

FROM ZASHKOV TO THE 40th ANNIVERSARY IN NEW YORK

by Morris Galant

Our shtetl had many merchants and handicraftsmen. It was richer than all the surrounding towns because of its sugar mill and its yarid every Thursday, which was famous for its horse trading. Merchants used to come to this yarid from the four corners of the earth.

In a cultural sense too Zashkkov stood head and shoulders above the surrounding towns. There were many Zionists, as well as members of other political parties. Although the government did not allow a legal library to exist, people bought books and exchanged newspapers in Yiddish, Russian and Hebrew. There were meetings going on all the time to discuss a wide variety of social and political problems.

At the head of communal affairs -- as well as of Zionist activities -- stood Moyshe Skaritan, a cousin of Chaim Nachman Bialik. Skaritan was the founder of the first modern Hebrew school in Zashkov. He used to organize meetings, invite speakers from the "big city" and often speak himself at these meetings.

Zashkov sent its first pioneer to Eretz Yisrael 45-50 years ago. (This was written in 1955, Editor). Among them were Shmuel Dayan, father of Moshe Dayan. Also Lazer Sandlerman.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, when Jews were granted equal rights, Zashkov held some public meetings, which had been banned by Czar Nicholas but took place in secret. The happiness

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of Jews all over Russia was unparalleled, but it didn't last long. A wave of pogroms spread over the Ukraine and did not pass Zashkov by. That no one was killed in Zashkov is due solely to Moyshe Skaritan. As soon as a gang of pogromchiks entered Zashkov, he and several other representatives went out to meet them. With his ability as a speaker he always managed to persuade them to change their plans -- in exchange for money and other valuables. For 2½ years the Jews in Zashkov had one narrow escape after another, but no one was killed.

Until one Thursday in the summer of 1919, when everyone was busy in the marketplace, a gang of thugs under command of Ottoman Kazakov invaded the town, and in an hour-and-a-half killed 16 people, among them our rabbi, his brother Hersh Reingold, Peretz Vilshkover and Moyshe Skaratin himself.

After this tragedy the entire Jewish population of Zashkov left the town, not knowing where they were going and leaving behind all their possessions and the homes they had lived in for generations. Most of them ended up in Bessarabia.

At that time there was already a small Zashkov society in New York. When they learned about the situation of their landsleit they immediately sent a messenger to help the Zashkover and bring them over to America. Little by little the newcomers, with the help of their landsleit, started a new life here and eventually joined our Society.

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ZASHKOVER SOCIETY: 20 YEARS OF ACTIVITY

by Tsalek (Schneyer's) Werlinsky

When I started writing this I thought I would cover the entire history of our Society since its inception. But at the last moment I changed my mind. I shall divide the 20 years into three periods, because that will give you a better understanding of the work of our Ferein.

In every group or organization there are stages. You begin small. You are insignificant. No one notices you. And those who do notice you, shrug you off. They even make fun of you. Or they ignore you altogether. Then some time passes when it feels as if you're looking through a veil, but you see something moving...

Twenty years fly by. It was July 4, 1914 when eleven members, headed by David Puzar, came to our first meeting. 1914. 1915. We used to run around to our Zashkover people, begging them -- come join us, be among your own, let's get together once a week or once every two weeks and enjoy each other's company, and at the same time, help each other out. A strange country, strange customs, a strange language. All week long, busy earning a living, worried, concerned. At least once a week let's get together and relax...

But it was like a voice crying in the wilderness. Two years later a few did respond, and it gave us a bit more strength to continue with the work.

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Then the sad years of the world war. 1916. 1917. 1918. Actually the war started in 1914. And although those were years of prosperity, our hearts and souls were in pain. Because the Russian revolution broke out in 1917 and then came waves of pogroms. And they didn't skip over our shtetele Zashkov.

Then we heard the anguished cry of our near and dear ones on the other side of the ocean. And the Zashkover in America came to us by a kind of magic and joined our organization, because they knew that only through united effort could we do something to help the people who had run away from Zashkov to look for safety elsewhere. That was, so to speak, the climax of our society's growth, when it quickly became a large organization, rich in members and even in money.

It is not necessary to repeat here the story of the relief work that we did. That story was told in the journal that we issued in 1929 for our 15th anniversary. Here I want only to note that the relief work that our Society did was etched in our souls...

And after that, the world looked at us with different eyes. People took pride in our organization. People now came to us. They came to us and pleaded: "Take us into your Society. We want to be with you..."

Which we did. With open arms. And that's how it was until 1929, when we reached 173 members, with a treasury of close to \$4000, with three cemetery lots -- two all paid up and three with a substantial sum paid in. We also had a loan fund and all the necessary things that a well-run organization should have.

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But from the year 1930, things started going downhill. Our meetings are getting smaller, our membership is more and more apathetic. Something has gone wrong. The pulse is weakening. Friendships have been weakened. What is the reason? Who is to blame? That's the trouble -- there is no one to blame.

At this, our 20th anniversary, it would be a good thing if our active members would think about this problem and try to find a way to make our Society regain its former lustre, so that at our next celebration this writer will have something more cheerful to write about...

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ZASHKOVER ~~TYPE~~ ^{NOTES} This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)

HERSHL REINGOLD

In addition to being a merchant, a worldly man and a wise one, Hershl Reingold was also remarkably handsome. His radiant face expressed an internal beauty. Always quiet, he never grew excited, never rushed around. Whatever he was doing, he did calmly and deliberately. He never insulted anyone, never got angry with any one.

Hershl owned one of the inns in town. Once, when I was a boy of twelve and wanted to earn a few pennies, I went to ask him about a job. Wednesday evenings, when the landowners used to come for the Thursday yarid to buy cattle, the innkeepers would send boys out to the road to meet the guests and guide them to the "right" place. When I asked Hershl Reingold to let me do this he looked at me searchingly, like a psychologist studying someone's character. *

"Tsalek," he said, "that's no work for you."

I felt insulted, until he explained what he meant.

"You're not rough enough for that kind of work. Go home, Tsalek, and find something else to do."

Two years later, when I became a teacher of Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian, he sent for me.

"Tsalek," he said, "that is your work. And I want you to come and teach my children..."

So I was in his home quite often. I knew what a fine and

gentle man he was. His whole family was like that, including his wife Zlateh. And they left this legacy to their children, some of whom now live in Buffalo and New York. Two of them, Gedaliah and Sender, are honored members of the Zashkover Ferein.

REB NETANYOHU B'REB FISHEL -- that's how they called him up to the Torah, Shabbos in the Great Synagogue. But all the Zashkover called him "Sani the Butcher." A pious and honest man, he was also physically very strong. He could break down a wall with his fists. I myself witnessed such a scene once when my father Schneyer came home from Berditchev with a new walking cane he had bought there. He used to carry it as he strolled in and out of the shops with all the other kibbitzers.

One day a ruffian named Satski noticed the cane and took a fancy to it. My father refused to give it to him. Satski tried to wrest it from him. Not only was he stronger than my father but he also had friends in "city hall." I was only a youngster but, realizing the trouble ^{my} father was in, I ran as fast as I could to Sani's and told him what was happening. Without stopping to think he ran over to the place where the tug-o'-war was going on. Sizing up the unequal contest in one glance, he hit Satski in the face so hard that he knocked him out cold...

Three weeks Satski lay in bed, recuperating. Disgraced, he said nothing about what had happened to him. But after that he never picked on a Jew again.

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YOSL THE MENACKER

There was a pious Jew in Zashkov, skinny and weak, but learned in Torah, who earned his living by being a "menacker." Yosl the Menacker, people called him. A "menacker" is the man who removes the forbidden fat and veins from meat to make it kosher. We didn't understand exactly what the word meant, but we knew that whenever the butcher killed a cow, and the meat was to be sold for eating, you couldn't cook the meat until Yosl the Menacker gave his okay.

One day he and Sani decided to become partners. Most of the housewives in Zashkov bought their meat from Sani because he was an honest butcher and never cheated anyone. So he was very busy all the time and needed help. But whenever it came time to take the "merchandise" to market and somebody had to carry a whole side of beef on his back, Sani never let Yosl do it. He knew Yosl wasn't strong enough for that.

Yosl came to America with his family in 1921. When he died in 1933 he left three sons -- Nehemiah, Joseph and Hersh -- who became successful butchers in New York. He also had three daughters, who now live in New York.

DAVID THE CHAZN

Everyone knew him. He was the cantor in the Old Synagogue. An honest, pious man. And even though he was a chazn, he was very intelligent, which doesn't happen often in that profession. We know of two of his children who are in America -- Froyke and Judith (in Zashkov they called her Icka.)

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NAHUM SATANOWSKI

Everyone knew him as Nahum Warshawski, but his name was really Satanowski or Nahum Ahron Yossi's. A learned man and a clever one -- a great one for telling jokes. He was pious, but also worldly; a hasid, but not a fanatic. His wife was the same way. All his children are in America -- his daughter Chaika (whose husband Izzy Gershonowitz is a member of our Society) and his sons Lazer and Velvl.

HANINA MENASHE'S

None of Menashe's children was as well known in Zashkov as Hanina. And it wasn't so much he as his wife Pessi. She was one of a kind in Zashkov. Smart, pretty, vivacious. (She now lives in Pittsburgh with her daughter Beyla.) They owned a tobacco business. Hanina was not only a scholar but a real mechanic. He could build a house, a mill, anything. I recall the time they wanted to build the synagogue and they asked Hanina for advice. Although he had never studied architecture, he drew up the plans!

He was the first one to introduce the Tchochreika into Zashkov -- a machine with rollers to clean the raw wool that the peasants brought in, to make it easier to spin. He was simply bursting with energy.

Hanina was known in Zashkov for his beautiful daughters, who are all in America now. He came here in 1920 with his family and died in Pittsburgh in 1932.

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A COMPARISON

The Heder and the Melamed of Zashkov and the Hebrew Schools
of New York

by Ruby Gorobetz (Zavel Matis' son)

When the editor asked me to write about Zashkov "types," I hesitated, because when I left that clean, pleasant little shtetl where I was born, I was still a child and I remember very little. Still, I do remember some things, although they are not firmly imbedded in my memory. But because of a coincidence, I did recall the melamdin and the hadorim -- the "Hebrew teachers" and their schools.

My own children -- two boys -- go to a Hebrew school in the evenings after public school. I don't like to be an "Inquisitor" and keep asking them "what they learned" -- and a father should praise his children, but here I must say that they are good students and they are serious about their Jewish studies too. So one evening I decided to visit their Hebrew school and see how it's done in America. And while I was walking there I recalled the heder I attended when I was a child. And to tell the truth, I never did go there willingly. 10)

My first teachers were Peretz the Melamed and his son Mitsik (Avrom Yitzhok Shuster, who is now in America and a respected member of the Zashkov Society.) In my mind's-eye I can still see the long house with the thatched roof. Inside, the floor covered with yellow lime; a long, narrow table

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stretching from one end of the room to the other; on both sides of the table, long benches; on the benches, children with little prayerbooks open in front of them, and at the head of the table, the rebbe with his long beard, holding a "kontchik" (a cat-o-nine-tails) in one hand and a pointer in the other.

The rebbe says the first word and all the boys repeat it after him at the top of their voices. At the other end of the table sits his son Mitsik, doing the same thing. All day, from early in the morning till late in the afternoon, and every day of the week except Shabbos. Is it any wonder the children looked sleepy, emaciated, stoop-shouldered and unkempt.

My father's house was situated in-between two hadorim. On one side, Peretz's heder and on the other Sholem Nesi's, where there were also a lot of kids, but not as many as at Peretz's, because Sholem Nesi's was already a "gemora melamed," a more advanced subject. Nevertheless, the noise level there was also very high. And besides, Sholem Nesi's two daughters were seamstresses -- "modistkes" they were called -- and they each worked on a Singer sewing-machine in the same room with the heder. People must have had nerves of steel to stand all that racket.

Immersed in these memories of my own childhood, I entered the Hebrew school in New York. What a different picture! A large, neat, well-lit building, built for this purpose. The furniture, arranged symmetrically, was designed for a school. Open windows, fresh air. The wooden floor sparkingly clean. A lot of children, but not too much noise. They are washed,

combed, bright-eyed, rosy cheeked, smiling, wide-awake. The teachers, clean shaven, well dressed, alert; teaching seems to be a sort of game for them.

The class that I visited was divided into two groups. They were learning, but not shouting all at once. The teacher asked questions, the students answered. The group that answered more questions or pronounced the Hebrew words correctly, received more points. Curious, I asked the teacher to explain the game to me. It was like a baseball game, he said. The team that scored the most points won the game. It kept the children interested.

No wonder my boys go to Hebrew school so willingly. And no wonder I wasn't eager to go to our heder in Zashkov.

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A YARID IN ZASHKOV

by Hannah Schneyer's Youngest Son, dedicated to my sister
Feyga Gaidemak

Who doesn't remember the yarid in Zashkov? I think that in the entire Ukraine or at least in the whole District of Tarashche, there was no yarid in any shtetl like the one in Zashkov. Every Thursday a lot of peasants would come in from villages near and far with their grain and produce. Also, many merchants, not only from nearby cities but also from far away, even Warsaw. The main business was in cattle. There was a special area called "The Targavitse" (the trading square) -- a big, empty place fenced off with logs, where the peasants would drive their cattle that they had brought to sell.

Naturally this trade was carried on with the help of some Jews from Zashkov who earned a living from this business as "brokers." The buyers were rich landowners, dressed in the highest fashion, and they spoke an elegant Russian or Polish. The simple peasants were afraid even to stand close to these important noblemen, let alone speak with them. And they had to sell their cattle in order to buy things they needed at home: kerosene, cooking oil, a few yards of flowered goods for a skirt, a wadded jacket from Yosl Menkis or Yosl Shimmel, a pair of boots from Pinchas the Shoemaker, or from Zisa the Shoemaker, or a few pieces of leather for soles from Shmuel Zyvel. And with the rest of the money, to the tavern. Across from the tavern, peasant women would be sitting with their

bowls of roast pork or cold pigs'-feet jelly or white "bulatchki," a snack to eat with the whiskey.

For all of these things you needed cash. And to get the cash you had to sell a cow or a sack of grain or a couple of chickens or a few dozen eggs. To make these sales they relied on a Jew, a Jew who would know what landowner needed what products -- who the customers were, in other words.

There was no lack of beggars at the yarid, either. We used to call them "the lyrinkes," because they played the lyre. They occupied a special place in the life of the Ukrainians in general and the Zashkov fairs in particular. Blind, carrying long sticks, cripples on crutches, they would wander around either singly or in pairs, or even in larger groups, from fair to fair, from village to village, from town to town, with their lyres under their arms. The melodies they played were pervaded with melancholy, with the emotional pain of the Ukraine, where people drowned their troubles in liquor and where old people enjoy fairy tales, just like little children...

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FRAGMENTS

by Sophie Serota (Zyvel Matis' daughter)
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Sitting here writing for "Zashkover New World" I'm gathering bits and pieces of the life that we led in Zashkov. I recall that when I was barely ten years old I fell in love with music. The way it happened is a very interesting characteristic of the youth of Zashkov.

The Zashkov of 30 years ago had no conservatory, not even an ordinary music school where one could develop musical talent. In general, people in Zashkov had no conception of music -- I mean instrumental music. There were quite a few connoisseurs of vocal music, however. Whenever a cantor came to town the synagogue was packed and there were as many critics as there were worshippers. More than once a heated argument developed when one person said the cantor had a good voice and another said he was a "klutz."

When it came to instrumental music, however, such as the piano or the violin, people in Zashkov were ignorant. Even when Osher the Klezmer played at a wedding, the general public wasn't very enthusiastic. Big deal -- a klezmer scraping on a fiddle!

For me, though, it was a real holiday. I could hardly wait for the day of a wedding, when I could sate myself on the sweet tones of Osher's violin and his whole orchestra. But how long did that last? One day. Then weeks would go by, until the next wedding. Luckily I found a friend -- Lisa Leitman. I don't have to tell any Zashkover who Lisa Leitman was. Lisa's

parents owned a piano. It was the only house in Zashkov where you could hear the sound of music even without a wedding. They were among the "aristocrats" -- her father was a lawyer.

Dear reader, my pen is incapable of describing how envious I was of my friend. I used to beg her: Lisa dear, let me stay here just a little while longer and listen. (Her older sister and her brother both played the piano.) But Lisa, believe it or not, preferred to come to my house -- she didn't like music! She liked the everyday atmosphere in our house, the way people sang at the top of their voices and tapped their fingers on the glass panes of the china closet.

I swore then that if I ever had children, they would learn to play music, and thank God I kept my oath...

HOW ZASHKOV'S YOUNG PEOPLE FOUND WAYS TO MEET

Thirty years ago, when a Zashkov young woman wanted to meet a young man, what trouble and heartache she had to endure! Girls and fellows who had parents like mine tried at first to meet on the outskirts of the town. You said you were going for a walk. You were just walking along, minding your own business, and happened to meet someone.

But there was a problem. If you walked toward the market, it was no good, because that was the road to Pyotr, and people might be coming from the Pyotr yarid (fair) to Zashkov, and the next day the whole town would know that Zyvel's daughter was out walking with a fellow. So we tried the church road. and that too turned out to be bad, because on that road, people

were returning from the Stavishche yarid.

What ~~was~~ to be done? We called a meeting where all the young people of Zashkov were represented and we talked about ways that girls could meet boys in secret, so that our parents wouldn't find out about it. Remember, this was not America, where a girl and a boy meet and go straight to the ice cream parlor and behave like old friends. No, our "dates" were different, more interesting, more naive, more emotional. And if the friendship developed to a higher stage, it was even more spiritual -- reading together, discussing world problems. True, your heart beat faster, you felt the stirrings of desire, but that's as far as it went.

When the two methods mentioned above didn't work, we tried a new one. Our fathers were in business, so they used to receive a lot of letters. And since Moyshe the Letter-carrier wasn't a very careful man and often mislaid letters, the story was that we were going to Moyshe's house for our letters. We went to the neighborhood where Moyshe lived and we breathed easier. There no Jewish eyes would see us. Or if a Jew ever did happen to wander there by mistake, he was from Zavad, and they were Jews of another sort -- intellectuals, more or less, aristocrats. You didn't need to hide from them.

But if you're unlucky, nothing works. One Thursday evening, after the yarid, we walked over, as usual, to Moyshe the Postman's. We were supposed to be waiting for the post, which was due "any minute." We were a few couples, full of the zest for life, and we didn't notice how quickly it got to be ten o'clock.

Suddenly terribly frightened, we ran all the way home. The dogs in the Gentile homes started barking and chasing us and we barely made it home.

And that was the last time we ever went back there. We had sinned -- we had come home too late...

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