DAVID FRISHMAN:

The Critic as Artist

by

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FOREWORD

After preliminary conversations with Dr. Ezra Spicehandler of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, I undertook a consideration of the theme: "David Frishman's Short Stories as a Positive Manifestation of his Program for the Europeanization of Modern Hebrew Literature".

With this in mind, I began to read through the three volumes of Frishman's short stories (Warsaw and New York, 1929 edition), and was soon deeply impressed with the fact that these creative works were clearly intended to do more than merely entertain the Hebrew reading public, or earn royalties for their author. This initial observation became a firm conviction by the time I had completed my analysis of all the stories, and it was therefore no surprise to learn that the short story was one of the first areas in Hebrew literature in which David Frishman wielded a profound influence over the younger writers.

The research student desiring to study any phase of Frishman's literary legacy enjoys the advantage of an abundance of source material. Frishman himself was a prolific writer and his works fill nine volumes (Warsaw and New York, 1929 edition).

In addition, he was the subject of many articles published in contemporary publications. The luminaries of the Hebrew and Yiddish literary world tendered him a jubilee celebration in 1913, at a time when such testimonials were anything but a mere formality. On this occasion, many reviews, critical articles and laudatory essays were written about him. These have been preserved and constitute a priceless storehouse of information to which the researcher may refer in the pursuit of his investigations. Since Frishman's death in 1922, numerous articles have been published, evaluating the man and his work. For the most part, however, these have appeared in Hebrew periodicals and literary journals exclusively.

The creative portion of this thesis concerns itself with a detailed and extensive study of (a) -- the important themes which Frishman touched upon in his stories; (b) -- his treatment of these themes, from a stylistic and literary point of view; and, (c) -- how these themes, and Frishman's treatment of them, contributed to the improvement of Hebrew literary standards. Wherever possible, the arguments put forward in this thesis have been documented by liberal quotations from the stories under consideration.

It would be impossible for me to adequately express my deep indebtedness to Dr. Ezra Spicehandler, who was my moderator and advisor throughout the many months I was engaged in this project. He was the guiding spirit behind this work, and his many helpful suggestions regarding style and revision have been of inestimable value.

I wish, also, to acknowledge my thanks to Mrs. Susan Tabor, the assistant librarian, who inconvenienced herself on countless occasions to help me obtain the books I needed. A final word of thanks is also owing to Miss Libby Warsaw, whose kind assistance in the typing of this thesis is deeply appreciated.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

David Frishman once said that if a catastrophe were to destroy Jewish life altogether (as, in the meantime, has already happened in Eastern Europe), it would be possible to reconstitute the small-town life of East European Jewry in the nineteenth century on the basis of Mendele's writings.[1] The history of modern Hebrew literature forms an extremely instructive page in the history of the Jewish people. It is especially interesting from the point of view of social psychology, furnishing, as it does, valuable documents which mirror the thought and action of our forefathers living in Eastern Europe. In order to better understand the historical development and the growth of the conditions that molded their lives, as well as the lives of those writers who portrayed their way of life, we must familiarize ourselves with the forces that shaped their world. It is therefore necessary to begin with a brief description of the social, economic and cultural status of Russian Jewry, as well as of the Haskalah movement, so that we may be better equipped to understand David Frishman's creative writings, and to evaluate them in their proper perspective.

A. A Short Survey of East European Jewish Life from 1855 to 1905

1. Policy of the Russian Government toward its Jewish Subjects

In 1855, Alexander II ascended the throne of the Czars. After the Crimean War, which had exposed the rottenness of the old order, a fresh atmosphere swept through Russia. The institution of serfdom was abolished, but the Jewish question, which meant the question of equal citizenship for the Jews, was not placed in the line of the great reforms, but was solved fragmentarily and within narrowly circumscribed limits. Although a number of reforms were carried through at this time, no radical changes were made in the condition of the Jewish population, and the most serious disabilities to which the Jews were subjected in previous reigns still remained in force. Nevertheless, the laws limiting the residence and occupations of the Jews were enforced with less rigor.

The Coronation Manifesto of August 26, 1856 abolished the drafting of Jewish minors into the army (Cantonists). Jews were placed on the same basis with the rest of the population in the matter of military service, although some discriminations still remained. The government made a breach in the Pale of Settlement by opening the forbidden interior of the country to wealthy merchants and university graduates, as well as to certain classes of

artisans and skilled workers. Since these privileged persons were permitted to bring along with them a number of employees and attendants, the number of Jews living outside of the Pale steadily increased, amounting to almost a million by the year 1881. In addition, certain minor residential restrictions within the Pale itself, were removed. The disgraceful ancient privilege of several cities, such as Zhitomir and Wilna, entitling them to exclude the Jews from certain streets, was revoked.

Jews were admitted to the legal profession and even to the judiciary, and could hold offices in the local councils, or Zemstvos. Little by little, another dismal aspect of the past began to disappear. In the beginning of Alexander's reign, the conversion of Jews was still encouraged by the grant of monetary assistance to converts. In 1864, however, the government came to the conclusion that it was not worth rewarding deserters, and the policy was discontinued.

The emperor's aim in treating the Jews in this milder fashion seems to have been to blend them in with the rest of the population. Instead of relying on conversion, the government used enlightenment as its chief policy against Jewish separatism. Indeed, the reign of Alexander II marked the high point of the Russian Haskalah movement, and a steady Russification took place, especially among the wealthy.

However, a decided drift toward political reaction in the second part of Alexander's reign also affected the specific Jewish problem. After having carried out the first great reforms, the government considered the task of Russian regeneration to be completed, and stubbornly refused a constitution and political liberty. A breach thus arose between the government and the progressive element of the Russian people. A complete emancipation of the Jews was out of the question in this atmosphere of growing official reaction. The rise of a Jewish plutocracy also served to aggravate the situation by arousing the envy of the non-Jewish industrialists and merchants, and there were loud out-cries against the Jews as exploiters.

In 1871 there was a pogrom in Odessa, an unusual event in those days. For three days hordes of Greeks and Russians gave vent to their mob instincts, demolishing, burning and robbing Jewish property -- undisturbed by the presence of police and troops who did nothing to stop the atrocities. In this stark fashion was the last decade of Alexander's reign inaugurated. In 1878-1879, a ritual murder trial took place at Kutais. The case ended with the acquittal of all the accused, but the agitation surround-ing the case left a dangerous sediment in the Russian press.

With the assassination of Alexander II in 1881,

Alexander III ascended the throne of Russia. Already as crown prince, he had shown strong anti-Jewish prejudices. When he came to power, he was under the influence of his former tutor, Pobyedonostzev, who, as procurator of the Holy Synod, was a bitter enemy of the Jews. The beginning of Alexander's reign was marked by a wave of bloody anti-Jewish riots, which aroused a storm of protest from abroad. Starting in the spring of 1881 and continuing into the following year, the pogroms spread to over one hundred and sixty[2] cities and towns within one month. In 1882 the government superimposed a new set of restrictions upon the already complicated legislation which hedged in Russian Jewry. These were the so-called May Laws, or, "Temporary Rules."

Each succeeding year witnessed added insult and injury. Reversing the policy of his predecessor, Alexander III restricted the number of students of the Jewish faith in the secondary schools and universities to ten percent within the Pale and to a still smaller proportion outside of it. The repeated expulsions from the villages within the Pale and from the capitals and large cities outside it had a disastrous effect on all of Jewish life. Wholesale expulsions of Jews took place in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov and other forbidden centers. The effect of these expulsions upon the commercial life of the country was so disastrous, that the big Russian merchants

of Moscow and Kharkov appealed to the government to relax the restrictions surrounding the visits of Jews to these cities. These persecutions resulted in a mass emigration movement to America, as well as a small but steady stream of Jewish emigration to Palestine.

A number of laws passed during that period were of such a nature as to admit of but one explanation, namely, the desire to insult and humiliate the Jew. It was forbidden for Jews to Russianize their names, or even to correct legitimate diminutives of Hebrew names to their proper forms (ex., Yosele to Joseph). In the nineties, there were continual expulsions from the governments of the interior of Russia. The decree of 1880, which had sanctioned the residence outside the Pale of Settlement of all those Jews who had lived there previously, was repealed. Alexander III died in 1894 after a reign which lasted fourteen years. Writes Dubnow: "Having begun with pogroms, it ended with expulsions."[3]

Nicholas II, the reactionary son of Alexander III, made it clear at the start that he would be as uncompromising as his father. He surrounded himself with reactionaries and initiated new restrictions. He barred the Jews from the liquor trade, and thus robbed hundreds of thousands of them of their scanty livelihood. Through this and other measures, he brought about the economic collapse

of Russian Jewry. In addition, pogroms flared up again at the end of the nineteenth century (Shpola, 1897; Kantakuzenka and Nikolaev, 1899). These increased in intensity and culminated in the Kishinev massacre of Easter, 1903. This latter horror evoked cries of unbelieving protest throughout Russia and from the civilized countries of the world.

Thus, the hostility of the Czarist regime toward its Jewish subjects continued unabated, restricting their residence rights, choking off their few remaining sources of income, humiliating and degrading them in every way, and slaughtering them in unofficially provoked riots and pogroms.[4]

2. Economic Life of Russian Jewry

The economic status of the Russian Jews was always very unstable, and even after 1855, the year with which this survey begins, the ascension of Alexander II to the throne brought with it no amelioration of their economic position. Their poverty was aggravated both by the new rural economy resulting from the liberation of the serfs, and by the industrialization of Russia, which began in the fifties of the nineteenth century. In the 1840's, a special study of the Jewish communities in the Pale showed that only three out of a hundred Jews possessed capital of any consequence, while the rest led a half-starved,

miserable existence. A government committee appointed in the eighties to investigate the condition of the Jews reported that 90 percent of them constituted "a proletariat living from hand to mouth, in poverty and under the most trying and unhygienic conditions."[5]

The density of the Jewish population as compared to that of the non-Jewish in the same area is an index to their relatively greater poverty. The Jews lived in miserable congestion and squalor. These conditions were due to the fact that space was restricted, and that restricted areas were in the most populated sections of the Russian Empire. Because of the smaller number of Jews in the Ukraine and more favorable natural conditions, the economic position of the Jews was always somewhat better in that region than in the north-western provinces. But even in the Ukraine, poverty was the common lot. The concentration of Jews in the cities and towns of the Pale intensified the demoralizing competition and poverty there.

The extent of Jewish poverty is indicated by the statistics of tax delinquencies. "In the years 1855-57, the government was obliged to cancel the taxes of the cities of the province of Grodno, where the population consisted mostly of Jews, because of the inability of those cities to make any payment."[6] This was due not only to their poverty, but also to the discriminatory extra taxes that

were imposed upon them.

The liberation of the serfs curtailed the income of the landowners. They, therefore, had to dispense with the services of many Jews who acted as middlemen and sales agents and managers for their large estates. Numerous Jewish innkeepers and coachmen who had made a living from coach travelers lost their source of livelihood as a result of the expansion of rail and steam facilities for transportation. "It should be noted that though these social and industrial reforms had an unsettling effect upon the already rickety economic structure of Russian Jewry, the changes could have been beneficial had the Pale been removed and opportunity given to Jews to adapt themselves to the new conditions."[7] The economic position of the Jews deteriorated steadily.

Under Nicholas II, the economic structure of Russian Jewry collapsed completely. The range of Jewish economic endeavor had been narrowed more and more. By establishing an imperial liquor monopoly, the Russian Government closed the avenue of the liquor traffic to two hundred thousand Jews,[8] without removing the special restrictions which barred their entrance to other lines of endeavor.

Observers of economic life in the Pale called attention to the frightful increase of pauperism in that region. In 1897, the number of destitute Jews applying

for help before the Passover festival, reached unheard of proportions, amounting in Odessa, Wilna, Minsk, Kovno, and other cities, to forty and even fifty percent of the total Jewish population. The crop failures of 1899 and 1900 in the south of Russia resulted in a terrible famine among the impecunious Jewish masses. The dawn of the twentieth century found the economic structure of Russian Jewry in a state of complete collapse.[9]

3. The Inner Life of Russian Jewry

How could the ghettoes of Russia and Poland endure this relentless pressure applied by a hostile government? The answer is, of course, that many Jewish men and women did not. Many an individual lost his spiritual, physical and moral equilibrium through the constant assault upon his nerves, and his rights as a human being. On the whole, however, they resisted heroically. Their courage was strengthened by the sympathy of Jews the world over, as well as by the more tangible evidences of their co-religionists' assistance.

But the decisive factor was a form of inner self-defense, a will to survive. Communities made every effort to maintain their various communal institutions. These included charity organizations, schools, yeshivos and synagogues. The ghetto was not fallow. The Russian

constitution granted freedom of assembly, and the lively Jewish spirit made rich use of this liberty. People did not gather for religious matters only. Secular activities also found their way into the ghetto.

Apart from a handful of millionaires in the capitals, who did not concern themselves about the Jewish future, three groups could be distinguished in Russian Jewish life. There were the large mass of pietists, loyal to the advice of their rabbis, and convinced that they could master their fate by reciting psalms. Second, there were the middle class activists, who likewise burned with faith, but were convinced they they had to take their fate into their own hands. Their ideal was Zionism -- a Hebrew Renaissance on the soil of their forefathers. This nationalist movement was a very important factor in the survival of Russian Jewry, and it gave them a certain immunity to despair.

Third, the swelling number of manual workers gave rise to a growing Jewish proletarian class. Jews in this segment of the population formed various groups, which were joined together in 1897 to form the Bund. For these Jews, the primacy of religion yielded to secular demands. The awakening of a Jewish proletarian class consciousness set the masses in motion and resulted in demands for freedom. The instrument for reaching the masses was the Yiddish

language, and Yiddish now made great gains in importance and in cultural value. Yiddish became the language of socialistic journalism.

In 1897, the year in which the Bund was formed, the Zionist movement was also organized. It, too, sought to influence the masses; it, too, was unconcerned about religious traditions; it, too, spoke for national demands. However, its interpretation of 'national' was different. Unlike the Bund, Zionism avoided Russian political movements. Public officials noticed this, and favored Zionism. An internecine war was waged between the Bund and Zionism. Socialism and Zionism alike strove to become popular movements.

Among the movements which arose at the end of the nineteenth century, there were, in addition to the two already mentioned, three other movements which produced a new outlook on the national Jewish problem. Territorialism was one of these. It was born out of the Zionist organization, and like political Zionism, it, too, was advanced as a solution to the question of Jewish suffering, in its practical aspect. Another movement was Spiritual Zionism, so called to distinguish it from Political (Herzlian) Zionism. It was offered as an alternative to political Zionism, which was born as a reaction against anti-Semitism. It was Ahad Ha-Am who delineated the doctrine of "Spiritual Zionism."

Whereas both political and spiritual Zionism had their roots in the same common ground, namely, in the conviction that the Jewish people had no possibility of continuing its existence as a normal national entity in the lands of the Diaspora, the theory of National-Cultural Autonomism took as its point of departure the historic fact that at all times, with a few brief exceptions, the Jewish Diaspora represented a national organism which compensated for the absence of a political or territorial unity by the greater intensity of its social and autonomous life. Unlike political Zionism, or Territorialism, National-Cultural Autonomism sought to solve the problem of Judaism, not the problem of the Jew. In this sense, it had the same goal as Spiritual Zionism, which sought to solve the problem of both the Jew and Judaism.

The sledge-hammer of Russian reaction which had descended with crushing force upon the vast community of the six million Russian Jews did not shatter the national organism of Jewry. Instead, the Jewry of Russia showed the world that it was endowed with indestructible spiritual energy. The internal chaos had given way to the inner regeneration of Russian Jewry, both in its national and social life.[10]

B. A Brief History of the Development of Modern Hebrew Literature in Russia

1. The Dawn of the Russian Haskalah

The middle of the nineteenth century saw Russia take the lead in the development of modern Hebrew literature. Lithuania became the center of this activity. Isaac Baer Levinsohn (1788-1860) was one of those early pioneers who blazed the path for the later development of Hebrew literature in Russia. A man of considerable secular information and critical understanding, Levinsohn was called "the Russian Mendelsohn." In 1812, he settled in Brody, Galicia, and made the acquaintance of Isaac Erter, Joseph Perl, S. L. Rapoport, the historian, and Nachman Krochmal. He attached himself to the circle of Maskilim there. His thinking was greatly influenced by his experiences in Brody, and when he returned to his native Kremenetz, he decided to devote his energies to the educational needs of the Jews of Russia. In his "Teudah B'Yisroel" (1828), he challenged the Jews in Russia to learn foreign languages, and to acquire secular knowledge. Levinsohn really belongs in a history of the emancipation of the Russian Jews, rather than in a history of literature. He also published a book called "Beth Yehudah" (1839), his chief work, which was the first attempt at Jewish scientific investigation in Russia.

Contemporaneous with Levinsohn was Mordecai Aaron Gunzburg (1795-1846). His influence upon Hebrew literature is of special importance. Until his day, Hebrew was dominated by the style and spirit of the Talmud. The literature of his times was overloaded with puns and alliterations and pedantic allusions. Gunzburg was the first, perhaps with the exception of Erter, to try to remedy this evil. He wrote simply and concisely. Because of this, he was accused of attempting to "Germanize" the Hebrew language.

Although he was a prolific writer, few of Gunzburg's books and essays deal with what we now call Jewish Science. He was determined to teach through the vehicle of Hebrew. Gunzburg created a realistic Hebrew prose style, and he also helped to create a Hebrew reading public. His readers were repelled by his realism at first, but the second generation of Lithuanian writers overcame this difficulty, when they introduced romanticism into Hebrew literature.

Two writers of note who headed the literary procession in Lithuania were Abraham Baer Lebensohn (1794-1880), and his son Micah Joseph Lebensohn (1828-1852). When the elder Lebensohn published his "Shire S'fat Kodesh" in Wilna, in 1852, he was hailed as the "father of poetry". He also published works on grammar and exegesis. Micah Joseph Lebensohn, who died tragically at the age of 24, embodied the romantic spirit in the poetry of that period.

His "Shire Bat Zion" (1851) and "Kinor Bat Zion" (1852, published posthumously) show that Hebrew poetry suffered the loss of a truly great lyrical poet in his untimely death.

2. The Flowering of Haskalah Hebrew Literature

The fullest development of the Haskalah in Russia took place during the reign of Alexander II. In the liberalism that characterized the first years of his reign, modern Hebrew writers placed themselves on the side of the government. At about this time, we notice an efflourescence of Hebrew publications, as well as the creation of a Hebrew press. This is not difficult to explain when we read the following note by Jacob S. Raisin: "Permission was granted to publish Jewish periodicals in Russian, Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish (1860), and on April 26, 1862, the restriction was removed that limited Jewish publishing houses and printing-presses to Wilna and Zhitomir."[11]

Numerous periodicals now began to appear in Russia. "Ha-Maggid" (1856) was published in Lyck, on the Russian-Polish border, but was intended for a reading public in Russia. In 1860, Samuel Joseph Fuenn began publishing the periodical "Ha-Karmel" in Wilna. This magazine was primarily devoted to the Science of Judaism.

Alexander Zederbaum founded "Ha-Meliz" in Odessa in 1860. This journal was the first to appear in Russia itself, and together with its Yiddish supplement, "Kol Mevasser", became the principle organ of the movement for emancipation. "Ha-Zefirah" was edited by Chaim Zelig Slonimsky in Warsaw, beginning in 1862. In 1869, Peretz Smolenskin's "Ha-Shachar" appeared in Vienna, but had most of its readers in Russia.

This growing Hebrew press exercised considerable influence on the Jews of Russia. It spread knowledge and Hebrew literature. In the hands of the defenders of the new order, it became an effective instrument. The rationalism of earlier Hebrew-writing Haskalists now gave way almost completely to a remorseless struggle between the spokesmen for Jewish reform, and the religious fanatics. We are given the following graphic description of Jewish life at that time: " ... Jewish society was divided into two antagonistic camps. There were, on the one hand, the Maskilim, who formed the Jewish aristocracy, ... and on the other hand, there was the bulk of the Jewish people, clinging to ancient traditions, fanatic, superstitious, opposed to any innovation, looking at the Maskilim with suspicion, and persecuting them whenever possible. This was the atmosphere that surrounded Hebrew literature, and these were influences and tendencies by which it was swayed ..."[12]

The educated classes, conscious of the support of the authorities, became aggressive, boldly attacking the traditionalists. They followed the example set by the Russian realistic literature of their day. What was the condition of Russian literature at that time? "Russia had just passed through a period of literary reaction, which had ended with the death of Nicholas I (1855), and was striking out in an entirely different direction. Writers such as Herzen, Pisarev, Dobrolubov, Tschernishevsky, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky (in his first years), and Tolstoy were laying their impress upon it and were leading it on the path of radicalism. And this radicalism did not express itself in mere revolutionary ideas. It was -- particularly in the case of the critics Pisarev and Tschernishevsky -- of a coarser fibre. It constituted what is popularly known as nihilism and became, from the point of view of literature, a gross materialism which discouraged poetic activities, and which esteemed ... Buchner's "Force and Matter" far above the creations of a Pushkin.

"Among the Russians themselves, this spirit penetrated every phase of life: social, religious and political. It is true that political conditions were of a nature such as to curb any open attack upon the established order; but the revolutionary spirit asserted itself in spite

of all restraint and persecution, cropping out through every crevice and cranny in life and in literature. When its influence reached the Jewish Pale, however, it found but one native element which it could combat and upon which it could force reforms -- religion. Since the political and economic, and, in a measure, even the social life of the Jews was being created for them by an external force .... there remained only the religious life that was of their own making and that they could fashion at their will."[13]

Thus, the Hebrew writers of the day were influenced by the Russian writers, and both the Russian writers and the Hebrew writers were responsive to the political and cultural currents of the age.

Abraham Mapu (1808-1867), whose "Ahavat Zion" had introduced the romantic novel into Hebrew literature, was also the first to introduce the realistic novel. His "Ayit Tzavua" was the first Haskalah novel. "Ayit Tzavua" was an ambitious novel that portrayed all types of ghetto fanatics. The appearance of Mapu's novel was the signal for Abraham Baer Lebensohn to publish his "Emes Ve-Emunah", which he had written twenty years earlier. About the same time, a young writer by the name of Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch (1836-1918) issued his realistic novel "Ha-Avos V'ha-Banim". This work closely

resembled Mapu's "Ayit Tzavua". Mapu's novel was a wide canvas of the life of Lithuanian Jewry in the nineteenth century. Abramowitsch's novel dealt with Hasidic life in Volhynia, and satirized all that was unwholesome and sterile in the Jewish ghetto. In these and in other prose works, such as R. A. Braudes' (1851-1902) "Ha-Dat V'ha-Chaim", we see reflected in the Hebrew literature of this period, its conflicts and ambitions.

In commenting on the lack of style in Haskalah literature, Nahum Slouschz writes: "Let not the reader expect to find perfection of form, pure art in its often monotonous lyric poetry, or its prolix, didactic novels. The authors of the ghetto felt too much, suffered too much, were too much under the dominance of a life of misery, a semi-Asiatic medieval regime, to have had heart for the cultivation of mere form."[14]

The Haskalah story retrogressed in a very important particular, namely, in the appreciation of nature. "Not one description can be pointed out in the whole range of the novel or story of that age, in which there is any indication of more than a conventional treatment of the world of out-of-doors."[15] Why was there this almost complete indifference to nature and to the description of nature? Simon Halkin gives us a comprehensive answer. "The prose of the Haskalah age ... is social-

minded and utilitarian in its tireless insistence upon the practical necessities of Jewish social, economic and cultural change. Manual labor, the greater penetration into the arts and crafts, becomes with Haskalah prose a social ideal... Superstition and petrified religious observance are assailed vehemently. The improvement of social manners, of Jewish garb, speech, and deportment, is continually preached... Haskalah prose never loses sight of a purely tutorial function in its social mission."[16] Realistic writings, which border on the missionary and the semi-publicistic, have no time for a dallying description of the beauties of nature. Now we can also understand why Haskalah novels and stories are, at best, half-hearted in characterization. In the story of this period, what was not directly useful and necessary, was omitted.

The contrast between the poetry and the prose of the Haskalah period was purely a difference of approach, not a difference of basic philosophy. Haskalah prose desired the same ideal, humanistic, Jewishly well-balanced Jew, as did Haskalah poetry. But while poetry described the envisioned new Jew, prose was always bitterly aware of the great distance between the Jew as he was, and the Jew as he should be. Only in the seventies and eighties did poetry begin to pay attention to the realities of Jewish ghetto life..

The foremost poet of the Haskalah period was Judah Leib Gordon (1830-1892). He received a Rabbinic training, knew German, Russian, French and Latin, and was thoroughly acquainted with Russian literature. He was friendly with both Lebensohns, and was greatly influenced by Micah Joseph Lebensohn. After the younger Lebensohn died, Gordon became the foremost Hebrew poet. Gordon occupied a prominent place in the open conflict between Haskalah progressive thinking, and Jewish obscurantism and ignorance. To Gordon, as to all Haskalah writers, the prime aim was not merely to cultivate the Hebrew language. The development and modernization of Hebrew style was desired only because in that way could Hebrew be made an effective tool in the Haskalah campaign. How different is this approach to the development of the Hebrew language from that taken by David Frishman, whose sole desire was to aestheticize and beautify and refine the Hebrew language, regardless of the message which that language was to convey.

Gordon's "Kotzo Shel Yod" dealt with the social condition of the Jewish woman, a theme not uncommon among the Hebrew writers of the time. In this, as well as in his "Shnai Yosef ben Shimon", Gordon severely condemned the prevailing tenor of Jewish life. Gordon became one of the editors of "Ha-Meliz", the Hebrew periodical with the largest circulation. In a series of articles published

in this journal, he defended the theory that before the reconstruction of the Jewish State could be taken seriously, there first had to be a religious liberation. After the reaction set in, about 1870, a pessimistic strain appeared in Gordon's writings. He never "converted" to Zionism, and he never entered into the national revival with full faith in its promises.

3. The Decline of the Haskalah

With the Russification of the Jews in Russia, the same phenomenon was witnessed as with the Germanization of the Jews in Germany. Many of them became indifferent to Judaism. New cults were founded, such as the "New Israel", and the "Ethical Culture Society". Other enlightened Jews, finding their hopes of being welcomed by the Russians frustrated as long as they were still Jews, accepted Christianity.

With the decline of liberalism in Russia during Alexander II's reign, educated Jews who had no desire to form new societies, or to convert, or to ally themselves with secret socialistic organizations, transferred their ambitions and their activity to Judaism. The pathetic assumption of the period, namely, that if the Jew in Eastern Europe would consent to change his ghetto ways, he would automatically share with his non-Jewish

environment the blessings of a richer material and spiritual civilization, exploded in the faces of those writers who had staked their lives on this belief. The tidal wave of Russian reaction profoundly affected Maskilim of all degrees of Russification, as they saw the coveted dream of equality and emancipation denied them.

The change in official policy affected the Hebrew writers of the Haskalah more than it did the great masses of Jewry. The Hebrew writers and their adherents had especially taken up the fight for religious reforms.[17] "This zeal for religious reform evinced by the intellectuals was, however, by no means shared by the masses. In the first place, both the Hebrew and the Russo-Jewish wings spoke in languages not understood by the people at large. The Maskilim, therefore, did not get a large following from among the masses..."[18]

By the end of the Haskalah period, a reaction had set in. Such enemies of ultra-Orthodoxy as Lilienblum and Judah Leib Gordon saw that they had gone too far from the point of view of Jewish nationalism. Lilienblum became the classic casualty of the Haskalah, but unlike Gordon, he entered enthusiastically upon the national revival movement.

The latter phase of the Haskalah had been essentially, though unconsciously, assimilatory. A synthesis was now

needed, to merge the good intentions of the Haskalah with the yearnings of the great masses of Russian Jewry. This task was accomplished by Peretz Smolenskin, the forerunner of the national revival movement.

4. Harbingers of Hibbath Zion

Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885) was a prominent figure in the Haskalah movement. A son of the ghetto, he went to Odessa. There he acquired a knowledge of modern languages, and wrote his first literary production, his article against Letteris. In Odessa, too, he wrote the first few chapters of his great novel, "Ha-toeh B'darche Ha-Chaim". Smolenskin went to Prague, then to Vienna, and later traveled to Paris and London. As he traveled, he studied and made notes. Upon his return his disenchantment was complete. Everywhere, he saw the Western Jew turning away from the essence of Judaism. In 1869, Smolenskin began to publish his review "Ha-Shachar". Unlike the typical writer of the Haskalah period, Smolenskin waged war not only against medieval obscurantism, but against modern indifference as well. "Ha-Shachar" became the spokesman for nationalist Maskilim. At a time when Hebrew literature consisted mainly of translations or works of minor significance, Smolenskin ordained that his columns would be open to writers of original articles only.[19]

Smolenskin published "Ha-toeh B'darche Ha-Chaim" in the columns of "Ha-Shachar". He was the precursor of the national revival movement insofar as he believed in, (a), reversion to the Jewish religion, and (b), that Hebrew was essential to nationalism and that it should be cherished as a prime national factor. Smolenskin made Hebrew literature an aim in itself rather than merely a means of conveying certain opinions. He believed that the fate of the Jewish people was bound up with the Torah. He knew how to render his ideas intelligibly to the people at large. His influence was great both upon his contemporaries and upon later writers.

The history of "Ha-Shachar" forms an important chapter in the development of Hebrew literature. A list of its contributors reads like a roll-call of all the important Hebrew writers of the day. Gordon published his satires in "Ha-Shachar". Lilienblum published his "Olam Ha-tohu" in its columns. Other contributors were M. D. Brandstaedter, the Galician novelist; Solomon Mandelkern, author of a new Biblical Concordance; Yehallel, Chwolson, David Kahane and Ben-Zevi. In the scientific department there were such contributors as Joshua Lewisohn, J. H. Schorr, Jehiel Bernstein, Moses Ornstein, Dr. Y. L. Kantor, and Dr. A. Poriess, the author of a treatise on physiology in Hebrew. Litterateurs who contributed were

Reuben Asher Braudes, M. M. Dolitsky and Zvi Scherechevsky. The first work David Frishman ever published ("Hamoreh Tzedek" 1878) appeared in Smolenskin's "Ha-Shachar". In addition to editing and publishing "Ha-Shachar", Smolenskin was a talented novelist and essayist. His novels are a series of social documents and propagandist writings, rather than works of pure art.

Shortly before Smolenskin's death, anti-Semitic riots and pogroms flared up in Russia, (1881-1882). They served as a strong impetus to the revival movement, an impetus which brought about a reaction against the Haskalah. In appraising the program of Haskalah writers, A. S. Waldstein writes: "..their tendencies were of too negative a character. Though they were of service to Judaism by curbing superstition and making a breach in the ghetto wall to admit some fresh air from without, yet they did not offer the key they had promised to the solution of the Jewish problem."[20]

The revival movement had important consequences for the renaissance of Hebrew literature. By this time, the number of Hebrew readers had increased considerably. Interest in Hebrew literature grew. For a century, modern Hebrew literature had been the handmaiden of one preponderating idea -- the enlightenment idea in all its various applications. At the beginning of the eighties, however,

it entered upon a new phase of its development. Hebrew once again took its place as the language of the Jewish people. Hebrew literature became an end in itself, and an important factor in the life of the Jews. Hebrew became the receptacle of the national literature of the Jewish people.

It was at this juncture in the development of modern Hebrew literature that David Frishman appeared on the scene. The stage was now set for Frishman, and others like him, to enrich the vocabulary, style and resources of the Hebrew language, and to complete the work of modernization.

CHAPTER TWO

David Frishman was born in Zgiraz, near Lodz. There are conflicting dates as to when he was born. In his autobiographical sketch, which he sent to S. L. Citron, Frishman himself wrote: "I was born on the 9th of Tebeth, 1865. This date, however, does not agree with the one recorded in the birth notices of the state."[1] The true date of his birth has never been ascertained, but it is generally believed that he was born in 1860. While he was still young, Frishman's family moved to Lodz, where his father was a successful merchant. Although there had been a number of rabbis in the family, and even some well-known artists on his mother's side of the family (Glatzenstein, Hirschenberg),[2] Frishman tells us that his was primarily a merchant-class background.

Frishman apparently enjoyed the excitement of living in a large mercantile city like Lodz. In an autobiographical note, he writes: "The Lodz air sharpens one's faculties in every way, and does not permit even the grossest fool to be idle, especially one who, like me, lives among merchants and is in constant contact with all kinds of people. It gives a man a resilience and a sense of security in everything he does; it gives him, if you will, a certain 'huzpah'."[3]

Frishman's family was well-to-do, and both his father and mother were enlightened. His was a religious home,

though not a fanatic one. Frishman's father was a strong-minded and intelligent individual, and in Frishman's own objective judgment, "a truly outstanding personality."[4] Frishman inherited his critical spirit from his father. From his mother's side of the family, he inherited a dreamy and idealistic nature. "The spirit of criticism, and the spirit of poetry both possessed me at the same time," wrote Frishman in his autobiographical sketch, "and they have not ceased wrestling within me to this day."[5]

Young Frishman's curriculum was as diversified as it was unusual for his day and age. It embraced the study of Talmud, the Rambam, the Bible and the Prophets, and even (at the age of eight!) the study of some Kabbalah.[6] At the same time, it included singing lessons and dance instruction. Frishman was a diligent student, with a quick grasp and a remarkable memory.[7] He himself tells us that he was a "book-worm". He was quiet and introverted.[8]

David Frishman even had a governess who taught him several European languages, and he was especially proficient in German, which was the vernacular of Lodz. He read fluently in several European languages, and by means of voracious reading, came to know European literature very well. He became saturated with the love of good writing. Frishman thus came to Hebrew literature fully

equipped for the role of apostle of Europeanism and good taste.

The character of Frishman's literary activity can be partially explained by his life and education. "He was one of the few writers of the period, and probably the only one, who did not enter literature by way of the Yeshiva, nor did he go through the struggle for enlightenment, as did many of his contemporaries."[9] The transition from the reading of sacred texts to the perusing of Haskalah literature was an easy one for Frishman. In his father's house there had been no conflict between religion and the Haskalah. Along with the Bible and the other standard Hebrew texts, there were on his father's shelves many volumes in foreign languages, especially in German. In his youth, he read the poems of Heine along with those of Micah Joseph Lebensohn and Yehuda Leib Gordon, and was influenced by both streams of his reading.[10]

The transition from reading to writing and composing poetry was also a simple matter for Frishman. He tells us that he began writing at a very early age.[11] His first story, "Ha-Moreh Tzedek", was printed in "Ha-Shachar" in 1878. According to Frishman, he wrote this story on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah. This story showed the influence of Yehuda Leib Gordon, as well as that of Heinrich Heine. In 1879, Frishman published a translation of

Heine's "Don Ramiro" in the periodical, "Ha-boker Or". While yet in his teens, Frishman had already translated the first part of Mapu's "Ayit Tzavua" into German, and had also translated Dumas' "The Count of Monte Cristo" into Hebrew.[12]

Meanwhile, his father's business had taken a turn for the worse, and the elder Frishman was compelled to declare bankruptcy. The business was then signed over to David Frishman, who found himself, overnight, a Lodz manufacturer. He tried to run the business himself for a while. Finally, he liquidated the enterprise, and his family then entered upon a period of economic duress.[13] It was at this point, in 1881, that the twenty one year old Frishman left the family hearth and went to Germany. In Berlin, he met Aaron Bernstein, who took a liking to him, and who came to exercise a great influence over him. [reference ?]

Frishman's first poems had already attracted the attention of Hebrew readers, and Peretz Smolenskin enthusiastically hailed "the new star that has appeared in the firmament of Hebrew poetry."[14] Frishman's important period of literary productivity really began with the publication of his "B'yom Ha-kippurim" (published in "Ha-boker Or" in 1881). This was the longest of Frishman's stories, and one of the finest he ever wrote. It was here, for the first time, that Frishman revealed his own

originality. With the publication of "Tohu Vavohu", a mordant, critical pamphlet that appeared in 1883, Frishman was catapulted into the world of Hebrew letters, and he became a force in Hebrew literature for forty years.

Frishman had returned to Poland at this time, and the publication of his slashing attack on the well-known Hebrew writers of the day caused a furore. It immediately established Frishman as one of the protagonists for new forms and fresh content in Hebrew literature. At the same time, the appearance of "Tohu Vavohu" brought down upon Frishman's head a storm of protests and polemics from the established Hebrew press. This development was a harbinger of what Frishman's relations with his contemporaries were to be in the years that followed.

It must be noted that Frishman's provocative little brochure was not merely a matter of simple literary criticism. It went much deeper than that. "Tohu Vavohu" was published a year after the first series of pogroms in Russia took place, in 1881-1882. Jewish life was all astir as a result of the catastrophe. The Hebrew press, as the mouthpiece of Jewish public opinion, could naturally be expected to face up to the problems confronting the Russian Jewish population. Yet, all Frishman could find in the publications of the day was a vague search for solutions, written in a style that was hopelessly enmeshed in the

"Melitza" school of writing -- a flowery and rhetorical manner of expression.[15]

In defense of the writers of Frishman's day, it should also be pointed out that the average reader was well satisfied with this sort of writing. The more the writer excelled in borrowing from the Biblical verses, the more he won the admiration of his readers. It was this sort of writing and reading, that Frishman attacked and mocked with all the force of satire at his command, in "Tohu Vavohu".[16]

Frishman's versatility and fertility of imagination made him an asset to publishers and editors, and he was much sought after. He collaborated with Nahum Sokolow in the editing of the annual, "Ha-Asif". In 1886, when Dr. Y. L. Kantor began to publish the first daily newspaper in Hebrew, the "Ha-Yom", he invited Frishman to become his chief assistant editor. Here, in St. Petersburg, Frishman wrote political articles and a series of light short stories. He wrote his fine critical essays and here, also, he developed his brilliant feuilletons. Concerning this period in Frishman's life, Jacob Fichman writes: "This brief period (1886-1888) was a time of growth and improvement for Frishman, such as he had never seen. This was his great spring. Indeed, he showed his ability in all phases of literature then."[17]

When, in 1888, "Ha-Yom" ceased publication, it was as though the gates of Hebrew literature had closed before Frishman. He remained for a time, "like a cantor without a position."[18] He had antagonized so many people, that he could find no medium for continuing his writing in an editorial capacity. At this time, Sholom Aleichem, who admired Frishman greatly, invited him to join the staff of the "Yiddisher Volksbibliothek". For a while, Frishman became established in Yiddish newspaper work.[19]

Frishman went to Germany again in 1890, this time to Breslau. He entered the university there. "I entered the university," wrote Frishman, "not with the idea of achieving any goal, but for my own pleasure, to study for study's sake."[20] Frishman believed that nothing whatsoever ought to be alien to a writer, and that, as a writer, he had to feel at home in whatever circumstance he found himself. "And yet," continues Frishman, "I found that I was following certain lines of interest; my chief interest lay in the study of Romance philology, and later, economics, as well as history and philosophy. I ended my studies after four years."[21]

Frishman returned to Warsaw, the centers of Hebrew literature at that time, and he settled down there. He now embarked upon his most productive period of literary activity. He engaged in the writing of short stories,

poems, critical essays and feuilletons, and above all, translations. His greatest contributions of this period were his translations. He completed George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda"; he translated Schumacher's "Veronica", Spilhagen's "By the Sea", and Julius Lippert's "Complete History of Man". Frishman's translation of Byron's "Cain" was a truly masterful work of art. Prior to this, in 1896, he had translated Andersen's "Fairy Tales", and in 1899, Frishman translated some of Pushkin's poetry. These titles are listed to give some indication of the versatility and expertness and grasp of language which Frishman displayed. He also translated works by Nietzsche, Anatole France, Baudelaire, Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore.

On the personal side, it was at about this time (1903) that Frishman married Lili Levine, when he was close to forty years old.

The beginning of the twentieth century found Frishman in Warsaw, editing the new weekly, "Ha-Dor". From 1901 on, Frishman devoted most of his energy to editing. In 1901-1902, he edited "Ha-Dor", which appeared in Cracow. The weekly was unable to appear after 1902, and Frishman then edited the semi-weekly publication, "Ha-Z'man", which appeared in St. Petersburg. In 1904-1905, Frishman revived the "Ha-Dor", this time acting as publisher, as well as editor. In all of these semi-weekly, weekly,

monthly and quarterly publications which Frishman edited, he also published his own works, and he printed many stories, poems, essays and feuilletons. In 1909, Frishman edited the periodical "Sifrut", and in 1909-1910, he also edited the publication, "R'shafim", in which he published his translation of Nietzsche's "Thus Spake Zarathustra". In 1909, also, energetic David Frishman edited a Hebrew daily, "Ha-Boker", which appeared in Warsaw for only six months, and then ceased publication. From 1911 until the outbreak of the first World War, Frishman edited the revived "Ha-Zefirah". From time to time, especially in the years before the first World War, Frishman also wrote for the Yiddish press on a rather regular basis.[22]

In 1911, after the demise of his Hebrew daily, "Ha-Boker", Frishman made a trip to Palestine, where he was well-received by the Maskilim residing there, and he then went a second time in 1912. When he returned from these trips, he published his impressions in Warsaw in 1913, in a little booklet entitled "Ba-Aretz".[23]

In 1913, Frishman was greatly honored by his contemporaries, who celebrated his jubilee -- the rounding out of thirty years since the appearance of his "Tohu Vavohu". The occasion was also marked by the publication of sixteen volumes of his collected works. These were published in Warsaw, in 1914.[24]

At the outbreak of the first World War, Frishman, who had been living in Warsaw ever since he had returned from Breslau in 1895, moved to Odessa. There he continued his literary efforts and published some of his translations, poems and impressions in the "K'nesset", a literary periodical edited by Bialik, and published in Odessa in 1917. Early in 1918, Frishman was invited to come to Moscow, to take charge of the "Stybl" publications. Frishman was the chief editor of this vast publishing enterprise for nearly four years, and he greatly influenced its spirit and its development. From 1919 to 1921, Frishman also edited the quarterly, "Ha-Tekufah", in which he printed a large number of his Biblical stories, as well as other stories, not of this cycle. He also did many translations at this time, among them Anatole France's "Thais", Goethe's "Prometheus", and Shakespeare's "Coriolanus", this being the last translation he ever made.[25]

In 1922, the year of the war between Poland and Bolshevik Russia, Frishman, who was then living in Warsaw, left that city and went to Berlin. In the spring of that year, he was suddenly taken ill. He had previously been suffering from gall and liver diseases. Frishman had been a weak man (physically), and tired and sick, most of his days.[26] In the summer of 1922, doctors operated on David Frishman, and discovered that he had cancer.

Frishman died on the 10th of Ab, 1922 as a result of cancer of the liver. Check the original date!

Bialik was summoned by telegram from Hamburg, and he delivered a moving eulogy at Frishman's grave-side.[27] In all, Frishman had been productive in Hebrew literature for over forty years.

B. David Frishman's Place in the Hebrew Literature of his Day

1. The Literature of Hibbath Zion

There are Hebrew writers who excel David Frishman in one way or another in some one branch of Hebrew literature. Very few, however, can measure up to him in literary comprehensiveness, in reflecting the entire course of the literature of the period in which he lived and worked, and in the influence he exerted upon the writers who followed him. S. Bernfeld writes: "Frishman's language and style -- these are very important matters. This is a great and important chapter in our literature. When the complete history of Hebrew literature is written, with an understanding of its development and progress, most certainly a separate chapter will be devoted to Frishman's literary efforts, and especially to his influence upon the development of language and style."[28]

During the early eighteen eighties, a number of

important changes had taken place in the status of Hebrew literature. In describing the condition of Hebrew literature in Frishman's day, Nahum Slouschz wrote:: "In the number of publications, (Hebrew) ranks as the third literature in Russia, the Russian and the Polish being the only ones ahead of it..."[29] Also, by the time Frishman appeared on the scene as an important figure (1883), Hebrew literature was no longer regarded simply as a medium for propaganda. Its aim now was to develop a literature which would express the national genius and which would be the embodiment of Jewish cultural life.

The mood of Hebrew literature during this period was one of revaluating the ideology of the Haskalah. In a complete about-face, it stopped berating the Jew, and instead Hebrew literature began to extol the beauty of the traditional Jewish way of life. In its fiction, Hebrew literature began to revaluate its former attitude toward the ghetto Jew and ghetto Judaism. In the short story, a tendency known as neo-Hasidism emerged. Writes A. S. Waldstein: "Another important feature of contemporary Hebrew literature (writing in 1916) is its favorable attitude toward Hasidism. This is not due merely to religious tolerance... but has a deeper literary significance. In the first place, Hasidism is more subjective than its rival creed, Mithnagdism; its saints have displayed more

individuality and its adherents, more life and character. The modern writer of the story could, therefore, find a richer harvest of material in Hasidism than elsewhere."[30]

In addition to glorifying the past, post-Haskalah literature was full of suggestions for solutions to the Jewish problem. Especially prominent among these suggested solutions were incipient Zionism and Socialism. David Frishman, too, had his pet theory for national redemption. Jacob Fichman explains it thus: "National redemption had to be a redemption of the heart. External pressure alone could not enslave a man, if his heart were alive and sensitive..."[31] Like Ahad Ha-Am, Frishman, too, recognized the necessity for a preparation of the heart. He, too, believed that before there could be a redemption, there had to be a preparation for redemption. However, Frishman, in his passion for aesthetic literary expression, was under the naive illusion that Jewish youth could be saved for Judaism only if we would make it possible for our young people to read, in Hebrew, the finest and the best that world literature had to offer.[32] "The road to true redemption, namely, redemption and liberation of the heart, lay, according to Frishman, in authentic poetry and true art."[33]

Because Frishman believed that the best of world literature should be made available in Hebrew, he himself

labored valiantly in translating classic works from European languages into Hebrew. Then, concluding that nothing short of a literary revolution would rid Hebrew literature of its many shortcomings, David Frishman took it upon himself to wage this campaign singlehanded. "In the quiet of his room or in the tumult of the editorial office, he did not interrupt his task of upbuilding Hebrew literature."[34] Ravnitsky says of him: "Frishman was, indeed, one of the high priests in the temple of Hebrew literature. The word 'temple' is not used as a mere figure of speech, for, truly, he regarded literature all his life... as a temple, and he altruistically occupied himself in its holy work."[35]

Frishman saw everything in terms of Hebrew literature. That was his one frame of reference. Jacob Fichman tells us: "He never forgave corrupters of the language."[36] Also: "He judged the innocence of a man by the purity of his expression."[37] This extreme attitude on Frishman's part is understandable in the light of what Ravnitsky writes about him: "Perverting the Hebrew language (or using poor style), was like introducing an abomination into his temple of beauty."[38]

S. Bernfeld helps us to understand the literary climate of the times, and Frishman's reaction to it. He writes: "... it was a period of transition. Instead of

writers who were learned, there arose young writers, lacking in scientific knowledge. They judged the old writers only according to their method of expression, not by their content. Instead of the book, there now appeared the 'article'... on the whole, lacking both content and form... Hebrew literature, which still did not have good taste, also began to lack content as well... until Frishman came along and brought to it new streams of thought."[39]

Frishman was the perfectionist par excellence, and Bernfeld tells us how he would polish and re-polish words and phrases, and how he would fret over style. Frishman introduced many European literary forms and styles into Hebrew literature.[40] But he avoided the use of borrowed words.[41]

Frishman also insisted that not purely Jewish issues, but generally human values, must feed Hebrew literature.[42] That he was successful may be adduced from the following note by A. S. Waldstein: "The year 1891 may be regarded as a landmark in modern Hebrew literature. In that year, the latter began to assume an entirely European character."[43] Berdichevsky goes so far as to flatly state that Frishman was not a Jewish writer, but a Western writer, a writer who was primarily interested in those matters which were common to all men.[44] One cannot help but feel that this too sweeping a statement. Jacob Fichman, who was quite intimate with Frishman, and who was sympathetic to Frishman,

and who knew his thought and his philosophy of literature, describes Frishman's attitude thus: "He had a universalist nature. Even the Jewish style, the Jewish thought, were humanistic values in Hebrew form."[45] This seems to be a more accurate description, and one which takes cognizance of both the European and the Jewish values embodied in Frishman's writings.

In view of the fact that Frishman was so taken by European literature, and was, at the same time, so well-versed in European languages, it is surprising that he did not choose to write in them. On this, Bernfeld writes: "There is no doubt in my mind that if he had written in some European language, he would have been quite famous. I know that he knew German thoroughly. What he wrote in Hebrew he could have written in German. But his topic was Jewish. He, who always emphasized the broad, modern, European view in our literature, was himself a Jew, and his world was the world of Judaism."[46] Israel Zemora writes: "He (Frishman) loved the Hebrew language strongly and determinedly, even without any ideology, and therefore, he was simply consumed with jealousy and prayer and hope that among us, too, there would arise great men of talent who would bestow upon Hebrew, poetic and artistic creations which would serve as a model."[47]

2. Frishman and His Contemporaries

Frishman attacked the artificiality and poor taste of the writers of his time. His method of criticism was fulminatory and subjective, and his criteria were arbitrary and vague. Lachover writes that Frishman always held his position -- namely, that of the 'loyal opposition' -- even though he later collaborated with many of those he criticized.[48] Writes Bernfeld: "He was the 'revolutionary' in our literature. In order to build a new edifice, he felt it necessary to demolish the old one."[49] However, lest we think that Frishman was simply a reckless iconoclast, a further note by Bernfeld clarifies this point for us: "He plucked the thorns from the vineyard, but did not destroy the plants."[50]

In 1881, Frishman struck the first blow for an improved level of Hebrew authorship. He wrote his "M'mistere Sifrutaynu", in which he sharply attacked Smolenskin, branding his "Am Olam" a plagiarism of Moses Hess' "Rome and Jerusalem". He also criticized Smolenskin's prolixity. This article had no effect, for Smolenskin was considered one of the greatest living national writers.

In 1883, however, with the appearance of his "Tohu Vavohu", Frishman aroused a storm of protest, and, overnight, became the stormy petrel of Hebrew literature. "Of course," says Lachover, "this diatribe aroused the entire literary

profession against Frishman, and it fought against him with every weapon."[51] S. Bernfeld puts it this way: "You can understand that Frishman's sharp criticism, with his sarcasm and his pronounced irony, did not add to his circle of friends in our group of writers."[52]

"Frishman's opponents used to hold against him the fact that he was without a philosophy, and that he took no fixed stand..."[53] Ravnitsky also writes: "Frishman was never a group-man, or a party-man. National and communal and even cultural public service never attracted him, and he could see no merit in it."[54] This was true. Frishman never allied himself with any of the literary currents, or with the various parties and tendencies in Jewish life. Concerning this quality in Frishman, Jacob Fichman writes: "A native of two periods... he was hurled, constantly, between the two, without severing any ties with either. He remained always outside. He did not warm himself at the light of the camp, nor did he seek refuge in the shadow of the camp."[55]

Frishman's refusal to 'take sides' on controversial matters sometimes found him in the anomalous position of being on both sides of the fence. Fichman tells us that David Frishman never impressed him as being an enemy of Hibbath Zion. Yet, when Dr. Leo Kantor established his Hebrew daily, "Ha-Yom", an organ that opposed official

Hibbath Zion, he designated Frishman as one of his principal assistants.[56] And yet, on the Zionist issue, Frishman was only reflecting his times. "While in its intellectual, or more strictly publicistic aspects, Hebrew literature embraced Zionism from its first glimmerings as a movement in Jewish life in the 1880's, it remained only passively Zionistic in its fiction and poetry up to about 1920."[57] Nevertheless, even if the writers of his time had championed Hibbath Zion more vigorously, Frishman would still have done as he wished, for he was a man who marched to the beat of a hidden drum.

As time went by, two things happened which eased the strain between him and most of his contemporaries. First, because of his unrelenting efforts, Hebrew literature did improve considerably; and second, the same writers who pounced on him for his violent attacks against those who were unfortunate enough to violate his aesthetic literary standards, realized that although his methods may have been arbitrary, his motives were sincere. His contemporaries gradually came to respect him for his unswerving allegiance to his principles, and also for the great good he had wrought in the improvement of Hebrew literature. This admiration and esteem took tangible form, when they tendered him a jubilee celebration on the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of his "Tohu Vavohu.

3. Influences

David Frishman had no outstanding teachers, who might have made any deep impression on him.[58] His good taste and fine sensitivity were innate. Among the very earliest influences which left a lasting impression on Frishman was the Bible. "He was a man of the Bible -- to such an extent, that perhaps there was not another like him."[59] Lachover tells us that of the Pentateuch, the book of Deuteronomy made the deepest impression on Frishman, and that it greatly influenced his style.[60] Of the prophets, Frishman liked the book of Isaiah best. He read and re-read it constantly.[61] In spite of the fact that Frishman left the Beth Midrash at an early age, he was fairly well-versed in the Talmud.[62] There is every reason to believe that this is true, for he selected, as titles for a few of his short stories, terms which would have meaning only to one who was familiar with Talmudic lore ("Shtay Sa'arot", "Atarn'gola V'Atarn'golta").

Frishman learned German at the same time he studied Hebrew. He was so influenced by Heine that he composed a poem to that writer. Fichman writes: "His favorite poet, by far, was Heinrich Heine, who was closest to him in the blending of lyricism and satire, and in the metre of his poetry."[63] S. Bernfeld says: "In Frishman's satires we find a good deal of Heine's works, which he loved and esteemed all his life."[64]

David Frishman was a marvelously well-read individual, and he limited himself in no way whatsoever, when it came to reading. "David Frishman was well-versed in ancient, classic literature, but especially did he admire the European literature of recent centuries, particularly the great works of the nineteenth century."[65] Lachover writes that Shakespeare and Spinoza both had a great influence on Frishman. Frishman knew practically all of Shakespeare by heart. In Shakespeare, he found the fortunate blending of the simplicity of Biblical style with strictly human content.[66]

Among the Haskalah writers, Micah Joseph Lebensohn influenced Frishman lyrically, and in his longing for life and beauty. This influence is most noticeable in Frishman's early poems, and even in his stories, to a marked degree.[67] Another Haskalah writer who exerted a strong influence upon Frishman was Yehuda Leib Gordon. He influenced Frishman's style, his fighting qualities and his rebelliousness.[68] Frishman even rebelled against Gordon.

Aaron Bernstein, whom Frishman met in Berlin, was a skilled writer and possessed a fine style. He, too, exercized some influence on Frishman.[69] This is also implied in an autobiographical note by Frishman: "When I was still quite young, I traveled to Germany, where I came into contact with the well-known German writers Auerbach and Bernstein.... who made a deep impression upon me."[70]

The opinion has also been expressed that young Frishman was influenced by Peretz Smolenskin, to a degree hitherto unrecognized. Writes S. Kramer: "The same year Frishman wrote his article ("M'mistere Sifrutenu"), in which he openly attacked Smolenskin the publicist, he also wrote his story "B'yom Ha-kippurim", which is nothing more than an imitation of Smolenskin's "Yililat Ha-Ruach", and those who have written the history of our modern literature have recognized this. Smolenskin's influence on the principal writers of the national revival period was far greater than has been estimated. The whole generation of writers, during the eighties and nineties, was influenced to a marked degree by the spirit of this outstanding individual... Even Ahad Ha-Am, the graceful culturalist, found shelter in his strong 'Succah'. It is, therefore, not surprising that young Frishman, the rebel, was also unable to escape this influence. Even though he criticized him so harshly, he was suckled by him (Smolenskin)."[71]

In writing his stories, David Frishman was greatly influenced by the German writer Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904). We can recognize in Frishman's stories, traces of the influence of those who wrote about the ghetto, using Western languages. Writers like Leopold von Sachar-Masoch (1835-1895), and Franzos acquainted Central and Western Europe with the cultural and social problems of East European

Jewry. These writers selected certain incidents in the lives of Jews and wrote about them. In this connection, we can recognize in Frishman's first stories, traces of Franzos' influence. Franzos' descriptions of ghetto life, such as we find in his "Shylock von Barnov", are somewhat reminiscent of Frishman's "Yizkor" -- of Hannah, who married a non-Jew.[72]

Also, we find that in his first stories, Frishman describes the clash between extreme religious fanaticism and those who are drawn to the great, outside, Gentile world. Ghetto stories in Western languages which described incidents concerning the Jewish world and the outside world, also usually describe the clash between these two worlds. Franzos, especially, describes this in his stories.[73]

In his first legends ("Ha-Malach Ha-koton", etc.), the influence of Andersen is noticeable. His later legends, however, show the influence of Oscar Wilde.[74]

These, then, are the influences, both broad and specific, which were brought to bear on the young Frishman. Most of them he gradually sloughed off as his own brilliant talent emerged. The one influence which clearly and constantly marked his work was the influence of Europeanism. He, himself, was powerfully drawn to the high literary standards of European writing. Indeed, Frishman introduced into Hebrew literature the literary and stylistic standards of Europe.

C. Frishman's Creative Medium: The Short Story

In the early years of his literary productivity, Frishman's creative efforts were fairly equally divided between poetry and the short story. As his talent developed, however, Frishman wrote fewer poems. When he turned to creative writing, his style compelled him to select the short story as his medium. In a sense, this was almost inevitable. The short story centers around some important event, or some psychological condition which affects a persons life. There are no episodes or parallel events, there is no broad description of surroundings, there is no detailed characterization of the hero, nor are there any superfluous adjectives. The short story is compact, and there is a single action which is central. The short story requires of the author a grasp of details inherent in situations, brevity of expression, and the ability to hint at broader horizons. The short story expects the reader to complete, in his own mind, the thought being narrated or described, and makes him a partner to the creation.

In warring against the pompous rhetoric and soporific verbosity of the Haskalah novel, Frishman used the short story as an exemplary model of what good writing ought to be. The novel is predominantly an exploration of life. It has development of character, and forward movement of

time. All this requires a maximum of description. Thus, prolixity and parallel description were the occupational hazards of the novelist. Frishman, seeking to inculcate in the new generation of writers a simplicity and directness of style, repudiated the novel as a creative medium, and instead, made full and effective use of that medium which would permit him to write simply and graphically. That medium was the short story.

However, while it is undeniably true that Frishman's temperament, style and 'message' led him to select the short story as his creative medium, there were equally valid historical reasons which influenced his decision.

The short story began in the days of the Renaissance in Italy. It achieved a level of deep and serious artistry only at the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth century, with the stories of Maupassant and Chekhov. At that time, the short story took the place of the realistic novel both in world literature and in Hebrew literature. It came to full flower with the rise of individualism, and the Decadence in Western Europe. The wide development of modern psychology was an important contributary impetus. The individual man, freed from the standards of society, as well as from its established mores, was the hero of the modern short story. The principal reader was the upper class European -- a man of the new

culture, an aesthete, a man of feeling and sensitivity, a man who preferred the hint rather than the full expression, one who regarded the outline as more important than the construction, who preferred the taste to the eating.

The short story as a literary medium was also called into being by its urban public. The residents of the large cities were the short story's early readers. In the process of making a living, they had neither the time nor the patience to read long novels, or to examine broad panoramas. They wanted brief compositions which could be read quickly, and their demands resulted in the short story. At the end of the nineteenth century, European life was in transition. It was a life that was constantly in flux, with neither roots in the past, nor fruits in the future. The urban artist feasted his eyes on the sights and sounds around him, and he reflected this unsettled life in the short story.

The short story entered Hebrew literature as a result of these outside influences. It found, in Hebrew literature, a multiplicity of subjects and themes, for East European Jewish life was in a state of desintegration. It suited the Jewish writer, who was subject to fragmentary impressions, and it lent itself to the discussion of principles, and not of details. The Hebrew

writer, therefore, turned his back on the novel, which had been a fixture of Haskalah literature, and established, instead, the short story. One of the first short story writers in modern Hebrew literature was David Frishman.[75]

CHAPTER THREE

A. The Critic As Artist

David Frishman was outstanding in a variety of literary activities. He distinguished himself in poetry, criticism, editing, translating and, of course, as a short story writer. In all of his diversified literary efforts, it was in the genre of the short story that he revealed the full brilliance of his powerful talent, and it was in this field that he made his chief contribution to Hebrew belles-lettres.

Frishman's appearance on the threshold of a new period in Jewish life and in Hebrew literature -- at a time when the atmosphere was still saturated with the ideals of the Haskalah -- was a phenomenon of unusual importance. He spanned the gap between Haskalah and post-Haskalah literature.

He was the last of the "melitzah" writers, and the first of the so-called "natural" writers. Yet, while it is true that he was one of the "melitzah" writers, he was one of the few great ones among them. He injected warmth and emotion into that dead, petrified form. Frishman liked the "melitzah", but only the simple, natural metaphor, which had in it something of the simplicity of popular creation. He categorically rejected the involved,

convoluted figure of speech, the complicated, leaden "melitzah" of which the Haskalah writers were so enamored.[1]

With the transition from the story of the Haskalah to the Frishman story, we immediately see a new approach -- the psychological, individualistic approach to the Jew. The Haskalah writers portrayed only general types. The psychological foundation or principle was scarcely considered. Even Mendele saw the general type only, the average Jew, rather than the individual Jew in his own right. Frishman reveals the human, hidden, inner Jew, instead of the outer layers which have been grafted onto him by the passing centuries. The Haskalah saw the "man" and the "Jew" as entities set apart. Frishman saw the man in the Jew, and the Jew in the man.[2]

His first story, "Hamoreh Tzedek" (The Teacher of Righteousness) is interesting because it is such an excellent example of Frishman's early development, when he was still under the influence of Haskalah values. The story relates how Miriam, an orphan girl, and Joseph, a young man who had also been orphaned at an early age, met and fell in love. Joseph is described as a hero-type which was fairly common in Haskalah literature, namely, a working man -- unlettered but honest. Joseph wanted to marry Miriam, and the two young people came to the

rabbi and asked him to perform the marriage ceremony. Prior to this, Miriam had been seen associating with a Christian seamstress, and had, in fact, been unduly influenced by her. Because of this, the rabbi refused to marry them. The young couple tried to make themselves acceptable to the rabbi by offering him money, but in vain. They thereupon gathered a minyan together and were married "according to the laws of Moses and Israel."

A son was born to Miriam and Joseph, and eight days after his birth, Joseph brought his wife and his son to the rabbi's house and diffidently asked him to circumcise the infant. Frishman describes this scene with graphic detail, so that the conflict emerges with vivid clarity:

> When these visitors came to him, the rabbi was sitting at a large table, perusing a book of "Questions and Answers" which lay open before him, and without any greeting, he removed his glasses, turned this way and that, looked at Joseph and Miriam -- and he said: "You finally had to come to me." A smile of pride was on his lips, and he resolved to grant their request, but first he had to have a few words with them -- a commandment which was not written in the Torah.
>
> "Is that you, Joseph?" called the rabbi in an angry voice.
>
> "Here I am, my rabbi and teacher," answered Joseph softly, "for I have brought my son to be circumcised."
>
> "Miriam's son? The son of sin?"
>
> "My son," replied Joseph in a trembling voice, and Miriam lowered her eyes to the ground and covered her face with a handkerchief to hide the tears which were about to fall.
>
> "Your son? The son who was conceived in sin? The son of shame?" cried the rabbi. Joseph stood silent, not saying a word, but his eyes burned and his natural temper slowly began to assert itself after

having been held in check for many years, but he controlled himself with all his strength, and in a soft voice, almost under his breath, said:

"Sir, my teacher! More than a year ago, I asked you to marry us according to the ways of the land, and my teacher would not grant my request."

"Because the girl was without faith; she deviated from the ways of Israel."

"The Lord, who has put into my heart this powerful love for Miriam," quickly answered Joseph -- and the rabbi's face grew livid at these last words -- "this God knows that I did not sin. It is not God's will that man should be born for sorrow, and I would have been unhappy all my life had I not found Miriam. But my rabbi and teacher drove me away."

"I am a teacher of righteousness, and I know what I have to do and what is proper," answered the rabbi proudly.

"To turn all the people against me, and to make our lives bitter, are these righteous things?" asked Joseph with great wrath. "The girl is good and proper..."

"A good and proper woman?" cried the rabbi with a smile.

"Say anything you want to about me," said Joseph in great anger, "but don't you dare say anything derogatory about her, my rabbi and teacher, because she is my wife in the name of the Lord!"

The rabbi stood up and said: "Your wife Miriam is an apostate!" -- but the rabbi could not finish what he was saying because Joseph, in his great anger, forgot what he was there for, and forgot that he was quarreling with the rabbi, and he suddenly attacked him, and would not permit him to say another word. The rabbi began to cry out bitterly, and even Miriam began to scream, for at that moment, the rabbi's wife burst into the room and began to shout: "God of our fathers! Joseph, the wild man, has come to kill the rabbi!" And she ran outside to call for help.

When the neighbors came into the room, they found the rabbi and Joseph with their arms interlocked, and with great effort, they tried to pull Joseph's arm away from the rabbi. Miriam, who was clasping the child to her, fell to the ground and those neighbors who took pity on her took her to their home while Joseph was being led away to prison.

3

Frishman made the "Moreh Tzedek" a villain, after the manner of Yehuda Leib Gordon. However, the story also

portrays a living, feeling, suffering hero. Here we have the setting, which was not Frishman, and the character, which was definitely in the Frishman style. This combination is typical of Frishman -- half of the story is old, half is new; half flows and lives, half is stagnant and inert.

"Hamoreh Tzedek" contains only the barest indications -- although definite ones -- of the Frishman that was to develop. He had not yet liberated himself from the literary tradition of his day. It is interesting to note that the names of the towns in this story were the stock names which writers at that time employed. Frishman became the first to discontinue this practice.[4] Lachover gives us the incidental bit of information that Frishman signed only his initials to this story.[5]

1. Frishman and the New Short Story

Frishman was the precursor of a new type of fiction, in which the inner life of men and women was of greater importance than their external relationships with their environment. His stories describe characters who are absorbed in memories of their youth -- in which the haziness of the past softens the physical facts. Out of the abyss of the forgotten past, memories rise up -- delicate

impressions of the soul -- and these are described in a manner not factual, but impressionistic.

Frishman does not describe his characters fully. He invariably reveals some one striking aspect of his central character; this one quality makes his hero intelligible to the reader. By means of one lucid, lyric sentence which penetrates to the core of the matter, Frishman lays bare the psychological processes which dominate the soul of his hero.

Externally his stories are actually sketches rather than stories as we understand the term. They neither describe nor reveal the life of the central character in its entirety, nor even to any substantial degree. His stories are primarily sketches of one episode or certain moments in a person's life. These moments, however, are of great importance and frequently decide the fate of the hero or heroine for the rest of their lives. Not ideology, but psychology, forms the warp and woof of Frishman's artistry. The riddle of life and its grief, the whirl of chance, the forces at work in man's nature -- these are Frishman's principal motifs.

Frishman frequently begins with the surprising and tragic end, and then leads the reader by the hand in retracing the various steps which have led up to the calamitous denouement. The first important group of his short stories takes as its principal theme the tragedy which comes to

parents living in the ghetto. These heartbreaking stories deal with the conflicts which arise between them and their children, who are lured away by the glamor and glitter of the great outside world. To this group belong the stories "B'yom Hakippurim" (On the Day of Atonement), "Yizkor" (Memorial Prayer) and "Tikun Lel Shavuot" (Prayer Service Read on the Night of Shavuot). The theme in all three is, with slight variations, essentially the same, but the description differs in each one, lending a peculiar charm to the stories and giving each its own individual poignancy.

The plot of "B'yom Hakippurim" centers around a tragic episode in the life of a widow names Sarah who killed her apostate daughter, a famous singer, when the latter appeared at a concert in her native town on the Eve of the Day of Atonement. After the death of her husband, Joseph, a traveling musician, the widow Sarah had treasured her daughter more than ever. In the first days of her widowhood, she had consoled herself with the thought that she at least had her daughter Esther to compensate for the blow fate had dealt her:

> "God has given me my daughter," she would say to herself at bitter moments, "and my daughter is very lovable; fortunate is the woman who has a daughter like her, and I am that lucky mother." 6

The years passed and Esther grew to be a beautiful young girl. Her mother had hoped that when she grew up, her daughter would marry and be settled and secure, but fate decreed otherwise.

When she grew old enough to leave the house alone, Esther began to help her mother earn a livelihood by selling fruit from a basket which she carried about on her arm. The little town in which she and her mother lived, Gradow, was divided into the Jewish quarter and the Polish quarter, Jews not being permitted to venture into the latter. These two neighborhoods were separated from one another by the Wartha River. The bridge which joined the two shores stood as a silent symbol of the gulf which separated the two worlds. One day, Esther crossed the bridge into the new part of the town, and for the first time she saw that there was a way of life other than the one she had come to know. Fascinated by the gaiety, finery and manners of the new way of life, she returned again and again, hugging her secret jealously. Then, one day, something happened which touched her very soul:

> It was a burning, hot day, and the sun beat down on the girl's head as she stood with her basket, tired and distracted and faint. ...
> At that moment, she heard a voice from the next room -- and she stood still, as though tied to the ground. It was the soft voice of a young singer, and she listened quietly, and then, suddenly,

> the voice changed, and it became stormy and powerful and full; it sounded as though it were a mighty cry from a prisoner, who for the first time, felt a breeze, and who is begging that he be spared his life, and freedom and air, and then he suddenly wishes to take all this by force, and he stretches out his mighty arm, and he will take everything, he will take it and no one will be able to stop him...
>
> The song was by Wolfgang von Goethe, and the music by Ludwig von Beethoven, and a concert singer had just sung an encore in preparation for this evening's song-fest. Esther did not know what happened to her; Esther understood hardly anything of the content of the song, nor of the beauty of the music, and yet, every note stirred a revolution within her, and hearing that part of the selection, that violent, stormy and powerful part, her blood began to boil, and suddenly her heart became like a stone, and she stood there, open-mouthed, and her eyes glowed and burned with a strange light... 7

Esther, who had music in her soul, was slowly drawn to the new life. One day she disappeared from her mother's home. Frantic with grief, the widow traveled after her daughter, and prayed for her return. However, when she learned that her Esther had entered a convent to study music, her mind snapped and she returned to Gradow to try to forget the loss of her beloved, only daughter. Her tortured mind planned some vague, secret revenge.

Esther studied for many years, and achieved the position of world-famous singer. She was unhappy, and derived no enduring satisfaction from all the praise that was heaped upon her. She tried to drown the tragedy of her soul in a whirl of gaiety, love and the flattery of admirers. She began to think of her mother again after

their many years of separation:

> ... she became a wandering singer, and she sang her songs to relieve herself and to lighten the burden upon her heart... Should she now seek her mother? Would she find her in Gradow? Was she still alive? And what would she say to her, upon seeing her for the first time It was an astonishing thought! [8]

After wandering for many years, Esther finally came back to her native Gradow. She stayed on for weeks on end. The Days of Awe arrived and still Esther remained in Gradow, hoping to win her mother over to forgiveness. Esther appeared on the stage and sang on the Eve of Rosh Hashonah. On the night of Kol Nidre, Esther, a trifle pale but sure and firm in her step, ascended the stage of the local concert hall and gave her performance. She sang well -- better than usual -- and was called back for curtain bravos. She waited until all the other performers had left, and then she, too, emerged from the stage door:

> And then the unbelievable happened: the widow threw herself upon her, violently; grasped her around the neck and began to choke her. Suddenly, a sharp stone struck the top of the unfortunate girl's head, and she began to bleed.
>
> A scream escaped her. When a crowd gathered in a few minutes, they found the girl's body rolling in her blood, on the ground, and she was half alive and half dead; at her feet kneeled a Jewish woman who was kissing her continually, and laughing aloud... [9]

These incidents leading to the great tragedy in the lives of both mother and daughter are masterfully interwoven in an indirect way, and the details are given in a casual manner.

Frishman begins with a description of his heroine when she is already insane, and from that point he recounts the story and leads up to the moment of tragedy. The author seems to actually participate in the narrative and the incident assumes a form of reminiscence, enveloped in a halo of legend and poetry. This is one of Frishman's characteristic devices for imparting a poetic tinge to his short stories.

"B'yom Hakippurim" is probably the first story with its setting in the modern era -- with living characters rather than symbolic personalities or general types.

All of Frishman's stories are poems in prose, poems in which nature and the human heart are intertwined. Frishman is not a storyteller in the ordinary sense of the word. He is not a writer who follows his heroes step by step from birth, describing everything that happens to them. He is interested only in the lyrical -- the moment when a person's soul is most sensitive and aware; when the soul is striving to liberate itself from intolerable conditions. Frishman always describes his hero's experiences in the form of an inner meditation, or by means of reminiscences. To these he adds descriptions of nature, and in this way he causes the reader to share in the emotional upheavals which wrack his heroes' souls.

Frishman brought a new development to Hebrew literature. Before he established the new trend in writing, our literature recognized man and nature as two separate domains. There was no connection or relationship between the two. Frishman was the first to reveal the psychological interrelationship between human emotions and visible nature. He described the delicate feelings which inhabited the human heart, and which in turn reacted to every movement and change in Creation, whether it were a gentle breeze, the current of a river or the waving of a blade of grass.

In his story "Yizkor" (Memorial Prayer), descriptions of nature and the inner searchings of the soul are so skilfully interwoven as to form a harmonious and complementary development of the plot. Once again, another Jewish daughter has forsaken her people and her parent, this time a widowed father. This story, like most of Frishman's early works, begins with a poetic, subjective reminiscence which serves as an introduction. The story itself is related as something remembered from childhood. Again, the time of the action is a holiday -- the second day of Shavuot. In the synagogue, the sexton has announced the imminent recital of the yizkor prayer. Frishman describes the scene in the synagogue at that moment, as seen through the eyes of childhood:

> ... a cloud descended upon the congregation, from east to west and from north to south, and the fear of God fell upon the congregation, and a dark and holy fear filled the entire building.
>
> Slowly the words issued from the lips of the worshippers, and the many candles flickered all about, shadows danced on the walls slowly, and all around there was a spirit of quietness and holiness and sadness, and this spirit was sweet and pleasant.
>
> Was it really true that the souls of the dead gathered in the synagogue when Yizkor was being said? Do broken hearts become healed; are the wounds which the souls suffered while they were alive, are these wounds bandaged up? -- And I stole in and I looked through a crack of the door: perhaps I would also see little Rachel, my teacher's daughter, who died in childhood, and whom I missed and longed for so much... 10

The author saw not souls hovering in the air, but instead, a much more awesome and terrifying sight: R. Samuel Mordecai Rosengold was saying yizkor although both his parents were still living.

In a series of flashbacks, Frishman sketches in the incidents leading up to that scene in the synagogue. R. Samuel Mordecai had made a death-bed promise to his wife that after she was gone, he would be both mother and father to their daughter, Esther. He never re-married, choosing to devote himself entirely to the upbringing of his daughter.

He spoiled her thoroughly, and indulged her every whim. He loved her so much, that he hadn't the heart to deny her the little pleasures she craved. And yet, he realized that in indulging her, he was opening the gates for her to walk into the dazzling, outside, Gentile world.

As the daughter of a money-lender, Esther saw many men come into her father's home. One of her father's clients, Count Vincente Shtchegulsky, began to visit frequently, "sometimes on business, sometimes not." The Polish nobleman asked the widower for his daughter's hand in marriage. R. Mordecai's gruff refusal did not put an end to the matter. There came days when Esther would go walking in the park, there to meet her lover. One terrible day, Esther left his home never to return again.

He searched wildly for her for three days, and then learned that she had married Count Shtchegulsky, and had become a convert to Christianity. He mourned her for seven days as though she were dead, and expunged her memory from his mind and from his heart.

One day, his slender young daughter -- with her golden hair and her blue eyes -- came back to him and tried to enter his house, but he seized her and pushed her out and closed the door behind her

Frishman uses the synagogue as the setting for the father's reminiscences. For the daughter's meditations, he takes us to the woodland surrounding the Count's palace. Artfully and beautifully, he describes the love affair between the Count and the blue-eyed, blonde Esther. The trees of the forest are our narrators:

> Quiet! -- The trees now tell us that the girl, with the blue eyes and the golden curls, came to live in the palace across the way, which stands among the trees in the park, and that it is bigger and taller than all the tall trees in the park. And the branches now move softly and slowly, as they quietly tell how pleasant days and sacred moments arrived for the two people who were pure in heart and who lived in the old palace.
>
> Quiet! -- The old oak tree has just bent down to speak to a tender young tree standing nearby, and it is saying: "My son! You are young and I am old, and I am afraid you won't understand all these things! Do you think that the girl, with the golden curls and the blue eyes, is happy and joyful and fortunate, as she says she is? No, my son, ask me and I shall tell you, for I am old, and I understand these things better than you. She is fooling herself when she reassures herself that her father and her family and her acquaintances and her people are all forgotten, and do not matter to her any more -- but there will come a time..."[11]

Now, on this second day of Shavuot, it was the father whose soul was consumed with love and the desire to ~~once more~~ see his blue-eyed daughter once more. He began to walk across the fields until he arrived at the Count's palace. The footman announced him, and his daughter, the Countess, came to the door. Frishman describes the climactic scene in swift, bold strokes:

> The door opened and the servant entered. "Countess," he said in a low voice, "there is an old man outside, and he will not leave until he sees you, and he says..." The Countess did not hear the rest of what he was saying, for her face suddenly turned white, and she went into one room and then another, deep in thought, as though she were trying to decide what to do, and in a moment, she stood still and told the servant to lead the old man in.
>
> The door quickly opened, and R. Samuel Mordecai appeared on the threshold. The Countess rose and stood with her head held high, and put on her glasses.
>
> "What do you want, old man? -- We don't need your money or your loans today, and we have nothing to do with Jews..." The old man fell to the ground...[12]

The strain of circumstances proves too severe a trial for the stern but loving father and he dies of grief.

Frishman's characters are children of the period of transition, when life beckoned to them and unfastened the bonds which centuries of tradition had placed upon their wrists. Esther, the widow's daughter, and Esther the daughter of R. Samuel Mordecai, sought the fuller, freer life. They forsook their religion neither out of spite nor because of materialistic reasons, but in obedience to the concealed forces at work within them. These children broke through the fence that hedged them in, but when they entered the wide, outside world they were drawn back to the domain of their fathers. They waged war with themselves and fell as casualties to their loyalties, old and new.

It is important to note that Frishman introduced a new chord into the Hebrew short story dealing with the conflict between the old generation and the new. The war between parents and children in the Hebrew literature of the Haskalah period was waged for reasons of enlightenment and knowledge. In Frishman's short stories, the differences between children and their parents arise over beauty and life. The desire for beauty and life more abundant fills many of his stories, and it is therefore not surprising to find that the daughter, and not the son, is the protagonist

in this war. In Frishman's stories, it is she who is frequently the principal character.[13]

How different are these stories by Frishman from those that preceded them. The older Haskalah stories dealing with the struggle between parents and children were all in favor of the children. They depicted the parents as obscurantists, fanatics and people who were harsh and unsympathetic to the desires of youth.

Frishman deals differently with the same characters. With all his great love for modern life, he -- being a true poet -- understood the deep tragedy of the parents. He delicately portrayed the inner workings of their souls, and showed a sympathetic appreciation for the feelings in their hearts. Unlike the writers of the Haskalah period, he does not revile the old generation, nor does he extol the new. Instead he tells of the downfall and ruin, the pain and anguish of both the parents and the children. The children are not betrayers and the parents are not harsh fanatics. Both are merely listening to the human being inside them.

In "B'yom Hakippurim", despite everything it describes in the way of a desire for modern life, we are deeply moved by the plight of the widow. The story "Yizkor" awakens within us feelings of compassion for the unfortunate father. As we read these stories, we are aware of a deep sympathy

for these people because they are fighting for their beliefs and for everything they hold sacred and precious in life. Thus did Frishman understand the psychology of the passing generation despite the fact that he himself was completely modern, completely European. Even in these early stories, we can see that he had already become largely independent of the influences that had molded him.

In the parents vs. children struggle, we may summarize as follows: the Haskalah favored the children -- never the parents. Karl Emil Franzos, the German writer who exerted a marked influence on Frishman's short stories (and who also was representative of the school of German and Austrian writers who treated of ghetto themes) saw the war from the parents point of view -- never sympathizing with the children who abandoned their people and their faith. Frishman made a study of the lives of his heroes until both sides were portrayed as being tragic. In his stories, everything happens because of some psychological necessity; figures from both sides are treated sympathetically. Perhaps greater heroism and more tragic strength is displayed by the mothers and fathers, who cannot understand what is torturing the souls of their sons and daughters.

Some of the techniques which Frishman employs in order to introduce a lyric, poignant quality into his stories may appear to be exkagerated and stylized from the modern viewpoint.

They were by no means superfluous at the time Frishman used them. In view of the fact that he was writing so soon after a period when the supremacy of reason had been the accepted standard, it did not seem extravagant to stress the emotional side of life.

2. The Inner Struggle: Man Against Himself

In Frishman's stories, we will find no tumult or confusion, no complicated plots, no heroes who take poison, no princes and princesses and no miracles. Instead, they contain a profound contemplation and a deep insight into the secret emotions of a man's soul. Frishman liked to dwell on the psychology of the anomaly -- the paradox -- in the spirit of man. The average person, with normal feelings and emotions, did not interest him. He was drawn to strange people with strange desires. He used the exception to illustrate the rule. His thesis seems to have been that one could not understand the normal unless he had first studied the pathological.

Most of Frishman's heroes are not the kind of people we meet every day. In the main, they are people who are oppressed by some secret longing, some powerful desire, which finally overwhelms them. There is a second group of stories by Frishman in which the central theme is

the great struggle in the hero's soul with some all-embracing passion or desire. To this group belong such stories as "Ish Umiktarto" (A Man and his Pipe), "Kupat R. Meir Ba'al Ha-nes" (Rabbi Meir's Charity Box) and "Titchadesh" (the traditional salutation, among Jews, which is extended to someone who is wearing a new garment for the first time.)

As we read these stories, it seems as though we have known these people at some time in our lives, and we can almost recall where we saw them or met them. In each story Frishman delineates and unfolds some clear line of development which is symbolic of an eternal, human problem.

Generally, one powerful emotion in a person's heart is all he needs to create a beautiful story. This strong emotion grows progressively stronger, until it reaches a climax and the individual must submit to it, and become enslaved by it. The subject of "Ish Umiktarto" is a rabbi who is renowned for his piety and scholarship. Frishman early foreshadows the ominous changes which will completely alter his life:

> He frequently read in his books: "Do not be sure of yourself until the day of your death!" And in his heart, he always believed that he had fathomed the full significance of this dictum. Yet, little did he know that, in this room, Satan was waiting to capture him. 14

The rabbi had one habit, one powerful desire, which he indulged inordinately. He liked to smoke. He was completely addicted to it and would smoke constantly, except

for one day in the week, on which no self-respecting Jew would smoke a pipe:

> As the darkness of Sabbath Eve approached, the slave would cease being a slave and the enchantment departed from the light-hearted creature, and such a creature would again become a dignified human being.
>
> As a bridegroom, to use the words of the poet, he would go to welcome the Sabbath Queen. As a man who possessed good manners, he knew that it was not proper to smoke in the presence of ladies, let alone in the presence of a queen. 15

The rabbi was able to control his desire on the Sabbath for many years. Once, however, there came a fateful Sabbath in Tammuz, when the days were long. He was seized with a powerful desire to smoke. He fought against the wicked thought with all the spiritual resources at his command. He recited psalms and then repeated sacred verses. His greatest mistake came when he chanced to gaze out through the window.

Here Frishman shows us how nature affects man's actions. In this instance, nature was the decisive stimulus which pushed the rabbi over the brink of the abyss of temptation:

> ... he could see little clouds zig-zagging their way across the heavens, and they were shaped like the smoke rings, and they had the appearance of the tobacco smoke rings which made their way upward from the tobacco in his pipe...
>
> When he beheld this sight, he lost his voice, and his throat became tight and his eyes became dark, and he no longer knew what was happening to him, and when the bitter moment of temptation arrived, he could not withstand it.
>
> .....
>
> A moment later, he locked the door, and a little while after that he lit his pipe and smoke began to rise from it... Oh, sun in the heaven, turn your eyes away! A famous rabbi in Israel is smoking on the Sabbath. 16

He wept and repented for weeks thereafter, yet he succumbed to temptation a second time. Again he cried and beat his breast. When the same thing had occurred a number of times, his conscience gradually ceased its whimpering and he began to sin regularly, with equanimity:

> ... every Sabbath day, when he was alone in his room, he would puff on the burning tobacco until he was satisfied, and he enjoyed the heavy clouds of smoke which issued from the 'shofar' in his mouth -- the 't'kios', 'sh'vorim' and 'truahs' which followed rapidly, chasing one another, as it were. 17

One Sabbath day, he neglected to close the door of his room as he sat down to smoke his pipe. Many people gathered and his sin became known to all. That was the decisive moment of his life. Henceforth, he was ostracized by the community and ultimately became a heretic. The psychological moment of the struggle is deftly and skilfully portrayed.

The story "Kupat R. Meir Ba'al Ha-nes" is still more artistic, for while the previous story deals with a passion for pleasure, this sketch portrays a fierce struggle between piety and hunger. In the first few sentences of the story, Frishman tells us more about the widow Rachel Leah than we could learn from a dozen pages of detailed description:

> For a long time, I used to wear socks made by Rachel Leah. The people on the street used to buy their socks from Rachel Leah. It was considered

> a mitzvah. This woman was a pious old woman, and a widow. Her husband had been a God-fearing, learned and respectable man, and the widow was now unable to find any other way of ekeing out a living. The socks were her last attempt in trying to earn a bit of bread. 18

Immediately after her husband's death, the community had collected a large sum of money for her. With this as the sum total of her resources, the widow embarked upon various occupations, not succeeding in any. Each time she changed her occupation, she took a step down the economic ladder. As time went by, the townsfolk became less consciencious about patronizing the widow:

> For there were new widows in the town, new respectable and honorable women, and the people on the street felt it their duty to perform these new kindnesses and new mitzvas. 19

Rachel Leah sank to the lowest level of existence. She rented sleeping space in the home of a poor tailor. There she would sit and knit socks -- if she had any wool.

In the early days of her widowhood, she had hoped to save enough money to enable her to travel to Palestine, that she might spend her last days there. Now, as she subsisted on bread and an occasional potato, she sometimes thought of those early dreams. Whenever she had had some money, she used to deposit an occasional penny in the charity box of R. Meir, the wonder worker. Lately, she had been unable to drop any coins in it. Instead, she now found herself thinking about the coin-box more than was necessary.

The image of the coin-box pursued her and danced before her eyes. She realized why she was thinking about it constantly, and the thought confused her. She was always hungry now, and it required all her self-control to stop thinking about the coins in the box. One evening, when she was all alone in the house, it seemed to her that she was acting strangely:

> ... she arose and slowly approached the coin-box. What she intended to do with it, she did not know, but she began to notice many different details which she had never noticed before. Between the two windows hung a mirror; from the ceiling hung a copper lantern... The room was square, and it had four walls; and within these four walls, she seemed to see a woman taking a knife and walking over to the coin-box with the knife, and she was inserting the knife between the cover and the box, and the cover is twisted and raised, and two thin, shrunken fingers laboriously push into the coin-box and take something out, and it looks like a coin -- but it isn't she, not she! Heaven forbid, not she! She would swear to it, by God's name, and by her life, and by her husband's soul and by her share in paradise! Not she, not she, but some other strange woman was doing it!
>
> And that woman was very hungry, very hungry.
>
> And it seemed to her that the woman was walking -- first she extended her right foot, and then her left -- so. One after the other -- but not she, not she! -- And she left the house and went into a nearby store and bought a little biscuit that cost one penny. A large biscuit cost two pennies.
>
> And then the woman washed her hands and dried them with a sheet, and said: "Make your hands holy...", and took the biscuit --
>
> And suddenly she knew and remembered and understood who the woman was, who was doing this.
>
> And she toppled onto the bed fully clad, clutching the biscuit in both hands.

> In the morning, they found her lying on her bed, and in her hand was the whole piece of bread, which had never touched her lips.
> The first words she heard were: "Thief! Get out of my house thisvery instant!" 20

The reader is left to imagine the miserable sequel to this heartbreaking episode in the unfortunate widow's life. There is less poetry and more pathos in this story than in "Ish Umiktarto".

As a corollary to the theme of the individual struggling against some powerful desire which threatens to overwhelm him, Frishman has also written about the tragedy which comes into people's lives because of unfulfilled desires. In "Titchadesh", he tells us of a boy who lived and died without ever realizing his heart's most fervent desire. In this story we discover, for the first time, that touch of irony which Frishman knew how to employ so adroitly and cleverly. He frames this artistic sketch in such a manner that the reader immediately understands that the author means much more than what the words are saying:

> I have a story to tell you about a little boy, the son of a poor tailor -- but you are not to take this matter to heart, or become too depressed about it; after all, he was only a tailor's son. 21

The actual story begins on Passover Eve. At the Seder table, the Haggadah is being read. The boy has asked the "Four Questions" and now, as his father continues reading the Hagaddah, he sits there brooding:

> And suddenly, he interrupts his father and asks again -- but the new question which he asks is not a question found in the Haggadah.
> "Father! Why didn't they say "Titchadesh!" to me, too? ... All the boys who were in the synagogue said "Titchadesh!" to one another, but they didn't say it to me..."
> And his face became very pale, and his eyes began to glow. 22

In great embarrassment, his father and mother explain that this is said only to someone who is wearing a new garment. The boy asks why he cannot have a new garment, that people might say "Titchadesh!" to him, too. He is promised a new suit for next Passover, but he received none either next Passover or the Passover following:

> Kisses -- these his mother was able to give him, but not a new suit. 23

The boy grew older. Now he was twelve years old, and apprenticed to a tailor. It was while he was working for the tailor that his all-consuming desire brought him disgrace and further frustration:

> A new suit had been finished at the tailor's, and it was given to Ephraim to deliver to a rich man's home, for his son. However, Ephraim did not take the suit to the rich man's house, but he took it to his quarters, in the tailor's house. Once in his life he wanted to put a new suit on his body; just once in his life he wanted to experience the feel of a new suit -- even if only for one moment.
> And the tailor's wife was the one who caught him in his theft. Then they beat him and wounded him and drove him out. 24

He grew into manhood without ever hearing anyone say that beloved word to him. With the passing of the years, poverty and frustration took their toll of his health.

At the hospital, the doctor no longer stopped at his bed, for his case was hopeless. The youth became delirious:

> And little by little, his eyes close, and he sees a wonderful vision: Behold, angels are descending, little angels, big angels, thousands of angels, more angels than one can count, and in a little while, the room is full of them; and the angels ascend and descend, ascend and descend, and they flap their wings, and suddenly they are holding new suits, white suits, and his ears hear a pleasant song, a song that has no end: "Titchadesh! Titchadesh! Titchadesh!"
>
> And suddenly, behold, a black angel...
>
> -- -- -- -- -- --
>
> That day, they buried him in new, white garments. But his ears no longer heard "Titchadesh!".
>
> This is the story I wanted to tell you about a boy who somehow never wore a new suit as long as he lived.
>
> But please don't take it too seriously, or feel too depressed about it -- after all, he was only a tailor's son. 25

In all these sketches and stories, there is still the echo of the Haskalah. On the one hand, there is the ghetto -- with its narrow, hemmed-in way of life. Opposite the ghetto stands the wider, modern life toward which the hero was striving. This is an old struggle in Judaism, dating back to the time of the Hellenists. In the Haskalah period, it reappeared in the guise of ghetto piety and obscurantism versus enlightenment and religious reforms. In Frishman's day, this struggle centered about the desire for life in its physical aspects. Even though the gates

of the ghetto were no longer barred, still, as long as Jewish life remained intact in its classic integrity, clashes between the traditional view of life and the general, secular weltanschaung were bound to occur.

3. Stories From Life

Frishman was instrumental in liberating the Hebrew short story from the imaginary and artificial elements which played such an important role in Haskalah literature generally. The lyric quality of his stories, as well as the psychological truths they contain, have helped to bring the Hebrew short story closer to real life. One of his favorite techniques is to select one point, one phenomenon, and showthe effect of that circumstance in an individual's life. Frishman's realistic stories grasp some triviality, magnify it, attach a special importance to it and make it the underlying cause of significant events. He likes to dwell on the trifles in a person's life, showing how these can lead to fatal and fateful consequences. He tells us about the petty happenings which determine a man's life, and which raise him from the lowest levels to the highest degrees of happiness and good fortune.

In this category, we find stories such as "Sh'tei Sa'arot" (Two Threads of Hair), "Bin Li-lo Echod" (In the Course of

One Night) and "Matos Umaseh" (referring to two weekly portions of the Pentateuch which are frequently read on the same Sabbath.

Frishman tells us the story of Olga Weinbloom, the heroine of "Sh'tei Sa'arot", whose life was changed completely by an insignificant incident:

> Two threads of hair took one woman from the world in which she had been brought up, to a new world -- to live in the light of a new life -- and this woman went from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, and from the lowest depths to the greatest heights, and she changed her path from one extreme to the other. 26

In accordance with prevailing custom, Olga had been betrothed to a delicate young man, despite the fact that she had not even been consulted in the matter. In going to live with her husband's family, she had to give up her academic interests and her university friends. She was not happy in her new surroundings, and neither were her new relatives entirely pleased with her. However, as a dutiful wife, Olga determined to be as pleasing as possible both to her husband and to his family. Yet, she could not completely forget the ways of her youth. One Sabbath she walked to the outskirts of the village and began walking about in the fields. It was summer, and the beauties of field and forest touched her very soul.

Frishman artistically intertwines the great world of nature and the human heart:

> I walked in the fields and I breathed the air, and the trees and the flowers of the field clapped their hands and called to the depths of my heart: Hurray, hurray! Oh, God of my fathers, how foolish is man that he complains to you and that he is angry with you. The world is full of beauty and charm; beauty and majesty are all around us, and the soul is given us to understand and to know this... 27

At this moment of high exaltation, a group of Olga's neighbors saw her revelling in the fields, and they noticed a terrible fault:

> The women saw two locks of hair that had peeped out from under the kerchief on my head, and because of these two witnesses, it came about that I was a sinner. 28

Olga was now ostracized by all the townsfolk and her life at home became unbearable. In her anguish, she again went out into the field. Frishman now describes the significant moment, the instant when her life is changed forever. She sees a river and begins to muse:

> Where does this water go? Wherever it wants to go, that's where it goes. -- And I am a human being with a human heart; why can I, too, not go where I want to go? And I raised my eyes and I saw a quail overhead; he was flying very swiftly, and was gone -- where does he fly? Wherever he wants to go, and I am a foolish human being. Haven't I, too, the spirit to move my foot from this place, and to move on?... 29

Once again, Frishman has illustrated the effect of nature upon the human heart -- nature serving as a guide to action. Olga leaves the village, and in St. Petersburg she is reunited with the friends of her youth. The story begins with Olga already re-married to her second husband, a doctor, and

all the events related here are viewed in retrospect from her happier situation. Somewhat pedantically, Frishman concludes his story with a philosophic refrain:

> And what brought it about that this woman went from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from the lowest depths to the greatest heights, from the house of Lemel Ox to the house of Dr. Stanislav Bloom?
>
> Two threads of hair brought her out of one world, into a new world. 30

Whereas Olga Weinbloom became a doctor's wife because of two blonde hairs, Dr. Moritz Shtchepansky became a doctor because of his failure to observe one yahrzeit on the anniversary of his father's death. In the story "Bin Li-lo Echod", the hero is already Dr. Shtchepansky when the story begins. But his childhood had given no indication of what he was to become:

> ... Originally, things had been different with him, for his name, at first, had been Moses, and he had been one of the boys who carry kindling wood in bundles, to sell to those who pass by on the streets of the city. 31

On a particularly cold day, Moses had fared badly in selling his wood, for it had been snowing all day. Cold and shivering, he went into an inn and spent every one of his last few pennies for food, sat down near the great open fireplace, and fell to musing. Suddenly, he stopped eating and turned pale. He remembered that it was his father's yahrzeit, and now he hadn't even a penny left with

which to buy a memorial candle. That night the lad could not sleep. The accident of forgetting the yahrzeit and then not having enough to buy a candle made him thoughtful and restless.

Now Frishman is ready to introduce the great moment of "sturm und drang". Little Moses has begun to react to his experience:

> He rose from his bed and went over to the window, lowered his head, and leaned against the cold pane.
>
> "Woe is me -- why was I given a spirit and a soul with which to think and to probe? Isn't it better to be rich and to buy a candle in its proper time, before these thoughts come to a man's mind to torture him... Why was I not one of the wealthy? Was it because I have not studied?"
>
> Moses stood in front of the window for a long time, and thousands of thoughts passed through his mind, and he didn't go to bed the rest of the night, and he didn't know that he was cold -- but his thoughts did not cease for a moment, until he found the right path which now lay before him.
>
> Behold, this was his fighting spirit which had fought with him all night. "I will study -- and if I have the will, I shall attain..."
>
> When morning came, Moses rose. His spirit was quiet and his soul was unafraid. His soul knew that in one night, he had changed completely... 32

His resolve culminated in his becoming the respected and famous Dr. Moritz Shtchepansky. Then, following a now familiar pattern, Frishman underscores the moral of the story:

> When did all this glory come to him? Wasn't it in the course of one night? 33

Frishman did not always limit himself to describing the moment which brought his hero "from darkness into light, from slavery into freedom". In his stories from life, he also occasionally recounted the vicissitudes of life which lowered his hero to ignominious depths of shame and poverty. In the story "Matos Umaseh", Moses Lapidus is a tragic figure whose life was one long series of frustrating and degrading episodes eventuating in his imprisonment.

Frishman contrasts his hero's degradation with the successful career of a Gentile boyhood friend, and the lives of these two young men are deftly interwoven. Once more, Frishman begins his story at the tense moment of crisis and then reviews for the reader, the incidents which have led up to this tense, melodramatic scene. The story begins in a courtroom. A prisoner has just been tried and the judge now begins to pronounce the sentence:

> Sergei Kirkushkin lifted his eyes as he read the last words, and casually looked at the defendant standing before him -- and his words suddenly grew faint and his face turned pale. Has he just recognized the face of the guilty man standing before him in judgment? Has he suddenly remembered memories of his youth? ... 34

Indeed, the two men had known one another in childhood, and although they were inseparable companions, they lived in different worlds. These differences began to manifest

themselves in unexpected ways:

> Sometimes, when they were rolling about in the sand in their play, the dark boy, dressed in an "arba kanfos" -- the wind would blow its fringes so that they touched the face of the blond boy; then, the blond boy would put his hand under his shirt and he, too, would look for fringes with which to do the same to his friend, and he would not find them -- Then the boy would sink into thought for a moment. 35

When they grew to school age, the two boys went their separate ways. Sergei went to school. Moses started to attend Heder.

Moses developed an unexpected talent for painting, and achieved some local fame as a result of his handiwork:

> He was twelve years old when he painted the "Shivisi" in front of the reader's stand of the Great Synagogue. Whoever saw that picture was amazed, for never had such a young boy made such a beautiful picture, expecially when he had never studied. And he also was known for his beautiful handwriting, and people said that they had never seen such beautiful and wonderful handwriting.
>
> But what do such things mean to Jews? 36

Moses decided to try to make a life for himself in the world outside the ghetto. He left Heder and began to prepare himself for the entrance examinations to the Gymnasium. By coincidence, his friend Sergei also appeared to take the same set of examinations. Discrimination showed its ugly countenance:

> ... the instructors accepted one boy, the blond one, 'because he was doing splendidly in his studies', and the other boy, with the pale face, they rejected, 'because he did not have the necessary requirements'. 37

Thoroughly disheartened, Moses determined to obtain his heart's desire in any way possible, even if it meant doing something illegal.

At this point, Frishman introduces the period of struggle within the hero's breast, when he thinks as he has never thought before, and strives to fathom the mystery of life and the purpose of existence:

> The pale-faced boy lay on his bed at night, alone and forlorn, and he could not sleep.
>
> Why had God done this to him? Why was He paying him with evil, when he, himself, was always pursuing good? Isn't it right for a person to seek the good? ...
>
> Perhaps! Perhaps it isn't right for a person to seek good...
>
> He would go someplace where they did not know him...
>
> He would try to enter a school...
>
> But how could he be admitted to any school unless he had a record?... His blood congealed as he thought of this, and he couldn't sleep all night.
>
> But toward dawn, he became calmer, for he had found the proper solution...
>
> In one of the first reports which he had received from his teachers, in his first years of study, he would change a few words and a few letters, erasing them and writing others instead. Who else was as well-equipped to write and to copy any handwriting?
>
> If they hadn't given him what he deserved legally, then they would give it to him illegally!
>
> And he fell asleep... 38

Moses forged the school records and was discovered in the felony. He was barred from every school in the land thereafter. Moses then turned to wholesale forgery and counterfeiting, was caught, and had now been brought to trial.

In telling this story, Frishman counterbalances each defeat suffered by Moses with a success scored by his childhood friend Sergei Kirkushkin. We thus see these two lives in juxtaposition. Thus, the scene in the courtroom is powerful and climactic not only contextually but stylistically as well.

As we can see from this story, Frishman liked to experiment with various story forms, and used a variety of formats with immense effectiveness. No one loved and appreciated beauty and form as much as Frishman, but his stories are captivating and engrossing not only because of their external beauty, nor merely because of their clear, lucid style. Frishman enchanted his readers by virtue of an inner beauty which he revealed in his heroes.

However, his sketches of ghetto life, his descriptions of mortal struggles between man and desire, and his vignettes of life in the marketplace reveal only one aspect of Frishman's brilliant talent as a story-teller.

CHAPTER FOUR

A. The Artist as Critic

David Frishman's initial attacks upon the insipid triviality and contrived artificiality of the literature of his day were not only iconoclastic, but also indicative of a concrete and definite program. He became the critic, not only of Hebrew literature, but of Jewish social and national life as well. He took his stand a bit to the side, so as to have ample perspective for observation. He was, of course, almost obsessed with the desire to bring about a refinement of taste on the part of both readers and authors. In waging this campaign, his principal weapons were his innumerable feuilletons and critical essays.

In his short stories, however, Frishman trained his critical and perceptive eye upon the social and national vagaries of East European Jewish life. "The scope of interests which Frishman demonstrated in his short stories is unbelievably diversified. He wrote about literature and art, about writers and ordinary village folk, about the young and the old, about artists and apostates, about the insane and the hypocritical. He wrote about love and hate, about life and death. He wrote about a multitude of subjects; he was a prolific writer." [1]

1. The Religious Life of the Jew

Frishman was one of the first to introduce religious motifs into modern Hebrew literature. Indeed, his impressionistic descriptions in "Sh'losha She-ochlu" (Three Who Ate) and "L'Eretz Yisroel" (To the Land of Israel) are among his most poetic and original creations. He made a study of the religious experiences of the Jew and described them in the above-mentioned stories, as well as in his "Mitzvah" (Commandment) and "Ha-cohen" (The Priest). In this group of stories, he scrutinized the religious life of the Jew through the microscope of psychology and faith, and he marveled at its awe and stamina and deep-rootedness.

In his "Ha-cohen", Frishman describes a priest he once knew, and this priest has left an indelible impression upon him:

> The first time I saw the man was when I was invited to a 'pidyon haben'. He stood between the two window curtains, looking outside, and I saw only his back: he was small and thin, with a crooked, bent back and narrow shoulders. Indeed, he made a strange sight, ragged and impoverished, among all the happy, well-dressed people who filled the room. 2

The priest seemed strangely ill-at-ease, and his discomfiture increased visibly as he began the actual ceremony:

> The man left his place near the window, and approached. Every drop of blood had left his face. Apparently, he was now completely astonished,

> and did not remember where he was. Now he lifted his eyes, and looked all about him. A simple smile played over his features.
>
> "He is frightened because he is unaccustomed to crowds," I thought to myself -- "a poor, hungry man among all these choice objects..."
>
> And he began to stammer: "Which do you prefer? To give your son..."
>
> Someone standing nearby suddenly interrupted him: "The father begins first: 'This, my first-born son...', and then the priest says: 'Which do you prefer...'"
>
> The man's face turned crimson; but only for a moment, and then it became seven times paler than before. 3

The author saw the priest a second time -- on this occasion, under different circumstances. The priest was in the synagogue. The Torah scroll had just been taken from the Ark, and he had just been called to recite the first blessing:

> And suddenly, I hear a voice calling: "Let R. Ephraim, son of R. Elijah arose!" And the thin man near the window does not hear anything until people rouse him; then, he ascends to the Torah, and recites the blessing.
>
> And his face is immobile, not a single muscle moving. Nor do his eyes look pleasant. But his cheeks are terribly pale, without a drop of blood, and on one cheek burns a tiny red spot.
>
> This man is unhappy, very unhappy -- I know this of a certainty. 4

The third time he met the priest, it was under most unusual conditions. The man was standing half in and half out of a doorway, and a group of women were shrieking at him and telling him that he had to leave the house -- that a child had died in the next room. The priest ran to the synagogue, and there, before the venerable old rabbi, confessed his terrible sin. His wife and five children

had been hungry. There had been no bread in the house for three days. Two of his children were ill with typhus. He had been frantic, and knew not where to turn:

> "And then came the temptation," continued the man. "Five silver rubles... They told me that there was to be a 'pidyon haben' at my neighbor's home... I knew that it was a great sin, but there were moments when I didn't know it... And the two sick children were waiting for medicine and my wife was waiting for bread... and I hardened myself, and fought against it -- but I finally hadn't the strength to fight against it... On the contrary, I knew that I was performing a mitzvah... That evening, I went to my neighbor and asked him to let me officiate... It seemed to me that I was performing a mitzvah... Lord of the universe, I couldn't sleep all that night, and my head throbbed like a hammer...
>
> I am an 'Israelite', not a priest... And the hammer pounded, and said the same: 'Israelite, not a priest, Israelite, not a priest!' -- And it has not ceased until now. I wanted to come to you many times, but I couldn't... But now, death has come... Death is a fearsome thing..." 5

The rabbi was shocked beyond words. The blood drained from his face. He rose and began to pace back and forth. The man had sinned grievously, and yet...

Now, Frishman peers deep into the soul of his subject, seeking the key to the riddle of the compelling religiosity of the Jew:

> The room was very still.
> Suddenly, the rabbi turned his head.
> "You must fast... You must fast every Monday and Thursday..."
> The man, it seems, was not set at ease by this. Fasting was nothing new to him. He had fasted not only on Monday and Thursday, but on many other days.
> "You must be lashed... Thirty nine lashes..."

But the man, it seems, was not set at ease even by this. He had smitten his heart within him a thousand times.

"You must go into exile..."

The man breathed. Apparently, a great burden had lifted itself off his heart.

"And send your wife to me today," continued the rabbi, "the community will provide for her.

And the man left.

I never saw this man's face again. 6

Writing at the time of Frishman's jubilee celebration, Naiditz adds a postscript which enables us to grasp the significance of the story's climax. "We, today, don't know what 'going into exile' means. But older people will recall a corner of the synagogue, where there would stand a white-faced stranger, with wild, unkempt hair and torn clothes, who barely ate from one Sabbath to the next. No one would know his name or whence he came, or what he was doing there. And the people of the synagogue would whisper that he was an 'oreach galut', one who was wandering in order to atone for his sins." 7

In this story, Frishman has shown us how the hero suffers under the lash of his conscience. At the end of the story, he describes how the man accepts his punishment with love. However he has merely described the religious inspiration of the Jew. He has not explained it.

With an even deeper insight, Frishman tells us about the hero of the story "Mitzvah", whose conduct puzzles him even more. This story is an excellent example of how

he dealt with psychological problems in a more general, indirect fashion and it is also of value to us because it shows us the thinking of the author. As the story begins, Frishman might well be pondering a problem which has actually been puzzling him:

> Mitzvah -- I know very well what it is, and that he who performs it is prepared to sacrifice his life for it. But in sacrificing his life for it, does he do it out of broad-mindedness, and in inspiration, or is it because of hardness of heart and a strong will? Is it because of a yielding nature that he will relinquish his dearest possessions, or is it just perverseness and dull-heartedness? Is it a flaming fire, which sets him aflame, and lights up the chambers of his heart, or is it merely apathy which freezes his heart and his soul at that moment, so that he feels nothing? [8]

This is not a question which our author has pondered once, and once only. It is a problem of the human soul which has recurred again and again. Once, when he was a student studying philosophy at a German university, a visitor was announced. His unexpected guest was a Polish Jew of middle age, dressed in a caftan and wearing a beard. With a minimum of ceremony, the visitor plunged into a recital of his business. He wanted the author to accompany him to the doctor's office and then to the consul's office. Although he was a complete stranger, he assumed that the young man would be delighted to oblige him.

It was not unusual for Polish Jews to travel to Germany for their health, to take the famous baths.

It was not uncommon for these visitors to ask their co-religionists to help them in finding their way about. Our author's guest was just such a visitor.

When both errands had been attended to, the two men returned to the author's quarters. Once there, the author sat down at his desk, surrounded himself with books and papers, and tried to study. The Polish Jew, however, kept up a steady stream of conversation. The author tried to ignore him, but suddenly his attention was arrested by something the man had said:

> "... but it was a mitzvah... It is an explicitly stated law. And how could I let him transgress an explicitly stated law? If he, himself, didn't pay any attention to it, then I had to do it. After all, I am his father until after 120 years. We are Jews. But he was a fool. He was a silly person. A fool, a fool, nothing more. I tell you, he was a fool, and you may believe me. Did it really make any great difference whether it was this woman or another woman?" 9

Our author turned from his books and faced the Polish Jew and began to ask him one question, and then another, and heard a truly heartbreaking tale. The Polish Jew was speaking of his son, who had married some ten years previously, and settled down to a peaceful and happy life:

> "Yes, I won't deny it. They lived together in wonderful harmony. They enjoyed 'shalom bayis', family peace... great family peace. Great and mighty family peace. This is true. No one can deny it. Family peace, they had family peace..." 10

Jewish law specified that a man must divorce his wife after ten years if she has been barren. Now, after ten years of happy married life, this couple's life together was threatened, for the woman had borne no children. Half dreading the answer he would receive, our author asked:

> "And what... did your son really divorce his beloved wife of his youth, and did he send her away even though he loved her?" 11

His heart sank at the Polish Jew's reply:

> "... what does a father not do for his son? I waited until practically the end of the eleventh year. And he... why should I tell you the vanities he perpetrated and all the controversies he assayed in order to rebel against me? Then I induced the rabbi of our town to help me...
>
> "And he and I talked to him, we talked to him day and night. After all, there is still law and order in Israel. And it is written explicitly: 'You shall force him, and shall beat him with a whip until he shall agree.' But don't imagine that it was easy. He was a fool, an awful fool, and he was stubborn. But he finally consented.
>
> "And the rabbi sent for her, too. But that's what I was telling you: he was a fool, and he, the fool, apparently hadn't said anything about the matter to her. He didn't tell her, so as not to cause her any anguish -- that's what he said. And she came, without the slightest idea of what was going to happen. And then... I told you that she had always been well and healthy, would I were as well as she. But a woman is only a woman, and she wasn't too clever. When he gave her the bill of divorce, she fainted... and he..." 12

Frishman even finds a human spark in this father. At this point in the Polish Jew's description of the divorce scene, our author writes:

> It appeared to me that his voice suddenly changed. --- Now I observed clearly that the man's voice shook as he spoke. 13

Frishman has looked into the depths of the observant Jew's soul, hoping to find there some clue to the secret of his religious stamina, but again, he ends with the question still unanswered. Although he is bitter toward people who break up happy homes in order to perform a commandment, he neither condemns nor judges. He merely seeks to solve the riddle -- to answer the question.

Frishman's short stories are perhaps the first in Hebrew literature without a publicistic purpose. They are entirely psychological. Yet, he does not over-analyze the mental sub-strata of his heroes. A lyric story-teller like Frishman cannot be favorably disposed toward detailed investigation and analysis. Lyricism and analysis do not blend well. Russian literature had no effect whatsoever upon Frishman, in this respect, although it did affect the other Hebrew writers. Like all great poets, our author possessed the heart of a child and the mind of a mature man.

The language of these stories dealing with religious themes is, like all his other stories, pleasant and enchanting. There is no unnecessary verbiage nor does he use any artificial expressions. All of these stories contain a buoyant tenderness and poignancy which is both powerful and moving.

2. Satires: Don Quixotes de la Haskalah

In a number of his stories, Frishman displayed a spirit of irony which lent a touch of charm to his works, and made them delightfully humorous, amusing and entertaining. In his satires, we discover that Frishman is a clever humorist. In these stories another aspect of his diversified talent comes to light. He was endowed simultaneously with a deep poetic feeling, a romantic inclination, a delicate sense of humor and a shrewd and critical faculty for highlighting the ridiculous and the bizarre.

Frishman was also blessed with good judgment and a nice sense of proportion, so that none of these atrributes was ever unduly exaggerated. Indeed, it was this diversity and his essential unity of outlook which enabled him to exert such a powerful influence on all of Hebrew literature.

Frishman's humor is light and his satire, seldom malicious. At times, however, it could be incisive. His satires can be divided into two clearly recognizable groups. The first deals with the ludicrous side of the Haskalah; the second humorously describes certain phases of Jewish life. To the first group belong such stories as "Bar-plugta de Copernica" (Copernicus' Adversary) and "Ben Azzai Ha-sheni" (The Second Ben Azzai).

In "Bar-plugta de Copernica", Frishman depicts one of the many variations of the maskil who is far removed from the world of reality. The central character of this sketch is one of those people who knew nothing of the modern discoveries of science, and who saw himself as an adversary of Copernicus and his system. Frishman immediately gives us a knowing wink and proceeds to describe his hero:

> They called him "Lebush the philosopher". Do you know what a philosopher is?
> If someone never used a comb, and has never looked into a morror, and if he holds his head thrown back, and is always looking at the sky, if his hat is always crokked on his head, and his brim is over his ear, if his mouth is always open and flies go in and out, if he has a forehead full of wrinkles and his nose is always full -- then he has tha makings of a philosopher. 14

Lebush showed philosophical propensities early in life. As a little boy, he pondered the relative value of the sun and the moon:

> And naturally, he came to the clever solution that the moon was more important, since it shed its light at night, when it was dark, and when we could use its light, whereas the sun shone during the day, at a time when it is light anyhow, and we do not need its light. 15

Astronomy was not Lebush's only talent. He also revealed a precocious interest in mathematics:

> When his teacher used to beat him with the cat-o-nine tails, he would lie there, and he wouldn't mind the blows as such, but he would just count them. In this way, he would think: the cat-o-nine tails has five strips, and he was struck with it about six times a minute -- that made thirty a minute; if

> they should whip him one solid hour without let-up -- then it would add up to 1800: if they should beat him all day without a stop -- that would add up to 340,200; and if a whole year continuously, then it would come to 15,788,000 -- and should it happen to be a leap year, then naturally, there would be a nice little addition to that... [16]

Lebush grew to be a Maskil. He studied grammar and philosophy, argued with the town apostate and engaged in discussions with the Catholic priest. Somehow, he heard about a certain Copernicus (whom he still imagined to be living). He locked himself in his room for six weeks and when he reappeared, he made an astounding announcement:

> "Copernicus made a mistake!"
> "The earth is standing still, the sun is revolving around it, as it has done since the beginning of time." The people listened and were astonished and didn't understand. [17]

He had arrived at this conclusion by means of various complex proofs, but the clinching argument was something which everyone could verify for themselves:

> "If someone throws his hat up, the hat always falls back upon the same spot whence it was thrown; if the earth had really turned in the meantime, the hat should have fallen some distance from the original spot. So, it was clear that the earth is always standing still." [18]

Lebush even traveled to Warsaw to discuss the matter with Copernicus himself. The civil authorities placed him in a mental institution, and to his dying day, he maintained his position that he was right, and Copernicus had been wrong.

Lebush was but one of the Don Quixotes of the Haskalah, a man whose life and imagination were out of touch with real life. Another equally radical and absurd character is portrayed by Frishman in his "Ben Azzai Ha-sheni". Again, the author begins with a comical description of the hero:

> His shoes were torn and tattered, and the researcher used to say about them that they were from the days of Gibeon; over them were torn sandals which remained on his shoes in warm weather and rainy weather. His trousers were shabby and torn, and had been preserved from the day when priesthood was in flower.
>
> His hat was an heirloom from his grandfather, and its quality was a la Menachem ben Serok. His coat was split down the back along its full length, as well as on top, and was made according to the style of the land of Ammon, during the reign of Ben Chanun ben Nachash; his beard was cut a la Henri Quatre, and his hair was always disheveled, according to the custom of the B'nai Chavila. 19

The hero here described, Moritz Pekoklis, had married the butcher's widow, a coarse woman, and had done so for the most surprising reason:

> Do not laugh at my words, readers; this is no joke. Moritz married this woman because his soul yearned for Torah! 20

Moritz had read somewhere about a number of ancient manuscripts which had been excavated by an English archaeologist. By coincidence, it just happened that a stranger came to Moritz's little village and borrowed money from the butcher's widow. (In addition to carrying on her husband's business, the widow also made loans at substantial rates of interest.)

In the case of the Gentile stranger, she took from him, as security, a number of books, some of them very old. The stranger also mentioned to her that he was from England.

A stranger in a small Russian village was news, and in a short time, the report also reached the ears of Moritz Pekoklis. In a flash of inspiration he knew who the mysterious stranger was:

> ... his imagination became even more vivid, and Moritz truly knew, and all his senses shouted within him, that it was thus: this Englishman was the archaeologist Smith, and these books had been excavated from the ruins of Pompeii. 21

Moritz sent various emissaries to the widow to see if she would give him the books. Then he sent the most respected men of the community with offers to buy the books from her. Finally, he came to her himself and asked to see them. At first she permitted him to read them but soon, she rescinded even this meagre privilege. Seeing no other way to obtain the books, Moritz Pekoklis married the widow. Thus did he sacrifice himself for the love of Torah and knowledge. As for the books:

> It finally became known that the Englishman had not been an Englishman by birth, but a Jewish boy who had been a tailor's apprentice, and who had gone to England in his youth, and had later returned to his country to become a tailor; and the books were not from the ruins of Pompeii, but had been stolen; and the numbers which were written on the margins in pencil were the calculations of expenses which the tailor had listed on the empty pages, when he had no other paper.

> But the people of the town paid no attention to this fact, and all of them said that he had married the woman because his heart yearned for Torah and knowledge -- and there was a difference between him and Ben Azzai: Ben Azzai had yearned for Torah, and did not marry, while he had yearned for Torah, and had married.
>
> That is why the people of the town called Moritz Pekoklis the second Ben Azzai. 22

The family names which Frishman assigned to his characters played an important part in his satirical sketches and humoresques. In these stories, the central character is always a person whose psychological bent causes him to attach value to external things.

But Frishman was not a writer whose only forte lay in the field of satire. His satirical sketches and stories were merely another facet of a marvelously well-rounded and versatile talent. His satires are generally sad rather than vicious. All the characters in his satires are people whose desires and longings are not "life" desires and "life" longings. They contrast sharply with his poetical heroes, and his attitude toward them contrasts markedly with the attitude he displays toward the warm, human, poetic heroes who have lyrical, "human" longings and desires. There is a sharp and witty irony in these anti-Haskalah satires, and Frishman the critic is plainly evident in them.

3. Satires: The Jew and his World

Frishman also painted some trenchant portraits wherein he satirized certain phases of Jewish life and adumbrated their grotesqueries. Under this classification we may list such stories as "Mo-ohn Kayitz" (Summer House), "Ba'al Parnoso" (The Wage Earner) and "Atarn'gola V'tarn'golta" (The Rooster and the Hen). In these stories, Frishman depicts not the aberrant and eccentric denizen of the Jewish milieu, but types which were to be found well within the orbit of the normal and the familiar.

In "Mo-ohn Kayitz", Frishman's subject is the ubiquitous 'melamed', a certain R. Zalman by name. In addition to being unable to make a living, R. Zalman had other troubles:

> Six years ago, right after marriage, when he was still at home in Zabludova, he began to cough. Oh well, a cough is a cough. I don't think anyone ever died from coughing. His mother, too, had coughed all her life, and his father as well. It was a family trait.
>
> He began to eat sugar candy, and to drink licorice water -- and he still coughed. However, he recently began spitting blood -- I don't think it's more than two years ago.
>
> Several of his acquaintances advised him to drink Chinese tea; Chinese tea was a sure cure. Several of his acquaintances advised him to eat soft-boiled eggs; soft-boiled eggs were a sure cure for all illnesses, and were good for the voice, too.
>
> At the same time, they also advised him to go to a doctor -- for instance -- to the well-known Jewish doctor who was so famous for his friendliness, and who spoke Yiddish with his patients.

R. Zalman, however, procrastinated and his ailment grew worse. His cronies at the synagogue were able to explain his condition:

> 'No doubt, he had caught a cold,' explained several of his acquaintances with whom he used to daven at the Nikolaevsky synagogue. They strongly insisted that he see a doctor, and took him to Ishmael Prospect. 24

The doctor discovered the R. Zalman's lung was inflamed, and suggested massages and milk and fresh air; he even recommended a trip to Italy. Then, seeing that R. Zalman hadn't understood a word he was saying, the doctor made his minimum prescription:

> "At least, you must travel for fresh air, you must see about getting a summer house, perhaps a 'dacha' not far from St. Petersburg. ... Liesnoy would be good for you; in Liesnoy there are mostly Jews." 25

And so it came about that R. Zalman became like the many prosperous businessmen who spent their days working in St. Petersburg, returning to their suburban summer dwellings in the evening. However, his schedule differed slightly from theirs:

> You can go from St. Petersburg to Liesnoy in three different ways: by wagon, by train and on foot. R. Zalman had selected for himself one of these ways -- he went on foot. Running quickly, a good runner can reach it in two or three hours. And R. Zalman used to run, R. Zalman used to run fast and R. Zalman was a good runner. Since he used to run continuously -- as though he were being pursued -- he used to reach there in two or three hours. It is true that every time he arrived there, he was bathed in perspiration, he was out of breath, and he was more dead than alive -- but what won't a man do for the sake of his health? 26

Frishman's irony does not conceal the pitiful ludicrousness of the situation:

> For in truth, R. Zalman's summer house was not his summer house, but a synagogue of sorts, where, except for the Ark and a table and a lectern, there was nothing other than a wooden bench, and the Jews, being compassionate, and hearing that this 'melamed' had an ailment, permitted him to come out there every evening and sleep there. 27

Frishman ends the story on a sober note:

> Finally, however, no one saw him any more, neither did he run back and forth any more. The last one to see him was the superintendent of the Alexander Hospital.
>
> This was a man with a summer house; this, too, was a summer house... 28

Here, perhaps better than in most of his satirical stories, we can see that Frishman's irony contained a good deal of sympathy and understanding. True, he ridiculed, caricatured and burlesqued the individual, but in a very profound sense, he also lashed out against the benighted ignorance which caused people to behave in such a tragic-comic manner.

In "Ba'al Parnoso", Frishman describes a character not as tragic as R. Zalman, but one who is certainly no less amusing. Our hero was one of those poor unfortunates who couldn't seem to make a living. He had tried innumerable professions without notable success.

> ... his livelihood was very meagre, and he didn't have enough to eat to satisfy his appetite, but he was confident that there would be better days. In his spare time, he would read Psalms, because he was a God-fearing Jew. 29

The years passed without any noticeable change in our hero. He tried his hand at every conceivable type of work. When our author met him again, he was employed at a new occupation, but in certain ways, he was still the same:

> ... he was now a "reader" for a minyan of worshippers, a "reader" of the Torah before the congregation on Sabbaths and holidays, and at times, he acted as reader of the prayers, but his livelihood was still barely sufficient. ... He now had much spare time to recite Psalms. [30]

Our author lost track of the pitiable "wage-earner", and had almost completely forgotten about him. When he chanced to meet him one day, quite by accident, the change in the little man's appearance was quite astonishing:

> ... his cheeks were full, his bleary eyes were clear, his movements were vigorous and the shoes on his feet were whole and good; in short, I saw that he had a livelihood. [31]

All efforts to question him about his present vocation elicited only the vaguest of replies. But at last, the matter was known:

> ... this man had now found a new and original business: He used to deliver himself to forced conversion every day, and sometimes twice and three times a day...
>
> .....
>
> The matter came to pass in this way: A well-to-do Jew would come to live in St. Petersburg, and when he found many restrictions in his way, he would decide to get himself a certificate of baptism. He would go to the evangelist priest and undergo a ceremony and receive a certificate.

> There were those who were sensitive and who were repelled at the idea, and they could not do it. So they found a substitute for this matter, who would deliver the certificate to him; this individual would go and submit to all the ceremonies, and bring him the certificate. In return, he would give him a certain amount of gold coins.
>
> And there were many such sensitive people. And my Jew was such a substitute. 32

Frishman concludes the story on a note of high satire:

> And with all this, he sat and recited Psalms in his spare time... He had much to thank God for -- that the good Lord sends him many rich men, to whom fifteen rubles are a mere trifle. Everything depends on luck, and God does not forsake a man. Thank God, he now had a livelihood.
>
> After all, he was only trying to make a living. 33

In "Ba'al Parnoso" and "Mo-ohn Kayitz", Frishman has depicted characters who are ludicrous. In doing so he has also exposed the deficiencies in the Jewish ghetto environment. Then, too, he has also pointed the accusing finger at the unfair and discriminatory practices of Russian society. Frishman's satire is of a fruitful and positive nature, because good satire, like good parody, requires a sympathetic attitude on the part of the satirist.

In "Atarn'gola V'tarn'golta", Frishman takes a small Jewish community and describes its communal deterioration and disintegration because of a silly misunderstanding between the two leaders of the town.

The story begins with R. Feibush and R. Yitzchok, the two community leaders, already mortal enemies. However, the author assures us that the situation had once been quite the reverse. The original blissful state of affairs had ceased abruptly one Purim, despite the fact that all had started well enough:

> It was at the Purim season, a day of light and happiness and rejoicing and on every street every face exuded love, and the small congregation was happy and joyous. On that morning, the two community leaders came to the synagogue together. R. Feibush brought with him his glasses and the Megillah which he had written with his own hands, and R. Yitzchok brought the "shekalim" which he had inherited from his forefathers, and the silver platter.
>
> R. Feibush read the Megillah for the congregation and R. Yitzchok sang the song "Shoshanas Yaakov", and nothing was changed or different from what had been done last year or ten years ago or twenty years ago..
>
> After the prayer service, the two discussed what they would do for the further advancement of the town, and they left the synagogue together, and came in peace, each man to his own home. 34

The two men were friendly not only with regard to community matters, but they also enjoyed a brotherly relationship in private life:

> Every year, since he was young, R. Yitzchok took a bottle of Tokay wine and ten cucumbers, and sent them as "shalach monos" to the home of his senior, R. Feibush, and each time, R. Feibush returned pickled watermelon, which his wife made during the summer, and a cup full of French wine. Thus do they both do, year after year, and this year, too, was no different. When R. Yitzchok had finished eathing his dinner, he gave the "shalach monos" to his servant boy, whom he had brought with him from Warsaw, and he dispatched it. 35

Now follows a Chaucerian sequence of events:

> As soon as the young boy had left the room, Satan met him, and enticed him. The cucumbers gave off an odor from under the kerchief which was covering them, and entered the boy's nose, and a strong spirit of desire was aroused in him, and the next moment, he no longer knew what he was doing, and he automatically put his hand into the basket and took one, and with painful heart, put it to his mouth. In another minute, he would have been victorious over his desire, but at that moment, his teeth were already embedded in the cucumber and a moment later, it was already inside him.
>
> Did the boy know that the peace of the entire town hung on this cucumber? Then he suddenly remembered that one was not an even number and he hastened to make it even, and he ate another one. And then, he also remembered that eight is not a usual nomber, and he ate the eighth one and the seventh one and the sixth one, and then he decided to bring the remaining half, but at that moment, he happened to trip. And at that moment, when his thoughts were completely occupied with the cucumbers, he tripped over the basket of wine and the bottle broke, and the contents flowed like water before his eyes.
>
> The hair on his head stood up and his heart pounded violently, and quick as lightning, he abandoned his previous plan, and quickly put the remaining cucumbers into his handkerchief and decided to leave for Warsaw the following day -- and, as though nothing had happened, he returned to his master's house to wait for morning. 36

The disruption of their normal exchange of Purim gifts caused great consternation in the homes of the two community leaders. Worry lead to suspense, bewilderment, suspicion, indignation, humiliation, bitterness, recriminations and, ultimately, mortal enmity. The two men stopped speaking to one another, and the town was transformed into a battlefield:

> If R. Feibush said "day", then R. Yitzchok answered "night". ...
>
> R. Feibush implied that R. Yitzchok had stolen the congregation's funds and had put them in his own pocket, and R. Yitzchok countered by trying to prove that R. Feibush was the embezzler. With all this going on, charity was reversed. The afflicted did not find refuge, the sick did not find a home, the hungry did not know the blessing over bread, and in all the houses of study, the battle spread from day to day.
>
> .....
>
> And all this on account of a cucumber and a bottle of wine, or as people say: "A rooster and a hen." 37

This last quotation is also the title of the story, and is a statement found in the Talmud (Tractate Gittin: Perek V, p. 55b). These words are found in an aggadic passage explaining why certain cities and institutions were destroyed. Frishman's early Talmudic studies often find expression in his stories in precisely the manner we see here. The use of so recondite an expression as "atarn'gola v'tarn'golta" -- and in such appropriate fashion -- indicate that Frishman drew on Talmudic inspiration as freely as he drew on his other areas of education.

In "Atarn'gola V'tarn'golta", Frishman has focused the spotlight of his dry, witty satire on the Jewish community organization at large. R. Feibush and R. Yitzchok are type symbols, rather than specific individuals. Frishman's discerning eye caught the fundamental weakness underlying the chronic anarchy of the Jewish community. His words have an ominously familiar ring today.

4. Frishman and Political Zionism

In Frishman's short stories, there are scarcely any allusions to topical matters. One of the rare occasions when he did make open mention of a burning issue of the day is to be found in his "Premia" (Lottery). In a most uncharacteristic departure, Frishman makes mention of Zionism and even of Herzl, but in a manner designed to present each of these in a light clearly not complimentary. In this brief sketch, the hero champions the cause of Zionism. However, he is one of the eccentrics in Frishman's gallery of characters, and the story itself leaves us no choice but to place it among his satires.

The description of the story's hero leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to Frishman's own opinion of the central character of "Premia":

> His forehead was small and slanting, his eyes were small and suffering, his features indicated that he did not engage much in mental activity, but the speed and movement which were in every limb of his body, the body of a bear, endeared him to all who came in contact with him.
>
> No man or woman walked in the city, whom he did not know, or who did not know him. When he would walk down the street, his hand wouldn't leave his hat at all, and he had to wave it every minute in order to greet all whom he saw and all who saw him, or to return greetings. God knows where he acquired so many acquaintances. Perhaps the nature of the man himself had something to do with it.

> As soon as he met someone, he would clap him on the shoulder with great affection, and he would immediately begin to address him familiarly. And he spoke to everyone, and talked a great deal and all this, very quickly and loudly and animatedly. Of course, it was impossible to find matters of great profundity in his words. 38

Our author came to know this extravert and he would see him on the street occasionally. The man not only liked people but he was also a great joiner, and held membership in dozens of organizations. When, therefore, a new type of organization appeared on the horizon of the Jewish world, our hero's reaction was almost inevitable:

> So time passed, and Zionism came to the world. The tumult was great and the movement was very popular. The spirit embraced within its wings all who had a brain in their skulls, and all who did not. Old and young met. Naturally, one of the first ten in this movement was my man.
>
> He did not eat and he did not drink, for he was a Zionist. He did not know much about Judaism or Jews. What Zionism was, basically, he didn't understand, but he was an enthusiastic Zionist. He had given up his business almost completely, and occupied himself almost exclusively with Zionism.
>
> I didn't see him in those days, but I heard about him. Naturally, he spoke publicly every day; of course, he attended the First Congress and the Second Congress and the Third; of course, the movement filled his entire being. 39

Frishman may have drawn on definite autobiographical experiences in recording the next development in the story:

> Once, he suddenly burst into my home and clapped me on the shoulder, and shouted breathlessly: "Murderer, thief, apostate, why do you stand from afar?" And before I had time to answer him, he was gone. 40

Frishman's description of the feverish temper of the times is interesting:

> Matters were wearying. The whole nation sighed breathlessly, and with feverish breath. Many thousands of dollars were sought and the nation gave pennies. All who belonged to the movement and worked for it, sought advice.
>
> Thousands of suggestions were offered as to how to increase the amount for the Keren L'umit, but none was satisfactory. It was as though a fever had besieged this entire camp. And in those days, my man did nothing else. He had already left his position at the bank... 41

Our hero, too, had concerned himself with the problem of raising funds, and now had arrived at a plan of action. Frishman makes this character appear as the most ludicrous he has ever portrayed, for there isn't the slightest shred of sympathy in his description of the denouement:

> In a few weeks, I heard. This man had really done something: he offered himself as a premium to any girl who wanted to get married. A hundred thousand tickets went out in a sort of raffle, and each ticket was priced at one ruble, and the girl who had the winning ticket would get him as a husband. ...
>
> There wasn't the slightest doubt in his mind that he would thereby bring a great salvation to the nation. 42

"Premia" is by far Frishman's most incisive satire, and seems to have been written with a vengeance. This story compares very unfavorably with his other works, and belongs in the category of publicistic writings rather than in a collection of short stories.

Frishman' satires generally reveal a sympathetic identification with the unfortunate hero. By and large, his satires are markedly inferior to the stories he has written about the Jew's religious life, ghetto conflicts, and the stories from real life. Perhaps this is true because in his satires, the artist has also attempted to be the critic. Because these stories contain a fair measure of Frishman the critic, they ore closely resemble the feuilleton than the short story.

We have thus examined another aspect of Frishman the story-teller, one which does not, perhaps, show the artist at his best. However, we cannot draw any final conclusions without first considering a third and strikingly beautiful series of stories which he wrote in his sunset years. These works are a number of artistic creations which are unique in Hebrew literature, and which unquestionably stamp Frishman as one of the great Hebrew prose writers.

CHAPTER FIVE

A. The Artist as Artist

One of the forms which Frishman's lyric story assumed was that of the legend. The romantic writer clings to the popular legend, and it serves him, not only as a shore of safety to which he can escape from the waves of gloomy reality, but also as a canvas for poetic expression when he is moved to give beautiful literary form to popular, national and primitive ideas.

At difficult times, when Frishman wanted to escape from his sorrows, and when the well-springs of his early childhood flickered within him for a moment, he sought refuge in legends, and out of the depths of his imagination, he would resurrect the joys of childhood. The wistful mood of that sweet, tender age would captivate his tired soul, and at such moments, Frishman created his legends, in which he revealed his most brilliant talents.

It is no exaggeration to say that some of them stand alone in Hebrew literature as stylistic gems. There are none like them in perfection and beauty, in brilliance of imagination and thought. Frishman the satirist, the skeptic, was in truth a man of child-like faith as is evidenced by his legends.

Frishman was the first of the new post-Haskalah generation, and he created legends for his generation -- legends by the individual for the people, as contrasted with the classic formula, legends by the people for the individual. He required of the legend not content, but pure, simple form, in order that he might impress his feelings and his thoughts upon it. His legends are individualistic and modern. Actually, many of his stories are legends, except that the images are presented in their realistic form. When he wanted to endow his characters with freedom, he turned to the popular legend, and found therein a mdeium of expression ideally suited to his style and temperament.

Frishman's legends are distinguished by their simplicity and naivete. In this field, Frishman is a child as well as an artist. He seems to have abandoned the world of care. One spirit pervades everything that Frishman wrote -- the spirit of a grown-up child who knows how to re-awaken within us, by means of his language and style, memories which were lost with our childhood. Frishman's style is the style of youth.

1. Legends of a People's Childhood

In the last years of his life, Frishman published his

"Legends of the Desert", which are brilliant in their poetic form, and written with a sweep of imagination that takes the reader's breath away. If Frishman's early legends are saturated with the spirit of childhood, his Biblical legends -- the "Bamidbar" (In the Desert) series -- are legends of our national childhood. He had an uncanny understanding of the ancient motives of our history. His language blends in a wonderfully harmonious fashion with the rhythm of the pre-Biblical and Biblical periods. He felt the pulse of events which beckon to us out of the unwritten lines of the Pentateuch. Frishman discovered heroes, individual phenomena and people who suffered under the pressures of the then existing order. To these, he added a psychological and sociological color, conjuring up legendary visions of the past.

These Biblical legends are much more original than any other legends Frishman wrote. In the "Bamidbar" series, the setting is the desert, the dwelling place of the children of Israel before they arrived at a settled and arable land. The time of these legends is set at the period before, during and immediately following the revelation of the Torah at Sinai.

These desert legends were Frishman's last legacy to Hebrew literature, and are unparalleled in beauty and craftsmanship. In addition to the description of the

spirit, there is in them the description of physical bodies as well. Besides the life of the soul, there is also the life of nature and its components. This gives the stories a sense of completeness. The music of the spirit is the foundation of these stories. The vibrant inner life is the chief principle in them.

Frishman was an apostle of beauty, art and a freer life among Jews, and he spread this gospel in his own way. He was a man of the world and he felt the weight of the law and the severity of the restraint which it imposed. He attempte to resolve the dichotomy by presenting both sides and leaving the reader to judge for himself. It is this secret rebellion against law and restraint which underlies his artistic series of Biblical legends. The conflict between law and desire, between life and morality, is skilfully drawn. Rebellion is the single motif which runs through all these legends, and this theme is presented in all its varied inner color and in all its external variations. They bristle with a violent criticism which digs beneath the false principles men live by.

These legends are not historical, of course, but neither do they purport to demolish Biblical facts. Frishman chose the life of the Israelites in the desert as a background for these legends for a number of reasons.

First, the enduring desert, cruel and unchartered, was very suitable as a dwelling place for heroes who raged and rebelled against every advance of culture. Second, as a confirmed romantic, Frishman's fancy was intrigued by these rebellious and powerful heroes who lived in the ancient world, when man and nature still stood on the threshold of their power and glory. Third, the Torah was given in the desert; it was there that the restraining shackles of law were placed upon life. It was there, for the first time, that the conflict arose in man between his free will and desire from within, and law and duty from without -- between savagery and civilization. It was then that this eternal problem was born; then was the well of suffering and anguish uncovered.

The clash between law and life is sharply projected in the story "Ha-m'koshesh" (The Woodgatherer). This story is full of bitterness and rebellion and protest against the entrenched authority of the priests, whom Frishman portrays in Voltarian style as waxing fat on the religion they taught.

"Ha-m'koshesh" relates the story described in Numbers 15:32-36, where it is told how Moses ordered the stoning of an Israelite who was found gathering wood on the Sabbath. Frishman tells us this strange story, describing it as he thinks it might have happened:

> Those were the days of the brand new priestly hierarchy which had arisen but a few months back, in the neighborhood of Mt. Sinai -- and this priestly hierarchy was still shaky and infirm and was not firmly established, and a whole community of priests, leaders and lawgivers and police worked day and night, seeking ways to bolster it and establish it firmly. Signs had appeared and miracles had happened in heaven and on earth, in order to impress the people, but the people stood at a distance and shrugged their shoulders.
>
> Laws were given and commandments were brought down from heaven on tablets of stone, in order to separate this newly-formed people from all other peoples, and to set them apart -- but the people listened for a moment, and the next it forgot everything. Promises were made, sweet and pleasant words were spoken to give the people hope for the future -- but the people listened and stood at a distance, and did not believe any of it. [1]

Frishman has described these conditions in order to make what follow seem more credible. The priestly craft realized that some drastic step had to be taken:

> Then a new method was employed, with a strong fist and an iron rod, and with severe punishments -- and a murmuring went through the camp from one end to the other. [2]

How differently Frishman connotes the phrase "and a murmuring went through the camp". Tradition has always implied that when the people "murmured" against Moses, they were being ungrateful and unreasonable. Frishman interprets the word otherwise. He also presents a novel interpretation of the laws of the laws of the Pentateuch, and offers a theory as to how they may have been promulgated:

Suddenly, there was a new law: "Six days shalt thou do all thy work, and the seventh day shall be holy, the Sabbath, a day of rest for the sake of God -- whosoever shall do any work on that day shall be put to death."

Put to death? The people heard it and laughed at it.

A young priest, on whom the oil was not yet dry on the lobe of his right ear and his right thum and his right big tow, completed the announcement, and added: "You shall not light any fire in your dwelling places on the Sabbath day."

After him, there arose a fleshy, fat-bellied pries with a headband on his head and with forehead decorations on his forehead, and on his body he wore a gold-stitched shirt with fringes at its edges, and he spoke in his deep, bass voice, and said:

"And you shall observe my Sabbaths. For it is a sign between Me and you, for all your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord, thy God, who has made you holy -- whosoever transgresses this law, he shall be put to death."

And the people listened and didn't believe it. Who would be put to death? Who would do the killing? And why? 3

The people may have shrugged their shoulders, but the fledgling, nervous, weak priestly hierarchy was determined to impose its will upon the people. The first test case was pathetic and macabre:

One day -- on a Sabbath -- they discovered someone walking in the field, a man standing bent over and who looked like someone searching for something on the ground, as though he had lost it.

When they came closer, several of them recognized him and saw that it was God, the woodcutter. A moment later, the man was again bent to the ground, and they saw that he was gathering bits of wood from the ground -- and they immediately seized him.

"... today is the Sabbath," said the people. Gog heard them and didn't understand. He had heard this word several times during the last few weeks, but he had forgotten what it meant, and didn't know. He furrowed his brow and stood there. 4

Gog was brought to trial, and after the priestly tribunal had weighed the charges, the following scene took place:

> After they had led him out of the hall, the deliberations of the judges began. The first to speak was the leader: "I believe we ought to let this silly fellow go, for we did not catch a whale in our net." The others also agreed with this.
>
> At this point, however, the High Priest, Phineas, son of Eleazar, rose from his place. His eyebrows became twice as broad as usual, and his gaze was forbiddingly dark.
>
> "No!" And this word was not spoken, but shrieked. "We shall not do this. I will not permit you to do it. It is God's Sabbath, and once and for all, we must set a precedent, so that all the people may finally realize and know what the Sabbath means, and how important it is to us. This man must serve as an example, a sign and a token for all transgressors, in order that all the people, from one end of the camp to the other, shall hear about it, and shall fear and shall not dare to do such a thing again. This man must be put to death... It is the will of God!"
>
> The other judges looked at one another in amazement, and a moment later, they agreed with the High Priest. 5

Frishman now describes the terrible day of the execution. The multitude of Israelites had gathered on the outskirts of the camp. All was now in readiness for the stoning:

> At this point, the Priest, Phineas, son of Eleazar, climbed up onto a mound of sand and spoke to the people and said: "In the name of God and in the name of Moses!
>
> This is what shall be done with a man who transgresses the Sabbath, and who has not observed the symbol which is between God and man: such a man shall be put to death, and his soul shall be cut off from among his people, for whosoever works on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. And therefore, this man, Gog, son of Becher, shall be put to death for transgressing the Sabbath, for so has God ordained through Moses!"

> And the people all around heard it, and were fearfully afraid.
>
> And from the youngest to the oldest, the people shouted as one: "He shall be put to death! He shall be put to death!"
>
> The men shouted, the women shouted and even the children shouted. 6

Thus, this story contains a profound indictment against the mob, and mocks them for their disgraceful, bovine conduct. The reader gains the impression that the death of the woodcutter was not only unjust but pointless. To heighten the tragedy, Frishman adds another episode:

> And among the children, there was a little girl who had come at the very end, and had missed everything, for she had a long way to run from her house at the other end of the camp, to this place -- and she was Gog's little daughter, Jacoba. When she arrived at the place of the stoning, there had risen a large mound of stones upon the ground, and the stoned man already lay dead.
>
> She didn't have the slightest notion as to what had taken place here and she didn't know who the man had been.
>
> The little girl gathered some pebbles from the ground, and in playing with them, she threw them on the mound of stones. 7

Here, in a powerful and compelling tour de fouce, Frishman points his finger at the glaring weakness in religious practice. The iron hand of law and authority throttles the untamed beauty of man's free will and natural instincts. In "Ha-m'koshesh", Frishman's secret, smouldering rebellion against law and restraint flares into bold, explosive asseveration. This theme is developed to even greater extreme in other legends of this cycle.

The style of these desert legends is in such remarkable harmony with the period they describe, that they seem like "pages torn out of an Apocryphal Pentateuch".[8] These desert legends were Frishman's swan-song, and in them he realized his highest poetic talent. In these legends, he raised Hebrew literary creativity to a very high level. The eternal problems of humanity, of love and hate, the individual and society, religion and life -- themes such as these found their freshest and most artistic expression in these stories. They shimmer and glow like the desert, and are as powerful and as enduring as its rocks.

CHAPTER SIX

A. Literary and Thematic Evaluation

When we consider Frishman's short stories, we must realize that how he wrote is more important than what he wrote. That which an author writes, namely his material, is external and accidental; but how he writes -- that is his own, his individual talent.

"Le style est l'homme meme." These oft-quoted words of Comte de Buffon are particularly apropos in describing Frishman. His style clearly reflected the essence of his soul. His was the style of a purist, a Biblical style. However, there is none of the flowery, exalted style of the Latter Prophets, but rather the warm, simple, direct manner of expression found in the book of Deuteronomy and in the First Prophets. Frishman rejected the pedantic, rhetorical, prolix style which had been developed and cultivated by the writers of the period preceding his. He introduced, instead, a simple, lucid conversational style, a style wonderfully well-suited to Hebrew. In his latter period, especially, his style reached the heights of lucid simplicity.

His language consists of the best in Biblical expression as well as the rounded, simple, natural expressions peculiar to Mishnaic diction parlance. Against this

linguistic background, Frishman wove his artistic threads. He created a natural style of writing which will always be the classic example of lyric Hebrew prose.

1. The Broad Aspects

The most characteristic quality found in Frishman's stories, expecially among his earlier works, is an impressionistic lyricism. Because of this lyric quality, his story is brief. Everything is concentrated into one dramatic moment of furious activity -- and the rest is only what follows after this moment. The essence of his stories is desire. The moment of overwhelming desire, and the sin, are themes which recur constantly in his lyric stories. In his satires, he mocks those people who do not have strong desires, and whose poles of interest are set in those areas which are remote from the broad current of flowing, pulsating life.

This is the secret of his short stories. Although he wrote ghetto stories, real-life stories, tales of conflict and desire, astute and incisive satires and stories dealing with the religious life of the Jews, this diversified selection of themes and subjects must not obscure the fact that there was a unity in all this

apparent diversity. Frishman was a poet to the core of his being. His most poetic expressions are reserved for those who seek after life and freedom -- whether it be a maiden from the ghetto thirsting for the life of the glittering, outside, Gentile world, or a man fighting to preserve the wild freedom of his desert life against the inroads of superimposed law and discipline.

Successful or not, it is these thirsting, seeking, striving individuals who are his true heroes. They are the beneficiaries of his most eloquent and sympathetic literary treatment. This is the philosophy of life which emerges out of a reading of all of Frishman's stories. These life-loving, life-striving qualities are revealed as his most cherished values.

To this extent, many of Frishman's stories follow a common pattern with respect to plot, characters and locales. This is especially true of his first stories "B'yom Hakippurim" and "Yizkor". In both stories, the heroine leaves the ghetto and escapes into the great outside world, only to find that she does not find true happiness there. Both Esthers attempt to heal the breach between themselves and their parents, and in both instances, the result is tragic for both heroines and parents.

Frishman's satires, the merely ludicrous as well as the more deliberately mordant, are all alike in holding up

to scorn all whose lives are rooted in artificiality and triviality.

In his "Desert Legends", Frishman embellishes a central theme, and yet, the reader is made to feel that each story is a gem in itself, and one's interest is maintained throughout. Herein lies the distinction between an ordinary writer and a real artist. What might have become dessicating repetition in the hands of a scribbler becomes, in Frishman's gifted hand, variations on a theme. This characteristic of returning to one theme in many variations is also to be found in Frishman's other stories. He returns again and again to his principal theme, and uses it over and over, giving it new and original form. Herein lies the secret of Frishman's greatness as a stylist.

Although they are brief, his short stories are not abrupt "slice-of-life" stories a la Chekhov. They have a definite starting point and are carried through to a logical conclusion. In order to accomplish this continuity of narrative, Frishman frequently resorts to that method which we, today, call the "flash-back technique". He begins with the lyric, dramatic moment just having taken place, or about to happen, and then he retraces the events which have led up to this moment.

Another technique which Frishman employs with unfailing regularity is that of reminiscence. He narrates his story as one remembering things out of a dim and faraway past; by using this method, he is able to pole-vault over the sequence of events and the passage of time, simply by having his hero remember the important occurrences. This method is particularly apparent in his stories from real life. Another explanation of his ability to narrate smoothly and continuously and harmoniously within the framework of his brief stories is the very fact that he treats of the one psychological moment of decision or action. Since he limits himself to the moment of crisis, his subject matter requires no lengthy description. Frishman can afford to be sparing in his characterization because of his ability to reveal the essential nature of his hero with one, penetrating phrase or sentence.

The majority of Frishman's stories center around Jewish themes. This is to say that the greater number of his stories either involve specifically Jewish circumstances (as in the story "Mitzvah"), or where the stories deal with a more general human problem, the incidental setting makes reference to holidays, institutions and mores which would be intelligible only to someone familiar with Jewish life.

However, within the framework of his predominantly Jewish dramatis personae and locales, Frishman writes almost exclusively of broad, universal themes, and of problems which are common to all men. If these stories were published in translation, they would, in all likelihood, be of interest to both Jewish and non-Jewish readers, provided a glossary were furnished.

Aside from the slow maturing of his talent and a high refinement of his artistry, the passing of the years in no way changed Frishman's basic philosophy of life and literature. There is a uniformity of thought throughout. Nowhere is there any discernible change of attitude or fading of idealism in Frishman's later creative works, nor is any encroachment of conservatism evident in his final years. Frishman, to his dying day, was the central figure in Hebrew literature. He somehow never aged. He remained young to the very end.

2. The Specifics

Frishman's style was not excessively descriptive, detailed or lengthy. Frequently, two or three sentences were sufficient for the author to sketch his hero's appearance and character; occasionally, this was accomplished by the use of one sentence.

In "B'yom Hakippurim", Frishman intimates the beauty of young Esther in one simple sentence:

> She blossomed like a rose from day to day and from month to month, and whoever saw her in the Jewish street turned to look at her, and stopped. [1]

In "Yizkor", our author employs one sentence which immediately impresses the reader with the other Esther's beauty:

> ... whoever saw her face would never forget the girl, not only because of the blonde hair that grew abundantly on her head, ... and not the beauty of her features and of her mouth, nor her blue eyes, which were unlike those of any other little girl, su unique were they! [2]

Frishman devotes two lines to the description of the old Rabbi in "Sh'losha She-ochlu":

> The Rabbi was old, eighty or more years old, his beard was white with a silver whiteness, and the hair on his head was as newly-fallen snow. His face, too was white; but his eyes, unlike the eyes of old men, were black and glowing. [3]

In his lyric stories and legends, Frishman preferred this brief, subjective form of description. However in his satires, the description of the central character is quite detailed and objective. The explanation, of course, is that in the satires, the description of the hero is an important part of the story and is essential to the forward movement of the plot. Also, the subjects of the satires

are generally characters toward whom Frishman is either mildly negative or openly hostile. It is therefore easier for him to caricature them. In "B'glal N'kuda Achat", Frishman lampoons a typical Haskalah pedant. His description of the story's main character definitely strengthens the satirical impact of the sketch:

> My teacher even looked like a piece of grammar. His head over his bent back seemed like a 'holem' over an 'ayin'; his moustache under his nose looked like a 'patach' under a 'vav'; the eyes and nose like a 'segol' under his forehead; his nose was as crooked as a 'zion'; his nostrils were like a 'tzere'; the three-pointed beard, one point longer than the other, looked like a 'shuruk'; and he himself, R. Moshe Baruch, was a little, round man, and if you saw him from a distance, you would think that a 'dagesh' were rolling across the ground. 4.

Most of Frishman's satires contain such detailed, comical and uncomplimentary descriptions. Like the master craftsman he is, he uses description only when he knows it is necessary to carry forward the story's action. In his psychological-lyrical stories, and in his legends, Frishman introduces only the barest minimum of character description, relying instead on the powerful "human" momentum of the story to compensate for this exigency.

In the matter of settings and locales, the above ratio is reversed. In the satires, there is next to no description of background: neither cities nor towns nor other physical scenes are described, even sketchily. There, the central character is held up to ridicule

because he is unaffected by his surroundings in life and in nature. Why should Frishman describe a tree or a field or a beautiful sunset when such things meant nothing to a pedantic grammarian such as was described above?

In all his other stories, however, Frishman makes extensive use of description to launch the story successfully. In the lyric story, mood is all-important, and Frishman utilizes relatively lengthy descriptions to set the tone, and to put his reader in harmony with the story which he is preparing to relate. These descriptions take the form of reminiscences in which cities and towns are recalled nostalgically. The best example of this is to be found at the beginning of "B'yom Hakippurim":

> Here again is the little town of Gradow -- and when I recall the name of this town, there is also a rush of many other memories: the old synagogue with its wonders and its marvels, my teacher the philosopher, who studied all his life and finally went mad; my brilliant companions who later became assimilated, and little Rachel, with her golden, blonde hair which I liked so much, even when I became older -- all these things I recalled and remembered today; and I also remembered little Ignatz, and our big, black cat, 'Yaktan', and the Catholic priest, with his Latin books.
>
> And then there also comes to mind the big bridge which separates the two parts of the town, the old and the new, and the waters of the Warta River swirl past the two ends of the bridge and wash against the supports upon which it rests.
>
> And it happens, sometimes, that my ears can still hear the sound of the rushing water and the splashing of the waves, and they also beat against my heart, and their tongues swirl there, until my heart trembles and is moved and excited... 5

Frishman goes on in this vien, describing various incidents which he remembers, until he has succeeded in establishing communication between the heart of the reader and that of the heroine.

Even more abundant are Frishman's descriptions of the phenomena of nature. These descriptions are extremely vital to the Frishman short story, for they not only serve to create a mood, but they frequently affect the action of the story's characters, sometimes crucially. The rabbi in "Ish Umiktarto" yields to the temptation to smoke on the Sabbath because the clouds in the sky remind him of smoke rings rising from a pipeful of tobacco. This sight is decisive in snapping his self-control. Olga Weinbloom, the heroine of "Sh'tey Sa'arot", finally decides to break with her unhappy past because of certain thoughts which occur to her as she watches the waters of the river flowing by:

> "Where does this water go? Wherever it wants to go, that's where it goes. --
> And I am a human being with a human heart;
> why can't I, too, not go where I want to go?"

6

Frishman's poetic imagination took wing when he described nature in any aspect. His spirit was intoxicated with its grandeur, its boundlessness and its wild beauty. In at least one of his stories he made nature the central theme. In "Ba-ya'ar" (In the Forest) describes the manner

in which the trees of the forest celebrated their New Year's Day -- the 15th of Sh'vat:

> From morning on, with the morning star hardly risen, the trees all stood in great fear, without moving, and with their eyes lifted to the sky. With a piety which lasted one day, they sought to erase all the sins and transgressions which they had committed during the entire year. But this has always been the custom of trees ...
>
> The forest all around, from the smallest to the tallest, was wrapped in white prayer-shawls made of pure snow which had just fallen from the sky, and their fringes were the long icicles.
>
> .....
>
> An old, tired elm tree stood to one side, and in a hoarse, tired, old voice, began to recite strange verses and to mutter Psalms, and a young weed, who was still a student, tried to repeat after him... A pious and reverent oak tree was the leader of the Morning Service, and a powerful, old cypress tree recited the Afternoon Service.
>
> A wind mightily blew the 'tekioh' and the 'sh'vorim' and the 'truah', and the congregation all around wept loudly. 7

This all-too-brief excerpt should give the reader some inkling of the beauty of Frishman's poetic imagination where nature was involved. The heart of the poet was attuned to the heart of the great outdoors, and the two spoke the same language.

Many of Frishman's stories have a sweet and nostalgic air about them. This is largely because of his manner of describing time. His favorite tense is the past tense. He always looks back to a bygone day and resurrects it in his memory. In his "Desert Legends", he reaches back to the time when the Jewish people was in its infancy.

In "Kidush L'vono" (Blessing the New Moon), Frishman writes:

> Shall I tell you the story of that day when my childhood and my innocence and my faith died? I remember exactly the day it happened. And often, when that day comes around, I feel as though I ought to set up and light a yahrzeit candle for these three things, just as one lights it for someone who actually died. This day is really a yahrzeit day for me. 8

Frishman was the Adam, turned out of his Garden of Eden of "childhood and innocence and faith", who must now wander the face of the earth, tortured by remembered but no longer attainable glories. In "B'har Sinai", he has one of his characters say:

> "Once a man has opened his eyes and has seen, it does not help if he closes them again. That which he has seen, for one moment, will never leave him..." 9

These are the words of Frishman, the realist, but Frishman, the incurable romantic, is forever seeking to recapture his lost world. His lyric stories are the "yahrzeit candles" which he has lit to the memory of the long ago, departed past.

One of the many powerful currents which runs through his stories is that of love. Beginning with the broad foundation of love for life and freedom, Frishman introduces the element of human love in all its forms -- from the most spiritual to the most sensual and lustful. The story "B'har Sinai" contains some of the most sensual and erotic love scenes ever written in the Hebrew language.

Love was sacred to Frishman, even if it assumed a coarse and voluptuous character. In "Ir Hamiklot" (The City of Refuge), he describes a prostitute who followed the camp of the Israelites:

> During the day, when the sun blazed, she ran about over the fields in the sparkling sand, playing with two young snakes which she had tamed. She used to expose her breasts and place the serpents on her body, and they curled themselves around her breasts, and did not harm her; and she used to look up at the sky into the sun, dreaming with her eyes wide open.
>
> At night, when it was dark, she lay in the fields, and near her would be some young man -- and it didn't mean anything to her. She exchanged young men just as anyone would change their garments -- and it never bothered her. Just like a black cat or a white angora, she would pair up with anyone, and didn't think she was doing anything wrong, but she would always laugh out loud.
>
> ... frequently she would be seized by a wild desire, and she would quickly rip off all her clothes and cast them far from her -- remaining sitting in the field as naked as the day she was born. And then she would sometimes take her long hair, which reached to her knees; she would roll it up into a ball, covering herself with it. 10

Our author is familiar with love in all its forms. Voluptuous body-worship and licentiousness are not coarse or vulgar for him. Romantic love causes the poet's heart to experience a pang of pain when the lovers are parted.

Frishman also stood in awe of unselfish, altruistic love as exemplified by the love of a mother for her child. In his tender and moving story "Or" (Light), he describes a mother's love, and does so with such reverence, that the

reader is imbued with a sense of awe, too. A child wakes in the middle of the night and cries out that he wants light. His mother brings him a candle, but he cries that he wants it to be light all over the world -- and not just in his little room. The mother's heart is torn at the sound of her child's weeping. Yet, what will a mother not do for her child. Although she knows it is impossible, she goes to look for light for her child. In reply to her query, an old woman gives her the following advice:

> "Light for your child? Listen to what I will tell you: if you take your bright and sparkling eyes, and would offer them as a sacrifice for your child, then your child shall have light, as he wishes."
>
> The woman did not hesitate for a moment. She brought her bright and sparkling eyes for a sacrifice for her child. Day and night, day and night, she worked for the sake of her child; she did not sleep nights, until finally, she became blind from working too much at night. 11

When this sacrifice proves insufficient, the mother searches a second time and a third time -- to give her child what he wants:

> "The blood of my heart?" asked the woman. And ruthlessly, she tore out her heart, and brought it to her child as an offering. When the child felt his mother's heart near him, he felt warm, as though warmed by the sun, and it was bright for him day and night, and all was light for him. But it was not an eternal light. And it did not light everywhere, nor constantly, for the entire world.
>
> And the woman still wandered around and searched. "Where is light? Where is light? -- Tell me. Where is there such a light, which will shine for my child forever, and for the sake of my child, shall shine all over the world?" 12

In this legend, Frishman lays bare the heart of every mother that ever lived. He looks upon the powerful love in the mother's heart, and bows in homage and reverence. As we can see, Frishman was essentially a poet whose prose contained a lyrical rhythm and a musical beauty. He was a poet to the core of his being, but his poetry was always veiled. His short stories are nothing short of poems in prose form. The emotions of the human soul were his rhyme, the beat of the human heart, his metre.

B. Summary

Frishman was like a magnificent tree with many branches. He was blessed not with one talent, but with many different creative abilities. These did not supersede one another, nor did they conflict within him. Instead, they constituted a harmonious blend, enabling him to bridge the worlds of life and art. This variety and harmony of literary attributes also dwelt in the innermost recesses of his soul. His personality was a synthesis of harshness of character and tenderness of heart, of sophistication and innocence, of mockery and serious idealism, of sober thought and poetic imagination, of skepticism and perfect childlike faith, of joy and of sadness. Yet, these contrasting and opposing tendencies did not impair his ability to function on the highest creative level.

Frishman was completely the writer. His life was rooted in literature, and he was successful in the use of all his talents. He was the most lyric, cultured and modern of all the Hebrew writers of his generation. His contemporaries criticized him for not taking a more active part in Jewish affairs, and in the Jewish national revival movement. However, these critics did not realize that he was engaging in precisely their 'national Jewish affairs'. In his stories, he introduced his readers to the treasure-house of the traditions and beliefs of our people, and he revealed the powerful spiritual reservoir and the hidden resources which had sustained the Jew in his centuries-long odyssey.

Frishman brought about an awakening of the heart among his readers. "Stories like "Yizkor", "Tikun Lel Shovuot", "Sh'losha She-ochlu", and many others, did more to turn the hearts of the youth toward everything the Jewish people held dear, than did many articles on 'The Content of Judaism'." [13] By means of his nature poetry and his human poetry, as found in his stories, he made his colleagues and readers aware of the meagreness of their standards, and the lack of beauty and good taste in their literature.

Frishman visualized himself as the builder of a new Hebrew literature, a teacher of writers and an educator

of the Hebrew reading public. Like a teacher, he worked as a critic and translator, and even his stories and legends are not without the hidden purpose of setting an example for others. He asked of the Hebrew writer that he possess talent, originality and good taste. He himself possessed all three of these qualities in generous abundance. He made demands of the new trend in modern Hebrew literature, and he himself measured up to these demands in his own literary creations.

He campaigned for European aestheticism, for beauty of form and for inner beauty as well. Frishman's greatness is to be sought, not in himself or in his writings, so much as in the influence he wielded on others, and in the changes he wrought among his contemporaries and successors.

In Nehemiah 4:11, we read: "They that builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, everyone, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." This David Frishman did, also, as he went about the task of building the structure of Hebrew literature, his temple. With one hand, he held the sword, waging war against all who desecrated the "holy" -- and with the other hand, he laid stone upon stone, to beautify and perfect the edifice of Hebrew literature.

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NOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

NOTES

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"B'glal N'kuda Achat" (Because of One Dot)

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