

Chava



"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good"—whichever way God leads is good. That is, it should be good, for try and become a sage and make things better! Take me—I wanted to be clever, I interpreted Bible verses this way and that way and saw that it was of no use, so I gave it up as a hopeless job and told myself: Tevye, you're a fool! You won't overturn the world. The Almighty gave us *"the pain of bringing up children,"* which means the sorrows inflicted by children should be looked upon as blessings. For instance, my eldest daughter Tzeitl fell in love with the tailor Motl Kamzoil, so have I anything against him? True, he is a simple soul, not very well versed in the fine little letters, I mean, but what can be done? The whole world can't be educated, can it? But he is honest and hard-working, he works, poor man, by the sweat of his brow. They already have, you should only see, a houseful—knock on wood—of bare-bellied young ones, and both of them struggle *"in honor and in riches,"* as the saying goes. But talk with her, she'll tell you that everything is, knock on wood, fine with her, it can't be better. The only trouble is that there isn't enough food... There you have, so to say, round number one.

Well, and about the second daughter, I mean Hodel, I don't have to tell you, you already know. With her I gambled and lost, lost her forever! God alone knows whether my eyes will ever behold her again, unless we meet in the next world, in a hundred and twenty years... Whenever I speak of her, of Hodel, I still can't take it, it's the end of my life! Forget her, you say? How can one forget a living person? Especially such a child as Hodel? You should only see the letters she writes to me—your heart would melt! She writes that they are doing quite well out there. He sits in prison and she earns a living. She washes clothes and reads books and visits him every week; she hopes, she says, that the pot will boil over here, in our parts, the sun will rise and everything will brighten, and then

he and many others like him will be released, and after that, she says, they will all begin their real work and turn the world upside-down. Well? How do you like that? Fine, isn't it?..

Yes, so what does the Almighty do? He is, after all, "*a gracious and merciful Lord*," so He says to me: "Just you wait, Tevye, I will bring something to pass that'll make you forget all your former troubles..."

And sure enough—this is a story worth hearing. I wouldn't tell it to another person, because the pain is great and the shame is still greater! Only, as it is written in our Book: "*Shall I conceal it from Abraham?*"—I have no secrets from you. Whatever I have on my mind I tell you. But there is one request I want to make: let it remain between the two of us. I tell you once more: the pain is great, but the shame, the shame is still greater!

Well, as it stands in the *Perek*: "*The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to purify a soul*"—God decided to do Tevye a favor, so he went and blessed him with seven female children, daughters, that is, all of them lovely, clever, and beautiful, fresh and healthy—pine trees, I tell you! Oh, if only they had been ugly and ill-tempered it might have been better for them and healthier for me. Now, I ask you, what is the use of a good horse if it is kept in a stable? What's the good of having beautiful daughters when you're stuck away with them out in a hole where they see no live people except Ivan Poperilo, the headman of the village, or the clerk Fedka Galagan, a tall Gentile fellow with a mane of hair and high boots, and the Russian priest, may his name and his memory be blotted out. I just can't bear to hear his name—not because I am a Jew and he is a Christian priest. On the contrary, we have been well acquainted for many years. That is, we don't visit each other to have a talk, nor, of course, do we wish each other a happy holiday; but, no matter, when we meet we say good morning, a good year, what's new in the world? I hate to get involved in long conversations with him, because they are sure to turn into a discussion: your God, our God. But I don't let him go on—I interrupt with an aphorism and tell him that we have a certain verse in the Bible... So he interrupts me and says that he knows all these verses as well as I do, and perhaps even better, and he begins to recite our Holy Bible in Hebrew to me, with his Gentile pronunciation: "*Bereshit bara alokim*"*—every time, every time the same thing. So I interrupt him again and

* "*In the beginning God created...*", the opening words of Genesis (Hebrew).—Tr.

tell him that we have a *Midrash*... "The *Midrash*," he says, "is called the *Tal-mud*," and he hates the *Tal-mud* for the *Tal-mud* is sheer trickery... So of course I get good and angry and start laying out anything that comes to my mind. Do you think he cares? Not at all! He looks at me and laughs, combing his beard with his fingers all the while. There is nothing more maddening in the world than the silence of a person you are shouting at, calling all manner of foul names—and not getting a word back! You are boiling, your bile is rising, while he just sits and smiles! At that time I couldn't understand it, but now I know what that smile meant...

Well, as I was coming home towards evening one day whom should I see standing near my house but the clerk Fedka, talking to my third daughter, Chava, the one who comes after Hodel. Upon seeing me the fellow about-faced, took off his cap to me and left. So I asked Chava:

"What was Fedka doing here?"

"Nothing," she answered.,

"What do you mean by nothing?" I asked.

"We were just talking."

"What's there for you to talk with Fedka about?"

"We've known each other for a long time."

"I congratulate you on your acquaintanceship! A wonderful friend—Fedka!" cried I.

"Do you know him then?" she asked. "Do you know who he is?"

"Who he is—that I don't know," said I, "I haven't seen his family register, however, I do understand that he probably stems from the greatest celebrities: his father must have been either a cowherd, or a watchman, or simply a drunkard."

To this she, Chava, that is, answered: "What his father was I don't know, to me all people are equal; but that he himself is no ordinary person—that I know for sure."

"And namely what sort of man may he be? Let me hear."

"I'd tell you," said she, "but you won't understand. Fedka—he is a second Gorky."

"A second Gorky? Then who was the first Gorky?"

"Gorky," she answered, "is almost the greatest man in the world today."

"Where does he live." I asked, "this sage of yours, what is his business and what kind of sermons does he preach?"

"Gorky," said my daughter, "is a famous writer, an author, a

man who creates books, a wonderful, rare, honest person. He also comes from the common folk, he had no schooling at all but is self-educated. Here is his portrait," she said, taking a small picture out of a pocket and showing it to me.

"So this is he, your saintly man, Reb Gorky? I could swear that I've seen him somewhere," I said, "either at the railway station carrying sacks or in the woods hauling logs."

"So in your opinion," said she, "it's a fault if a man toiled with his own hands? Don't you yourself work hard? And don't we work hard?"

"Yes, yes," said I, "you are quite right. In our Law it says: '*When thou eatest the labor of thine own hands*'—if you don't work, you won't eat... Still, I cannot understand what Fedka was doing here. It would give me greater pleasure if you were acquainted with him at a distance; you mustn't forget '*Whence thou camest and whither thou goest*'—who you are and who he is."

Her answer to this was: "God created all men equal."

"Yes, yes, God created Adam our forefather in his own likeness, but we shouldn't forget that each one of us must seek his equal, as it is written: '*From each according to his means...*'"

"Amazing!" cried she. "For everything you have a quotation! Maybe you can also find one explaining why people divided themselves up into Jews and Gentiles, into lords and slaves, into nobility and beggars?"

"Tut-tut-tut, daughter!" said I. "It seems to me that you've gone too far — strayed, as they say, into the '*sixth millennium*'."

I explained to her that this had been the way of the world since "*before the six days of Creation*."

So she asked: "Why should that be the way of the world?"

I answered: "Because that is how God created His world."

"Why did God create His world so?"

"Eh," said I, "if we started asking questions—why this and why that—'*there would be no end to it*,' it would be a tale without an end."

"God gave us reason," she said, "so that we should ask questions."

"We have a custom," said I, "that when a hen begins to crow like a rooster it is immediately taken to the slaughterer; as we say in the benediction: '*Who gave the rooster the ability to discern between day and night...*'"

"Maybe we've already had enough yammering out there?!"

shouted my Golda from the house. "The borsht," she said, "has been standing on the table for an hour already, but he's still singing Sabbath hymns!"

"Here we have another holiday!" said I. "It's not for nothing that our wise men said: '*Seven idle words hath a golem*'—a woman contains nine measures of speech. We're discussing important matters and she comes along with her milk borsht!"

"The milk borsht," said she, "may be just as important as all your 'important matters.'"

"Congratulations! Here we have a new philosopher, directly from under the oven! It isn't enough that my daughters have become enlightened—now Tevye's wife has begun to fly through the chimney up into the sky!"

"Talking of the sky," said Golda, "may the earth swallow you!"

How do you like, for example, such a welcome on an empty stomach?

To make it short, let us leave the prince and turn to the princess—I mean the priest, may his name and memory be forgotten!

One evening I was driving homeward with my empty jugs and crocks; just as I was coming into the village I met the priest coming from the opposite direction in his iron-coated britzka, proudly driving the horses himself, his well-combed beard flowing in the wind. May the ill luck from this encounter fall on your head, I thought to myself.

"Good evening!" said he. "Don't you recognize me, or what?"

"It's a sign that you'll soon become rich," said I to him, taking off my cap and intending to continue on my way.

"Wait a while, Tevel," said he. "What's the great hurry? I have a few words to say to you."

"Oh," said I, "if it's something good—very well, and if it isn't—keep it for another time."

"What do you mean by another time?" he asked.

"Another time means when the Messiah comes."

"But the Messiah," said he, "has come already."

"That I have heard from you before, and not once; better tell me, Father, something new."

"That's just what I mean to tell you," said he. "I want to have a talk with you about you yourself, that is, about your daughter."

This sent a pang through my heart: what had he to do with my daughter?

"My daughters," said I, "are, God forbid, not the kind of girls you have to speak for, they can stand up for themselves."

"But this," said he, "is a matter of which she herself cannot talk, another must speak for her, because it is a most important matter, her future depends on it."

"Whose concern is the future of my child?" I asked. "It seems to me that since we are speaking of futures I am a father to my child for a hundred and twenty years, isn't that so?"

"True," said he, "you are a father to your child. However, you are blind to her needs. Your child is reaching out for another world, but you don't understand her, or else you don't want to understand her!"

"Whether I don't understand her or don't want to understand her is another matter," said I. "This we can have a little talk about. But what has it got to do with you, Father?"

"It has quite a lot to do with me, for she is now under my care," he answered, looking me straight in the eye and combing his flowing beard with his fingers.

This jolted me, to be sure: "Who? My child is under *your* care? What right have you?" cried I, feeling my temper flaring up.

"Don't get so worked up, Tevel!" said he with a cold-blooded smile. "Slow down. You know that I am no enemy, God forbid, of yours, even though you are a Jew. You know that I respect Jews, that my heart bleeds for them, for their obstinacy, for their stubborn refusal to understand what is meant for their own good."

"Don't you talk to me of our own good, Father," said I, "for every word I now hear from you is like a drop of deadly poison, like a bullet piercing my heart. If you are, as you say, such a good friend of mine, I ask only one favor of you: leave my daughter alone..."

"You are a foolish man," he retorted. "Nothing bad, God forbid, will happen to your daughter. She will be happy—she is going to marry a fine man, I should live such a life."

"Amen!" said I, forcing myself to laugh, while my heart was a burning Gehenna. "And who may he be, this bridegroom, if I might have the honor of knowing?"

"You must know him" said the priest; "he is a fine and honest young man, and pretty well educated, although self-taught, and he loves your daughter and wants to marry her, but he can't, for he is not a Jew."

Fedka! was my instant thought, and I felt my head swimming;

a cold sweat broke out all over my body, I could barely keep my seat in the wagon. But I wouldn't let him see anything—he won't live to see the day! So I picked up the reins, gave the horse a few lashes and took off without a goodbye—*"departed like Moses."*

When I got home—oh, everything was topsy-turvy! The children were crying with their faces buried in pillows, weeping loudly, Golda was more dead than alive... I looked around for Chava—where is Chava? No Chava!

I knew better—woe is me—than to ask about her. I was beset by the torments of the grave, and a flame of anger burned in me, I don't know against whom... I felt like giving myself a beating... I started yelling at the children and let out the bitterness of my heart on my wife.

I couldn't find a place for myself, so I went out to the stall to feed the horse and found him standing with a leg twisted over the far side of his trough. I grabbed a stick and began laying into the poor beast as if bent on skinning him and breaking all his bones: "May you burn alive, *shlimazl!* May you starve to death—not a single oat grain will you get from me! Troubles, if you like, you may have, and anguish, blows and plagues!.."

Shouting so at the horse, I soon caught myself thinking: *A pity for living things*—for a poor innocent beast—what do I have against him? I sifted a little chopped straw into the manger and promised the horse that I would show him, God willing, the letter "hay"* in my prayer-book on the Sabbath.

Then I went back into the house, lay down, and buried my head in the pillow. I felt as if my chest had been cut open, my head was splitting from thinking, from trying to understand, to grasp the real meaning of all this. "*How have I sinned and what is my transgression*"—how have I, Tevye, sinned more than the rest of the world that I am punished more than all the Jews? Oh, Almighty God, Lord of the Universe! "*Who are we and what is our life?*" Who am I that you always have me in mind, and never permit any blight, trouble or misfortune to pass me by?!

So ran my thoughts, and I felt as if I were lying on live coals; then I heard my poor wife groaning and sighing—my heart bled for her.

"Golda," I asked, "are you asleep?"

"No," she answered. "What then?"

*The name of the first letter of the word "hay" in Hebrew.—Tr.

"Nothing," said I, "we've got ourselves into a nice hole. Maybe you have some idea of what's to be done?"

"You ask me for advice," said she, "woe is me... A child gets up in the morning, strong and healthy, gets dressed and embraces me and begins to kiss me, hug me and bursts into tears, but says nothing. I thought that she—God forbid—had lost her mind! So I ask her: 'What's the matter with you, daughter?' She doesn't say a word and runs out into the yard to see to the cows and disappears. I wait an hour, I wait two hours, three hours—where is Chava? No Chava! So I tell the children to run over the priest's house for a minute..."

"How did you know, Golda, that she was there?"

"Alas and alack! Don't I have eyes? Or maybe I am not her mother?"

"If you have eyes and if you are her mother," said I, "then why didn't you say anything, why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you? When are you at home? And when I do tell you something—do you listen to me? When a person tells you something you immediately answer with a quotation; you've drummed my head full of quotations and that's how you get by..."

That is what she, Golda, said to me, and I heard her weeping in the darkness... She is partly right, thought I, because what does a woman understand? It pained my heart to hear her groaning and weeping. So I said to her:

"Look, Golda, you are angry at me because I have a quotation for everything; well, even this I must answer with a quotation. It is written in our Book: *'As a father has mercy on his children!'*—a father loves his child. Why doesn't the passage read: *'As a mother has mercy on her children'*—that a mother loves her child? Because a mother is not a father; a father can speak differently to a child. Just wait, tomorrow, God willing, I'll see her."

"God grant," said she, "that you will be able to see her, and him, too. He is not a bad man, even though he is a priest; he does have compassion for people. You implore him, fall to his feet, perhaps he'll have mercy."

"Who, the priest, may his name be accursed!? I should stoop to the priest? Are you crazy or have you lost your mind? *'Do not open your mouth to Satan,'*" said I, "my enemies won't live to hear of such things!"

"Ah, you see! There you go again!" exclaimed Golda.

"What did you think? That I should let myself be led by a woman? That I would live according to your female reason?"

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We spent the whole night talking in this manner. At the first crow of the cock I got up, said my prayers, picked up my whip and set off straight for the priest's house. As you say, a woman is only a woman, but where else should I have gone? Into the grave?

When I entered the priest's yard his hounds gave me a splendid welcome and wanted to "fix" my cloak and taste the calves of my Jewish legs, to see whether they were good for their canine teeth... It was my good luck that I had taken my whip along; with its aid I made them understand the Hebrew quotation, "*Not a dog shall bark*"—or, as it goes in Ukrainian, *Nekhai sobaka darom nye breshet*—don't let a dog bark in vain.

The barking and the uproar brought the priest and his wife out into the yard. With difficulty they managed to drive off the merry pack, and then they invited me into the house, receiving me as an honored guest—they even wanted to put on the samovar for me. I said that the samovar was not necessary, that I had something I wanted to talk about with the priest eye-to-eye. He guessed what I meant and winked at his spouse to please shut the door from the other side.

I came straight to the point without any preamble: let him first tell me whether he believed in God... Then let him tell me whether he felt what it meant to part a father from a child he loved. Next, let him tell me what, to his mind, was a good deed and what was a sin? And another thing I wanted him to make clear to me: what does he think of a man who sneaks into another man's house and wants to change everything in it—move the chairs, the tables and beds?

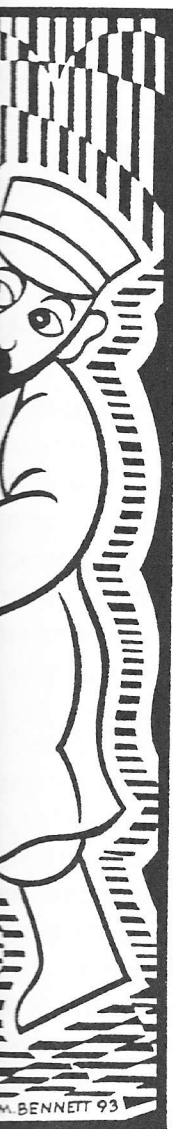
Of course he was bewildered: "Tevel, you are a clever man, and here you come and hurl so many questions at me at once, and you want me to answer them all at one go. Wait a while and I'll answer all your questions, from first to last."

"No," said I, "my dear Father, you'll never answer these questions. Do you know why? Because I know all your thoughts beforehand. Better give me an answer to this: May I still hope to see my child again or not?"

At this he jumped to his feet: "What do you mean—see her again? Nothing will happen to your daughter, quite the opposite!"

"I know," said I, "I know you want to make her happy! That's not what I'm speaking about. I want to know where my child is, and whether I can see her?"

"Anything you want," said he, "but that—no."



url so many

"That's the way to talk," said I, "short and sweet and right to the point! Goodbye now, and may God repay you many times over!"

When I got home I found my Golda lying in bed all bunched up like a ball of black thread; her eyes had already run out of tears. I said to her: "Get up, my wife, take off your shoes and let us sit down on the floor and mourn our child for seven days, as God has commanded. '*The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.*' We are not the first and we are not the last. Let it seem to us that we never had any Chava, or that she has left us, like Hodel who went off beyond the '*mountains of darkness*' and God alone knows whether we will ever see her again...The Almighty is a merciful God, He knows what He does!..."

With such talk I poured out the bitterness of my heart, feeling that tears were choking me, like a bone struck in my throat. But Tevye is not a woman, Tevye can restrain himself! That, of course, is only in a manner of speaking, because, first of all—the shame! And secondly, how can I restrain myself when I've lost a living child, especially such a child, a diamond embedded deep in both my own and her mother's hearts, almost more precious to us than all the other children, I don't know why. Perhaps it is because she had been very sickly as a little child, had suffered "*all the troubles of the world.*" We used to sit up with her whole nights, several times we snatched her, literally snatched, out of the clutches of death, breathed life into her, as one would breathe on a tiny, trampled chick, because if God so wishes He makes the dead come to life again, as we say in a *hallel*: "*I shall not die but I shall live*"—if it is not ordained that you should die, you don't die...And maybe it is because she was a good and faithful child, she always loved us both with all her heart and soul. So I ask: how could it happen that she should cause us such grief? The answer is that, firstly, such was our luck. I don't know about you, but I believe in Providence; and secondly, it was some kind of witchcraft! You may laugh at me, but I must tell you that I am not so benightedly foolish as to believe in gnomes, elves, *domoviks**, spooks and other such nonsense. But I do believe in witchcraft, for what could it have been but witchcraft? Just hear me out and you will also say the same thing....

In short, as our Holy Books say, "*Perforce you must live*"—a

*A goblin, or brownie that was, according to superstition, supposed to live in every house (from the Russian word *dom*—house). — *Tr.*

human being does not take his own life—these are no idle words. There are no wounds that don't heal, and no trouble that is not forgotten with time. That is, one doesn't actually forget, but what can be done? "*Man is likened to a beast*"—a man must toil, suffer, labor to exhaustion for his piece of bread. So all of us got down to work, my wife and the children with the jugs and jars, I with my horse and wagon, and "*the world continued in its course*"—the world does not stand still. I told my family that Chava was "*never to be mentioned nor thought of*"—no more Chava! Blotted out for good! Then I got together some fresh dairy products and set off for Boiberik to my customers.

In Boiberik my customers welcomed me most enthusiastically: "How are you, Reb Tevye, why haven't we seen you such a long time?"

"How should I be," I answered. "*We renew our days as of old*"—I'm the same *shlimazl* I always was, one of my cows has dropped dead."

"Why is it," they asked, "that all these miracles happen to you?" Then all of them and each one separately wanted to know what kind of cow I had lost, how much it cost me, and how many other cows I had left. Laughing merrily, they joked and made fun of me, a poor man, a *shlimazl*, as is the custom of rich people when they have just had a good meal, are in a cheerful mood, everything is fine and green outdoors, the weather is balmy—just right for a nice snooze. But Tevye is a person who can take a joke: not for the life of me would I have let them know what my feelings really were!

Having sold all my goods, I set off for home with my empty crocks and jars. Driving through the woods, I slackened the reins and let the horse go on slowly, so that he might stealthily crop a tuft of grass now and then. Losing myself in meditations, I let my imagination run away with me, thinking of life and of death, of this world and of the next, of what the world actually was, why a man lived, and similar things—all in order not to let myself think of Chava. But as if in spite, namely she, Chava, crept into my mind. Here she comes towards me, tall stately, beautiful and fresh as a pine tree, or as she was in early childhood, a tiny, sickly, almost lifeless little baby nestling in my arms, her head dropping over my shoulder. "What do you want, Chaveleh? Bread soaked in milk? A sip of milk?.."

For a while I forgot what she had done and my heart went out

to her, my soul ached with longing for her. Then I remembered, and anger flared up in my breast against her, against him, against the whole world and against myself for not being able to blot out her memory, tear her out of my soul. Why can't I do it? Doesn't she deserve it? Was it for this Tevye had to be a Jew among Jews? Did he toil and suffer, root the ground, and raise children only for them to be torn away by force, to fall away as a pine cone falls from its tree, and to be carried away by the wind and by smoke? For instance, I thought, a tree, say, an oak, grows in the forest; then someone comes along with an axe and chops off a branch, another branch and another branch—what is the tree without its branches, alas? Better go, lummo, and chop down the whole tree and put an end to it! Why should an oak stand bare in the forest!..

As these thoughts flitted through my mind, my horse suddenly came to a standstill. What was the matter? I looked up and saw—Chava! The same Chava as before, hadn't changed a bit, not even her clothes were different!

My first impulse was to spring to the ground and embrace her, kiss her... But I was held back by a second thought: Tevye, what are you, a woman? I gave the reins a tug and cried to the horse: "Giddy-up, *shlimazl!*"—and pulled to the right. But Chava also went to the right, waving her hand to me, as if to say: "Stand still a while, I have to tell you something."

Something seemed to snap in me, something tugged at my heart, my limbs went weak and I all but jumped off the wagon! But I held myself in check and pulled the reins, making the horse turn left—Chava also moved left, looking at me wildly, her face deathly pale... What shall I do? I thought to myself. Shall I stop or drive ahead? Before I could look around she was already holding the horse by the bridle and crying: "*Tateh!* I'll sooner die than let you move from this spot! I beg you, please hear me out first, *Tateh-Father!*.."

Eh, thought I, you mean to take me by force? Oh, no, my dear! If that is what you mean—it's a sign that you don't know your father... And I began to lay into the poor beast for all it was worth. The horse lunged ahead obediently, turning its head backwards and twitching its ears.

"Giddap," I told the horse, "*Judge not the vessel but its contents*—don't look, my clever one, where you shouldn't." But do you think that I myself didn't want to turn my head and look back, to have at least a glimpse of the spot where she remained

standing? But no, Tevye is not a woman, Tevye knows how to deal with smoldering Satan...

Well, I don't want to waste your time with too long a story. If it was ordained that I should suffer the torments of the damned after death, I must surely have atoned for all my sins already. I know the taste of Gehenna and of purgatory, and of all the other tortures that are described in our Holy Books—ask me and I'll tell you!

All the rest of the way home it seemed to me that she was running after the wagon and crying: "Hear me out, *Tateh-Father!*" A thought crossed my mind: Tevye, you are taking too much upon yourself! What harm will it do if you stop for a while and hear what she has to say? Maybe she has something to say that you should know? Maybe, who knows, she has changed her mind and wants to come back? Maybe she suffers in her life with him and wants you to help her escape from a living hell?.. Maybe, maybe and maybe and many another maybe flitted through my mind; again I saw her as a child and was reminded of the passage: "*As a father has mercy on his children...*"—a father can have no bad children, and I blamed myself and said that I "*do not deserve to be pitied,*" that I am unworthy of walking upon the earth!

So what? Why all this fretting and fuming, you stubborn madman? Turn your wagon back, you brute, and make it up with her, she is your own child, not another's! Strange thoughts crept into my head: What is the meaning of Jew and non-Jew?.. And why did God create Jews and non-Jews?.. And since He did create Jews and non-Jews, why should they be so isolated from each other, hate each other, just as if this one is from God and that one is not from God?.. I was sorry that I was not as learned as others in holy and in secular books, where I might have found the true justification for this...

In order to break up this train of thought I began to chant: "*Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house, and they shall continue to praise Thee...*", saying *Minhah*, the afternoon prayer, as God bade us.

But what good was this praying, this chanting, when inside, in my heart, an entirely different melody was playing: "Cha-va! cha-va! Cha-va!" The louder I chanted "*Blessed...*" the louder became the "Chava" tune, and the more I tried to forget her, the clearer was her image in my eyes, and it seemed to me that I could hear her voice crying: "Hear me out, *Tateh-Father!*" I tried to stop my



me."

ears so as not to hear her, I shut my eyes not to see her; I chanted the *Shmin-esra* and could not hear my own voice, I beat my breast and called myself a sinner and did not know what my sin was; my life was in a muddle and I myself was bewildered. I told nobody of this encounter and spoke with nobody of Chava, asked nobody about her, although I knew very well where she was and where he was and what they were doing, but nobody would find out anything from me. My enemies won't live to see the day I complain to anyone. That's the kind of person Tevye is!

I should like to know whether all men are like this, or whether I alone am so crazy?

You know, for example, it sometimes happens... You won't laugh at me? I am afraid you will...

For instance, it sometimes happens that I put on my Sabbath coat and set off for the railway station; I am ready to get on the train and go out there, to them, I know where they live. I go to the ticket-window and ask the man to give me a ticket. He asks, "Where to?" "To Yehupetz..." So he says, "I know of no such city." So I say, "Then it is not my fault..." And I turn and go back home, take off my Sabbath coat and get down to work, to my dairy wares and the horse and wagon. As it is written: "*Each man to his labor*"—the tailor to his shears, the cobbler to his last.

Yes, you are laughing at me! What did I tell you? I even know what you are thinking. You are thinking: This Tevye, he is something of an imbecile!

Therefore, "*Up to here and no further*"—it's enough for today, I mean... Be well and strong, and write me letters. And, for God's sake, don't forget what I asked you: keep silent concerning this, don't make a book out of it. But if you do happen to write, write about someone else, not me. Forget about me. As the passage goes: "*And he was forgotten*"—no more Tevye the Dairyman!

1906

