

MORDECAI ZEEV FEIERBERG

by

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## PREFACE

The past hundred years have marked an upheaval never before recorded in history. The Jew as an integral part of that era, has been involved intimately with both, its creativity and destructiveness.

The rise of Western civilization and the crumbling of the ghetto walls challenged the modern Jew, who had to face the dilemma of loyalty to the old tradition and desire for a new way of life. I have chosen Mordecai Zeév Feilerberg as a representative of the generation that pondered over the problem - how can a contemporary Jew preserve his Jewish identity and yet develop his humanistic aspirations in the modern world of the Diaspora. For I felt that we in America today, can relate and benefit from Feilerberg's presentation of the dilemma of seventy years ago in understanding our own problem. Can a Jew remain a Jew, once he is no longer bound with those historical and cultural ties of his people, but integrated with the culture and history of the country in which he lives?

This composition is therefore, my attempt to acquaint the English-reading Jew with a piece of literature that unfortunately has remained in its original Hebrew language but for the story "Le-an."

In my research of the writings of Feilerberg, I found

a lack of treatment of his work from a particular point of view. His writings were evaluated by scholars in relation to other writers of his period. As a result, he has been relegated to a somewhat shallow place in Hebrew literature. Although he indeed is a minor author, it is my hope that through this work, which concerns itself with Feilerberg only, his depth and perception would be rightly recognized.

My basic texts throughout this paper have been: Kovetz Sippurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feilerberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz, n. d.) and M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, translated by Ira Eisenstein (New York, Abelard, 1959).

I should like here to express my thanks to my advisor Dr. Shaul Hareli, who read the earlier draft and suggested various corrections.

## CHAPTER I

### Historical Background

Modern currents in Jewish cultural life in Russia, made their first appearance due to Russian internal conditions. These currents can be grouped into two main streams: Haskalah<sup>1</sup> from 1830-1880 and "Sifrut Tzeira"<sup>2</sup> from 1880-1900.

Politically, the Haskalah period in Russia, was marked by the reign of Nicolas I and Alexander II. Nicolas I reigned from 1825-1855 and pursued a determined policy to wipe out all national differences for the sake of unifying Russia under one church.

The Jewish people underwent the process of Russification in three different ways. First, by decrees such as The Military Act.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, by abolishing the internal autocracy of the "Kahal"<sup>5</sup> and thirdly, by erection of secular schools for Jewish youth.<sup>6</sup> The secular schools were set up as a counterbalance against the Jewish religious establishments.

Alexander II however, gave up the attempt to bring religious sameness and believed in fusing Jews and Russians along cultural lines. He instituted various reforms concerning the Jewish people: The age limit for recruits was

made the same to Jews as well as to Christians; the inner provinces of the country were opened for permanent Jewish residents; Jewish wealth, education and skills were welcomed in industry; Jews were admitted to legal profession.<sup>7</sup>

The Jewish response to the acquisition of their civil rights was most positive. The Jewish community became eager and willing to take advantage of Russian liberalism, and soon a privileged Jewish bourgeoisie and university-trained intelligentsia arose. This group was granted special favors by the Russian government and, as a consequence, became distinguished from the Jewish masses.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the growing generation attending the secular schools and studying secular subjects, seemed to fulfill Russian intentions to keep the Jews away from their religious traditions. The Talmud<sup>9</sup> according to Russian statesmen, was the tie which bound the Jews to a strong religious unit.<sup>10</sup> This unit broke down when Jewish intellectual youth suddenly forsook their old heritage, left behind them a rich cultural history filled with Jewish values and ideals which were now considered old. They left the old for the new without hesitation, no half way pleased them. Modern life beckoned from without, Israel must step into it. At best, the Jew was to be a Jew at home and a

"man" outside. So sang the poet Judah Leib Gordon<sup>11</sup>. This group, which was classified in history as Maskilim,<sup>12</sup> faced a vast and compact Jewish community still deeply traditional in character. The religious group defended its position with great stubbornness and singleness of purpose. Its fight against the Haskalah peril was in many ways a struggle for its own survival.

The national aspect of the Haskalah first found expression in the ideals of a new group called "Hovevai Hahaskalah."<sup>13</sup> The revival of the Hebrew language and the creation of a neo-Hebraic literature were both principles of their program. The Hebrew novel was introduced by Abraham Mapu,<sup>14</sup> in which he injected a secular tone. "Mendele Mocher Sfarim"<sup>15</sup> created the novel and short story in the popular dialect of the Russian Jews. Peretz Smolenskin<sup>16</sup> manifested his ideas concerning Jewish nationalism in his novels.

The cultural sources however, that nourished both the Maskilim and Hovevai-Hahaskalah were mainly Russian sources. Therefore, the period reflects an external viewpoint on a static background to Judaism.

The "Sifrut Tzeira" period in Russia was marked politically by the reign of Alexander III. The czar who ruled from 1881-1894 believed that religious unity through

the Greek Orthodox Church must be imposed in all Russia. As for the Jews, his program included definite goals: A third might be converted, a third should emigrate and a third would be put to death.<sup>17</sup> The execution of the third act in this program began with Easter of 1881. Pogroms<sup>18</sup> were carried out against the Jews in the southern provinces of Russia. This pogrom wave caused a most significant turning point in Jewish history. It shook the Jewish spirit to its very foundation and marked a determination to return and re-identify with the destiny of the Jewish people. The Jewish Maskilim who were dominated by an assimilationistic ideology were stunned by the negative Russian liberal reaction to the pogroms. Their enthusiastic faith in the Russian people was betrayed and their disappointment overturned the ideology of many of them. Lilienblum<sup>19</sup> called for a return to the ancient land of our fathers "should it take a whole century to carry it through."<sup>20</sup> Leo Pinsker<sup>21</sup> admonished his fellow Jews and urged them to look for salvation in self-emancipation, preferably in Palestine, but if necessary, in any other country. The ideals of national revival in Palestine developed into the "Hibbat Zion"<sup>22</sup> movement. Hibbat Zion included the "Bilu"<sup>23</sup> groups also. Its aspirations and ideals were deeply rooted in Jewish history and tradition.



the ideas of return of the exile and redemption of the land of Israel, return to the old culture, particularly to the Hebrew language. Eliezer Ben-Yehudah<sup>24</sup> was the expressor of the ideal of the revival of Hebrew. The interpretation of these ideals by the Hibbat Zion movement did not imply a religious interpretation, but rather a modern secular interpretation based on economical and political terms.<sup>25</sup>

The 1880's are an expression of a period of individuals spreading their ideals from an internal viewpoint on a dynamic background to Judaism.

## CHAPTER I - NOTES

1. Haskalah: The Hebraic renaissance among European Jews; "enlightenment."
2. Sifrut Tzeira: Refers to post-Haskalah literature in Eastern Europe; "young literature."
3. Shimon Rabidovitz, Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg, Perek Betoldot Sifruteinu Machadasah, (Berlin: "Or", 1923), p. 7.
4. The Military Act: A decree in which Jewish recruits were required to serve twenty-five years in the Russian army.
5. Kahal: A term used for the autonomous Jewish communities in Eastern Europe.
6. Shimon Dubnov, Deevrai Yemai Am Olam, Popular Edition prepared by Baruch Karu, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir Co. Ltd., 1954), p. 602.
7. Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, A History of The Jewish People, (Phila., Jewish Publication Society, 1927), p. 683.
8. Ben-Adir, "Modern Currents In Jewish Social and National Life," The Jewish People Past and Present, Volume 2, (New York, Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1955), p. 291.
9. Talmud: A code of Jewish law edited by Rab Ashi and Rabina in the academy of Sura in Babylonia in the year 500.
10. See M. Margolis and A. Marx, op. cit., p. 670.
11. Judah Leib Gordon: (1830-1892): Leading Haskalah poet. He wrote historical idylls on the advantages of rustic life. Later he attacked rabbinic Judaism in satirical verse caricaturing the evil effects of outmoded Jewish laws.
12. Maskilim: Devotees of the Haskalah.
13. Hovevai Mahaskalah: A group of Russian Jews influenced by the western idea of the Haskalah. Their goal was to

establish a compromise between the two extreme groups of assimilators and religious zealots; "Lovers of the Haskalah". The term Hovevai Hahaskalah is found in: Shimon Dubnov, Deevrai Yemai Am Olam, Popular Edition prepared by Baruch Karu, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir Co. Ltd., 1954), p. 636.

14. Abraham Mapu (1808-1868): First modern Hebrew novelist. His most popular works were romances based upon the biblical history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. His novels, therefore, were a factor in the development of the Zionist movement.

15. Mendele Mocher Sfarim (pseudonym for Shalom Jacob Abramowitz, 1836-1918): Important Hebrew novelist of traditional Eastern European Jewish life of the mid 19th century. His novels, first written in Yiddish and later rewritten in Hebrew, are a museum of Jewish realia.

16. Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885): Novelist. Published as early as 1870. An active spokesman for nationalism as opposed to cosmopolitanism.

17. See A. Marx and M. Margolis, op. cit., p. 693.

18. Pogrom: A planned slaughter of defenseless people, as formerly of Jews in Russia.

19. Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843-1910): Publicist; pressed for socio-economic and cultural reform in Jewish life. He became a leading protagonist of the Hibbat Zion movement after the pogroms of 1881.

20. See A. Marx and M. Margolis, op. cit., p. 697.

21. Leo Pinsker (1821-1891): Previously an ardent protagonist of assimilation, Pinsker transformed into a champion of national rebirth of the Jewish people in a land of its own. His brochure Auto-Emancipation played a decisive role in the formation of the ideology of Hibbat Zion movement.

22. Hibbat Zion: One of the forerunners of the Zionist movement. Its main ideal was resettlement of the Jewish people in Israel. "Love of Zion".

23. Bilu (abbreviation for Beth Yaakov Lechu Venelcha, - Oh House of Jacob, come ye, and let us go): An organization of mostly Russian Jewish students. Their plan was

to establish an agricultural colony in Israel. A handful arrived in Israel and settled in Rishon le-Zion and Mikveh-Israel.

24. Eliezer Ben-Yehudah (1858-1922): Author of a monumental Hebrew dictionary; he played a very decisive part in the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language.

25. See Ben-Adir, op. cit., p. 293.

## CHAPTER II

### Ideological Background

The "Sifrut Tzeira"<sup>1</sup> period of the 1880's finally realized the dilemma of Haskalah<sup>2</sup> literature: the contradiction between the ideal Jew of Haskalah poetry and the Haskalah Jew in reality. It remained for the "Sifrut Tzeira" to explore the inevitable question of the time - How can the Jew survive as a Jew, distinct and distinctive, once he comes to share fully the cultural non-Jewish environment of the country in which he lives?

To understand the question, the problem and attempted answers of the "Sifrut Tzeira" in Russia, one must inquire the roots of the Haskalah idea.

Its early presentation in Russia was a pure imitation of the western or German idea of the Haskalah. The western goal of humanistic self-fulfillment was merely transplanted into Jewish society in Eastern Europe. The western humanistic ideology aimed to adjust the Jew culturally for the attainment of political emancipation.<sup>3</sup> This adjustment required a public acknowledgment that the Jews are not a distinct people but a purely religious community.

Peretz Smolenskin<sup>4</sup> accused Moses Mendelssohn<sup>5</sup> of having reduced Jewish history to a mere catechism by defining Israel as a religious denomination rather than a

people.<sup>6</sup> This basic principle of Western Haskalah presented serious difficulties - the Jewish religion was very national in character bound with Jewish national hopes and aspirations. Religion, therefore, had to be reformed to adapt itself to the demands of the new era.

Thus, the bases of Western Haskalah became negative in attitude towards the historic Jew and traditional Judaism. Secular values took the place of holy ones and the likeness to others replaced the idea of "a chosen people."

Abolishment of the idealistic, spiritualistic viewpoint and acceptance of the realistic-materialistic viewpoint followed. The future free and emancipated Jew, faced at that time a developing capitalism in which he could employ both his skill and energy and as a result, benefit materially.

The only positive national factor, which in the beginning put its mark on the Haskalah movement, was the ideal of revival of the Hebrew language. Haskalah authors worshipped Hebrew for two reasons: "it was the language beautiful, our holy tongue, salvaged as the only vestige of all our ancient splendors;" and it was also "the only link that holds together the House of Israel in the different lands."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the earliest Maskilim<sup>8</sup>

preached and argued their new ideals in a Hebrew-published periodical called "Measef."<sup>9</sup> The first "Measef" was issued in 1784 and ceased to exist in 1811.<sup>10</sup> The rapid disappearance of Hebrew as the language of the Haskalah in Germany was bitterly acknowledged by Isaac Euchel, one of the editors of "Measef," when he announced his conviction that there was no Hebrew-reading public left among German Jews.<sup>11</sup> The significance of this fact can be recognized not only as a denial of Jewish language, but of Jewish tradition and history as well. Jewish self-integration into European culture finally reached its last stage - assimilation.

The Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, particularly Russia, acquired the western idea of the Haskalah just before it reached its final stage in Germany. Much the same process repeated itself in Eastern Europe till the 1880's. But the internal position and conditions of the Jewish community here, blocked the danger that overcame the western Jewish community so rapidly. The Russian Jewish community was rooted deeply in Jewish tradition. The cultural readjustment, as a step to acquire emancipation, was hardly convincing to the oppressed and persecuted Jewish population by the Czarist government. The masses were sceptical regarding the validity of the Haskalah

program for a happier life. Nevertheless, Jewish "intelligentsia" and intellectuals in Russia reacted and related to the Haskalah idea in the same way of their German colleagues and many among them reached the inevitable final step - assimilation. But for thirty years to come, as a result of the Russian "pogroms"<sup>12</sup> of 1880 and the disappointment of Jewish intellectuals from the goal of humanistic self-fulfillment, we witness a reaction to most of original Haskalah ideals in Russia.

Reaction to materialism and cultural readjustment of the Haskalah came in the new trend for national idealism. Reaction to the rationalism of the Haskalah manifested itself in the new literary trend - sentimentalism. Reaction to disbelief - faith. Faith not in external powers - foreign culture; but an internal faith in the creative powers of the nation. The humanistic self-fulfillment, however, the ultimate goal of the Haskalah, was still desirable.

The problem of preserving the Jewish identity became the pressing issue of the generation that sought an answer to our original question in this chapter - How can the Jew survive as a Jew, distinct and distinctive, once he comes to share fully the cultural non-Jewish environment of the country in which he lives?



It was in the midst of this ideological confusion that Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg presented the dilemma of his generation - "Whither?"

## CHAPTER II - NOTES

1. "Sifrut Tzeira": See Chap. I, Note No. 2.
2. Haskalah: See Chap. I, Note No. 1.
3. Simon Halkin, Modern Hebrew Literature, (New York: Schocken Books, 1950), p. 61.
4. Peretz Smolenskin: See Chap. I, Note No. 16.
5. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1787): He edited the short-lived Hebrew periodical Kohélet Musar. He wrote the book "Jerusalem", outlining religious and political toleration, separation of church and state, and equality for all citizens. He also edited a German translation of the Bible with a Hebrew commentary which helped to spread enlightenment. Father of German Haskalah.
6. S. Halkin, op. cit., p. 55.
7. Ibid., p. 62.
8. Maskilim: See Chap. I, Note No. 12.
9. Measef: A Hebrew Journal used by the German Maskilim, established in 1784, but soon abandoned.
10. Shimon Dubnov, Deevrai Yemai Am Olam, Popular Edition prepared by Baruch Karu, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir Co. Ltd., 1954, p. 506.
11. S. Halkin, op. cit., p. 29.
12. Pogrom: See Chap. I, Note No. 18.

### CHAPTER III

#### Biography

Much of the form and quality which Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg gave to the struggle of the young generation with the problem "Whither?" was due to the milieu and environment in which the author was born and raised.

The Jewish town of Eastern Europe lived its own life, socially humble, primitive, poor and insecure. Yet at the same time it was permeated by profound idealism and religious optimism. The small town played a positive part in Jewish life - it was a reservoir of fresh moral power, a source of national and spiritual energy. The social structure of a typical town was simple - a very thin layer of well-to-do, in the midst of petty merchants and shopkeepers. The force of religious tradition presented the characteristic attitude of equity, humane behavior and compassion. On this basis many social customs and institutions developed. The family and home structure emphasized the status of the father as an authority in all functions.<sup>1</sup>

It was this type of environment that welcomed the birth of Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg on the 4th day of Tishrai in the year 1874; in the city of Novograd, in the province of Volhynia. His Hassidic family was not only extremely ortho-

dex in their religious observances but fanatically so.<sup>2</sup> Feierberg, the father, was a "shochet"<sup>3</sup> by profession, and when Mordecai Zeev, the son, was still a young boy, the father was appointed chief "shochet" in the village of Hilsk, not far from Novograd. It was here in Hilsk that Mordecai Zeev spent his first eleven years of childhood. The simplicity of nature in the village intrigued his lonely soul and enabled him to develop his imagination and arouse his inward feelings which were nurtured on stories from the Bible taught to him by his father. At the age of eleven Feierberg and his family left the village and moved to the city. Mordecai Zeev joined the "Heder"<sup>4</sup> with the rest of the boys his age. However, the new student did not remain in the "Heder" for long, and whether he was asked to leave or left on his own volition is not clear.<sup>5</sup> His next step was to study on his own in the "Yeshivah"<sup>6</sup> of Hassidai Chernovil. When Mordecai Zeev did not seem to show a brilliant progress in the studies of the "Talmud", the father's concern for the son's future increased and he encouraged him to become a "shochet" and learn the various laws concerning ritual slaughtering.

Both worlds of the Talmud and the Codes apparently did not satisfy Feierberg and he turned to the study of the "Agada"<sup>7</sup> and to numerous half-ethical and half-

narrative books of medieval literature which he found in the "Yeshivah" of the Hassidim.<sup>8</sup> It was in this literature that Feilerberg found sustenance for his emotional soul. Thus, still in the "Yeshivah", his way was paved to the Haskalah and the acquaintance with Modern Hebrew literature. Books by Mapu,<sup>9</sup> stories and essays by Smolenskin<sup>10</sup> and writings of Lillienblum<sup>11</sup> inspired Feilerberg and influenced his entire way of life. He questioned his surroundings, challenged the accepted ways of life both of the "Yeshivah" and that of his father. The orthodox father reacted to the son's rebellion as a catastrophe; he would often beat him and at last chased him away from home.<sup>12</sup> But Mordecai Zeev did not get discouraged by his father's attitude; the latter fact rather increased his interest in the Haskalah and he devoted more time to its study. The desperate father sent for his son and made him the family's storekeeper. The store, however, became a gathering place for many of Feilerberg's intellectual friends, where together they engrossed themselves in various debates. The merchandise was not watched over and the accounting books were filled with Feilerberg's notes, ideas and opinions.<sup>13</sup> The attempt of the father to get his son involved in the details of business failed. Nevertheless, Feilerberg, the father, tried once more to turn the son's ideas away by getting him into marriage. The arrangement between Mordecai Zeev and the daughter

of the "shochet" from the next town seemed satisfactory to all concerned and for a while even the lonely Mordecai Zeev seemed happy. The marriage was cancelled, however, by the bride's father when it was discovered that Feierberg suffered from tuberculosis of the throat.

For the winter of 1896 Feierberg was sent to Warsaw to consult a doctor about his health. It was there that he met Nachum Sokolov,<sup>14</sup> the editor of "Hatzfira",<sup>15</sup> who advised him to discontinue the writing of poetry, but rather concentrate on prose. Feierberg wished to remain in Warsaw and began working on a literary career, but his doctor recommended him to enter a convalescent home in the town of Salvuta. At the end of the summer in 1896 Feierberg returned to Novograd and wrote his first story "Yaakov Hashomer." The story was based on tales of an old tailor concerning the period of the "cantonists"<sup>16</sup> and was published in "Hatzfira" in 1897, when Feierberg reached the twenty-second year of his life. Back in Salvuta in the summer of 1897 he wrote his second story "Ha-aigel", which was published in "Hashelach."<sup>17</sup> At this time "Ahad-Ha-am"<sup>18</sup> first took interest in Feierberg and a series of letters were exchanged between them, dealing primarily with the symbolism found in Feierberg's third story - "Hazzlalom."<sup>19</sup> In the winter of 1897 in Novograd Feierberg studied Russian and German literature and at the same time began to develop

his Zionist ideas. Due to his increased activity, his illness grew worse and friends called upon "Ahad-Ha-am" to help the young author financially. Thus Feierberg received for one year a monthly allowance from a wealthy Jew in Moscow.<sup>20</sup> In addition to this, he was paid for the stories "Ba-erev" and "Ha-kamea", which were published in "Hashelach"; and for "Hazzlilim" and "Leil Aviv," which were published in "Lusach Achiasaf."<sup>21</sup>

Financially stable, Feierberg left his father's home and rented an apartment, where he began to work on the story "Le-an".<sup>22</sup> Upon the completion of "Le-an", Feierberg began to think about writing the life of the "Baal Shem Tov."<sup>23</sup> His illness, however, overcame him, and on the 20th day of Adar in the year 1899 Mordecai Zeev Feierberg died when he was twenty-four years of age.

Feierberg's struggle in life encompassed two categories, extreme in essence, in which he was deeply involved: The world wrapped in the "talit"<sup>24</sup> with its life centered around the "Yeshiva". The Jewish orthodox Hassidic category with its rich tradition of customs and literature on one hand and the Hebraic reformed Haskalah category on the other hand. Turning away from one, yet not denying it, recognizing its advantages; and shying away from the other, not fully accepting and yet realizing its disadvantages, represented the conflict not only of Mordecai Zeev Feierberg but of his entire generation - the conflict between the old and the new.

## CHAPTER III - NOTES

1. Joseph Heller, "Jewish Way of Life", The Jewish People Past and Present, Volume 2, (New York, Jewish Encyclopedic Handbook, 1955), p. 257.
2. Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature, Volume IV, Part one, (New York, Thomas Yoseloff, 1941), p. 56.
3. Shochet: One who slaughters cattle and fowl according to the prescribed religious law.
4. Heder: School attended by young Jewish children in Eastern Europe. Pious parents did not send their children to the government schools, even when they were permitted to do so.
5. P. Lachover, Toledot Ha-Sifrut Ha-Evrit Ha-Chadasha, Volume 3, Part two, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir, 1951), p. 142.
6. Yeshivah: A school of higher Jewish learning.
7. Agada: Homiletic interpretation of Scripture.
8. Hassidim: Followers of Hassidism, a popular revivalist movement originating in eighteenth-century Poland.
9. A. Mapu: See Chap. I, Note No. 14.
10. P. Smolenskin: See Chap. I, Note No. 16.
11. M. L. Lilienblum: See Chap. I, Note No. 19.
12. A. Ben-Or, Toledot Ha-Sifrut Ha-Evrit Ha-Chadasha, Volume two, (Tel-Aviv, Yezrael, 1951), p. 120.
13. P. Lachover, op. cit., p. 143.
14. Nachum Sokolov: A leading essayist and most distinguished publicist in the Hebrew literature of that period.
15. Hatzfira: A periodical that became an important factor in Hebrew letters under the editorship of Nachum Sokolov (1881-1928).
16. Cantonist: The Jewish recruits who were forced to serve twenty-five years in the Russian army.



17. Hashelach: The outstanding monthly Journal of the period. Its forty-six volumes served as a gathering place for the most talented writers in all literary branches (1897-1926).

18. Ahad-Ha-Am: A pseudonym for Asher Ginzberg, who lived from 1856 to 1927. His philosophy molded the character of Jewish spiritual regeneration in the face of the crumbling ghetto walls when the Jew was threatened with cultural extinction. He advocated a spiritual center in Israel as a means for counteracting the negative forces in the Diaspora.

19. P. Lachover, op. cit., p. 145.

20. Yosef Klausner, Yotzrim Uvonim, Volume 2, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir): reprinted as the Forward in Kovetz Sippurim Uketavim-M. Z. Feierberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 24.

21. Luach Achiasaf: A periodical that was started in 1893 and was published regularly until 1905. It was devoted to literature of all phases and contained the works of all the leading novelists, poets, and essayists of the day.

22. Le-An: At first this work was called "Apikorus". See P. Lachover, op. cit., p. 146.

23. Baal Shem Tov: The founder of the Hassidic movement. Literally, "Master of the Good Name".

24. Talit: Prayer shawl worn by pious Jews.

## CHAPTER IV

### "Bein Hashmashot"

Reflection on the evolution of history will prove the inevitable fact that every generation is a transition to those that come after it; every generation is a mirror in which the future outlines can be seen and expected.<sup>1</sup> The character of the respective transition period is determined by two means - evolution and revolution.<sup>2</sup> Evolution involves tradition which is transferred from one generation to another, while the latter adds and changes the inherited tradition in the spirit of his own time. Revolution, however, involves the uprooting of tradition with an intention to start from anew.

Feierberg's period does not belong wholly to an evolutionary transition period or to a revolutionary transition period.<sup>3</sup> It is enwrapped in an absurd character which contains both evolution and revolution in the same time and at the same place. The absurdity lies in the essence of the definition of these two concepts - evolution involves building on existing foundations; revolution involves destroying existing foundations and replacing them by new ones. The dilemma that confronted Feierberg's

generation was the presence of destruction and building of the same foundations, the same values, at the same time. The root of the dilemma being love and craving for two extremes - the old and the new, tradition and novelty, again, at the same time. The expression of this dilemma manifested itself by an inevitable confusion, bewilderment and despair; a confusion in which one could hear lamentations over the glories of the past - the old on one hand and songs of praise for the new on the other hand. The old was too old to stand by itself and the new wasn't the desirable replacement. The old already disappeared into the darkness, yet the new is not the coming light. It is twilight time of a generation that lost the straight path in the dim hours between light and darkness - a generation of "Bein Hashmashot".<sup>4</sup>

Hebrew literature of the later years of the nineteenth century became an expression of the generation of "Bein Hashmashot". A generation that experienced an unusual phenomena - after two thousand years of both material and spiritual stagnation within the "Ghetto"<sup>5</sup> walls, the gates to the wide world opened. The old "Beit Hamidrash"<sup>6</sup> crumbles, the students once occupying it running away. The problem, however, was - where to? The generation of the thirties escaped into the new -

the idea of the Haskalah, but the generation of the nineties felt already its disadvantages and shyed away from it. They no longer shared the skepticism and disbelief of the Haskalah, but long ago left the faith and devotion of orthodoxy. The solution of - "Be a man when you go out and a Jew when you are at home",<sup>7</sup> no longer applied to the generation of "Bein Hashmashot", for both the Jew and the man were to them inseparable entities at home as well as outside. Questions concerning the Jew and the man sought for answers, while the youth of the Post Haskalah period stood perplexed on the crossroad, not knowing where to turn for a solution. Both world views - the old and the new and the problems they presented possessed not only the power of attraction but also of repulsion.

This struggle depicted by Feilerberg as a personal representative of his generation is, therefore, a permanent struggle of two world views, but his is not an intellectual struggle only. This is not the fight of the Haskalah heroes for emancipation and secular knowledge against the practices of the religion of the "Ghetto". Feilerberg and his generation are involved in an emotional struggle in which the goal is unclear. Feilerberg does not see salvation in secular knowledge nor in emancipation; he is looking, together with his generation, to a

solution for the entire Jewish people.<sup>8</sup> A tremendous goal indeed, but where to begin? Feilerberg's hero, in contrast with the Haskalah hero, knows also the grievous faults in modern life; he is looking for an ideal which would justify a joyful and pleasant experience of Judaism as that of our Biblical past; an experience which will retain the faith he lost in present Judaism, the lost faith from which stems the tragedy of - Whither?

It is not by mere coincidence that Feilerberg's stories call for "Le-an",<sup>9</sup> "Ba-erev",<sup>10</sup> "Hazzlalom".<sup>11</sup> Feilerberg felt the atmosphere of "Bein Hashmashot" of his time and the titles of his stories are his personal reflection on his generation. The personal conflict between the old and the new, that took place in his soul, became the embodiment of the conflict of his entire generation. Feilerberg, son of our old historical culture, craves for the shadows - "Zlalom", of the past exclaiming: "In all the great wide world with its joys and pleasures, nothing attracts me more than the shadows".<sup>12</sup> And Feilerberg, the imaginative and sensitive youth, cries out: "How beautiful is the world and how blue is the sky."<sup>13</sup>

The intellectual and emotional struggle develops into a practical struggle as well - a struggle between the old and the new as two different ways of life. A struggle against

thousands of confining laws and commandments which gives birth to the outburst - "Life, life, life, Oh God!"<sup>14</sup> and yet the deep recognition that "in our book of Psalms, this great book of prayer, which expresses the feelings and emotions of all mankind"<sup>15</sup> ... In it are the real values of life "... the sanctity of life and all which is noble and exalted."<sup>16</sup> The book of Psalms, however, belongs to that which is past and cannot offer Feilerberg and his generation a practical solution to their unique problems. Therefore - two worlds are struggling within me, two different worlds as distant one from the other as the east from the west; and my unfortunate heart bears the burden of both."<sup>17</sup>

This emotional tragedy which took hold of the intellectually emancipated youth of the nineties is illustrated symbolically in Feilerberg's sketch - "Hazlilalim" - The Shadows. The author sits alone at night in the midst of the shadows of "Beit-Hamidrash" and a struggle goes on in his heart: "What are you doing in a world of shadows which belongs to the past? Look, yonder is a world full of light and throbbing life."<sup>18</sup> No, is the answer: "I love the shadows, there is a tragic charm in them. They are not mere shadows, for among them flutter the spirits of saints, of martyrs,

and the souls of men great in moral power and religious fervor."<sup>19</sup> The shadows are symbols of all that was Jewish values, Jewish culture; the shadows are Feierberg's inheritance left for him by his father, an inheritance which he would not like to part with even though "I know that the world regards my old "Beit-hamidrash" as wasted ruins about to crumble,"<sup>20</sup> and even though "I know that outside of this desolate room there are other vast and various treasures to behold."<sup>21</sup> Feierberg is attracted to the past not only emotionally but out of conviction that Judaism contains a great moral power which will ultimately manifest itself for the benefit of all humanity - "I see my "Beit-Hamidrash" established in the center of the world and from it beams of light going out to all mankind."<sup>22</sup> This is an ideal for the remote future, but in the meantime - "Oh life, life! I love also life ... my soul within me burns"<sup>23</sup>... "and this life, how nice and pleasant! Here there are no shadows, all shines and glitters."<sup>24</sup> The pathos of these words are Feierberg's expression of the struggle of the Jew for a better life in this world and a brighter future for humanity in general; a struggle that the author regarded as a conflict between father and

son - "My poor but happy father! You did not extinguish  
the holy fire of your heart with strange fire - lust!  
You did not chill your warmth in the cold sea of life!"<sup>25</sup>



## CHAPTER IV - NOTES

1. Shimon Rabidovitz, Mordecai Zeev Feierberg - Perek Betoldot Sifrutainu Hachadasha, (Berlin, "OR", 1923), p. 43.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Bein Hashmashot: literally "twilight." As an expression, it implies obscurity.
5. Ghetto: An assigned quarter for Jewish residency only; enclosure.
6. Beit Hamidresh: House of Study.
7. Yehudah Leib Gordon, "Hakitzza Ami", Shirai Higayon, Meshalim, Shirai Alila - Y. L. Gordon, (Tel-Aviv, Schocken, Ltd., 1958), p. 5.
8. Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature, Volume IV, Part one, (New York, Thomas Yesseloff, 1941), p. 55.
9. Le-an: Literally, "Whither?"
10. Ba-erev: Literally, "In The Evening."
11. Hazillalim: Literally, "The Shadows".
12. Mordecai Zeev Feierberg, "Hazillalim", Kovetz Sipurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feierberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 101.
13. M. Z. Feierberg, "Leil Aviv", op. cit., p. 113.
14. Ibid., p. 114.
15. M. Z. Feierberg, "Sifrutainu Hayafa Vechovotsha", op. cit., p. 137.
16. Ibid.
17. M. Z. Feierberg, "Hazillalim", op. cit., p. 106.
18. Ibid., p. 101. See M. Waxman, op. cit., p. 601.

19. Ibid. p. 104. See M. Waxman, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
20. Ibid. p. 104.
21. Ibid. p. 108.
22. Ibid. p. 104.
23. Ibid. p. 110.
24. Ibid. p. 109.
25. Ibid. p. 103.

## CHAPTER V

Father and Son

"You, my father, destroyed all desire even before it had time to take form; but in me, your unfortunate son, in me, fire wars upon fire."<sup>1</sup> The struggle of the father and the son is not between one and the other, but rather within each and the other. The father and son as symbols of the ideas of the old and the new stand in an inevitable conflict. However, as individuals representing two generations in the transition period, they do not fight one against the other; each one has his own unique internal struggle with himself. The father's struggle is a passive one. He extinguished the desire for a "strange fire" before it took hold in his soul, but in so doing, lost the strength to defend the "eternal light" that burned within him.

Rab Zalman Ha-Hassid represents the image of the father in Feilerberg's story "Hakame-an".<sup>2</sup> When Hophni, the son, is troubled by frequent nightmares, Rab Zalman, upon the request of his wife, turns to the aid of the local mystic - Rab Shmaya "Hamekubal".<sup>3</sup> Rab Shmaya, however, only acknowledges what the father had felt before - their uselessness and incapability to help Hophni, the son. Nonetheless, Rab Shmaya feels compelled to do something; he

ties a locket around the boy's neck while sharing with the father the knowledge of its worthlessness. Both Rab Zalman and Rab Shmaya, fathers in the transition period, express the helplessness of their own generation by saying: "We feel that this world is no longer ours, and this life does not belong to us".<sup>4</sup> They lost the steadfastness, firmness and might of their forefathers in defending their values. Instead, they wrapped themselves with sadness, weakness and despair. "There is no righteous one that will defend our generation",<sup>5</sup> sighs Rab Zalman, thus revealing part of the reason, the source of the weakness of the fathers. The fathers did not know against whom to fight and with what to fight. The "strange fire" - the Haskalah idea was extinguished within them even before they had a chance to familiarize themselves with its essence. Therefore, they denied themselves of the strategy of knowing one's enemy. The sole awareness that their survival was at stake still did not equip them with the necessary weapons to defend themselves. "The spirit of holiness diminishes",<sup>6</sup> ... and we are in exile together with the Shechinah".<sup>7</sup> The concept of "Kiddush Hashem"<sup>8</sup> which acted both as shield and weapon to the forefathers was unobtainable to the fathers of the transition period. Not knowing any other weapon, they did

not have with what to fight. The result was an acceptance of the new as a historical necessity that could not be overcome. The fathers must give their sons away to "the schools"<sup>9</sup> ... this is Rab Shmaya's bitter summary of the situation. The weakness of the fathers gives the sons away to the "Klipah" - to the evil power. The fathers, however, do not compromise with this spiritual revolution for themselves; for them surrender is incomprehensible and they seek refuge in the future, in a world of fancy and imagination. A world filled with secrets:

I have a secret concerning this matter and you are unable to understand it ... I do not have ... I do not have to whom to travel ... Do you understand? You do not understand and how can you understand? I have a deep wound in my heart, you will not understand what is Hassidism, even in the academy there are not many who will understand ... Woe to these evil days! The heart is covered with ashes; skeptics and unbelievers ...<sup>10</sup> and the coal of fire becomes dimmer and dimmer.

In this monologue Rab Zalman reveals before his wife his interpretation of the struggle of his time, the interpretation of the father: the world is a battlefield in which an eternal struggle between sanctity and defilement takes place. Hassidism, in which Rab Zalman sees the last chance of reviving sanctity, joy, innocence and love of God, dies away and leaves defilement to dominate the world. It is not Haskalah that gains, it is defilement that wins the battle. "Sanctity has left the world, and since holiness

has gone, the world is open for Satan to spread his net and catch souls in his trap ... The world is empty of all holiness"<sup>11</sup>... Neither Rab Zalman Ha-Hassid nor Rab Shmaya Hamekubal can help the deterioration of the period in which they live. All that remained for them to do was to wail and cry for their own weakness and destruction.

The suffering of the fathers is manifested in their children. The weakness, despair and helplessness of the fathers was bestowed upon the sons. The struggle of the sons was an active one - "in me fire wars upon fire." The conflict between the fire of old and the fire of the new resulted in the exhaustion of the son who cried helplessly - "The situation is intolerable and it is impossible to endure it any longer; without realizing, I begin to cry."<sup>12</sup> Hophni, the son, cries in apprehension - "I am frightened, my mother, I am frightened."<sup>13</sup> It is the uncertainty of not knowing whether I am awake or asleep,"<sup>14</sup> ... that causes the fear of Hophni, and as a result ... "behold, I lie motionless."<sup>15</sup> Hophni, the son, looks for his identity, he wants to know and feel if he is awake or asleep. Living in a time that strives for a definite future is being awake; living in a time that looks back for the past is being asleep. The son is neither awake nor asleep; he cannot identify himself with the future -

the new and not with the past - the old. They both draw his attention and attract him - "Behold, a voice rings in my ears as the ringing of the bell, and the voice arouses within me my senses, and I realize that I am awake ... But why am I not asleep?"<sup>16</sup> Even though Hophni realizes for a moment that he is awake, the question that still troubles him is - why am I not asleep?

The roots of the son are in the past, deep in his father's tradition, therefore he is much more sensitive to the past - the old, its advantages or disadvantages. Looking at Rab Shmaya, he feels:

that here is a different world, a world of magic and sanctity; the room is small and humble, the Jew sitting in it is lean and weak, like all the Jews, but despite all this, how great is the difference! I feel deep within my soul, how exalted and uplifted is this Jew and how much holiness and purity hover in this small room ...<sup>17</sup>

And yet, the son's reaction was not acceptance of the man and the values for which he stood. Hophni could not respond to him, but instead - "I was greatly alarmed and I could not bear his sight"<sup>18</sup> Thus, Hophni, the son, as Rab Zalman, his father, finds himself standing before a situation he could not help. The father's struggle, however, is not as cruel as his son's - he still retained his identity, but was helpless to defend and transmit it to Hophni. The father cries for his weakness and dies away, but the son who cries in his youth lives on, and the dilemma is still his to solve.

## CHAPTER V - NOTES

1. Mordecai Zeev Feierberg, "Hazlilalim," Kovetz Sipurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feierberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 103.
2. Hakame-ah: Literally, "The Locket."
3. Hamakubal: A mystic popular especially among the Hassidim who might be able to find the key by which the Messiah would come and redeem Israel.
4. M. Z. Feierberg, "Hakame-ah", op. cit., p. 24.
5. Ibid. p. 23.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. p. 27.
8. Kiddush Hashem: A death by one who testifies to his faith.
9. M. Z. Feierberg, "Hakame-ah," op. cit., p. 27.
10. Ibid. p. 22.
11. Ibid. p. 27.
12. Ibid. p. 20.
13. Ibid. p. 19.
14. Ibid. p. 20.
15. Ibid. p. 20.
16. Ibid. p. 20.
17. Ibid. p. 26.
18. Ibid. p. 25.



## CHAPTER VI

### Among the Nations

"Ye shall know that today we have to fight a great and mighty battle, "Samael"<sup>1</sup> wants to take the child's soul into captivity. The "paritz"<sup>2</sup> is a spark of "Samael", he wants to take the child and make him a "Goy."<sup>3</sup>

Judaism does not experience only an occasional internal conflict as those of the father and son; but being in exile Judaism faces a permanent external conflict also, a struggle with the outside world. "We have to fight with the "Goyim" ... with exile."<sup>4</sup>

The folk story "Ba-erev",<sup>5</sup> as told to Hophni by his mother, is symbolic of the entire history of Israel among the nations. The constant struggle between Judaism and the outside forces. The plot takes place on the estate of a Polish nobleman, where a poor Jew, by the name of Joseph, ran the local inn. Part of Joseph's duty to the nobleman was to amuse him by singing synagogue melodies and dance before him. As a reward, the nobleman overlooked the payment of rent. Joseph was satisfied with his lot except for his longing for a son. When Rabbi Leib Sore - a famous Hassidic wonder worker, stopped at Joseph's inn, he presented his plan before

the Rabbi and was promised a son. The son, however, he was warned would possess a great soul which the "Evil Power" would endeavor to seize and a great struggle will ensue between the power of holiness and the power of evil for its possession. When, in due time, the son arrived, Rabbi Leib, with a few trusted followers, were appointed to guard the infant. On the eve before circumcision, the nobleman, who was a wizard, made great efforts to obtain the infant, but his guards kept watch. Finally, when all his devices failed, he tried to call the guards to let him enter the house in the name of the "Besht."<sup>6</sup> At that moment one of the guardians replied, "I am ready!"<sup>7</sup> A black cat rushed into the open door and snatched the boy from its crib. "Samael" has triumphed. Joseph was punished to death by the nobleman and his family was driven away from the estate. The child, in the meantime, grew up in the nobleman's house. At the age of twelve, his Jewish consciousness was first aroused when he was called "Zhid"<sup>8</sup> by his playmates. On the eve of his "Bar-Mitzva"<sup>9</sup> he dreams a dream in which his father, Joseph, appears before him, acknowledging the fact that he is a Jew and instructing him to leave the palace. By some mysterious way, the boy finds himself on the doorstep of a Rabbi's house in the nearest

town. The Rabbi instructs him in the teachings of Judaism and the boy becomes a great scholar and is to be sent to Amsterdam to continue his studies. The Rabbi, knowing the danger in which the boy was involved, supplied him with a staff and a "kame-ah"<sup>10</sup> and told him to draw a circle around him with the staff for protection. The temptations began to appear before the boy when he started on his way. All failed. Suddenly, he heard a wonderful melody that attracted him more and more until he let himself be captivated by it. He was seized by the wind and carried back to the palace. At the door, though, he was held by a powerful hand, the hand of his father calling: "Do not follow the melody; it is false and strange. Go back to the Torah."<sup>11</sup>

It is not the son - the Jewish hero of the transition period in exile, that actually fights, the fight is not his, it is the fight of the father and the fight of the "paritz" for him - for his soul. It is the tragic fight of the "Kamea" and the melody. On one hand the internal forces:

Here, take this "Kamea" and also my staff I give to you, and whenever you go to sleep, make a circle with this staff around you and do not go out from the circle until the morning ... courage and strength be with you.<sup>12</sup>

It is the "Kamea", old and void of meaning and real power for the son, it is the "Kamea" that loses because of its

own weakness: "His hands trembling, the "Kamea" slips and falls to the ground ... and he is compelled against his will to leave the circle"<sup>13</sup> ... On the other hand, the external forces:

Behold the sound of music is heard from a distance, and the melody, Oh how bewitching! ... it pulls the feet to run after the melody ... all the senses are intoxicated, the heart beats rapidly, the eyes shed tears ... the blood in the veins pulsate in rhythm to the music ... the melody draws closer; they want to sit in their places and study the "Zohar",<sup>14</sup> but the melody lures them ... they fortify and strengthen themselves in their places, but still the melody pulls and pulls.<sup>15</sup>

Pulled by both the internal and the external powers, the son finds himself in an undesirable situation - he is a man in captivity, he is no longer free. Moreover, the son is a captive slaving for two masters at the same time. His mind serves the one, finding in him the longing for peace and rest; while his heart serves the other, looking for excitement and pleasure: "the mind looks for peace, and the heart desires life,"<sup>16</sup> ..,and as a result - "I am suspended between heaven and earth."<sup>17</sup> The choice between the two is the son's dilemma, a dilemma that becomes even more complex due to the fact that there is something within the Jew, even though in captivity and even though his attraction to the other side may be great, something

that compels him to remain one of his people. "My father - tell me, what is "Zhid?"<sup>18</sup> "Is it so, am I a "Zhid?"<sup>19</sup> asks the boy of his pretended father, the "paritz."

A symbol of the same point - a Jew that remains loyal to his people due to that something that kept telling him - this is your destiny, is the story "Yaakov-Hashomer."<sup>20</sup> Yaakov Hashomer belongs to that part in our history that is associated with the term "cantonists."<sup>21</sup> Early in his childhood he was kidnapped for work and conversion in the army of Nicolas I in Russia. Far from his home town, he withstood the tests, trials and temptations placed upon him: "and not once, nor twice, nor three times, was he beaten by one of his masters!"<sup>22</sup> ... But Yaakov Hashomer remained loyal to his God and his people: "and he, as a mighty warrior, fought for his soul a fierce and arduous battle."<sup>23</sup>

What was the secret of his weapon that brought him victory? Yaakov Hashomer did not have the chance for an intensive knowledge and comprehension of the Torah to use their advantage as his guards. It was only something that he inherited before leaving the home of his father - "Wee unto me for the exile of the 'Shechina'."<sup>24</sup>

The father's lament became the son's song of praise while dwelling far from his people, among the nations. It was the only thing, that something that compelled Yaakov Hashomer, as it would have compelled any other Jew, to both remain part of his religion and return to his birthplace - "and then our man of valor returned to his town - and became the guardian of the city."<sup>25</sup>

The guardian of the city became a spiritual symbol in which Feierberg saw the idealism of the Jew that is full of faith and compassion; an idealism that is ready to stand before the whole world and guard faith in the midst of disbelief and skepticism.<sup>26</sup> But an effective clinging to Judaism demands giving up of the material world for the spiritual world of idealism, and Feierberg puts this idea into a concrete picture in his story "Ha-aigel."<sup>27</sup> A calf was born to Hophni's family and the child loved and cared for it. But then, overhearing his mother's conversation, he realizes that the calf is about to be slaughtered. This terrifies the boy and rebellion springs in his heart. His protest to the mother arouses only her laughter and, in spite of his waiting for a miracle to happen, the calf is slaughtered. Hophni - Feierberg sees in this calf the symbol of the innate idealism of Judaism. However, Hophni that identi-

fies himself with the calf is in a constant clash with his environment. It is the eternal conflict between spiritualism and materialism, that he experiences for the first time.

The boy's fight for the calf's life is a losing battle - he does not have a chance to win: "The natural cause of events offers no hope; my mother is stubborn - but perhaps a miracle will take place, any other way is non-existent"<sup>28</sup> ... but still Hophni fights and believes that something, and even though supernatural, would happen and the calf would not be slaughtered. "And the calf was slaughtered."<sup>29</sup>

The efforts and hopes for life, however, did not die with the slaughtered calf. Hophni, in the image of Nachman in the story "Le-an", still ponders and seeks an answer for his problem - Whither?

## CHAPTER VI - NOTES

1. Samael: Satan or the devil.
2. Paritz: A Polish nobleman.
3. Mordecai Zeev Feierberg, "Ba-erev," Kovetz Sipurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feierberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 10. The term "Goy" refers to a Gentile.
4. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ba-erev," op. cit., p. 17.
5. Ba-erev: Literally, "In The Evening."
6. Besht: Short name for Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hassidic movement.
7. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ba-erev," op. cit., p. 12.
8. Zhid: A Polish slang word for "Jew."
9. Bar-Mitzva: Literally, "Son of a Commandment." When a Jewish boy reaches the age of thirteen, all laws and obligations become binding upon him and he is accepted as a full member of the congregation.
10. Kame-ah: See Chap. V, Note No. 2.
11. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ba-erev," op. cit., p. 17.
12. Ibid. p. 15.
13. Ibid. p. 16.
14. Zohar: The basic Kabbalistic work which is a commentary on the Pentateuch, written in Hebrew and Aramaic.
15. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ba-erev," op. cit., p. 11.
16. Ibid. p. 12.
17. M. Z. Feierberg, "Yaakov Hashomer," op. cit., 116.
18. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ba-erev," op. cit., p. 12.
19. Ibid. p. 13.



20. Yaakov-Hashomer: Literally, "Jacob, the Watchman."
21. Cantonists: Jewish recruits in the Russian army for twenty-five years.
22. M. Z. Feierberg, "Yaakov Hashomer," op. cit., p. 123.
23. Ibid. p. 123.
24. Ibid. The term "Shachina" is often used as a synonym for God.
25. M. Z. Feierberg, "Yaakov Hashomer," op. cit., p. 123.
26. P. Lachover, Toledot Ha-Sifrut Ha-Evrit Ha-Chadasha, Volume III, Part two (Tel-Aviv, Dvir. 1931), p. 148.
27. Ha-aigel: Literally, "The Calf."
28. M. Z. Feierberg, "Ha-aigel," op. cit. p. 99.
29. Ibid. p. 100

## CHAPTER VII

### Whither?

"Yom Kippur!"<sup>1</sup> The synagogue is crowded to the doors with men, dressed in white, wrapped in prayer-shawls" ...<sup>2</sup> "All is vanity," cries Nachman - and he takes the wax candle that lights up the platform, and blows it out.<sup>3</sup>

Nachman is the protagonist of the young Jewry in Feilerberg's generation that recurrently asks the question: Whither? His act on the holiest of the Jewish holidays is not a declaration of war against religion, nor is it a form of non-belief in all that is considered sacred. It is an act of despair, an act of a young man lost in his personal search for a contemporary Jewish identity. The sinful act is a symbol which expresses the cry in Nachman's heart - "Blow out the light of 'Galut'"<sup>4</sup> - a new light must be lit."<sup>5</sup> Yet, even though Nachman never finds the way to light that "new candle" in Jewish history, the extinguishing of the candle signifies the first physical action taken by Feilerberg towards a tentative solution to the problem "Whither?"

Nachman's deed on the eve of "Yom Kippur," from the point of view of laws and dogmas, is an irreligious act.

However, from Nachman's view-point, it is merely an attempt to diagnose the roots of his own sickness - the sickness of his generation, and determine what it is. "I am wretched," he thinks, "for I belong to a people whose only possession is its faith. There are only two things to do: defend the faith or denounce it. But I want to be free; I do not want to fight for Religion or fight against Religion."<sup>6</sup>

The roots of the sickness lie in the fact that Judaism is full of theological dross and, therefore, cannot offer the "life" for which Nachman - Feilerberg longs. The only way to both, be a "free man" and remain a Jew is, therefore, to purify Judaism by removing that dross. But Nachman does not want to take this task upon himself; his idea of being free is neither defending Religion nor fighting for it. He looks for another goal: "I aspire to other things; I want to accomplish other things with my people."<sup>7</sup> What are the "other things?" - even Nachman himself does not know; his goal is vague and the means to reach it are totally obscure. It is ironical but inevitable that the only rescuer, savior of both goal and means is Religion. As long as Nachman cannot find what are the "other things" he craves to do with his people, his only world - the world that

binds him with his people - is the World of Religion. His fight, whether he likes it, whether he wants it or not, is a religious fight and he cannot free himself from its realm.<sup>8</sup> This is why the new goal Nachman sets for himself is deeply rooted in Jewish religious values ... "We must redeem Torah from exile" ...<sup>9</sup> Redemption of the Torah from exile will eventually bring to the redemption of Israel. The medium in accomplishing this goal will be the Messiah -<sup>10</sup> ...

"When the Messiah comes, he will carry with him, first, redemption for all the letters in the Torah, then for the parchment on which they are written; first he will release the soul, then the body; first the Divine Presence, then Israel."<sup>11</sup> Nachman determines the goal, but how will the goal be achieved? "How can anyone bring the Messiah?"<sup>12</sup> The only means that Nachman can turn to are unrealistic means - the holy books.

"But now, now he has discovered how to bring the Messiah. He has found, in the "Lekutai Zui,"<sup>13</sup> that while the cantor prolongs his rendition of "Where is thy glory to be found?" in the "Kedushah"<sup>14</sup>, on the Holy Days, you may plead for one of three things: the Holy Spirit, wealth or dutiful children ... The Holy Spirit! Yes, he will surely pray for that."<sup>15</sup> Feierberg, son of the Hassidic tradition, leads his hero

Nachman, to follow in the footsteps of those Hassidic principles in which he himself was raised.

Nachman takes upon himself the responsibility of self-purification as a means of preparation to his own dedication as the bringer of the Messiah. The disappointment of accomplishing this goal is inevitable and although "he is still searching his soul for a sign of the Holy Spirit, he can see nothing. He is just as he was. The heavens are shut ..." <sup>16</sup> and "the Messiah has not come; he has not brought him" ... <sup>17</sup>

Embittered, Nachman - Feilerberg looks for a new goal. The frustration from his last defeat gives birth to a strong desire for power, in his soul. Thus, he finds his new goal in a form of a warrior, and truly believes that he would be mighty. "When he stood alone on this rock, he considered himself omnipotent ruler. His will knew no bounds. What mysterious power urged him on, up there? He wanted to fly, to soar, to battle with all things, to conquer all" ... <sup>18</sup> But again, how does one become a warrior? What makes one a warrior? Nachman, disappointed from the answers of the books, turns to his father's aid. And again, his approach to the father is as unrealistic as the approach to the holy books. The father's philosophy of a warrior

will sooner than later disappoint the son. "Whoever wants to serve God," says the father, "whoever wants to reach his goal ... he must become a warrior."<sup>19</sup> "A warrior must accustom himself to a strenuous life, to fitful sleeplessness, so that he may be able to defend his country and his King. Warriors spend most of their days in exile and suffering. That is a warrior's life."<sup>20</sup> But this was not a warrior's life Nachman envisioned while standing on top of the rock. The father's warrior did not have any appeal to the son, who manifests his reaction by saying: "His father wants him to be a warrior, to fight the evil influence with Satan,<sup>21</sup> to sanctify his life to his people and to his law. He told him that he must forget everything, abandon it, only to understand that Torah is all-important and that all else is nothing ... He is nothing. How fearful a thing to be such a warrior!"<sup>22</sup> Nachman repulses the idea of such a warrior, but at the same time he continues to attend "Beit-Hamidrash"<sup>23</sup> - the creator of these warriors. It was while sitting in "Beit - Hamidrash" that the passive repulsion turned into a protest - "Unthinkingly, he fixes his gaze onto the "batlan"<sup>24</sup>, and a fearful thought crossed his mind: he is the model of a warrior my father wants me to be:

a "batlan" dried up, poor, spending his days in a dark corner of "Beit - Hamidrash," looking blank and bleary-eyed at the book ...<sup>25</sup> "No! I won't be a guardian of graves; I won't be such a warrior. I want to live, to live like every man."<sup>26</sup> The cry for life flourished into a rebellion, a rebellion in which the son conveyed for the first time, his thoughts face to face to his father: "Say what you will, but it seems to me that all Israel has been sitting for two thousand years, weeping over the graves - not living. You say 'We are helpless!' Of course, we are. If anyone is forever sitting over the graves and has no contact with life, naturally he will be helpless. You are waiting complacently for divine inspiration. I cannot"<sup>27</sup> ... Nachman came finally to the realization that he can neither fight for the same cause, nor with the same weapons of his father. The "Kamea," which he was given by his father to guard him is old, meaningless and useless. It does not hasten his salvation even one pace closer. "We have had enough of standing on one spot and weeping over ruins. We must go on!"<sup>28</sup> But whither?

"Let our people gird itself in strength and go on to earn its place among the nations of the world,"<sup>29</sup> marks a new period, a new plan in Nachman-Feierberg's

struggle for life. Defeated by two previous attempts to solve his personal dilemma, the dilemma of his generation, Nachman searches for a goal and means practical in character, original, new in essence. He finds the new goal in the form of a revival of nationalism for the sake of universalism. The combination of nationalism and universalism as Nachman's - Feilerberg's new goal is not a contradiction of ideologies; for both elements can be found in the principles and doctrines of the Kabbala<sup>30</sup> with which Feilerberg was familiar.<sup>31</sup> Attachment to the land of Israel was always deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Jewish people. Love of Zion as the place where the history and language of the nation will some day be returned was expressed directly and indirectly by most "Haskalah" writers.<sup>32</sup> It is little wonder, therefore, that Feilerberg groped his way in the direction of the land of Israel. "Zionism,<sup>33</sup> in the abstract, spiritual significance of the term', Zionism as the longing for the Holy Land was an integral part of Feilerberg's education since childhood: "Nachman recalls the many stories he has heard from Jews of the Holy Land, who tell about the walls of Jerusalem. He sees before him the Western Wall of the Temple. He stands amid the ruins near the holy wall.



He sees a mass of Jews strewn on the ground, wailing aloud" ...<sup>34</sup> "Oh, my son, my son, the Land of Israel is dust and earth, Jerusalem is a city, houses, market-place and towers"...<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the development of an idea concerning the solution of the Jewish problem in terms of Zionism was not a strange uprooted idea, and for a moment it seemed that the desired goal is finally a realistic one. "Everyone had begun to join the cry, "Onward"... But they did not ask "Whither?" They knew whither. The land of Israel"<sup>36</sup>. Even embittered, disappointed and frustrated Nachman, even he "When he first heard the cry, "On to the land of Israel," he felt that a new heart beat within him, that all his limbs were revived, that there was a new, happy life ahead."<sup>37</sup> How could he have forgotten that spot he was so close with, all his life, was the question his heart kept asking. But the answer of the mind, cool and realistic, told him: "No! he had not forgotten. He had always kept it in mind, but he never knew how to get there"...<sup>38</sup> His Zionism could at best be a keen abstraction, because he did not see before him a Jewry that was sufficiently aroused to make the dream of the return to Israel a reality. "But the people has not

awakened. It no longer realizes its curse and its fate ... It cannot bear a life of labor - only a piece of bread and rest for its weary limbs. It does not long for freedom, for the full free life, for fruitful labor, for the burning desire to regain once more its position in the society of the nations. These things did not stir him to return to his homeland."<sup>39</sup> Zionism was with Feilerberg only a hesitant new faith, for he could sense more deeply the tragedy of those Jews among his people who still were not conscious of the tragic fact that they cannot save their Jewishness even in the only way possible - by settling in the land of Israel. The people sought for an escape, the land of Israel is for them just another place of refuge. This is not what Feilerberg had in mind as the solution for the tragic existence of his people. "No! This is not the way to cure a people, to banish its curse. Woe to a people that returns to its Land sickly, crushed, wretched, battered, to live on the life of the exile. The Jews must return not to escape from famine and the scourge, but to set the foundations of a new life, of a new society. Not the decrepit old society, prostrate and shattered as the exile, but a new Hebrew civilization, exuberant and fresh, a civilization which will once more be a model for

nations, as the old Judean life was in its day, a civilization that will spread life, aspiration, hope and revived creativity through all the world."<sup>40</sup> Feilerberg does not only want the possession of a territory by the Jews, but also that they raise Judaism to a spiritual world power and carry great ideals to the entire world. In this nationalist-universalistic concept we can actually see Feilerberg the Hassid, Feilerberg the Jew, that is deeply rooted in his religion. His future plan and solution for his people is influenced by that of "Ahad-Haam"<sup>41</sup>, but it is wrapped much stronger in a religious-romantic longing for an Isaiah's<sup>42</sup> type of "And it shall come to pass in the end of days"...<sup>43</sup> "And I see my "Beit-Hamidrash" built in the center of the world and from there rays of light spread out unto the whole world",<sup>44</sup> says Feilerberg in "Hazlilalim." With "Ahad-Haam" he believes that historical Judaism put its magnificent imprint upon world civilization. But, like "Ahad-Haam" again, Feilerberg believes that it is impossible "to dedicate Jewry to spiritual missions or historic goals as long as the Jewish people has not attained the natural physical goal of every living organism; has not created for itself living conditions which fit its spiritual character, and which will permit

it to develop its forces and capacities, its own specific form. For only when it has attained all this, will it be possible for the process of its life, in course of time, to draw Jewry to the function for which it may be best suited - that of teacher of others."<sup>45</sup> All that is needed to reach this goal is a new framework in which Zionism will be the only method by which the Jew can develop his humanistic growth for the benefit of universalism and at the same time preserve his Jewish identity for the sake of nationalism. The idea that pure Judaism, Judaism without the theological dross, is the true expression of humanism in a nationalistic form<sup>46</sup> is the basis of Feierberg's theory of the "East."

"And you, brothers, when you go East, remember that you are native to the East."<sup>47</sup> ... "So, brothers, when you travel eastward, do not go as enemies of the East, but as devoted and faithful sons. Strive to give it life, not to destroy it."<sup>48</sup> The people must identify themselves as part of the ancient culture of the East, the culture in which our Jewish entity first took form, shape and meaning. It is surprising how early did Feierberg realize what David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, tries to practice nowadays. In this same theory of the "East" Feierberg anticipated also the

philosophy of Martin Buber<sup>49</sup> that called for the revival of the East on the rotten ruins of Western culture.<sup>50</sup>

"The West is the greatest enemy of Judaism"...<sup>51</sup>

"Europe is sick. Everyone can sense that society is crumbling; its foundations have long been rotten."<sup>52</sup>

Nachman-Feierberg, in his speech, his last flicker of life in "Le-an," betrays Europe and with it the whole ideology of the "Haskalah." He points out that the culture of the West brought us Jews only harm and disappointment, we are not part of the West as much as we would have liked to be. Feierberg, the correspondent, in his open letter to Berdichevsky<sup>53</sup> manifests and emphasizes this point rather strongly. You say: "We have lost everything and everything is lost for us, and now we have to regain everything from others,"<sup>54</sup> and I say "but what will we do with what we have already learned from the inside?"<sup>55</sup> Berdichevsky refers to "others" and means the West, while Feierberg refers to "inside" and means the East. Berdichevsky still clings to the original idea of the "Haskalah" as an ally of the West, but Feierberg creates a new type of "Haskalah" - "Haskalah" as an ally of the East. An Eastern type of "Haskalah" is the synthesis he longed for in creating a harmony between the old and the new. Therefore, Feier-

berg truly believes that the triumph is inevitable - "I believe that this great people, whose books, and whose spirit cannot be disassociated from the destiny of the world, will once more give life to Society. But this Society must be of the East. The great East will awaken from its sleep and begin to live a natural existence. Then this wretched people will rise to the top, to the leadership of a living East."<sup>56</sup> As in the idea - "Europe is sick ..." when Feilerberg bequeathed almost a prophecy, a classical portrayal of the crisis which shook the Jewish world in Europe during the time of Hitler,<sup>57</sup> we likewise witness today, beginnings of the awakening of the East, where even the West realizes that the future balance of power lies in the development of the East.

The solution, the triumph are seen for the future, But the tragedy of both is that Feilerberg can see no personal salvation, nor a salvation for his immediate generation in this solution. He realizes that his sickness is rooted too deep within his soul to be cured and build a new healthy life - "I used to be a madman, for I knew not where to turn. Now I am only an unfortunate man. Time was when I thought to go forth before my people; now no longer. Let a new, living generation

arise and lead us. If it is true that there is a goal for Israel, then gird yourselves with Torah and its goal, and bring them along to the East ... But not to Israel alone, to all the East. Then will my people know that it is on the straight, true road."<sup>58</sup>

Nachman was born in faith and with faith he died. He left this world with a clear recognition that a generation will arise and solve his problems.

## CHAPTER VII - NOTES

1. Yom Kippur: Literally, the day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year to the Jews.
2. Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg, Whither?, translated from the Hebrew by Ira Eisenstein, (New York, Abelard, 1959), p. 24.
3. Ibid. p. 26
4. Galut: Literally, "Diaspora."
5. Simon Halkin, Modern Hebrew Literature, (New York, Schocken, 1950), p. 86.
6. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 17.
7. Ibid. p. 27.
8. P. Lachover, Toledot Ha-Sifrut Ha-Evrit Ha-Chadasha, Volume III, Part two, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir, 1951), p. 160.
9. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 45.
10. Messiah: Literally, "The Anointed One;" one who will come and redeem the people of Israel.
11. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 45.
12. Ibid. p. 43.
13. Lekutai Zvi: A prayer book containing many penitential hymns and Kabbalistic suggestions.
14. Kedushah: Literally, "Sanctification". A prayer which is inserted between the second and third benedictions when the reader repeats the "Amida."
15. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 48.
16. Ibid. p. 52.
17. Ibid. p. 53.
18. Ibid.



19. Ibid. p. 59.
20. Ibid.
21. Satan: See Chap. VI, Note No. 1.
22. M. Z. Feierberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 66.
23. Beit Hamidresh: See Chap. IV, Note No. 4.
24. Batlan: Literally, an idle man, one who spends all his time praying or studying, for lack of anything else to do.
25. M. Z. Feierberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 68.
26. Ibid. p. 70.
27. Ibid. p. 90.
28. Ibid. p. 93.
29. Ibid. p. 104.
30. Kabbala: The mystical tradition popular among many Hassidim; see Chap. V, Note No. 3.
31. A. Ben-Or, Toledot Ha-Sifrut Ha-Evrit Ha-Chadasha, Tel-Aviv, Yizrael, 1951), p. 131.
32. S. Halkin, op. cit., p. 77.
33. Zionism: A movement that yearned for Israel as a homeland for the Jews.
34. M. Z. Feierberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 34.
35. Ibid. p. 88.
36. Ibid. p. 116.
37. Ibid. p. 117.
38. Ibid. p. 118.
39. Ibid. p. 119.

40. Ibid. pp. 119 f.
41. Ahad-Haam: See Chap. IX, Note No. 18.
42. Isaiah: Prophet in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
43. Isaiah 2:2.
44. Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg, "Hazilalim," Kovetz Sipurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feilerberg, (Tel Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 104.
45. Ahad-Ha-am, Al Parshat Dersachim, Volume I, (Tel-Aviv, 1921), pp. 131 ff. Reprinted in Halkin, op. cit., p.83.
46. Yossef Klausner, Yotserim Uvenim, Volume II, reprinted as introduction in Kovetz Sipurim Uketavim - M. Z. Feilerberg, (Tel-Aviv, Keren Yisrael Matz), p. 14.
47. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 124.
48. Ibid. p. 125.
49. Martin Buber: A leading philosopher in the field of existentialism, and one of the world's outstanding interpreters of mysticism and Hassidism.
50. Shimon Rabidovitz, Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg, Perek Betoldot Sifrutainu Ha-Chadasha, (Berlin, "OR", 1923), p. 40 f.
51. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 124.
52. Ibid. p. 123.
53. Micah Joseph Berdichevsky: A revolutionary figure in modern Hebrew Literature, whose work deals with the perplexed uprooted Jew and advocated individual freedom from the tradition.
54. M. Z. Feilerberg, "Mistav Galuy, Le-Mar Berdichevsky," op. cit., p. 129.
55. Ibid.
56. M. Z. Feilerberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 125.

57. Adolf Hitler: Leader of the Nazis who advocated intense German chauvinism and racial anti-Semitism. Under his leadership six million Jews were killed by the Germans.

58. M. Z. Feierberg, Whither?, op. cit., p. 125.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Style and Composition

The author of "Le-an" was a "magnificent cantor who expressed the feelings of his generation as one who prays for the congregation, in front of the holy ark."<sup>1</sup>

A cantor standing before the ark pours out his soul not only for himself but for the entire congregation. His song of prayer relates aspirations which are felt by all, but which only he can express. The song of a cantor, therefore, is both personal and general in scope.

Feierberg's chant is the prayer of his generation with him as the cantor. His only medium of expression is an outpouring of the soul, the Jewish breath of life. It is a spiritual, abstract medium, a necessary means of expression for a musician, a poet, but not for a master of literature, a writer. A writer expresses his inner compulsions in prose, a poet manifests his in the writing of verse. The absurdity in Feierberg, from an artistic point of view, is the choice of prose as a framework for a poetic medium of expression.

In modern terms, the literary type of Feierberg's prose belongs to the short story. A contemporary short story is built around a single episode, has a single pur-

pose and includes incidents that serve to bring out this purpose. The condensed plot takes place at a certain time, specific locality and revolves around very few characters.<sup>2</sup> The outline is drawn with great attention to the description of the real, substantial, in terms of sense perception.

As a prose writer, we hardly see in Feierberg's short stories usage of the new means of expression that are characteristic to this form of fiction nowadays. His literary work as a prose writer did not mark a new stage towards the development of the short story.<sup>3</sup> Feierberg's world was far away from the real, the significance of perception of what the ear can hear and what the eye can see, was strange to him. He does have indeed few magnificent descriptions both in "Ha-aigel" and in "Le-an"; the descriptions of Tikkun Hatzot<sup>4</sup> and Tisha Be-av<sup>5</sup> attract us by their beauty and fine artistry, but these are certainly not the expression in which we find Feierberg's greatness.<sup>6</sup> His is a spiritual expression, a song without a body, some kind of an inner light that enters the readers an almost magic way and keeps shining there.

The element of observation in the artist, an observation that penetrates into the real and paints it in details and colors, is unknown to Feierberg. He does not observe things and interprets them, but rather sees things and hands them over.<sup>7</sup> The obser-

vance of himself, others, nature around him, is filled with compassion and sensitivity but lacks the power of creativity. Creativity that, together with sensitivity, forms an artist.

Feierberg delivered his words with great excitement, his failure, however, was his tendency to over-excitability and sentimentalism. A multitude of sighs, cries, groanings and wailings pour out of his soul straight into his writings and prevents the clarity and sensibility of a perfect sketch.

These outbursts were disadvantages from the artistic view-point. However, emotional honesty, a general truth in Feierberg's few writings, became one of his greatest advantages.<sup>8</sup> The honest feeling manifested directly into writing, brings a closeness between the reader and the work he reads. The reader identifies himself with both the author and his composition. Feierberg is for them not "his honor, the author, but a friend."<sup>9</sup>

By conveying natural conversation and real problems, true to life, Feierberg won his readers and thus fulfilled the goal of his literary work - to arouse the members of his generation for a struggle for what he believed to be right.

Truth to life, however, involves both literal truth to facts and feelings, and symbolical truth. The events

which take place in a symbolical truth may be impossible, but the view of life it reveals is true. The symbolical-mystical element struggles and toils with itself in Feilerberg's stories. It is fascinating in its strangeness but lacks clarity and consistency. Feilerberg falls apart before the "Zlialim", the shadows he himself created. The dynamics of the shadows confuse him and he cannot decide whether he is dominated by the shadows because of his love for them, or because of his hate.

The origin of Feilerberg's symbolism and mysticism is his attraction to the past, to Romanticism. Romanticism, with its fanciful uprootedness, was his reaction to both Haskalah rationalism and the deep logic of orthodox study.<sup>11</sup>

Feilerberg yearns for something which he does not possess and wraps his yearnings with mysticism. Even when he looks at nature, he does not sing his song of praise as one who knows nature and feels it, but as one who dreams about it, ~~along~~ and reveres it as a holy thing.<sup>12</sup>

In the same romantic mystic way Feilerberg treats love. Only two women in his writings, his mother and his wife, seemed to him as images sublime in essence, cause for peace, purity and faith. Love for him meant nearness to God.<sup>13</sup>

Feilerberg's song is a spiritual one, it is impossible

therefore, to look into his style for substantial expressions. The usage of expressions from the Bible and from the "Agada" is dominant in his writings. His language is simple and flows smoothly even though it sometimes tends to flowery sayings and artificial structure of sentences. Pathos, the artistical quality which arouses pity, sorrow and pain, is over-exaggerated by an almost unparalleled abundance of question marks and exclamation marks, especially in "Le-an". The plentitude of philosophical terms, multitude of great names, both Jewish and Gentile, is highly inappropriate for a short story. The usage of color is limited to dark shades only, and these appear in many of the titles of the different stories. The titles are short and clear and with them have the power of arousing the curiosity of the reader as to what he might expect to read.

The greatest disadvantage of Feierberg from the artistic point of view is, in my opinion, the construction of his stories. They lack both unity of time and place, and unity of plot. The action which makes up the plot of a story consists of a series of incidents or happenings. In a plot that distinguishes a short story from a tale, every incident causes what happens next; Feierberg neglects this basic rule very often and thus it is almost impossible to follow a logical sequence of events in his



stories. "Le-an" suffers especially from bad construction and so does "Ba-erev", where the beginning can actually be a story by itself and has nothing to do with the following part.

With all their faults, Feierberg's few writings leave with the reader a single strong impression, an impression of a man perplexed and tangled with real problems, a man that tries desperately to find a solution for his dilemma - the dilemma of his generation.

## CHAPTER VIII - NOTES

1. A. Shteinman, "Feierberg Be-ainainu," Kitvai M. Z. Feierberg, (Tel-Aviv, Kenneset, 1941), p. 24.
2. Ruth Mary Weeks, World Literature, (New York, Scribner's, 1938), p. 1.
3. Yaakov Fichman, Ruchot Umanginot, (Jerusalem, Mosad Bialik, 1952), p. 280.
4. Tikkun Hatzot: The saying of prayers at midnight to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem.
5. Tisha Be-av: The 9th day of the month of Av, commemorating the destruction of the first and second Temples.
6. Shalom Shtrait, Penai Ha Sifrut, Volume II, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir, 1939), pp. 19 ff.
7. Shimon Rabidovitz, Mordecai Zeev Feierberg, Perek Be Toledot Sifroteinu Ha-Chadasha, (Berlin, Or, 1924), p. 18.
8. A. Ben-Or, Toledot HaSifrut HaEvrut Ha-Chadasha, Volume II, (Tel-Aviv, Yizrael, 1951), p. 139.
9. A. Shteinman, op. cit., p. 32.
10. S. Rabidovitz, op. cit., p. 24.
11. P. Iachover, Toledot HaSifrut HaEvrut Ha-Chadasha, Volume III, Part two, (Tel-Aviv, Dvir, 1951), p. 155.
12. S. Rabidovitz, op. cit., pp. 20 ff.
13. Ibid. p. 21.
14. Agada: See Chap. III, Note No. 7.

## EPILOGUE

Modern Hebrew literature of the nineteenth century has participated in the broad humanistic movement that has enveloped Jewish modern life, inviting the Jew to leave his long-practiced tradition, his "ghetto" life.

Young Hebrew literature, the "Sifrut Tzeira" of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century realized that this very process of humanization has resulted in a rapid disintegration of the Jewish group, brought assimilation and threatened the survival of the Jewish people.

The difficulty of the conflict, the desire for humanizing Jewish life and the equally compelling desire for Jewish cultural and historical continuation, were recorded magnificently in Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg, the man, the Jew and the writer.

Whether it is Hophni in "Sippurai Hophni Ba-al Dimyon", or Nachman "Hameshugah" in "Le-an", the hero in Feilerberg's writing, is always one and the same himself. The adjectives he attaches to his hero are significant; they intend to remind us that both Hophni and Nachman are Jews deeply rooted in their tradition, no matter what they do and say. For both "Ba-al Dimyon" and "meshugah" signify in Hebrew, since the times of the Bible, men of

spirit, human beings who possess great and unusual moral and intellectual powers and therefore, find themselves always in clash with society.

Feierberg's hero is a man of spirit, an extremist whose life is a continuous struggle with his environment. His is an everlasting fight, for he does not know how to compromise; he will not give up any part of the historical Jew in him for the sake of a new contemporary human being.

Thus, almost inhumanly, both Hophni and Nachman, encumber themselves with a permanent struggle of two world views; an intellectual struggle, an emotional and practical struggle. A personal conflict between father and son, an inner conflict with themselves and an external conflict with the outside world.

But their combat is a Jewish combat. Feierberg's hero has never left Beit-Hamidrash. In the story "Leil Aviv" he looks at the outside world but he himself remains "in the street", within the boundaries of tradition. Even when he turns to non-belief, he is strangely enough a Jewish non-believer. It is his temporary non-belief that brings him back to his people and strengthens his faith in the inner powers of Judaism. Realizing that he himself lost in the race against time, when the Zionist solution offered the long desired integration

between humanization of Jewish life and perpetration of Jewish selfhood, he retained this faith and was convinced that the following generations will victoriously resolve his problems.

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