THE FICTION OF GERSHON SHOFFMAN

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the fiction of Gershon Shoffman. This can be carried out in two ways. In the first place, the writer could simply take a number of what are generally recognized to be Shoffman's most representative stories and base his analysis upon the content and character of these stories. This is the procedure followed by most literary critics. They generally refer to the same stories in their analyses, and usually make the same broad, almost expansive generalizations about the nature of Gershon Shoffman's writings. There are several problems with this approach, however. The stories used by literary critics are usually from the earliest period of his writing. For that reason alone they are not typical of the entire scope of over fifty years of writing. Since Shoffman is devoted to a portrayal of objective reality as he sees it, he is not to be subjected to broad generalizations. He does not write about character types; on the contrary, he writes about individuals in specific situations. For these reasons, the applicability of the above-mentioned literary analyses has been severely limited.

There does remain a second approach which offers us a far better chance to grasp the meaning and breadth of Shoffman's writings. The obvious solution lies in the

examination of the entirety of his fiction, not in the superficial evaluation of a few selected stories. The second approach is the one that the writer of this thesis has chosen. He has read all of the fiction of Gershon Shoffman and has made extensive notes about the various stories and sketches as he went along. Upon completion of the reading and organization of the notations, a definite pattern presented itself.

Shoffman's stories fall into two categories. Some are comparatively lengthy, running from ten to thirty pages in length. There are no more than about two dozen of these stories. Most of the 1100 pages of his writings are made up by one, two or three page works which have been called "impressions," "vignettes" and "charcoal sketches." They are compact works which have great impact and which often convey more than most writers can convey in a dozen or more pages. Generally speaking, Shoffman wrote the longer stories in his early years completing the last one by 1929. Most of them were completed by 1910. His later works were more compact. For the sake of clarity, all references will be made to the latest collection of Schoffman's writings: KOL KITVE G. SHOFFMAN (The Complete Works of G. Schoffman), published by Dvir Co. Ltd. and Am Oved., Tel Aviv, 1960. His writings fill five volumes.

In one other respect do his writings fall into two distinct categories. About half of his stories have a direct bearing on the place where Shoffman was then living and clearly reflect his environment. These period pieces were sometimes autobiographical, but usually treated by the writer as an impartial observer. In these stories the time and place play a central role, or at least an important role. Four periods in Shoffman's life stand out in his writings; his service in the Russian Army; his wandering around Galicia and Austria; the period of Nazi occupation of Austria; and life in Israel. A chapter will be devoted to each of these segments of his life. There are many other stories which cannot be placed in any chronological framework. They simply do not fit any particular period in Shoffman's life. This is not surprising because Shoffman is first and foremost a keen observer of life. He strives to portray life as he sees it. He looks beyond a particular time and place. He digs beneath the surface to portray the truth as he sees it. It is for this reason that many of his stories deal with broad themes in all their many varied forms. Here four clear-cut categories present themselves: Jews, Man, Life and Love. The writer will devote a chapter to each of these broad categories to see if there are any general attitudes underlying his multi-faceted discussion of these subjects. Only after both

the period pieces and these stories have been carefully considered will we be able to discuss Shoffman's magnificent style and then evaluate his literary creations accurately.

When so many of his stories are autobiographical or semi-autobiographical, one is tempted to rely heavily on the details of Shoffman's life in the examination of his fiction. Again, because of Shoffman's independence and his devotion to objective realism, this would be a mistake. On the other hand, it is certainly helpful to have a general picture of the course of his life so as to have a correct temporal perspective toward his stories.

Gershon Shoffman was born in Orsha, Russia, in 1880. Until he reached the age of 16, he received the traditional Heder and Yeshiva education. Then he began to study Russian language and literature. In 1899 his first stories appeared, and were immediately accepted by the then limited number of readers. They comprised seven stories and were published by the Hebrew Library of Tushiya.[1] To some critics this small but significant work represented the beginning of post-Mendelian prose even though it was not intended to start a literary revolution. In 1901 he published a few more stories calling them Sippurim Vetziyurim (Stories and Sketches). Then, in that same year, the first major event in his life took place; he was called to serve in the Russian Army. For three years, from 1901 to 1904, he

served in the Army. Although none of his stories appears to be autobiographical, it is not difficult to see the experiences and feelings of the writer reflected in them. After receiving his discharge from the Army, he began to wander from city to city in Galicia eventually coming to Vienna in 1913. Again, his stories of this period are not autobiographical in the strict sense of the word, but they clearly reflect his experiences. During this era he wrote about many young men who wandered about seeking roots of any kind: intellectual, emotional, familial, etc. It is clear that he lived in much the same way as his heroes. It is only some fifty or so years later that he openly admits this. A one page vignette entitled "Our First Meeting"[2] tells all. In it Shoffman describes his wanderings in the Diaspora. He was always without the proper documents and always feared that a detective would arrest him. He was once arrested for that very reason in Russia. When he came to Vienna from Galicia, he feared that the same thing would happen. One morning the doorbell rang. He thought it was the police. As he fearfully opened the door, he saw a giant of a man standing before him. He asks:

Shoffman?
Yes!
I am Jacob Fichman

After a long search, Fichman the poet had found Shoffman. The object of the search was not to arrest Shoffman, but

to meet with him as a friend; nevertheless, the fear he felt during those long years remains unmistakeable. During this nine year period, Shoffman published two more collections of stories. The first, call Reshimot (Sketches), was published in 1908. The second, published a year later, is called Meidakh Gisa (On the Other Hand).

In 1921, Gershon Shoffman married a non-Jewess and left Vienna for the village of Wezeldorn which was near the city of Graz (Southwest of Vienna near the borders of Hungary and Yugoslavia). There he lived from 1921 until 1938 when he left for Israel. It is during this period that he writes of the rise of the Nazis. While a few of his stories take place in Vienna or some other city, the overwhelming number take place in Wezeldorn. In this town he is practically the only Jew. This fact may help to explain why he suddenly become autobiographical in his stories and sketches at this time. In many stories he portrays his experiences and those of his family at the hands of the Nazis. It is almost as if he has become preoccupied with his own personal safety. In 1929, while living in Wezeldorn, his collected works were published. They include all the stories in volume one of the 1960 edition, all but the last story in volume two[3], and the first three stories in volume three.[4] It is interesting to note that he frequently mentions his daughter as well

as his son[5], but he never mentions his wife. Not once does he even make an oblique reference to her. Only if the reader knows the nature of Shoffman's marriage can he surmise from some of the stories that Shoffman is indeed concerned with the problems of a mixed marriage. In a number of stories he portrays the plight of people in a mixed marriage. In one particularly poignant story, "Vater,"[6] he tells of young Kitty, the product of a mixed marriage. Her father, a Christian, deserts the family and becomes a loyal member of the Nazi movement. She is forced to flee the country and come to Israel where she is also a pariah and has to work as a maid. There too she does not fit in. In short, Shoffman is concerned with the problem and does give careful attention to it.

In 1938 Gershon Shoffman managed to leave Austria for Eretz Yisrael. It was only with great difficulty that he obtained the necessary papers. It is clear that he saw the handwriting on the wall. For years he had been systematically portraying the rise of the Nazis. He saw its insidious influence spreading from the cities to the towns. He saw how the people of his village were engulfed by the rising tide. He knew that he had no choice but to leave his home and adopted country for Israel. Once he arrived in Israel, his stories became much more personal. Many of them are clearly autobiographical. They describe

some of his vivid personal experiences, but, at the same time, help to give the reader an insight into the magic of the Land of Israel. In 1942 a new edition of his collected works appeared. This collection comprised four volumes (all but volume five of the present edition). It includes about 200 vignettes not published in the 1929 collection.

It is at this time that Gershon Shoffman begins to look at his childhood with a certain amount of nostalgia. Once he comes to Eretz Yisrael his whole attitude toward his youth undergoes a transformation. Now, for the first time, he writes about an earlier period in his life. He gradually moves away from the theme of isolation in all its ramifications which permeated his earlier stories. He no longer maintains strict objectivity and now demonstates a vividly person lyricism. This happens as he becomes more concerned with himself, with experiences in his own life which reveal some unique, startling experience that pictures the unity of man and nature. Some of the stories, however, are simply nostalgic recollections of his youth. "A Long Time Ago in Israel"[7] falls into this category. In this story he tells about his youth from ages 4 to 10. He tells of his father the Melamed and their home in the midst of the non-Jews away from the Jewish section of the town. He tells of the Gentile neighbor,

Nikipor and his son Trishka, and all the problems they encountered. He relates how he studied at his grandfather's Heder and later how he studied with his father. He describes his two brothers and his sister, Chasya. Everything is told vividly, clearly and with great feeling.

In another story, "Ropes"[8], Shoffman sentimentally surveys the town of his youth and tells of his special fascination for the craftsmen of the town. In this story the reader gets a surprising insight into Shoffman's youth. He describes the various craftsmen of the town and then describes two brothers who were rope-makers. They need an apprentice and manage to get Shoffman as their helper. He spends his thirteenth year learning the trade of rope-making and does not go to school. He just gets to the point of being very skillful at the trade when his older brother, Moses, compels him to return to school. He concludes the story by noting that every time he passes by a rope store, it would evoke special feelings within him.

A third story, "'Days of Awe' in My Youth,"[9] also helps to give the reader an insight into Shoffman's youth. In this two-page story, he is 17 and his brother Moses is 23. They are entranced by the melodies of the High Holy Days, and desire to hear them sung beautifully. They

go from synagogue to synagogue looking for the Hazan with the best voice. He remembers those days with great fondness.

Shoffman wrote all of his stories in Hebrew. Many of the stories were translated into Yiddish by Abraham Reisin, Asher Beilin and even by Gershon Shoffman himself. During his years in Vienna he was influenced by the writer Peter Altenberg.[10] Shoffman later translated the works of Altenberg into Hebrew. He also translated the plays of Anton Chekhov into Hebrew. In Israel he edited two anthologies: Shallecheth (The Felling) and Peret (Gleanings). He also edited the monthly periodical Gevulot (Boundaries).

Chapter Two: Life in the Army

Almost all of Gershon Shoffman's stories about army life are found in volume one of his collected works because they are a product of his younger years. Most of the stories to be discussed in this chapter were written either while he was in the Russian Army from 1901-1904 or during the years immediately following his discharge. A few stories about the army and war in general are found in volumes two and three. Some were inspired by World War I and how it affected Shoffman and others like him. Several were written during World War II and have Israel as their setting.

It is not surprising that Shoffman applies his strict standard of objective realism to these stories. At the same time he feels so strongly about the evils of war and its utter stupidity that his views come forth in many of the stories. At times he realistically portrays some of the more bizarre aspects of military life primarily to criticize its inhumaneness and bestiality.

Gershon Shoffman was twenty-one years old when he was drafted into the Russian Army. After leaving the world of his youth, he entered the Gentile world through the army. His soul was repelled by the coarseness, bestiality and stupidity of the realm of the soldier. Never-

theless, he was able to penetrate this world to catch its essence--although it was much different from what he previously portrayed.[11] He turned his talents to this world just as he had to the previous one.

Many of his stories seem to have no plot. They are merely segments in the life of the soldier, or in the never-changing, never-ending tedium of army life. "During the Middle Watch"[12] gives the reader a glimpse into this life. It describes several men on watch from midnight to 3 A.M. We see 39 privates living together in one barracks and get a taste of army life. "Inside the Walls"[13] devotes twenty-one pages to a detailed account of the preparations of a group of soldiers to go to the East to fight against the Japanese. It describes the events in their lives in minute detail, not failing to include anything that would help to portray life in the army. "To War"[14] is a similar account. It too takes place within the confines of the barracks. Here too a regiment is in an army camp in 1905. All the soldiers know that some would be sent to the Far East, but they then find out that they would all be sent to the front. The story is a vivid description of their reactions and how they prepare themselves both physically and spiritually for the venture.

Shoffman's view soon becomes clear. He feels too strongly about army life to keep his opinions hidden. One of his common themes is the bestiality and brutality of the army. It is permeated with coarseness and insensitivity. In the story, "All the Days"[15], a mother speaks bitterly of what the army is liable to do to her daughter: "With men of the army, one has to be careful with things like these. You still do not know what the work of the army is. But when your sons grow up and are taken to the army, you will know. They will tell you!" What must be among the most powerful stories of army life is "Behind the Walls"[16]. It is a prime example of the horrors army life can cause. The biggest and strong man in the regiment breaks down when he hears the term "Russian blood." He cries out that an officer commanded him to stab his father and mother: "As I live--I stabbed them! By God, I swear--I stabbed them!" In "Revenge"[17] the officer Susko hates Kuzman, the enlisted man, with great intensity. The hatred between them is vicious. The officer always manages to "win out" because of his superior rank, or at least until the day before the general's visit. Susko is telling the men about each of the pictures on the walls of the barracks and comes to the third one--about a slaughter of Poles by the Russians. Susko, a native Pole, is pained terribly by this, and Kuzman takes advantage of

his moment of weakness to verbally demolish his superior officer. It is a moment of drama which only serves to portray the animal instincts brought out by army life. Indeed, the army breeds inhumanity and insensitivity.

Another recurrent theme in Shoffman's stories is the view that the army is like a prison because it serves to confine and limit the soldier serving in it. It is like an eternal jail that manages to snare its victims and keep them safely within its confines. Almost everyone called to serve is accepted by the army. The story, "Whether Fit or Not"[18] shows the utter futility of hoping to fail the physical examination. Almost everyone is judged physically fit to serve in the army. The draftee is made to lug crates the night before his physical exam. It soon becomes evident that he is already in and his fate is already sealed. One cannot overlook the great significance of this story for the youth of today. Is not a Mark Rudd or a Cassius Clay in the same position as the draftee in the story! Even if they do not serve, they do suffer greatly for having protested.

It is Levin, the Jewish soldier in "Inside the Walls"[19] who yearns for freedom and a chance to live--outside the army and outside the confines of the army camp. He has a strong desire to live. At the same time all seems such a waste of time to him. He is just marking time, he thinks.

When he left home, his girl, Feigel, was 14 years old, and by the time he hopes to get out she will be 18, but now that he is about to be sent to the Far East, who knows when he will get out--if at all. Everything seems so meaningless and hopeless to him. In another story, "All the Days"[20], Nachum Bundy is taken into the army at age 14. He has been caught and for him there is no escape. Inspired by the desertions of many of his fellow-soldiers he too deserts the army he loathes so much. He soon finds himself in a strange country. World War I breaks out and again he finds himself in the army--it is the army of a different country, but then one army is like another. The stress of war puts him in a mental hospital where he makes a rapid recovery. But then Moroz, his old task master is brought to the ward, and when Nachum sees the man who had afflicted him so when he was in the army the first time, he suffers a relapse. Indeed, there is no escape.

For the corporal in "Corporal Haritonov"[21] army life is a prison in a different sense. He lives for the army; his whole life is devoted to it. For fourteen years he serves devotedly. After those long years of service he is discharged. His world is shattered. He cannot bear to live without the army, so on the first night after his discharge, he shoots himself. We cannot overlook the fact that for some people life in the military

is not only meaningful, but the only life. When forced to leave the protection of the army, his world shatters and life closes in on him.

In only one story is Shoffman's message couched in symbolic terms. "Refuge"[22] tells the plight of a young man who is hidden by his beloved so that he can avoid the draft. But after a while she is unable to hide him any longer, and he is forced to leave the refuge of her home. Faced with seizure by a military patrol, he enters a doorway and finds himself in an observatory. He begins to envy the starts that appear cheerful and free. Oh how he longs to be in their place! He continues to look at them even when it is time to leave as if he were trying to grasp at the freedom that is denied to him.

Some of the stories Shoffman uses as a polemic against the horrors of war and killing. He utilizes all of the means at his disposal to get his message across. In some cases as in "Finally"[23] he may simply describe the impact of war upon a city. In this story he tells how the city has to be evacuated. Food is rationed and only potatoes are consistently available. Everywhere horses are dying from lack of fodder. Young, healthy men are being drafted, thereby depleting the city of much-needed manpower. Then too many people go crazy from the war and the terrible pressures it imposes upon them. All in all, Shoffman paints a gruesome picture.

With biting irony he describes the military chaplain in "To the War."[24] The priest speaks to the soldiers before they go to the Far East. He tells them that their efforts for the Czar and Russia are totally in keeping with the spirit of Christianity. "Your blood will join with that very holy blood that our fathers, the first Christians, shed for Christ." This story is not so much a criticism of Christianity as it is a criticism of war in the name of religion.

In another story Shoffman uses irony with artistic perfection to demonstrate the utter stupidity of war. The very title of the story "Without Cares"[25] bespeaks the ironic nature of the story. Before the war there was nothing to discuss with the people around him. Now that they had all fought, each has become an interesting personality with much to tell. Each had his own unique experiences during the war and each tells of the evil of war and how one has to suffer through it to understand it. Yet one of the people notes that the war days were good days, days without cares. One did not have the normal pressures and obligations of the usual, everyday life to worry about. The daily problems and worries of life were superseded by the need to play one's part in the war effort. To this observer they were days without worry and cares.

Such criticism is mild compared to the scathing attack on human bestiality in the story, "In the Bosom of Nature."[26] The young soldier is sickened by all the killing and inhumanity of the war. Even when the war is over he cannot escape the human longing to kill. He discovers that man the animal gets used to killing and to being inhumane: "The war ended, but the matter of killing did not end at all. In addition to the revolts and pogroms, soldiers who went to their homes with their weapon in their hands, continued the matter individually. Every man in his own place."[27] It seems that every day the young soldier reads of more robberies and murders, often committed by his fellow soldiers. He flees to the country from the big city to find the purity of nature and all the innocence that he was missing. Yet even there, the true nature of man becomes clear. The simple act of killing chickens in order to cook them brings him back to reality. There is no escape, there is no hope. One must simply accept this tragic reality.

Shoffman frequently describes the Jew in the army. In many of these stories he is probably reflecting some of his personal experiences. The Jew is usually alone and he is usually the victim of anti-Semitic feeling. He comes to expect anti-Semitic outburst and even to have Jewish civilians fall prey to the army's anti-Semitic whims. In the story "To War"[28] there are a number of "typical" references to the Jews. In one case a soldier yells at

his Jewish companion saying: "I cannot saw wood with this Jew." He blames him for his mistake in sawing just because he is a Jew. Later in the same story, Tironov, the officer, tells his men that the internal enemy, the Jew, the NON-Christian, is an even greater enemy than the external enemy, the Japanese. He speaks with bitter contempt and hatred for the Jews.

In a number of stories Shoffman describes the brutal anti-Semitism of the army. "Army Days"[29] falls into this category. It describes in detail how the Jewish soldiers and Jewish civilians are treated. Riots, pogroms and anti-Jewish edicts become the rule of the day. The Jewish soldier is treated like dirt in the army. The story centers around a young Jewish soldier who takes a liking for Sonia, a Jewish girl. One night he is on patrol and sees Jews being rounded up and carted off to the local jail. When he arrives at the jail he finds Sonia and her two brothers locked in different cells. He is helpless to do anything and must stand by helplessly as the Russian soldiers rob, torture, rape and kill the Jewish girls they just arrested. It is a painful picture. Sometimes the picture is not so grim, but the fear is always there. "After the Noise"[30] tells how there had been trouble in the city so forty soldiers are stationed right in the middle of the city. Late that night a young girl comes to the soldiers and

begins to talk with the one Jewish soldier among them. Even though the soldiers are there, the Jews continue to fear. One has only to listen to the way the soldiers talk about killing an elderly Jew to understand why they continue to be afraid.

Occasionally Gershon Shoffman describes an oddity, or an exception to the rule such as Abraham Diknah, the Jewish soldier in "On Guard."[31] It is usually the officer who is the most anti-Semitic of the soldiers. The army camp is near a Jewish town, and the only good water belongs to the army. Abraham Diknah is an outstanding soldier; he excells as a marksman and is perhaps the best in the regiment. One night, while guarding the well, a Jew approaches and wants a little water. He is ordered to refuse to give water to the Jews under any circumstances. Even when the Jew begs him, Abraham refuses to give him any water. Finally Abraham exclaims: "Nu, nu, don't make a lot of chatter here!" And when the Jew leaves, the soldier calls after him: "JEW!" Here is the oddity of a Jew turning against his own kind in order to win the respect of his fellow soldiers.

Apart from these stories, Shoffman makes only incidental reference to war and the army. In three vignettes he describes events in Palestine during World War II. The Israelis were rather distant from the battlefieds of

World War II, yet they felt intimately concerned with the progress of the war. They sometimes would make small but significant gestures to show that they cared. In "The Young Australian"[32] a young shoeshine boy shines the shoes of an Australian soldier. He works hard and does a superb job, but the lad refuses to take any money for his work. In this small way he helps the war effort. In "El Alamein"[33] Gershon Shoffman notes that when we think of those who died bravely for Israel, we must not limit ourselves to those who died in the War of Independence, but must also remember the brave English, Australian and other soldiers who fought against Rommel and saved Israel from German control. They too died for this land. A third story, entitled "The Three"[34], takes place in Tel Aviv during World War II. Three British soldiers are on leave and are sitting at an outdoor cafe when the air raid siren sounds. Everyone runs to the shelters, but these three men who sit calmly at the table. They are not afraid. "They were not just soldiers--they were flyers."

Chapter Three: Man In Search of Himself

Gershon Shoffman has written a large number of stories and sketches during the period when he wandered about Galicia and when he lived a rootless existence in Vienna prior to his marriage in 1921. The theme of his writings during this period is possibly the problem of a lost and rootless youth. His stories are mostly about young men like himself who have difficulty establishing roots or finds a meaningful existence. He handles the problem in many ways always giving great variety to what are basically similar stories. Although they concern themselves with the same general theme, each one manages to stand out as a special creation. One critic notes that Shoffman's stories about Vienna belong with the previous ones describing the lost youth.[35] The Jews came to Vienna after serving in the Russian Army and were sustained by handouts from the Jewish community. They wandered about the streets again uprooted and detached from the life around them.

It is important to note that while Gershon Shoffman deals with the lonely individual, he never projects himself into the descriptions. He treats the lonely figures in his stories with an objective realism which heightens their literary effect. The reader knows that he had to live

through something very similar to be able to write with such poignancy, yet he almost never feels that the author is writing about himself.

The most common subject of his stories is the young intellectual who cannot find a meaningful existence in a confused world. Sometimes he deals with artists who strive for meaning in life. In a handful of stories he portrays their sad plight. At times he deals with the young Jew. What is clear, however, is that it really matters little whether the uprooted youth is Jew or Gentile; his problem is the same. His Jewishness is almost incidental. That is why Shoffman often treats his hero without giving any indication of his religious persuasion. Other writers such as Feierberg, Gnessin and Brenner also deal with the isolation of the individual, with the Talush. What separates Gershon Shoffman from them is the absence of specifically Jewish qualities. He treats the individual as man and not as Jew.[36]

As this writer pointed out earlier, the critics tend to speak in sweeping generalizations about the contents of Shoffman's writings. Shalom Kramer, Isaiah Rabinovich and Menachem Ribalow each deal extensively with the "Talush." Each tries to generalize on a theme that is subtly multi-faceted. They do succeed in giving the reader a fairly accurate picture of these stories, but at the same time,

they tend to obscure the hundreds of other stories which do not fall into this category. In other words, each of the above critics emphasizes the theme of isolation almost to the exclusion of other equally important themes in the writings of Shoffman.

There are a few general comments which might aid us in our examination of the stories about the lost youth. Kramer provides us with some useful information about the background of the stories.[37] In his earlier stories, he notes, Shoffman usually portrays the young man out of touch with society, and uprooted from it. He is usually from a poor family living in the Pale of Settlement. He hates his family, and resents the burdens it imposes upon him. Even in his teens he despairs of the future because of the economic hardships--he thinks like a sick, old man. In one sense he is removed from the society around him--out of touch with it. In another sense, he is intellectually and emotionally withdrawn into his own world, without touch with the outer one. Menachem Ribalow succeeds in describing the mood of many of Shoffman's stories. He portrays the emptiness of the lives of Shoffman's heroes:

> What a dark and oppressive incubus weighs upon the lives of these uprooted characters who stalk through the pages of Shoffman's stories! Torn and far removed from home and hearth, love of home still haunts them. They roam about in strange towns to no purpose, aimlessly and hopelessly. They waste their lives in hostile surroundings. Their vacant and insipid existence is totally without meaning.[38]

Ribalow also describes the feeling of despair in the stories:

> Like the discarded cigarette butts, so too are the dreams of their youth trodden underfoot. Their gloomy fear-ridden days pass like swift-moving shadows upon the walls, and darkness frightens them with its nightmares (a word much used by Shoffman) as they sleep in their cheap lodgings two in a rickety bed, on dirty uncased pillows and straw mats.39

Indeed, many of Shoffman's stories portray the tragedy of an empty life. A good example is the case of David Chertov in the story "Finally."[40] Just after the conclusion of the war between Russia and Japan in 1905, he flees his home town in search of a happy life, but he is afraid to really make his life happy. He moves to the big city, the capital, which at first seems happy and wonderful. Soon the bitterness of his life and the emptiness of it sours him to the city and so he yearns to flee once again. Then World War I comes and it brings out the emptiness of his life. He again flees from himself and move to a new residence where he sees a young girl who reminds him of a childhood love who failed to respond to him. This girl ignores him too. He dies--trampled to death by a crowd at a public demonstration. The individual is often swallowed up by forces greater than himself. He years to find meaning and fulfillment but tragically fails in his quest. In another story

"The Partition"[41], the result is equally sad. Eliyahu Badlon, a student of philosophy is forced to come home from abroad because of illness. He is only 25. He gives others the impression that he is always afraid of something--walking with his head down, never looking at anything directly. He creates a wall between himself and the world around him. He suddenly realizes that he had sealed himself in and struggles to break himself free. He yearns to be able to work cutting wood as do his three brothers and his father. He desires simply to be a part of life. This young man, when he comes home, feels that he is an alien in a strange world. "But in the course of his pondering, an idea suddenly flashes upon him with tragic certainty; it is not the world at large that is at fault, or his hometown or the city in which he studies; the sense of isolation comes from his inner self, and is inherent in his own nature."[42]

In one story Shoffman presents his message using a young boy. It is in this story, "In a Strange Home"[43], that we see all the fears and terror of the unknown that well up within a young boy. Reuben would always go to Saul's home, but Reuben finally gets his companion to come to his home. Saul comes, with trepidation, but he comes. He finds that he feels strange and alone. During the afternoon and evening it is bad, but bearable. During

the long, sleepless night it is pure terror for him. In the morning, when Saul leaves his friend's home, he feels as if the chains were removed from him, and is free again. Even in the small child Shoffman sees the fear of life, the lack of strength to stretch forth the hand, and to snatch up what life has to offer. This story vividly portrays the fear everyone feels when he is about to face the unknown, and knows there is no escape.

It is almost possible to say that Shoffman during this period of his life saw life as a prison from which there is no escape nor release. Many of his heroes are on the run and are always trying to hide or escape from someone. For some, life is but going from one jail to another. The young intellectual or revolutionary would always be fleeing and would rarely have the proper papers. Shoffman seems to divide his characters into two groups:

> The whole world is but one large dark prison in which the prisoners are confronted by the blind walls of despair. That is why there are in Shoffman's stories so many emigres, fugitives, prisoners and spies. One group, and by far the larger, is in jail or in hiding, while the other keeps watch over it or lies in wait, ready to pounce at any moment. The world is full of "eyes"--the vigilant eyes of police, visible and invisible, always prying, always pursuing their victims.[44]

To Shoffman, a jail in Russia is the same as a jail in Austria. In some cases his hero would find himself in both. The fugitive is constantly being tracked by the

ever watchful eyes of the police. His whole life is lived in the shadow of fear--fear of others and fear of himself. It is only necessary to take one example to see how the prison symbolizes the life of the Talush. In the story "A Stroll"[45], Gedalyahu Shore is released from prison after spending several years in jail for some petty offense. He seeks out his old cronies and finds only one. He relates to him his innermost feelings. While in prison he tried to imagine himself outside the prison walls. Now that he is free at last, he strives to imagine what it is like to live outside the confines of his narrow life, but he despairs for he has nowhere to go. For him life outside the prison walls is no less a prison.

Sometimes the lost youth will turn to the days of his childhood in search of the meaning that he cannot find. The case of Hillel Snapir in "Triviality"[46] is particularly vivid. He comes to the city to further his education, but also to experience the fullness of the city-life. He feels a lack of direction. He looks for some meaning. He goes to a prostitute, but when he leaves he asks himself: "Now what? What to now?" He then begins to think of his childhood and almost sentimentally yearns for a return to those blessed days of purity and meaning. Then he know where he was going and what he was doing--he was growing up. The case of Ezra Levinton in "The Axe"[47] is somewhat

similar. When he was a child he loved to cut wood with an axe. It gave him an exhilarating feeling. Now 35, married with three children, he is overcome by a feeling of inadequacy. At the Yeshivah he is afraid to express his views at a meeting. At home he muses over his unhappy marriage and about the troubles caused by his children who have kept him awake three nights in a row. He goes out for a walk and sees his 13 year-old son chopping wood. He begins to chop and the feelings of his youth return to him. While before he felt that all was lost and wasted, he now feels a sense of hope and a desire to better himself, to be someone. It should be pointed out that this note of hope is quite unusual at this stage in Shoffman's writings.

For most of his heroes, there is absolutely no hope. Most manage to bear with the meaninglessness of it all, but some yearn for an escape. Some see death as the only way out. In "The Fugitive"[48] Daniel Koran, who was in a Russian prison, manages to escape and get to Poland where he lives for five years before being arrested by Polish authorities for not having the proper documents. Day after day those in his cell are freed, but he remains. He finally realizes the emptiness of his life, and how he had abandoned his brother who was hanged. His only way out is to hang himself in the Polish cell. The case of Bronya in the story "On the Other Hand"[49] is quite similar.

The story tells of a group of Russians exiled in a Polish city. The local authorities begin systematically to remove and drive them out, arresting some as spies. Bronya, a girl in her teens, sees her brother arrested and hanged. She marries and has a child, but shortly thereafter hangs herself. This is certainly a comment on her desperate and meaningless life. For Jonah[50] it is different. He wants desperately to live, but cannot escape death. Jonah, a Hebrew teacher, takes sick in the early summer and is unable to recover from the illness. His sickness, while it is real and gets worse, is also symbolic of his spiritual confusion and despondency. He has no roots in life. He is confused and bewildered. In the late winter he begins to feel better and eagerly awaits the warmth of the Spring sun which promises to bring healing to him. He waits and waits, growing weaker each day, yet continuing to hope that the next day will bring the Spring and a new life. But he dies, and the very next day Spring comes--too late as was always the case with him. He realizes too late that he can only find a meaningful life if he reaches out to life. He is the troubled soul, always dissatisfied with his lot, feeling that he has missed his calling--and indeed he has!

The Jewish intellectual is rarely considered as such. He is lost and rootless just like everyone else. Occasionally

Shoffman deals with him, but then almost incidentally. In one story, "In Dire Straits"[51], he refers to the Jewish intellectuals who meet in the Coffee Houses. The police would sometimes raid these establishments arresting the Jews and accusing them of money changing and other illegal activities. In only one story does he actually describe the Jew who rebels against his Jewishness, and who tries hard to avoid it. In "War and Peace"[52] Budko, a Hebrew teacher, and a young Jewish intellectual, seeks to break away from his Jewish past. At the Jewish Center, where he reads Russian newspapers, he flees when Minchah is about to begin. During World War I, he does not teach and lives a wasted, rootless life, but at least he is free of what he sees as his fetters. When the war ends he dreads the thought of teaching Hebrew again.

In some of his stories Gershon Shoffman deals with the artistic temperament. In some he explores the nature of the artist, and in others he discusses the frustrations experienced by an artist living in a non-artistic world. In "Blank Material"[53] he notes that there is something missing in the personality of the artist. His blank look, his almost bored expression tell us that the artist has to be lacking something in order to portray the beauty around him. That which is full does not absorb, but that which is empty can absorb much. What the artist lacks, he draws from what he finds around him.

In another story Shoffman describes the egotism of the artist which he sees as part of his mentality. In "The Artist"[54] he tells of the painter who cares only about his dear friend, whose opinion is the only one that matters to him. He does not care about the viewing public. Suddenly his friend becomes ill and it is apparent that he will soon die. The artist is then working on his masterpiece and labors rapidly to finish it so that his friend might view it before he dies. He finishes it; the friend views the masterpiece and dies the same day, but the artist is happy.

Other stories deal with the artist's striving for meaning and being frustrated in his search. "Dream"[55] tells of a poet who had labored for fifty years and was famous. One night in a dream a young poet appears to him and tells him what he, the old poet, had wanted to say for fifty years. When he awakes he immediately writes what he had dreamt. This last creation firmly establishes the fame of the poet and impresses the world, yet no one knows that he had stolen it from a dream. While this story has a touch of irony, "Persil"[56] is filled with it. It is a poignantly ironic picture of the frustrations of the young poet, who can find neither fulfillment nor rest. Persil is the name of a new soap powder produced by a large local firm. The poet works as one of their agents

because his work as a poet pays him little. One day, after canvassing almost every home in the city, he manages to escape to the country. There he sprawls on the ground hoping to escape the drudgery of his existence by staring at the beautiful blue sky. But ever there he finds no rest--an airplane is writing in the sky: PERSIL!

There are a number of other stories worth mentioning in this chapter even though they do not fit into any neat category. In one story, "Nightmare"[57], Menachem feels the pangs of an aimless and meaningless life as do many other of Shoffman's heroes, but he at least does something about it. He marries! It is an unhappy marriage, and they just live together. Yet here too, even though he at least marries, he cannot find roots; here again he lacks direction and purpose.

In another story Shoffman deals with the intellectual's search for meaning in life. In "Hurry and Read, Hurry and Understand"[58] he tells of the intellectual's desperate search for understanding. There is something about him that is never satisfied. The one thing above all that plagues him is the fear that he will die without understanding what life is all about. Even when his years are many and death is near, he frantically gropes for the meaning that has eluded him. The sick old man tells the narrator: "I would not want to die while there is a problem between

Hume and Kant which is not clear to me as it should be... Therefore hurry and read, hurry and understand--before it is too late."

In yet another story Shoffman deals with the apparent fickleness of youth. In "Man in the Eternal Gray Suit"[59], he tells how twenty years ago a youth came to his abode in Poland begging for money to get to Russia. The youth had to return to Russia to be able to fight for the revolutionary cause (probably around 1905). Then, only recently (about twenty years later) a man came to his door to make a similar request, only this time it was to fight for the White Russians, the monarchists. This time Shoffman began to think that he had seen this man before, and then he remembered: both he and the youth who came to him twenty years before were missing the same middle tooth. They were indeed one and the same person. This story is short, yet its impact is strong. The dreams of youth are lost as one gets older. Even the great liberal can become a defender of the most conservative of ideals.

In only one short sketch does Shoffman portray the pride and independence of youth. Perhaps it is more positive because it was written somewhat later than the other stories and sketches about the lost youth. In this sketch, "Independence"[60], he tells how the youths were proud and erect when the times were good; they would conquer

the world. Even when life is difficult, they remain erect and independent; they retain their pride. The young man enters the food store and asks: "Please give me something from the garbage to eat...without a trace of shame, without a drop of surrender. Independence even now."

Perhaps this story marks a transition from the despair of his youth to a greater feeling of hope, of concern for the future. Shoffman must suffer through one more period of despair, the Nazis, before spiritual rebirth in Israel can take place.

Chapter Four: The Horrors of Nazism

Almost all of Gershon Shoffman's stories about the rise of the Nazis and their horrible effect on the world are centered in the small Austrian village of Wezeldorn. He does not portray life in Germany, or even in the cities of Austria; instead, he uses a small town as the setting for most of his stories. After living in Vienna, Shoffman went to a small village where he lived among the Gentiles. He portrays the satiety of the farm life, but also the baseness of the villagers. There is a touch of the idyllic, but not more, for he saw the baseness of man even in the fields. The beautiful scenery and landscape serve but to emphasize the inhumanity and cruelty of man that is so clearly brought out by the horrors of Nazism. Shoffman clearly understood the nature of the village folk. He saw beneath the simplicity of their lives. He seemed to have understood the passion for killing in the Arian race and knew how they would respond to the Nazis.[61]

Little by little Nazism engulfed the people of Shoffman's village. Gradually they fell sway to the poison that filled the air. The story "We are Alone"[62] tells how separated the Jews were from the non-Jews of the town. At first only Niehold, the shoemaker, opposes

the coming of the Nazis. The others, the silent Teutons, do not react, and go about their everyday business as if nothing had happened. That is, at least, until Hitler, ("the despicable") visits a near-by city. Then everyone, including Niehold, goes to visit him, to welcome the Führer. It was then that Shoffman wandered about the town. He roamed the streets of the serted city alone. He remarks bitterly: "We now remain ALONE." Indeed, in the last analysis, the Jew stands alone. He finds little or no sympathy nor understanding from his "Arian" neighbors. Another story, "The One"[63], also describes the loneliness of the Jew. Shoffman and his family lived in the outskirts of the city. Hatred poisoned the air as Nazism grew in strength; everyone around him was filled with the Nazi venom. A new family moved in above them and the fathers became friendly. Soon it became evident from the presence of the police that the father was a thief. Yet the two men became and remained friends--they were the only two who resisted the poison around them. By virtue of what was happening, they were forced together just as their daughters became intimate friends.

Nazism touched not only the Jewish family, but the family of a mixed marriage as well. Mention has already been made to Kitty, the daughter of a Jewish mother and a Christian father.[6] Her father became a loyal Nazi but

had to sacrifice his wife and daughter to achieve that goal. Such a situation could only be tragic. Another story, "Franzel"[64], is quite similar. Shoffman and his family became good friends with Franzel's family, a lad who was a playmate of Shoffman's son. Though they were Gentiles, the only ones in that section, the two families were good friends. One day, after a bitter struggle, the country submitted to the forces of Nazism. Shoffman wondered how the people would relate to them now. Then this family was alienated from them, and when he asked Franzel what had happened, the lad said: "They fired father today from his job. They found that we are not pure Arians." His blue eyes suddenly lost something of their former luster.

A theme that is rather common during this time is the impact of Nazism upon the youth of the land. In these stories, Shoffman expresses bitterness toward the Nazis. They serve as an eloquent protest against the horrors of Hitlerism. In the sketch, "If Your Son Will Ask You,"[65] Shoffman manages in but a few lines to show how Nazism poisons the innocence of childhood. He and his young son are walking down a street when they pass a man giving out Nazi hate literature. His son notices the armband and asks: "Father, what is that insignia?" Although the sketch ends with those words, it is not

difficult to imagine what Shoffman might reply: You will soon know my son! In "The One"[66] Franzel and Ernest are friendly young boys who play with Shoffman's children. Yet once they become a part of Nazi Youth they look with scorn at the Shoffman family refusing to play with Esther, his daughter. In short, their minds have been poisoned.

"When"[67] is among the bitterest of his outcries. In this one page sketch he writes of his recollections of the Nazi radio broadcasts, and in particular of the programs for children. Those programs exploited the innocent children while other children, Jewish children, were being murdered by the same people who made the broadcasts. "The murder of children--about that, one cannot think without the danger of going mad" he bitterly exclaims.

Shoffman cannot really blame the young people for succumbing to the hypnotic power of Hitler. They surely cannot be expected to resist if their parents are unable to do so. It is in this light that "With a Raised Hand"[68] becomes so tragically painful. The boy is returning home from his Hebrew lesson with his Bible under his arm when he comes upon the crowd. The Führer himself had come to the city and the people throng to catch a glimpse of him. Somehow, the boy is caught up in the excitement of the moment and feels his arm being raised by the magnetism of the event. As he lifts his arm, the Bible falls to the

to the ground. Later, no matter how hard he tries, he cannot banish the shame from his heart.

Two stories demonstrate the impact of Nazism on the youth in his late teens or early twenties. In the first, "In the Sea of Blue"[69], Shoffman sees the blue-eyed youth all around him. The young, pretty girl Inga is friendly to him when they meet on the street, and he begins to take a liking to her. He comments to her that her friend Erika is not good, for her eyes are filled with venom. She joined the Hitler Youth. Then the Hitler Youth hold a summer festival at the big field and even Inga attends. The next day on his way to work Shoffman greets her, but she does not reply. She does not even smile--she wears a swastika. "Now trouble was indeed coming" he tells us in the last line of the story. The second story, "The Railroad Station of Rostov"[70] is equally effective. While sitting in a movie theater in Tel Aviv during World War II, Shoffman sees a newsreel of the German retreat from Russia. In it he sees a German soldier in an overturned motorcycle dead on the road. He does not see the face but imagines it is Karl whom he knew from the Austrian village. In school Karl became a part of Nazi Youth. It did not matter what his devout father, who was a Catholic and a Social Democrat, would say or that he beat his son for being a Nazi. And then Shoffman sadly notes: "He would pass by me during

the last days without saying hello--Without looking in my direction. And only on the day I left, when I parted from the neighbors, did he raise a look of scorn to me and full of meaning called out: 'Until we meet in Palestine!' And he indeed kept his word!"

In a number of stories Gershon Shoffman portrays the despair of the Jews in Nazi Austria. In one story he tells of "Director Wolf"[71] who is the only Jew working in the bank. To him come every Jew who needs help and usually he receives the loan that he needs. Director Wolf gained a reputation far and wide as the savior of the Jews. With the increasing power of the Nazis, however, his position in the bank becomes shaky. Most of those around him become avowed Nazis. Even Nazi soldiers were coming to the city from Vienna. Then as the situation becomes really serious, another Jew, whose business was failing, comes to him for help. Like those before he exclaims that he is on the verge of suicide. Instead of submitting to his pleas as he invariably had done before, the director answers: "So am I!" Even the director is desperate. In another story, "Eyes and Rivers"[72], the young Jewish couple, Yuri and Rebecca, had to leave Vienna after the end of World War I because of the rise of anti-Semitism. The ominous signs of the Swastika and "Jew, Get out" begin to appear everywhere. The couple flees

to a small village in the country where they live with an elderly woman. There, no politics has touched the people in all their rustic simplicity. But soon it reaches there also and life again becomes unbearable. The couple cannot pay its bills. To make matters worse, a child is born. One day Yuri returns to Vienna to look for a place to live. Suddenly, in the middle of the street he begins to grow blind. As his vision grows dim he runs to the Danube and there, full of despair, drowns himself.

While the Jews were filled with despair, many tried to get out. Many of them saw the handwriting on the wall and left the country. Shoffman describes this sense of urgency, but adds a touch of irony as well. "To the Border Crossing"[73] tells how the Jews arrange their papers and hurry to the border crossings, not wanting to waste a single moment, just as they had done again and again for hundreds of years in dozens of countries. Yet when they arrive at the border, the border guard does not hurry to let them pass. He has plenty of time. He is in no hurry. The "Gendarme"[74] is more expansive in scope. In it Shoffman tells how his small Austrian city came under Nazi control. Even before the final conquest of Austria, he and his family were getting ready to leave the country. They were selling their belongings for next to nothing and were obtaining the necessary papers. Many of his

friends, including the rabbi, were arrested by the Nazis before they could leave and he, Gershon Shoffman, feared that he too would be arrested before leaving the country. It could happen at any moment. Nazis did not allow Jew in certain restaurants, closed their stores and wrote "For Arians Only" on park benches. Everything was in order and the family began to leave this living Hell. At that moment a gendarme came up to them, and this Shoffman thought, was the end. But it was a local police, and as he spoke Shoffman's fear evaporated: "I saw an advertisement in the newspaper, that you have a gas stove for sale. I just got married--he added with a smile--and we have to get settled." This is exactly what we do not expect to find at the end of the story. Here is Shoffman's irony at work. As in many of his stories, he gives this story a sarcastic and somewhat bitter ironic twist.

There are a number of things which may be noted about all of the stories and sketches discussed in this chapter. In the first place, Gershon Shoffman becomes autobiographical for the first time. He is no longer the totally detached realist who objectively describes what he sees. Now he not only is vitally involved with what is happening around him, but expresses his sense of involvement in the stories. At the same time he begins to reflect back on his youth and writes several substantial stories including "A Long

Time Ago in Israel"[75] about the experiences of his youth. For the first time he feels a sense of nostalgia. Along with this he begins to abandon his feeling of isolation. His characters are no longer living in a meaningless and cruel world. Surely life is bad under the Nazis, but there is some hope for the future. In "A Flash in the Dark Cloud"[76], he gives an inkling of a hope for a better future. The two youths stand at the corner peddling the Nazi hate literature and many people buy what they sell. They actually buy that poison! Shoffman watches and is dejected by the sight. Suddenly, a Russian flag passes by and all gaze at it reverently as it passes, forgetting for the moment the hate they had been peddling. Seeing that bit of humanity in these Nazi youths, Gershon Shoffman relaxes and goes on his way.

The story "A New Light"[77] is even more hopeful even though it has a special twist. Klimat, the Jewish historian, and his son, Hugo, live in a small village near a large city during the early thirties, when Nazism was on the rise. Here there are two parallel stories: the rise of the Nazis and the preoccupation of Klimat with the money he owes the Fischer Furniture company. At the end of the story the wave of Nazism is almost at its peak. It is about to take over and submerge the country. The Jewish merchants are pushed out or burned out. At the end of the story Hugo does not return home from school

in the city. The father is worried and runs to the bus stop to wait for his son. He sees flames from the city and learns that a Nazi uprising had failed but it did set the Fischer Furniture Company on fire. At that moment he sees the face of Hugo in the approaching bus, and joyfully comments about the light coming from the city: "A wonderful light, a new light." Even though the Nazi threat becomes worse and worse, there is still hope. The negation of the debt gives Klimat a new lease on life especially when his son returns home safely. In spite of everything, there is some hope, and the flames symbolize that hope.

Chapter Five: The Land of Israel

It appears that Gershon Shoffman's arrival in Israel marked a change in his writing. In the last years of his sojourn in the village of Wezeldorn, he began to express his personal involvement in his stories. Until then he approached his realism as a detached, objective observer. Only when he and his family were threatened by the rise of Nazism did he begin to reflect the insecurity of his own life. Instead of using a fictional character to express his feeling, he began to make extensive use of the words "I" and "We" in his vignettes. This trend reaches fruition with his arrival in Israel. In his many stories about the Promised Land, his promised land, he tells of his many travels throughout the land, and of his reactions to what he saw. He tells of his search for the essence of Eretz Yisrael, and tries to portray its magical qualities. For the Shoffman of the late thirties and the early forties, the romance with the land and its people is too great for him to remain a coldly detached realist. It is his home and his people that he describes.

Everything about the land takes on a vital significance for him. Yet it is important to note that his stories never turn to any mystical or symbolic solution; on the contrary, they continue to deal in careful detail with

the plot and never take refuge in any secret world. Shoffman is too much of a realist to allow himself to become a mystic, even though he sees a special kind of magic in the Land of Israel.

When Shoffman came to Israel he stopped writing novellas or short stories, and condensed his writing even more. There is hardly a single story over four or five pages in length while most are no more than two pages long. Now he would describe only a single moment or instance which would shed great light on the nature of Israel and its people. His vignettes become even shorter but they become more incisive as well. One of the critics elaborates on this point:

> In his third volume, the sensitivity is greater than anything he had written previously. He still tends to compress everything into brief episodes, but the episode no longer reflects a single level of a character at a specific moment. Instead, it responds at numerous interacting levels, and the author himself, either directly or indirectly, becomes part and parcel of the characters he has created.[78]

Clearly, one of Shoffman's most frequent themes is the effort to portray the special qualities of Israel, and to show what makes it unique. "Take Off Your Shoes"[79] is the last story in volume three and the only one of all of Shoffman's stories that is vocalized. It appears that he does this for the sake of emphasis and clarity. He commands the reader: "Take off your shoes from on

your feet and barefoot feel the earth!...Kiss the earth, do not be ashamed. Youth gave their lives for it and live no more! Kiss it, Kiss it!" In a magnificently poetic way Shoffman describes the holiness and majesty of Eretz Yisrael. The command to remove the shoes is clearly an allusion to both Moses standing before the burning bush (Exodus 3.5) and the Angel commanding Joshua to remove his shoes (Joshua 5.15). Because of these Biblical allusions the entire vignette has a deep and profound impact upon the reader. In "Superhuman Strength"[80] Shoffman also captures the spirit of Israel. In this story he recalls visiting a family in Jerusalem whose only son, Joseph, died in the War of Independence. He wonders: "From where did the youths draw all their strength and courage?" He muses over the question as the bus travels from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. He stares at the strikingly beautiful landscape along the way and suddenly realizes that the LAND OF ISRAEL itself gave these young men their strength.

The very fact that Israel is the land of the Bible contributes immeasurably to its magical charm and special qualities. In many of his stories Shoffman sees before him the mighty heroes of old, and not just the modern pioneers and settlers of the land. In "Between Gilboa and Gilead"[81] he describes the Kibbutzim near Mount Gilboa. He sees the immigrants living there as searching for

some tie with the past--for a link with the days of the Bible. At times it seems that Shoffman searches out any and every tie with the time of the Bible. In "First Masters"[82] he feels a sentimental attachment to donkeys and camels. He imagines that these animals are pleased that their first owners--the Jews--have returned to them after so many centuries. These animals, he muses, are happy because they are "Biblical Animals." The story, "Settlement in the South"[83], has a similar theme. Everything about the land is different and special. This is particularly evident in the South: "The Arab lad, who rides on the first camel, whips his Biblical creation..."

Shoffman, as we have previously noted, loves to use a touch of irony to emphasize his main point. In "Deborah"[84] he tells how the Israeli may lose his feeling for the past history of his land by having everyday contact with it. The people of the Kibbutz do not view Gilboa and Tabor with particular reverence because they live with these mountains every day, but the guest who is clearly Shoffman, is entranced by them. He recalls their rich history. First he thinks of Saul, David and Jonathan. Then he turns to Mt. Tabor and thinks of Deborah. As he walks with his friend, a member of the Kibbutz, a young girl passes by them. There is something interesting about the girl, so he asks his host to introduce her to him: "He told me he would be glad to and called to her: Deborah!"

Closely related to the theme of Israel as the land of the Bible is the theme of the mixture of the old and the new. Somehow the old is inextricably intertwined with the new, and the two form a fascinating combination. He reflects on this in "Reciprocal Actions"[85], wondering what distinguishes Israel from other countries of the world. As he looks at Haifa and the sights around it, he thinks how different this Biblical land is from any similar land outside Israel. It has a special flavor which might be called the taste of antiquity, yet, at the same time, the land seems distant and detached from its antiquity as if it were arranged and recreated in our days. It is a blend of the old and new that gives Israel its special flavor. "The Last One"[86] tells how the city boldly advances to meet the new age. Each man works hard to conquer and build the land. Even the youth is devoted to this pursuit. Yet in the middle of all the newness and modernity stand an old Yemenite beggar in torn clothing, who would curl up and spend the night on the sidewalk of the city. He is a link with the past, with the long and troubled history of our people. He is the LAST REMNANT OF THE PAST in this modern city. However, while the Haifas and Tel Avivs develop into proud symbols of the twentieth century, there remain bastions of the old forms of life, even whole cities. Safed is one of them. In

"Safed"[87] he maintains that nothing much changes in the city. Today it is the same as it was one hundred years ago and will be the same one hundred years from now. The elderly shoemaker symbolizes the people of the city. He only repairs shoes; he does not make new ones. He tells Shoffman: "Don't look for the new here...It is the kingdom of the old, the kingdom of the ancient, full of years."

Again Shoffman uses that touch of irony to give added impact to his message. He tells of a boyhood friend who comes to Israel from Australia to visit him in "We Are the Builders."[88] After growing up together, they parted, and only now are they reunited. His friend is a famous Yiddish poet who still lives for the Yiddish language. As they stroll down the streets hearing Hebrew spoken by everyone and Yiddish by no one, the poet is visibly disturbed. It appears to him that his world is fading. But then they pass a group of workmen building a house, and they hear Yiddish spoken by them. Then the poet smiles and exclaims: "But we are the builders!" This story says a lot. It shows how Israel has become a true melting pot for all Jews. It is the one place where every Jew, no matter where he is from nor what language he may speak, is made to feel that this is his home.

Israel is the land of freedom for all Jews. It is the one place in the world where Jews can live knowing

that it is their country and that they are not simply transient inhabitants. Shoffman concerns himself with many aspects of this theme. "With a Winking of the Eye"[89] tells of the elderly gentleman sitting in the Cafe all the time. He sits there calmly as if in deep thought, as if he were a poet or philosopher. No one could guess that this man was once a mighty international adventurer, a man who constantly faced danger. In Israel he can live in peace; he has a home from which he does not have to run and does not have to face danger. But one does not have to find an adventurer to note the freedom of Israel; one need only to listen to the "Noise of the Schools"[90] to understand the difference between Israel and the Diaspora. Gershon Shoffman remembers his youth in Europe when Jewish children feared to raise their voices, afraid that they would be beaten or bullied. How sweet it is to hear the voices of Jewish children playing during a school recess. Every time he passes by a school he stops and listens to that sweet sound. Strikingly different in content but similar in theme is the story, "In the Fields of Sharona."[91] In this story he tells how the Jew has always been a city dweller while the Christian has generally been a farmer. The Jew could not leave his quarters at night without fear of being attacked. Yet in Israel things are different. There the Jew lives in the

country and on farms. There he lives and there he is not afraid to go anywhere, for Israel is his home: "We are on our land today--what will be will be."

In another story, "Just Between Us"[92], Shoffman uses the policeman as a means for contrasting the Diaspora and Israel. In the cities of Europe one could not take two steps without seeing a policeman, nor could several people stand together on a street corner without a warning from the police--the atmosphere was oppressive. In Israel one has to look for a policeman. If a youth is caught stealing from the vendor, the policeman tells the man not to beat theboy. Fairness and justice without the need for the everpresent policeman is the rule. What a difference!

What is clearly one of Shoffman's most striking stories is "Among the Wild Animals and Birds."[93] In this story he sees the spirit of Israel as he strolls through the zoo in the Israeli city. The animals seem to tell him something about the Jewish people. In each cage he sees pairs or groups of animals. He speaks of the young lions and their parents who roam proudly in their cages, just as he roams about the Land of Israel. This is the "lion of Israel. Yet it is the wild pig that has such an effect upon him. Unlike the other animals it is but one and it is alone: "In absolute solitude is the black wild pig. In Galut, in Galut." How effective is this irony! In Israel it is the Jew who is at home. The Gentile with his pigs has no place in Israel; there HE is in Galut.

Gershon Shoffman frequently deals with life on a Kibbutz. We have already made reference to stories taking place on a Kibbutz. We have seen that he describes and almost chronicles the life on the settlements. His primary objective, as always, is to describe man and the basic elements of his existence. But there is a touch of the optimist, of hope, of a fulfilled redemption. He does not actually speak of it, but one may sense it in his writings.[94]

It is almost as if he treats the Kibbutz as the focal point of Israeli life. He seems to see in it the symbol of Israel's very life and spirit. In "Hamsin in the Valley"[95] he describes the people living on a Kibbutz in the Valley of Jezreel, and how they suffer through a Hamsin. In spite of the suffering--the great heat, the unsatiable thirst--the work goes on. The young men plow the field with such great joy that it is communicated to the horse which needs no whipping. These people effuse a sense of happiness and self-confidence. Their devotion to their work and their cause is also evident in "The Five and the One."[96] It tells of five young men who died in an Arab ambush and of a young girl of 18 who also gave her life for the Kibbutz. It tells in a moving way how they gave of themselves for the Land of Israel.

All is not rosy on the Kibbutz. Life is difficult and danger lurks around the brave settlers. In "Don't

Sleep, Don't Sleep"[97], Shoffman tells of the refugees who come to Israel from Germany and Austria, hoping to find peace and security. But it is not peaceful even on the Kibbutz. There is still fear, the fear of the unseen enemy lurking around them, ready to kill without mercy or pity. The cry of the child in the children's house, afraid to sleep, demonstrates the fear felt by all of the people. The story "Burdened"[98], on the other hand, does not picture the fear and sadness in such all-pervasive terms. It tells of the child of four who lives on a Kibbutz with his family. Only in the evening, after a long day of work, does he get to be with his parents. It is a happy life for the boy, but once in a while, while hugging one of his parents, he suddenly becomes sad and it almost seems as if he wants to say: "For what did you bring me into this world to live this kind of life?" These last two stories demonstrate that Shoffman remains the realist. He does not and cannot speak of the Kibbutz in romantic terms. He can describe the devotion of the settlers and their great love for the land, but he cannot say that all is happiness and joy. Life is difficult, and danger is always close at hand. Life on a Kibbutz requires much sacrifice and the individual is not always willing to make that sacrifice.

Chapter Six: The Jew

Until now we have been considering those writings of Gershon Shoffman which in large measure reflect the course of the writer's life. We have seen how he treats life in the army, the life of the wandering youth searching for meaning, the rise of Nazism and the romance between a Jew and Israel. There is a second category of writings which is generally divorced from any particular setting or context. It is in this second group of writings that Shoffman tends to become the philosopher who expounds on life as he sees it. There are four themes which pervade his writings from beginning to end: the Jew, man, life and love. Here too Shoffman remains the realist par excellence. Yet, if we carefully piece together the puzzle, we can at least in part discover what are his attitudes and ideals. The search may often appear to be futile and full of contradictions; nevertheless, we shall try to reach some acceptable conclusions.

The first of these broad themes is the Jew. He maintains his strict standard of objectivity in describing the Jews even though they are his people. He does not introduce social signs or satirical elements in his descriptions. He treats Jews like anyone else.[99] There has been some discussion among literary critics about how

to describe Shoffman's stories about the Jews. Clearly by his extreme laconism Shoffman reveals the Jewish character in a sharp and forceful manner. While Barasch and Streit have tried to show that Shoffman embodies the qualities of the Biblical epic, Fichman feels that he more accurately embodies the style of the Aggadic Remez. His sketches portray the psychological nuances of life and its wisdom by using symbols, parables and the like--very much in the Aggadic tradition.[100]

One of the common themes about the Jew is simply that it is not easy to be a Jew. The Jew faces obstacles and opposition almost everywhere he turns. In "Seventeen Years Old"[101] the youth of seventeen fights a battle for his very existence. His is indeed a difficult struggle. Yet the Jewish youth has a double burden to bear for he must also bear the burden of Jewish tradition and suffer as did his ancestors for being a Jew. Then too the Jew must face one of the realities of his existence--he is rarely a welcome member of society and must frequently flee from land to land: "Such is the fate of this people in the lands of its dispersion. Fleeing from state to state. The eternal sudden haste: to the border crossing, to the border crossing!"[102] For the pious Jew life in Israel is often difficult and painful, for there his enemy is the secularism of the modern Israeli. He sees

a people that lives in the land of the Bible and speaks Hebrew, yet is detached from the roots of Judaism. "The Robbed One"[103] tells of the devout scholar who would frequently go to the Cinema to see the Israeli newsreels. One day the screen shows Israeli troops at the foot of Mount Sinai. At that moment Shoffman looks at the man's face and sees "great sadness descend upon him, as in the case of a person whose world is suddenly shaken at its roots." Another story gives a poignant picture of the reality of Jewish suffering. It is imaginatively presented and that adds to its impact. "The Old Historian"[104] tells of the historian who wrote "The Book of Afflictions" about Jewish martyrs from the days of the Bible to the present. One night in a dream Rabbi Akiba appears to him and berates him for living off the sufferings of his ancestors. Shortly thereafter life in Austria takes a turn for the worse as the Nazis begin to repeat the actions of former generations. Even this venerable historian is beaten by the Nazis. Again Akiba appears to him, but this time the historian tells him that they are now in the same situation, and he adds that it is all worth suffering for, as the words of the Shema tell us: "And Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might."

In spite of all his suffering, the Jew manages to keep alive and keep going. One of the reasons for his

continued survival is the feeling of Hevrah or clannishness that exists among Jews. They feel a common bond to each other which can transcend racial, national and language barriers of any magnitude. "All Jews are responsible for each other" is one of the fundamental truths of Judaism. When a Jew feels that his fellow Jews are not living up to their responsibility to him, he voices his complaint. "Heart"[105] tells of Shoffman's visit to an old Jewish doctor who pours out his heart to him. He tells how his office used to be filled with patients, but because of the advent of socialized medicine, and the anti-Semitic campaign against Jewish doctors he is practically without patients. He becomes involved with his bitter lament and in the process forgets to examine the patient. "Why Do You Strike Your Brother"[106] likewise tells of Jew against Jew. In the previous story even the Jewish patients avoided the Jewish doctor; here the Jew is robbed and beaten by a fellow Jew who happens to be a thief. To Shoffman this is nothing short of outrageous. He declares bitterly: "Yesterday the Egyptian beat the two of them, and today they beat each other." How can it be, he asks disbelievingly, that the persecuted Jew can now turn on his brother? A third story, "Again?"[107], deals with the same theme. In Austria the widow and her son lived alone. At school the boy was frequently beaten up by the local gang, but

the mother could not complain to the principal because he was a Nazi and would do nothing. Now they are living in Israel. Again her son comes home from school, and again he is beaten up by the local bullies who this time are Jewish. However, this time she can do something: "She was angered to the root of her being; she goes again to the principal of the school; this time to OUR principal, in our home. Here, with this principal, she would speak differently!" In Israel she can speak as a member of the Jewish community. In spite of the many challenges to this solidarity among the Jewish people, it perseveres because it has deep roots. The story "Wiener Neustadt"[108] points this out clearly. Every time the train passes the small town Shoffman feels very sad, but he cannot remember why this city on the way to Vienna should bother him so. He suddenly remembers reading in the "Book of Tears," a collection of source material about the persecution of Jews from post-Biblical times to World War I,[109] how 700 years ago the Jews in that town were brutally slaughtered and murdered by the Gentiles. For this reason he feels such a pained feeling as the train passes the city.

Probably the most common theme is that of Shoffman's youth. He has written many stories about the days of his youth, which are either autobiographical or semi-autobiographical: they are either direct references to his

youth or references through the medium of a fictional character. As previously noted, during his last years in Austria, he began to become more personal and autobiographical, as if he were trying to reestablish his Jewish roots, and trying to reconnect what had previously been severed. One is tempted to view these glimpses at the days of his youth as the products of nostalgia, but Shoffman is too much the objective realist to fall victim to the maudlin and the sentimental. The picture that results does show that most of his memories were happy ones, but it also shows that his youth represents the old ways, and that those old ways can hardly manage to survive in the modern world.

Some of Shoffman's autobiographical statements reveal that his youth was generally happy and memorable. "A Long Time Ago in Israel"[110] tells about his childhood from ages four to ten. He tells of his father the Melamed and their home in the midst of the gentiles, far away from the Jewish sector of the city. He tells of life at his grandfather's Heder and later describes studying with his father. With great fondness he describes his two brothers and his sister Chasya. He tells everything with great feeling and warmth. In another story previously mentioned[9] he tells how he and his brother would go from synagogue to synagogue looking for the Hazan with the best voice.

"Passover Long Ago in Israel"[111] tells of the great joy in his household when Passover came. He tells of his youth when he looked forward to Pesach eagerly. He describes the family preparations. Central in all the preparations was grandmother. She was old but had a wish: "As a matter of fact, she did not merely ask to live a long time, but simply to live until next Passover. And this modest wish was granted to her for a number of years until...until a new Passover arrived, and we sat down for a Seder without her."

But all was not happy and wonderful in the days of Gershon Shoffman's youth. Not all of his memories were such golden ones. He recalls "Our Fallen Sukkah"[112] as the symbol of the dying past. Just as the Temple in Jerusalem has only one wall left, so too with their Sukkah. Instead of tearing down the Sukkah at the end of the festival, they simply left it to the elements. Shoffman wryly notes:"Is it not the way of all ruins--that one wall remains!" Surely the beginning of the end for the old ways was starting to appear. "Dubrovnah"[113] tells of David, aged 14, who leaves his home for the big city where he is to spend a year at the Yeshiva there. He tells of a year filled with unpleasantness and hardship at the hands of a cruel teacher. David longs for home, and when he does return home for vacation, the town never seems more wonderful. It is possible, at this

juncture, to speculate about Shoffman's attitudes toward the Yeshiva and all that it stood for. Why does he write with such apparent bitterness about life at the Yeshiva? It appears that he considers it to be an anachronism and a vestige of a former era. He himself had a Yeshiva education until age 16, but subsequently turned to the broad worlds of secular learning. It seems clear from the tone and content of his writings that he prefers the latter without hesitation, yet it hurts him to condemn the old way of life. Although he feels a fondness for that world, he realizes that it is helpless in the face of modernity. The story "Vitebsk"[114] makes that point emphatically. In it he tells how he goes to a distant city to study in the Yeshiva. He tells of the wonderful rabbi who taught Talmud, and, unlike his former teachers, loved his pupils and treated them with kindness. Gershon and two other boys sleep in the synagogue serving as night watchment. One night the police break in and arrest the boys taking them to jail. The next morning the rabbi appears to get the boys released. Now he appears in the light of REALITY--away from the sea of Talmud. This encounter awakens in Shoffman the realization of the remoteness of the Talmud. It serves as an ominous sign of the troubles ahead for the Jews. In that police station the wonderful and all-knowing rabbi has to trust in the fate of the diaspora--he is reliant on the whim

and will of forces beyond his grasp. What a sobering experience.

In two other stories Shoffman uses symbols to declare that the old order is dead, even though many Jews cling to it. In "The Fiddle"[115] he tells how he has an aversion to the fiddle because it symbolizes the old way of life of the Jew (Yiddle with the Fiddle). Its sounds and notes express the life and spirit of the ghetto, something that Shoffman wants to forget. Even in Austria, where the Swastika and the Nazis took over almost over night, the Jews continue to have their children learn the fiddle, just as in former days, until the last moment--when the hangman stands behind them. Even this story lacks the finality of "An Old Jew."[116] He tells of young Kendel who allows the young Nazis to use his field to drill and practice. On his property is a great elm, the showpiece of the village. After his father's death he decides to chop it down to demonstrate to all that he is now boss, and that the old order as symbolized by his father and the giant tree has passed. He arrogantly chops it down. Shoffman adds a note: "And I understood: this tree was a JEW, an old Jew!"

Another theme common to Shoffman's stories can be described simply as "Once a Jew, always a Jew." There is really no escaping one's Jewishness no matter how hard

one tries. Sometimes that Jewish consciousness is buried beneath many many layers of coarse insensitivity, but it is there nonetheless. "The Old Skeptic"[117] tells of the man who all his life argues against the ways of faith and belief. When he was in his seventies he would think of death, but upon reaching his eighties he is no longer worried about it. In the meantime all of his friends have died, and he accompanies them to the cemetery, but he would never enter the burial grounds. "Why don't you enter? the people of the funeral procession ask him. I am a Kohen--he answers with the whisper of the old skeptic." Once a Jew, always a Jew! In "Remember the Sabbath Day"[118] the narrator describes the seemingly remote world of the prison when suddenly he is arrested and brought to trial. As he is about to take an oath, he is asked if he is a Jew. Upon giving an affirmative reply, the judge has him swear on a Torah instead of on a cross. His eyes light on the command to remember the Sabbath, and at that moment he realizes that he cannot forget his Jewishness, for it is a real and deep part of him. "The Great Surgeon"[119] is equally incisive in its portrayal of Jewish roots. He is a famous surgeon, yet cold and scientific in his demeanor. His daughter marries and has a child. He attends the Berith, but does not interfere at all. He feels that in this case he should not interfere with the

course of tradition: "There are cases where even the atheist and the man of science become religious."

It may seem somewhat strange, but Gershon Shoffman rarely mentions the word God, and even more rarely writes about God. In only two vignettes does he deal with this subject. "To the Sea, to the Sea"[120] tells of the poet who runs to the sea, the only place where he can find adequate expression for his love, and the only place which seems to understand him. Then he suddenly realizes that he does not know where all this might (i.e. the sea) and majesty come from. It leads to God, he concludes: "The love of creation hides behind all these things, the very source of love, and it is the creator and it is the prime mover....In the beginning there was love!" The second vignette, "God"[121], is only 8 lines long, but it has a powerful impact on the reader. It needs no elucidation:

> The two of us strolled one afternoon along a dirt road and through fields and groves of trees.
> Father, I see God in the sky!
> Where?
> There, there, the white...
> Where!?
> But right there...don't you see?!
> I do not see, my child.
> You do not see anything!

Only the child can see; the father, wise to the ways of the world, is blind to the ways of life!

Gershon Shoffman deals rather frequently with the relationship between Jew and Christian. In many stories he emphasizes the conflicts between them. Often these

differences and misunderstandings seem so much a part of the Jew's life that they do not even constitute the focal point of the stories. It is not surprising to note that Shoffman uses the same standard to portray Jews and Christians. He writes about many Christians without being positive or negative in his description. Only with regard to the Christians of Nazi Austria does he tend to be negative.[122] What distinguishes him from many other Hebrew writers, however, is that he knew Gentiles well, because he lived with and among them for many years. For that reason he treats them just as he does anyone else; in fact, the religion of the main character may often be incidental to the point of the story.

Shoffman seems to focus on the problems of the convert and the product of a mixed marriage in his examination of Jewish-Christian relations. As was previously noted, this was probably due to his own experiences with a non-Jewish wife whom he divorced before leaving Austria for Israel with his two children. Without ever mentioning this fact he sensitively probes this delicate area. "Bandit"[123] tells of a boy who is a product of a mixed marriage. During the war his father remains in Germany and no one knows where his mother is. The orphan is taken in by a Christian family. While this family spoils its own children, they merely give food and shelter to this boy. Living with them is an old bachelor, and he, like the lad, is lonely.

They form a close relationship. When the lad puts his head on the knees of the lonely old man, it is a moment of great joy for both of them. A different setting yields a similar result in "Foreigners."[124] The scene is a gathering of Arabs and Jews. They come together to dance, even though they do not know the dances of the others, but they try to learn. The Arabs have a great deal of difficulty learning the Israeli dances and appear to be very funny. Only one person, a girl, does not laugh. She understands how they feel, for she is a convert. She too feels that she does not belong; she too is an outsider. "Strangers"[125] also brings the message home. The Jewish school and the Christian school are on the same street. The children attending each institution are contrasted: the Christian children are haughty, proud and confident, while the Jewish children are restrained and afraid. Sometimes they are dismissed at the same time and they fight each other--all the hatred of their generation is embodied in these small wars. But there are a few children, some from each side, who stand aside refusing to fight--they are children of mixed marriages.

All in all, Gershon Shoffman seems to feel strong ties with Judaism, but at the same time he realistically views his people and his faith. He sees that it is difficult to be a Jew. He realizes that the old ways must make way for the new even if the Judaism of the modern age is markedly different from that of the past. He is a Jew to the very root of his being, and that is how he wants it.

Chapter Seven: Man

It has not been especially difficult for Shoffman to talk about the "Jew" because being one, Judaism has been a vital concern to him throughout his life. He is conscious of his Jewishness and reflects a special awareness of what it means to be a Jew in many of his stories. He does not need to philosophize about the Jewish people. With regard to the subjects of man, life and love, the matter is much different. It is very doubtful that Shoffman approaches these subjects with any special attitude or philosophy; he discusses these subjects simply as he, the trained observer, sees them. While there is a great temptation to lump these stories together and to come up with a Shoffmanic Weltanschauung, it would be unfair to Gershon Shoffman to do so. This much can be said about the content of the next three chapters without hesitation. In the first place, Shoffman is probably more negative and pessimistic in his earlier stories than in his later ones. Secondly, because his standard is objective realism, it is more than likely that his stories will portray both the good and bad sides of man, just as they will picture life as not all good and not all bad. The same applies for the subject of love. Being the keen observer, he may spot similarities between diverse

people or experiences, but that certainly does not imply that he tends to generalize about the world around him. In "Nightmare;[126] he compares the head of a Yeshiva with the officer of a platoon; each had the same look in their eyes when they would slap him. Two men could not be more different, yet they had something in common. The critic who points this out[127] goes on to note that Shoffman deals with individuals in particular circumstances, never dealing with types or generalities. His characters are always carefully defined. Another critic is convinced that man is the prisoner of his passions in the stories of Gershon Shoffman. He describes this slavish subjugation to his passions as Shoffman's typical man:

> He is convinced that it is the passions that hold sovereign sway over man. From them there is no escape. They deprive man of his independence while stirring him into feverish activity. After man has done their bidding, they play havoc with his life. They promise happiness and spread before his eyes beckoning vistas of beauty, but after he has heeded their call, the alluring horizons are invariably found to be mirages. What is man but the sport of blind forces? He is not free. He is not the 'captain of his soul,' not 'the master of his fate.' His path in life is beset with insidious snares into which, sooner or later, he is sure to fall.[128]

Such a position may be defensible for Shoffman's early works but it is difficult to justify for his later stories and vignettes. It remains for us to examine his stories about man to see what conclusions if any can be drawn from them.

In two vignettes Shoffman makes the interesting point that each man has his place in the world. In "Jethro"[129] he uses the example of Moses' father-in-law and his desire not to follow Moses to the Promised Land as an indication that every man has a place in the world: "Every man and his land, every man and his birthplace." Even the criminal has his place in the scheme of things. "Even He"[130] tells of the man from the provinces who comes to the big city to enact some urgent business. A hustler spots him as he gets off the train and dupes him into buying some worthless item. When he realizes what has happened, he rushes to the police station angry at what happened, yet admiring the man who had cheated him so cleverly. At the police station he spots the man in the book of photographs and declares: "Even He is here!"

It is clear that Shoffman sees in man an inseparable mixture of the Yetzer Hatov and the Yetzer Hara, the good inclination and the evil inclination. Man is both good and bad. Just as this entire chapter may be seen as Shoffman's balance sheet listing man's debits and credits, so too can the following stories which describe some of man's peculiar strengths and weaknesses. In "A New Word"[131] he talks about the egotism of man. The newspaper writer completes his article and submits it to the printer only to decide that he has used a wrong word. He hurries to the printer's to try to change the word. In his biting manner Shoffman explains the nature of that word: "Coward,

one time in your life you write a new word, YOURS, and you scratch it out!!" "I Strained My Ears to Listen"[132] also belongs on the debit side. It tells of country folk who sometimes engage in philosophical or political arguments when neither side knows much about the subject. Nevertheless they argue, often bitterly, creating much enmity in the process. Another story uses the song of the thrush to show man's inability to communicate with his fellow man. In "Song of the Thrush"[133] Shoffman tells that there is a certain divine quality among the thrushes that does not exist among men. They seem to be able to communicate and understand each other, but man cannot really hear and understand the words of his fellow men--indeed he lacks the simple art of communication the bird possesses.

The fourth weakness of man may be described as the limitations of being human. "Radio"[134] tells how man has created the marvel of the radio which enables people to be heard thousands of miles away. As the people crowd about the radio to listen to the lecture, it becomes clear that the speaker is hoarse and has a lung defect. Victory indeed, muses Shoffman, when man's weaknesses can be detected at such a great distance.

But the inner strengths of man balance out the weaknesses. It seems that man has resources within him which can be extraordinary; he has only to call on them. In

"Strength"[125] he reflects about the individual lost in the great impersonal world. A person could fall down in the middle of the street and not get help. In spite of everything, however, the individual has the strength to bear this and more. He can overcome all adversity and keep going. "I am Not Here"[136] tells of the famous lawyer who lost everything when he left Europe to live in Israel. In Israel he desperately tries to get some help to start once again, but he has no luck. In spite of this he does not despair, for "poverty follows the poor and success pursues the successful." Somehow he will again be a success. And when we finish reading this story, we have little doubt that he will be a success. Then too what about the selfless devotion of the girl in "Give Her Praise?"[137] The young girl is willing to make the sacrifice and devote her life to taking care of the young soldier who has lost his legs. It is tribute to her courage and her spirit that she does what no person should have to do. Certainly these belong on the credit side of the ledger.

Nevertheless, there is much about man that is bad. He has a tendency to be fickle and two-faced. There is no better example of this than the story "The Two Poets."[138] They are not just poets, or so they think. They see themselves as both poets and righteous men. When they stroll through their neighborhoods, they greet everyone with a

smile and with friendliness. Each sees himself as the bearer of the burden of human suffering, and portrays that in his poems. "And only in one case do they pass by someone and become angry without even saying hello or displaying open dislike--when they meet EACH OTHER." Two other stories tell of boyhood friends who meet again after many years, but their friendship of those days long ago counts little. In "The Arm"[139] Shoffman tells of two who were close friends in their youth. One was subsequently successful in everything he did, while the other failed at everything. Finally, the failure comes to see his former friend only to be repelled by: "I am not able to do anything here. The Law is over everything!" With that he touches the arm of his former friend; it feels cold like the steel from which the guillotine is made. "It Passed With the Wind"[140] also tells how former friendships are easily forgotten. Again the failure comes to see the successful man who has since become the head of a large business. They reminisce about old times. As he is about to leave, the visitor indicates that he would like a job, and at that moment "the world of youth with all its wonders was destroyed in an instant...it passed with the wind." When the chips are down, it is each man for himself.

In many of his stories Shoffman speaks of man's apathy and insensitivity. While there are certainly many exceptions, man is usually interested only in himself and cares about

only what affects him. He can be oblivious to everything around him. "Card Players"[141] describes what must be considered the epitome of apathy. They sit around a table to play cards, indifferent to everything around them. Only for one instant did they stop playing--when the newsboys announced the outbreak of World War Two. When the announcemnt was over, they calmly resumed their card playing. Selfishness and insensitivity are also among man's debits. They are poignantly described in "A Strange Child."[142] A poet is writing about the apathy of his fellow men when he suddenly hears the crying of a strange child outside. Although many children are outside, it could be his child who is crying. He runs outside fearing what might be happening to his child only to find that it is some other child who is crying: "Great joy overcame him--a strange child cried." This story demonstrates Shoffman's acumen. One would think that the artist would be among the most sensitive of men, but instead he proves himself to be no different from anyone else. Very much like the poet is the girl in "Woman."[143] She is delicate and pretty and plays the piano exceptionally well. She bitterly condemns the war and the brutal cruelty between peoples: "It is still a good thing, that mankind has not reached the skies. They would destroy that too." It is as if she stands aloof from the human race, but she too is about to become a part of what she criticizes. Her love affair

is breaking up; her lover comes to see her trying desperately to save it. She greets him coldly, and then turns her back on him continuing to play the piano: "All the tyranny of man was symbolized by that turning of the back. Now she was finally a member of that same human race." No matter how hard he may try, Shoffman seems to declare, man is still man, nothing more. He may be less as he becomes barbaric and cruel but he is never more. Both the poet and the girl try to be superior, but they fall victim to their humanness.

How does one draw the line between insensitivity, selfishness and apathy on the one hand and inhumanity, barbarism, and cruelty on the other? Sometimes man's insensitivity is a mask for his cruel and barbaric urges. Two stories form the bridge between these two themes. "Gypsies"[144] tells of a gypsy killed for trying to keep a policeman from molesting his wife. She is forced to roam the streets begging for alms to help herself and her two children. She gets little help and is soon forgotten. Then the Galician Jew comes to town. Now he becomes the victim of the barbs and insults of the people: "They mocked him--both the Germans and the Gypsies." Man is so cruel and unfeeling that the oppressed will jump at any opportunity to become the oppressor without any feeling towards the person he is about to persecute. The second

story, "Hanged"[145] can be read in two ways. In the first place it is the story of man's craving for excitement and violence. When it is discovered that a lad of sixteen had been hanged, everyone runs to the site of the hanging to see the sight. For these people it is a thrill, because it is a break from the ordinary dull humdrum of life. On a second level, it is a criticism of putting loyalty to a religious or ethnic group ahead of one's feeling for mankind. When the hanging is discovered everyone asks the same question: "Who is he, a Catholic or a Jew? That was the first question of everyone who came. 'Jew,' answered a voice after a moment. That brought anger to the face of the Jew and a shadow of hidden relief over the face of the Catholic." Surely this goes beyond the bounds of what we call insensitivity!

Other stories tell of man's propensity for cruelty and barbarism. Here the mask is removed. In "The Small Ones"[146] Shoffman reads a newspaper account of the Nazi atrocities. He sees pictures of German soldiers who resemble those he knew as young children in Austria. He begins to wonder how they could commit such horrible acts. What was it in their youth which brings them to this? To him it is inconceivable that anyone could be so filled with animal passions as to become so inhumane. Then "Teutons"[147] tells of the German people living in a small

village, probably his own. Through the week they do not waste a moment, rushing to do what they have to do. They use a bicycle because they fear they will waste a precious moment. But on Sunday things are different. They drink to excess--to the point where each man is ready to kill everyone else. The barbarism of the people is particularly evident in the two butchers of the town, who would love to kill each other. They get vicarious satisfaction by slaughtering the animals. When the local thief is caught and killed one night, the people rejoice as they accompany the coffin to the cemetery. On the daughter of the policeman who caught him cries. Only she, who loved that very thief, could cry. "I Want to See"[148] brings this inhumanity and cruelty down to the level of children. There is something in children that gives them a thrill at seeing cruelty. The young boy of seven in the small Austrian village prefers to watch his father, the butcher, slaughter a lamb or kid than play with his friends. Shoffman's son loves to go to the zoo where he can watch with relish the cobra patiently make ready to swallow the rabbit alive. When the cobra seems too patient, he scratches on the glass to arouse and incite the snake to work faster so that he might see the gruesome event. For Shoffman it is particularly painful to see such manifestations in his own son, but then too

he also is human. On the basis of the stories discusssed in this chapter so far, it might be easy to agree with the critic who declares that while man is in part governed by his desires and passions, he is basically a cruel being. In all his cruelty he delights in the sufferings of others.[149] Nevertheless, this is only one half of the balance sheet. What is yet to follow may be understood as Gershon Shoffman's contribution to man's credit side of the balance sheet. There is much about man that is good, humane and even wonderful.

In quite a number of his stories Gershon Shoffman speaks of man's basic humanity and compassion. They are filled with a deep and abiding respect for man. Sometimes, however, that humanity has to be brought to the surface, but it is invariably there. "Rebecca"[150] is a touching story of Jacob Rivlin, an old bachelor. All his life he has lived alone with no real contact with people. Even when six million of his fellow Jews died, he could feel no real emotion about their deaths, because he felt no real tie with them. He avoids beggars not out of stinginess but because he feels no obligation to his fellow man. Suddenly a young girl runs up to him and hugs him. It electrifies this man and stimulates him in a way he never felt before. For the first time in his life he feels a sense of contact with another person. The girl, a beggar,

asks him for a coin which he gladly gives her, and then he painfully asks himself: "How many Rebeccas like these were there in the death camps? and he trembled. And at that moment he fulfilled himself." The humanity was there; it only had to be brought forth. "The Two"[151] is somewhat more philosophical in its approach. Shoffman wonders what happens when a person falls ill or faints in a crowded place. He realizes that most people run away for fear of getting involved in something unpleasant, yet there always seem to be two who come to the rescue of the falled while the other return to look--not caring, only curious. In spite of those who are insensitive and apathetic, he tells the reader not to worry: "Do not be afraid my fellow man when you go out; when and if you should fall, the two will be there to pick you up."

Again and again Shoffman the artist captures that one instant in a thousand which gives man an insight into himself. With uncanny accuracy, he penetrates to the very core of man's being, and often his findings are heart-warming. "On the Operating Table"[152] captures much of this insight in its few short lines. As Shoffman walks down the street, he hears a conversation between two men, one of whom is about to undergo a serious operation. He looks at the man and the man looks at him. A look of understanding and sympathy passes between them. In seven short

worlds of feeling and inspiration are opened to us. In another story, "The Wanderer and the Conductor"[153], man's trust in his fellow human is beautifully portrayed. The wanderer is resting on his seat in the compartment when the conductor comes by to collect the tickets. He begins to hunt furiously for the ticket he knows he has, but he just cannot find it. He continues his frantic search and finally finds it only to discover that the conductor had already gone to the next compartment--he had believed him! Both "Man is Good"[154] and "Our executioner--Our Friend"[155] describe bill collectors who have more than a touch of humanity in them. They are capable of mercy. In each case they pretend not to see what little of value remains to the poverty-stricken people so as not to deprive them of their last vestige of dignity and honor.

In spite of his many stories depicting the evil, raw side of man, one cannot help but feel that Shoffman has a deep-seated love for mankind. It is almost as if he has faith in man. He is clearly a universalist, looking beyond the confines of nationality, race or religion. He feels a love for the Jewish people, but feels a greater love for the human people so to speak. The story about the sixteen year-old found hanged and many others make this indisputably clear. In many of his stories this concern with the universal man is a dominant theme. In

one story Shoffman portrays man's relation to history and shows how he might feel a part of its grandeur. "Kerosene Lamp"[156] tells of a home where the electricity suddenly goes out. The family is compelled to light the kerosene lamp which had not been used for so long. The young son just sits there staring at the lamp, fascinated by it. The mother cannot understand, but the father does: "But I knew: from the midst of this lamp his fathers and his fathers' fathers were suggested to him and with them, with them, he was now united secretly." But most of Shoffman's stories deal with man's relations to man in the here and now. In "Man on Earth"[157] he speaks of the "eternal harmonika" which seems to symbolize the basic unity of life. The farmer in Russia is accompanied by his harmonika just as the farmer in Austria and even in Israel. No matter how different he may seem to be, man is basically the same everywhere. Yet frequently there are seemingly insurmountable barriers which stand in the way of this unity. It often requires an extraordinary event to break down those barriers. "The Small Remanant"[158] tells of the happiness of two people at the completion of the brick wall separating their homes. Now they would have privacy and happiness. Just at that moment they hear the sound of approaching aircraft--the enemy is upon them and their peace is no more. It is really quite futile to build

walls between men, Shoffman seems to say, because forces greater than he will break them down. A second story, "Cancer"[159], gives dramatic impact to this theme. He is sitting in the Cafe when his friend the doctor enters. Sitting nearby is a monarchist, a remnant of the old order, and also a militant Nazi anti-Semite. Into this world enters the doctor, who looks like a head of some Yeshiva. The doctor begins to talk in a loud voice about the need for a Jewish State. Shoffman changes the subject wanting to avoid a confrontation with the anti-Semite. He asks the doctor if he knows of any new cure for cancer. Suddenly the doctor forgets where he is and begins to lecture in a loud voice about cancer. Each man there, so different from everyone else, is bound together by a common enemy, cancer, and all differences are suddenly forgotten. Even the hate-filled eyes of the anti-Semite become almost pure and dear. With a magnificent touch of irony Shoffman concludes the story: "Cancer is indeed a wonderful thing."

There are many other stories which are universal in scope and significance. In them he stresses the similarities between all men. He describes them in a number of different ways. In "Names After Names"[160] he describes the people sitting on benches waiting to be called to the courtroom. All sorts of people--name after name--are there. It is as if humanity is lumped together on these benches. In

other words, man, whatever his origin, has basically the same lot in life. "Not Many Faces in the World"[161] tells how there are really not many different faces in the world. When a person sees a new face, it is usually like one he has already seen. Only the nuances are different. A third story talks about the international policeman. "There is Nothing to See"[162] describes a four-story building just built, and how a woman uses it to commit suicide. People begin to approach the fallen body until the policeman appears and manages to push them back telling them that there is nothing to see. This young, healthy policeman does not look like a Jew (in Israel) but looks like the international policeman. This man is the prototype of the policeman everywhere in the world. He is also a philosopher when he adds his observation of the scene: "There is nothing to see." One of Shoffman's most magnificent stories is called "Not a Jew, Not a Russian."[163] It tells of a man, presumably the author himself, strolling through a small town into the outskirts. As he walks along, people look at him, the stranger, through their windows. He notices one man in particular who stares at him. He has seen that face, that man, in other places, in other towns, and in other lands: "Not a Jew, not a Russian, not a Pole, and not a German--A MAN!"

Indeed, Gershon Shoffman has shown us that man is

not all bad. He has demonstrated that man has an almost unlimited capacity for compassion and humanity. He has further shown that it is man, and not Jew, German, Israeli, Austrian, Negro or White that is most important of all. With eloquence and almost sublime beauty he portrays the goodness common to all men. What better way to conclude this chapter than to describe several of his eloquent pleas for human understanding and tolerance. In one, "They Made Peace"[164], he tells of two young men walking down the street together, Christian and Jew, with their hands willingly bound together with chains as a demonstration of their feelings of brotherhood. Their hands are chained together to show that they are both men who share a common lot. No Devil can part them, not even the Nazis who preach hatred and evil. A second story, "Moses"[165], reminds the Jews of Israel that they have frequently been the underdogs. In Austria the Arian boys are playing soccer, and on one occasion let a few Jewish boys play with them. For these Jewish boys it is wonderful to be accepted, even this one time. In Israel, the Arab boy works hard carrying heavy bundles on his shoulders all of the time. The only happy moments in his life are when a stray soccer ball crosses his path, and he kicks it with his bare feet. Then the scene shifts back to the Jewish boys in Austria. Through the medium of the soccer ball we see both the Jew

and the Arab, each in his time, as the victim of oppression. What an eloquent plea for tolerance and understanding. "The Guest"[166] is a fitting end for this chapter. It tells of the old man watching a military parade. He soon tires of seeing all the military hardware. At that moment cages of doves used for military mail service pass by. Carefully he looks at them and shows great interest.. Perhaps, Shoffman notes wryly, this man is Isaiah the son of Amoz!

Chapter Eight: Life

It should be clear at this stage in our analysis of Gershon Shoffman's writings that there are two general currents to his works. In the first place, he tends to be more negative and pessimistic in his early writings than in his latter works. The transition period occurs during his last years in Austria. Even in the late twenties there is some indication of a change in the works. Subsequently, he is much more the man of optimism and hope. But there is also a second current which should not be overlooked. In spite of this mellowing trend, Shoffman remains the objective realist who feels compelled to portray man and life as he sees them. These two currents are clearly visible in his works about man, and they are likewise evident in his writings about life in general. Even in such subjects as old age and death, there is often a note of hope. One critic describes Shoffman's works in another way. He sees him using the everyday, mundane world to bring out the inner world which is the true reality:

> Perhaps it is only in these scenes from the everyday, mundane world that the author can convey his deeper existentialist understanding of life.

> This understanding, revealing the visionary element concealed within the real world, casts some of its creative force over the landscape that, as we have said, always serves as a mirror to reflect the inner world of the character. These descriptions of nature in Shoffman are so saturated with hopelessness that sometimes nature itself seems to be suffering from an incurable melancholy, despairing of any comfort liable to come from the world of light and splendor beyond the horizon. Yet even nature is in due course elevated from despair in these episodes, as if responding to the author's own new vision.[167]

One of the best examples of this mixture of hope and despair is the story "My Little Daughter."[168] Shoffman tells of his eight month-old daughter, who is very sickly. At night he is afraid that she won't live until morning. He is despondent and despairing and almost gives up hope. When the morning arrives and the child opens her eyes, all of the depression of the previous night vanishes. Now he knows--it is worth all the pain and suffering to see her smiling face. It is as if the spirit of God emanates from her tiny body. This touching story epitomizes much of Shoffman's writing--the careful mixture of hope and despair. For Shoffman that is life and that is how he intends to portray it. "From Evening to Mid-day"[169] also illustrates how Shoffman interweaves hope and despair. It tells how he and many others are huddled in an air raid shelter somewhere in Israel. During those long hours he remembers the days of his youth and his dreams. He remembers a love of life and an excitement for it. In the shelter

is a young girl. She is not afraid: "It was good to stand beside her; near her was security. All of us had a right to live by virtue of her existence." When he leaves the shelter and sees the sky, he realizes that it is the same blue, hope-filled sky that he saw in his youth.

Another story, "Man On Earth"[170], expresses a faith in life and a hope for the future in a most exalted and uplifting manner. In the story man descends into the very depths of despair, and then, in the darkest hour, the moment of redemption occurs. It is a magnificent story that must rank among Shoffman's best. It is the tale of the sad and meaningless life of Alex and Helena. Their marriage is not a happy one. They cannot find a place to live in Vienna, so they go to the country to stay with an aunt for the summer. Then the mean aunt throws them out and they rent a small place only to be forced out again. Alex's father has managed to acquire some land on the outskirts of Vienna, and so the young couple move there to live in a dilapidated hut with their baby. A great storm comes--almost as a culmination to their unhappiness--and blows the roof off. Helena and the young girl Zizi, who is living with them, do not know what to do. They run from the hut thinking only of saving themselves from the descruction, leaving the baby behind. Yet the baby is a special human being. He is

not like other babies--he seems to have an inner spirit that is very special. Suddenly everything seems to be all right. A big rainbow appears which symbolizes hope, telling the reader that there is really hope for the child in spite of everything; "The blind forces, which apparently were not so blind, finally achieved their end: a beautiful man on a beautiful earth."

While this and other stories portray a feeling of hope for the future, Shoffman clearly suggests that man never finds ultimate meaning in life. He must constantly strive for meaning and fulfillment and must expect to fall short of his goals. In about a dozen stories, of which we shall analyze a number, he examines the course of man's strivings. Sometimes man feels that he has found meaning and satisfaction, but sooner or later his illusion is obliterated by a sudden and often painful recognition that there is much more to be achieved. "At the Vacation Spot"[171] tells of two poets, who are about forty-five years old and bachelors, who meet a businessman of about seventy years of age at a seaside resort. They spend a great deal of time together even though they have little in common. The poets look down upon the merchant as a simple man of the world and not of the spirit. Then the elderly man's two married daughters and all their children come to visit the grandfather. It is at that moment that the two bachelors realize that this

merchant had attained much in life that they, with all their lofty poetical thoughts, never attained. It is they who should admire him! In "Until When"[172] the bubble of smugness is also pricked. The man is advanced in years and is satisfied with his life. He has done enough, he tells himself. He rejoices over his inner peace and his sense of accomplishment. Or at least so he thinks! One days he strolls through a nearby grove of trees and sees a girl of 16 or 17 and her beauty haunts as does his jealousy of the lad next to her. He suddenly understands that one can never be satisfied. The love of life, the desire for youth and the craving for satisfaction never ceases.

Similarly, a person may set a goal for himself and may devote himself to the accomplishment of it. When he reaches the object of his striving, he is often disapointed to find that he must now strive for something else. It is as if the act of searching and striving is more meaningful than its accomplishment. "Brother"[173] tells of Mundek who has just ascended a mountain and now stands at the peak surveying the world below. He comments profoundly about his striving and his inability to find satisfaction: "It's amazing; when I am in the valley, it seems to me that the essence of life is here, and now on the contrary, it seems to me that it is there." "Appro-

priate Clothes"[174] deals with the same theme but adds a note of bitterness and futility. The man is very upset because he could not have a new suit of clothes. He envies the noblemen and their rich clothing. He puts his very being into saving for a new suit and one day buys the suit as well as a coat and a hat. He now strolls proudly along the street, thinking of himself as a new man. But now the situation is different; the tired, weary looks of those who pass by him speak of jealousy and hate. He is now a bridegroom among mourners, a man who just does not fit in. It was bad before with the old clothes, he laments, but now there too is no peace for him. This story is a parable, and as such, follows a well-established literary tradition starting from the Bible itself.

Other stories seem to describe man's eternal search for meaning in life. As long as there is man, there will be a search for the ultimate. "Letter Carrier"[175] tells of a village where life seems the closest thing possible to the Garden of Eden. The people appear to have everything, but they are not satisfied. Each day they eagerly await the letter carrier with great impatience. The people run after him to get their mail early. A great plague attacks the town, and many people are removed to a hastily constructed area outside the town. Those still well wait for the mailman with the same impatience as

before. One day he does not come. He too has taken ill and is brought to the barracks. This mailman represents their hopes and their striving, and now that he is dying, they are not afraid to die, for there is nothing more for them to live for. They can strive no more just as the mailman can work no more. Man has reached the limit of his endurance and must abandon the search, only to have others take it up where he leaves off. In "The End"[176] Shoffman philosophizes about this very subject. With autumn all things come to an end, but there is always another beginning. The farmer reaps his harvest, and then plows for the next planting. He remembers the days when he studied Chumash and asks himself about the meaning of the Biblical expressions: "and he died" and "he was gathered to his people." He wonders: "How will it be, with the coming of the FINAL END, that has no return with it--how will it be, how will it be?!"

In many of his stories, Shoffman describes the hopelessness and emptiness of an unhappy, meaningless life. For some people there can be no hope. For them itseems that fate has doomed them to a bitter and hopeless existence. In one of his more philosophical vignettes, "Fate"[177], Shoffman wonders whether man is really free or if he has his fate sealed in advance. He notes that we have different feelings towards our parents, brothers and sisters.

We may love them all, hate them all, or love some and hate others. These feelings then shape our memory of these people. They are only memories, nothing more, until our children are born. Then we see the faces of our parents, brothers and sisters in our children, and then our memories are revived. It is an evolution of faces. Yet fate plays a role, for our feelings toward brothers, sisters and parents are transferred to our children who resemble them. Their fate is sealed in advance!

For many people life can be meaningless to the point of despair, while for others it has little meaning because it is shallow and superficial. The women of Galicia who fall for the songs of the Brody poets in "Songs of the Brody Singers"[178] are silly and foolish. The songs say nothing but gibberish, but the women take them seriously. For these people life cannot be filled with despair because it is not taken seriously enough. Likewise, in "Gold"[179], the soldiers stand staring at the gold ornaments in the store windows. How, Shoffman asks, can these men who have such momentous experiences almost daily, be interested in such superficialities? It is hard for him to understand.

For other people life is real enought to be painful and even tragic. For some life is filled with bitterness and unhappiness. Such is the case in "Images-Memories."[180] This three-part story portrays the poverty

and despair of a woman. In the first part she is a young girl who is never happy. She fears the outdoors and hates the store her parents own because it symbolizes the poverty of her life. In the second part she is a mother with a young child, yet there is barely enough for them to eat. She complains bitterly to her husband. In the third part, she is sixty, a widow, and ready to die. She wonders if she will live until next Passover. She takes an onion to eat, and that symbolizes the bitterness of her life. This is clearly one of Shoffman's most pessimistic and bitter stories. The next story, "Exalted Moments"[181], tells how it is difficult to escape from troubles, for when one is troubled, there is no escape. The man goes to sleep hoping that the hours of the night will give him relief, but nightmares haunt him and give him no peace. He longs for the coming of the day and the end to his nightmares. With the first rays of light, he feels a great relief and an exalted feeling descends upon him. But it lasts only a few short moments, for he has awakened to find himself back where he started--not with the nightmares, but with the real problems and the troubles themselves. Nonetheless, there is sometimes hope even in the darkest of moments. "Let Us Wait"[182] tells of that undying hope. The people sit in the Cafe until past midnight--until the doors are closed. Why should these

men hurry home? They have nowhere to go! Most of them are bachelors, without a life to live for. They laugh and make merry at the Cafe, but inside they are crying, for their lives are unhappy and empty. After the doors are closed one suggests: "Let us wait here until our eyes become accustomed to the dark...Yes, let us wait." These men are clinging to one last bit of hope. It may not be much, but it is something.

For many of Shoffman's unhappy and despairing characters, loneliness is a terrible burden. He tells how everyone wants to be accepted and loved by others, only sometimes he does not know how. In such cases the person withdraws into his own world and finds repose there. "Lonely"[183] tells of a man of eighty who continues to work even thogh he is old and alone. Only on the Sabbath and on holidays does he leave his work. On those days he strolls along the main street, not arm in arm as do the young couples, but his two arms are together as if to tell us that he needs no one else because he has himself. Shoffman wryly notes: "Here is the lack of worries to the absolute degree; here is repose itself. He and the world." Many other people, however, strive hard to escape their loneliness. "But This is a Wonderful City"[184] describes one type of person who desperately wants to be liked and accepted by others. He is not accepted by the people of the city so he tries

to win over every newcomer to the place. Shoffman describes him in this way:

> Every place there is someone who feels uncomfortable among the people around him, someone, to whom it seems that the others relate to him in a somewhat insulting way which is not fitting to him. 'Loner' as he is, his way is to attach himself to every strange man, who comes to live here, and truly makes a great effort to become friendly with him and to conquer him for himself before the latter manages to come in contact with the remainder of the people of that place, who are liable to influence him as well, the new inhabitant, for the worst.

Even with all its bitterness and tragedy, life manages to go on. In spite of everything, life does not stand still. Tragedies are forgotten because man has some inner quality which enables him to forget the bitter past and keep going. But there is a negative side to this as well. Sometimes man is so indifferent and even apathetic to the woes of his fellow men that he ignores everything around him. This indifference and lack of concern can sometimes be as painful as disdain and contempt. It is difficult to be treated as insignificant and unimportant. The rural postman in "The Postmaster"[185] is a good example of this. He is such an even-tempered and moderate individual that nothing affects him. He treats nobleman and peasant alike--with the same perfunctory consideration. Even when a letter comes for a man who has just passed away, he merely notes: So we shall return the letter to the sender." In another story, "The Painter"[186], Shoffman

also speaks of this indifference. The father has just committed suicide. The family of the deceased moves out, and the apartment is being readied for new tenants. The painter comes and happily works on his job, oblivious to the sorrow of that home, and indifferent to the hardships and sorrows and tragedies life has meted out to those around him. He does his job singing as he works, yet somehow his empty life provides comfort for those who suffer and bear so much around him. Life goes on!

A similar theme is found in several other stories. Here Shoffman is again somewhat philosophical. He notes that little in life changes; it constantly repeats itself with minor variations each time. "In The Circus"[187] tells how worlds change, but life remains about the same--only the circus does not change for it is the same today as it was generations back. Shoffman speaks grimly of man's lot: "If a person falls and dies, who will sympathize with him? Isn't that why he was created? They (i.e. men who are indifferent to their fellow men) are like creatures from another planet, without any spiritual tie between them and us." Then he returns to the subject of the circus to point out that the acrobat, who is also a mother, checks the nets herself before doing her act because others really do not care. She realizes this and tries to protect her children. If she doesn't, who will! "New and Old"[188]

is even more philosophical. In it Shoffman tells how he returns to visit a place he knew in his youth. There an old friend comes to see him and speaks excitedly about the newness of the place. Shoffman, however, does not feel the same as his friend. Very few places, if any, are new, he notes. They are really quite old. There is very little difference between most places in the world--very little! Sometimes one has but to look a little below the surface to see that. He does not envy travelers who find almost the same thing wherever they go.

Another very common theme in Gershon Shoffman's stories about life is the idea that the future is unpredictable and often full of danger. There is a basic insecurity about the future, simply because no one knows what will happen. He deals with this theme in a variety of ways. "With Pincers"[189] symbolizes man's fear of facing the future, as well as his desire to avoid the dangers that lay ahead. The times are bad. With Hitler's plan for the final solution to the Jewish problem, the future looks bleak. People are sad. A baby being born with the aid of a doctor's pincers symbolizes the situation: the baby does not want to come into the world. He has to be helped and coerced. How sad! Then too, it must be a lonely and insecure life for the storekeeper. "The Closing of the Store"[190] tells of this world.

The storekeeper has to put himself in debt to stock the store, and then has to wait until customers come--if they come at all. As Shoffman stands in a store examining this unsure world, the storekeeper epitomizes his lot with but one question: "And so, are you buying something or not!?!" But the fear of the future even extends to the world of dreams. A man can cope with the problems of his life, "Dreams"[191] points out, but there is one thing he cannot cope with--his dreams. They portend fear and suffering without end and sometimes their horror extends into the world of the living and affects man in his waking moments: "I am not afraid of a severe illness; I am not afraid of death itself, but I am afraid of the dreams ready for me in those nights."

In many stories Shoffman talks of his children. Most of them will be discussed in the next chapter, but several belong here. They tell of a father's concern for the future of his son. He worries about the dark, murky days ahead and hopes that his son will be able to cope with the forces lurking out there. In "Defense"[192] a father, probably Shoffman himself, embraces his son and gives him refuge not because of the rag-merchant who makes the child fear that he will be put in the man's sack, but because of the unsure, even dangerous future that awaits the child in the years ahead. Then the father may not be

able to guard and protect his son. His embrace seems to tell his son: fear not my son, for you shall be able to stand alone. "Through the Window"[193] deals with the mundane in a highly significant manner. The father watches his son compete with the other children from the neighborhod picking up the nuts that have fallen from the tree during the storm. His son returns home empty-handed, while the others fill their pockets. He hopes that when his son is grown, he will be able to cope with the demands of life: "It's no good, it's no good! It was a bad sign for him and for his self-preservation. My only hope is that by the time he grows up, the order of the world will be such that there will be no place for picking nuts."

For others of Shoffman's heroes, the fear of the future is not so great. They know that death is inevitable, so they are determined to live life fully for as long as they are able. They do not fear the future. "For the Time Being"[194] tells how life is short and death may be around the corner, but for the moment all is well and life should be enjoyed to the fullest. The people who come to the famous doctor are fearful that they have cancer. He tells them "it is nothing" and that they should take each moment as it comes, worrying about the dangers of the future when and if they occur. Shoffman then shifts the scene to young Karl who sits in school listening to instructions on what to do in case of a gas attack. The teacher speaks

in the grimmest of terms. Yet when Karl leaves the school, the air is so fresh and sweet and wonderful: "for the time being the air was pure, and the airplanes of the enemy were not in the sky...for the time being!" In the story, "The Best Friend"[195], the young man is not afraid to die. When the air raid siren blows everyone except him descends to the shelters. He tells his girl friend later that life may not be all that sweet, but he is not afraid to die. He does not want to have fear ruin his life; he intends to live. A similar situation occurs in "History Itself."[196] The ninety year-old historian refuses to go to the air raid shelter. He declares that all his life he has earned a living from history by teaching it and writing about it. Why should he hide from that same history? Come what may, he will not stand in the way of time and history.

There are three themes, namely nature, old age, and death, which comprise the remainder of the chapter about life. The first of the themes forms an interesting part of Gershon Shoffman's writings. He writes infrequently about nature <u>per se</u>, but nonetheless uses it as a frequent tool. Nature often provides the background for many of his stories, serving as the environment in which the story takes place. His descriptions of nature form an organic part of the story and serve to reflect the plight of the central figure. Invariably the picture of nature mirrors the mood and focus of the story.[197]

One gets the impression that Shoffman would like very much to treat nature as an object of love and beauty, and as an object of reverence, but his fidelity to realism forbids him from doing this. He cannot view nature as a romantic, but must view it as reflecting life which is both good and bad. Occasionally, as in "The Milky Way"[198], he praises the beauty of nature, but that is the exception to the rule. He dwells on the lack of purity and simplicity which unfortunately describes nature at least in part. In "Hanya"[199] he tells of a simple girl living with her German farmer-father in the middle of the forest. Every Sunday students from the nearby city would come to the forest. Hanya is the very symbol of the simplicity and purity of nature. Soon the factories come to the city and begin to destroy nature around them. While Hanya brings the beauty of nature with her, the factories do the opposite. Her death a a young age symbolizes the demise of nature and all the simplicity and beauty that goes with it as the forces of industrialization advance. "In the Field"[200] tells of the robber who lurks in the shadows waiting for the summer travelers to arrive in the country. His welcome to the beauty of nature consists of robbery and murder. He does this without thought of his victims, merely using the realm of nature as his battleground: "Yes, yes, the field again is not so simple...behold it is the field in which Cain rose against his brother Abel." The irony in this

story is particularly potent. A third story, "The Harmonika"[201], deals with a similar theme. The man thinks he will be close to the bosom of nature if he lives in the country, so he moves there, but to his surprise he finds the youth there to be as coarse and barbaric as in the city. For him it is naive to suppose that nature brings out the "true man." Only the melodious sounds of the harmonika soothe his soul and make up for the lack of purity he finds around him.

Shoffman deals with the subject of old age in quite a number of his stories. In some he simply describes the elderly, but in most he has a specific point he wants to make. At times he laments the need for man to be old, and pities the old man who recalls the excitement of his youth, longing for a chance to relive it. But he also tells of the old man who learns to accept his lot in life and to be satisfied with it. And he also tells of the beauty of old age and the fulfillment that hopefully is a part of it.

It may indeed be said that Shoffman's stories about old age run the gamut from despair to fulfillment. In "Here in Israel"[202] the old man begins to think of his youth in Russia. He thinks of his loves of fourteen and fifteen and all the wonderful experiences he had. Then the realist takes the fore and he notes: "Where are They? They are now here in Israel...old women!" There is little room for sentimental nostalgia in the writings of Gershon

Shoffman. In two other stories he writes of the difficulty of being old. At times, as in "Inkwell"[203], he writes of the effort of the elderly to recapture the spark of their youth, but to no avail. The old poet breaks his inkwell and goes out in search of another one. He goes from store to store only to discover that they are no longer available. Nevertheless, he continues to search hoping that he will find it and finally he finds one in a distant store. But when he arrives home and sits down to write, the words do not come forth. The remarks of all the storekeepers about the old-fashioned inkwell bother him so much that he cannot write. The past must give way to the future, and the old cannot recapture what has already passed. In the second story, "The Battle"[204], Shoffman writes of the frustrations of being old. He tells of the old man who is still quite healthy except that he forgets recent events while remembering his golden youth. One day he is taking a walk when he sees a bully beating a small boy. He interferes and begins to struggle with the bully. The bully takes his cane and begins to beat him, but passers-by stop the youth. Shoffman then notes: "Then he was not able to beat him up because he was small, and now--because he is old."

There is also an element of satisfaction and fulfillment in old age. The elderly person comes to realize that he cannot be young again, and accepts things as they are. "The Apprehension"[205] tells of an elderly writer's attachment

in his youth to a book by Joshua Steinberg. He cherished a love for it all his life. Then he takes the book to be rebound, and when he gets it back, he cannot conceal his great joy. He feels as if he has regained his youth. At the same time, however, he cannot and does not forget that he cannot be young again, and that his end may not be far off. He dies several years later, yet he is satisfied because he accepts life for what it is. "I Kissed the MAN"[206] is one of the most moving of Shoffman's stories on this subject. It speaks of the fulfillment and beauty of old age. It tells of a man Shoffman has not seen for 30 years. He remembers the days of their youth they shared. When he sees his friend, the man has aged greatly, but as he gazes into his eyes he does not see what was a simple, young man, but a man perfected and made whole by maturity. He sees a mature human being, a man full of the splendor of his advanced years: "Mercy and love overcame me. Mercy and love to the point of bringing out a tear, and I pressed his hand at the parting at the door; I pressed strongly and could not resist saying: Give me your cheek! I did not kiss the companion of my youth--but the MAN!"

Another frequently used theme is that of death. Shoffman does not simply state that death is inevitable, and so man must accept what is bound to come sooner or later. Here too, he takes the commonplace and the mundane and treats the subject with imagination and acumen. These

stories are remarkably incisive and poignant. They leave their mark. In "Death"[207] he tells of the poet who concerns himself with the meaning of death in most of his poems. He strives to penetrate the veiled secrecy surrounding it. Suddenly, unexpectedly, death comes to him, and it is "Not at all like what he has described in all his works." Here Shoffman seems to say in his ironic manner that death has to be experienced to be understood. Another story, "Astonishment"[208] tells of man's fear of death and his shock at hearing of an unexpected death. Man knows that everyone will die sooner or later, yet he always is shocked and a bit afraid to hear of someone's premature death. Shoffman writes:

> Every time that we accidentally come across a case of death, the astonishment smites us as if we see something that goes against the laws of nature.
>
> That is because we are found among the living. If we were among the dead all the time, if we lived on a large burial ground, among thousands of tombstones without end--then great astonishment, very great astonishment, would overcome us at the sight of a living man.
>
> A L I V I N G M A N! Look and be astonished!

A very vivid story, "I See Them"[209], tells of man's fear of death and his desire to avoid cemeteries. Shoffman writes of a man dead and buried who describes the people who come to see him. Most people, while they do not forget the dead, want to leave the cemetery as quickly as possible. A couple, dear friends, come and tarry. In the meantime the watchman locks the cemetery and goes home not realizing that they are within. At first they laugh, but then they frantic-

cally try to get out, becoming more and more terrified. They become terribly afraid of the place, and of the future fate that will one day be theirs. With a touch of irony Shoffman concludes: "What is all the fear for my friends? Am I not with you here? And you loved me so much, so much you loved me!"

It is surely not original to say that death is inevitable, but Shoffman speaks of it in terms of an interesting metaphor. In "Crows"[210] he tells of the person who feels like a prisoner in the world of men, for his fate is sealed. He knows that he is doomed to death; he knows his time will come: "All of us are prisoners condemned to death, but the carrying out of the verdict has been postponed for some technical reasons until an undetermined time." In "Among the Graves and Stones"[211] Shoffman strolls among the graves of the cemetery and muses about life and death. He compares the two thinking that in some respects those in the graves are fortunate not having to suffer any more, but then too, he realizes, they suffered in their time. Only one thing is certain: the letter from the postman of death comes to all of us. But while death may be inevitable, man may still want to postpone that inevitability and live as long and as fully as possible. "At a Funeral"[212] deals with this very idea. Shoffman goes to the funeral of a teacher. At the graveside he suddenly realizes that

this is in store for every man. Riding back to the city, the bus arrives at his stop. A friend turns to him and tells him that this is his stop, but he does not want to get off: "No--I answered--I am traveling further." Here the symbolism is obvious; man knows he will die, but nonetheless wants to continue to live as long as possible. Here too, in the subject of death, we can detect a note of optimism in the writings of Gershon Shoffman. In "Yearning"[213] he tells of a person looking in the mirror contemplating the death he knows is near. He feels a slight pain, but at the same time a sweet tiredness. Behold, he declares, I have done something with my life. I have lived. It is a wonderful feeling that makes death the high point of life--the culmination of a meaningful life.

In summary, it may be noted that Shoffman remains the realist. He speaks of life as he sees it; difficult yet capable of fulfillment. He uses the most ordinary and commonplace aspects of life to make unusual and even extraordinary insights. As we read these stories, we feel that he is speaking to us, and is helping us to live a fuller and richer life. We realize that his stories are not dated, but continue to be incisively real and meaningful for the modern man. Perhaps that is the test of greatness.

Chapter Nine: Love

The subject of love is the last of four general themes that pervade the writings of Gershon Shoffman. He deals with so many aspects of this many-faceted subject that it will be impossible to consider all of them in this chapter. Some of the stories are so interesting that, even though they cannot be conveniently grouped with other stories, they will be examined in the beginning of the chapter. There are, however, four general topics which are given common expression and they shall be given treatment and consideration here: lovers in competition; forbidden loves; love and marriage, and the love between parent and child.

There is little doubt that Shoffman the realist operates here too. He portrays life and love as he sees them, and avoids the generalization. His world is composed of the individual experiences that he describes in his stories. There is the expected mixture of happiness and sorrow, of optimism and pessimism that characterize all of his stories. It is difficult to agree with the critic who states that a central theme in Shoffman's writings is love and the sense of isolation it inevitably involves, because of the pain of separation that follows.[214] However, the same critic is somewhat less dogmatic when he states that Shoffman portrays the many varied psychological

aspects of love: "He never shies away from the fatalistic elements involved--life and echoes of death, physical embrace, and the fatal despair inherent within it, dreams and the reality that so cruelly profanes them."[215] Another critic disagrees with him insofar as love is seen in fatalistic terms. He notes that Shoffman is concerned with pretty girls and the power of love. In Russia, Vienna and even in Israel he casts his eyes upon pretty girls. He portrays coarse, vulgar love and fine, delicate love. In short, he points out, love is the power that moves man. It moves him and oppresses him. It exalts him and troubles him in his rest and comfort.[216] That is Shoffman!

At times Shoffman talks of the great joy of love and of the special benefits it brings to the lovers. In "Happy Are the Lovers"[217] he tells how love in and of itself may be wretched, and may cause great pain, but lovers seem to attain a new view of the world. They see a new world with everything fresh and alive. That is much different from the view of everything as old and gray as seen by most people. Another story, "Canopy in the Forest"[218], tells of the young lovers who meet in the forest. There are obstacles and barriers to their love all around them, but in the forest there is the roof of the Chupah over their heads, the eternal Chupah, the trees of the forest. In a third, "Happy is He Who Waits"[219], Shoffman asks what

is that which penetrates to the heart of lovers? It is not the early words of praise or the final conquest. It is the first meeting outside, on the tree-lined avenue, at the coming of dusk. You see her shadow approaching, but you are not sure that it is she. Maybe it is she and maybe it is not. Behold it is she--"Happy is he who waits."

There are two stories which defy any specific label. They do show, however, the breadth of Shoffman's writing about love. Both are poignant and touching. The first, "More Than This I Didn't Want"[220], speaks of the girl of our dreams and fantasies. She is the object of our imaginative fancies and represents all that is distant and unattainable. In short, she is the ideal woman. The man, Shoffman relates, is riding on a train with his six year-old son. Sitting opposite them is a young girl of extraordinary beauty. He writes:

> Behold this is the very girl about whom we dream all our lives without getting her. She is not conquered by any man, but appears, like a meteor on its course, in a train or elevator and then disappears. She rises and leaves the car, and on her way out she takes hold of the chin of my son and pats him on the cheek. What a lovely child she says....I was happy; it was more than I could expect.

The second story, "She Joined"[221], vividly describes the ironic nature of love. It can have some twists which are totally unpredictable and often quite sobering. The poet writes of love and the torments of love, because he

is enslaved by every girl he comes to know well. A girl loves his poetry and longs to meet him. The opportunity comes. They become friends and then lovers. At first she tries to help him sooth his former pains and to make him happy. But then she thinks that by so doing she would ruin his wonderful poetry which she loves so much, so she too "hardened her heart and joined the former lovers."

Shoffman sometimes speaks of the competition for the same woman, and the jealousy that often plays such an important part in these struggles. Sometimes, as in "They Parted"[222], love is seen as the object of conquest. He writes of this kind of love and the sorrow that may come from it: "When a man takes a beautiful wife for his own, he spreads his wings over her as he steals her from others." It is a source of great joy for him, but then too others enjoy this spectacle in secret for one of these days they will suddenly be apart and separated--for the love by conquest is not a lasting love and one that brings separation in the end. Sometimes a lover is so zealous in his love that he jealously guards the object of his love. "Nevertheless"[223] tells of a youth who fears that some hidden rival will steal his love from him. He is obsessed with protecting her from all opponents--both real and imaginary. When she suddenly takes ill and dies, it is as if a great burden is removed from his shoulders. He no longer has to protect her. But when she is being buried, the gravedigger

has to lift her upper torso to place her in the grave properly, and in the process holds her in the form of an embrace. This the young man sees and even this provokes jealousy. Even in death he guards her with all of his being.

There is clearly an element of unpredictability in love simply because love is not a rational or logical phenomenon. "Ice Cream"[224] is a brilliant exposition of this very idea. Sokolin and Markolis are roommates and they are both interested in the same girl. Sokolin is the easy-going, simple happy sort who has a good time with Fankeh, the girl who occupies their attention. Markolis is quiet and withdrawn, but deeply loves Fankeh from afar. Sokolin is confident that his rival in love offers little in the way of competition. He happily watches as Markolis tosses and turns in the midst of restless sleep, tormented by the girl he loves. But in the end, love plays one of its little tricks. Then it becomes clear that Fankeh has loved Markolis all along. On the last night before the two young men are to leave the city, it is Sokolin who tosses and turns while Markolis sleeps blissfully. The next day Markolis buys ice cream for the two of them: pink for himself and white for Sokolin, and then shows a picture of Fankeh with words of love written on it to Sokolin. For this reason, Sokolin, who tells the story to Shoffman, can never eat ice cream again.

Another of Shoffman's truly great stories is "Love."[225] It is the story of Joseph and Moses, two boyhood friends who remain as close as brothers. When they were young they both loved Feigel and made her their ideal woman. When, after a period of separation, Moses marries Julia, whose similarity to Feigel is obvious, Joseph also begins to love her even though she is the wife of his friend. In a real sense this woman becomes the common possession of both men. The image of Julia-Feigel is loved by both although in different ways. Soon she becomes the source of a bitter struggle between the former friends, for Julia has really parted them. Moses takes Julia with him to another city to escape from Joseph. There they are happy and their love becomes strong. She becomes pregnant but tragically dies in childbirth. With her death the two men are again united, this time in their common sorrow and grief over the loss of Julia, and they both cry at her grave. This is a very real story. It is not simply a fictional creation but appears to the reader as the story of believable people who stand before him as real, living people. It effectively shows how love brings happiness and sorrow, and how it inextricably binds up all that is called life around it.

Shoffman also tells us that love is not always as it should be. Sometimes it manifests itself in strange

forms. In "Sister"[226] he tells how the childhood love between a brother and a sister was so strong that it serves to prevent both from attaining happiness in life. The brother is unhappily married because he can love no one but his sister, while the sister never marries because her brother can never be hers. More common is the theme of wanting someone who belongs to another and who is forbidden to you. In a story that take the form of a one-act play, "Let Us Please Be Friends"[227], Shoffman writes about three characters: Esther the mother, aged forty; Ofrah the daughter, aged 19 and Emanuel the suitor aged 48. Emanuel woos Ofrah but feels that she does not love him. Again and again the mother steps in to save the relationship, but only when she dies does Emanuel realize that he loves the Esther of his youth whom he sees in the guise of Ofrah. The death of Esther tells him once and for all that the dreams of youth cannot be recaptured. "The Grandson"[228] tells of two young men who battled for the love of one woman. The loser decided that he would wait until the winner died and then would claim his bride. For more than thirty years he preserves himself, maintaining his youth in anticipation of finally having his bride. The husband at last dies and he goes to see the widow. He tries to talk of the old days, but she only speaks of her deceased husband and of her grand-

children. Finally, one grandson exclaims that he wants the old man to leave, and so he does, realizing then that his wait was in vain: "So was ended the secret, stubborn and long romance."

At times a woman becomes desirable simply because she belongs to another man. The very fact that the other man finds her worthy to be his bride makes her an object of respect and desire. "Her Tear on Her Cheeks"[229] tells how many years ago the man snatched a kiss from the woman when her husband was not at home. For many years the memory of that kiss torments him. When they meet years later he asks her: "On which cheek did I kiss you? The woman does not restrain herself--and her tears flowing down one cheek is the answer." In another story, "The Kaiser"[230], the point is made even more clearly. Otto and Hans are close friends. Hans meets Valdi and falls in love with her. Otto also begins to love her but is left out in the cold. Hans goes off to war for about four years. Otto tries to make advances, but for three years he gets nowhere. Then, when Hans stops writing, he begins to make progress. All of a sudden he realizes that Valdi lacks depth, and then he understands why Hans stopped writing. He had tried to win her over just because she had belonged to Hans.

In a number of stories Shoffman deals with the subject of marriage. Clearly the realist cannot be romantic even about marriage. He sees it for what it

is: a source of great joy and happiness, but also a source of sorrow and suffering. The two cannot be separated. The wedding between the young girl and the soldier in "The Man"[231] brings this out. It is a beautiful ceremony. The father of the groom is the only person who is not smiling. He begins to cry gently but in the midst of his sadness, he experiences a feeling of joy and splendor and loudly proclaims: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, creator of man." He mixes together his love for his son and his joy over the marriage with the fear for his son's safety. While Shoffman may not be a romantic, he recognizes the importance of romance in a marriage. Sometimes, when the romance of one's youth departs from the marriage one or both of the partners may strive to recreate it either in fact or through the imagination. In "He"[232] the husband and wife reminisce about their younger days before they were married. Throughout the story she talks about a former male companion of whom she speaks in the most affectionate terms yet refers to him only as "He." The husband feels pangs of jealousy and because of the man's anonymity he is determined to find out who "He" is. After some searching the husband realizes that "He" is merely a product of his wife's romantic notions about him, the husband, in his early years. It is but a creation of her imagination longing for the romance of youth.

Two other stories tell how a crisis or special event may serve to bring a husband and wife closer together thereby firmly cementing the relationship. "What did You Do?"[233] tells how the young couple begin to despair of the world about them, and do not want to bring a child into the world. They agree to have an abortion, yet during the operation he begins to feel a new and deeper love for his wife. Then and only then he realizes that the world is better than he had thought and he cries out: "What have you done, what have you done?" "Mother"[234] tells how childbirth and motherhood can completely change a woman and a marriage. The young wife is frivolous, mischievous and never takes her husband or life for that matter too seriously. She continues to be this way during the months of her pregnancy, but a strange storm rages within her soul during the moments of childbirth. She suddenly finds herself transformed. For the first time she feels a great pang of love for her husband surging over her. In that moment, when she understands fully her love for him, she is already a mother.

The last major theme to be considered in this chapter is the relationship between parent and child. This obviously has many varied forms. Some stories are seen through the eyes of the parents, while others take the opposite perspective. Most of the stories are viewed through the eyes of either a mother or a father. One, in particular, takes

a different approach. In "Meaning"[235] the narrator tells how he is strolling about early one evening, marvelling at the beauty around him after the storm. However, something bothers him; it seems that the universe lacks content. It lacks love. He thinks of all the girls he has loved--all in vain, for none had responded with lasting love. Suddenly his thoughts are interrupted by the voice of his five year-old daughter. He sees in her eyes a splendor, a sparkle that he never saw before when she tells him that she is already big and is not afraid to walk in the dark. Again the universe is filled with content--with love. Here Shoffman seems to be saying that one need not look to the distant, romantic past or to some remote part of the universe to find love; one can find it in his family.

Some of these stories tell of the protective love of a father for his child. "Always, Always"[236] tells of a father and son who go to the country where the lad suddenly flowers into a bright, inquisitive child. He asks his father about the funeral of the Burgermeister several weeks before. The child asks about death, and the father explains how the heart gives out just as a watch stops running. In the last two lines of the story, the deep and abiding love of the father for his son becomes clear: "Father, will my heart also stop beating," the child asks. The father replies: "No, my sweet child, your heart will

beat forever, forever, forever." "The Judge"[237] also tells of the father's love for his child, but here the father needs a bit of coaxing. He is a judge, cold, severe and mercilless on the bench. Even in the Cafe he is cold and aloof, sitting in a corner away from everyone. One day his son comes to him in the Cafe with a message from home. To him too he is cold and seems to be lacking affection until the father takes out a handkerchief from his pocket and gently removes some dirt from his son's forehead: And before me suddenly burst forth the Father, a very great father." That is Shoffman's comment, and that one short comment says much. Sometimes, as in "The Poet"[238], the father wants to protect his child, but is powerless to do so. The poet is a strong man, proud to defend the Jewish people as he goes through life. In Israel he has a daughter in his old age. Now, quite old, he watches his sixteen year-old daughter play in the sea. All of his hopes and dreams rest with her. She is his future. He watches her swim and then she disappears. He looks and looks but does not find her. He gazes filllled with dejection and despair--just as Moses, the man of God, looked at the Promised Land from Mount Nebo, knowing that he could go no further and would not enter the promised land. Indeed, there is only so much that a parent can do. He can protect his son from the rag-merchant, but

can only hope that his child will be able to cope with future dangers when he is no longer around to guard him.

Other stories tell of mothers. They are somehow quite different from the stories about fathers. There is a special protective need that a mother feels toward her child even when the child is grown, and there is a special feeling of dependence the child feels toward her. "My Mother"[239] tells of a man who after 30 years receives word that his mother is still alive and well. When a picture arrives with a letter, he exclaims: "My mother...all of us are still children." There is a special type of dependence on mother, and she seems to have a special power over her children that never grows weak. Sometimes this love is a bit overly protective and sometimes there is a touch of jealousy of other women trying to steal her son. "The Heart of a Mother"[240] tells of one mother who reads the poems written by her poet son. Through them she is able to penetrate the love world of her son. She sees in his poem "You" the need for one healing, good word from a young woman who would save him through her strength. Anticipating the sorrow of losing her son to another woman, the mother runs to her son as he returns from school, and utters the "good word" that surpasses them all--"the poem is wonderful." Who can top that? Who can overcome such an adversary? In another story, "The Mother"[241], she

continually intervenes in the tenuous love affair between her daughter and the young man. Again and again she is able to patch things up; her charm and insight would restore peace, at least for a while. Then the final break comes. He wonders if the mother will come to make peace, but she never comes. A day, week and months pass by and the vision of the girl becomes dim, but he still wonders if the mother will come. Sometimes, too, a mother's devotion surpasses all bounds. "Mother of a Doctor"[242] tells of a mother who slaves so that her son may finish high school and then become a doctor. After he becomes a doctor, they come to Israel where he tries to start a practice, but he cannot succeed. People just do not come to him. The mother has to peddle odds and ends to earn money to support him and keep him dressed as befits a doctor. It is a sad, but beautiful story of a mother's total devotion to her son.

In one story, "Daughter"[243], Shoffman gives the story of the possessive parent a twist. Here the father, after the death of his wife, becomes an overly possessive father, but his daughter gets even in the end. He forces his daughter to study, not allowing her to date, for no boy is good enough for his daughter. He stands in her way. She finally marries against his wishes, but the three of them get along well. She now has the love of both men--one sitting on each side of her when they are at the

movies. Then comes Havah, her husband's sister and so the four of them go out together. The father begins to grow attached to Havah, for she represents his lost youth which he hopes to regain. Suddenly Havah no longer joins them, and the father wants to know why. He wants to call her, but the daughter refuses to give him her phone number. She stands in his way in the end. Here again it is that magnificent ironic twist that ends the story.

One additional story deserves mention in this chapter. "The Kiss"[244] is more than just a love story. Yael, the girl the young man meets and loves so deeply, seems to represent the spirituality of the Land of Israel. He does not kiss her, but worships her, yet he decides that he will kiss her when she returns from a singing engagement in Jerusalem. But her bus is attacked and she is killed en route. He goes to the site of her death and kisses the ground where her blood had been spilled. More than a touching love story, it tells us that we must be prepared to give our all, and even die for the Land of Israel. If our love for Israel is great enough, then even death is not too great a sacrifice.

Chapter Ten: Style

Again and again in this thesis Gershon Shoffman is described as an objective realist. What exactly is the meaning of this phrase? It does mean that Shoffman is objective and a realist, but it also means much more.. He feels that his prime task is to portray life as he sees it--fairly and objectively. His main interest is to describe the truth and not to portray beauty. He cannot take a romantic attitude because it gives an unreal and biased picture of life. He must be direct and straightforward in his stories. He must be positive, truthful and educating.[245] Because he is primarily concerned with a presentation of the truth, he puts clear, lucid, precise portrayal of his subject before style. To him style is of secondary importance. He does not feel bound to the so-called "Hebrew style" of Mendele; he considers himself free from all such obligations.[246] He does not feel bound to describe types, nor does he feel obligated to express any particular set of ideas. He feels that the only way to show fidelity to the truth is to deal with the individual and the particular. By treating each story as a separate entity he tries to arrive at an accurate picture of life and man. Only by disregarding all styles, modes and generalizations can this goal be attained.[247]

Part of Shoffman's genius is his selection of material. He knows exactly what to write about and what to disregard. He is very strict about his choice of material. He will sift through the dust of the world, peeping through all the lattices to find the right segments of life to describe. He can ignore 1000 visions in order to capture the one thousand and first.[248]

Part of Shoffman's objectivity stems from his detachment from the characters he portrays. By standing back and describing them as he sees them, Shoffman creates a profound and vivid realism. He does not try to have an epic effect, but deals with a "firm, well-defined structure,"[249] which enables him to portray poignantly one element in the chain of reality. One critic describes it in this way:

> Shoffman remains calmly objective, never becoming part of his characters' fate, never feeling any personal responsibility. This epic objectivity, even in the shortest story Shoffman ever wrote, not only lacks the messianic fervor of Brenner, but is also free of the irony that shows the author's personal stand in regard to the events related. It is only Shoffman's profound understanding of life that, with quiet serenity, burgeons out of the story.[250]

Another characteristic of his writing is his compactness of expression. It has been noted that he does not try to create universals in his fiction. Each story is, in effect, a self-enclosed unit describing one link in the chain of life. It is a writing of particulars, of specific moments and experiences in the lives of many

different kinds of people. As such it generally concentrates on one event or several closely related events. Shoffman supplies the reader with only the information needed to understand the story. Nothing is superfluous, and nothing is irrelevant. He may omit some details from a story which the reader would normally expect to know, yet, strange as it may seem, there never seems to be any need for that data. It is at times intriguing that the artist who is so rich in his gifts is so frugal in giving expression to them. He has such a command of language yet is sparing in his use of it. In short, he says only what needs to be said. He says only that which is impossible without it.

It is interesting to note that as the reader follows Shoffman's progress from one story to the next, it becomes clear that he constantly tries to eliminate all that is superfluous, leaving only those aspects necessary for a clear, lucid portrayal of the material. Examining the early stories, it becomes evident that many run ten pages or more in length. Volume one contains about 45 stories which average five pages in length. In volumes two and three the average length is just under two pages per story. This appears to be a conscious effort to pare down the stories. Those in volume one often deal with a number of different characters with variations on the theme of isolation, and numerous nature descriptions reflecting the inner moods

of these characters. Later on the stories become vignettes containing only one character in which the theme is conveyed through a single episode.[251] Little by little Shoffman makes his stories even more compact and concise.

It has been seen how Shoffman has an uncanny ability for selecting just the right subject material for his stories. He knows how to observe the world around him and to pick that which is ripe for description. Once he has made his selection of material, he knows how to describe what he sees with faultless accuracy. The use of detail becomes the means by which reality is portrayed. Sometimes Shoffman will take one particular object, and will center the story around it. Two stories, "The Boot"[252] and "The Axe"[253], are excellent examples of this technique. In the first, the young tutor struggles to make a few pennies. He is terribly conscious of his worn boots and finally throws one away only to be left with one useless boot. Through this young man's preoccupation with the boot, the reader gets a vivid picture of the tutor's life. It becomes the focal point of the entire story. The axe in the second story symbolizes the hope of Ezra Levinton's youth. When, after twenty-five years, he takes the axe and chops wood, he again feels as he did when he was young. Both of these stories show how Shoffman's mastery of the Hebrew language enables him to create a mood and paint a vivid picture through effective use of detail.

Even though he is most assuredly a realist, he nevertheless makes rather frequent use of symbolism. The symbols he uses stem from the very situations he describes and are therefore natural results of his objective observation of the world around him. At the same time he limits his use of symbols so that there is no conflict with the real world he seeks to picture: "Shoffman brings his natural descriptions to the threshold of symbolism without ever letting them become really symbolic for he will not allow his wonderful stories to move out of the realm of the realistic world."[254] Many stories bring this out quite clearly. "Eyes and Rivers"[255] describe the wanderings of Yuri from city to city. The rivers represent this wandering as well as the sense of continuity in life. They fit in so naturally in this story that one is tempted to overlook them as symbols and to see them simply as an integral part of the story which they surely are. In "Ice Cream"[256] the strawberry ice cream serves as the symbol of triumph and victory while the vanilla serves as the sign of surrender and defeat. The symbolism is obvious, but the place of ice cream in the story is completely logical and real--the true test.

Occasionally Shoffman lets himself go and becomes more consciously symbolic. This only occurs when he is in a philosophical frame of mind. These stories have

very little if any action in them; there are merely reflections on the meaning of reality. "The Roof"[257] tells how Shoffman remembers the slanted roofs of his youth. They seem to represent the mid-point between heaven and earth, and serve to symbolize the striving for the heights. The roofs represent the elusive and the hard to reach. But here, he laments, the roofs are flat; people walk on them all the time, and hang their wash on them. They certainly are not way stations between earth and sky. The flat roof is easy to reach; it requires no striving to get there. Another story is called "At the Zoo."[258] In it, Shoffman tells of his visit to the Tel Aviv Zoo. When he looks at the eagle, he thinks that perhaps the eagle from up in the air sees the true reality--life as it really is. When he looks at the snakes, they testify to the dark forces lurking in the universe. Only the parrots cheer him up. The lions, sitting in their cages, are bothered by the flies but do nothing; they seem to speak of the boredom of existence.

The last major characteristic of Gershon Shoffman's writing is his use of irony. Again and again he declares that life is not always as it seems. It is difficult to plan ahead and know in advance how things will turn out. It is this unpredictability which gives him the opportunity to mix irony and wry humor into his stories. Ribalow describes it in this way:

> Yet Shoffman not only knows how to tell a story and to portray a character; he can also entertain. That too, he does with a subtlety all his own. From his carefully weighed and measured line, the initiated reader derives a refreshing satisfaction. This is due not only to his manner of composition and style, but primarily to his keen power of observation and his uncanny psychological insight. He can pique the reader's curiosity and arouse his dormant sensibilities.[259]

Time and time again he builds up a mood only to shatter it rudely at the very end of the story. At times one is tempted to protest such cruelty, but after some thought, it becomes clearly that irony such as this is very much a part of life. It is quite real. What makes it so poignant is the author's ability to capture those moments and put them in writing. That is part of Shoffman's genius. In one story, "In the Midst of All This"[260], he tells of a trip into the hill country around Mount Carmel. He describes the Druzes as well as other religious groups. He sees an isolated house in the distance, and is immediately sure that it belongs to some very pious man. As they drive toward the house he lets his imagination run wild. He thinks of the wondrous opportunities for devotion and speculation in these hills. They arrive to the building and look at the sign: PRISON. How shocking and contradictory this is, yet is it not real? Is that not the way the world is put together? "Miracle"[261] shows the redeeming power of that which is considered to be evil. Sometimes it is terribly difficult to separate good from evil as

this story points out. The people in the country live in mortal dread of robbers and murderers who lurk in the dark nights. Then the sick brother of one matron, whose days are numbered, comes to the country. He has a horrible cough and sleeps outside in the clean country air. His cough--the cough of a very sick man--scares away the robbers. Once again the people sleep in peace and do not fear. Often life is so ironic that Shoffman need only take what he sees and put it in writing. Sometimes the twist is humorous, and sometimes it is sad, but it is always life. "Blackness"[262] tells of a father who is a chimney sweep. He wants his son to follow in his footsteps, but the son does not want to be a chimney sweep. He tries a number of jobs, and fails at each one, all with his mother's encouragement. Finally the son has no choice but to become a chimney sweep like his father. Now the mother concentrates all her love on her sixteen year-old daughter. One night the daughter stays out until morning. When she comes home her mother yells at her and asks:

> Who is this lad?
> A descent lad--answered Herta--he swore that he would marry me legally.
> What does he do? (the mother asks)
> He is an apprentice to a chimney sweep!

That is what life is like and that is how Shoffman records it, objectively and realistically.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this thesis to examine the fiction of Gershon Shoffman. In the introductory chapter two possible approaches were discussed. The first involves an examination of what are generally considered the most representative of Shoffman's stories. It was seen that there are several inherent dangers in such an approach. In the first place, Shoffman's writings cover a period of more than fifty years. What is typical of his early stories may not be typical of his stories in the forties or early fifties. Secondly, because he is concerned with an objective description of reality, there may not be any typical stories. Each story is but a link in the chain of reality. Each story deserves separate consideration. The second approach, which involves an analysis of all of Shoffman's fiction, gives a broader and more accurate picture of his writing. By examining all of his nearly five hundred stories, trends and patterns can been seen. This has been the approach used in this thesis. After reading all of his stories, it has been found that they fit conveniently in eight groups. Four of these groups reflect periods in Shoffman's life and four reflect general themes which have interested him throughout his writing career. This thesis has been devoted to a dis-

cussion of those eight aspects of Shoffman's writings, as well as to a general examination of his style.

After growing up in Russia, Shoffman entered the Russian Army in 1901 and served until 1904. Those three years had a great impact not only on him but upon the course of his writing. He examines army life both from the viewpoint of its inhumanity and bestiality and from the viewpoint of its treatment of Jews. It is clear from his writings that his service in the army was not a happy experience. Although objective and detached in his writings about army life, many stories are nevertheless filled with biting criticism. It is as if he cannot help but criticize army life. He tells again and again of the inhumanity and brutality that is everyday fare in the army. In a number of stories he compares the army to a prison from which it is almost impossible to escape. Even if a soldier deserts the army, he will at a later date find himself in another army in another land. He speaks bitterly of the military chaplain who urges the soldiers to fight for Russia in the name of the Church, telling them that they are fighting a holy war for their homeland. He tells the reader of the habit of killing and how soldiers sometimes continue to kill after returning home, because the habit has become so much a part of them that they cannot resist. Shoffman also discusses the

sad plight of the Jew in the army. He is treated very badly and is often the victim of anti-Semitism. He is drafted at an early age, and is often force to serve longer than the Christian soldiers. Life for the average soldier is bad, but for the Jew it is worse.

Upon being discharged from the army in 1904, Gershon Shoffman began his period of wandering. He traveled from city to city in Galicia for the next nine years, meeting and writing about many different sorts of people. In 1913 he came to Vienna where he lived for the next eight years. During this period he wrote mainly about the individual in search of himself. He describes many young men and women desperately searching for meaning in life, hoping to find some moorings, but more times than not failing in the search. It is clear that many of his stories reflect his own experiences, yet he hardly ever projects himself into these stories. Shoffman deals with the theme of lost youth and loneliness in an almost infinite variety of ways. For most of his heroes there is almost no hope. They, like the soldiers of the previous period, see life as a prison from which there is little escape, yet they, unlike the soldiers, often find themselves in prison. They are often intellectuals and revolutionaries who flee their homes without proper documents. Sooner or later they are arrested and jailed. For some of them death is the only

hope of escape and so they commit suicide. Others just bear with an essentially empty life doing little if anything with it. He deals infrequently with the Jewish intellectual because his lot is really no different from that of the non-Jew. He too suffers the rootlessness of his age. He too fails to find meaning in the cruel world around him.

In 1921 Gershon Shoffman married a non-Jewish woman and moved to a small village in South-eastern Austria. He lived there for the next seventeen years, and from the village of Wezeldorn he observed the rise of Hitler and Nazism. It is during this period in his writings that he becomes much more autobiographical. For the first time many of his stories are about himself and his children. He sees the rise of the Nazis and their threat to the Jews in very personal terms. As he sees a greater and greater threat to the Jews, he himself feels his Jewishness more intensely. Although it had lain dormant for many years, it again came to the fore.

Instead of dealing with the rise of Nazism in the cities, he chooses to trace the lives of the people in his village to see how they respond to the new movement. He takes what is at first a peaceful, almost idyllic village and hows how the slow but steady change to the hatred and cruelty of the Nazis takes place. It is sad to watch the changes. He tells how the Jews are slowly cut off from

hope of escape and so they commit suicide. Others just bear with an essentially empty life doing little if anything with it. He deals infrequently with the Jewish intellectual because his lot is really no different from that of the non-Jew. He too suffers the rootlessness of his age. He too fails to find meaning in the cruel world around him.

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the community, force to be pariahs and outcasts, and fearful for their lives. He describes how the teachings of Hitler poison the youth of his adopted land. He sees this insidious influence in the teenagers as well as in the very young children. For the Jews the situation is at first unpleasant but bearable, yet, with the passing of time, it becomes totally unbearable. This they can bear no longer, and must flee the country hoping to find refuge somewhere else. And what better place to go to than Israel!

In 1938 Gershon Shoffman and his children left Austria for Israel. At this time he begins what may be described as a romance with Eretz Yisrael. He loves the land both as a Jew and as a free man, and expresses his affection for the land in many of his stories. At the same time he remains the realist who objectively portrays what he sees. Admittedly, he feels a strong emotional link to the Land of Israel, but he never lets his feelings dominate his writings. Real people having real experiences live in Israel just as they live in Austria and Russia. The background is friendly, but the subject matter is essentially the same.

Perhaps the overriding concern for Shoffman in these stories is to discover what makes Israel special. He talks of the special qualities of the land. The land, itself, has a special quality and charm which gives meaning to the people living in Israel. In addition, it is

the land of the Bible and that gives Israel a special charm and sanctity. Since it is the land of the Bible, it contains a unique mixture of the old and the new which are inextricably bound together. He speaks of the Yemenite beggar living in the modern, bustling Israeli city. He tells how the old lives along-side the new, how a Safed can exist in the same land as a Tel Aviv. He speaks of the freedom that Jews can find in the Land of Israel. In Israel they are in their land. There they need not fear oppression or persecution, for it is their home. He also talks of the Kibbutz which seems to symbolize the very spirit of the land. It captures the magical qualities of Israel.

After examining the panorama of Shoffman's life, we turn to a discussion of four main themes which pervade his writings, themes which are in evidence throughout his writing career: the Jew, Man, Life, and Love.

Shoffman considers a wide range of ideas in his stories about Jews. He is loyal to Judaism, but he is not blindly loyal to what he considers to be remnants of bygone days. He is a modern, emancipated Jew who wants to be a citizen of the twentieth century and still be a Jew. While he may occasionally permit himself to nostalgically recall the days of his youth, most of his recollections indicate that the ways of his father and grandfather are no longer suitable for the present. They can no longer

cope with the challenges of the modern age. He feels strong ties to Judaism; in fact, he feels that one's Jewishness makes an indelible mark on the individual which cannot be removed no matter how hard he may try. He is glad of that and finds strength among his fellow Jews. He derives comfort and consolation in times of despair when he is with fellow Jews, yet he cannot forget that it is terribly difficult to be a Jew. He dwells on this very idea in numerous ways each one showing that Judaism is both a blessing and a burden. Even his stories about the relations between Jews and non-Jews deal with the mixed blessing that is called Judaism. He is glad he is a Jew, yet he cannot hide the responsibilities that accompany the privilege. Here again it is Shoffman the realist at work--only this time it is his people whom he describes.

Just as it is difficult to generalize about Shoffman and the Jew, it is even more difficult to generalize about the remaining themes. In truth, these themes are so expansive that one is tempted to expect some form of generalization to come from his stories, but it is not forthcoming. In the chapter about man many aspects of this subject were examined. When all was said and done it was clear that the only thing that can be said is that Shoffman describes man as he sees him. He speaks of the fickleness of man, of his insensitivity and cruelty; they all comprise the

debit side of the balance sheet. But he also talks about man's humanity and compassion, and about his feelings of brotherhood that supercede all racial, religious and national bounds; this comprises the credit side of the balance sheet. Man is both good and evil, both compassionate and inhumane he seems to tell us. Man has both the Yetzer Hara and the Yetzer Hatov. To give precedence to one over the other would be wrong and inaccurate. He wants to give man the benefit of the doubt, and to treat him as more good than evil, but he has seen so much that is evil in his life that he cannot. Only in a few stories, which are pleas for tolerance and understanding, do we catch a glimpse at what he would like to believe. There we see that he has some hope for the future. In spite of everything, there is some hope. He cannot be overly confident about the future, yet at the same time he cannot allow himself to despair.

Shoffman's writings about life also comprise a wide spectrum of ideas. Although they are many and different, they all share that curious mixture of hope and despair that permeates most of Shoffman's stories. His stories are that way because that is how he sees life--not all good and not all evil. In many stories he writes of man's search for fulfillment. It is a search that is bound to fail because man cannot find ultimate meaning. Nevertheless, man continues to strive and search because the very act of reaching for the ultimate has great significance for

man. He also tells of the bitterness, despair and hopelessness that characterize the lives of many people. For them there is no search for meaning; there can be no search for higher values because all is lost. Yet midway between the hoping and the despairing he makes the simple, yet correct observation that life goes on no matter how man responds to it. There is a certain indifference and even apathy on the part of life to the living. Often there are hidden and unseen dangers ahead which instill fear in the living and lead them to contemplate death. Maybe life is not worth living, maybe death is better they lament. but then too, for others, the unknown represents a challenge. It dares them to face the future unafraid and courageously. So too is it with death. For some people it is the doom that awaits us all, yet for others it is the culmination of a rich and meaningful life. Again it is clear that it is virtually impossible to generalize about Shoffman's stories.

In the last of the four general themes as in the first, Shoffman is the realist above all else. He sees in love both the good and the bad, both happiness and sorrow. About all that one can do is to describe the general themes that appear in his stories about love. In a number of stories he tells about two people competing for the same woman or man. While in some stories he

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speaks of the great joys of love, here he tells of the jealousy and rivalry that love can cause. He tells of two roommates who compete for the same girl, describing both their inner and outer struggles. He tells of two close friends who are separated by a woman and who later are brought together by the death of that same woman. He tells of forbidden loves, of loves that are not supposed to be, yet flourish nonetheless. In one case a man kisses his friend's wife and is tormented by that kiss for years. In another, a rival in love waits thirty years for the husband to die only to be rejected by the woman he loves. In other stories Shoffman speaks of marriage. It too is a mixed blessing. It too is a source of pain and despair, yet it can bring unlimited joy to husband and wife. The last of Shoffman's major themes is the love between parent and child. In most of the stories he tells of the devotion of a parent to his child. In some the result is great joy while in others only pain and suffering result. As always, the two cannot be separated.

The style of Gershon Shoffman is basically quite simple. He believes in an approach that is both objective and realistic, and devotes himself uncompromisingly to those ends. He remains detached from his stories, and thereby can stand back and observe them fairly and objectively. He is compact in his stories almost to the point

of frugality. He discards anything that is superfluous or unnecessary. Only those details which are absolutely necessary are retained. His use of detail is masterful. He knows just what to write to create a mood and to paint a vivid picture in the reader's mind. At times he becomes symbolic, but never allows his symbols to dominate the stories, or to interfere with a realistic portrayal of their content. He also makes extensive use of irony, yet for him this is but a faithful representation of the irony of life. Life itself is so full of surprises; he is only describing what he sees.

This then is Gershon Shoffman. Unfettered by traditions and social conventions he describes life as he sees it. A master of description and an uncanny observer of mankind, he remains significant and meaningful for the Jew of the sixties. His stories often transcend the era when they were written. They continue to be vitally significant and relevant for us today.

FOOTNOTES

Explanatory note: For the sake of convenience, all references to Kol Kitve G. Shoffman(The Collected Works of G. Shoffman) will be made in the following manner:
Volume Aleph(vol. I) will be referred to as "A"
Volume Bet(vol II) as "B"
Volume Gimel(vol. III) as "C"
Volume Daled(vol. IV) as "D"
Volume Hay(vol. V) as "E"
(For example: a story found on page 100 of volume two would be listed simply as B100)

1. Jacob Fichman, p. 128.

   פיכמן, יעקב, בני דור, עם עובד, תל אביב, 1952, ע. 128

2. Gershon Shoffman, E50,

   שופמן, גרשון, כל כתבי ג. שופמן, תל אביב, ה. 50

3. "A Long Time Ago in Israel" (B329-346), written sometime between 1929 and 1942.

4. "Man on Earth" (C5-32), "Eyes and Rivers"(C33-46), and "A New Light" (C47-58).

5. See "My Little Daughter", B184.

6. C202-204.

7. B329-346.

8. C302-305.

9. C251-152.

10. Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, volume 9, (New York, 1943), p. 417.

11. Fichman, p. 142.

12. A156-157.

13. A68-88.

14. A188-196

15. B75(entire story B75-83).

16. A68-88.

17. A210-215.

18. A112-115.

19. A68-88.

20. B75-83.

21. C142-144.

22. B70-71.

23. B44-55.

24. A188-196.

25. B294-295.

26. B143-148.

27. B143.

28. A188-196.

29. B17-20.

30. A97-101.

31. A207-209.

32. C135-136.

33. E44

34. C155-156.

35. Shalom Kramer, p. 58.,
קרמר, שלום, ריאליזם ושבירתו, תל אביב, 1968, ע. 58

36. Isaiah Rabinovich, Major Trends in Modern Hebrew Fiction, Translated by M. Roston, (Chicago, 1968), p. 112.

37. Kramer, p. 56.

38. Menachem Ribalow, The Flowering of Modern Hebrew Literature Translated by Judah Nadich, (New York, 1959), p. 308.

39. Ibid., p. 309.

40. B44-55.

41. A38-44.

42. Rabinovich, p. 113.

43. A30-37.
44. Ribalow, p. 308.
45. A132-137.
46. A89-96.
47. A23-29.
48. A276-294.
49. A162-173.
50. "Jonah," A54-67.
51. B125-137.
52. B113-119.
53. C139.
54. B202
55. B245.
56. B224-225.
57. B155-170.
58. C325.
59. B192-193.
60. B308.
61. Kramer, p. 58.
62. C71-72.
63. B323-326.
64. C84-85.
65. B283.
66. B323-326.
67. C240.
68. D7.

69. B321-322.

70. C234-235.

71. C68-70.

72. C33-46.

73. C122-123.

74. C107-108.

75. B329-346.

76. B290.

77. C47-58.

78. Rabinovich, p. 121.

79. C342.

80. E31-32.

81. C91-92.

82. C167.

83. C244.

84. C131-132.

85. C326.

86. C105-106.

87. C217-218.

88. D19-20.

89. D11.

90. C311.

91. C280-281.

92. C133-134.

93. C246-247.

94. Kramer, p. 59.

95. C145-146.

96. C178-180.

97. C93-94.

98. C169.

99. Kramer, p. 57.

100. Fichman, p. 126.

101. C279.

102. "To the Border Crossing" (C122-123)

103. E59.

104. C148-149.

105. B208-209.

106. C125-126.

107. C161.

108. B233.

109. ברנפלד, שמעון, ספר הדמעות, 3 כרכים

110. B329-346.

111. C241-242.

112. C229.

113. B90-98.

114. C313-316.

115. C186-187.

116. B281-282.

117. C285.

118. B189.

119. C332-333.

120. C75.

121. B207.

122. Kramer, p. 57.

123. C227.

124. C100.

125. B79-80.

126. B157.

127. Kramer, p. 51.

128. Ribalow, pp. 307-308.

129. E58.

130. B275.

131. D13.

132. D18.

133. C277.

134. B286.

135. B251.

136. C118-119.

137. C282.

138. C237.

139. E5.

140. C184-185.

141. C147.

142. B197.

143. C153-154.

144. B315-317.

145. A147-150.

146. C176.

147. C60-62.

148. C103-104.

149. Kramer, p. 54.

150. C309-310.

151. B252.

152. B196.

153. B216.

154. B300-302.

155. B318-320.

156. B221.

157. C5-32.

158. C181.

159. B254-256.

160. B303.

161. B264.

162. C163-164.

163. B182.

164. B276.

165. C196.

166. E18.

167. Rabinovich, pp. 119-120.

168. B184.

169. C127-128.

170. C5-32.

171. D21-22.

172. B204.

173. A257-261.

174. B241-242.

175. B228-229.

176. B198.

177. B304.

178. A120-123.

179. C248.

180. C189-191.

181. E6.

182. C150.

183. E21.

184. B311.

185. B200.

186. C59.

187. D12.

188. C192.

189. C213-214.

190. C228.

191. C293.

192. B206.

193. B231.

194. C66-67.

195. C116-117.

196. C158-159.

197. Rabinovich, p. 113.

198. C160.

199. A178-181.

200. B181.

201. B179.

202. C188.

203. E55.

204. C231-232.

205. E57.

206. C79-80.

207. B296.

208. C174.

209. C86.

210. B232.

211. E43.

212. C209-210.

213. B180.

214. Rabinovich, p. 116.

215. Ibid., p. 117.

216. Kramer, p. 54.

217. E25.

218. E67.

219. E37.

220. B217.

221. E26.

222. B223.

223. C275.

224. A197-206.

225. A216-231.

226. B210-211.

227. C334-341.

228. C300-301.

229. C157.

230. B99-105.

231. C205.

232. B149-151.

233. C97-98.

234. A185-186.

235. B272.

236. B187-188.

237. B239.

238. C82-83.

239. B299.

240. C298.

241. C88-90.

242. C206-208.

243. C289-290.

244. C111-113.

245. Fichman, pp. 124-125.

246. Ibid., p. 123.

247. Ibid., p. 125.

248. Ibid., p. 127.

249. Rabinovich, p. 112.

250. Ibid., p. 114.

251. Ibid., p. 118.

252. A5-12.

253. A23-29.

254. Rabinovich, p. 116.

255. C33-46.

256. A197-206.

257. C87.

258. C140-141.

259. Ribalow, p. 307.

260. E29.

261. B218-219.

262. B277-278.

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF STORIES ACCORDING TO HEBREW TITLES

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Man On Earth	4,157,170	C5-32	אדם בארץ
Love	225	A216-231	אהבה
A New Light	4, 77	C47-58	אור חדש
The Guest	166	E18	אורח
Brother	173	A257-261	אח
Sister	226	B210-211	אחות
After the Noise	30	A97-101	אחרי הרעש
There is Nothing to See	162	C163-164	אין מה לראות!
I Am Not Here	136	C118-119	איננו!
But This Is a Wonderful City	184	B311	אך זאת היא עיר נהדרה!
To the Sea, To the Sea	120	C75	אל הים, אל הים
To the Border Crossing	73,102	C122-123	אל מעבר לגבול
El Alamein	33	E44	אל עלמיין
God	121	B207	אלוהים
Mother	234	A185-186	אם
Mother of the Doctor	242	C206-208	אם הדוקטור
My Mother	239	B299	אמי
We Are the Builders	88	D19-20	אנחנו הבונים!
I See Them	209	C86	אני רואה אותם!
I Want To See!	148	C103-104	אני רוצה לראות!
Man In the Eternal Gray Suit	59	B192-193	אפור הבגדים הנצחי
Happy Is He Who Waits	219	E37	אשרי המחכה

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Happy Are The Lovers	217	E25	אשרי המתאהבים
I Kissed the MAN	206	C79-80	את האדם נשקתי
In the Midst of All This	260	E29	באמצע כל אלה
During the Middle Watch	12	A156-157	באשמורה התיכונית
In a Strange House	43	A30-37	בבית זר
Appropriate Clothes	174	B241-242	בגדים נאים
At the Zoo	258	C140-141	בגן החיות
Blank Material	53	B202	בד חלק
In the Bosom of Nature	26,27	B143-148	בחיק הטבע
More Than This I Didn't Want	220	B217	ביותר מזה לא חפצתי!
In the Sea of Blue	69	B321-322	בים התכלת
Whether Fit or Not	18	A112-115	בין אמטום ואינאמטום
Between Gilboa & Gilead	81	C91-92	בין גלבוע וגלעד
Inside the Walls	13,16,19	A66-88	בין החומות
Among the Wild Animals & Birds	93	C246-247	בין חיות ועופות
Just Between Us	92	C133-134	בינינו לבין עצמנו
Among the Graves and Stones	211	E43	בין קברים ומצבות
The Railroad Station of Rostov	70	C234-235	בית התחיבות של רוסטוב
Nevertheless	223	C275	בכל זאת...
Without Cares	25	B294-295	בלי דאגות
With a Raised Hand	68	D7	במועל-ידו

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
With Pincers	189	C213-214	במלקחים
In Dire Straits	51	B125-137	במצור ובמצוק
At the Vacation Spot	171	D21-22	במקום נופש
Bandit	123	C227	בנדיט
Seventeen Years Old	101	C279	בן השבע-עשרה
Through The Window	193	B231	בעד החלון
First Masters	82	167	בעלים ראשונים
In the Circus	187	D12	בקרקס
A Flash in the Dark Cloud	76	B290	ברק בעב-הענן
In the Field	200	B181	בשדה
In the Fields of Sharona	91	C280-281	בשדות שרונה
Daughter	243	C289-290	בת
A Woman	143	C153-154	בת-אדם
My Little Daughter	5,168	B184	בתי הקטנה
Fate	177	B304	גורל
Ice Cream	224,256	A197-206	גלידה
Deborah	84	C131-132	דבורה
Dubrovnah	113	B90-98	דוברובנה
Inkwell	203	E55	דיותה
Images-Memories	180	C189-191	דמויות-זכרונות
The Man	231	C205	האדם
Man is Good	154	C300-302	האדם טוב
The Young Australian	32	C135-136	האוסטרלי הצעיר
The One	63,66	B323-326	האחד

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
The Last One	86	C105-106	האחרון
The Mother	241	C88-90	האם
The Artist	54	B202	האמן
The Old Skeptic	117	C285	האפיקורס הזקן
Give Her Praise!	137	C282	הבו גודל לה!
The Roof	257	C87	הגג
Defense	192	B206	הגנה
Director Wolf	71	C68-70	הדירקטור וולף
History Itself	196	C158-159	ההיסטוריה עצמה
The Old Historian	104	C148-149	ההיסטוריון הישיש
He	232	B149-151	הוא
The Gendarme	74	C107-108	ז'נדרם
The Arm	139	E5	הזרוע
The Apprehension	205	E57	החשש
The Best Friend	195	C116-117	הטוב בידידים
The Fiddle	115	C186-187	הכינור
The Great Surgeon	119	C332-333	הכירורג הגדול
The Poet	238	C82-83	המשורר
The Robbed One	103	E59	הנגזל
Even He	130	B275	הנה אף הוא
The Wanderer and the Conductor	153	B216	הנודד והמבקר
Hanya	199	A178-181	הניה
The Grandson	228	C300-301	הנכד
The Kiss	244	C111-113	הנשיקה

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
The Painter	186	C59	הסייד
Cancer	159	B254-256	הסרטן
The Boot	252	A5-12	הערדל
Corporal Haritonov	21	C142-144	הפלדפבל חריטונוב
The Fugitive	48	A276-294	הפליט
The Kaiser	230	B99-105	הקיסר
The Small Ones	146	C176	הקטנים
The Battle	204	C231-232	הקרב
The Axe	47,253	A23-29	הקרדום
The Harmonika	201	B179	הרמוניקה
The Small Remnant	158	C181	השארית המעטה
The Judge	237	B239	השופט
The Three	34	C155-156	השלושה
They Made Peace	164	B276	השלימו!
The Two	151	B252	השנים
Her Tear on Her Cheek	229	C157	ודמעוה על לחיה
If Your Son Will Ask You	65	B283	והיה כי ישאלך בנך
Vitebsk	114	C313-316	ויטבסק
Wiener Neustadt	108	B233	וינר נוישטט
Gold	179	C248	זהב
Remember the Sabbath Day	118	B189	,זכור את יום השבת
Strangers	125	B279-280	זרים
Ropes	8	C302-305	חבלים
New and Old	188	C192	חדש וישן

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Chupah In the Forest	218	E67	חופה בחורשה
Hurry & Read, Hurry & Understand	58	C325	חטוף וקרא, חטוף והבן
Dream	55	B245	חלום
Dreams	191	C293	חלומות
It Passed With the Wind	140	C184-185	חלף עם הרוח
The Five & The One	96	C178-180	חמישה ואחת
Hamsin In the Valley	95	C145-146	חמסין בעמק
Teutons	147	C60-62	טבטונים
A Stroll	45	A132-137	טיול
An Old Jew	116	B281	יהודי זקן
Jonah	50	A54-67	יונה
A Strange Child	142	B197	ילד זר
'Days of Awe' in My Youth	9	C251-252	ימים נוראים', בנעורותי
Jethro	129	E58	יתרו
Here in Israel	202	C188	כאן בישראל
Strength	135	B251	כוח
Superhuman Strength	80	E31-32	כוח-אבנים
All the Days	15,20	B78-83	כל הימים
Yearning	213	B180	כלות-הנפש
Not a Jew, Not a Russian	163	B182	לא יהודי, לא רוסי
Don't Sleep, Don't Sleep	97	C93-94	לא לישון, לא לישון
Heart	105	B208-209	לב

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
The Heart of a Mother	240	C298	לב אם
Why Do You Strike Your Brother?	106	C125-126	למה תכה אחיך?
To War	14,24,28	A188-196	למלחמה
For the Time Being	194	C66-67	לפי השעה
A Long Time Ago In Israel	3,7,75,110	B329-342	לפנים בישראל
On the Other Hand	49	A162-173	מאידך גיטא
Settlement in the South	83	C244	מושבה בדרום
Death	207	B296	מות
The Partition	41	A38-44	המחיצה
A New Word	131	D13	מלה חדשה
War and Peace	52	B113-119	מלחמה ושלום
The Postmaster	185	B200	מנהל הדואר
From Evening To Midday	169	C127-128	מערב עד צהרים
What Did You Do?	233	C97-98	מה עשיתם?
Army Days	29	B17-20	מעתות בצבא
Refuge	22	B70-71	מפלט
Moses	165	C196	משה
When?!	67	C240	מתי?
Let Us Please Be Friends	227	C334-341	נהיה נא ידידים
Letter Carrier	175	B228-229	נושא המכתבים
Let Us Wait	182	C150	נחכה נא!
Foreigners	124	C100	נכרים
Miracle	261	B218-219	נס

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
They Parted	222	B223	נפרדו
She Joined	221	E26	נצטרפה
Revenge	17	A210-215	נקמה
The Milky War	198	C160	נתיב-החלב
Our Fallen Sukkah	112	C229	סוכתנו הנופלת
End	176	B198	סוף
Finally	23,40	B44-55	סוף סוף
Nightmare	57,126	B155-170	סיוט
Until When?	172	B204	עד מתי?
Crows	210	B232	עורבים
Eyes and Rivers	4,72,255	C33-46	עינים ונהרות
On Guard	31	A207-209	על המשמר
On the Operating Table	152	B196	על שולחן הניתוח
At a Funeral	212	C209-210	עם לויה אחת
The Closing of the Store	190	C228	עם נעילת-החנות
Burdened	98	C169	עמוס
Lonely	183	E21	עירי
I Strained My Ears	132	B18	עשיתי אזני כאפרכסת
Kerosene Lamp	156	B221	עששית הנפט
Our First Meeting	2	E50	פגישתנו הראשונה
Passover Long Ago In Israel	111	C241-242	פסח לפנים בישראל
Reciprocal Action	85	C326	פעולה הדדית
Franzel	64	C84-85	פרנצל

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Not Many Faces in the World	161	B264	פרצופים לא רבים בעולם
Gypsies	144	B315-317	צוענים
Safed	87	C217-218	צפת
Card Players	141	C147	קוביומטומים
Independence	60	B308	קוממיות
Trivialities	46	A89-96	קטנים
With a Winking of the Eye	89	D11	קריצת עין
Rebecca	150	C309-310	רבקה
Exalted Moments	181	E6	רגעים נעלים
Radio	134	B286	רדיו
Noise of the Schools	90	C311	רעש בתי-הספר
Again?	107	C161	שוב ?
Blackness	262	B277-278	שחור
Songs of the Brody Singers	178	A120-123	שירי ה,ברודיים'
Song of the Thrush	133	C277	שירת-הבולבול
Take Off Your Shoes	71	C342	שלו נעליכם
Names After Names	160	B303	שמות תחת שמות
The Two Poets	138	B237	שני הפייטנים
Meaning	235	B272	תוכן
Hanged	145	A147-150	תלוי
Our Executioners--Our Friends	155	B318-320	תליינינו--ידידינו

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference*	Hebrew Title
Astonishment	208	C174	תמהון
Always, Always	236	B187-188	תמיד, תמיד, תמיד
Persil	56	B224-225	Title not in Hebrew
Vater	6	C202-204	" " " "

*As in the case of the footnote listing, the letters A,B,C,D, and E refer to volumes I, II, III, IV, and V of Kol Kitve G. Shoffman.

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF STORIES ACCORDING TO ENGLISH TITLES

Note: The Letters A,B,C,D and E under Text Reference stand for volumes I, II, III, IV and V respectively of Kol Kitve Gershon Shoffman.

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
After the Noise	30	A97-101	אחרי הרעש
Again?	107	C161	שוב ?
All the Days	15,20	B78-83	כל הימים
Always, Always	236	B187-188	תמיד, תמיד, תמיד
Among the Graves and Stones	211	E43	בין קברים ומצבות
Among the Wild Animals and Birds	93	C246-247	בין חיות ועופות
The Apprehension	205	E57	החשש
Appropriate Clothes	174	B241-242	בגדים נאים
The Arm	139	E5	הזרוע
Army Days	29	B17-20	בעתות בצבא
The Artist	54	B202	האמן
Astonishment	208	C174	תמהון
At a Funeral	212	C209-210	עם לויה אחת
At the Vacation Spot	171	D21-22	במקום נופש
At the Zoo	258	C140-141	בגן החיות
The Axe	47,253	A23-29	הקרדום
Bandit	123	C227	בנדית
The Battle	204	C231-232	הקרב
The Best Friend	195	C116-117	הטוב בידידים

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Between Gilboa & Gilead	81	C91-92	בין גלבוע וגלעד
Blackness	262	B277-278	שחור
Blank Material	53	B202	בד חלק
The Boot	252	A5-12	הערדל
Brother	173	A257-261	אח
Burdened	98	C169	עמוס
But This Is A Wonderful City	184	B311	אך זאת היא עיר נהדרה!
Cancer	159	B254-256	הסרטן
Canopy in the Forest	218	E67	חופה בחורשה
Card Players	141	C147	קוביוסטומים
The Closing of The Store	190	C228	עם נעילה החנות
Corporal Haritonov	21	C142-144	הסלדפבל חריטונוב
Crows	210	B232	עורבים
Daughter	243	C289-290	בת
'Days of Awe' In My Youth	9	C251-252	,ימים נוראים' בנעורותי
Death	207	B296	מות
Deborah	84	C131-132	דבורה
Defense	192	B206	הגנה
Director Wolf	71	C68-70	זהדירקטור וולף
Don't Sleep, Don't Sleep	97	C93-94	לא לישון, לא לישון
Dream	55	B245	חלום
Dreams	191	C293	חלומות

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Dubrovnah	113	B90-98	דוברובנה
During the Middle Watch	12	A156-157	באשמורה התיכונית
El Alamein	33	E44	אל עלמיין
End	176	B198	סוף
Even He	130	B275	הנה אף הוא
Exalted Moments	181	E6	רגעים נעלים
Eyes and Rivers	4,72,255	C33-46	עינים ונהרות
Fate	177	B304	גורל
The Fiddle	115	C186-187	הכינור
Finally	23,40	B44-55	סוף סוף
First Masters	82	C167	בעלים ראשונים
The Five and The One	96	C178-180	חמישה ואחת
A Flash in the Dark Cloud	76	B290	ברק בעב הענן
For the Time Being	194	C66-67	לפי השעה
Foreigners	124	C100	נכרים
Franzel	64	C84-85	פרנצל
From Evening To Midday	169	C127-128	מערב עד הצהרים
The Fugitive	48	A276-294	הפליט
The Gendarme	74	C107-108	ה'ז'נדרם
Give Her Praise!	137	C282	הבו גודל לה!
God	121	B207	אלוהים
Gold	179	C248	זהב

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
The Grandson	228	C300-301	הנכד
The Great Surgeon	119	C332-333	הכירורג הגדול
The Guest	166	E18	אורח
Gypsies	144	B315-317	צוענים
Hamsin in the Valley	95	C145-146	חמסין בעמק
Hanged	145	A147-150	תלוי
Hanya	199	A178-181	חניה
Happy Are the Lovers	217	E25	אשרי המתאהבים
Happy Is He Who Waits	219	E37	אשרי המחכה
The Harmonika	201	B179	הרמוניקה
He	232	B149-151	הוא
Heart	105	B208-209	לב
The Heart of a Mother	240	C298	לב אם
Her Tear On Her Cheek	229	C157	ודמעתה על לחיה
Here In Israel	202	C188	כאן בישראל
History Itself	196	C158-159	ההיסטוריה עצמה
Hurry & Read, Hurry & Understand	58	C325	חטוף וקרא, חטוף והבן
I Am Not Here	136	C118-119	איננו
I Kissed the Man	206	C79-80	את האדם נשקתי
I See Them	209	C86	אני רואה אותם
I Strained My Ears	132	D18	עשיתי אזני כאפרכסת
I Want To See!	148	C103-104	אני רוצה לראות!
Ice Cream	224,256	A197-206	גלידה

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
If Your Son Will Ask You	65	B283	והיה כי ישאלך בנך
Images-Memories	180	C189-191	דמויות-זכרונות
In a Strange House	43	A30-37	בבית זר
In Dire Straits	51	B125-137	במצור ובמצוק
In the Bosom of Nature	26,27	B143-148	בחיק הטבע
In the Circus	187	D12	בקרקס
In the Field	200	B181	בשדה
In the Fields of Sharona	91	C280-281	בשדות שרונה
In the Midst of All This	260	E29	באצמע כל אלה
In the Sea of Blue	69	B321-322	בים התכלת
Independence	60	B308	קוממיות
Inkwell	203	E55	דיוקה
Inside the Walls	13,16,19	A68-88	בין החומות
It Passed With the Wind	140	C184-185	חלף עם הרוח
Jethro	129	E58	יתרו
Jonah	50	A54-67	יונה
The Judge	237	B239	השופט
Just Between Us	92	C133-134	בינינו לבין עצמנו
The Kaiser	230	B99-105	הקיסר
Kerosene Lamp	156	B221	עששית הנפט
The Kiss	244	C111-113	הנשיקה
The Last One	86	C105-106	האחרון

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
Let Us Please Be Friends	227	C334-341	נהיה נא ידידים
Let Us Wait!	182	C150	נחכה נא!
Letter Carrier	175	B228-229	נושא המכתבים
Lonely	183	E21	עירירי
A Long Time Ago In Israel	3,7,110,75	B329-342	לפנים בישראל
Love	225	A216-231	אהבה
Man In the Eternal Gray Suit	59	B192-193	אפור הבגדים הנצחי
The Man	231	C205	האדם
Man Is Good	154	B300-302	האדם טוב
Man On Earth	4,157,170	C5-32	אדם בארץ
Meaning	235	B272	תוכן
The Milky Way	198	C160	נתיב-החלב
Miracle	261	B218-219	נס
More Than This I Didn't Want	220	B217	ביותר מזה לא חמצתי
Moses	165	C196	משה
Mother	234	A185-186	אם
The Mother	241	C88-90	האם
Mother Of the Doctor	242	C206-208	אם הדוקטור
My Little Daughter	5,168	B184	בתי הקטנה
My Mother	239	B299	אמי
Names After Names	160	B303	שמות תחת שמות
Nevertheless	223	C275	בכל זאת...

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
New and Old	188	C192	חדש וישן
A New Light	4,77	C47-58	אור חדש
A New Word	131	D13	מלה חדשה
Nightmare	57,126	B155-170	סיוט
Noise of the Schools	90	C311	רעש בתי-הספר
Not a Jew, Not a Russian	163	B182	לא יהודי, לא רוסי
Not Many Faces In the World	161	B264	פרצופים לא רבים בעולם
The Old Historian	104	C148-149	ההיסטוריון הישיש
An Old Jew	116	B281	יהודי זקן
The Old Skeptic	117	C285	האפיקורס הזקן
On Guard	31	A207-209	על המשמר
On the Operating Table	152	B196	על שולחן הניתוח
On the Other Hand	49	A162-173	מאידך גיסה
The One	63,66	B323-326	האחד
Our Executioners--Our Friends	155	B318-320	תליינינו--ידידינו
Our Fallen Sukkah	112	C229	סוכתנו הנופלת
Our First Meeting	2	E50	פגישתנו הראשונה
The Painter	186	C59	הסייד
The Partition	41	A38-44	מהיצה
Passover Long Ago In Israel	111	C241-242	פסח לפנים בישראל
Persil	56	B224-225	Title not in Hebrew
The Poet	238	C82-83	המשורר

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
The Postmaster	185	B200	מנהל הדואר
Radio	134	B286	רדיו
The Railroad Station of Rostov	70	C234-235	בית הנהיבות של רוסטוב
Rebecca	150	C309-310	רבקה
Reciprocal Action	85	C326	פעולה הדדית
Refuge	22	B70-71	מפלט
"Remember the Sabbath Day"	118	B189	,זכור את יום השבת'
Revenge	17	A210-215	נקמה
The Robbed One	103	E59	הנגזל
The Roof	257	C87	הגג
Ropes	8	C302-305	חבלים
Safed	87	C217-218	צפת
Settlement In the South	83	C244	מושבה בדרום
Seventeen Years Old	101	C279	בן השבע-עשרה
She Joined	221	E26	נצטרפה
Sister	226	B210-211	אחות
The Small Ones	146	C176	הקטנים
The Small Remnant	158	C181	השארית המעטה
Song of the Thrush	133	C277	שירת-הבולבול
Songs of the "Brody Singers"	178	A120-123	שירי ה,ברודיים'
A Strange Child	142	B197	ילד זר
Strangers	125	B279-280	זרים

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Strength	135	B251	כוח
A Stroll	45	A132-137	טיול
Superhuman Strength	80	E31-32	כוח-אבנים
Take Off Your Shoes	79	C342	שלו נעליכם
Teutons	147	C60-62	טבטונים
There Is Nothing To See	162	C163-164	אין מה לראות!
They Made Peace	164	B276	השלימו!
They Parted	222	B223	נפרדו
The Three	34	C155-156	השלושה
Through the Window	193	B231	בעד החלון
To the Border Crossing	73,102	C122-123	אל מעבר לגבול
To the Sea, To the Sea	120	C75	אל הים, אל הים
To War	14,24,28	A188-196	למלחמה
Trivialities	46	A89-96	קטנות
The Two	151	B252	השנים
The Two Poets	138	B237	שני המיימנים
Until When?	172	B204	עד מתי ?
Vater	6	C202-204	No Hebrew Title
Vitebsk	114	C313-316	ויטבסק
The Wanderer and the Conductor	153	B216	הנודד והמנקר
War and Peace	52	B113-119	מלחמה ושלום
We Are the Builders	88	D19-20	אנחנו הבונים!
What Did You Do?	233	C97-98	מה עשיתם ?!

English Title	Footnotes	Text Reference	Hebrew Title
When?!	67	C240	מתי ?!
Whether Fit or Not	18	A112-115	בין אפטום ואינו פטום
Why Do You Strike Your Brother?	106	C125-126	למה תכה אחיך ?
Wiener Neustadt	108	B233	וינר נוישטט
With a Raised Hand	68	D7	במועל-ידו
With a Winking of the Eye	89	D11	קריצה-עין
With Pincers	189	C213-214	במלקחים
Without Cares	25	B294-295	בלי דאגות
A Woman	143	C153-154	בת-אדם
Yearning	213	B180	כלות-הנפש
The Young Australian	32	C135-136	האוסטרלי הצעיר

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