

Rozinoy
Jewish Farmers on Russian Fields
(translated from Hebrew)
by Mordechai Guber
Sifrat Poalim, Ltd. 1965

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In the years 1904-1907 I studied at the yeshiva in Rozinoy and on the Sabbaths we would sometimes take walks to the Jewish settlements near the city.

The farming life of the Jews and their peaceful way of life entranced me as opposed to that of the city folk; that their livelihood was based mainly on produce and crafts work.

On one of the Sabbaths I entered the synagogue of one settlement. As the ark was opened to take out the *Sefer Torah*¹ one of the residents got up on the *bimah*² and announced that he was delaying the reading of the *Torah*. It was a custom that any person in the audience who felt himself slighted by someone else in the audience, was allowed to delay the reading of the *Torah*, and to force those present to participate in the correction of the wrong doing. And the man who had postponed the reading announced that he had been slighted by his neighbor in the following way, that his neighbor had collected the “droppings”³ on half of the street opposite his house after the herd had passed that way. The audience saw a public scandal in this neighbor’s action, and decided to fine him for collecting the “droppings” that were on the half of the street not opposite his own house.

As a yeshiva student at that time, I saw the behavior of the residents of the village as sacrilegious. Was it possible to bring up a disagreement about “droppings” to the table of the *Sefer Torah*? But when I grew older, I saw that the “behavior” of the village that I had absorbed in the Jewish settlements in my youth brought me to lead a life of farming in *Eretz Israel*. And here I came to understand the holiness of that same delay in the reading of the *Torah* because of the theft of the “droppings” on half of the street by the house of that farmer.

Mordechai Guber (Nehora, Heval Lachis)

¹ *Sefer Torah* – the scroll of the *Torah*

² *bimah* – a small stage where the *Sefer Torah* is read before the constituents.

³ “droppings” – they were used as fertilizer, and therefore very much valued.