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It has taken me until now to sit down and write to you, my most loyal correspondent, because I have had no peace of mind for reasons good and bad. But here I am again, teaching in Moscow for the month of December, which never figured in my Five Year Plan and made the last 6 weeks more hectic than ever. What happened is this: Another professor from New York, who was supposed to teach a mini-course on the Holocaust (sounds like a bad joke) took ill, and I offered to replace him, thinking not so much of myself as of Shana, who loved it here. And my offer was accepted. So I had to rearrange the classes I was currently teaching to complete the semester a week early and prepare a whole new course for Moscow, and get my syllabi & course materials ready for the spring semester as well! But that was the least of it. Most of November was taken up with the planned adoption. Through Shana's work, we found out about a "link agency" in Minnesota that has its own pool of birth mothers, whom it "links up" with prospective parents in what is known as an open adoption. Though we didn't know it at the time, and though it cost us much grief, we were the first New York couple they had ever worked with. After much uncertainty (as to whether this was legal under New York law) we finally went out there for the preliminary "intake"; i.e., to meet the entire professional staff of social workers, psychologists and lawyers. And it was freezing! But the people (all of whom are themselves either adoptive parents or adopted) were wonderful, and we even had friends to stay with over Shabbat. We stayed in Minneapolis for 3 days all told, 2 days' worth of interviews and briefings, then Shabbos to relax. It was anything but relaxing! For what we basically had to learn was how to market ourselves to a group of young women aged 18-25 with a 6-grade reading level and a fairly unsophisticated grasp of reality. You take what you can get. It did help bring an end to Shana's mourning, however, for the child we wouldn't have, and made us focus on the reality of the child we would likely have. Once we got home, there were

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documents to procure, a Dear Birthmom letter to write, photo albums to prepare (to give the birth mother a sense of the glorious life we lead - would that she and her newborn could have the same!), and a lot of talking to do among ourselves. Anyeh, you should know, is very much involved in the process. Yes, we also had something called a home study: a 5-hr. interview in our home by a social worker to evaluate our parental worthiness. There were moments, I admit, when it all seemed very degrading. Why should we, who are excellent parents, be put through these indignities, when other parents, far less loving than we, can have as many children as they want, free of charge? In the end, it brought Shana and me that much closer. I taught her to avoid such invidious comparisons and to think of the end result. After all: we're getting a second chance, and it's sure to challenge us and change us in many wonderful ways, just as our 3 months in Moscow were an unexpected watershed. Before I left, Shana had already come up with names for our new son or daughter. Now we have to wait for the phone to ring - long distance...

Because of the adoption and the last-minute trip to Moscow, I developed pains in my sides which I was convinced were the onset of cancer. So I stopped sleeping and developed other side effects. I was a mess! Meanwhile, I got it into my head to organize a seminar on Prewar Central and East European Cultures which has since evolved into a meeting ground of Polish and Jewish intellectuals. I got the idea from meeting an American-born graduate student named David Goldfarb who submitted an excellent article about Bruno Schulz for Proof texts. Goldfarb, it turns out, lives on the Upper West Side, and knows the whole Polish Colony. So I asked him for a mailing list, added names of my own, and set up the first seminar to meet in our home. Bożena Shallcross, who knows you, gave a lecture and slide presentation (on Nov. 17) on the transformation of Mickiewicz's *Jankiel*. It was a great way to begin. I was very impressed by the Polish contingent (whose very difficult names I cannot reproduce from memory!!), and they, in turn, were surprised to meet their Jewish counterparts at such close quarters. Joanna Rostopowicz-Czark spoke about how God had intended for Poles and Jews to inhabit the same land - and had some very insightful things to say about Mickiewicz and

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Norwid. Thirteen people attended (not including me), and we're scheduled to meet once a month. I am anxious to keep the group small, but not to lose momentum. Oh, if only you could be with us! And if only you could share your papers on Singer with our group. I read them both very carefully and am assigning the one about his differentiated audience to my class on Singer's fiction that meets in the spring. You may be right not to seek ideological motives in the changes that occurred from the Yiddish to the English. I especially like what you did with the children's stories, showing how there's a whole shift in genre. I still believe, however, that there was a significant mellowing in his attitude towards Christianity from the 1940s to the 1960s. The animus of the 1940s is essential for my understanding of him as a storyteller in the Yiddish tradition.

Speaking of which, my book was accepted for publication pending editing it down by a third. Naturally, no writer likes to be told to cut his prose, but I have always maintained that a book is only as good as its editor, and here, both my editor and the two outside readers agreed independently that the book was too long. In Yiddish we say: $\text{הַבְּרַחַם הַשָּׁמַיְמִי הוֹסֵס אֶת הַבְּנֵי אָדָם}$, so I'm that fourth person who's got to sober up.

My teaching experience at the Seminary this past semester was extremely gratifying. Because of curricular changes, my introduction to Jewish Literature for Rabbinical students was whittled down to one semester, but I finally learned how to channel classroom discussion into a true learning experience. Knowing a priori how little I could accomplish in so short a time, I was more relaxed - and more able to focus on the bare essentials. For the first time I can remember, the 25 students applauded at the end of class. Here, in Moscow, meanwhile, my reunion with the students was extremely moving. I hugged and kissed each one of them and shed a tear. In general, I find myself crying quite a bit these days. And in the middle of all this, my 87-year-old mother was hospitalized after losing $\frac{1}{2}$ her blood. I rushed to see her in Montreal - 3 days before leaving for Russia. Though they still don't have a diagnosis, she now feels great. So who knows? Maybe she will live on and continue to serve as my lifeline to the past. If you fax me or send me an e-mail letter [car@caris.rggg.msk.su], I will reply by return mail. Shira and Arjeh join me on the 23rd of December. We return to New York on January 2nd.

Love,
David