The Shoes Were Found

Mother suspected that the shoes were stolen. If they had been thrown in the river they would have sunk where the clothes were and would have been found.

Who were these gentile boys? I knew them all. There were four: Kolia, Luka, and of the remaining two, both were named Stepan. I knew where they lived, as did mother, who also knew their parents. We next attempted to determine which two of the four boys would have use for the shoes and concluded that Kolia and one of the Stepans were about the same age and size as Moishe and I. Luka and the other Stepan were much bigger and probably older.

Early next morning, after hearing the sounds of father’s cane on the cobblestones disappearing in the direction of the synagogue, I quickly jumped out of bed. Mother, as if by agreement, did the same. She helped make the Sammovar (my daily task), placed a jar of preserves and related foods on the table for father’s use upon his return from the synagogue and, after the Sammovar came to a boil, placed it on the table with a sufficient supply of red-hot charcoal to keep the water hot for a long time. Then, instead of confronting the two suspected boys, we determined to get help from one or both of the other two.

We reached Luka’s house first. His father’s name was “Matvei”. Though on his way to church, Matvei stopped to inquire what he could do for us. After being advised of our mission, mother suggested that, from what she had heard, the other three boys were accusing his son Luka of stealing both pairs of shoes. This enraged Matvei and he called Luka. An outraged Luke readily named Kolia and the younger Stepan. “They have both pairs of shoes”, he said. “You go with them to Kolia”, said Matvei.

The three of us set out for Kolia’s house, whose family was preparing to go to church. When Kolia saw the three of us he sensed the danger and brought out a pair of shoes saying it was all a joke. The shoes were Moishe’s. Kolia joined us in the procession to the house of the suspected Stepan. All had gone to church except Stepan’s older sister who was in back of the house. When informed of the nature of the visit she was embarrassed and went into the house to look for the other pair of shoes. She soon came out with them in her hand.

By David B. Schreiber

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