

Friday 20 February 1998

To Dear David G., on His Great Birthday!

For fortunate reasons I can not attend the celebration: Not only is my first grandson Yonatan receiving his first Torah today, he is also playing the part of *Adam Harishon* in the school play! And as always when receiving the Torah, it is mandatory that all generations are present, not to speak of the fact that the teacher typecast him as the *Mentch!*

So I will be with you and Hanna in spirit only, until this evening.

However, I am enclosing my two-part present to you, and, *kedarchi bakodesh*, this will not pass without some accompanying words, which you could share with your guests if you so wish.

The first part is, excuse the pun, clearly seen: it is a binocular, by which I wish for you continued foresight and far-sight, good and undimmed light, depth, even greater and more heights, as in *hitrommemut haruach*, and the extra dimension we call *she'ar ruach*. This has to do with the future.

The second part has to do with your responsibility and undertaking of the past. It is **Seder Selichot**, published by the *Almana and Achim Rom* in *Vilna*, in May 1871, some hundred and twenty seven years ago. As you can see, it is still wet with tears and soaked with candlewax. It even includes, in the bottom margins, a translation into *Ivrith Taitch*, in the words of the editor: "for the benefit of the masses and women". Dark-blue ink stained its last pages.

Amos bought it for me in Kovna: We went to pray in the synagogue which, at the time, was wrapped in bandages by the Lubavitz construction battalion. We asked for The Rabbi and one of them hastened to introduce himself as The Rabbi, but we insisted on The Rabbi and finally they called him in. He was, to say the least, ambivalent about the construction scene, but even more so by our insistence on meeting him. I was holding this book in my hand, wiping and embracing it, as I found it in a pile under one of the dusty benches. Noticing my attachment to it, The Rabbi said: "Do you want it?" I started trembling: "How do you mean? You do not need it?" I asked, and he said: "No one can read either the Hebrew or the Taich here. If you can read it, it is better for both of you". Not being used to taking something for nothing, Amos immediately opened his wallet and gave the Rabbi a donation. When we left the synagogue, clenching the book and, adding my fresh tears to those of my ancestral mothers, I looked back to ensure he did not change his mind. And indeed, The Rabbi was following us, literally running, saying breathlessly in Yiddish: *Yiddn, Yiddn*, for this *gelt* you can have them all! The book is burning still, as I am sure you can see, like a burning bush. I could not have read it were it not for you, David.

I would like you to have it because I know you will keep it that way.

With all my love,

Zvia 