

WALTER FREUD

PURIMSPIEL



synagoga
E. F.

Vergeltet
1888-1890

In the *Purimspiel* (*Purim Play*) we hear a voice rarely represented in the theatrical life of the ghetto: the voice of a young Zionist. This script, preserved in Walter Freud's file at Beit Terezín in Israel,¹ is the only work authored by him that has so far come to light.² The play appears to end in mid-scene and it is likely that the final pages were lost. Although it is not possible to say definitively whether the extant manuscript was preserved from the ghetto or reconstructed after the war, a poster preserved in the archives of the Terezín Memorial in the Czech Republic confirms that a *Purimstück* (*Purim Piece*) written by Walter Freud was performed in Terezín/Theresienstadt in March 1943.³ Survivor Jiří Shmuel Bloch, living today in Zichron Yaakov, Israel, confirmed that the text published here corresponds to the poster. Even before perusing the script, he recalled that his good friend Dov Révész, one of the actors listed on the poster, sang the parody of the aria “La donna e mobile” that appears in the final act.⁴

IMAGE 10.1 (page 281) **The synagogue in the Cavalier barracks. By E. Neugebauer.**
 IMAGE 10.2 (facing page) **A souvenir poster for the *Purimstück*. By Walter Freud.**
Both images courtesy of the Terezín Memorial.

- 1 Archives of Beit Terezín, file 338. There is no information regarding how the script reached their archives.
- 2 Freud wrote at least two more original works: a German-language revue, *What Was Mordechai Like?* (*Wie war Mordechai?*) and a Czech-language Hannukah play called *Menorah*. See the Terezín Memorial, inv. nos. PT 8413 and PT 8420.
- 3 See the Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 4041.
- 4 Jiří Shmuel Bloch, interview with Lisa Peschel, October 24, 2007. The aria is from the first act of the opera *Rigoletto* (1851) by Giuseppe Verdi.

MÄRZ 1943

PURIMSTÜCK

VON WALTER FREUD

REGIE, - AUSSTATTUNG:

WALTER FREUD

MITWIRKENDE:

Revezs Dov.

Erich Huppert,

Hans Epstein,

Frant. Weiss,

Karel Fleischer,

Walter Freud.

u. Jugendliche der Heime Q 710, u. L 410

3 Wiederholungen BV 241

PROSINEC 1943 - B V / 2+1.

CHANUKA

SESTAVIL: WALTER FREUD

KONFERANCIERE:

WALTER FREUD

Učinkující:

Gustav Schorick,

Nora Friedl,

Haral Reiner,

Renee Gärtnergeiringer,

Jakob Goldring,

Tamara Zucker,

Leo Haas,

Adolf Schächter,

Paťa Fischel.

PROSINEC 1942

MENORAH

CHANUKA

HRA OD

WALTRA

FREUDA

REŽIE: J. GOLDSTEIN

VÝPRAVA: J. ŠUBR

UČINKUJÍCÍ:

MLÁDEŽ DOMOVA L 417

DÍVKY DOMOVA L 410

PAŤA FISCHL, WALTER FREUD

TANCE NASTUDOVALA:

GRETA WURMOVÁ

IMAGE 10.3 (left) A souvenir poster for a Hanukkah celebration in December 1943, organized and hosted by Walter Freud.

IMAGE 10.4 (right) A souvenir poster for Menorah, a Hanukkah play by Walter Freud performed in December 1942.

Both images courtesy of the Terezín Memorial.

Walter Freud perished after his deportation to Auschwitz. His wife Ruth survived, and thanks to letters she wrote to Beit Terezín in 1995⁵ and a 1997 interview with Elena Makarova,⁶ as well as testimony by Terezín/Theresienstadt survivor Michal Beer,⁷ much is known about his life.

Walter was born in 1917 in Vienna but grew up in Brno/Brünn. During the occupation he was employed by the Jewish congregation as a *shaliach*⁸ and traveled widely in Moravia, delivering lectures on Jewish topics. As Ruth described his work, “He was not pious, but he wanted Jewish youth to know their history.”⁹ He traveled frequently to the town of Strážnice to work with a large Maccabi youth group.¹⁰ There he met Ruth, and they were married on December 7, 1941.

At the beginning of 1942 Walter was named head of the Jewish orphanage in Brno/Brünn. Ruth, who in the meantime had completed a training course as a children’s nurse, worked there with him. In March 1942, the 80 children of the orphanage and all their caretakers were deported to Terezín/Theresienstadt. In the ghetto, Walter and Ruth were assigned to work in the girls’ youth home L410. Posters preserved in the Terezín Memorial reveal how he immersed himself in the cultural life of the ghetto and especially in work with youth.¹¹ He organized

5 Her letters and a wedding photo are preserved in the archives of Beit Terezín, file 338. Unless otherwise indicated, the letters are the source of all the biographical information below. Dates have been confirmed with information from the database of the Institute of the Terezín Initiative.

6 Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 405.

7 Michal Beer, interviews with Lisa Peschel, October 15 and 16, 2007.

8 In the Zionist movement, the *shaliach* devoted himself above all to educating youth and preparing them for emigration to Palestine.

9 Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 405.

10 Maccabi groups were branches of an international Jewish sports organization. The first Czechoslovak chapter was founded in 1919. See Ruth Bondy, *Mezi námi řečeno: Jak mluvíli Židé v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague: Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 2003), p. 90.

11 In addition to the *Purimspiel* and the two works mentioned earlier, Freud organized an evening of works by Scholem Aleichem (Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 3916), a children’s revue titled *A Girl Travels to the Promised Land* (*Ein Mädchen reist ins gelobte Land*, PT 4014), and several more performances.

several performances on Jewish and Zionist themes for adults as well as for young audiences. Judging by the *Purimspiel* itself and the comic titles of some of his other works, it is perhaps not surprising that he participated in the lecture series of the ghetto with a talk titled “Jewish Humor.”¹² He also helped young people adapt their favorite fairy tales and stories for the stage.¹³ He was even able to indulge his passion for puppet theater, sometimes working with another author represented in this collection, Arthur Engländer.¹⁴ Survivor Hana Reinerová, the caretaker for a group of boys in home Q609, recalled that he taught her young charges to make marionettes.¹⁵

Because they both worked in the girls’ youth home, Walter and Ruth Freud were one of few married couples in the ghetto who were able to live together.¹⁶ A year after their arrival, however, they suffered a terrible loss: the death of their child. Ruth was already expecting a baby when they arrived in the ghetto. Although the doctors in Terezín/Theresienstadt recommended that she terminate her pregnancy, Ruth refused, believing that the war would be over by the time the child was born. Their daughter, Eva, nicknamed “Yanika,” was born in November 1942 but contracted whooping cough and died when she was only four months old.¹⁷ As Ruth wrote, “Walter himself built a small white coffin and we accompanied the little one to the crematorium.”

Walter was deported to Auschwitz on the first of several mass transports in September and October 1944. According to Ruth, the SS

¹² Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 456.

¹³ See, for example, posters for a Czech-language performance of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (*Krysař hamelský*, Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 4310) and a German-language performance based on Erich Kästner’s children’s novel *Emil and the Detectives* (*Emil und die Detektive*, Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 3848).

¹⁴ See, for example, posters for two Czech puppet plays, *Johnny’s Kingdom* (*Honzovo království*) and *Circus* (*Cirkus*), in the Terezín Memorial, inv. nos. PT 3860 and PT 3885.

¹⁵ Hana Reinerová, interview with Lisa Peschel, August 31, 2006. A poster for a puppet play staged by her boys lists Walter Freud as one of the artistic supervisors. See the Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 3857.

¹⁶ Michal Beer, interview with Lisa Peschel, October 15, 2007.

¹⁷ According to survivor Michal Beer, the Freuds derived the nickname from the letters Y N K. In Hebrew, when different vowels are added to the three-letter verb root, these letters form several words related to the verb “to suckle.”



IMAGE 10.5 A souvenir poster for The Pied Piper of Hamelin, adapted by Walter Freud.

Courtesy of the Terezín Memorial.

claimed that the transport was being sent to build a new ghetto and Walter volunteered to help.¹⁸ Ruth and approximately five hundred other women from Terezín/Theresienstadt volunteered for a transport leaving just a few days later that would supposedly reunite them with their men. She never saw Walter again. At Auschwitz she was selected for labor; she was liberated in Kudowa, a subcamp of Gross Rosen.

THE SCRIPT

With this work Freud perpetuated the long tradition of Purim plays: performances that contribute to the festive atmosphere of the holiday. Purim commemorates events that took place during the Jewish diaspora in Persia, in the capital city of Shushan, in the fifth century BCE. The Purim play traditionally features several figures from the biblical Book of Esther. The Persian king, Ahasuerus, is not an evil character but has been deceived by the villain Haman into agreeing to the murder of the Jews. Haman, the king's minister, begins to plot against the Jews after Mordechai, Ahasuerus's Jewish doorkeeper, refuses to bow to him (as a Jew, Mordechai bows only before God). Haman tells Ahasuerus that the Jews are disobeying the king's laws and requests a decree granting the enemies of the Jews the right to kill them all on the designated day. The king agrees, not knowing that Esther, his second wife, the young and beautiful queen, is a Jewish orphan and Mordechai's niece.¹⁹ When Esther reveals Haman's plot to the king, Ahasuerus sentences Haman to death. Although he cannot annul his own royal decree, he issues a second decree granting the Jews permission to defend themselves and they triumph over their enemies. Vashti, the first wife of King Ahasuerus who was banished from the court for her disobedient behavior, often plays a role in the Purim play as well.

18 Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 406.

19 Esther is traditionally referred to as Mordechai's niece; in the Book of Esther she is identified as the daughter of Mordechai's uncle.

Freud's text freely combines elements of the traditional Purim play with influences from the prisoners' daily life: a cabaret song about rampant gossip in the ghetto, a scene about the young Zionists' theoretical love of manual labor, etc. It culminates in a comic opera sung by Esther, Haman, Mordechai, and the King.²⁰ The work provides us with insight into Freud's own personal brand of "Jewish humor" and also with a rare look into the daily activities of young Zionists in the ghetto: how these young people, most of whom came from very assimilated families, learned about Jewish history and holidays, struggled to learn Hebrew, and prepared for a future in Palestine.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

THE AUTHOR

WALTER FREUD was born on May 25, 1917. He was deported to Terezín/Theresienstadt on March 31, 1942 and to Auschwitz on September 28, 1944. He perished.

THE ACTORS

The following actors are listed on the *Purimstück* poster:

DOV RÉVÉSZ appears in the database of the Institute of the Terezín Initiative as Pál Révész. He was born on January 7, 1922 and registered in Plzeň/Pilsen. He was deported from Prague to Terezín/Theresienstadt on May 15, 1942. According to the database he was released from the ghetto on March 15, 1944 as a Hungarian citizen. This conflicts with information provided by Jiří Shmuel Bloch, who testified that Révész was deported to Auschwitz and subsequently perished.

ERICH HUPPERT, born on February 7, 1925, was deported on January 28, 1942 from Brno/Brünn to Terezín/Theresienstadt and on September 28, 1944 to Auschwitz. He was liberated in Buchenwald.

²⁰ See sheet music on pp. 320–31 of this volume, IMAGES 10.6–17.

HANS or **HANUŠ EPSTEIN** was a common name in the ghetto. There are ten listed in the database, but only two appear to be of the right age. One was born on March 20, 1924. He was deported on January 22, 1942 from Plzeň/Pilsen to Terezín/Theresienstadt and on September 6, 1943 to Auschwitz where he perished. The other was born on March 17, 1925, deported from Brno/Brünn to Terezín/Theresienstadt on April 8, 1942, and to Auschwitz on December 18, 1943. He perished on April 21, 1945 in Schwarzheide.

FRANT. (FRANTIŠEK) WEISS was a common name in the ghetto. In the database of the Institute of the Terezín Initiative it appears eleven times, but there is only one who was approximately the same age as the other actors. Born on May 24, 1926, he was deported on January 28, 1942 from Brno/Brünn to Terezín/Theresienstadt and on September 28, 1944 to Auschwitz. He perished.

KAREL FLEISCHER, born on July 2, 1925, was deported on April 8, 1942 from Brno/Brünn to Terezín/Theresienstadt and on September 28, 1944 to Auschwitz. He perished.

The youth of homes Q710 (the Zionist youth home) and L410 (the girls' home where Freud worked) also participated in the play. One of the girls from the youth homes apparently played the role of Esther; all of the actors named on the *Purimstück* poster were male.

THE SURVIVORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INTRODUCTION AND ANNOTATION

MICHAL BEER (née **MAUD STECKLMACHEROVÁ**) was born on April 7, 1929. She was deported to Terezín/Theresienstadt from Olomouc/Olmütz on July 4, 1942 and was liberated in the ghetto. She now lives in Tel Aviv.

RUTH FELIX (née **FREUD**) was born on June 14, 1924. She was deported to Terezín/Theresienstadt on March 31, 1942 and to Auschwitz on October 1, 1944. She was liberated in the slave-labor camp Kudowa.

JÍŘI SHMUEL BLOCH was born on May 3, 1926. He was deported from Plzeň/Pilsen to Terezín/Theresienstadt on January 22, 1942 and to Auschwitz on September 28, 1944. He was liberated in the slave-labor camp Blechhammer. He now lives in Zichron Yaakov, Israel.

HANA REINEROVÁ was born on April 19, 1921. She was deported to Terezín/Theresienstadt on July 5, 1943 and to Auschwitz on October 1, 1944. She was liberated in Mauthausen. She passed away on June 1, 2007.

CHARACTERS²¹

Director of the Theater Troupe
 King, also Ahitofel and A
 Haman, also Bal Marduk and B
 Esther
 Vashti (a man) and C
 Mordechai, also Nisibist and D
 The People of Shushan
 E

ACT I

*The entire theater troupe, with the Director, enters through the audience and takes the stage, singing a Huha Horra.*²²

DIRECTOR. Now all you players, gather 'round

Look what an audience we've found

To watch the scenes that you'll perform:

Women, plain and fair of form,

Men, both poor and prosperous

The miserly and the sponsorous.

Bakers, cobblers, cooks, and jailers

Clerks and locksmiths, brokers, tailors

²¹ The cast list on the *Purimstück* poster names six actors (including Walter Freud himself) and the youth from homes Q710 and L410. This list of characters in the script also suggests a core cast of six (the Director and A, B, C, D, and E) and additional actors to play the smaller roles (Esther and the "People of Shushan"). Details regarding the characters are provided at the beginning of each scene.

²² Huha Horra: probably the hora (also spelled horah), a dance that originated in the Balkans and played an important role in the development of Israeli folk dance. It is often performed to the Hebrew folk song "Hava Nagila," which is perhaps the song the actors are singing as they enter. The significance of "Huha" is unclear; perhaps it is just a comic twist on the name of the dance.

All are gathered here today.

Quickly now, what shall we play?

Wait—where's Ahasuerus, our royal?

KING. Here, among his subjects loyal.

DIRECTOR. Would you please stop embarrassing me—

Is this how you earn your salary?

Get up here, drop the pretense

Those chairs are for the audience.

KING. I'll tell you why I'm here, to wit:

I'm looking for a place to sit.

DIRECTOR. Whatever has come over you?

The first two rows, as usual,

Are set aside for VIPs.

KING. Well, as the king, I'm one of these.

DIRECTOR. They're for the Jewish Council members

Not for stateless kings, remember . . .

Off-stage, you have no commonweal.

KING. And they—no robes, no crowns—are real?

DIRECTOR. Enough. We've got a packed-full house

MORDECHAI. As if we were playing *Die Fledermaus*!²³

DIRECTOR. So let's begin our tale sublime

Or we might just run out of time.

To all our honored guests:

A welcome unreserved.

We bring to you the very best

That human ears have ever heard,

That human eyes have ever seen,

If you don't like it, you can leave.

For those of you who choose to stay,

We'll gladly now present our play:

23 The operetta *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss was performed in the ghetto under the direction of Hans Hofer, another author featured in this volume. See the Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 4045.

A *Purimfest*.

Wait—I mean a *Purimspiel*.

Guests, forgive me, please don't feel
Offended by these small delays

Soon we'll be *in medias res*.

MORDECHAI. That's Latin; it means, "in the middle of things."²⁴

DIRECTOR. My players travel from ghetto to ghetto

With Nathan the Wise and Rigoletto²⁵

For our spectators, what's the greatest hit?

They love it when we play that Shylock.²⁶

But what today we'll represent

Are true, historical events

From long ago.

The Jews in Persia, as you know,

Were not at all well loved by the regime.

MORDECHAI. They were probably being blamed for some defeat.²⁷

DIRECTOR. I'm the director; my company:

The king . . .

The King steps forward and bows.

KING. Ahasuerus, that's me.

Eternal sovereign on the stage,

I've ruled these boards for many an age

Returning faithfully once a year

For Purim, as you see me here.

²⁴ More specifically, *in medias res* indicates the narrative technique of beginning a story in the middle of the action rather than at the chronological beginning of the events.

²⁵ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's work *Nathan the Wise* (*Nathan der Weise*) was performed several times in Terezín/Theresienstadt as a staged reading, and *Rigoletto* was one of several operas performed in the ghetto. See the Terezín Memorial, inv. nos. PT 3981 and PT 3923.

²⁶ The break in the rhyme scheme is intentional. In the original script this verse reads "Und unser allergrößter Reißer / ist der vielgerühmte Scheilock."

²⁷ The *Dolchstoßlegende* (stab-in-the-back legend) that circulated in Germany after the First World War relieved the military of responsibility for the defeat and blamed the loss on sabotage by socialists, Bolsheviks, and Jews. This legend was exploited by Hitler to turn public opinion against these groups.

DIRECTOR. Here is Vashti, looking good,
A credit to modern womanhood.

VASHTI. I'm Vashti, proud and beautiful
Just between us . . . the king's a fool
He didn't know how to deal with me
So I left the court and now I'm free.

DIRECTOR. In the Bible, it's explained differently.

HAMAN. In this group, I am number three
But I'll conceal my evil intents,
Cloaking them in deep silence.

My defeat each year is nothing new
But I'm still dead set against the Jews
For the court bows down as I pass by—

DIRECTOR. Except for the old Jew Mordechai
A central figure in the tale.

MORDECHAI. Before no power do I quail.
I remain what I've always been,
The uncle to the Jewish queen.

ESTHER. My name is Esther,
And to the letter, my king fulfills my every wish.
On his guard, always standing by
Is my dear old uncle Mordechai.

DIRECTOR. And all the rest whom you see here
They play the folk of Shushan.²⁸

The outcome of the tale's not clear
For those who live in Shushan.

Yes, every man is in suspense
Inside the fortress Shushan.
He can't know how the story ends
He feels so small in Shushan
But in his tales, he's twice his size²⁹

28 In this passage, Shushan becomes an allegory for the ghetto itself.

29 Many survivors have described the widespread phenomenon of Terezín/Theresienstadt prisoners exaggerating the importance of their pre-war positions. See, for example, Utitz, *Psychologie života v terezínském koncentračním táboře*, pp. 22–3.

The little man in Shushan.

Though without omens, without signs,

The hopeful folk of Shushan

Believe Haman will get the noose

Then, oh, what joy in Shushan

Sometimes they're in a foul mood,

The rabble's roused in Shushan,

But what's to tell—we know them well,

The nasty folk of Shushan.

KING. Long live the folk of Shushan! (*He goes to the Director, puts the crown on his head.*) There—you have my crown. You play the king today; I won't do it.

ALL. What's going on, what's happening?

KING. I've been in the theater for years and I always play the king, the same king Ahasuerus every year! Always the same *Purimspiel*—I've had enough!

VASHTI. He's right. I'm not going to play Vashti anymore. (*The actor takes off his dress and bra and gives them to the Director.*)³⁰ You can play Vashti yourself.

DIRECTOR. But ladies and gentlemen, the audience!

KING. The audience knows the tale by heart already.

HAMAN. I'm not going to play Haman anymore either. (*Gives Mordechai the dagger.*) Mordechai can play Haman if he wants.

MORDECHAI. I know some Jews who gladly try to play the role of Haman, but I'm afraid you won't find anyone who wants to play the Jew!

DIRECTOR. But ladies and gentleman, the audience!

ESTHER. What about them? Always “the audience.” Why does only the audience have the right to have fun on Purim? We have our rights too. The audience always laughs at the actors; today we'll laugh at the audience.

ALL. Bravo, bravo!

³⁰ The list of characters indicates that this role is played by a man.

MORDECHAI. The laugh's on the audience—good idea; how should we begin?

DIRECTOR. But ladies and gentleman, the audience!

HAMAN. We don't give a damn about the audience. We're playing for ourselves today.

KING. But I'm not going to play the king.

VASHTI. And I'm not playing Vashti.

HAMAN. I won't play Haman either.

MORDECHAI. Then, my worthy fellow actors, I suggest you play, for once, the people of Shushan.

KING. That's an idea—we'll play the folk of Shushan, not the life of the court and castle.

HAMAN. Yes, that's an idea—I will play a simple man of the people.

DIRECTOR. Ladies and gentleman, the audience! (*The players leave the Director alone, rush to a box, pull out costumes and start to dress as pious Jews. The Director turns to the audience.*) Ladies and gentlemen, the actors . . .

Two actors grab him, stick him in the box of costumes and close the lid. The curtain falls.

ACT II³¹

In front of the curtain.

*Herr Fröhlich, Herr Schön, Herr Popper, Frau Kobn, Frau Zwicker, Frau Müller:*³²

31 This act is based on the song “Goodbye, Herr Fröhlich” (“Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Fröhlich”), which was a popular cabaret number in the inter-war period. The *Purimspiel* version, however, may have been recited rather than sung; the German-language verses in the original do not appear to fit the melody. Another Terezín/Theresienstadt version of the song has been published in Migdal, *Und die Musik spielt dazu*, pp. 98–9. It was probably performed in the ghetto by cabaret artists Bobby John and Ernst Morgan. See Volker Kühn, “Kabarett im KZ,” in booklet to the CD/DVD set *Totentanz: Kabarett im KZ* (Neckargemünd: Edition Mnemosyne, 2000), p. 45; and the Terezín Memorial, inv. no. PT 4099.

32 These six characters were probably played by the “people of Shushan,” i.e. the youth from homes Q710 and L410. I have retained the German “Herr” and “Frau” instead of using “Mr.” and “Mrs.” in this translation to preserve the rhythm of the original text.

HERR FRÖHLICH. Herr Schön, have you heard?

HERR SCHÖN. Heard what, Herr Fröhlich?

HERR FRÖHLICH. There's something up in Shushan.

HERR SCHÖN. Well, well, you don't say? And where, Herr Fröhlich?

HERR FRÖHLICH. Now I don't know exactly, but probably at the castle.

HERR SCHÖN. The castle? *Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Fröhlich.

HERR FRÖHLICH. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Schön.

HERR SCHÖN. Herr Popper, have you heard?

HERR POPPER. Good day, Herr Schön. What's going on?

HERR SCHÖN. There's something up in Shushan at the castle.

HERR POPPER. Well, you don't say, and what, Herr Schön?

HERR SCHÖN. Now I don't know for sure, but what else could it be?

It's very likely something with that Haman.

HERR POPPER. So something's up with Haman in Shushan?

HERR SCHÖN. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Popper,

HERR POPPER. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Schön.

HERR POPPER. Oh, what luck to see you here, Frau Kohn.

FRAU KOHN. Oh, my dear Herr Popper! What's happening?

HERR POPPER. There's something up in Shushan at the castle—and certainly it's something with that Haman.

FRAU KOHN. With Haman? and what, Herr Popper?

HERR POPPER. What else could it be? He's surely gotten mixed up in some quarrel.

FRAU KOHN. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Popper.

HERR POPPER. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Frau Kohn.

FRAU KOHN. Frau Zwicker, Frau Zwicker!

FRAU ZWICKER. My word, I haven't seen you in so long.

FRAU KOHN. Now, have you heard the news, Frau Zwicker?

FRAU ZWICKER. I don't have to hear it all to know it all.

FRAU KOHN. There's something up in Shushan, Haman's gotten mixed up in some quarrel at the castle, that's all that I can tell you—

FRAU ZWICKER. Do you have this from a reliable source?

FRAU KOHN. Am I perhaps an unreliable source?

Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Zwicker.

FRAU ZWICKER. *Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Kohn.*

A brief pantomime, where all whisper softly and only the word "Shushan" is heard.

FRAU MÜLLER. Herr Schön, Herr Schön!

HERR SCHÖN. What's going on, Frau Müller?

FRAU MÜLLER. Haven't you heard the news?

HERR SCHÖN. I know, there's something up in Shushan!

FRAU MÜLLER. And how, Herr Schön!!

HERR SCHÖN. Do you know?

FRAU MÜLLER. Hmph, do I know . . . that Haman's gotten mixed up in some quarrel at the castle, with the king and the queen, and the king will see him hang.

HERR SCHÖN. Is it really so?

FRAU MÜLLER. Of course, and now we'll go free; the fourteenth of Adar has been cancelled!

HERR SCHÖN. *Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Müller.*

FRAU MÜLLER. *Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Schön!*

ACT III

*The curtain opens. Five men are bent over their books, studying.*³³

A, B, C, D, E, Herr Schön.

³³ This act perpetuates a traditional aspect of many Purim plays: scenes satirizing *pilpul*—the seemingly endless, minute analysis of Jewish law.

- A. The matter is as follows: you need two witnesses to convict a man according to eyewitness testimony. Now the two witnesses testified that they saw Reuben kill Simeon³⁴ on such and such a day, in such and such a place. Now two new witnesses appear and say to the first two: you've committed perjury. On that day you weren't even there, but somewhere else with us. The law says: the first witnesses gave false testimony and they must be condemned to death. When they are executed, they will be executed together, because one cannot be executed alone. If one of them dies in the meantime, then you must let the other live, because one alone cannot bear false witness—testimony from one person means nothing; you need the testimony of two witnesses.
- B. So both of them sinned together and therefore they can only be punished together.
- C. But how can the first two witnesses be punished based on the testimony of the two new witnesses? Here are two witnesses and there are two witnesses. Two against two. How do we know that the new witnesses are telling the truth?
- D. This question is nothing new. Many sages have already spoken of it—Rashi³⁵ and others as well. The matter is as follows: each of the first two witnesses is interrogated alone so one doesn't hear what the other says, and now the two new witnesses testify against one of them at a time, so each time it's two against one.
- E. All right, and this means that, if one of the false witnesses dies, the other can't be executed. Now I ask you: what happens if they are going to the place where they will be executed, and on the way, one picks up a stone and kills the other. So he has

34 Reuben and Simeon, the eldest sons of Jacob and Leah, were two of the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. In this scene they are significant simply as biblical names; Reuben the patriarch did not murder Simeon.

35 Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, c.1040–c.1105): a medieval French rabbi who authored one of the best-known and most beloved commentaries on the Torah.

to be set free, because they must be executed together. By killing the other, the first one saves himself. Is this possible?

- A. What a question. He will still be executed because he murdered the other witness.
- B. This answer is no answer. He cannot be executed for killing the other witness, because it isn't murder.
- C. And why not? Why shouldn't it be murder?
- B. Because it is written: only he who destroys life commits a murder. However, he who kills a dead man, that is, a man who is as good as dead and who cannot be saved, he who kills such a person commits no murder. Here a man has to be executed, he is already on the way to his execution, thus he is, for all practical purposes, already dead. How can they execute the other for killing him? He has killed a dead person.
- D. It is true that he who is being led to his execution is practically dead, so whoever kills him does not commit murder and thus cannot be punished for murder. He is free, and he cannot be executed for his false testimony because one witness alone cannot be executed. He is therefore truly free. If the one false witness kills the other false witness, he frees himself.
- E. That's impossible. A criminal escapes his punishment by committing another crime? That's impossible. The second witness, who for all practical purposes is dead, since he is on the way to his execution, is in the same position as the other. Both are being taken to their executions. Both are lost. Now the one kills the other and for that he should go free?
- A. Well, if one can do it, the other can too. If the other, the second witness, had killed the first, he would have gone free. Thus the other had the means to save himself, so he wasn't really lost, he wasn't as good as dead, he wasn't dead but alive. Thus the first witness would have killed a living man, would have committed a real murder, so he can be executed for that and the whole matter doesn't help him at all.

B. If that's the case, if it doesn't help the first witness to kill the second one, if he will still be executed, then it wouldn't help the second witness to kill the first. He would still be executed. So if he has no way to save himself, if he will be executed anyway, then again he is as good as dead and the first witness kills not a living man but a dead man and he is free.

HERR SCHÖN (*rushing in*). Friends, we are saved, the decree of the fourteenth of Adar has been overturned!

A. *Scha*³⁶—don't bother us, can't you see we're working?

HERR SCHÖN. What will you do now? Everything is back the way it was, Haman is no more, Mordechai will be a minister, friends, think about it, what will you do now? Celebrate, be glad!

A. Don't bother us now; we have more important things to discuss. So, my friends, the matter is apparently not yet resolved. Let us begin again from the beginning.

Curtain.

ACT IV³⁷

A (*Ahitofel*),³⁸ B (*Bal Marduk*),³⁹ C, D (*Dardanus*),⁴⁰ E (*Eshpruta the Nisibist*),⁴¹ *Herr Fröhlich, a platoon of soldiers, and their leader.*

³⁶ Yiddish for "shhhh."

³⁷ The characters in this scene represent conflicts (class tensions, anti-Semitism even among converted Jews, etc.) between various social groups in inter-war Central Europe and within the ghetto itself.

³⁸ Ahitofel (also spelled Ahitophel) was an advisor to King David of Israel who conspired with David's son Absalom to overthrow the king. The plot failed and Ahitofel committed suicide.

³⁹ Bal Marduk was a god worshipped in ancient Mesopotamia and patron deity of the city of Babylon. By the late 2nd millennium BCE he was regarded as head of the pantheon of Babylonian gods.

⁴⁰ Perhaps Dardanus. In Greek mythology, Dardanus was a son of Zeus and Electra. He founded the city of Dardania on Mount Ida in the Troad. According to some accounts, he came to the Troad after surviving a great flood.

⁴¹ The School of Nisibis, founded in 350 CE, was an important spiritual center of the early Church of the East, which belonged to the Syriac tradition of Eastern

- B. Well aren't you a sight, Mr. Ahitofel. You have certainly seen better days, Mr. Ahitofel—you were a soap factory magnate from the land of the Nile, Mr. Ahitofel and his donkeys' milk,⁴² you didn't even recognize me, Bal Marduk; you didn't even give me the time of day!
- C. Be quiet, Bal Marduk. Why are you always looking for trouble? Now we are all equal, the same fate awaits us all, now we are all workers, ordinary workers with ordinary shovels.
- B. And with several thousand Thalers⁴³ hidden away with some Persian.
- A. You talk about the Persians, Bal Marduk, as if they were strangers. I am a Persian too and what's it to you if I've given my brother a sum of money for safekeeping? I am a worker now, all the same.
- D. You a worker? You will always be the famous Ahitofel Ltd., manufacturer of soap—and swindler.
- A. What? My soap received first prize for Persian-made products and was used by the former queen Vashti . . . Queen Esther washes in the *mikveh*,⁴⁴ but she probably uses my soap too. You speak out of jealousy, Mr. Dardanalus, because your Astarte⁴⁵ toothpaste was for sale only at flea-markets.⁴⁶

Christianity. Nisibis, the ancient city where it was founded, is now known as Nusaybin and is located in modern-day Turkey. The meaning of the name Eshpruta is not clear.

42 Donkey's milk has been recognized since the time of Cleopatra for its cosmetic properties.

43 Clearly an anachronism: the first Thaler coin, the Joachimsthaler, was minted in the sixteenth century from silver obtained from St. Joachim's Valley in Bohemia.

44 Jewish ritual bath.

45 The goddess Astarte appeared in Ancient Egypt along with other deities of the northwest Semitic peoples. She was worshipped especially in her aspect as a warrior goddess, and was also associated with fertility and sexuality.

46 In the original, *Einheitströdelmarkt*, a term combining *Einheitsmarkt* (standard market) with *Trödelmarkt* (flea market).

- D. You are mistaken, Mr. Ahitofel. Do you know Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, who wields a trident with three teeth? Yes—he cleans those teeth only with Astarte toothpaste.
- E. You Jews, always quarreling amongst yourselves . . . Jewish rabble.

All laughs.

- c. And what are you, if I may ask?
- E. I am a Nisibist.
- B. Followers like you surely make the goddess Nisibis very happy.⁴⁷ Why are you here with us then? The decree of the thirteenth of Adar applies only to us Jews.
- E. I know that. I'm here by mistake.
- A. It was always my ideal to become a Nisibist—Ahitofel is my name.
- E. Eshpruta—nice to meet you.
- A. At the next possible opportunity we will become co-religionists; of that you can be sure.
- D. In the meantime, pay attention to your ditch-digging—a little faster now!
- A. How dare you? Don't you know who I am? Haven't you seen my chariot? The axles made of gold, the seat of cedar wood—now the mayor of Shushan drives around in it and I'm supposed to take orders from you on how to do my work—besides, I'm a worker just like you, what do you have against . . .
- B. Stop it. Workers don't quarrel amongst themselves.
- A. That's right. So why does he act so spitefully toward me? Why is he always trying to oppress me? You are no better than I am, if not worse.
- c. What are we working on, anyway? Really, what is this for, what is it supposed to be?
- D. Do you need to know what all the work they assign you to is for?

⁴⁷ There is no goddess Nisibis; Freud's reference is probably for comic effect. The Nisibist probably represents a Jewish convert to Christianity.

E. It's terrible, the way you treat each other! It serves you right that they chose the thirteenth of Adar for you—what did our sort do to deserve this, that by mistake we have to spend our lives with rabble like you?

HERR FRÖHLICH (*rushes in*). Gentlemen, haven't you heard? Why do you still have those shovels in your hands?

A. Because we are workers.

HERR FRÖHLICH. Stop! we're free again—the whole thing's been resolved—the decree of the thirteenth of Adar is cancelled—Esther and Mordechai have taken care of everything—we're free!!

D. That's impossible!

A. We are free, workers, we are free.

B. Our time has come!

D. We need a rallying cry.

E. Long live the goddess Nisibis.

C. Long live Persia.

B. A slogan, quickly, a slogan. The rallying cry of the liberated worker!

A. Give us back our factories, give us back our factories! (*Hangs a poster with the slogan "Vashti is better."*)

All the others exit, chanting their slogans. D comes back, sees Abitofel's poster, tears it down and hangs up his poster, "Astarte is even better." The chanting of slogans fades away in the background. Troops march in with brooms in their hands. The end of each broomstick is wrapped with a rag. Their leader marches in front, and all wear paper hats. Herr Fröhlich enters from the other side.

HERR FRÖHLICH. Have you heard? We're finally free!

LEADER. What's that? What did you say?

HERR FRÖHLICH. It's true; Mordechai will be a minister.

LEADER. Well, brothers-in-arms! This is news for us; now we will be able to help our people, old Mordechai will negotiate with the king—we will make our demands! Our discipline and our weapons will determine our future.

HERR FRÖHLICH. Tell me, why have your soldiers wrapped the ends of their weapons?

LEADER. Very simple. Since we belong to the faithful, we know the power of God the Almighty: If God wills it, a broom can shoot!⁴⁸ (*Calls one person out of the ranks and whispers to him*) Attention!

HERR FRÖHLICH. How can they hear and obey orders when you speak so quietly?

LEADER. Don't worry; word will get around.⁴⁹

HERR FRÖHLICH. Well trained.

LEADER. See for yourself!

HERR FRÖHLICH. Left face!

No one moves; only one person asks: "Where are we going?"

LEADER. Not like that; no one will understand. *Gen mistrach!*⁵⁰ (*All make the appropriate turn. More commands of this type: Schmone esse, i.e. three steps back.*⁵¹) Yes sir, we don't negotiate, we demand *lech lechha!*⁵² Company—march!
Exit.

ACT V

*The characters are digging a pit.*⁵³

⁴⁸ A proverb, variously identified as Yiddish or Russian.

⁴⁹ Perhaps a satirical reference to gossip in the ghetto. See *bonke* (glossary).

⁵⁰ *Gen* is apparently based on the German verb *gehen* (to go), and *mistrach* in Hebrew means "east."

⁵¹ Pious worshippers take three steps forward at the beginning of the *Shmoneh Esrei* (as it is spelled in English), the key prayer of the worship service, and three steps backward at its conclusion, approaching and departing from God's throne without turning their backs.

⁵² In the Book of Genesis, *lech lechha* (Hebrew for "go" or "leave") was God's commandment to Abraham to leave his native land and his father's house for the Promised Land that God would show him.

⁵³ This act represents members of the Zionist youth movement in the ghetto.

A, B, C, D, E, *the Zofeh*,⁵⁴ *Herr Fröhlich*.

All sing “Anu nihje harishonim.”⁵⁵

- A. What are we building here, anyway?
- B. The foundation for a barracks.
- A. A foundation? A foundation—aha, an economic foundation!⁵⁶
- B. No, a foundation made of concrete.
- A. A concrete foundation? That’s not possible. That can’t be!
- c. Why not?
- A. Concrete foundation? Ridiculous! There is nothing in the world that is not based on an economic foundation—are you trying to convince me that barracks constitute an exception and are based on a concrete foundation?
- c. Of course.
- A. Reactionary!
- D. *Chaverim, chaverim. (Looks at his watch.) Anachnu mucbrachim, anachnu medabrim rak ivritb achschar!*
- E. *Ken, ken rak ivritb!*⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Zofeh*, from the Hebrew word for “see,” here means “scout,” a nickname for the youngest members of the Zionist movement.

⁵⁵ A Hebrew song sung by Zionist youth. The lyrics mean “We will be the first” (that is, the first pioneers in Palestine). See Jakob Schönberg (ed.), *Shire Erets-Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Hozsaah Ivrit Ltd., 1947), p. 40.

⁵⁶ In the original, *ökonomische Grundlage* (sometimes translated as “economic basis”), a term from Karl Marx’s *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy* (1858).

⁵⁷ *Chaverim, chaverim*: Hebrew for “Friends, friends” (that is, fellow Zionists). The transliteration of Hebrew has been preserved from the original German-language script in order to retain potentially meaningful irregularities (comically intentional errors, indications of lack of knowledge of the language on the part of the character or the author, etc.). Only obvious inconsistencies have been corrected. *Sch* should be pronounced like the English *sh*, *j* like the English *y*, *th* like the English *t*, and *z* like the English *ts*. For more information, see the pronunciation guide for German in this volume, pp. xxii–xxiii. *Anachnu muchrachim, anachnu medabrim rak ivritb achschar*: Hebrew for “We must, we will now speak only Hebrew!” *Ken, ken rak ivritb*: Hebrew for “Yes, yes, only Hebrew!”

c (*whispers to Aaron*). I just met someone today—I'm telling you, Aaron, a girl . . . beautiful . . .

E. *Rak ivriṭh chaverim, rak ivriṭh!*¹⁵⁸

c. *Jesch li naarab jaffa meod, jesch li naarab jaffa meod, hoi hoi jefejfija.* (*He is silent for a moment.*) Halleluja Halleluja . . .

D. *Chaverim, chaverim—jesch li—jesch li . . .*

E. *Gam naarab?*

D. *Lo lo, jesch li, jesch li.*

ALL. *Mab jesch lechab?*

D. *Jeschli ha ha (bursts out) ha defnita!*

E. *Ha defnitional? Ejze defnitional?*

D. *Mab ze chaluz? Ata mevijn?*

58 The following few lines are in Hebrew. The translations are as follows. **Rak ivriṭh chaverim, rak ivriṭh:** “Only Hebrew, friends, only Hebrew!” **Jesch li naarah . . . Jefejfija:** “I have a very pretty girl, I have a very pretty girl, *hoi hoi* a beauty.” This is a line from a Hebrew folk song. As Jiří Shmuel Bloch suggests, perhaps C’s Hebrew is so poor that the only way he can express himself is by quoting this line from the song. Interview with Lisa Peschel, February 10, 2008. **Chaverim, chaverim—jesch li—jesch li:** “Friends, friends, I have, I have . . .” **Gam naarah?:** “Also a girl?” **Lo lo, jesch li, jesch li:** “No, no, I have, I have . . .”. **Mah jesch lechab?:** “What do you have?” **Jeschli ha ha ha defnita:** (Hebrew and Latin) “I have a . . . a . . . a . . . definition!” D apparently does not know the Hebrew word for definition, *hagdarah*, and instead uses the Latin word *defnita*. **Ha defnitional? Ejze defnitional?:** “You have a definition? What definition?” **Mah ze chaluz? Ata mevijn?:** “What is a *chaluz*? Do you understand?” That is, D has learned the word *chaluz* (pioneer) and is asking the others if they know what it means. **Lo ani mi-Berlin!** “No, I am from Berlin!” This joke is based on the similarity of the Hebrew phrases “Do you understand?” and “Are you from Wien (Vienna)?” **Chaluz jachol . . . belli nekud:** “A *chaluz* (pioneer) can read without points, but not live without points.” A joke based on a double meaning of the word “points.” In the first phrase, “points” indicates the system of dots, known as *niqqud* or *nikkud*, used as diacritical marks to represent vowels or distinguish between alternative pronunciations of letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The second phrase refers to ghetto-specific point systems. Manual laborers received extra bread for hard labor, night labor, etc., and their work was measured with a point system. Prisoners could also obtain coupons worth a certain number of points (see *Bezugsschein* [glossary]) that could be traded in for items in the ghetto shops. See Hyndráková et al., *Acta Theresiana*, pp. 158–9, 226.

E. *Lo ani mi-Berlin!*

D. *Chaluz jachol likroh beli nekudoth, aval ejno jachol lichyoth beli nekud.*

E (*looks at his watch*). *Dajenu!*

B. Well, that was a wonderful definition.

A. He only does that because he thinks there'll be something in it for him. Later, in exchange for his words of wisdom, he'll demand a *vatikim* certificate.⁵⁹

B. That's not true. His ideas are brilliant. He will definitely play a leading role in *ivrith* propaganda. For example, yesterday at the rabbis' meeting he proposed that the sentence in the Haggadah, *Leschanah haba bi jeruschalajim* should be changed, for propaganda reasons, to *leschavuah ivri haba bijeruschalajim*.⁶⁰

C. Look out, here comes a *zofel*!

All begin to work and sing "Ann nihje . . ."

ZOFEH (*to a member of the group who is working clumsily*). Pardon me, can I help you?

E. So you too want to experience the joys of manual labor?

Dajenu: "Enough for us!" A reference to the prayer sung in the Passover Haggadah.

⁵⁹ In the inter-war period the British government distributed a limited number of certificates for immigration to Palestine. The *vatikim* (veterans), as senior members of the Zionist movement, were the first to receive such certificates.

⁶⁰ **Ivrith propaganda:** this may be a reference to the Propaganda Department of the Jewish National Fund (JNF [in Hebrew, Keren Kayemet LeYisrael, KKL]). The JNF was founded in 1901 to buy and develop land in Palestine for Jewish settlement. The Propaganda Department concerned itself with disseminating the symbols, knowledge, and ideas that gave Zionism its meaning. See Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund, 1924–1947* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003). **Haggadah:** the Jewish religious text that sets out the order of the Passover Seder, commemorating the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus. **Leschanah haba bi jeruschalajim:** Hebrew for "Next year in Jerusalem." A pious refrain used at the end of the Passover Haggadah. **Leschavuah ivri haba bijeruschalajim:** Hebrew for "The next Hebrew week in Jerusalem." That is, he encourages other Jews not to wait until "next year" for emigration to Palestine.

ZOFEH. No, I am from Yad Tomechet⁶¹ and when we happen to encounter someone who is old or unfit for work, we are supposed to try to be helpful, and I've been watching you for a while . . .

D. But Jochanan, what are you thinking, this is a *chaver* . . .

ZOFEH. David, is that you? I didn't even recognize you!

C. Aaron—Yad Tomechet, I just remembered, excuse me for leaving early, I almost forgot, I have a *sichab*⁶² for Yad Tomechet.

ZOFEH. Is it hard, working like that with a shovel?

D. What an idea, Jochanan! For us, for whom work is a maxim and a categorical imperative,⁶³ we who, with the workers . . .

E. *Lav medalbern vor dem jelet!*⁶⁴

D. Oh, sorry, I though he was over sixteen.⁶⁵ Well, Jochanan, to work is very nice, and healthy for the body and the spirit . . .

ZOFEH. David, you must have forgotten, you're supposed to have a *sichab* with us now. Come on or it will be too late.

D. That's right—Aaron, please excuse me, I have a *sichab* right now with the *sofim* . . . come on, let's go.

A. Well, of course . . .

B. We'll take care of your part of the work, we'll just have to dig a bit harder . . .

61 Yad Tomechet (Hebrew for “a helping hand”) was a youth organization in the ghetto. Members volunteered to visit the elderly and infirm, read aloud to them in their quarters, and help them with other tasks.

62 Hebrew for “meeting” or “discussion.”

63 The categorical imperative is the central philosophical concept in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, introduced in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). It is best known in its first formulation: “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

64 A saying derived from Hebrew, German and Yiddish: “Don't talk that way in front of the child!” See Bondy, *Mezi námi řečeno*, pp. 84–5.

65 According to Jewish tradition, the age of adulthood is 13 for boys and 12 for girls. It is unclear as to why a 16-year-old would be regarded as a *jelet!*

- E. *Chaverim*, we've forgotten, we haven't learned our usual five vocabulary words of the day yet, and you know how important it is for us to be able to name all aspects of our daily lives in *ivrith*.⁶⁶
- B. Speaking of *ivrith*: I completely forgot, there's an *ivrith* seminar today, I have to run or I'll be late. Please excuse me, Aaron, but I have to leave a bit early—I'll stay longer tomorrow—*shalom, chaverim*.
- A. *Shalom*. So, what are the five vocabulary words for today?
- E. I've prepared them:
Bet simcha al galgalim = the *polička*⁶⁷
Gan Eden = the Provisions Department
Gehinom = the *Jugendfürsorge*, that is a *nifal*.⁶⁸
- A. How do you know that?
- E. Because it is passive.⁶⁹
*Im türzu ebn zoth agadab*⁷⁰ = When you have connections, there are no fairy tales.

⁶⁶ According to survivor Lisa Gidron-Wurzel, a council for Jewish education in the ghetto invented Hebrew neologisms to describe life in Terezín/Theresienstadt. See Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 148.

⁶⁷ A complex trilingual joke. *Bet simcha al galgalim* (Hebrew for “a happy house on wheels”) is an ironic translation of the Czech expression *bordel na kolečkách*, literally “a bordello on wheels,” slang for “a mess.” *Polička* (Czech for “small shelf”) refers to the small shelves mounted on the bunk beds in the youth homes. They were often the only private space the young prisoners possessed, but the leaders of the youth homes sometimes threatened to remove them because they were not kept clean. For the importance of these shelves for the young prisoners, see Křížková et al., *We are Children Just the Same*, p. 51.

⁶⁸ **Gan Eden**: Hebrew for “the Garden of Eden.” **Gehinom**: Hebrew for “hell.” **Jugendfürsorge**: see glossary. The young Zionists might have associated the *Jugendfürsorge* with hell because it organized labor assignments for all youth older than 14. **Nifal**: Hebrew for “passive,” as in a passive verb form.

⁶⁹ The meaning of this joke is unclear. All sources indicate that the *Jugendfürsorge* workers were anything but passive in their efforts to help the youth in the ghetto survive and to prepare them for life after the war.

⁷⁰ Hebrew for “If you wish it, it is no fairy tale.” This legend at the beginning of Theodor Herzl’s utopian novel *Old-New Land* (1900) became a well-known motto of the Zionist movement. E’s variation means that, in the ghetto, anything is possible if one has the right connections.

And the last one: *Tötzereth Haarez*⁷¹ = the *bonke*. But now I have to hurry. There's a seminar today. It's not enough simply to do work all day; one must also educate oneself about work. Please excuse me, I have to go now.

A. Then I'm here all by myself . . . *shalom* . . . I should actually go to a *Freizeitgestaltung*⁷² sometime too; otherwise I'll lose touch with my *chaverim*.

Voices are heard offstage, growing louder and coming nearer: "That's impossible," "That's wonderful," etc.

HERR FRÖHLICH. If I say it, you can believe it!

Enter chaverim B, C, D, and E. Instead of shovels they hold large posters. A is completely astounded.

D. Well, Aaron, you're still here and with a shovel in your hand? You're going to miss *aliyah*.⁷³ Hey, come with us—take the blade off that shovel and put something useful on it!

*A takes the blade off the shovel and replaces it with a poster without words, only dots.*⁷⁴

*Exit all, singing "Aba alinynu."*⁷⁵

⁷¹ Hebrew for "Made in Israel." In this case, probably intended to mean "made in Terezín/Theresienstadt": a *bonke* (see glossary) was a rumor "manufactured" in the ghetto.

⁷² The *Freizeitgestaltung*, in addition to administering other types of cultural events, organized series of lectures on many topics, including Zionism. For information on the lectures given by Zionist leader Dr. Franz Kahn, see Makarova et al., *University over the Abyss*, p. 58.

⁷³ Hebrew for "emigration to Israel."

⁷⁴ Perhaps a further reference to *niqqud*.

⁷⁵ A Hebrew song that was sung by Zionist youth. In the songbook *Shire Erets-Yisrael*, the lyrics are written *arzah alinu* (*arzah* meaning "to the land," that is, of Israel, and *alinu* meaning "we have gone up"). The *Aha alinynu* in the original script may be a typing error, or a joke along the lines of the Huha Horra at the beginning of the *Purimspiel*. See Schönberg, *Shire Erets-Yisrael*, p. 8.

The Director crawls out of the box and calls others back.

The Director, A, B, C, D, E, the Zofeh.

DIRECTOR. Players, please don't take offense

But you won't please the audience

By criticizing in your play

All the errors of their ways.

Although it's quite hilarious,

It simply can't go on like this!

All the players laugh: ha ha ha ha!!!

A. Look how our director worries

B. But today we'll choose the story

C. Tomorrow, Shylock,

D. The wise old Nate,

E. *Die Fledermaus*,

A. Will be back on stage.

ZOFEH. But who likes that old *Purimspiel*,

B. A story that's not even real,

C. It ends the same way every year

D. That's really what they want to hear?

ZOFEH. A tale as ancient as the Bible,

A. A boring, old and dusty trifle.

DIRECTOR. Don't underestimate old rhymes;

The public loves them every time.

If you give them something new,

The first thing that they ask of you

Is: "I haven't heard anything about this, has it been in the newspapers?"

And if "no, not yet" is what you say,

Their interest evaporates.

My friends, a hint:

Unless it has appeared in print

The truly novel, latest thing

They don't find very interesting.

The moral of my story's clear:

Give them what they expect to hear.

A. Well, if that's the way you feel . . .

It's true that last year's *Purimspiel*

Pleased everyone, without exception

And truly fit the celebration.

We could put it on again.

DIRECTOR. Oh, yes, the scene where they all sing,

HAMAN. At dinner, as the queen requests,

DIRECTOR. Haman and the king are both her guests

For reasons they cannot begin to know.

Any objections to this show?

Then come, let's lose no time at all:

We take you to the banquet hall.

ACT VII

*The King enters, singing.*⁷⁶

King, Haman, Esther, Mordechai.

KING. I don't know why I've been invited⁷⁷

To come to dinner tonight

Perhaps the queen is angry

And wants to start a fight.

HAMAN. I don't know why I've been invited

To come to dinner tonight

Maybe the king cannot stand it

To be alone with his wife.

⁷⁶ In this act the characters sing their lines to melodies from operas, operettas, and films. See sheet music on pp. 320–31 of this volume, IMAGES 10.6–17.

⁷⁷ The King and Haman sing a parody of a verse from Heinrich Heine's *Buch der Lieder* (1827) known as "Die Lorelei." The poem has been set to music multiple times. The best-known version was composed by Friedrich Silcher in 1838.

KING. Tonight, what will it be?⁷⁸

Perhaps you'll tell me

If your love belongs to me

Have you invited me here to tell me

I'm the only one that you hold dear?

HAMAN. Striking up a friendship with you⁷⁹

Would be advantageous

Striking up a friendship with me,

Would that be so outrageous?

KING (*noticing Haman*). You too, she's invited you here⁸⁰

You too, you too

How could she be so insincere

You too . . .

Beat it, Haman, beat it!⁸¹

ESTHER. Gentlemen⁸²

Welcome here to dinner, welcome here to dinner, welcome here to dinner . . .

KING. Lovely and sweet little queen⁸³

Do you know what fidelity means?

Why is he here for dinner and drinking?

What were you thinking?

My little queen.

78 The song "Heute Nacht oder nie" is from the film *Lied einer Nacht* (1932). Music by Misha Spoliansky, lyrics by M. Schiffer. This song made Spoliansky famous, but in 1933 the Nazis banned his works because of his Jewish origins.

79 The song "Eine kleine Freundschaft mit Dir" is from the film *Liebeskommando* (1931). Music by Robert Stolz, lyrics by Robert Gilbert.

80 The song "Auch Du wirst mich einmal betrügen" is from the operetta *Zwei Herzen im Dreivierteltakt* (1933). Music by Robert Stolz, lyrics by W. Reisch.

81 The motif *Weiche, Wotan, weiche* from Richard Wagner's opera *Das Rheingold* (1869).

82 The song "Grüßt euch Gott, alle mit einander" is from the operetta *Der Vogelhändler* (1891). Music by Carl Zeller, libretto by Moritz West (Moritz Nitzelberger) and Ludwig Held.

83 The song "Kleine entzückende Frau" is from the film *Früchtchen* (1934). Music by Nicholas Brodsky, lyrics by Konrad Drey.

HAMAN. Who knew a woman's heart⁸⁴

Held such deception

Bringing us both here

To toy with our affections

KING. I've had enough of this,

Enough of this business

Deceitful to the core,

That's just how she is

ALL. That's just how she is,

That's just how she is,

That's just how she is,

That's how she is.

HAMAN. Now something wonderful's in store⁸⁵

What will we have for dinner?

KING. It's probably mostly made of pork

HAMAN. Horsemeat would be a winner

ESTHER. Keep guessing . . . what has cloven feet?

The steak could be of camel meat⁸⁶

Oh, but the dumplings, the dumplings, the dumplings are
made of wheat.⁸⁷

(*All three sit down.*)

HAMAN and **KING.** Drink, drink, Esther mine, drink⁸⁸

⁸⁴ The aria "La donna e mobile" is from the first act of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Rigoletto* (1851).

⁸⁵ The song "Es muß was Wunderbares sein, von Dir geliebt zu werden" is from the operetta *Im Weißen Rössl* (1930). Music by Ralph Benatzky, libretto by Benatzky, Hans Müller-Einigen, and Erik Charell, lyrics by Robert Gilbert. The work was banned in Nazi Germany because of the Jewish origins of its co-authors.

⁸⁶ Camel meat, like pork, is not kosher.

⁸⁷ Many dishes in the ghetto were prepared from some type of substitute. Lentil soup was made of synthetic lentil powder, and meat usually meant a few shreds of horsemeat boiled in a soup. The dumplings, however, which were actually made of wheat, represented a welcome exception. Jifí Shmuel Bloch, interview with Lisa Peschel, February 10, 2008.

⁸⁸ The song "Trink, Brüderlein, trink" is often attributed to Wilhelm Lindemann but the music was actually written by Paul Bendix and the lyrics by T. P. Henning

Leave all your *daiges*⁸⁹ behind

Drink, drink, Esther mine drink

ESTHER. Drink, drink, darling king, drink

Leave all your *daiges* behind

Drink, drink, drink, Haman, drink

You'll both be *schicker*⁹⁰ tonight.

HAMAN and **KING.** Drink, drink, Esther mine, drink

Can't you get rid of this guy?

Drink, drink, Esther mine, drink,

My blood pressure's starting to rise.

KING. Yes, he's a minister, but lazy as hell.

HAMAN. I could be king very well.

KING. What do you see in him? you know that it's true:

HAMAN and **KING.** I am the right man for you.

KING. My love for you, his love for you⁹¹

Are not equal things

He is just a minister

But I, I am the king.

Now I hope you'll tell us both

Exactly why we're here.

ESTHER. Don't ask me why, don't ask me why

I thought you'd know, my dear.

HAMAN. Don't ask me any questions.⁹²

ESTHER. Now it's time for your confession.

in 1927. Bendix (1870–1944) was deported from Berlin to Terezín/Theresienstadt on May 29, 1943, where he perished.

⁸⁹ Yiddish for “worries,” from Hebrew *da'agot*. See Bondy, *Mezi námi řečeno*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Yiddish for “drunk,” from Hebrew *shikor*. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁹¹ “Meine Liebe, deine Liebe” is from the operetta *Das Land des Lächelns* (1929). Music by Franz Lehár and libretto, lyrics by Ludwig Herzer and Fritz Löhner-Beda.

⁹² The aria “Nie sollst du mich befragen” is sung by the title character in Richard Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* (1850).

KING. Oh won't you stop with this game⁹³

Don't try making me jealous.

HAMAN. What should I do about the fact that I'm so handsome?⁹⁴

What should I do about it, that they all love me?

What should I do here at this most peculiar party

That our queen Esther's thrown just for the king and me?

ESTHER. Don't ask, don't ask⁹⁵

Just look deeply into my eyes

And you will see all you need to know.

Mordechai enters.

MORDECHAI. Forgive me, my dear Esther⁹⁶

That *schifles*⁹⁷ I must give you

I look around

And clearly something's missing

Why don't you serve

Scholet, *mitschbert*, and *bejlek*?⁹⁸

Here all I see is

Only *chazir*!⁹⁹

ESTHER. How cold your hands are, uncle

To warm them I will try

MORDECHAI. I have no *hentschkes*¹⁰⁰

A *nebbish* and dirt-poor am I!

⁹³ The original German version begins with a direct quote "Santuzza, reize mich nicht" from the German translation of the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu in the opera *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890) by Pietro Mascagni (libretto by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci).

⁹⁴ The song "Was kann der Sigismund dafür, daß er so schön ist?" is from the operetta *Im Weißen Rössl*. Music by Ralph Benatzky, libretto by Benatzky, Hans Müller-Einigen, and Erik Charell, and lyrics by Robert Gilbert.

⁹⁵ The song "Frag nicht" is from the film *Ein Lied geht um die Welt* (1933). Music by Hans May, lyrics by Erst Neubach.

⁹⁶ The aria "Che gelida manina" is from Giacomo Puccini's opera *La bohème* (1896).

⁹⁷ Yiddish for "criticism."

⁹⁸ All traditional Jewish dishes. See *scholet* (glossary).

⁹⁹ Hebrew for "pig." Probably intended to insult Esther's guests as well.

¹⁰⁰ Yiddish for "gloves."

HAMAN. I am, from head to toe . . . 101

MORDECHAI. *Gamal gamali* . . . 102

HAMAN. . . so ready for your love.

KING. It was never love¹⁰³

Just a flirtation insincere

Esther is my wife

You can be sure!

HAMAN. Come to me tonight, my dear¹⁰⁴

All is ready, never fear

Come to me at ten

He won't see you then

For the lights go out at nine¹⁰⁵

In the dark you will be mine.

KING. Into the fight, I can't believe my eyes 106

You dare to try

Annoying my wife

(*The manuscript ends here.*)

101 The song "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt" is from the film *The Blue Angel* (1930). Music and lyrics by Friedrich Holländer.

102 Hebrew for "camel." Mordechai again insults Haman by calling him by the name of a non-kosher animal. *Gamal, gamali* was a well-known Hebrew song. See Schönberg, *Shire Erets-Yisrael*, p. 87.

103 The song "Liebe war es nie" (1927) was a popular tango. Music by Fred Markesch, lyrics by Fritz Rotter.

104 The song "Hab' ein blaues Himmelbett" is from the operetta *Frasquita* (1922). Music by Franz Lehár, book and lyrics by A. M. Willner and H. Reichert.

105 Lights in the prisoners' housing in the ghetto had to be turned off by a certain time in the evening. The time varied according to the season of the year. See Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p. 92.

106 The aria "Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre," popularly known as "March of the Toreadors," is from Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* (1875).