Ben Yakov (Kalmen Zingman)
[Translated from Yiddish
by *Khane-Faygl Turtletaub*,
with an introduction by *Oleksandra Uralova*]
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In Edenia, a City of the Future.

A Novel.

Kharkov: Harkaver Yiddish Farlag, 1918

Abstract

In the wake of the 1917 Revolution, Kalmen Zingman (born near Kovno) established the first Yiddish printing press in Kharkiv where he published his utopian technocratic novel *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya* (*In Edenia, a City of the Future*, 1918; under the pen name Ben Yakov).

Zingman's novel argued against Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish future expressed in his utopian novel *Altneuland* (Leipzig, 1903), particularly against the Herzlian negation of diaspora revivalism and the centrality of Yiddish. On the contrary, argued Zingman, in the distant future (his utopian Edenia is dated around the mid-1940s) Jewish life would be centered in the diaspora cities such as Kharkiv, where Jews would celebrate their participation in communal and technological development, their traditional yet secularized values, and their Yiddish culture.

Particularly important for Zingman were the blurred boundaries between the two peoples, Jews and Ukrainians, and their conflict-free coexistence in urban space. This is the first English translation of Zingman's utopian novel, commissioned by artist and curator Yevgeniy Fiks for the exhibition "In Edenia, a City of the Future", and first published, with an original introduction, in *Judaica Ukrainica*.

Introduction

More than five hundred years have passed since Thomas More's "truly golden little book" *Utopia* was published in its original Latin. Nevertheless, utopias still provide both readers and researchers with rich material for thought. The following novel, *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya (In Edenia, a City of the Future, 1918*) by Ben Yakov (the pen name of Kalmen Zingman) also belongs to the category of utopian fiction, the stories of people's dreams and hopes for a better future.

Judaica Ukrainica 6 (2017)
DOI: 10.14653/ju.2017.09

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term *utopia* as a "place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions," "an impractical scheme for social improvement," and "an imaginary and indefinitely remote place."[1] This term is also a name for a genre of fictional texts describing such places and societies. Like their opposite, dystopias, utopias emerge as a reaction to social and political changes in the world their authors come from. Perhaps, utopian texts can also serve as an example of the aspirations of societies, peoples, and generations.

Russell Jacoby, Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in the Age of Apathy* (Basic Books, 1999), *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (Columbia University Press, 2005), and other critical works on literature, history, and academic culture, explores the subject of utopias in 20th-century literature in *Picture Imperfect*. In this work he also distinguishes between two types of utopianism, "blueprint" and "iconoclastic."[2]

Blueprint utopias concentrate on manufacturing an idyllic society, where every aspect of human life is prescribed yet comfortable, and this scheme supports the citizen's personal development. In such fictional texts, human life in utopian spaces is described in great detail, from administrative institutions down to eating schedules. Whereas iconoclastic utopias, in their turn, introduce their readers to worlds less defined but more full of emotion and firmness in humanist ideals. According to Jacoby, iconoclastic utopias also have a recognizable lexicon, filled with words like heart, hope, believe, love, trust, etc. Thus, an iconoclastic utopian text offers the reader an analysis of what the future of humanity could be like, as well as an emotional experience. Jacoby considers Thomas More and Edward Bellamy representatives of the first type. In the iconoclastic category he places authors mostly of Jewish origin, like Gustav Landauer and Fritz Mauthner. While a blueprint utopia gives us rather strict "recipes," an iconoclastic one evokes the reader's imagination and humanistic feelings. The spirit of hope is one of the identifying features of iconoclastic utopianism, which, according to Jacoby, has strong Jewish roots.

Today, the phenomenon of Jewish utopias (whether written before or during Mandated Palestine, or even after the forming of the State of Israel) is attracting interest in academic circles, particularly among researchers of Jewish literature. In 2016, the *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*,[3] edited by Caspar Battegay on behalf of the Association for European Jewish Literature Studies, was dedicated to the topic of Jewish utopias. This volume included articles on the works of Franz Kafka and Theodor Herzl, as well as research on contemporary European Jewish literature. The publication is a source of inspiration for those who study Jewish literature, and especially

[1] *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "utopia (n.)," accessed September 1, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/utopia.

[2] Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[3] Caspar Battegay, ed., *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*, vol. 3, *European Jewish Utopias* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016).

the fruitful and promising field of Jewish utopianism. Still, only a few works by authors from Eastern Europe before World War II were analyzed in the *Yearbook*, and *Edenya* was not among them.

However, Kalmen Zingman's *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya* has been noticed by prominent scholar of Jewish history, language, and literature Gennadiy Estraikh, Rauch Associate Professor of Yiddish Studies and Associate Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. In his article "Utopias and Cities of Kalmen Zingman, an Uprooted Yiddishist Dreamer,"[4] he calls attention to Zingman's *Edenya* as a descriptive example of the positive development of relations between Jews and Ukrainians written by a Jewish author originating from a very different, Litvak surrounding.

In 2014, the Ukrainian translation of *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya,* by scholars and translators Tetyana Batanova and Nataliia Ryndiuk, appeared on the pages of *Judaica Ukrainica*.[5] This was the second translation of the novel ever made. The first, from Yiddish into Hebrew, was published as *Ba-'ir he-'atid "Edenia"*[6] in 1996 in Israel, with an afterword by Abraham Zimrani, the author's son. Today, we are proud to present *Edenya* in English translation by Khane-Faygl Turtletaub in *Judaica Ukrainica*.

Before introducing the novel, we should provide the reader with a few examples of Jewish contributions to utopian literature and describe Edenia, the city of future, in its historical and contemporary context. The goal of this preface is to provide insight into the world of the author and to shed light on the aspirations of his generation through the prism of the world he created.

In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya was not the first novel dedicated to the topic of building a Jewish state, nor was it the best known. By 1918, when Kalmen Zingman's story was published in Kharkiv, a number of literary works in the utopian field had already been written by Jewish authors. The most iconic among them was the 1902 *Altneuland* (*The Old New Land*) written in German by the political leader, writer, and ideologist of Zionism Theodor Herzl.[7] The novel contained all the marks of the genre, like predictions of technological development and descriptions of the future state's social structure (for instance, in *Altneuland* the process of redemption of criminals is described in considerable detail), but it was also rich in describing the emotions and inner experiences of the characters. This novel, having characteristics of both blueprint and iconoclastic utopias, became an iconic text not only in Jewish literature, but also for Jewish society as a whole. And although it was written in Austria-Hungary by a Western European Jewish author, some of the novel's characters had prototypes in the Eastern

[4] Gennadiy Estraikh, "Utopias and Cities of Kalman Zingman, an Uprooted Yiddishist Dreamer," *East European Jewish Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2006): 31–42.

[5] Ben Yakov (Kalmen Zingman), "Edeniia: U misti maibutnyioho," trans. Tetiana Batanova and Nataliia Ryndiuk, preface by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Judaica Ukrainica* 3 (2014): 231–255.

[6] Ben-Ya'akov (Kalman Zingman), Ba-'ir he-'atid "Edenyah" / In der tsukunft-shtot Edenia (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1996).

[7] Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland: Roman* (Leipzig: Hermann Nachfolger, 1903).

European Jewish communities, where by the beginning of the epoch Jewish emancipation had become an impressive and inspiring process. *Altneuland* can be considered a truly Jewish utopia of the turn of the 20th century, although a number of Jewish utopias written in Jewish languages were still to come.

One of the first famous utopias by Jewish authors from Eastern Europe (mainly, Ukraine), written in Yiddish, is perhaps Sholem Aleichem's satiric story *Di ershte yiddishe republik* (*The First Jewish Republic*), published in 1907.[8] This story gives us an example of Jewish political thought at the beginning of the 20th century. Thirteen people of Jewish origin, with polar worldviews, are cast away on what they take for a desert island. Without thinking twice, they decide to form a Jewish state there. Yet they never reach an agreement, not even on the name of the state they created. Every member of the freshly formed society suggests a different word, which is either a geographical name of a place where, following the ideas of the time, the state of Israel could be reborn, or a philosophical or religious item. By the end of the story, the thirteen founders of the first Jewish republic are banished from the island by the local population that they had not noticed in the beginning. This short story basically gives us an intelligible image of the variety of opinions on the question of Jewish national identity in the political, public, and philosophical thought of the Jewish community in the beginning of the 20th century.

Both the abovementioned works were written before World War I. In *Altneuland*, Theodor Herzl created a Zionist utopia; Sholem Aleichem's *Di ershte yiddishe republik* was a bitter satire on each and every side of Jewish political thought (one can find rich descriptions of both texts in the *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*). Kalmen Zingman belonged to the generation that personally witnessed and experienced World War I, two revolutions, and drastic social changes.

Zingman was originally born near Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, in the shtetl Slobodka in 1889. As a young boy he began a traditional Jewish education, but due to family circumstances his studies were interrupted. He became a salesman and after some years opened his own shop. Zingman loved literature and read a lot in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian, and after some time started to make his own attempts in literature. One of his first printed works was the poem "*Baym Nyeman* (At the Nieman)," which appeared in the anthology *Shtraln* (*Rays*), edited by A. Litvin (Shmuel Hurvits). He moved to Kharkiv, where the Jewish community's social life was not as lively as it was in Odessa, although the influx of Jewish migrants from the territories of Lithuania and Belarus was gradually changing this situation. In 1917, after selling his textile business, Zingman opened the Yiddish publishing house, one of the first specializing in publishing literature in Yiddish in/on the territories of the collapsing empire. By the end of that year, two volumes of the literary anthology *Kunst-ring almanakh* appeared under Zingman's editorship. This anthology soon became a monthly publication. (In 1919, it became

[8] Sholem Aleichem, *Di ershte yiddishe republik* (1907); Schalom Alechem, *Die erste jüdische Republik. Novellen* (Berlin: Osterheld & Co., 1925).

fairly well-known, and its cover was designed by the famous Kultur-Lige artist El Lissitzky.) In 1918, Zingman, full of utopian hopes and autonomist aspirations, published his novel *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya* under the pseudonym Ben Yakov.

In 1920, Zingman decided to leave Kharkiv and tried to find his "Edenic" city in Lithuania. After his homeward voyage, he stayed in Kaunas for several years, editing his *Vispe* (*Islet*) periodical, managing a bookstore, and publishing treatises of Jewish philosophers. Here he began to work on his semi-biographic novel *Oyfn shvindtrep* (*On the Winding Stairs*). He died in Simferopol in 1929, spending his last days as a tourist in Soviet Crimea. By that time the Ukrainian lands were no longer considered the most promising project for Jewish autonomy, and many intellectuals among Zingman's like-minded friends from Lithuania were intending to create a Jewish utopia in Birobidzhan. The city of Edenia remained only a dream.

As a genre of literary fiction, utopias possess a dimension of social criticism, in other words, the author's written response to his or her contemporaries to the most sensitive questions of the time, or at least a formulation of some of these questions. Kalmen Zingman gave his readers a utopia of his time, a story of a city of multiple ethnic communities, concentrated much less on religious and national questions than questions of social equality, a city that had not known war for twenty years, a city without money, without atrocity, without poverty. The time when the novel was written unveiled new problems around Jewish national identity to the world in general and to Jewish activists in particular. In 1918, when Kalmen Zingman's story saw the light of the world, nations and states were only recovering from the impact of World War I. This war had changed the understanding of what societies should look like, and the same question was true for the various Jewish societies. In the Eastern Europe of 1918, when the war was coming to an end, increasing antisemitism was sadly noticeable. After the first Russian constitution, the revolution of 1905, and the murder of Stolypin, the horror of several pogroms within the Pale of Settlement became overwhelming. This was soon followed by the revolutions of 1917, and the questions of Jewish national identity and a Jewish State grew even more acute. The political and fictional thought of that period had formed several different images of the Jewish society's future.

In January 1918, the Tsentralna Rada, the parliamentary assembly of the Ukrainian People's Republic, declared national autonomy for Russians, Poles, and Jews. This was a time when the views of the Jewish political activist, historian, and writer Simon Dubnov were popular among some of the political and social activists of Eastern European Jewry. Dubnov rejected assimilation and hardly supported Zionism. His hopes were on secular education and high culture as the main moving forces of society's development. Jewish political parties located in Ukraine, like the Bund and the *Folkspartey*, favored Dubnov's ideas of autonomism, a form of non-territorial self-rule for the Jewish diaspora in the European states.

No wonder that after the declaration of national autonomies by the Tsentralna Rada, Kalmen Zingman put his hopes on this new possibility for the peaceful coexistence of nations in a new democratic multiethnic society and tried to imagine this so-

ciety and to forecast its future development. He was not the only person who directed his thoughts into a utopian discourse. In the same year, 1918, the editor of the London Yiddish daily paper *Tsayt*, Morris Myer, published an essay transparently named "A Jewish Utopia: A Plan of Reconstructing the Jewish People," where he also developed the idea of an autonomist Jewish society based on Yiddish culture. The Yiddishist economist Yakov Leshchinsky, in the pamphlet *Our National Demands,* depicted the future of national (first and foremost, Jewish) communities in post-imperial Russia as self-governed secular structures with a democratically elected parliament and a highly developed cultural domain. Religious organizations in such communities would remain in the minority.

Such a society was the foundation of Zingman's utopian city of Edenia. The city described in his novel is not a completely fabricated space, but a fantasy of what the real city of Kharkiv could have become. We see this Eastern European megapolis through the eyes of the protagonist, Zalman Kindishman, Chairman of the Worldwide Statistics Committee, a man in his early fifties, who comes back to the city of his youth, a city that has dramatically changed since he left it over twenty-five years ago. The Kharkiv he remembers is the one where author Kalmen Zingman lives, a city with very poor possibilities for Jewish life and complicated living conditions, yet with hope for changes in the future. Kindishman recalls how dangerous the city was for him and his friend, both young Jewish men, and how he had to spend his nights in Kharkiv in fear for his life. The city he returns to from Palestine is a place of a fulfilled dream for those who supported the ideas of Simon Dubnov. Its new name, Edenia — the Garden of Eden, has seemingly granted it a new destiny. It's no wonder that the technical level of life in the fictional Kharkiv of the 1940s was high. Indeed, technological progress was something expected by all representatives of the utopian genre. The cultural and political life was also so different from what even such a highly educated modern person like Kindishman was used to that he (like the reader) needs a guide in this brave new world.

The world that Zingman introduces to the reader is also a world of big dreams. Although there is no United States of America anymore (instead there are United States of Germany in Europe), the people of the world seem to finally have found something worth reconsidering their ways for—and that, of course, is peace. In the center of this young humanistic society, which grows bigger and stronger day by day, are the Jewish communities all around the globe. Even in Palestine, where the protagonist has come from, there is peace. Arabs and Jews live side by side in respectful coexistence and harmony (as do the Ukrainians and Jews in Edenia), and there is far less conflict between them than between the adherents of Yiddish and Hebrew. For Zingman, who supported the Folkists' ideas, as for his protagonist, Yiddish has a very important, almost sacred significance. For both of them, Hebrew is the language of religion, the language of the old world, where Jewish communities often lived in fear and humiliation, as well as the language of Zionists, of course. The author of *Edenya* presents us with a new world where Hebrew is losing its power, and Yiddish, the language of secularism, the language of the new Jewish literature created by his contemporaries and allies, is win-

ning. Even in the Palestine of Zingman's imaginary world, people boycott the Hebrew-speaking institutions, and by doing so they also boycott the traditionalist world for tomorrow's sake.

In comparison to the world of the Yiddishist utopian discourse, as Estraikh calls Zingman's works, we can recreate the Kharkiv of 1918 from chronicles, official documents, and newspapers. Back then it was a city of great changes, dangers, and aspirations. In February 1918, the city was chosen to be the capital of the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic. In the same month, after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers, it became part of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Six weeks later, the newly established Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic was eliminated. Later, in April, the German army occupied Kharkiv. The chaos of 1918 did not decrease much, even after the end of the war in November. Jewish refugees from all over Eastern Europe continued their flight to eastern Ukraine, bringing their fears and also new aspirations. This was the Kharkiv that Kalmen Zingman, himself a refugee of the fighting in Lithuania during World War I, saw in the few years he remained in the city.

Perhaps one of *Edenya*'s main goals is not to show the progress, but to let the readers feel the changes in society, in people themselves. In contrast to the real world where Zingman lived, Edenia is a peaceful city, a city of dreamers. Nostalgia, amazement, and admiration fill this story about coming home to the future, and turn what at first seems like a blueprint program into a world of emotionally charged fantasy, an iconoclastic utopian tale.

Although the ideals of utopian worlds of peace and harmony are rarely incorporated into actual life, the blueprint part of the foretold future does come true from time to time. Some of the projects mentioned by Zingman in *Edenya*'s fictional future did appear later. For example, a Sholem Aleichem street exists in Kharkiv today. The first buildings one could call skyscrapers appeared there in the late 1920s and early 1930s: the impressive structures of Derzhprom and the Kharkiv National University. In 1979 the first buildings with more than 20 stories were built. Kharkiv became a center for technical development and was the capital of Soviet Ukraine twice: from 1921–1934 and during the Nazi siege of Kyiv in World War II. Even today, this city is considered a city of education and scholarship. The wireless service equipment described by Zingman and a great number of writers who believed in the most progressive projects and impossible dreams have long ago become a part of many people's everyday life.

While *Edenya* has only recently received widespread attention, it has already become a source of inspiration for contemporary artists. Contemporary art, like utopian fiction, is known for its criticism of reality. In 2017, almost 100 years after *Edenya* was published, the curators Yevgeniy Fiks and Larissa Babij organized a contemporary art exhibition inspired by and named after Zingman's novella in Kharkiv, where the story saw the light of day for the first time. The exhibition featured works by an international group of artists, who responded to the curators' invitation to read the novel and create a work as if it were from the art museum of the imaginary utopian city of Edenia. The exhibition took place at Yermilov Center between June 8 and July 9, 2017, and featured

works by Ifeoma Anyaeji, Babi Badalov, Concrete Dates Collective, Curandi Katz, Sasha Dedos, Aikaterini Gegisian, Tatiana Grigorenko, Creolex Centre (Ruthie Jenrbekova and Maria Vilkovisky), Nikita Kadan, Kapwani Kiwanga, Yuri Leiderman, Mykola Ridnyi, Haim Sokol, Agnes Thurnauer, and exhibition design by Ivan Melnychuk. The opening was attended by Kama Ginkas, director of the Moscow Young Generation Theater and Kalmen Zingman's grandson. Dr. Vitaly Chernoivanenko, President of the Ukrainian Association for Jewish Studies and chief editor of *Judaica Ukrainica,* was present at the opening ceremony and read some excerpts from *Edenye* with translation into Ukrainian. The illustrations to the text by Sergey Solonskij featured photos of the exhibition in Kharkiv overlaid with quotations from the novel in its original Yiddish. Thus, Edenia became a place on the contemporary Ukrainian map, and a space for discussion about utopian and dystopian worldviews in terms of art.

Utopias, stories of impossible futures, provide much-needed views on their contemporary worlds, leaving behind portraits of past epochs. This is also true for *In der tsukunft-shtot Edenya*, a novel of a world that was yet to come but was never embodied. The fact that the highly technological, peaceful paradise of Edenia remains only on paper gives us a clue that the world of Zingman's imaginary Kharkiv was perhaps literally too good to be true. Discovering Edenia, studying it, and perhaps finding inspiration in it may still provide a new image of Kharkiv in 1918: the way it was, could have been, and never became. Understanding this historical past and fictional future gives us new opportunities to see and reform reality.

In Edenia, a City of the Future

I

In Hotel Frayfolk, the biggest and nicest hotel in Edenia, a young man sat in his room on the 22nd floor. He was of average height, his face was smooth-shaven and the hair on his head was grayish. His glance was sure and energetic. According to his appearance one might have thought that he was no more than forty years old, but in truth he was much older, over fifty.

He sat next to his desk in a rocking chair holding the wireless telephone book. He glanced at it, leafing through the first pages, on which were written instructions for using the telephone. He finished reading, walked over to the window and remained standing awhile, looking out at the street. There was a happy, childlike smile on his face. It was obvious that he was reliving one of his most peaceful moments. For a while he was deep in thought, as if he wanted to recall someone or something important. Suddenly he returned to the present, went back to his desk, leafed through the telephone book again, and upon finding whom he had been looking for, he couldn't contain his joy. Even though he was alone, he called out, "Yes, that is he, my old friend Yugendboym!"

On the desk he seemed to be drawing figures with his fingers, and the following conversation ensued:

"Telephone Center?"

"Yes, my friend. What can I do for you?"

"Give me number 14."

"Right away, my friend."

Pause.

"I'm listening. Who is speaking?"

"Friend Yugendboym."

"Yes. Who is calling?"

"Your good friend and comrade from long ago, Zalman Kindishman. Do you remember him?"

Pause.

"Zalman Kindishman? Really? Zalman Kindishman? Is it possible? Where are you? Where are you staying?"

"In the Frayfolk Hotel on Gogol Street."

"You mean Sholem Aleichem Street?"

"Yes, yes, excuse me. I was remembering its former name of 25 years ago."

"Oh, how happy I am! I am heading over to you right now. Hotel Frayfolk, Sholem Aleichem Street, 850?"

"I think so, yes. Hotel Frayfolk, room 101, elevator 7."

"See you soon."

"Looking forward to seeing you again."

II

Full of joy, Zalman Kindishman didn't know what to do. He simply began to dance across the room. His glance landed on the automatic telephone — this was a machine that served its guests completely, instead of old-fashioned servants. He stood near the machine, letting his fingers play over it. He pushed the first button, then a second one, then a third, according to what was written on the instruction card, and a voice was immediately heard: "What does Friend Kindishman require?"

"Can one get some good wine?"

"With the greatest pleasure, if your wine card has not been used up."

Zalman Kindishman conducted this conversation via the automatic telephone, thinking that he was talking to the hotel's administrators. He was, however, mistaken. He was answered by the machine, which was at the same time taking a picture of the guest, fulfilling the guest's order, and automatically delivering it via service tubes as precisely as trusted servants used to do in former times.

Zalman Kindishman began to examine the two wineskins. He read what was lit up by an incomprehensible little electric fire: "Gefinya Winery" and a bit lower — "These grapes are from local Jewish vineyards in Ukraine and Moldavia."

He didn't manage to read what was illuminated on the second wineskin because someone knocked on the door.

"Come in."

The door opened, and before him stood a man of a bit above average height, with a little gray-and-black beard, a smart, pleasant face and glasses. This man stood there for a moment, looked around, and wiped his glasses. Kindishman approached him. Finally they embraced each other, kissed each other like brothers, and both sat down on the soft, wide armchair on which he had previously been rocking.

A short happy pause.

"Well, how are you?"

"How are you?"

"As you see: I've traveled the wide world over. I've been to Africa, America, Japan, China, Argentina, Brazil, and Palestine."

"There, too? Well, how are things there in our land, Palestine?"

"There, like everywhere else, there are wealthy people and paupers."

"How?" Yugendboym could not contain himself. "In your land, that is — our land, Palestine, the new regime is not yet in place?"

"Unfortunately, no. And that is why there are often revolutions taking place there, as well as uprisings and strikes. I've lived there for the last few years. My family is still living there in Noriya, a small provincial city with a Jewish population of about sixteen thousand and about thirty thousand Arabs."

"And, in general, how do they get along — the Arabs and the Jews?"

"Nothing special to report. Instead, why don't you tell me about what is going on with you here? You cannot imagine my delight, that I was destined to meet you again."

"Oh, how much effort I put into trying to get your address. I sent letters to many newspaper editors, but you had disappeared. It was as if you had drowned. I never received a reply. But, thank God, you are alive. How are your wife and children?"

"My wife is well, thank you. After all, you know about everything. If you recall, just as soon as the immigration to Palestine began, she began pressing for us to go there. Now she is manager of the Central Workers' Library named for Morris Rosenfeld. You remember my son, don't you? Little Shloymele, whose children's songs you loved to listen to? He is now a private instructor in Zhitlovsky University, which is a higher education school specializing in philosophy and economics. He is also the chief editor of the monthly Yiddish artistic-literary journal *Word and Thought*.

"Then Yiddish is recognized there as a scholarly language and is as widespread as it is here?"

"Yes, all the workers and the common people are still using Yiddish everywhere, which causes many conflicts. If one goes into the post office or the train station to get a ticket, the cashier turns up his nose and doesn't respond. But the more this happens, the more the people resist. And the general masses have begun to build Yiddish — not Hebrew — kindergartens, schools, and even universities, and they are very successful."

"Oh how happy I am to hear these details!" Yugendboym interjected. "And your son must certainly be one of the fighters."

"You do understand that in Zhitlovsky University all the classes are given in Yiddish, and despite the fact that the local Jewish community does not contribute any funds, it is better equipped than the Hebrew Marmarek and Wolfson Universities. The new university named for Zhitlovsky is attended especially by those newly arrived from Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Dagestan, and other republics, while those from Lithuania, Poland, and Galicia attend state schools and universities.

"My son's pupils told me so many interesting things about your life," Kindishman continued, "that I couldn't stay put even one more day, but had to travel here to see how it looks — this street and this city, where 25 years ago they did not understand our language and laughed at us, ridiculed us. And now I have come here."

III

Zalman opened the bottle of wine, filled the goblets, and they drank to the former days of their youth, to the future, and also to the present.

"I am, after all, Chairman of the Worldwide Statistics Commission," Kindishman continued. "And it is actually because of this that I have a mission to research the growth and progress of the Jews outside of Israel, who live in Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, and the Dagestan Republic. And being very familiar with the general condition of Jews in the whole world, I can tell you that we can also drink to our wonderful presence everywhere. Take the United States of Germany, Romania, Anglo-Saxonia, and America, and see what a healthy life has developed from the once-immigrant Jewry.

There the national assemblies of Jews work so diligently that the Great Knesset of Palestine could use them as an example."

"And how is it here, where we are?" Yugendboym interrupted him. "Our Parliament just adopted legislation concerning the protection of elders: that means that upon reaching the age of 55, everyone receives a permanent Life Card from the Jewish community, which frees him from the obligation to work, which is incumbent upon every citizen from the age of 18 on.

"This permanent Life Card gives the bearer the right to travel everywhere freely and to enjoy every wonderful thing that human creative thought has discovered. This earthly paradise begins for a person after he has devoted his whole life to humanity and also when his physical strength begins to ebb. Then society repays him for his many years of effort."

They sat as Yugendboym went on and on.

Kindishman became drunk. His head began to spin — not from the wine that he had imbibed, but from all that Yugendboym had told him. He could see before him the contrast of the former years, when both of them had spent the night on a bench somewhere on the edge of the large city, far, far away, so that no one would notice them, because, as Jews, they were not permitted into any hotel.

"Yes, I remember," Yugendboym responded to Kindishman's memories. "And that is why I want to suggest that since you have very little time to spend with us, come, and I will show you the city. You'll see the Green Garden. You'll see Freedom Place, about which I told you.

"Come, my friend," Yugendboym ended, getting up from his seat.

Kindishman also stood up.

"Yes, let's go," he agreed with pleasure. And both friends left the room.

IV

After taking the 7th elevator down from the 22nd floor, on which his room was located, both friends remained standing.

Yugendboym immediately said, "Let's board the aerotrain, and we will ride over to the Green Garden."

"What did you say?" Kindishman asked, interested in the new term.

"To Green Garden. That is the newest part of the city. In my day there were fields, woods, mud, and ditches there. Do you remember? From the Jewish cemetery on."

"So that is now the most beautiful part of town? You've picked a nice place — near the graves!" Kindishman said this with an ironic smile.

"Be calm, my friend. Graves have not existed here for a long time."

"Where then do you hide the corpses? Or has the Angel of Death discovered another way?"

"Don't laugh, my friend. For years, our Medical Institute has been conducting tests on rabbits and other animals that have died naturally or been killed, squirting

serum into their noses and bringing them back to life. And the Director of the Institute, Professor Rabinovitch, writes in the journal *Health* that it is possible that very shortly we will be able to insert a new soul into a person who died of old age and bring him back to life. But for now it is still a medical experiment. Yet you asked where we hide the corpses that have died. And I will answer you. Once we're in the Green Garden, you will see a 40-story building, the Crematorium. There the corpses are cremated, and the ashes of each one are given a separate number and a box. In addition, very few young people die here. Life is so well-ordered that one only dies of old age, of weakness, and not as it used to be, from accidents when young. The older generation dies. There has not been a war for the last twenty-one years. The young people only know the term 'war' from history class in school. The other classes are concerned with guarding their health. In the upper grades, both boys and girls learn about sex, not as they did in our time when they went through all the swamps of life before they got married. Here, in our times, no one knows what 'the swamps of life' are. In addition to natural science, a schoolgirl studies history, literature, culinary arts, sex education, and child-rearing. And if you were to see our young mothers — that is, our children! They are completely different from the children of the past, who used to know life, intimate life, only from pornographic novels that they read furtively."

"You know, my friend," Kindishman interrupted, "there is no reason for us to wait around for an aerotrain, when all we will see the whole way to Green Garden is empty air. Let's rather walk, if it isn't too far."

"It's not close," Yugendboym answered, "but you are right. It would be much more interesting for you to walk. That way you will see what our community has accomplished in the last 25 years."

"Why just our community? Is it only the Jewish community that has built all this? Where are the other self-governing peoples?" Kindishman asked.

"When I say our community, I am actually including all the other self-governing peoples. Here we live together so peacefully, without any conflicts at all, that you can't distinguish or separate them to the extent of saying 'the Jewish community' or 'the Ukrainian one' (which is the governing one). Every community has the right to work out its own system of laws as it relates to the improvement of the state. If it is accepted by its own council, the resolution and the law is carried to the central municipal council, and it is proposed for agreement by all the nations whose representatives are present. It is accepted if it is passed by a majority of the votes and immediately implemented."

"So we are walking," said Kindishman, turning to his friend.

"That suits me just fine. On the way, I will have the opportunity to show you many of our fully realized plans, which, thanks to our initiative — the initiative of the Jewish community — have been implemented in our lives."

V

They didn't even manage to get to the corner of the street before they got to a "garden spot." That is what the squares were called that were located at the beginning of every street. With childlike curiosity Kindishman's glance rested on everything he saw there. First he went over to the Sholem Aleichem memorial in the very center of the small garden covered with flowers and greenery. Sholem Aleichem's figure was sculpted out of marble. Before he approached, it had seemed to him that he was seeing Sholem Aleichem in the flesh, just as long, long ago, he — a child — had heard the author read in the municipal theater of his city in Lithuania. That is how alive this image was. Standing close, he noticed that underneath this extraordinarily lifelike portrait, there were many bas-reliefs. One on the right side was called "The Stock Exchange in Mazepevke." It depicted a group of Jewish brokers in a café, bargaining, dickering, and the most noticeable of all the figures was Menakhem Mendl with a black goatee, his mangled Sabbath hat, and carrying a cane. His pose was with his thumb pointing upwards. This made a very strong impression on Kindishman. It seemed to him that he was at one of the liveliest exchanges during the time of the war, when the person in front of whose memorial he was standing was still alive.

On the left was another bas-relief: a rich composition the likes of which was rarely seen. In the middle of a field stood a couple along with cans of milk and a miserable, decrepit mare. The wagon was packed with a whole family and all its household paraphernalia. Here the figures were so striking: Chava, Hodl, Shprintze. Near each daughter stood her intended. Here is Chvedka and also Feferl. Underneath there was the inscription: "Tevye and his family travel to the land of Israel." And even clearer than these two bas-reliefs, the third, a gilded bas-relief, caught the eye. It was called "Jewish Children." In it you immediately recognized Yosele Solovey, Busie, Perele, Dvairke, Motl — the cantor Peyse's son, Fishele — the butcher's son, Getzel — the oaf, Benny — the son of Mayer Polkovai. Among this group of children, each one of which was smiling and each with his own identifying stance, the horse Methuselah was wandering around, as was Rabchik, the dog, and Meni, the calf.

Zalman Kindishman could not stop looking at these bas-reliefs, which depicted practically the whole of Sholem Aleichem's creative world carved in stone.

VI

They sat down for a while on a nearby bench. The fountain in the middle of the garden continually sprayed fresh, crystal-clear water. The surrounding air was cool, despite it being a warm *Lag B'Omer* day, because the water that flowed through the fountain also cooled the air with the cold gas it emitted.

"You see this fountain?" Yugendboym asked his friend. "This too is thanks to the initiative of one of our Jewish Council members, a doctor of chemical engineering, Lazar Denktan, one of the young, talented engineers, who graduated from our Polytechnic Institute several years ago."

"So what is so ingenious about it?" Kindishman inquired.

"First of all," Yugendboym replied, "in addition to the fountain, which is nothing new, which could also have been found in wealthy private homes, the new innovation here is the cooling gas in the summer and the regulator in the winter, which cause the water to be cold and emit a cold gas in the summer, but do just the opposite in winter: the water is warm, and most important, the gas is warm, and the air is regulated for many meters around, from one quarter to the next. If you were here with us in our city in winter, you would certainly be surprised. You would not see fur coats and warm clothes as before. No, the same light summer clothing, artificially green grass, living flowers, birds in the trees in the woods. Those that are near the big cities do not migrate to warmer climes as they used to. No, all of this was discovered by a young man of twenty-eight, who attended our kindergarten, then our elementary school, afterwards our high school, and while still a student, his brilliant abilities were noticed, and several years later, when the Jewish community elections took place, he became a candidate for the Earthly Ones in the community."

"What did you say?" Kindishman stopped him with a question. "...backed by the Earthly Ones? What is that?"

"I will explain it to you. Since we instituted the unitary system and annulled 'money,' as it was once called, we also did away with all the parties, such as the socialists, radicals, and so on. For a while the anarchists held out, but there arose, that is, there were distinguished two sects: the Heavenly Ones and the Earthly Ones. The Heavenly Ones preach. They renounce all earthly pleasures, all the enjoyments that life can bring. They maintain that there is an even higher world, a more beautiful one. That is the heavenly one, the abstract world. They have very few members. A few of their adherents can be found in every city. They are like the Greek ascetics of yore or the saints, the truly pious monks, who once lived in greater Russia during the times of the czar. The second sect consists of the Earthly Ones, who say: enrich and improve life, so that heaven can be on earth. And this is the sect that is most successful. It has the support of the intelligentsia; the academics are for it, as is the whole army of working folk.

VII

The clock in the cupola on the corner struck 12. Yugendboym got up from his seat. "Come," he said. "We still have a lot to see, and if we sit down in every little garden, it will take months before I can show you even the most interesting things."

"You are correct," Kindishman agreed, and he too stood up from his place, and they turned right toward the side garden, where they could see a lovely booth painted with oil paint. They went closer. Zalman stopped, looked at it, and read the inscription above it: "The Newspaper and Book Kiosk of the Jewish Community."

A young man looked out of the kiosk. He was about thirty years old and had a short black beard. He spoke to them: "My friends, what would you like — the morning pa-

per, the weekly gazette, or only the monthly journal *The Jewish Community*, of which the 275th issue was just published?"

Kindishman asked for the latest copy of all of them and, forgetting that no one pays with money here for what he receives, he stuck his hand in his pocket. But Yugendboym reminded him, "For quite a number of years now that kind of money hasn't existed here, not to mention that it has lost all the appeal it used to have for us in former times, when people were so wild that people were killed because of it."

"If you are not tired, my friend, please explain to me when and how this came about, this disappearance of money, when we still cannot rid ourselves of it where I come from."

"I'll explain it to you as we walk."

They left the little garden, turned right onto a street that abutted Mendele Street, but on the other side, not on the side of the garden. Yugendboym took his friend's arm and, as they began to walk on the paved sidewalk, began to explain:

"After the great municipal bankruptcy in 1925, and after a long battle with lots of bloodshed, we instituted the solidarity system, or, as they called it then, the 'Social Order': that is, every member of our community must donate his work to the community for self-governance — each according to his national affiliation. As a result, on the first of each month everyone receives a Life Card. With this card he receives everything that he needs for himself and for his family: everything that he requires as an individual and as a citizen. There are no private businesses as there used to be in former times. That is why you will no longer see, as you used to, open businesses, stores, marketplaces with shouting, bustling, and so on. The city is divided into regions, quarters, and you can find everything you need in the central municipal warehouses that are located in the business areas. That is why everyone has to donate his labor to the community to the extent he is able. I, for example, am the Chairman of the Municipal Jewish Community Council of my region, and also selected as the publisher of educational materials for the provincial government's Education Council. This is what takes place: when a writer brings me something to publish, I must first take it to the Cultural Academy's critique department, and when the critique commission puts its stamp of approval on it, indicating that the item is coherent from an artistic or scientific standpoint, then I get it, along with the letter of approval, and a note for the municipal paper storehouse for a certain number of sheets of paper, and from the Printing Commission — a note for a certain number of hours of work, once they have determined how many hours it should require, and another for the municipal printing house, where the type is and where there are workers of all the nationalities that reside in the city. When the work has been printed, all the printed copies must be sent to the Educational Commission of the Jewish Community, and it sends them out to all the libraries and book departments that are registered with the Education Council.

"After ten years of diligent and honest work, the publishers and book managers receive the title of Esteemed Citizen. This gives them the right to receive one-and-a-half times the card value of everything that everyone else receives. When an artist

is inducted into the League of Immortals (which includes only those few truly talented, blessed-by-God poets, painters, musicians, etc.), that person receives extraordinary treatment: he is sent, all expenses paid, to the wealthiest and loveliest cultural cities of the world. He is given a Worldwide Card, which allows him, according to international agreements, to travel everywhere freely and to receive everything paid by the state, regardless of his age."

VIII

"Why doesn't one see open stores here?" Kindishman asked him. "We are walking and walking, and there are only shuttered buildings. It gives one the impression that Edenia is hiding some secret. Explain this to me, my friend."

"It's quite simple, because we are now in the Cultural Quarter. Your hotel is actually on Sholem Aleichem Street, which belongs to the Cultural Quarter. Do you understand, my dear friend, that years ago the old city was completely rebuilt and divided into quarters? The Factory Quarter, the Useful Business Quarter, the Cultural Quarter, and the last quarter includes the editorial boards of newspapers and magazines, universities and schools."

They came to another corner. Zalman became interested in another booth, but here there was no human face to be seen. It had posters on all sides — red ones, blue ones, green and white ones. They went closer. Yugendboym explained to him, "This is an ordinary poster kiosk of the Jewish community.

"You understand, my dear friend," he continued to explain, "every national community has its own kiosk. After all, every block has four corners. The streets have been rebuilt so that they are parallel. At the beginning and at the end, there are two kiosks on which newspapers and information sheets can be posted."

Zalman began to read the first green poster, whose artistically engraved motif had caught his attention:

> Today at 6:15 in the first Yiddish opera house on Peretz Street the opera *At Solomon's Throne* will be presented. The singers include the baritone Shtiman and the young prima donna Khane Vilenhof. Ballet — led by the director of the newly-opened ballet school, Mr. Laykhtfis. Sets — by the artist Farbton. Music — by composer Nakhtigal.

Before finishing reading the poster, he saw another one:

> In the little dramatic arts theater on Mendele Street, the tragedy *The Year 1905* by A. Feldman will be presented for the 57th time. The role of the young Jew will be played by the dramatic actor Nakhtshotn.
>
> Begins promptly at 6:45.
>
> The last piece written by A. Feldman, *The Expulsion of the Jews,* is being prepared to be staged.

IX

"Oh what a curious child you are," Yugendboym said to his friend, smiling. "Come now, come to Green Garden. You'll see other posters there."

"You're right," Kindishman agreed, and together with his walking companion, he turned left, which led them to one of the lively, central streets — Shevchenko Street.

For a while Zalman Kindishman remained deep in his own thoughts. Past him rode triple- and quadruple-decker buses, cars, and trams — left and right on two broad avenues. Along the sides grew dense pine trees, the branches of which were so thick that they barely let through the rays of sun that wanted to occupy a place on the sandy ground between the streets. There were many people on the rows of benches; they were dressed in light, white, summery outfits. Their faces were smiling, laughing.

He went over closer to the corner garden, and unconsciously, his gaze paused on the bronze memorial to Shevchenko. This inscription in gold lettering was visible:

The Prophet of Ukraine
Taras Shevchenko

Born: February 25, 1814 Died: February 26, 1861

They wanted to cross over to the other side of the street and enter the tree-lined path. Yugendboym brought his attention to a small nondescript construction, which went from one side of the street to the other over the busy central part.

Yugendboym pushed the button "N" which was on the cabin, and the door opened, and they sat down on a quite comfortable chair, and rising up high, they rode unnoticed to the beginning of the street. As they got out, Yugendboym once again pushed a button. Sensing that no one else was waiting, the chair returned to its previous position.

On the street, they sat down on one of the benches. Kindishman took out his bundle of newspapers. First, he started reading the daily paper. His attention was drawn to the announcements, because the press in general was quiet and stationary. Other than its format, the daily paper was pretty much indistinguishable from the monthly magazine, as their contents were identical. There was no especially surprising news, nor did anyone expect it. The daily newspapers served more as information guides for the citizens in their daily lives. The literary page, the feuilleton, exclusively dealt with memoirs of the great Russian and worldwide revolutions, of the World War, and of the former political situation of the Jews in various countries. After the announcements, this occupied the most space.

X

As they sat there reading the newspaper, they heard the sound of the aerotrain, which was getting closer to them. The noise was getting louder and closer, until the winged ship landed not far from them, on the corner of one of the streets that intersects the other.

Many people got out: women, children. And many others rushed to board the aerotrain. Among those getting on were our walkers, Kindishman and Yugendboym.

They sat down on the soft, plush benches in the aerotrain, which held up to one hundred people. The two friends had not even managed to say a few words to one another, when the conductor called out, "Green Garden, Freedom Place — three minutes."

They, along with all the others, got up from their seats and went out to the broad open area that was planted all over with green plants. This was an immense square area with many daises. Over every dais hung a day lamp — an electric lamp, which dispels the darkness of the night and makes it bright as day. Among all of these platforms was one central dais — the stage. This stage could hold up to five hundred people, who, on holidays, would perform large folk performances under the open sky, both during the day and at night. They did an especially good job with the theatrical, decorative sets, going so far as to provide anything the production needed: a forest, a river, and so on. These things were electrical and would be pulled out of the underground caves of Freedom Place. The large, mass productions, performed under the open sky, were the most popular performances in Edenia.

Zalman Kindishman was enthralled by the proud, majestic statue *Freedom* that stood precisely in the center of the square and could be seen from all sides. This was one of the most artistic creations of the famous, genius sculptor, Mark Kritsenshteyn. The *Freedom* statue consisted of the following:

A young girl with an ardent glance, her hair in loose curls, stepping with her feet on a snake, which is completely wrapped around her. In one hand she holds a blood-red flag and in the other — a black one. On the bottom of the red side is a bas-relief depicting high barricades, flattened faces — a war is going on. There is also a bas-relief on the other side, under the black flag, of the victims after the war, of those who were shot: a Russian, a Ukrainian, a Pole, a Jew, a Georgian, etc. — all dead. The inscription reads: "They fought together, they died together."

The favorite spot of the young people was near the *Freedom* statue. It was there that they brought flowers, and the whole statue was always decorated with so many floral wreaths that the inscriptions on the statue's bas-reliefs could barely be discerned.

XI

They ducked into the buffet restaurant on the street, where they had something light to eat and then continued to explore the large, unbounded square. From a distance they saw schoolchildren approaching. The sweet voices of thousands of young children singing wafted toward them, the voices of four- and five-year-old children, who were

going there today to celebrate their favorite children's holiday — Lag B'Omer. Kindishman and Yugendboym took a seat in the spectators' gallery. The stream of approaching children grew and grew. In pairs, boys and girls with glowing, shining faces were marching in Freedom Square, supervised by their teachers. In their hands, every child had a bow and arrow, the symbol of this holiday. In their lapels were field flowers, which they had picked in the forest through which they came. The first couple that appeared and approached the dais held a flag on which the following was written:

We dance and play,
We laugh and joke around.
We are Jewish children;
Today is our holiday — Lag B'Omer!

The musicians of the Society of Middle School and Kindergarten Students, who had already occupied a dais, played the children's hymn, and the children, their chests high, their collars open, their cheeks and eyes flaming, all sang in unison as they marched:

Summer, summer
We go into the woods. (2x)
Singing are the little birds,
Little birds —
Young and old. (2x)
Winter, winter,
We lie in the snow. (2x)
Snowballs we throw,
We throw —
One, two. (2x)

Passover, Passover,
We play with nuts. (2x)
Turning green are the blades of grass,
The blades of grass —
Regards from summer. (2x)

Sukos, Sukos,
We play with the green branches. (2x)
Cold winds are already whistling,
Already whistling —
The roof is wet with rain. (2x)

Children, children
Take one step at a time. (2x)
There may be thunder and lightning,
Lightning —
That doesn't bother us at all! (2x)

Zalman Kindishman sat and listened to the sweet voices of the children singing, and at that moment he would have given his whole life to be a child again — a small, four-year-old boy marching with them and singing with them that naïve childish song about summer and winter. But at this point his thoughts were interrupted by the drumming of the drummers, which indicated that the first part of the singing had ended, and now the meaning of the holiday of Lag B'Omer would be explained to the children from the dais. One by one the children in the older classes went up to the main dais, along with their parents, the kindergarten teachers, and other teachers. With that the second part was over. The nicest part was the third part, when the drumming began again and so did the children's play *Lag B'Omer*, in which at least 200 children participated.

Zalman Kindishman could not get his fill of looking at what his eyes saw. At that moment it seemed to him that he was reading a fabulous novel, that he was seeing the lovely dream of a child, or he was hearing a fairy tale that one told a child in a cradle before sleeping. The frequent drumming of the drums before each new part of the festivities woke him up from his dreams.

Actually, the sport part was now taking place. They were performing "Jacob's Ladder" — that is, a ladder of 500 young boys in the higher classes. They were standing one on top of the other, and when the last one — the 500th — was on top, a dazzling firecracker went off, and with that the entertainment came to an end.

It was beginning to get dark. The sun began to blush red. The children and their musical orchestras began to walk back into the woods, and from there the festivities continued on the river Ukrayina, where the Youth sport club performed their water numbers. Kindishman, however, was fatigued from everything he had seen, thought, and experienced, and he decided to return home to his hotel Frayfolk.

They parted on the aerotrain platform, which was near Freedom Square. Kindishman had to promise his friend Yugendboym that he would visit him tomorrow, when he would introduce him to his daughters and show him some very interesting things.

Each one entered the appropriate aerotrain. The airship spread its wings. Night fell on Edenia. It was a clear night. The sky was illuminated with stars, the streets with day lights. The tree-lined streets were filled with many people, young and old, who welcomed the Night Queen, dreaming, loving — a blessing rested on Edenia. This was the Creator blessing the lovely, blue, approaching summer night in Edenia, full of life and decorated with green branches.

XII

The night passed.

Dawn: the sky becomes reddish in the east. In one place it is as pink as the cheeks of a young child, and in another it turns violet. Zalman Kindishman is already up. He is, in general, not used to sleeping late. He has just come out of the bathtub, finished

his daily morning exercises, donned his early morning shirt, walked over to the window, which had been open the whole night — that is how he has slept for many years.

The early morning air is cool and fresh. A thin rain, blessed by God, had cleansed the night air, and on every tree the drops of the morning rain lay like golden tears. The songbird, which had trilled its morning song six times in his room, let him know that it was six o'clock. He stood looking at the quiet, sleeping streets — hushed, peaceful, without any noise, buses, aerotrains — everything was sleeping and dreaming.

Zalman could not fall asleep the past night. All the tableaux that he had seen in Freedom Square — the monuments, the marching children — everything had blended together to form one fantastic picture that prevented him from sleeping. It had been a long time since his spirit and imagination had been so worked up. One minute he was in Japan, the next in Egypt; one minute in St. Thomas, the next on the Corsican Islands. He had tossed and turned from one side to the other, and it wasn't until well after midnight that he managed to fall asleep.

* * *

Zalman Kindishman was standing by the window; his loose, early-morning shirt was open, his neck exposed. He felt very good after the morning bath that he had just taken in his room, which had every comfort. He stood there motionless, leaning on the railing of the window, deep in thought about the hot eastern land where some of his people lived independent lives in a country of their own, plowing their own fields, cutting the grapes of their own vineyards. Here he felt much better. He remembered a place in the Talmud that he had learned as a child, where it says: "There will come a time that the land of Israel will spread out; where the Jews will be — that will be the land of Israel."

"Yes," he thought, agreeing with himself, "is this then not the Promised Land, when I drink the wine of Gefinya, learn in my own language at school, build my life as I understand it, and do not feel the pressure of a supervisor, while in Palestine all the workers are still fettered." He continued these thoughts on that morning... When what did he suddenly see?

"Perhaps it is a dream? No!"

He wiped his eyes and felt his strong, white neck. Yes, he is awake and he is really seeing this.

"But who is she?" Where had he seen this familiar face before?

He hadn't been in Edenia for the last 25 years, and not in the outside world, yet how familiar that face was to him.

He directed all his powers of recollection to that one point: who is she, the one who like him got up early and stands there continuously looking into his open window? In vain he searched through and turned over his memory to recall where he had seen such a countenance, but it was to no avail. Not one woman whom he had met in his travels, whose acquaintance he had made, even vaguely resembled that sphinx, who, like him, stood by the open window wearing a simple, blue morning dress. After continuously staring at her, he could now distinguish and see more clearly the contours and lines of her face and figure.

She was of medium height, had blonde hair; her deep eyes were dark brown and resembled ripe cherries. Her round neck was dark brown, her shoulders bare. In some way she looked Spanish. He wanted to believe that this was a daughter of the old Marranos. She stood there and looked, and the longer she stared the more familiar she seemed to him.

But where had he seen her before?

At seven o'clock, the automatic telephone began to ring. He went over to the device and ordered breakfast. Along with the breakfast that arrived on a small ivory tray, there was a note written on a green leaf from a tree. The note was addressed to: "Unknown yet so familiar friend."

He trembled just reading the salutation. He went over to the window, but the figure was no longer there. He began to read further:

> If I am not mistaken, your family name is Kindishman; you are from Lithuania. You are the one of whom I have dreamt for a very long time. If you will give me a sign with your finger through the window or push the buttons N then B, I will tell you more. I am waiting by the telephone table.
>
> Your Nemi

Kindishman, taken aback, paced the room thinking: "Who could this Nemi be? Nemi dreamt of me? But what is the use of thinking?" He quickly pressed the N and the B. He heard a thin telephonic voice, so lovely, so familiar. Somehow this voice reminded him of his youth so long, long ago.

"Nemi, who are you?"

"I am coming to you," was the reply. "I am coming."

She did not enter as one ordinarily would through the door, but he heard the sound that he had heard yesterday — the whirring of an aerotrain, but this was something completely different — like a butterfly, she flew into his room. He looked at her in amazement. She pronounced each word clearly.

"Kindishman? Yes, Zalman, I think. Born in Lithuania. It is you!"

"Yes, it is I," Zalman replied, bewildered.

She kissed him on his high, smooth cheek, and continued talking. "I am the one whose window you often walked by — long, long ago, 35 years ago. My name never left your lips. I used to stand by my window, playing with my long, blonde braid, and look on as you walked back and forth like a sentinel on those bitterly cold winter nights. The electric streetlamp that was near our building would cast its broad rays, like pale moonlight, on your pale, wan face. I am Nemi."

Kindishman bowed his head. "You are the Nemi from Synagogue Street? That Nemi? Is it possible? You are still so young! So beautiful!"

"Yes, that is who I am."

She took his hand, led him as one leads a small child to the soft, plush loveseat and sat him down. And after a minute's silence, she took something out of her bosom.

"You see," she said, turning towards him, "I have carried you right here near my heart. I didn't believe you were alive. I didn't dare hope to meet you, but I still preserve

the memory of a poem you once wrote about me. Every morning, the moment I open my eyes, it is my prayer. And every night when I lay down on my bed, those are the words I say before falling asleep. Here! Read!"

She handed him a shiny, yet fragrant piece of paper — a page torn out of an old magazine, which had printed one of his first youthful poems.

> Does she even know that someone, a pale young man,
> Loves her so purely that I would die for her?
> Does she know of the one who wanders the streets,
> Who, out of love, kisses the threshold of her door? . . .

* * *

"Yes," she said, "I knew," continuing to speak as she caressed his handsome, somewhat gray head with her delicate, thin fingers. "Yes, I knew of your love, and I loved you too strongly to be able to reveal my love to you. The truest love is the one that burns itself to ashes — one's heart and soul in agony. As you hurt, so did I. And I continued to love and to suffer."

"Have you then never married?" he suddenly asked her.

"No!" she replied firmly. "I kept my love only for you, and if it weren't destined for me to give my love to you, there is only one other who would have received my love — and that is Black Death! But my heart told me: You are like the bird that left the nest, who was paired with another bird, and one would think that would be good, but no. It wanted to return to its original love."

Kindishman continued to sit as before, his head bowed in thought: "But is this now for real? Nemi! Nemi! The proud Nemi?"

"Yes, that is who I am!" she firmly declared. "That is who I am, and if you require more proof, well, here you have another proof!"

She quickly unbuttoned her morning dress, and before him he saw her naked, alabaster breasts, full and proud as if they belonged to an eighteen-year-old princess: "Here, read what is etched on my breast — Zalman Kindishman 1909, Lithuania."

He fell upon her passionately seething and beating heart. She placed his head upon her breast. She embraced him with her bare hands and kissed him for a very long time.

* * *

After having lived a healthy, normal life, and now being so excited and experiencing an inner trembling, he burst into violent sobs. He wept like a small child without stopping, all the while kissing her body, her chest, her breasts, her neck... kissing her and crying at the same time.

"Why are you crying?" she asked after having been silent for a long time.

"My joy is overpowering; the wine is too frothy, and I am afraid that this will be the final hour of my life, because an Indian witch once said: 'You will wander all over the world; you will wander for a very long time until you come to a land of eternal light. There true happiness will appear to you, the happiness that is called Love. The first day,

you will be overwhelmed; the second day, love will intoxicate you; the third day, you will weep for joy — your happiness will be limitless! Day and night, your joy will keep you in her arms. On the fourth day, she will kiss you: this will be the kiss of death, and both of you, naked, unclothed, locked in each other's arms, you will both die of this kiss of love.' This is what the Indian witch Saka-Siki told me."

She suddenly tore herself from his arms and as if responding to someone's question said, "I am coming right now." She put on her wings, and like a butterfly flew out the open window. The fanning of her wings could still be heard, but she was no longer there.

Kindishman remained alone.

He sat down on the rocking chair near the window. The day, the noisy day, was already in full swing. Up in the air, the airships were flying; down below on the ground — buses, cars, and trams were rushing by one after the other. He tried to remember what had just happened to him, but it was impossible to understand. Could it be that it had been a dream? But it can't be. The room was still redolent of her scent, her fresh aroma. It had been she, Nemi!

But where was she now? Why had she left so suddenly? And to whom had she gone? These were the thoughts that plagued him. It was the telephone that snapped him out of his present emotional state. It lit up, and the speaking began:

"Friend Kindishman?"

"Yes, who is this?"

"Khane Yugendboym."

"Good morning to you and to your whole family. What is it, my dear young lady?"

"Good morning, why aren't you here with us yet? Why are you so late? We are waiting for you to come, as you promised my father yesterday. You'll come right away? Yes?"

"I am coming right now, lovely Khane."

He got up from the chair and decided to go to his friend Yugendboym, with whom he had passed such a pleasurable day yesterday. But at this point a question arose in his mind: should he tell him about Nemi's visit, or should he leave it for another time?

For another time was what he decided. He left the room and got in the elevator that led to the street.

XIII

"Oh, how happy we are to meet you," Yugendboym's daughters said, greeting Kindishman. "We have been waiting for you all morning."

Kindishman was in a happy mood this morning. He told them stories about life in Palestine. He showed them many fantastic games from the eastern lands. They went into the garden. Yugendboym's daughters, eighteen-year-old Khane and the older one, Yehudis, each took an arm, and playfully they went into the garden and threw themselves down upon the green grass at the same time. Khane said, "Friend Kindishman, now lying here on the fresh green grass, tell me something, especially about your youth. When you were young, life was completely different, and Father told us so many inter-

esting things about you that it would be quite ridiculous if you yourself did not tell us something."

"Certainly, certainly," Yehudis added.

When the word "youth" was mentioned, Kindishman's heart quivered. He became sad. Khane and Yehudis both noticed the alteration that showed on Kindishman's face. He became paler and paler.

"What is happening to you?" both of them, suddenly quite fearful, asked.

"It's nothing, dear friends. Let's all take a little ride to Green Garden," he said quietly. They got up from the grass, but Kindishman remained lying on the grass, fatigued.

"Let me stay here a while by myself," he said.

They left the patch of grass where they had lain and went into the leafy gazebo, uneasy due to Kindishman's current mood.

They sat a while in the gazebo. There had always been a small library there of "garden literature" as they called it, which consisted of light stories and pieces that lent themselves to reading aloud. There was also a piano there, where the best musical pieces could be played. Khane began to play Einhorn's sonnets.

Kindishman got up. His previous cheerful mood had returned to him. He went to them in the gazebo. He sat down near Yehudis. He listened to Einhorn's sonnets, and his soul became peaceful.

"Oh, what a wonderful poet he is," Yehudis said. "He is my favorite poet. Is he still alive?"

"Yes, he is now in Palestine. A new opera of his, *The Lithuanian Daughter*, is now being staged. The words and music are by the composer Akhronson. I met him a long, long time ago."

"You know what?" Khane spoke up. "Let's go with our new friend to Professor Shvartzvald's lecture at our university today."

"Whose lecture?" Kindishman asked.

"Professor Shimon Shvartsvald. He's our favorite lecturer. He lectures on Yiddish literature."

"Professor Shvartsvald? He has to be about sixty years old, right?"

"Yes," Khane replied. "Do you know him then?"

"He's an old friend of mine. At the time that I met your father, I also met the then young and talented Shvartsvald. About whom is he speaking today? Is it possible to find out?"

"Why not? Today it is an interesting topic: the great Peretz and what his contemporaries thought of him."

"Yes, you know," Kindishman interrupted, "we have not yet seen the Peretz monument. That would be the greatest injustice — to have been in Edenia for a few days already and not visit the monument of our great national genius Yitskhok Leybush Peretz."

At that moment Yugendboym entered.

"Now, my friends," he said, turning to Kindishman, "I am ready and free, and we can continue the city excursion we did not finish yesterday."

"Our friend Kindishman wants to go to Peretz Street," Khane replied to her father.

"That is excellent!" Yugendboym agreed. And the whole little company decided to go to the Peretz monument.

* * *

Kindishman stood near the bronze statue of Peretz and with his eyes bored into the profound, cleverly prophetic gaze of the one who — even many years ago — foresaw that upon which he now looked with his own eyes.

He read the inscription on the monument. What was written there was:

"Light and knowledge — spirit and beauty,

If not higher"

Y. L. Peretz

He bowed deeply, stood that way for quite a while. His walking companions, Yugendboym and his daughters, looked on, amazed at Kindishman's pure devotion. He was very lost in his own thoughts.

"What are you thinking, my friend?" Yugendboym said, interrupting his thoughts.

"Yes, there is a lot to think about," he replied, and began to tell him something:

"This happened long, long ago. This very one who is looking at us with his eagle eye, with his right hand lifted over his eyes and staring into the distant horizon — he was still alive and had been invited to the great capital city of P. to read his work. He arrived and in a large beautiful hall read his Khasidish stories, the artistic pearls that the fanatics among us even now in the schools of Palestine still read and teach to their children. He read his first short story to a packed audience, the second he read to a half-empty hall. By the third story, only several of his very close friends and critics remained. Then he began to spin a yarn: the story was about a golden future, which only he and the few who were still listening (and felt his self-effacement) understood."

"Were people at that time so boorish that upon hearing him read his own brilliant stories they left the hall? How could this have happened?" Yugendboym's daughters asked incredulously.

"Unfortunately, yes. There were such people, and at that time they were in the majority."

The clock struck one. Now was the time to go to the university to hear the lecture. Khane and Yehudis turned to Kindishman, "Let's go, and you will meet your old friend. You will see the young people who fill the large university auditorium, not to hear Peretz, because we are, unfortunately, too late for that, but to hear about him. When we hear his stories read, that too is a festive occasion for us, especially when they are read by our favorite Professor Shvartsvald."

All four of them boarded a bus, sat down, and asked to be driven to the Jewish University in the Cultural Quarter.

They arrived at a large, tall edifice built of concrete and marble blocks, in an old Jewish style. There were two columns. On the columns were old, eastern etchings with fiery, ever-illuminated letters, which spelled out:

Jewish University — Built by the Jewish Community

They went into the glass-domed auditorium, which was fully packed with listeners: male and female students filled the great hall. They passed through the columns. He heard that well-known name. Here and there groups of students were carrying on hairsplitting discussions about Peretz's symbolism. Once Kindishman, Yugendboym, and his daughters were in their seats, they could hear the discussions of those who sat nearby.

"And I say," one pretty brunette said fervently to her girlfriend, "Vaysenberg's dramas are like clumsy sculptures. They do not have the light, childlike quality of Asch, and that is why I say that Asch is a storyteller and a sculptor, but not a dramatist. I am not even mentioning the young ones like Feldman, Blimling, Leah Levinsky, and that whole school of young people."

"I don't agree with that," the other girl responded openly. "Asch's earnings are enormous. Just read Elison's 24th volume with his overview '50 years of Asch's writings,' and you'll see that even though he is not one of his ardent followers — he greatly diverges from Shvartsvald — nevertheless he finds that Asch occupies the second place in literature — after Peretz. I am not speaking about the young genius Blimling. About him we cannot yet speak."

"Have you read, Ruth," an excited young man of about eighteen asked, running over to the charming, hairsplitting young brunette, "have you read Blimling's new poem in *Waterfall*?"

"No."

"It's excellent. Stop in this evening, and you'll get the latest issue of *Waterfall*."

There was a lot of noise, a tumult. All of those gathered there milled around finding their seats. A man of average height, wearing gold-toned glasses, went up to the podium. He had long hair tousled in curls and wore a stiff, white shirtfront. The thousand people in the audience became quiet as Professor Shvartsvald, the darling of young Yiddish Edenia, began his lecture on the great Peretz.

* * *

The applause was thunderous when he finished reading, and he was carried out on the arms of his listeners. Flowers were tossed in the air, which was customary for students to do for their beloved professor. The air was filled with shouts: "Long live our rich Yiddish culture!" "May we long remember our national genius Peretz!" "Long live Shvartzvald! Hurrah! Hurrah!" And these cries also echoed in the street around the university.

It was almost evening. When they went out to University Street, they found themselves not far from Tower Place, about which Yugendboym had told him while they were sitting in Freedom Square.

"That will be enough for today," Kindishman said, turning to his friends. "I will absorb too much joy in one day." His eyes were full of tears. They were tears of joy brought on by everything that he had seen in and around the university. "Tomorrow, my friends, we will visit Tower Place."

"Well, if our friend Kindishman prefers tomorrow, we will put it off until tomorrow."

* * *

Kindishman returned to his room. He was now overcome by a strong longing to see Nemi. He went over to the window. He hoped that he would once again see her there, but to no avail. He stood there for quite a while, and no one appeared. He went over to the telephone. He remembered that she had told him to push N and B. That is what he did, but no one responded. He became very restless and decided that he would visit Tower Place today.

* * *

On the corner of Shevchenko Street he caught the roof train and took that to the Tower of Edenia. First he went to the library, began to read one of his old, beloved writers, Schopenhauer, and went into the garden. At that moment, he really wanted to run into Nemi, but it wasn't she whom he met there. Actually, there were no women at all there that day. He went from the library to the Art Museum and looked at the figure sculptures of Kritsenshteyn, Lissitsky, and Roza Fayngold; then he went to the top level. The door closed behind him, and he looked for a very long time, thought for a long time, and got lost in his ruminations.

XIV

A day or two passed, and Kindishman was nowhere to be seen. Nemi came to his room a few times, but she didn't find him in. Yugendboym and his family were very surprised that he had not come to see them for several days. Their surprise turned to great apprehension. They asked around for him in all the public institutions but received no reply. Could it be that he had left without saying goodbye? Impossible. He was too polite to have left without telling anyone. And sadness descended on the Yugendboym household. They all felt that something heavy was pressing on their souls; a hidden fear was evident on all their faces — on Yugendboym's and also his daughters'.

Suddenly one evening, the light lit up on the telephone table. Yugendboym was sitting at the table; both his voice and his hands were trembling. He felt a premonition in his heart, as if he were about to hear a piece of news. The call was from the Jewish Community Office:

"Today at 7 o'clock in the evening, as the sun was setting, a young man of about 45 was found dead in the garden of the Edenia Museum. He had black and gray hair, was clean shaven, and in the wallet that he had with him, a business card was found:

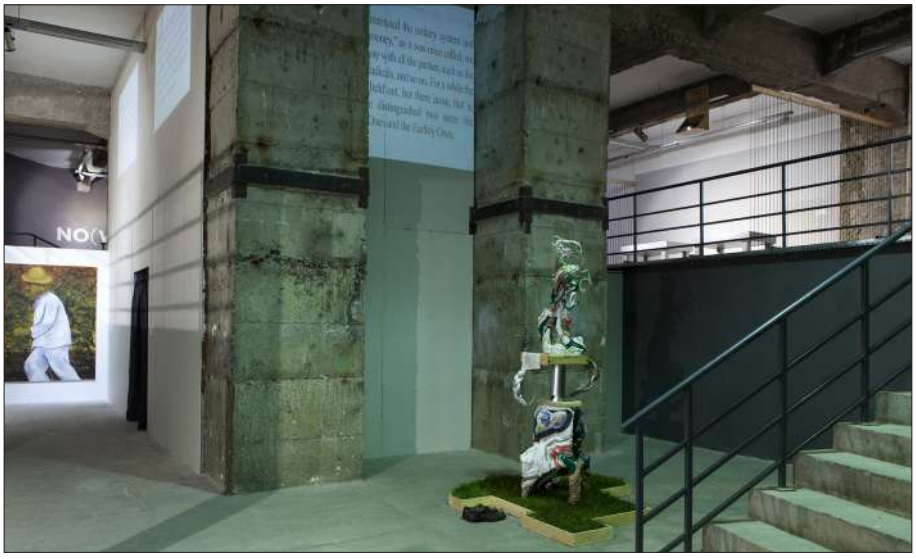
Zalman Kindishman
Chairman of the Worldwide
Statistics Committee

"Upon further inspection, your address was found. There were also many papers and manuscripts. Please come immediately to the Statistics Department of Births and Deaths in the Jewish Community Town Hall. The cremation will be tomorrow at 11 o'clock in the morning."

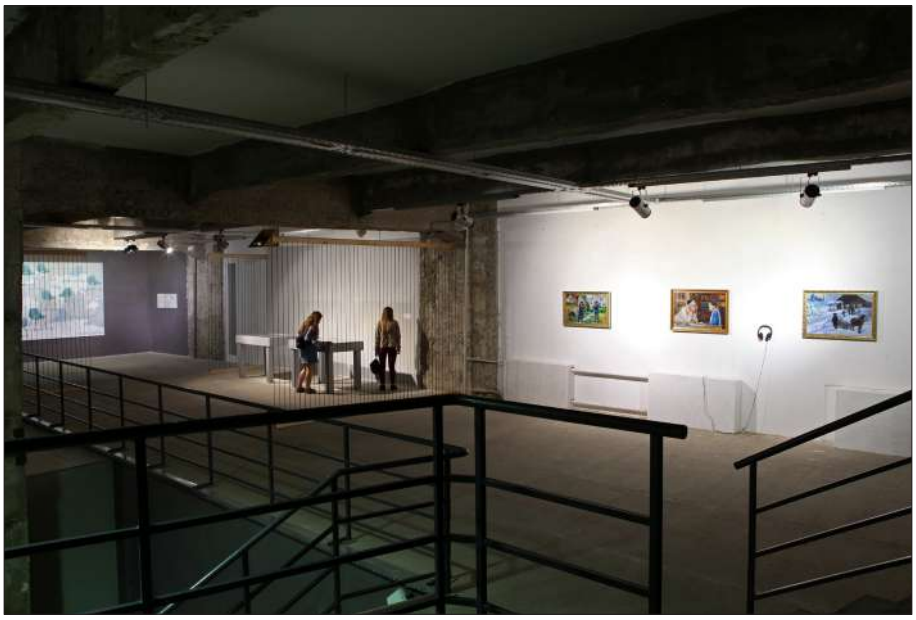
The whole household stood around the telephone. From seeing how pale their father's face had become, they understood that something unusual had just happened, and they trembled like autumn leaves on a tree. Yugendboym fell off his chair and was barely able to respond to his children's questions.

Yes, Kindishman was dead. And someone added, "Also in the city of the future his death will be known."

Curandi Katz, Several Attempts at Sewing the Borders
of Homelands and Promised Lands, 2010 – ongoing
and
Babi Badalov, NO(W) FUTURE, 2017



Ifeoma Anyaeji, Ezuhu ezu – (in[complete]), 2017
and
Yuri Leiderman, Self-portrait in Ukrainian Costume, 2013



Concrete Dates Collective, Three Paintings in the Exhibition, 2017
and
Agnès Thurnauer, Untitled, 2008

Haim Sokol, Testimony, 2015. Two channel video installation, 140 mins