

to parodize = Adeshism!
differential role of ideology
1. Orthodoxy
2. Diaspora nationalism
3. Bolshevism
4. Zionism

Interwar Haggada Parodies of Three Centers:
Poland, Soviet Union, United States

Handwritten Hebrew text, likely a parody of a Haggada passage, written in a cursive style. The text is arranged in several lines and appears to be a mix of original and parodied words.

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May 11, 1998
Modern Jewish History
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Parody, the imitation of a serious piece of literature for comic or social purposes, did not appear in Jewish literary life until the Middle Ages. Though there is humor and word play to be found in Talmudic literature, there was no parodizing of canonized texts until the 12th century. In his comprehensive study on Jewish Parody, Israel Davidson argues that the earliest Hebrew parodies never targeted the text of the original, unlike non-Jewish parody of the period, the purpose of which was to "pull down the ancient models from their high pedestals."¹ He also reveals that Jewish parody reflects all phases of Jewish life: all aspects of Jewish literature have been used by parodists, from the Bible to the Talmud, to Midrash, to Liturgy and so on. All social movements in modern Judaism have been targets of parody: Hasidism, Reform Judaism, Socialism, Zionism. Despite the opinion of Rabbis from medieval times to the present, that parody degrades the original text and its hallowed associations, and is an attempt to degrade rather than to elevate, parody of Jewish religious texts became extremely popular as modernity and Jewish life approached one another. Parody allowed Jewish writers to creatively use canonized and fixed works in order to satirize virtually any aspect of life.²

One central Jewish text, the Passover Haggada, began to be used as a form for parody as early as the 13th century.³ Its popularity, familiarity and fixed structure allowed for easy substitution of words or sections and it became a mainstay in the sphere of Jewish parody. Nearly all Jews celebrate Passover and most are familiar with its text. As Yerushalmi notes, the Haggada is one of the most popular and beloved Jewish books. The entire Jewish community makes use of it: from children to scholars; from folk to philosopher.⁴ This allows it to lend itself easily to parody. In order to employ the Haggada successfully for parody, the reader is required to know its text and customs in addition to understanding what the target of the parody is, which can be someone or something totally unrelated to the holiday. The Haggada, immutable and enduring, provided modern Jews with a format which could be easily filled with new material that, on the surface, appeared utterly incompatible with the original text. This incongruity created a humorous effect in that well known current events or people were incorporated into an ancient and holy text for either humorous or propagandistic purposes.

Following World War One and the Bolshevik Revolution, Eastern European Jewry was

¹ Davidson, I. Parody in Jewish Literature, p. xviii.

² *ibid.* xx.

³ *ibid.* 16-17.

⁴ Yerushalmi, Y. Haggadah and History, p. 13.

suddenly divided, culturally and by new borders. The Pale of Settlement was abolished and Poland became an independent state for the first time in over one hundred years. A large segment of that Jewry became Soviet citizens, a situation which forced them to modify their religion and culture. With this division in mind, three main centers⁵ of Jewish life come to the fore following the First World War: Poland, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Each center had approximately 2.5-3 million Jews, a majority of whom were Yiddish speaking. Yet they were extremely different, despite their common origin. Polish Jews had to contend with life in independent Poland, an often hostile environment; the lives of Jews in the USSR were turned upside down: they were instantly emancipated, but not free to practice their religion or culture as it had existed previously; American Jews, as immigrants to a new way of life, had to deal with, among other things, remaining Jewish in a free land. Yet all three groups had to struggle with modernity and all three groups had to exist as minorities.

Satire and parody became a common aspect of the Yiddish press in the early part of the 20th century in Eastern Europe and the United States. Kh. Finklshteyn comments on "the importance of humorous articles on social and political themes" which found a place early on in the Warsaw's *Haynt* daily newspaper.⁶ In the United States, *Der groyser kundes*, played the role of moral watchdog in jester's clothing from 1909 to 1927. Its satire and parody kept politicians and cultural figures in check.⁷ Much of the other Yiddish press throughout Eastern Europe and America maintained weekly humor pages in their newspapers on which occasional parodies would be printed. Holidays and their religious texts provided a good opportunity for Yiddish parodists to satirize whatever prey they wanted to shame. And there is a plethora of such material. Parodic material was published at nearly every holiday. Among this material, there is much related to Passover. This paper will attempt to compare and contrast the parodic material related to Passover whose origins are the three main centers of Jewish life in the interwar period: Poland, the United States, and the Soviet Union. There was such a vast amount of material published in Poland and the United States (there is significantly less from the USSR), that a random sampling was necessary in order to maintain a limit on what could be considered. Nonetheless, a comparison of the literary works produced in the three centers can help to reveal their similarities and differences.

⁵ "Three Centers," referring to the Jews of the USSR, Poland and New York, is a concept of Dovid Bergelson. See *In shpan*, 1926.

⁶ Finklshteyn, Kh. *Haynt: a tsaytung bay yidn.*, p. 127.

⁷ Gotesfeld, Kh. *75 yor yidishe prese in amerike*, p. 97-99.

With Polish independence gained following World War One and the slow entrance of Poland and its Jews into the modern world, it becomes clear, in comparison to American and the newly Sovietized Jewry, that Polish Jewry maintained a greater stasis in culture and religion than the other two centers. Independent Poland forced Jews to contend with modern politics while they continued to deal with previous problems such as assimilation and anti-semitism. Life changed, but not as drastically as it did for immigrants to the US or for citizens of the Soviet Union. Religious and cultural life evolved, but not at a distance from its source.

As previously mentioned, parody became a popular form in the Yiddish press of Poland with which to condemn Jewish politicians or cultural figures. Though there is no published bibliography for Yiddish materials published in Poland, it is clear that more material was published there than either the US or the Soviet Union. Much of the parodic material was printed in holiday-related "one day" journals called *jednodniowka*, though small, often fragmentary parodies also appeared in the Friday humor sections of the major daily newspapers. These *jednodniowki* appeared just prior to major Jewish holidays and were satiric journals which contained humorous poems, stories and cartoons. Much of the humor related to the holiday to which it was connected and often mocked Jewish cultural and political figures of the day by placing them in biblical or religious roles related to the holiday. Some of the titles of the Passover-related *jednodniowka* are: *Moror* (Bitter Herbs) - Warsaw, 1921; *Di elefte make* (The Eleventh Plague) - Riga, 1922; *A malke oyf peysakh* (A Queen on Passover) - Warsaw, 1924; *Di freylekhe hagode* (The Happy Haggadah) - Lublin, 1924; *Der roshe* (The Wicked One) - Warsaw, 1927; *Der afikoymen* - 1929; *Zalts vaser* (Salt Water) - Warsaw, 1930; *Der peysakhdiger kantshik* (The Passover Whip) - Bialystok, 1931; *Bialistoker khareyses* (Bialystok kharoset) - Bialystok, 1932. In addition, weekly humor/satire journals such as *Der bezem* (The Broom) and *Der Takhshet* (The Brat) also published special Passover issues in which parodic material appears. These journals did not shy away from sharp social satire and controversy.⁸ In comparison to Poland, the production of such journals, with the exception of Passover issues of *Der groyser kundes* and the few anti-Passover journals produced by Yiddish Communists in New York, as well as *Di royte hagode* in the USSR, there are

⁸ Fuks, M. *The Polish Jewry: History and Culture*, p. 83.

the output of such materials in the Soviet Union and the US can be considered quite meager.⁹ It is clear, therefore, that Jews in Poland produced significantly more humoristic materials in Yiddish than either New York or the Soviet Union. The reasons for this can be conjectured as follows: Polish Jewry, despite modernization and assimilation, remained at the source of traditional Eastern European Jewish culture, hence their closer connection to tradition and use of traditional materials for humoristic outlet. Soviet Jewry, as we know, was drastically torn from its roots and denied the opportunity to engage such material for any purpose other than propaganda. Finally, American immigrant Jewry used the material in a humorous way in order to remain connected with their past while satirizing their present.

The satiric material found in both the Passover *jednodniowki* and the Warsaw daily press is heavily referential and deals mainly with local Polish Jewish politics and press issues. More than anything, the Passover parodies serve to mock Jewish politicians and journalists. Many of them make significantly more use of the Haggadah text than those of the other centers, indicating a more widespread knowledge of not only the headings,¹⁰ but the actual text.

An'hagode far gensha gas (A Haggadah for Gesia Street),¹¹ for example, which cleverly intersperses a great deal of original haggadic text in the parody, is told from the point of view of an aspiring Gesia Street businessman (Gesia was considered the Fifth Avenue of Warsaw Jewry). The hagada begins with the search for leaven, "*kol khamire vekhamiye - ale harbe 'likhve'-breklekh, daykhe breshese - vos gefinin zikh in mayn gesheft*" which becomes a search for embezzlers in the business establishment of the narrator. As is typical of most parodies, it then makes use of the "kadesh, urkhats, karpas, yakhets..." mnemonic, applying each heading to what is occurring in the text. The Kadesh, or blessing, goes to those who made deals before the valuation: *Kadesh - ver es hot "geshribn" far der valorizatsiye, iz gevorn a "kadish."* It continues with a brief explanation of what happens when provincial businessmen come to Gesia street: the Gesia street store owners "wash" up to them (urkhats); they are first pushed into a store with a

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⁹ *Di royte hagode: humoristish literarisher antireligyezer zhurnal*, Bobroysk, April 1924, 22 pp. is entry no. 3842 in Shmeruk's "Jewish Publications in the USSR. This journal was unfortunately unavailable to me and I therefore have no way of determining its satiric or parodic quality. Because of the generally propagandistic nature of Soviet literature related to Passover and the lack of known humoristic materials related to Jewish matters, it is impossible to gauge the tenor of this journal.

¹⁰ By headings I mean the "Kadesh, urkhats, karpes, yakhats, maggid...etc." mnemonic device. See pp. 9-10 of Glotzer, N. *The Passover Haggadah* for further explanation of this phenomenon.

¹¹ From: *A malke oyf peysakh*, edited by Pinkhes Katz, Warsaw, April 18, 1924, p. 3.

stalk of parsley, the image being that they are prodded into the store (karpes); they are divided into those who can pay cash and those who leave an IOU (yakhets); he is then made "to sing and to say" (magid), a play on both magid - the "telling" of the haggada story and the old Yiddish folk expression "*tsu zingn un tsu zogn*,"; a sale is then made (moytsi), which is connected with the blessing of the "bread;" this is followed by taxes (maror), the bitter part of the transaction. The hagada continues in this vein, with the four questions querying as to why taxes are so high. The four sons discuss the overbearing laws relating to commerce. In this case, the four sons represent Poles of various gradations: the wise son is a "patriot," who informs the *yidelakh* (little Jews) that the laws are *for* them. The wicked son is a "*Rozvoynik*,"¹² who asks the *zhides* (kikes), "how is it that you (Jews) arrive at commerce?" The response is that "commerce is a decent thing, not for his potato-head." The simple son is the official in charge of the price list (*zennik*) and the son who cannot yet ask a question is the tax man.

What is interesting here is that this is a rare instance in which Poles appear in the haggada parodies. Whereas non-Jewish characters appear in both the Soviet and left wing American parodies, they typically do not in the Polish parodies, which mainly address intra-Jewish communal and political issues. With the awareness that the Yiddish language and the religious framework of the parodies rendered these works entirely intra-communal, the possibility that fear of offending the dominant culture can essentially be ruled out. It is a strange phenomenon that the majority of the parodies, which presented opportunities to mock anyone and everything, generally refrained from attacking the government, or the anti-semitic parties more than the one or two occurrences of the numerous opportunities they had. Perhaps the writers did not consider this an appropriate forum (though in New York, *Der groyser kundes* and the *Freiheit* often satirized non-Jewish public figures) to criticize serious political problems. It may also reflect the position of the Jew in inter war Polish society, whose real position is that of second class citizen with little possibility for true change. Perhaps this turning inward reveals a rejection of Polish society. Certainly the language and form bears little connection to it. It is also a possibility that the writers did not want to address these serious social and political difficulties in relation to a joyous holiday in what was a period of economic depression, dilemmas that might weigh to heavily on the light nature of the parodies.

¹² *Rozwoj* was a far-right, anti-semitic party that initiated anti-Jewish boycotts. Korzec, P. *Juifs en Pologne*, pp. 137, 169.

An'hagode far gensha gas is, in fact, an excellent example of what Khone Shmeruk considered the "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish polysystem" in that it was written with the expectation that the reader would be able to understand all three languages, which was not typical of most of the parodies.¹³ Take, for example, the parodic recitation of *dover akher*, "another explanation," followed by the ten plagues, which are transformed here, in the mind of the Gesia Street businessman, into different kinds of taxes (Hebrew is underlined, Yiddish is italicized, Polish is in boldface):

Dover akher - *men ken keyn khazer nisht zayn un men muz voynen un tsoln*; Beyad khazoke - *az nisht nemt men mit gvald*. Shtayim - *un men muz moykhl zayn tsoln kara tsvey mol azoy fil*. Ilu eser podatkes she'hevi grabski aleynu, vilu heyn: **Mayantkove, dokhodove, miyeshkanyove, odekhove, spatserove, vodotsionove, esregove, shalekh-monesove, kneydlekhove...**

Another explanation is - one cannot be a pig and one must live and pay; With a strong hand - if not they take you brutally. Two - and one must apologize and pay a penalty that is twice as much. These are the ten taxes that Grabski brought on us: Property tax, capital gains tax, apartment tax, breathing tax, walking tax, plumbing tax, etrog tax, purim-gift tax, matzo-ball tax...

Obviously, the purpose is to render absurd the heavy taxation prevalent during the Grabski administration, which was to fall the following year.¹⁴ The haggada continues with a hopeful version of *Ehad mi yodeye*, a counting song in which objects significant in Jewish life are revealed, which in this case counts customers and concludes with "mi yodeye?" (who knows?) how much money one might make if five or six customers come into the store. The parody closes with the traditional *Khad gadye*, though instead of a goat, the father buys a "pekele" (little package). A blessing is made on the *sfire* and the counting (of money) begins.

An'hagode far gensha gas is one of the more well thought out and more intricate parodies. It successfully attacks its targets, taxes and the administration, and successfully presents a "haggada" through the eyes of a businessman. The piece is signed by *Der koter* (The Tomcat), who was likely the editor of *A malke oyf Pesyakh*, the 1924 *jednodniowka* in which it appeared,

¹³ Shmeruk, Kh. Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture in The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars, pp. 285-311.

¹⁴ Wladyslaw Grabski, then President of the Polish Republic. Reference is made to the effect of his tax laws in hastening Jewish emigration (specifically Hebrew writers in this case) from Poland in Hana Hever's "From Exile-without-Homeland to Homeland-without-Exile: A Guiding Principle of Hebrew Fiction in Interwar Poland in The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars, pp. 334-335

Pinkhes Katz.¹⁵

Another interesting parody from Warsaw, *Di hagode shel mis yudea* (The Haggadah of Miss Judea) sheds light on an interesting scandal that occurred in the Warsaw Jewish community in 1929, though apparently the Warsaw Kehilla was constantly plagued by party battles.¹⁶ Each year, the Polish language Jewish daily, *Nasz Przegląd*, held a “Miss Judea” beauty contest for the most beautiful Jewish girl in Poland.¹⁷ The 1929 winner of the contest was invited, along with the staff of *Nasz Przegląd*, to a reception at the Kehila building by Heshl Farbshteyn, leader of the religious-Zionist *Mizrakhi* party¹⁸ and then president of the Warsaw Kehila, where he praised her and read the "Song of Songs" in honor of her. This act caused outrage among the *Agudas yisroel* members of the Kehile, who protested vigorously. Vice-president of the Kehila and *Aguda* leader Yeshaye Rozenboym happened to die a week later. At the funeral, Farbshteyn stood to eulogize his colleague in the name of the Kehila, when he was shouted down by a group of *Aguda* supporters, who in turn were shouted at by those who thought Farbshteyn should be allowed to speak. Fistfights broke out between the two camps of Hasidim and continued even after Farbshteyn was hustled away from the scene. The dais was smashed, the funeral was forgotten and the cemetery turned into a mass melee of battling Hasidim.¹⁹ This scandal became the talk of Warsaw that Passover season and, a major theme of the Friday humor sections of the daily papers, as well as that of the seasonal *jednodniowki*.²⁰

Haynt, the publisher of *Di hagode shel mis yudeya*, assumed that others like theirs would be also be printed and informed the reader that theirs was "the only authentic Miss Judea Haggadah and that others should be burned along with the *khometz*." In fact, another *jednodniowka* of that season was called “*Mis malke*,” (Miss Queen) and had on the cover a cartoon entitled, “The Seder (order and meal) of Today” under which was a drawing of a scantily clad Miss Judea reclining on the seder plate between a bearded religious Jew and secular Jew labeled *Nasz Przegląd*, who says,

¹⁵ For more information on Katz see Finklshteyn, Kh. *Haynt, a tsaytung bay yidn*, pp. 223-224.

¹⁶ Heller, C. *On the Eve of Destruction*, p. 162.

¹⁷ Steinlauf, M. *The Polish Jewish Daily Press*. p. 345

¹⁸ *Mizrakhi* promoted orthodoxy and Zionism.

¹⁹ *Haynt: Skandal oyf der levaye fun yeshaye rozenboym z"l: bziem hames durkh a klike agudanikes baym keyver fun zeyer firer*, April 2, 1929; *Nokhveyenishn fun "mis yudeya" in kehile-rat*, April 16, 1929.

²⁰ *Haynt: Yatskan, Sh. "Mis yudeya" April 17?, 1929*. Yatskan, the paper's editor wrote of how the scandal overtook Jewish Warsaw: "...in the meantime, we have a "Miss Judea" and on the Jewish street there are no more salary worries, no more bankruptcies, no more taxes - long live Miss Judea!"

datke
entende

“*Nisht azoy di hagode, vi di kneydlekh*” (Not so much the haggada, as the matzo-balls). The orthodox Jew responds, “*Moror zey shonu oykhlim*” (Bitter herbs that we eat). This makes use of the expression, “*er meynt nit di hagode vi di kneydlekh,*” which means that the person is not interested in the text or the ceremony and only wants to eat, and in this case, it is Miss Judea on the plate. This is also a reference to the fact that *Nasz Przegląd* was seen as an assimilationist newspaper by traditional and folkist Jews because of its use of Polish language. This brings in the idea that Polish-speaking Jews are not interested in Jewish tradition, i.e. the haggada, but nevertheless still want the matzo-balls, the tasty bits of Jewish culture. They were widely seen by traditional Jews as being Jews devoid of Jewish culture. The orthodox response that it is “bitter” that we have Jews in our community that engage in activities such as the Miss Judea pageant.

The Haynt publication, “*Der afikoymen,*” the cover of which shows a caricature of Farbshteyn “kashering” Miss Judea in a pot marked “Kehilla,” mocks the Miss Judea pageant of *Nasz Przegląd* in addition to taking a poke at the Bundist daily, *Folkstaytung*, as well as the writer Hillel Tsaytlin.²¹ Similarly to *An’hagode far gensha gas, Di hagode shel mis yudeya* uses the original Hebrew text of the true Haggada interspersed with Yiddish and Polish, although only the headings and “*kadesh, urkhats, karpas, yakhets...*” mnemonic are used more prominently. The parody chronicles the scandal without mentioning any names, which is not necessary, since everyone in Warsaw is already familiar with the story. The parody fabricates an interaction between the contest judges and Miss Judea, who they see as a pawn in the whole affair. In doing so, however, everyone involved in the events surrounding the contest becomes a target. In order to indicate the linguistic composite, material from the original Haggada is underlined, Polish is in bold face and Yiddish is italicized.

Shfoyx hamaskho al hagoyim

Tut’s nokh di goyim, azoy vi zey hobn oyfgenumen zeyer miss, nemt’s oykh oyf undzer “miss.”

Di miss shrayt:

Ana hoshiyo no

Gevald, helft’s aroys mit a nedove

Nirtse

*Af der nakht farbet di miss di **sendzhes** oyf a “**pshenshe**” un zi zogt:*

Khasal Sidur

Tatush dopiero pshishedl z’ madlitvi v’ sinagadze un zi shrayt:

L’shone habe beyerushelayim

Prange bitsh khalutsan i yekhatsh do grokhovo

²¹ *Zerue: a shtikl fleysh nisht kalt nisht varem, vi a layt-artikl fun folkstaytung; Kharoyeses: a gemish fun farfoylte epl, yerushelayim nis, tsimering un a bisl sheymen zays fun hilel tsaytlins an’artikl.*

Pour out your wrath on the gentiles

You imitate the gentiles, as they entertained their Miss, you also entertain our "Miss."

The Miss screams:

We beseech Thee, save now

Help, help out with a contribution

Concluded

At night, the judges invite the Miss to a sit-down dinner and she says:

Concluded is the Seder

Daddy I just got back from synagogue and she screams:

Next year in Jerusalem

I want to go to Grochow and party.

The parody cleverly uses the original Haggadic text in order to satirize the already scandalized participants. It accuses them of imitating the Poles in having a beauty contest and then parading the winner about town. It address^oes the actual monetary situation of the winner, and how the judges swoon over her. The ironic use of the original Hebrew text juxtaposed with the Yiddish and Polish reality is quite humorous. (As in all satirical parody, much of the humor arises from the incongruity of scandalous current events connected with ancient hallowed ones.)

Multiple parodies were produced in the press and in *jednodniowka* each season. Other parodies include *Di kehilische hagode* from the *jednodniowka Khad gadye*, (Warsaw, April 1927), published by the daily *Moment* and edited by Yoysef Tunkl, perhaps the best known parodist in Yiddish literature,²² which satirizes Jewish politics in Poland. For example, the first of the four questions asks "what is the difference between the situation before *matan konstitutsiye* (giving of the constitution) and after *matan konstitutsiye*," which plays on *matan tora* (giving of the Torah). The irony here is the juxtaposition of the Torah, the Jewish "consitution," and the Polish constitution, which failed to provide true emancipation for the Jews.²³ Playing on the serious analysis of the situation which appeared in the press, part of the answer to the four questions is given by well known Polish-Jewish historian, I. Shiper. It also mentions that "*Tsurikgekumene 'oylim' dertseyln di nisim fun yetsies palestina*" (Returning *olim* tell of the miracles of the Exodus from Palestine). This ironic twist on the Passover commandment to "tell of the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt" comments on the situation in Palestine that was so difficult, that immigrants from Poland were not able to endure and had to return. The parody uses only portions of the original, but also includes the original Hebrew text as part of the narrative.

Di hagode fun hayntikn moment of 1928, also published by *Moment* and edited by Tunkel

²² See Szeintuch, Y. *Sefer hahumoreskot vehaparodiot hasifrutiot beyidish*.

²³ See Tomaszewki, J. *The Civil Rights of the Jews, 1918-1939*, Polin, v. 8, 1994.

mainly addresses the winners and losers of the Sejm elections of that year. The “Seder” is subtitled, “*Vi tsu firm a val-kampanye*” (How to Direct an Election Campaign) and goes on to describe, under the usual mnemonic headings, all the dirty tricks used in a political campaign. It goes on to describe the four sons as: Wise: Grinboym (Poale tsion); Wicked: Kirshbroyn (Agudas yisroel); Simple: Erlikh (Bund); Unable to ask a question: Zerubovl (Left poale tsion).

Another interesting *jednodniowka* is the *Peysakh-blat* of Lublin from circa 1925-26,²⁴ the cover of which takes on the form of a religious tract. On it is written, “*Pesakh-blat, Kosher l'mehedrin min hamehedrin, Oyf a gants yor, Bashgokhes harov heylpern mekh*”s *khamdas yisroel*.” The target of this parody is bourgeois religious Jews and the Beys Yankev school for girls. It is entitled, “*Do fregt di fir kashes a fraylayn fun beys-yankev-shule, frantsishkaner 6*” (The four questions are asked here by a young woman from *Beys-yankev* School, Franciskaner 6). The parodied four questions relate to why the girl’s aunt goes around all made up in fancy clothes, stockings and long nails. Her mother gives the Answer, which deals with religious women’s issues. These included women’s duties (religious) in the home and hygiene. The four sons are, in this case, the four daughters. The wise daughter is able deal with women’s issues on her own and simply goes to the *mikve*. The wicked daughter argues that a bath is more hygienic than the *mikve*. The simple daughter (“*Tama ma hi omeret*), or the “naive woman,” wonders what all the fuss about hygiene is. Her “bobe” went to the *mikve* under ice and it was fine for her. The daughter who doesn’t know how to ask is the one who gets seduced by young men. She needs her father to explain that if “one takes another, he’ll soon have two.”

The *dayenu* (it would be enough for us) recitation includes the following:

If women would wear wigs and men would wear a beard and *peyes*, *dayenu*.
If women and men would dance together but not at Jewish weddings, *dayenu*.
If Jewish daughters went naked but cut their nails, *dayenu*.
If our aristocrats would put up a *mezuzah* and not lay *tfilin*.* *dayenu*.

* We gave out special pamphlets explaining the requirements regarding *tfilin* and *mezuzah*.

This parody is one of the rare parodies produced by and for the religious community. This would indicate that there must not have been a problem with rabbinical authorization of them. The parody is well done and deals with issues specific to the orthodox community. There is much humor and, as indicated by some of the “*dayenu*” lines, great exaggeration and incongruity,

²⁴ The date of *Peysach-blat* is in question. 1925-26 is handwritten on the cover.

components typical of all satirical parody. It also addresses serious issues to the religious community, hence the asterisk and explanation that they had given out a *konters dinim* regarding *tfilin* and *mezuzes*. Such an explanation serves to temper the frivolity of the parody and puts it into perspective in what should be a life of modesty, though surely not without laughter.

Der bezem, one of the weekly satire journals, included a brief *Hagode shel peysekh* in their Passover issue which included items like: *Urkhats*: wash your hands before picking up the *Folkstaytung* (Bundist newspaper), don't make a blessing - it will be a wasted blessing. *Magid*: A Jewish deputy goes into the Sejm and talks...to the wall. Another parody in the same issue satirizes the politicians of *Agudas yisroel*.

Di Bialistoker khareyses of 1932 includes *Hagode shel bialistok* which mocks the city council. The four questions ask the city fathers of "pure Polish background," why, when there is an regular evening session, they are all there, but when there is a session that involves Jewish issues, they disappear; why is there money for your institutions, and for ours there is only bitter herbs; why are subsidies for your institutions instantly approved when it takes more than "shetey pe'omim" for us to get anything." The four sons are the four Jewish members of the Magistrate: Zhemilski, Katsnelson, Edlshteyn and Floymenboym. They leave it up to the reader as to which role each will play. They say, however, that Zhemilski must be the Wise son, since he never got married. The parody continues on to address problems of the Jewish community, including school subsidies and leadership that only "sits on the benches." As is typical, this parody intersperses the original Hebrew headings and text with the parodic material. (As noted above, this is one of the rarer parodies which addresses Poles.)

← very
← confusing

Very often, journals or newspaper humor sections parodize only portions of the haggada. Because the original text is canonized and fixed, the vast majority of the text lends itself to parody, though some sections are evidently accept it more easily. The four questions is one of those, as is the four sons and the ten plagues. The four sons for example, were easily transformed into public figures, or in the case of the 1925 issue of *Der afikoymen*, transmogrified into cartoon caricatures of Warsaw's top Jewish daily newspapers. Under the question, "What do our four sons say about Jerusalem University?" Just a few weeks prior to this edition, Hebrew University had been founded in Palestine, a major Jewish press event. The wise son, *Haynt*, portrayed as a rotund, bearded Jew in a bowler-style hat, says "Nu, who is still on top, me or them?" This informs us of

x

Haynt's position as the most successful daily, not worried about competition or who is more important. Next to him is the wicked son, the Bundist *Folkstsaytung*, portrayed as skinny and hatless with a thin mustache and a scowl, says (in Soviet orthography, incorrect though it may be, to indicate the Bund's leftism), "University shmiversity! It's meaningless. Comrades! Come to the meeting on Saturday." This image plays on the Bund's secularism and willingness to hold meetings on Shabbat in order to spite religious tradition. The simple son is the second most popular daily, *Moment*, which is portrayed as a thin bearded Jew in boots and a workingman's cap. This reflects its lower status and perhaps its readership. He says, "All the better. There should be a Hebrew University too." This is indicative of the lower intellectual quality of the paper, as if they did not know the founding occurred. The son who is unable to ask a question is the Polish language *Nasz Przegląd*, who appears as a clean-shaven, thin man wearing plaid pants (everyone else is in black). He says, in Polish "Owszem, niech zhiye univerek! Dami fotografie do ilustrovanego dodatku." (Alright! Let's do university! There will be photos of it in our illustrated section.) There is a two fold mockery here, one of the newspaper itself, and another of its readers, who want to look at the pictures. *Nasz Przegląd*, newspaper of assimilated and monied Polish Jewry, included a lot of photographs. The idea here is that people buy the paper to look at the pictures and not to read the articles.

Der rusze, or *The Wicked* (4/10/27), named for the wicked son, includes a literary version of the four sons in which four candidates from the Warsaw Yiddish Literary Union are considered for candidacy for the concurrently running elections to the Polish Sejm. The wise son is Menakhem Kipnis, who is portrayed as a loudmouth who won't open his mouth unless he is remunerated; the wicked son is the writer, Segalovitsh, who comments on the many volumes he has produced and who's lack of interest in the Sejm results from the fact that there is not one "potefon" nor would he be able to grab a "Charleston;" the simple son is Meylekh Ravitsh, who feigns a lack of knowledge of the Sejm and says "Secretary Ravitsh of the Literary Union is not here, only Ravitsh the poet is." He who is not able to ask a question is labeled "Hershele," nom de plume of poet Hersh Danielovitsh. He apologizes for having nothing to say and is portrayed as a pauper, with no interest in the Sejm elections.²⁵

Another interpretation, this time political, is found in *Der Meylekh*, of 1 April, 1928. In

²⁵ Danielovitsh was indeed poor. He barely made a living as a copy editor at Haynt. See Finklshteyn, Kh. p. 261-263.

this, Viktor Ehrlikh, leader of the Bund is portrayed as the wise son, Kirshbroyn, the *Aguda* leader, as the wicked, Prilutski of the *Folkspartey* as the simple son and the *Poaley-tzion* leader Zerubovl as that who cannot even ask a question. As in the previous incarnation, the sharpest commentary is reserved for the son who cannot ask a question. Here, Zerubovl is attacked as not knowing what he wants: "5 grams of Zionism, 10 grams of Socialism, 20 grams of stupidism... and the story already has a beard (Yiddish expression meaning the story has become a long one)." This was a comment on Zerubovl' long, Hertselian beard, which he apparently prided himself on. He was also known to have preferred the high life, staying only in fancy hotels, while promoting left Zionism.

In the previously discussed *Der seder fun mis yudea*, there appear cartoon illustrations of the four sons, although they are heads of writers and journalists drawn onto the bodies of women to further the Miss Judea theme. Kipnis and Segalowicz as the Wise and the Wicked respectively, though this time with Alter Kacyzne as the simple and an unknown as the one who cannot ask a question. All are concocted reactions of the writers to the Miss Judea contest, which was attacked in another *jednodniowka* of that year (*Der afikoymen*), as well as the Yiddish press.

As a whole, the use of the Haggada for parody in Poland is significantly more extensive than that of the US and especially the Soviet Union. The complexity of many of the parodies indicate a readership that was more closely acquainted with the original text as well as deeply involved in community life. The parodies address a multifarious array of issues from a number of differing perspectives. In short, they attest to the vibrancy of Polish Jewish life as it entered the modern world.

II Haggada parody of the Soviet Union presents a different problem. Once part of the mass of Eastern European Jewry, they were cut off from their brethren physically and culturally with the onset of the October Revolution. Their culture was proletarianized and atheized. As soon as the Bolshevik government began to enforce its rule in revolutionary Russia, a strange conflict initiated itself for the Jews. On the one hand, they were suddenly free to join society at large with full civil rights, something they never had, and on the other, they were forced to unshackle their religious beliefs and practices from their culture, all of which were deeply intertwined. Hence, traditional Jewish culture suffered immensely, despite the fact that the Soviet anti-religious campaign was non-denominational. Religious functionaries of all levels were persecuted. Anti-religious

Very weak conclusion

campaigns were conducted and heightened during the holidays. Passover was one of the holidays during which anti-religious campaigns were intensified. Some of these demonstrations included the infamous *Royte Sedorim*, at which Jews flagrantly ate bread and spoke out against the holiday.²⁶ Though the Passover Seder is typically performed in the home, those who held them apparently feared reprisals by the government.²⁷ Nonetheless, many continued to hold Seders in their homes and, as Gershuni notes, the older generation did not pay much heed to the anti-Passover propaganda. This was not the case with the younger generation, who, after attending *Sedorim* in their parent's homes, would go to see the Yevseksiye's *Royte sedorim* performances.²⁸ In Warsaw's *Haynt*, April 8, 1925, Bentsien Katz describes in his article, "*Peysekh in moskve in der tsayt fun militerishe komunizm*," the difficulties in obtaining articles and food necessary for the holiday, matzos in particular. Katz mentions that when he brought matzos to Moscow from Kovno in 1921 and gave them out to his incredulous Muscovite friends, among them Rov Ma"ze and Madame Tshlenov, he was asked "if Jews outside the Soviet Union still live the way they use to." This indicates that there was a total break in Jewish culture in the Soviet Union as early as 1921. This helps to confirm Fishman's conviction that "the combined forces of emancipation on the one hand, and the state persecution of Judaism on the other, generated a pace of secularization, acculturation, and alienation from the Jewish tradition unparalleled in Modern Jewish History."²⁹

As Jewish communists began to build Soviet Jewish proletarian culture, they also had to destroy their old culture. This was done by attempting to debunk the basis of the holidays using modern means. Some of this was done through community trials, in which the *kheyder*, *yeshivas* and certain holidays were "put on trial."³⁰ Another manifestation of this was the publication of anti-religious tracts. Regarding Passover, such materials included, *Kegn peysekh, material far propagandistn un forteger tsu der anti-peysakh kampanie*, (*Tsentralfarlag, moskve - kharkov - minsk. ukrainishe opteylung*, 1920), a small handbook which explains the nature of the Soviet anti-religious campaign as it relates to Passover. It opens with essays by Lenin regarding religion in general (*Vos iz azoyns religye; farvos tret der arbeter aroys kegn religye; di konter-*

²⁶ Swet, G. *Jewish Religion in Soviet Russia*, p.214.

²⁷ Rothenberg, J. *Jewish Religion in the Soviet Union*, pp. 173-175 in Kochan, *The Jews in Soviet Russia*.

²⁸ Gershuni, A. *Yehadut berusiya hasoviyetit, Mosad harav kuk, jerusalem* *taf shin kaf'alef*, p. 84.

²⁹ Fishman, D. *Preserving Tradition in the Land of Revolution: The Religious Leadership of Soviet Jewry, 1917-1930*, p. 85. from *The Uses of Tradition*.

³⁰ op cit. p. 173.

revolutsionere role fun religye, pp. 5-9) and continues with an explanation of "what is reactionary" and why the Jewish religion and holidays are considered reactionary. It explains how no educated person could possibly believe in these fabrications and how religious holidays must be replaced with revolutionary holidays. This booklet is not a parody, though it does contain elements of parody within its propagandistic preaching. For example (p. 15), "*Mir dertseyln oykh vegn di makes, vos di burzhvazi hot geshikt afn kemfndikn proletariat: Miliukov, Tshernov, Krasnov, Kornilov, Kerenski, Tshaykovski, Hats, Petliura, Denikin, Vrangl, Makhno, Pilsudski, Shaydeman, No-ke, Vandervelde. Nit tsen, nor hunderter azelkhe makes!*" This parodizing allows the writer and reader to reassess their traditional beliefs and consider new ones. It goes on to list the various enemies of the Bolsheviks, including the Kadets, Eserisher and Mentshevikes, among others. "Instead of *Kriyes yontef*, we tell of the heroic Red Army guard at Perekop; instead of the groans of the Jews in Egypt, we tell of the suffering of the proletariat; instead of telling of the wonder how God built His Temple in Jerusalem, we tell of how the proletariat is building socialism in the USSR." It further explains that Passover is a nationalist holiday, which is inherently evil because it prevents people from thinking of the proletariat (p. 16). *Di arbeter yugnt vet nit fregn keyn hagode-kashes, zi vet entfernen mit revolutsionsere entuziazm in gebit fun sotsialistisher boiung*" It explains how (p. 21) the Jewish proletariat last year boycotted, in mass demonstrations, the matzos sent patronizingly from abroad to the "poor Russian brothers."

It describes the Passover ritual and the origin of the word *peysakh*. The descriptions and tone are not disrespectful and make frequent reference to biblical passages. Essentially, it is a sober, intellectual inquiry into the Passover ritual and story. This lends the booklet a legitimacy among Soviet citizens who are familiar with the holiday and who may still be religious. It mentions (p. 31) Jewish workers who prepare for and celebrate Passover at least with as much energy as the clerics. The reason for this is that they don't know the reasons for what they are doing and that when they are educated, they will cease these practices.

In this environment, there was surely much for Yiddish parodists to mock, however due to the oppressive atmosphere and danger and impossibility of criticizing the regime, no such parodies are known to exist. In fact, satiric holiday journals, similar to those published in Poland, stopped

publication completely in 1918.³¹ Without a free forum, satirical political and cultural humor was forced out of the public domain. What remained were Soviet anti-religious publications such as “*Kegn peysekhn*” and the official Soviet press. As far as can be ascertained from material available in New York, no one-time journals like the *jednodniowki* in Poland appeared in the Soviet Union and what did appear can only be considered propaganda.

Though the text was not available to me, it can be assumed that *Di royte hagode*, which was used when the *Royte sedorim* were conceived in 1924, employed a similar thematic to *Kegn peysekhn*.³² Gershuni confirms this and cites quotations from the *Royte hagode* such as “We were slaves to Capital until the October Revolution came and saved us with a strong hand from the land of servitude.” It closes with “Now the revolution is only here; next year - world revolution.”³³ This type of parody, in which the revolution replaces the “strong hand and outstretched arm” of God, was the bedrock of all Soviet haggada propagandistic parody. Additionally, because of its proximity to the first of May, it is frequently mentioned in anti-Passover texts that the former should naturally replace the latter.

Though holidays like Passover were supposed to disappear in the newly atheistic Soviet Union, anti materials continued to appear. Cartoons in *Emes*, the Moscow Yiddish daily, around the time of Passover 1926 included one called “*A seyder unter di palestinishhe ‘faygn’-boymer*,” (A seder under the Palestinian “fig” tree) which shows an immigrant to Palestine seated at a seder table with Khayem Vaytsman underneath a tree which has ‘faygn’ instead of leaves.³⁴ The immigrant says, “*Manishtane vos in ale nekht fun a gants yor flegn mir esn oder khomets oder matse, un do in palestine esn mir ale teg un nekht kuloy kadokhes?*” (What is the difference that on all nights of the whole year we used to eat leaven or matzo, and here in Palestine, every day and night we eat only malaria?). This brief parody of the four questions is not anti-Passover, but anti-Zionist. It mocks the Zionist who leaves the Soviet “paradise” to drain malarial swamps in Palestine.

Other cartoons which appeared later in *Emes*, illustrate the strange position of Jewish

³¹ Kirzhnits, A. *Di yidishe prese in ratnfarband, 1917-1927, Minsk, 1928. Vaysruslendische bikher-kamer ba der vaysruslendisher melukhe bibliotek*. The last publications include: *Der Ashmoday*, Kiev, 1917-18; *Der Mazik*, Poltava, 1918 (purim); *Naye akadmes*, Kiev, 1918 (shavues); *Der Fledervish*, Kiev, 1918; *Der Tayvl*, Minsk, 1918.

³² Gitelman, Zvi, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 302. According to Gitelman, a description of a *Royter seder* is to be found in *Der veker* (Minsk) of April 3, 1923. Unfortunately, this was also not available to me.

³³ Gershuni, A. *Yehadut berusiya hasoviyetit, Mosad harav kuk, jerusalem, taf shin kaf"alef*, p. 84.

³⁴ Fayg: the offensive hand gesture in which the thumb is placed between the fore and middle fingers.

religious iconography and imagery in Soviet Jewish propaganda . In the same manner as above and as it was done in Poland and in the US, Passover imagery is used in order to satirize another issue. In April, 1930, in *Emes*, a number of cartoons appear under the title, “*Naye hagode ilustratsiyes*” (New Haggada Illustrations). These include “*Beytso*” (egg), an image of a capitalist with a cigar and top hat though with the body of a huge chicken sitting on an egg and crushing a worker underneath (April 4). Another, called *Moror* (Bitter herbs), shows a capitalist crying in front of a factory waving a banner reading, “*Dem finif yor plan in 4 yor!*” (The five year plan in four years!). Clearly, these cartoons are not anti-Passover, but combine Soviet and Passover imagery to attack their capitalist targets. It should be noted, however, that many of the issues that contained these cartoons and that surrounded the holiday, were full of the usual anti-Passover articles, but no parodies or humor related material.

The best and most lucid Soviet parody comes to us from M. Altshuler a writer of a number of anti-religious tracts, among them: *Gekasherte neshomes (kegn kheyder), fun komunistisher yugnt farband, kharkov, 1922*; *Anti religyezer lernbukh, tseñtralfarlag, moskve, 1929*; *Vi darf men firm antireligyeze propagande, tseñtralfarlag, moskve, 1929*; *Komsomolishe hagode (hagada shel pesakh af ivri-taytsh), kharkov, seriye kegn shiml fun doayres. 1930.*³⁵

His 1927 *Hagode far gloyber un apikorsim*³⁶ is an excellent example of a truly “Soviet” hagada parody. The text indicates just how far Soviet Jewish culture had traveled on the Soviet anti-religious line. As the title indicates, it is for “believers and non-believers,” which implies that there are still “believers” in the USSR who need to be weaned from their incorrect beliefs and superstitions. The cover of the pamphlet has an illustration of Jews at a seder table with a mirror image underneath of cavorting devils. This makes clear the intentions of the text.

Altshuler borrows a great deal from previous anti-Passover works, mostly “*Kegn peysekh*,” the original of which was published anonymously. He also includes some of the 1924 tract entitled “*Peysakh*.”³⁷ Altshuler uses text verbatim from these tracts in a number of places. Judging from the tone and the images, it seems as though Altshuler aimed at a fairly wide

³⁵ Unfortunately, I did not have access to *Komsomolishe hagode* and have no way of knowing if it is a reprint of his 1927 *hagode* or a new publication.

³⁶ Altshuler, M. *Hagode far gloyber un apikorsim (tsveyte oysgebeseerte oyflage), Tseñtrale felker farlag fun f.s.s.r., moskve, 1927.*

³⁷ *Peysakh*. H. Luria, Kharkov, 1924 Farlag Put Prosveshstshenya. A serious academic work regarding the potential historical origins of the holiday and an attempted debunking of the holiday.

audience, including the youth. It's multi-leveled qualities endow the work with the ability^{to} appeal to different audiences. Its basic explanation and denigration of the customs, literature and history surrounding the holiday provide a fine primer for the young and uninitiated in Jewish practice. The parodic quality provides a creative and interesting perspective on the holiday for previously religious Jews. For them it provides reassurance that proletarian culture is superseding their previous culture which has been successfully debunked. For religious Jews, however, the text is an unmitigated attack on their way of life and utterly offensive. The text makes it clear that there is no place for Judaism as a religion in the Soviet Union. In the same vein the text also raises the question of nationality. Altshuler treads a thin line when he writes of "the Jewish nation," though this was published prior to the anti-nationalist bacchanalia of the 1930s.

Altshuler begins by applying *bdikes khomets* to the proletarian revolution. He writes, "*mit tsen yor tsurik hot der arbeter klas fun rusland mit der hilf funem poyertum boydek khomets geven in land.*" He goes on to explain how the workers cleaned the land of domination by nobles and the bourgeoisie and took over the factories and land and destroyed the enemies of the working class. In the tradition of the first act of Passover, the *khomets* was burned, though here "*in fayer fun der groyser sotsialistisher revolutsiye,*" and followed by a "*brokhe*" listing those to be burned in the fires of the revolution. This list includes "*ale pritsim, burzhvazn un zeyer helfer - mentshevikes, esern, kadetn, bundovtses, tsionistn, esevtses, ye'esavtses, poyaley-tsieonikes, tse'irey-tsieonikes, un ale andere konter-revolutsionern...*" By allegorizing the revolution to *bedikes khomets*, Altshuler brings the revolution into the homes and culture of Soviet Jewry. The allegory is easily understood by Jews who have performed the act and it is quickly apparent that Altshuler will be connected the victory of the socialist revolution to the festival of Jewish freedom and nationhood. As in the traditional Haggada, the search for *khomets* is followed by the seder. However, Altshuler, playing on the meaning of the word itself, writes that the working class has created a new order (*seder*) in the land. Because the tenor of the period placed strong emphasis on rooting out counter-revolutionary elements, Altshuler also places emphasis on this theme. He writes that the young communists organize the seder according to the directions of the "communist hagode," which begins as the traditional Haggada does, with the recitation of "*kadesh*." Here, Altshuler turns the blessing of the wine into *kadesh*, the prayer for the dead, which is recited here for the now dead "capitalist order and its helpers," including the traditional list of counter revolutionary

= cliché

enemies, as well as an additional list of Jewish clerical positions. Though not part of the traditional Haggada, this prayer for the dead begins, "*sof ganef letlie - di kapitalistishe velt muz untergeyn...*" It then lists those who will not be helped, including, Chamberlain, Kautsky, Mussolini and the "entire Second International of Social-betrayers." Though this *Kadesh* bears no resemblance whatsoever to the *kidush* of the Haggada, it does begin with a "Hebrew prayer" which nominally likens it to liturgy.

The *urkhats*, or wash, section follows the *kadesh*, as in a traditional Haggada, though here the working class is urged to "wash off the bourgeois dirt and mold of generations and say "not a blessing, but a curse," that devastation will come upon all the outdated rabbinical obligations and customs, yeshivas and khedorim, which darken and enslave the people." *Karpas* follows, with the actual Hebrew text "*borey pri ha'adama*, in traditional Hebrew orthography, not Soviet Yiddish orthography. Altshuler translates this "*af ivri-taytsh*" as "they (the capitalist order, churches and schools) should lie in the ground and bake bagels (or matzah)." Three important elements are included here: one, as in a traditional *kheyder*, the Hebrew text is translated into "*ivri-taytsh*," a phrase meaning "Yiddish" but closer to "translation." This is the actual language of the *kheyder* which the Soviet system banished; two, the Yiddish folk expression, "to lie in the ground and bake bagels" provides a folkist element to the text which contains an element of folkist nationalism, decried in the Soviet system; three, the parenthetical addendum of "(or matzah)" introduces an element of humor to the piece. While the work as a parody is often viewed as humorous, the text itself, with the exception of this particular moment is mainly of a propagandistic nature and, despite the incongruities that appear, there is really no humor at all. *Yakhats*, when in the traditional seder the matzah is split, has "mankind divided into two camps "workers and parasites."

This is followed by the main section, *Magid*, the telling, which Altshuler begins with the traditional "*ha lakhmo anyo*," though the section bears little relation to the traditional text. Here, Altshuler decries the capitalists and clerics who have enslaved the workers. Its specifically Jewish content includes the comment that "we were given a *sidur* and a *makhzor* instead of a real education and instead of real history, we were taught *khumash* and *hagode*; instead of fighting for freedom, it was argued that God will lead us from the diaspora." This leads into the section on the four questions. Here, Altshuler creates a short narrative describing how he would ask his father the traditional four question and would receive the traditional answer. The questions he asks here relate

Scientific
atheism

to the issue of Passover being a national Jewish holiday of freedom. He asks if the communists have not made a mistake in attempting to have the Jewish workers cease celebrating Passover. He enters into an analysis of conjectures as to how the holiday came into existence. It is the same explanation found in previously published Soviet materials that attempt to debunk the religious-historical origins of the holiday. In short, he posits that the holiday originated as one which initially celebrated the coming of spring by a tribe who worshipped at Mount Sinai, which was, at the time, a volcano (see: burning bush). Over centuries, Rabbis and capitalists took over the tribe, invented the Passover story and created a situation where their rules (mitsvot) were to be followed and put fear into the people from an unknown god. He also expends effort decrying the fact that the Haggada tells the reader to hate those who don't follow your god (*shfoykhamaskho*). This, he sees as the purpose of all religions. He writes "the holiday of Passover, to which the Jewish *Kohanim* and "intellectuals (*khakhomim*)" gave the shine of a freedom holiday, actually has been changed into a holiday against every freedom - movement from slavery from an oppressor. In one of the Passover stories about the Exodus from Egypt, it is even told that thirty thousand Jewish heroes of the *bney-efroyim* wanted free themselves from slavery with weapons, but God punished them and they were killed because of it because they relied on their own strength instead of waiting until God alone freed them."

This anecdote explains Altshuler's antipathy to the Jewish tradition and how it flies directly in the face of the what had occurred only ten years prior in the Soviet union. Altshuler closes the seder with *koyrekh*, during which a sandwich of bitter herbs is eaten between two pieces of matzah. Here, he writes, "place the Second International together with the *Felker-lige*, between them put in Zionism and say '*yokhluhu*,' they should be eaten by the worldwide revolutionary uprising of the proletariat." His use of "*yokhluhu*" contrasts the traditional text, which is done in order to commemorate the memory of the temple in Jerusalem. Here it is the devouring of enemies. For *halel*, the Internationale is sung. It is not difficult to see how the associations Altshuler makes serve to negate the original text.

Of the Soviet materials, Altshuler's hagode is the most creative and clever use of the original materials. Whereas the other texts are mainly academic denunciations and attempts to discredit the holiday on historical terms, Altshuler succeeds in incorporating a portion of the original text within the format of a traditional Haggada. As a work of propaganda it is therefore a

more useful product since it is a mockery of an original which was unquestionably well known to the vast majority of Soviet Jews. What is interesting is the implicit transposition of the Israelite God with the Soviet Union. Just as the Israelites of the Haggada have many enemies, so does the international proletariat. Just as God led them from Egypt with a strong arm, the USSR has brought the proletariat freedom from Tsarist oppression. Passover would have undoubtedly made a fine Soviet holiday, as it made a fine socialist holiday with emphasis on the peasant revolt theory of the event. However, its nationalist and linguistic nature rendered it untenable for Soviet Jewry, in addition to standing in opposition to plans for Jewish assimilation. Its previously noted proximity to the first of May, which was frequently mentioned as the legitimate substitute in anti-Passover literature, was also an obstacle.

Di hagode far gloyber un apikorsim is a useful text in assessing the nature and purpose of the Soviet anti-religious and anti-Passover campaigns. It allows the historian to see the strange dichotomy of Soviet Jewish life: on the one hand, they are Jews. On the other, their culture has been stripped of Jewish elements. To be a Jew in the Soviet Union was to have a culture that has an integral historical basis torn away and replaced with an ineffective substitute, proletarian culture. What is fascinating about Altshuler's *Hagode* and other anti-Passover works is their attempt to find a grounding for Jewish culture in socialism while denying the traditional sources.³⁸ On the other hand, it is not possible to completely understand the work as a parody without familiarity ^{with} of the original Haggada. This is the paradox of Soviet Jewish culture as a culture of denial. Because of the political/cultural situation, parodies and other Passover-related literature differ significantly from parodic work in Poland and the United States in that they serve only one master - the regime.

III
Immigrant Jews from Poland and Russia to the United States created a large and successful Yiddish culture during the first half of the twentieth century despite having uprooted themselves from their cultural source. By the interwar period, Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe ground to a halt and Jewish cultural activists had to contend with strong tendencies toward assimilation, though unlike the Soviet Union, it was voluntary, however with great social pressure. Religious observance in America had to contend with the growing secular and Reform movements. The authority of the Rabbi was diminished in America and the traditions of Eastern European Jewry became transformed.³⁹ However, as immigrant Jewish culture clashed with

³⁸ See Miller, J. *Soviet Theory on the Jews*. pp 44-57 in Kochan.

³⁹ Howe, I. *World of Our Fathers*, p. 194-195.

American culture and modernity at the same time, Passover became the most valued holiday of the Jewish year. As Jenna Joselit argues, "more American Jews celebrated Passover than kept kosher, observed shabbos, or lit Chanuka candles," according to statistical surveys going back to the 1920s.⁴⁰ As much of Jewish liturgy fell to modernity, the Haggada remained sturdy as the centrally read text during the holiday.⁴¹ Passover then, remained central in the Jewish imagination in America and with the Haggada unchanged, Jewish parodists in America took to it.

Among the four and occasionally five Yiddish daily newspapers which appeared during the interwar period, humor sections were to be found. Yiddish writers and editors, like their brethren in Poland, recognized the importance of humor in the press. Passover-related humor, though not always parody, appeared annually in nearly all the papers. A weekly satire and humor magazine called *Der groyser kundes*, was the undisputed king of humor in Yiddish America from 1908-1927.⁴² Jewish holidays were celebrated in *Kundes* with special holiday issues. Many holiday-related parodies were produced in these issues and Passover was no exception.

What differs in American parodies of Passover during the interwar period from the other to centers is that most of the parodies are fragmentary, meaning only sections of the Haggada were parodied. Often, these sections were those that lent themselves most easily to parody, such as the four questions, the four sons and the ten plagues. However, nearly all aspects of the Haggada were eventually touched upon, including less frequently parodied supplementary Psalms such as *Ki lo no'e* and *Bekhetsi halaylo*.

Though many haggada parodies were published from its inception in 1908 through the late teens that adhered to the "kadesh, urkhatz..." mnemonic, it appears that the writers of *Der kundes* lost interest in the traditional form and began to experiment by creatively inserting the Passover themes in stories, plays and mock interviews. This is addressed in a short introduction to *Di revolutsiye in der hagode* of April 9, 1920, in which the author, "Khayem'ke," notes, "With a Haggada in hand I sat myself down on the sofa and looked for a theme for a Passover story, a Passover poem, a Passover joke, a Passover "something" that should be **new, peysakhdik and interesting**. And that's a very difficult thing. Almost impossible: because if it's **new**, it can't be *peysakhdik*. And if its *peysakhdik*, how can it be new?" Khayem'ke then proceeds to transmogrify

⁴⁰ Joselit, J. *The Wonders of America*, p. 227.

⁴¹ Yerushalmi, Y. *Haggadah and History*, p. 16.

⁴² Part of this reign included a period as *Der kibitser*.

Preceded
by Hebrew
parodies
from
1860s!

Passover themes and headings into characters and has a proletarian revolution take place in the Haggada, in which the steering committee consists of “*ma nishtane, karpes and moror*, with the support of *shfoykhamaskho*.” *Biyer khomets* escapes from the fire, *Matso* is shot and the four brothers are arrested in the middle of their debate. A general strike is called and a statement is made by the revolutionary leaders which echoes Khayem’ke’s opening comments: “It’s been many long years that we’ve been enslaved to the tyranny of the Haggada, which has terrorized and persecuted us for generations....We can no longer endure the dominance of *Bdikes khomets, Arbo bonim, Matso* and the *Arbo koyses!* We must put an end once and for all to the dark reaction of *Vayehi bekhetsi halaylo!*....Our demands: 1. Making a new Haggada. 2. The conservative *Halel* and *Khad gadye* must be thrown out, *Afikoymen* must be confiscated and made into his own people. 3. We must found a pure, proletarian government under the leadership of *Ma nishtane, Karpes* and *Maror*....The *Arbo koyses* are to be nationalized.” In the end, the revolution succeeds. With the revolution in Russia and Soviet government machinations an important newsworthy theme in the Yiddish press of the day, it is easy to see how Khayem’ke chose it as a creative way of avoiding the traditional manner of parody. In addition, many of the contributors to *Kundes* were also connected with the communist *Freiheit*.

throw-away
line!

The same issue contains a parody of *Ekhad mi yoydeya*, in which Yankev Marinov, the editor of *Kundes*, uses the counting song to target the Democratic and Republican parties, the four Yiddish daily newspapers, President Wilson, Yiddish anarchist Shaul Yanovsky and the paper “*Fraye arbeter shtime*,” and the Yiddish literary journal, “*In zikh*,” among others. An April 22, 1921 piece by Komodor is a pro-zionist parody in narrative form which begins with the “American Jew” asking the four questions: “Why is the American Jew different from the rest of the world’s Jews? Why have the American Zionist leaders, with the coming of Weizman to America, suddenly started sending statements to the Yiddish press and acting as if the movement were a democracy, when they didn’t care at all about the Yiddish press or the Zionist masses before? Why do the American Zionist leaders complain about the wasteful extravagance of the World Zionist Organization when they’re silent about their own wasteful extravagance on Fifth Avenue? Why is it that a thousand years ago it only took one Moyshe to free us from the Egyptians and today we have so many Moyshe’s and were still in exile.”

The obvious target of the piece is the wealthy German-Jewish Zionists, who were not

connected with the Jewish masses or their press organs. The answer to the four questions is: "We were once slaves only to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Today we are the slaves of Louis (Marshall), the king of the American Jewish Committee, Louie (Brandeis) the king of Washington and Yankev De (Schiff), the Crown-Prince of Fifth Avenue...." The story describes how Khayem Weizman came and received little in the way of donations. As with traditional Passover parody, it employs portions of the Haggada format and story to attack the wealthy Zionists.

The same issue has another story, "Interview with the Four Sons," in which the four sons are: Wise - Albert Einstein; Wicked - Henry Morgenthau; Simple - Henry Ford; Unable to ask a question - Louis Brandeis. When the writer, Naftoli ben Yankev, goes to the Hotel Commodore to meet the Wise son, he enters a room in which five Jews are sitting: Weizman, Einstein, Ussishkin, Mosesohn and Shmarye Levin. He says, "I would like to see Mr. Khokhem (Wise)." All of them jump up and say, "That's me!" He later goes to interview Henry Morgenthau, who calls him a kike in Polish. Morgenthau had apparently defended the musician Ignacy Paderewski, who was a supporter of the anti-semitic Polish political party of Roman Dmowski, the Endeks.⁴³ This association renders him an anti-semite to the writer. Ben yankev finds the other Henry (Ford) "asleep on the collected works of Haman, Torquemada, Pobedonostsev, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and old issues of The Dearborn Independent." Ford, who had appeared in other parodies of the 1920s as the Wicked son, is asked why he is an anti-semite. His editor enters the room to put words in Ford's mouth, who says, "Your Mendl Trotsky and Leon Beilis united with the New York *kehile* to destroy Christian civilization..." Ford is made to look like a puppet and an ignoramus. Ben yankev runs away to the Son who cannot ask a question, Brandeis, who can only "mumble diplomatically." The interview succeeds in attacking its targets in a clever and modern manner. This is yet another way in which the writers of *Kundes* managed to parody aspects of the Haggada by using a modern narrative "interview" format instead of what they evidently considered the tired and timeworn Haggada formula.

goes back to M. Commission

= since was non of secular parody

Other original incarnations of Passover humor and parody appeared each season. As an indication as to how American Jews were affected by distinct American laws, a cartoon by artist Zuni Maud in which a large, bearded Uncle Peysakh, who carries a bottle of Kosher for Passover wine, pushes a weak looking figure labeled "prohibition" out of his way. Though liquor was

⁴³ Korcz, P. *Juifs en Pologne*, 62-65.

banned during prohibition, Jews were allowed wine for holiday purposes.⁴⁴

In the April 6, 1923 issue of *Kundes*, the traditional headings of the Haggada are used, however, they are turned into the characters of a play in which they bicker amongst themselves. *Ma nishtane*, for instance is “a naive young man who likes to ask questions in fours.” *Keho lakhmo* is “a poor Jew or a famous liar,” *Maror* is “a bitter Jew who loves to tell the truth,” *Koyrekh* is “an alrightnik (bourgeois) with a fat stomach,” *Karpas* is a *greener* (recent immigrant) who doesn’t want to work,” *Rakhats* is “no longer green and a half *yahudi*” (on his way up the social ladder) and so on. This is another clever example of transforming representative words into characters. This piece was scheduled to be performed in the Manhattan Opera House on April 22 of that year at the *Kundes lakh-nakht*. Hence, there is a dual purpose in turning the haggada themes into characters.

The four sons of the April 10, 1925 Passover issue of *Kundes* are four of the daily newspapers, *Tog*, *Forverts*, *Tageblatt* and *Di naye varhayt*, who represent Wise, Wicked, Simple and Unable to ask a question, respectively. Much of their status has to do with their ability to jump on the increasingly popular theme of Zionism.

The same issue contains a parody of *Ki lo no’e*, For to Him Praise is Proper, a less popular item for parody. It uses the chorus and the formula, but bears no connection to the actual text:

*Fort der id atsind keyn palestine
grindet bislekhvayz a medine
tut es unz gor shtark hanoë -
Ki lo no’e, Ki lo no’e
Boyt men dortn oykh an universitet,
zogt der forverts, az s’iz bloyz geredt
s’shtekht im unzer bisele hanoë-
Ki lo no’e, Ki lo no’e
Drukn ale tsaytungen atsind hebreyish
halb-terkish-toterish, halb khaldeyish
kayt es der hebreyer on hanoë -
Ki lo no’e, Ki lo no’e*

The Jew goes to Palestine
and slowly builds a country
it gives us great pleasure
For to Him Praise is Proper
A university is being built there
The Forverts says it’s only talk
Our bit of joy bothers him
For to Him Praise is Proper

⁴⁴ *Der groyser kundes*, April 22, 1921

All the newspapers are printing Hebrew
Half Turkish-Tatar, half Chaldean
The Hebrew chews it without pleasure
For to Him Praise is Proper

The parody maintains constants of *Der groyser kundes*: support for Zionism and disparagement of the Forverts. Numerous Haggada parodies were published in *Der groyser kundes*, far too many to discuss here. Nearly every section of the Haggada was touched upon and themes ranged from local, national, international and Jewish politics and culture. However, in the main, issues important to Yiddish speaking Jewish immigrants were addressed. As is evident from the material above, Zionism played an important role in the work of *Der kundes* as did attempts to maneuver around the traditional format of the haggada.

While *Der groyser kundes* held a virtual monopoly on Jewish satire from 1908-1927, the daily Yiddish press of the interwar period, notably the *Forverts* and the *Morgn Frayhayt* maintained Sunday humor sections. The *Forverts* humor section, "*Der shtif-kind*" (the step child), contained one panel cartoons, humorous stories, poems and jokes. With some exceptions (B. Kovner, for one), the material was not very creative nor very humorous. This includes the Passover-related material. Often, there were no items related to the holiday, though the "*Minyan fun vitsn*" (Quorum of Jokes) column was sometimes changed into "*Vitsn kosher lepeysek*" (Jokes Kosher for Passover), with the same tired one-liners. Occasionally, such as found in the Passover *shtif-kind* page of April 17, 1927, parodies appeared. *Di naye hagode*, by Z. Kornblith, subtitled "For Pretty Women who have Lovers," uses the traditional headings to depict what a woman who is planning on meeting a clandestine lover would do. The headings relate, in a simple way, to the parodic text. As did the *Forverts* in general, the text has a great deal of English words in it and, for the most part, the parody is crass and not funny.

Kadesh: make sure that the "date" has a bottle of whiskey.

Urkhets: wash the face and color the cheeks and lips.

Karpes: supper begins with chopped liver and onions.

Yakhats: the schnapps is divided equally.

Magid: if the schnapps is "tship stof," give the friend the right gift.

Rakhtse: the schnapps is washed down by a glass of wine.

Moytse-matse: eat a pencil thin piece of bread so you won't get fat.

and so on until the four questions:

1. Why does he say he'll buy me a fur coat and then he doesn't buy it?

2. *Vay di hel* (Why the hell) did he take her to a serious drama and not a musical comedy? Doesn't he know that she has no patience for "shows" where they just talk and talk?

Contradict
p. 23

WHY?

3. And why did he go to theater last week with his own wife?
4. And how many times has she told him that she can't make it on the monthly check he gives her. If he doesn't give her a bigger check, it's "gudbay un gud lok," (goodbye and good luck). She hates kikes anyway.

And she mustn't give him smile until he answers all four questions.

Evodim hayinu: he was her slave and he will remain her slave.

Vaudeville
The target of the parody, mistresses who dominate their men, is a morally sound one but the portrayal is so misogynistic that it is rendered vulgar. The woman who is out for only for herself is made to be totally repulsive. The connection to Passover is tenuous and its vulgarity reflects badly on the haggada format. It was this type of "shund" for which the Forverts was frequently attacked by *Der groyser kundes*.

During the twenties, the communist newspaper, *Freiheit*, also used the Haggada for parody on its humor page, *Royte kropive* (Red Nettles). Initially, it seems, the *Freiheit* did not know what to do for Passover. The week of the April 1, 1923 has no mention of the holiday whatsoever, though the front page exclaims: "Today is the holiday in honor of the birthday of the *Freiheit*!" They began to include Soviet style propaganda, such as "The godfloggers want to convince you that Passover is the holiday of freedom. In truth it is a common religious holiday which is exploited by the Jewish bourgeoisie, like all the other religious holidays, to keep the toiling masses in darkness and ignorance" (April 9, 1925). This preceded an announcement for a "Communist Seder," where a "good time will be had without the Haggada, matzo-balls, *kharoyes* and bitter herbs." The same issue has a long article very much in the style of Soviet propaganda which denounces the holiday as a fraud.

Despite this, material such as *Di emese geshikhte fun yetsiyes mitsrayim* (The Real Story of the Departure from Egypt), April 12, 1925, a story in cartoons by Bill Gropper appeared, which clearly was not anti-Passover. The narrative occurs in pictures, in which the Pharaoh is shown as running a non-union shop, Moyshe is accused of being an agent from Moscow as he speaks on a soap box, he leads the Jews over the Red Sea on the "International Bridge," the golden calf is compared to Yiddish Vaudeville, the Jews accept the Torah, and finally line up to get into Palestine, "A *shekel far a kuk*" (A shekel for a look), where they have to show the Balfour declaration to get in. Though the *Freiheit* did not support Zionism, this cartoon was published before it was entirely in line with Moscow. A few years later, such an indecisive cartoon on Zionism would never have appeared.

American Jewish communists took their views from Soviet propaganda and Americanized

them. The main differences between the American and Soviet Communist parodies is the specific application to local themes and humor. Whereas the American communists used humor in their parodies, the Soviets seem to have avoided it completely. In anti-Passover related journals such as *Khomets lepeysekhn* and *Der groyser bekitser*, they expanded on anti-religious and anti-passover themes that had only been touched on in the “Red Nettles” humor section of the *Freiheit*. *Khomets lepeysakh*, which plays on the phrase, “*Kosher lepeysakh*,” contains general anti-religious and anti-passover material in the format of stories, poems, plays and cartoons. “*A naye hagode*,” by Sam Liptsin, who was known mostly as a humorist, is a tendentious, worker-oriented version, typical of socialist and communist Haggada parodies. It appeared originally on April 13, 1930 as *Di royte hagode* in the *Royte kropive* section of the *Freiheit* and was expanded for *Khomets lepeysakh*. Whereas the majority of the parodies abide by the “*kadesh, urkhats, karpas, yakhets...*” mnemonic, Liptsin’s *Naye hagode* uses a rambling mix of headings, including: *Boydek khomets; seder; moror; karpes; yakhets; magid; shulkhn orekh; ho lakhmo anyo; ma nishtano*; followed by, *itst di hagode*. Liptsin evidently used what he felt was appropriate and apparently did not feel the need to match the traditional hagode nor did he maintain the traditional order. The headings and some of the text is in Hebrew, though with Soviet orthography, and explained in colloquial Yiddish.

The *boydek khomets* tells the reader to “mix up all the *khomets* that embitters the lives of the workers, like the bosses, traitors, bureaucrats, renegades, politicians, evil clergymen and plain scoundrels; put them in the fire of revolution in every shop and street and say loudly: out with this *khomets*, we will have bread in the house....” *Khomets*, thought not traditionally perceived as “embittering” anything, is used here to represent that which should be burned in the “fires of revolution.” It is evident that the meaning is twisted to serve the propagandistic purpose of the writer.

Following this is the “*seder*,” by which Liptsin tells the reader to sit with the youth and tell them that all should be ready for the call to “burn the ‘mold [of generations].” This calling of the youth to the seder echoes the traditional seder’s “and you shall tell your son....” This theme is continued under “*moror*,” where the bitterness of the life of the worker is to be told and “how the bosses eat horseradish with fish and the worker gets bitter herbs instead of bread - through the whole year.”

Unlike the Soviet communist hagadas, Liptsin's is specific to the American experience. The parody maintain a connection to both the Seder and the Haggada, but only to parts of it. Under Karpes, the "greens" of the "AF of L" (American Federation of Labor) are dunked in salt water and the blessing said, "*borey pri adome.*" It should grow in the *adome*, head down." This makes use of both the blessing found in the *Karpas* section, however without the blessing of God, as well as the Yiddish folk expression, "*zol er vaksn vi a tsibele, mit zayn kop arop*" (he should grow like an onion, with his head down). *Yakhats* has the traditional washing of hands, followed by "going to the parasites and traitors" and returning what they have stolen from the workers. This is followed by *Magid*, the beginning of the traditional telling of the Passover story in the Haggada, though here, there is no connection whatsoever as Liptsin writes: "Say it so loud that all will hear: He who does not work gets punches, not food!"

Liptsin includes *Shulkhn orekh*, which is the point at which the meal is traditionally served after *Magid*, under which is written, "Take over the leadership throughout the whole world and celebrate your own Soviet table." Obviously, *Shulkhan* is table, though it is also possible that Liptsin is referring to Yosef Caro's *Shulkhan Arukh* as a rule of Soviet law for the entire world, but it is not entirely clear. The *Ho lakhmo anyo* section demands that the bread lines be abolished and a "red decree should go to the working class: '*kol dikhfin yeisi veyoikh!*' Everyone come with a good appetite and eat *gezunterheyt*." Liptsin makes good use of the depression era bread lines in relation to "this is the bread of my affliction" and that "all those who are hungry enter and eat." This is followed by the four questions. As is usual in all manner of Haggada parodies, four entirely new questions are devised. In this case, the working class/communist sentiment is clear:

Why should one work and another play?
Why should the worker build houses and he himself be thrown into the street?
Why in such a rich world should there be so many poor?
Why let yourself be led by Pharaohs and scabs (strikebreakers)?

The "hagode" section begins with "*avodim hoinu*" and details how man was enslaved to religion and capitalism, how the workers were betrayed by social democrats, and how the workers eventually woke up and began to build a Soviet world. This is followed by the four sons, who speak in humorous, rhyming couplets. They are represented by the four main Yiddish daily newspapers in New York City. The *Freiheit*, the communist newspaper, is the wise son who

fighters against poverty, battles yellow journalism and is the champion of the weak.

The wicked son is, of course, the *Forverts*, the enemy of the *Freiheit*. Here Liptsin intersperses English terms to make fun of the “potato” Yiddish of the *Forverts*. The *Forverts* is seen as the purveyor of “*shund*,” and yellow journalism. The editor, Ab. Cahan, is mocked mercilessly, as is the 10 story *Forverts* building, the first ‘skyscraper’ on the Lower East Side. The simple son is represented by *Der tog*, which is mocked for its political neutrality and inability to take an independent stand on issues, but doesn’t care as long as it gets paid.

The son who cannot yet ask a question is the orthodox oriented *Morgn zhurnal*. It is mocked for having “important” news only of Rabbis, Cantors and funerals. Liptsin also pokes fun at its most “important” section, the want ads. The *Morgn zhurnal*, as the first Yiddish daily to come out in the morning, had the largest classified section.

Under the section *Zeykher*, (remember) Liptsin uses key words from the Haggada in order to relate them to Communism. For example, he quotes, “*Bimsey mehos*,” (sic) “Few in number” before becoming great multitudes in Egypt (Deut. 10:22), and continues, “with only a few communists did we begin our movement. Now the world is full of them.” The Egyptians are then compared with the Black Hundreds, who administer the ten plagues: *dom* (blood) - the police; *tsfardeyo* (frogs) - a dirty union; *kinim* (lice) - the press; *orev* (beasts) - confusion; *dever* (blight) - bureaucrats; *shkhin* (boils) Lovestonites; *borod* (hail) injunctions; *arbe* (locusts) - the blue bird - this refers to the symbol of the National Recovery Administration; *khoyshekh* (darkness) - religion; *makes bekhoyres* (slaying of the first born) - imprisonment of our leaders.

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This is followed by *Sfoykh hamoskho* (pour out your wrath), traditionally directed at non-Jews. Here, it is directed at traitors, nationalists, chauvinists, renegades, bureaucrats, bourgeoisie, clergy and swindlers. It is interesting that Zionists does not appear, since every other communist work includes that thematic. This is quite different from the Soviet commentary on *Sfoykh hamoskho*, which disapproved of its nationalist intent.

“*A naye hagode*” ends with *khad gadyo*. This version bears no resemblance to previous communist incarnations of the song and does not even make use of its food chain thematic, which could easily be applied to communist propaganda aims. Instead, it sticks with the evil bosses/clergy theme and ends with:

Yetst ale tsuzamen, mener un froyen,

A velt fun soveth shoyt tsayt nemen boyen,
un zoln di bozes biln un voyen -
khad gadyo, khad gadyo

All together now, men and women
A Soviet world it's time to start building,
and all of the bosses will be barking and whining -
khad gadyo.

In addition to *Khomets lepeysek*, two other special Passover journals were published by the same group of writers and artists: *Der groyser bekitser* (1935) and *Boydek khomets* (193?). Both contain similar anti-Passover propaganda materials to *Khomets lepeysakh*. There are no known satiric Passover journals from the US from the interwar period other than these communist journals. They seem to be a combination of Polish-Yiddish *jednodniowka* format and Soviet propagandistic style together with American political themes. It may be of note that many of the contributors to these journals also worked for *Der groyser kundes* for at least part of the same period they worked for the *Freiheit*.

It is of interest that in the realm of parody, Passover received more attention in the United States from American Jewish communists who had been influenced by Soviet propaganda on the holiday. With a much freer hand than their Soviet brethren, Jewish communists in America, in many instances, were able to combine communist propaganda, parody and humor in their attacks on Passover, a product far different than that which appeared in their cultural and social benefactor, the Soviet Union.

IV

As Jews of all three centers dealt with modernity and their minority status, they also dealt with their own respective predicaments which varied significantly from place to place. Though the initial source, Eastern European Jewish culture was the shared basis for all three cultures, the intervention of historical events changed them irrevocably. These cultural, social and political differences are reflected in the way in which Haggada parody was approached and utilized. The Polish parodies provide a unique purview into Polish Jewish life and reflect a community in political and cultural flux, but closer to its roots than the other two. The Soviet parodies attempt to utilize the ancient text in order to explode the myths the Soviet system associates with it. However, it is the enduring quality of the haggada that challenged them to use it instead of disposing of it entirely. It is not possible to say that the Soviet parodies reflect the Soviet Jewish community. In addition to size and variation, the community cannot have been represented by these "official"

publications. These parodies seem to point to a community (of writers and intellectuals) who, in attempting to liquidate the religious aspects of their culture, felt compelled to turn back to them. In the end, however, the replacement of proletarian culture was not sufficient. American Jewish communists, on the other hand, seemed to manage an accommodation with their version of Soviet proletarian culture, partially because there was still a viable traditional Jewish community they could turn to and either mock or laud. Other American haggada parodies reflect an immigrant community with deep roots in Eastern Europe existing in a new, alien world. The social and political freedom they enjoyed and their experiences as Americans seemed to allow them to be more creative with the parodies than to adhere to the traditional form. Perhaps, though, the freedom afforded the immigrant Jewish parodists included a freedom from tradition combined with a nostalgia for it, giving them a free hand to deviate from the norm while still culling the necessary traditions to keep it within the realm of parody. Ultimately, what is revealed by the publication of the Haggada parodies in all three centers is the profound and important role that the holiday plays in modern Jewish life. Their respective approaches to it reveal the similarities and differences of the three centers, all of which shared a common core.

- ① Recursions
 - A. ניגון נון
 - B. פרסוף יג.ני'
- ② Parodists
 - A. Der Trutceler
 - B. Altshuler
 - C. Liptzin
- ③ Institutions
 - A. Jednodniowski
 - B. Yevsektorye
 - C. Kunder
 - D. Daily newspapers
 - E. Orthodoxy
- ④ Pesach - so ...
 - A. carnival: communal
 - B. trzesty: scientific atheism
 - C.

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One-time Passover journals (jednodniowki):

Moror (Bitter Herbs) - Warsaw, 1921; *Di elefte make* (The Eleventh Plague) - Riga, 1922; *A malke oyf peysakh* (A Queen on Passover) - Warsaw, 1924; *Di freylekhe hagode* (The Happy Haggadah) - Lublin, 1924; *Der roshe* (The Wicked One) - Warsaw, 1927; *Der afikoymen* - 1929; *Zalts vaser* (Salt Water) - Warsaw, 1930; *Der peysakhdiger kantshik* (The Passover Whip) - Bialystok, 1931; *Bialistoker khareyses* (Bialystok kharoset) - Bialystok, 1932.

Boydek khomets - New York, 1937; *Khomets lepeysek* - New York, 1934; *Der groyser bekitser* - New York, 1935.

מסכת

עמריקא

בין

תלמוד יבנאי

עם פרוש קצר ומספיק.

מחבר ומסדר מאת

גרשון ראזנצווייג

ניו יארק.

1909.



הוצאת בית מוסד הספרים של
דרוקעריסאן, 60 מאנעל סטריט, ניו יארק.

מסכת אין בין עמריקא א

פתי' אין בין עמריקא. לעולמותא. שלשה תלמי יסוד: והיה לנום שנים. קוויירי: אלא שעזר ונלכותא. סמלק הרנעי לא נברא אלא לחד עמא

פרק ראשון

ללות עמריקא: תכתיים קוויירי. דשעזר ונלכות עמריקא נמי לכותא. לכל עמריקא דאשתעי וטוריס למכתי עעזר ונלכות סוס: מלכות בלכר דכרי רבי ירקא, ותכמים אומרים עמריקא כשאר ארצות לכל דבר: גמי תניא לא נבראה עמריקא אלא לארץ מקלם, שבשעת גלמי שלמ תלמי יסוד. דקורס ענגלמס עמריקא לא סיו עלל עעלם

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שלח קולמבוס את עמריקא כאו שלח חלקי הישוב לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא ואמר לפני רבונו של עולם כתבת בתורתך (נביים י"ט) ושלחת את גבול ארצך, אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא והיה לנום שמה כל רוצת. אמר רב ספרא צפה קולמבוס כאצטנגינות שלי שעתידה עמריקא שתיעשה ארץ מקלם לרקין ופחיון של כל העולם כלו ובקש רחמים שלא תקרא על שמי קראת עמא ריקה. אני והא תנן כל הארצות עומת לעמריקא שעמריקא בחזקת יחסין עומדת. אמר רב מבינא מאן יחסין פולין של שאר ארצות כרוזן עשרת יחסין עלו עם עומא מככל וקחשיב סמוריס ונרנינים וכו' הניא נמי דכי עשרה יחסין עלו כראשונה לעמריקא. ואלוהן רוצחים, ננביים, מוסרים, מרלוקין, כריים, מוייפי, ששרות, מוכרי נפשות, עדים זומיין, פושטי, לול, עובדי חסם, וכנים סוררים ומורים, ויש אומרים אף נעדרות ענתות, ולמה נקראין יחסין לפי שכל הפולין של שאר ארצות בין שבאין לעמריקא נעשין בה יחסין. כמתנתא תנא לפנייה דיה נקראת עמריקא, משום שהא מפרקת עונותיהן של

Parody Exempt From Copyright, High Court Says

Continued From Page A1



Associated Press

Luther Campbell, of the rap group 2 Live Crew, speaking at a news conference in Miami yesterday after the United States Supreme Court overturned a copyright infringement ruling against the group.

The opinion today, *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose*, No. 92-1292, was not a final victory for 2 Live Crew. Justice Souter said the group had to persuade the lower courts of two elements essential to the fair use defense: that it had not taken any more of the original than necessary to make the point of the parody, and that the parody had not harmed the market for the original song or the potential market for new versions that Acuff-Rose may license.

While joining the opinion, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy wrote a separate, concurring opinion in which he expressed doubt that 2 Live Crew's song was a "legitimate parody" as opposed to a "commercial take-off."

The Court received "friend of the court" briefs on 2 Live Crew's behalf from *Mad Magazine*, the *Harvard Lampoon* and the political satirist Mark Russell. The *Capitol Steps*, a musical group here that performs topical political parodies, sent the Justices a cassette tape on which the group performs a musical history of parody in America dating to the Revolution. Acuff-Rose was supported by many briefs, including those from the Songwriters' Guild, the entertainer Michael Jackson, who owns the rights to many of the Beatles' songs, and the estates of a number of renowned composers, including Leonard Bernstein and George and Ira Gershwin.

ed on a 1989 album, "As Clean as They Wanna Be," was intended as parody.

The original version, written by Roy Orbison and William Dees and copyrighted by Acuff-Rose Music Inc., was an upbeat tale of a man who sees, longs for and eventually captures the attention of a woman as she walks down the street. In the 2 Live Crew version, the pretty woman of the first verse becomes "big hairy woman," "bald headed woman" and "two timin' woman."

The Court's opinion printed both versions, with Justice Souter commenting on the rap group's: "The later words can be taken as a comment on the naïveté of the original of an earlier day, as a rejection of its sentiment that ignores the ugliness of street life and the debasement that it signifies."

The humor of parody, Justice Souter said, "necessarily springs from recognizable allusion to its object through distorted imitation." He said that because parody's "art lies in the tension between a known original and its parodic twin," a parody has to be able to use enough of the original to be recognizable to the audience.

He said that works like parody, which take the original and effect a creative transformation, "lie at the heart of the fair use doctrine's guarantee of breathing space within the confines of copyright."

Justice Souter stressed that courts must make a case-by-case determination of whether a parody, or any other form of borrowing copyrighted material, qualifies as fair use.

Group Asked Permission

While the copyright law lists "commercial purpose" as one element in the fair use determination, the appeals court in this case mistakenly treated 2 Live Crew's profit motive as the only element, Justice Souter said. Noting that the concept of fair use comes from English common law and dates back centuries, he quoted Samuel Johnson's admonition that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money" as evidence that commercial writing should not be stripped automatically of fair use protection.

2 Live Crew had requested permission to record its version of the song, which Acuff-Rose denied. On its album, the group gave credit for "Pretty Woman" to Roy Orbison, William Dees and Acuff-Rose. After Acuff-Rose sued for copyright infringement, the Federal District Court in Nashville ruled for 2 Live Crew, a ruling that was overturned by the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, in Cincinnati.

Autobiography

I died with the first blow and was buried
among the rocks of the field.
The raven taught my parents
what to do with me.

If my family is famous,
not a little of the credit goes to me.
My brother invented murder,
my parents invented grief,
I invented silence.

Afterwards the well-known events took place.
Our inventions were perfected. One thing led to another,
orders were given. There were those who murdered in their own
way,
grieved in their own way.

I won't mention names
out of consideration for the reader,
since at first the details horrify
though finally they're a bore:

you can die once, twice, even seven times,
but you can't die a thousand times.
I can.

My underground cells reach everywhere.

When Cain began to multiply on the face of the earth,
I began to multiply in the belly of the earth,
and my strength has long been greater than his.
His legions desert him and go over to me,
and even this is only half a revenge.

אוטוביוגרפיה

מתי במכה הראשונה ונקברתי
בשדה הטרשים.
העורב הורה להוריי
מה לעשות בי.

משפוחתי מכבדת, לא מעט בזכותי.
אחי המציא את ההרג,
הורי את הבכי,
אני את השתיקה.

אחר כך נפלו הדברים הזכורים הישב.
ההמצאות שלנו שכללו. דבר גדר דבר,
הוצאו ציונים. היו גם שהדגו לפי דרךם,
בכו לפי דרךם.

לא אזכיר שמות
מתוך התחשבות בקורא,
כי בתחלה עלולים הפדטים להבעית,
אבל בסופו של דבר הם מיוענים:

אתה יכול למות פעם, פעמים, אפלו שבע פעמים,
אבל אינך יכול למות רבבות.
אני יכול.
תאי המחותר שלי מגיעים לכל מקום.

כאשר החל קזן לפרץ על פני האדמה
החליתי אני לפרץ בבטן האדמה,
ומזמן עולה פחי על כחי.
גודדיו נוטשים אותו ומצטרפים אלי,
ואפלו זה רק חצי נקמה.

אבער לאמיר זיך אומקערן צו די יידן פון קרעשעוו.

דער מאַרק איז אַ גאַנץ יאָר איין ברייטער זומפּ. די ווייבער גיסן דאָרטן די פאַמעשאַפּער. די שטובן שטייען איינגעבויגן, האַלב איינגע-זונקען, מיט געלאַטעטע דעכער, די פענצטער פאַרשטאַפּט מיט שמאַטעס. אַדער איבערגעצויגן מיט פענכערס פון רינדער. אין די דירות פון די קבצנים זענען נישטאָ קיין דילן. אין אייניקע זענען אַפילו נישטאָ קיין קוימענס. ווען מען הייצט דעם אויוון, גייט אַרויס דער רויך דורך אַ לאַך אין דאָך. די ווייבער, וואָס האָבן חתונה צו פּערצן און פּופּצן יאָר, ווערן פרי געעלטערט פון טראַגן און האָבן. די שוסטערלעך זיצן אויף קליינע בענקלעך און עסקן זיך מיט אַלטע שקראַבעס. די שניידערס דרייען איבער אויף דער דריטער זייט לויזיקע פעלצן. די בערשטן-מאַכער קעמען מיט הילצערנע קאַמען די חזירשע האָר און זינגען מיט הייזעריקע שטימען חזנות און בחדנישע לידער. די קרעמער האָבן אַ גאַנצע וואַך, אויסערן מאַרק-טאַג, גאַרנישט וואָס צו טון און זיי זיצן אין בית-מדרש, קראַצן זיך, לערנען גמרא און דערציילן וואונדערלעכע מעשיות פון פיפּערנאַטערס, שדים און ווילקאַלאַקן. איר קאַנט אייך מערקן, אַז איר האָב ווייניק וואָס צו טון אין אַזאַ העק. אויף קיין רעכטער עבירה קאַן מען זיך דאָרטן נישט ריכטן. עס איז נישטאָ ביי די לייט קיין כוח און קיין פאַרלאַנג. אַמאַל שמדט זיך אַפּ אַ נייטאַרין; עס טרעפט, אַז אַ מויד פון אַ וואַסער-טרעגער ווערט מעוברת, אַבער דאָס פאַרשאַפּט מיר ווייניק שפּאַס. איך פּלעג דעריבער זעלטן קומען קיין קרעשעוו.

נו, זענען אַבער געווען אין קרעשעוו אויך עטלעכע נגידיים און אין אַ פאַרמעגלעך הויז קען שוין עפעס פאַסירן. באַזונדערס האָב איך געוואָרפן אַן אויג אויף דעם הויז פון דעם גרעסטן גביר פון קרעשעוו, ר' גימפל שור. ס'וואַלט געדויערט צו לאַנג צו דערציילן ווי דער ר' גימפל איז געקומען קיין קרעשעוו. ער האָט גאָר פריער געוואוינט אין זשאלקווע, ביי לעמבערג. געבראַכט האָבן אים קיין קרעשעוו ערשטנס — מסחרים: ער האָט געהאַנדלט מיט געהילץ און האָט פאַר אַ שיבוש אַפּגעקויפט ביים קרעשעווער פּריץ אַ וואַלד. אַחוץ דעם האָט זיין ווייב געענדל (אַ גרויסע מיוחסת, אַן אייניקל פון מהרש"א, אַדער פון רמ"א) געליטן אויף אַ הוסט און געשפּיגן צוביסלעך מיט בלוט און עפעס אַ לעמבערגער רופּא זאָל זי האָבן געראַטן צו וואוינען אין אַ וואַל-דיקער געגענט. גענוג, אַז ער איז געקומען קיין קרעשעוו מיט זיין האָב און גוטס און מיטגעבראַכט אַ דערוואַקסענעם בחור און אַ בתולה פון אַ יאָר צען, ליסע. ער האָט זיך געלאָזט אויפבויען אַ הויז אין עק פון שול-גאַס, אַפּגערוקט פון די איבעריקע הייזער, און געבראַכט עטלעכע בוידן מיט מעבל, געפעס, מלבושים, ספרים און נאָך פיל חפצים. עס איז אויך מיטגעקומען אַן אַלטע דינסט און אַ יונגער משרת, וואָס איז אויך געווען ביי ר' גימפלען דער אַנטרייבער. ער האָט געהייסן לייבל. די שטאַט איז אויפגעריכט געוואָרן פון דעם נייען בעל-הבית. די זין פון די פּראַסטע לייט זענען געוואָרן מענטשן ביי ר' גימפלען אין וואַלד. די בעל-עגלהס האָבן געפירט קלעצער. ר' גימפל האָט געלאָזט פאַרריכטן דאָס באַד און אויפגעשלאָגן אַ נייען דאָך אויסן הקדש.

But at the time I am speaking about there were a few rich men in the town and in a prosperous home anything can happen. So whenever I turned my eyes in that direction, I made sure to see how things were going in the household of Reb Bunim Shor, the community's richest man. It would take too long to explain in detail how Reb Bunim happened to settle in Kreshev. He had originally lived in Zholkve, which is a town near Lemberg. He had left there for business reasons. His interest was lumber and for a very small sum he had purchased a nice tract of woods from the Kreshev squire. In addition, his wife, Shifrah Tammar (a woman of distinguished family, granddaughter of the famous scholar Reb Samuel Edels), suffered from a chronic cough which made her spit blood, and a Lemberg doctor had recommended that she live in a wooded area. At any rate, Reb Bunim had moved to Kreshev with all his possessions, bringing along with him also a grown son and Lise, his ten-year-old daughter. He had built a house set apart from all the other dwellings at the end of the synagogue street; and several wagonloads of furniture, crockery, clothing, books and a host of other things had been crammed into the building. He had also brought with him a couple of servants, an old woman and a young man called Mendel, who acted as Reb Bunim's coachman. The arrival of the new inhabitant restored life to the town. Now there was work for the young men in Reb Bunim's forests and Kreshev's coachmen had logs to haul. Reb Bunim repaired the town's bath and he constructed a new roof for the almshouse.

The Destruction of Kreshev

Translated by Elaine Gottlieb and June Ruth Flaum

I

Reb Bunim Comes to Kreshev

I AM the Primeval Snake, the Evil One, Satan. The Cabala refers to me as Samael and the Jews sometimes call me merely "that one."

It is well known that I love to arrange strange marriages, delighting in such mismatings as an old man with a young girl, an unattractive widow with a youth in his prime, a cripple with a great beauty, a cantor with a deaf woman, a mute with a braggart. Let me tell you about one such "interesting" union I contrived in Kreshev, which is a town on the river San, that enabled me to be properly abusive and gave me the opportunity to perform one of those little stunts that forces the forsaking of both this world and the next between the saying of a yes and a no.

Kreshev is about as large as one of the smallest letters in the smallest prayer books. On two sides of the town there is a thick pine forest and on the third the river San. The peasants in the neighboring villages are poorer and more isolated than any others in the Lublin district and the fields are the most barren. During a good part of the year the roads leading to the larger towns are merely broad trenches of water; one travels by wagon at one's peril. Bears and wolves lurk at the edge of the settlement in winter and often attack a stray cow or calf, occasionally even a human being. And, finally, so that the peasants shall never be rid of their wretchedness, I have instilled in them a burning faith. In that part of the country there is a church in every other village, a shrine at every tenth house. The Virgin stands with rusty halo, holding in her arms Jesus, the infant son of the Jewish carpenter Yossel. To her the aged come—and in the depth of winter kneel down, thus acquiring rheumatism. When May comes we have daily processions of the half-starved chanting with hoarse voices for rain. The incense gives off an acrid odor, and a consumptive drummer beats with all his might to

frighten me away. Nevertheless, the rains don't come. Or if they do, they are never in time. But that doesn't prevent the people from believing. And so it has continued from time immemorial.

The Jews of Kreshev are both somewhat better informed and more prosperous than the peasants. Their wives are shopkeepers and are skilled in giving false weight and measure. The village peddlers know how to get the peasant women to purchase all sorts of trinkets and thus earn for themselves corn, potatoes, flax, chickens, ducks, geese—and sometimes a little extra. What won't a woman give for a string of beads, a decorated feather duster, a flowered calico, or just a kind word from a stranger? So it is not entirely surprising that here and there among the flaxen-haired children one comes across a curly-haired, black-eyed imp with a hooked nose. The peasants are extremely sound sleepers but the devil does not permit their young women to rest but leads them down back paths to barns where the peddlers wait in the day. Dogs bay at the moon, roosters crow, and God himself dozes among the clouds. The Almighty is old; it is no easy task to live forever.

But let us return to the Jews of Kreshev.

All year round, the marketplace is one deep marsh, for the very good reason that the women empty their slops there. The houses don't stand straight; they are half-sunk into the earth and have patched roofs; their windows are stuffed with rags or covered with ox bladders. The homes of the poor have no floors; some even lack chimneys. In such houses the smoke from the stove escapes through a hole in the roof. The women marry when they are fourteen or fifteen and age quickly from too much childbearing. In Kreshev the cobblers at their low benches have only worn-out, scuffed shoes on which to practice their trade. The tailors have no alternative but to turn the ragged furs brought to them to their third side. The brushmakers comb hog bristles with wooden combs and hoarsely sing fragments of ritual chants and wedding tunes. After market day there is nothing for the storekeepers to do and so they hang around the study house, scratching themselves and leafing through the Talmud or else telling each other amazing stories of monsters and ghosts and werewolves. Obviously in such a town there isn't much for me to do. One is just very hard put to come across a real sin thereabouts. The inhabitants lack both the strength and the inclination. Now and again a seamstress gossips about the rabbi's wife or the water bearer's girl grows large with child, but those are not the sort of things that amuse me. That is why I rarely visit Kreshev.

דער חורבן פון קרעשעוו

א

1. גימפל קומט קיין קרעשעוו

איך בין דער יצר-הרע. דער שטן, דער נחש הקדמוני. אין קבלה-ספרים רופט מען מיך סמאל, אדער דער ס"ם. יידן רופן מיך צומאל דער בעל-דבר.

עס איז וואויל באקאנט דאס איך האב ליב אויסצופירן קרומע שידוכים. עס פארשאפט מיר נחת-רוח צונויפצופירן אן אלטן מיט א יונגער מויד; א מיאסע אלמנה א קטלנית — מיט א יונגן בחור. וואס עס שפראצט אים נאך נישט קיין בארד; א קריפל — מיט א יפת-תואר; א קלוגן מיט א נאר; א חזן — מיט א טויבער; א שוויגער — מיט א חצופה. איינעם אזא אויסטערלישן זיווג האב איך אמאל צונויפגעפירט אין דעם שטעטל קרעשעוו. וואס געפינט זיך נאענט פון טייך סאן. די לייט האבן געהאט פון וואס צו שפעטן און איך האב דערביי צוגעגרייט איינס פון מיינע קונץ-שטיקלעך, וואס מען פארלייט דורך זיי עולם-הזה און עולם-הבא צווישן יא און ניין.

1. דאס שטעטל קרעשעוו איז אזוי גרויס ווי א טלומער אין א קליין סידורל. דער ישוב איז פון צוויי זייטן ארומגערינגלט מיט געדיכטע סאסנע-וועלדער. פון דער דריטער זייט פליסט דער טייך סאן. די פויערע אין די דערפער ארום זענען ארעמער און פארגרעכטער פון אלע גוים אין לובלינער געגנט. די פעלדער זענען מאגער. די וועגן וואס פירן אין גרעסערע שטעט, זענען לאנגע חדשים אין יאר איבערגע-שניטן מיט ברייטע ריוון וואסער און עס איז א סכנה דורך זיי צו פארן מיט א סור. אום ווינטער קומען בערן און וועלף צו די ברעגן פון די ישובים און עס טרעפט, אז זיי פרעסן אויף א קו, א קאלב, און אפילו א מענטש.

2. אום די גוים זאלן זיך נישט קענען ארויסראטעווען פון זייער עלנט. האב איך אין זיי איינגעפלאנצט א סך פרומקייט, אדער קרומקייט. אין יעדן צווייטן דערפל איז דא א תיפלה. אויף יעדע צען הייזער איז פאראן א קאפעל. די הייליקע מוטער שטייט דארטן מיט א פאראסט רייפל איבערן קאפ. מיטן יויול אויף די הענט. און דערמאנט דעם המון אן דעם ממור, וואס דער יידישער סטאלער יאסל פאנדרע האט איר געמאכט מיט דער הילף פון רוח-הקודש. אלטע גויעס קומען אהין קניען אפילו ווינטערצייט און זיי קריגן דערפון ברעכעניש אין די געלענקען. אין חודש מאי גייען טאג-אויס פראצעסיעס. דער אויסגעהונגערטער המון בלעקעכצט מיט הייעריקע קולות. דער וויירויך שטינקט. דער שווינדזיכטיקער פויקער פויקט אום מיך צו דערשרעקן

און פארטרייבן. דער גלה, וואס האט געוויינלעך א צענדליק ממורים ארומלויפן איבערן דארף, שלוקערצט אויף לאטיין. צלמט זיך און בא-שווענצלט. קיין רעגנס קומען נישט. און אויב יא. איז נישט אין דער צייט. אבער דאס פאלק גלויבט סיי-ווי-סיי. און אזוי פירט זיך עס זינט אלטע צייטן.

3. די יידן אין קרעשעוו זענען אביסל געשייטער און פארמעגלעכער. זייערע ווייבער אין די קראמען גיבן א פאלשע וואג און א פאלשע מאס. די דארף-לייפער רעדן-אן די פויערטעס צו קויפען אלערליי שמאכטעס און זיי באקומען דערפאר מעסטלעך קארן. פערטלעך קארטאפל, הניילן פלאקס. הינער. קאטשקעס. גענדו. און אמאל אפילו נאר עפעס פאר א צוגאב. דען וואס וועט נישט געבן א נקבה פאר א שנירל גלעזערנע פאטשער-קעס, פאר אן אפגעפארבטן פלעדערוויש, פאר אן אייל געבלומטן סיך, אדער גאר פאר א פריינטלעך ווארט פון א פרעמדן זכר זאלט זיך דעריבער נישט וואונדערן וואס מען טרעפט צומאל צווישן די פלאקסן קעפיקע שקצימלעך און שיקסלעך שווארצאויגיגע שרעטלעך מיט גע-קרייזלטע האר און געבויענע נען. די פויערים שלאסן געשמאק אין די נעכט און די יונגע ווייבער לאזט דער טיוול נישט איינרוען און פירט זיי מיט הינטעררוועגלעך. צו די שיערן. וואו די שטאטישע אויפקויפער וואלגערן זיך אין היי. די הינט בילן. די הענער קרייען. די זשאבעס קוואקען און די שטערן אין הימל וואכן און ווינקען. און גאט אליין דרימלט אין די וואלקנס. כביכול איז אלט. עס איז נישט קיין לייכטע זאך צו לעבן אייביק. . . .

Kola Street

SHOLEM ASCH

1.

THE WESTERN tip of Mazowsze, south of the sandy hills along the bend of the Vistula between Plock and Wloclawek, is a region poor in water and sparse in forests. The horizon extends endlessly, and there is nothing to stop the eye: long monotonous fields stretch for miles and miles, for the most part covered with scanty grain, and only occasionally cut by the white ribbon of a cart road bordered with infrequent weeping willows. This triangular area, which includes Kutno, Zychlin, Gostynin, Gombin, and a number of smaller towns, has none of the mysterious charm of its neighbor, the province of Kujawy, so rich in legends about the souls of the dead that haunt black lanes, wander in the fields, and lure people into the swamps; nor is it as rich in color and in sound as its other neighbor, the Duchy of Lowicz, which gave birth to the greatest Polish composer and creator of the mazurka, Chopin. Flat and monotonous are its fields, and the peasant who cultivates them is as plain as the potatoes they yield. Unlike the peasant of Lowicz, he does not deck himself out in white castans and brightly colored trousers and hats adorned with ribbons and corals; nor does he go in for witchcraft like the peasant of Tall Poplars in Kujawy. Here the peasant is like a clod of earth into which God has breathed a soul, like the walking lime that grows in front of his house. He never quits his reed, on which he plays, far into the night, long formless tunes

that have no beginning and no end, tunes that are like his long, broad, green-covered fields. He is a man without guile—"I am as God made me." When he is friendly he will give you his very shirt; but when he gets mad he will take his revenge, let it be at the cost of his life. He is devoted to his cow, which lives with him, and will never slaughter it for his own use. But above all he loves and cherishes his horse, which he never subjects to daily labor: to plow his field he would yoke his cow or his wife rather than his horse. He saves his horse for Sundays, to drive it to church, and to show it off when he goes to visit friends in a neighboring village.

The Jew native to this region partakes more of the flavor of wheat and of apples than of the synagogue and the ritual bath. The land is rich for grazing: the peasant breeds cows and oxen and sheep, and the Jew buys them from him to take them to Lodz or across the German border, which is nearby. Among the Jews there are the renowned fishermen of the Lonsk ponds, who supply fish to Lodz and the surrounding country in the Kalisz and Plock areas; the sturdy teamsters who take Litvaks to the frontier where the railway has not yet penetrated; and the big horse-dealers who sell the horses bred and nurtured by the peasants to Germans coming from Torun and Berlin. The poor Jews rent orchards from the peasant for the summer; in the winter they wash his pelts in the town pond and take them to the fair in Lowicz or Gombin. Throughout the week the Jew stays in the village, sharing the peasant's life. For the Sabbath he comes to town to attend services at the Three-Trade Synagogue, where fisherman, cattlemen, and teamsters divide the honors among them, and where they discuss the events of the week. On Saturday, after the Sabbath meal, they go into the field, where the horses are fed and the boys play games. After sunset they settle on benches in front of the houses, watch the promenading servant girls, and tell stories.