

AVRAHAM YAARI

THE GOODLY HERITAGE

*Memoirs describing the life of the Jewish community
of Eretz Yisrael from the seventeenth
to the twentieth centuries*

Abridged and translated by

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Yea I have a goodly heritage.

Psalm 16, 6

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THIS BOOK is an adaptation of Mr. Avraham Yaari's *Zikhronot Eretz Yisrael*. The original Hebrew version is in two volumes and runs to over 1,200 pages. The reduction of this considerable amount of material to the compass of one medium-sized volume in English was accomplished in two ways: by selection and abridgment. The memoirs included in the English version were chosen for their intrinsic interest and for the light they shed upon the periods they illustrate. The original contains material covering the two decades after the First World War, but the English version stops short at 1920. The consideration which prompted the translator here was to present as extensive a picture as possible of the war and its aftermath,—a period that has so far been given scant treatment in English. The other material omitted was largely of a supplementary character, and probably of less interest to the English than to the Hebrew reader.

Selection alone, however, was not sufficient to reduce the book to manageable proportions, and so recourse was had to abridgment. Much of the material is therefore given in condensed form; but wherever condensation would have impaired the descriptive or dramatic qualities of the narrative, or deprived it of its characteristic flavour, the original has been allowed to stand. Thus the story of Trumpeldor's last days, for instance, has been given with a minimum of condensation. The abridged passages and the full text of the original are clearly differentiated by means of type and layout. Brief explanatory notes, giving the essential historical background, are embodied in the text.

I. S.

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MEDIEVAL PALESTINE

ACCORDING to the historians, the Middle Ages ended in the 15th century. In Palestine, however, as in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, they can be said to have persisted till well into the 19th. Lane's book, 'Modern Egyptians', written in 1836, describes a largely medieval way of life, and is read by students of Arab history who want to gain an insight into the manners and customs of the Arabs in the Middle Ages. The Turks, who ruled the country from 1517 to 1917, were not interested in the development or prosperity of their possessions, and thwarted attempts to achieve progress on the part of their subject peoples. Rapacious governors who regarded their task as being solely to maintain the Sultan's rule and keep the Imperial coffers full, were sent out to the provinces. In other respects they did as they pleased. The Sultan, living in luxurious refinement in Constantinople (Istamboul) was not concerned with the welfare of his Imperial subjects as near at hand as Syria and Palestine. He did not care how his governors obtained money, as long as it flowed in. They could, and sometimes did, quarrel among themselves, even to the extent of fighting pitched battles or laying siege to cities. There was no regular or controlled system of taxation: the governors were required to furnish certain sums; and if they extorted additional amounts and thereby made a profit, that was their own affair. Their only other task was to maintain order and security of a rudimentary nature (not even to the extent of guaranteeing the safety of wayfarers). How

they did it, again, was their business, and if the exercise of authority entailed the grinding down of a particular section of the population, there was no one to stay their hand. Thus the inhabitants of Turkey's Imperial territories lived, or died, in accordance with the whims and caprices of petty tyrants whose title to office was sometimes no greater qualification than a promise to furnish a larger sum in taxes than was offered by a rival aspirant.

The provincial administration, moreover, was composed of men without training, chosen by nepotism, often endowed with no more than an ability to read and write. Their treatment of the native population was rough, and sometimes brutal. Their inadequate wages were frequently delayed or unpaid, so that bribery—the notorious baksheesh—was the mainstay of their income. Indeed, the performance of any service had its price in baksheesh, on a sliding scale according to the rank of the official. There were laws—the Muslim code, no longer adapted to conditions in a fast-changing world, but laws nevertheless—and a system of judicature. But any law could be circumvented, any evidence altered or suppressed, any case adjudicated as desired, by an appropriate greasing of palms. Justice was beyond the reach of the poor. There were very few public services, such as schools or hospitals. Disease was widespread, and epidemics periodic. Lawlessness was rife, and the individual insecure. Even as late as the middle of the 19th century the gates of Jerusalem were closed at dusk to keep out lurking marauders.

In circumstances like these the small Yishuv (Jewish community of Palestine) lived in a more or less continual state of insecurity and fear. Travel was

fraught with danger (there were only rough tracks negotiable by donkeys or other animals: it was not until 1869 that a carriage road was laid between Jerusalem and Jaffa). These conditions—especially the corruption and inefficiency of the Administration—continued to an extent up to the end of Turkish rule in Palestine in 1917–18. They explain some of the otherwise inexplicable features of many of the subsequent chapters. Small wonder that Turkey, though a Muslim power, was cordially hated by the oppressed Arab population of the Ottoman Empire. But at the same time, it can be remarked in passing, the modern Arab States carved out of Turkey's Imperial Provinces have inherited no small share of her legacy of administrative corruption and inefficiency.

The Jews of Palestine generally kept to themselves, living in their own narrow quarters in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron—the four 'Holy Cities'. They led a closed existence of their own, pursuing the study of the Holy Law, and seldom venturing abroad. Though subjected throughout to severe disabilities, restrictions and humiliations, they were as a rule not seriously molested. But on occasion they found themselves the objects of particular and unwelcome attention, of which the following account by an anonymous resident of Jerusalem, is an instance.

A TYRANT IN JERUSALEM

It was in the third year of the reign of Sultan Murad (1625), our narrator relates, and Muhammad Pasha was Governor of Jerusalem.

The City of our God contained more of our people than at any time since the Jews were banished from their country. Many Jews came daily to live in the

City, apart from those coming to pray at the Western Wall... Moreover, they brought with them bountiful gifts of money to strengthen the Jews of Jerusalem. It was reported in all countries that we were dwelling in peace and security. Many of us bought houses and fields and rebuilt the ruins, and aged men and women sat in the streets of Jerusalem, and the thoroughfares of the City were thronged with boys and girls... The teaching of the Holy Law prospered, and many houses of study stood open to all who sought to engage in the labour of Heaven. The leaders of the community provided the students with their daily needs. All the poor were relieved of their wants...

This idyllic state of affairs, however, was to be rudely disturbed. A wicked man, blind in one eye, named Muhammad ibn-Faroukh, bought the governorship of Jerusalem from the Pasha of Damascus¹ for a stipulated period. He arrived in Jerusalem with 300 mercenaries and began to oppress the population, Muslims and Christians as well as Jews. No one was allowed to leave the city. The wealthy were forced to part with large sums of money. So great was the outcry against his exactions that the *qadi* (judge) went to him, trying first persuasion and then reproof. Ibn Faroukh's reply was to threaten to kill him. A new *qadi* was then appointed in his place.

¹ There was no clearly defined system of provincial administration at the time. In Syria and Palestine there were two main seats of government—Damascus and Sidon—from which the Provincial Governors or 'Pashas', ruled the territory between them. Under them were subordinate Pashas stationed in the more important towns, such as Jerusalem and Acre. The position of some of the more outlying areas was often indeterminate. They might pass from one Province to the other in accordance with the power of the respective Pashas and local governors.

Ibn-Faroukh's Deputy was his wife's brother, one Ibrahim Agha, whom he instructed to obtain money by any means he saw fit. The latter was not slow to do his bidding, and extorted large sums from all sections of the population. Many sought to flee; but armed guards were posted at the gates to prevent their egress. Our narrator, however, is primarily concerned with the harrowing experiences of his fellow-Jews, of which he is capable of describing only 'one part in a thousand'.

Ibn-Faroukh began to demand large sums from the Jews who, together with the other inhabitants, believed that his rule was too wicked to endure. But their hopes were disappointed. Not only were the Jews made to pay out vast amounts, but they were forced to dig ditches round the City walls. Ibrahim Agha wanted to feather his nest as well, and so he did some extorting on his own account.

The rule of extortion lasted for two years. Time and again the Jews were pressed for large sums; and if they were not prompt in paying, the leaders of the community were thrown into jail, and sometimes made to undergo all the refinements of the Turkish torture-chamber. The arrival of the new *qadi* was greeted with joy by all the inhabitants: surely he would see that justice was done. But ibn-Faroukh bribed him and turned him into his partner in crime. Communal life almost ceased. Some people managed to leave the City; but those who remained went into hiding, especially those who still had any means: the poor were not so likely to be molested.

In the summer of 1625 ibn-Faroukh was appointed to lead the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and he took Ibrahim Agha with him, leaving the latter's brother,

Uthman Agha, in charge. Uthman lulled the population into a sense of false security. He asked for a sum of money, but uttered no threats. Believing that he was not so great a rogue as the absent Governor and his Deputy, the Jews came out of hiding, thronged the market-place and openly went to worship once more. Then, on a Saturday, Uthman surrounded two synagogues and seized fifteen worshippers, for whose release he demanded a huge ransom. The community was seized with fear, and the joy of the Sabbath was marred. Eventually the prisoners were freed after the community made a supreme financial effort.

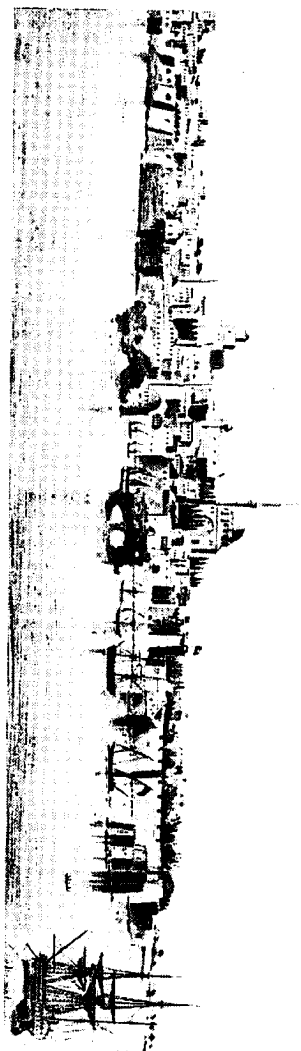
Another money-raising device was Uthman's order to convert a synagogue, not then in use, into shops. This sacrilege was averted by the payment of a large sum; but so poor was the community by then that the money had to be borrowed at interest.

On his return, ibn-Faroukh renewed his exactions, to meet which the Jews had to sell or pledge some of their household chattels. Meanwhile he had seized and occupied the Citadel, removing the captain of the garrison—an act of rebellion. The Pasha of Damascus accordingly sent out a new Governor accompanied by an armed force to take the City. Uthman Agha was again in charge, as his master had gone to placate the Pasha; and he prepared to withstand a siege. He mounted guns, filled the moat round the Citadel, and stopped up many cisterns, so that the townspeople were left thirsty. He seized all the food he could find and brought it to the Citadel. Our narrator continues:

He ordered the guards not to let anyone leave the City. When the Jews went to remove a dead body for burial outside the walls, the cruel soldiers used



Haifa Bay and Mt. Carmel (from an early etching)



Acre in the early Nineteenth Century

to plunge their swords or lances into it, to make sure that it was not a living man seeking to leave the City under pretence of being dead. The people were sore afraid, for a great force had gathered at Ramleh to make war on Uthman. All sought hiding-places in which to conceal their wives and children. There was joy at the thought that the rule of evil was about to end; but there was anxiety lest the place be devastated by the cannon. Yet it was generally agreed that devastation and death were preferable to the City's remaining under the rule of a wicked and heartless man . . .

But the captain of the force stationed in Ramleh, seeing Uthman meant to fight, decided to call off the expedition, leaving the rebel with a sense of even greater security than before. The immediate danger past, he set to work to mulct the Jews with renewed vigour.

The reign of terror in Jerusalem, however, was nearing its close, for the activities of ibn-Faroukh and his accomplices had been brought to the notice of the Sultan, at whose court three influential Jews pressed home the charges against them. The downfall of the rapacious Governor and his knavish accomplices was at hand; and, as not infrequently happens on such occasions, the thieves fell out. Ibn-Faroukh, who came back to Jerusalem to retrieve what he could, learned that Uthman was planning his overthrow. He thereupon killed Uthman—an action which occasioned great rejoicing among the Jews. But, near though the end of his governorship was, he decided to squeeze the impoverished Jews completely dry. He seized two of their number and, to speed up their ransom, had them brought to synagogue, where they were tortured before the eyes of the congregation. So severely were

they handled, that the hardened commander of the troops was moved to intervene on their behalf.

The end of ibn-Faroukh's inglorious governorship came after a dream, in which King David appeared to him and prophesied his death if he should ever close his eyes again in that land. Next morning, he and his myrmidons loaded as much loot as they could on a train of camels, which was sent ahead to Nablus. Ibn-Faroukh slipped out of the City by night, taking with him two Jews whom he had imprisoned and whose ransom had not been paid. When the Jews of Jerusalem awoke next morning, they found that the cloud which had darkened their existence for two years had passed, and that the sun was shining again.

In the morning we rendered thanks to the Almighty in the synagogue, and we praised His name in the Great *Hallel* for all His goodness to us in removing strange worship from our land and driving away from us the wicked foe, ibn-Faroukh. Some of the sages and leaders of the Community went round the City and collected food and gifts for the poor; and there was light and joy for the Jews.

The two Jews carried off by ibn-Faroukh returned safe and sound, and the new Governor was duly installed. The Jews' happiness was complete. But they had been reduced to beggary. All their money and most of their possessions were gone. Towards the end they had been forced to borrow in order to meet the exactions of their oppressors. 'Today', says our narrator, 'we are mortgaged—men, women and children—to the Ishmaelite dwellers of this land'. Throughout the period of ibn-Faroukh's governorship 'we knew no peace or rest: we ate our bread in trembling and

drank our water in anxiety. Even at night we could not sleep . . .’

THE STORY OF THE SIEGE OF TIBERIAS

(Containing an Account of Two Miracles

Wrought by the Lord)

Not all provincial governors were as cruel and grasping as ibn-Faroukh. Indeed, we now go from one extreme to the other, and see something of Jewish life in Tiberias more than a century later under a wise and benevolent ruler. An Arab Sheikh, Dhaher al-Umar, had rebelled against the central Administration and established a firm and settled régime over Galilee. A friendship had developed between him and Rabbi Chayim Abulafia, a native of Palestine who had become Rabbi of Izmir (Smyrna). Sheikh Dhaher appreciated how beneficial Jewish settlement would be for the prosperity of his territory, and Rabbi Abulafia, quick to realise the opportunity presented by the enforcement of security, proceeded (in 1740) to re-establish the Jewish Community of Tiberias, which had ceased to exist seventy years before. The following is an enthralling account by Rabbi Yaakov Beirav (Rabbi Abulafia's son-in-law) of the vicissitudes the people of Tiberias underwent as a result of the designs of a jealous Turkish Pasha in 1742.

Beirav begins by describing the former state of insecurity in the land. The roads were so unsafe that travellers had to proceed armed and in parties of fifty. But under Sheikh Dhaher solitary wayfarers could go about in safety carrying money. (That such a fact should be deemed worthy of remark is in itself an indication of conditions in the Ottoman Empire.)

The Sheikh, learning that Rabbi Abulafia intended

returning to the Holy Land, sent him letter after letter entreating him to re-establish the Jewish Community of Tiberias and gave him a cordial welcome on his arrival. Rabbi Abulafia built houses and courtyards, a synagogue 'of unrivalled splendour in all Palestine', a fine bath-house, shops and a press for sesame oil. He caused roads to be made and fields and vineyards to be planted. He enjoyed great esteem, 'and all inhabitants of Tiberias were happy and contented, for the land was quiet and there was no cause for fear'.

On the 22nd August, 1742, however, Rabbi Abulafia received a letter from two Jewish friends employed in the counting-house of the Governor of Damascus, Suleiman Pasha. They told him that Suleiman meant to come to Tiberias, destroy the town, and bring back the head of Sheikh Dhaher. He was preparing artillery which fired shells capable of killing 20 men at a distance of six miles. It would therefore be advisable for the Jews to quit the town and take their valuables with them.

Thereupon Rabbi Abulafia went to see Sheikh Dhaher, who had heard rumours of a like nature. But the latter did not attach great importance to them, one of his reasons being that Tiberias lay in the province of Sidon, not of Damascus, and that he paid the taxes due from him promptly and faithfully. He thought that the letter was merely an artifice to make him buy off Suleiman Pasha. The two Jews in Damascus wrote again to describe the Pasha's preparations; but Sheikh Dhaher discounted the gravity of the situation, for he had received a reassuring message from the Pasha of Sidon permitting him to fight if attacked. He therefore bade the inhabitants of the villages around Tiberias stay where they were.

On the 4th September Suleiman's expedition was reported to have set forth, and Sheikh Dhaher proceeded to fortify a tower about a mile from the town. On seeing these warlike preparations the Jews grew anxious, and proposed to Rabbi Abulafia that they go to Safed or Acre for safety. But the aged Rabbi upbraided them. He himself would not leave the Holy City and the synagogue and quarter he had built with so much effort. For the Jews to leave would be a great insult to the Sheikh, and would occasion unending hatred and enmity. If they left, moreover, the inhabitants would surely plunder and destroy their homes. Their defection would also weaken the spirit of the townspeople. In any event, he was too old to withstand the rigours of the journey. Better to remain in Tiberias and trust in the Almighty. Whereupon he and his followers repaired next day to the cave of Rabbi Chiyya and his sons, where several illustrious sages lie buried, and prayed and wept and sounded the ram's horn and besought God to have mercy.

It was not until the Pasha's forces were near the city that Sheikh Dhaher was persuaded of his aggressive intentions and made dispositions for defence. Two days later the advancing army encamped within sight of Tiberias. Sheikh Dhaher regretted that he had relied on the assurances of the Pasha of Sidon, and that he had not brought in the inhabitants of the outlying villages, who were exposed to the ravages of the invading soldiery. The defending force consisted of 600 swordsmen and bowmen, and another 400 indifferent warriors. This force was divided into four parts. One was assigned to the tower, another to man the city walls, and the other two to guard the waterfront on the Sea of Galilee. That same day, an envoy came

from Sidon to tell the Sheikh that if Suleiman Pasha besieged the city, he was at liberty to go out and kill him. The envoy remained in the city for fear of being killed if he left. The Sheikh then sent word to his brother, Said, who held a fortified post not far off, to assemble a large force of bedouin to come to his aid, should need arise. Said did as bidden; and the Sheikh was able to reassure his people that they did not stand alone.

On Saturday, the 8th September, Suleiman Pasha attacked the tower; but a cannon-ball killed fourteen of his own men, upon which he withdrew his troops to a distance. This propitious beginning put heart into the men of Tiberias.

The same evening Suleiman began to bombard the city with his ordnance; and although he fired some 200 rounds—each ball was capable of destroying several houses—no damage or casualties were sustained. Most of the balls fell into the lake, or passed over the houses and buried themselves in the streets, which were of earth; and the children dug them out and brought them to the Sheikh, who gave them money. Some bombshells burst in the air, but without causing damage. People walked about the streets freely. Although wood was spread out to dry on most of the roofs, or booths erected on them, no fires were started. Some of the bombshells fell in the yard of Rabbi Abulafia's house. Several missiles which fell in the Jewish quarter were later displayed in the Rabbi's house 'that the people of Israel and pilgrims might know the mercies of the Lord'.

After a fortnight's ineffectual bombardment, the Sheikh thought that Suleiman, on seeing that God was with the people of Tiberias, would be placated

by the token of humility and depart if offered a handsome gift. His reasoning, says Beirav, met with the approval of his officers and counsellors, who cried:

'Thy words are sweeter than honey and syrup'. Thereupon the Sheikh sent the aged wife of his father², who had a ready tongue, to speak to the Pasha. For it is the custom of the Arabs, when beseeching something of a great man, to send their message by a wise woman.

Accordingly the old lady went to Suleiman's camp with a horse of great worth, and the townspeople watched anxiously from the walls for her return. She came back without the horse, and before she reached the city Suleiman's soldiers began shooting again. Suleiman had received the gift, and told her that he would not depart before taking the Sheikh's head and razing the city walls. If the city did not give in, he would storm it and put the entire population to the sword. The inhabitants were all downcast on hearing this, but the Sheikh rallied their spirits. He had done as he had, to show that he was not wanting in respect for the Sultan's representative, but now he was free to act and would call in his brother's men. 'Whereupon the heart of the people was strengthened'.

The Sheikh then bade Said send word to the Pasha of Sidon to make a show of force against Suleiman, whereupon he (Said) should attack his army. This would prevent the Sheikh from being accused of rebelling against a Pasha of the Sultan, and would also afford proof of the Pasha of Sidon's good faith. But it soon became clear that the two Pashas had made a compact, and so the Sheikh did not send for

² Presumably his father had taken more than one wife, so that the lady was not Sheikh Dhaher's mother.

Said's troops. In the meantime the Jews were alarmed to hear that Suleiman was bringing two very large pieces of ordnance from Haifa. Yet, even when they were employed against the city, the Jews continued to attend worship thrice daily. On the Sabbaths the Rabbi preached words of comfort. In fact they led a normal life and had enough to eat, though food was somewhat dear as there had not been time to bring in provisions from the villages.

Some 1,500 cannon-balls and bombshells were fired at the city; but no building was destroyed and no one killed. Then the Sheikh made another attempt to propitiate Suleiman, and sent his father's wife on a second mission of conciliation, this time with a horse half the value of the previous one. But once again Suleiman accepted the Sheikh's gift and rejected his overtures. During the truce observed for the performance of this embassy, word was brought to Rabbi Abulafia advising him to send his two sons out of the city. This he proudly declined to do.

The townspeople meanwhile grew impatient and remonstrated with the Sheikh: twice his peace offers had been rejected by Suleiman, who was still firmly resolved to kill him. Let him therefore send for his brother's troops and end the matter. The Sheikh, however, refused to yield to pressure. There was as yet no need for such extreme action: his defences and men were intact, and he did not want to incur the odium of killing a man who, in addition to being a Pasha, was due to lead the pilgrimage to Mecca that year. The best policy was to repulse direct onslaughts, and not to sally forth to attack Suleiman's army. 'Whereupon all the people marvelled at the Sheikh's sagacity and foresight.'

Seeing that the bombardment was of no avail, Suleiman blocked all the approaches to the city, by land and water, in the hope of starving it into submission. He posted guards at the gates of Acre, to prevent help being sent from that quarter, and launched two boats on the lake to patrol the shore. But, despite these precautions, the people of Acre, who were friendly disposed towards the Sheikh, sent him supplies by secret ways under cover of night. Nor did the second device avail, for the Sheikh had much larger boats than Suleiman, and when he launched them the smaller vessels fled.

Matters had now reached a deadlock: the Sheikh would not yield, and Suleiman could not force him to. Suleiman's officers therefore suggested that the Sheikh despatch his father's wife on yet another mission of peace. The Sheikh complied, and sent a third gift-horse, though of lesser value than on the previous occasion. But Suleiman's conditions were still unacceptable: the town must be destroyed, and his forces must march through Tiberias. The Sheikh, too shrewd to place himself at the mercy of his enemy in this way, countered by offering to demolish a few stones of the tower and to allow ten of Suleiman's soldiers to march through the city as a symbolic act of submission. Suleiman, however, remained adamant.

The latter events recorded by Beirav took place during the season of the High Festivals, and the Jews went to prayer and observed all the ritual of those solemn occasions. One thing, however, was lacking: the *arbaa minim*³ for the benedictions on the Feast of Tabernacles. For out of the four, only the palm

³ Citron, palm leaf, and sprigs of willow and myrtle.

grew in Tiberias. Anxiety increased as the Feast progressed and the ceremonial appurtenances failed to appear. Then, on the day before the end of the Feast, a Jew took advantage of the truce observed in connection with the peace talks to cross the lines into Tiberias. Seeing the position there, he had the missing three 'varieties' sent in, and the benedictions were duly pronounced. 'There was great rejoicing', says Beirav. 'So great was their joy that the people wept in ecstasy at performing the precept. Fortunate are Israel!'

Following the breakdown of the negotiations, Suleiman renewed the assault. This time he advanced with scaling-ladders and used diversionary tactics. But the attack was repulsed, and there was great rejoicing among the townspeople.

However, Suleiman remained undaunted. He brought from Acre an even larger cannon than any he had used in the hope of destroying the tower. But once again the wily Sheikh was equal to the occasion. He built an inner wall to reinforce the tower, so that the cannon-balls had a negligible effect. In rage and mortification Suleiman turned his artillery on the city again, but with no more harmful results than on previous occasions. His next device was to dig a tunnel to undermine the city wall. The townspeople, seeing what was going forward, were dismayed. But Sheikh Dhaher countered this stratagem with one equally ingenious. He, too, caused a tunnel to be made near the spot chosen by the enemy, and his men, emerging on the outside of the wall, dug trenches from which they harassed the enemy's engineers.

Winter had come, bringing heavy rain and cold, which depressed the spirits of the besieging forces,

some of whom deserted. Yet Suleiman would not raise the siege. His commanders, however, were anxious to end the issue, and proposed that Sheikh Dhaher send yet another peace mission. After all his humiliations the Sheikh was disinclined to do so, but finally consented to send his brother, Sheikh Yusuf, after being given an important hostage to secure his safety. He also sent a handsome gift of ten camels. This time, too, the talks were fruitless, though Suleiman's demands had now become largely monetary. The season of the Mecca pilgrimage was at hand; but Suleiman tarried a little longer, for he had faith in the efficacy of his tunnel, which he ordered to be made ready in fifteen days. After five days' digging, the overseer took measurements and found that no progress had been made and that the tunnel was not running straight. Clearly, the Jews inside the city had cast a spell! The Pasha, acting on the overseer's suggestion, thereupon seized ten Jews in Safed and put them to work digging; for the Jewish spell would be ineffectual against Jews, and thus the work might go forward unhindered. One of the unfortunate Jews offered to buy himself out of the back-breaking task, but this time the all-powerful baksheesh was of no avail. Yet, despite this subtle ruse, the tunnel would not run straight, and it was not ready on the appointed day.

Offensive operations now stopped, and the Sheikh took advantage of the Great Feast, which follows the fasting month of Ramadhan, to send the Pasha a holiday gift. This greatly impressed the Pasha's commander with the Sheikh's sagacity, and negotiations were reopened. Even now Suleiman's demands were exorbitant; but he had to leave for the pilgrimage,

and so hostilities were suspended and hostages exchanged as a guarantee of good faith on either side. The Jews who had been forced to dig the tunnel went into the city and gave the latest news from Safed, from which Tiberias had been cut off for three months. Safed had meanwhile been ravaged by a plague, which had killed many Jews and must surely have spread to Tiberias, but for the siege. This was interpreted as a sign of God's grace—as were the Pasha's repeated but unavailing attempts to destroy the city—'that all peoples might know that no nation rules in Tiberias, the holy territory which is the centre of the Land of Israel'. It was also God's will that the Sheikh had refused to believe in the imminence of danger and so had not brought the inhabitants of the countryside into the city. For the possession of a larger body of men would have encouraged him to go out and kill the Pasha, instead of which a tiny force had miraculously held out against a besieging army.

Suleiman and his army decamped on Saturday, the 1st December, 1742, eighty-five days after the siege had begun. A festive service of thanksgiving was held in the synagogue, and Rabbi Abulafia preached on the significance of the miracle that had been wrought. It was decided to observe the anniversary of that day (the 4th Kislev) as a day of rejoicing, like the Feast of Purim, which commemorates the downfall of Haman.

Matters might have rested there; but Suleiman's failure to reduce Tiberias had made him a laughing-stock, while Sheikh Dhaher had won a glowing reputation. He therefore decided to renew the onslaught against the city after his return from the pilgrimage. On the 4th July, 1743, news reached Tiberias that

Suleiman was preparing to march again. Many of the townspeople fled, but a group of Jews remained behind with Rabbi Abulafia, who felt so unafraid that he did not even lay in a stock of food.

This time Suleiman's army was larger and his preparations more complete. He advanced to Lubia, a village on a height near Tiberias on the 23rd August, and alarm spread in the town. But next day, Saturday, the aged Rabbi preached on comforting texts to his flock, taking as his theme that mortal man is not to be feared.

On the Sunday word was brought that Suleiman had been taken sick, and two days later that he had died. The troops were withdrawn to Damascus, and once again there was great rejoicing. The Jews of Tiberias, Beirav concludes his narrative, decided to observe the day of Suleiman's death (7th Elul) as a festival, for this was an even greater miracle than the first.

CHAPTER II

THE DARKEST HOUR

THE HOUR before dawn is said to be the darkest, and so it was with the history of the Jews in Palestine. The medieval pall of gloom seemed to settle more heavily with the passage of time, until the establishment of foreign consulates and the introduction of Capitulations (from 1838) gradually introduced a minimum degree of security for foreign nationals (most of whom were Jews). From that time, too, more Jews came into the country and the first stirrings of a new spirit began to be manifest. Some sem-

blance of method and orderliness was also introduced into the Turkish Administration, though it continued to be hopelessly corrupt, badly run, and oblivious of the welfare of the country and its inhabitants. In particular, it displayed hostility towards Jewish settlement; but at least conditions were established that made settlement possible, even if it had to contend with immense difficulties at every turn.

Matters were to get worse before they improved. In 1825, for instance, the Pasha of Acre besieged Jerusalem and took the city after a bombardment. In 1831 Muhammad Ali, the man who laid the foundations of modern Egypt, conquered Palestine and held it for several years. In 1834 the Arab *fellahin* (peasants) rose up against Egyptian rule, and excesses were committed in which the Jews of Safed and Hebron suffered especially severely. In 1837, nature took a hand, and a violent earthquake rocked Safed, occasioning great loss of life among the Jewish inhabitants. Apart from major upheavals, life for the Jews of Palestine was made increasingly difficult to bear. An Anglican clergyman, W. B. Lewis, describing the situation in 1824, tells how any Arab villager, however humble, could stop a Jew in the streets of Jerusalem and claim money from him (the Jew's testimony that he was not indebted would not carry weight against a Muslim).

But the grave disabilities under which the Jews lived and suffered did not deter their brethren elsewhere from exchanging the comparative security of the Diaspora for the rigours of the Holy Land. The last quarter of the 18th century saw a new influx of Jews. First came the *Chassidim*, and then, not to be outdone, their opponents the *Mitnagdim* or *Peru-*

shim (notably the disciples of Rabbi Elijah, *Gaon* of Vilna). The growing security for travellers in Europe and improved means of communications after the Napoleonic wars were also factors responsible for the growth in the number of Jews setting out for the Holy Land.

The prospect that greeted the new immigrants was not inviting. Safed lay half-ruined, as the result of an earthquake in 1759. Tiberias had only a small community of *Sepharadim* (South European and Near Eastern Jews). Jerusalem had been barred to *Ashkenazim* (Jews from Central and Eastern Europe) from 1723. There was no source of livelihood for these people, so that they had to subsist on the charitable contributions of Jewish communities in Europe, which arrived at uncertain intervals and did not suffice when they did arrive, for the recipients had to pay heavy taxes or meet the extortionate demands of governors; or else they had to take loans at high interest because their allowances were in arrears. Something of the sufferings the immigrants underwent, and of the fortitude with which they bore them, is told in the following pages.

ABDULLAH, PASHA OF ACRE

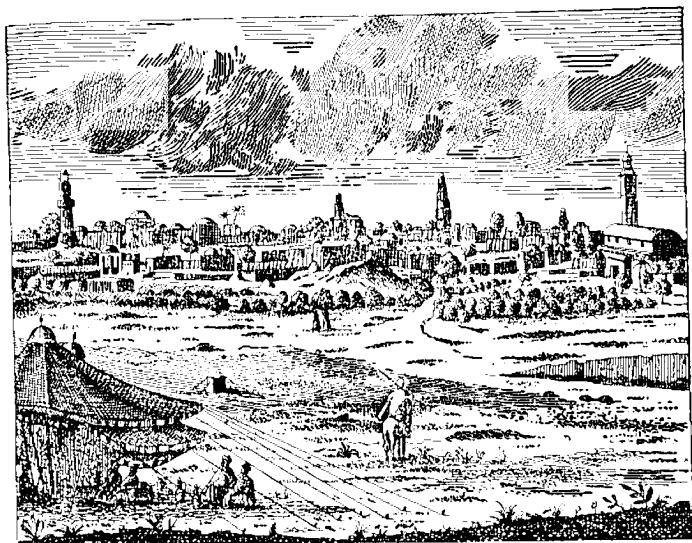
The background, it must be remembered, had not changed in the meantime. Even as late as 1825—ten years after Waterloo—Palestine was in as great a state of anarchy as at the time of ibn-Faroukh's nightmare régime in Jerusalem exactly two centuries earlier.

In 1804, according to contemporary accounts set down later by Rabbi Yehosef Schwartz, of Jerusalem, one Suleiman Pasha was appointed Governor of Acre.

His right-hand man was a Jew, Rabbi Chayim Farchi, who had acquired a considerable degree of power and gained renown as a wise administrator in Damascus and Acre, and who had successfully interceded for the Jews of Palestine and secured their exemption from taxes. Farchi brought up Abdullah, the Pasha's little son, in his own home, and taught him wisdom and statecraft. In 1819 Suleiman died, and Farchi had Abdullah appointed Governor in his stead. For a time all went well, and the Governor did the bidding of his loving mentor. But a rebuke over some wrongful action made him realise that he would not enjoy freedom of action as long as Farchi was there to restrain him. He therefore trumped up a charge against him and had him strangled.

Freed from restraint, Abdullah proceeded to give rein to his lusts and ambitions. He reimposed the taxes on the Jews and made them pay the arrears for the period of their exemption. So exorbitant were his demands upon the Jews of Safed that they had to sell their clothes to meet them. Abdullah maintained his despotic rule until 1832, when Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's son, besieged Acre with his Egyptian troops and took him prisoner.

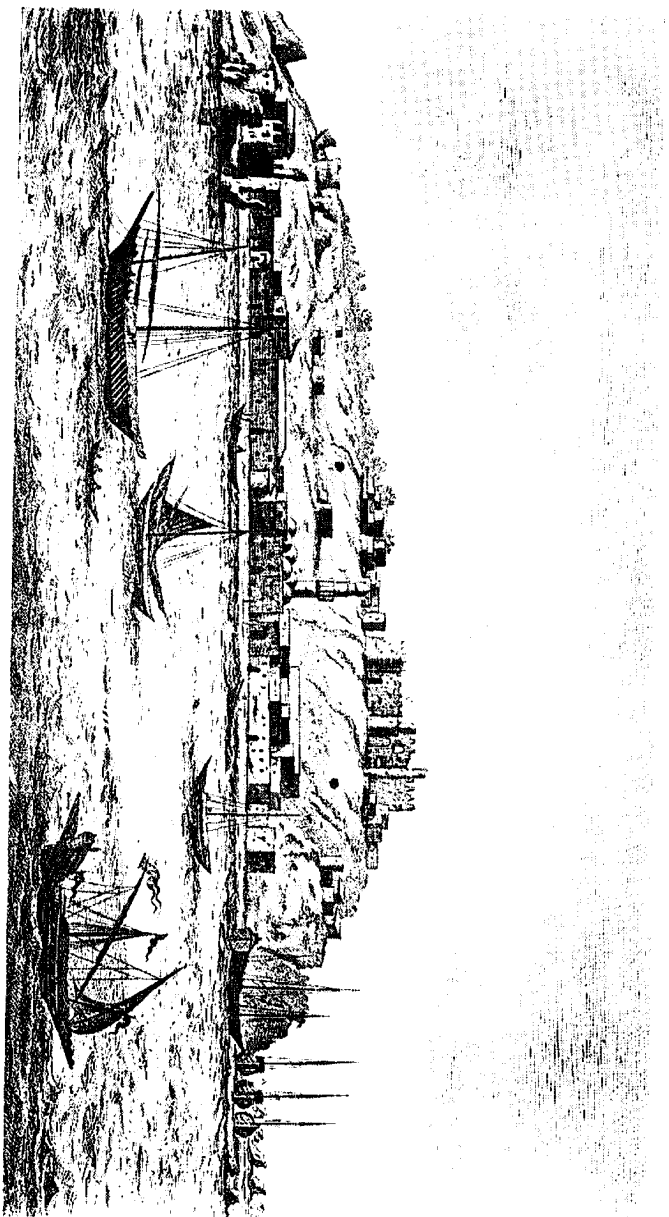
In September, 1825, Abdullah brought an army to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Elyashar (1817-1906), who eventually became Chief Rabbi of the *Sepharadim*, (with the title *Rishon Letzion*), describes what happened. The besieging forces bombarded the city at regular intervals, anticipating by over a century the action of another Abdullah. The bombardment did some damage; and Rabbi Raphael Abulafia was burned in the leg by a cannon ball as he was eating in his *succa*.



Ramleh in the Seventeenth Century



Tiberias in the Seventeenth Century



Jaffa in the Seventeenth Century

On the 2nd November, Abdullah entered the city and imposed taxes on the Jewish inhabitants, though he subsequently moderated his attitude towards them. His rule over Jerusalem lasted until its capture in 1831 by the Egyptian forces of Muhammad Ali,

who wrought fearful judgments upon all wicked men, and [caused] fear and trembling to fall upon everyone, so that a little girl could take the road carrying gold coins in her hand, and no one would address or molest her.

In May, 1834, the *fellahin*, together with the townspeople of Jerusalem, Hebron and Nablus, conspired to revolt against the Egyptian régime, as they objected to enforced military service. Seeing the growing unrest, the Governor of Jerusalem closed the gates and sent word to Muhammad Ali. But some Arabs penetrated into the city through the sewer leading to the village of Silwan (Biblical Siloam), hard by the City wall, and let in their allies. The garrison shut itself up in the Citadel (known in Hebrew as the Tower of David), until a force under Ibrahim Pasha re-established Egyptian supremacy. Ibrahim also entered Hebron, where many of his soldiers had been killed by the rebels. Here he allowed his men to run wild for three days.

THE PERUSHIM AND THEIR SUFFERINGS
Following the immigration of *Chassidim* from Eastern Europe at the end of the 18th century, came their opponents, the *Perushim* (literally, 'Those Apart'). The first of them was Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Shklow, who arrived in 1808. He went first to Tiberias and then to Safed; but in neither did he find a congenial congregation, since the ritual observed there differed from his own. In 1810 two more rabbis of the

sect of the *Gaon's* followers, including Rabbi Israel of Shklow, the author of the memoir from which this account is taken, came to Safed. This was the situation there as he describes it:

I found here some 40 householders, in all 150 precious souls. They were learned students of the Law, for long worshippers of the Lord and whole in their fear of Him, and they lived in very crowded dwellings. The Rabbi (Menachem Mendel) of blessed memory was their leader and provider, and he maintained them by obtaining loans, solely to sustain life, that they might sit over the Law . . .

Means were then discussed for putting the affairs of the community on a sounder footing, and Rabbi Israel was charged with the task of going to Europe and organising a regular flow of contributions from the parent community in Lithuania. He describes his reluctant consent to undertake the mission:

Although this heavy burden of leaving the Holy Land, to which I have become attached through great suffering and yearning like a thirsty man to water, is as the weight of a rock and the burden of a load of sand; although the Holy Land is dear and sweet to me above all, the plea of the scholars presses down upon me, and I see that their necessity is dire: for the scholars of our community, that have come to the Land of Israel and are without food and sustenance, are many.

Rabbi Israel, accompanied by another rabbi, accordingly set forth, on the 21st March, 1810. Owing to the war between Russia and Turkey, he had to take the overland route, and finally arrived at his destination after many adventures and narrow escapes. He spent some months in Europe, also visiting Warsaw

by invitation. His mission was successful, and one of the things he contrived to do was to come to an arrangement whereby both the *Chassidim* and their opponents in Safed received contributions from Poland. Napoleon's invasion of Russia made it necessary for him to return to Palestine, which he reached in 1813.

Following Rabbi Israel's return, a plague broke out in Acre and spread to Safed. 'And', says Rabbi Israel, 'we were sojourners: we knew nothing about quarantine and taking precautions'. He, Rabbi Menàchem Mendel, and many others fled from Safed to Jerusalem and elsewhere to escape the pestilence. On the way Rabbi Israel lost his wife and children: only one daughter survived. His parents, who had remained in Safed, died there. He then returned to find that 'the old men and scholars had been carried off in droves'. Nevertheless, he addressed himself to the task of rebuilding the community, and re-married. A new epidemic came, but though struck down he recovered and resumed control of the community's finances. This was no easy task, as their allowances had not been arriving regularly owing to the dislocation caused by the plague, and it had become necessary to borrow. Then, in 1819, came the murder of Chayim Farchi, and the Jews were left without a protector. The day after, a Saturday, all the Jewish males of Safed were taken to the citadel for their failure to pay taxes for several years. They were set at liberty after being ordered to pay ten years' arrears. Fortunately, a Russian Minister was visiting Palestine at the time and was moved to intercede on their behalf. As a result, the amount payable was greatly reduced. When, however, another impost was levied on the Safed Jews at a later date, they were forced to pay.

In 1825-26 the plague again broke out in Safed. But by now Rabbi Israel was more experienced in dealing with the visitation and he put all the members of his congregation in quarantine by making them stay at home. Those who had no suitable place he sent to the near-by village of Pekiin, which was free of the plague. He ends his story:

May it be recorded in my favour in the Hereafter that I was the cause of saving precious souls. Of the communities of the *Sepharadim* and *Chassidim* there were 300 missing in each, God preserve us! But of our own community there were no more than ten or twelve losses, blessed be the Lord, and they included women and children who had not heeded my warning. The plague was severe, both here and in Jerusalem, but with God's help our whole community was safe.

Elsewhere, Rabbi Israel describes how he and his daughter were left alone, out of a large and thriving family, in Jerusalem following the earlier plague:

My friends and well-wishers kept away from me. I would lie upon the roof weeping, prostrating myself and imploring the compassion of our Father in Heaven. My virtuous daughter Sheindel (may she live!), who was a child at the time, was also sick and lay near me. My cheeks were wet with tears, and the water gushed from my eyes at the thought of all I had undergone; and my woe was great as the sea. In Holy Galilee there passed away droves of true men, great and pious members of our band. From the depth of my heart I prayed to God . . .

Emulating the example of Jacob, he took a vow. If he survived his ordeal, he would compile a book on

the Order of Seeds (dealing with agricultural laws) of the Jerusalem Talmud according to the system of interpretation of the *Gaon* of Vilna. However, he did not carry out his intention for some time, until, in 1825 several houses in Safed caved in during a torrential downpour; and though the same fate overtook his own, his family was safe. He then 'girded up his loins like a man' and compiled his book, which is known as *Pe'at Hashulchan*.

THE FIRST ASHKENAZIM IN JERUSALEM

An Anglican clergyman, W. B. Lewis, whom we have already mentioned, paints a very gloomy picture of Jerusalem in 1824. Both Christians and Jews groaned under the tyrant's heel, but the ones to suffer most were the disciples of the *Gaon* of Vilna, whose settlement there dated back to 1815, when Rabbi Menachem Mendel took up his abode in the Holy City (*Ashkenazim* had been forbidden to dwell there for nearly a century). They were helpless: there were no consuls on the spot to protect them, and the foreign envoys in Constantinople were too far off to help. True, there were laws; but recourse to them was unavailing. Jews were often seized and made to perform annual labour without pay. They might have a small coin flung at them as a reward, but if they were to expostulate they would be threatened with the whip and torture. For instance, a Jewish metal-engraver was once seized in the street by a Turk and ordered to make a carving on stone. The Jew's protestations that he did not know how to do so were unavailing: the Turk drew his sword and wounded the Jew, but no one came to his rescue.

Lewis' description of the way in which money was extorted from the Jews takes us back to the days of ibn-Faroukh: exorbitant sums were demanded, hostages were taken, and when payment was not effected promptly, torture followed. Jews were liable to be robbed whenever they ventured outside their homes. The men who set upon them were not professional robbers or bedouin, but their neighbours among whom they dwelt.

On more than one occasion Lewis stood between Jews and their oppressors, and used his influence with the *qadi*, who professed feelings of friendship for him. But his conviction grew that the situation could be improved only by the constant presence on the spot of a consular representative who would have the welfare of the Jews at heart. As a supreme instance of the prevailing anarchy, Lewis cites the story of Rabbi Menachem Mendel, to whose reputation for piety and learning he pays due tribute. One night the venerable rabbi was roused by soldiers, on the pretext that his street door was open contrary to law. The next day he was dragged before the Pasha, who flung him into jail and threatened him with torture unless he paid an enormous sum. The ransom of Rabbi Menachem Mendel, and of three other Jews seized at the same time on a similar pretext, was defrayed by the poverty-stricken community, who had to sell their very garments to raise the amount required.

Rabbi Aryeh Neeman, one of the first ten *Ashkenazi* Jews to settle in Jerusalem, adds more examples of the lawlessness that reigned there. Thus, if a Muslim merchant had wares he could not sell, he would dump them at the house of a Jew and then claim

their price: the word of a Jew would never be taken against that of a True Believer. A similar practice was followed by the water-sellers of the nearby village of Silwan if business was not brisk.

THE DISASTERS OF 1834 AND 1837

The following pages describe the disasters that overtook the Jews of Safed, Hebron and Tiberias in the *fellah* revolt of 1834 and the great earthquake of 1837. The writer is Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kaminetz, who was born about 1800 and came to live in Safed in 1833, where he joined the followers of the *Gaon* of Vilna.¹ Rabbi Menachem Mendel's tale is harrowing. On arriving in Safad, he found that a heavy snowfall the winter before had caused great damage to buildings. This was followed in the autumn by a countrywide epidemic of plague which was particularly severe in Jerusalem. On the 24th May, 1834, there were two earthquakes in Safed.

The tremors grew in intensity. We were therefore compelled to leave our homes and run outside; for there is no fear in the open, but it is death to remain indoors. The walls were rent asunder and fell upon those near them.

Revolt broke out on the 15th June, 1834. The Arab villagers, together with the townspeople, armed themselves and attacked the Jews, raping their women and destroying their synagogues. The riots in Safed went on for 33 days, but in Jerusalem, Hebron and Tiberias they ended sooner. The cause the writer assigns to the revolt was the order of Muhammad Ali (whose Egyptian forces had occupied the country

¹ He later settled in Jerusalem and opened the first hotel for Jewish visitors, dying there in 1873.

in 1831) for the recruitment of local Arabs to the army, which was keenly resented. The inhabitants of Nablus began the revolt and were joined by the *fellahin* of the surrounding countryside. Their purpose was to seize Jerusalem, to which they gained access through underground passages. The garrison were too few to withstand the invaders and locked themselves up, while the mob despoiled the city. There was a scarcity of water, 'and the Jews were in great peril'. Ibrahim Pasha (Muhammad Ali's son and general) came to restore order, but, his forces being too few, he retired.

The Arabs of Safed decided to emulate the example of the inhabitants of Nablus and Jerusalem and secured the complicity of the Governor of the town. The mob set upon the Jews, stripped them and drove them from their homes. The writer, together with Rabbi Israel of Shklow and other members of the community of *Perushim*, many of them bruised and wounded, took refuge in their synagogue, where they prayed and bewailed their lot. The rioters came to the synagogue and wanted to kill Rabbi Israel, but he succeeded in buying his life from them.

As the synagogue afforded no security, the Jews who had taken refuge there left it and went to a spot outside the town called the 'Vineyard'. Sanctuary was found for Rabbi Israel and some of his flock in the near-by Arab village of Ein Zeitun (in Hebrew, Ein Zeitim). A worse fate, however, overtook Rabbi Nathan Neta, son of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Shklow. While the others went to the 'Vineyard' for refuge, he had run to a cemetery near at hand and hidden in a cave.

There the rioters found him and put out one of his eyes. He suffered great agony. We saw it all

from where we were. Many other Jews, all wounded and bleeding, came to join us in our hiding-place.

The *Chassidim* had meanwhile secured the protection of the *qadi* of Safed by making over to him their communal funds. The *Perushim* hoped to join them, and found an Arab who agreed to take them to the *Chassidim*. They all set out; but their Arab intermediary betrayed them, and he and some accomplices fell upon them and took all they could find. In despair the unfortunate Jews went back into Safed, where they were greeted by rioters standing on the rooftops brandishing their weapons and threatening vengeance. The entreaties of the Jews won them their lives, and they left the town with all haste, making their way to an abandoned ruin. But here too, they were to know no rest: the rioters, learning their whereabouts, set out after them, and the hapless Jews had to seek a new refuge. This was another ruin on a hilltop, where they suffered from severe cold and dew at night. That night the rioters killed a *Sepharadi* rabbi who had barricaded himself in a house in Safed. Several Jews had remained in the synagogue of the *Perushim*, including some old men incapable of running away.

There a great miracle was wrought to Rabbi Moses Montpelier. He had concealed himself in the hollow space beneath the platform on which the *Torah* (Scroll of the Law) is read. The rioters plunged their swords into the space and pierced Rabbi Moses' clothing, but he was unharmed. Several synagogues were completely destroyed... and one was burnt out. All this happened during the same night. They (the rioters) tore up all the Scrolls of the Law that they found.

The rioters destroyed Israel Bek's printing press and all the books, the prayer-shawls and phylacteries on the premises. When Rabbi Israel of Shklow learned of Rabbi Nathan Neta's misfortune, he prevailed upon some of the Arabs of Ein Zeitim to accompany a party of Jews, dressed as Arabs, into Safed to bring out the wounded and retrieve whatever was left. Some 600 souls were assembled that night on Rabbi Menachem Mendel's hilltop. Many had been separated from their families, and there were infants that had not been fed for days.

Next morning two Jews went into the town to find out how the land lay. The Arabs assured them that the rioting was over, on the strength of which several others, including Rabbi Menachem Mendel, ventured down. Despite the assurance of safety, the Rabbi was set upon, but managed to escape. His companion, who had last seen him running away with an Arab at his heels, fled in fear to the house of a Christian ('for the Christians are good men'), where Rabbi Menachem Mendel later rejoined him. But it was not safe to remain at the house of the Christian, and so Rabbi Menachem Mendel and his companion made their way to the courtyard of the *qadi*, where the *Chassidim* and also some *Perushim*, had taken shelter, to the number of about a thousand. A few days later, however, the *qadi* decided that it would not do to have so many Jews thronging his courtyard, and ordered several hundred of them to return to the hilltop ruin. There they stayed for several weeks in constant fear of attack. Among them was Rabbi Abraham Ber, head of the *Chassidic* community of Safed, who fed them at his expense. Their food consisted of two small Arab cakes of bread a day each, supplemented by

three onions on the Sabbath. Rabbi Abraham's generosity was all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the rioters had taken all his belongings, down to his last shirt, so that a shirt had to be sent to him from Tiberias.

Meanwhile Rabbi Menachem Mendel was consumed with anxiety concerning the Scrolls of the Law in the synagogues. Accordingly he depleted his slender store of money to pay an Arab to accompany him, and together with two other Jews made a round of the thirteen synagogues of Safed. The sight that greeted them everywhere was very painful. There had been some 500 Scrolls of the Law, all of which lay in scattered fragments on the floors and in the streets. In some cases the parchment had been taken to make slippers and aprons. The three Jews, with aching hearts, gathered the sacred fragments and buried them.² On their return they told the others about the desecration of the synagogues, and how the Arab villagers had come into Safed with their donkeys to carry away the chattels of the Jews, and how some Arabs had even broken down the walls of Jewish houses to discover whether any treasure lay hidden there.

The Arabs of Tiberias would have followed the example of those of Safed, but the Jews succeeded in staying their wrath with a large sum of money. Nevertheless, they remained in a state of constant anxiety for 33 days, until a contingent of Druze soldiers serving in Ibrahim Pasha's army came to restore order.

The rioters of Safed, fearing the jealousy of the

² Scrolls of the Law that have become defiled are not destroyed, but buried.

Arabs of the surrounding district at their acquiring such wealth, formed themselves into some semblance of military order, mounted guards and employed various devices to create an impression of strength and numbers. In the meantime, after spending three weeks in their ruin, the *Perushim* joined Rabbi Israel in the village of Ein Zeitim.

Four weeks after the beginning of the riots a punitive force of Druze troops marched on Tiberias and Safed. The *qadi* and merchants of Safed were eager to receive the troops peaceably, but the more audacious spirits among the rioters decided to offer resistance. They forced the Jews to assist in their preparations, which included mounting two cannon on towers. Matters did not come to a fight, however, for as soon as the troops set foot inside the town the rioters lost heart and went into hiding. The officers were amazed to see the destruction that had been caused during the riots, and an order was given to let the Jews return to their homes. Nevertheless, the *Perushim* remained at Ein Zeitim, as the soldiers were too few to guarantee their safety. When the troops were reinforced shortly afterward, the commander ordered the Jews' property to be restored. The rioters, however, only returned the stolen articles of trivial value, and refused to give up those of greater worth, even though they were soundly beaten. Thirteen of the ringleaders, as well as the treasonable Governor of Safed, were taken away and put to death.

In Hebron, where the inhabitants refused to obey the Egyptian troops sent to quell the revolt, the soldiery were let loose on the town, and they vented their indiscriminate anger on Arab and Jew alike.

After the riots were over, the Jews of Palestine were left in peace for a while. Then, on the 1st January, 1837, Nature stepped in, and in the twinkling of an eye caused more loss of life and havoc in Safed and Tiberias than the prolonged rioting. This is how Rabbi Menachem Mendel describes it:

[The Lord] poured out His wrath like fire, and the earth trembled and quaked mightily in Safed and Tiberias. (The earth did not split open, as is generally thought. It shook, like a horse tossing its mane.) The domes of the houses fell upon those inside, making their homes their graves. The destruction was especially severe in the houses on the hills. But the people who were outside were unhurt. About 2,000 people died in the two towns, and many were maimed or lost limbs . . .

AN EARLY FARMING VENTURE

Israel Bek³ relates the following:

I came to Safed towards the end of 1831, for it was there I had elected to dwell. Soon after, Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt swept through our land like a torrent and conquered it. He began in Acre and ended in Jerusalem. The Lord made me find favour in the eyes of that prince, and he refused nothing that I asked of him. In 1834 Safed was despoiled⁴, and we remained destitute. I then went to the Pasha in Acre and pleaded with him for me and mine . . . He had compassion upon me and gave me a small

³ Israel Bek came to Palestine from Berdichev (Ukraine), where he had been a printer. He set up a press in Safed, which he operated from 1832 to 1837. In 1840 he moved his press to Jerusalem, becoming the first printer in the city. He died in 1874.

⁴ In the *fellah* revolt.

village called Jarmak.⁵ It has springs around it, and is only half an hour from the village of Meron.⁶ Formerly there were gardens and orchards in that village, but at the time there were only forest trees and rocks, and all vegetation was in the clefts between the rocks. Then, on the 1st January, 1837, came the great earthquake . . . and I was compelled to go to the village given me by the Pasha. I built dwelling houses there, made gardens and sowed fields, and already in that year I ate plentifully of the produce of the land. Next year I had cattle, sheep and goats . . . and with God's help I observed the Sabbath in all particulars. I carried out the precepts connected with the soil, and my house was wide open. The blessing of God was upon all my doings, in house and field. Although the place was not suitable for sowing, since many stones were there, yet I fared well, and God prospered me. But for the many tribulations that came upon us in 1839 owing to the fearful war between our lord the Sultan and the Pasha of Egypt, which forced me to leave this lovely village and come to Jerusalem, I should now be happy.

Israel Bek, who wrote his account in 1872, when a movement was afoot to establish an agricultural colony, pointed out that, if he could succeed as a farmer on the unfertile soil of Upper Galilee, there need be no fears as to the success of a venture in fertile country.

⁵ At the foot of the mountain of the same name (Atzmon in Hebrew), to the west of Safed.

⁶ Where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a Jewish sage of the 2nd century, is reputed to lie buried.

THE PLIGHT OF THE JEWS BEFORE THE CAPITULATIONS

The Egyptian occupation of Palestine was shortlived, and the re-establishment of Turkish rule saw the restoration of the old abuses, if anything in an even acuter form. The few years that elapsed prior to the establishment of European consulates (beginning with the British in 1838) and the conclusion of Capitulations treaties, which gave the consuls wide powers with reference to their own nationals, saw the sufferings of the Jews plumb new depths. These are described by Rabbi Moshe Reisher, writing in Jerusalem about the middle of the 19th century.

... What shall I tell of the heavy burden of exile that fell upon the Jews dwelling in the Land of Life (i.e., the Holy Land) from the day they settled there till 1847.⁷ The tale of their sufferings is difficult to believe. Let me describe an infinitesimal part of their tribulations in Hebron, Jerusalem, Safed and Tiberias as recounted to me by my fathers and from what I myself have seen.

For twenty years, says Reisher, Jerusalem was full of ruins, and the surrounding countryside was desolate and neglected. Jews dared not venture outside the City wall for fear of being waylaid by robbers. On catching a Jew the robbers would order him to strip, and he, fearing for his life, would obey and be sent off naked and barefoot. Such spoils were termed by the robbers 'the profit of God'.

The journey between Jerusalem and Hebron was

⁷ A year after James Finn became British Consul in Jerusalem. During his tenure of office many Palestinian Jews came under the protection of the British Crown.

hazardous even in a large caravan, and to travel to smaller places was still more dangerous. 'It is still the custom in the Land of Israel', writes Reisher, 'for travellers to pronounce the *Hagomel* benediction⁸ on reaching their destination.' On encountering a Jew in the street, an Arab would order him to pass on his left.⁹ Woe betide the Jew if he so much as touched the Arab in passing. The latter would set upon him and proclaim that he had cursed Islam, whereupon a mob would gather and belabour the Jew, who would end up with imprisonment and torture. In the market-place a Jew was liable to be beaten, have stones thrown at him, have his beard pulled or be spat upon. He would not dare to utter a word of remonstrance, but take to his heels and thank God he was still alive. He would regard his sufferings as the price of his love for the Holy Land. If a Jew bought anything of an Arab, he dared not bargain, but paid the price demanded.

One family of Arab notables made it their practice to impress Jewish passers-by to carry their purchases home from market. On one occasion they so used Rabbi Yishayahu Bardaki, a saintly man and a great scholar. Should a Jew inadvertently wear a green garment, he would be stripped and cast into jail for profaning the sacred colour of the Muslims. Jews were stoned and mocked when they went to visit their sacred tombs or pray at the Wailing Wall. No Jewish woman dared venture abroad.

The Jews of Hebron lived in constant fear and

⁸ The blessing prescribed for those successfully accomplishing a sea voyage or similar perilous undertaking.

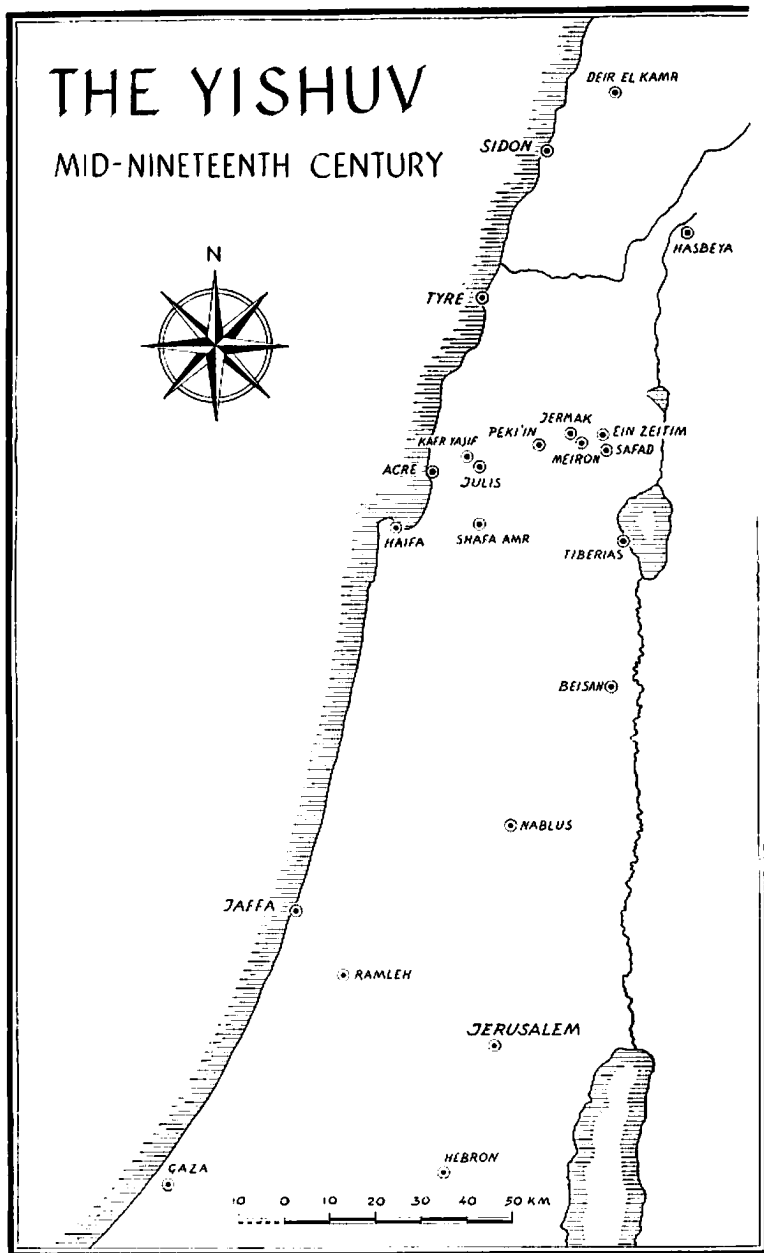
⁹ It is the Muslim belief that Satan stands on the Believer's left side.



Jewish Quarter of Old City of Jerusalem

THE YISHUV

MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY



trembling. In that town there was a rebellious man, a Negro, who gathered a band of desperadoes about him and defied the Sultan's authority. He frequently extorted money from the Jews, and in the accounts of the support they received from their sponsor community in Europe was entered the item, 'so and so much for the Black Man'. Eventually the rebel was apprehended and taken in chains to Constantinople, where he was put to death,—an event that occasioned great rejoicing among the Jews of Hebron.

Jews throughout Palestine were forbidden to acquire real estate. There was a rigorous ban on the building of synagogues. To build a synagogue it was necessary to disburse large sums and to journey to Constantinople to obtain a *firman* bearing the Sultan's seal.

But, says Reisher, the last decade saw an improvement in the situation:

The Sultan has strengthened his control over the country and appointed redoubtable men in every district who do great execution and are purging the land of bloodshed. The consulates in Jerusalem and elsewhere are also imposing fear upon the savage Arabs, and the Jews enjoy great freedom.

Arabs could no longer abuse and curse Jews, for this had become a punishable offence. Better relations developed among the various sections of the population, and troops were on hand to destroy the lairs of robbers and highwaymen. Jews began coming into the country from Europe, and also *Sepharadi* Jews from the Near East. They began to build dwellings and houses of prayer and study. The ban on the acquisition of landed property was lifted, and caravans carrying money and merchandise could proceed unmolested.

JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN JAFFA

The re-establishment of the Jewish community of Jaffa after a long period in which the city was devoid of Jewish inhabitants was to have considerable historic significance. From the small beginnings described here, the Jewish quarter of Jaffa became the hub of Jewish life in Palestine during the first decade of the 20th century. It was this fact which determined the establishment of Tel Aviv, today one of the largest cities in the Middle East.

Jaffa, in the first half of the 19th century (as described by Rabbi Yaacov Shaul Elyashar), was for the Jews merely the gateway to Jerusalem, and not more than a handful of Jews, mostly Oriental, actually lived there. No transport facilities existed, and when a boat arrived with Jews on board, word was sent to Jerusalem and an official of the community would come down and assemble a caravan of donkeys. The journey was hazardous and performed only in daytime. The travellers would set out in the afternoon and spend the night in a Jewish house in Ramleh. Next morning they would set out for Jerusalem, where they would arrive by nightfall. In 1820, a rich Jew from Constantinople, seeing that Jewish immigrants had to stay in Jaffa at a non-Jewish caravanserai while awaiting transport to Jerusalem, bought a house and turned it into an inn, one room of which was set aside as a synagogue. After the Egyptian occupation in 1832, the Jaffa community began to grow, the newcomers including a boatload of Moroccan Jews who had been shipwrecked off Haifa. They engaged in trade. But apart from the inn there were still no communal buildings or institutions, and even

the dead had to be taken to Jerusalem for burial. A few years later the *Sepharadi* community of Jerusalem bought an area of land in Jaffa as a cemetery.

In 1839, several hundred *Ashkenazi* Jews arrived, and as an epidemic was raging at the time they were kept in quarantine. A few of them stayed on in Jaffa, but there were still not enough *Ashkenazim* to form a separate community. From then on the number of Jews in Jaffa slowly increased. In 1856, following the Crimean war, a new impetus was given to Jaffa's development. A considerable movement of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem began, and trade expanded, providing opportunities for Jews to settle in Jaffa and lay the foundations of a large community.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

IT IS not always easy to determine when one period in history ends and a new one begins: life does not divide itself up conveniently into chapters like a book. Consequently it is hard to say exactly at what point Palestine's medieval period ended and its transition to modernity began. The line of demarcation is roughly the eighteen-forties, after the opening of the foreign consulates in Jerusalem. But many decades were to elapse before the country became comparatively modernised. On the other hand, a change in the position and outlook of the Jewish community began to be manifest before then, though it was a slow change indeed. Jewish immigration had increased in

the eighteen-thirties, and was to proceed at a more rapid rate during the next half century (up till the beginning of modern settlement). As time went on, a certain disinclination was evinced to subsisting upon charity from abroad. Some Jews turned to trade; others thought of farming. Eventually—in 1878—the first attempt was made to establish a farming community.

The period covered by this chapter—roughly half a century—saw the Jewish community undergo considerable growth, especially in Jerusalem. Communal life developed, and the foundations of a Hebrew Press were laid. Several commercial ventures were launched, new residential quarters were built, and a desire to engage in productive occupations germinated, though the seed was small as yet. Perhaps the intrinsic value of the new trend was slight, and it may be that, without the impact of Zionist settlement, it would not have led to a radical change in the Jewish way of life. On the other hand, the growth in the size of the Yishuv provided the Zionist settlers with a background without which their task would have been even harder than it was. The transition period in the life of the Yishuv was thus a necessary link in the chain of development.

Another feature of this period was an improvement in the administration of the country. Turkish official life remained corrupt and inefficient until it finally crumbled before Allenby in 1917–18. Nevertheless, a certain improvement set in, and some of the more glaring abuses were removed. The administrative districts were clearly demarcated, and provincial and district governors were appointed from Istamboul. Nepotism was still the main criterion of suitability for office;

but extortion was more or less confined to baksheesh, and governors could no longer engage in warfare with one another for control of a particular area.

The foreign consuls, too, were a powerful factor. They could curb some of the worst excesses of the Administration and remedy some of its grosser injustices. Many Jews came under the protection, first of the British and Austrian, and later the Russian and German, consuls; for the Powers in question were quietly trying to extend and consolidate their position in an area of strategic and political importance in the tottering Empire of the Sick Man of Europe.

LIFE IN JERUSALEM (1834-1863)

Yehoshua Yellin, father of the late Professor David Yellin, the distinguished Hebrew scholar, describes in the following pages Jewish life in Jerusalem during his early years. Though born in 1843, he goes back a few years before that date and furnishes the background to his account from the recollections of his father and others.

Yellin's father, David, had left his home town of Lomza (Poland) and settled in the Holy Land in 1834 in fulfilment of a vow. The voyage from Istamboul to Acre was very stormy and took forty days to accomplish. Yellin the elder first went to Safed, but, finding the *Chassidic* customs prevalent there little to his liking, decided to move to Jerusalem. He and his wife settled there in the eastern quarter known as *Bab al-Hatta*, where most of the small *Ashkenazi* community lived. Yehoshua Yellin describes the position at the time as follows:

When my late father came to Jerusalem he found

the City neglected and deserted¹. . . Most of its houses and courtyards were in ruins, and those that remained whole were small, low and dark. Their tiny windows were covered with grilles to hide the women from the gaze of passers-by. The shops were in a similar case. Only a few were occupied by vendors of the rough, black pottery made in Gaza and Hebron, or by leather-workers and cobblers. . . There were but few shopkeepers. Houses and shops could be bought for next to nothing; but the Jews did not interest themselves in purchasing them, as they did not see any possibility of gaining a worth-while living from them. They were more concerned with obtaining tenancy rights.

In 1836, Yellin goes on, the community began to grow. Former residents who had left the City during the recent troubles returned, and new settlers arrived. Most of the Jews moved to the quarter known as the 'Street of the Jews' in the vicinity of the *Churva* ('Ruin') of Rabbi Yehuda the Pious. This area had been laid in ruins over a century before, but special permission had been obtained from Cairo, through the good offices of the Russian and Austrian representatives there, to rebuild it. The rubble was consequently removed, and a synagogue, houses and shops erected.² Two wealthy brothers from Amsterdam put up a courtyard³ and endowed it as lodgings

¹ This was in 1834, just after the *fellah* revolt.

² The *Churva* Synagogue was deliberately destroyed by shelling after the capture of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City by the Transjordan Arab Legion in 1948.

³ A 'courtyard' (*chatzer*) is a rectangular structure containing a number of dwellings built around an open space. A form of architecture characteristic of the old Yishuv, it is believed to be an original style of Jewish building dating back roughly to the period of the Second Temple.

for students of the Holy Law. They also erected a house of prayer and study there.

David Yellin bought the tenancy rights of a house in the Street of the Jews, but later exchanged it for another in the Street of the Hebronites, where a number of Hebron Jews had settled to escape persecution in their own town. He rented this house in partnership with a merchant named Leon, and then another near by, so that the two houses yielded a fair income. He had brought with him the equivalent of £400—a considerable amount in those days—which he lent out at low interest to the *Ashkenazi* community. His income thus sufficed to enable him to devote his time to study. Two years later, however, the community became bankrupt, so that he lost a great part of his capital.

In 1839 Jerusalem was visited by a plague. The Arabs, who were careless, died in large numbers but the Jews suffered fewer losses of life, as they laid in stocks of food and remained in their houses.

A few years before Yehoshua Yellin's birth, the leader of the *Ashkenazi* community, Rabbi Yishayahu Bardaki, obtained the post of Austrian Vice-consul through the efforts of the head of the Jewish community in Vienna. Bardaki thereupon took all the Russian Jews with passports under the protection of Austria. This was before any European Powers sent consular representatives to Jerusalem. Bardaki took his office seriously, and on ceremonial occasions went about preceded by an attendant bearing a silver-mounted staff. He also employed an interpreter for his dealings with the authorities.

In 1839, a well-known scholar, Rabbi Zundel Salant, came to Jerusalem to lead the studies of the

Ashkenazi community and took up his residence in the *Churva*. Two years later he was joined by his brother-in-law, Rabbi Samuel Salant, an eminent scholar, who became head of the Rabbinical Court. Rabbi Bardaki was officially designated head of the community. However, he quarrelled with Samuel Salant, and the community split up into two factions. David Yellin favoured the Salant faction. His wife, together with Salant's wife, started a business for the manufacture and sale of wines and spirits, thus enabling their husbands to devote themselves to study.

The *Ashkenazi* community by this time numbered between 400 and 500 souls, and a religious school was set up. Meanwhile immigration from Russia was increasing. Hitherto, the community had been sponsored by that of Vilna; but the influx of Polish Jews resulted in the establishment of a separate community known as *Kotel* Warsaw. David Yellin went to Warsaw to advise on the organisation of the new community, of which he was appointed head.

Communications with the outer world were improving, and steamships began plying between Europe and Syria and Palestine. New immigrants arrived with capital, but they could not invest it owing to their ignorance of local conditions. A group of newcomers therefore combined with several Jerusalem residents to form a joint stock trading company, of which David Yellin became agent and chief accountant. The firm established connections with the merchants who handled the Levant trade of European firms, and the venture prospered. For the first three years a 15 per cent dividend was paid. The firm then decided to extend its activities to include banking. This was a

necessary measure, since no other bank existed among a community almost entirely dependent upon money from abroad. The funds were received in the form of drafts on London banks. These could only be turned into cash by selling them at a large discount to money-changers, who used to dispose of them in Beirut at a considerable profit. The Jerusalem firm therefore sent a member to open a business in London, and with the aid of that connection was able to buy up drafts, from non-Jews as well as Jews. The bank gained a good reputation in commercial circles in Palestine and Syria.

In 1846 James Finn became British Consul in Jerusalem. In addition to his consular duties he acted as representative of a London philanthropic society for helping the poor of Jerusalem of all denominations. He bought a stretch of land and employed poor people there as labourers. The financial aspect of these activities brought him into contact with the bank, and a friendship grew up between him and David Yellin. The man who brought them together was an Arab named Musa Tannous, who owned some land outside the City wall. Our narrator proceeds:

My late father, who was profoundly attached to the Land of Israel, had always wanted to own some property. But as the houses within the walls were old and cramped, and the air within them was foul owing to the narrow, tortuous and filthy streets, he would have none of them, and decided instead to buy a plot outside the walls for all that there was no vestige of human habitation there—only some Christian monks and merchants had acquired plots outside the wall—and despite the fact that the City gates were closed at nightfall by order of the authorities and remained shut all

night. Before sunset a soldier would go out and announce that the gates were about to be closed, and all those without hurried inside. Any who tarried had to spend the night in the open.

David Yellin began to negotiate for a stretch of land some distance from the City wall (it is known today as the Russian Compound, in the heart of the modern city). But the parties differed concerning the width of a path that was to run through the land, and the deal fell through. Though Yellin was subsequently prepared to accept Tannous' terms, the latter refused to sell, and the land was soon after sold to the Russian Church together with several adjoining plots.

In 1854, Sir Moses Montefiore built a vocational training school to teach young Jerusalem Jews the art of weaving and thus enable them to live by their own efforts. He also provided funds for the maintenance of the pupils. David Yellin was appointed to administer the school. Work started with a will, and it looked as if new prospects were opening up for Jerusalem's Jews. But the fabrics produced could compete neither in quality nor price with European imports, and so the school had to be closed down.

Jerusalem life about 1850 was primitive. Instead of matches, use was made of wicks dipped in melted phosphorus. When dry, the wick would be laid on a piece of flint and struck with a hammer. The sparks produced set the wick alight. Yehoshua Yellin recalls the first matches he saw in his boyhood,—clumsy things six centimetres long. They were regarded as a notable example of scientific progress. Another step forward was the introduction of cigarettes: till then tobacco had been smoked only in pipes. The paper came in large sheets, and the smoker cut off as much

as he needed to roll himself a cigarette. The lamp in general use consisted of four rush lights with a shallow bowl beneath, suspended from the ceiling. The fuel used for the purpose was olive oil.

Yellin describes in some detail the system of *chaluka* (maintenance of students of the Holy Law), virtually the only means of subsistence of the *Ashkenazi* community. The *Perushim* (i.e., not *Chassidim*) of Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias formed a single community known as *Kolel* Vilna, since it was in that city that funds were collected from Jews in various parts of Russia. The officials of the fund (called the Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes Fund) in Vilna disbursed payments according to lists drawn up by the administration in Jerusalem. Payments were of two kinds: a subsistence allowance, based on the number of persons per family, which was alike for all; and a sort of bonus payable according to the lineage and learning of the head of the family. Only a privileged few received payment of the second kind. There were no regular postal connections, and so the *chaluka* money was remitted yearly. A special messenger would take it to Istamboul, where a messenger from the Holy Land would meet him by appointment. The Russian coins would be exchanged for currency accepted in Palestine, and the emissary would return with the money to Jerusalem. From there it was distributed among the different towns. If members of the community needed money during the year, they could obtain from the administrators promissory notes, which were negotiable at a discount, with the date of maturity designated as the arrival of 'the ship' for the year in question.

Yellin also furnishes enlightenment concerning the

curious institution of the *chazaka*. The *Sepharadim*, to prevent excessive amounts of Jewish money from passing into non-Jewish hands in efforts to secure dwellings, had ruled that a Jew who had once dwelt in a particular house belonging to a non-Jew acquired occupancy rights there. These rights were regarded as a negotiable commodity, and could be sold or mortgaged. The proceeding proved lucrative, for the landlord was forced to come to terms with the original tenant, who was able to sub-let for much more than the amount of the rental. It is therefore understandable why Jews were not concerned with buying property, despite the fact that houses could be bought at the time for ridiculously low prices.

Though in less affluent circumstances than before, the elder Yellin did not give up his idea of becoming the owner of a piece of land. He therefore joined forces with Yehoshua's brother-in-law, Shaul, who was of a like mind. The two scraped together some money and were offered a stretch of land at the village of Kolonia, about seven kilometres west of Jerusalem. Upon it stood an olive grove containing a spring of water. The surroundings were altogether delightful: there was water in abundance, and the air was refreshing. In summer it was customary for wealthy Jerusalem Arabs to camp there, and some used to go out there just for the day. The village lay alongside the Jaffa-Jerusalem highway, and it had the merit of being the site of a place mentioned in the Bible—Motza, by which name it is now known. So charmed were the prospective purchasers by the beauty of the spot, that they decided to acquire it. Foreign nationals however, were not permitted to buy land outside the City unless by a special dispensation of the Sultan,

and so Yellin and his partner consulted James Finn (the British Consul), who suggested a somewhat involved way of getting round the difficulty.

The inhabitants inundated Yellin and his partners with offers; that year had been a very poor one, and some of the villagers had gone to the Hauran to settle, leaving their holdings with their relatives. The two Jews bought several plots of land and began to erect stone fences around them. (The fences were destroyed a few years later when the Turkish authorities took the stones to build a carriage road to Jaffa.) Some more purchases were made subsequently on behalf of several Jews in Palestine and abroad. No official protests were raised, owing to Finn's prestige. Yehoshua Yellin writes:

The Consul was held in great awe by the Pasha and other high Government officials. During the time he held office, he had several Pashas removed by complaining of them to the British Ambassador in Istamboul; for at the time Britain wielded more influence there than any other country. Even the great sheikh, Haj Mustapha abu-Ghosh, who held sway over all the villages on the northern side of Jerusalem, kept aloof from us and did not interfere.

In this connection, Yehoshua Yellin sheds interesting light on the organisation of the country. The Arab population was divided into two opposing confederations—Qays, covering southern Palestine up to Jerusalem; and Yaman, extending from Jerusalem northwards to Damascus. The area covered by each confederation was subdivided into a loose system of sheikhdoms: if the sheikh of a village happened to be of a particularly strong and resolute character, he

would extend his influence to the neighbouring villages, of which he became the unquestioned ruler. Mustapha abu-Ghosh, for example, was supreme in the countryside between Jerusalem and Nablus. Sheikhs belonging to the same confederation never quarrelled among themselves; but they might become involved with a sheikh on the other side. The sheikh's power was absolute: he had an armed force at his disposal, and could seize persons or property at will. He was the effective ruler in the countryside: the Turkish Administration was virtually confined to the towns and availed itself of the help of the sheikhs in collecting taxes from the rural population. It was not until later in the 19th century that the Turkish Administration strengthened its hold upon the country and threw the more obstreperous sheikhs into prison.

Motza was one of the two regular halting-places for travellers between Jerusalem and Jaffa (the other was Ramleh). There was a rude lodging-house with bunks, on which were spread mats in lieu of beds. Instead of paying for lodging, each traveller had to buy a small cup of black coffee from the keeper of the house, who held the concession from Sheikh abu-Ghosh. David Yellin and his partner proposed to erect a more elaborate lodging-house in its place; but the sudden death of the former (in 1863) prevented the execution of the scheme.

The settlement of Motza was destined to be delayed for a number of years, for, in addition to David Yellin's death, Finn became bankrupt. Finn had borrowed extensively to finance his philanthropic undertakings, which were run in a very unbusinesslike manner, and had incurred large debts. Yehoshua Yellin was among his creditors. No sooner did word get

round that Finn was in straits, than the officials and sheikhs who had held him in such awe reared their heads. Sheikh abu-Ghosh began obstructing the work at Motza. Finn resigned, and Yellin went to his successor, Moore, for help. The latter found that Finn's advice concerning the acquisition of the land at Motza was both unlawful and unsound. Nevertheless, he did his best to patch things up and to placate Sheikh abu-Ghosh. The Sheikh finally agreed to let the Jews do as they liked at Motza, so long as they did not build houses, and forbade the *fellahin* to molest them. The area thus remained in Jewish hands, and the present village of Motza was built there subsequently.

BREACHING THE CITY WALL

There was something symbolic in the erection of the first houses outside the City wall of Jerusalem. The desire to break out of the gloomy dwellings and narrow streets of the walled City was accompanied by a wish to escape from the thrall of complete dependence upon charity from abroad. Jews throughout the world were on the road to emancipation: the process that was going on everywhere could scarcely fail to arouse an echo in Palestine. The pioneer of settlement outside the City wall was Yosef Rivlin, a resident of Jerusalem. His activities are described by his grandson, Yosef Yoel Rivlin, a noted Orientalist and Professor at the Hebrew University, and a present resident of Jerusalem.

The first Jewish houses outside the wall were put up by the famous Anglo-Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore, in 1857, on a site near the present Railway Station. To begin with the houses were used for his weaving factory project, and when that failed

they were turned into a hospital. But that also failed, since patients were afraid to lie in so dangerous a place. The houses therefore remained uninhabited for a number of years.

Rivlin's desire to found a new quarter pre-dated Montefiore's project and amounted to an obsession. Indeed, when, on becoming betrothed in 1855, he told his future wife's family of his intention, they were so outraged that they sought to prevent the marriage; but, fortunately for Rivlin, the bride fell in with his plans. Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that he was possessed by a demon which attracted him to deserted places, and his family resorted to various devices to exorcise it.

Rivlin utilised every opportunity of propagating his idea, but for a time gained only one convert, Rabbi Leib Hurwitz. He took the first practical step towards the fulfilment of his aim in 1857, when he founded a society called 'The Builders of Jerusalem'. A few of his younger friends joined his society, some out of pity for him. One or two, however, had become genuinely convinced of the soundness of his scheme.

Two years later he was invited to go to Russia, where a group of relatives and friends had evinced an interest in his project. A committee was formed and a sum collected for buying land, to which Rivlin added some money of his own and a further sum which he obtained in Jerusalem. On his return he proceeded to take active steps and formed a committee together with three others. However, they stipulated that work should not begin until there were sufficient funds to build 25 houses, a synagogue, a ritual bath-house and a stone fence around the quarter. The houses were also to be built not far from the City wall.



Yisrael Belkind, a Bilu Pioneer



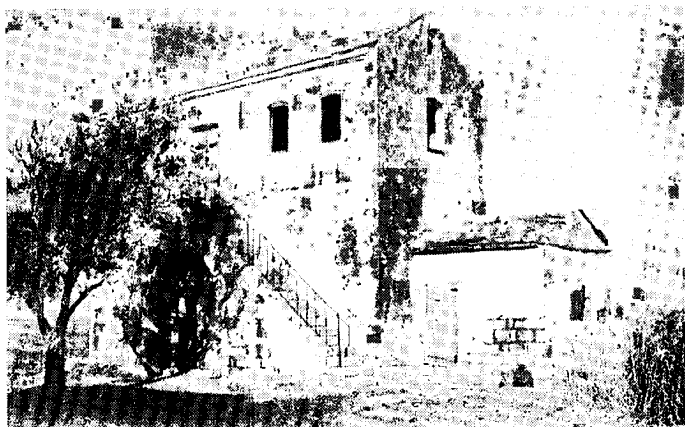
Dr. Chayim Chissin, a Bilu Pioneer



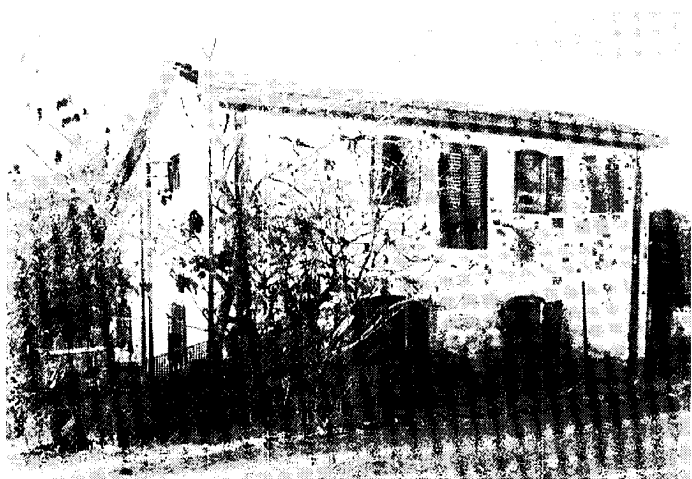
Karl Netter,
founder of Mikveh Israel



Yosef Feinberg, a Bilu Pioneer



Zichron Ya'acov. Building found by settlers on the site



Feinberg's house. One of the first buildings in Rishon Lezion

Rivlin accordingly began to negotiate with an Arab for the purchase of an area of land. But he refrained from telling him what his real intention was, for fear of offending the Arab landlords in the City, who felt they had their Jewish tenants at their mercy⁴ and who would have tried to frustrate any venture to build outside the wall. The negotiations went on for several years, as it was hard to find a suitable area with clearly defined boundaries which could be transferred without undue difficulty.

Meanwhile events were favouring Rivlin's scheme. An outbreak of cholera in 1865-66 had caused hundreds of Arabs to flee from Transjordan and crowd into Jerusalem, thus increasing the risk of infection. The Arab landlords exploited the opportunity to raise rents, and threatened to raise them still further. Finally, in 1867, Rivlin and his associates, together with a few others, succeeded in buying an area bordered on the north by the main highway, and on the south by an old Muslim cemetery. As the participants in the scheme did not want the matter to get to the ears of the Arab landlords in the City, the transfer was registered in the Government offices by Rabbi Leib Hurwitz's wife. To do this, she dressed as an Arab woman and veiled her face.

A financial arrangement was made to enable the participants (there were seven of them) to start building, and it was decided that each year two of them were to build a house. Rivlin was one of the first to do so, and the laying of the foundation stone, on the 29th April, 1869, was a great event attended by a large number of Jews from the City. The first two

⁴ The Jewish population had grown considerably by then, and accommodation was becoming scarce.

houses were up within two months, and on the 4th August Rivlin moved in. At first he slept there alone, and every morning his relatives went down to the City gate to see whether he was still alive. Only occasionally did a visitor spend the night at Rivlin's house, and then he would hardly sleep a wink at the thought of the terrible dangers he was braving.

Determined opposition was still offered to the scheme, and Rivlin's opponents once exploited his absence to hire some *fellahin* to break the doors and windows of his house, so that he should think that it had been attacked by bandits. However, he was not deflected from his purpose, and continued to live in Nachalat Shiva ('Portion of the Seven'), as the new quarter was destined to be called. Once he had demonstrated that it was possible to live outside the City wall, the other participants followed his example, and Nachalat Shiva became the first outpost of Jewish settlement in the New City.

The next step was the formation in 1875 of a company on co-operative lines for the erection of a second quarter outside the City. The company, which consisted of a hundred members, was called Mea Shearim ('One Hundred Gates'). The initiators of this project were Zalman Levi and Benzion Leon, the latter a wealthy merchant. Yehoshua Yellin was also an active participant. The intention was to build a house for every member, who had to take up a share (or two, if he wished) in the company. When all the shares had been sold, the company proceeded to buy an area of land to the north of the City. This was divided up according to shares, and a third of the area was set aside for roads and public buildings. A detailed plan was drawn up. Each member was to have a dwelling consisting

of one room and a corridor. To reduce costs, it was decided to build the dwellings in the form of long blocks. The shareholders were to make annual payments sufficient for the construction of ten dwellings a year. As each ten dwellings were completed, lots were to be drawn and the shareholders were to move in. For ten years after moving in, the shareholders were to pay a small annual sum to provide for public amenities. The plan was carried out, but it called for more money than was anticipated owing to a rise in the cost of building materials and labour. The quarter itself was given the name of Mea Shearim. Three years after the inauguration of the Mea Shearim scheme, another company of thirty-five members was formed which built a quarter known as Even Yisrael ('Rock of Israel').

ATTEMPTS TO BUY AGRICULTURAL LAND

Although the establishment of a settlement at Motza had not succeeded, the idea of going on the land was not abandoned. In 1872, some ten years after the Motza transaction, a further attempt was made in the same direction. Again, Yehoshua Yellin was one of the prime movers; and again it is from his pen that we derive our account.

The Turkish system of land tenure was very involved. Nearly all agricultural land was of the category known as *miri*. Nominally it was the property of the State, but the holders were the effective owners and could sell or mortgage it. If, however, the land remained untilled for three consecutive years, it reverted to the State. It was thus that 4,000 dunams (about 1,000 acres) in the neighbourhood of Jericho came into the hands of the Administration, which put it up

for auction. Part of the area was watered by springs, and the rest, though arid, consisted of fertile soil that would respond to irrigation.

When the Jericho lands were put up for sale, two prospective purchasers appeared. One was Musa Pasha al-Huseini, a rich man and the leading Muslim notable of Jerusalem. The other was a wealthy Armenian living in Egypt, who wanted to buy the land and present it to the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. On learning of the auction and the appearance of the two bidders, Yellin, together with some of his friends (several of whom had been concerned in the Nachalat Shiva and Mea Shearim schemes), formed a company to buy the land and settle it. About fifty of the leading Jews in the City took up shares in the company. Benzion Leon, Yoel Moshe Salomon and Yellin were elected directors. One of the first acts of the company was to give the Pasha of Jerusalem a handsome bribe, to ensure that he protected their interests when the time came. The next step was to get Musa Huseini out of the race. He agreed to let the Jews outbid him in return for a tenth part of the land.

The only remaining obstacle was the Armenian. They therefore appointed a representative, Rabbi Aryeh Neeman, to enter into negotiations with the Armenian Patriarch. A delegation consisting of Neeman and several others went to see the Patriarch, who welcomed them cordially. The Jews, Neeman said, wanted the land at Jericho to enable their poor to earn a livelihood there. They had heard that a wealthy philanthropist wished to buy the land for the Armenian church. But the Armenians were a small and wealthy community, and owned considerable property in the Jerusalem and Jaffa areas, and they would

surely not be prepared to endure the hardships of tilling the soil in the torrid climate of Jericho. Would the Patriarch therefore persuade the philanthropist to withdraw from the contest in favour of the Jewish poor, as Musa Huseini had done? (Neeman made no mention of the deal concluded with Huseini.)

The Patriarch said in reply that he appreciated the Jews' desire to resettle their country, and observed that they were starting from Jericho, as Joshua had done three thousand years previously. But, said he smiling, what were they going to do about Joshua's ban: 'Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it' (Joshua, VI, 26)? To this the Jews countered by saying that the curse applied only to the first who should build, and that it had already been fulfilled in the case of Hiel the Bethelite (I Kings, XVI, 34). This argument appealed to the Patriarch, who thereupon promised to carry out their request. He accordingly wrote to the would-be benefactor advising him not to buy the land in question, as the Jericho climate was insalubrious, and suggesting instead that he put up houses and shops on the Armenian properties near Jerusalem.

The company outbid the Armenian, and obtained both from him and Musa Huseini written statements confirming their withdrawal from the auction. Thus the Jews were left alone in the field; and after the lapse of the statutory three months, during which no new bidders came forward, the Pasha wrote to Istamboul for permission to complete the transaction.

Here Yellin tells us what the initiators of the project had in mind:

We did not want to stop at buying the 4,000 dunams (at Jericho): we hoped, as a result of that purchase, eventually to buy the many thousands of dunams of derelict land extending up to the Jordan which, according to law, we could have acquired for nothing by turning it into cultivated land. Our plan was to induce wealthy Jews in Europe to invest substantial sums in our undertaking. With the aid of those investments we meant to install machinery on the bank of the Jordan to irrigate most, if not all, of the adjacent area. Since the soil there is fertile and only requires watering, we thought that instead of growing wheat, which calls for much labour and brings in scant profit, we would plant orchards and groves. In this way 50 dunams would suffice to maintain a large family in prosperity. For the soil around Jericho surpasses all other parts of the country as regards the abundance, size and quality of the fruit it yields. In the course of time we hoped that thousands of families would be able to gain a profitable livelihood. We also investigated the soil on the banks of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and found that it contained a large proportion of sulphur. This could also be a source of livelihood for many families.

At the end of the allotted period, a query came through from Istamboul concerning the nationality of the prospective purchasers. A general meeting of the company was called to decide what answer to give. The old residents urged that the purchase be registered in the name of those participants who were Ottoman subjects, for they sensed that the purpose of the query was to prevent the land from passing into the hands of foreign nationals. After the purchase was consummated, the registered purchasers could dispose of the land to the others. The newcomers, how-

ever, strongly objected to this course; and, since they were in a majority, their view prevailed. The names of several foreign subjects were accordingly given as the purchasers. A month later they were told that the Sultan, fearful lest his dominions pass into foreign hands, had decided to buy the land himself. Yellin continues:

The association was dissolved. Many of the members were heartbroken at the consequences of their making one small error. But they did not forgo their aspirations. After indulging in fanciful projects for a time, several of them later established the first Jewish village in the Coastal Plain, and called it Petach Tikva⁵ which was the name originally intended for their settlement in Jericho.

Three years previously, an attempt had been made to buy the land on which the settlement (now a thriving town) of Rechovot was ultimately established. The transaction fell through, however, owing to the reluctance of the local Pasha to seeing it pass into Jewish hands. Another projected land purchase near Hebron at about the same time also ended abortively.

CHILDHOOD REMINISCENCES OF JERUSALEM

Ephraim Cohen-Reiss, who was born in Jerusalem in 1863,⁶ records some vivid impressions of his boyhood in the City. One of the most notable events in his early life was the visit paid by the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, Franz Josef, to Jerusalem in 1869. Franz Josef made a brief stay in Palestine while on his way

⁵ See the following Chapter.

⁶ He studied abroad, and from 1887 administered various institutions set up in Palestine by the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*.

to attend the opening of the Suez Canal. He had a great liking for the Jews, and they in turn held him in high esteem. They turned out *en masse* to meet him on his arrival in the Holy City, and the crowds, the soldiers on parade and the colourful uniforms of the officials presented an unwonted spectacle. Most wonderful of all was the sight of the Emperor riding into the City in a carriage—the first ever seen there. The first proper road had been laid between Jaffa and Jerusalem especially for this occasion. The Chief Rabbi and notables of the *Ashkenazi* and *Sepharadi* communities greeted the Emperor, and the sons of Rabbi Nissan Bek, leader of the Austro-Hungarian Jews, formed part of the mounted escort which accompanied the Emperor and his retinue from Motza to the City gates. For the children it was a memorable occasion, something like the Rejoicing of the Law, 'for', says Cohen-Reiss, 'the rabbis went out to meet him bearing Scrolls of the Law, which were bedecked with glistening crowns and ornaments'. The Emperor visited several Jewish institutions, including the Rothschild Hospital, which was under Austrian protection; contributed to Jewish charitable funds; and decorated several of the leading Jewish notables and communal workers.

Another memorable event was the visit, shortly after Franz Josef's, of the Prussian Crown Prince, Friedrich Wilhelm. The son of Wilhelm I and father of Wilhelm II, he was fated to reign only 90 days. Friedrich Wilhelm, like Franz Josef, was fond of the Jews, and more than once he expressed the belief that anti-Semitism was a disgrace to the 19th century. He was met on his arrival by a delegation of three Jewish notables who were Prussian subjects. One of them,

Rabbi Aryeh Marcus, was something of a character. A little man, he always went about in a turban and long Oriental clothes. Sometimes the Armenian street-urchins would try and block up the windows of the Bikkur Cholim Hospital, which overlooked the Armenian Quarter. On such occasions he would throw off his robe, grasp his silver-mounted stick firmly, and do great execution among the pates of the unruly young Armenians. When he went to greet the august visitor, his companions pleaded with him, to exchange his Oriental clothes for more seemly European ones. But he refused to do so, and the Crown Prince was greatly taken with his attire.

Jewish children in Jerusalem in those days had a hard life of it, according to Cohen-Reiss. There were no vacations from studies at the *Talmud Tora*⁷ (apart from Sabbaths and Festivals—and even then there were afternoon studies). But the few hours of freedom on Friday afternoons were exploited to the full, especially in summer. The most popular game was to form two sides which forcibly asserted their claims to possession of a selected mound of earth. Another occupation was to help build the Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue, otherwise known as the Nissan Bek Synagogue, which was then under construction. Although the children hindered more than they helped, they were allowed to go on assisting in the work, since it was realised that they were actuated by the highest motives. After their Friday afternoon games the youngsters would go for a dip in the Pool of Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest, at the spring of Siloam.

⁷ Elementary school for boys devoted mainly to study of the Pentateuch and designed as a preparation for the *Yeshiva* or Talmudical College.

This they preferred to any of the bathing establishments in the City itself.

Meat was a rare commodity in those days, and was usually eaten only on Sabbaths and Festivals. Early on Friday mornings there was a rush to the slaughterhouse, to reserve a choice portion of the animal before it reached the butcher's shop.

The slaughterer used to pronounce the Muslim benediction, *bismillahi 'rrahmani 'rrahim* ('In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate') before reciting the Hebrew benediction that precedes the slaughtering of an animal. This he was forced to do by the authorities, but the order of the blessings—to secure consent to which the *mufti* had to be given regular gifts of rice and sugar—was arranged so that nothing extraneous should come between the Hebrew words and the act of slaughtering.

The *Ashkenazi* butcher's was thronged on Fridays by a pushing crowd, mainly of women. The fishmonger's was also crowded on Fridays, but here men predominated. The Lithuanians and *Sepharadim* could for the most part not afford the luxury of fish as well as meat for their Sabbath repast; but the Hungarians, who were fond of good food and whose allowances were more generous, indulged themselves. The men used to go themselves and choose the fish for the meal.

On the Sabbath the children's frolicsome spirit gave way to a feeling of sanctity, which made up for the absence of games. Dressed in their Sabbath clothes, they acquired a gravity of demeanour and feeling of importance, like their elders, whom they accompanied to synagogue and on visits to relatives and neighbours.

Cohen-Reiss spent most of his childhood in a quarter founded a few years earlier in the close vicinity of the Western (or Wailing) Wall. Both the Wall and the Mount of Olives were visible from his father's house. His impressions of the worshippers at the Western Wall, and of the suppliant women who came to pray for members of their families who were mortally sick, are very vivid. He was especially moved on Feast days, when he heard the prayer, *umipnei chataeinu*⁸ proceeding from throats choked with tears.

To the children, the advent of the Messiah—who would bring about the redemption of the Temple Mount and the restoration of the Temple itself—was a very real concept. He was liable to make his appearance at any moment. True, at times they might hear grown-ups talk ironically of the coming of the Messiah, almost as if they did not believe in its imminence; but any doubts engendered were fleeting and did not shake the children's faith.

A number of *Sepharadi* Jews lived in the neighbourhood, and Cohen-Reiss mixed with them a great deal, worshipping almost daily in their synagogue. Owing to the absence of any other common language, he had to converse with them in Hebrew.

Relations between the Jews and their Arab neighbours were friendly, and sometimes even cordial. There was one Arab family whose members were traders and intermediaries and who spoke Ladino (Judeo-Spanish: the Yiddish of the *Sepharadim*) and Yiddish. Saleh, of Silwan, who went about selling sand for the housewives to scour their pots with, was a

⁸ 'And for our sins we have been exiled from our land and far removed from our soil.'

well-known figure in the Jewish Quarter. He would hawk his wares in Yiddish, and could also speak Ladino. He even learned some Hebrew tongue-twisters from the children. Then there was the Muslim notable, Musa Effendi al-Khalidi, who used to call at the Cohen-Reiss home on holidays and greet the head of the family on the occasion. Cohen-Reiss and his young friends were on intimate terms with an Arab who owned a large flock of goats, and they would help him to feed them. There were two Arab shopkeepers, Hasan and Ihsein, who used to vie with one another in being the first to bring warm baker's bread and honey as a friendly gesture to the Jews on the conclusion of the Feast of Passover. Sheikh Yusuf, the deputy *mufti*, was a partner in some Jewish printing concerns.

The Jews did not get their bread from the baker, but bought wheat and ground it into flour, which they baked themselves. This is how Cohen-Reiss described the process:

Women armed with large sieves used to come to our house to sift the wheat. They would be joined by the neighbouring womenfolk, who made it a practice to help one another in this task. They used to enliven the proceedings by gossiping about the latest news in the City. When the wheat was sifted it was taken to the Arab mill, near the *Sepharadi* Synagogue, where it was ground under the close supervision of its owner (the miller did not object to such supervision). The flour was then brought home and passed through sieves, in order to divide it into three different grades.

The children were to be found at every kind of celebration, especially weddings, where they derived enjoyment from the performance of the musicians.

Although the ears of Cohen-Reiss and his friends were more attuned to *Ashkenazi* melodies, they also grew to enjoy the Oriental lilts of the musicians at *Sepharadi* weddings. The enjoyment of big and little alike, however, was rudely disturbed by a decision of Rabbi Meir Auerbach and his *Beth Din* (Rabbinical Court) forbidding the sounding of instruments in Jerusalem, since the City was bewailing its ancient destruction. Only the beating of drums was permissible (the *Sepharadim*, who were not bound by the *Ashkenazi* ruling, continued to employ musicians at weddings). Henceforth weddings became somewhat drab affairs. The only solace left to the children were the quips of the two jesters, whose task it was to gladden the hearts of the bridegroom and bride. One of their methods of raising laughs was to imitate prominent Jewish visitors to the City and their mannerisms in making speeches. Another, though to the children less amusing, feature of wedding celebrations was the dancing before the bridegroom. A favourite was the Arab sword-dance, and those who distinguished themselves most by their lightness of foot and adroitness of movement were the members of the *Chevre Kadisha* (Burial Society).

Best of all, Cohen-Reiss liked Purim,⁹ when many people wore masks, and a festive spirit enveloped the whole Jewish Quarter. A particularly impressive experience was a performance one year of the play, *Mekhirat Yosef* ('The Selling of Joseph'), by an amateur troupe. The players made a round of the houses of the Jewish notables and gave a separate performance in each one. There were some qualms

⁹ The Feast of Esther, celebrating the downfall of Haman.

in rabbinical circles concerning the validity of such proceedings, lest there be a violation of the Biblical injunction prohibiting men from wearing women's garments. The thought that a woman might actually take part did not, of course, even enter anyone's mind. As, however, the *dramatis personae* were all males, the religious authorities decided to turn a blind eye to the innovation.

The actors borrowed their clothes from those of the *kawasses* (attendants) of the consuls, who wore European clothes. Thus we behold the spectacle of Joseph and Pharaoh in European dress and with crowns on their heads . . . A dramatic moment was when Joseph passes his mother's grave on his way to Egypt as a captive. Two chairs, covered with a sheet, represent a grave. Inside the 'grave' sits 'Rachel', a youth with a pleasant, high-pitched voice. A caravan of Ishmaelites passes. Joseph breaks away from the caravan and flings himself down sobbing in front of the grave. We feel very sorry at the sight of poor Joseph being sold into slavery, and we weep with him amid the joy of Purim. Suddenly Rachel's voice issues from the grave: 'Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord.' This verse from Isaiah is supplemented by words of consolation in Yiddish: 'Her oif zu weinen un sei frehlach; geh kein Mizraim un wer a melech' ('stop weeping and be joyful; go to Egypt and be a king').

COMMUNICATIONS

Although a road had been laid between Jaffa and Jerusalem in 1869, travel along it continued to be by donkey and mule. A few years later, Ben Zion Leon, a wealthy merchant (who had participated in some

of the land-buying ventures described earlier in this Chapter), together with one Chaim Feifer, bought a carriage in Egypt and started a passenger service between Jerusalem and Jaffa. However, fares were high, and the journey uncomfortable, since the carriage had difficulty in negotiating the uneven surface of the Turkish-built highway. Meanwhile many passengers still adhered to the old mode of travel, and the carriage was used by persons too old or sick to ride an animal. As the passengers frequently had to get out and walk over particularly difficult stretches, Leon's carriage was appreciably slower than a mule. Before long, more carriages were introduced, and these were of a more suitable type for the indifferent highway. By 1885 no less than fifty carriages were plying between Jerusalem and Jaffa.

P. Cahanov, who tells us about Leon's pioneering venture, describes his arrival at Jaffa from Europe in 1876. As the ship dropped anchor, Arab boatmen swarmed up the sides, accompanied by Jewish touts.

They immediately began dropping our luggage into the boats. The sea was so stormy that the gangway could not be lowered. Each passenger in turn was therefore seated on the end of a plank over the side, while an Arab held him to prevent his slipping off. When the boat rose on the crest of a wave to the same level as the plank, the Arab boatmen pulled him off and deposited him in the bottom of the boat... There were few Jews in Jaffa, and they were indistinguishable from the Arabs as regards clothing and headgear. The Oriental Jews, from North Africa, even spoke the same language as the Arabs. The first Jews I set eyes on there, the touts, could not be told apart from Arabs by their behaviour. They mingled with

the boatmen, porters, donkey-drivers and cameleers whose raucous shouts deafened one's ears and led one to think that they were all on the point of murdering one another.

Postal communications in the last quarter of the 19th century, as described by Chayim Hamburger, were most unsatisfactory. The Turkish Post Office dealt with mail to and from Turkey, the Turkish provinces, and also America. European mail went through the so-called 'Austrian Post Office'. As, however, the Turkish Post Office did not function too well, and some letters from America failed to arrive, the more reliable Austrian Post Office was resorted to in increasing measure.

Mail from Russia—including the remittances that were the mainstay of most of the *Ashkenazi* community—was brought by the Russian packet which plied between Odessa and Jaffa. The captain would hand the mail to the agent of the shipping firm, and the addressees would go and collect their letters from him for a fee. As the agent would not accept responsibility for sending mail to Jerusalem by the thug-infested highway, and the authorities refused to allow the railway to be used for the purpose, the Jerusalem Jews made arrangements to get their letters from Russia through the Austrian Post Office. In addition, the Jerusalem Jews organised an internal mail service with Jaffa. Letters took only a day to arrive, instead of four or five by the Turkish Post Office, and the charge was a quarter of the official rate. The addresses were written in Hebrew. As the Jerusalem and Jaffa communities had grown considerably by the end of the century, this postal service was a boon. Here, again, the Austrian Post Office was used, but letters

were also sent by Jewish travellers. The Turkish authorities kept a sharp look-out for unlicensed letter-carriers, so that a sporting element of hide-and-seek entered into the matter. When the authorities caught letters conveyed in this manner, they affixed stamps of twice the prescribed denomination as a fine, and the addressees had perforce to pay if they wanted to get their letters.

CHAPTER IV

PETACH TIKVA

THE ESTABLISHMENT of Petach Tikva by a group of Jerusalem Jews in 1878 was a landmark in the life of the Yishuv, and as such it merits a chapter to itself. The experiment was shortlived: it lasted only some two years. Nevertheless, its effects were lasting, for the pioneers who undertook the venture had proved that they were capable of exchanging a parasitic existence for one of productive effort. The gap was wide, but it was bridged by a single act.

Mulabbes, as Petach Tikva and its surrounding area were originally called, lay near the upper reaches of the tiny Yarkon River. There were several springs on the land, but they had been allowed to form malarial swamps which poisoned the whole neighbourhood. The inhabitants of the village of Mulabbes, which was on low ground near the river and swamps, were worn down by the disease, and several of them succumbed to it every year. In 1878 the village was reduced to a handful of sick, blind or crippled inhabitants, and most of the land had come into the posses-

sion of two Arab merchants of Jaffa, one of whom was named Tayan, and the other Qassar.

It was on a summer's morning in 1878, we are informed by Tuvia Salomon, that a group of Jerusalem Jews went down to Jaffa to look at the land of Mulabbes with a view to founding a village there. Among them were David Gutmann, Yoel Moshe Salomon, Yehoshua Stampfer and Zerach Barnett. They spent a day inspecting the land, and the rich soil and abundance of water made a favourable impression upon them. When, however, they went into the village and saw the unhealthy pallor and emaciated appearance of the *fellahin*, some of whom were blind from eye disease, they were taken aback. In the evening they returned to Jaffa. But Yoel Salomon, who spoke Arabic fluently, decided to stay on and make further inquiries. Although he had taken to the place as much as his companions had, he felt it would be irresponsible of them to settle there before they knew what was in store for them. He closely questioned the *fellahin*, both of Mulabbes and the surrounding area, and found that the prevalent ill-health was attributed to the Yarkon itself and to the swamps in its vicinity. Owing to the lack of any control, refuse of all kinds, including carcasses of animals, was thrown into the river, while the swamps were full of mosquitoes. But it was only those who lived near the Yarkon who were affected: the villagers who dwelt further to the south were healthy. Armed with this information, Salomon returned to his companions and advised the purchase of what was believed to be a healthier site for a village further to the south, but in the same area, near the Arab village of Yahudiyeh.

Assailed by doubts as to the advisability of carrying

out their scheme, they decided to consult a Greek doctor, whom they brought to Mulabbes. He climbed into a ruined house and gazed at the sky, while Salomon, Gutmann and Stampfer stood watching him anxiously, not understanding what he was about. Tuvia Salomon carries on the tale in his own words:

After half an hour or so the doctor descended from his strange perch and said: 'The study of the climate of a locality is one of the most difficult problems in medical science. But there is one general indication which shows for certain whether a place is fit for human habitation, or whether it should be shunned. All the while I stood upon that eminence I scanned the heavens to see whether any birds were visible; but not one could I discern . . . There is corn here in abundance, and also worms and insects,—the food of birds. The air here must be evil indeed if even the birds, obedient to their ever-watchful instincts, fear to approach. This is a deadly place.'

The three remained rooted to the spot. Gutmann felt that the world had suddenly grown dark. He resolved inwardly not to heed the doctor and to conclude the purchase. But as he looked at his companions, who stood with downcast heads awaiting word from him, he dared not give utterance to his resolve. The three could not summon up courage to look at one another. They stood thus in silence for several minutes. Then Salomon muttered: 'All the same . . .'; and Stampfer said in a loud voice: 'Let us try.' Gutmann, deeply moved, fell upon the necks of his companions and wept. The others, unable to restrain their feelings, wept with him.

When the doctor approached them and saw their excited behaviour and tear-stained faces, he as-

sumed that they had bought the land before he had given his opinion and were now deploring the loss of their money. He therefore tried to console them by assuring them that it was better to lose money than to endanger life. His surprise was great indeed when he learned that, despite his expert advice, they were determined to settle on that dangerous spot, and that their tears were in no way due to fears or regrets.

The settlers finally agreed with Qassar, owner of part of the land, to buy 3,375 dunams. The transaction, which was concluded on the 30th July, 1878, was put through at the Austrian Consulate in Jaffa, and Gutmann, who was an Austrian subject, signed the contract on behalf of his companions. This was done in order to forestall any opposition on the part of the Pasha of Jerusalem, who was an ardent Turkish patriot and violently objected to land passing into Jewish hands. The settlers decided to call their future village Petach Tikva.¹

The initial group of settlers consisted of five men: Elazar Raab, his son Yehuda, Yehoshua Stampfer, David Gutmann and Yoel Moshe Salomon. They went down to Jaffa, to make their preparations, on the 10th September, and on the 3rd November settled at Petach Tikva. They began to cultivate the land collectively, with the aid of twelve span of oxen, five horses, and some donkeys. They had a well sunk, and a few weeks later water was found, an event which occasioned great rejoicing. The well brought new life to the place, and the Arabs of the neighbour-

¹ 'And I will give her her vineyards from thence and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope' (*petach tikva*). Hosea, II, 15.

hood began to frequent Petach Tikva to obtain fresh water, of which there was now an abundance. The settlers, too, were now spared the necessity of having to go all the way to the Yarkon to get water, which they had used with misgivings. There was a great desire to divide up the land immediately, but it proved impossible to carry out the necessary measurements while the earth was covered with winter vegetation. The settlers therefore had to wait till summer before they could work their individual holdings and contented themselves with tending the winter crops.

There was abundant rainfall the first winter, and the crops flourished. Although the country was afflicted with locusts that year, the fields of Petach Tikva were spared. The settlers passed their first few months in contentment and at peace with their Arab neighbours. They then set about erecting the most necessary farm buildings, apportioning part of the barn as sleeping quarters (they spent the week-days there, returning for the Sabbath to Jaffa, where their families stayed in the meantime). They did not trouble to try and secure building permits, which were certain to be refused, but trusted to luck that their activities would not be noticed by the authorities; for once a building was completed the law could do nothing about it.

A Hungarian Jew, David Regner, who had recently come to Palestine and was attracted by the venture, decided to settle at Petach Tikva. Having been employed on a large estate in Hungary, he became the settlers' agricultural expert. Regner decided that the primitive, shallow-cutting Arab plough that the settlers were using was not good enough, and persuaded Gutmann, who had charge of the administrative and

financial side of the venture, to send for ploughs from Hungary. These were duly brought; but they proved too heavy for the local oxen to draw. Larger oxen were therefore ordered from Damascus. The attempt at deep ploughing was highly successful: the crops thrived, and the Arabs were full of admiration. But when the summer set in, the Damascus oxen were unable to withstand the torrid climate of the Coastal Plain and died off. Thus ended the experiment to plough in the European manner.

The next winter began with unseasonably early rain. The Arabs, with long experience behind them, believed it presaged a spell of drought, and refrained from sowing. Regner, however, refused to heed their example and proceeded to sow. The crops came up, and although subsequent rainfall was slight, it furnished the necessary moisture. The Arabs, whose fields lay bare, took this as a sign that Providence favoured the Jews. At the end of the winter heavy rains fell, making the stream of Musrara, between Petach Tikva and Jaffa, impassable. The settlers were thus unable to get regular supplies of bread from Jaffa, and were sometimes reduced almost to starvation.

During the first summer at Petach Tikva the settlers became involved in a dispute between two tribes of bedouin who had settled on the land: the Abu-Kishq, quartered near by, and the Amir al-Harati of Wadi Hawarit (now Emek Chefer), to the north. The two tribes had had a long-standing feud and now decided to have the matter out in a pitched battle. A deputation, consisting of the Sheikh and elders of the Abu-Kishq, called upon the settlers and sought to enlist their aid. Salomon, who acted as spokesman, explained that, while the settlers were fully sensible

of the honour done to them in being asked to help, they must nevertheless decline, since they were too few to spare men from the fields. As a sign of their sympathy with the Abu-Kishq, however, they offered to provide ten sacks of rice, two of coffee and three of sugar for the fighting men. They also acceded to the Sheikh's request to take care of the tribe's flocks while the fighting was in progress. The fight duly took place, and several casualties were suffered by either side before the authorities intervened. When it was all over, the Sheikh of the Abu-Kishq came and thanked the men of Petach Tikva for their help, and from then on the tribe considered themselves the allies of the settlers.

A less pleasant episode occurred a few months afterwards, early in the first winter. Tayan, the owner of the land adjoining Petach Tikva, bore a grudge against the Jews for not buying his property and sent some of his men to graze their animals in the fields of the settlement and damage the growing crops. The Jews replied by falling upon the trespassers and locking up their animals until the damage was made good. Angry at his discomfiture, Tayan sent a force of *fellahin* armed with staves to recover the impounded animals. But the Jews met them resolutely and beat them off.

The sequel came when Mikhel Katz, who had joined Petach Tikva a short time after its foundation, was returning from Qalqiliya with a string of camels laden with seed for sowing. Ignorant of the recent clash, he passed through Tayan's land to get home by the shortest route. As he neared Petach Tikva he was set upon by Tayan's *fellahin* and manhandled so severely that he barely escaped with his life,—which

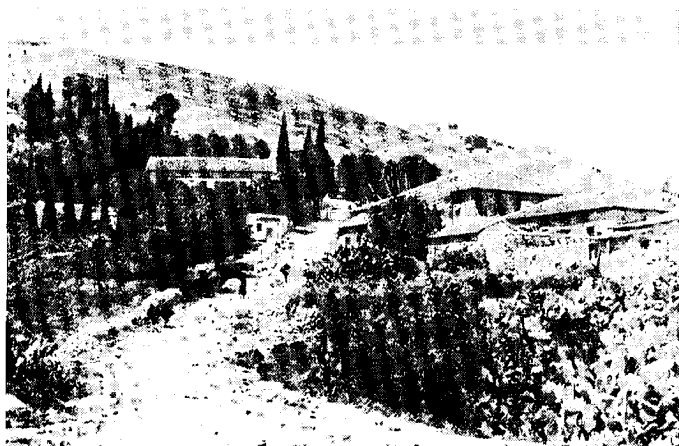
he owed to the Turkish soldier escorting him. The settlers then brought an action against Tayan. As Katz was an Austrian subject, the aid of the Austrian Consul was invoked. The situation was explained to the Consul: the object of the action was not merely to recover damages for Katz's injuries, but to establish the status of the newly-founded Jewish village; otherwise their position would become untenable. Tayan, believing the judge to be in his pocket, scoffed at the proceedings; but much to his surprise the affair was turned into a criminal case, and his hirelings were sent to jail for six months. He had to come begging to the Jews to secure their release. The case cost the settlers a pretty penny. But it proved worth while, for, having humbled the local notable, they won the respect of all the *fellahin* in the district, not one of whom now ventured to lay hands on a Jew of Petach Tikva.

The celebration of the first Passover on the land, in April, 1879, was a great event in the life of the young community. The settlers brought their families from Jaffa and they all gathered in the barn (which was empty now that winter was over) to celebrate the traditional *Seder*. Gutmann, as the oldest, sat at the head of the table, his face radiant at the thought that he had fulfilled his vow to become one of the first Jewish farmers in the Holy Land.

Addressing the company, he said that they should give thanks to the Almighty for being privileged to be the first Jewish farmers, who would be followed by many others. He believed that as a result the spirit of the Jewish people would be reborn, and that prophets and saints would once more arise to bring about the redemption of the Jewish people and regeneration

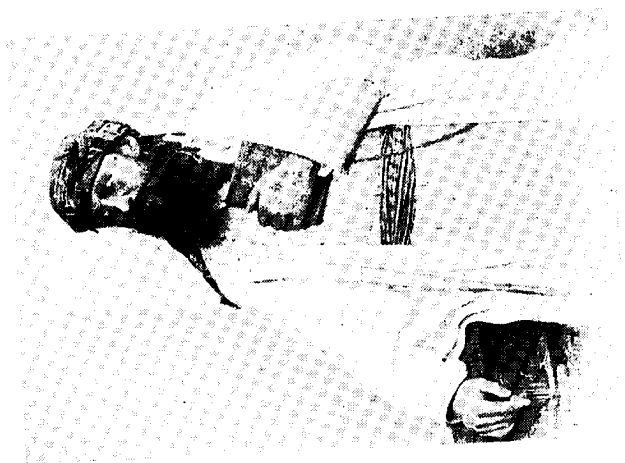


Hadera



Rosh Pinah

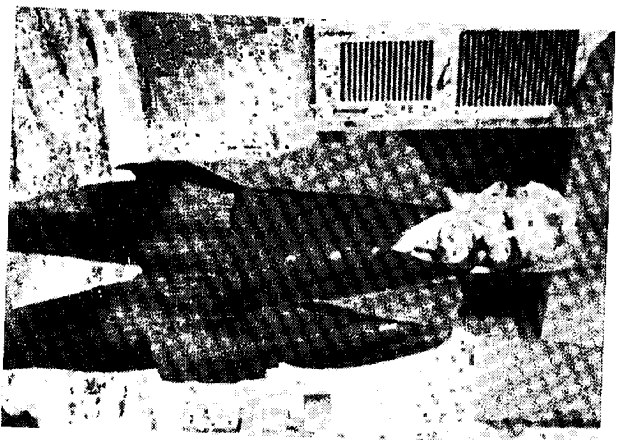




David Shub, founder of Rosh Pinah



Ychoshua Chankin



Dr. Hillel Yaffe
a Pioneer Doctor



Meir Dizengoff, later Mayor
of Tel-Aviv (1890)

of the world. He was followed by Stampfer, who pointed out that Passover—the festival of spring and freedom—had only now gained full significance. What had they felt of spring cooped up between the walls of Old Jerusalem? What had they known of freedom there? Now that they were on the land and had successfully stood up to their Arab neighbours, they felt a sense of freedom they had never experienced before. He, too, expressed the conviction that the handful of pioneers would be followed by many others, whose numbers would eventually swell to millions. The seven days of Passover were spent in contentment, and the Arabs of the neighbourhood came to Petach Tikva to wish the settlers joy of their feast.

In Jerusalem, considerable interest was evinced by the Jews in the progress of Petach Tikva, and when Yoel Salomon went to the City to spend the latter days of Passover there, he was surrounded by eager questioners. Several men offered to join the village. Salomon, however, refused to take them. The venture was still in the nature of an experiment and might incur a loss. They must await the harvest and the making up of the year's accounts. Then, any prospective settlers could examine the books and decide whether to act on their impulse. If they were still bent on joining the village, the first settlers were ready to buy an adjoining tract of land for them and help them in every possible way.

The first harvest was successful, despite the damage done to the crops, and the settlers joyfully carried out the Biblical precepts connected with the soil (e.g. leaving gleanings and a corner unharvested). Tithes, and portions for the non-resident members of the village, were taken from the harvested grain and

brought to Jerusalem, where a spacious house in Mea Shearim was cleared for their reception. A large crowd gathered to behold the arrival in Jerusalem of the produce of Jewish tillage for the first time since the destruction of the Temple. The procession consisted of a train of camels headed by several settlers, their faces tanned by the sun, riding on donkeys. They were greeted warmly, and the event was the talk of the town. The opponents of agricultural settlement were silenced, for the men of Petach Tikva had given practical proof of their ability. Moreover, they lived in security, and were even less troubled by thieves than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where burglaries were a nightly occurrence.

The settlers were now in a position to admit new members, and in the autumn of 1879 they contracted with Tayan for the purchase of over 10,000 dunams of land bordering the Yarkon. The price was to be paid in four instalments over a period of two years, the first on taking possession. Meanwhile the settlers had the site of the village properly surveyed and divided into 48 plots. The houses were to be built to form a square, with the open space in the middle for cowsheds and barns.

When the additional land was formally transferred, the new settlers came down to Petach Tikva, where they were warmly welcomed by the Jewish villagers. After the dinner given in their honour, Yoel Salomon delivered a speech in which he made the significant point that the area of land in Jewish possession in Petach Tikva was larger than the combined areas occupied by Jews in the rest of Palestine. The land would only be redeemed through agricultural settlement.

When the new settlers moved in after Passover, the founders offered them plots for houses at cost price on the first, and healthier, site. They also warned the newcomers against drinking from the Yarkon and offered them the use of their own well for nothing. But from the outset relations between the two groups became strained, and the newcomers mistrusted the motives of the founders. Most of the former settled near the Yarkon, and for a few months all went well. They built houses, began to cultivate the soil, drew an abundance of fish from the Yarkon and drank its water. As no signs of disease appeared, some of the other settlers took to visiting them, and even incautiously drank water from the Yarkon. But as summer drew to a close, the new settlers came down with the fever and several of them died. The survivors fled to the first settlement, but the disease spread there as well. So great was the toll taken by the disease that even the founders could not resist the eloquent pleas of their relatives in Jerusalem, who were anxiously concerned for their safety. Reluctantly, the remaining settlers including the stalwart Gutmann and Salomon, returned to Jerusalem, a little over two years after founding Petach Tikva. But they hoped to go back; and when the village was re-established in 1883 some of the original settlers were among its founders.

We glean further information on life in Petach Tikva from Zerach Barnett, who had come out from England to settle in Jerusalem in 1871. He was keenly interested in the plans that were afoot to establish a Jewish village, and joined Salomon, Stampfer and Gutmann in their efforts to find a suitable area of land for the purpose. When they made the expedition which ended in the purchase of the site of Petach

Tikva, Barnett relates, the participants told their families that they would be back in three days. In fact, however, they were away for thirteen. On their return they were greeted with tearful joy, for their relatives were sure they had been murdered by bedouin robbers and had already asked the police to ascertain their fate.

When the pioneers first settled at Petach Tikva, they were completely ignorant of agriculture and sought to hire a *fellah* as an instructor. But they could find no one. The Sheikh of the neighbouring village—whose friendship they had secured at the outset—offered to sell them a slave who would be in their service for the rest of his life. The thought appalled them, and they refused the offer. Eventually they found a swarthy Arab who agreed to work for them on condition that they tattooed the name of their village on his arm. This also horrified them, but Barnett wrote his name on the man's arm in ink to humour him. The Arab worked for a few weeks, till one fine morning he was gone, and the villagers' mules with him.

Once relations with the Arabs of the district were on a friendly footing, the settlers decided to bring their families from Jaffa. They put up a tent, which they divided into two, and lodged the ten families in it temporarily. They then set to work to build houses before the rains set in. All, big and little, worked with a will at making bricks out of sand and earth, and an Arab helped them in the more skilled tasks of house-building. Barnett himself fell sick with malaria and dysentery before his house was ready, and, while his wife was gone to bring a doctor from Jaffa, an Arab soothsayer nearly killed him by trying to smoke

out the demon that had supposedly entered his body. After Barnett recovered, several other settlers took ill. The house was ready in time, and Barnett and his family spent the first winter there, and in later years he recollected it with fond affection. The house of his neighbour, however, had been built almost entirely of mud and without mortar, and in the first storm it crumbled. Barnett had to take in the neighbouring family until a new house could be built for them.

The tithes and offerings from the first harvest were brought to Mea Shearim in Jerusalem, and the *Kohanim* (descendants of the priests) and *Levites* took their shares. A three-day feast was held, and heartfelt thanks were offered up to the Lord.

Although the harvest was abundant, the settlers were denied the pleasure of eating their own bread, as they had no proper flour mill. They therefore sold their wheat and bought flour from Jaffa, which, as we have seen, caused them great hardship during the heavy rains.

During the second winter the roof of Barnett's house, which was made of a mixture of sand and straw, leaked. For three nights the family had to stand in the doorway, which was the only dry spot, with Barnett holding his small daughter asleep in his arms. Several other houses let in the rain as well and threatened to disintegrate entirely. The settlers therefore decided to build stone houses. Since the law forbade the erection of houses without a special permit—which was most difficult for Jews to obtain—but was powerless to act once the roof was up, they began building two houses by night. When the work was almost done, the neighbouring Arabs informed the authorities, and a company of soldiers was sent to undo it. By dint of

a liberal greasing of palms, the settlers persuaded the soldiers to look the other way while they put a roof on one of the houses, but they were compelled to destroy the other.

The new stone house became a communal property. Arrangements had just been made to open a school there for the fifteen children of Petach Tikva, when malaria made its appearance, and four of the children took sick and died. Lack of immediate medical attention greatly handicapped the settlers in their losing fight against the fever. It was usually difficult—and during the winter floods impossible—to bring a doctor or get patients to Jaffa in time. During the floods, too, the settlements near the Yarkon was virtually marooned, so that the other settlers could not bring food and drugs. One woman there died in her hut, and some time elapsed before the fact was discovered.

Conditions had become intolerable. Barnett writes:

We thought we could overcome all ordinary difficulties, such as shortage of food, but we did not have the strength to fight the nature of the place. Many of the families were sent back to Jerusalem, and some of the farmers also began to entertain thoughts of returning, though most members of the group resolved to stay on, come what might. But the sabbatical year² was approaching, and we did not see how we could hold out. Some sent their families to Jaffa, others returned to their own places. I was firmly convinced that God would observe our straits and eventually prosper us... But all my money was gone, and without substantial investment there was no hope of succeeding and obtaining a good yield from the soil.

² Jewish law prescribes that the land must be left fallow every seventh year.

Barnett therefore returned to London (as he had done once before) to make some money in order to re-establish himself as a farmer at Petach Tikva. He wept as he went on board the ship that was to take him away from his beloved country, and remained on deck until the shore was out of sight. Then he shut himself up in his cabin for two whole days.

In 1881 nearly all the remaining settlers left Petach Tikva; but the founders did everything in their power to prevent the village from lapsing into decay. They therefore bought a piece of land at the Arab village of Yahudiyeh, a short distance away, and established a study centre there. A few watchmen were maintained at Petach Tikva to guard the farms. One man, however, Rabbi Aryeh Leib Frumkin, a noted scholar, was so attached to the settlement, that he remained there despite the adjurations of his friends. He bravely continued to live there in solitude, and from the converted cowshed that was his home conducted an active campaign through the mails for the re-establishment of Petach Tikva. The resettlement of the village not long after was largely due to his persistence.

CHAPTER V

THE REVIVAL OF HEBREW SPEECH

FROM THE heroic struggles of the pioneers of Petach Tikva we return to Jerusalem, where pioneer work of a different kind had meanwhile been going forward. It is perhaps mainly through the perseverance of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda¹ that Israel today has an efficient

¹ Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (Perlman) was born in Lithuania in

instrument of national self-expression. The physical regeneration of the Jewish people was begun by the pioneer farmers from 1878 onwards by re-forming the ties between the Jews and the soil of their ancient country. Their spiritual regeneration was begun by the pioneers of modern Hebrew literature (albeit for a different end and without realising the effect their work was destined to have) from the eighteenth century onwards, who prepared the Hebrew language to take its place in the modern world. But it was Ben-Yehuda who realised that spiritual regeneration could never be complete unless the Jews in the Land of Israel became replanted in their indigenous linguistic soil,—unless they came to speak and think in Hebrew. Today it is hard to visualise the State of Israel without Hebrew as the basis of its cultural existence and as the mortar which will bind into a homogenous community the thousands of Jews flocking to its shores.

It is no detraction from Ben-Yehuda's great achievement to point out that Hebrew was by no means a dead language in 1881. Indeed, the organism was very much alive; for ever since the destruction of the Jewish State by Rome Hebrew literary output had continued in some form in one country or another (e.g. when it declined in Moorish Spain it began to flourish in Italy, and so on). But the tongue of the Hebrew organism had atrophied, though Ben-Yehuda maintained, in the Introduction to his monumental *Thesaurus*, that Hebrew was spoken far later than is generally supposed; and at various times down the ages it was used as a medium of speech to a limited extent.

The following description of the way spoken Hebrew

1853 and came to Palestine in 1881, where he died in 1922.

was revived is taken from Ben-Yehuda's own account.

Ben-Yehuda had already turned his thoughts towards Palestine in 1881. He was in Paris at the time and lay sick in the Rothschild Hospital. There he found himself in the company of a Jewish scholar from Jerusalem, Avraham Moshe Lunz, who had recently gone blind. The two became firm friends, and Ben-Yehuda eagerly questioned Lunz about life in Jerusalem.

Needless to say, we spoke in Hebrew, and after a few conversations I grew accustomed to the pronunciation in vogue in the Land of Israel with which Lunz was familiar. He explained to me that the various communities in Jerusalem—*Sepharadim*, *Ashkenazim*, Moroccans, Caucasians and others—used the language of their countries of origin when among themselves, but did not understand the languages of the others, so that they had recourse to Hebrew on all occasions. When discussing secular matters the *Ashkenazim* also employed the *Sepharadi* pronunciation. What I heard from Lunz confirmed my belief that Hebrew could be revived in the Land of Israel.

Shortly afterwards, Ben-Yehuda set out from Vienna for Palestine accompanied by his wife. Although she had been taught no more than how to read the prayer-book, he began speaking Hebrew to her on the trip down the Danube.

Her vocabulary increased hourly. As we passed through the Iron Gates, I was so awed by the sight that I could not help exclaiming: *Ma yafeh hama-kom hazeh* ('How beautiful this place is'). My wife, who only a day or two previously had known not a word of Hebrew, rejoined: *Be-emet yafe zeh ha-*

makom ('Indeed, this place is beautiful'). Those were the first words uttered by a woman in our age in the course of a secular conversation in Hebrew as a living, spoken tongue. From then on, we switched more and more from Russian to Hebrew. When we reached Bucharest and met some of the readers of *Hashachar*,² they were amazed to hear a woman conversing with her husband in Hebrew.

Although we are mainly concerned here with the revival of spoken Hebrew, Ben-Yehuda's impressions and descriptions of his journey and arrival are too interesting and penetrating to omit.

As the ship on which he and his wife sailed from Constantinople proceeded down the Syrian coast, more and more Arab passengers, most of them tall, stalwart men, came aboard.

I must admit that my first meeting with my Ishmaelite cousins was not a joyous one. I was suddenly filled with a depressing sense of fear. I felt that they considered themselves the masters of what was once the land of my ancestors and that I, the descendant of those ancestors, was coming there as a stranger . . . and that I had no political or civic rights there . . . I was unprepared for such a feeling . . . I was suddenly broken, and regrets seemed to well up within me: perhaps all that I had planned to do was in vain and the regeneration of the Jewish people on its ancestral soil was an unreal dream . . .

It was not until he found himself at the Jewish inn of Jaffa that his depression left him. When he addressed the innkeeper in Hebrew, the latter was sur-

² A Hebrew literary periodical, published in Vienna; Lunz used to contribute Jerusalem letters to it.

prised, but replied in the same language. He knew of Ben-Yehuda, who was a contributor to the Jerusalem Hebrew periodical, *Hachavatzelet*. On going into the streets of Jaffa, Ben-Yehuda was again assailed by fear at the predominantly Arab character of the town. But, again, the feeling left him when he changed some money at a Jewish money-changer's, and accomplished the transaction in Hebrew.

On the day after their arrival the couple left for Jerusalem. The driver of the wagon was a Jew, and once more Ben-Yehuda had the satisfaction of finding someone with whom he could conduct a Hebrew conversation. In later years the wagoner was very proud of that early association with Ben-Yehuda.

Two representatives of Rabbi Yisrael Dov Frumkin, editor of *Hachavatzelet*, met the newcomers at the entrance to the city and conducted them to Frumkin's house. Ben-Yehuda was grieved to see the neglect all around and most perturbed to learn that such new building as was being done was the work of non-Jews. The attitude of the local Jews in this matter seemed strange to him: they did not mind how much the Gentiles built, as upon the advent of the Messiah it would all become Jewish property. Ben-Yehuda also records his lack of emotion on entering the walled City,—something he would previously not have believed possible.

Frumkin immediately offered to make Ben-Yehuda his assistant editor. As he intended going abroad to increase the circulation of his paper, Ben-Yehuda would be left in charge. Although the remuneration was the equivalent of only four dollars a month, he agreed to the proposal with alacrity; thus his hope of finding a means to propagate his views was realised at the outset.

Frumkin was an exceedingly pious and observant Jew. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to entrust his paper to the free-thinking Ben-Yehuda. This was because the latter, in articles he had sent from Paris the year before, had expressed the view that the requirements of the national effort prohibited schism, and that, indeed, the non-religious should make whatever concessions to the orthodox that might be necessary in order to secure unity. In this respect Ben-Yehuda was most acceptable, since Frumkin was at loggerheads with the rabbis and administrators of the *chalu-ka* who wielded the power in the community.

Ben-Yehuda's first article written in Jerusalem, in the autumn of 1881, was a diatribe against the Franco-Jewish philanthropic society, *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. Following the pogroms in Russia and Rumania that year, a movement in favour of settling in Palestine had begun among the Jews of those countries. The *Alliance*, however, announced that it would help only those Jews who wished to go to America. In view of this attitude, Ben-Yehuda's article suggested that the Jews should form a large society of their own to further settlement in Palestine.

Desiring to establish friendly relations with the leaders of the community, Ben-Yehuda called on Rabbi Yechiel Mikhal Pines, the administrator of Sir Moses Montefiore's scheme for rendering the Jerusalem Jews productive and self-supporting, to whom Frumkin was bitterly opposed. Ben-Yehuda was made welcome at his home. He was also made welcome, through the offices of a Russian-Gentile fellow-traveller to Palestine, at the Russian Consulate. The Consul, Kozevnikov by name, was a cultured man of liberal views, and assured Ben-Yehuda of his readiness to help him always.

Ben-Yehuda had arrived in Palestine just after the Jewish New Year; and as the paper did not appear during the intermediate days of the Feast of *Succot* (Tabernacles), he had an opportunity to discuss at length with Frumkin the position of the Jewish population. What he learned was not encouraging. There were about 30,000 Jews in Palestine, some 16,000 of them in Jerusalem. Sizable communities existed in Hebron, Jaffa, Safed and Tiberias, and a few hundred each in Haifa, Acre and Sidon. The Jewish population was split up into numerous groups according to countries of origin, each speaking a different language. Only the *Sepharadi* community of Jerusalem, numbering about 7,000, lived a normal life: except for 300 *chachamim* ('sages', i.e. rabbis), who were supported, the members of the community earned their own bread, mostly as craftsmen. The *Ashkenazi* community, which was about the same size, lived almost exclusively on *chaluka* and engaged in study and prayer. Nor did the Jews own much property. In Jerusalem there were three or four comparatively large synagogues and two small hospitals, and the new quarters outside the wall consisted of some 200 houses of two or three rooms, a few of them with more. Elsewhere there was little save the Mikveh Yisrael Agricultural School, the orange grove planted by Montefiore, the village of Petach Tikva, the land of Jauni (later to become Rosh Pina), and some houses in the other towns. There was, however, the comforting thought that in Jerusalem the Jews formed the majority of the population. On Sabbaths and festivals many non-Jewish as well as Jewish shops were closed. Ben-Yehuda's feeling was that the Muslim Arabs despised, rather than hated, the Jews. For the Jews were in-

capable of standing up to even the most lowly of their Arab detractors.

During *Succot* many visitors called at Frumkin's home. Ben-Yehuda was greatly taken with the dignified bearing of the *Sepharadim*—in contrast to whom the *Ashkenazim* appeared to disadvantage—and was particularly impressed by the fluent, idiomatic Hebrew, with its sonorous Oriental pronunciation, in which they spoke to him. He was also impressed by his visit to the *Chacham Bashi*—the *Sepharadi* Chief Rabbi—whose position was formally confirmed by the Turkish authorities. The *Chacham Bashi* lived in comparative opulence and had a uniformed attendant complete with sword. His state seemed splendid indeed set off by the prevailing poverty of the Jews.

The end of *Succot* was memorable for the reason that Ben-Yehuda entered into a compact with Pines. They agreed to speak only Hebrew between themselves and with anyone else who knew the language. Moreover, they were to make their households Hebrew-speaking and to do all they could to spread Hebrew speech. Although Pines did not fully keep his part of the agreement, Ben-Yehuda nevertheless attributed the greatest importance to it. For Pines was one of the mainstays of the community, and his association with Ben-Yehuda's scheme caused the Jerusalem Jews to take it seriously.

Ben-Yehuda and his wife took two rooms in the walled City. Apart from speaking Hebrew to his wife and the people he met, he saw no way of achieving his ambition until he had children to bring up in Hebrew. But he could not remain inactive till then. He had advocated, while still in Paris, that Hebrew should be used as the language of tuition in the *tal-*

mudei torah (religious schools) ; but he now saw that there was no hope of overcoming the conservatism of the men in charge of them. However, his chance came sooner than he expected. One rainy day during his first winter in Jerusalem, a man named Nissim Bechar came to see him. Addressing Ben-Yehuda in Hebrew he told him that he had come out on behalf of the *Alliance* to open a boys' school and invited him to teach Hebrew there. He readily agreed to Ben-Yehuda's stipulation that the Hebrew studies should be conducted entirely in Hebrew. Indeed, it was because of his belief in Ben-Yehuda's idea of reviving Hebrew as a spoken language that he had made the offer. As there was no financial provision for a Hebrew teacher in the new school, Bechar had to exercise some ingenuity to provide him with even a tiny salary. But Ben-Yehuda was not worried by the scant pay he received for six hours' teaching a day: there was now a school where Hebrew had become the medium of communication between teacher and pupils, and that was a notable step forward.

Ben-Yehuda was worried at the fact that he was a foreigner in his own country, and wanted to exchange his Russian for Turkish nationality.³ Frumkin tried to dissuade him from such an act, pointing out the drawbacks of being a defenceless Ottoman subject as compared with the advantages of living under the protection of a foreign Power. Ben-Yehuda fully realised what was involved, and that the welfare of the popu-

³ At the end of the first World War Ben-Yehuda was in America. When he returned to Jerusalem, he refused to travel on a Turkish passport and insisted on being given a Palestinian passport issued by the new Mandatory Government. He was the first person to hold such a document.

lation was the last thing the Government had at heart. On the other hand, there was the negative consolation that the Jews were not singled out for harsher treatment than the Arabs: all suffered alike. But the protected foreigners enjoyed a privileged existence: the Turkish law could not be invoked against them except with the agreement of their consuls. Were it not for this, and the all-powerful influence of baksheesh, it would not have been possible, Ben-Yehuda thought to make any headway in the Jewish national enterprise—not even to found a single settlement.

Russia's position in Turkey at the time was stronger than that of any other foreign Power; and though she might permit savage pogroms at home, she sedulously protected the rights of her Jewish subjects abroad. Enjoying this status and the friendship of the Russian Consul in Jerusalem, Ben-Yehuda seemed unwise indeed to become an Ottoman subject. Nevertheless, when the Government proclaimed a census and made a general offer of Ottoman nationality to all who wished to assume it, he took out Turkish papers and at the same time officially changed his name from Perlman to Ben-Yehuda. His wife paled when he told her what he had done, but bowed to the will of her husband. Frumkin, however, was outraged. Ben-Yehuda's own feelings were different:

It was over: I had got what I wanted. Now I was legally and officially a citizen of Jerusalem. I officially bore the Hebrew name of Ben-Yehuda, and it was entered in the records . . . Today there are so many Hebrew surnames that there seems nothing remarkable in what I did . . . But at the time it was a great event in my life: I felt I had been reborn. My link with the Diaspora had been severed.

The new movement in Russia and Rumania to found agricultural settlements in Palestine led Ben-Yehuda to believe that great things were about to happen, and that the Palestinian Jews would do all they could to encourage matters in this direction. But the hopes he had placed in the Jerusalem rabbis proved to be unfounded: they were in fact hostile, or at best apathetic, to the idea of modern settlement on a large scale, though at first they had concealed their hostility. Nevertheless, Jews began to stream in to the country in 1882, and it was they who laid the modest but firm foundations of the new Yishuv.

The new movement was a source of unbounded delight to Ben-Yehuda. But one feature of it disturbed him. The men who came out to buy land for prospective settlers picked on Jaffa as their headquarters. Their choice was dictated by practical reasons: they sought land in the area around Jaffa, which was also Palestine's gateway to the outside world. Ben-Yehuda urged the claims of Jerusalem as the centre of the new movement, but without success. He felt, from then on, that the ancient capital of Israel was badly neglected by the Zionist leaders. He also had a practical argument in favour of his case: undue Jewish activity would be more noticeable in Jaffa and would attract the attention of the Turkish authorities.

Ben-Yehuda proved right. The influx of a few thousand Jews into Jaffa led, a few months later, to the issue of a firm order from Istamboul for the stoppage of Jewish immigration. Jews still continued coming into the country, but only through payment of bribes to the port officials; and as the ban was more strictly applied, the rates of baksheesh soared to an unprecedented level. Eventually, however, even this

panacea failed, and several boatloads of Jews were refused permission to land at Jaffa. From then until the end of Ottoman rule in Palestine, the authorities remained opposed to Zionist activity in any form. Whatever the Jews succeeded in accomplishing in spite of such opposition was due to the employment of baksheesh and other roundabout methods. But, as Ben-Yehuda points out, it was not always possible to rely on baksheesh, 'and then we experienced dark hours when we almost gave up hope.'

However, the gloom was not altogether unrelieved. On the 31st July, 1882, six days after the proclamation of the Sultan's edict prohibiting Jewish immigration, there occurred two events: in the fields of Southern Judea a group of pioneers founded the village of Rishon Letzion; and in a dark room in Jerusalem, near the site of the Temple, Ben-Yehuda's first son was born. This was the child who was to be the subject of the experiment of bringing up a Jew wholly in the Hebrew language from birth. Ben-Yehuda regarded it as symbolic that the revival of Jewish tillage and Hebrew speech should have begun on the same day, almost at the same hour.

Although Ben-Yehuda's income amounted to the equivalent of only some 12 dollars a month, it would have been possible to maintain a part-time servant. But, despite her weakness after childbirth, his wife agreed to employ no help in order that the child's ear should not be contaminated by any non-Hebrew sound. Such extreme precautions, Ben-Yehuda admits, were not really necessary: subsequent experience showed that it was enough if the parents both spoke Hebrew for a child to acquire it as his native language, and that a servant, if a young girl, would soon pick

up enough Hebrew for household purposes. But that was something he learned after the revival of Hebrew speech had become an accomplished fact. Ben-Yehuda's wife therefore undertook the performance of all household duties unaided until her son was prattling in Hebrew.

JERUSALEM IN 1881-82

Itta Yellin, the wife of the Hebrew scholar, Professor David Yellin, was the daughter of Yechezkel Mikhal Pines. Her father had left Russia in 1878 to settle in Jerusalem, as the administrator of Sir Moses Montefiore's project. The family followed later, and arrived in Palestine in August, 1881. Itta was only twelve at the time, but she was an observant child, and in her reminiscences she paints an interesting picture of life in Jerusalem in the days when Ben-Yehuda was engaged in his revolutionary experiment to make Hebrew the everyday language of the Yishuv.

The Pines family settled in a primitively furnished dwelling in conditions very different from those they had known in Europe. At first they experienced great hardships. Soon after their arrival, Itta's two-year-old brother died of scarlet fever. The mosquitoes proved very troublesome and made sleep difficult during the warm nights of late summer. The members of the family were also afflicted with inflammation of the eyes. There were only one or two Jewish physicians, and the other medical facilities consisted of hospitals run by the French and English Missions. As they were reluctant to have recourse to those institutions, the Pines family made use of specifics recommended by their women neighbours. The remedies—which included compresses of arak and water, or tea-leaves—

did no harm; but the inflammation used to return every summer for years to come. Another source of trouble was malaria. Itta herself suffered from it intermittently until she was married.

The Pines family quickly learned how to keep house in the Jerusalem style. Two months after their arrival, they moved to a new dwelling in the recently-built Even Yisrael quarter outside the walled City. It was a luxurious home by contemporary standards, for it contained four rooms and a kitchen outside; whereas it was customary even for large families to make do with two rooms. There were also two cellars, where stocks of several commodities—charcoal, wine, spirits, olives and sesame oil—were laid in for the year. A year's supply of wheat was also laid in, but it was stored in large wooden crates in the house itself. The wheat was usually obtained from bedouin in the Hauran, where the best variety was cultivated.

The way in which wheat was converted into bread was as arduous as it was primitive. First the grain had to be cleaned of the tiny stones which collected in it, and then it was washed and dried. When ready for grinding, it was taken to the mill in the City. All the womenfolk of the family, including the little girls, assisted in the grinding, together with two Moroccan (Jewish) woman helpers. The latter also compounded, from flour and eggs, a preparation known as *kuskusu* in the form of small grains. From this, in turn, was made a kind of pudding which was dried in the sun. The *kuskusu* was made for eating during winter, when eggs were dear. At the end of summer, housewives also laid in a stock of eggs, which were packed in slaked lime in large earthenware jars.

The flour, after coming back from the miller's, was

sifted into three grades. The finest was used for baking white Sabbath loaves (*challot*) and biscuit. The coarse flour was used for cooking, and the medium, darkish flour for ordinary bread. The sifters sat on the floor, upon rugs covered with sheets, and their operations caused a film of fine white dust to settle upon everything in the house.

The wine and spirits were also made at home, and in the Pines household it was the mother who superintended the proceedings. Accompanied by two male relatives, she would go to the market and buy several hundred kilograms of choice Hebron grapes. The grapes were taken into the cellar, where they were removed from the stalks and placed in large earthenware jars. They were then emptied into large brass washpots, and the men, after carefully washing their feet, trod them. The juice was then poured into the earthenware jars to ferment,—a process which took about a month. Four or five different kinds of wine, in addition to brandy, were produced, and Mrs. Pines was very proud of her achievement. Charcoal was the only fuel in use at the time: the kerosene stove had not yet reached Jerusalem. It was used for cooking and, in braziers, for heating the rooms in winter.

Itta had three sisters, one a little older and two younger than herself, and the question of their education greatly worried their parents. The only school in Jerusalem at the time to which they could have gone was so primitive that it did not come into consideration. Finally, on the recommendation of the Russian Consul, Pines found a private tutor, but as he proposed marriage to one of the girls, he was soon dismissed. Eventually, a young man, a native of Jerusalem who had studied in Germany, was engaged as

a tutor. But this arrangement did not last long either. As soon as the ultra-Orthodox Jews learned of what was taking place, they threatened to impose a ban upon the family unless the studies were discontinued. They even went so far as to station watchers at the windows to make sure that the teacher had not got into the house unobserved. As a result, the girls had to go without schooling.

Itta describes life in the Ben-Yehuda household as being on the border of penury. Ben-Yehuda himself suffered from a chest complaint and worked very hard for a pittance. His wife, Devora, helped make ends meet by sewing, but their combined income hardly sufficed to enable them to live in moderate comfort, especially after their son was born. At one time they took in as boarders a group of Biluite pioneers who had come to Jerusalem to learn crafts. Fortunately, Ben-Yehuda had a friend, a Russian-Christian, with whom he had studied and from whom he received assistance. Devora worked very hard, without a word of complaint. She used to content herself with the simplest fare while she fed her husband on milk, meat, and other expensive foods which his poor health required him to have. Itta visited the house very often, for she took Hebrew lessons from Ben-Yehuda.

The Alliance school, which had just been opened and in which Ben-Yehuda taught, aroused the antagonism of the extremist rabbis, and they placed a ban upon it. The families of the children who attended the school—among the children was David Yellin, Itta's future husband—suffered not a few annoyances as a result. It took some time before Rabbi Shmuel Salant and the *Sepharadi* Chief Rabbi were able to get the ban revoked. Nissim Bechar, the principal of

the school, was a man of great courage and integrity of purpose, and refused to be deterred by the unreasonable opposition he encountered. A *Sepharadi* born in Palestine, he had studied in France. He was at the same time a traditional and scholarly Jew and a man of general culture.

Tolerance was not one of the marked characteristics of the *Ashkenazi* community at the time. It is therefore not hard to imagine the unpopularity of the Pines womenfolk for refusing to adopt the local style of dress. The only other family that ventured to dress in the European style was that of Herzberg, an assimilated Jew who administered an orphanage founded by German Jews. But it was easier for the Herzbergs, since they lived apart in a spacious villa with a large garden outside the walled City and had few direct dealings with the local community.

Another display of intolerance occurred in connection with the activities of Itta's father. Pines was eager to promote any constructive enterprise, and had taken a prominent part in the Petach Tikva venture. When a rich Jew from Boston named Marcus came to him and expressed a wish to found some useful institution in memory of his wife, he readily agreed to help. Pines' suggestion, which Marcus accepted, was to set up a combination of trade school and *Yeshiva*, which he was prepared to administer, and which would accustom young Jerusalem Jews to doing without *chaluka* support. But no sooner was the project launched than the extremist faction, of which the ringleader was the wife of Rabbi Yehoshua Diskin, ordered Pines to surrender the key of the institution on pain of being placed under a ban,—a penalty that would be visited upon his family and anyone else

connected with the institution. There was also a threat of physical violence. Pines, however, resolved to defy the extremists, although most of the students stayed away out of fear. If the new movement of immigration had not begun at that time, bringing more people with liberal views to Jerusalem, the position of the Pines family would have been untenable. Even so, it was far from enviable. Itta's mother's health suffered as a result, 'and it was not pleasant for us girls to hear the abuse hurled at us when we walked through the streets, such as "Here come the apostates: keep away from them" !

CHAPTER VI

RISHON LETZION

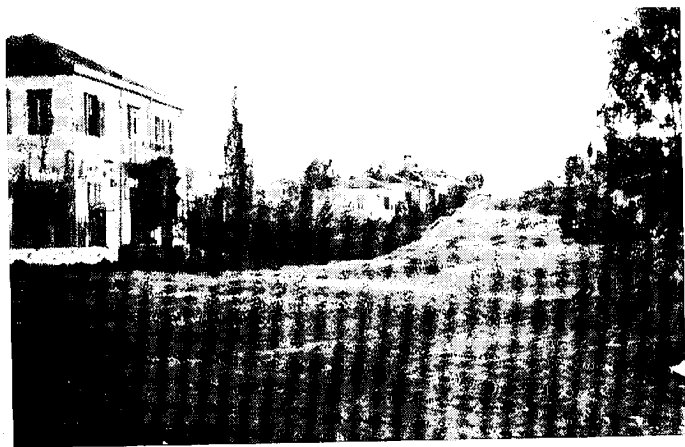
WITH THE establishment of Rishon Letzion in 1882 we enter upon the new era of Jewish settlement which continues unbroken down to the present. There were great difficulties and hardships, especially in the early days, and not a few set-backs. But the pioneers persisted in their task, and by their patient toil and devotion laid the foundations upon which the State of Israel was to arise sixty-six years later.

The story of Rishon Letzion's beginnings is told here by Zalman David Levontin, who subsequently became Director of the Anglo-Palestine Bank.

The year 1882 saw an influx of European Jews who wanted to settle on the land. They were, however, unfamiliar with conditions in Palestine and fell into the hands of unscrupulous members of the Jaffa community who hoped to profit by their inexperience.



Beertuvia, 1920



Rehovot, 1913



Herzl in Jaffa



Herzl in Rehovot

Seeing that the whole movement was liable to peter out if things continued in this manner, Levontin and his associates decided to set up a committee in Jaffa to organise settlement. Newcomers, on arrival, would apply to the committee, which would ascertain what land was available for settlement and, when a sufficiently large group of settlers had collected, effect its purchase. The committee was duly formed and given the name of *Vaad Chalutzei Yesud Hamaala*, and Pines, who was one of its initiators, drew up the rules governing its activities. The first meeting was held in March, 1882.

The committee got to work in earnest with the arrival from Russia of Yosef Feinberg, who had brought a recommendation from Lilienblum (a leading figure in the early days of Zionism) and who became one of its most active members. Levontin and Feinberg began their activities by undertaking an expedition to survey the land available for settlement. Their first stop was at the house of a Christian-German settler at Wadi Hunein (where Ness Tziona was established five years later). From there they went southwards to Isdud, where they were hospitably received by an Armenian miller. On arrival at Gaza, they were made welcome by a Christian missionary named Shapiro. The missionary was highly respected throughout the district, and such was his influence that he could summon the Pasha of Gaza to his house whenever he wished. Shapiro—as his name suggests—was a converted Jew. He proved most sympathetic to the aspirations of Levontin and Feinberg and did his best to help them. Sending for one of the tribal sheikhs of the Negev, he bade him take them to his domain and show them what land was available there. From the

Negev, Levontin and Feinberg toured the hill country around Jerusalem. After completing their trip, they considered the various possibilities and decided in favour of the Gaza district. The soil there was good, and large areas could be bought cheaply. In addition, the local bedouin were friendly and would not resent Jewish settlers.

While in Jerusalem, Levontin and Feinberg went to see Professor Hofmann, who had established four German Templar colonies (in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Sarona and Haifa). The founders of these colonies were members of a German religious sect who believed in the Biblical prophecies that the Children of Israel would one day return to their own border. Hofmann recounted the difficulties and hardships experienced by the colonists, and explained how their faith and attachment had enabled them to prevail over all obstacles. This made Levontin and Feinberg realise that the Jewish settlers, too, must be inspired with an ideal if they were to succeed.

In the summer, several Jews arrived from Russia who knew Levontin. Among them was a relative of his, Zvi Levontin, a wealthy man who, having no children, wished to establish some constructive enterprise in Palestine to perpetuate his name. He had come out at Zalman Levontin's invitation and agreed to his suggestion of buying an area of land and re-selling it to settlers at cost price. A small group of prospective settlers was formed including (in addition to Zalman Levontin and Feinberg) Yehoshua Chan-kin, who was to play a leading role in redeeming the soil of Israel for the next half-century. They decided to look for an area of land suitable for a settlement of about thirty families: the rate of immigration had

slowed down, and it would be very difficult to find a larger number of settlers. For this reason they had to abandon the original idea of establishing a large settlement in the Gaza area, where security called for a more considerable population, and decided to found a modest village within easy distance of Jaffa.

Levontin and his friends secured the help of Yosef Navon, a *Sepharadi* Jew in Jerusalem, and Chayim Amzaleg¹ to deal with prospective Arab vendors on their behalf, since they were unfamiliar with the intricacies of land buying in Palestine. After two transactions fell through for one reason or another, a suitable area was found to the south of Beit Dajan, off the Jaffa-Jerusalem highway. Although Levontin was not enthusiastic about it, he was persuaded by the others, and finally agreed to buy it. The area, which consisted of 3,340 dunams, was called Ein, Kara (identified with the Biblical Ein Hakore). Negotiations for completing the purchase were well under way when the authorities imposed a ban on mass settlement by Russian and Rumanian Jews. The ban was applied even in this case, though the number of people involved was very small; and it was only circumvented with the help of Amzaleg, who bought the land in his own name and gave the real purchasers unofficial title-deeds, written in Hebrew, for their respective shares. Levontin and his group took half the land. The owner of the other half, Zvi Levontin, agreed to let six poor families have 330 dunams out of his share. The price was to be paid up in five

¹ Amzaleg, a *Sepharadi* Jew, was British Vice-consul in Jaffa and a man of considerable local influence. He had been interested in the promotion of Jewish settlement since the foundation of Petach Tikva four years earlier.

years, but instead of taking the money he devoted it to the erection of a communal building, which was to house a synagogue and school.

Eventually the settlers were ready to go on the land. Some half a dozen men set out from Jaffa with a cart and two horses. On the cart they loaded tents and essential articles of furniture and household equipment, and that same evening camped on a hillock on their own land. Levontin decided to call their future village Rishon Letzion ('First to Zion'), and by that name it has been known ever since.

The initial difficulty of obtaining permits to build was overcome with comparative ease. The land was registered in the name of Amzaleg, the British Vice-consul, and the Turkish authorities were anxious to avoid any unpleasantness on that score. They therefore took the convenient course of looking the other way until the houses were up.

After the preliminaries had been completed, most of the settlers went back to Europe to liquidate their affairs and bring out their families, leaving Levontin and a few others to begin laying out vineyards and plantations, dig wells, make paths, hew stones for building and get Arab labourers to work erecting houses. No one reading this description, Levontin writes, even if he had performed similar tasks in his own country,

can imagine the difficulty with which such work was beset in Palestine for a Jew as yet unacquainted with the ways of the inhabitants and ignorant of their language; what it meant for a man unaccustomed to such a life to have to dwell in a tent day and night, to wait for a pitcher of water to be brought from a place half an hour's distance

away, to eat unwashed vegetables, to work all day and keep watch at night . . . Only we, the members of our group, appreciate how hard it was. We know that it was only by dint of remarkable courage that we survived all our tribulations and adventures, and that we are now able to live in our own houses with our own fields and vineyards.

At this stage Levontin organised the group on collective lines. The land had to be tilled collectively, and each member was required to put into a common pool a sum of money proportionate to the size of his share of the land. Everyone received the same daily wage out of the pool. Although this procedure entailed some loss, Levontin thought it was worth while, and attributed to it the ultimate success of the venture. The wages were an incentive to work, and it developed upon the community to provide tents, horses and water-carts for the settlers. As a result of the introduction of this system, nearly all the settlers were on the spot before their houses were built, and they kept together until the village was properly established.

Relations between Rishon Letzion and its Arab neighbours were soon put to the test. One night, during the early winter of 1882, Levontin was awakened by the watchman on duty, who told him that Arabs were grazing their flocks on a sown field belonging to Rishon Letzion. He immediately collected half a dozen men, including his Arab servant, distributed weapons (as there were not enough firearms, scythes and sticks had to be taken as well) and got out the horses. The party galloped off in pursuit of the intruders—who had taken to their heels on hearing the hue and cry—and soon caught up with them and

took two of their number prisoner together with five of their animals. The party returned in triumph to Rishon Letzion and locked up the Arabs with their animals. Next morning, a deputation of elders from the near-by village of Sarafand waited on Levontin. They begged for the release of the prisoners, but Levontin sternly told them that they must be punished for wantonly damaging the sown fields. If this incident were passed over, further acts of the same kind would be sure to follow. The guilty men must be taken to court and punished for their offence. The elders begged him to show mercy: they would pay for the damage incurred. But Levontin remained adamant. He had a pair of horses harnessed to a cart, placed the prisoners in it, and made ready to set out for Jaffa. At this the elders went down on their knees and renewed their entreaties. Levontin, who had not really wanted to carry out his threat, finally relented. Since he wished to demonstrate to the Arabs the goodwill of their Jewish neighbours, he would overlook the matter. The elders, however, must sign a guarantee that they would accept responsibility for any further trespass. This they readily agreed to do, and affirmed their desire to live in harmony with the Jews, whom they regarded as brothers. As a result of the manner in which this matter was handled, Levontin writes, 'we suffered no loss from that day on... and our brothers live in peace and amity with their Arab neighbours'.

The sinking of a well was a vital necessity, for every drop of water had to be carried a considerable distance. The settlers were advised to dig for water on the hillock where they were building their houses, and they proceeded to do so during the summer of

1882. As, however, there was not so much as a sign of water at a depth of 30 metres, they gave up the attempt and began digging in a more low-lying spot. But in the meantime the population was growing; workers came to build houses, and the demand for water increased, making it necessary to have more transport facilities in addition to the horse-drawn water-cart. Accordingly, the settlers bought two camels and harnessed them to a cart. At first the camels proved refractory; but eventually they were cudgelled into obedience, and took the cart into the Arab village of Beit Dajan to fetch water. The sight aroused the astonishment of the Arabs: they had never seen camels in harness before, and marvelled at the innovation introduced by the Jews.

The digging of the second well continued for six months. Every day the settlers, as they passed by, would question the workers on their progress. One day in spring, when a depth of 40 metres had been reached, damp clay was struck. All the inhabitants gathered at the spot to await the expected moment when water would be found. After a while, word came up the shaft that there was water at the bottom. Great was the jubilation as the first pailful was drawn to the surface.

THE FIRST VILLAGE HEBREW SCHOOL

Rishon Letzion was a pioneer village in more ways than one. It was, for instance, the first Jewish village where Hebrew became the spoken language. David Yudelovitz, a Biluite,² had spent a while in Jerusalem, where he had been closely associated with Ben-

² See the next Chapter.

Yehuda; and in 1885 he was appointed a teacher in the Rishon Letzion school. He writes:

The influence of Ben-Yehuda, the prophet of the Hebrew revival, coloured my whole being. When I found myself confronted with so important a task as that entrusted to me in Rishon Letzion, I devoted myself to the fight to make Hebrew the language of the boys and girls in school, out of doors, in their homes and everywhere.

It was a difficult task for several reasons. Everyone—young and old—spoke Yiddish, Ladino, Russian or Rumanian,—anything but Hebrew. The parents were of the old school and were not easily reconciled to modern methods of education for their children: they were averse to anything new. The Hebrew language, which was to be revived, was poor. It lacked the words for common articles and concepts like towel, socks, sleeve, seriousness, plate, handkerchief, interesting, postal order, egoism, trip, progress, date, pin, interview, mobilisation, apathy, and many others evolved during the succeeding half-century. We were only semi-articulate; and sometimes a foreign word was bound to creep in to explain something. Yet the teacher was always urging the pupils to use Hebrew on every possible occasion . . .

Yudelovitz succeeded in evolving a method of teaching in Hebrew, but he was greatly handicapped by the lack of text-books. There were some half-dozen books in Hebrew on mathematics, geography and science, but they were ponderous works which presented difficulty even for adults and so were entirely unsuited to school-children. Accordingly, he discussed with Mordekhai Lubman (who was first principal of the Rishon Letzion school, and then supervisor of the

schools at Rishon Letzion, Petach Tikva and Ekron³) the compilation of Hebrew text-books.

Lubman, however, felt it his duty towards Baron de Rothschild's administration to foster the study of French. Moreover, he was not prepared to brave the opposition of the Baron's officials and the children's parents. After the discussion Yudelovitz himself almost despaired; but he persisted. It was agreed that the question of the younger children should be left to the discretion of the individual teachers, but that the older children must undoubtedly be taught in Hebrew. Lubman was prevailed upon to help supply Hebrew text-books, and wrote an elementary science book. Yudelovitz compiled a school geography and prepared lessons on the history of science. Another teacher, named Rosin, translated a book on general history, and Ben-Yehuda wrote a history of the Jewish people. Several other teachers were drawn into the scheme, and more text-books followed for the study of the Hebrew language and grammar, the Bible, and arithmetic. These text-books enabled Yudelovitz to realise his ambition of making Hebrew the language of tuition in all school subjects. It was from such modest beginnings that the future Hebrew school system evolved.

HOW THE VINE CAME TO RISHON

According to the reminiscences of an early pioneer, Mikhal Zalman Puchatchevsky, it was the introduction of viticulture that saved the Jewish settlements.

³ The Jewish villages had by then come under the administration set up for their promotion by Baron Edmond de Rothschild. Yudelovitz succeeded Lubman as principal of the Rishon Letzion school.

A few settlers, on their journeys between Jaffa and Rishon Letzion, had noticed some vines planted by Arabs in the sands near Mikveh Yisrael. Recalling descriptions of ancient Israel, when each man dwelt under his own vine, they helped themselves to one or two green slips and planted them in their own holdings, little thinking what consequences their action was destined to have. The slips took root and developed into flourishing vines.

When the settlers began work at Rishon Letzion, they sowed cereals and proceeded to lay out sums for public amenities in anticipation of a handsome return on their crops. But, although some of them were familiar with farming in the Diaspora, their efforts ended in failure; for they did not know the simple, but basic, fact that the soil of Rishon Letzion was unsuited to cereal crops.

The village was in a bad way, and the settlers began to fear that it would be overtaken by the same fate as Petach Tikva. However, help came from an unexpected source. The interest of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, the Jewish millionaire philanthropist of Paris, had been won for the cause of Jewish settlement in Palestine (though not on national grounds: his concern was to enable Jews who had to leave Russia to become re-established in productive occupations in other countries, among which he included Palestine), and he took over the recently founded villages and made himself financially responsible for them. He accordingly sent out a commission of agricultural experts to Rishon Letzion to investigate possibilities. The position looked hopeless: there seemed to be no way of reconstituting the village on a sound basis. The experts were on the point of giving up, when

they accidentally discovered the vines that had been planted with so little thought for their significance. Coming from France, where viticulture is one of the main branches of agriculture, they immediately realised the potentialities of winegrowing for Rishon Letzion. The settlers had never thought along these lines, for they were familiar only with the wheatfields of Russia.

The experts returned to Paris and recommended the development of viticulture in Palestine to Rothschild, who agreed with alacrity. A hum of activity followed in Rishon Letzion. The settlers prepared ground and began planting vines. There was no system or forethought in their work. They mixed different varieties and spaced the plants wrongly, for they had no better example to follow than that of the Arab winegrowers. Nor did they have the least idea how they would dispose of the vintage. Disappointment inevitably resulted, but the settlers persevered, and learned from their mistakes; and soon Rishon Letzion boasted thriving vineyards that could compare with those of the traditional winegrowing countries.

When Rothschild learned of the success of the experiment, he bought an additional stretch of land to the west of Rishon Letzion, and plots were sold to new immigrants. The population of the village grew, and the newcomers included people of means who established themselves without financial help. They set to work enthusiastically, and within a short time transformed the new land into thriving vineyards. This further success induced Rothschild to try and improve methods of cultivation still more. He therefore secured the services of a French professor of viticulture, who came out to Rishon Letzion, where

he was greatly impressed by the achievement of the settlers and predicted a great future for the wine industry. The expert, however, was far from satisfied with the methods of cultivation employed. These had to be changed, and new varieties introduced which would enable Rishon wines to compete on the world market. As the vineyards of Europe were afflicted at the time by phylloxera, the expert sought elsewhere for uncontaminated plants, and eventually found some on the estate of the Maharajah of Kashmir. The precious plants duly arrived from India in good condition, and the local varieties were greatly improved with their help. Grafting began in the spring of 1889; and as the settlers sat down to the task, they were surprised to see an engineer and several assistants surveying part of the vineyard where they were at work. This was the first step to the erection, at Rothschild's initiative and expense, of the Rishon Wine-cellars, today famous the world over.

CHAPTER VII

BILU

THE BILUITES ON THE LAND

THE FIRST *Aliya*—as the wave of immigration between 1882 and 1891 is called—largely bore the impress of the Bilu pioneers; indeed, they exercised a profound influence upon the spirit of all subsequent pioneering. A society numbering several hundred members had been formed among Jewish students in Russia to foster settlement in Palestine. The society, which took as its name the initial letters of a verse

from the Bible,¹ evolved an ideology based on social justice. A model village was to be established which would pave the way for others of the same kind.

Fewer than thirty Biluites actually came out to Palestine, and Gedera, the village they founded, did not conform to the proposed pattern. Nevertheless, the Biluites made their mark; for they were the first pioneers in the modern sense,—Jews who came to Eretz Yisrael out of conviction, and gave up material comforts and the amenities of civilised existence to labour in a virtual wilderness. Unlike the majority of the other immigrants of their time, they had to a large extent been assimilated to Russian culture and thrown off the restraints of the traditional Jewish way of life in small, closed communities. They had intended to seek salvation for their people through full participation in Russian life, and for themselves by completing their university studies and entering the liberal professions, which would assure them of a secure and comfortable existence. The pogroms, which broke out with startling suddenness in 1881, had dashed their hopes, and disillusionment was in a few cases directed into the positive channel of regenerating the Jewish people in Palestine. But those few—very few—were to pave the way for a nation.

The Biluites came out to Palestine in two groups within a few weeks of each other, to be followed later by another small group. They were not easily assimilated by the other settlers and had to struggle hard for the privilege of toiling for a pittance. We go to the diary of Chayim Chissin for an account of their early experiences.

¹ *Beit Yaakov Lehu Venelcha* ('O House of Jacob, come let us go'—Isaiah II, 5).

Chissin and his companions arrived in Jaffa on the 10th August, 1882. The restrictions against Jewish immigrants were already in force, and Chissin describes the pathetic sight of aged Jews prevented from entering their beloved land to spend their dying days there, though they had reached its very threshold. The Biluites were also denied entry at first, and it was only through the efforts of Zalman David Levontin on their behalf that they were able to land. The newcomers went straight to the house taken by the first group of Biluites (who had arrived six weeks earlier) among the orange groves on the outskirts of Jaffa. The vanguard consisted of thirteen young men and one young woman. The house had two rooms and a porch. It was rudely furnished: the table was formed of planks resting on boxes, and the Biluites slept on the floor. Everything, however, was kept in perfect order, and the place was scrupulously clean. Nine members of the first group had obtained work at the *Alliance Israélite* Agricultural School at Mikveh Yisrael, where they obtained a pittance of one franc in return for a hard day's work. Three others were ill in hospital at the time. These wretched earnings had to suffice for board and lodging for the entire group, for the maintenance of a voluminous correspondence, and for trips to Jerusalem and the new Jewish settlements on Bilu affairs.

The arrival of the newcomers was celebrated by a gala evening meal of two courses, instead of the usual one. It consisted of bean and potato soup, and rice pudding. The combined groups now comprised 21 members, two of them girls. The men slept on the porch. Although the men who had worked that day were tired out, talk went on till past midnight.

The newcomers were given three days' grace before they went to work. This is how Chissin describes his introduction to farm work in Palestine:

I have not written for ten days: I have been physically incapable of it. My hands are blistered and congested with blood, and I cannot straighten my fingers. While I was in Russia, I dreamed of working eight hours a day and devoting the rest of my time to things of the mind. But how can one's brain absorb anything when one's back is near to breaking and one is overcome by dreadful fatigue,—when all one wants to do on returning from work is to bolt one's supper and fling oneself down and sleep?

On my first day of work I got up at five, the hour of sunrise, as work began at six. We did not drink tea in the morning. After arranging our bedding we grabbed a loaf of bread apiece. Although most of us could not eat so early, some arrived at our place of work with only a quarter of a loaf left. Twenty minutes after we set out we were at Mikveh Yisrael . . . Founded in 1870, Mikveh Yisrael had an area of 1,800 dunams. A school was to have been set up there to teach Jewish boys farming, and they were later to have been provided with farms. But the original intention has been forgotten, and now the place is just a farm with a 'school' which the pupils attend without acquiring any specialised knowledge, and on leaving which they are fit only for unskilled work. The farm consists mostly of citrus groves and vineyards . . . About 40 Arab day-labourers work there, apart from 60 employees and pupils. In summer work starts at 6 a.m. and ends at 6.30 p.m. There is an hour's break between noon and 1 p.m. . . Our group had come to an arrangement with Hirsch, the principal of the school, whereby we were not to work more

than eight hours a day,—from 6 to 10 a.m., and from 2.30 to 6.30 p.m.

We took our hoes, filled the *jarra* (large earthenware pitcher used by the Arabs) with water, rolled up our sleeves and got down to work under the supervision of the foreman. We had to dig up the ground to a depth of about 30 centimetres and remove all weeds, together with their roots. We all stood in a row. I had not the faintest notion of what I was expected to do, or of what it was all about. Still, I raised my hoe and began bringing it down onto the earth at all angles. In a little while blisters developed. My hands started bleeding, and the pain was so excruciating that I had to lay down the hoe. But I immediately felt ashamed of myself. 'Is this how you mean to show that the Jews are capable of manual labour?' I asked myself. 'Are you really unable to come through this decisive test?' I took new heart, picked up the hoe again, and despite the stinging pain hoed for two solid hours, though it nearly killed me. I then sat down exhausted. After that I could do nothing for a whole day...

For the next few days, Chissin felt depressed. The pain in his back, caused by working in a stooping position, caused him agony; but gradually he became used to the work, and he was encouraged by the way the other Biluites had accustomed themselves to their new mode of life. Even so, things were far from easy:

Lighter tasks, such as laying out vegetable beds, planting, picking fruit or watering are not given to us. We are made to hoe all the time. The foreman keeps us at it relentlessly: he does not let us relax for a moment. He was instructed to treat us like that by Hirsch, who wants to drive the 'mad-



A Jewish Watchman



Founding Members of Hashomer



The Meeting at which it was decided to found Tel Aviv, 1909



Merchavia, 1913

ness' out of us and make us leave the place. Every day he stands behind the trees, watching, and then suddenly appears at our side. He simply cannot believe that Russian Jews (for whom their French co-religionists have a profound contempt), and intelligent men at that, can in all seriousness do manual labour.

From Mikveh Yisrael, the Biluites went to Rishon Letzion. Matters there had become critical. The drilling of the second well was costing far more than anticipated, and it was not yet finished. Meanwhile several of the wealthier settlers could no longer carry their share of the expenses. There were six poor families to be supported; houses had to be built for the approaching winter; and livestock and implements had to be bought. Yosef Feinberg was accordingly sent to Europe to obtain a loan. As he was away some time, and there was no news of him, dissatisfaction increased among the settlers. Part of the land had to be mortgaged to provide for daily expenses. The settlers split into two groups. The liberals, who were in a minority, rallied round Levontin. The conservatives, who were joined by the poorer settlers, opposed the liberals and levelled all kinds of accusations against their leader. The collective broke up, and the individual members began to be concerned only about their own welfare. The poorer settlers were placed in a particularly difficult position, as there was no one to care for their interests. The opposition group demanded the division of the land among the settlers. But, when it was surveyed, it proved to be 50 dunams short of the supposed figure, which increased the dissatisfaction still further. To encourage the settlers, Levontin built a house, and four others followed his

example; but matters still did not improve. It looked as if his dream of establishing a model village composed of progressive inhabitants was doomed to fail.

In November, 1882, Feinberg returned. Baron de Rothschild had agreed to lend the settlement 30,000 francs² and promised to send out an agricultural expert. Hirsch (of Mikveh Yisrael) was authorised to disburse the money as he saw fit and was also instructed to transfer the Biluities to Rishon. Levontin was particularly pleased at this last decision, as he considered that the Biluities would be an eminently desirable element: they were young, good workers and on a high intellectual level, and they would provide a counterpoise to the conservatives. The Biluities accordingly moved to the settlement, fully determined to work hard and demonstrate what a closely-knit, harmonious group could do.

Early in 1883, the settlers began to sow, choosing barley as their main crop. The Biluities, too, tilled part of the land with the aid of two horses and a plough they had managed to acquire. The settlers disregarded the warning of the Arabs that it was too late to sow, and that the land was not suitable for barley. With the aid of European ploughs (which the local horses could scarcely pull) they fondly hoped to show the primitive local inhabitants what superior methods could achieve despite their inexperience in farming. But even the French expert, who had come out in the meantime, was unfamiliar with conditions in Palestine. Throughout the winter, how-

² He gave the money anonymously and maintained his anonymity for some years. He was commonly referred to as the 'Well-known Philanthropist' but his identity was an open secret.

ever, they lived in high hopes. When the harvest approached the extent of their error became apparent.

The position of the Biluites in Rishon was undefined for the time being. They worked as a group under the guidance of the French expert on projects of a communal nature: they dug ditches and foundations, planted rows of trees, and also built three two-storeyed houses for themselves. Their living conditions improved considerably: they were able to exchange their tattered rags for proper clothes, and could indulge in the luxury of a piece of salted herring for breakfast. They even tasted meat occasionally. Such was their prevailing mood that they sang as they went to and from work. In the evenings, they would arrange talks on Jewish history, agriculture and other subjects, and they began to learn Arabic. Their hut became a social centre, especially for the youth.

Neighbouring Arab shepherds frequently came, even in broad daylight, to graze their flocks on the sown fields. On such occasions the whole village would turn out to drive them off, after giving the intruders a thrashing and impounding one or two of their animals. Similar incidents would occur at night. As soon as the trespassers were detected, all the inhabitants would be quietly alerted, and the young men would stealthily set out on horseback, accompanied by the older men on foot. After the Arabs had been disposed of, the pursuers would return singing to the village, where the womenfolk would be waiting to receive them, their faces full of admiration. The fines collected from the Arabs for trespassing were devoted to buying arms. In their brushes with the Arabs, the numerical advantage did not always lie with the settlers, who sometimes took a drubbing themselves. Chissin reflects:

When I see the settlers engaged in a tussle with the Arabs, I often ask myself: Are these the Jews who in their countries of domicile endured all kinds of insults and degradations without complaint? Where is the supposedly 'innate' fear which many Jews consider to be a feature of their people, and which they defend on the ground that the Jews abhor physical violence?

One of the Biluites had to go and bathe in the hot springs of Tiberias, as he was suffering from a serious complaint in the joints of his hands. Chissin describes, *en passant*, the lack of all accommodation at that now famous health resort. In spring and autumn the fields around the hot springs were covered with the tents of sufferers from all over Syria and Palestine. There was, however, not a single doctor in the town,—no one to consult as to how often a person should bathe or at what temperature the water should be to cure any particular ailment. The bathing establishment was dirty and had no facilities. People came out of their baths hot and weakened and had to stand on a cold stone floor in a draughty room. As a result, some patients came away from Tiberias in a worse state than the one which had brought them there.

In April, 1883 (as we saw in the preceding chapter), water was found in the second well at Rishon after months of hard work. The joy of the settlers was unbounded; for, Chissin writes, if water had not been found, the entire experiment of Rishon Letzion would have had to be abandoned. Now at least the essential prerequisite to farming, and indeed to any human activity—water—was available in abundance.

The following winter, the Biluites, who felt that their intellectual faculties were becoming atrophied,

began to meet at the house of a farmer who owned a piano. There they had musical and literary evenings, with songs, recitations, readings and lectures. These occasions revived their flagging spirits and helped them forget their hardships for a while. They also tried to publish a hectographed paper; but they were no longer accustomed to writing or to expressing their thoughts in logical sequence, so that they could not obtain sufficient contributions. Nor could they spare the time for such an enterprise. 'This', writes Chissin, 'clearly showed us how distant we had become from things of the spirit, and how we were now better at wielding our fists than the pen.'

On one occasion the Biluites distinguished themselves by their gallantry. Two of them apprehended five armed Arab marauders near the settlement. One kept the Arabs at bay while the other rushed for help. A force comprising almost the entire population of Rishon Letzion, including children, turned out and caught the Arabs, who were placed under lock and key and then taken to Jaffa for trial. The incident made a deep impression throughout the district, and the Biluites received lavish praise. Rishon Letzion's firmness in dealing with trespassers and marauders inspired the respect of the Arabs in the district; and the roads, once dangerous for travellers, were now rendered perfectly safe. Indeed, if Arabs—as sometimes happened—were attacked near the settlement and called upon the Jews for help, their call would not go unheeded.

In February, 1885, Chissin and a group of farmers from Rishon Letzion paid a visit to the settlement of Gedera, founded a short while previously by nine Biluites on a site to the south of what was one day to

become Rechovot. Chissin had parted company with the Biluites, but on this occasion rejoined them and was admitted as a member of Gedera. The settlement could be reached only after a *wadi* (water-course) leading from the Judean Hills to the sea had been negotiated. During the rains this became an impassable torrent. When Chissin and his companions approached the settlement, they found the kitchen orderly standing outside and enveloped in a cloud of smoke as he cooked the mid-day meal. The pot stood upon some stones, and the fuel consisted of thistles gathered from the near-by hillsides. Close to the single hut that comprised the settlement was a stall for the donkey,—the only animal in the place apart from the watch-dogs. The interior of the hut contained bunks ranged in tiers along the walls. Apart from these, the only furniture was a table and some shelves.

When the settlers returned from the fields for their mid-day meal, they sat down to sliced radishes followed by potato soup with lumps of dough floating in it,—a dish of which they had several helpings. Being thirsty after lunch, Chissin was given brownish water to drink. On expressing surprise at its colour, he was told that it came from the *wadi*, which the settlers used when they could in preference to the foul water of the only available well.

Chissin was that evening re-admitted to the membership of Bilu and stayed on in Gedera. However, being used to spending the night in a proper house, he found he could not sleep in the cold and draughty hut with the wind penetrating the cracks between the planks. He therefore dressed and went outside, where he stayed till morning talking to the watchman.

The last entry in Chissin's diary from which we

quote is dated the 27th August, 1886, and it sheds light on the methods of the Turkish Administration. The harvest had been gathered, but had to await the collection of the *ushr* (tithe) before it could be threshed. Chissin writes:

Throughout the world a thriving agriculture is regarded as the best guarantee of a country's prosperity, but here the Government has taken all measures to stifle agriculture. Elsewhere taxes are more or less equitably distributed among all sections of the population, but here the town-dwellers virtually pay no taxes... The peasants are skinned mercilessly, so that they lead a miserable existence, even if they have the finest land.

According to the law, farmers had to give up nearly an eighth of their produce in the form of 'tithes'. In fact, they had to part with much more. Each year the District Governor used to put up the collection of the *ushr* from the different villages in his territory for auction. If the collector experienced any difficulty, he would be provided with a squad of gendarmes to help him. On coming to a village, he would assess the crop at a glance, frequently at twice its real amount, and collect the 'tithe' accordingly. If the farmer objected to the assessment, he had the right to divide the crop into ten equal heaps, and the collector could choose one and a half of them. But the poor *fellah* had not the courage or the wits to invoke the protection of the law. The collector would threaten him with the whip and refuse to let him thresh; and the *fellah* would prefer to give up a sixth, or even a quarter, of his crop rather than become involved in a dispute.

The Jewish settlers, being Europeans, were treated

more circumspectly, for it was realised that they had some conception of the workings of the law. 'As the European population grew,' Chissin concludes,

the authorities became more cautious with regard to the local inhabitants as well . . . The position of the *fellah* in the more developed Jaffa District, for instance, became easier than in the backward Gaza District.

THE BILUITES IN JERUSALEM

David Yudclovitz, who was to become a pioneer of Hebrew education at Rishon Letzion³, describes a different aspect of the Biluites' activities. Carl Netter, who had founded Mikveh Israel and was keenly interested in promoting Jewish agricultural settlement, died in October, 1882. The Biluites were profoundly dejected, for they had hoped to have his support in their effort to found their model village. Yechiel Mikhel Pines, who had followed their fortunes from the outset, encouraged them and suggested that some of their number go to Jerusalem to learn trades, which were as necessary for the creation of a new Jewish social structure as farming. The result was the formation of a society known as *Techiat Yisrael* ('The Regeneration of Israel'), with which both Pines and Ben-Yehuda were actively associated. It was proposed that several young men should learn trades in Jerusalem, and that in the evenings after work they should devote themselves to the study of Jewish history and Hebrew literature. They were also to learn to speak Hebrew.

Nine Biluites accordingly went to Jerusalem and

³ See Chapter VI.

formed themselves into a group which they called *Hecharash Vehamasger* ('The Craftsman and Locksmith'). They included Yudelovitz, Zeev Dubnow (brother of the great Jewish historian, Shimon Dubnow), Yaakov Shertok (father of the former Israel Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett), and a girl, Devora Sirot, who was to take care of the domestic arrangements. Two members of the group became apprenticed to a carpenter, two to a metal engraver, one to a blacksmith and one (Yudelovitz) to a Christian-German cutler. Another member, Lifshitz, who acted as secretary of the group, became a teacher in the *Alliance* school run by Nissim Bechar. The ninth member, Mohilansky, was assigned quite a different avocation. The leaders of the Jewish community and its representatives *vis-à-vis* the outside world were rabbis who, in Ben-Yehuda's opinion, were too ignorant of worldly matters and too narrow-minded to discharge their functions adequately and with dignity. He wanted to see the emergence of a rabbi with the qualities and knowledge requisite for an office that combined the spiritual with the temporal. He therefore selected Mohilansky, who in his youth had distinguished himself as a prodigy in Talmudical studies, to prepare himself for a rabbinical career. Mohilansky accordingly donned a caftan, grew the traditional side-curls, and entered the *yeshiva* of Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin,—all for the sake of the Jewish national revival.

Although the Bilutes were mere apprentices, their masters treated them in a most considerate manner. Yudelovitz's German cutler began paying him for his work before the date set down in the articles, and when the date in question came, he increased the rate of pay considerably.

At first the Biluites did not all live together. Five of them, including Yudelovitz, shared a room in the Nachalat Shiva quarter furnished with only a table, two benches and a mat. They slept on the mat, using their coats as bedclothes. Shertok had brought a fur-lined from Russia which he shared with one of his room-mates who had no coat at all. Yudelovitz had been given a down-filled pillow by his mother. This served for all five men. Four slept on it at a time, their legs extended to the four points of the compass and their heads touching in the middle. As there was room on the pillow for only four, it was arranged that they should do two-hour spells of writing in turn. Shertok utilised his shift to write for a paper in Odesa; Dubnow, to write to his brother, the historian; and Yudelovitz, to write for the Hebrew periodicals, *Hamaggid*, *Hamelitz* and *Hatzefira*.

Their breakfasts and suppers, which consisted of bread and tea, they took in a kitchen, glorified by the name of restaurant, in Nachalat Shiva. Sometimes they would supplement their evening meal with a basket of oranges. They took their mid-day meal, which was prepared by Devora Sirot, at the house of Ben-Yehuda, whose wife helped in the task.

The group regularly attended worship, and they naturally went to Pines' Synagogue. For society they frequented the homes of Ben-Yehuda, Pines and Wilhelm Herzberg, who, though assimilated to German culture, was imbued with warm Jewish feelings. Herzberg was principal of an orphanage maintained by a German-Jewish society and was among the founders of *Techiat Yisrael*. The Biluites also used to visit Avraham Moshe Lunz, the blind scholar, and Nissim Bechar. They made friends with a number of

other leading figures in the Jewish community of Jerusalem. Among their circle of intimate acquaintances were Pines' two daughters, Itta (David Yellin, her future husband, was also in the same circle) and Sarah Rachel, who was an excellent rider and could shoot a bird from the saddle of a galloping horse.

When the Biluites had gained proficiency in their several crafts, they took an eight-roomed dwelling, where they also set up a workshop. One room was set aside as a library, for which they assiduously collected books. These books were later included in the 'Treasure House of the Books of Israel', founded by Ben-Yehuda and his friends, and eventually made their way to the National and University Library on Mount Scopus.

The handiwork of the Biluite metal workers was sold to the Committee of Mazkeret Moshe, a new quarter (named after Sir Moses Montefiore), which was then under construction. Samples of the craftsmanship of the other Biluites were sent by Pines to Jewish communities abroad which, however, failed to appreciate their significance. Eventually the group disintegrated, and its members went their different ways.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESTORATION OF PETACH TIKVA

UNDER THE impact of the new movement for Jewish settlement, it was not long before the abandoned village of Petach Tikva was restored. In 1883, a group of Jews from Bialystok bought some land from the former settlers of Petach Tikva, several of whom had

gone to live at the Arab village of Yahudiyeh, nearly five miles away. They chose that spot to build houses in order to avoid living on the unhealthy land of Petach Tikva, though it was their intention to go to work there daily. When their houses were ready, the newcomers decided to spend a year learning the art of farming from the old settlers. They also pooled their resources and formed a fund out of which to buy their requirements. After a year's training, they felt they knew something about farm work and were ready to begin tilling the soil in earnest. They also tried to persuade some of the original settlers to join them in the task of draining the swamps.

The Bialystok settlers drew up a list of rules, among which was the provision that outside labour should not be employed: each man was to work his own holding and to use only such help as his wife and children could supply. They also decided to live as frugally as possible and forgo all luxuries. They were all to consider themselves as equal and to work together to achieve their common goal.

In a sense, Petach Tikva may be said never to have been wholly abandoned. After the failure of the initial attempt at settlement, a watchman was maintained on the spot, and those of the settlers who had taken up their quarters at Yahudiyeh kept an eye on the place. In 1882 Mordekhai Diskin came to Palestine from Lithuania, and since he knew something about farming and wanted to live at Petach Tikva, David Gutmann and Yoel Moshe Salomon persuaded him to take charge of affairs there. Under the Turkish system, as we have seen, arable land left uncultivated for three successive years reverted to its nominal owner, the State. To guard against such a contingency,

it was decided to employ Arab labourers to maintain the land in cultivation. Diskin, according to his own account, actually went to live in Petach Tikva itself. His only companion was Moshe Slor, the son of one of the original settlers. As, however, Slor spent three days a week visiting his family in Jaffa, he was left alone a good deal. On his return from Jaffa on Sunday night, Slor would bring a supply of Arab bread. This fare, together with black coffee, constituted Diskin's staple diet. (Arab-style bread grows hard and unpalatable the day after it is baked, so that it scarcely improves at the end of a week!) But, though unused to living in such a rude fashion, he writes, 'the earnest desire for the settlement of the Land of Israel gave me an accession of strength and courage'. To add to their troubles, Diskin and Slor found themselves compelled, after the rains were over, to get their water from a source forty minutes' distant, as the well of Petach Tikva had become polluted through disuse.

About a month after Passover, Diskin had a brush with some armed Arabs who had come to steal water-melons. He was badly wounded in the leg in the encounter, but contrived by his own efforts to stanch the copious flow of blood. As medical help was not available, he rigged a rope sling from the ceiling and supported his leg with it while he lay in bed, until he was able to hobble about on crutches. When he was recovered, he invested much effort and money to bring his assailant to justice. The man in question was eventually sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Some time later, when the harvest was in, and Diskin's share of it was stored in his barn, another attempt at robbery was made. On this occasion some twenty Arabs, including the watchman of Petach Tik-

va, attacked Diskin's house and barn. Fortunately, his son was with him and made use of the revolver that was kept in the house. One of the attackers was wounded, and they all made off. As, however, it was claimed that the wounded man might die (in which case retaliation, in accordance with the code of the blood feud, was to be feared), the two Jews did not feel safe by themselves in so lonely a spot. Diskin accordingly removed to Yahudiyeh for a time, and his son returned to Jerusalem.

Dov Chaviv-Lubman, a pioneer of Rishon Letzion, was in Petach Tikva during 1885-86. He describes with admiration how a handful of Jewish settlers—strangers with outlandish ways, as they seemed to their neighbours—impressed the Arabs by their courage. Single villages no longer dared to risk a fight with the Jews. At this juncture, however, the former owners of the land of Petach Tikva began to incite the *fellahin* of the surrounding villages to combine and wrest the area from the Jews or else force them to pay in order to re-establish their title to it. A large band of Arabs therefore began to plough and sow the fields on the southern and western fringes of Petach Tikva, driving away the settlers who opposed them.

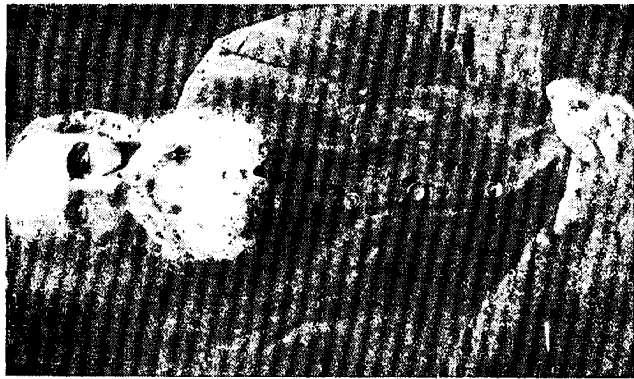
The Jewish villagers promptly organised themselves into a military force, partly mounted. They included several women, who on previous occasions had shown prowess in the use of arms. A man stood upon a cart blowing loud blasts upon a trumpet to inform the laggards that general mobilisation had been proclaimed. The commander-in-chief of the force was Yehuda Stampfer, one of the original founders of Petach Tikva, a tall, broad-shouldered, black-bearded figure.

Mounted on a large dappled horse, he looked like a Persian satrap or Assyrian prince. Stampfer arrayed his troops in battle formation. The cavalry came first, equipped with firearms. They were followed by the infantry, bearing sticks, *nabouts* (a kind of cudgel used in the Near East), pitchforks and similar weapons. The force advanced in close formation to the fields where the intruders were busy ploughing. On catching sight of the advancing Jews, an Arab standing on a knoll as look-out man began waving a kerchief, as a sign to the scattered *fellahin* to close in with the adversary.

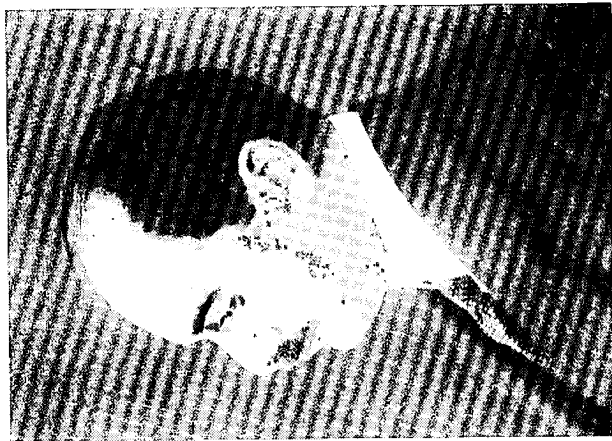
The Jewish commander gave the order to drive back the invaders, seize their animals, break their ploughs and trample the area that had been ploughed and sown. Both sides closed, and a *melée* ensued which was rendered hideous by the neighing of horses, braying of donkeys, grunting of camels, barking of dogs, shouts and curses of men, and the ululations of the Arab women who had come along to encourage their menfolk. The Jewish cavalymen did great execution among the enemy with their whips (firearms were only to be resorted to in an extremity) and trampled the fields effectively. The Jewish youths exercised considerable ingenuity in the use of their feet and heads as weapons. When the tide of battle finally began to turn in favour of the Jews, Stampfer rode up to the Arab in authority, a venerable, bearded *fellah*, and remonstrated with him. The Arab, seeing that the fortunes of war were against his people, called off his men, who gathered their belongings and limped off home, impartially cursing both the Jews and the agitators who had persuaded them to undertake so unprofitable an expedition.

The first organised attack on a Jewish village in Palestine was launched on Petach Tikva on the 1st March, 1886. The attack, from the description by Zerach Barnett, was made unexpectedly by the Arabs of Yahudiyeh and the neighbouring villages, and it took the Jews unawares. Its object was plunder (no political motives were involved at the time), and Petach Tikva came near to destruction. Everyone was quickly marshalled into Barnett's house, which was the largest and most solid building in the place. The men took up positions and fired back at the attackers, while the women and children stood at the windows as spotters. While the battle was in progress, one of the settlers succeeded in making his way to Jaffa, whence a detachment of soldiers was immediately sent to the beleaguered Jewish village. The troops quickly dispersed the attackers and led sixteen of them away in chains. The culprits seized were sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and some of them received, in addition, a whipping in the best Turkish tradition. There was no loss of life among the Jews; and as the Arabs had used only small shot, the wounds inflicted, though painful, were not serious. The attackers did, however, succeed in driving off the settlement's flocks and herds, totalling several hundred head.

In the first few years after its restoration, Petach Tikva was distinguished by having among its inhabitants several interesting 'types' who excelled in deeds of derring-do. One of these was a man nicknamed by the Arabs Skandar Haddad ('Alexander the Blacksmith'). Born and bred at his father's forge in a Russian village, Skandar came to Petach Tikva, where, as Moshe Smilansky recounts, he began his career as a labourer.



Aharon David Gordon (1920)

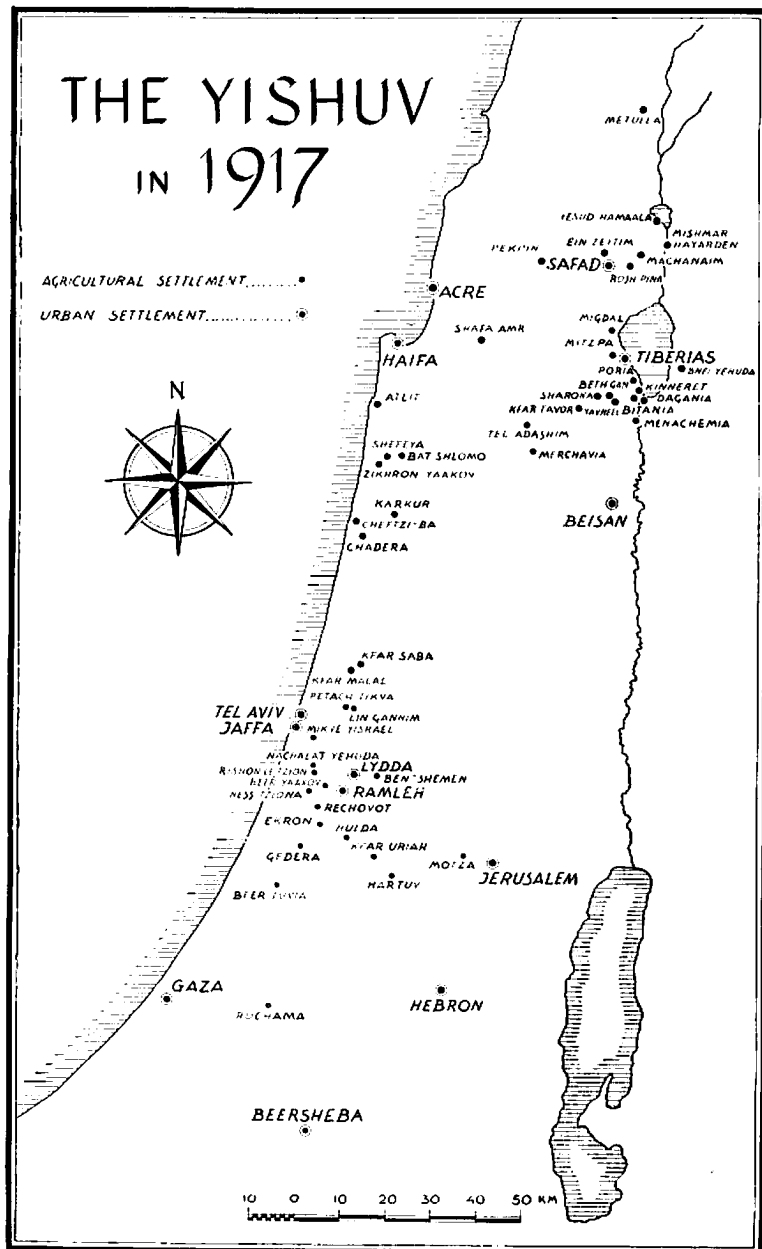


Dr. Arthur Ruppin (1913)

THE YISHUV IN 1917

AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT.....•

URBAN SETTLEMENT.....



Later, he set up a forge and gained a reputation throughout the countryside for his skill in shoeing even the most recalcitrant horse. His love for horses was great, and he acquired a handsome filly foal which he carefully tended until it became a fine riding mare. Mounted on his horse, Skandar took an active part in the protection of Petach Tikva against trespassers and marauders. Wherever there was trouble, he would appear on his mare and lay about him with telling effect. He disliked firearms, and preferred his great fists to any weapon. When forced to resort to weapons, he sometimes reluctantly used the *nabout*, or more often a very long whip, the thong of which was tipped with a piece of lead, which he wielded with great precision. When not engaged in fighting the Arabs, Skandar would delight in sitting with bedouin, sipping bitter coffee and discussing the ever-green topics of the desert, horses and beautiful women.

Another, and even more remarkable, figure of the early days of Petach Tikva was Abraham Shapira, whose exploits have acquired the force of legend. Born in Russia in 1870, he came to Petach Tikva in 1884. According to his own reminiscences, he was not yet fourteen when he performed his first feat of bravery. A veritable tragedy had occurred at Petach Tikva: the rope of the well had broken, and the pail had fallen down the well shaft. There was no other pail available, and no means of retrieving the one that had been lost. By the time a new pail could be procured, the whole community might be parched with thirst. Shapira volunteered to save the situation. He tied the rope around his body and had himself let down the shaft. Only after he had come up again with the precious utensil was it realised that the rope,

which had parted with only a pail suspended from it, could easily have broken under the far heavier strain of the lad's weight.

Six months later, Shapira distinguished himself in his first fight. A party of neighbouring Arab villagers had come to plough on the fields of Petach Tikva, and all the settlers turned out to drive them off. Shapira, armed with a club, joined in the fight and laid about him so lustily that soon not an Arab was left in sight.

On another occasion, when he was but fifteen and a half, Shapira returned from some business outside Petach Tikva to find that a number of settlers were in pursuit of a party of trespassing bedouin, whose animals they wanted to impound (these would later be released against payment of a stipulated sum—a handier method of dealing with such offences than the cumbersome and venal processes of Turkish law). The Jews caught up with the bedouin and attacked them. But they were outnumbered five to one, and their only firearm, a revolver, failed to function at the crucial moment. At this, the bedouin took courage and turned at bay, forcing the Jews onto the defensive and pressing them back. Only one settler held his ground, and he stood facing the horde of howling bedouin alone and armed with a staff. That was the position when Shapira arrived on the scene. The man and boy hit out right and left, trying to hold back the bedouin until help could be summoned from Petach Tikva. Suddenly Shapira's staff broke in his hand. But he quickly seized that of his companion, who was by now too bruised and weary to carry on fighting. The lad fought on valiantly, but he was soon hemmed in by the bedouin, one of whom fired at him

and wounded him in the left arm. The man who had shot at him was ramming a new charge down the barrel of his gun (it was an old-fashioned muzzle-loader) to administer the *coup de grâce*, when an aged *bedawi* stepped forward and bid him stay his hand. 'Do not,' he said, 'shed the blood of this brave lad, who has faced us with but a stick. Show him honour, for he is a hero indeed.' With that, the old man threw his cloak upon Shapira, thereby taking him under his protection and saving his life.

CHAPTER IX

SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTH

THE YEAR 1882, which saw the beginnings of Jewish settlement in the Coastal Plain, around Jaffa, also marked the establishment of the first Jewish villages in the north: Rosh Pina, and Yesud Hamaala in Galilee, and Zikhron Yaakov in Samaria. Settlement in the north and south proceeded independently, for the distances and lack of roads rendered travel between Judea and Galilee an arduous and sometimes hazardous undertaking. An additional factor was that, administratively, Judea and Galilee were under different jurisdictions. Consequently there was little communication between the northern and southern settlements, and any kind of joint activity was out of the question. Indeed, even three or four decades later Jewish Galilee formed a separate entity, and it was not until proper roads were built and the motor-car introduced, in Mandatory times, that the spaces of Palestine, which once seemed so large ('from Dan to

Beersheba') were brought within the compass of a few hours' drive.

The Galilean villages produced a different type of farmer from that in Judea. The terrain is rugged and the soil more suited to field crops than to plantations. The farmers of Galilee, even after they had overcome the initial difficulties of their pioneering days, lived far more austere and worked harder than those in the plantation zone. Their Hebrew, too, differed slightly from that spoken elsewhere, and the pronunciation of the *v* (*vet*) as *b* (*bet*) unmistakably marked the speaker as a Galilean wherever he went (the Galilean 'dialect' disappeared after the first World War).

ROSH PINA

The founders of Rosh Pina—the first settlement in the north—were a group of Rumanian Jews. They were preceded by David Shuv, who came out to Palestine in December, 1881, to purchase an area of land on which to establish a village. Shuv landed in Beirut and travelled overland to Safed. The journey, which was accomplished on donkey-back, took four days. His description of Safed at that time makes interesting reading:

There was no hotel in Safed in those days, nor was there a road. No wheeled conveyances were to be seen at all. People coming to live in Safed—or rather to be buried there (for only aged folk journeyed to that town)—travelled by donkey or mule from Beirut or Haifa. By the time they reached Safed they were so bumped and bruised from the journey that they were incapable of moving a limb... They would be set down, together with

their baggage, in the middle of an empty lot before the town which served as the communal refuse dump. There the beadle of the Jewish community would come to meet them and exact from them a toll of so much per head. No one was permitted to challenge this proceeding: all had to pay without demur. The poor wretches had to lie in the street until some relative or friend came along and offered the hospitality of his home. I was the first to oppose this barbaric custom and secured the abolition of the toll, since when things have gradually improved.

Shuv spent a short time in Safed at the house of his uncle, where, he says,

I had to sleep on a bed of stones, as a wooden or iron bedstead was something the people of Safed could not as yet allow themselves, especially my uncle, in whose house poverty reigned supreme.

Together with a young Jewish resident, he made a tour of the district around Safed and Haifa in search of a likely site for a village. On their way back to Safed they encountered heavy snow, and returned with difficulty. The snow lay on the ground a metre high, and people could hardly get into and out of their houses. Nor could they bring hot food home from the communal ovens (it was a Sabbath, so that they were unable to kindle fires inside their homes), and many had perforce to go without. Several mishaps occurred. Some houses collapsed, and in one an eighteen-year-old youth, who was just about to be married, was killed.

While still in Rumania, Shuv had heard, from a visiting Palestinian Jew, that some Safed Jews had bought land from the near-by village of Jauni and that, lacking the means to cultivate it, they wished to

sell it. He made a note of this fact at the time and, now that he was on the spot, went to examine the land. He found there three Arab-style houses, two of them occupied by two Jewish brothers, who were so poverty-stricken that they subsisted on gleanings and what the neighbouring *fellahin* gave them out of the kindness of their hearts. The land was well watered and its price not too high. Shuv therefore notified his society in Rumania of the facts and awaited their reply before doing anything further. As there was no telegraph office in Safed, and the postal services were most unreliable, no reply could be expected for two months.

Meanwhile, several more societies for the promotion of settlement in Palestine were formed in Rumania with a central organisation in Galatz. They sent out several representatives to look for land suitable for settlement.

But when I saw the representatives and their bearing [Shuv writes], my spirits fell. When I went all over Galilee with Shaul Zifris [his companion from Safed], we hired two donkeys, donned the raiment of the local inhabitants and made our way about without fuss. The Rumanian representatives, however, came to Tiberias on horseback, looking for all the world like Englishmen and Americans on a Cook's Tour. They were dressed like Europeans, and the Arab inhabitants were not yet accustomed to seeing such Jews come to settle in Palestine. Naturally, their passage through the country created a stir, and the word went round that powerful Jews with limitless wealth at their command had come to buy land. But that was not so much in our interest... I told the representatives that they had harmed our cause by the fuss they had made. It turned out as I had feared.

They did not succeed in their quest, and they soon went back without accomplishing anything. Some of them even spread evil reports about the country...

Not wishing to arrive at a hasty decision, Shuv toured the Jerusalem and Jaffa districts. But he did not find a suitable area with the advantages of Jauni, —a fine cool climate and, more important, water available for immediate use. Jauni, then, seemed the most desirable spot, since, in addition to its natural advantages for farming, the beauty of its setting captivated him entirely. Admittedly, the Jauni estate had certain disadvantages. The absence of roads made it difficult of access from the coastal towns, and the land itself was covered with rocks and stones, which would have to be removed. But these were minor drawbacks; and, as subsequent experience was to show, they could be overcome.

Accordingly, on the 24th July, 1882, Shuv took over two thirds of Jauni land, and a group from Russia bought the remaining third. On the same day, Shuv had a cable sent to his society in the Rumanian town of Moinesti announcing the transfer of the land, and the news spread like wildfire throughout the country. The Moinesti society was inundated with offers to buy holdings in the Jauni estate; and the organisation in Galatz, whose representatives had met with so little success on their mission to Palestine, asked for twenty families to be allotted shares in the venture.

On the 15th August, thirty families—about 130 souls in all—left Moinesti for Palestine, and on the way were joined by another twenty that had gathered in Galatz. They were all young people, the oldest

among them not being above forty. Their progress through Rumania was triumphal: at every town where they stopped they were met by enthusiastic crowds of Jews. The non-Jewish public, and even the Government, displayed great interest in the departure of the pioneers; and the newspapers stressed the poetic irony of the fact that the ship on which they embarked bore the name of Titus, the Roman destroyer of Jerusalem.

Shuv's family were among the immigrants. On the way, his baby daughter took sick and died. In order to prevent their being detained in quarantine at Beirut, his wife was persuaded to carry her dead child in her arms so as not to attract the attention of the port officials.

The journey by mule and donkey over the rocky hills from Beirut to Safed caused the immigrants great hardship, which was further increased by the behaviour of the Arab muleteers. The latter constantly urged on the caravan, cursed the travellers, and purloined their victuals and belongings, thinking they had to do with the faint-hearted, cowering type of Jew with whom they were familiar. But the immigrants were unused to such treatment, and when their patience was exhausted, the young men halted the caravan and gave the Arabs a sound thrashing which made them more circumspect for the rest of the journey.

It had been hoped to buy additional land at Jauni to enable all fifty families to settle there; but it was finally decided that land should be bought elsewhere for the twenty families from Galatz, who accordingly settled shortly afterwards at Zamarin (in Samaria), better known as Zikhron Yaakov.

In mid-September, Shuv called a meeting of the

settlers to discuss practical steps for occupying the land, and discovered that not all of them had the stipulated minimum sum of money. While some had brought more, others had brought far less, in the hope that the settlement would make provision for one or two poor families. But the number of poor families proved inconveniently large. Shuv came to the conclusion that, if the settlers worked as individuals, barriers would soon spring up between rich and poor, possibly to the extent of leading to the disintegration of the settlement. In order, therefore, to avoid complete failure at the outset, he proposed that for the first year, at least, the land should be worked on a communal basis. Everyone should hand his money—however much or little—to the treasurer, who was to be elected. A committee was also to be elected to undertake the building of houses, direct the work in the fields, and make provision for the necessities of life. Every settler, rich or poor, was to do the same amount of work and receive equal pay, and the land was to be divided into holdings of equal size. Anyone who disagreed with these arrangements was asked to leave, so as not to impair the efforts of the others. Only six families disagreed and, after being refunded their money, went back to Rumania, where, according to Shuv, they later greatly regretted their action. Shuv named the village Rosh Pina ('corner stone'), from the Biblical verse, 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner' (Psalms, 118, 22).

The first step to be taken was to build houses, and the settlers got to work on them at once. For various reasons, among them the proximity of water, it was decided to build near the existing Arab houses on the

spot. The houses were built in two rows and placed very close to one another. Each house consisted of two rooms, a cowshed and a small yard, and only the larger families were given the luxury of three rooms apiece.

Before all the houses were completed, the authorities had imposed their restrictions on Jewish immigration and settlement. The Governor of Safed accordingly sent a detachment of troops to Rosh Pina to stop building operations. Shuv had to make a special journey to Damascus to secure the necessary permission to resume work, a proceeding which entailed considerable effort as well as a liberal expenditure on the inevitable baksheesh. However, his mission proved successful, and the Governor of Safed came to Rosh Pina to announce the fact and advised the settlers, in their own interest, to become Ottoman subjects, which they did. He also addressed the *fellahin* of the neighbouring village of Jauni and spoke to them in praise of the Jews, whose activities, he said, would benefit them as well.

Owing to the lateness of the first rains (which soften the earth baked hard by the summer heat), the settlers did not begin to plough till the 12th December, 1882. The occasion was marked by a festive gathering, and it was decided to observe the day as the anniversary of the founding of Rosh Pina. On the same day, the marriage took place of two of the young immigrants. But the joy of the celebration was seriously marred. Some of the neighbouring Arabs attended the festivities and, as is their custom, expressed their joyful feelings by discharging firearms. One young Jew had a loaded pistol with him, and an Arab guest asked to see it. As the young man took out the weapon, it

went off accidentally, killing the Arab. The settlers were greatly dismayed at the fatal mishap, but, being new to the country, did not realise that a blood feud could ensue which might endanger all their lives.

Shuv thereupon despatched a messenger post-haste to the French Consul in Safed (a Jew), while the Arabs informed the Turkish authorities. Meanwhile, the news of the tragedy reached the dead man's family. A mob of some two hundred Arabs—men, women and children—swarmed to Rosh Pina armed with sticks and stones and thirsting for vengeance. The settlers hastily barricaded themselves inside their houses. Their position might have become grave indeed, but for the intervention of the Sheikh of the neighbouring village and his men, who barred the way to the attackers and cried out that the shooting had been accidental. By this time, the French Consul and a party of soldiers had arrived from Safed, to which the latter removed the body of the victim, and also the Jew who had been the unintentional cause of his death.

The relatives of the dead Arab, however, were not content to wait until the law had taken its course, but repeatedly attacked members of the settlement, who had to be provided with a soldier to escort them on their journeys to and from Safed. This state of affairs went on for eight months, until the young Jew was finally tried and acquitted. In the end, a settlement was reached: the members of Rish Pina paid a large sum to the bereaved family in blood-money, and a ceremony of reconciliation was held.

In the early days of Rosh Pina, a clash also occurred with a tribe of bedouin, who insisted on watering their cattle without permission at the trough put

up by the settlers. Water was a scarce commodity; but the bedouin were deaf to all remonstrance. In the end, they were driven off. Incensed by such cavalier treatment on the part of the despised Jews, they attempted to retrieve their tarnished reputation by attacking the settlement in force. But they encountered determined resistance; and when a well-aimed stone unseated the Sheikh, who was leading them on horseback, they retired in confusion and gave no further trouble. Indeed, amicable relations were established from that time on, and an arrangement was come to whereby the settlers were allowed to make use of the extensive grazing-grounds of the bedouin, while the latter were permitted to water their cattle at Rosh Pina.

The chattels of the settlers were of so little value, writes Yaakov Bendel, another of the founder-members of Rosh Pina, that there was hardly any need to protect them. But the sown fields, which represented their real wealth, had to be guarded against Arab shepherds and trespassers. As the Arab watchmen employed for the task were unreliable, in league with the local thieves, and costly to maintain, the settlers decided to dispense with their services. Two young men, Bukstetter and Grabovsky, therefore assumed the rôle of watchmen. Dressed in Arab garments, they guarded the fields by night. For years they acted as watchmen, beating off intruders and sometimes taking lusty blows in the process. Gradually their fame spread throughout the district, and all the Arabs spoke respectfully of abu-Daoud (Bukstetter) and abu-Musa (Grabovsky). When they procured themselves thoroughbred mares, their reputation was still further enhanced.

Disease, writes Bendel, was a terrible scourge. Malaria, yellow fever and other illnesses made inroads on the population of Rosh Pina, and nothing could be done to check them, as no medical help was available. The 'doctors' were the old women, and the remedies they applied were strange indeed. Thus the sovereign specific for inflammation of the eyes was a compress of asses' dung (the result of this treatment, says Bendel, may well be imagined). The old women felt capable of dealing with most diseases in a similarly effective and hygienic manner. But when epidemics of diphtheria and dysentery broke out, even they gave up the cause as lost. In such cases, there was nothing for it but to send for the Jewish 'apothecary' of Safed (even there no qualified physician was to be found), who would arrive, several hours after he was called, with a bag containing castor oil, Epsom salts and some herbs. The 'apothecary' was indefatigable in his efforts to find a remedy for diphtheria, and tried one experiment after another. Bendel describes one of these experiments as follows:

The patient was a girl of about twelve—a healthy, well set-up child—who lay struggling in the throes of a severe attack of diphtheria. Her throat was parched, and her fever mounted. The 'apothecary' ordered a bowl of quicklime to be brought into the room and there slaked with water. Everyone left the room, and all the apertures in it were stopped up. From without, we heard the lime bubbling, while the child's groans decreased until they stopped altogether. After a while, we opened the door. The fumes of the lime burst out. The sick child was lying in complete repose: her soul had departed . . . Her bereaved parents were frenzied with pain and grief; and the 'apothecary' was filled with

sorrow: once again he had failed to prevail against the accursed disease . . .

In 1890, one of the settlers discovered in his yard the remains of an ancient olive press in good condition. He decided to restore it to use and set about putting it to rights. A heavy stone had to be brought from a near-by hillside for crushing the olives. With great difficulty it was hoisted onto a cart and brought to the press. In the meantime, while everyone was busy getting the rock into position, an Arab from Jauni, who happened to be on the spot, volunteered to remove the empty cart for a small fee. But he whipped up the horses so smartly that they took fright and bolted. The Arab was thrown and crushed to death beneath the wheels. This created an awkward situation; for though the Arab had been killed while working for hire and at his own risk, through no fault of the settlers, the mishap had occurred at Rosh Pina. An official inquiry was instituted and the settlers exonerated. Nevertheless, the relatives of the dead man kept turning up and claiming compensation; and other Arabs, hoping to reap financial benefit, pretended to be relatives of the deceased. The threat of a general attack was repeatedly held over the heads of the settlers if they failed to pay up. The men of Rosh Pina, however, firmly resolved not to give in to extortion, and prepared to defend their village. Eventually, the matter was concluded by the settlers' undertaking to pay the dead man's widow a small monthly stipend for the rest of her days.

ZIKHRON YAAKOV

Like all the other settlements, Zikhron Yaakov had its full measure of hardship and suffering. But the

tribulations of the founders of this village began before ever they set foot upon the soil of Palestine. A group of 156 immigrants were on board a ship which arrived in Haifa roadstead on a winter's day in 1882, after the ban on Jewish immigration had been imposed, writes David Yudelovitz, who was one of their number. The authorities at Haifa flatly refused to allow the immigrants to land, and it was only with great difficulty that they were persuaded to agree to the disembarkation of a mother and the infant to which she had given birth during the voyage. From Haifa the ship sailed to Jaffa, where attempts to land met with no greater success. The next port of call was Beirut. There, too, the authorities could not be moved, despite the representations made by influential local Jews. Providentially, however, a storm arose, and the captain moved his ship to a more sheltered anchorage further to the north, off the coast of the semi-independent territory of Lebanon, which was under the protection of Christian Powers. The Christian Governor of the territory was persuaded to allow the landing of a single boatload of Jews, including some sick persons who could no longer stand the rigours of an open deck upon a stormy sea. Yudelovitz, who conducted the negotiations, set off for the ship, which had meanwhile stood further out to sea, with provisions for the by now almost starving passengers. He had procured twelve stalwart boatmen, and, after five hours' rowing in a heavy sea, reached the ship, deposited the provisions, and took off 16 passengers. The ship then returned with the remaining 138 passengers to Jaffa, and thence once again to Haifa, where they were transhipped to another vessel.

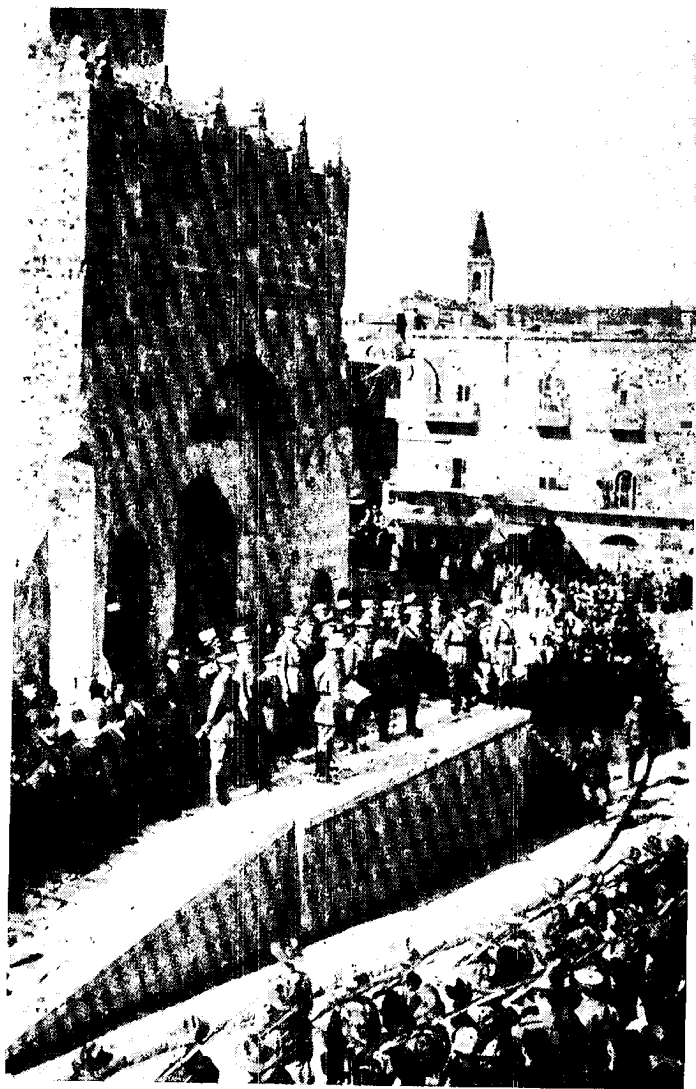
The new ship sailed for Jaffa, and this time the

authorities were persuaded to let the immigrants disembark against a *per capita* payment. But before they could all be landed, the captain weighed anchor and set sail, this time for Egypt, still carrying some 80 Jews on board. The weary passengers finally landed at Port Said, whence they proposed to make their way to Palestine overland. But they accepted the advice of a local Jewish resident and waited another day or two for a Russian ship carrying 400 Christian pilgrims to spend New Year's Day in the Holy Land. The Egyptian Jew equipped most of the Jewish passengers with false passports made out in the names of Christians, and the immigrants duly arrived at Jaffa once more. The holders of the false passports landed without difficulty: the authorities did not subject Christians to the close scrutiny they reserved for Jews. But the few who lacked the requisite documents were not allowed off the ship and were carried off to Haifa. It was there that their disembarkation was finally arranged, and the strange Odyssey came to an end.

The account of the settlement of Zikhron Yaakov is a composite one, and is taken from the reminiscences of several of the early settlers. The land of Zamarin, where the village was established, is in north-western Samaria and lies upon an eminence looking down upon the sea with a magnificent prospect of the surrounding countryside. The settlers had been led to expect a fertile area ready for farming, and were consequently disappointed by what awaited them. The land was thickly strewn with rocks and stones, all of which had to be removed before a plough could be used. There were 16 Arab families on the land leading a miserable, impoverished existence. To avert starvation, they used to accompany their goats into the



Zion Mule Corps in Alexandria (1915)



Allenby's Entry into Jerusalem

fields to pick up anything they could find to eat. They went about half naked, their only covering being a few filthy rags. Their rudely built houses were infested by snakes and scorpions.

The settlers set out for Zamarin in December, 1882, in an ox-drawn wagon. But the going was rough, for no roads existed in that part of the country. Indeed, so broken did the ground become, that they had to dismantle the wagon and carry it and its contents on their shoulders. It took them several hours of hard going in the dark, amongst rocks and dense undergrowth, before they finally arrived at their hilltop, where an advance party awaited them with food and a welcoming bonfire.

The first few nights, the settlers slept in the open, even though the rainy season had begun. As there was no accommodation on the spot, they decided to bring up a consignment of timber that had been sent them from Europe and erect huts. But owing to the absence of transport, they had to carry the planks all the way from Haifa on their shoulders.

The settlers found themselves engaged in a hard and bitter struggle against nature, and more than once they nearly gave up in despair. Yet, within the space of four years they had accomplished so much that one of their number, who returned after an absence, found the place changed beyond recognition. There were flourishing green fields and vineyards; the rocks had been removed; the hill-slopes were covered with vegetation; and fig-trees and carobs were growing.

YESUD HAMAALA

The establishment of the first Jewish villages in Palestine caused a great stir among the Jews of Eastern

Europe. The belief became widespread that the restoration of the Jewish people to their ancient patrimony was at hand. Thus, in the little Polish town of Mezritch, a society of 24 members was formed with the object of founding a new village in Palestine, and every member was obliged to contribute a stipulated sum for the purchase of land.

Immediately after the formation of the society, relates David Shuv, the chronicler of Rosh Pina, a representative was elected to go to Palestine and choose a suitable site. The man picked for the task was named Leib Rubin, and he arrived at the end of 1883. First he toured Judea; but, as he found nothing suitable, he went to Galilee, where he was captivated by the beauty of the scenery. He was particularly taken with Rosh Pina and wanted to buy some land adjoining it, but refrained on learning that it was earmarked for the extension of the settlement.

From Rosh Pina, Rubin went down to the Hula Plain, the fertility of which, coupled with the fact that water was plentiful throughout the district at a depth of a few feet, impressed him greatly. In addition, Lake Hula yielded an abundance of fish. Hesitant to take a decision on his own, he wrote back to his society, which despatched another representative to join him. The newcomer confirmed Rubin's choice of a stretch of land by the western shore of Lake Hula. The land in question was then occupied by some bedouin. But when the Government, some years previously, had carried out a compulsory registration of all land holdings and ordered title deeds to be taken out, the bedouin had avoided bringing their existence to the notice of the authorities for fear that the measure might be a device to secure recruits for enforced

military service. The two delegates therefore sought the help of three influential Jewish brothers in Safed, by the name of Abo, one of whom was French Consul in that town. The Abo brothers willingly came to the rescue, paid the requisite fees, and had the land registered in their own name. The bedouin meanwhile stayed on the estate as tenants. When Rubin and his companion made known their desire to buy the land, the owners readily agreed to sell, and the transaction was soon concluded.

Some of the Safed Jews cautioned the two representatives about the dangers of the Hula district. Malaria was widespread there, as evidenced by the greenish pallor and swollen spleens of the bedouin children. But the newcomers disregarded this solicitude, attributing it to the Safed Jews' opposition to agricultural settlement (the latter, like the Jerusalem Jews, lived on *chaluka*). The dirty, poverty-stricken bedouin were no yardstick: the settlers would not live like them, and better living conditions would be a safeguard against disease. In any event, the land had already been bought, and the work of settlement must proceed. The representatives therefore sent their society a letter announcing the purchase and describing the land in superlative terms. On the strength of their report, seven members of the society and their families set out, arriving in Palestine in the summer of 1884.

The future village was given the name of Yesud Hamaala,¹ originally intended for another settlement project which had failed to materialise (one of the participants in the latter joined the new group). The settlers then went on the land. Among them was one

¹ Signifying the 'going up' from Babylon (*see* Ezra, 7, 9)

Yisrael Ashkenazi, an intrepid young man who had worked on a farm in Poland. He acted as agricultural instructor to the settlers. Their first action was to restore a small orchard they found on the land, and then to plant an adjoining area of several hundred dunams with fruit trees. They also dug a well and sowed vegetables.

A large, dilapidated building stood upon their land. This they hoped to use as a cowshed and barn. However, when they began to repair it, the authorities stepped in and refused to allow the work to proceed. The official obstruction was only overcome with the aid of baksheesh, the persuasive powers of which the settlers had not yet learned. The repairs were duly effected, and cows, seed and grain were stored in the building. The settlers themselves moved in, but their families meanwhile stayed on in Safed till their new homes were ready.

They slept [writes Shuv] together with the animals. The fleas, which were almost as large as flies, literally ate their flesh: there was no escaping them. It was impossible to sleep out of doors owing to the cold and rain. The fleas sometimes rendered the nights altogether sleepless. On such occasions, the settlers would jump up and run away as far as they could. Once, on their return, they found that the oxen were gone: some bedouin had been lurking near by, and, as soon as the settlers, smarting from their flea-bites, were out of the way, removed the animals and hustled them across the border into Transjordan.

For nearly two years the settlers lived under such conditions, separated from their families. Things could not continue thus any longer. Since the authorities

refused to issue building permits, Ashkenazi sought alternative means of solving the problem, and decided to ascertain how their bedouin neighbours lived. He accordingly paid a friendly call at the nearest encampment and found the bedouin living in reed huts, the material for which grew plentifully in the Hula marshes. By chance, an Arab was engaged in making a hut at the time, and Ashkenazi watched the process attentively, memorising it with a view to subsequent reproduction. He then returned to the settlers and suggested that they, too, make reed huts, which could be erected cheaply and quickly, and which could be made reasonably habitable. His suggestion fell on willing ears, and Fishel Shulman, another of the settlers, agreed to accompany him on a quest for reeds.

They obtained the loan of a boat from a Safed Jew who had the fishing concessions for Lake Hula, and set off together with Shulman's sons and an Arab from the bedouin encampment to show them the spot where the right kind of reeds grew. They duly found the reeds, cut a goodly supply, bound them into sheaves, and towed them back across the lake. But in order to build proper huts, wooden supports were needed for walls and roofs. No suitable trees grew in the vicinity, nor was there money enough to buy ready-made poles in Safed. Ashkenazi, however, with his unfailing resourcefulness, discovered that the right kind of tree for their purpose grew in profusion on the other side of the Jordan not far away. The expedition was dangerous, as bedouin marauders infested the territory across the Jordan; but such considerations did not weigh with Ashkenazi.

Accompanied by several settlers, he made his way to the woodland. There the party felled some trees,

stripped off the branches, put the trunks across their shoulders and turned for home. On their way back, however, they were confronted by an unexpected situation. They had to cross the Jordan by way of a bridge (Jisr Banat Yaqoub), of which an Arab landlord was the tollkeeper, vested with the right to exact payment on all goods brought into western Palestine. The settlers had no money to pay the toll, and the tollkeeper had no wish to accept the wood—which was valueless to him—in lieu of payment. The stalemate lasted nearly all day, until the Arab had an inspiration: he set the Jews to work for several hours in his plantation, and the settlers, having no alternative, were forced to accept his terms if they were to get home that night with their wood.

The settlers then set to work making huts. The first specimens were not wholly successful, and were used as barns. But with practice came proficiency, and the next huts were habitable. Thus, on the shore of the Hula, a Jewish village of reed huts came into being, and Ashkenazi, the author of the suggestion, was loudly acclaimed for his sagacity.

The settlers were prepared to stay in their rude dwellings and subsist upon coarse bread made of *dhurra* until such time as they were able to build proper homes and their farms provided richer fare. But, so poor were they, that they had difficulty in procuring even enough *dhurra* to satisfy their needs. They ground their flour with millstones and kneaded it into flat cakes in bedouin style. Having no ovens, they baked their bread on curved tin plates set upon stones, using thistles as fuel. One day, a spark was carried by the wind to the nearest hut, which caught fire. The fire spread, and within a short time the whole en-

campment was gutted. The settlers were left utterly destitute, and had to be supplied with food and clothing from Rosh Pina. Then they had to repeat the arduous process of collecting reeds, fetching wood (paying the tollkeeper in labour as before), plaiting the reeds and putting up new huts. But even though the new huts were an improvement upon the old, they were not proper homes for civilised people. They were half underground and windowless, and their contents were never exposed to fresh air and sunshine.

More exacting still were the heat and pestilential atmosphere of the Hula, a shallow lake which, swollen by the flood waters of the Jordan in winter, contracted in summer to form marshes. In the marshes bred the anopheles mosquito, which spread a virulent form of malaria, wrongly identified by many at the time with the yellow fever of the tropics. There was not a doctor available. One young woman died of the disease. A young man fell violently sick and went out of his mind before eventually recovering. Yet, despite all their hardships and suffering, the settlers had no intention of leaving and devoutly believed that better times were in store for them.

But their misfortunes were not yet ended. Trouble of another kind now assailed them. One day, they found upon their land the body of a young man who had been violently done to death. The Rosh Pina community refused to accept the body for burial, as in the absence of a death certificate serious difficulties might ensue. The settlers of Yesud Hamaala therefore buried the corpse surreptitiously in their own land. Nevertheless, the authorities got wind of the affair. The corpse was exhumed, and all the men of Yesud Hamaala were marched off to Safed in chains

and held on a charge of murder (one of the settlers, who had not been on the spot at the time of the arrest, voluntarily joined the others in prison). The settlers spent several weeks in prison until released on bail at the instance of Yaakov Abo, the French Consul in Safed and former owner of Yesud Hamaala land. At the trial the settlers were exonerated; but they came out depressed, for in addition to everything else they were heavily indebted to the Jews of Safed for the expenses incurred by the trial.

Better times dawned for Yesud Hamaala in 1887, the year in which Baron de Rothschild visited Palestine. Quite by chance, he decided to alter his itinerary and journeyed eastward from Safed to Damascus *via* Transjordan. On the way, he passed through the Hula Plain and became enamoured of it. 'This,' he said to a member of his suite, 'we must acquire in its entirety.' Then his eye lighted upon a cluster of reed huts, and to his surprise he learned that it was a settlement of Polish Jews. He thereupon resolved to place Yesud Hamaala under his care in addition to the other settlements for which he had accepted responsibility.

As a result of this step, a real house was built at Yesud Hamaala at long last, and this is how David Shuv describes the event:

Great was the joy of the settlers when the foundation stone was laid for the first house, which was built for Moshe Amitai, the man placed by the Baron's administration in charge of the settlement. Their joy was even greater when the house was completed and the owner came to occupy it. When the lamp was lit on the first night, and a new light shone through the windows, the settlers con-

gregated outside . . . and turned to one another in amazement,—a real lamp! The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy. For years the unfortunate settlers had languished in their windowless huts, unable to light a lamp for fear of a fire: they still had not forgotten the day when they stood, destitute, over the smouldering ruins of their dwellings. Above all, the little children rejoiced, for they had not beheld such a wonderful sight in all their lives.

It is interesting to note that, on one of the rare occasions the Turkish Administration tried to accomplish something positive, it left matters in even a worse state than before. According to Mikhal Puchatchevsky,² the authorities decided to reclaim part of the fertile Jiftlik lands, the personal property of the Sultan in the Hula district, that had become submerged. A party of engineers was sent out in 1887, and they decided that the reason was that the bridge known as Jisr Banat Yaqoub, a little to the south of Lake Hula, was holding up the flow of the Jordan with its pillars, causing it to overflow its banks and flood the surrounding countryside. The order was accordingly issued to all the villages in the area to send quotas of men for forced labour. Their task was to deepen the river bed in order to reclaim land and thus increase the revenues of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan. (The Jews were allowed to buy their exemption from this difficult and unpleasant task.) The work was put in hand, and the level of the water dropped, uncovering thousands of dunams of land. It also exposed a variety of objects, including a cannon

² See Chapter XI.

of Napoleon's army that had fallen into the water. Ancient irrigation canals, reputed to date back to King Solomon's time, were found in the reclaimed area above Lake Hula. But though the desired result had been achieved, new swamps were created, and the area became even more pestilential than it had been before.

CHAPTER X

A LONE PIONEERING VENTURE

THE FOLLOWING story tells of the bravery and determination of a single Jewish family in the early days of settlement. The account is taken from the reminiscences of Aharon Leib Fellman, eldest son of the central figure, Dov David Fellman, as set down by Abraham Fellman.

Dov Fellman was a member of the group of Jews in Mezeritch (Poland) who founded Yesud Hamaala. Early in 1885 he came out to Palestine, at his own expense, to accompany the group's representative, Leib Rubin,¹ whose task it was to find a site upon which a village could be established. Together they toured the country in the unseasonably hot spring of 1883. They went from place to place in their quest for land, but every proposition seemed to have some fault for Rubin. Originally, Fellman had intended to settle together with the group, but Rubin's vacillations decided him in favour of settling on his own. He had with him 10,000 roubles—a considerable sum in those days, and more than enough to buy a farm

¹ See the previous Chapter.

for a single family—which he deposited with his uncle in Jerusalem.

A wealthy settler like Fellman was naturally much in demand, and he received several offers to join one of the newly-founded Jewish villages. The settlers of Petach Tikva, which had just been re-established, were particularly keen to have him. But he was not impressed with the economic position of the new villages. For instance, Rishon Letzion, which had been founded only a short while previously, was already forced to seek help from abroad. Of the seventy families at Zikhron Yaakov, twenty had left the country, and the rest would have been glad to sell their meagre belongings for food. The lack of success of the other settlers only served to strengthen Fellman's resolve to make a success of his own venture. He therefore turned to the 'real estate market' in Jaffa, which his son describes in the following terms:

Jaffa was at that time full of refugees from the pogroms in Russia and representatives of various societies, all of them most eager to buy 'estates'. No one knew exactly what to do or to whom to turn. No one knew the local conditions of land purchasing, the habits of the Arab vendors or their language. Many Jews long resident in the country, who in addition to their expertness in the intricacies of real estate business—derived from the Talmudical tractate of *Baba Bathra*—knew a little Arabic, found in the new immigrants a source of livelihood and politely, but persistently, showered them with attentions and offered their services as agents or intermediaries with the Arab vendors. In their frantic endeavours to catch 'buyers' and thereby earn commissions, they competed with one another, setting Arab against Arab, and Jew against Jew,

and sent land prices soaring. Sometimes all the fuss centred around a new immigrant's purse, and the land in question proved to be non-existent. The Arab 'vendor' . . . would show the unsuspecting buyer a piece of paper covered with Turkish or Arabic writing and purporting to be a *qushan* (title deed) . . . conduct him to fields or vineyards belonging to someone else, and take an advance payment on account of the purchase price. Within a few days the fraud would be discovered. A great deal of money, belonging to both individuals and societies, was lost in this manner.

Dov Fellman turned his back on the turbulent scene in Jaffa and, by chance, found 40 dunams of good land near the Arab village of Sumeil to the north of Jaffa, which he bought for 7,000 roubles. As a Russian subject, he could not transfer the land in his own name. Not wishing to resort to the subterfuges usually employed in such cases, he took out Turkish citizenship papers. The transaction completed, he returned to Russia to bring out his family.

By the beginning of 1884 Fellman was on his way back with his family, which consisted of his wife, Sarah Itta, his aged mother, three sons (the eldest of them, Aharon, aged 17) and four daughters. In Odessa, through which they passed, he bought a colloquial Arabic primer, which he studied diligently on board ship in order to be able to converse with his neighbours when he arrived. He also took with him a learned man, Barukh Rosenblum (who later settled at Yesud Hamaala), to teach his sons Talmud and to act as a *shochet* (slaughterer). But before settling down on his own land, Fellman had to discharge a commission on behalf of his fellow-Jews in Mezeritch and help Rubin, who was still looking for a suitable

area of land, to make up his mind. The result of his efforts was the acquisition of Yesud Hamaala.

Fellman's land lay a two hours' walk (or over an hour's ride) across the sand dunes from Jaffa, which had then but a tiny Jewish community. The Polish-Jewish family thus found itself suddenly set down in the midst of an utterly alien environment. On the land was an orange grove and house, which Fellman had arranged to have tended in his absence in Europe. The Arab caretaker also cultivated the rest of the holding and looked after the three cows and draught animals Fellman had bought. Thus the family, on its arrival, found everything ready for its reception. But the farm was insufficient to maintain so many people. Fellman therefore proceeded to enlarge his orange grove with the expert advice of the Sheikh of Sumeil. The work was hard, especially the irrigation of the grove, as every drop of water had, in default of a mechanical pump, to be drawn from the well by means of mule traction. While Fellman himself worked his holding, his wife and mother performed all the farmyard and household tasks, including the daily baking of bread in an Arab-style oven.

In addition to doing the farm work, Fellman used to load his surplus produce on a donkey and take it into Jaffa for sale. His day began with prayers and the study of a page of Talmud. Though it was unpleasant to be cut off from Jewish society—especially from the society of learned men, *talmidei chachamim*—Fellman had the compensation of living on the soil, and under the skies, of Israel. Realising that he must adapt himself to his altered conditions, he cultivated the friendship and learned the language of his Arab neighbours of Sumeil, establishing the most cordial

relations with them. But it was on the Sabbath that he felt his isolation most. Jaffa lay beyond the permitted walking distance on the Day of Rest, so that unless he took his family and spent the week-end in town—as he did on rare occasions—he had to engage in solitary worship even on Saturdays. Nevertheless, he was confident that his lonely state would not endure, and that his example would encourage other Jews to come out from the Diaspora and settle on the land. If Dov Fellman had any serious complaint, it was that his sons were not able to make satisfactory progress with their studies.

Fellman believed that citriculture in Palestine had a great future, and asked his friend Yechiel Michal Pines to publish in the Hebrew periodicals articles for the guidance of would-be growers. He sought to disabuse people abroad of the false notions that were then current. Farming in the Land of Israel could be highly successful; but the work was hard, and it was idle to look for quick profits. His advice to Pines was to publish the truth about the Land of Israel. The lily required no gilding: it was sufficiently beautiful as it was.

But Fellman was not destined to till his beloved soil for long. One day, in the height of his first summer in the Land of Israel, he was struck down by the sun. The physician who was summoned from Jaffa—he was the only one in the whole town—wrongly diagnosed the complaint as the fever, and administered quinine, which is fatal in cases of sun-stroke. Fellman died on the 1st July, 1884.

His widow was left in charge of the farm; and with the head of the household gone, the precariousness of the family's position now became fully apparent. Sarah

Itta Fellman now had to assume responsibility for both farm and home, and almost immediately she had to contend with the added hardship of disease; for malaria carried off her baby daughter after a few weeks of illness.

The actual labour was performed by Arabs. To maintain their obedience and respect, Itta had to adopt a severe manner, for she realised the danger any sign of weakness would spell. At home, however, she became the kindly mother once more, and took on much of the work hitherto done by her old mother-in-law, now too overcome by grief to be of much use. Sarah Itta was urged on all sides to leave the farm and return to her own kinsfolk in Poland; but she adamantly refused to move. She insisted upon carrying on her husband's work, believing that women, too, had their task to fulfil in reviving the Land of Israel and redeeming the Jewish people. Her husband's soul could repose in the knowledge that she was continuing his sacred work.

The widow and her thriving farm were tempting bait for the marauding bedouin of the district, who were no respecters of other people's property—especially when it was not strongly defended. If Sarah Itta succeeded in maintaining her position, it was due to her good relations with the neighbouring Arab villagers. Both she and her children soon learned to speak fluent Arabic and—no less important—mastered the intricacies of the complicated Arab code of etiquette. For years the Fellman family lived unmolested in their lonely habitation, sending their produce to town with never a mishap, and that at a time when hardly a road in the country was safe. On the one or two occasions that bedouin tried to raid the

farm, the villagers of Sumeil hastened to drive them off. Such was the esteem in which Sarah Itta was held, that she and her family escaped the ugly consequences of a threatened blood feud. One day, the Arab watchman's little son was found dead in the Fellmans' well. Relatives from the surrounding villages gathered and marched on the Jewish farmstead, intending violence. But the dead child's mother threw herself between the Jewish family and the attackers, crying: 'Touch them not! My son was as dear to them as he was to me. God forbid that you should lay a finger on them: Sarah Itta is a worthy woman.' Her intercession proved effectual, and the Jewish family remained unharmed.

CHAPTER XI

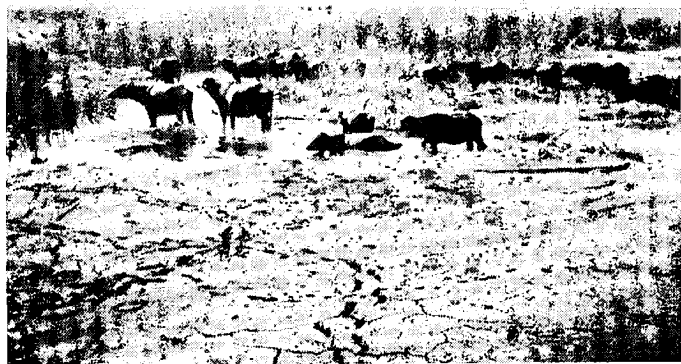
STUDENTS OF AGRICULTURE

IN 1885 Baron de Rothschild sent six youths to Palestine to learn farming. They were to be trained as agricultural instructors in the villages under his care, in order to replace the Frenchmen employed in that capacity, whose relations with the settlers were far from cordial. All six youths were from Russia and had been selected by the *Chovevei Zion*¹ Society there. One of them was named Mikhal Zalman Puchatchevsky, who later became a farmer in Rishon Letzion. Gifted with a keen sense of observation, Puchatchevsky recorded the adventures of the group. As their activities took them to various parts of the country,

¹ 'Lovers of Zion' the forerunner of the Zionist Organisation.



The Zionist Commission (1918). Right to left: Major Ormsby-Gore, Dr. Weizmann, Joseph Cowen, S. Marks, Sylvain Levy, Leon Simon, Z. D. Levontin, B. Yaffe



Kerdanch Marshes (near Acre)



Joseph Trumpeldor

we get, incidentally, a vivid picture of the Yishuv as it was in 1885-86.

Three of the young students arrived in Jaffa in August, 1885; and, as arrangements had been made on Baron de Rothschild's behalf to receive them, they landed without mishap. They then proceeded to the only hotel in Jaffa, kept by one Chayim Becker, who was the Baron's representative vis-à-vis the local Government and port authorities. There they met the Biluites.

We had heard a great deal [Puchatchevsky narrates] about their sufferings. We were anxious to see what they looked like, how they were dressed. But the picture was depressing. One of them wore an ancient, faded straw hat, the brim of which had long since departed . . . Another was dressed in a raincoat, even though it was August, when the heat is at its greatest. The others were attired in a similarly curious fashion. We, though dressed simply, felt shamed before them: we seemed to be mocking their poverty. We did not then know that the chief reason for their strange garb was that it was literally impossible to buy any European article of clothing in Jaffa: one had to go to Jerusalem even for a shoelace . . .

Chayim Becker's hotel was a venerable structure, and had survived the earthquake that had destroyed almost the whole of Jaffa about forty years previously. It had two storeys, the lower one occupied by a press for extracting sesame oil, the motive power for which was supplied by a camel. The peculiar odour of this manufactory pervaded the air all around. It was particularly noticeable in the upper storey, which comprised the hotel where all immigrants stayed on arrival. The main section of the hotel was the flat roof of the house, where the

aged travellers slept, awaiting their turn to journey, (that took forty to fifty hours) on camel's back or in a jolting cart, to Jerusalem . . .

While in Jaffa awaiting the arrival of their comrades, the young men paid a call on Avraham Moyal, head of the Jaffa branch of the Central Committee of the *Chovevei Zion* Society in Odessa. He was an aristocratic *Sepharadi* Jew and a keen supporter of the *Chibbat Zion* Movement. His secretary was Eliezer Rokach. Moyal lived in a house that looked, from the outside, no more pretentious than its neighbours in the Fish Market Street, but, inside, was elegantly and tastefully furnished in Eastern style. There the young visitors had their first introduction to Oriental civilities. They were conducted by Rokach into a room where they were received by Moyal, who was seated upon cushions placed on the floor, a tarboosh on his head and the mouthpiece of an ornate *narghileh* between his teeth. Conversation, with both Rokach and Moyal, was conducted in Hebrew; but the latter's guttural pronunciation—characteristic of Oriental Jews—was unfamiliar to the visitors.

Puchatchevsky and his two companions took advantage of their enforced leisure to pay a visit to Rishon Letzion. The opportunity was provided by the arrival of a wagon from the settlement. Puchatchevsky writes:

We joyfully decided to join the expedition,—which really meant walking by the side of the lumbering wagon, for it had obviously come to town to carry a load and not for pleasure . . . Fourteen persons set out with the wagon. The journey took several hours by way of a long sandy track. The wagoner was glad to have company with him, as they could

help his wretched horses every now and then, and the danger of attack was lessened.

At Rishon they became the guests of Yosef Feinberg, whose home, though furnished out of the simplest and meanest materials, had a European aspect. They spent an enjoyable evening in what might almost have been a *salon* in far-off Moscow. For a moment they were transported back into the pleasant world, with its rich intellectual and social life, that they had renounced. When they had talked their fill and felt like having some music, there was even a piano on which Mrs. Feinberg could accompany one of the young visitors, who had studied singing at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire. Of course the settlers of Rishon were not then living in the style of the well-to-do Russian *intelligentsia*: such *soirées* were rare occasions indeed. All the settlers worked hard and lived frugally, and none of the other housewives had the exceptional gift of Mrs. Feinberg for making a gracious home with the most primitive means. In contrast, the visitors ate their mid-day meal next day at the home of the Belkinds, where, in the only room in the house, they sat upon sacks of fodder and ate chicken with their fingers.

A few days later, the remaining members of the group arrived, and Rokach informed them that they were to go to Zikhron Yaakov to undergo training. While arrangements were being made for their journey—no simple matter in those days—, they paid a visit to Mikveh Yisrael. There they were accorded a disappointingly cool reception by the Principal, Hirsch, whose manner not even a letter of introduction from the famous Dr. Leon Pinsker succeeded in rendering more cordial. It was Hirsch with whom the Biluites

had had serious differences ending in an open breach three years earlier, and he was therefore disposed to look upon all young Russian Jews as dangerous revolutionaries.

The journey northwards, which began next day, was a notable occasion. Crowds gathered round the two vehicles—a covered American spring wagon for the passengers and a cart for their belongings—as they waited to leave Jaffa. The carts had been procured from the German colony of Sarona² by Chayim Becker, who organised the expedition. An interpreter was included in the party to enable the passengers and wagoners to communicate, and to be in charge generally during the long and adventurous journey into Samaria, which was expected to take no less than twelve hours.

The German owner of the vehicles travelled with them as far as Sarona, where he got off. Before leaving, he gave the Arab driver of the covered-wagon, who had never gone northwards before, instructions as to how to get to Zamarin (Zikhron Yaakov). The two vehicles dashed forward in fine style until they reached the Yarkon river. It was then that the first mistake was made. Instead of going due north, the wagoners decided to turn west and to keep to the sea-shore. As the horses found the going hard, the passengers got out to lighten the load. Finally, they found themselves on a caravan track, and eventually a train of camels came in sight. When they were abreast, the leading wagoner asked the cameleer if they were heading right for Zamarin. 'For Subbarin?'

² Now part of Tel Aviv and temporary headquarters of the Government following the proclamation of the State of Israel.

the cameleer replied without even turning his head. This added to the wagoners' confusion of mind. Was the place they were heading for called Zamarin or Subbarin? It might be the latter! They were still plodding their way along the sea sands when darkness overtook them. They camped in the open air that night.

When the sun rose the following morning, they saw that they were on the verge of good black soil, and that a village was close by. Their entry into the village occasioned great astonishment. 'Look at the box being pulled by horses,' the villagers cried. After a short stop there, the party set forth, accompanied by a hail of stones from the village lads, whose elders, in contrast, had displayed friendliness and hospitality. The late afternoon found the travellers picking their way at a snail's pace along a rough track winding through the hills of Samaria. They lay down for the night in the open once again, hungry, thirsty, tired out and bruised all over.

The next day was the eve of *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year. Unless they made haste, the advent of that solemn occasion would find them far from a Jewish habitation. A shepherd passing by, however, directed them to Subbarin, now near at hand, and they arrived there by eight in the morning. It was only then that they realised that their real destination was Zamarin! Fortunately, a guide was found who offered to lead them there, and after three or four hours' journey over some of the roughest terrain they had yet encountered, they finally reached the settlement.

When the six tired travellers eventually got to Zikhron Yaakov (it stood near the remains of the tumble-

down Arab village of Zamarin), they were greeted on behalf of the Baron's administrator on the spot and shown to their quarters. Their abode, which had been prepared for them in advance, was in a building known as 'the warehouse', an old structure in which sundry stores were kept, including some drugs, the smell of which pervaded the place. They were allotted a corner here with wide benches topped with mattresses as beds, and a table and some stools as furniture.

The 'warehouse' stood in an exposed position on the edge of the settlement, and in its vicinity was the cowshed, which contained all the settlers' livestock. At night six armed settlers stood watch over the cowshed to ward off possible attack, and it was felt only right that the young newcomers should be on hand in case of need. The former Arab inhabitants had cultivated the land as tenants, and on the Jews' acquiring the area had been forced to leave. They had now turned thieves and brigands; and as they knew every inch of the ground, they were at a considerable advantage. The newcomers consequently found their services in great demand as watchmen.

The local administrator, M. Wormser, an Alsatian Jew, received the young men in a kindly fashion. But the French horticulturist, a Christian, under whom they were supposed to work, took a deep dislike to them. He had been appointed to his post because he had spent some years in the Middle East and had learned to speak Arabic. A thoroughgoing anti-Semite, he nevertheless allowed the generous salary he received from a Jewish source to blunt his aversion to Jews. But his true feelings had emerged in his dealings with the Biluites and settlers at Rishon Letzion, and they

revealed themselves now in Zikhron, whither he had been transferred (indeed, it was to avoid further unpleasantness of this nature that the Baron had been advised to have these six Jewish youths trained as agricultural instructors). While he could put up with the settlers, who came from Rumania, the six young students, who were of Russian origin and painfully reminiscent of the Biluites, were more than he could stomach. He therefore embarked on a planned policy of making their lives so miserable, and of putting them in such bad odour, that they would be glad to leave. And, Puchatchevsky remarks, he very nearly succeeded in accomplishing his design.

Instead of teaching the young men farming, he made them his personal drudges. Every day they had to wait outside his house—in full view of the manager's office—until he returned from his early morning shooting. They had to go on waiting while he breakfasted. He would then assign the 'students' their tasks. Four would be detailed to carry building materials over long distances where, owing to the rocky ground, no cart could venture. The other two would be placed at the disposal of the Frenchman's Christian-Arab maidservant, who hated Jews and made the most of her opportunity to vent her spite on them by compelling them to perform the most menial tasks. But, since he had to make at least a pretence of teaching the 'students' something about farming, he laid out a flower and vegetable garden near his house. As the ground there was rocky and without sufficient soil, the 'students' were made to remove the rocks, uproot the wild undergrowth, level the ground, bring earth from elsewhere, and fetch water from the well some distance away. To add to their troubles, the rains

that year were late, and the summer's heat lasted well into November. 'Needless to say,' Puchatchevsky writes, 'relations with our respected teacher grew daily more strained. That, however, seems to have been his purpose.'

Remonstrances by Wormser only had the effect of adding fuel to the flames of the Frenchman's hatred. He now refused to give the 'students' any work at all, and sent in reports to the Baron's headquarters in Paris charging them with laziness and general worthlessness. These reports were forwarded to the *Chovevei Zion* Society in Odessa, which threatened to have nothing more to do with the six young men unless they mended their ways. Meanwhile, the young men themselves were beginning to despair and to entertain thoughts of returning to Russia. This they would probably have done, had it not been for the patience with which Wormser reassured them that matters were bound to improve.

The young men had their barrack-like quarters and a regular monthly stipend; but the boredom of utter idleness weighed heavily upon them. They accordingly secured Wormser's permission to lay a road between the old and new sections of Zikhron Yaakov, which were then connected by a circuitous path difficult to negotiate. With energy and zeal they set about their self-appointed task, much to the amazement of the inhabitants of Zikhron.

The farmers' wives came to witness our labours. When they saw the heavy rocks being levered up and rolled aside, they decided that we must be paying the penalty for some heinous crime. But, on learning that we had undertaken the arduous task of our own free will, they besought us with tears

in their eyes to desist: 'Have pity,' they pleaded, 'on your mothers who are not here to see you. We, too, are mothers of sons, and it is our right to stop you.' But of course we carried on.

The hot, rainless weather persisted, and a virulent form of malaria made its appearance in the settlement. All six young men were struck down,—one of them, Abraham Halperin, not to rise again. A doctor—a Greek-Christian—and a Jewish pharmacist were available; but there was no one to minister to the sick, for the settlers were hardly in better case themselves and could spare no one for the purpose. The 'students' therefore had to look after themselves, those whose fever had temporarily abated tending their more helpless comrades.

After all their vicissitudes, the little group of students, now unhappily reduced to five, left Zikhron Yaakov and were sent to Rosh Pina. Here they had the luxury of four rooms to live in, and real beds to sleep on. They were cordially received by the Baron's administrator on the spot, and also by the horticultural instructor—a Frenchman again—who was only too glad to teach his charges. The farmers of Rosh Pina were, perhaps, the best pleased of all to welcome the young men. They were jealous of the attention that was being bestowed on places like Rishon and Zikhron, and considered that their own village was being neglected. Now they felt overlooked no longer, and hoped that the introduction of young manpower presaged the beginning of a period of more vigorous development. At Rosh Pina, the young men finally achieved their purpose. They were taught the practical arts of gardening and fruit growing, and also the elements of the making of wine and perfumes.

In addition, they received theoretical instruction, and were taught French to enable them to read books on horticulture. Puchatchevsky, writing a year after their arrival at Rosh Pina, paints a picture of the contentment that derives from hard work performed with willing hands.

CHAPTER XII

BEER TUVIA: A FALSE START

THE VILLAGE of Beer Tuvia, for many years the most southerly outpost of Jewish settlement, had an unfortunate early history. First settled in 1888, it was abandoned within a year. Eight years later, it was re-established as a workers' village by the *Chovevei Zion* Society. It continued to exist till 1929, when it was destroyed in the Arab riots. Thereafter it was reconstituted, on entirely new lines, as a *moshav ovdim* (smallholders' co-operative village) and has since flourished. It is now, however, no longer an outpost, for the Southern District and the Negev are undergoing rapid and extensive development.

Beer Tuvia, or Kastina, as it was then known (the name was that of the neighbouring Arab village), was based upon a plan that had been prepared beforehand with considerable attention to detail. A group of Jews in Bessarabia, whose wish it was to settle in the Land of Israel, had got into touch with Baron de Rothschild's officials in Paris and negotiated with them concerning the establishment of a village. The negotiations were successfully concluded, and it was agreed that 25 families were each to pay a stipu-

lated sum, in return for which the Baron was to settle them on the land.

Such was the interest evinced in the enterprise by the Bessarabian Jews, that the 25 families were increased to over 30. Their naive hopes, as they set out for the hard realities of Palestine, are described by Shmuel Cohen:

It is hard to describe the romance—the hope, light and joy—that filled their hearts . . . as they set sail for the land of their fathers to be pioneers of Jewish agriculture. Each man painted, in the brightest of colours, a picture of his farm-to-be in the Land of Israel . . . Each man would have his own wheat-field, vegetable garden and chicken run. It was inconceivable that he should not have his own bread, vegetables, poultry and eggs. Could one imagine a peasant in Bessarabia without his cows, sheep and vineyard, his orchard and beehives? . . . In the land flowing with milk and honey, of course, all this would be supplemented by olives, almonds, figs, dates and other delicacies.

. . . The dreamers disembarked at Jaffa [in the summer of 1888] and suddenly found themselves in the Old Town, with its dark, winding, dirty streets. It was a place that gave off evil odours and bred disease: malaria, trachoma, dysentery . . . The malodorous town made a bad impression upon them, and they far from enjoyed their stay in it during the months they had to wait until the negotiations for the purchase of land at Kastina were concluded. They were in a bad state indeed, and their future seemed most uncertain. Upon their arrival in the country, they learned that the Baron's officials on the spot were very different from the men around him in Paris. Here they acted in the most wilful manner imaginable . . . It seemed as if

the Baron were the prisoner of these administrators, and that all his fine and generous plans were being wrecked by his own servants.

A short while previously, there had been some unpleasantness at Rishon Letzion, as a result of which the Baron's official, Ossovitsky, had been removed at the settlers' request. The higher officials in the Baron's administration now decided to assert themselves and deprive the settlers of such powers as they possessed. As a consequence of this move, the Bessarabian newcomers were offered employment as day labourers at Kastina, which meant that they would be entirely subservient to the officials.

All the dreams these people had dreamed, of becoming free men, lords of their own land . . . were completely shattered. They did not agree to become slaves at the beck and call of junior officials of the administration. Brought to despair, and broken in body and spirit, they were forced to leave the beloved land of their forefathers, where they had hoped to find a new life, and returned broken-hearted to the Diaspora . . .

It is to that indefatigable chronicler, Mikhal Zalman Puchatchevsky, to whom we turn for an account of what happened at Kastina itself. We left him in Rosh Pina, assiduously acquiring the knowledge that would equip him to guide and instruct new settlers going on the land. By 1888, he was qualified to act as an instructor, and it is in that capacity that he became associated with the venture at Kastina.

Puchatchevsky mentions the interesting fact that the Arab villagers of Sarafand, near Rishon Letzion, offered to exchange their land for that of Kastina. Had the offer been accepted, the task of settlement

would have been rendered far easier than on the remote site actually chosen. But the head of the Baron's administration, Bloch, a short, thickset, quick-tempered Alsatian Jew, rejected the proposal, as he thought that the settlers would be more manageable spread over a wide area than in villages concentrated in one district. He also hoped that, in so distant a spot, it would be possible to build unnoticed, without having recourse to baksheesh to circumvent the stringent regulations. In this Bloch was indulging a purely personal desire to get the better of the Turkish authorities.

Initial preparations for going on the land were made at Rishon. A number of carpenters were employed to construct prefabricated huts, which were later to be assembled at Kastina. A few carts, driven by settlers from Rishon and containing the dismantled huts, a few workers and one of Puchatchevsky's fellow-instructors, a man named Horowitz, finally set out for Kastina. They reached Gadera without difficulty; but to the southward lay *terra incognita*, and they lost their way—and also a night—as a result.

This was unfortunate, as owing to the delay they did not arrive at their destination until the following day, which was the eve of the Day of Atonement. As soon, therefore, as the carters reached what they believed to be the spot on which the new settlement was to be founded, they unloaded as quickly as possible and hurried back home for the Fast. Only an unfeeling despot like Bloch, Puchatchevsky remarks, could have compelled Godfearing Jews to undertake so long and hazardous a journey at such a time.

Horowitz and a few carpenters found themselves marooned on a hillock in a district entirely unknown

to them. But they decided to make the best of their situation and proceeded to improvise tents out of some mats they had brought. They had, however, neither food nor water,—a fact which disturbed the more strictly Orthodox members of the party, who claimed that it was as much a duty to eat beforehand as to abstain from eating during the Fast.

Not many hours elapsed before the Arabs of the neighbouring village of Beit Daras noticed that the near-by hilltop had developed an unfamiliar protuberance. On going to investigate, they discovered the tiny group of *yahud* (Jews) and the piles of timber for huts. The latter intrigued them particularly, and they made a mental note of their exact location with a view to paying the spot surreptitious nocturnal visits. Meanwhile, they sold the newcomers hard-boiled eggs, flat cakes of bread, and water, which viands were consumed with great relish.

After the Fast, regular communications were established with Rishon, and the hill of Kastina was covered with building materials. A fortnight later, Puchatchevsky was sent to relieve Horowitz, and found a partially erected hut, where he made up his cot. He immediately began to supervise the work of building, and succeeded in getting the carpenters to enter into friendly rivalry. By day, the work proceeded apace; by night, Puchatchevsky slept with his rifle slung across his body and started up at the lightest rustle and made an inspection of the half-finished houses to make quite sure that nothing had been abstracted under cover of darkness.

The Arab neighbours, though seemingly friendly and benefiting financially from the propinquity of the Jewish encampment, nevertheless informed the authorities

at Gaza of the houses that were being erected without permits. The Governor of Gaza stood in awe of Bloch; but, on the other hand, he could not allow the law to be flagrantly contravened before his very eyes. He extricated himself from the dilemma by billeting a Turkish trooper upon the Jews. The trooper, a shrewd and wily Anatolian, immediately sized up the position, and realised that the purpose of his being on the spot was simply to relieve the neighbouring Arab notables of all responsibility with regard to the Jews' activities: once he was there, their actions were exclusively his concern, since he represented the law in his own person.

The trooper arrived with an official order to stop building, and another requiring food and lodging to be provided for himself and his mount. Puchatchevsky received him, assigned him a hut, and fixed a daily payment to compensate him for his trouble. This treatment made a faithful and willing servant out of the trooper who, anxious to demonstrate his gratitude, actually exhorted the workers in the performance of the task he had been specially charged to prevent. Meanwhile, the neighbouring Arabs kept their own counsel and, deterred by the presence of an armed trooper, gave up their nightly thieving expeditions.

The population now increased to over thirty workers, and a manager was sent down to administer the project. He found, however, that there was nothing whatever for him to do, and so he spent most of his time on his cot, contemplating the roof and sometimes taking shots with his pistol at field-mice which ventured too close.

In the meantime the work progressed: the huts were up, trees planted, drilling operations for a well

set in hand, a ditch dug around the settlement, and the fields ploughed and sown (some of the neighbouring Arabs were hired to perform this last). When winter came, Beer Tuvia was completely isolated.

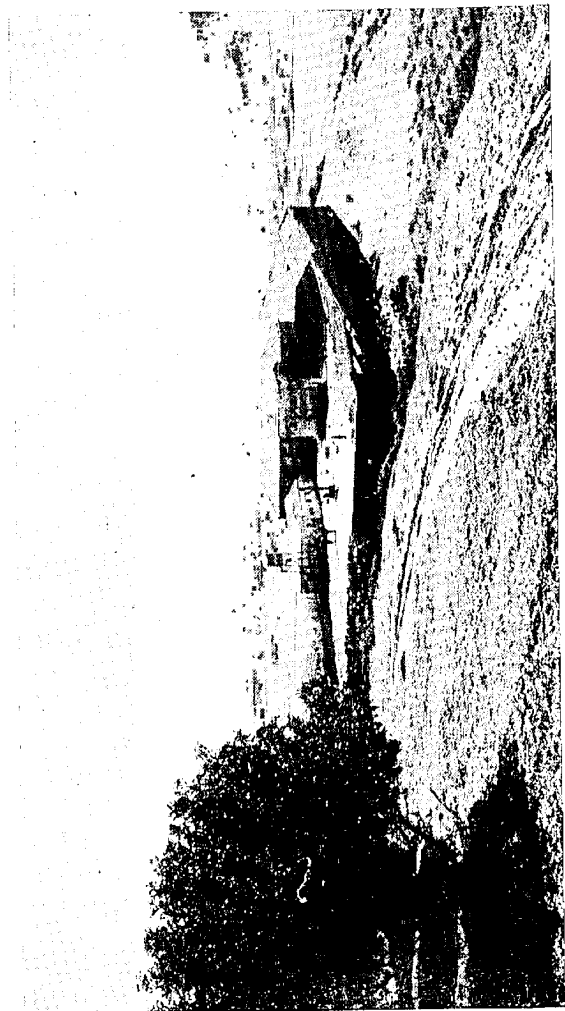
We consumed all our food and had to eat the grain put aside for sowing. We had been cut off for ten days, as all the water-courses were flooded with water streaming down to the sea from the Judean hills. Suddenly we were confronted with an apparition: an Arab from Isdud—a giant of a man—made his way to us with a donkey bearing a sack of flour. We joyously hailed him as our deliverer. He had been sent by the Christian miller of Isdud, from whom we got our bread. He had anxiously cast about for a way of getting a sack of flour to us. The moment the sky cleared, he had chosen the tallest and strongest Arab he could find and sent him to us by a roundabout route that took five hours instead of the usual three-quarters of an hour. During the floods several Arabs had been drowned with their donkeys attempting to travel southwards from Jaffa.

It is on that somewhat depressing note that we leave Beer Tuvia during the first unsuccessful attempt to found a settlement there.

CHAPTER XIII

RECHOVOT

THE SURGE of enthusiasm that swept over the Jewish people at the outset of the Return to Zion in 1882 soon subsided. Immigration dwindled to a tiny trickle, partly as a result of the restrictions imposed by the



Tel Chai



Eliezer Ben Yehuda



Aharon Aharonson (circa 1910)

Turkish Government. In Palestine itself, too, the first flush of zeal for the restoration of Israel's ancient patrimony was overlaid by gray reality. The settlers knew next to nothing about farming and even less about local conditions. They did not calculate their probable costs correctly and in most cases brought insufficient money with them. It was the largeness of heart of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who stepped in just in time, that saved the new Jewish villages from ruin. But the administrative machine he set up in them was far from sympathetic to the settlers, as can be seen from the contemporary impressions recorded in the previous chapters. Apathy replaced the initial idealism, and there was every indication that the tiny Yishuv, with its handful of villages run by bureaucratic and domineering officials, would at best continue the way it was.

But the years 1890-91 saw a revival of the spirit of 1882. Immigrants streamed into the country once more, and there was much land buying. The scene was dominated by the meteor-like personality of Zeev Tiomkin (*see* Chapter XIV). The main result of that short but busy period was the establishment of Rechovot and Chadera, both of them private ventures that remained outside the network of Baron de Rothschild's administration.

BUYING THE LAND

The story of the purchase of the land upon which Rechovot was founded constitutes an epic in itself. It is told by Eliahu Aharon Eisenberg, who in 1889 was living at Wadi Hunein (Ness Tziona), where he was overseer of several orange groves. In summer he worked as a mason in Jaffa, Rishon and Ekron.

The estate of Duran, about half-way between Rishon and Gedera, consisted of 10,600 dunams. Some thirty years previously, an attempt had been made by Jews to buy it, but without success. Now it was the property of Anton Rock, a Christian-Arab of Jaffa, who had considerable land holdings. The land was leased to bedouin who paid so little for its use, however, as scarcely to cover the taxes on it. The owner was consequently not reluctant to sell.

Eisenberg had more than once thought that the Duran estate would make an excellent site for a new village that could become a centre for Jewish settlement in the south. He disclosed the idea to a few of his friends (among them was Yehuda Grasovsky-Gur, author of one of the better-known modern Hebrew dictionaries), who became infected with his enthusiasm. Eisenberg writes:

The idea of redeeming the estate gave me no rest. The Yishuv at the time was impoverished and in straits. On the one hand, the Government had closed the country to immigration and would not allow even a hut to be erected in the settlements. On the other hand, there was pressure on the part of the notorious Bloch,¹ the Baron's chief official. What between the Turks and Bloch, the notion took complete possession of me. Apart from the necessity of redeeming an important area in the midst of the southern settlements, I felt it was highly necessary for a new village to be built on a healthy basis by persons with private means, so that it could be free of the officialdom, grants and support that had hampered the Yishuv's development.

¹ See Chapter XII.

Matters drifted on without any move being made until August, 1889, when Eisenberg learned that the administration of Pastor Schneller's Orphanage (a Christian-German institution) in Jerusalem had begun to negotiate for the purchase of Duran in order to establish an agricultural school there. Eisenberg was in a quandary. There was no one to talk to. It was useless to discuss the matter with the Baron's administration. Bloch was sure to be rude and insulting and was liable to tell anyone who came forward with a suggestion to mind his own business. For this reason, the settlers kept out of his way as much as possible. Nevertheless, urged by the feeling that he ought to try every avenue, Eisenberg sent Bloch an anonymous letter in Hebrew explaining the danger to the Duran estate and the necessity of redeeming it. The letter had no effect, other than to anger Bloch; but its writer felt he had done his duty in sending it.

Meanwhile, Eisenberg and a friend of his in Rishon received letters from a new society in Minsk (Russia) calling itself the 'Thousand Family Association'. Its aim was to acquire 100,000 dunams in Palestine in the course of ten years and settle a thousand families on 100 dunams apiece, and it sought the advice of Eisenberg and his friend as to the feasibility of the scheme. The project seemed most unrealistic, but Eisenberg thought it would be worth while to buy the land then, if possible, and to worry about the precise means of settling it later. The Association accordingly sent out a representative, who approached Eisenberg, and the latter promptly suggested his acquiring Duran for his principals. Eisenberg had no little trouble with the representative, for exaggerated reports had begun to spread concerning the nature of his mission. More-

over, the authorities viewed him with suspicion, while land speculators were anxious to get their hands on him. With the exercise of some ingenuity, Eisenberg succeeded in keeping the representative away from the speculators and in persuading him to agree to buy Duran. As, however, he felt unequal to the task of conducting negotiations with Anton Rock to secure an option on the land, he decided, with the representative's approval, to place the matter in more competent hands.

The man he resolved to approach was his friend, Yisrael Belkind, who had moved from Rishon Letzion to Jaffa, where he had become principal of a new school for boys. While the representative returned to Russia to persuade the Association to raise money for the purchase, Eisenberg made the first move. It was Rock's habit—as was usual among wealthy Arabs, who found that time hung heavy on their hands—to frequent the shop of the Chankins (to whom Belkind was related by marriage) and spend an hour or two there in small talk. Belkind accordingly began discussing the transaction with the landowner in the shop and soon after suggested that his brother-in-law, Yehoshua Chankin,² act in his stead. So insistent was Belkind, that Eisenberg had perforce to agree.

Chankin's instructions were to oust the rival purchasers, secure an option, and promise Rock that the money would be forthcoming within three months. Rock agreed to the arrangement, and Eisenberg hastened to inform the Association. He also asked them to send out a representative with the necessary sum within the stipulated period. In reply, he received a

² See Chapter VI.

letter to the effect that the Association had been liquidated, but that it was hoped to resuscitate it and raise the money in time. Trusting that a miracle might still occur before the three months were up, Eisenberg kept the news from Rock, and did not even tell Chankin.

The three months passed, and Rock announced his intention of selling to the highest bidder. Eisenberg, in desperation at the prospect of the land he had set his heart on becoming lost to Jewish settlement, proposed to Chankin that the two of them undertake the venture on their own account. Chankin was to sign a contract with Rock and pay a sum in advance. The money for this payment was to be obtained by Chankin in the form of a loan of 10,000 francs from a Jewish merchant in Beirut who supplied the shop in Jaffa. Eisenberg offered bills for 5,000 francs, with his holding at Ness Tziona as security. The contract was signed on the 27th February, 1890, the very day that saw the formation of the *Menucha Venachala* Society in Warsaw, the members of which later settled in Rechovot.

Eisenberg describes his feelings the day after as follows:

When I got up, I felt that we had succeeded in performing a great enterprise, that we had redeemed an important area. But at the same time I experienced doubt and anxiety. For who could tell what would happen to the land in four months' time, when the balance of the payment fell due? In order to make the initial payment, I had mortgaged everything I possessed. Where, then, were we to find the remainder, which would probably total 100,000 francs by the time all the incidental expenses were paid? I accordingly resolved to take

the matter up with the leading members of our tiny Yishuv in the hope of forming a committee to assume responsibility for the venture . . .

One evening, a few days later, Chankin and his brother rode out to Eisenberg's house at Ness Tziona and bade him accompany them to the Duran estate. They carried a letter from Rock to his caretaker on the spot informing him of the transfer of the land and instructing him to meet the new owners' wishes. It was midnight when they aroused the Sudanese caretaker, who was thoroughly alarmed at an intrusion at so unexpected an hour. The visitors spent the night in the caretaker's stone hut, drinking the coffee he made them and talking. When dawn broke, they went out and made a tour of inspection.

Immediately afterwards, Eisenberg began to canvass the leading members of the Yishuv, and two days later succeeded in calling a meeting. The entire gathering consisted of four people, among them Ye-chiel Mikhal Pines and Shimon Rokach. Eisenberg proposed that they should try and find people to take up the land. He had not brought Chankin to the meeting, as the latter and Pines were not on good terms. Nevertheless, he was most surprised when all four refused to have anything to do with the transaction as long as Chankin had a hand in it. As they stipulated that Chankin must withdraw completely if they were to be associated with the venture, Eisenberg reluctantly dispensed with their help.

Eisenberg and Chankin next decided to give their project some publicity, and issued a general invitation to all who might be interested to go and view the land on the Feast of Purim (the 6th March). On the appointed day, a large number of people, many

with their wives and children, from Jaffa, Rishon, and Gedera, assembled outside Eisenberg's house, whence they proceeded to Duran. The visitors strolled about the estate, apathetic or even sceptical. The occasion threatened to end in anti-climax, when Eisenberg gathered them together and delivered a speech exhorting them, with the aid of an apt quotation from the Talmud, to believe that the desolation they beheld around them could be redeemed. 'I also,' he recounts, explained to them the aim of founding a village on a different principle by using the means of the settlers themselves, which would make it unnecessary to have recourse to the Baron's generosity. I regarded him as a great and exalted man (which was not the opinion of the majority of Palestinian Jews at the time); but he was only an individual, and so was liable to be mistaken. We need a community, a people; and a people does not make mistakes.

After Eisenberg had concluded his address, Belkind got up and proposed that the place be called *Recho-vot*, which carried the dual connotation of wide expanse and streets (Genesis, 26, 22; Zechariah, 8, 4). The simple but moving ceremony inspired some of the visitors, if not all, with a degree of conviction. But that fact, though affording some encouragement, did not provide the much-needed sum to purchase the land. Former friends now joined Pines in determined opposition to the scheme. Nevertheless, Eisenberg's resolution did not waver:

I had but one purpose before me: to save the estate from falling into strange hands. I had to discontinue working and spend most of my time in Jaffa. My family suffered not a little in consequence. It took over three hours to trudge from

Wadi Hunein across the sands to Jaffa. We had no coaches or postal service. Sometimes my wife did not know where I was. She would remain on her own, looking after the children, who were sick with fever and eye-disease . . . But above all I suffered from the coolness of my friends . . . and from their unaccountable objection to Chankin.

Things were in a bad way, when a man named Gorodissky, newly come from Russia, sought Eisenberg's advice concerning the purchase of several hundred dunams on behalf of his family. He was persuaded by Eisenberg to buy 700 dunams at Rechovot, and a purchaser was found for another 300. Shortly afterwards, news was received from Warsaw of the foundation there of the *Menucha Venachala* Association, with the object of establishing a village in Palestine. Eisenberg had hopes that the Association would buy land at Rechovot—especially as it included several members of Bnei Moshe, a group formed by Achad Ha'am to carry out settlement on a non-philanthropic basis, of which he himself was a member—and asked them to send out a representative. In the meantime, however, the Chankin family, despairing of finding Jewish purchasers and having had their fill of heart-ache, were about to clinch a deal with the German missionaries. Eisenberg went to Jaffa as soon as he heard what was afoot, and prevented the sale from taking place. So sure was he that the land would be redeemed, that he signed more promissory notes, offering everything he possessed as a security. Support was also forthcoming from Chankin's wife, Olga, who threatened to commit suicide if the land passed into the hands of the Germans. Nevertheless, the position still remained critical.

THE VILLAGE IS FOUNDED

The tale is taken up at this point by Eliahu Zeev Halevi Lewin-Epstein. A member of the newly founded *Menucha Venachala* Association in Warsaw, he arrived in Palestine at the crucial moment for Rechovot. He came together with another member of the Association, a wealthy man of middle age, named Yaakov Broda, to buy land for a village. Broda, being senior to Lewin-Epstein in years, was given the right to make decisions. Lewin-Epstein's first act, upon arrival, was to go out to Duran, while Broda, who found the summer heat oppressive, stayed in Jaffa. Lewin-Epstein, accompanied by several farmers from the Judean settlements, made a careful and methodical inspection of the land. The conclusion reached was that the land was eminently suited to the purpose in view, and that its situation, with Jewish villages to the north and south, was ideal. Lewin-Epstein did not even trouble to examine the other propositions that were offered.

The Duran estate, consisting of 10,600 dunams, was more than was needed for a village of 50 holdings each of 100 dunams, as envisaged by *Menucha Venachala*. But, Lewin-Epstein writes,

We did not worry about the remaining half of the land. There were, already then, numerous individuals in the country who wanted to settle in the existing Jewish villages but could find no room there. It never entered the mind of a Jew to go and settle in an Arab village. Such persons therefore sat back and waited until a new settlement was founded in the hope of joining it.

A number of prospective settlers was found to make

up for a few defections on the part of *Menucha Venachala*, and to ensure that the residue of the land was disposed of. At the request of its representatives on the spot, therefore, the society sent sufficient money to buy the entire estate. But, when the negotiations were brought to the stage of signing a deed of sale, Broda suddenly interposed objections. For, while Lewin-Epstein had been at Duran inspecting the land, he had spent his time in Jaffa in the company of Yechiel Mikhal Pines, whose animosity towards Chankin we have seen. Prompted by Pines, Broda forced his companion to put to Chankin a series of exacting demands before he would agree to paying over the money. He began, at Pines' suggestion, by demanding that the title-deeds be made out individually in the names of all the purchasers—a practice that was entirely without precedent in the case of Russian citizens. Chankin, however, agreed without demur. Pines next urged him to insist that Chankin obtain permits to build houses, which was something altogether unheard of. Nevertheless, Chankin accepted this condition as well. Finally, Pines got him to demand the production of an exact map of the estate and an express undertaking by the neighbouring Arabs to respect the boundaries as marked on it. This seemed even more preposterous than the previous demands; for what Arab *fellah* knew what a map was?

Meanwhile, Lewin-Epstein's patience was becoming exhausted. As the junior partner in the enterprise, he had to abide by Broda's decisions. But it was also his unpleasant task to persuade Chankin to carry out the demands that Pines had ingeniously devised in the hope of bringing the entire transaction to nothing. 'Nevertheless,' he writes,

I have to admit that Broda's insistence finally turned out to our advantage; for the fulfilment of his demands enabled us to place our settlement on a firm footing. Chankin carried out all our stipulations. He drew up separate title-deeds in the names of all the members of our society and of the other purchasers, and designated them as Russian subjects,—the first time that such a thing had been done in Palestine under Turkish rule. He also provided us with permits to build cowsheds, which we could later easily convert into houses. These proved of the utmost use, for every permit to build a house required the Sultan's assent and signature, which might take years to secure. The local authorities assured us that they would look the other way when we transformed the cowsheds into houses... And it was Chankin who helped us by inducing our Arab neighbours to affix their signatures to the map showing the boundaries of Duran land. More than once I thanked Heaven for making Broda so insistent...

The land was accordingly surveyed, the task being performed by Mordekhai Lubman, the teacher, who helped to establish Hebrew as the language of tuition at Rishon Letzion,³ and who had previously qualified as a surveyor. This, incidentally, was the first time that a survey had been made of the land of a Jewish settlement. Lewin-Epstein acted as Lubman's assistant; and even though he was taken ill with malaria, he resolutely carried on with the work, 'for,' he writes, 'I was young, wholeheartedly devoted to the idea of the Yishuv, and full of admiration for the sacred task that awaited me.'

³ See Chapter VI.

Meanwhile, the summer drew on and the Fast of the Ninth of Av approached. The settlers spent the day in Jaffa and recited the Book of Lamentations in the house of Yechiel Mikhal Pines. This is how Lewin-Epstein describes his feelings on that occasion:

It is hard to picture the feelings of a *Chovev Zion* who, upon coming to the Land of Israel for the first time, had to mourn the destruction that was everywhere so evident. There were scarcely any plantations throughout the country, and the fields lay bare and covered with dust. The occasional trees, to be found here and there, were gray rather than green. Rainfall is scant in this country, and there was virtually no artificial irrigation. The town of Jaffa is squalid and its streets narrow . . . When we read the Zion Lamentations of Yehuda Halevi, with their descriptions of Zion in her ancient glory and splendour, and thought of Zion of today, which is daily being rendered more desolate by a savage people and barbarian government . . . our tears gushed forth.

But the day also had its compensating joy: for Chankin came with the news that the title-deeds were signed. Twelve days later, they went to the Government offices in Jaffa and completed the necessary formalities. The land of Duran was securely in Jewish hands at last.

The first settlers went out to Rechovot soon after, and building started. In December, a general meeting was held to decide how the village was to be administered. The first step was the election of a committee of five: three representing the *Menucha Venachala* Association, and two, the individual settlers. Lewin-Epstein was elected chairman. Altogether, sixteen settlers took part in the proceedings. Among

them was a woman, Batya Makov, who had come out with her children, leaving her husband, who had no desire to accompany her, behind in Europe. 'She was,' writes Lewin-Epstein, 'a woman of worth in every sense. She did all her own work on her farmstead and attended all the meetings of the colonists.'

The committee was instructed to draft the statutes of the colony, to be submitted at the next general meeting, and in the meantime to administer current affairs. Another decision taken at the meeting was that the name of Rechovot, given to the place by Belkind the previous year, was to be retained. In official eyes, however, it remained Duran until the establishment of the Mandatory régime. The settlers themselves, according to Lewin-Epstein, had some difficulties in remembering to employ the new name, so they resorted to a simple, but efficacious, device to jog their memories. Every settler kept a pin in his clothing; and whenever a lapse of memory occurred with reference to the name of the village, a pinprick would serve as a reminder.

The understanding secured by Chankin with regard to the building of cowsheds for subsequent conversion into houses lapsed with the appointment of a new District Governor at Jaffa. The new official, who had not yet had his palm crossed with silver, kept a close watch on Rechovot. The settlers, for their part, also maintained a constant vigil, and whenever a party of inspectors came in sight, stopped work and sent the workers into hiding (they were more afraid of the workers being arrested than of the demolition of the unfinished buildings). Although one or two buildings were surreptitiously erected (once the roof was up, the authorities were not allowed by law to demolish

the structure), the arrival from abroad of more owners of holdings at Rechovot created a serious housing shortage. Lewin-Epstein, who had to make a trip to Europe, decided to stop in Constantinople on the way and apply for building permits. In the meantime, he begged the settlers to refrain from building on their own initiative.

But such was the pressure of necessity that the settlers began building, with the result that a Turkish gendarme was quartered in Rechovot. The gendarme expected to be bribed to ignore the settlers' building activity, but Lewin-Epstein, who had by then returned, was unwilling to become involved in the subsequent difficulties with the authorities that this might entail. The gendarme consequently expressed his annoyance by vexing the settlers in every possible way. One day he tried to stop a settler's wife from drawing water at the well. The woman thereupon called the other women to her aid and gave the gendarme a thorough drubbing. Following this incident he was removed from Rechovot. 'And,' Lewin-Epstein notes, 'whenever he met me thereafter . . . he invariably greeted me with the greatest civility and courtesy.'

Permits to complete seven half-finished houses duly arrived from Constantinople. They had been secured through the good offices of Baron de Rothschild's representative there. This friendliness was attributable to the fact that, upon the formation of *Menucha Venachala*, its founders had written to Rothschild explaining the system they proposed to employ, whereby the members would stay in Warsaw while their holdings were brought to a profit-bearing stage, when they would come out and cultivate them. Rothschild, they thought, would approve of methods of settle-

ment designed to obviate the need for outside support, as indeed he did. The motive that prompted the writing of the letter was 'a sacred duty to inform him of what we proposed to do. For he is the father and patron of all settlement in the Land of Israel.' Rothschild accordingly instructed all his officials to help the Rechovot settlers in every way.

In his account of the early days of Rechovot, Lewin-Epstein throws interesting light on the currency situation in the Turkish provinces. There was at the time a shortage of small coins. Most of the currency was gold or silver, chiefly French 20-franc gold pieces. These could be changed into small Turkish denominations only at a four per cent fee. The *Menucha Venachala* Association therefore decided to print (in Warsaw) its own notes for small denominations—from half a piastre to 26 piastres. The reason for the 26-piastre note was as follows, in Lewin-Epstein's own words:

The *majidi* was a silver coin worth 20 piastres in Constantinople, i.e., upon issue. When, however, the Government withdrew it from circulation, its value was placed at only 19 piastres, owing to the decrease in its weight through much handling. But the selfsame *majidi* in Jaffa was worth 26 piastres... as the Jaffa piastre was smaller than that current in the capital. Moreover, in Beirut a *majidi* was worth 46 piastres, while in Jerusalem it was worth 23.⁴ Thus, if anyone from other parts came to Beirut or Jerusalem to buy merchandise, he had to calculate the difference between the piastre rate in his own district and that current

⁴ Discrepancies also existed in the system of weights and measures persisting until close upon the end of the Mandatory régime, when the metric system was introduced.

locally . . . Apart from Turkish gold and silver coins, French, English, German, Russian and other currencies were used in Palestine and Syria. The rate for changing gold coins into silver was four per cent. A fee also had to be paid for changing large into small denominations. A person who went on a long journey and changed his money several times in different districts might end up by finding himself penniless.

The local Arabs were at first reluctant to use the Rechovot notes; but when they realised that for notes to the value of a gold coin they could get payment in gold, their confidence increased. The notes even gained currency among Arab merchants in Jaffa. A zealous Turkish official, overhearing an Arab mention the Jewish notes to the disparagement of the Turkish currency (on the ground that even when they were badly torn their full equivalent was paid in gold), procured some specimens and sent them to the Pasha in Jerusalem. The latter, however, did not take any action, for the notes, being made out in the form of drafts upon the village funds, were quite legal. Lewin-Epstein points out that brass piastre and half-piastre coins were issued by the settlers at Zikhron Yaakov even earlier.

'HATIKVA'—A MUSICAL FOOTNOTE

Shmuel Cohen, author of the memoirs on which the previous chapter is based, whose association with Rechovot dates back to the first year of its existence, throws interesting light on the emergence of *Hatikva* as the Jewish national anthem. Then, as now, singing constituted an important feature of the life of the young people. There were, however, no musicians in the

country, with the exception of Egli, one of the six young men who had been sent out to become agricultural instructors.⁵ Recourse was therefore had to Russian revolutionary songs, or to Hebrew songs set to Russian melodies. An example of the latter was *Chushu Achim Chushu* ('Hasten, Brothers, Hasten!'), the words of which were by Yechiel Mikhal Pines. In 1887, Cohen relates, the Hebrew poet, Naphtali Herz Imber, was in Rosh Pina. He gave to Cohen's brother, a settler there, a volume of his poems entitled *Barkai*, which had been published in Jerusalem the year before. Cohen, who was still in Europe at the time, received the volume as a gift from his brother and was immediately struck with the poem called *Shir Hatikva* ('The Song of Hope').

On his arrival in Palestine, Cohen went to Rishon Letzion, where he began to sing *Hatikva* to a Rumanian folk melody,—the melody that has since become known throughout the world. At first the song attracted little attention. Much more interest was displayed in Egli's setting of songs about Rishon, one by Imber and the other—*He'ach Rishon Letzion!*—by the fifteen-year-old son of a settler named Shalit. The same composer also set Imber's poem, *Mishmar Hayarden* ('Watch on the Jordan'), which was beginning to gain the status of a national anthem. Yet, for all its transient popularity, *Mishmar Hayarden* fell out of favour with the public, together with several of its contemporaries. On this Cohen muses:

The oblivion that has overtaken some of the first songs, which expressed the outpouring of our hearts is to be regretted. Our children who come after us will not feel the strains that bind them to their

⁵ See Chapter XI.

fathers and to the pioneers of the past generation. Does indeed no value attach to the melody expressive of the suffering and sadness—and also the joy—of the fathers, whose feet first trod the soil of our land to restore its ravages? Have the words, *Rishon Letzion* ('First to Zion') become emptied of their content, so that they no longer convey any message to the heart of a Zionist?

Gradually *Hatikva* gained a place in the repertoire of songs sung at gatherings. Then came the new wave of settlement activity of 1890–91. There was a tendency at the time to identify certain songs with certain places. Thus *He'ach Rishon Letzion!* became the special song of Rishon; *Chushu Achim Chushu* was identified with Gadera; and *Masat Nafshi* ('My Heart's Desire'), with Chadera. *Hatikva* was appropriated by Rechovot, and Cohen recalls how the workers (400 Jews were employed there at the time) would return home in a body singing that song. Eventually the popularity of *Hatikva* spread, until it became the Jewish national anthem, entirely through the free choice of the people. Cohen concludes:

Many a time, at meetings, conferences and other occasions where *Hatikva* is sung, I am reminded of the song as it was first sung. And I count myself happy to have been privileged to be among the first who sang it.

'TIOMKIN'S DAYS'

A REMARKABLE phase in the history of the Yishuv is the period in 1890-91 that is associated with the name of Vladimir Tiomkin. Sent out by the *Chovevei Zion* Society in Odessa to administer its affairs in Palestine, and set up a local Committee in Jaffa, Tiomkin stepped off the boat to be received like a king. Less than a year later, he returned to Russia broken and discredited. The description of Tiomkin's meteoric career is taken from the memoirs of Moshe Smilansky¹, who had arrived in the country a few months earlier and was working at the time as an agricultural labourer.

It was on a morning in November, 1890, that Tiomkin walked ashore at Jaffa, to be greeted by a large crowd of Jews, among them the leading figures in the Yishuv. From the port, he and they moved off in a procession through the streets, much to the wonderment of the Arabs. No sooner did he enter his room in the Kaminetz Hotel, in the German Colony of Jaffa, than people began knocking on his door to speak to him.

The Jaffa office of the *Chovevei Zion's* Committee was up a narrow stairway in a dark Arab house.

¹ From this point, Smilansky becomes one of the most important sources of information concerning the early history of the Yishuv. First an agricultural labourer at Rishon, then a pioneer at Chadera, Smilansky finally settled down as a citrus grower in Rechovot. Throughout his active life he wrote voluminously,—stories, articles on Zionism, farming and current topics, and several books of memoirs and reminiscences.

Tiomkin's room led out of a large hall, which was filled to capacity all day with young newcomers to the country waiting to see him. Some came with no other object than to catch a glimpse of him. Those fortunate to gain admittance to the Chairman of the Committee would emerge with faces bright with hope. 'They seemed to have found something precious inside the office,' Smilansky writes,

and that something communicated itself to the crowd waiting outside... Sometimes the door would open, and he himself would come out. Head and shoulders above those around him, he would look about him with an expression of kindness and warmth and ask them what they wanted... They wanted nothing: just to have the satisfaction of beholding him. Gradually, he would edge forward from the doorway until he stood in their midst... He would ask questions, and they would answer. Then it was their turn to ask and his to answer. On his face rested a light smile, pleasant and winning. His voice was sweet and captivating: it in itself seemed to hold an assurance of goodness, without his having to put it into words... After he had finished speaking, they would leave, contented and hopeful...

Some of the frequenters of the office, who had come from afar, would eat their food and even spend the night there. Wherever Tiomkin went, people immediately assumed an attitude of respect and would rise and greet him. Among the Arabs, too, word went round that he was *ras al-yahud* ('Chief of the Jews').

At that time, Smilansky continues, Tuesday was an eventful day, for it was the occasion of the arrival of the weekly steamer from Russia, which brought letters from the parents and families of settlers and disgorg-

ed several hundred immigrants. These included men of means coming to buy themselves a farm; representatives of settlement societies (which abounded just then); and, more frequently, poor immigrants who had really intended going to America and had somehow landed at Jaffa by mistake. Of the former categories, some spent a week or two in Palestine, either leaving money with the *Chovevei Zion* Committee to buy land, or departing with a scornful smile, having achieved nothing. Some returned in the evening by the same boat that had brought them in the morning; others stayed on until they found what they wanted. Of the poor arrivals, some went on to New York or back to Russia, while those who had no money at all remained as 'workers',—which meant that they became a charge upon Tiomkin's Committee. Tiomkin had to induce Bloch (Baron de Rothschild's representative in Rishon) to relax the restriction upon strangers staying in the settlements administered by Rothschild, and as a result a hundred newcomers were given work in the plantations at Rishon. Hundreds more found work at Rechovot. They were accommodated in tents at Wadi Hunein (Ness Tziona) after every habitable attic and cellar in the settlements had been occupied.

Smilansky's classification of the immigrants, however, includes a third category:

... I used to distinguish them by special signs... They were the people who had been attracted to Eretz Yisrael, not by the prospect of becoming freehold farmers or of finding a livelihood, nor by any motives of public-spiritedness, but by... who knows? Perhaps it was the seed once sown in their hearts by the stories told them by their rabbis in

cheder . . . Perhaps it was the warm rays of sunshine radiating from *Ahavat Tzion*²—the sunshine of the ancestral homeland . . . Perhaps it was the tears that had streamed from their eyes over the pages of the 'Wars of the Jews'. Or perhaps it was something great, something lofty, that had no name . . . 'Idealists', or '*Shmendriks*',—that is how they were referred to locally, with a smile. I knew them by the purity of their soft, gentle faces; by the flash of their warm, sparkling eyes; and by the expression of faith—of seeking something hidden—upon their faces, in their eyes, and in all their gestures. They were usually almost boys, striplings. For the most part they did not tarry in Jaffa. They would go to the Committee's office to see *him*. Having done that, they would go out to the settlements. From there they would usually be brought back by cart to hospital or to the cemetery. Or else they would go straight to the steamship, turning neither to right nor to left, a black mark of bitter despair upon their brows . . .

Some time passed, during which Smilansky had been working hard and hearing little about developments. Meanwhile, Tiomkin had been encountering difficulties and opposition; and despite his personal magnetism and gift of oratory, he was not able to overcome the one or quell the other.

Tiomkin had two assistants thrust upon him: Y.M. Pines and Y. Ben-Tovim. The latter was a newcomer and held a watching brief on behalf of the Central Committee of the *Chovevei Zion* in Odessa. Pines had, up till the formation of the Jaffa Committee, acted for years as Palestine representative of the *Cho-*

² 'Love of Zion' (first published in 1853) by Abraham Mapu, father of the modern Hebrew novel.

vevei Zion, and he had been actively concerned in the establishment of Petach Tikva and Yesud Hamaala, and had founded Gedera on his own initiative. Both men looked askance upon Tiomkin.

Unofficially, Tiomkin was assisted by Yehoshua Eisenstadt-Barzilai and Yehoshua Chankin. The first was a dreamer and fiery idealist, with a capacity for impetuously embarking on unsound ventures. Of Chankin, and Pines' attitude towards him, we saw something in the previous chapter. An open breach was inevitable between Tiomkin's official assistants and unofficial advisers; and it came about over his most ambitious project.

His mission was to place two or three settlements on a firm footing; but a soaring spirit like his could not be chained to so trivial a task. Realising the extent of the national awakening among Jews in Russia, he wanted to link it effectively with the revival that was taking place in Eretz Yisrael. He wanted to redeem the ancestral soil with the nation's resources. Aware of the difficulties of land purchase by the individual, he sought to concentrate in the hands of the *Chovevei Zion* Committee large areas of land to be resold to new settlers. He depended upon Eisenstadt-Barzilai to publicise the idea, and upon Chankin to see to the land-buying aspect.

But Ben-Tovim and Pines opposed the idea of concentrating the land in the hands of a single body, and they objected in particular to Chankin's being given so responsible a task. 'It was not,' Smilansky writes, 'without their assent and moral assistance' that another movement to buy land was fostered. A number of newcomers, and also some local residents, began looking for land to acquire, and agents and middlemen

sprang up like mushrooms. Meanwhile, land was being bought in excess of the requirements of the number of prospective settlers. The new landowners therefore began to canvass recently arrived immigrants, making all kinds of extravagant promises to them.

Not to be outdone, Chankin negotiated for various tracts of land that were offered for sale. Having the funds of the *Chovevei Zion* Committee at his disposal, he paid for options on a far greater total area than could be made use of at the time. In some cases, he was not careful enough in investigating the genuineness of the proposition, and paid out money to no purpose. Chankin's opponents tried to trip him up in every way. The net result of their activities was a rise in land values and bad blood all round. Tiomkin did his best to smoothe matters over, but he was powerless in face of all the jealousy, hatred and petty rivalry.

An atmosphere of suspicion and distrust was created. Tiomkin's face became pale, lined and strained. Matters went from bad to worse, and dark hints were thrown out of impending restrictive measures by the authorities. Law suits, the consequence of which would have been to wash a great deal of dirty linen in front of the hostile Turkish authorities, were threatened on all sides. There were prospective settlers who, on going to take possession of the holdings they had supposedly bought, found that they owned nothing. Some found that they had unwittingly taken possession of other people's land, and were forcibly evicted.

As if all these troubles were not enough, the affairs of the Committee had fallen into a state of chaos. So preoccupied was Tiomkin with his plans

and schemes that he entirely neglected his routine duties. He did not report fully on his activities to the *Chovevei Zion* Central Committee in Odessa, and he failed to keep proper accounts. He consequently exceeded his budget, and hoped to make good the deficit out of the proceeds of the sale of land to new settlers. Thus, in addition to everything else, the Committee's finances were in a complete muddle. Moreover, many of the people who had bought land now thought better of it and demanded that the Committee refund them their money. Sums paid to Arabs for options on land were in danger of being lost.

At the end of the winter, a three-man commission, composed of Achad Ha'am, Dr. Mazeh and Menachem Ussishkin—three central figures of the *Chovevei Zion* Movement—came out to investigate the situation. Achad Ha'am soon discovered the sources of the trouble (he described the position in the second of his essays entitled, 'Truth from Eretz Yisrael') and expressed disapproval of Tiomkin's activities. As a result, Tiomkin's position became weakened still further.

The summer of 1891 came round. Newcomers continued to arrive every week, and numerous transactions were still being negotiated; but there was a general feeling of impatience and tiredness, and even in the pleasant new offices the Committee had taken the atmosphere was heavy with foreboding. The threatened restrictive measures materialised, preceded by an epidemic of malaria and typhoid. The weekly ship from Russia began taking back full complements of passengers, especially people of substance; and though newcomers were still arriving, they were without means.

Poverty increased, and with it the difficulties. The

position of the Committee grew daily more precarious. The people without means spent whole days on the Committee's doorstep demanding help. Some threatened to complain about the alleged misdeeds of the Committee to the representative of the Russian Government and to ask to be sent back at the Committee's expense.

Then on top of everything, came the suspension by the Turkish Government of Jewish immigration and land purchases. The advance payments on account of land were lost, and new arrivals were unceremoniously packed off to their country of origin by the very next ship. Tiomkin made a desperate last attempt to avert a complete breakdown. At first he gained some measure of success. He established a fixed rate of bak-sheesh, which enabled new arrivals to enter the country, and with Chankin's help he devised a way of completing some of the unfinished land transactions. But the ever-tightening official stranglehold on Zionist activity, combined with growing financial embarrassment in the affairs of the Committee, brought on an acute crisis, and Tiomkin was recalled to Odessa, less than a year after his arrival in Jaffa.

CHAPTER XV

THE EPIC OF CHADERA

IT IS doubtful whether the establishment of any one settlement was fraught with so much suffering or was carried out with greater heroism than that of Chadera. For a description of this veritable epic in the history of the Yishuv, we turn once again to Moshe Smi-

lansky, who was an active participant in the venture.

In the winter of 1890, when Tiomkin's brief reign was at its height, word went round of the purchase by Chankin, on behalf of the *Chovevei Zion* Committee, of a tract in Samaria near the coast. The land was said to consist of 30,000 dunams—such a fabulously large area had never before been bought at one time—and there were reported to be inlets and coves where a port might one day be constructed. The soil was fertile, and the entire area was covered with green. The ominous significance neither of this fact nor of the Arabic name of the place, *el-Ekhdeira* ('the Green One'), struck the group of young people assembled in Aharon Eisenberg's house at Wadi Hunein (Ness Tziona) who heard the news of the purchase with leaping hearts. Indeed, when one of the listeners—an older man—pointed out that the deceptive green of the place was a sign of lurking malaria, his warning was disregarded. Next day, they went in a body to Tiomkin with the request that they be permitted to settle on the new estate. The desired permission was readily granted. Smilansky was then a lad of sixteen.

During the winter, a number of the future settlers at Chadera worked in the plantations at Rishon, to gain proficiency in manual work. Although they were predominantly young, they included a few middle-aged men. They also went to visit Rechovot, to see for themselves a new settlement in the process of establishment. The farmers of Rechovot, who had heard of the evil repute of Chadera, besought the group to join them, but to no avail. Meanwhile, the young pioneers began to make preparations, and got together carts, implements and other necessities. A pleasant feature of this preparatory stage was the talks

and dreams of the future; and though the settlers who happened to overhear the youngsters' fanciful descriptions of what they would do sometimes injected drops of gall into their cup of sweet anticipation, their forebodings were disregarded.

The youngsters also took hope from the weekly arrival in Jaffa of hundreds of immigrants. And indeed the land at Chadera was soon sold to the representatives of new settlement societies in Vilna, Kovno and Riga, as well as to a number of individuals. A small advance party—among them Chankin's brother and several of his relatives—went out to settle on the spot that winter, and began to cultivate the land in order to assert the Jewish life to ownership.

In the spring of 1891, just after Passover, Smilansky and his companions paid a visit to Chadera. As they drew near, Smilansky writes,

Our hearts beat strongly. Here was where we were going to weave the fabric of our lives and of our national future . . . We passed by a hillock and crossed a ditch—the boundary of Chadera! We descended into a glen, which displayed signs of moisture, and from which rose the scent of green grass . . . The refreshing sight and smell of the grass gladdened our hearts. In Judea, whence we had come, the grass had already withered. 'What a lovely place!' several of us exclaimed in unison. 'Here's your land,' the carter rejoined with a scornful smile . . . In a grave voice, which betrayed a note of anxiety, he added: 'These glens are swamps. This is the smallest of them. There are bigger ones, wider and deeper, to the north and west. Rain-water and water from the springs collect there, and they dry up only at the end of summer. It is from there that the fever comes. There are pestilential

swamps near Petach Tikva, and Zikhron Yaakov, too; but such marshes are not to be found anywhere save at Yesud Hamaala. Look around: there are no villages throughout this broad valley. There used to be a Circassian village on the fringe of your land, but its inhabitants are all dead, except for a few who have remained physical wrecks.'

Sobered, but undaunted, the pioneers continued on their way, till they came to a disused *khan* (caravan-serai), where they found the members of the advance party. It was a gloomy, forbidding structure, and the large inner courtyard was full of dirt and litter. The doorless apertures of the rooms ranged around it looked like gaping caverns, and the whole presented a scene of utter desolation. It was here that the first comers had taken up their abode, after making a few of the rooms habitable.

One of the first settlers, Reb Yossi—he was no youngster and had taken his numerous family to Chadera with him—invited the party into his room. It was a large room and tastefully arranged. In one corner stood a small cupboard draped with a hanging: it contained a Scroll of the Torah which he had brought from Europe. It was there that the settlers met for worship. Reb Yossi then conducted the visitors on a tour of inspection of their property. As they stood upon an eminence gazing at their land extending all around them, their hearts beat faster with excitement,—and perhaps with a touch of fear as well.

It was in the summer of 1891 that Smilansky and his companions—they included one young woman, his own sister—went to settle at Chadera. Not wishing to live in the *khan*, they chose a hillock a short distance away and erected two wooden huts, which they roofed

with mats, one as living quarters and the other as a kitchen and dining-room. Since the land had not yet been divided among its various owners, farming proper could not yet begin. Permits to build had not been received, and the authorities were keeping a watchful eye open. It was, therefore, impossible to begin erecting houses. Meanwhile, the settlers occupied themselves in conveying building materials to the site. The wood, which they procured in Jaffa, they transported by boat and brought up from the seashore on camels. For the rest, they spent much of their time exploring their land feeling, as Smilansky puts it, 'like bridegrooms'.

By night, we young people used to gather round our huts, joined by visitors from Jaffa and the settlements. The young people were all vital, happy, gay and full of hope and faith. The nights were glorious, the sky pure and serene, and almost luminous. Tens of thousands of stars shed brightness, even when there was no moon. And when the moon was full, the nights were white . . . The laughing voices of those gathered together on the hillock were borne afar . . . The countryside, asleep for centuries, seemed to awaken, wondering at the joyful youngsters: who were they, and whence had they come?

It was on such nights that they gave themselves up to imagining the future of Chadera, each painting in his fancy a different picture. Sometimes, too, there were discussions which would become very heated, and in which voices would be raised high. Then

even the fox, on his way to the swamp, would stand still for a moment, cocking his head in the direction of the group of noisy intruders, wondering what they might be wanting there.

But the pleasant honeymoon period quickly gave way to toil and hardship. Haifa was then eight hours' journey from Chadera, and Jaffa, twelve. The roads were bad and travelling dangerous. All requirements had to be procured from Jaffa, and the young men turned themselves into wagoners, wearing themselves out as they spent day after day on dusty tracks under the burning summer sun. It took them a day and a night to traverse the distance between Jaffa and Chadera with their heavily laden carts. The settlers also suffered from raids by thieves and bandits. Although in the early years no organised attacks were made upon Chadera, thieves would often creep in under cover of darkness to steal horses or anything else worth taking and they were usually armed. The settlers, too, were armed, and exchanges of fire sometimes took place before the intruders were put to flight. To add to the settlers' tribulations, the authorities now took a hand. Believing that permits to build were about to be issued, several of the men of Chadera had begun to erect houses. What happened is described by Smilansky as follows:

One day, towards evening, as my brother-in-law and I were returning from the sea on horseback, we noticed from afar that the place was in a turmoil. It looked ominous. We pressed forward, and when we reached the settlement, a terrible sight met our eyes. Armed soldiers were going about destroying the foundations we had laid. Behind them ran a motley crowd of Arabs—men, women and children—shouting and laughing triumphantly . . . There was confusion and despondency among the settlers. Several huts had been torn down, and their contents scattered outside . . .

For some time afterwards, the Governor of Caesa-

rea sent soldiers to Chadera daily to see that no 'permanent structure' was built. This term was interpreted to include even a wooden hut with a roof to it.

Another blow was the new ban on immigration in 1891. Efforts were made to defy it by landing immigrants on lonely spots along the coast. One such group was successfully landed and brought to Zikhron and Chadera. But the authorities got wind of the matter, and soldiers were sent to comb the villages in question. All persons not having the requisite papers in their possession were arrested, and it was only as the result of protracted efforts that their release was finally secured.

At the close of the summer, the dreaded fever made its appearance. First to be struck down was Lermann, a man of some substance. Apparently owing to a weak heart, he succumbed within the space of a few hours, so that his death came as a shock. Smilansky and his companions had to dig a grave that night: although the land had not yet been divided up or houses built, Chadera already had its cemetery.

The fever did not pass over a single room in the *khan*; nor did it spare the dwellers in the huts, which had meanwhile been rebuilt. There was no physician on the spot, and no competent medical aid nearer than Zikhron or Jaffa. Of the sick who were taken to one or the other, some never returned. After the initial stupor caused by the suddenness of the calamity had worn off, the settlers organised a nursing service: all those who could stand on their feet had to tend the sick according to a roster. They were kept very busy.

Next to be struck down was Reb Yossi, the pious Jew who had shown Smilansky and his friends over the land of Chadera only a few months before. He

did not live to realise his dream of seeing his cherished Scroll of the Torah ceremoniously installed in Chadera's synagogue. After him died his wife and five of his children: one daughter only survived. During the coming weeks the toll grew even heavier.

We were at a loss. We went about pale and weak at the knees, the brand of death upon our foreheads and fear in our hearts. Relatives and friends from the settlements came to us and pleaded with us to leave. 'Abandon the place,' they begged, 'and save yourselves. Save the good name of the Yishuv. If the situation becomes known abroad, it will give the whole country a bad name' . . . But no one stirred from the place. Were we going to run away from the battle? Were we going to leave Chadera—our Chadera—desolate as before? We sometimes even said that we would rather die in Chadera than live anywhere else. Nevertheless, with each new case of sickness our hearts gave a wrench. Each time we saw a cart leave for Jaffa or Zikhron bearing its terrible burden, our hands grew weak; and at each piece of bad news the thought bored through our brains: 'When will our turn come?'

Indeed, scarcely a person was left untouched by the scourge. Smilansky, too, had his turn and suffered from the alternating fits of shivering and intense heat that are characteristic of the disease. He was taken in a cart, driven by his brother, to Zikhron, to be given proper treatment and care. As evening fell, they were set upon by three Arab bandits, and it was only by chance that they were rescued by another Arab, a former watchman at Chadera. The excitement of the adventure, however, banished Smilansky's sickness, and he returned to Chadera without a trace of it.

Meanwhile winter was approaching, and Smilan-

sky's sister was stricken with the fever a second time. Permits to build houses had not been issued. As the first signs of approaching rain appeared, the young settlers hastened to transfer their belongings to the *khan*; but they had not finished by nightfall, and the rain overtook them in their flimsy, roofless huts. They placed boards above the sick young woman's bed to keep her dry, while they themselves stood shivering in the rain. Next day, they transferred to the *khan*, which they so much disliked but which at least offered shelter against the rain and cold.

The fever that winter claimed more lives at Chadera and an outbreak of cholera in Damascus spread to northern Palestine, causing the Jaffa authorities to place Chadera in quarantine. 'And from yonder, from our parents' home,' writes Smilansky, 'come voices bidding us leave everything and return.' After the huts-dwellers moved into the *khan*, Smilansky, too, fell sick once more, this time with the 'green fever'. He writes:

The way to Jaffa was barred by the quarantine, and the road to Zikhron Yaakov was dangerous on account of the rains. How were we to obtain food? Where were we to procure medical help? One by one, the families left the settlement and went to live in Haifa and Jaffa, to wait until the situation improved. Only the unmarried men stayed behind. We, too, decided to go back to Rishon for the time being... After ten days in quarantine, we were allowed into Jaffa, and from there we returned to Rishon. It was my intention to find accommodation for my sister and younger brother in Rishon, and to go back to Chadera by myself. But my plan miscarried. The 'green fever' pursued me and struck me down in Rishon. For months I lay there, hovering between life and death... When I was

out of danger, Rechovot beckoned to me, and I went there. My sister carried the poison of the fever in her bones. For two years it consumed her by slow degrees, until it laid her, while yet in the prime of her life, to her eternal rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PIONEER DOCTOR

HILLEL YAFFE arrived in Palestine, where he proposed to work as a physician, in the summer of 1891, after Tiomkin's influence had begun to wane. The Turkish Government had reimposed its ban on Jewish immigration, and it was with difficulty that Tiomkin was able to secure permission for Yaffe, and the several hundred Jews with whom he travelled, to disembark. Indeed, Yaffe records, hardly a single East European Jew was allowed into the country for some time afterwards.

After a short stay in Jaffa, where the scenes he witnessed in the office of the *Chovevei Zion* Committee distressed him greatly, Yaffe went to Jerusalem on a three-day visit and then toured the settlements. At Rishon Letzion he met the head of Baron de Rothschild's administration, Bloch. He made a point of vexing the settlers for, Yaffe writes,

he even interfered in the farmers' private lives. He kept careful watch over them to make sure they did not light fires on the Sabbath, and saw to it that they observed the dietary laws and the like, although he himself was in no way an observant Jew. He was forever maliciously imposing penalties and fines, and everyone hated and loathed him.

From Rishon, Yaffe went to Wadi Hunein (Ness Tziona), where he beheld

a distressing sight. Dozens of sick people were lying outside under the trees with a high temperature. . . There were no doctors or nurses. The sick were all destitute, and there was no room for them in the new hospital at Jaffa . . . founded by the *Lemaan Zion Society*, or in the hospital at Rishon. Although a few young women did come to look after the patients, and some food arrived from Jaffa and the settlements, the impression the poor wretches made on me was terrible.

In Rechovot, which he visited next, he felt calmer. He was particularly struck by the workers' kitchen, where he found

a crowd of young people, most of them belonging to the intelligentsia, some of them speaking Hebrew and all of them in an enthusiastic mood, despite arduous work, difficult conditions and the heavy hand of malaria . . . There were then about a dozen houses in Rechovot built on two hills. Everything looked poverty-stricken and plain, but there was a prevalent atmosphere of industriousness and of great hope in the future.

At Gedera, he met some of the Biluites, and enjoyed hearing from their lips the tale of their adventures, of the first upward surge of their spirits, their arrival in Palestine, their alternating hope and despair, their period of communal living, the attack launched by the Arabs, the Jewish blood shed on the soil of Gedera, the defence of their women and children, and so on. It was not yet ten full years since the Biluite movement had begun, yet it seemed like an entire generation.

Back in Rishon at the end of his tour, Yaffe en-

quired about the possibilities of practising as a doctor. According to the Rishon physician, the prospects were most discouraging, and the best thing he could do was to settle in Beirut. However, Yaffe, who was quite determined to stay in the country and also to follow his profession, went to Haifa for three months. It was there that he made the acquaintance of some Jews from Tiberias,—an acquaintance that was to lead to an invitation to go and settle there. In October, 1891, he paid his first visit to that stronghold of traditional Jewry. He made the journey, which took ten hours, in the company of Elazar Rokach and a man called Goldenberg, who had been apprenticed to a pharmacist in Russia for a year. On the day after his arrival in Tiberias, he began examining patients and writing prescriptions. That evening he discussed matters with the leaders of the community. The *Sepharadim* refused to share in the expenses of a medical service, as their *chaluka* (charitable funds, out of which they were maintained to study the Holy Law), was limited to students only, whereas the *Ashkenazim* had more freedom in the disposal of their funds. The *Ashkenazim* also had income from other sources, apart from which assistance for medical aid had been promised from Europe.

On the morning after his arrival, Yaffe examined a number of patients, and in the evening he held a reception at his hotel (a primitive hostelry, but with spacious rooms) to which he invited some forty guests, mostly notables of the various *Ashkenazi* congregations. He ordered chairs, refreshments and a plentiful supply of cigarettes for the occasion. The reception was a decided success. One feature of the proceedings intrigued Yaffe greatly:

In front of the door were ranged numerous piles of slippers. I must admit that then, and on many subsequent occasions, I was amazed how each of the notables invariably identified his own slippers when he got up to go...

The guests wore long garments, which were scrupulously clean, and their faces were adorned with long beards and sidelocks. They mostly sat on the floor with their feet tucked under them. Yaffe had never seen Jews of that type before, except once when he had journeyed through Galicia.

A delicate issue was that of religion. Yaffe, who was not religious, decided to broach it at once. Informing his guests of his own non-observance, he promised to do nothing to offend their susceptibilities if he were installed as a doctor in Tiberias, nor would he force a patient to transgress any religious laws unless it was absolutely necessary. To this he received from one of the leaders of the community the following reply: 'Sir, we already have learned and pious men in Tiberias. Now we have need of a skilled physician.'

Yaffe returned to Haifa and, after thinking the matter over, decided to take the proffered appointment. Within a few weeks he was back in Tiberias and made his home in a small house in the Old Town (there were as yet no modern suburbs) looking out onto the lake. He furnished it simply, and his sister came out to join him and keep house for him. Before long he felt very much at home. He writes:

A mutual liking began to grow up between myself and those devout and primitive people. I discovered in them a certain idealism, a fine humanity, Jewish national feeling, and also religious tolerance. They understood and respected me; and I am

proud to say, too, that they loved me just as I loved them, even though there may have seemed to be a gulf between us.

On Saturday evenings, after the Sabbath had departed, Yaffe was always 'at home' to his new friends. They would come dressed in their Sabbath raiment and discuss with him topics from the realm of medicine and other matters outside their ken. At half past ten they would select their respective slippers and go home. 'They never,' Yaffe records, 'concerned themselves about my relations with God, and not one of them ever asked me why I did not attend synagogue.'

Yaffe describes some interesting characters in Tiberias in his time. Chief among them was his assistant, Moshe, a man of 35 who had six children, one of them already a mother. He attended the doctor with complete loyalty and devotion. Once he was given an unusual opportunity of performing an act of piety. It was a Saturday, and Yaffe had to prescribe for a little girl, who was dangerously ill, a remedy that required heating. Neither the pharmacist nor his assistant wanted to desecrate the Sabbath by kindling a fire; but Moshe struck a match, happy at being privileged to save a life thereby. On another occasion—it was the Ninth of Av—the rabbis permitted the fast to be broken, as several dangerous epidemics were raging, and to forgo eating might weaken people and so render them more vulnerable to disease. To encourage the community to overcome their scruples and eat, in order to strengthen their bodies, Yaffe had his table laid in the open, where all might see him at his meal. Moshe joined him and also partook of food although, as Yaffe says of him, 'for the sake of religion he could take upon himself all the torments in the world.'

Another member of the community made it his business to collect donations for the maintenance of Yaffe's hospital and to supply any articles that might be wanting, such as a sheet or blanket. There was a man who, as a child had been kidnapped and forcibly enlisted in the Czar's army. Tall and massively built, he commanded a copious flow of invective, which he habitually directed against the administrators of the *chaluka* funds. Such functionaries turned back rather than come face to face with him in the street. There was another interesting character—Leibkeh Constantinover, they called him—a frail, aged man. Many years before, he had been a power in the land and acted as financial secretary to Aqil Agha, an independent Sheikh in the Hauran (in Syria). Aqil Agha was virtually king in his territory, and Leibkeh would go among the villages, armed to the teeth, to ensure that his master's taxes are promptly paid.

Yaffe worked very hard. The climate was oppressive, especially in summer, and even at night there was no relief. No cool beverages could be obtained, and bathing in the tepid waters of the lake was not refreshing. Yaffe attributed his ability to stand the difficult conditions largely to the patience of his sister, who had the gift of laying bare the beauty that existed in their lives and surroundings.

On the subject of Jewish-Arab relations, Yaffe has the following observations to offer:

I believe that the sparks of fanaticism—religious more than racial—existed deep down in the hearts of the Arabs, as of the Jews. But they could flare up only under pressure of a particular stimulus, such as hope of plunder or contempt for the strength of the Jews and a desire to believe that all

Jews are weak and phlegmatic. They all showed great respect towards the doctor . . . I was constantly surprised at the Arabs' respect for the outward manifestations of the Jewish religion: even the ecstatic dancing and strange cries of the *Chassidim* in the streets of Tiberias did not cause the Arabs to mock or give vent to derogatory remarks . . .

At the end of two years, Yaffe felt he had had enough of Tiberias: he wanted to be nearer to Jewish settlement and to the new life that was coming into being in Palestine. He accordingly moved to Zikhron Yaakov, where, he writes,

there were many cases of sickness, especially malarial cases from Chadera. No words can do justice to those people. With their own hands they dug graves for relatives, friends and neighbours; but they had the courage to remain where they were and refused to budge. It was a courage bordering on madness. Most of the sick from Chadera were brought to the hospital at Zikhron, but I often had to go to Chadera and attend to patients at home, or rather in the *khan*, which consisted of stables, in which the pioneers had made their homes . . .

Zikhron at the time was very much under the sway of Scheid and his hierarchy of officials, who ruled the village in the name of the Baron. The farmers received their regular maintenance allowances for themselves and their families. If they fell ill, they received free medical treatment and were sent to convalesce in the Lebanon, where they stayed at the best hotels. The farm work was done by Arabs, who were paid out of the Baron's pocket, while the settlers merely supervised their activities. There were two agricultural experts, and officials and clerks galore. Scheid himself,

who controlled all the settlements, used to visit Palestine twice a year to compile reports for the Baron. Once, Yaffe records, he told Scheid in a lighthearted moment that there seemed to be two officials for every settler in the village. Of the settlers and their way of life Yaffe paints the following picture:

French was the main language in the school. Hebrew was taught to a very slight extent, and then for religious purposes. After a while, under the influence of Grasovsky¹ and later of Zifrin, more Hebrew began to be taught. In the streets the lads spoke Yiddish or Arabic, while the lasses tried to speak French,—not necessarily of the classical variety. If, in favoured settlers' families, there were young daughters with some degree of talent, they were sent to Paris at the expense of the Baron's administration to acquire proficiency in language, deportment and the art of dressing,—the three great accomplishments in the eyes of the officials of that strange community . . . After scaling the heights of Parisian culture, they would qualify as principals of schools in the settlements.

In such circumstances, Yaffe remarks, the wonder is, not that there was demoralisation, but that there was not more of it. In spite of everything, there were a few simple, hard-working farmers. But they were a minority: most of the settlers tried to curry favour with the all-powerful officials, who at a whim might send one of their sons abroad to study at the Baron's expense. It required great moral strength to withstand the temptations of a lazy and degenerate existence. Yaffe tells of an instance that shocked him particularly:

¹ See Chapter XIII.

Fishel Aharonson worked his own farm and loved it like his own child. After his loving toil had shown results and his vineyard had begun to bear excellent fruit, the office decided to appropriate all his income for the payment of his fantastically large debt² and to let him have only a small sum in the amount of the allowance he had been getting before. One really might well believe that the officials were opposed to any individual success due to a man's own physical efforts.

Yaffe stayed at Zikhron for two years. Despite the stifling atmosphere of bureaucracy and degeneracy, he loved the place, the scenery, the people—who nevertheless retained some good qualities—and his own work, which consisted chiefly of fighting malaria. When he returned there for a visit in 1907, he was pleasantly surprised to find an industrious, self-respecting farming community.

CHAPTER XVII

DIZENGOFF AND HIS ARAB FRIENDS

MEIR DIZENGOFF will go down in the history of modern Israel as the father of Tel Aviv. One of the founders of the first all-Jewish city, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to its affairs and became its Mayor. Many people still recall how, even as an old man, he would take a regular early morning ride along the seashore mounted on a white horse. After studying engineering in Paris, he came out to Pales-

² Theoretically, the sums invested in settlers' farms were loans, but their repayment was not seriously contemplated either by the settlers or the officials.

tine in 1892 at the age of 31 to establish a glass factory on behalf of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, stayed in the country for three years, and then went abroad, returning to settle permanently in 1905. The early reminiscences that provide the material of this chapter were set down in 1935, the year before Dizengoff died. Tantura, where the factory was established, is in the northern Coastal Plain, between Caesarea and Haifa.

One day, when he was in Jaffa on business, Dizengoff was called back to Tantura urgently. As there was, at the time, no fast means of conveyance, he set out by the shortest route along the seashore on horseback, accompanied by his escort, Tzadok. This worthy merits description in Dizengoff's own words:

He was a Jew from Safed, well-acquainted with the district, and with a fluent knowledge of Arabic. I used to take him with me as my escort to lighten the tedium of my journeys and to deal with the Arabs. He was dressed in an *abaya*, and on his head he wore the *kufiya* and *aqal*, like the bedouin. With his small, pointed beard, shining black eyes and Arab peasant speech, complete with all the typical *fellah* expressions, he looked a real Arab, and no villager could detect whether he was a Jew or Muslim.

Two hours after they crossed the Yarkon, the pair were overtaken by a fierce storm. They could not return to Jaffa, since the Yarkon would by then have become a raging torrent. Nor could they proceed northwards, as their way would be blocked by swollen streams and watercourses. Fortunately, they espied a bedouin encampment, where they were gladly given shelter. Rumour concerning the arrival of an important guest with an armed escort soon spread, and all the bedouin crowded into the Sheikh's tent to wel-

come him. The occasion developed into a kind of formal reception, with everyone seated around in a circle. Tzadok opened the proceedings by describing the state and extolling the virtues of the Baron, whose representative in Palestine (so he said) was Dizengoff. The Baron, he said, had palaces of solid gold, and kings and ministers sought audience of him, and much more in the same vein. When Dizengoff asked Tzadok in an aside why he was exaggerating to such an extent, the latter replied that it was to impress the bedouin, who have great respect for the rich and powerful. Tzadok thereupon continued unabashed to describe how the Baron decided the outcome of wars by granting a loan to the country he favoured and how he had built a palace at Tantura for his beloved Dizengoff. He asked them all to pay him a visit there.

In reply, Abu-Zaki, head of the tribe, stated that it was indeed a great honour to entertain so distinguished a guest, and offered him the freedom of the encampment. A discussion on contemporary politics ensued, in which the view was expressed that all would be right with the world as long as Sultan Abdul-Hamid and Queen Victoria continued to manage affairs jointly: the Pope had to defer to so powerful a combination. (Baron de Rothschild, it appeared, was on excellent terms with both the Sublime Porte and the British Government.)

The Sheikh's brother, Ahmad, then discoursed on his tribe's attitude to the world religions. He found much in common between Arabs and Jews, as reflected in their ancestry and religious customs and beliefs. The Muslims, he pointed out, revered Moses as a prophet in addition to Muhammad. These sentiments were heartily endorsed by all.

The talk—about the Government, horses, ancestors, and the Sultan's court—went on for hours, until Tzadok intimated that his master wished to rest. Accommodation was provided, but Dizengoff could not sleep owing to the noise of the storm. Next day, the storm having abated, he made ready to go, but his hosts would not permit him to leave before he had partaken of the sheep that was being dressed for the occasion. The festive meal was attended by all the bedouin in the neighbourhood. Unlike many an Occidental banquet, the proceedings were not marred by speeches. Nevertheless, Tzadok could not refrain, after the Sheikh had thanked God for the rain that had brought his honoured guests into his encampment, from expressing his admiration of bedouin hospitality.

The parting of Dizengoff and his companion from the hospitable nomads was cordial indeed, and they were escorted across the stream by a mounted party of young bedouin. Before they left, the Sheikh asked Tzadok to speak to Dizengoff about his son, a tall, lively lad of fifteen, whom he wanted to have educated. Dizengoff had the boy—Shafer was his name—brought to Tantura, and kept him in his own home, where he had him taught Arabic, Turkish and arithmetic. He later procured him a clerical appointment in the Post Office. Subsequently the young bedouin became a high official in the Railway Administration. 'My friendly relations with the Abu-Zaki family,' writes Dizengoff, 'continued to remain firm, and Shafer still visits me from time to time.'

Conditions in Palestine at the time, Dizengoff goes on, were quiet:

There was no army or strong police force, and peace and tranquillity reigned among the popula-

tion. The Turkish Administration was weak, and the local governors were 'indulgent' to Jewish immigration, despite the ban issued in Constantinople. The immigrants received a 'red ticket' on entering the country which entitled them to stay for three months for the purpose of praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem and visiting the tombs of the patriarchs and prophets. When enquiries came through from Constantinople as to why they did not leave when the three months were up, the local governors used to answer to this effect: 'Only old people come here, to die in the Holy Land; and indeed most of them have already died.'

Upon his arrival in Tantura, Dizengoff established friendly relations with the local Arab notables, and took an Arabic teacher. He exchanged visits with the sheikhs of the neighbouring villages, and, he writes,

On the Sultan's birthday all the local sheikhs assembled at my house, and together we went to call on the *mudir* (governor) to present our salutations. We all rode horses and carried rifles slung across our shoulders or revolvers in our belts (only women, the Arabs claim, cross the threshold of their homes unarmed).

So popular did Dizengoff become with his new friends, that one of them advised him to marry an Arab girl.

When the glass factory was established at Tantura, Dizengoff set up a small chemical laboratory for testing materials. The local Arabs, however, insisted that it was a dispensary and that Dizengoff was a doctor. Would-be patients frequently came to him for treatment and refused to believe his protestations that he was in no way qualified to minister to them. One day the Arab watchman of the factory rushed in and flung

himself at Dizengoff's feet. He would not leave, he said, until Dizengoff had cured him: he would die on the spot rather than go elsewhere for aid. Seeing the man cry like a child, Dizengoff resolved to do what he could for him. As all the signs of a severe attack of malaria were evident, diagnosis was not hard to establish. He prescribed the usual remedies, and within a few days the man recovered. This incident, however, only served to strengthen the belief that Dizengoff was a doctor, and a most efficient one at that.

It was after this that Sheikh Said came bursting in to Dizengoff's room, his face expressing the greatest distress. Sheikh Said was an old man, tall and impressive, with a flowing white beard. He had once ruled over a considerable part of the Haifa district, but the establishment of direct Turkish rule throughout Palestine had deprived him of his little principedom, and of his personal wealth at the same time. He was exiled to Ankara, where all but one of his family had died as the result of hardship, poverty and disgrace. A few years before Dizengoff's arrival, he had secured permission to return to his country, and one of his several mansions was given back to him. Otherwise, all he had left was his daughter, Fatima, whom he loved dearly. She was now lying dangerously ill. Would Dizengoff come and save her life?

Dizengoff found it hard to resist the moving appeal of the dignified old man, who had once been so mighty and was now humbly beseeching his help to save the one treasure left to him. But he explained that, while he was willing to do all he could, he was no doctor: far better to take the girl to the hospital at Zikhron Yaakov, where she would be in the hands of his friend, Dr. Hillel Yaffe.

'No,' replied the Sheikh with determination. 'In no circumstances will I permit a strange physician to see my daughter. I may have been reduced from my former estate, but my daughter is still a princess, and as such she shall be treated. She never steps outside the house, and no stranger's eye has ever beheld her. Even if I knew she was bound to die, I would not bring a strange physician to her. But you are a friend and like a brother to me, and it is only to you that I can disclose the girl. Come and save the only possession I cherish.'

Without further argument, Dizengoff went with the Sheikh, who conducted him to Fatima. She was a beautiful maiden of about seventeen. Her throat was paining her greatly, and she could not swallow. Her temperature was very high, and she seemed delirious. Dizengoff was in a quandary, for here was obviously no simple case of malaria. But chance came to his rescue. While in Paris, he had contracted diphtheria and had been taken to hospital. From his own experience, he realised what was the matter with the patient, and he remembered more or less distinctly what the correct treatment was. He accordingly gave the woman in attendance certain instructions and sent for some drugs which he had in his laboratory. With the aid of medicines, treatment and diet, he had the patient completely well within seven days. Sheikh Said wept on his shoulder for joy, and Fatima granted him a smile which, he records, 'compensated me for all my trouble.'

Once again the local sheikhs tried to get Dizengoff married, and this time they agreed unanimously that no more appropriate bride could be found for him than Fatima, whose father, they assured him, would give her to him without any purchase money.

Shortly afterwards, Dizengoff had to take a trip abroad. On his return, three months later,

Sheikh Said came to me, bent and broken, and burst out weeping. 'God has taken my daughter from me,' the unfortunate man sobbed in anguish. 'He has taken the light of my eyes, the breath of my nostrils. He sent you abroad, and Fatima fell ill again. I could not bring a strange physician to her, and so she rendered up her spirit to God. Now it is better that I should die than live such a life, alone, without my Fatima.'

CHAPTER XVIII

HERZL IN ERETZ YISRAEL

IN OCTOBER, 1898, Theodor Herzl, who projected the idea of the Jewish State as a practical possibility and founded the Zionist Organisation as the instrument with which to fashion it, visited Palestine. His object was to try and secure the help of the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, who was then on a visit to Palestine as the Sultan's guest, in furthering the Zionist enterprise. He failed in attaining his political objective, but from a purely Zionist point of view his visit was a great success. He passed through the settlements of Judea in triumphal progress, like a beloved king going among his subjects.

Herzl could hardly have chosen a better time for his visit to the Yishuv. The first Zionist Congress had taken place little more than a year previously, and political Zionism had all the attraction of a new and venturesome idea with vast potentialities (five years later, Herzl's proposal for constituting an autonomous

Jewish territory in Uganda was to command a sizable following among the Yishuv). In 1898, the Yishuv was in the doldrums. Immigration on any scale had not taken place for several years. The villages under Baron de Rothschild's care were still directly administered by his officials (in 1900 they were taken over by the Jewish Colonisation Association—though Rothschild still concerned himself actively with them—which ran them more competently). Settlers who had come of the country full of zeal were tired, and their attention was wholly taken up by the struggle for existence and the numerous petty vexations with which they had to contend. 'Idealists', who, as we have seen, were looked down upon already in Tiomkin's time, were no better thought of now. The Second *Aliya*, which brought with it men and women with clear-cut social concepts and the determination to put them into practice, was still six years off.

Herzl, in fact, gave to the Yishuv a new message of hope, which undoubtedly helped it to maintain cohesion during a difficult period, when it began to look as if the entire *Chibbat Zion* experiment might end in a few settlements held together by the generosity of a Jewish millionaire. Now a more glorious future was in sight: the Jewish State seemed nearer at hand than it did five years later. Hearts beat faster in the Yishuv when the news that Herzl was on the way was suddenly conveyed to them. The settlers' feelings are vividly portrayed by Moshe Smilansky, who describes Herzl's visit to Rehovot.

It was late in the afternoon of the 26th October, when the son of Eliahu Lewin-Epstein, the Chairman of the Rehovot Council, burst into the Council House with an urgent message. Smilansky, who had been

standing outside with some other young men, went in, expecting that the message had some reference to the burning issues in local politics of the moment. The Chairman, pale and agitated, closed the door and came out with the news: 'Herzl's in Jaffa!' He showed Smilansky the note he had received. It read: 'Herzl, accompanied by several members of the Zionist Executive, landed in Jaffa this morning. He will go to Rishon Letzion today and will spend the night in Rechovot.'

The news had a stunning effect. Hitherto news concerning the *Chovevei Zion* had always leaked out in advance, while here was intelligence of the highest importance that had been kept a close secret till the last moment. The Chairman began walking to and fro, speculating on the possible reason for the Zionist leader's unexpected arrival. It was, he decided, a sign that Herzl and Rothschild had decided to join forces. Corroborating evidence was provided by the fact that the Baron was due to visit Palestine in a month's time. Was this, indeed, the beginning of the Jewish people's redemption?

The two men soon ended their reveries: preparations had to be made to welcome the distinguished visitor, and Lewin-Epstein charged Smilansky with organising the young men. The latter went out and announced the great news, which spread round the village in a matter of minutes. Everyone began talking about the great event and its implications.

A rider dashed into the village and handed Lewin-Epstein a missive. Eagerly he opened it, and in a faltering voice read out its contents to the crowd that had gathered round. The itinerary had been changed: Herzl would arrive in Rechovot next morning. That

night he would spend in Rishon, where a dinner had been arranged for him by the Baron's officials. That, surely, afforded clinching proof of the agreement which had been reached between Herzl and Rothschild! No one seemed to remember that the Kaiser was then visiting Palestine, and that the simultaneous presence in the country of the German ruler and the Zionist leader might in any way be connected.

Smilansky records:

No one in Rechovot slept that night. At sundown all the settlers got to work cleaning their yards and the streets. The young men groomed their horses, and the teachers and schoolchildren formed a choir. After midnight, the village became quiet; but the settlers' hearts were not stilled. People lay restless in their beds. . . . At the first cock-crow I went outside my front door. Two young men from Ekron stood before me. 'Sir,' one of them addressed me, 'may we join the Rechovot horsemen?' 'Of course.' The young men turned to go, a look of happiness on their face. Who had conveyed the tidings to Ekron during the night?

With sunrise, the bustle of activity was resumed. The village was spick and span, and all the girls were dressed in white. Discussions concerning the manner of the reception to be accorded Herzl were taking place among the older men, among whom was Reb Yaakov, for whom the younger men had a special affection.

One suggestion was that Herzl should be welcomed with bread and salt; another was that a Scroll of the Torah should be taken out for the occasion. Reb Yaakov, however, insisted that all the Scrolls should be taken out. He was wearing a caftan of velvet, a silken waistband and his Sabbath fur cap.

That morning, he had omitted from his prayers the *Tachanun* [penitential prayers]. 'Today is a feast day,' he proclaimed, 'a *yom tov*'. The girls were whispering among themselves, pinching one another and chattering: they were busy making garlands. The schoolchildren were forming into rows.

I and my companions—there were sixteen of us—rode out of the village in twos on horseback. The two Ekron lads brought up the rear on mules. In silence we rode to the crest of the sandy hill that marks the limit of our village. 'We'll wait here.' We dismounted and stood in a circle.

The young men stood waiting until one of their number, who was posted as lookout, should give the word that he had seen a carriage leave Ness Tziona (which lies half-way between Rishon and Rechovot). The waiting irked them: they longed to be on their horses and to escort Herzl into Rechovot in their own particular manner. To make the time pass more quickly, one of them flew into the village on his horse and returned a few minutes later with two bottles of brandy, in which the company pledged Herzl, the Jewish national revival, Rechovot and themselves.

Two carriages were suddenly descried entering Ness Tziona from the Rishon side. The horsemen were to wait until the carriages could be seen leaving. Nor had they long to wait. As the equipages moved on again, the riders dashed forward. Smilansky continues:

From afar I could see the leading carriage stop a moment. The door opened, a man's face looked out at us, and then the door closed again. When we were within a few paces of the carriage, it stopped. One of the riders had blocked the roadway and called upon the driver to pull up. '*Yechi Dr. Herzl!*' we cried with one accord.

The carriage door opened again. Jumping out like a youngster, a tall man came striding towards us. He had a long, square-cut, black beard and large, deep black eyes. There was a profound sorrow in those eyes, and a sadness upon that brow and countenance. Even the smile that played about his lips seemed to have its source in sorrow. His face captivated me. I had never known fear, but this time my knees trembled. 'Rechovot sends its greetings to Dr. Herzl,' I said weakly. Behind me thundered the refrain: '*Yechi Dr. Herzl! Hedad!*'

... A tremor crossed his face, and a tear glistened in his eye... He extended his hand to me and to each of my companions. He spoke in German, and we answered him in Hebrew. His colleagues, too, alighted and came to us...

'Mount!' Up we got onto our horses. Herzl got back into the carriage, but he did not close the door: his eyes remained fixed upon us... 'Long live Herzl!' 'Long live Rechovot' Our voices thundered, and our horses began to prance, rear, and gallop... The mount of the daredevil of the party—a thoroughbred Arab mare—scented the race-course and flew with the speed of an arrow, making circles round the carriage. Its rider sat glued to its back, and they seemed to become one... Herzl did not remove his gaze, and his eyes glistened...

Thus escorted, Herzl's carriage entered Rechovot. In Ekron Street, the entire population was assembled to greet him, headed by the Council and elders of the community. One of the latter was waiting with bread and salt, the traditional Jewish symbol of hospitality, and two others held Scrolls of the Torah. The riders, dashing up to them, took up positions in double row, thus forming a lane through which Herzl passed. Herzl alighted and shook hands with the notables, looking

curiously at each in turn. Reb Yaakov, dressed in his festive garments, approached Herzl, shook his hand, and pronounced the *shehecheyanu* benediction, which is uttered on occasions of solemn importance. He then turned to the crowd and bid them a good *yom tov*. Herzl could not take his eyes off the old man.

Cheers for Herzl thundered out. Then the school-children came forward in a double row. A fair-haired little girl, dressed in blue and white, presented him with a nosegay, which he acknowledged by kissing her on the forehead. The little girl began singing *Hatikva*, which was taken up by the other children, and then by the entire crowd. Meanwhile, the Arabs, watching the scene from among the trees, whispered to one another, *malik al-yahud*—the king of the Jews!

At the top of Yaakov Street, Herzl was met by a group of *Sepharadi* Jews from Ramleh.

Two of them, old men, went up to Herzl, knelt down before him, blessed him and fell on their faces, kissing his feet. Herzl stepped backwards in astonishment. 'It will be thus with the Messiah, the son of Joseph,'¹ explained one of the aged *Sepharadim*.

Herzl entered the house of the Chairman of the Council. The crowd followed, filling all the room in the house, while a long line of people remained outside. 'Dr. Herzl wants to rest a little, just for half an hour. When he has rested, he'll come out to you. In the meantime go home,' said the Chairman. But no one moved.

After resting for a few minutes, Herzl sat down to a meal . . . In the middle of his repast he got up,

¹ The Messiah, the son of Joseph (*Mashiach ben-Yosef*), according to popular tradition, will precede the coming of the Messiah, the son of David (*Mashiach ben-David*).

a glass of wine in his hand, and addressed the people of Rechovot. He spoke in German, which we did not understand. But what did that matter: was it not enough for us just to hear his voice? And his voice trembled: tears choked it. He paused several times. As he spoke, the enthusiasm of the audience grew. Thunderous applause broke out as he ended. 'Long live Dr. Herzl!'

In the afternoon, Herzl visited the homes of the members of the Council. He came to my house, too, as I was then serving on the Council. Seeing a picture of the First Zionist Congress hanging up there, he exclaimed: 'I see that all our colleagues are here!' I proposed a toast to him. In reply, he said that he did not understand what I had said, but hoped that on his next visit he would be able to speak Hebrew.

Herzl left Rechovot in the late afternoon. Once again he was accompanied by the entire population, and we galloped after him on our horses to the crest of the sandy hill. There he stopped his carriage, got out and asked us to return to the village. We dismounted and each in turn bade him farewell. He looked at us with a kindly expression and shook us all by the hand. The last to say goodbye to him was Bereleh, the blacksmith, who said: 'May we live to see Herzl as President of the Jewish Republic!' A smile flitted across Herzl's face as he patted him on the shoulder.

For a long time we stood and watched the carriage as it receded into the distance. We returned to the village. Our hearts were heavy... It was only then we realised that we had not eaten all day...

On the next day we learned that Herzl had met Kaiser Wilhelm at Mikveh Yisrael... Herzl was also going to Jerusalem to have an audience with the Kaiser and explain the Zionist idea to him...

CHAPTER XIX

THE BEGINNING OF LABOUR SETTLEMENT

THE OPENING years of the present century were not eventful for the Yishuv. Immigration had died down to the merest trickle, and, apart from the establishment of four small villages in Galilee (Yavneel and Kfar Tavor in 1901; and Menachamia and Sejera in 1902) by the Jewish Colonisation Association (ICA), which had assumed responsibility for the villages under the care of Baron de Rothschild in 1900, no new settlement ventures were initiated. The first wave of enthusiasm that had swept the Yishuv with the launching of the Zionist Organisation in 1897 gradually wore off, and the failure to achieve rapid or spectacular results in the political field had led to disillusionment, and even cynicism on the part of some of the settlers.

It was upon such a scene that there appeared, at the end of 1904—the year of Herzl's death—the forerunners of the Second *Aliya*.¹ These were immigrants of a different type from their predecessors. They were largely young men and women with a modern outlook and imbued with a desire to live as workers deriving their sustenance from the soil by their own unaided efforts (a number of workers had come out during the latter part of the First *Aliya* in 1890–91, but they were too few to determine the character of the period). Their slogan, therefore, was *kibbush ha-avoda* (the 'conquest' of labour), which in its broad-

¹ The history of the modern Yishuv is divided into periods called *Aliyot* (literally, 'immigrations'). Each was given its character by the prevailing type of immigrants at the time.

er sense meant the penetration of Jewish labour into every sphere of economic activity, and in its practical application, working for the Jewish settlers, who had hitherto employed Arab labour exclusively. Later, another slogan was added: *kibbush haadama* (the 'conquest' of the land), which led to the establishment of workers' villages on a collective basis. Among the immigrants of the Second *Aliya* were young women, who sought to work in their own right on terms of equality with their male comrades.

Something of the struggle of these women pioneers, of the vicissitudes of the Second *Aliya* immigrants in general, and of the evolution of the *kvutza*, is told in the following pages. First come the reminiscences of Sarah Malkin (she died in 1949), who arrived in the country in 1905.

After landing in Jaffa, Sarah Malkin went to Petach Tikva, where a friend of hers whom she designates as R., had gone to live. Her motive in going there was not that she was in urgent need of employment (she had enough money to last her a few weeks), but that she wanted to work with her own hands. As she herself put it:

There were two ideas which brought me to this country. One was that the object of Zionism is to live in Eretz Yisrael. The other was that everyone should work and create and not be a parasite, and that in Eretz Yisrael one should till the soil.

Sarah, however, almost immediately found work ironing linen. At the end of her first day's work she went back to her lodging, well pleased with the paper notes, issued by the Petach Tikva Council, in which she was paid. That evening, her friend took her to visit a family called G., whose members always ac-

corded a warm welcome to recent arrivals in the country. Such an attitude was the exception rather than the rule, for

the newly-arrived immigrants in those days found matters difficult on going to the Judean settlements. Even among the workers who had come there first, there were some who failed to understand the language of the idealist newcomers. They were usually young men who had run away on account of the Russo-Japanese War.² There were, too, so-called 'workers' in the colonists' camp who, though purporting to be workers, received support from the Odessa Committee (of *Chovevei Zion*) and cultivated their vineyards with Arab labour. They looked upon every newcomer as their sworn foe. The other settlers were Territorialists and advocates of Uganda,³ and ridiculed the word 'Zionist'.

However hard conditions were for the workers of the Second *Aliya*, they were even harder for Sarah Malkin. While a settler could occasionally be found who was willing to employ a Jewish labourer at the same wage as an Arab, the idea of employing a Jewish woman on the land was quite unthinkable. Young girls were forbidden to consort with the wayward maiden who had left home to go and work like any Arab woman. Sarah continues her narrative:

All this put an end to the fancies and dreams that had sustained my spirit in the Diaspora,—fancies and dreams about Jewish farmers living and work-

² i.e., to evade service in the Russian Army.

³ The great controversy over Uganda, which Herzl had contemplated as a temporary halting-place for the Jewish people on their way to Zion, was still very fresh in people's minds, and many Jews were then in favour of a 'territorial' solution to the Jewish problem, which meant taking persecuted Jews to some country other than Palestine.

ing in Eretz Yisrael . . . But I was no less depressed by the attitude of my comrades. They, too, did not believe in the physical or spiritual ability of us women, or even in our willingness. The question of young women coming out and taking part in life in Palestine was either non-existent, or was dealt with in a very summary fashion.

Discouraging though circumstances were, Sarah did not give up her ambition of working on the land. In the meantime, she was prepared to follow some other occupation that would enable her to live until she attained her objective. It was, however, through the hospitality of the family G., rather than with the help of the new working-class immigrants, that she was enabled to take the first step in the direction she wished to go. One day they conducted her to their orange grove, and thence to a field, where she was put to work, together with a number of Arab women, pulling up vetch. This was easy work, considered fit for women and children. Sarah's feelings were a mixture of happiness and mortification, with the former nevertheless predominating. But this state of affairs lasted only three days. A child in one of the settlers' households died without any apparent cause. The general verdict on the reason for the tragic loss was that it was a visitation for the sinfulness of the young woman who had gone to work with men in a field outside the village.

Although no expert needlewoman, Sarah next tried her hand at dressmaking. This could have become a highly profitable occupation for her, but it was not what she wanted. Fortunately for her ambition, another settler, H., who together with his family had stood by her staunchly, now offered her work digging

potatoes. She accepted the offer with alacrity and worked for two days. It was some weeks later that she learned that her services had not actually been required, and that the settler had merely wanted to satisfy himself as to the genuineness of her desire for farm work.

Sarah found the summer very trying. She suffered from recurrent attacks of malaria, and also from inflammation of the eyes. She therefore went to Jaffa for some weeks to recuperate, and on her return to Petach Tikva found that the orange-picking season was at hand. She consequently resolved to pick oranges. It was no easy task for her to gain admittance to an orange grove, and day after day went by in inconclusive negotiation. But her persistence was finally rewarded, and she was given work in the grove she had set her heart on (the owner was extremely religious, and hence all the less likely to agree to a Jewish woman's working on his land). Sarah was happy.

I imagined how great my happiness and how deep my contentment would be as I stood by the leafy trees and carefully and lovingly picked the beautiful oranges. I would forget the whole world as I worked in that enchanting grove. I turned up for work on Sunday morning. The manager set all the labourers to work and then called to me to follow him. We came to a large building, which looked like a stable, and went inside. It was quite empty, and mats were spread out on the floor. 'Here,' said the manager, 'is where you will work. The oranges will be brought here in baskets, and you will arrange them neatly on the mats. You haven't got long fingernails, have you'? . . .

But Sarah was not daunted by the disappointingly prosaic nature of the task assigned her. She had to prove that Jewish women could work as well as Arab

women, or even better. That was the only argument that would convince the settlers. She therefore set her teeth and began working as hard as she could, even suffering in silence the agonising sting of a scorpion rather than lay herself open to taunts on account of her 'softness'. After a few days' work, Sarah transferred to another grove, the owner of which offered to pay her twice the normal rate, on the ground that she had worked as well as two Arab women. Sarah, however, had to be persuaded to take the money; she did not want any kind of charity just because she was a Jewess. She was only reassured when a fellow-worker told her that the owner was a shrewd businessman, and that if he offered her twice the usual rate, it meant that she was really worth three times as much.

From there, Sarah went to work in a third grove, where she stayed for the season. The manager had studied at Mikveh Yisrael Agricultural School, and was sympathetic and helpful towards the 'new element.' He understood Sarah's ambition and helped her realise it. If only she could produce a substitute for sorting the oranges, he was prepared to teach her the art of picking. Although it was by no means easy to find a girl to replace her, she was able to persuade the daughter of a family which had recently arrived and whose other members were all working. Thus Sarah was able to pick oranges at last, and it was not long before she mastered the delicate art. Her expertness gained her a high wage. It also did much to remove the widespread belief that women were unfit for agriculture.

The following summer, Sarah Malkin writes, the stream of immigrants grew, and Petach Tikva was no

longer the only place to which the young workers went on arriving in the country. Rechovot and other settlements became centres for newcomers, and Sarah also moved to Rechovot. She felt happier there, as the local youth were closer to the Jewish workers than they were anywhere else. There was an old wooden hut, left over from the early days of the settlement. This was turned into a workers' club, restaurant, and reading room combined. Sarah was persuaded to become cook to this establishment; and while she was glad to be of help to her fellow-workers, she still clung to her ideal of working on a farm.. The same objections to the employment of women on farms existed in Réchovot as in Petach Tikva.

But Sarah was not the only one to be dissatisfied. Among the workers, too, were some who were disappointed to find that their dream of working on the land in close contact with nature was far from realisation. Gradually there evolved the idea that the best way for them to achieve their aim was for a group of them, consisting of friends who knew and understood one another, to settle on the land and cultivate it.

Meanwhile Sarah received a letter from a friend in Sejera (in Galilee), where a training farm for agricultural workers had been set up by the Jewish Colonisation Association (ICA) some years before. The manager of the farm, whose name was Krause,⁴ was prepared to take in some young women workers to tend the chickens and cows. Sarah's friend, R., was duly sent off to Sejera to see what things were like there, but she did not get further than Haifa.

Shortly afterwards, Sarah went to Galilee, with

⁴ Later the principal of the Mikveh Yisrael Agricultural School.

the intention of staying there; for she had heard that a fairly large group of workers, including some women, had found employment there and that they were satisfied with conditions. On the way to Sejera, which is in the hills to the west, she passed close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. There her guide pointed out an area known as Daleiqa, which was at the time frequented by a tribe of fierce and predatory bedouin. The land had recently been acquired by the Jewish National Fund and was shortly due to be cultivated. In the evening of that same day, she learned that a party of workers from Judea had arrived to work at Daleiqa as an independent group under the supervision of an agricultural expert. There were eight of them, and several of them knew Sarah, whom they wanted to join the group, though they asked her to wait until living quarters could be provided.

Nevertheless, it was only four days later that Sarah, who had meanwhile gone to Sejera, was sent for by the group. They simply could not cope with their domestic arrangements, explained the messenger who came to fetch her: there was nothing to eat, and several men were already down with malaria. Sarah had certain scruples about going, for a meeting of workers in Galilee had disapproved the commencement of work at Daleiqa as long as Berman, (the agricultural expert) was in charge, owing to an incident at Ben-Shemen, where he had employed some Arabs to plant trees. But the thought of the suffering group of men who had gone to Daleiqa not for profit or gain, but because it was an enterprise of national importance, decided her, and she joined them. Their living quarters she describes as follows:

Our dwelling was the single room in the old ruin-

ed house. It had no windows, ceiling or floor. The room served for everyone and everything, including snakes and scorpions, which had made themselves a secure home there. We slept on the roof, to which we gained access through a hole in the wall. It never entered our minds to make a ladder. There we rested on mats after the long, scorching day. We could not rest during the mid-day break, as there was no shade at all, while inside the room it was stifling.

On her first morning at Daleiqa, Sarah noticed that the men were slow in setting out for work in the fields, and gathered from scraps of conversation she overheard that they were afraid to leave her alone in case the local bedouin should launch an attack. She, however, refused to entertain the idea of having one of them stay behind to guard her, and they duly went to work. Sarah continues:

I set about my household duties. There was no stove, and very few kitchen or eating utensils. But I did not notice that, or the intense heat: I was completely immersed in the tremendous task with which I had been charged. In the evening the *chaverim*, gathered round, like a family group, and discussed work and our Arab neighbours — with whom relations had so far been satisfactory, though one could never tell. Feelings of comradeship and mutual devotion animated us all. Berman was very pleased, and told us a lot about his own life... He hoped that at Daleiqa he would succeed in training good workers who would later be capable of running model farms on their own. He lived under the same conditions as ourselves, and we felt at ease in his company. We took a number of interesting walks with him to explore the surrounding countryside...

Within a short while, Sarah records, she lost all sense of fear, and went wherever necessary—to Tiberias or to the few Jewish settlements in the area—unarmed and unescorted. Indeed, her fearless behaviour evoked the admiration of the local Arabs.

Soon after the establishment of the training farm, in 1908, the workers decided to change the Arabic name of Daleiqa to Kinneret, the Hebrew appellation of the Sea of Galilee. In this they had the support of the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organisation, which had been opened up in Jaffa that year with Dr. Arthur Ruppin in charge.

Berman decided to draw up a year's contract with the workers. Their remuneration, in cash and kind, was calculated on the basis of a Jewish farm labourer's pay, with a small addition to enable them gradually to acquire livestock for farms of their own. They were, then, to be provided with food, and their clothes were to be laundered and mended, on top of which they were to get 10 francs a month. As an incentive to work, each man was to get the net produce of half a hectare of wheat, and to be allowed to maintain at the farm's expense, a calf or foal and ten sheep. To Sarah, Berman proposed a wage of 30 francs a month; but this she refused, as she did not want to be treated on a different footing from her comrades. Meanwhile, the farm developed, the number of workers grew, and Sarah's task became harder:

I cooked in the open, over a few stones, in the terrible heat without any kind of shade or protection. As it happened, that summer was exceptionally hot. I had to cook for thirty men. In the winter, when it rained, the wood refused to burn, and the rain poured down on me and into the pots...

No one suggested building a kitchen. Nor did I think of suggesting it; for we were at the beginning, and all beginnings are hard . . .

Eventually, one dwelling room was made ready for occupation, but no one was anxious to sleep there as long as the majority had to put up with rough conditions. It was finally decided that Sarah should occupy the room together with six of the less robust workers. Nevertheless, she preferred quarters of her own, and found herself a corner in the general storeroom, where the gnawing of mice and hissing of snakes—not to mention the gusts of wind whenever anyone came in for something and forgot to close the door again—was not conducive to restful sleep. But it did not occur to Sarah or to anyone else to question the existing arrangements. As she herself put it:

It was really absurd: thousands of francs were spent on the farm, but 20 francs could not be allocated to build a stove, so that I need not stand out in the open to cook . . .

We now turn to the reminiscences of Rabbi Benjamin, (pen-name of Y. Radler-Feldman). An original participant in the first experiment in workers' settlement, he later became a well-known writer and publicist. (In the extracts from his memoirs, recorded thirty years after the events in question, he refers to himself in the third person.)

Radler-Feldman had just resigned from a post he held in the new Hebrew Secondary School ('Gymnasia') in Jaffa, when Berman came to him with a proposition. A training farm was to be established on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Tiberias. It was the Zionist Organisation's first settlement venture

there, and it was most important that it should succeed. It was bound to be a profitable enterprise, Berman explained; but, like all new and daring ideas, it encountered some opposition, even among the workers in Galilee. Would Radler-Feldman agree to become the secretary, bookkeeper, assistant and general factotum on the training farm? Conditions would be primitive at first, and the pay modest, but the venture was going to be worth while. The young teacher agreed, and set about making the necessary preparations, including the printing of forms and receipt books.

Although some of his friends tried to dissuade him from embarking on what they considered the foolhardy enterprise of going to settle in wild and desolate Galilee, Radler-Feldman was not to be put off. He booked a passage in a *diligence* which took him to Haifa, and from there he made his way to Daleiqa. He arrived there in the middle of June, 1908, and found a group of eight young men and one young woman, and the farm manager, Berman. His own position was mid-way between the manager and the workers.

The workers had been toughened by various experiences in Russia (pogroms, the Russo-Japanese War, and the abortive revolution of 1905), and their ideological outlook, as Zionists and Socialists, had been forged in the heat of repeated discussion. At the same time, they were not of proletarian origin, but were the children of comfortable, middle-class parents, and their background was evident in their behaviour. In contrast to them was Berman, tall and determined looking, the son of rich parents and brought up on a large landed estate in Russia. An active Zionist be-

fore coming to Palestine, he had fallen under the spell of Aaron Aaronson, the brilliant young agronomist who discovered wild wheat—the ancestor of cultivated wheat—in Palestine⁵. From him, too, he acquired a somewhat domineering way with people. To Radler-Feldman it seemed that a clash between Berman and the workers was inevitable; and he wondered whether the Palestine Office had not sent him purposely to act as a buffer.

At first, however, no sense of impending antagonism marred the idyll of Kinneret's early days. Berman was busy procuring livestock and equipment and managing the farm. The workers were daily out in the fields uprooting wild undergrowth. The third party—Radler-Feldman—did very little, in his own estimation: he kept the accounts, attended to correspondence, procured the household requirements and gave lessons on the Prophets. It was a hard-working but placid and tranquil existence that the tiny community led amid the beauties of Lower Galilee.

Somewhere in Constantinople and Salonica, Young Turks, whose slogan is 'Unity and Progress', are preparing an unpleasant surprise for the Caliph, Abdul-Hamid. Here we know nothing... There are no police, no overseers, no one else to interfere. We are scattered over the fields. A young woman is alone in the room. We bathe in the lake. We all sleep on the flat roof. There is nothing to trouble or annoy us...

Every now and then newcomers—both men and women—would arrive to join the tiny band of workers. Each additional person greatly helped to relieve

⁵ See Chapter XXVI.

the inevitable tedium of so closed a social circle. There were visitors, too. One of them was Arthur Ruppin, a German Jew who had thrown up a promising career to come out to head the Palestine Office in Jaffa. Another visitor was Yehoshua Chankin, whom Radler-Feldman describes as follows:

Here he looked different. He was dressed differently and had the appearance of a great lord or pasha. He wore a sword, with a *kawass* at his right . . .

Other visitors included Lubman⁶, of Rishon Letzion who visited Galilee from time to time. He would arrive wearing a white kerchief, like a bedouin. Jabotinsky, too, came to see the group of Jewish workers at Kinneret.

Some six weeks after the arrival of the group, it was decided to hold a memorial meeting at Kinneret on the fourth anniversary of Herzl's death. It was thought fitting to pay tribute to the great national leader on the soil of the nation and at what was then the only settlement established by the Zionist Organisation. The boycott of Kinneret that had been proclaimed by the Jewish agricultural workers in Galilee was forgotten, and visitors arrived from all the settlements in the area, on mules and donkeys, in carts and wagons, and on foot. There were several hundred visitors, men and women, and they brought their own food with them. They walked round the settlement and along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and over the land upon which Daganian was founded shortly afterwards. Tea was served in the single room at Kinneret, and then the visitors gathered round an improvised stage to pay tribute to Herzl.

⁶ See Chapter VI.

Ehrlich, a teacher from Kfar Tavor, was the main speaker. He was in good form and spoke in an optimistic vein. He regarded the settlement as a good augury,—as the beginning of the realisation of Herzl's dream. Somehow, a festive air prevailed. The settlement that had been rejected by Hachorash⁷ had suddenly become a corner-stone. A month previously, the spot had been desolate: now it was a 'settlement' and was entertaining hundreds of guests . . . and was serving as a focus for a number of villages. It was impossible to go from some of the villages to Tiberias, the central town of the district, without passing by Kinneret.

Meanwhile, Kinneret was growing. Its population was increasing, and so was the area under cultivation. More rooms were added. These were built by *Sepharadim* from Tiberias and proselytes from Yavneel.

The *Sepharadim* made a splendid impression. What a noble mien they had, and how grave was their speech and bearing . . . The proselytes had uprooted themselves from Russia and followed the God of Israel. They had undergone many vicissitudes before reaching Lower Galilee. They were refined people. They did the joinery work in the new wing, which contained several rooms. In the morning, before starting work, they recited Psalms with great feeling, weeping and supplicating the while. Then they put on *tefillin* and prayer-shawls, worshipped and ate breakfast; after which they began their labours. Their faces bore the impress of sadness.

As in most of the other early settlements, disease soon made its appearance at Kinneret. Malaria prostrated a number of the workers, and Zvi Aaronson

⁷ The organisation of Galilean agricultural workers that had proclaimed the boycott.

(brother of Aaron Aaronson), who had joined Kinneret as an assistant secretary, tended the sick. Other diseases, especially of the stomach and intestines, also attacked several of the settlers; but fortunately there was a mission hospital in Tiberias, equipped with an operating theatre, where they could receive proper care.

Relations with the neighbouring Arabs were generally friendly. The settlers were on the best of terms with the Arab fishermen of the Sea of Galilee, and also with Sheikh Isa. This last was a colourful personality. The former owner of the Daleiqa estate, he had fallen on bad times and had been compelled to sell his lands. Though he no longer had a penny, he still possessed his cherished mare, reminder of his former greatness, on which he roamed the countryside.

He used to visit Kinneret almost daily. He was a splendid talker, and after drinking a glass of tea he would begin a peroration. 'See, *khawaja*,' he would say, 'I was once the owner of this estate, and mine was the large and ancient room. Now I am a stranger on my own land. Now I have to thank you for the hospitality you extend to me, for the glass of tea you offer me. You have the power and the right to drive me away from here like a dog.' . . . A strange story, his, but certainly an affecting one.

By and by, reports came in of clashes with Arabs. Those clashes, which did not involve Kinneret itself, had no political significance, but had their origin in boundary disputes, cattle-thieving raids, and the like. But the settlers in Galilee were few, and the potential enemies around them were many. At a meeting of members, Radler-Feldman, who had already then

entered the field of journalism, was persuaded to write an article for *Hapoel Hatzair* (organ of the Labour party of that name) urging young men in Judea and the Sharon to go to Galilee as workers and defenders. Meanwhile time was passing:

What had previously been desolation had now become a settlement. Golden fantasy had been transmuted into reality, and the romance of the first honeymoon had evaporated. Here was reality—work, movement, health, sickness, man and beast. People discussed and disputed, without caring whether they trod upon each other's corns. Berman went on living in the world of his imagination, still naively believing that the first year would end in a profit... A few months later, Moshe Smilansky demonstrated, very simply, the absurdity of Berman's calculations. It did not call for much effort: a simple, almost superficial analysis sufficed to show the error. But that suggestive error had, in itself, a motive force. It was that which during that year created Kinneret, the results of which were to prove so important for subsequent creations⁸.

CHAPTER XX

HASHOMER

TODAY ISRAEL has a modern, efficient army which compares in quality with that of any country. But

⁸ Berman left at the end of the year and was replaced for a brief period by another manager, with whom the workers found it impossible to work in harmony. The workers then took over themselves, and ran Kinneret on a collective basis.

though it is a new army—it was born in the stress of total resistance to invasion by the combined forces of the Arab countries in 1948—, it has a continuous tradition going back over four decades. It inherited the values created by the *Hagana* self-defence organisation, which operated, in varying degrees of secrecy, during Mandatory times; and the *Hagana*, in turn, was successor to *Hashomer*, the watchmen's organisation that existed in the years immediately preceding the first World War. *Hashomer* numbered only a few score men, but it evolved the prototype of the Israeli soldier: a resourceful, self-reliant fighting man, whose interest in warlike matters is dictated solely by concern for the security of the Yishuv and the preservation of the practical achievements of Zionist endeavour.

The following account of the early days of *Hashomer* is taken from the recollections of Yisrael Giladi, who became head of the society a few years after its establishment. (Kfar Giladi, just south of Metulla in the northernmost wedge of Israel's territory, was named in his memory following his death in 1918.) Giladi's style is matter-of-fact and dry, as one would expect of a soldier. But the story he tells is in effect a chain of heroic episodes.

It was in 1907, Giladi relates, that a number of young men in the Judean settlements, all of them members of the Social Democratic *Poalei Zion* Party, decided to try and remedy what they felt to be the deplorable state of the Yishuv at the time. One of the immediate tasks they saw ahead of them was to induce the Jews to protect their own property.

With that end in view, we decided to go out and protect Jewish property. We named our society

Bar Giora¹, and appointed a leader to command us. We bound ourselves together by a constitution enjoining strict discipline, and each one of us silently took the oath, 'Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him'². We resolved not to divulge the society's existence to anyone.

The society offered its services first to the farmers of Zikhron Yaacov, but the latter were hesitant to entrust the safeguarding of their property to Jews, whom they did not believe capable of such a task. At that time one of their comrades, Manya Wilbushewitz³ returned from abroad and sought to put into practice the idea of farming the land on a collective basis. She hoped the trial would be made in the Hauran (present-day Syria), where a large area was to be sold to Jewish purchasers, and where rough conditions called for settlers with great determination and perseverance. But as, in the meantime, only a few workers were ready for such an assignment, her plan was to form the nucleus of a collective group and prepare it for the future in one of the existing settlements. She accordingly got into touch with the Bar Giora Society and arranged with Krause, manager of the workers' training farm which had recently been established at Sejera, that its members would work there and cultivate the cereal crops on their own responsibility. The experiment was designed to convince the Jewish Colonisation Association (ICA) that a collective group was capable of undertaking settlement in the Hauran.

As a result, most of the members of the society went

¹ After a hero of the Jewish wars against the Romans.

² Ecclesiastes, 10, 8.

³ Better known as Manya Shochet (of Kfar Giladi). She is still active in public affairs.

to Sejera at the end of 1907, leaving a few behind in the towns to enlist further adherents. The group carried out all the work on the farm, and saw to it that all the ancillary tasks were performed by Jews: for instance, they secured experienced Jewish workers for the flour mill. By the end of the year—during which the remaining members of the society were transferred from Judea to Galilee—the collective group had shown that the farm had incurred no financial loss. The society had by then acquired a membership of fifteen.

Giladi furnishes the following description of the affairs of the society at this juncture:

We used to admit new members by a unanimous vote. During the year meetings of the society were held at which we considered ways of putting our idea into practice. Some of us had the ambition of taking up the bedouin way of life, of leading a nomad existence in tents, of occupying ourselves with livestock breeding and thus getting to know the country and the Arabs' way of life. Some aspired to build a village, which should serve as a fixed centre of the society, from which members would go out to undertake guard duties, and to which they would later return. To establish such a village, forty members were needed. We sent a delegate to Judea to seek out suitable candidates. . .

Meanwhile, the group had been entrusted with the protection of the Sejera Training Farm, and, after several disputes between the villagers and their Arab watchmen, it assumed responsibility for the village as well. Thus, during their year at Sejera, the members gained experience both in farming and in mounting guard. In the course of that year they had to ward off a number of attacks by Arabs before the latter

took their measure and gained a healthy respect for them. They also took an active part in *Hachoreshe*, the federation of agricultural workers in Galilee, and joined the opposition to the establishment of the farm at Kinneret with Berman as manager⁴. But the group did not form a homogeneous collective unit; and so, after the first year at Sejera, its members decided to occupy themselves wholly as watchmen, in which capacity they had already gained a reputation among the local Jewish settlers as well as among the Arabs. This decision was doubtless influenced by the fact that, some two months before the end of the year, the villagers of Messcha⁵, a few miles away, fell foul of their Arab watchmen, who began to molest them. In response to a call for help, the *shomrim* (which means 'watchmen', and also members of *Hashomer*, as the organisation became known shortly afterwards) sent a few of their number to Messcha daily and then, at a general meeting, decided to station four men there permanently. Before taking on this assignment, however, they stipulated that the villagers should employ at least fifteen Jewish labourers and acquire twenty rifles. Both these demands were met; and at Messcha, as at Sejera, the Arabs soon gave up their attacks on meeting the vigilant defence of the Jewish watchmen.

Next year (1908-09) the group concentrated at Messcha, although they still maintained the protection of Sejera. They were employed on a monthly basis, thus establishing an innovation; for no Jewish village had hitherto had its own regularly paid Jewish watchmen. Nevertheless, Giladi writes,

⁴ See the previous chapter.

⁵ Two syllables, Mess-cha. The village is today known by its Hebrew name of Kfar Tavor.

our economic circumstances were difficult. We did not have enough money to procure boots for the winter in sufficient quantity for both watchmen and workers. Each watchman and worker therefore had to take turns in wearing a single pair of boots.

Meanwhile, events at Sejera had taken a serious turn: an Arab from Kafr Kana had attacked a Jew as he was on his way to Sejera, and the Jew had replied by shooting him dead. A blood feud threatened. The Arabs of Kafr Kana began attacking the village, and the other Arabs in the vicinity joined them. Reinforcements were sent to Sejera, and the attackers were beaten off repeatedly. But they finally succeeded in killing one of the watchmen, and also a Jewish worker who went out in search of his murderers. Eventually the assailants were caught and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Thus ended the first serious episode in which organised Jewish watchmen were involved.

Gradually the network of Jewish watchmen's units was extended to other Jewish villages in the area—Beth Gan, Yavneel, Mitzpa and Kinneret. The watchmen succeeded in removing a troublesome clan of bedouin who encroached upon the lands of Beth Gan and Yavneel; but not before one of the settlers was killed. Another member of *Hashomer*, Dov Schweiger, died of wounds inflicted upon him by Arabs. That year, Giladi writes,

we established a Weapon Fund, and all the members acquired good weapons. On the basis of the wide experience we had gained during the first two years, there was reason to hope that our activities would expand if we concentrated all our efforts upon securing the protection of the Jewish

villages. But as we also concerned ourselves with the question of a *Hashomer* village, our energies were dispersed. One of the members thereupon proposed our forming a Labour Legion. He felt that Jewish labour, too, should be consolidated by firm discipline on military lines. The success of the collective and the results of Jewish protection showed that a labour army had prospects of succeeding.

By the autumn of 1909, *Hashomer* boasted only 26 members (it had begun with eight). Nevertheless, its reputation had been established throughout the Yishuv. It was for this reason that Yehoshua Chankin came to Hashomer with a proposal on behalf of the Jewish Colonisation Association (ICA). That body owned a tract of land on which a bedouin clan, known as the Arab Zbeih had squatted. The bedouin refused to move, as they did not believe the Jews would have the temerity to eject them forcibly. *Hashomer*, at Chankin's request, agreed to occupy and plough the land. But it was a delicate task; for if they used firearms, they might precipitate an ugly situation and create bad blood between the Jews and Arabs of Lower Galilee. After discussing the issue, they decided to make the attempt. They obtained ploughs and went onto the disputed terrain. As soon as the bedouin learned what was afoot, they came along in strength and sent two men to reconnoitre. When, however, they found they had to deal with the *shomrim*, their resolution faltered and they went away peaceably. That incident, Giladi relates, had a quietening effect upon the entire neighbourhood, and the Jewish settlements there had no further trouble that year. The land in question was settled by a group of young farmers.

Meanwhile, two groups of the Labour Legion were formed, one going to Chadera, the other to Sejera. The name 'Legion', however, was dropped, and the organisation was known simply as *Avoda* ('Labour').

But the watchmen's preoccupation with *Avoda* was at the expense of their guard duties. It was accordingly decided that these should become the concern of a special body composed of whole-time watchmen. The dispersal of the watchmen had, moreover, led to an unpleasant incident. At the village of Beth Gan, a gang of bedouin thieves succeeded in making off with a dozen head of cattle while the solitary Jewish watchman was asleep. Although some of the animals were recovered, this was a severe blow to the prestige of the *shomrim*, who had to redouble their vigilance to restore the settlers' confidence in them. But they soon had an opportunity to show their mettle once more. The former Arab watchmen of Messcha, who still visited the village, took a fancy to the weapons of the *shomrim* and decided to try and gain possession of them. One night they staged an attack from two sides, but were repulsed with casualties. One of the Jewish watchmen received a knife wound in the encounter.

In the meantime, the German-Jewish philanthropic society, *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, agreed to provide the group with means to acquire livestock for their proposed village, on condition that they found the means for the land and buildings from other sources. At the same time, a meeting of the *Poalei Zion*⁶ in Galilee approved the *Avoda* group and passed a resolution to promote its development.

At a meeting held in September, 1910, the *shomrim*

⁶ There were two Labour groups among the Jewish workers at that time: *Hapoel Hatzair* and *Poalei Zion*.

formed themselves into an official body and drew up a constitution, which they published in the Hebrew press. The same meeting adopted a proposal by Chan-kin and Dr. Ruppin to cultivate the land of Fuleh (later Merchavia), in the Emek (Valley of Jezreel), on the same terms as the collective group which had founded Daganian. This step, however, encountered the opposition of the inhabitants of Nazareth, who made a profitable enterprise out of providing the *fellahin* of Fuleh with foodstuffs and taking their crops in payment at the end of the season. The local authorities reinforced the townspeople's opposition, and when the settlers went on the land, they were driven off by soldiers. The official argument against Jews' settling there was that they must be Ottoman subjects; and it took two or three months before the settlers obtained naturalisation papers and were able to begin work at Fuleh.

But matters did not rest there. The neighbouring Arabs repeatedly provoked the settlers. One night they attacked a watchman named Yigal and tried to steal his mare. He replied by shooting one of the attackers dead, hitting another's horse and fatally wounding a third. The attackers were well-known bandits and belonged to notable families. Their kinsfolk thereupon tried to incite the entire district against the Jews. But though large numbers of Arab villagers, actively encouraged by the inhabitants of Nazareth, laid siege to the hilltop of Fuleh, their heart was not in it; for they were all full of admiration for the solitary Jewish watchman who had so bravely withstood attack by a whole band. Seven of the settlers, including three members of *Hashomer*, were arrested as a consequence of this incident. Matters were finally

smoothed over through the diplomacy of Chankin, and the arrested men were released after a few months in jail.

In the course of the next three or four years, *Hashomer* grew in numbers and assumed the protection of several more Jewish villages. It also formed groups to engage in cereal farming at Karkur, in the northern Sharon, and at Tel Adashim, in the Emek. Several *shomrim* were killed during Arab attacks upon the villages they were guarding.

The position in Galilee in the months preceding the first World War is described by Giladi as follows:

The security situation in Lower Galilee deteriorated considerably at the time. Two workers were killed at Daganian and Kinneret, and while the majority of our members were concentrated in the Jordan Valley, attacks began upon Sejera in which a *shomer* named Yaakov Feldman was killed. These frequent murders caused our comrades much sorrow, and some of them urged the adoption of the custom of blood feud, like the Arabs. Indeed, if the society did not fulfil their demand, they threatened to carry out blood feuds on their own responsibility. This view found numerous supporters, and it was only after lengthy and stormy discussions that we were able to dissuade them from taking such steps...

A SHOMER LOOKS BACK

The next reminiscences are those of Alexander Zeid, one of the original members of *Hashomer*, who was killed by Arab bandits in 1938. (Givot Zeid, formerly known as Sheikh Abrek, in the western Emek, of which he was a member, was named in his memory.) Zeid here fills in some of the outlines of Giladi's ac-

count. He begins with the following description of the founding of *Hashomer*:

Our first secret meeting took place in Jaffa, in the tiny room of Ben-Zvi.⁷ Those taking part were Ben-Zvi, Yisrael Shochet, Yisrael Giladi, Berelekh Schweiger, Yechezkel Nissanov, Yechezkel Chankin, Zvi Becker and myself. Shochet and Ben-Zvi had previously drawn up a short, but farsighted, programme. The society was given the name of Bar Giora, and its motto was: 'In blood and fire Judah fell; in blood and fire shall Judah arise.' The meeting proceeded without discussion. The faces of all the participants expressed loyalty, and their stalwart bodies betokened energy. We placed ourselves in the hands of destiny...

It was at the instance of Giladi, who for the next thirteen years was the moving spirit of *Hashomer*, that the group went to Galilee. At Sejera, Krause, who was manager of the training farm, was at first reluctant to entrust them with its protection, since he did not believe in their capacity to guard it, and also because he wanted to avoid any friction with the neighbouring Arabs. His contention was that men who did not themselves know how to steal would be ineffective as watchmen, on the principle of 'set a thief to catch a thief'. In order to prove their worth, therefore, the Jewish watchmen, soon after their arrival in Sejera, resorted to the following device. One night the Circassian watchman could not be found at his post. The *shomrim* crept into a stable, removed a mule

⁷ Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, scholar and Labour leader, was Chairman of the Vaad Leumi (National Council of Palestine Jews, the representative body of the Yishuv under the Mandate) for many years, and succeeded Dr. Chaim Weizmann as President of Israel.

and hid it, and told Krause that the watchman had betrayed his trust. Next morning the man was discharged, and one of the *shomrim*, Zvi Becker, was taken on in his place. The following night, the neighbouring Circassian villagers attacked the place in revenge. But the *shomrim* were expecting the attack and beat it off.

The Jewish watchmen's armoury in those days could hardly be called extensive:

All we had among us was a broad Circassian dagger, a rifle and a large six-chambered revolver. We kept a jealous watch over our weapons. If one of our number had occasion to visit the neighbouring Arab village on any business, he would deck himself out with all three weapons, and strut about proudly, followed by the admiring gaze of the wondering villagers.

Zeid makes special mention of the women members of the group, including his wife, Tzippora. During the first year at Sejera they gained Krause's approbation as workers; and during the second year, when most of the men were fully employed on guard duties, they undertook all manner of farm work, even ploughing with oxen.

For three years, Sejera was the centre for *Hashomer*, and also for the *Hachores* group. Conferences of the *Poalei Zion* party were held there as well. It was at Sejera, Zeid relates, that

we trained ourselves and acquired proficiency in our task. That period was like one long holiday for us. This was the task for which we had prepared ourselves while still in Russia, when we took the decision to devote our lives to the land and people of Israel. Now when we met together, a

group of young men and women with a single ideal and aspiration in common, the latent energy within us burst forth and called for deeds and a sphere of action. Hence we welcomed difficult assignments . . . When *Hashomer* began to educate us, to curb our energy and to impose discipline upon us, we willingly accepted it . . .

In its third year, *Hashomer* acquired a mare of its own, which it bought from the ICA administration in Rishon. Each member paid a monthly subscription until the full amount was defrayed. The Arabs of Daleiqa cast covetous glances at the animal, and one day three of them, mounted on horses of their own, waylaid Zvi Becker as he was riding her. The chase lasted several hours, until Becker and his mount eluded their pursuers. Later, Zeid bought the mare from the *Hashomer* committee.

Another mare figures large in the annals of *Hashomer*,—the magnificent thoroughbred belonging to Krause, which he had received as a gift from a distinguished sheikh. The *shomrim* had quite a task to prevent her from being stolen; for she was the envy of the Arabs near and far, who made periodic attempts to gain possession of her. On one occasion a bedouin, who had been sent on a special mission by a sheikh in Transjordan, succeeded in abducting her, after lying in wait for three days. He did not, however, know that she would suffer no one but her master to ride her. The Arab clung tenaciously to her back, but was eventually unseated. Krause refused to punish the man: let him rather go back to his people and spread the tale that the mare was a she-devil,—it would be a deterrent to further attempts to steal her.

Zeid records the satisfaction with which the *shomrim* acquired their first modern weapons. There had been an armed attack on Sejera, and the one double-barrelled shotgun and old-fashioned revolver had clearly shown the inadequacy of the armoury. Several of the group—including Tzippora Zeid—thereupon resolved, that very night, to take a loan from the administration of the settlement in order to buy arms. A few days later, two of them went to Beirut and returned with three Greek rifles and a Browning pistol. Tzippora made her husband a gift of one of the rifles and fifty rounds of ammunition, which occasioned him great joy.

The *shomrim* also gained proficiency in the art of horsemanship, for which the young women, and especially Tzippora, showed as much aptitude as the men. Indeed, it was not long before the *shomrim* were able to compete with the experienced bedouin horsemen.

Once the principle of Jewish protection had been established at Sejera, the question arose of extending it to Messcha. Most of the farmers there were against the idea, but the younger people were in favour and tried to win over their elders. In this they were strongly supported by the local teacher and pharmacist, who hoped for an infusion of new blood into the stagnant cultural life of the tiny Galilean village. The issue was finally settled as a result of the bickering between the Moroccan watchmen and bedouin labourers employed there, who, in their efforts to secure the monopoly as watchmen and to discredit their rivals, engaged in thievery on a considerable scale. A party of ten *shomrim* was accordingly sent to Messcha. Four of them to be employed as watchmen and six as

labourers; but the latter were always ready to come to their comrades' aid in an instant, should need arise.

The despatch of the group to Messcha was bound up with the idea—still rather vague—of founding a village of *shomrim* in the Hauran, on the lines of a Cossack settlement in Russia. The village was envisaged as having a population of 300, and the group at Messcha was to acquire experience in farming with that end in view.

Relations between *shomrim* and workers were cordial in the extreme, and the latter supported the former in all their demands. Zeid himself was employed as a worker at Messcha. He writes:

How pleasant it was to work on the land with the farmers that first year. The day's work lasted fourteen or fifteen hours, but it was not tiring. On the contrary, the hard farm work at Messcha did us good after the prolonged guard duties of Sejera, which had deprived us of our sleep and of all appetite . . . In the evenings, too, we all used to meet in the house of the *shomrim* at the end of the village. There one could always find several farmers who had called to discuss 'shop' with the *shomrim*. People would sit on the floor and pass the time drinking tea and singing. The *shomrim* would be cleaning their weapons and getting ready for the night watch. Meanwhile items of news would be exchanged: a new area of land had been acquired by ICA; a certain village had asked the *Hashomer* committee to supply it with watchmen; so-and-so had taken sick, and so-and-so was now well again. There might also be a letter from Sejera giving the latest news from there . . .

Apart from warding off attacks, shot for shot, the

shomrim sometimes had to demonstrate individual resourcefulness and diplomacy. For instance, one of the farmers, ploughing at the foot of Mt. Tabor, one day inadvertently left his rifle in his cart some way off. An Arab of the Zbeih tribe, who happened to be on the prowl, saw his opportunity and made off with the rifle. That evening, the farmer reported his loss. One of the *shomrim*, Benzion by name, who heard the tale, begged to be excused from duty that night on the plea of a headache and, instead of mounting guard, he stealthily made his way to the herd of the bedouin tribe and drove off a bull, which he brought back to Sejera and entrusted to the keeping of the *shomrim* there. A day or two later, Zeid relates,

a tribesman of the Zbeih came to the *shomrim* and asked, 'Perchance you have seen such-and-such a bull wandering in your fields?' To which he received the reply: 'Perchance you have seen a Greek rifle which fell off the cart of so-and-so the farmer and rolled into one of your tents?' The man returned to his tribe and brought back the rifle. Benzion then gave him a note to the *shomrim* of Sejera, and the hostage was restored to its owners.

The life of the *shomrim* was not an easy one, especially on stormy winter nights, when thieves would try and use the bad weather as cover. After such nights the watchman would return tired out and wet, throw himself on his bed in his clothes, and sleep the day through without eating a single hot meal. Some of the *shomrim*, realising that their health was deteriorating, began taking their meals in farmers' homes; but their pay was too scant to warrant such luxuries. The situation improved, however, with the arrival of Esther Becker, who assumed the rôle of mother to the *shom-*

rim. She cooked their meals, made their beds and sometimes visited them during the night watch to hand them a steaming glass of tea or coffee. Later, other women of *Hashomer* joined them and helped to relieve the monotony of existence in the dull village. A favourite pastime of the *shomrim* was to discuss their dream settlement in the Hauran. It was to be one of a chain of border villages designed to keep off marauding bedouin. The land and what stood upon it would belong to the nation. All the settlers would work, and they would have no officials or administrators. They would bring up their children—girls as well as boys—to till the soil, to live as a collective group, to use firearms, to ride thoroughbred mares bred by the settlers themselves, and to know Hebrew, Arabic and one European language.

After the ejection of the Zbeih tribe from the land bought by ICA (described above by Giladi), the neighbourhood became safe enough for the women to go between Sejera and Messcha during the night. The acquisition of this land led to an increase in the farming population of Messcha, and the officials administering the villages suggested that the *shomrim* settle there. But they did not accept the offer: their thoughts were far away, in the highlands of Hauran ...

Alexander Zeid, who himself fell at the hands of Arab assailants in Galilee many years later, pays a touching tribute to his comrade, Yechezkel Nissanov. Born in the Caucasus, Nissanov grew up in poverty and in an environment far removed from Jewish life. While still a lad, he ran away from home and became apprenticed to a Jewish tailor in the Black Sea town of Baku. There he met Zvi Becker, who drew him towards Socialism and Zionism. Nissanov learned to

speaking Yiddish and interested himself in Jewish history. Finally, coming to the conclusion that his future lay in the Land of Israel, he made his way there by a devious route, since he had no money for the sea passage from a Black Sea port to Jaffa. Upon his arrival, he went to work at Zikhron Yaakov and formed one of the small band who founded the nucleus of *Hashomer* in 1907. Yechezkel's aged mother and his two brothers also came out to the Land of Israel.

Nissanov was among the first to go to Sejera, where he worked hard in the field. To him, the son of the wild Caucasian hills, it was second nature to bear arms, and he fulfilled the tasks of a *shomer* with quiet efficiency. Whenever there was an emergency, he was sure to be at hand. It was at the time of the purchase of the Merchavia area (1911):

There was a smell of gunpowder in the Galilean villages, and the bandits were preparing to make trouble. We, too, were getting ready to meet what lay ahead. One day, Yechezkel and another *shomer* from Merchavia set out in a cart to distribute weapons among the villages of Galilee. On the way, between Messcha and Beth Gan, they were attacked by a band of marauders who tried to steal their mules. Yechezkel, throwing the reins to his comrade, went to the back of the cart and began firing at the attackers. His comrade whipped up the mules, which began racing madly down the incline towards Beth Gan while Yechezkel continued firing. When the cart reached Beth Gan, the driver turned round and saw Yechezkel lying in a pool of blood: a bullet had pierced his brain.

When the aged mother was told of the tragedy, she did not shed a single tear. With head held high, she approached the body of the son who had been her pride, looked down at him, and asked

his comrade: 'Did Yechezkel shoot at the bandits? Did he shed their blood before they shed his?' 'Yes,' he replied firmly. 'Blessed be the Lord,' the old woman whispered, clasping her hands and gazing heavenwards. 'May the name of the Lord be blessed . . .

CHAPTER XXI

FROM PETACH TIKVA TO DAGANIA

TODAY the workers are the strongest and most highly organised sector of Israel's population, and they occupy an important position in the country's economic life, whether it be through the *kibbutzim* or other forms of workers' villages, or through the manifold industrial, contracting, and marketing undertakings of the *Histadrut* (General Federation of Jewish Labour). This seems a far cry indeed from the times, described in this Chapter, when Jewish workers had but a precarious foothold in the *Yishuv*. In a sense, the progress upheld by this contrast is reflected in the person of Shmuel Dayan, author of the reminiscences quoted here. Beginning as a simple agricultural labourer in Petach Tikva, he was among the early settlers of Dagania. As, however, he found collective existence not altogether to his liking, he helped to found the first *moshav* (smallholders' co-operative village) at Nahalal. Today, he is a leading figure in the *moshav* movement, which embraces scores of villages, and a member of the Knesset (Israel's Parliament). He has also written extensively on agricultural matters. His son, Moshe Dayan, is Chief of the General Staff in the Israel Army.

Dayan came to the country in 1908, at the age of sixteen. He had been fired by a call to the young Jews of the Diaspora to come and build the homeland, which he had seen in a copy of *Hapoel Hatzair*, the organ of one of the two groups of Jewish workers in Palestine. The first place he went to on arrival was Petach Tikva. This he describes as a pleasant village; but there was much in it that was distasteful to a young Jewish worker whose ideals were to fill the soil and create a new form of Jewish life based on the Hebrew language. The prevailing medium of speech was Yiddish, mingled with Arabic expressions, and occasionally French was heard spoken by the local intelligentsia. The liveliest spot was the market; but the sellers were invariably Arabs, and the buyers Jews. Jewish wealth, Dayan records, flowed into the Arab villages:

The Arabs are chief among those engaged in creating the assets of our national regeneration . . . They are also the educators: Jewish babes are carried in the arms of Arab women-servants, in the farmers' homes. The sons of the Biluites are saturated from birth with the songs and speech of the Arabs.

Hebrew was scarcely heard among the farmers; but the Jewish workers all did their best to speak it. At the ceremonial inauguration of Ein Gannim¹, a play was presented in Hebrew; but in Petach Tikva only Yiddish plays were given, while the schoolchildren sometimes acted plays in French.

¹ Near Petach Tikva. Ein Gannim was established in 1908 as a village for 30 agricultural labourers and their families. They were normally employed in Petach Tikva, but had farms of 15 dunams (approximately three and three-quarter acres) each to supplement their income and to provide a means of livelihood in the event of unemployment.

In the empty space in front of the workers' hotel, hundreds of Arabs assemble before dawn. They are casual labourers. The permanent labourers, who live in the farmers' yards, go straight to the orange groves. They, too, number many hundreds: there are nearly 1,500 in all . . . We are only a few score Jewish workers, and we are often unemployed. We stand about in the market hoping for a day's work.

The Jewish workers felt estranged,— a feeling which was heightened when the farmer by whom they hoped to be employed passed by on donkey-back wearing a white suit and holding a whip in his hand, and contemptuously flung a harsh word at them. If unsuccessful, they would return to the dirty hotel and lie down on their beds, made of boards placed upon kerosene tins, and grit their teeth, hoping for better luck next day.

Dayan's first day's work was in the fields. He was the only Jew among the whole group of Arab workers, who made fun of him. But his satisfaction was great when he got his first day's wages,— a note drawn on the Petach Tikva Council for four piastres (the equivalent of less than 10d). After that he worked as a builder's assistant, and then he found employment in a citrus grove, digging irrigation pits around the trees with a large hoe,— a back-breaking task. It was while he was thus employed that he fell ill with malaria. Nevertheless, he would somehow contrive to perform his day's quota of work before he succumbed to the fever. One day he fainted in the street and woke up to find himself in hospital in Jaffa. As soon as he realised where he was, he took his clothes and left: he did not want to be the recipient of charity!

Dayan derived pleasure from the feeling that he

was achieving the 'Conquest of Labour', while many of his Jewish fellow-workers gave up and went to the towns, or even back to Europe. Meanwhile the fever clung to him, and the physician in Jaffa strongly urged him to leave the country—a piece of advice which he ignored. Instead, he joined a group which found employment laying out almond plantations at the near-by village of Kfar Saba. They would spend the week at Kfar Saba, working under the most strenuous conditions and in a far from pleasant atmosphere, and return for the Sabbath to Petach Tikva, which now seemed to them to wear a most welcoming aspect. As the village came in sight, they would break into song.

Petach Tikva was the centre. It already had several scores of Jewish workers, most of whom slept at the dirty hotel for working-men. It was they who trained and guided new arrivals in the country. They served as a labour exchange and information bureau, and concerned themselves with all the needs of the local workers. Every week a few newcomers joined them. Now and then some of their number would leave and steal away from the village to go to their consuls and arrange for their departure from the country...

But those workers who resolved to stay on became welded firmly together, largely by hardships shared in common. They helped and encouraged one another and sought joint ways out of their difficulties. Sometimes, at night, a group of them would make the three-hour tramp over the sandy hills to Jaffa, where, at Chayim Becker's hotel, they were sure to find a discussion of the problems of Zionism and Eretz Yisrael in full swing. A particularly pleasant corner of Jaffa was the editorial office of *Hapoel Hatzair*, the

workers' paper, which was edited by Yosef Aharonowitz, one of the leading figures in the early days of the Jewish Labour movement.

It was during his first year in the country that Dayan went north, to Galilee.

There was a feeling that we were only now arriving in Eretz Yisrael for the first time . . . Galilee! How we had dreamed of it . . . To plough, to sleep in a stable, to bear arms, to fight the bedouin, to reap and to gather in the harvest . . .

Dayan found himself work on a farm in one of the Galilean villages, and he actually did sleep in a stable, —to prevent the animals from being stolen. Within a short time he learned to plough as straight a furrow as any seasoned farmer. It was a very different life from the semi-urban experience of Petach Tikva, and much more satisfying. But once again he was struck down by the fever, and when he recovered, he found that an Arab labourer had taken his place.

Most of the Jewish workers in Petach Tikva and the other Judean villages left for other parts of the country or even went abroad: only a tiny minority, reinforced by a few newcomers, stayed on with a fixed resolve to accomplish the 'Conquest of Labour'. But now the workers decided to achieve their aim by a new means: they would undertake the cultivation of a grove for a year on a contracting basis. A group operating on such a basis would be able to do the work as cheaply as Arab labourers and at the same time make a reasonable livelihood, provided the entire cost of maintenance was included in the estimate. But it was not easy to persuade a Jewish citrus grower to entrust his grove to the group formed by Dayan and his comrades. Eventually they were allowed to cultivate a

grove at Chadera, which happened to be owned by the community. The experiment succeeded, and the workers earned adequately; but as no one could be found who was willing to repeat the experiment, the group broke up.

In the meantime, no improvement could be discerned in the attitude of the Jewish grove owners towards the Jewish workers. They did not believe in their capacity, and in particular they resented any criticism directed against themselves which appeared in *Hapoel Hatzair*. With difficulty, Jewish workers obtained a day's employment for a bare subsistence wage; and, if there happened to be a novice among them, he would find himself isolated among scores of Arab workers who did everything possible to make him feel uncomfortable. He would be placed among the Arabs with the most powerful physique, so as to show him to a disadvantage, and he would invariably be given the worst tools. He could not understand the remarks that were being made about him in Arabic, and the harsh, cynical behaviour of the overseer—a Jew—would oppress him. Yet, despite the disadvantage at which they were placed, the Jewish workers excelled, and they tried to subsist on the wages paid to Arabs. What galled them more than anything was the attitude of the overseers and the fawning of the Arab labourers towards their employers,—a practice they were not capable of imitating. Nevertheless, though the individual workers felt despondent to the point of tears, they forgot their troubles when they met together, and sang and danced instead.

The agricultural workers used to hold an annual conference:

They came from all over the country; the Judean

workers barefoot and in rags; the few from Galilee wearing the *kufiya* and *aqal* on their heads, and red high boots like the bedouin, or hobnailed boots like the Arab labourers regularly employed by Jewish farmers. They would assemble for a few days, engage in discussion and debate, and go their several ways again, reinvigorated and with renewed determination to strive for a solution to the main problem of our existence,—the 'Conquest of Labour'.

At the fourth conference, held in 1910, the bitterness of the Galilean workers found vehement expression. They were tired of their lonely existence, without any kind of intellectual recreation,—not even the opportunity to read a book. What was to be their future?

But the conference was also attended by some of the group at Kinneret, which had undertaken to cultivate the near-by land of Umm Junieh, as well as by members of the group which had cultivated the grove at Chadera on a contracting basis (they were known as the 'Chadera Commune'). Both groups were about to go to Umm Junieh to live as their own masters, and they introduced a note of hope and optimism into the proceedings. Yosef Chayim Brenner, the writer and one of the thinkers of the Zionist Labour movement, was also at the conference. He had entertained doubts concerning the ability of Jewish workers to build the country by their own efforts; but when he heard the enthusiastic and resolute words with which the conference ended, he too was imbued with enthusiasm and faith.

Dayan records his favourable impressions of the land at Umm Junieh, with its rich soil watered by the

Jordan. The original group of seven workers had proved that a collective body, administering its own affairs, could successfully engage in farming. But they did not want to stay on after the expiration of the year for which they had contracted. Their place, consequently, was taken by the 'Chadera Commune', whose delight upon first tasting an independent existence is expressed by Dayan:

To work in freedom! The words seemed to convey a deep breath, in contrast to the servitude in the *moshavot*. There is a feeling of creativeness in the work performed by the worker himself, even in the services, in administration, and in the very thought of work... We are free of employers and overseers... We are responsible to ourselves. We are working people who have been given the possibility of understanding, thinking, and directing their work as they desire.

The question they asked themselves was, whether they were physically capable of doing agricultural work proper, and whether they were able to lay out and plan a farm. But despite their inexperience, they had faith in themselves and were confident of overcoming the difficulties that lay in their path.

There was, however, a third factor they had overlooked: the behaviour of their neighbours. Of this, they were made fully aware a fortnight after they went on the land (November, 1910). One of their members, Zvi Yehuda, accompanied by Sarah Malkin, set out for Tiberias to buy some timber, mounted on a mule and donkey. It was getting on for nightfall when they began the return journey, and on the way they were set upon by three Arabs armed with Martini rifles. Zvi, who had a revolver with him, returned

their fire, and he and Sarah got back safely. The mule, however, was hit and died a few days later. This was a loss the young group could ill afford.

The settlers took their work seriously, read hand-books on farming, and discussed various agricultural problems among themselves. They also prepared to lay out plantations and vegetable gardens. Meanwhile, too, new buildings were under construction, a hundred yards or so from the point where the Jordan flows into the Sea of Galilee. The buildings included a two-storey house as living quarters, and another of one storey to contain the kitchen and shower room.

A common love for the new settlement drew the members of the group into intimate companionship. In the course of innumerable conversations, they uttered their innermost thoughts. If, as was inevitable, there was sometimes cause for criticism, they sought to overcome the defects by educating themselves to their new way of life—at meetings, which were

permeated by deep understanding and a delicate feeling for the suffering, joy and sorrow of one's companion . . . The affairs of the individual were subordinated to those of the group, to the new life. All one's happiness was in building and working, and members vied with one another in volunteering for the performance of difficult tasks.

Relations with the neighbouring Arabs were on the whole satisfactory. Two families, in particular, were on friendly terms with the settlers, and their womenfolk would visit the Jewish women and teach them how to perform their domestic tasks. Some of the neighbouring Arabs worked as tenants for the owner of the near-by estate, of which the land of Umm Junieh had formed a part.

Nothing occurred to cast a shadow upon our friendship. Nothing came between us. They worked on the *effendi's* estate, and we on our farm. We had taken nothing from them: the land had not been theirs. Indeed, they regarded us as ordinary workers like themselves: they saw in us the simplicity of labourers living by their toil. We, on our part, helped them in a number of small matters, such as giving them medical aid . . .

The settlers were also on cordial terms with the local landowners, with whom they exchanged visits and courtesies. An unusual relationship was that with Sheikh Isa (an old man of impressive appearance, who had once owned the land in that vicinity, but had had to sell it to pay his debts. He settled in a nearby village and sought a living as best he might. At first he hoped to place his five stalwart sons as watchmen of the Jewish settlement, but he quickly learned that the Jews intended to guard their own property. He therefore sent his sons to persuade them to the contrary. The sheikh's sons did indeed prove themselves a source of much trouble. They roamed the Jewish fields as far as Messcha and Sejera, and in the course of their forays murdered more than one Jewish settler. One of Sheikh Isa's sons was a notorious bandit, of whom all the Arabs in the vicinity stood in awe, and whom even the Government troopers were afraid to face. He would visit the settlers from time to time and partake eagerly of their hospitality. Then he would casually bring up the question of guarding the *kvutza* and, on meeting with a refusal, would challenge the settlers to meet him in their own fields at night. That night, accordingly, he and his followers would appear and cut as much of the ripening wheat as they could

take away in the sacks they had brought with them before disturbed in their occupation by the Jewish watchmen. Dayan records one such encounter in which the Jews hardly showed to advantage,—indeed, they had to beat a retreat. But the reason was not unconnected with the fact that, while the Arab raiders all had good rifles and ample ammunition, the Jews had only two rifles and 13 rounds—most of them rusty—, apart from a few revolvers. Moreover, during the course of the action one of the rusty cartridges failed to discharge and lodged in the breech, reducing the effective rifle strength by half. Only one watchman resolutely held his ground, until the defenders came back reinforced by a contingent from Kinneret. But by then the raiders had gone. Such encounters were not infrequent, but still the settlers did not entrust the protection of their property to the Arabs. The last time Sheikh Isa appeared, it was after the new houses had been built.

He was scarcely recognisable. He had aged greatly, his face was sunken, and his lustre had become dimmed. Of the first person he met on the porch, he asked for food. His was a truly pitiful tragedy. I think it was our last meeting with him.

Two of the old man's sons died in the Tiberias jail, and a third was killed in the settlement farmyard.

It was at this time, when the new buildings began to give the settlement the appearance of a proper village, that it was decided to give it a Hebrew name. There were two schools of thought: one was in favour of a name embodying the Jordan, which flowed through its fields; the other preferred one associated with the cereal crops which grew so profusely there. Eventually the latter prevailed, and the village was

named *Dagania*, from the Hebrew word *dagan*, meaning 'corn, grain' (also 'cornflower', found in abundance in the district).

The future course to be pursued also divided the settlers into two bodies of opinion, one in favour of going to occupy new land, the other, of remaining at *Dagania* permanently. Those who advocated the former course looked enviously at the group which had gone to occupy *Merchavia* with the object of going elsewhere when their work was done.

To settle! How much mockery and bourgeois smugness that expression seemed to contain in those days! Our task was to conquer, and to go on conquering. We were fighters, the vanguard,—lone men whose duty it was to be brave, to prepare the land for those who were to follow... How the very idea of the *Hauran* cast a spell over us!... To be beyond the *Jordan*, distant from towns and from civilised man; to be alone amidst thousands of Arabs and bedouin... to lay there the foundations, our corner-stone!

But those who thought otherwise looked askance upon such romanticising. It was easy enough to occupy a piece of land and face the Arabs' fire, or even to be killed. It was far harder to stand up against the difficulties of life, to engage in a constant, daily struggle to create a self-supporting farm and to turn a Jewish shopkeeper into a peasant. That was true heroism; and that was their task. And, indeed, though discussion on this issue was keen, it was the latter view which prevailed. The work conquered the pioneers. They became hungry for work, and they worked eagerly.

And we saw blessing in our labours. We sowed, and the sowing yielded ears of wheat, and we harvested

them and gathered them in . . . We planted, and the trees grew before our eyes. Every morning we saw with our eyes and felt with our hands the growth, the flourishing, and the development.

The work was hard indeed—from before dawn till after dusk—but the settlers threw themselves into it to the exclusion of all else. Books, which had meant so much to them, they resolutely put aside in their effort to adapt themselves to their new way of life.

The question troubled us: was it at all necessary to try and adapt ourselves that way? Did our path to emancipation, both as human beings and as members of the Jewish nation, lie in confining ourselves to that framework of existence and keeping away from the sources of culture and of things of the spirit generally? Yet it was clear that otherwise we would not overcome ourselves and become tillers of the soil, which required that we should think only of work . . . Nevertheless, the comfortable, glittering city overseas, the theatre, art—all the easy life of the past with its luxury and spiritual content—drew our secret yearnings, as if they wanted to tear us out of the soil into which we had succeeded in striking only tender roots . . .

The conflict within the settlers' minds was a difficult one; but, by dint of faith and hard work, they resolved it. A few of them, however, refused to do entirely without books and took to reading over breakfast or the mid-day meal. Some even forwent their siesta—their only respite during the long, hot summer days—to indulge their craving. The best opportunity to read was in time of sickness, and some members of the group actually used to hope that they might fall ill. Others, again, entirely foreswore reading and, in the words of Dayan,

spent their evenings talking about the work, the farmyard animals and their characteristics, and the cleverness and cunning of the mules. They looked down contemptuously upon the 'intellectuals' who stuck to their books.

This extract from Shmuel Dayan's memoirs ends with a description of Aaron David Gordon at Daganian. Gordon (1856-1922) came to Palestine at the age of fifty to live the life of a farmer, though he had never done farm work before. In addition to working, he wrote a great deal for the Labour press, expounding in his articles the creed of manual labour in conjunction with a life lived close to nature, and the redemption of the individual as a prerequisite to the redemption of the people—ideas which have exercised a profound influence upon the workers' movement in Eretz Yisrael.

After working in various parts of the country, Gordon went in 1912 to live in Daganian for a short time. He found the work there difficult, but he was loathe to give it up. If he were assigned an easy task, he would contemptuously regard it as 'women's work'. He therefore persisted, and suffered, since he would not agree to any differentiation in status between himself and the other workers.

For a time he acted as watchman in the farmyard and barn. He was armed with only a whistle, since he did not want to touch firearms (all weapons of destruction were an abomination to him). But a watch had to be kept, so he promised to let us know if he saw any thieves. We slept in the barn, our rifles at our heads, while he paced with firm tread among the stacks of clean wheat.

Gordon went from one settlement in Galilee to

another; but Daganian remained nearest to his heart, and he returned to it constantly. Wherever he went, he was the spiritual father of the Galilean workers. On Saturdays people used to flock to him, singly and in groups, to converse with him. The old man would climb the hills and take walks with them, encouraging, explaining, reproving; and every word he spoke was absorbed with gratitude . . . There was a time when suicides were frequent in our young community . . . In Gordon's company many young men took heart again; for he understood the conflicts which take place within the soul of man, and he knew how to remove doubt from people's minds. He, the symbol of self-assurance, was himself an example to others.

Although Gordon interested himself in all aspects of life at Daganian, and often made useful practical suggestions, he did not take part in the routine discussions on detail. Often he acted in a lighthearted manner; but suddenly he would sink into thought, and then he would slip into a different world. Despite the communal way of living in the *kvutza*, Gordon insisted on privacy for himself, so that he could write. His demands were modest enough,—a room, a lamp and writing materials. But there were times when he could not even have a room to himself. When there was no other available place, therefore, he would ensconce himself in the shower room (in winter, when it was not in use) or in the hay-loft.

Gordon could not suffer gloom. If he saw a shadow on any one of the settlers' faces, he would upbraid him and remind him that young people have no business to be downcast. Then he would call for a dance and join in the circle himself, until his spirit of calm confidence prevailed over the others as well.

The clothes that Gordon wore had to be of subdued colours and of a particular pattern. His hat and boots, too, were of a distinctive style. He refused to bathe indoors and made fun of the young people who were too lazy to go down to the Jordan or to the Sea of Galilee. He himself bathed either in the river or the lake several times a day: it was more in accordance with his concept of living close to nature. 'His powerful spiritual resources,' Dayan writes, 'enabled his body to stand the test, and by virtue of them he was able to perform back-breaking work in that difficult climate.'

CHAPTER XXII

JEWS FROM ARABIA

TODAY, with 'Operation Magic Carpet' (or 'On the Wings of Eagles', to use its Hebrew counterpart) so fresh in mind, it is interesting to hark back to an earlier phase in the immigration of Jews from Yemen. The territory of Yemen, virtually all of whose Jewish inhabitants have, as far as is known, now been transferred to Israel, lies in the south-west corner of the Arabian peninsula. The Yemenite Jews themselves retain traditional beliefs that they found their way to that distant land in the days of the Second Temple, or even as far back as the reign of King Solomon. Although there may be no reliable support for those beliefs in the shape of historical evidence, there is no question that Jews were living in Yemen early in the present era, and that theirs had one of the longest continuous histories of any Jewish community.

For many centuries the Jews of Yemen were virtually cut off from the rest of the world, until they were 'discovered' by a Jewish traveller from the Holy Land, Yaakov Sapir by name, who set out in the year 1858 in search of the lost Ten Tribes. In previous centuries, it is true, other Jewish travellers had made their way to Yemen, but it was Sapir who brought the existence of that branch of Jewry to the knowledge of the rest of the Jewish world by publishing his excellent account (in Hebrew) of his travels, which has become a classic of its kind.

Throughout their long exile, the Jews of Yemen never ceased to hope for their return to the land of their ancestors; and, indeed, they began to give practical expression to their yearning the moment they realised that it was physically possible for them to reach the Holy Land. It was evidently a report of the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Palestine which led to the first movement of several thousand Jews from Yemen between the years 1882 and 1887. They settled mainly in Jerusalem and Jaffa and, since they did not have occupations which would enable them to make a reasonable livelihood in the country's limited economy at that time, they were reduced to little better than beggary. It was not until the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts was founded in 1906 that they were able, to some extent, to resume their traditional crafts as goldsmiths and silversmiths. Another wave of immigration from Yemen began in 1908, with a score or so of families who found work at Rechovot as agricultural labourers. But by now there was a Palestine Office in Jaffa, representing the World Zionist Organisation and directing its activities in the country. There was, too, a Labour move-

ment. Between them, they were able to help organise immigration from Yemen and absorb the newcomers in productive occupations on their arrival. This, however, was at a somewhat later stage; the first newcomers to arrive from Yemen at this period experienced no small degree of hardship.

One of the causes of the second wave of immigration was a deterioration in the conditions of the Jews in Yemen, who in any event had an inferior status to that of the Muslim inhabitants. But it was by no means the only cause, as the following narrative will show. So interesting and unusual is the tale of the adventures encountered by one of the groups of immigrants on their way to Eretz Yisrael (in 1909), that it is felt justified to make a departure from the practice of this book—which contains memoirs of events which actually took place in Palestine—to give an account of them, together with a description of their background in Yemen. The account is furnished by Avraham Tabib (1889–1950), himself a Yemenite Jew, who came with the group whose experiences he describes. He ended a life of public activity, much of which was devoted to the cause of his fellow-Yemenite Jews, as a member of the first Knesset.

In 1900, Tabib relates, the leader of the Arabs of Yemen rose up against their Turkish overlords and drove them out of the country. This action, which took some time, was followed by a three years' war between rival aspirants to the rule of Yemen. It was the *Imam* Yahya who emerged victorious, and from then until his assassination in 1948 he pursued a policy of repression against the Jews which increased in severity as time went on.

It was in the northern provinces of Haidan and

Sa'ada, where the Jews lived in comparative prosperity and freedom, that an urge to leave for the Holy Land manifested itself during the year 1909. In the walled town of Sa'ada itself, the Jews had to suffer petty annoyances from their Arab neighbours, but outside they went about freely, which was something the Arab townspeople themselves did not venture to do for fear of attack by robbers. The Jews, however, felt no fear, and even found ways of getting in and out of the town after nightfall, when the gates were shut. If a Jew were attacked, he would defend himself stoutly with the sword he wore openly at his side. Yet within the town the Jews did not feel altogether at ease, even though the *mufti*¹ was favourably disposed towards them. On the other hand, the Jews living in Haidan and the surrounding villages were on the best and friendliest of terms with the Arabs.

The Jews in these northern provinces were consumed with jealousy on learning that Jews in other parts of the country had left or were preparing to leave for the Land of Israel; and the reports reaching them, which described the new life springing up there and which mentioned the place-names so familiar to them from the Bible, whetted their appetites. Another factor was the vastly exaggerated stories of rapidly acquired wealth and a life of indolent ease which some of the earlier immigrants had sent back to Yemen. Most communities, however, refused to believe such fantastic tales and made specific enquiries, which showed that life in the Promised Land was far from easy. But they were nothing daunted. Indeed, the

¹ A scholar, versed in Muslim Law, who is competent to adjudicate on points of religious law and who usually wields considerable authority and influence.

Jews of Haidan, who lived in tall houses and enjoyed many creature comforts, used to say: 'The herbs of Eretz Yisrael are better than the fleshpots of other lands.' Some of the leading Arabs in those provinces besought the Jews not to go, and even offered them gifts of land and letters patent to guarantee their safety for all time. But the Jews were firmly resolved to go back to their own country. They therefore liquidated their assets, parting with their houses and land for a fraction of their value, or in some cases even giving away their houses to their Arab neighbours or to their fellow-Jews who remained behind.

Although in later years, and especially following the 1929 riots in Palestine, the Jews of Yemen were subjected to increased disabilities, Tabib sees fit to pay tribute to their Arab neighbours 'for the great majority of them, are distinguished by their spirit of humanity, and their ways and dealings are honourable with all men, for the reason of their being men, no less than in a country noted for its culture and politeness'; although there was, to be sure, a small minority of people who cherished unkind feelings towards the Jews. In some places the Jews were even regarded as holy, and in time of drought they would be asked to pray for rain, as their prayers were sure to be efficacious.

In 1904-05, Tabib relates, the forces of the victorious *Imam* Yahya, pushing northwards to complete the conquest of the country, encountered what was for them a phenomenon; Jews with long sidelocks going about openly with swords in their belts and guns on their shoulders. They wanted to know whether the Jews actually dared to use their firearms, since they had been taught to believe that all Jews had

been laid under the curse of cowardice. But the local residents told them that all who lived in that land, whatever their origin or religion, enjoyed every privilege and freedom. Tabib also relates a story how some of the *Imam's* soldiers, accompanied by a local officer, saw two Jews with their firearms and asked for proof of their marksmanship. The officer obliged by holding up a rod, ten millimetres in width, which one of the Jewish soldiers split with a well-aimed shot from a distance of eighty metres. But, Tabib remarks, 'it is a matter for regret that only a small minority—about five per cent of all the Jews of Yemen—lived in those provinces in a clear atmosphere free of the poisonous spirit which prevailed in Yemen.' He attributes the different treatment accorded to the Jews of the northern provinces to their remoteness from the main centres of Jewry in that country.

Despite the favourable conditions that obtained in the north, no less than two hundred and twenty souls obeyed the urge to leave for the Land of Israel and set out from Haidan on the 1st July, 1909. They took with them a great many possessions, and also twenty camels loaded with coffee, which they hoped to sell on reaching their destination. As they left the town, the sound of wailing drowned the cries of 'God speed'. Indeed, the Arabs were more vociferous in their protestations of woe than were the Jews who remained, since the latter hoped shortly to be reunited with their kinsfolk in Palestine.

After two days' travel through settled country and a halt for Sabbath, they entered upon a desert which they had to cross in order to reach the coast. This was an extremely hot and arid region. Moreover, it was dangerous country to travel in, since it was infested

by bands of marauding bedouin who had a complete disregard for the sanctity of human life. The caravan therefore undertook the journey by easy stages, resting during the hottest hours of the day. At the end of the first day in the desert, they came upon a village inhabited by negroes, who were apparently too awed by their numbers to molest them. Next day, however, after they had halted to cook their mid-day meal, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by forty armed negroes. However, the Jews did not panic; they quickly formed themselves for defence, the swordsmen holding their drawn swords in their right hands and seizing their adversaries with their left, while the six riflemen aimed their pieces. The negroes, who had been accustomed to think all Jews cowards, were taken by surprise. They were saved only by the intervention of the Arab guide (he had left the caravan in the night, presumably to betray it to the negroes, and suddenly reappeared at this juncture), who averted the imminent bloodshed. After the assailants disappeared from view, the travellers resumed their interrupted meal.

On the fourth day after beginning their trans-desert march, they came to the Tihama², where they were detained in a village while a message was sent to the local potentate to enquire what should be done with them. Eight days later a reply was received, and they were allowed to proceed on their way. To avoid travelling in the intense heat of the sun, they made a forced march of thirteen hours by night to reach Medi, where they were to embark for Aden. They were completely worn out when they got there and

² The narrow strip of lowland extending along the western and southern coast of Arabia.

spent several days resting before they set out in the two small sailing vessels they hired. Pleased as they were at accomplishing yet another stage on their long journey, they were dismayed at the news that they would not be allowed into Aden armed. They therefore sold their weapons, with the possession of which they had successfully defied fear and braved every danger. Nor was their anxiety unfounded; for, as they stood unarmed upon the seashore, a company of seventy horsemen bore down upon them. While two of their number went forward to ascertain what the horsemen wanted, the others began to pray for deliverance and to sound the *shofar* (ram's horn, sounded in synagogue on the High Festivals). Upon hearing the unaccustomed sound the horsemen took fright; for in their belief the Jews had power over demons and evil spirits, and this was surely a way of invoking them. A gift of money to the leader of the horsemen, which had been made in the meantime, also helped, and the assailants drew off. The Jews thereupon waded into the sea, which was very shallow for a distance of several hundred yards, singing with joy, until they reached the boats that were to take them out to their ships.

The voyage began on a Thursday. During the first two days, they encountered rough weather. The rain beat down upon the tiny vessels, which were completely open, and at the height of the storm one of the women gave birth to a daughter (who, Tabib records, was alive and well in Rechovot when he published his memoirs over twenty years later). But on the Tuesday, which happened to be the Ninth of Av (the fast commemorating the destruction of the Temple), an even worse storm broke out. A mast of the

boat in which Tabib sailed was blown away by the force of the gale. The crew removed one of the sails and attached it to another mast which, however, swayed to such an extent that it split the ship's bottom. All hands, including the passengers, had to work furiously to stop the leak and to keep the mast tightly lashed, as it repeatedly worked loose again. By the time they reached Aden, they were in a state of utter exhaustion after their eight-day ordeal. No wonder the quarantine officer, on seeing the deathly pallor of their faces, concluded that they must be seriously ill and wanted to send them straight back. It was only through the intervention of an influential Jewish resident of Aden that the passengers were allowed to land and were placed in strict quarantine for seventeen days, after which they were given limited freedom. Eventually, on the morrow of the Day of Atonement (26th September), they embarked on a German ship bound for Jaffa.

Up till 1914, Tabib observes, all the immigrants from Yemen came to the Land of Israel of their own accord. This was so particularly after the visit paid to Yemen by Shmuel Yavneeli on behalf of the Zionist Organisation and the Jewish workers' movement. Those responsible for settlement work in Palestine realised that the Yemenite Jews, with their industriousness and modest demands, could provide an element capable of competing with the cheap local Arab labour, as well as furnishing excellent material for the new peasantry it was hoped to create. It was therefore considered desirable to organise their immigration. Yavneeli got as far as central Yemen and passed through nearly all the towns and villages inhabited by Jews. He explained to them the true state of affairs

in Palestine; and his dispelling the myths that had become widespread concerning the fabulous wealth and luxurious life of the Yishuv had a decidedly sobering, and in some cases disappointing, effect. Nevertheless, his forthright presentation of the situation and of the Yishuv's need for hard-working farmers did not prevent many of the Yemenite Jews who had not actually seen him with their own eyes from believing that he was come to herald the advent of the Messiah (some even went so far as to believe that he was the Messiah, the son of Joseph, who according to tradition will precede the Messiah, the son of David). But, Tabib writes,

those in the central provinces did not think much of the whole business, for they were still living in tranquillity, and it did not appear worth while to leave their homes. They did not know or feel what lay in store for them a few years later: they did not imagine that they would one day seek vainly for some way to leave, and that they would steal away as refugees to escape from this purgatory with a whole skin. Nevertheless, many families from the provinces close to Aden—such as Sharab, Ibb, Jibla and Dali—emigrated as a result of Yavneeli's mission. It was not they, but their guardian angels, who foresaw what lay ahead. They left for the Land of Israel between 1912 and 1914, and their going made a great impression in the central provinces as well. Had it not been for the outbreak of the World War, and the consequent disruption of sea communications, immigration from Yemen would have exceeded that from all other countries. For the Jews in the central provinces, too, finally awoke when they saw the lowland country becoming emptied of its population. But by then the sea routes were closed.

The first village to which the Yemenites came in 1909 was Rechovot. They were all Jews from the northern provinces who had come out willingly, not because circumstances had forced them. In the beginning they experienced great privations.

The settlers could not yet speak Hebrew; only a few had just begun to speak, with an *Ashkenazi* accent, which the Yemenites had difficulty in understanding... Housing accommodation was a problem which weighed down upon them intolerably. They were not provided with work, and if they did succeed in finding any, the wages were extremely low. The Arab labourers used to harry any Yemenite Jew who happened to come into the vineyards in which they were working, with the deliberate intention of vexing him to such an extent that he would leave his work in disgust. Moreover, the work itself was distasteful to the Yemenites, for they were not yet accustomed to agriculture.

The Yemenite farm labourers at that time were most forlorn and dejected; but they brightened on the rare occasions that they were visited by one of the veteran Yemenite-Jewish residents of Jerusalem or Jaffa who wanted to know how the newcomers were faring. Such a person was held by them in great respect: his every pronouncement had for them the force of an oracle. Occasionally the settlers of Rechovot treated them in a humiliating fashion, which grieved them. The Arab labourers manifested considerable hatred towards them and accused them of being responsible for the death of Arabs who had served with the Turkish army in Yemen. Indeed, the Yemenites were in actual physical danger, and, in the year of their arrival in Rechovot, one of them was

murdered as he was returning from work together with his Arab fellow-labourer.

The immediate housing requirements of the newcomers were met by the farmers of Rechovot, who, at the suggestion of the *Hapoel Hatzair* party, cleared some cellars and cowsheds for them. The Yemenites improvised ovens out of tin water-casks, on which they baked flat cakes of bread in their accustomed manner. They did all their cooking out of doors, even when it rained.

Tabib pays tribute to the energy and resourcefulness of the women-folk, who did much to help their husbands overcome the difficulties and hardships of the initial period. Some of them even went to work in the fields, although they were quite unused to farm labour. Indeed, Tabib asserts, 'it may be said that the first *chalutza* (woman pioneer) to work in the fields of Eretz Yisrael as a labourer was the Yemenite woman'. The women did all manner of work, such as spreading manure and carrying oranges. They also engaged in laundering and other household tasks in the farmers' homes. When there was nothing to do in the vineyards, and the men were kept in enforced idleness, the women went on working, sometimes assisted by their young daughters.

The Yemenites used to welcome the periodic visits paid to them by Yosef Sprinzak (now Chairman of the Knesset) of the *Hapoel Hatzair* party. He used to speak to them of the country and its ways and furnished practical answers to their questions. As the Yemenites found the unfamiliar name of Sprinzak difficult to pronounce, they called him simply Yosef; and his arrival in the settlement was always a happy event for them. Conditions were bad, since there was no

regular work in the vineyards during the latter part of winter and in spring. The Yemenites therefore undertook tasks like clearing the vineyards after pruning; but as they knew as yet nothing about local conditions, they accepted absurdly low remuneration. Nevertheless they did not utter a word of complaint and professed satisfaction with their lot, though now and then a telltale sigh would escape them.

The newcomers had been under the impression that all they had to do in order to acquire land of their own was to go to something known as 'The Company', and they would obtain holdings for which they would pay in small annual instalments. Matters, however, were not quite so simple. It was due to the generosity of two of the farmers of Rechovot, Sachs and Moshe Smilansky (who figures so prominently in this book), who set aside a vineyard for the purpose, that the beginnings of the first Yemenite rural settlement took shape. The land was divided into holdings of a dunam (approximately a quarter of an acre) per family; and it was this venture which led to the idea of farm work taking root among the Yemenites. The late Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, also helped to get land for the settlement of Yemenite Jews, this time from the *Keren Kayemet Leyisrael* (Jewish National Fund).

The effect of that dunam holding upon the Yemenite settler, Tabib writes, was as follows:

It showed him where he belonged. He became attached to it and was not assailed by any thoughts of moving elsewhere. He invested all his energy there and began slowly to build,—a hut, a kitchen, a small cowshed, a poultry run. He also sowed and planted a few trees. He did not waste his leisure

hours, but devoted them to his dunam. His dunam also gave him spiritual solace: he felt that he had 'come to his inheritance', small though it might be . . . But, much as it meant to him, it meant more to his children. Those who lived in crowded conditions, as did the Yemenites in Rishon Letzion for thirteen years, lost many of their children. Not so their brethren in Rechovot . . .

A number of the Yemenites had been considered wealthy men in their community, and had brought their money with them in the hope of having houses built. But even so large a sum as 200 *reals* proved to be worth not more than £18, which would not suffice to build so much as a simple shack. They consequently set to and built their own houses, manufacturing bricks of clay and using their modest savings to buy wood for doors and window frames, which they made themselves. The only outside assistance they procured was for making the roofs, which they did not know how to do. It was seeing the Yemenites accept their adverse conditions in such an uncomplaining manner that led those in charge of agricultural settlement work to realise the potentialities of immigrants from Yemen, and to Yavneeli's mission to that country.

The first Yemenites to arrive after Yavneeli made his trip went mainly to Rechovot, Rishon Letzion, and Petach Tikva. They found conditions easier, since the Palestine Office gave them all possible assistance, and they were able to benefit from the help and experience of those who had come out before them. Others went to Galilee. But the majority of those from the central provinces settled in Jerusalem and Jaffa, where members of their families had established themselves earlier, and none went on the land save

for a small group at Ness Tziona. A little later, the Jewish National Fund provided a number of Yemenite families with plots of land for auxiliary farms. Some of them, recent arrivals, refused the J.N.F.'s offer to erect huts for them and set to work building their own houses. Unfortunately, they did not know that the clay they had used was not of the consistency of that found in Yemen, where clay houses are built four and five storeys high. With the first heavy rains, therefore, they found their homes crumbling about them. In the end, they had to ask the J.N.F. for loans in order to buy wooden planks with which to shore up the half-ruined structures.

YAVNEELI'S MISSION

The story of how Shmuel Yavneeli came to be sent to Yemen is told by Rabbi Benjamin (Y. Radler-Feldman), whose reminiscences of the early days of Kinneret were given in Chapter XIX. After spending a year abroad, he joined the staff of the newly constituted Palestine Office, which was under the direction of Dr. Arthur Rupp and his assistant, Dr. Jacob Thon. Shortly after beginning work there, Rabbi Benjamin learned that strange things were afoot: an emissary was to be sent to Yemen to implant in the Jews there a desire to come to the Land of Israel and to organise their migration. Although there was at the time an official ban on the entry of Jews into Palestine, it could easily be circumvented by means of a little baksheesh. Yet, notwithstanding the ease with which Jews could enter the country, immigration was at a very low ebb, despite the calls issued by Yosef Vitkin and others urging the youth of the Diaspora to come to Palestine. But then, as Rabbi Benjamin

points out, those were the comfortable days before the first World War; and who wanted to leave a pleasant existence for the desolation of Palestine, where there was virtually nothing for a merchant or manufacturer to do (or so people thought), and where the prospects of modern development seemed remote? There were hundreds of Jewish workers in the country, but there was constant friction between them and the farmers, who preferred Arab labourers: the latter worked for less, were unfailingly cheerful, and had no fancy requirements—such as better accommodation, or the means to buy books.

Ruppin and Thon were worried by the existing state of affairs. They themselves had given up the comforts of life in Western Europe to help further the Jewish national rebirth in the homeland. But how could the Yishuv be expanded to sizable proportions without more Jewish workers? Was it impossible to find throughout the Diaspora Jews who were willing to immigrate and who were capable of meeting the competition of the Arab labourers? The answer was the Jews of Yemen. The first to immigrate from that country in 1882 had all found means of livelihood; and those who had come in 1909 had nearly all settled at Rehovot and Rishon Letzion, where they had engaged in farm labour to the satisfaction of both the Jewish workers and farmers. In that case, the wisest course would be to organise the immigration of larger numbers of such Jews; and, for that purpose, someone would have to be sent out to Yemen itself. The idea of the mission to Yemen gained ground in all quarters,—among the farmers, the workers and the Zionist officials.

The originator of the idea was a young worker

named Shmuel Yavneeli, who volunteered to go to Yemen himself. As, however, the mission could not be undertaken openly, it was given the fictitious purpose of a visit to examine specimens of Yemenite-Jewish craftsmanship on behalf of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, which had been established in Jerusalem in 1906. But since he knew nothing about Yemen, its customs and language, he went to Rechovot to find a suitable guide and companion for the journey from among the Yemenite Jews already settled there. The man whom it was proposed to send with Yavneeli laid down stiff terms, including a life pension for his wife in the event of his meeting with a fatal accident. But then, as he said with truth, he had not come to the Land of Israel in order to return to Yemen, even for a visit; and if he was to risk his life on so hazardous a journey, he was entitled to adequate recompense.

On reflection, however, Yavneeli decided on a better plan. Instead of going to the Arab port of Hodeida and making his way straight into the interior, as had been proposed, he would go to Aden, where he would be able to find a guide, should he need one. Moreover, the suggested purpose of his journey did not sound very convincing. He therefore went to Jaffa to consult Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who proposed a different course. Since the Yemenite Jews arrived in Palestine with customs which differed in some respects from those practised by Jews in other parts of the world, it was necessary to obtain full information concerning them from the rabbinical authorities on the spot. Rabbi Kook therefore drew up a list of thirty-two questions to which he desired specific answers, and composed a letter to the Rabbis of Yemen.

Those documents were to be Yavneeli's credentials attesting to the genuineness of his mission. In reality, however, this fiction, too, convinced no one; and when Yavneeli arrived in Yemen, widespread interest was displayed in him among Muslims as well as Jews:

For how often do they see there anyone from a distant land? Only once in a great while. Curiosity was rife. The sheikhs wanted to hold converse with such a man, to hear news and tales of wonder, to ascertain who would fight whom, and who would vanquish whom. As soon as the emissary came to a townlet, Muslim notables as well as Jews would assemble at his hostelry, and there was much drinking of coffee, which draws men near to one another. The emissary's fame travelled far afield, and before he arrived at a new destination everyone there would be agog to see him. Since the Muslims and Jews lived together, and spoke the same language, it proved impossible to conceal the true nature of his visit, and it became apparent that the entire matter of the questions concerning religious laws and customs was merely a blind.

At this point, the tale is taken up by Yavneeli himself. He set sail from Jaffa on the 16th December, 1910, and on arriving in Aden spent a fortnight there preparing for his journey. For four months he travelled, riding a donkey and accompanied by local Jewish inhabitants, sometimes singly, sometimes in whole groups. In all he visited some forty towns and villages. Wherever he stopped, the local Jews would gather round him. He would tell them about Eretz Yisrael, about the new villages that had been established there, and about the Jewish national movement. They would listen eagerly, and sometimes both he and they reached a high pitch of enthusiasm. In response to their

questions about the holy sites, Yavneeli would tell them that, rather than inquire about graves and stones, they should ask about the Restoration of Zion, and about the Jews who were going up from the Exile to dwell there.

For two millenia, Yavneeli writes, the Jews of Yemen had lived in their exile, subject to the excesses of cruel despots, forced to wander from province to province, and having many of their number wiped out by periodic famines. These and even worse sufferings they had to endure, and their exile seemed as if it would never end. Now and then a false Messiah would arise in their midst and kindle a brief spark of hope in their breasts. But when it had died down again, the darkness seemed even blacker than before; and some of those who had started up at what they believed to have been the Divinely inspired summons were made to suffer grievously for their rashness.

The only other occurrence to relieve the gloom was the occasional advent of a visitor from the Holy Land. How such visitors made their way to Yemen is not clear; but the fact of their having been there was attested to by the presence of Hebrew printed books three centuries old. Those travellers had come to collect money for various institutions, and had been cordially received. 'Such sons of Zion,' Yavneeli writes, were treated with kindness and love, and I was one such son of Zion.'

The Yemenite Jews eagerly questioned Yavneeli about the coming of the Messiah. He countered such questions by telling them about the redemption of the Land of Israel, which had already begun, and about the redemption of those members of the Jewish people who were going there and reviving its desolation by

means of hard, devoted labour. An awakening had begun in remote parts of the Diaspora, and it was time it reached Yemen as well. But would there be a response, Yavneeli wondered? The Yemenite Jews had the same characteristics as Jews in other countries of the Diaspora, and earned their living as craftsmen and petty traders. But the return to the Land of Israel called for a change in their mode of life: they must learn to value labour and acquire a love of the soil.

This, however, was not the kind of message the Yemenite Jews had expected to hear. It contained none of the romance associated in Jewish lore with the coming of the Messiah. Instead, they were bidden to take up a heavy burden. No longer should they sit by and enjoy the study of works written by Jewish scholars in other lands. Now they must send their sons to build the Land of Israel. Woe betide them if they should wait until their brethren there had prepared everything for them!

Reaction to Yavneeli's exhortation varied. Some thought that the Messianic era might indeed be at hand, and that perhaps they should go up to the Land of Israel, especially as in any event it was accounted a great virtue to dwell there. Others, again, thought it impious to try and hasten the advent of the Messiah, which would come about in God's own time. Yet a third view was expressed by a number of Jews who lacked the fare to undertake the journey. If a ship came to take them, they would gladly go.

It was no easy task, Yavneeli recounts, to drive home to the Yemenite Jews that they would be going to Palestine, not to die, but to lead a full, purposeful life. And when he tried to impress upon them the

importance of becoming farmers, he sometimes met with objections of an unforeseen kind, including a traditional belief that, if the Jews were content merely to do the will of God, their worldly labours would be performed for them by others.

Yavneeli tried to paint as faithful a picture as possible of the life of the Yishuv. He explained to them, for instance, that an unskilled agricultural worker could earn 1¼ francs a day, rising to 2½ francs as he acquired skill. Those paltry sums, however, seemed like great wealth to the Jews in Yemen, where an ordinary labourer earned the equivalent of only 25 to 30 centimes. It was therefore very hard to shake their belief that they would amass considerable wealth if they settled in the Land of Israel.

In his efforts to move the Jews there, Yavneeli used different approaches. One was to demonstrate to them that their supposed freedom was servitude, and that their whole existence bore the stamp of *Galut*,—of exile. Moreover, why was it that their numbers had not increased in the course of so many centuries, whereas the Children of Israel, who had numbered 70 souls on their going down to Egypt, had grown to a host of 600,000 by the time they left it? Surely this showed that God had laid a curse upon them in that land. On hearing these arguments the Jews of Yemen nodded their heads.

After journeying through Yemen for two months, Yavneeli went to the capital, Sana'a, where he stayed for a similar length of time. There he came to the conclusion that two practical measures ought to be taken: the fare for the passage from Aden to Palestine should be reduced, and an information bureau opened in Aden to furnish a link between Palestine

and Yemen. The steamship company should be prevailed upon to reduce its rates, and a contribution towards the cost of each immigrant's passage ought to be made out of public funds. Yavneeli's recommendations were soon adopted, with the result that the cost of the journey for the immigrants was cut down by half. The effect of the reduction was soon felt. As Yavneeli puts it.

The people began to awake. The rumours circulating in the country began to acquire a more joyous, a more legendary note. The movement gathered increasing strength. From the stories told by the representative sent in my name, and also by others, it was apparent that all kinds of dreams and extraordinary fancies had entered people's heads. It was surely something like a Messianic movement on a tiny scale . . . Each one felt he was being redeemed . . . in the terms of the prophecy, 'Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaiot shall minister unto thee . . . Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them'. . . (Isaiah, LX, 4-7, 9).

In the town of Dali, the Jews stood in the marketplace and sold all their chattels for next to nothing. It was an open, demonstrative departure from

the Exile. The local ruler summoned the Jews and warned them that he would not let them leave the city. But they replied that they were in no way subservient to him: they were not slaves, but free men! The prince then prepared a banquet for the Jews and slaughtered sheep and oxen,—all that they might be prevailed upon to remain. But that they would not do . . . They were being called from over yonder, and they were going. The departure of the Jews from the city meant the prince's losing the taxes they paid yearly. In anger, the prince decreed that no one should dare to buy the house of any Jew . . . That was a cruel blow. For many of the poorer Jews had placed their hopes upon selling their homes and going to the Land of Israel with the proceeds . . . But it was the final blow; they were going at last.

Yavneeli made one more journey into Yemen, but he had to cut his visit short. The provinces through which he travelled were but thinly populated by Jews, and the rumour was spread that he was a Christian spy masquerading as a Jew. Although he always travelled with a caravan and was accompanied by several Jews, he was one day ambushed, robbed of his money and taken to a village, where he was detained until his fate should be decided. Fortunately, his letters of recommendation to some of the Arab notables, together with representations made by the Jews on his behalf, extricated him from his plight. He thereupon returned to Aden, where he found that no less than six hundred Jews had left for Palestine. Within a few days of his return, further caravans arrived, and more were preparing to come.

THE BEGINNINGS OF TEL AVIV

TODAY the city of Tel Aviv, together with Jaffa, which has recently been included within its municipal jurisdiction, has a population of well over 300,000. In addition, it has around it a ring of towns and suburbs which bring the total for the Greater Tel Aviv area to half a million or more. Tel Aviv, a bustling, modern city, is the hub of Israel's commercial life, and there are some important industries in its vicinity. Culturally, too, it plays a major rôle in the life of the country: it is the home of the main theatrical companies and of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and it is there that all Hebrew daily newspapers, as well as many other periodicals and also books, are published. The city's phenomenal growth began under the Mandatory régime and has continued since Israel attained independence. During the period of Mandatory administration, it played a special part in developing the Yishuv and preparing it to assume political independence; for it alone, of all the Jewish urban centres, had its daily affairs managed almost exclusively by Jews. The Municipality was staffed entirely by Jews; the local Government offices had mainly Jewish personnel; and there was even a special section of the Palestine Police Force in Tel Aviv consisting of Jews and wearing distinctive uniforms. Over a third of Israel's Jewish inhabitants live in Tel Aviv and its environs; yet the city is less than fifty years old, and its main growth took place during the past thirty years.

The first steps towards the establishment of Tel

Aviv were taken in 1906, and the aim was the modest one of building a residential suburb in the neighbourhood of Jaffa. Although, at the time, Jerusalem had the largest Jewish population, the mainly non-Jewish city of Jaffa had some 5,000 Jewish inhabitants who constituted a vital community and who formed the modern, progressive element in Jewish urban life. But they lived in overcrowded conditions which became aggravated as more Jews went to live there. The following account of the beginnings of Tel Aviv is by the late David Smilansky, a brother of Moshe Smilansky, whose reminiscences appear elsewhere in this book.

Smilansky, who had been abroad, returned to Palestine in March, 1906. Landing, as did nearly all travellers, at Jaffa, he records how appalled he was by the narrow, dirty lanes of the city and their offensive stench, which had not improved in any respect since he had last seen them fifteen years earlier. The Salant Hotel, where he and his family secured temporary lodging, stood in the noisy market-place, and its yard was full of camels, horses, donkeys and other beasts. After vainly searching for proper living quarters for several months, Smilansky eventually found, through an Arab agent, a room in a 'boarding house' kept by a Jewish woman. For this room—without any amenities—he paid what was then the very considerable sum of 25 gold francs a month. He and his family suffered not a little from the mosquitoes, fleas, bed-bugs, mice and other creatures with which the room was infested.

A few months later, he accepted the offer of an Arab landlord to build him a dwelling for an advance payment of 500 gold francs on account of rent. The

dwelling consisted of three rooms, one of them windowless (being designed for the women of a Muslim household). This seemed truly a deliverance, and Smilansky thought himself exceptionally fortunate. But, he writes,

I later found I was no exception. There were many such 'deliverers' amongst our Ishmaelite brethren, who welcomed us cordially and with our money built whole streets of houses containing hundreds of dwellings, through the expedient of taking two or three years' rent in advance... The prices of dwellings increased very considerably, and the Arabs exploited the new immigrants at will.

Bitter thoughts assailed me. Was this the way to build an urban Jewish population? Instead of establishing a firm economic position for ourselves, here we were emptying our pockets and handing over our wealth to strangers. It was clear to me that our new Yishuv must be founded upon the soil, and that it must follow the path of agriculture and establish a new generation of farmers. But at the same time I felt that, although the towns need Jewish villages and settlements, the Jewish rural population equally needs a Jewish town, where commerce and industry should be centred, so as to render us independent of the good graces of others.

In the close vicinity of Smilansky's apartment lived several men who played leading parts in the life of the Yishuv, and especially in the annals of Tel Aviv. They included Z. D. Levontin, manager of the Anglo-Palestine Co., Dr. Hillel Yaffe, Yehuda Grazovsky, Dr. Metman, founder of the Herzlia 'Gymnasia' (Secondary School), S. Ben-Zion Guttman (the Hebrew writer), M. Sheinkin and others. In the evenings, after work, they would often meet and discuss affairs.

'The time,' Smilansky writes, 'was the beginning of the Second *Aliya*, and each ship brought hundreds of newcomers, most of whom settled in the Old City of Jaffa.' The newcomers included a man named Akiva Weiss and his family, who secured quarters near Smilansky.

It was on an evening in July, 1906, while Smilansky sat outside his house plunged in gloomy meditation, that Weiss came up to him and told him of an idea that had come into his head. This was to organise a group of Jewish residents of Jaffa to establish a suburb near by. Smilansky welcomed the idea, and the two began to try and win over some of their immediate circle of friends. A few of them warmly supported it, but many others—especially those who claimed to be experts—ridiculed it, prophesying that it would lead to the creation of just another congested Jewish quarter. And, writes Smilansky,

anyone who did not at the time see the dirt of those quarters, which were inhabited exclusively by our fellow-Jews; anyone who did not smell the evil odours of those dark and narrow alleys; can have no idea of the meaning of dirt, filth and squalor.

Nevertheless, Weiss and Smilansky proceeded undaunted, and within a few days they called a meeting which formed a society and elected a committee. New members were eagerly canvassed, and before long their number had grown to twenty. They were particularly glad when Meir Dizengoff (who later became the first Mayor of Tel Aviv) joined them and declared his readiness to take an active part in the project.

By January, 1907, the number of members had grown to 46, each paying in a sum in token of his

serious intention to build a home of his own. The society, which took the name of *Achuzat Bayit*, opened an account with the Anglo-Palestine Co., though not before some legal difficulties, due to its (the society's) not having been registered with central Turkish authorities, had been overcome. The next step was to finance the venture. Several foreign firms and banks were prepared to help, but the desirability of accepting their offers gave rise to discussion among the members. Some felt it was wrong to encourage foreign firms to gain a foothold in Palestine and thus weaken the precarious Jewish economic position. Others thought that international capital ought to be attracted to the country. It was the first view, however, which prevailed, and recourse was had to Jewish sources only. As the Anglo-Palestine Co. did not transact business of that nature, and as the supreme body of the Zionist Organisation was unable to come to any decision in the matter, application was made to the Jewish National Fund, which at that time had its headquarters in Cologne. A loan of 300,000 francs was requested to enable 60 single-family houses to be built. Thanks to the strong advocacy of Dr. Ruppin, who had been nominated Director of the Palestine Office which was to be set up in Jaffa, the Eighth Zionist Congress, which met at The Hague in August, 1907, approved the loan (a sixth of it was later earmarked for the new Herzlia quarter in Haifa).

The next step was to acquire land; but, although it had been decided to keep the matter secret at that stage, word of the society's intentions soon leaked out. The result was that dozens of middlemen sprang up as if from nowhere—Jews, Muslims and Christian Arabs—with a variety of offers. The site of the pro-

posed suburb gave rise to considerable discussion. Finally, it was decided to take the bold step of acquiring a tract of land known as Karm Jabali,—a stretch of sandy ground, bearing vestiges of a former orchard and vineyard, some distance to the north of Jaffa. But, despite all attempts to keep it secret, this decision became known as well, and the middlemen got wind of it. Indeed, so great was the fuss they made, that the price of land in the neighbourhood rose to four times its original value.

Discussion also centred around the amount of land to be acquired. The more farsighted members of the society wanted to buy an area sufficient to allow of further expansion, to admit of planning a sizable modern town, and to prevent speculation. They were, however, opposed by 'realists', who advised the acquisition of enough for immediate needs only. In the end, it was decided to buy an area sufficient for 60 houses, leaving a small margin for further development, with an option on an additional area of slightly lesser extent.

Negotiations with the Arab owners were concluded, and it was agreed that they would hand over the land free of all encumbrances within nine months, together with the requisite title deeds and building permits. But, once the purchase price had been paid, a series of delays ensued in fulfilling the conditions, added to which numbers of middlemen put in claims for payment of alleged services; months passed before the various difficulties were straightened out. A further obstacle was presented by the Turkish authorities' ban on the acquisition of land by East European Jews. Eventually the land was transferred, but it had to be registered in the name of several Jews of standing in

the community who were Ottoman subjects, and later in that of the late Dr. Jacobus Kahn, of Holland (who met his death in a Nazi extermination camp during the second World War). The announcement that the transaction was completed was made at a general meeting of the *Achuzat Bayit* Society, in September, 1908. At the same meeting it was announced that the Herzlia Gymnasia (the first Hebrew secondary school, which had been established in Jaffa in 1905) had decided to buy a large plot of land from the society for the construction of a new building with funds provided by an English Jew, Jacob Moser, of Bradford.

How daring the whole venture seemed at the time can be seen from David Smilansky's account of the debate concerning the advisability of transferring the school to the proposed site.

The older people . . . argued that it was wrong to erect the building in the midst of a sandy waste far from town, as it would endanger the lives of the children who would have to go there daily . . . But the dreamers countered by saying that the new Yishuv would soon quit the old town [Jaffa] and transfer the centre of its life to a cleaner environment, which would be altogether Jewish. They therefore insisted that the Gymnasia should be built in the Jewish suburb. The decisive voice in the controversy was that of Jacob Moser . . .

The regulations in force at the time made it necessary to apply to the central Government in Constantinople in order to obtain a building permit. This caused further delay, as well as considerable expenditure, which the society could ill afford. Meanwhile, the impatience of the members was growing. A few demanded their money back and returned to the Diaspora. Others began to charge the committee with incompe-

tence and to express their dissatisfaction in the form of constant protests and petitions. In the end, resort was had to the usual remedy in the Orient—baksheesh—and the committee succeeded in obtaining a permit to build a number of houses. Further application of the same remedy secured permits to build the full complement of houses.

At last preparations were put in hand to begin the actual work of construction. But a new and unforeseen obstacle arose: the authorities began to erect a police barracks in the middle of the projected main street. Not only did this interfere with the plan, but under Turkish law private building in the vicinity of such an establishment was forbidden. Representations to the various authorities were of no avail: the work of building was prosecuted with a vigour quite uncharacteristic of official Ottoman undertakings. When the structure was completed, Smilansky writes,

a festive procession was arranged by the Muslim and Christian Arabs under the patronage of Government officials. It included sheikhs, *imams* and Christian priests, and also a band. The drums beat, the cymbals clashed, and the trumpets blared forth triumphantly. The Arab youths were overjoyed. They sang and danced . . . and hurled abuse at the Jews.

It took more than the usual efforts and involved more than the customary sums in baksheesh before the society was able to buy the barracks,—which it then proceeded to demolish completely. That done, the members breathed with relief and resumed their preparations to build. The interruptions, however, were not yet at an end. This time the trouble was caused by a group of bedouin, who pitched their tents

on the society's land, choosing for the purpose the tallest eminence, which had been set aside for the school.

The heroes had occupied the sand hill one evening without encountering any opposition, since we all lived in Jaffa. They had hung Ottoman flags above their tents and taken possession of the land. The men were armed from top to toe with rifles, pistols, swords, daggers and knives. Their women-folk raised a great outcry and screamed with all their might if anyone ventured near their tents, and their hungry dogs snarled at us . . . The din was deafening.

The trespassers tried to establish a title to the land, but as they could produce no proofs in support of their claim, they relied on the principle of might is right. The members of *Achuzat Bayit*, in turn, sought the help of their respective consuls, whose energetic intervention with the authorities quickly secured action designed to remove the offending Arabs.

The Turkish Administration sent daily a detachment of horse and foot soldiers to drive off the 'enemy'. But the latter persistently returned. Weeks passed without positive results, and in the meantime rumours got about that new trespassers intended to encroach upon the remaining lots . . . The position was grave: the large amount of 150,000 francs was in danger of being lost. After three long years of waiting, and after surmounting all kinds of obstacles in order to start building, we had suddenly run against a blank wall. The new claimants to ownership . . . shouted and screamed that the land had been theirs of old, and threatened that unless they were paid in good hard cash they would not leave without a fight. The consuls

made continual representations to the Government, and repeated orders were issued to the district gendarmerie, but all to no avail. We finally realised that it was no use relying upon the local authorities, and that the matter would not be concluded without payment of compensation and gratuities. Eventually, after we had paid them close on 35,000 gold francs, the self-styled owners vacated the land.

Meanwhile, the fame of *Achuzat Bayit* had spread, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, and requests for plots poured in. In March, 1909, an application was received from a new society that had been formed in Jaffa, called *Nachlat Binyamin*, for the purchase of a sizable tract from *Achuzat Bayit* at the same price as it had paid. The application was granted, and thus another 40 prospective householders were added to the initial 60. A month later, a letter was received from the Hebrew poet, Chayim Nachman Bialik, who lived in Odessa at the time, asking to become a member of *Achuzat Bayit* and to be allocated a plot.

The building plots were distributed by means of a lottery, held on the 1st April, 1909, and measures were taken to go ahead with the actual work of building. A small motor and pump were ordered from a Jewish factory in Jaffa, and also a filter and tanks. The firm in question, that of L. Stein and Co., employed as many as 120 workers, all Jewish, and it was given the work of laying down the water pipes along the six streets that were planned for the suburb. A Jewish contractor was entrusted with digging a well and building a water tower. It was stipulated that he should use Jewish labour only, and he was paid the extra sum involved in employing Jews.

The drilling of the well was successful, and enough water was yielded to support a population of thousands. The levelling of the sand dunes was entrusted to a group of Jewish workers, and the society acquired some trolleys and rails for them to run on, to enable the sand to be removed more easily and quickly. This device intrigued the Arab onlookers, to whom the only method familiar was to carry the sand in baskets on their heads or, at best, on the backs of donkeys or camels.

The society saw to it that all public works were carried out by Jewish labour, but it was not so easy to insist upon the maintenance of this principle when it came to the members' building their own houses. The private contractors, in particular, were for various reasons disinclined to use Jewish labour exclusively. This incensed the Jewish skilled workers, who strongly urged that no non-Jewish labour should be used. The building of the Gymnasia, in particular, occasioned some trouble. The Jewish contractor, to whom the work had been assigned, had an Arab partner, and they employed Arab as well as Jewish labour. Friction ensued between the Arab and Jewish workers, culminating in a pitched battle, in which, incidentally, it was the Arabs who were more aggressive. Several Jewish workers were injured in the fight, but their wounds were not very serious, as the weapons employed were not lethal. Work was interrupted for a time following the clash and was later resumed with Jewish labour only.

In another few weeks, about the beginning of June, the foundations were laid of the first 17 houses, and hundreds of workers set out from Jaffa every day for the site of the new suburb. After work was begun on

the Gymnasia (in July), the pace of building increased, for, in David Smilansky's words,

it was understood that the school would eventually attract wealthy people from the Diaspora, who would come here to settle, build houses and place their children in the first and only Hebrew secondary school in the world.

The laying of the foundation stone of the Gymnasia, in what is today known as Herzl Street, was a memorable occasion and was attended by a crowd of several hundred, including teachers, parents, pupils and workers. Immediately afterwards, work was begun on another 27 houses, and the laying of the foundation stone of each house was marked by a ceremony attended by the future occupiers, their relatives and friends, and the workers engaged in building the particular house. The Arabs passing by the spot used to wonder at the feverish activity that was in progress in the midst of the sand dunes. They had difficulty in understanding why the Jews should leave the inhabited city of Jaffa to go and live in so desolate a place.

By the end of summer, the first houses were ready, and about the beginning of November several dozen families moved in. Since the sand lay deep in places, carts could not make their way to the suburb. For weeks, therefore, long strings of camels and donkeys could be seen transporting the settlers' furniture and other household goods to their new homes. Within a very short time, the new community numbered no fewer than 550 souls. Now that the suburb had actually come into being, the question of a name for it could no longer be deferred. Various suggestions were put forward, but in the end the name of Tel Aviv was selected. Apart from its euphonious character, and

the fact that it is mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel, it had the virtue of being the name given by Nachum Sokolow to his Hebrew translation of the novel *Alt-neuland*,—a description of the Jewish Homeland as Herzl conceived it in the future.

And so Tel Aviv was born as a modest garden suburb, the main object of which was to relieve the congestion in Jaffa and provide Jewish town-dwellers with healthier and more congenial surroundings. It is probably safe to assume that, although they may have envisaged further development, none of its founders anticipated the phenomenal growth that was to be achieved within so short a time. But before that phase set in, Tel Aviv was to undergo a period of difficulties and sufferings, an account of which is given below in Chapter XXVI.

CHAPTER XXIV

MERCHAVIA

MERCHAVIA constitutes an important chapter in the history of Zionism, for it was the first Jewish settlement in the Emek. Today the entire Emek is covered with flourishing Jewish villages; but in 1910–11, when the land of Merchavia was bought and occupied, it was a dangerous and hostile area. The danger lay in the malaria and other diseases produced by swamps and bad drinking water; the hostility came from the local Arab inhabitants. Thus the early days of Merchavia are among the most stirring in the epic of Jewish self-defence. At the same time Merchavia was the scene of a new experiment in settlement. The col-

lective village of Daganian was still in its initial stage: the later forms of collective society had not yet been evolved, and the original pattern was to be greatly modified in the course of time. The Merchavia experiment, therefore, had all the interest of a new venture rich in promise for the future. The tale of Merchavia's early days, from 1910 to 1913, is told here by Yosef Rabinowitz, one of the original settlers.

The beginning of this tale—how a group of watchmen of *Hashomer*, together with a small group of other workers, went to occupy the site of Merchavia—has been told briefly in Chapter XX. So, too, have the stories of the murder of the *shomrim*, Yigal and Nissanov. Rabinowitz also describes these events in greater detail and with a few minor variations, but, since the early days of Merchavia are replete with incident, and space is limited, their repetition must be omitted.

In the spring of 1911, a few weeks after the murder of Nissanov, Rabinowitz writes, the original settlers received an addition to their numbers.

Salomon Dyk, an agronomist, came out from Germany, bringing with him a few young men. They had studied farming under him and, after undergoing training at the PICA agricultural school, had gained further experience of agriculture in Germany. . . . Dyk came to Merchavia as the representative of Professor Franz Oppenheimer, in order to establish a co-operative settlement on the lines evolved by him. Oppenheimer had delivered an address on this question at the Sixth Zionist Congress—the last Congress at which Dr. Herzl had been present. Herzl regarded Oppenheimer's system as a means to maintain national ownership of the land, and also as an excellent way to ensure the individual farmer's working hard and energetically.

According to Oppenheimer, farming cannot succeed unless the individual derives benefit from his labour. But he also recognised the economic advantages of co-operative labour in farming. He therefore sought to combine both principles. The farm work would be carried out on a co-operative basis. At the same time, the individual worker would feel that his energy, devotion and abilities were being properly appreciated by the settlement. Consequently, the underlying principle of the settlement was to be remuneration for work done.

Oppenheimer's plan was approved by the Zionist Congress, and the *Keren Kayemet Leyisrael* bought 3,500 dunams of land at Merchavia for the purpose of establishing the co-operative settlement. A special fund was created and a board appointed to supervise the project.

Several workers from Galilee also joined the settlement soon after. But it was impossible as yet to begin developing the farm on a national basis, owing to the depredations of the neighbouring Arabs. When the winter crops began to ripen, the Arabs thought they would easily be able to reap that which they had not sown. But they were disappointed; for, much to their surprise, the small group of settlers clearly showed that they were constantly on the watch and in no mood to be despoiled of the fruits of their labour. It was at this time that Yigal, the watchman, was murdered (as described above), and several of the settlers, including three *shomrim*, were arrested. A few days later, four more settlers were summoned before the authorities on the basis of false accusations, for their supposed part in the affair (an Arab bandit had been killed in the shooting in which Yigal lost his life).

Our comrades innocently believed that they were only to be interrogated, as the police officer who came for them had told them. But as soon as they appeared before the Examining Magistrate, they were placed under arrest. Suddenly, the young settlement found itself deprived of its best workers and watchmen.

It took a long time for Ychoshua Chankin to secure the release of the arrested men. Meanwhile, the remaining settlers had all their work cut out to prepare for the coming winter (a great deal of damage had been done, and all removable articles stolen, when an Arab mob wrecked the settlement before the eyes of the Turkish District Governor and his gendarmes following the murder of Yigal). To add to their difficulties, Najib Naser, editor of *Al-Karmil*, an Arabic paper published in Haifa, began a systematic campaign among the inhabitants of the district. The settlers were accused of the most fantastic crimes, such as distributing poisoned sweets among the village children.

One day, there appeared among us a commission consisting of a physician, the District Governor and the Chief Prosecutor. Our neighbours had accused us of murdering an Arab child, who had passed by innocently, and of burying him in the old cemetery near our settlement. They opened up the grave, and actually found the body of a year-old infant which the Arabs had buried there beforehand... So many and wild were the charges against us, that we stopped showing our faces in the nearby Arab villages and brought our essential supplies from afar, some from Haifa and some from Beisan... The summer was drawing to a close and we had to assure ourselves of a supply of water... Till then, we had been bringing up water in barrels from the

well below, near a flour mill belonging to a Christian-Arab from Afuleh. This was an expensive procedure, and we were always short of water. We therefore began digging trenches and laying down pipes to lead water from the well. But our neighbour, the mill owner, interfered with our plan. During the mid-day rest hour, he called out several dozen Arabs, and the trenches were soon filled in. We opened them up again, but again they were filled in. We realised that, as long as the Christian-Arab remained in the mill, we would get no water from the well, and that it would take a long time before the *Keren Kayemet* could buy the mill... We therefore dug a well on a low-lying piece of ground near the hill known as Fuleh. At a depth of four metres we struck water. It was neither plentiful nor good. It was surface water which had filtered down to that spot, and on the way it had been contaminated by refuse from the Arab villages. Still, we shored up the sides of the well with timber, laid pipes to the settlement site on the hill and that completed the job. From then on we had water...

The Christian-Arabs of Afuleh, and those who directed them from Haifa, continued to harass the settlers. As a result, the authorities began looking for immigrants who had not obtained a permit of permanent residence in the country (though generally such persons were not molested); those without the requisite papers were hurriedly sent off to other Jewish settlements, where they were not likely to be troubled.

Plans were under discussion with the central authorities for erecting proper buildings for the settlement. As winter approached, it was essential to put up some huts; but to this the local authorities refused to agree. 'One day,' Rabinowitz writes,

as we were working hard to finish building a hut and get the roof on (for the accepted procedure was that, once a structure had a roof on, it could not be demolished), a police officer appeared and demanded to see our building permit. We had no such document. We therefore welcomed the officer cordially and turned his visit into a social occasion, with the object of talking of this and that until the building was completed . . . My friend, Saadya Paz . . . and I accordingly pledged our guest in toast after toast until daybreak. When the sun rose over the Emek, the hut was standing there finished. Our 'friend' set the head of his noble steed towards Nazareth, carrying with him written testimony to the fact that he had found a hut with the roof already on it.

It was hard work clearing the land of brush and undergrowth for the winter ploughing, but even here the authorities found ways of obstructing. There was a hill consisting of manure that had been piled up in the course of generations. This the settlers began to level, spreading it over the desolate fields in order to revive and fructify them. But beneath the hill were the ruins of an old fortress, and every now and then a commission would come out from Nazareth to stop the digging, so as to ensure that no damage was done to them. Nevertheless, the work went on. During the summer, several newcomers from Galicia joined the settlement; the land was ploughed and fertilised as far as possible; and the farm's livestock was increased by the purchase of some mules.

Matters seemed to be improving, and there were good prospects that Merchavia would at last see real progress; but a new enemy struck at the settlers—disease. The district was malarial, and the hill of Fuleh

especially so: indeed, the local Arabs said that children could not grow up there. But, what with the pressing needs of the farm work and the constant difficulties made by the authorities, there was no possibility of combating the outbreak. The settlers began to succumb to malaria one after another. Rabinowitz writes:

We improvised a dispensary in one of the disused Arab houses, and a sick-bay from material on the hill. The nurse, our S., tended us. The ceiling of the room was of beams and rotten straw, and the dust came down from it, day and night, like fine rain. The floor was a mixture of earth and ancient manure. Mice strolled about like kittens among the beams and straw, and from the floor there emerged swarms of fleas . . .

If a patient remained with a high fever for an unduly long time, he was transferred to Haifa, where Dr. Auerbach had established a Jewish hospital. Malaria was taken for granted in the Jewish settlements of those days. But at Merchavia there were other diseases as well. Apart from eye and skin ailments, caused by the dust and living conditions in the old Arab village, there were dysentery and typhoid, contracted from the polluted water of the well. Typhoid, in particular, took a heavy toll of the settlers, and one of them, a lad of seventeen, died of it in hospital.

Meanwhile, the chain of misfortunes was broken for a brief spell by a more cheerful episode. Professor Ohgen, a German-Christian, who was an expert on Palestine and a great friend of the Jewish people, visited Merchavia in September, 1911, and joined the settlers in their festive meal on the eve of *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year. Despite the wretched Arab courtyard in which the meal was eaten, a holi-

day mood prevailed, and when afterwards the settlers formed a circle and danced the *hora* to *El yivneh Hagalil* ('The Lord will build Galilee'), the German danced and sang with them.

Of all their various requirements, the settlers did not anticipate that a cemetery would be one of the first. Among their number was a seventeen-year-old lad, named Yitzchak, the grandson of a veteran resident of the Old City of Jerusalem. Yitzchak, who had previously worked in the Achdut printing press (whence he was dubbed Yitzchak Achduti), had heard about the Arab attacks on Merchavia and had come to join the settlers in their double duties of farming and defence. He soon became very popular, and was unanimously elected a founder member of the co-operative. It was during harvest time that tragedy visited Merchavia. The settlers, who had at last come across the ruins of the old fortress, decided to use some of its stones for building. While they were digging they come across an excellently preserved marble step. Yitzchak, who was there, said he would like to have it as his tombstone. A few days later, Yitzchak insisted on being allowed to drive the first cartload of barley to the threshing-floor, though he was not used to managing the wayward mules. As the mules strained with all their might, Yitzchak lost his balance and was crushed to death beneath the wheels. Merchavia went into mourning just as it was about to celebrate a double festivity: the first threshing and the return of the imprisoned settlers. Sadly, they went out to choose a site for the cemetery and to dig a grave for their young comrade. Yitzchak's wish was fulfilled: he was given his marble tombstone.

In the summer of 1912, work began on the con-

struction of permanent buildings in Merchavia. Baerwald, an architect, who was in Haifa at the time in connection with the new Hebrew Technical Institute, visited Merchavia and planned the settlement. The buildings were arranged on the four sides of a square courtyard of over ten thousand square yards in area. Along the north side were the stables, cowsheds, dairy, and stores; to the east, living quarters; to the south, dining hall, other communal rooms and service rooms; to the west, workshops and sheds for the machines. Although a building permit was expected, the settlers could not await its arrival, and began work. As usual, the authorities interfered, and, as usual in such cases, the payment of baksheesh made it possible for the work to continue. Skilled Jewish building labourers were brought from Jerusalem and Safed to execute the project.

On the whole, the summer of 1912 brought some satisfaction to the settlers: there were no further losses of life, and the crops were fair. But disease made heavy inroads, and sick settlers had to be sent to Haifa or Zikhron Yaakov. In those days, Zikhron Yaakov was a medical centre, not only for Palestine, but also for the neighbouring countries. Dr. Hillel Yaffe was the most competent physician in the country, and patients came to him from afar for treatment, and even for operations. The doors of the little hospital he set up were always open to the Jewish agricultural workers, to whom Yaffe was a friend and adviser.

That year, the settlers laid out a vegetable garden, and the plants thrived. But they were attacked from an unexpected quarter. So desolate was the surrounding countryside, that the birds saw the green patch of Merchavia's vegetable garden from afar and, alight-

ing on the plants, would destroy in a few hours the work of many days. Various devices were tried to protect the vegetables, but it was a simple ruse that proved most effective: the settlers strewed bread-crumbs and scraps of food on the ground, and the birds preferring them, left the plants alone.

An interesting episode in Merchavia's early history was the arrival of several settlers from the British Isles.

In the Scottish city of Glasgow, a society of skilled workers had been formed, the members of which set themselves the aim of coming to Eretz Yisrael and helping to found the village based on Oppenheimer's principles. On learning that a beginning had been made, they sent out three families. One summer's day, they arrived at Merchavia, together with their womenfolk and children, some fifteen souls in all. We stood amazed at this unexpected event. Our settlement was not ready, from the point of view of security and health, to receive families with small children. However, we accepted the situation and found them quarters... and work. During their stay with us, we got to know these visitors and found them imbued with both Zionist and social consciousness. Their desire was strong and clearly defined, but their capacity to translate it into practice was very limited. They had come too soon. They thought everything had been built up... One of them, Sunderland by name, a truly intellectual type, but too weak physically to adapt himself to the difficult climate, went back after a short time. The other two families remained with us and began to accustom themselves to work and to suffering. Of these two families, one named Guttman, played a useful rôle in the development of the Emek.

As only 3,500 out of the 9,500 dunams of Merchavia were intended for the co-operative settlement, the Palestine Land Development Company decided to sell the remainder to private individuals. One day, a short, thin little man, wearing a long kaftan turned up. His name was Noah Zaborsky and he came from Russia, where he had kept an inn with the help of his wife, Yenteh-Leah. Deciding to till the soil of Eretz Yisrael, he had bought a plot at Merchavia and had come out on his own to see what things were like and gain experience in farming before returning to bring out his family. The settlers could not resist his urgent plea to be allowed to live and work with them, and he was accepted temporarily as a member of the co-operative. He worked with a will and soon became very popular. In the evenings he would gather the younger settlers together and sing traditional *Chassidic* songs with them. After working at Merchavia for a time and finding himself equal to the task, he went back to Europe and returned with his family and all their possessions. He put his whole heart into cultivating his land, and, together with his family, set up a model farmstead.

Wearing his long kaftan, with his red tarboosh¹ on his head, Reb Noah would stride behind the plough, his only son, little Shlomi, helping him. One day in the autumn of 1913, Shalom Ash visited Merchavia. Finding Noah ploughing in the field, he began talking to him. Later, I read his article, "The Aptitude for Eretz Yisrael". Noah explained to Shalom Ash that, great as were the obstacles and difficulties confronting the land worker, the Jew who truly yearned for our ancestral

¹ The tarboosh, or fez, was worn extensively by Jews in Palestine during the period of Turkish rule.

homeland and had a 'special aptitude for Eretz Yisrael' was assured of being able to overcome them all...

The outbreak of the First World War, and the heavy burden of taxation it brought, weighed down upon Noah. Determined to preserve his farm intact at all costs, he deprived himself of even essential requirements. In the summer of 1916, he fell ill with dysentery. His weakened body could not resist the disease, and on the eve of *Yom Kippur* the settlers buried him. 'Gone from us,' writes Rabinowitz, 'was the man who had sweetened our lives with his blithe spirit and had been for us a bubbling fountain of *joie de vivre*, faith and desire'. His stricken widow mastered her grief and took all the farm work upon herself in addition to her domestic tasks. But at times, when her soul was overcome by sorrow for the husband of her youth, who had passed away in so untimely a fashion, Leah would sit on a rock behind her house, gazing silently at the hill opposite, where, under a heap of stones, Noah lay buried.

A notable event in the life of Merchavia was a visit, in the spring of 1913, from Franz Oppenheimer, author of the co-operative plan of the settlement. He was given a social and enthusiastic reception by the settlers and thoroughly enjoyed his brief sojourn in their midst. Speaking to them after the festive meal they arranged in his honour, he warned them against trying to carry theoretical principles too far in face of realities. 'You are confronted', he said, 'with obstacles from within and surrounded by enemies from without. You must weigh your every action. If, to your faith, energy and devotion, you add the necessary caution, you will succeed.'

During his stay, Oppenheimer participated in the settlers' discussions and took a keen interest in their problems. The settlers, Rabinowitz writes, did everything to make him comfortable.

We fitted him up with sleeping quarters in a hut next to the stable on the hill. He felt quite comfortable, but one night his sleep was disturbed. Thieves from the surrounding area tried to make off with some sacks of corn from the farmyard, and at the sound of the watchman's gun, the entire settlement was on its feet . . .

It was beginning to look as if things were going better for Merchavia. The farm was beginning to thrive; the barley harvest was at hand, and there had been no recent trouble with the local Arabs. One day, however, they received a visit from Hafiz Pasha, a rich Arab landowner from Jenin, who oppressed the Arab peasantry in his district and had great influence over the Turkish government officials. For some unexplained reason, he suddenly conceived a hatred for Merchavia, and, following his visit, Arab villagers from the southern Emek began trespassing upon the fields with their animals and destroying the crops. All the settlers stood guard, and reinforcements were sent by *Hashomer*, and also from Daganian and Kinneret. But the fields were spread over a wide area, and it was impossible to guard them all at once, especially when the Arabs made armed raids at night. One night, Meir Chasanowitz, a *shomer*, was mortally wounded. He died after being operated on at the English hospital in Nazareth. A close friend of Rabinowitz, he had grown up in the Caucasus, and after coming to Eretz Yisrael, had devoted himself wholeheartedly to the affairs of *Hashomer*.

The defenders succeeded in discouraging further attacks and carried on with the harvest. But now a new threat developed: a plague of field-mice. The settlers worked feverishly to harvest and thresh the crops (they had a threshing machine) and store them before the mice could destroy them. Working day and night for two months, they succeeded in getting in the crops, and they began to look forward to a profit on their year's labour.

But our period of calm was not to last. One Friday night, as we were chatting among ourselves, I said to one of our comrades: 'Look, Gershon, I don't want to tempt the fates, but we've had peace and quiet all around for several weeks.' No sooner had I uttered the words, than a shot pierced the night, followed by another and another. We hurried outside, and found some Arabs from Zarin trying to seize the grain store. They had come up in swarms, together with their animals and carrying sacks. We stood between them and the grain store... The fight between us lasted till three in the morning, when they withdrew.

The 'help' the authorities sent in answer to the settlers' urgent plea arrived only next morning. The upshot of the incident was that the *shomrim* were summoned to appear in court at Jenin to answer a complaint by the Arabs of Zarin that they had attacked them and injured their oxen. But whenever a gendarme came to look for one of the *shomrim*, he never found him.

There were many more difficulties, among them cattle diseases, but the settlers succeeded in overcoming them. Nor was help lacking in time of need. For example, Rabinowitz records, the German colonies at Haifa, and at Waldheim and Bethlehem in the Emek,

admitted Merchavia as a fourth partner in their co-operative dairy, which marketed its milk in Haifa. Their members also gave the settlers of Merchavia sound and useful advice.

Some of them, especially the older ones among them, were distinguished in appearance and were even men of lofty spirit. They were the survivors of the original Templars, who had come to Palestine out of exalted religious ideals. I got to know some of them while convalescing on the Carmel after a severe attack of malaria. I heard from them about their sufferings during the early days of their colonies. I said to myself: What have we to complain about? We live in luxury compared to what the Templars went through in their early days...

It is indeed bitter to recall that the sons and grandsons of these friendly Germans became fanatical Nazis after the rise of Hitler and helped the Arabs in their anti-Jewish riots of 1936-39. Interned during the Second World War, they were subsequently sent back to Germany.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FIRST WORLD WAR : FROM 1914 TO 1916

THE FIRST World War put an end to almost exactly four centuries of Ottoman rule in Palestine. As the previous chapters have shown, the governors and officials who ruled the country in the Sultan's name had no regard for the welfare of its inhabitants. They were corrupt, venal and rapacious; the administration, both central and local, was inefficient; justice was a farce;

and no effort was made to establish public services or to maintain effective security. Arabs and Jews alike groaned under the iniquitous régime, which permitted taxes to be farmed out to local notables, and against which there was no redress. The Jews, being mostly foreign nationals, had some measure of protection from their consuls against the grosser abuses. But the Turkish officials were hostile to Jewish settlement and development, and did all they could to thwart the progress of the Zionist experiment, as we have seen from the numerous examples quoted in the preceding pages.

The years 1914-18 saw the culmination of the Yishuv's trials under the Ottoman yoke. Expulsions, banishment, summary executions, unjust accusations, extortionate taxation, forced military service and labour, and suppression of all outward Zionist activity, were among the vicissitudes it underwent during those five years. The passage of armies, requisitioning of property and severance from the outside world almost completely disrupted its economy. Added to all these were a disastrous locust plague in 1915 and other ravages of nature. Finally, when the end was in sight, Palestine became the scene of fighting, and for a time the front line ran across the country, dividing the Yishuv in two. At first the Jewish population displayed loyalty to the Ottoman regime and would have gladly taken part in the defence of Palestine. But the authorities showed not the least disposition to avail themselves of the goodwill that was theirs for the asking, with the result that the goodwill evaporated. Before the war was half over, the Yishuv was hoping and praying for the country's liberation from the intolerable yoke. No wonder that it looked forward

to the occupation of Palestine by the Allied forces, and welcomed the British troops, who entered the country at about the same time the Balfour Declaration was issued, as its deliverers.

During the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the war, Jewish settlement had begun to progress with more rapid strides, and the Yishuv had grown in numbers to an estimated 85,000. By the end of the war, the figure had dropped to an estimated 55,000, and the Yishuv itself was greatly impoverished. But it was this population, which, by grimly holding on, despite all efforts to dislodge it and maintaining the continuity of Zionist endeavour, provided the basis of the further development that was destined, thirty years later, to lead to the birth of the Jewish State.

This chapter and the next are mainly concerned with the vicissitudes and misfortunes which befell the Yishuv during the First World War, and also with the measures it adopted to reorganise its life in order to ensure survival. Another aspect of that period: the formation of Jewish fighting units which, under the British flag, helped to liberate Palestine from its hated rulers, is discussed later.

OTTOMAN CITIZENSHIP AND DEPORTATION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS

In October, 1914, Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, and it was then that the sufferings of the Yishuv began. Upon Turkey's becoming a belligerent, the policy was adopted of expelling all foreign nationals from Palestine. Since a large proportion of the Jewish population came under this category, the measure threatened to imperil the stability,

and indeed the very existence, of the Yishuv. A widespread campaign was therefore launched for Jews to become Ottoman subjects, so that they could remain in the country. This campaign, according to Yosef Eliahu Chelouche, who describes the events set down here, began with a message from the Turkish Chief Rabbi, Chayim Nachum Effendi¹. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who revived Hebrew as a modern spoken language², became an enthusiastic advocate of the idea, and wrote articles in his paper, *Hatzvi*, under the slogan, "Jews, become Ottomans." All the prominent figures in the Yishuv threw themselves into the campaign, believing it was in the Jewish interest. The organisational side of the work was entrusted to Chelouche and to Meir Dizengoff³. The *Kaimakam* (Governor) of Jaffa welcomed the plan for turning the Jews of foreign nationality into Ottoman subjects, and allowed the employment of temporary Jewish staff in the Municipality's offices to deal with the rush of applications within the time limit that had been set. Three months later, Chelouche writes,

an order was received from Istamboul that all Ottoman subjects between the ages of 18 and 60 were to be drafted into the army. Imagine our sorrow: after all our propaganda and efforts to get Jews to become Ottoman subjects, they were already required to leave their homes and families to go to the front. We considered what to do. According to the law, anyone becoming a naturalised Ottoman subject was exempt from military service for the first year and anyone not wishing to serve could purchase exemption . . . But a few days later, we

¹ Now the Chief Rabbi of Egypt.

² See Chapter V.

³ See Chapter XVII.

learned that all would have to serve: the Government would recognise no exceptions and refused to accept any payments for exemption. The whole of Jaffa was in a turmoil over this terrible decree. Many Jews were arrested in order to be sent to the army...

Chelouche and Dizengoff were kept constantly busy interceding with the authorities, and being disturbed at all hours of the day and night to answer enquiries from the local Commandant or the *Kaimakam*.

Then came the expected blow. Baha ed-Din, the District Governor of Jaffa and an inveterate foe of the Yishuv, received a telegram from Istamboul ordering him to deport all foreign nationals.

He did not summon the representatives of the Jewish community to consult them about the fate of the deportees. One fine day (the 17th December, 1914), at two in the afternoon, he sent out a large number of soldiers, who spread all over the streets of Jaffa and Tel Aviv and indiscriminately rounded up all Jews of foreign nationality, adults and children, and locked them up in the Armenian Monastery, near the Custom House. Many Jews appealed to Dizengoff and myself to intercede and prevent the people concerned from being placed aboard the Italian ship at anchor off Jaffa which was due to sail that night. We hurried to the *Kaimakam* and asked him the reason for his action. He replied, smiling: 'I have received an urgent order from Jamal Pasha to expel all foreign nationals immediately, and so I have given instructions for their arrest and deportation this evening.'

When they expostulated, he advised them to telegraph Jamal Pasha. But he purposely misled them, for, instead of giving them the address of Jamal Pa-

ages at their heads . . . Some were weeping from their injuries, others because they had become separated from their kith and kin . . . We reprimanded the sailors and drew near to the ship. There we found dozens of small boats crowded together . . . We climbed from one boat to another till we reached the gangway. Here we found that soldiers were taking all the deportees' money from them before allowing them on board. When they saw us, the soldiers grew ashamed and desisted. We went on board and complained to the captain and agent that only one gangway had been let down for 750 people. While we were talking we heard agonized cries from the boats . . . I turned an electric light onto the scene to lighten the darkness and saw . . . that the sailors were plundering the deportees' possessions and molesting the women . . .

I went down into one of the boats and was told that soldiers, not finding any money, had taken away the passengers' warm clothing and bed-clothes . . . An Arab sailor showed me the boat in which the stolen possessions had been placed . . . and I returned them to their owners.

Accompanied by an Arab sailor, an honest, well-spoken fellow, who was to bear witness to what was happening, Chelouche returned to the port to persuade the *Kaimakam* to stop the abuses and order more gangways to be let down. After a protracted search, he found the *Kaimakam* sitting in his carriage at the back of the *Seraya* (Government House), eating, and described to him what was taking place.

We told him of the sufferings of our fellow-Jews . . . and how most of them were still in the boats . . . I spoke feelingly, in the belief that he too would be moved, and issue one of his usual peremptory orders. But he listened coldly and went on eating

sha, Commander of the Fourth Army Corps, who had issued the order, he gave them that of another Jamal Pasha, Commander of the Eighth Corps, who was of inferior rank and knew nothing about the matter. Needless to say, their long and expensive telegram remained unanswered.

Meanwhile Chelouche and Dizengoff organised a public committee to help the unfortunate deportees by sending them their essential belongings, food, and lamps to light the darkness of the Monastery as evening fell. They also tried to unite the members of families, for, in the panic caused by the sudden arrests in the streets, parents had become separated from their children, and husbands from their wives. There were in all 750 deportees in the Monastery, and during the evening Turkish soldiers began searching them, one by one. From about fifteen of them they took all the money and other articles in their possession. When Chelouche remonstrated, he was told that the money was needed to pay the shipping agent for the deportees' passage. He, however, guaranteed, together with Dizengoff, to pay the required sum, and the confiscated money was given back; though, owing to the confusion, it could not be restored to its owners.

At the port, the *Kaimikam* and his officers were there to watch the embarkation. With his permission, Chelouche and Dizengoff rowed out to the ship in a special boat.⁴ As they approached the ship, they heard cries of distress.

We hastened to the spot and found that the sailors were maltreating the passengers and throwing pack-

⁴ Ships cannot dock at the quayside at Jaffa, but lie at anchor in the roadstead.

as if nothing had happened. I then understood that the whole thing had been engineered by him... as otherwise the sailors and soldiers would not have dared to act as they had through fear of the *Kaimakam* . . . Filled with despair, I said to him: 'If it is the Government's desire to torture the Jews who are not Ottoman subjects, better to cast them into the sea than to cause them such prolonged suffering.' At that he grew angry and told me I was mad to speak about the Government that way. 'Your Excellency,' I replied, 'how could any other sane person witness what I have during the past ten hours and not go mad? I am prepared to repeat all I have told you before a military tribunal.'

The result was that the *Kaimakam* ordered his Commissar to go to the ship and speed up the embarkation. But that order, too, would not have been obeyed if the Commissar had not acceded to Chelouche's request, as a friend, to execute it.

Meanwhile, Dizengoff, who had remained on board, reported that two more gangways had been let down, that the embarkation was proceeding rapidly, and that the ship would set sail that night. But a new tragedy had occurred: there was not room in the ship for all the deportees, and some would have to go back to Jaffa. Chelouche, who was by then tired out, arranged for someone else to watch the proceedings and stop the Turkish soldiers from committing any more abuses, and went home to sleep. But his rest was suddenly disturbed by a commotion in the street. It was caused by those who had not been taken on board the ship.

A heart--rending scene met my eyes: little children who had remained virtual orphans, since their parents had been exiled to Egypt, and parents, whose

children had remained on board in the confusion. The cries of these poor wretches ascended to the heavens . . .

Chelouche and his family took the children, who were piteously crying for their parents, into their house. He himself then went to Dizengoff and told him what had happened through Baha ed-Din's cold-blooded cruelty. They decided that one of them should immediately go to the American Consul in Jerusalem and ask him to telegraph to higher authority in order to lighten the deportees' sufferings.

OTTOMAN DESPOTS: JAMAL PASHA, BAH
ED-DIN AND HASAN BEK

When the Sultan declared war on the Allies, his province of Palestine was committed to the rule of a calculating and ruthless military governor, named Jamal Pasha. The country was turned into a military base, and the inhabitants groaned under a mounting burden of tribulations. The position in 1915 is described in some detail by Meir Dizengoff, who played a leading role in the affairs of the Yishuv during the war.

The first troops of the Fourth Army Corps, under the supreme command of Ahmad Jamal Pasha, entered the country in order to prepare their attack on the Suez Canal through the desert. In its outward appearance, internal arrangements, and attitude towards the local population, this army did not belie the opinion we had formed of the strength and quality of wretched Turkey . . . All the belligerent powers had given their armies some slogan under which to fight,—the liberation of oppressed peoples, self-determination, democratic equality, and so on. True or false, these slogans gave the soldier the illusion that he was a hero

fighting for justice, right and homeland all together. But the Turkish troops were like cattle led to the slaughter: they were dragged into battle without any sense of duty towards country or people. When one looked into the innocent eyes of a Turkish soldier, and saw him go about ragged, hungry, dirty, diseased and exposed like a dog to the elements, one could not help feeling sorry for him.

The Fourth Army Corps treated Palestine as if it were enemy territory. The military authorities requisitioned whatever they pleased: animals, building materials, machinery, money, and even ladies' garments. 'For instance,' Dizengoff writes,

they took some harvesting machines from my business premises. Months later, I found them lying, disused and rusted, near the railway line. In like manner, they uprooted trees, destroyed gardens and orchards that we had planted with such effort, and generally impoverished both townspeople and villagers.

Contact with the outside world was severed; trade came to a standstill; there was no employment; and starvation stared the population in the face. Instead of bringing in food from places like Syria and helping to reorganise economic life, the authorities stripped the country bare and oppressed its inhabitants.

They seized men indiscriminately for forced military labour, irrespective of their age, health or family responsibilities. By such actions the Turks made themselves hated by all sections of the population. The military authorities displayed especial severity towards the Jews. Those who had become Ottoman subjects, including those who had paid

for exemption from military service, were taken a year later into the Army or made to do forced labour, and were subjected to particularly brutal treatment.

Such treatment was due to a belief that the inhabitants of Palestine were the sworn enemies of Turkey, and that the Jews, who were suspected of wanting to rebel against the Sultan and to set up an independent Zionist State, were prepared to go over to the Allies in the hope of furthering their designs . . . It was on account of these suspicions that the commander of the Fourth Army Corps sent to Palestine his minions, chief of whom were Baha ed-Din, as *Kaimakam*, and Hasan Bek, as Military Commandant, of Jaffa.

Baha ed-Din was a man of unknown origin and past, and apparently was one of those men who succeed in rising to positions of eminence in time of war. He looked, according to Dizengoff, like a secret agent brought up in an atmosphere of espionage and intrigue. He was an expert in conducting searches, regarded everyone with suspicion, and had a gift for making himself thoroughly hated. Since he had no experience of administration, he handed over all matters within that sphere to the Commandant, Hasan Bek.

It seemed that Baha ed-Din had been appointed for no other purpose than to expose the mysteries of the Zionists in Palestine. Already in the times of [the Sultan] Abdul Hamid, Zionism had been suspected in Istambul of being a subversive movement, and the active Zionists were only able to exist in Palestine through the protection of their consuls. No wonder then that, with the ending of the Capitulations, the Supreme Command of the

Fourth Army Corps decided to root out this evil thing from the country that had been chosen as the base for the attack on Egypt. Hence Baha ed-Din's main task was to discover the criminals and hand them over to Jamal Pasha.

Nor was it hard to find ostensible offences; for the Jewish population, owing to the ineptitude of the Turkish Administration, was engaging in activities which, but for the open manner in which they were conducted, might indeed be regarded as 'subversive'. Keren Kayemet stamps were sold, Hebrew signs posted up, Hebrew schools founded, and Hebrew magistrates' courts established. The Tel Aviv Committee issued currency tokens, and the Jewish villages had their own watchmen, who had organised themselves into a kind of gendarmerie. All this, Baha ed-Din decided, must stop, and those responsible be brought to justice. He therefore ordered all the Hebrew signs to be removed and replaced by Turkish signs; the Keren Kayemet stamps must no longer be sold; the Jewish watchmen were disarmed (later, an order was issued that they must be replaced by Arabs); the Anglo-Palestine Co.—the Zionist bank—was closed down; and the Tel Aviv currency was prohibited. Infringement of these orders was on pain of death.

Dizengoff was brought before Baha ed-Din for interrogation about the Tel Aviv currency. On being questioned about the signatures on the notes, he replied that they had been issued by the Tel Aviv Committee, of which, he was Chairman, and that he therefore assumed full responsibility for them. For this he was committed for trial before a military tribunal.

In Tel Aviv, there began a wave of arrests and searches. The arrests were intended to produce the

ringleaders of the supposed revolt that was intended, and the searches, to uncover caches of arms and the requisite documentary evidence. Meanwhile, Hasan Bek, an ignorant, cruel and savage-looking scoundrel, began to oppress all the inhabitants, Arabs as well as Jews, with a heavy hand. He demanded arms from the Jews, and as soon as they met one demand, he asked for more. He asked for money for a supposed militia, in which, however, not a single Jew was included.

Suddenly, in the midst of the preparations for war, he was seized with a passion for beautifying the city. For that purpose he would take people from the streets and set them to work demolishing houses, mending roads, building a new mosque⁵, and planting avenues of trees. The work was carried on at a feverish pace, as if the entire outcome of the war depended on it . . . He and his minions plundered, confiscated, carried out arrests, and beat up people right and left, making the town and the surrounding area desolate. It was forbidden to kindle a light in the houses at night, lest it be used as a signal to the warships which sailed along the coast of Jaffa from time to time. Hasan Bek plunged the town in darkness by night and in fear by day . . .

At this stage, Baha ed-Din and Hasan Bek decided that the Jews had completed their preparations for launching a general rebellion, and they even compiled a list of the members of the Jewish government-to-be. They drew up long registers of men suspected of actively organising the rebellion and set detectives to

⁵ The Hasan Bek Mosque, as it is still called, overlooks some of the main streets of Tel Aviv. During the fighting in the first few months of 1948 (before the Jewish occupation of Jaffa), it was used as a sniping post by the Arabs.

watch them. Thus Jamal Pasha was kept fully informed of what was supposed to be going on. A stop had to be put to it.

There was insufficient proof to bring all the suspects before a military tribunal (apparently the Germans prevented this from being done), but it was dangerous to leave them where they were. Jamal Pasha therefore decided to send them, administratively, to some remote spot in Asia Minor until their crimes were proved. One day, therefore, thirty-two of the proscribed suspects were summoned to the Fourth Army Corps Headquarters in Jerusalem. This was the first meeting between the representatives of the Palestine community and the man in whose hands lay the fate of the entire Yishuv...

The name of Jamal Pasha had already struck terror into the hearts of the population with his stern trials. Nor was his reputation for cruelty groundless, for he himself had said: 'A commander has no heart'. As regards Zionism, his attitude could be gauged by the men he had sent to do his bidding. It was with trepidation, therefore, that Dizengoff and his fellow-leaders of the Yishuv contemplated the coming interview with the man who had not long before hanged a number of Christian notables in Syria. The Jews from Tel Aviv boarded a train at Jaffa, where they were placed in a special carriage under an armed guard. At Ramleh they stopped and were joined by the leading members of the Jewish settlements in the district. No one knew what offence they were being charged with, but it was enough in itself that they were guilty of being Zionists. As the train went on its way, they held a meeting and resolved that, if asked whether they were Zionists, they would proudly ans-

wer in the affirmative. Although they realised the seriousness of their predicament, the decision put heart into them. Someone produced a bottle of brandy, and they all drank a toast to one another and to the country they loved.

On arrival in Jerusalem, they were met by an armed escort to take them to the prison, where they were to wait until they were summoned before Jamal Pasha in the afternoon. But, through the intervention of Albert Antebi, a leading member of the Jerusalem community, who was also due to appear before the Turkish commander, the police officer allowed them to repair to a hotel. At four o'clock they were at Jamal Pasha's headquarters.

A quarter of an hour later, Jamal Pasha appeared, accompanied by his adjutants and officials. Before us stood a medium-sized man with broad shoulders and eyes that showed energy and determination. His resolute and angry expression betokened strong will-power, and, to judge from his measured movement, he apparently knew how to master his emotions. For several minutes he paced up and down before the two rows of 'accused', looking at us intently as he passed. Finally, turning to those at the end of the row, he asked me in French: 'What is your name?' 'Dizengoff, Your Excellency,' I replied. He also asked Antebi his name.

'In ten days' time,' he said, 'you will leave here and be banished to Ankara or Sivas.' No one uttered a word. 'Do you understand?' 'Yes, Your Excellency,' I replied, 'we understand very well.' That ended the proceedings. Jamal Pasha waited another few moments, in case anyone should venture to ask permission to say something, but we all kept quiet. He then turned on his heel and left, and we went back to the hotel.

Afterwards they learned that Jamal Pasha had expected to be asked what the reason for the order was, and was prepared to read out the charge, accusing them of being Zionists and rebels. He had also expected to hear pleas for clemency, in which case he would have displayed his well-known relentlessness. But the silence he encountered evidently astonished him greatly.

On discussing the matter they found a number of points unclear. Were they to be banished alone or with their families? For how long were they to remain in exile? How were they and their families to exist? They therefore decided to send a deputation of two to Jamal Pasha to ask him about those matters, and to try and get him to mitigate the severity of his sentence if possible. Jamal Pasha agreed to receive one representative that evening. The group thereupon elected Dizengoff and Antebi as their representatives, leaving it to them to decide who was to go and speak to the commander. Dizengoff persuaded Antebi to undertake the task since, as his family had been Ottoman subjects for three generations, Jamal Pasha would be more disposed to believe him.

At first, Jamal Pasha angrily denounced the Zionists as rebels and foes of Turkey. But Antebi, by means of tact, humour and adroit argument, succeeded in turning away his wrath and convincing him of the Yishuv's loyalty and of the harmless nature of Zionist aspirations. On being asked what he truly thought of the men who had been brought there that afternoon, he explained that they were all loyal, but that some had perhaps made mistakes through not receiving adequate instructions and not having been informed of the Ottoman Government's true intentions. Some

of them, himself and Dizengoff included, deserved the punishment imposed, to serve as an example; but the great majority should be pardoned. Jamal Pasha then sent for Baha ed-Din, who had been waiting in the anteroom with Dizengoff and asked for the file of the case. Meanwhile, Antebi went to consult Dizengoff about the list of people who were to undergo 'punishment', and on his return Jamal Pasha tore up the entire file. The result was that Antebi was charged to draw up, with Baha ed-Din, a list of fifteen 'true culprits', who were to be sent to Tiberias for a fortnight a week or two later. In the meantime, all the arrested men were allowed to go home.

Some time later, Dizengoff and Antebi went to call on Jamal Pasha. He outlined to them a plan for promoting Zionist development in Palestine after the war. Dizengoff writes:

Jamal Pasha became the friend of the Jews. Baha ed-Din was transferred from the country, and the attitude of the authorities took a turn for the better. The Commander visited Tel Aviv and its institutions and paid several visits to Jewish settlements, expressing admiration of Jewish efforts to revive the land. At Rishon Letzion, at Antebi's suggestion, he agreed to make a gift of 20,000 dunams of Government-owned sand dunes, on condition that the settlers of Rishon afforested them . . .

Thus, with the aid of the best men among us, we adapted ourselves to the situation and to the requirements of the times, and, despite the ravages of the locusts, requisitioning for war-time purposes, and the depredations of the army, we contrived to work with our own resources and in an autonomous manner. In this way we succeeded in maintaining our position despite the difficulties that beset us

daily, until the tragedy of the exile from Tel Aviv and Jaffa, which opened up a chapter of misfortunes such as we had not anticipated.

But the change in Jamal Pasha's attitude was not destined to last, for he was to bring upon the Yishuv fresh miseries and hardships.

FORCED LABOUR SERVICE

The following is an account, by Yitzchak Siryon, of the hardships undergone by the Yishuv as a result of forced labour during the war years from 1915 onwards.

Upon Turkey's declaration of war, ships stopped calling at the ports of Palestine, and the prices of essential commodities began to soar. The military authorities began imposing taxes, which grew heavier from day to day, and requisitioned all the horses and mules, together with their owners. As the war dragged on, the Yishuv became greatly impoverished, and it was ravaged by hunger and disease.

The young men of 18 to 25 were taken for active military service and were unable to buy their exemption, in accordance with the law. Men above the age of 45 were able to buy their exemption for a while on payment of considerable sums. But the money was not available, for hunger caused great privations, and assistance was not forthcoming. Many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem literally died of hunger and poverty after selling all their possessions: furniture, clothing, books and household utensils, which they had to dispose of for trifling sums, since there were no purchasers. Weak and enfeebled men, unsuitable for army service, were taken by the Government for public works, such as road repairs and street-cleaning. Policemen and overseers were put in charge of them and made

their lives a misery. They were given no food, or at best one small wretched loaf of bread a day. People therefore made every possible effort to obtain the requisite sums for their exemption... Those who did not succeed worked until their strength left them completely. But here, too, our unfortunate brethren who worked at street-cleaning were able to resort to the well tried remedy of *baksheesh*. The members of the street-cleaning brigade, who were known as *amaliyeh* (labour corps), had to sleep in a special barracks. In Jerusalem, this was the former Government house, an old, dilapidated building where they slept on the floor on mats.

Many escaped from Jerusalem to Jaffa and the settlements, especially to Petach Tikva. These people, who were known as *ferrarin* (deserters), were well looked after there by the leaders of the Yishuv and given accommodation and food.

Jamal Pasha visited the country from time to time and imposed harsh decrees upon its inhabitants. On learning of the large number of desertions, he mobilised all the military police and gendarmerie in Palestine to seek out the *ferrarin* and bring them before him. Numbers of them—Muslims, Christians and Jews—were caught. Jamal ordered three of them, one from each community, to be hanged. His order was carried out promptly, and they were hanged the day after they were caught. The other *ferrarin* who were caught were sentenced to severe military penalties. The Jew who was caught (and hanged) was not even a *ferrar*. He had been working as a military tailor at an army camp at Beersheba. His commander had sent him to Jerusalem to procure some materials needed for his trade, but had not furnished him with any pass or document. The man was caught while on his

way to Jerusalem. He was given no opportunity to speak in his own defence and exonerate himself, but was immediately sentenced to death and executed the next day. When the United Committee learned, at night, that he had been sentenced to death, several members met and consulted how to save him, but they realised that there was no possibility. The man was the only son of his widowed mother. She went to the Pasha's palace to plead for her son's life, but they would not let her in or even accept the letter she had written. After he was hanged, they handed over his body to her, and it was buried on the Mount of Olives.

THE LOCUST PLAGUE

By the outbreak of the war, Moshe Smilansky, whose name appears so frequently in these pages, was an old-established settler at Rechovot, where he engaged mainly in citrus growing. His account of the locust plague, which ravaged the country in 1916, is dramatic. It was a hot, choking *khamsin* day on the 10th March, he writes. He was working in his grove in the afternoon, when a gust of hot wind carried with it some strange flying creatures. The Arab labourers soon identified them, with alarm, as locusts. As he watched, the numbers of locusts increased, until they were flying in a low dense cloud towards the north-east, against the wind. Sometimes the wind checked their progress momentarily, but on they came. Then some began to settle on the trees.

I stood and watched this sudden assault with a certain degree of equanimity. My mind had not yet grasped the immense import of this terrible incursion. For the moment I was preoccupied only with its outward appearance.

By evening the swarm had come to an end and had settled on the orange trees, vines, almonds and other plants on the southern and western sides of Rechovot. The settlers gathered in the main street to discuss the situation. Some tried to console themselves that the damage would be slight, but Yisrael Aharoni⁶ warned that the real danger would come after the newly-hatched locusts had appeared. Contradictory opinions were expressed—for no one had any previous experience of a locust plague—and ineffectual suggestions for active measures alternated with expressions of wishful thinking that somehow the swarm would be blown away by the wind or mysteriously destroyed.

Some measure of comfort was derived from the expert opinion of a visitor, a farmer from Argentina. That was a tiny swarm, he said, compared to those in his country, and in three days it was sure to fly away. The zoologist, however, maintained that the situation would become grave when the eggs hatched, and advised active measures to destroy the pest. But how to do that, no one knew.

Next morning, Smilansky went out to his grove, hoping against hope that the plague had disappeared overnight. At first glance it looked as if his hopes were justified; but on closer examination he saw that the locusts had covered the trees like a mantle, and that the higher branches had turned yellow. In the wheat-fields, on the slopes below, there was an unaccustomed rustling: all the ears of wheat were covered with locusts. As the sun rose higher, numbers of the locusts flew into the air; but the illusion that they were tak-

⁶ An authority on zoology in the ancient Hebrew sources; he later became a Lecturer at the Hebrew University.

ing wing again was quickly dispelled, for they soon descended once more. Then, at nine o'clock, a new swarm began to appear from the south. Part of it alighted on the ground.

From the vineyards came the sound of tins being banged. It seemed futile to try and do anything against the myriads of insects, yet Smilansky felt he could not stand by idly and, gathering some tins, called to his labourers to follow him and take up arms against the enemy. But as soon as they had passed down a row of trees, the locusts were back again in increased numbers. After an hour of useless toil, he sent his labourers back to their work; but they could do nothing, for as soon as they went up to a tree, the locusts flew into their faces. Meanwhile, the vine-growers, despairing of their efforts, returned to the settlement, each with an alarming tale of woe. Again they discussed what was to be done, and the zoologist advised destroying the females, which were the greatest source of danger. This suggestion was turned down, with humorous cynicism, as 'impracticable.'

Next day came fresh swarms of locusts, and the day after, still more. The first arrivals were now mating, and the entire neighbourhood was full with the noise of their humming. And now news was coming in from other parts: Gedera and Ekron had been attacked before Rechovot, and Rishon Letzion and Petach Tikva followed.

For three days in succession the locusts swarmed. On the fourth day, the air and the sky cleared. No new ones came. But the first arrivals covered the land. Wherever one trod, one stepped on locusts. . . . Wherever one stood, one heard their humming. . . . If one closed one's eyes, one saw nothing but yel-

low, and even if one stopped up one's ears, one heard the fearful sound . . .

The day after the locusts stopped coming, a vigorous course of action was decided upon. Each farmer would exterminate the locusts on his own land, and an 'Anti-locust Committee' was formed to carry on the fight in the settlement's public places and on its borders, and to provide the farmers with guidance. Smilansky considered what to do. Even if he performed the virtually impossible and destroyed the locusts in his orange grove, with its three thousand trees, how would he prevent an incursion by the insects from his neighbours' land and from the surrounding countryside? Nevertheless, he assembled ten Arab women and children, gave them tins, and went out into the grove with them. All day they banged and shouted, frightening away the locusts, which flew off and settled on the ground outside the grove. This gave Smilansky a sense of achievement. But on his return to the settlement in the evening, he was greeted with the dreaded news that the first clusters of eggs had been found. Next morning he found some eggs on his own land; and even though there was hope that not many would be laid under the shade of his trees, the thought of the millions that must be hatching in the open countryside around appalled him.

Smilansky and the other settlers gave up their Sisyphean task. Meanwhile, the locusts continued to eat and to lay eggs. They ate little in the almond orchards and orange groves, but they consumed most of the vegetables and destroyed whole sections of the vineyards. Smilansky found a part of a vineyard utterly ruined: not a leaf remained, and the locusts had gone on in search of food, leaving only a few stragglers be-

hind. The owner, accompanied by two Arab boys, was running along the rows of bare vines, beating savagely at the remnants of the locusts. When Smilansky asked him why he was expending his strength in vain, he replied: 'Look what they've done! They've destroyed the vines! At least there's the satisfaction of vengeance.' Then he described how he and his helpers had poured boiling water over the locusts, killing them by the thousand. In another vineyard, the owner, a young man, was beating a tin with all his might, some dozen Arab women were doing likewise. It was about the tenth time they had repeated the same performance that day. Almost the entire vineyard had been destroyed; nevertheless the young man had a look of triumph on his begrimed face.

On the twelfth day the locusts disappeared, and for a while the settlers experienced a sense of relief. But it was only temporary, for they knew that the eggs were hatching, not only in Rechovot, but in all the country around. No one knew how great the unseen threat would be, or how to combat it. Their anxiety was that of a man who has been bitten by a dog and is waiting for four days to pass in order to know whether he will live or die.

On the advice of those with experience, the settlers began ploughing their land to expose the clusters of eggs to the sun, so as to prevent them from hatching, and to destroy them generally. Three times they ploughed, working feverishly, their task being rendered more difficult by the absence of many of their animals, which had been seized by the army. Where the plough did not reach, they dug with hoes. They soon became experts in detecting the presence of the eggs (for the female locust buries them in the ground

and levels the surface above the spot; but she leaves tell-tale marks near by which are intended to deceive). At the same time, they began to prepare for the fight against the larvae, which were about to emerge, by digging trenches round the settlement and round every vineyard and grove. Sprayers were obtained and solutions of lye, lysol and arsenic prepared. Various suggestions were made as to what concentrations would be effective. Smilansky writes:

We followed all suggestions, and also the dictates of our own common sense. We did everything possible, and expended the remainder of our money and strength. But, throughout, one bitter thought gnawed at us constantly: what could we do amidst all the desolation around us? For in hundreds of Arab villages no ploughing had been done, and only in a few had eggs been gathered in a desultory fashion. There were, too, all the fields where the bedouin encamped; and the hills had remained strongholds of the locusts... How could the narrow strip of Jewish settlements hold out against the entire surrounding area?...

It was the 2nd April, twenty-three days after the first locusts had descended and twelve since their departure. Smilansky and his labourers were working in his almond orchard, some way off from the settlement, digging trenches to arrest the path of the larvae, and destroying the eggs wherever they found them. Suddenly one of the labourers pointed skywards: a vast cloud of locusts was passing overhead. It travelled on its way northwards in an unending stream. Then the locusts began to descend, as if they could no longer keep in the air. More swarms followed. Soon the entire area was covered once again in a thick carpet of humming insects, which began mating. Whatever vege-

tables had been left by the previous swarms were now instantly devoured by the latest arrivals: they even ate the stalks of the wheat. This time the locusts remained for ten days, but after their initial hunger they did not eat much, confining themselves to mating and laying eggs. Then followed a repetition of the former procedure of turning the soil and seeking out and destroying the eggs. But before the task was completed—it was on the last day of Passover—the grubs from the eggs laid by the first swarms began to emerge. As they came out of the clusters of eggs, they were white, but as the sun warmed them they became, as Smilansky put it, 'as black as devils'.

The grubs were soon emerging in force. The expedients that had been devised were tried out. The solution of lye had no effect whatever, and though the lysol seemed more promising at first, it proved no more effective. Again there were anxious consultations, and various remedies—some of them far-fetched and ridiculous—were proposed. Nevertheless, the settlers went to work, grimly determined to fight the pest. They dug trenches, waved black cloths at the grubs to frighten them and make them jump in, and then filled the trenches.

The entire settlement took up arms: farmers, workers and artisans. Men, women, children, and even the school-teachers and their pupils, joined in to help. Each farmer worked on his own farm. The Anti-locust Committee and its workers split up into four groups, to cover all the boundaries of the settlement.

The grubs were now penetrating everywhere. The settlement worked as it had never worked before in all its fifteen years' existence.

It was not work: it was war. From before dawn till dusk, farmers and labourers worked without thinking about time or wages. Workers were called in from all around,—Arab men, women and children from the villages. Yemenite and Urphali Jews, both men and women, were summoned from the towns. Everywhere . . . groups of people could be seen standing around the patches of grubs, waving black clothes at them and driving them into the trenches . . .

But even where it seemed that the work had been done most thoroughly, new grubs appeared, covering acres upon acres. Meanwhile their colour was changing to grey, and they began climbing the trees, which they stripped bare of fruit and leaves in a twinkling. The settlers and their helpers intensified their efforts still further, straining every fibre in their bodies. If they closed their eyes at night, they saw patches of tiny black squirming insects; and when they slept they would awake in a sweat from nightmare encounters with the dreaded scourge.

For two solid weeks they worked, and at the end of that time they had destroyed all the grubs in the fields, orchards, and vineyards of Rechovot, and also on its boundaries. The first onslaught of the enemy had been repulsed, and they sat back for a brief respite. But they could not relax for long: they knew that there were two more onslaughts to be met—the larvae of the second wave of locusts, and the hoppers and grown locusts from the surrounding area, where the larvae had not been destroyed.

On the 29th April, the larvae from the second wave of locusts began to emerge, and in places they were much more numerous than the previous time. Again

the call went out for help; but this time the response was less good, for other settlements, too, were appealing for additional workers, especially Petach Tikva, which had been very badly hit. The people of Rechovot worked frantically to destroy the larvae, and as they were in the midst of the fight, the hoppers made their appearance. The inhabitants of the surrounding villages had disregarded the strict instructions issued by the authorities and had destroyed only an insignificant proportion of the larvae. Now the larvae had grown into hoppers, which were moving north-west in increasing streams, consuming everything in their path. The Arab *fellahin* were short-handed, with so many of their number in army service; they were busily engaged in harvesting what remained of their wheat before it was destroyed, and they bribed the inspectors, sent to ensure that they obeyed instructions, to gain exemption from working. Moreover, the soldiers sent to help the villagers also neglected their task: they were tired out from long desert marches and weakened by hunger.

The hoppers spread all over the fields of the *fellahin*. Not finding any food in their desolate fields, they streamed in their masses towards the Jewish settlements, which were full of greenery and trees... They came in great armies from all sides. The yellowish hoppers were in the lead, and with them came grubs from the second invasion of locusts, the tiny black and gray insects jumping alongside their elder brothers... A sea of destroyers. Behind them, everything was consumed, a veritable wilderness; before them lay a paradise...

Despite the hopelessness of the attempt, the settlers worked, of their own accord, in the surrounding fields

to combat the incursion of hoppers. They worked in groups of ten, about a hundred in all. The members of the Anti-locust Committee, hoarse with shouting and shadows of their former selves, were in charge of the workers, or rode about the countryside to spy out the enemy's movements.

The first heavy wave of hoppers came up from the coast to within three kilometres of the settlement's boundaries. It was the 1st May, a Saturday.

Word was given to get to work, and the entire settlement turned out. It was the first Sabbath we had profaned with work since we had come to the country. At the very outset of the campaign against the locusts, the young men had urged that work should be permitted on the Sabbath for its duration. The older men had objected . . . But on this Sabbath work was permitted even without the consent of the community and rabbi . . . All day we worked on the village lands of Qubeita. The villagers of Zarnuqa, and also some soldiers encamped near us, came to our help. That day we halted the enemy's progress, and all the following week we destroyed him. On the 2nd May, a third wave of locusts descended upon us. But they were few, and touched only part of our vineyards. They no longer frightened us: what could they do that the first and second waves had not done?

Another week, another Sabbath profaned by work, and news was received that no further armies of hoppers were to be seen. The tidings were cheerful indeed, but the fight was not quite over yet. There still remained the hoppers from the more distant villages, as many as ten and twenty kilometres away, which attacked Rechovot in search of food. They shared the same fate as their predecessors. The locusts were

destroyed at last, but the damage they had done was enormous, as Smilansky's description shows.

It was dawn. The sun had not yet risen. I stood in my orange grove, leaning against the fence and contemplating the frightful devastation. I could not turn my eyes away from the terrible scene. The trees stood there like skeletons . . .

Suddenly I was aroused by an Arab speaking to me: 'Don't worry, *Khawaja*, God will return it to you twofold.' I awoke with a start from my reverie and looked towards the road. It was an Arab from Ramleh . . . He was astride a donkey with an empty fig-box on either side. He had a good-natured face, and both his gaze and his voice were soft . . .

'*Khawaja*, don't worry. You see me, with my donkey and empty boxes? I started out with these twenty years ago. I already had olive trees worth two hundred pounds and apricots worth thirty pounds. The locusts ate them all. All I have left from my labours is what you see . . . Don't worry, man; God will return it twofold.'

The Arab's voice was so soft, so full of sympathy; I had never heard an Arab speak to a Jew in such a voice. My heart grew soft, my eyes filled with tears. 'Where are you going to?' The Arab looked at me in astonishment, then at his donkey and empty boxes. He seemed to ask himself the same question . . . Was there anything to buy in the villages after the locusts? . . . Yet what was there for him to do but go to the villages, and buy and sell? He was starting all over again. He urged on his donkey and went his way . . .

I, too, returned to my work. I called the labourers, and we began digging shallow pits around the trees, and channels to irrigate them. Before the last of the grown locusts had gone, the grove was already well watered.

The agricultural experts . . . decided that cultivation and irrigation should not begin until the last of the locusts were out of the country. I could not refrain from working any longer . . . And I was successful: I was the first to see his grove covered in green again . . . Two months later, the land, which had become a desolate wilderness, was a paradise once more. Sun, water and labour had restored it to its former glory.

AN AMERICAN FRIEND

Virtually the only help for the Yishuv during the difficult days of the war came from the United States of America, which did not become a belligerent till 1917. But for the help received from America, the plight of the Jews of Palestine would undoubtedly have been even more serious. After the war was over, too, American aid was instrumental in enabling the Yishuv to recover from its economic effects. The part played by America, and especially by its official representative in Jerusalem, is described by David Yellin (son of Yehoshua Yellin), the Hebrew scholar who later became a Professor at the Hebrew University.

Dr. Otis Alan Glazebrook, who came to Jerusalem in April, 1914, was an old man. He had been a minister of religion in the quiet town of Princeton, at whose University his old friend Woodrow Wilson had been a professor. When Wilson became President of the United States, he indulged Glazebrook's lifelong wish to live in the Holy Land by sending him to Jerusalem as U.S. Consul. Distinguished and venerable in appearance, Glazebrook was young in spirit, full of energy, and always ready to do a friendly service for the Jews.

In Yellin's estimation, the Yishuv was saved from complete ruin by the help rendered by America, by means of

the extraordinarily generous assistance rendered by the American Jews; by the fact that the U.S. Ambassador in Constantinople was Henry Morgenthau, a Jew; and by the fact that such a truly righteous man as Glazebrook was U.S. Consul in Palestine. He was the man who, by means of his intervention and influence, saved several of our most energetic workers from the gallows that awaited them at the beginning of the war. But his main and most consistent activity was concerned with the Yishuv's economic life. The American Consulate in those days became a large financial organisation—one of the largest banks—and its clients were almost entirely Jews.

The Zionist Emergency Committee, and other committees large and small, as well as individuals in the U.S.A., sent their contributions through the American Consulate. So did the committee formed in neutral countries for the relief of the Jews of Palestine. Henry Morgenthau obtained special permission from the Ottoman Government to send these moneys to Palestine in the form of gold. The usual procedure was that gold had to be exchanged in Istamboul for Turkish paper money, which was worth only a sixth of its value. Apart from the money transmitted from America, no gold currency was to be seen, since the existing gold coins found their way to the corn dealers in Transjordan and the Hauran, or to the bedouin and *fellahin* who sold wheat and other produce, for they had no confidence in the paper money. They buried the gold for the duration of the war, out of fear that they might be forced to exchange it for notes.

Whenever a consignment of gold arrived at Jaffa, the Consul would go down there and bring it back to Jerusalem in iron boxes, which he stored in his study. With genuine delight he would himself count out the thousands of coins intended for the maintenance of the entire Yishuv and hand them over to the Jewish Committee. But, apart from this, he had the difficult task of allocating the money among the different sections of the Jewish community and adjudicating their rival claims. (The numerous religious communities, especially in Jerusalem, which were known as *kollelim*, existed on *chaluka*—contributions from abroad.)

The Consulate in those days became a meeting-place for Jews. *Ashkenazi* rabbis, with their black hats, *Sepharadi chachamim*, with their tarbooshes and turbans, and bare-headed modern Jews—all gathered there to press their claims and to argue with one another until they reached a compromise. When matters did not progress, he had to use the full weight of his official powers and all his personal charm to get the parties to agree . . .

When a shipload of food was sent by the American Jews to their brethren in Palestine, the Muslims and Christians cast covetous eyes upon it. The decision was therefore taken that they, too, should share in it. Since it was impossible to obtain reliable statistics concerning their numbers and needs, their share was fixed at a little under half.

Here all the Consul's influence had to be wielded with the other communities, whose appetite had grown in the meantime . . .

Every morning, before beginning work, Glazebrook would read two chapters of the Bible, which served

him 'with spiritual and moral support for the whole day.' He often quoted the words of the prophets he had read that morning when speaking at a Jewish meeting.

For all his mild disposition, the venerable Consul was fearless. Even Jamal Pasha's cruelty had no terrors for him. Despite all the despot's attempts and intimidations to make him hand over the archives of the consulates of enemy countries entrusted to his care, he would not allow him to read one word of them. Ben-Yehuda, too, committed the thousands of cards for his dictionary to Glazebrook's care before leaving for America at the beginning of the war. They were kept in iron strong-boxes, and they remained intact until Ben-Yehuda's return to Jerusalem after the war.

Glazebrook was forced to leave Jerusalem after his country declared war on Turkey, but early in 1919 he returned to his post. Yellin concludes:

He still lived to see the vindication of his ardent faith in the future of our people,—a faith he had expressed more than once in the darkest days.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FIRST WORLD WAR: FROM 1916 TO 1918

NEW SETTLEMENTS

WITH THE outbreak of the war, and the difficult conditions that prevailed as a result of the attitude taken by the authorities, the Zionist Organisation had to halt its work of agricultural settlement, which had expanded considerably in the preceding few years. Ne-

vertheless, despite the increasing nature of the Yishuv's hardships as the war progressed, four new Jewish villages were founded, all of them in Upper Galilee. They were destined before long to play an important part in the annals of the Yishuv, and, indeed, to write a heroic page in the epic of Jewish self-defence. How Kfar Giladi, one of the four new villages, came into being is described by Alexander Zeid, a founder member of the *Hashomer* organisation.¹

The question had arisen whether Tel Adashim (about half-way between Afuleh and Nazareth, in the Emek), where some members of *Hashomer* were working, should be turned into a permanent *Hashomer* village. Zeid supported Yisrael Giladi, who was negotiating with Chayim Kalvarissky, the ICA (Jewish Colonisation Association) official responsible for the Galilee district, with a view to founding a settlement near Metulla in the northernmost part of Upper Galilee. Eventually, the opponents of the scheme, who still had their hearts set on one day going into the wilds of the Hauran, were won over. Giladi and Schneerson, another veteran member of *Hashomer*, went out to find a suitable site, and decided upon the land of Khamra, a short distance to the south of Metulla. When Zeid joined them, he confirmed the decision, and all three went to see Kalvarissky at Rosh Pina. They outlined the plan of their settlement to him, and he was easily persuaded to approve it. As there were a number of houses left abandoned at Metulla, it was decided that, for the time being, four of them should be used to accommodate the settlers' families, while the menfolk worked at Khamra.

¹ See Chapter XX.

The budget for the enterprise was to be provided, in equal proportion, by ICA, the Workers' Fund and the Zionist Executive. Shortly before he left the country by order of the Turkish authorities, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, Director of the Zionist Organisation's Settlement Department, visited Merchavia. Zeid and Giladi went to see him there, and, Zeid writes,

Ruppin was very angry. How could anyone talk of founding a new settlement in war time and in a state of emergency? We replied that the plan was not a new one: it had been in existence for some time, and the war ought not to hold it up. Ruppin's anger died down. He listened to the details of the plan, and ended by treating our proposal seriously.

Finally, the three bodies concerned granted a sum of money to settle the first four families. The settlers brought their livestock, implements and household utensils with them. But, as the sum received was insufficient for their maintenance, they undertook to watch over the village and fields of Metulla for a monthly payment. Zeid continues:

Giladi appealed to several workers' groups, urging them to settle at Ayelet Hashachar and Machanayim. The workers answered his call and began tilling the soil, first as hired labourers, and then as their own masters. The *kvutza* of Tel Chai was also founded at that time... The Yishuv in those days did not understand the meaning of this daring venture, and thought it was an impulsive action to found new settlements during war time. But Giladi had one reply for everyone: 'We do not know what the outcome of the war will be, or what will be the attitude displayed towards our settlement work by the new rulers of the country after the war. In the meantime we have to create

facts.' Now we all realise how wise his approach was, and how great was the importance attaching to the few settlements we founded in Upper Galilee in those days. But for those settlements, there is no doubt that the frontier of Palestine would have been fixed south of Tel Chai, and that the whole of that extensive area would have come under the French Mandate.

Zeid pays tribute to Kalvarissky, who alone of the ICA managers remained in the country at that time (the rest had gone to France).

He supported us and the settlers of Gesher. He used constantly to say to us: 'Lads, don't miss the opportunity! Plough up as much as you can, then the ICA officials won't be able to drive you off this land. Although they oppose the *kvutzot* and frown upon that experiment in settlement, they cannot by any means remove you from the soil you are tilling. At most they will dismiss me for my sin in helping you, but they won't touch you.'

At first the settlers lived at Metulla, and went out to Khamra every day to work, a distance of two hours' walk. They used to set out before dawn and return after dusk, and saw their children only on Saturdays and rainy days, when they could not work.

Food and supplies were shared by us in common, but each family lived separately, as we did not have a house large enough to accommodate us all. The unmarried men had a communal kitchen, and one of the women cooked for them. Boots were also shared. At night the watchmen wore them and tramped in the mud; in the morning they took them off and handed them to the farmers, who put them on to go out into the fields.

Life was very hard for the women. After we obtained a sack of wheat and brought it home, the woman of the house would have to sift it, grain by grain, take it on her shoulders to the Arab mill, wait there for a few hours till it was ground into flour, and then carry it back home. When the dough was kneaded, she would have to go out into the field and gather dry brushwood and thistles, set the stove going with them, and bake the bread. There was no water at Metulla. In order to wash clothes, the women had to go down to the stream with their washtubs and carry the wet clothes uphill. The women's strength was sapped by the hard work, and disease began to visit our homes frequently. The woman doctor left Metulla, and no one came to replace her. We had, in cases of necessity, to resort to an Arab doctor in a village near the river Litany. He would only examine patients after taking a drink, and he would demand his fee in advance, in the form of money and wine... We were all *ferrain*, and the authorities persecuted us cruelly. Day and night, mounted military police roamed around Metulla and Khamra in search of people like us. They also looked for mules and horses for forced labour, and for corn for the army. But, truth to tell, the police were not after us so much as our money. Everyone carried several *mejidis* (Turkish coins) about with him, to bribe them...

The settlers of Kfar Giladi had to experience many more vicissitudes before they were able to set up their first hut on the hilltop they had chosen for the site of their village. The account of their subsequent adventures and their heroic defence, isolated and surrounded by thousands of fiercely hostile Arabs, will be found in Chapter XXVIII.

THE EVACUATION OF JAFFA AND TEL AVIV

Meir Dizengoff, chairman of the Tel Aviv Committee, tells how on the 28th March, 1917, an order was issued to evacuate Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Jamal Pasha, who was not in the habit of explaining his orders, called together the notables and gave them his reasons for the measure. After speaking to the Arabs, he went over to the Jewish representatives. Turkey, he said, had no fleet, and the ships of her co-belligerents had no access to the Mediterranean. The Allied warships could at any time attack the coastal towns and destroy them. It was therefore in the interests of their inhabitants that they should be evacuated.

Why were the other coastal towns, such as Haifa and Beirut, not 'rescued'? Why were all kinds of facilities granted to the Arab evacuees, so that they were allowed to stay in the groves around the city; whereas so much concern was shown for the Jews that they had to be sent further afield, outside the Jerusalem *Sanjak* [District]? No answer was provided to those questions in what Jamal Pasha said. However, there is no doubt that the cause of the evacuation was the fear lest the Jews should turn traitors when the enemy broke through to occupy the country (at that time something was becoming known of the espionage activities of Aaronson's group²). While, therefore, all subjects of countries allied to Turkey were allowed to remain in the evacuated area, Jewish subjects of those countries were forbidden to do so.

Dizengoff, who worked so hard to bring Jews into Tel Aviv, was now charged with the melancholy task

² See below in this Chapter.

of taking them out. An Evacuation Committee was formed, and it organised the exodus. Apart from a small number who were able to find accommodation in the Judean settlements and Jerusalem, the great majority of evacuees had to go northwards, and their first halting-place was to be Petach Tikva. But transportation was a problem. When Jamal Pasha was asked about this, he cynically replied that they could go on foot.

A call for assistance was therefore sent to the Jewish villages in Galilee, and it was answered promptly.

Many carts were sent to us, and their owners and drivers placed themselves at the service of the Evacuation Committee, in nearly all cases without asking for payment. They loaded up, went off, came back and did the same again... The late Yosef Bussel (of Daganía) was sent to us on behalf of the *kvutzot* in the Kinneret area, and helped to arrange for the accommodation and disposal of the evacuees. This attitude on the part of the villages and *kvutzot* in Galilee gave us some consolation in the hour of trial and confusion. We had found friends in need.

Arrangements were made to distribute the evacuees in Jewish centres and villages in various parts of the country, but at first they were all concentrated in Petach Tikva. With few exceptions, the evacuees celebrated the Passover *Seder* there. All the houses and yards were full of people, and tents and huts were set up in the streets and on empty lots.

The festival candles were lit, and the *Seder* was celebrated with singing... We had our *Seder* in Mr. Rozov's house. There was, of course, no lack of 'bitter herbs': the aged householder distributed

them liberally, and we swallowed them together with the bitterness of the exile and banishment that had been carried out with such wilful cruelty, without benefit to anyone . . . Nevertheless, hope and confidence had a place in all our hearts, for we firmly believed that all these tribulations were transient, and that, if God willed, we would very soon return to our town and homes. This faith put heart into all the exiles . . .

Since they believed their absence would be of only short duration, the evacuees took no more than their essential belongings with them. Watchmen were appointed to stay in Tel Aviv and look after the houses and their contents, and a mechanic was instructed to keep the water supply working, so that the watchmen could water the gardens.

The Anglo-Palestine Company set up a temporary branch of its bank in Petach Tikva, and all the different committees, including the American Fund and the Zionist Organisation's Palestine Office, united to form one central body known as the Evacuation Committee, of which Dizengoff was elected Chairman. At its first meeting, the Chairman of the Petach Tikva Committee, Zalman Gissin, turned to Dizengoff and said, in a voice trembling with emotion:

'You have been exiled from your town and your homes, and you have come to our *moshava* [village]. This house—the premises of our Committee—and the entire *moshava* of Petach Tikva are at your disposal. Until you return to your beloved town, do as you please here, brethren.'

Those words, Dizengoff writes, gave the evacuees the feeling that they were among brothers, and

Throughout our exile and our stay in Petach Tikva

we merged with it and became like one family: together we suffered . . . together we insisted upon our elementary human and national rights, and together we were redeemed.

Apart from evacuees, Petach Tikva was full of *ferrarin* who had escaped from the rigours of forced labour, of Jews who had become nationals of neutral countries or countries friendly to Turkey, and of those who had procured exemption from army service by means of work vouchers from military contractors. All sought refuge in the settlement's groves and some measure of help from the Evacuation Committee, which administered the American Fund. Petach Tikva began to become a suspicious place in the eyes of the authorities, and so the order was given for its evacuation. Only the owners of plantations were to be allowed to remain in order to look after them. But only a few of the inhabitants had orange groves or vineyards; for the most part they were workers, craftsmen, wagoners, shopkeepers and so on. If they all left, their property would be stolen, and the number of evacuees in the north would be greatly swelled, thus making matters even more difficult. However, a device was found. The farmers of Petach Tikva did not yet have official title-deeds to their holdings, which were only entered in the register of the settlement's Committee. These holdings were accordingly split up into as many plots as there were inhabitants, and each one was given a signed document by the Committee attesting to his ownership. Thus the main part of the population was able to stay on.

But many hundreds still had to be evacuated, and the police were constantly urging the Evacuation Committee to send them to the temporary evacua-

tion centres to the north. If we did not carry out the task, the Government would send them to Aleppo and Homs and other distant places... So every day we sent the unfortunate people in carts to Kfar Saba, Zikhron Yaakov and Haifa, and also by train, via Lydda and Ras el-Ein, to Samakh, and thence to Tiberias and the Galilean settlements. In the course of three weeks... thousands of men, women and children were sent to undergo the hardships and vicissitudes of exile for no reason... In those times I saw great powers of endurance displayed among our brethren, and also mutual help—the help extended to brothers in distress by *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*³ and then I knew that mine is a generous people.

The narrative is here taken up by Menachem Klivner, who was put in charge of the evacuees at Kfar Saba, a few miles north of Petach Tikva. Leaving his family in the orange grove of a friend at Petach Tikva, his first action was to care for the evacuees who were on their way to Galilee, but who had become stranded at Ras el-Ein (near Petach Tikva) waiting for a train, hungry and thirsty, and exposed to the hot sun. He therefore obtained the means to buy some sacks of bread and oranges, which he distributed among them, together with a small allowance of ready cash for each one. Klivner then went to Kfar Saba, where he found a similar situation and applied a similar remedy. His own family, meanwhile, were in little better case. He writes:

'We lay in the pumping-house of the orange grove, sleeping on the sandy floor. All kinds of reptiles and insects crawled over us, and, of course, they did

³ 'Compassionate ones, the sons of compassionate ones,' a traditional epithet applied to the Jewish people.

not let us sleep at night . . . When the Passover festival arrived, we celebrated the *Seder* sitting on the floor. We all burst into tears, and the Passover seemed to us more like the Fast of the Ninth of Av . . .

Eventually, through Dizengoff's efforts, rail transport was secured for the evacuees waiting at Ras el-Ein, and within a fortnight they had all left for Galilee. Klivner was now free to devote himself solely to the evacuees at Kfar Saba, which he visited twice a week. Huts had to be built, water supplied and, above all, relief money distributed. Since there was not enough accommodation at Kfar Saba, booths were made of eucalyptus branches from the young woods around the settlement.

The evacuees made their own booths, built themselves earthen ovens for cooking, and also large ovens for baking bread. Gradually life became organised in an orderly fashion, and Klivner and his family moved to Kfar Saba, where they lived in a roomy tent of eucalyptus boughs. However, water supply was a problem. The settlement's well was enough for local needs, but not for the evacuee population, which reached the figure of 750 during the summer (later it decreased somewhat). To meet this situation, it was decided to transfer the pump and motor from Tel Aviv, but owing to various difficulties the motor could not be properly installed. The pump was therefore operated by hand power, with five or six men working the lever at one time. This was a source of employment to the evacuees, who were assigned to the task in rotation, and were paid out of the common fund. Now, at last, the evacuees were able to wash thoroughly and launder their clothes.

With the help of the Evacuation and Education Committees, two schools were set up which functioned for several months. They were housed in huts of eucalyptus branches in the wood. A kindergarten was also founded, as was a *Talmud Torah* (religious elementary school). When the schools were closed down,

the teachers left for Galilee, taking with them the cheerfulness that had prevailed during the summer at Kfar Saba. For, as long as they were in the settlement, boys and girls used to stroll about on Friday evenings singing and laughing... and begin to think about a free Eretz Yisrael and a beautiful future. But the periodic visits by the gendarmes would remind us, with the blows of their whips, of our true situation and drive away all the beautiful dreams and hopes.

Many of the evacuees found employment in picking almonds, but, as the pay received was very small, their relief allowance was not stopped. Others were employed as watchmen in the almond orchards. But winter was approaching and more solid accommodation had to be provided. It was therefore decided to build houses on the public spaces and on lots belonging to the farmers, which they would pay for over a period of years. Building began in the middle of August, 1917, and went on till the middle of November. Nearly all the evacuees were employed on the project, and their earnings were such that they did not need relief during that period. Over 20 houses were built in this way. But they were far from being sufficient. Klivner therefore tried to find an alternative, and, by enquiring among the local Arabs and bedouin, decided to build tents of rushes, of which there was an abundance in the vicinity. These tents consisted only of roofs

on supports, without walls, but the roofs were impervious to rain, even at the end of several years. Sixty such tents were put up; for, apart from the impossibility of building enough houses by the winter, the local Turkish authorities had begun to interfere in the work of construction, making it very difficult to continue.

In September, 1918, conditions became much harder. There were repeated evacuations from Petach Tikva, and frequent searches for men evading forced labour; and, although evacuees were exempt from that obligation,

no attention was paid to laws. Orders were received to molest the Jews as much as possible and by all kinds of devices. They would suddenly pounce fiercely on one or other of the Jewish settlements, and arrest all men of military age, or those who held passports of doubtful countries or who gave rise to suspicion for some other reason . . . and beat them and torture them, endlessly and without purpose.

Since Kfar Saba also expected a search of this kind, look-outs were posted to give warning of approaching soldiers, whereupon all those likely to be involved took to the woods and plantations, and hid. One day, however, a unit of Turkish cavalry succeeded in surrounding the village before the alarm could be raised. Since it was the hour when the workers had just returned from their work in the fields and vineyards, the great majority of them were caught. Klivner himself was among them, but since his American passport was found genuine, he was set free, together with another settler named Liebermann. The two immediately set to work to help the arrested men. Although the officers

in charge promised to release some of the forty men they had arrested by next morning, they took half of them to Petach Tikva during the night.

There they added to their number the men they caught in that settlement and took them all to Jerusalem, en route to Damascus. Only one young man was able to escape from Petach Tikva. A large number of hapless prisoners died on the way or in prison . . . Some of those who survived finally witnessed the entry into Damascus of the British, who opened the prison and released them. Some of the others remained in Jerusalem until the city's liberation, and so were saved.

On another occasion, a force of gendarmes came from the town of Tulkarm and rounded up all the males in Kfar Saba. After letting them return to their homes, they roused them from their beds very early next morning, and sent them all to the improvised synagogue of eucalyptus boughs. It was a Saturday, and the congregation calmly proceeded with the Sabbath service. The old men of seventy and eighty, in particular, were unperturbed for their own safety; they need not fear that they would be drafted for military labour. Meanwhile the son of the *Mukhtar*⁴ of Kfar Saba had persuaded the officer in charge with the aid of a bottle of arak to set Klivner free. Klivner was reluctant to leave his fellow-settlers; but they prevailed upon him to go, since he would be able to help them if he were at liberty, whereas if he shared their fate, he could do nothing.

After the prisoners were taken to Tulkarm, Klivner assembled the few men who had been able to hide

⁴ 'Headman', recognised by the Turkish authorities as responsible for the affairs of a village or urban quarter.

from the gendarmes, and he and another settler armed themselves with revolvers and guarded the now unprotected village at night. He sent one of the small number of remaining men, Pfefferman, to Petach Tikva to inform the settlers there of the position and to solicit their help.

In the meantime, Slor, another of the settlers who had remained at liberty and who had gone to Tulkarm to make representations to the authorities, returned to Kfar Saba with all the men who had been arrested.

Although it was after midnight, and it was pitch dark, the entire *moshava* was astir and in a joyful mood. Each one began telling of the tribulations endured by the unfortunate men on the road. They were forced to march for seven hours, and on the way the gendarmes struck them with their whips, refused to let them rest or relieve themselves, or to sip a little water. The march most greatly affected the old men, of eighty and upwards. One of them, Alter Greenberg, an evacuee from Jaffa, was ninety! We were told how Mr. Slor took the Pasha to task and openly reproached him.

Ranging the old men in a row, he said to him: 'Has such an injustice ever been perpetrated since the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain? To torture old men entirely innocent of any offence . . .' and so on in similar terms. Whereupon a Turkish officer said to Mr. Slor: 'If it were not the fact that, whenever anything is done to you people, you raise such an outcry that it is heard at the ends of the earth—as you did after the Expulsion from Spain—we would not leave so much as a remnant of you.'

On a Saturday morning, early in November, 1917, a large force of Turkish troops marched through

Kfar Saba. Hopes ran high that this was the beginning of the great retreat; but they were soon belied when the troops returned, cut the road to Petach Tikva, and set up artillery positions in the village. The commanding officer told a Turkish officer from Tulkarm, who had frequently caused difficulties to the settlers of Kfar Saba, to explain to them in Arabic that the place was now under military rule, and that it might become necessary to evacuate the inhabitants. The officer, however, wilfully mistranslated the commander's words and told them that they were ordered to leave immediately. An urgent meeting was held to discuss how to effect the evacuation in half an hour. Where were they to go, on foot, with their children, old people, and those who were sick? For there was now no Jewish settlement near by in which they could seek refuge. The women and children began weeping loudly.

Suddenly the commander came and addressed us in Turkish. One of our number, a farmer named Mr. Chaimovitz, who understood Turkish, translated for us: 'The heart of the Commander, Vasil Bey, had melted from the cries of the women and children. He said he did not order the village to be evacuated immediately. For the time being, everyone may return to his house or tent.' In general, he behaved towards us in a humane way. He was the only Turkish officer who acted uprightly; and when we complained to him about thefts and robberies committed by troops, he used to punish the offenders.

Orders were then given to destroy the bridges in the vicinity, and a bombardment began, some of the guns firing from behind Klivner's house. Great fears were felt lest this should draw the fire of the opposing

forces and lead to the destruction of the village. But, after a few days, the commander announced that the shelling had been designed 'to locate the enemy', and that this had been achieved. A week later, a Turkish force of 6,000 overwhelmed a tiny British force at Abu Qishq and entered Petach Tikva from two sides. The Turkish soldiers did a great deal of damage and plundering, and entirely destroyed the small settlement of Ein Gannim. After the troops left, the field hospitals were moved up to Kfar Saba. All the good houses were occupied by army surgeons, officers and others, and their owners dispossessed. The village hospital was taken over, together with its beds and equipment, and the patients turned out.

The (British) aeroplanes began to come over and drop bombs . . . The position was growing terrible. We were not sure of our lives for a moment. There was no money in the public coffers, and there were no foodstuffs to be had. We began to suffer from hunger and from thirst; for the army were taking water all day and night, and we could not obtain access to the well. However, after making repeated requests, we were allowed to draw water for a few hours at night. But they stole even those hours from us, and the water shortage was felt by us acutely.

Owing to the severance of communications, both with Petach Tikva and with Galilee, coupled with the lack of ready money, it was impossible to obtain food. The neighbouring Arab villagers would not provide anything on credit. Finally, one Arab was found ready to let them have some *dhura* (a kind of maize) on credit, but they were not allowed to grind it. The *dhura* was therefore brought whole to Kfar Saba and

immediately distributed among the hungry evacuees. Some mill-stones were obtained to grind whatever grain the inhabitants had. But so impatient were some, that they boiled the *dhura* whole and ate it, and, not being accustomed to it, suffered severely from disorders of the stomach. Eventually, they were allowed to fetch some flour from Petach Tikva, and it was brought to Kfar Saba through shell fire from both sides. Meanwhile, to add to the difficulties, the Turks began to drive the Jews out of Petach Tikva and Ein Gannim, most of whom came to Kfar Saba and increased the congestion there still further. Later, in the beginning of December, others came through pouring rain, after being despoiled of all their possessions on the way by Turkish soldiers. Klivner writes:

Upon their arrival, I ran about all day and night to find them accommodation in tents and stables... Our number increased to 1,500 souls. The congestion was stifling, and the rain beat down mercilessly. The stable and communal kitchen were crowded with people and packages. There were two families in each tent. At first they were ashamed before one another, and there was no possibility of changing underwear or any clothes at all. So we slept in the clothes we went about in all day. Above all, there was no water for laundering or washing: there was barely enough for drinking... nevertheless, we did not think of leaving. For there was no other Jewish settlement near by, and everyone was afraid of going as far as Galilee... For here the British army was behind us, only a quarter of an hour away...

The Turks were pushed back, and Kfar Saba became part of the front. The Turkish troops robbed and plundered right and left. Representations to their

commanders were of no avail. Klivner relates how one night six armed soldiers broke into his house.

Two of them pinioned my arms, and one levelled his rifle at me. The three others combed the house, taking whatever they found. First, they took all the bread there was, then clothes, linen, and utensils. When the other member of the household began to cry for help, they made off with their spoils. The next day, of course, we had to fast, since there was no food, and my little two-year-old son went hungry as well. We were not allowed to take water all day, either. We all suffered from hunger and thirst. That night, there was heavy rainfall, and we gathered the water that ran off from the roof and so quenched our thirst . . . In such a manner, people suffered for about seven months.

At that time, two battalions of German troops moved into Kfar Saba, and, owing to the heavy rainfall, they occupied the houses, stables and even tents. They behaved with some humanity, and stopped the Turkish soldiers whom they hated, from robbing and plundering, and beat them severely whenever they caught them at it. But the congestion became even greater.

One family of evacuees had to share a tent with eight or ten German soldiers, with all their weapons and accoutrements, including hand-grenades, which filled it to capacity. There was no room to sit down, only to stand with difficulty. But hope did not die, and it was a source of consolation to all of us. Among the troops was a Jewish sergeant. After we had become acquainted with him, he showed us a copy of the *Juedische Rundschau*,⁵

⁵ The organ of the Zionist Movement in Germany.

which gave the text of the Balfour Declaration. We had a strange feeling that day. We read the paper secretly, I, Mr. Ashkenazi, and Mr. Chait, and then looked at one another. Here, we were being ground into the dust, while over there we were being raised to the skies . . .

WORKING FOR ALLIED INTELLIGENCE

1. *Avshalom Feinberg*

One of the most heroic chapters in the entire history of the modern Yishuv was written by a group of young Jews from Zikhron Yaakov and Chadera. Fired by the ideal of creating a Jewish Army which should throw off the Turkish yoke and raise the standard of the Jewish State, they volunteered to do intelligence work for the Allied forces, whose entry into Palestine would greatly facilitate their aims. The story of four of these brave and selfless young people is told here by Moshe Smilansky.

Avshalom Feinberg was the son of Yosef Feinberg, one of the early Bilu pioneers. Brought up in Chadera, he spent much of his time among the local bedouin, while his imagination dwelt upon the ancient heroes of the Jewish people,—of the times of the Judges, Kings, and the wars against the Greeks and Romans. His favourite readings in childhood were the Bible and Josephus, after which he read French literature and spent some time studying in France. After his father's death, he took over his farm.

During the first year of the World War, some of the neighbouring Arabs accused the inhabitants of Chadera of victualling enemy ships passing along the coast. Smilansky writes:

The German authorities in the Turkish army, who

disliked the Jews, seized this opportunity and supported the accusation. A large force of gendarmes was sent to the settlement to carry out arrests and impose punishments, and it was headed by a district official who hated the place owing to some old personal accounts he wished to settle with it. The gendarmes arrested all the men in the settlement, beat them, tortured them, and forced them to 'confess' their treasonable activities.

However the Pasha of Nablus, who was an enlightened and upright man, came to Chadera and proved the accusation to be unfounded. The caravans of camels, that were supposedly supplying enemy ships, were in fact taking wheat to Tel Aviv. The Pasha's intervention saved Chadera.

Previous to this incident, there had been a clash with some neighbouring Arabs who had come to plough a stretch of land belonging to Chadera. In the clash, an Arab had been fatally wounded, and the authorities had arrested several settlers and put them in prison, where they had been badly treated. At the beginning of the war, too, parties of gendarmes carried out periodic searches at Chadera, on the pretext that the Jews had hidden arms, which they would use on the side of the enemy, if the opportunity arose. These various incidents seemed to Avshalom to be an open invitation to engineer an armed revolt against the oppressive régime.

At Zikhron Yaakov, there existed a society of young men called the Gideonites. Headed by a member of the Aaronson family, they had a vague aim of forming the nucleus of a Jewish Army, which would one day raise the banner of liberation. Avshalom was a member of the society: Gideon, of the Book of Judges,

had been one of his boyhood heroes. Moreover, the leader of the Gideonites had a sister with fiery eyes, who had won his heart.

The members of the society began to plan the revolt. They would establish contact with the British and obtain arms, chiefly machine-guns. Then they would entrench themselves in a spot on the coast, preferably the ruins of Athlit, where they would rally their forces and proclaim the revolt. They might also capture Caesarea, near Chadera, which was held by only a small force of gendarmes, and unfurl the flag of the Jewish State at the very place where the Romans had once taken it down. The rebels would call in the help of the British, who would organise a landing from Egypt, and together they would inflict a decisive defeat upon the Turks.

As a result, the leader of the Gideonites and Avshalom went down to Alexandria in one of the neutral ships that were still sailing between Palestine and Egypt, and laid their plans before the British General Headquarters Staff. The projected revolt and British landing did not evoke enthusiasm, but the ardent young Jew, who contemptuously refused even to discuss the question of remuneration for his services, was to their liking. Espionage for the Allies was being carried out by Arabs; but, since it had yielded no tangible results, they were willing to try out the two young Jews, who accepted the offer. The leader of the Gideonites sailed for America, and Avshalom was taken in a British warship and dropped into a boat off Athlit, whence he made his way inland.

There was a threat at that time of a locust invasion from the Negev desert. Avshalom was appointed by the Turkish Administration in charge of [anti-

locust] work in the desert. There he joined the local Arabs, who were engaged in espionage on behalf of the British. But Avshalom's desert companions purposely withheld the instructions that had been sent him from Egypt, and he was misled . . . He therefore decided to cross the desert and reach the British overland. He set off on a camel, unaccompanied, for he relied on his knowledge of the desert tracks and on his compass. He was a splendid rider, fearless, and a crack shot, and he knew the paths of the country as well as he knew his own settlement. But the paths in the desert are unlike those in other districts: they are constantly changing^a. Avshalom lost his way and fell into the hands of a Turkish mobile unit . . . He was taken to Beersheba, and thence to Damascus, where he was brought before a military tribunal.

Aaron Aaronson, the agronomist, and a member of the pro-British espionage group, who was in charge of the anti-locust campaign, and who had influence with Jamal Pasha, succeeded in effecting Avshalom's release and getting permission for him to go to Constantinople, where his sister, Sarah, was then staying. Aaronson himself received Jamal Pasha's consent to go abroad on a scientific mission. He went to Germany, and thence to America. On the way, he was caught by the British and taken to London, from where he went to Egypt to organise the work of espionage on a large scale. Smilansky continues:

Avshalom returned to Palestine together with Sarah. While in prison in Beersheba, he had become acquainted with Yosef Leczansky, a native of Palestine like himself, who was born in Metulla, and

^a i.e., on account of the shifting sand dunes.

with whom he had struck up a friendship. When Aaron Aaronson left for abroad, and Avshalom and Sarah returned from Constantinople, the three of them took charge of the work of espionage. Avshalom received a secret message to go to Egypt. He and Yosef went to Beersheba, and thence they set out for the desert, dressed as bedouin, in order to reach the Suez Canal. A bedouin, upon whom Yosef relied, accompanied them. It was difficult, even for an expert, to tell which of the three were Arabs and which Jews . . .

To this day it is not known whether the bedouin who accompanied them betrayed his companions and intentionally led them to the spot where a group of pro-Turkish bedouin lay in ambush, or whether he lost his way . . . Whatever the truth of the matter, they were already close to the British lines, after undergoing many vicissitudes, when they ran into a band of armed bedouin lying in wait among the sand hills. The bedouin guide turned and ran, but Avshalom shot him dead. A hail of bullets was let loose upon the two riders . . . For a long time they defended themselves with superb heroism . . . and kept the Arabs at a distance, so as not to fall into their hands; for it was the intention of the Arabs to take them alive and get a reward for their capture. But when they began to suffer heavy losses, the attackers changed their tactics and aimed at the two men. Yosef was wounded first, but not seriously. Then Avshalom received a mortal wound and fell to the ground. Yosef was wounded again, and he, too, fell. The Arabs, believing them both to be dead, took their horses and rifles, and went off. When Yosef returned to consciousness, he crawled across the sand and succeeded in meeting an Australian cavalry patrol, which was reconnoitring the area. They took him, half-

dead, to Port Said. When he recovered enough strength to speak, he told them who he was and what had happened to him and his friend in the desert. Runners were sent to look for Avshalom's body, but they could not find it. Either wild animals had eaten it, or else the sand of the desert had covered to eternity the warm-hearted and imaginative young man who had dreamed of a Jewish revolt against the Turks.

2. *Yosef Leszansky*

Metulla, the tiny settlement at the foot of Mount Hermon, far from any other Jewish settlement, had to contend for many years with the neighbouring Druzes. The grandeur of the mountain scenery and the constant presence of danger gave Yosef Leszansky, in common with the other youngsters of Metulla, a love of adventure and brave deeds. As soon as he could ride and shoot, he joined *Hashomer*, and was a member of it for several years. But the aim of *Hashomer's* leaders was to settle on the land, an aim that did not satisfy Yosef's adventurous spirit. He also had aspiration to leadership. Thus, as a result of ideological and personal differences, he left *Hashomer*, taking with him several other discontented and adventure-loving men, and founded a new watchmen's organisation, which he called *Hanoter*. This organisation took over the protection of the small Jewish settlements in southern Judea. When Yosef met Avshalom Feinberg in the prison at Beersheba, he was a watchman at Ruchama, then the southernmost Jewish village in Palestine. There it was that the two opponents of *Hashomer* met, the Gideonite and the leader of *Hanoter*.

After Yosef recovered from the wounds inflicted on

him in the desert ambush which cost Avshalom his life, he was dropped by a British warship off Athlit and entered the Agricultural Experimental Station there. Together with Sarah Aaronson, he directed the espionage network. Every three weeks, a British ship would pass by and send a boat to the shore. It would be met by an emissary of Sarah and Yosef, who would supply important information about the composition, armaments and movements of the Turkish and German forces in Palestine. In 1917, the Germans began to suspect that Jews were involved in spying for the British, since the information was obviously supplied by intelligent people. But, as suspicion grew the group relaxed their vigilance. Smilansky continues:

After Avshalom's death, and following the need to maintain some of the best members of the group abroad or on British ships, there was a great shortage of active members in Palestine. Sarah and Yosef worked with great devotion and ability, but they lacked assistants who were suited to the task and who were sufficiently intelligent and discreet. Moreover, the shower of gold that rained down upon the spies, as the espionage network developed, attracted some careless and hasty young men, who boasted openly about their exploits . . .

In addition, all was not well between the two leaders of the organisation. Yosef fell in love with Sarah, but she remained true to the memory of Avshalom. Whether it was because of unrequited love, or because the original aim of organising a revolt had deteriorated into mere spying, Yosef had become moody and sullen.

Two months before the British entered Palestine, at the end of the summer of 1917, a spy was caught trying to cross the desert. At the same time, the Turk-

ish police caught a carrier-pigeon, bearing a letter, that had lost its way. A countrywide spy-hunt began. The immediate objectives were the Experimental Station at Athlit and the Aaronson home at Zikhron Yaakov, and the two persons most sought after were Sarah and Yosef. Sarah calmly awaited her fate in her own home; Yosef ran away in accordance with her orders. Strong detachments of gendarmes searched all the Jewish settlements for Yosef, using threats and torture to make the inhabitants give him up.

Yosef hid among the rocks and caves near Zikhron Yaakov and made his way to Karkur. There, no one wished to have anything to do with him, and he had to exact a few hours' rest and some food at the point of his revolver. He continued his flight, in constant fear of running into a roving patrol. As he was near the road to Jaffa, he heard a cart. Running into the road, gun in hand, he stopped it. The cart contained some members of *Hashomer* who were conveying arms from the south to the north. Two of the occupants were former comrades of Yosef from his days with *Hashomer*.

He asked them to forget the past and to save him in the moment of his peril. They took him up and the cart went on its way carrying the chief spy and the arms for Jewish self-defence. Had the cart fallen into the hands of the Turks, who were lying in wait on the roads!... But it arrived safely at Tel Adas, and there the fugitive was hidden in one of the houses, while consultations were held to decide what to do with him. Finally, it was decided to transfer him to Metulla, his birthplace, whence he could easily escape to the Druzes, among whom he had friends; for they, too, had revolted against the Turks.

Whether it was because he had heard of Sarah's heroic death, or for some other reason, Yosef, who had made every effort to escape, now became listless and apathetic and afraid at the least sound. He begged to be saved, but did not go over to the Druzes.

Meanwhile, the wave of tortures, that passed through all the Jewish settlements, was coming northwards. What was to be done? Was the entire village to be destroyed on account of the one man in its midst? One of the members of *Hashomer* resolved to put an end to matters; he would kill Yosef and hand his body over to the authorities. . . He entered Yosef's room, pistol in hand, and fired. But his practised hand faltered, and he missed his mark, his shot only wounding Yosef in the arm.

The incident restored Yosef's resolution, and he ran away. But, instead of going to the near-by Druzes, he went southwards, no doubt hoping to reach the British lines in a few days. He safely reached the coast, to the south of Rishon Letzion, but there his courage left him again. He remained among the sand dunes and orange groves for several days, irresolute.

Perhaps it was through fear of the front line, which was near by; perhaps the bedouin, among whom he took refuge, betrayed him; perhaps he hoped that a British ship, to which he could signal would pass by the coast . . . Even though he was armed, he did not defend himself when the bedouin seized him to take him to the authorities in Ramleh . . . Listless, apathetic and weak, he was brought before the governor there. The Pasha of Jerusalem came down in person to Ramleh that day and took the prisoner back to Jerusalem for interrogation. From Jerusalem he was taken to Damascus, where his comrade, who had been caught in the

desert near Beersheba, was brought as well. Together, bound in chains, they awaited their trial. The military court sentenced them both to be hanged. Yosef's courage returned to him once again. Thrusting aside the guards who held him, he ascended the scaffold by himself, and loudly cursed Turkey and prophesied her downfall.

3. *Sarah Aaronson*

Sarah Aaronson has earned the right to be counted among the great patriot women of the world. The story of her heroic exploits and martyrdom is charged with drama, an aspect which Smilansky brings out fully.

Born in Zikhron Yaakov, Sarah had from an early age dreamed of the Jewish heroes of old and of valiant resistance to the Romans. Her favourite reading, in childhood and early youth, was the Bible and accounts of the Jewish wars, followed later by French literature. When her brother founded the society of Gideonites, she met Avshalom Feinberg, a thin dark-eyed youth with a black shock of hair, who had about him an air that attracted her and made her think of the brave days of yore. He used to call her Deborah, and Joan of Arc, and she would thrill to the sound of those names. Since, however, her parents associated with the officials of Baron Rothschild's administration, Government officials and prosperous merchants, and since Avshalom was a penniless youth, she dutifully yielded to their wishes and married the man they chose. For, Smilansky observed, though dreaming of brave deeds against the enemies of the Jewish people, she was weak when it came to personal matters. Her husband went to Constantinople, and she followed.

The war broke out, and Sarah heard with alarm

of the Yishuv's sufferings. One day, Avshalom appeared in Constantinople and told her of the projected revolt. Then they received a message from her brother Aaron, asking them to come and take over his work of espionage, since he had to go to the main centres of activity. Admittedly espionage was not a rebellion, but it was the beginning of a rebellion. She went with Avshalom to Athlit.

Together with Yosef Leszansky, they organized and directed the work. Then, when Avshalom and Yosef had to make their desert journey to Egypt, Sarah remained in sole charge. She had a great variety of tasks to carry out, to obtain accurate data about enemy forces in Palestine, their formations, armaments, food and water supplies, and at the same time to note the passing of British ships at night and recognise their signals. Smilansky continues:

All this Sarah undertook herself, for she had few helpers; and whatever she did, she did with great competence. Sarah was not a beautiful woman, but she was endowed with exceptional charm... She was always gay, active and vivacious. She spoke French, Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew, all of them well. Her exceptional charm enabled her to ingratiate herself with the high army officers, and she became friendly with them. She also established friendly relations with the German flying officers. Without their realising it, in the inconsequential chatter and curiosity of a woman, and by a word here and there at dances, she gradually drew from them items of information that she needed and jotted them down. She had confidence in only a few of her helpers, and so she went herself from place to place in pursuit of her 'investigations',... from Haifa to Jerusalem and to Ramleh (where

the flying corps was stationed), and to Gaza and Beersheba. Wherever she went, she found a pretext for being there, and everywhere she found ways of executing her designs . . . When there were large movements of troops from north to south, and all the roads were barred to Europeans, she would don bedouin dress and, together with the bedouin women of the locality, squat in the fields near the roadside. No one would have recognised her; no one would suspect that, in the folds of the bedouin woman's dress, was a notebook in which all the army's movements were jotted down . . .

Sarah anxiously awaited news of her comrades who had gone down to Egypt. Then, one rainy and stormy night, a British ship signalled. A man swam ashore with a message from one of her brothers, who was on board the ship. He also told her of the tragedy that had overtaken Avshalom. Three weeks later, Yosef Leszansky landed from another ship. She was no longer alone in her task; but her heart was desolate at the thought of her hero, who had dreamed of the great rebellion, lying buried in the desert. Although Yosef worked loyally with her, she felt resentful towards him. She also suspected that he had not stood by his comrade in the desert as he should have.

Meanwhile, the espionage network was growing.

Information of what was happening in the Yishuv was sent abroad by Sarah, and relief funds and encouraging news reached her from the Diaspora. Apart from transmitting news regularly by the ships, the spies also established a carrier-pigeon service to and from Egypt. Two and a half hours after the order to evacuate Jaffa was issued, the fact was known in Egypt and from there published throughout the Jewish world. But Sarah's heart

was not tranquil. When, towards the end of the summer of 1917, one of the spies was caught in the desert near Beersheba, she gave a cry from the depth of her heart: 'we are lost' . . .

On hearing this news, Sarah's brothers in Egypt were also alarmed, and a warship was sent to take her to safety. But she refused to leave her men in the hour of need. On the 23rd September—it was the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles—, a large force of gendarmes and troops surrounded Zikhron Yaakov. Sarah was waiting for them in her house. All incriminating documents, there and at Athlit, had been burned, and Yosef and his helpers had escaped. The gendarmes entered the house and began to subject her to torture, an act in which the Turks were well versed. They used the bastinado, thumb-screws, and red-hot stones, hoping thereby to make her divulge her secrets and disclose the names of her associates.

But this time the executioners had miscalculated: they had encountered a descendant of the Ten Martyrs who had been tortured to death by the Romans . . . For three days in succession the torture continued, in public and in secret. All the refinements of the torturer's art were tried. Today the bastinado beat again upon the wounds it had inflicted yesterday, on the palms of her hands and soles of her feet, then upon both at the same time, for which purpose the hands and feet were tied together . . . Then came the thumb-screws, which crushed the fingers, followed by the red-hot stones, which were placed under her armpits. All this was done in the open, in the sunlight; no one knows the ingenuity of the torturers devised in the privacy of the rooms.

But to all her tortures Sarah replied with words of

defiance, while she met all questions with complete silence. When her aged father was stripped and beaten before her eyes, in order to make her divulge Yosef's whereabouts, she merely exhorted him to be brave and proud, and emulate the courage of his ancestors. To the question, 'Who are your accomplices?' which the torturers screamed into her ears, she answered that she had none: she alone had prepared their downfall. And she proceeded to pour out abuse upon the vindictive, corrupt and lying régime. One of the torturers was a district officer who had been in league with the spies and received large sums from them. Now, to avert any possible suspicion from himself, he was foremost in urging the torturers to greater efforts.

Even the cruel, savage Anatolian gendarmes and soldiers were appalled at the sight of the martyred woman. Their hands continued their work, but their hearts were not in it. Only the district officer, against whom [Sarah's] hints about corruption were directed, and the ferocious army commander, who went into a frenzy on hearing his country vilified, repeatedly devised new forms of torture.

Eventually, the devilish work succeeded. The torturers did not extract anything from the woman: matters did not come to such a pass. They only succeeded in breaking down her physical resistance . . . Towards the end her screams caused dismay throughout the vicinity. Her cries did not stop by day or night . . . and struck terror into every heart . . . What were they doing to her in the darkness of her room?

The inhabitants of the *moshava* hid in their houses and stopped up their ears, so as not to go insane with sorrow. The streets were empty: the

entire *moshava* was like dead . . . Then the executioners took the *mukhtars* and several old men, laid them down in the street and beat them and tortured them, to make them tell where Yosef was hidden. Their cries mingled with those of the tortured woman.

When all the methods of torture were exhausted, the chief executioner ordered the hapless woman to be taken to Nazareth, for there, in the birth-place of the religion of forgiveness, the torturers had their infernal headquarters. They hoped that there they would find ways of opening her mouth... Sarah asked permission to go into her bedroom and change her blood-stained clothes. She was given permission to do so, and the soldier, an Anatolian villager, who was in charge of her agreed to wait outside the door,—for she was a woman, and must not change her clothes in the presence of a man. As soon as she was alone, she took her pistol from its hiding-place and fired into her mouth.

There was great confusion. The army officer, who was the chief torturer, summoned the village doctor and ordered him to restore her to life. When she came to, she recognised the doctor. A cry burst from her throat, and she whispered: 'Why did you save my life?' But her life had not been saved: a few hours later she died. All that remained to her torturers was her body, which had turned completely black. Sarah was given an impressive funeral. All the inhabitants of the *moshava*, old and young followed her coffin. The torturers followed it, too, their heads bent.

4. Aaron Aaronson

From the pen picture drawn by Smilansky, we see Aaron Aaronson as a man gifted with many of the

qualities of leadership, and imbued with a desire to lead, who did not achieve his aim. 'When, at the end of his life,' Smilansky writes, 'he did attain to leadership, he failed in an enterprise that had none of the creativeness for which his powers and gifts were apparently destined.'

Born in Rumania, he came to Palestine as a child with his parents, who were among the founders of Zikhron Yaakov. There he spent most of his time in the fields, getting to know all the different plants that grew there. He developed into a tall, broad-shouldered young man, and was at home in all branches of practical farming. He also went about the country, until he knew its roads and paths as well as he knew his own village.

When he was older, he was sent by Baron Rothschild's administration (which assumed responsibility for most of the early Jewish settlements) to study agriculture in Paris. There he showed great brilliance in his studies, and his botany teachers predicted a splendid future for him in that science. He returned to Palestine as a qualified agronomist, and was sent by Baron Rothschild's administration to act as manager and instructor at the new settlement of Metulla (it was founded in 1896) in the northernmost corner of the country. Yet, despite his excellent qualities, he did not get on with the Baron's officials on the spot. He was too uncouth, and at the same time too alert and active, to work together with the urbanised officials, who were negligent, wasteful and unresourceful. After a series of differences with them, he resigned. As Smilansky puts it, 'the young man's soul received its first wound.'

Unable to return to his father's little farm at Zikh-

ron Yaakov, and seeing wider horizons before him, Aaronson went to Turkey, where he worked on a large farm in Anatolia for some years. However, Palestine drew him back. On his return, he found that Baron Rothschild's administration had given way to that of I.C.A. (the Jewish Colonisation Association). But he was not called in, 'and Aaronson's soul received a second wound.'

Aaronson thereupon sought his own way in life, and devoted himself to a study of the country, its soil and its plants. He assembled a collection of plants that became known all over Palestine, and even in Europe and America. He enriched the knowledge of botany, and made a notable discovery that brought him world-wide fame: in the neighbourhood of Mount Hermon he found wild wheat,—the mother of all wheat.

Aaronson's learning was accepted by the Yishuv, but there was something hard and independent in his personality that prevented him from becoming liked by people. Thus, although he was respected, and even admired, he was not popular. After the failure of the Uganda project, in 1903, there became evident signs of a change in Zionist policy in Palestine, and the first steps began to be taken towards the active fostering of settlement by the Zionist Organisation. Aaronson became acquainted with several of the Zionist leaders, and it began to look as if his dream of establishing an agricultural experimental station was approaching fulfilment. Yet, when practical Zionist work expanded and began to assume the form of a social movement, he was left on one side, 'and his soul received yet another wound'. He was neither swept forward by the Second *Aliya*, nor was he able to draw it after him: 'he had the

abilities of a leader, but not the requisite personal qualities'.

He went to America, and there gained the interest of J. Rosenwald, a noted philanthropist, who gave him the means to establish his own experimental station. He set up the station in Athlit, with a branch in Chadera. Here Aaronson seemed to have found his true avocation. His experimental work developed with great strides, and the important problem of dry farming began to find its solution. People began visiting him in large numbers.

School teachers came streaming to him, singly and in groups. He would unfold his knowledge to them and go with them on trips of exploration. He was an exceptionally gifted educator and lecturer, and it looked as if the path of training teachers would bring him to leadership. Fate did not will it that Aaronson should be at the head of agricultural settlement, as the leader of a social trend, but he would become the leader and patron of agricultural science in Palestine . . . But it was the glamour of leadership of a very different kind that turned him aside from the high road ahead of him onto a narrow path, on which he stumbled and fell.

Aaronson knew only vaguely of the plan to revolt against the Turks, but when Avshalom Feinberg returned from Egypt, he was told all about the espionage network that was being organised. He dismissed the projected revolt immediately as impracticable, but devoted all his energy and organising ability to the work of espionage. He distrusted the Arabs, who were engaged in spying for the British, and sought ways of establishing contact with Egypt and starting the work on an entirely new basis. Here the locust plague, in

the spring of 1915, came to his assistance. No one had any idea how to combat it, and he came forward with a plan of campaign. All the Jewish settlements turned to him, and Jamal Pasha, the ruler of the country, empowered him to take effective measures, giving him financial means and putting labourers and troops at his disposal. Jamal also authorised him to travel freely about the country; for, owing to the state of war, civilian movement was restricted.

The locusts came across the desert, from Egypt; and it was there that the British forces lay with which he wanted to make contact. It was there, too, that the bedouin tribes spying for both sides were encamped, and Aaronson wanted to keep them under his surveillance. In both these objects he succeeded, and meanwhile he enjoyed the complete confidence of Jamal Pasha, who was enthralled by his magnetic personality. Aaronson exploited his hold over Jamal Pasha. He secured the release of Avshalom Feinberg, when he was caught trying to cross the desert, and also that of two other of his emissaries who were caught. Smilansky writes:

With one hand he helped Jamal Pasha in the fight against the locusts and in administering the country's agricultural affairs, and with the other, he organised and improved the espionage system. He walked between fire and water, cool and assured. He gathered together a group of young men from Zikhron Yaakov, Chadera, Petach Tikva and Rishon Letzion, organised them, trained them and placed them in agricultural work, at the Experimental Station and with the Government. There he prepared them for espionage work in the future.

His distrust of the pro-British Arab spies was well

founded. They had misled both Avshalom and the British, and purposely confused the messages they transmitted to the Jewish spies from the British, so that the signals flashed by the British warships to the watchers on the shore were misread. Avshalom tried to get through to the British forces once more to clear matters up; but he fell in the attempt. Aaronson thereupon decided to get to Egypt and direct activities from there. He obtained permission from Jamal Pasha to go to Germany and America, for scientific purposes and to conduct pro-Turkish propaganda. From Germany he went to Copenhagen, thence to London and from there he got to Alexandria in January, 1917.

From the time of Aaronson's arrival in Egypt, the espionage activities began to function effectively. He directed the work in Egypt, and his sister Sarah, in Palestine. Together with military information, the spies sent out all the news concerning the situation in the country and the Jewish population. They also brought letters and money from Egypt to individuals and public bodies in Palestine. At the time of the evacuation from Jaffa and Tel Aviv, Aaronson organised considerable financial aid for the evacuees. At first, there were differences between Aaronson and the British General Staff about this specifically Jewish work which the spies had undertaken, and which made it harder for them to carry out their principal task. But they eventually realised the truth of his contention that the addition of this work would give the members of the organisation more energy and put more heart into them.

Aaronson tried to enlist the support of the leaders of the Palestinian Jews exiled to Egypt in his work, but they would have nothing to do with it, on the

grounds that it would endanger the entire Yishuv if it became known that they were involved. They devoted themselves, in preference, to helping the formation of the Jewish battalions that were being created at the time. When the organisation was discovered, Aaronson had a ship sent to save at least his sister's life. But, as we have seen, she refused to take advantage of the opportunity.

Two months later, he returned to Palestine with the invading British forces; but the Yishuv gave him a cold welcome. He sat at General Headquarters, and though he tried to establish contact with the leaders of the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement, he failed. Smilansky believes that this occasioned a considerable loss to the Yishuv, since

it prevented establishing relations of friendship and mutual trust between it and the British Army authorities. For evidently there was a great deal of confidence in Aaronson at Headquarters.

The enlistment of members of the Yishuv in the British Army and in its Jewish battalions, which began in October, 1917, with the collapse of the Turkish front in the south, did not obtain the approval of General Headquarters until May, 1918. All the representations by Jabotinsky, Weizmann, and British Army commanders failed to move matters forward. Those who headed the enlistment campaign were told to apply to Aaronson, but they refused to do so. It was only after they decided to change their attitude, and they turned to him for assistance, that they obtained the approval of General Headquarters.

Aaronson went about the country gloomy and angry. The doors that he hoped would be opened remained shut to him. With the signing of the Armistice, he

went to Egypt, and then to England. When the Versailles Peace Conference took place, he went to France. Although his influence lay in the military rather than the political sphere, and he could be of only limited use to the Zionist representatives, they did not seek his help. His friendly contacts in America were severed, too: his friends in Chicago could not forgive him for turning a scientific research institute into a centre of espionage.

An evil and bitter day dawned. That day remains enshrouded in the veil of a fearful tragedy. Aaronson set off in a special aircraft from Paris to London. On the way, the aircraft broke down and fell. He disappeared forever in the depths of the sea . . .

THE ROAD TO EXILE

As we have seen, the discovery of the espionage network was followed by searches of all the Jewish settlements, and several score of their inhabitants were suddenly taken from their homes and sent to Damascus. One of them was Yitzchak Livni, today a well-known authority on the Hebrew language, especially on its syntax and style. He had come to Eretz Yisrael with his wife about three years before the war broke out and was working as an agricultural labourer in one of the Jewish villages in Southern Judea. The arrests, he writes, began in September, 1917, at the time of the High Festivals. A young man had been arrested on suspicion of being a spy, but had been released after interrogation by the Chief of Staff himself. The incident seemed to have been closed, when suddenly it was reopened. Whispered rumours began to circulate that the young man had been arrested again and was being subjected to frightful torture.

Then came a wave of arrests, evacuations and deportations of Jews throughout the country. To add to all its other acts of vicious and unnecessary cruelty, the Turkish Administration now accused the entire Jewish population of being spies. The manner in which Turkish troops would suddenly encircle a Jewish settlement at night, drag its inhabitants from their beds, and take some away for imprisonment and deportation, has already been described. Now, according to Livni, a wave of panic swept over the Yishuv, and the first thought in the mind of each individual was how to go into hiding and avoid arrest and the possibly worse fate that might follow. Vague, but alarming, rumours, pursued one another in quick succession. No one in Livni's village knew whether or when their turn would come. If it did, would it be possible to turn the wrath of the Turks by the time-honoured method of greasing their palms, or was it possible to hide?

Each one hid in his own corner, undergoing the experience, in his sickly imagination, of being caught over and over again. All places were equally good or bad for the purpose. By day the streets were quiet, by night there was movement. Tiles rattled on the roofs, coughs could be heard, shutters creaked, footsteps sounded. They used to go out in groups to sleep in the orange groves. Towards morning they would wait with half-closed eyes, trembling feverishly, for the news that the messengers of destruction had not yet come. Miserable and broken, they would return each to his home and work.

But such precautions were in vain. After one such night spent in the open, the men returned to the village in the morning to find the Turks awaiting them.

One by one, we were interrogated. Then they tied us together as we were standing, in rows of eight. The rows stood behind one another, and the men at the end of the rows were also tied together, so as to form a kind of square frame. So tightly were the ropes tied, that our hands went blue . . . When the work was done, a document was handed to one of the troopers escorting the batch of prisoners, and the order to march was given . . .

And so the prisoners were marched off to an unknown destination to the accompaniment of the bitter cries of their wives and children. Their first halt was at Ramleh. There they were unceremoniously thrust into the lock-up. It was a large, airy hall, and they took heart: this was not so bad as they had anticipated. They sat down, apart from the Arab prisoners who already occupied the lock-up, took out the provisions they had brought and rested. Upon their entry the Arabs took off their clothes and began picking the lice from them. This procedure disgusted the Jews: but they were soon to learn to do it themselves. Soon, a man appeared who offered to procure them water and some oil to light a lamp for them when it grew dark. He represented himself as a friend who wanted to help them; but before long it became clear that he wanted to profit by their misfortunes, for he demanded a grossly exorbitant sum for these services. But when they objected, he found means of compelling them to pay. That night they slept soundly, for they were tired after the events of the day and the many nights of broken sleep they had spent before. Now they need no longer fear capture: they were already prisoners.

The comparatively humane treatment of the first

day rapidly deteriorated. They were beaten intermittently throughout the following day. But even harder to suffer was the behaviour of the man who had been put in charge of them and who sucked their very blood to enrich his own pocket in return for the slight services it was possible to procure. For they were powerless to remonstrate or protest. Then came the order to convey the prisoners to Jerusalem. They were told to pay a pound each for their transportation by rail, otherwise they would be forced to make the journey on foot and tied together. But they lacked the requisite amount, even by pooling all their resources. Thereupon their tormentor ordered them to pay a certain sum for the ropes with which they were to be tied. So humiliating was this insult, that they replied with bitter laughter. However, Livni writes,

When the time came to go, and that messenger of Hell came in again and demanded payment for the ropes, and stretched a few of us on the floor to be beaten, our laughter turned into gnashing of teeth . . . So we were beaten, and we paid up, and we were tied together with ropes, with ropes that were there ready before any money was paid, ropes that had no connection with that money . . .

So tightly were they bound this time, that some cried out, weeping with anguish, to have their bonds eased. But the officer in charge merely replied with callous laughter. In addition, they were tied so closely together that there was no room to move an inch to either side.

Like herrings in a barrel, we were squeezed against one another . . . When the tying was completed, a devil from Hell appeared in the shape of an old

soldier, from whose mouth poured a stream of curses. Taking a long rope from his haversack, he bound all the ropes together, as with a frame. From now, we had all to be dragged along as one man . . . Then we were ordered, unnecessarily, to sit down and get up several times; for they knew that it was next to impossible to do so in such a terrible predicament . . .

Thus, we were dragged, forty men, under the lash of the whip, and with a mighty cloud of dust rising from under our feet. Body pressed against body, body pushing against body. The bonds became even tighter. Soon one's hand would be cut off . . . Men were weeping, men were fainting . . .

All along the road, motor-cars were speeding straight at us. Each time the batch of prisoners was dragged heavily to the right, then to the left; to the left, then to the right.

The motor-cars belonged to the German army, and they added to the prisoners' feeling of degradation.

These sons of the Teutons lash one with their light blue eyes . . . They, too, sons of the West, men of progress, reformers of the world, grandsons of Kant and Goethe, laugh at one . . . After a whole day of restrained anger, of swallowed tears, of fists clenched in vain, and of other natural processes restrained, we arrived towards evening, tired, thirsty, hungry and half asleep, at Bab el-Wad.⁷

There they were untied and pushed into a tiny, airless den. It was pitch dark, and so cramped was the space, that no one had room to get up or sit down. Their captors were changed at Bab el-Wad, and they met the new officer in charge when he burst into the

⁷ Now called Shaar Hagai, the entrance to the Jerusalem hills.

den, candle in hand, crushing those next to the door. He fell upon one of the prisoners and beat him mercilessly,—for sitting on a heap of straw with which he wanted to feed his horse. They remained awake most of the night. The majority stood up, leaning against each other, like sheep which bury their heads in one another's fleece on a hot day. Eventually they dozed off, even though the lice and fleas that inhabited the place attacked them. The foul air and the smell of sweating bodies was unbearable. Livni writes,

'I wanted to die. But, as I expressed the wish, I laughed to myself with a pained laugh: 'Wait! This is only the beginning . . . Wait for what is to follow, for the end. There's still a long way to go.' And indeed the way was still long,—not in terms of miles and leagues, but of suffering and tribulation.

As soon as they started on the uphill march in the morning, their visitor of the night before showed all the viciousness of his nature. Seated on his horse, he rode all round the prisoners, lashing them with his whip, so that not one of them was spared. The ropes were tied very tightly once again, and the prisoners got out of temper with one another, one complaining that his companion was purposely pulling at his fetters, or that he was treading on his toes, and the like. When some altercation arose, the officer would whip both disputants, till they bit their lips with mortification at the punishment and at their own behaviour. The road to Jerusalem was a succession of ascents and descents. The prisoners were covered with dust, and no one had an eye for the beauty of the countryside though which they were passing. Only when they came to the long descent to Motza (before the final

climb to Jerusalem) did Livni awake to the scenery. To him it seemed that they were going down into an inferno: the dust, the stones beneath their feet, the chafing fetters, the whistling whip, the Germans rushing by in their motor-cars or passing overhead in aeroplanes, all contributed to that impression. At Motza they were each given a sip of water; and then began the last painful climb to the city itself.

When they reached Jerusalem, they were given strict orders not to speak to anyone unless in Turkish, a language with which the prisoners were not familiar. Jews stood in the street amazed at the sight, but their questions went unanswered. One man who was rash enough to speak received the whip with full force on his back; and Livni himself was given ten strokes in the courtyard of the police building for asking a Jewish woman for something to eat.

From Jerusalem, the prisoners were taken northwards, on their way to Damascus. The next scene Livni describes is at the railway station at Merchavia, where the number of prisoners was now increased to eighty. All eighty of them were packed into a single goods wagon,—a tiny cubby-hole with a low ceiling and two small iron gratings to supply light and air. There was no room to move a limb, and the light was barely enough to see by. It soon became intolerably hot and suffocating. The sweat dripped down their bodies, and it was impossible to free a hand to wipe it off or to scratch. It was raining, and the rain came in through the apertures in the roof, adding to their already acute discomfort. Several soldiers had also been squeezed into the wagon 'to maintain order', and they constantly stilled, with threats, all murmurs or complaints.

The prisoners felt their strength waning, and they gave themselves up to despair. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, came a ray of hope and comfort. The settlers from Galilee had come to the station, and through the narrow gratings they handed in cans of water and loaves of bread. The feeling that they were not alone in the world after all raised the prisoners' spirits and helped them to face the ordeal still ahead of them. The Turkish guards also had their share of the food, and, writes Livni,

they were already licking our boots, fawning and cringing in a nauseating manner. Exasperating as they were when they were lording it over us, they were even more exasperating in their servility.

Next morning, the prisoners were taken out of the wagon under a heavy guard. The purpose of this was to enable them to pick the vermin out of their clothes.

We undressed, naked in the sun, in the sight of passers-by, and began to search our clothes, which had been wet by the rain and saturated with sweat, and in which the lice had bred. We were no longer ashamed or disgusted. Since we started on our journey, we had become adept at this art. Had we not practised it morning, noon and night, we would have been literally eaten by the vermin... But, seeing that the vermin had become so numerous that our work would have no end, we asked our friends to give us a change of clothing. They brought us sacks full of clothes and underwear. We changed into them, and experienced a feeling of relief.

At Daganian, the next halting-place, the settlers brought the prisoners hot food, a supply of food

for the journey, and above all, as Livni puts it, warmth of heart.

For eight days we were confined in those terrible wagons. For eight days we did not lie down at night or enjoy restful sleep. Eighty people in one wagon for eight consecutive days! We were shut in there, unable to move, deprived of fresh air. . .

They had to suffer the inevitable stench of so many people confined in so tiny a space without the possibility of washing or even going out to relieve themselves. Many fell ill, some became mentally deranged. But their comrades who remained healthy could do nothing to help them,—even to give them a drink of water or to put a wet compress on their feverish heads. The sick did not ask for anything.

Is it to be wondered that we took three men from the train for burial? Three of our people went on that journey to their own world. And we, who remained alive, did not weep or mourn. We were numbed by the misfortunes that had overtaken us; our feelings were blunted . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

FIGHTING FOR THE LIBERATION OF ERETZ YISRAEL

OFFICIALLY, the Zionist Organisation adopted an attitude of neutrality during the first World War, for its adherents were to be found on both sides. But the Jews of Palestine, many of whom were sympathetic to Turkey at the outbreak of the war, and who would have immediately responded to any sign of friend-

liness on the part of the Turkish authorities, gradually began to conceive a growing preference for the Allied cause. That preference arose out of a natural belief, confirmed by the repressive measures of the Turks, that the Yishuv's salvation would come about only with the liberation of Eretz Yisrael by the Allied forces. Then, too, a new future would open up before the Zionist Movement. The desire consequently grew to participate in the country's liberation by fighting, as Jews, alongside the Allied armies. As a result of long negotiations, in which Vladimir Jabotinsky played a leading part, a Jewish regiment was created as a formation of the British army. But the first step in this direction was taken in Alexandria, where there were several thousand Jewish refugees from Palestine.

The first unit of Jewish soldiers to fight as Jews, and consisting of 900 men, was known as the Zion Mule Corps, and it remained in existence from April, 1915, until the following March. The initiator of the scheme for recruiting Jews to fight for the liberation of Eretz Yisrael was Yosef Trumpeldor, a Jew who had served as an officer in the Russian army and had lost an arm while fighting in the Russo-Japanese War. When he enlisted in the British army, he was commissioned as a captain. Later in the war Trumpeldor returned to Russia, where he organised the *Hechalutz* (pioneering) Movement. Then, after his return to Eretz Yisrael, he directed the defence of Tel Chai against Arab attack, losing his life and winning imperishable fame¹.

¹ See the following chapter.

THE ZION MULE CORPS

Trumpeldor himself describes the formation of the first Jewish unit and its subsequent activities at the front. The negotiations with the British army command at Alexandria took some time and were not without difficulties. Trumpeldor writes:

We did not want to be relegated to transport services, or to be sent anywhere they pleased. We wanted to go into action, to be among the combatants, and only in the Palestine theatre of war. We wanted to fight for Eretz Yisrael, upon its soil. Step by step, we would conquer the country from which we had been forcibly exiled; we would liberate our homeland and our comrades who had remained, under terrible conditions, to protect the Yishuv.

However, the Zion Mule Corps was not destined to enter Eretz Yisrael (though some of its members did so later in the ranks of the Jewish Regiment); nor was it to be a combat unit. It went to Gallipoli instead, and its task was supply. Nevertheless, the volunteers from Eretz Yisrael had to operate under murderously heavy fire, and they acquitted themselves in a soldierly manner.

After the formation of the unit had been announced at a meeting addressed by a British general,

the young Palestinians dispersed in groups along the streets of Alexandria, singing the songs of Eretz Yisrael. They joined company with English soldiers and sang with them the song that was then in vogue, 'Tipperary'. Within a few days, a new camp sprang up in the vicinity of Alexandria, and from it could be heard words of command uttered

vigorously and with precision in the Hebrew tongue.

They were told to be ready to leave within a few weeks, and in the meantime new recruits joined their ranks. One of them was a youth named Wertheimer, thin, weak-looking, and wearing the side-locks that betokened a member of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Community in the Old City of Jerusalem. He was accompanied to the camp by his father, who told Trumpeldor that, although they lived on *Chaluka* (funds subscribed abroad for the maintenance of religious institutions in the Holy Land), the country was as dear to them as to anyone else, and they were prepared to lay down their lives for it. Wertheimer tried his hardest to be a good soldier, Trumpeldor records, but he was not too successful at first. Moreover, he could not overcome his physical weakness; for, since there was no possibility of having a *kasher* kitchen at the camp, it meant his subsisting on a meagre diet.

Embarkation day came, and that night, before they set sail, the Jewish soldiers sang the songs and danced the dances of Eretz Yisrael, the girls who had come to see them off adding to the gaiety of the occasion. Only Wertheimer did not join in the festivities. When Trumpeldor found him standing alone and asked him the reason, he replied that he was afraid,—lest he should not acquit himself honourably if faced with a serious test, and so disgrace the Zion Corps and the Jewish people.

Within a few days they were at Gallipoli, and they soon began to suffer losses, in killed, wounded, and sick. It was hard to tell whether Wertheimer was still afraid or not: he carried out whatever assignments were given to him, including dangerous ones. But he

went about deep in thought: apparently he had not made up his own mind.

Then came Wertheimer's crucial test. The troops in a forward position were running short of ammunition and had to have a new supply. A pair of mules were loaded with ammunition; but someone had to be found who would be brave enough to volunteer to take them across the open stretch of ground, raked by enemy fire, that had to be traversed in order to reach the trenches. To cross that stretch of ground meant walking to almost certain death. The battalion commander called for a volunteer; but no one—British, Indian or Jew—came forward. The commander explained again how vital it was to get the ammunition to the trenches. Still no one moved. Then Wertheimer shyly walked forward from the rear ranks and offered to go.

When Wertheimer appeared with his mules on the stretch of open ground, the enemy's fire redoubled. Shells fell thick and fast, exploding with frightful detonations . . . The mules stiffened their backs and did not want to move. But the quiet, reassuring hand of Wertheimer held them and pulled them forward. He walked calmly, as if nothing were happening around him, and he paid no attention to the exploding shells. On either side of the open space the soldiers watched him with bated breath, saying in a whisper, 'Brave fellow, brave fellow'.

A few paces away from the trenches, Wertheimer was hit. He was pulled into the trenches and given every care, and was taken by hospital ship to Alexandria. But his was a mortal wound, and within a week he died. Then, Trumpeldor writes,

A letter arrived from his father asking to be sent

his late son's *tefillin* (phylacteries). There was no suggestion of complaint or unrestrained grief. The man of the *Chaluka* from Jerusalem had bravely shown his love for Eretz Yisrael.

THE 39TH BATTALION, ROYAL FUSILIERS

When Jewish units were finally created within the British army, they were formed into a Jewish Regiment, comprising the 38th, 39th and 40th battalions of the Royal Fusiliers. The 38th battalion was recruited among Russian Jews in England and was commanded by Colonel J. H. Patterson, who had been commander of the Zion Mule Corps. The 39th was recruited in America and included Palestinian Jews who were in that country during the war. Its commander was Colonel Eleazar Margolin, a Russian Jew who had come to Palestine in his youth and had subsequently gone to Australia. Both these battalions saw action on the Palestine front. The third—the 40th—was recruited in Palestine itself after the British occupation of Judea, but it was formed too late to take an active part in the war.

We are here concerned with the 39th battalion, and the account of its exploits is by Yefet Yudelovitz, son of the Bilu pioneer, David Yudelovitz². He was one of a group of Palestinian students who had been in California when the war broke out... He and his fellow-exiles had been greatly concerned about the fate of the Yishuv. But the issue of the Balfour Declaration in November, 1917, followed by news of the formation of the Jewish Regiment, put heart into them. Now they were able to take part in the libera-

² See Chapter VI.

tion of their country, and many of them resolved to enlist immediately. In January, 1918, Yudelovitz and a friend, Abraham Friedmann, went to the British Consul in San Francisco and offered to serve in the Jewish battalions. He thought they were not altogether sane, for how could Ottoman subjects fight in the Allied ranks? However, they succeeded in convincing him of their purpose, and he gave them first-class tickets to Chicago, whence they had to make their way to Windsor, Nova Scotia, where the recruits to the 39th battalion had their camp. However, Yudelovitz and his companion were impatient at having to wait in the cold Canadian winter, when they were anxious to be off to the Palestine front. They were also put out at having to remain in civilian clothes when the other recruits already had uniforms. The reason for this was the fact that they were Ottoman subjects; and it took urgent cabling to high quarters before they were finally allowed to don khaki. Yudelovitz writes:

Who can now describe the happiness we then experienced, and the singing and dancing in which all the members of the company indulged?

Our small group made a large Jewish flag, and whenever new contingents joined our ranks, we met them at the station, with the blue-and-white flag fluttering to greet them by the side of the Union Jack.

When the family grew into hundreds, we began to engage in public work. First . . . we sent all our civilian clothes to Hadassah in New York for transmission to the inhabitants of Palestine . . . In a fortnight we filled several dozen large cases with splendid clothes . . . and all kinds of good things . . .

After two months' drilling and training at Wind-

sor, we were told that we were going to Europe. One cannot imagine the joy of the Jewish volunteers from America at the prospect of going on board the ship that would carry them towards their goal—to fight for the liberation of our country among the armies of the great Powers . . .

On the ship crossing the Atlantic, one of the Jewish soldiers translated some popular English soldiers' songs into Hebrew, and the members of the battalion sang them in that form. The Passover festival was celebrated aboard ship with due ceremony. While at sea, the Jewish volunteers showed their prowess in the art of boxing against some Canadian volunteers who were travelling with them. After disembarking at Glasgow, the 39th went to London, where they were hospitably entertained by the Jewish community, especially by its Zionist members. Mrs. Weizmann and Mrs. Jabotinsky were very active in helping to make the volunteers' stay in London a pleasant one. While in London, Yudelovitz met Achad Ha'am, the great Zionist thinker and essayist, who spent the war years in England.

I told him that at the barracks it was suggested to us that we should volunteer early to go out to Egypt and to Palestine. I asked him whether he thought it worth while spending another few weeks in England or to go out straight away. With a dreamy look charged with secrecy, he said that, if they had promised to send us to the Palestine front immediately, we had no reason to hesitate, but that we should go. For, he said, England's promise for today was more certain than her promise for the future, and if we did not go immediately, there was the danger of our being sent to the front in France a little later.

They set sail from England and travelled through France by train.

More than once, among the foreign troops we met on the way, we came across Jewish soldiers. They wept with joy at seeing Jewish units, and they wanted to join our ranks. Later, many of them did so.

On arrival at the Italian port of Taranto, which was filled with troops, they marched through the streets singing the Jewish national anthem, *Hatikva*, with the Jewish colours at their head. The sea journey took three weeks, owing to the necessity of avoiding German U-boats; and on an evening in May, 1918, they steamed into Alexandria harbour. There, Yudelovitz was met by his parents, to whom he had succeeded in conveying news of his impending arrival. Although they were concerned at the prospect that their son would soon be in the firing line.

their faces were happy, and their eyes expressed pride at the sight of their eldest son's being among the nation's volunteers and continuing along the path of sacrifice and suffering that they had begun to traverse thirty-five years previously . . .

On seeing the reunion, the soldiers, who were standing on the ship's deck, loudly cheered Yudelovitz' parents. That same day they entrained for Cairo, and thence to a near-by army camp where the 38th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers was already stationed. The command of the 39th was then assumed by Colonel Margolin, whom Yudelovitz remembered from the time when he lived in Rishon Letzion.

A few weeks later, the Jewish battalions moved up to the front, which then ran from north of Tel Aviv, past Kfar Saba, along the hills to the north of Jeru-

saalem, and thence down to Jericho. They went by train along the railway line recently constructed by the British army; and although he did not know exactly where he was when they arrived at their destination after dark, Yudelovitz was thrilled at the thought that he was somewhere near his home village of Rishon Letzion. Indeed, he soon found that the camp was situated on the very boundary of the village; and next day he and some of his friends were given special leave to go and visit their relatives there.

On the 2nd September, they were told that they would not go into action on the northern front, but on the eastern front, in the Jordan Valley. They were consequently sent to Jerusalem, where they remained for a few days and began the eastward march on the 12th. Despite the growing heat as they descended from the hills, they all marched well. They could already hear the rumble of gunfire, and the abandoned vehicles and weapons and the carcasses of horses by the roadside bore witness to the enemy's hurried retreat. The heat was now intense, and there was no shade whatever; but, tired and thirsty as they were, they pressed on, for the Colonel wanted to reach Jericho as soon as possible.

On the 14th they were at the gates of Jericho and under shell fire. For several weeks they remained there. The heat was very trying, and snakes and scorpions abounded, but they remained in cheerful spirits.

Only a few hundred yards separate us from the Turks. Near us are some British and Indian troops. But most of the front is held by Jews. This is the most difficult spot along the entire Palestine front. The enemy's guns are never silent, but rain down shells upon us unceasingly.

It was at Wadi el-Auja, a few miles to the north of Jericho, that Yudelovitz and the other members of his company were stationed on *Yom Kippur*, which fell on the 16th September. That day, it so happened, the order was given to dig a trench to lay a telephone cable. Most of the men prepared to set about the task, though with a very heavy heart. But a few refused and several more followed their example. Yudelovitz, who was in charge of the party, alternately pleaded and threatened. The company commander, a Scotsman named Harris, also begged him to persuade the men to obey the order: he could well understand the Jews' reluctance to work on that sacred day, but they must obey. If they did so, he would let them have the day to themselves after doing a little work. Eventually, Yudelovitz persuaded the reluctant soldiers, and they all set to work.

Some could be heard singing the sad melody of *Kol Nidrei*... which seemed to give expression to Israel's long exile and eternal suffering. I shall never forget that *Yom Kippur*: Jewish soldiers singing *Kol Nidrei* and digging a trench, their rifles slung over their shoulders and the Shield of David flashing on their sleeves. After a few minutes' work, our commander gave us the order to stop and disperse. We saw in that upright Scot a symbol of Great Britain,—honest and sympathising with our feelings and sorrows. Faith in complete Redemption filled our hearts on that *Yom Kippur*.

One day, Captain Harris paraded the company and asked for volunteers to carry out a difficult and dangerous reconnaissance that night. No sooner had he uttered the words, 'Volunteers, two paces to the

front!' than the entire unit stepped forward as one man.

The Captain was an old and well-tried soldier, who had served in the Boer War. So moved was he at the sight, that tears of joy poured down his cheeks. He was proud, he said, of his volunteer soldiers. The ten men he selected carried out their mission in the best possible manner. They went out that night, crawling on all fours, their bayoneted rifles on their backs. Towards morning they all returned safe and sound, and reported what they had discovered on their reconnaissance.

At the end of the third week in September, a heavy barrage suddenly began. The guns boomed, aircraft flew above us, and countless shells were fired into the front line from both sides. We felt that something serious was afoot.

On the 23rd September, we left Wadi el-Auja and headed for the Jordan, in the direction of Allenby Bridge. Our artillery action had been successful. The enemy was pushed back and his line broken. Then came the order to advance. Colonel Margolin rode at the head of the battalion and his purpose was to be the first to reach es-Salt. He worked us very hard. It was a broiling day: the heat was like that of a furnace. Many soldiers were overcome by fatigue, others fell ill. But our officers showed their sympathy for us by dismounting and marching with us...

On the 24th, after twenty-four hours of continuous marching, we reached es-Salt. There we took several thousand Turkish soldiers prisoner, together with some hundreds of Germans. They were not men but shadows of men, and they were hungry and thirsty. We Jews, with our traditional compassion, felt sorry for them and gave them some of

our rations of food and water. They fell upon the food and drink like ravenous wolves. They kissed our feet to show their gratitude . . .

We stayed a week at es-Salt . . . and then returned to Jerusalem. During our stay there, Colonel Margolin was the governor of es-Salt, and the whole of Transjordan was under his authority.

Several dozen of our men lost their lives in these actions, and their graves are dispersed among the military cemeteries.

After the Armistice, the Jewish battalions were entrusted with guarding the lines of communication throughout Palestine and as far as the Sinai Desert. Our soldiers were to be seen at all the guard posts from Kantara to Syria, and some even got as far as the Taurus Mountains.

RECRUITING IN ERETZ YISRAEL

It was through no fault of their own that the members of the 40th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers were unable to go into action; the military authorities delayed the formation of the unit for so long that the fighting was over before it could reach the front.

It is Moshe Smilansky, who appears for the last time in these pages, who tells the story how the 40th battalion was formed. The British forces had already occupied the southern portion of Palestine, but the north was still held by the Turks. Rumours had spread concerning the existence of the Jewish battalions; but no one in the Yishuv had yet seen them, and their arrival was eagerly awaited. In the meantime, a movement was launched to form a third battalion, to be recruited among the Jews in the part of Palestine already freed from Turkish rule. Although it was originally intended to ascertain the reactions of the Yishuv

to the idea, a recruiting campaign was soon in full swing. But there was some opposition to the campaign, and it was voiced, strangely, by *Hapoel Hatzair*, one of the two main workers' parties. 'For,' Smilansky writes,

their main principle was that our work should not be done by strangers. Was it therefore right that the work of liberation should be done by strangers?... 'If we go,' they argued, 'who will watch the interests of Labour? If we are killed in the fighting, who will carry on our work?'... As if some dozens of youngsters were the entire nation, and as if, in the event of their loss, Israel would lose its redeemer... As if the main aspect of their work is, after all, nothing but the symbol it represents, and as if enlisting is nothing but a symbol, too...

There was also opposition on the grounds of anti-militarism. But the very nature of the recruiting campaign was defensive: to defend the Yishuv from the Turks, who had sworn to stamp out Zionism, and to throw off the shackles of servitude and falseness that bound the Yishuv, so that the Jewish people might be free to enter its homeland.

The campaign was abandoned after a short time, especially as it led to some bitterness of feeling between its proponents and opponents. Nevertheless it had succeeded in its purpose, for some five hundred persons registered for enlistment, including a hundred and fifty women. An inaugural meeting for the formation of the battalion was held in Tel Aviv on the 15th and 16th February, 1918, and the main questions of principle and practice were decided upon. 'Those decisions,' Smilansky writes, 'contained much warmth

and not a little naiveté—the characteristics of every enterprise upon its initiation.’

Resolutions adopted were as follows:

‘The liberation of Eretz Yisrael should not be completed without us.’

‘The battalion opens the gates of the country to every Jew.’

It was further envisaged that the battalion would participate in the war as long as it continued on the Palestine front; that the battalion’s preliminary training would take place at Jerusalem; and that, together with the combatant force, a labour battalion should be formed behind the front line.

A few days later, the committee formed at the inaugural meeting submitted a memorandum to the local British commander. In it, they embodied the resolutions adopted at the meeting and enlarged upon them. The men, it said, would serve in the infantry and cavalry and the women would serve as nurses and in other suitable capacities. The battalion wanted to link up with the other Jewish battalions when they arrived, and hoped that many Jews in the Allied forces would be enabled to join them, so as to form a united Jewish army which, alongside the British army, would fight for the liberation of the Jewish people and its country. They wanted training to begin as soon as possible, preferably in Jerusalem, otherwise in some other Jewish area of Palestine. The officers and instructors should, as far as possible, be Jews from the Allied forces. The language of command should be Hebrew. The uniform should include a specifically Jewish badge, and the battalion’s financial affairs and the maintenance of dependents should be dealt with by a special Jewish fund or through a loan

by the British Government. A more general declaration of aims was appended.

After the memorandum was submitted, it was expected that a speedy reply would be forthcoming, and some of the recruits, including Smilansky himself, settled their affairs or made arrangements for their business or occupation to be taken over by others. But, apart from an official confirmation that the memorandum had been received, nothing happened. The silence seemed ominous, and not only with regard to the question of the battalion. Meanwhile the attitude of the military authorities seemed to enhance the battalion's popularity among the Yishuv, and the number of recruits increased. The great majority of them were workers.

The workers at that time were divided into three groups. There was the *Poalei Zion* group, to which the members of *Hashomer* belonged; there was the *Hapoel Hatzair* group, which included the first settlers on the land; and in addition there was the 'non-party' group, which wielded considerable influence among the agricultural workers. The leaders of this last group, Shmuel Yavneeli and Berl Katznelson, joined in the recruiting. Many of their comrades followed them, and many members of *Hapoel Hatzair* also went over to volunteer. Not a few of the recruits came from bourgeois circles, especially from among graduates of the Herzlia secondary school, and a small number of private farmers' sons also joined up.

Eventually, the volunteers' offer was accepted, though not their terms: training would take place in Egypt, and the language of command would not be Hebrew. Although this news caused some grumbling, it did not dampen the general feeling of elation. On

the 20th Tammuz (the 30th June, 1918, four and a half months' after the memorandum was submitted), the anniversary of the death of Theodor Herzl was marked by a large rally in Tel Aviv.

Large numbers of people came, the blue-white armlet on their right arms, and renewed enthusiasm in their hearts. The enthusiasm reached its peak—not only among the volunteers, but also among the throng from the towns and villages—during the ceremony of presenting the flag. The flag had been made by the women of Tel Aviv, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann presented it to the battalion. A Scroll of the Law was presented to us, too, by the Tel Aviv community.

It was morning. The volunteers were drawn up in ranks outside the little synagogue, and people crowded all around, on the ground, at windows and on roof-tops. Dr. Weizmann³, tall, pale and with fiery eyes, held the flag in his hand and addressed the volunteers:

'On behalf of the entire nation, I present this flag to you. . . Preserve it intact. Let no stain sully it . . . Return it, holy and pure, to the place destined for it in the future. . .'

An electric thrill passed through the crowd. Something impaired the sight of one's eyes. Tears?.. Before whom and before what are you standing?.. As if from a distance I heard the voice:

'Two thousand years ago, Titus dashed the flag from our hands. Now it is in our hands once again. . .'

Next day, the volunteers left by train for Lydda, where they were to be joined by the volunteers from

³ Dr. Weizmann was instrumental in securing the Balfour Declaration. He became the first President of Israel.

Jerusalem, with whom they would make the journey to Egypt. It was a solemn moment as they moved off, watched by a large crowd. One of the leaders of *Ha-poel Hatzair*, who had consistently opposed the recruitment of the battalion, went up to Smilansky before the train started, and said: 'All the same, something great has happened here today.'

However, soon after the train left Tel Aviv, it was stopped: Some of the women volunteers had boarded it as well, and they had to be removed. At Lydda, the Tel Aviv volunteers met those from Jerusalem, and together they numbered over a thousand. As night fell, they all left for Egypt.

The battalion encamped at Kantara, on the Egyptian border, for ten days; and, though it was only a temporary camp, the volunteers pitched their tents with a feeling of elation. They ranged their tents in streets, which they named in honour of Herzl, Weizmann, Jabotinsky, Moses Hess, Achad Ha'am, and Ber Borochoy. They also wrote slogans on the sand with sea-shells.

Spirits were high. There was singing in the morning before drill and singing in the evening after drill, until the bugle signalled that it was bedtime. . . They were Hebrew songs, songs of Eretz Yisrael. The British soldiers who passed by the camp shrugged their shoulders with a mixture of surprise and admiration: to volunteer, now?

DEFENDERS OF THE YISHUV

ARAB hostility to Jewish resettlement in Eretz Yisrael had not been wanting under Ottoman rule, but it was mainly unorganised. With the advent of British rule, and the growth of national aspirations in the territories inhabited by Arabs, that hostility increased and was organised on a larger scale. As a consequence, the entire period of the Mandatory administration in Palestine was punctuated by Arab riots every few years, culminating in the war which saw the rise of the State of Israel in 1948. The first serious clashes with Arabs took place in 1920. In February, the two tiny *kvutzot* of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi, after being besieged by thousands of armed Arabs, had to be abandoned temporarily. In April, a veritable pogrom took place in the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, and for three days Jews were attacked and their possessions plundered beneath the eyes of British troops. In April of the following year, serious riots broke out in Jaffa and the surrounding area. This chapter is devoted to the epic of Tel Chai and to the defence of Petach Tikva in the 1921 riots.

TEL CHAI AND KFAR GILADI

The attack upon Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi arose out of the political and military circumstances that prevailed in northern Galilee at the end of the first World War. Britain and France had not finally agreed upon the line of demarcation between their respective areas of occupation. The area of Upper Galilee lying between Yesud Hamaala, to the south, and Metulla,

to the north, which had been occupied by French troops, was left a no-man's-land, where bands of armed bedouin, eager for plunder, roamed unchecked. The situation, however, was further complicated by the setting up of an autonomous Arab region in Syria. There Feisal proclaimed himself king a few days after the events described below. But the French looked askance upon this development, and Feisal's reign in Damascus was shortlived. Syria became a French mandated territory, and Feisal became king of Iraq. At the time of the events described in this chapter, the French were seeking ways to put an end to the autonomous régime in Syria, which led to strong anti-French feeling on the part of the Arab nationalists. Troops of the army got together by Feisal began attacking Christian-Arab villages, whose inhabitants were in sympathy with the French, and they later encountered the French forces as well. The bedouin in the Chula Plain were also enlisted in the Arab national cause, which served them with an opportunity to indulge their appetite for marauding.

It was in this confused situation that the northernmost Jewish villages of Metulla, Kfar Giladi and Tel Chai found themselves at the beginning of 1920. At first, Metulla was occupied by French troops, but upon their withdrawal it had to be abandoned, since there were not enough men to defend it, Kfar Giladi and Tel Chai (which adjoin one another) were thus isolated and subjected to a prolonged siege. Although the attacking Arabs did not at first make the Jewish villages their direct objective, there was little doubt in the settlers' minds that they would have to stand at bay, and they resolved to brave all hazards, since they believed it politically inexpedient to leave the spot,

and they wanted to defend the honour of the Yishuv. As their numbers were pitifully small, they sent out repeated requests for reinforcements; but the leaders of the Yishuv—with the exception of the workers' representatives and Menachem Ussishkin—wanted them to evacuate the two villages and did not decide to send help until it was too late. However, the defence of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi vindicated the settlers' determination. For the whole of the narrow strip of territory up to the northernmost point at Metulla was subsequently included within the Palestine Mandated area, and the heroic defence put up by the settlers became an inspiration to the entire Yishuv.

The description of this great episode in the history of the Yishuv is taken from the diary and letters of Yosef Trumpeldor, whose accounts of the Zion Mule Corps was given in the preceding chapter. After the disbandment of the Corps, Trumpeldor went back to Russia and organised the *chalutz* movement there, and returned to Palestine after the revolution. The story of the defence of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi, which Trumpeldor directed, is given mainly in his own words, as written in his diary and letters.

4th January, 1920.

Last night we learned that the French were to come tonight or tomorrow morning. These tidings strengthened the good spirits of both *kvutzot*. A meeting was held, and it was decided, first, to increase the night watch to 12 (three watches of four men each), and second, in the event of the attack, to prevent the armed marauders from reaching the house. In addition, it was decided at Tel Chai to go out to work tomorrow to sow wheat under the protection of a squad of watchmen.

Early this morning the French reached the Chula Plain. With the aid of artillery and machine-guns, they set fire to several villages, and by about 10.30 they pushed the Arabs back into the hills. But at that hour, approximately, the Arabs went over to the attack, mainly from the direction of the hills. The French, who were unprepared for this assault, and who did not have the necessary forces at their disposal, began to withdraw.

At 11.30 a.m., the Arab attackers closed in on Khamra¹, which appeared to have been in use then as the French headquarters base. We were compelled to stop working in the fields and to return home. At that moment the last of the French left Khamra and beat a retreat to Metulla, and the Arabs began streaming towards it from all sides. The unarmed Arabs in the vicinity also went towards Metulla, apparently in order to loot. We removed the guard and returned to the house. It was a difficult and fateful moment. Something oppressed and made the hearts of many of us tremble. We asked ourselves the question: If a French battalion, armed with artillery and machine-guns, could not withstand the Arabs, how could we—a tiny group armed only with rifles—do so? Scarcely one of us doubted that the Arabs, who were working themselves up into a frenzy, were bound to attack us, and soon. The question, whether it was expedient to flee to Metulla, hovered in the air, but no one at Tel Chai dared give it utterance. On the contrary, at the meeting that was hastily convened, it was definitely resolved to remain

¹ The *kvutza* set up by members of *Hashomer* (see Chapter XXVI). Their families lived at Metulla.

where we are at all costs . . . When the decisive moment came, we would fight for our existence to the utmost limit, and we would, of course, try and sell our lives, as dearly as possible. At Kfar Giladi, the question of evacuation was raised, but was rejected by a large majority. Similarly, a proposal was turned down to concentrate both defence points in one spot. Here, the suggestion was put forward that any members who should try and leave the place at a moment of danger should be shot.

Meanwhile, events in the battlefield took their course. At midnight, a black column of smoke rose above one of the huts at Khamra. Evidently the Arabs had set fire to it. Half an hour later, a column of smoke rose from the second hut as well. At the end of two hours, all that could be seen on the site of Khamra were two smouldering mounds. 'Khamra is no more,' someone said. The words, 'is no more', froze all our hearts and induced a feeling of death-like frigidity and sadness. Thoughts about the fall of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi seemed to hover in the air; and, as if in answer to those unspoken thoughts, came the reply: 'We shall not yield Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi so easily as that.' And someone added: 'Khamra has fallen, but Khamra will arise.'

We saw, through field-glasses, the French retreating in disorder to Metulla, and the Arabs attacking them from all sides. Many of them, both armed and unarmed, were running about on the path leading past Tel Chai. The order was given to bring the cattle into the farmyard, to prepare a quantity of water, and to take up defence posi-

tions. The gates and doors were shut; but the windows, on the other hand, were opened wide as rifle rests had been prepared on the window-sills. The Arabs, realising that the Jews were ready to defend themselves, passed by our positions warily.

Towards evening, an Arab from Khalsa², whom we knew, came to us. He was as dark as a Negro, with a black beard . . . and told us that the Arabs had captured Metulla. The French, he said, had suffered heavy losses, and the Arab forces were heading for Jedida and Beirut. We did not believe the news about the fall of Metulla; nevertheless, we increased the night watch. We instituted four watches of five men in each (a three-hour shift each by night and by day).

5th January.

The night passed peacefully. Towards morning, an old Arab came from Khalsa. He told us he had been sent by Kamel Effendi³ with the proposal that we should transfer all our possessions of value to Khalsa for safe keeping. In answer to our question why we should do so, he said: 'A large body of Arabs are on their way to occupy Metulla, Jedida and Beirut. As they pass by you, they will rob you of all your possessions and valuables.' We told him that as the Jews were not at war with the Arabs, the Arab troops would consequently do nothing to harm us. As for marauders, we had wea-

² A village at the foot of the hills on the western side of the Chula Plain. It is now inhabited by Jews and is designed to grow into a town. Today it is known as Kiryat Shmoneh.

³ The leading notable of Khalsa.

pons for our protection. Some time later, our swarthy friend came back again and confirmed the belief that large numbers of Arabs were streaming northwards, and that, in his opinion, we would do well to transfer those of our possessions worth keeping to be held in safe custody at Khalsa. However, we were not so much concerned about transferring our possessions from Tel Chai (and Kfar Giladi), as we were about how to get through to us the articles we so badly need. We have not enough men (we ought to have between 40 and 50 in each position), and not all of them are armed with rifles (at Tel Chai we have 25 men and 18 rifles; at Kfar Giladi, 18 men and 16 rifles). We need 1,000, or at least 500, rounds per rifle, but we have only 100. We have no hand-grenades at all, nor have we machine-guns. Our food stocks are becoming depleted. Even our stock of flour is low, so that in another week we shall actually face starvation. Some of us are without boots. We are short of linens and blankets. But how are we to get all these things (or at any rate part of them)? We are sure that our comrades in the south are ready to help us, but is the road clear? Our belief is that as long as bands of victory-drunk marauders are roaming the roads, the way to us is fraught with danger. We do not want our comrades coming to our assistance to be ambushed by marauders. Nevertheless, we think that, in a day or two, French regular troops will come along, and that the marauding bands will then go back into the hills or disperse peacefully among their villages, after which road communications will doubtless be restored to normal. Till then, it would be useful if you could

send us some food by means of Arab camel-drivers. As soon, however, as the roads are cleared, the opportunity must be seized to send us all we need. This we will have to do immediately, as we do not know what the future has in store. It is possible that, after they have quelled the revolt, the French will return to their regular bases, and that the marauding bands will reappear in northern Galilee.

6th January.

Yesterday an Arab got through to us. He was sent by —. He said he had been sent to Metulla, but would not go there. We informed — of the situation in a note, which we handed to the Arab. We were afraid to write much, as the Arab was unknown to us, and he could show no proof to substantiate the correctness of his utterances.

We also received a letter from — in Metulla, yesterday. He told us that the French had concentrated in Metulla and Jedida, and that the Arabs were laying siege to them. Seventy Frenchmen, including a number of officers, had been taken prisoner, and 30 had been killed or wounded . . . He said that the *kvutza* of Metulla had been destroyed, and that many of the private farmers had run away, apparently to Sidon. The letter clearly showed us that the position continues to be grave. We maintained a strong guard (20 men), like yesterday. We did not even think about working in the fields, but we were in good spirits, and we sang and joked. Even the girls (there are three at Tel Chai and one at Kfar Giladi) did not falter for a moment. Naturally, in times of danger we

tried to put them in the safest places. The new young men, that is, those who arrived in the country recently, are brave lads on the whole. We are in constant communication with Kfar Giladi. Their watchmen come to us, and we go to them. Sometimes we use dogs as letter-carriers. We have agreed on a system of rifle-shots as signals . . .

Evening of the 6th January.
This afternoon we finally saw the French aircraft (two of them). For a long time they circled over Metulla, us, the Chula and the hills on the other side of the Chula. Intense fire was opened on them from the hills: one could tell that hundreds of rifles were used, but no movement of Arabs could be observed. On the contrary, an unusual stillness prevailed (like yesterday). No one was to be seen in the fields, and the villages looked as if their inhabitants had died. The roads were deserted: only those going to fight or to rob could be seen, from time to time, climbing in groups up the hillsides. In the evening there was a little flurry owing to some bullets, which flew over our building. We did not know where they came from, or what they were aimed at. There was a slight stir among the watchmen, but it ended at once, since we had already become so used to shots and to being under fire as to take it for granted.

The Defence Committee has decided that the diary kept by Trumpeldor should be regarded as its official record, and that from time to time it should be sent to the south, so that our comrades may know what is happening here and what they have to do to help their friends in the north. The building labourer, who was working here recently, has decided to go to the south, and he will start this very night. With him we hope to send you the first part of our record, together with some letters.

7th January, 8 a.m.

The building worker went off with the letters at 5 a.m. At about 7, the watchman saw an Arab walking along the path between the wood and the house. He was armed with a Mauser, which he hid beneath his cloak. The watchman and another comrade went down towards him. The Arab stood still and began shouting that he would not go any further, that he would return, that he did not know. The watchman tried to reassure him by telling him that nothing would happen to him, that he was free to go by the path, and that his (the watchman's) intention had only been to chat with him. But in vain, the Arab turned and fled . . . This is not the first incident showing that the Arabs are becoming afraid of us. They evidently know that we are not badly armed and that we are prepared to defend ourselves. Consequently, they evince towards us a feeling which, if not of respect, is at least one of a little fear. Previously, Arabs used to pass frequently along the paths by the house. But now they go very cautiously and by a very roundabout way.

10.30 a.m.

At 8.30, several guns boomed, and the shells whistled through the air. Apparently they were French guns. Then came some isolated rifle shots, not far off, but not very close. No sooner had we taken up our defence positions . . . than several lines of Arabs were suddenly observed along the path from Khalsa into the *wadi*. They were about a hundred strong, and they evidently thought to seize the nearby ridge, so as to attack us from there. Indeed, that was our least well-defended flank. We therefore set to at once and arranged four more rifle rests on the floor above the stable. We waited. Some of our comrades' spirits began to flag. Just then, a

young Arab approached the house. Shaking with fright, he told us that he had been sent by —. Tearing open a seam in his trousers, he drew forth a note. In it, — informed us that he had visited Damascus, where Mahmoud Fouar had assured him that the Jews of Upper Galilee would come to no harm. He also asked to be informed about our position. The Arab messenger said that on his way he had met numerous armed Arabs. He was obviously in great fear, for he continually urged us to make haste in writing our reply. Indeed, so frightened was he, that he lost his appetite and refused to take refreshment. Only when we had fulfilled his request did he take half a loaf of bread as he went. Our reply was short, as we had sent detailed information with the building worker. Incidentally, there had been a little discussion among ourselves whether or not to write that we were firmly resolved to remain. Some objected, without giving reasons, though it was clear that their opposition was due to faint-heartedness. Nevertheless, we decided, by a majority, to state our resolve. As the Arab understood Hebrew, we were forced to discuss the matter in Russian.

1 p.m.

An Arab has just arrived from Ayelet Hashachar with letters. They write that they do not clearly know our position. They have heard that Khamra has been burnt, and that everything has been taken from Tel Chai. They want to send us everything we need but do not know whether the road is clear. They also inform us that a movement of Arabs has begun in the Jordan Valley . . . If only we were able to rely, neither on the English nor on the French, but on ourselves! . . . In our vicinity all is quiet again. The Arabs are coming down from the hills in groups and returning to their villages.

8th January.

... Yesterday some French aircraft were overheard, and they came over again today. Several shells were fired into the Arab concentrations; but without infantry a complete victory cannot be gained, and there is no infantry as yet...

At 10 a.m., two comrades from Metulla got through to us and brought us news. On Sunday, the French had begun an orderly retirement. When, however, the first detachment reached Metulla, it grew confused and, apparently forgetting that another detachment was following, opened fire upon it. Inside the village, the French fired on a group of our comrades who were walking about the streets armed at the time: in their fear, the French took them for bedouin. Nearly all the farmers and workers have left Metulla and gone to Sidon. A large part of their possessions has been plundered by the Arab police and soldiers. The Arabs, who surrounded the village on all sides, opened fire on it and inflicted casualties on the French troops. Finally, however, the French brought up reinforcements to the number of 1,500. The Arabs have been driven out of Metulla, and the French have gone over to the offensive... Communications have been restored with Metulla today, and several of our members have gone there to procure food and arms.

It was decided to send — and Yehuda the shepherd to the south tonight. The object of their mission is, first, to see for themselves whether our comrades in the south can come to us; and, second, to insist firmly upon our demand that all our requirements should be sent to us at once. Our food stocks are giving out. The use of sugar has been restricted. There is no tobacco at all. New arrivals have no underwear to change into. Nevertheless, morale is generally high, and cheerfulness prevails. In the

evenings our hearty singing resounds throughout the neighbourhood.

9th January.

In the evenings we sing, and often we have discussions as well. Last night, for example, an animated debate developed over the question what we should do if attacked by marauders, and how we should behave if attacked by regular Arab troops. Some *chaverim* [comrades] expressed the opinion . . . that we can and should defend ourselves only against marauders, but that if regular troops come here, we ought to hand our arms over to them. Others, again, said they would defend themselves against all comers. They pointed out that, in an encounter with marauders, one of the attackers might be killed or wounded. In that event, help would undoubtedly be rushed to them to enable them to avenge the blood that had been spilt, and their helpers might well include troops. What should we do then? If we hand ourselves over to them, we shall die shamefully . . . But if we defend ourselves, we will, in the first place, save the honour of the Yishuv; and secondly, we may remain alive—at any rate, some of us may. So a simple calculation shows us that we have to defend ourselves and resist all attackers . . . Some members added that the Arab army as a whole would not attack us, since it had apparently not been given permission to do so. Thus we would only have to defend ourselves against marauders, and there was consequently no reason to weaken our resolve by loose conjecture. That would be superfluous and harmful.

Only a few of the *chaverim* took part in this discussion (the others were already asleep). We thought of calling a general meeting today, to ascertain the views of all the members on this question. A large proportion wanted to adopt a resolu-

tion not to resist regular troops; others were going to insist that any waverers had better leave while the going was good. Their place would be taken by men with definite convictions. However, the meeting did not take place. Without anything being said, we felt that, when the decisive moment came, we would all come to a single conclusion.

A detachment of cavalry, about 50 strong, left Metulla today and went down into the Chula. On the way, they came under light fire and returned to the village. It is quiet in our vicinity: the Arabs are scarcely to be seen. But the position is still unclear.

In his entry next day, Trumpeldor discusses the qualities of the defenders of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi. He classifies them under three heads: brave, of medium courage, and faint-hearted, the second category being the most numerous. Since all measures were taken by a vote, the men of medium courage tended now to the one extreme, now to the other, thus giving their decisions a makeshift, and sometimes a contradictory, character. Not all the faint-hearted ones showed their feelings, and one of them used to volunteer for dangerous assignments in order to overcome his fear. The men who were classified as courageous were of two kinds: tried veterans, and youngsters who made a great show of bravery but who still had to be put to the test before it could be known how they would behave in an emergency. One of the girls, Yehudit, came within this category: she was always finding excuses to get into danger, despite the admonitions of her elders. But, for all the evident shortcomings of some of them, Trumpeldor finds that on the whole they were a united, comradely body who would stand firm in the hour of trial. He continues:

If only the Gogols, the Dostoievskys and the other Russian writers could have seen this group of brave, determined lads, their Jewish types would certainly have been portrayed quite differently. Two tiny Jewish settlements in the midst of an angry sea of rebels—a sea that threatens to engulf them in a twinkling—and only forty brave lads standing fearlessly at their posts . . .

A French cavalry patrol went out into the Chula again today and returned to Metulla. Although the position is still unclear, we have decided to go out and work in the fields tomorrow. It is a pity to lose this precious time for sowing wheat.

Some of our comrades who went to Metulla today tell us that the village is in a very difficult position. It is now suffering from its defenders more than it did from its attackers. Most of the French troops in Metulla are Algerians and Muslims. They are Arabs and speak Arabic, and are not very markedly different from the rebels, with whom they are in sympathy . . . The attitude of the Frenchmen and of the Algerian Christians is very different, but their numbers are not large. Not only have they no sympathy for the rebels, but conceive for them a fierce hatred, and they long to take cruel vengeance upon them . . . On the other side of the picture, the Arabs are not sitting by idly . . .

However, the Algerians, Muslim and Christian equally, are alike in their desire to rob and pillage the Jewish residents of Metulla. A large proportion of the farmers have gone to Sidon, where they are undergoing privation. Those who stayed behind are trying to wind up their affairs and escape. When our cart arrived in Metulla, farmers crowded round it and begged us to transfer their possessions to us. We could not, of course, fulfil this request, and we decided to transfer the possessions of

the *kvutza* at Metulla. The livestock from there had already been taken to Tel Chai...

12th January.

... The Algerians are plundering everywhere they can lay their hands on in the village. The members of the *kvutza* at Metulla were several times forced to use their weapons to defend their property against them. The property left behind by the farmers could not be saved... The Algerians argued: 'It does not belong to you; the owners have run away'... And they went on looting, despite the vehement protests of our comrades. Unfortunately, the farmers are not organised, and they lack the requisite energy. The school at Metulla is, of course, closed... French troops are now quartered there.

Today the French burned the Arab village of Qila, and they propose to burn a number of other villages. No Arabs are to be seen... But there is also no sign of the Arabs' surrendering. They evidently intend to continue the fight.

We are carrying on with the work in the field under a group of guards. We are making haste to utilise the precious days to sow wheat. But it looks as if rain is coming and will interfere with the work...

Guard duties in both *kvutzot* are being duly carried out in accordance with the previous arrangement, but the men are somewhat tired, and discipline has grown lax. They turn up for duty in a dilatory fashion and are late in going to their posts. They do not maintain vigilance during their watch, and sometimes they leave their posts altogether. All this led to a discussion on the subject of discipline. Some of them stated bluntly that they were not soldiers and would not accept discipline. However, the great majority disapproved of such an attitude.

In this connection, and in connection with our situation generally, we are thinking a great deal about the fate of our only battalion⁴. Will it, too, be disbanded in the near future? . . . A thousand young men are ready to disperse to their own comfortable homes. It is true that they are tired, and also that they have to a great extent been treated wrongly. But does that affect the issue itself? . . .

13th January.

Work went on only till midday today, as heavy rain fell in the afternoon. Towards evening, — came to us from the south and brought a little food and some letters. He told us that, according to rumours, the partisan war would still go on. So, as we had previously envisaged, matters are not going to end so soon. We held a meeting at Tel Chai which was attended by representatives from Kfar Giladi. We decided to send out a call once again for help to be sent to us from the south. . . We go on asking for help while it is still not too late. Will they hear and listen in the south? Will they succeed in using the road while it is still open?

14th January.

Quiet. We worked at a distance in the field. There is not a single Arab in the vicinity. They seem to have gone into hiding, to have disappeared. Two of our comrades, one from Tel Chai and one from Kfar Giladi, have gone to Sidon, to see —, who sent for them. We gave them instructions to try

⁴ The 40th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (*see* the previous chapter). This battalion never went into action, and at the time in question its future seemed obscure. Men were leaving and new recruits were not coming forward to fill the gaps, and many of those who remained were tired of what seemed to be a purposeless existence, now that the war was over.

and secure the means required for the defence of the two positions.

Owing to the quiet, there had begun to be talk of reducing the number of men on guard duty. The young women, no doubt as a result of boredom, brought up the old-new question of the woman in the *kvutza*. 'Why should we work only in the house? We also want to work in the fields, together with everyone else. . . ' Endless grumbling and complaints. They seemed to think that someone wants to attack their privileges, to deprive them of their freedom. Every word uttered by a man was suspect and aroused their antagonism. Thus they argued at length, sometimes joking, sometimes serious, sometimes laughing, sometimes angry. But in the end the question was left unresolved. The young women remained unsatisfied, and they went back to their rooms almost insulted. Actually, the question is a simple one: it is a technical question concerning the manner in which the domestic economy is to be run. No one in the *kvutzot* is opposed to solving the question in a manner satisfactory to the women. Indeed, the men are perhaps even more desirous of finding a solution than they are, since it would finally enable the number of man and women in every *kvutza* to be equal; in other words, it would be possible to lead a normal family life.

The entry in Trumpeldor's diary of the 15th January tells how he and five others went out to Khamra to see what they could salvage from the burned-out settlement. The destruction was very great, but they succeeded in retrieving a few articles worth taking, and hitched themselves to the cultivator and set out for home. They left the cultivator in one of their own fields, so that their comrades could harness the

mules to it and bring it to the farmyard after work. As they were on the way back, not more than a kilometre from the house, they heard shots, and instantly realised that Tel Chai was being attacked. Trumpeldor devised a plan of action to communicate with the house, and divided his party into two groups of three, while another man was sent off to Kfar Giladi to give news of what was happening. By each group's alternately advancing and then giving covering fire, they reached the house. Then they returned to help their comrades make their way back from the field. When this was done, Trumpeldor and his men, reinforced by a party of four from Kfar Giladi, set out to attack the marauders. But the Arabs had fled before they could get to grips with them. Trumpeldor continues:

We returned home. In one of the walls of the house we found several bullets. . . None of the comrades was hurt. A discussion ensued, in which opinions were voiced and impressions given. It appeared that during the exchange of fire, about 70 rounds were expended. 'Another few such incidents and we'll remain without ammunition,' was the comment of some, who reproved those who had done the shooting. 'You must calculate the number of rounds you use.' But those who had been involved replied: 'We had to protect our comrades as they were retiring towards the house with the mules. At such a time one does not reckon the number of rounds. . .'

This last clash shows that no reliance is to be placed upon the assurances of the Arab leaders. It shows that we must be ready to meet an assault, and that it is essential for us to have a sufficient number of men (50 in each position) and all the

other things we have written about more than once. But when will we have all these things here? In the south, they apparently believe that the situation here will change shortly, and that they will not have to send us anything. But we are all the time becoming more and more convinced that the whole affair has grown more complicated, and that it will continue for a long time, perhaps for longer than a year. It is therefore essential, not only to strengthen the existing positions, but to establish new ones, so that the number of men in them will reach at least 250 . . . But who is going to do all this? Of whom can we demand it? Who will bear the responsibility for the inaction? . . . It is worth noting that the latest incident has shown that among the new arrivals in the country are a large proportion of brave and stalwart lads.

16th January.

Today we went out to work half an hour later than usual. We have slightly increased the number of watchmen. We were afraid of a repetition of yesterday's events, but the day passed quietly. Only the rain forced us to return home.

17th January.

Tonight — arrived here with ten men from the south . . . But they did not bring food or, most important, blankets. Blankets have become the most urgent question with us now, if we exclude the question of underwear.

The comrades who were in Metulla today inform us that the French have evacuated the place, leaving only a hundred troops behind, and they may go as well. Against that eventuality we need fifty men to settle in the village, otherwise it will be destroyed and pillaged by the bands of marauders who are roaming the vicinity.

Of the eleven who came, three are going back again. Six of those who came earlier are returning home. Thus the number of men, instead of increasing, is growing less. But we are hopeful of the south and are waiting. Our spirits are high. As before, the sound of our cheerful singing resounds throughout our neighbourhood.

25th January.

The entire week has passed quietly. A few days ago, our bearded friend from Khalsa visited us again, this time accompanied by another Arab dressed in a clean, neat uniform. The latter told us that he had been an officer in the Turkish army, and that he was now in Fouar's⁵ army... In another week they would take Metulla and go on from there to Jedida... They had been ordered not to harm the Jews. In the end, the officer disclosed the purpose of his visit, which was to ascertain the truth of a report by local Arabs that French troops were quartered with us.

The Arabs went. We did not place any reliance in what they said, and decided to set a strong guard, especially while work in the fields is in progress.

There has so far been no assault or attack, but nevertheless a large part of the French and all their artillery have left Metulla. The opinion has been voiced that this has been done in connection with the expected attack. Today a farmer came to us from Metulla, and reported that a rumour was circulating in the village to the effect that the remaining French troops would also leave shortly. If this is true, the village is seriously threatened. If only we had another fifty armed men, we could

⁵ The Arab rebel commander.

send them into the place as soon as the French leave. Will fifty men come in time?

A Jewish mounted policeman from the south got through to us today. He told us that the Arabs had decided to begin their attack this Friday (the 30th January). He also told us that riots have broken out in Beirut, where several hundred Arabs have been killed.

26th January.

Late yesterday afternoon, a young man came to us from Metulla. As he was on his way here, he said, he saw the French leaving. In the evening, we called a meeting. The French withdrawal from Metulla has made our own position graver. The reason the French were leaving was no doubt due to their being unable to depend upon their Tunisian troops. The Arabs, however, would regard the withdrawal as evidence that the French were yielding in the face of their superior strength. When the fact of the withdrawal becomes known to the local Arabs, they will certainly come and loot the village, and, after their success there, they will try their fortunes at the other two posts (Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi) as well. The following three resolutions were therefore adopted: (1) to go out to work in the fields (provided no large-scale movement of Arabs is noted) under increased guard; (2) to go up to Metulla and ascertain the actual position there; (3) to go to Khalsa and arrange to have some wheat ground, as there is only enough flour for another few days.

Owing to rain, we did not go out to work today. Perhaps no movement of Arabs was observed for the same reason. Two men went up to Metulla, one from Tel Chai and one from Kfar Giladi. On their return, they reported that the French had left the village. About ten farmers were still living

there, and when night fell, they barricaded themselves inside their dwellings and anxiously waited for the Arabs to come. But the Arabs have not yet come. Once again we deplored the absence of those fifty men . . . Our two comrades went to Khalsa, where they were amicably received by the Bey. They were given sweetened coffee, and were promised that their request to have their wheat ground would be fulfilled.

28th January.

Yesterday evening, one of the young farmers from Metulla came to us. He has a fellow-feeling for the workers, and his purpose was to seek our advice how to arrange the defence of the village, now that the French have left completely.

A meeting was held in Tel Chai last night to consider the matter and another meeting was held in Kfar Giladi this morning. In both places, an animated discussion developed over the question of principle whether we should or should not extend help to Metulla. For Metulla is a mainly non-Jewish settlement, and its farmers are merchants and middlemen, who till their land with the aid of Arab tenant-cultivators and refuse to give employment to Jewish workers. As soon as the trouble is over, the farmers will return to the village they had deserted in time of danger, they will eject the workers, who might have to shed their blood in defence of the village, and everything will be as before. Perhaps it would be better to abandon the village to its fate . . . Then, when all was over, young men would go and establish a new Jewish village based on Jewish labour and Hebrew culture on the site of the old village, which had estranged itself from the Jewish worker. However, the great majority of the *chaverim* took the view that help should be extended to the village; first, be-

cause in time of danger one does not scrutinise things too closely or rake up the past; second, because it was not to be contemplated that, upon the fall of Metulla, the northern frontier of Palestine should pass south of it. But at the same time, the majority found that, because of our present situation, we could not extend immediate help to the village. . .

They informed the Defence Committee at Ayelet Hashachar accordingly, and asked for fifty men to be sent to them with all haste, since they could not spare a single man for the defence of Metulla.

At this point, the pages of Trumpeldor's diary that have come down to us end. The tale, however, is continued in the letters written by Trumpeldor to the Defence Committee in Ayelet Hashachar and Tiberias.

7th February, 1920.

I shall briefly recount yesterday's attack on us. You will be given details later, in the diary. On the morning of the 6th February, I went, together with three other *chaverim* by cart to Metulla, to fetch fuel and straw. Three *chaverim* went into the field, not far from the house, — two of them to plough and the third to guard them. At about 11.30, two horsemen were seen coming from behind the hill, on the northern side, and they immediately opened fire on the workers. They were supported by other Arabs, who had hidden behind the hill, to the north and east. While this was happening, two Arabs on foot approached the *chaverim* who were working and tried to seize their animals. The watchman then began to reply to the fire, and the workers tried to lead the animals back to the house. However, the animals, being frightened by the shooting, became entangled in their harness,

and the workers had to leave them in order to run back to the house and get help. The watchman, too, retired to behind the hill, from where it was more convenient to shoot. A few minutes later about ten *chaverim* came out into the field. Sher was in the lead, with the others. The firing on either side grew more intense. Suddenly, Sher cried out, 'I'm hit,' and fell. A bullet had pierced his body. One bullet hole was in his right side, the other in his chest, almost opposite the heart. The doctor who was with us at Tel Chai attended to him immediately, but it was already too late. Half an hour later, he was brought home dead. Now we are going to dig his grave. Once again, we demand that we be sent the requisite number of men. If help fails to arrive in good time, it may be too late.

8th February.

... Today, at midday, several young farmers from Metulla came to us. They were tired and covered with sweat from the haste of their journey. They told us that yesterday afternoon about fifty mounted Arabs came to the village and demanded three sheep. Instead of three, however, they took thirteen. They also seized a rifle and some other articles. A few of the farmers who resisted were beaten.

The young farmers who had been with us at the time, only got to know what had happened after their return towards evening, and they arranged a watch for the night. The night passed quietly, but this morning, at about eight, they were again visited by a party, consisting of fifteen mounted Arabs and five on foot. The intruders began looting. The young farmers, who numbered between eight and ten, wanted to open fire on them, but the older people, and especially the women with children,

begged them not to do so for fear of being killed by the marauders. The young men were finally compelled to agree, and hid their weapons. The Arabs stayed in the village for half an hour or so, and in that short time they managed to steal a mare, three mules, a she-ass, and about fifty sheep. They also took various articles, including some silver coins and two rifles. They tried to seize the daughter of one of the farmers, and it was only with great difficulty that her parents succeeded in rescuing her. After that latest incident, the farmers sent their women and children to Sidon. Eight of the farmers' sons, armed with rifles, have come over to us (to Kfar Giladi and Tel Chai). Six elderly farmers are staying in Metulla (unarmed, of course).

After learning of the most recent events at Metulla, we discussed transferring possessions of value from them to us, and were about to send 20 men with mules for the purpose. However, suddenly we heard shots. The firing was at Kfar Giladi, but the exchange did not last long.

... The question of going up to Metulla has to be deferred for the time being. Bands of marauders are becoming more numerous in the vicinity, and there is more movement generally. We can go on waiting for help no longer. Make haste,—or else it will be too late. Get the necessary financial appropriation at once, and hurry up and send us the new men.

For the Defence Committee,
YOSEF TRUMPELDOR

9th February.

The crucial moment has come. This morning, our comrade — returned from Khalsa and told us the following in —'s name. Mahmoud Fouar has not yet returned from Damascus. Another man has

been temporarily appointed in his place, a former Turkish officer and an inveterate enemy of the Jews. A military council was held on the 6th February, and it was decided, under the influence of the new commander, to wipe out the Jewish population in Upper Galilee . . .

Thus we, the workers of Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi, are faced with the possibility, or rather the inevitability, of an attack, not merely by a gang of bandits, but by regular troops. The news has naturally had a somewhat disquieting effect upon us. Meetings were held in both posts to discuss the situation, and, after fierce arguments, the following decisions were adopted:

At Kfar Giladi it was unanimously agreed that: (1) everyone is to stay where he belongs; (2) in order to defend the three posts, at least 200 men are needed (100 for Kfar Giladi and Tel Chai, and 100 for Metulla); (3) the 150 men who are lacking have to be sent from the south immediately, without delay, and preferably they should be ex-servicemen; (4) every means should be employed to secure the budget needed to maintain the 200 men for a month (approximately £E.1,500⁶ to £E. 2,000); (5) to suggest to — that he use his best endeavours to prevent an assault by troops on the Jewish positions . . .; (6) in order to carry out all these matters, *Chaver* — should be sent to the south to arouse and encourage all those capable of helping him in his mission.

At Tel Chai it was agreed that: (1) of the 27 men, 17 will remain and the other ten will leave at the first opportunity (perhaps even tonight); (2) six *chaverim* insist that 150 men be sent here,

⁶ After the British occupation of Palestine, Egyptian currency was introduced. The Egyptian pound was approximately equal to the pound sterling.

while 16 are against it; (3) the suggestion to get — to take all steps to prevent danger is, of course, approved in Tel Chai as well.

It was also proposed to make strong representations to the Zionist Commission, the body responsible for all Zionist work in Palestine during the years immediately following the war. Some *chaverim* evidently intended to stay on as long as no attack was made by Arab troops; others resolved to remain and fight it out, even if such an attack was made, and to leave only when the position became untenable.

The hour of trial has almost come. It may happen tomorrow in all its horror. At this very moment the enemy may be lying in wait behind the house. Perhaps they are hiding under cover of darkness... and in another minute a shot will ring out...

A new generation, a generation of sons of Eretz Yisrael, of free men, are standing on the frontier, ready to sacrifice their lives in order to hold it. And there, inside the country, they are endlessly debating whether or not to help the defenders of the homeland.

Khamra no longer exists. Metulla has been almost wrested from our hands. A terrible catastrophe hovers over Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi. We cried out for help to be given to Khamra and Metulla while there was yet time, but our cry went unheeded. That negligence has not yet been atoned for. Now we are making the demand once again: send help to Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi with all haste! Their plight is more serious than that of Metulla and Khamra. No lives were lost there, while here two graves have already been dug. Forty young people are in peril here. Are the negotiations to continue? Are they going to go on bargaining? Will help arrive too late?

We are giving them the possibility of doing this. But let them take notice that the hour of reckoning will come. It may be sooner or later, but it will assuredly come.

On behalf of the Defence Committee,
YOSEF TRUMPELDOR

Kfar Giladi, 2nd Adar⁷.

We convey to you, briefly, the following intelligence. On the 28th Shevat⁸, the French came to Kfar Giladi, and the following morning the Mutawali⁹ took up positions to the left of Metulla. The Arabs, who at first pursued them, surrounded Tel Chai on all sides. One detachment of them fired on Tel Chai, but the defenders succeeded in driving them off with three volleys. The French then retired in a line with Kfar Giladi, following which the Arabs took up a position on the hill 300 metres in front of the house of Kfar Giladi. The French used one field-gun, machine-guns and rifles. The Arabs used only rifles. As long as the Arabs were encamped in front of the house of Kfar Giladi, the place was in danger. Towards evening, when they returned intoxicated with victory, they surrounded Tel Chai and wanted to know why they had been fired on that morning, and they wanted to plunder the place. But everything passed off quietly. Relations on the part of the neighbours at Khalsa were good.

On the 1st Adar, one of our *chaverim* rode over to Khalsa. On his way there from Tel Chai, six Arabs attacked him and barred his path. He succeeded in passing them, but they shot at his mare

⁷ 21st February, 1920.

⁸ 17th February.

⁹ Members of a Muslim Shi'ite sect inhabiting the southern Lebanon district.

and killed it. He defended himself. At Khalsa, he was given a mule, and he reached Kfar Giladi safely. The situation in the Chula has become more serious. Gangs of bandits are roaming the vicinity intoxicated with victory.

Another 15 men have to be relieved. We are detaining them, as the two posts cannot be left without the number of men who are there now. More men are needed who know the language and can communicate with our neighbours. Food can be procured in the district, but we have no money. We have no other mare in place of the one that was killed. Our former demands remain unchanged: they are as urgent as before.

On behalf of the Defence Committee,
YOSEF TRUMPELDOR

(Undated)

Yesterday some farmers came from Metulla and told us that the bandits are seizing everything they can lay hands on. They also slightly wounded one of the farmers . . .

They came to ask us for help. Yesterday evening we went up there (myself and 15 others). We reached Metulla at dusk. The bandits, who were in the village, greeted us with shots. But we returned their fire and drove them off. We were told that yesterday, too, they had been looting the village all day and had beaten the farmers. Three bandits raped a Christian-Arab woman who had come to Metulla with her husband. We arranged a watch; but this was difficult to do, owing to the fewness of the men. More men are badly needed, both for Metulla and for our two *kvutzot*, since several of our *chaverim* are tired and urge to be given an opportunity to go south. You must send us at least

twenty men, by Friday at the latest. Why have no women come?

On behalf of the Defence Committee,
YOSEF TRUMPELDOR

This is the last record of the events at Tel Chai and Kfar Giladi as set down by Trumpeldor. On the 11th Adar, 5680 (1st March, 1920), Trumpeldor and six of his comrades were killed defending Tel Chai, after causing heavy losses to the attackers. After Trumpeldor was wounded (according to an eyewitness, Yishayahu D.), he handed over the command to Shneerson. He then asked them to put back his intestines (which had come out through his wound). No one ventured to undertake this task. But he reassured his comrades, saying, 'Never mind, wash your hands, and I'll show you how to put them in again'. With amazing quiet and calm, he looked on as his intestines were put back and bound up with a towel. No bandages were available, for they were upstairs in an inaccessible place. After his wound had been bound up, he said: 'These are my last moments. Tell them all to hold out to the last for the honour of the Jewish people...' The day began to darken... On the way (to Kfar Giladi) he died. His last words, when he was asked how he felt, were: *T'ou lamut be'ad Artzenu* ('It is good to die for our country').

PETACH TIKVA

The following year, 1921, saw a renewal of Arab attacks upon the Yishuv, this time chiefly in the Coastal Plain. On the 1st May, an Arab mob fell upon the Jews in Jaffa, killing a number of them. Attacks upon Jews were made in other parts of the Jaffa dis-

trict, too. It was in one of these that Yosef Chayim Brenner, the Hebrew writer lost his life. The inhabitants of Tel Aviv immediately organised themselves for self-defence, for it seemed risky to leave the Yishuv's protection to the British troops. Who could tell whether they could be relied upon? The experience of the previous year, when British troops had stood by impassively while an Arab mob massacred Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem, had taught the Yishuv that it must be responsible for its own security.

This truth was also realised in Petach Tikva, the account of whose defence is furnished by several settlers. Since, in a general attack upon the Yishuv, the large village of Petach Tikva was not likely to escape unscathed, a meeting was held there on the evening of the 1st May. A Defence Committee was elected, headed by Abraham Shapira, now a man of over 50, whose youthful exploits have been described earlier.¹⁰ That same night, all the young men of Petach Tikva and the near-by villages of Ein Gannim and Machaneh Yehuda were assembled. They were divided into groups, assigned to positions, and equipped with arms, of which there was only a small quantity. The younger boys and scouts were enlisted as runners and signallers, and the older settlers were charged with maintaining order in the village. Two doctors were given the task of organising a medical service, and the same night the communal reading room and library were transformed into a hospital, with the young women of Petach Tikva as nurses.

The following day, it was decided to prevent Petach Tikva's becoming isolated and to maintain normal

¹⁰ See Chapter VIII.

communications with Tel Aviv. Shapira was to go there daily in order to ascertain the position and the Government's attitude, and to report on events at Petach Tikva. That day, however, attacks had been made on carts on the road between Tel Aviv and Petach Tikva, and two Jews setting out from Tel Aviv had been killed. The Petach Tikva Defence Committee therefore undertook to maintain security on the road and sent out mounted patrols, which escorted traffic.

The neighbouring villages of Kfar Saba and Ein Chai, which had few defenders and no arms, besought the help of Petach Tikva in the event of attack, but the Defence Committee could not risk splitting up its tiny force. It therefore persuaded them to send all their inhabitants and movable property to Petach Tikva. The settlers of the two villages were most reluctant to abandon their homes; but there was no alternative. All available carts were mustered, and an armed escort provided. Some Arab horsemen attacked the convoy, but were beaten off, and the settlers of Kfar Saba, together with their livestock and chattels, were brought safely to Petach Tikva.

That evening, a report was received that all the Arab villagers in the neighbourhood, together with the bedouin encamped there, were preparing to attack Petach Tikva the following day. Shapira was in Tel Aviv at the time, and two young men, Zeev Orlov and Shapira's son, Mordecai, volunteered to make the dangerous journey by night to inform him and the Tel Aviv Committee of the new development. Meanwhile Shapira had returned by a different route, and preparations were put in hand to meet the attack. The report of the Arabs' intention was confirmed by

the appearance of bonfires in all the surrounding villages,—a sign that the attackers were concentrating their forces.

Soon Kfar Saba and some outlying buildings were seen to be ablaze. The Defence Committee realised that this was a ruse to draw the Jewish defenders out in the open. It therefore ignored the fires and concentrated on making Petach Tikva itself impregnable.

When, however, it was reported that the Arabs had crossed the Yarkon river and were heading for Petach Tikva, several detachments of mounted men armed with rifles, followed by others on foot armed with clubs, daggers and similar weapons, set out to intercept them. On the way, they met the watchmen, who told them that the settlement's flock of some 700 head had been seized and driven off. Some of the younger men wanted to dash off in pursuit of the robbers and retrieve the flock, but Shapira restrained them.

The force was divided in two. One section, under Shapira and Gissin, advanced to halt the oncoming Arabs. This it succeeded in doing, after an exchange of fire lasting some twenty minutes. The other section, commanded by Chefetz, took up a position near the railway station. Seeing, however, that the enemy was advancing from several directions, and that the first section was in danger of being cut off, Chefetz sent a runner to warn it. When he arrived, he found it had begun to retire. But the retirement, which had to be effected by means of a narrow path, proved costly. Avshalom Gissin was killed, and several more were wounded. Meanwhile the enemy had advanced and taken up a position behind a cactus fence near the large citrus packing house.

The front now extended for two kilometres, the

main battle developing in the centre. The Arabs were in relatively secure positions, having the protection of the cactus fence and the packing house. The Jewish horsemen were forced to dismount and abandon their horses, and to enter the trenches which were held by an infantry force under Dr. Yarkani, who had served with the British Army. One narrator continues:

The battle which was fought fiercely, lasted for over two hours. Although the enemy had already attacked two houses just outside the settlement perimeter, they were finally compelled to abandon their position and withdraw, leaving their dead strewn about the battlefield. Among them was the bearer of the green standard,—the standard of the 'Holy War'. A large number of wounded were also left behind. Upon the enemy's retirement, the defenders began to return to the village, while the wounded were taken to the hospital.

That day, two Jews travelling by train from Haifa to Petach Tikva had seen large numbers of Arabs heading for the settlement. At Tulkarm, a company of Indian cavalry under a British officer had boarded the train together with their mounts. At Ras el-Ein (now called Rosh Haayin), the station nearest Petach Tikva, the travellers alighted and saw that the Indians were doing likewise. The troops had to be got to Petach Tikva. But would the officer order his men to the beleaguered settlement without instructions from his superior? The Defence Committee decided to send a messenger to Jaffa to seek help from there, or to get the authorities to order the Indians to Petach Tikva. A volunteer, Peretz Pascal, was found to undertake the dangerous assignment, for now the road was infested with Arab bandits.

Pascal's horse was already jaded from being rid-

den hard all day. Nevertheless, it accomplished the journey to Tel Aviv in half an hour. As soon as Pascal reached the main street, the horse fell. Pascal was admitted to the District Commissioner and military commander without delay. He told them of the situation and of the presence of the Indians at Ras el-Ein. He also asked for an armoured car to be sent from Jaffa. As he was giving further details of Petach Tikva's plight, he fainted. However, his requests were immediately fulfilled.

In the meantime, another runner had got through to the Indians at Ras el-Ein, and their commander, Captain Hudson, agreed to come to the relief of Petach Tikva. He arrived with his troops at the moment that the defenders were returning to the settlement. With Shapira as guide, the Indians set out and pursued the Arabs across the river, but, seeing how numerous they were, came back to Petach Tikva. Upon their return, they found that a British aircraft had dropped a message to say that new bands of Arabs were advancing from the south. A detachment of troops, accompanied by Shapira went out to meet them, and the aircraft dropped two bombs on them. At the same time an armoured car, equipped with a machine-gun, arrived and joined the Indians. In the engagement the Arabs lost 15 dead and 28 wounded: the rest ran away.

Our narrator ends:

The following day the funeral took place of the four defenders of the *moshava* who had laid down their lives. They were Avshalom Gissin, Chayim Zvi Greenstein, Nathan Rappaport and Zeev Orlov. All the inhabitants, young and old, and including the soldiers and officers, went to pay their last tribute to the heroes...

It was not only the inhabitants of Petach Tikva

who mourned them: the eyes of the English officers and Indian soldiers were also filled with tears. Near the synagogue, Moshe Gissin eulogised his son Avshalom. 'I am happy,' the bereaved father cried, 'that I am privileged to be a living witness of this historic event in the life of Petach Tikva.'

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

THE FIRST World War interrupted the growth of agricultural settlement in Palestine. Apart from four new villages established in Galilee, no further settlements were founded until some time after the Armistice in 1918. For the Yishuv had undergone great hardships during the war: its numbers had been depleted, its economy had been seriously impaired; and after the war it had to defend itself against Arab attacks. It was only natural that repair of the ravages of war and its aftermath should precede new settlement projects. Nevertheless, preparations were soon put in hand for the future expansion of the Yishuv's farm economy.

The acquisition of 70,000 dunams of land in Emek Jezreel, by the *Keren Kayemet Leyisrael* in 1920, opened up a new era in the history of the Yishuv. For the first time two large areas in the Eastern and Western Emek (they were subsequently consolidated by further purchases) were in Jewish hands. And to meet the challenge, came the pioneers of the Third *Aliya* from Eastern Europe. Nor did they fail to meet the challenge, for the draining of the Emek swamps was an

heroic undertaking which stands in the forefront of the Yishuv's pioneering achievements.

The Emek, once a fertile and thickly populated area—it has since become so again—was, at that time, pitted with malarial swamps. A few Arab villages, squalid and poverty-stricken, were scattered here and there. The only Jewish settlement was that of Merchavia. The first of the post-war settlements were established in 1921: Nahalal, in the west, and, a few days later, Ein Charod in the east, followed by Tel Yosef.

The founders of Nahalal were veterans of the Second *Aliya* who had found the *kvutza* form of settlement unsuited to their particular needs and outlook on life. Nahalal therefore enjoys the double distinction of being the first settlement in the Western Emek and the first *moshav ovdim* (smallholders' co-operative village); a form of village that has greatly increased in popularity, especially among the newcomers to enter the country since the State of Israel came into being in 1948. Our source here is Shmuel Dayan, whose reminiscences of the founding of Daganian we have quoted¹:

It was on the 11th September, 1921, Dayan writes, that

Twenty men, pioneers of the *moshav* which was to be founded on the hill near the village of Mahloul, to the east of present-day Nahalal, pitched their tents there and proceeded to engage in the work of occupying the place: draining the swamps, removing stones, digging ditches, marking boundaries, preparing trenches for defence (very necessary in those dangerous times) and other tasks. Those

¹ See Chapter XXI.

twenty men belonged to the association for the establishment of a *moshav ovdim* comprising 75 families, or about 130 persons.

Most of the members of the association had been in the country 12 to 18 years, and had come in answer to the call issued by *Hapoel Hatzair* to the young Jews of the Diaspora 'to come and effect the "conquest" of labour in Eretz Yisrael and to lay the foundations of a working population living by its own toil.' They had undergone all the privations that were the lot of Jewish agricultural workers in those days. They had experienced hardships and disease, and had shared the Yishuv's sufferings in the First World War. Some of them had been among the founders of the *kvutza*, where they had spent ten or twelve years in the belief that they had found an enduring and satisfying way of life on the land.

But they were disappointed. The hope of establishing a large settlement based on a co-operative life had not been realised. It was the post-war era. A large stream of immigrants from the Diaspora was expected; the horizon of labour and of settlement had expanded. They eagerly looked forward to work of construction and creation on a larger scale and at a faster pace. They wanted to step onto the broad highway. But what was the road? At that time one of the workers, Eliezer Yaffe, published a booklet entitled 'The Establishment of *Moshevei Ovdim*.' In it he outlined a new and interesting plan of work . . .

Yaffe proposed setting up villages comprising individual farmers on the basis of free co-operation. It was attractive to Dayan and his comrades, for it gave the individual the feeling that he bore the responsibility

for his own actions. If, on the other hand, the individual had to face the battle of life on the land alone and unaided, he was liable to fall. Had not this been the fate of the early pioneers, 'who had also been full of enthusiasm and imbued with a sincere desire to build a new edifice based on a life of labour'? What was a social unit which would help and encourage a man without hampering his freedom of action, and which would prevent him from oppressing others and from being oppressed. The *moshav ovdim* would meet these requirements. In the *moshav* the farmer would live and work in accordance with his inclination and ability; at the same time he would form part of a society composed of individuals like himself. They would be bound together by ties of mutual assistance, and, within limits, there would be co-operation, in accordance with their own wishes. The *moshav*, in fact, was to synthesise the best features of individual farming and of the *kvutza* system.

The publication of Yaffe's pamphlet caused a stir in workers' circles. An association of some 30 members was formed to implement his project, and a founders' meeting was held at Ein Gannim, the first Jewish village to accept the principle of all-Jewish labour. The association, which soon grew to number 130, drew up a plan for a *moshav* based on the following four points:

- (1) Settlement on nationally owned land.
- (2) Work must be carried out by the settlers' own efforts.
- (3) Buying and selling through a co-operative store.
- (4) Full mutual assistance in every respect.

When the land in the Emek was acquired, the

moshav group sent representatives to seek out a suitable area for settlement. There was a proposal to settle not far from Haifa; but, despite a number of advantages attaching to this proposal, the majority were in favour of going to Mahloul, although

it lay in the midst of swamps, its soil was of indifferent quality, it was lonely and hidden by hills, it was surrounded by Arab villages, and it was close to Nazareth, a hotbed of Arab anti-Jewish agitation in those days.

All these disadvantages were brushed aside; and the distance from Haifa was even accounted a virtue, for it ensured that the children would grow up to be true farmers.

Mahloul in those days had the following appearance.

... There is no proper road to the village. You have to climb over rocks, jump ditches, stumble across holes in the ground, and, by the time you get to the village, you are covered with sweat. There are no trees or gardens, and not a flower to be seen. The villagers walk about with a gloomy expression on their faces,—poverty and the silence of desolation. Men sit cross-legged listening to idle stories, women make their daughters bend down and pick (lice) from their hair. Children with diseased eyes and swollen bellies roam about the rubbish heaps, and the few chickens pecking in the dung heap find there their only sustenance. Water has to be brought from the distant well at the foot of the mountain, and the women carry it on their heads.

Most of the villagers, who numbered 200, were tenant-cultivators, and 'the land is a source of slavery

and hardship to them and their families'. There was no medical attention whatever, and the farms gave but a scant yield. Although the village was full of manure, the fields were left without any fertilisers. The few lean cows the village owned were left to fend for themselves in the swamps, and when it rained they found shelter in caves. They yielded milk only three months in the year, and then little more than enough for their owners' needs.

The tiny surplus is taken by the womenfolk to Nazareth, an 18-kilometre climb in the hills, a journey of four hours. The price they get for it is negligible . . .

The settlers were allocated an area of about 8,000 dunams (approximately 2,000 acres) at Mahloul. It was partly flat and partly hilly, and the Haifa-Nazareth road passed through it. At that time there were four swamps on the land. They had been caused by the water from four springs flooding the adjacent area and furnishing breeding grounds for malarial mosquitoes. The neighbourhood of one of the swamps, which was known as Ein Semouneh ('Spring of Poison'), was regarded as uninhabitable even by the Arabs, and the vestiges of former villages round about bore witness to the inroads made by malaria. A German colony had once existed there, but it was now in ruins: part of its inhabitants had died and the remainder had left. Medical opinion was strongly against settlement at that spot, and the doctors urged the Zionist Organisation to prevent the group's going on the land until it had been rendered safe. But all this did not weigh with the settlers; their mind was made up.

On closer inspection, the soil at Mahloul proved of

better quality than had at first been supposed. But Dayan and two companions who went out to inspect it were somewhat dismayed when they learned from an old Arab that another attempt had been made to settle on the spot abandoned by the German colonists. Arabs had tried to settle there, and they too had died of disease. Would the third attempt be any more successful! On climbing a hill to get a better view of their land, they found themselves walking among some ancient stones laid out in rows.

We stood motionless. We looked at the hill and beheld a large cemetery, with hundreds of graves close together. . . We were dumbfounded. Before us, to the west, stretched a broad, fertile, valley, while our feet were treading on forgotten graves. . .

The youngest of us whispered, as if to himself, 'But don't we want to live?' The second said: 'This is where we'll settle!' The third suggested a plan for draining the swamps. We thought of Chadera and its swamps. And when we descended from the hill, we knew in our hearts that we would indeed build a village there.

Several months elapsed before they actually went on the land, and another visit was made to inspect the proposed village, this time by a large number of prospective settlers. After making a tour of the area, they sat down to discuss matters, and to await the doctor (whom Dayan describes as 'the beloved workers' doctor') who was to give his opinion on the feasibility of the enterprise. In his view, Mahloul was fully as bad as Yesud Hamaala. After the swamps were drained it would be better, but it would never be really healthy. At all events, settlement must not begin until the swamps had been drained. The verdict cast

a gloom over the members of the group. Nevertheless, at a final meeting they decided to proceed in spite of the warnings they had received.

On the 11th September, 1921, the first group went on the land. All around them was desolation; not a living creature was to be seen except for some goats and cows. That evening, travellers were surprised to see a light as they passed by Mahloul, and next day the Jewish wagoners, who usually spent the night in a nearby village, turned aside to visit the newcomers. One old man entered the settlement and pronounced the *shehecheyanu* benediction: for him it was a great day to see Jews in the Western Emek.

One of the first acts of the new settlers was to change the name of the place. Although Mahloul is mentioned in an Aramaic passage in the Talmud, they wished their village to bear a Hebrew name. They therefore revived the Biblical name of Nahalal, 'out of a sense of obligation to the ancient history which we are continuing.'

The *Keren Kayemet* allocated a sum for draining the swamps, and another for building a road from Nahalal to the main highway. This gave rise to a serious discussion among the settlers. They felt it their duty to undertake all the work connected with their village, even if it took a very long time: they should not enjoy the benefit of others' labour. However, wiser counsels prevailed. They were too few to accomplish the drainage of the swamps, and with their limited numbers it would take ten years. Meanwhile they would fall easy prey to the fever whose annihilation was the object of the work, thus lessening their numbers still further. In that event they would never reach the stage of establishing their village. Both the drain-

age and the road construction were accordingly entrusted to the newly formed Histadrut Haovdim (Labour Federation), and at times as many as three or even four hundred men were at work on the two projects.

Nevertheless, the work was not allowed to proceed unhindered. Nahalal's Arab neighbours objected to the drainage. True, they suffered from the swamps, but their animals found water there. Once the spring water was led off in pipes, what were they to do? Disputes ensued, and no way out of the difficulty seemed apparent. Another obstacle was the opposition of the neighbouring villages, whose boundaries were contiguous with that of Nahalal, to leading pipes through their land,—a necessary measure to prevent the formation of swamps there. The Government consequently halted drainage operations until a settlement was reached. This interruption irked the settlers: it was all very well for the Government to stop the work,—it had plenty of time. But the settlers were working against time.

During the first summer, 40 per cent of the permanent workers fell sick with the fever. It struck with special force among the young men, newcomers to the country, who were engaged upon the work of drainage. There was also one strange and difficult episode, which lasted several days. When the channels were opened, and the smell of the swamps filled the air, everyone was seized with fits of vomiting. . .

In the end, after protracted negotiations, we came to terms with our neighbours. We set up pumps and laid pipes for them on the boundaries of our land, and they water their animals from them. After continuous and persistent demands on

our part, the Government is also being a little helpful. In other words it has stopped putting obstacles in our way.

The drainage work was completed not long after. It was the first project carried out on such a scale in the annals of Jewish settlement. As Dayan remarks,

It saved who knows how many lives. Above all, it saved the enterprise we had set our hearts on. We were consequently spared the fate of the older villages which were ravaged by fever.

Writing eight years after the founding of Nahalal, Dayan describes the progress made in that short interval. Malaria had been banished, and there were not even mosquitoes. Water from the swamp-forming springs was piped to the village, and the farmers drank from the 'Spring of Poison' without any injurious consequences. Indeed, it was later realised that the swamp water formed by that spring was poisonous because it had been contaminated by the Arabs' flocks and herds. Not only did the drainage of the swamps rid Nahalal of the fever: it also yielded another 3,500 dunams of land, which proved to be the most fertile in that area, and provided the means of irrigating another 500 dunams. 'It is no exaggeration to say,' Dayan writes, 'that the waters which laid a curse upon the land have been transformed into a blessing'.

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