Sand and Stars

Siddy Wronsky

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The Land

One land there is in this world which every child hears about as soon as he can distinguish the sounds of human speech, one land which every child reads about as soon as he can decipher the written word. To that land the hearts of men turn in their hour of need, hoping there to find surcease from pain and struggle; to that land the hearts of men turn in their hour of joy, hoping there to find an echo of their love and their effort; to that land the hearts of men turn in their hour of insight, hoping there to find confirmation of the ultimate ends of wisdom.

Concerning that land an ancient race one wrote a scroll that for thousands of years has been the Book of Books for many nations and races. Therein they read of a land of awe and marvels, of wanderings and dreams, of myths and legends, of captivity and liberation, of revelation and prophecy. Millions of men and women in many lands read that Book every day of their lives. The heroes of the land so stir their imagination that they weave their own dreams and plans, their own aims and desires, into the texture of its narratives. They accompany the Patriarch to the Land of Promise, they weep with Mother Rachel for her children, they dream with the lad Joseph of his fame in days to come, they follow their leader Moses on the long trail through the desert, they rejoice with Miriam in dance, they stand with their brethren at the foot of Mount Sinai, they fight beside David against Goliath, they help to build the Temple of Solomon, they sing songs of love with Shulamith, they ramble beside the lovely Ruth in the wheat field of Bethlehem, they pray for children with the devout Hannah, they join in the dance of death with the companions of Jephta's daughter, they sit beside Deborah under her palm tree, they swim across the raging waters with Jonah, they stand awestruck before Isaiah and Jeremiah, harkening to the Word of the Lord from the lips of His prophets.

For untold ages that land has been the home of the spirit of millions of men and women, uniting their resolve and their longing, their thoughts and their hopes, their efforts and their emotions. That land draws to itself the souls of men as the burning-glass draws to its centre the rays of the sun; and they find balm for all their earthly trials in the peace of their ancestral home. For thousands of years that land has fructified the intellectual and spiritual life of many peoples: By their prayers and their festival they have made it the home of their own spirit.

Through long ages the land lay solitary and forsaken, arid and untilled, without orchards or cornlands. Not a sign of life was to be seen on its

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highways or in its habitations. Ever it waited in the solemn silence of its mountain tops, in the depths of its lakes, in the breadth of its plains. For the return of its own people it waited, for the people that had been banished from its fields for two thousand years, exiled by the force of its destiny, driven hither and thither over the face of the whole earth. The land awaited the homecoming of its sons, that they might awaken its soil to new life, that they might cause crops to grow and to flourish, once again bearing green forests on its slopes and golden fruit in its valleys.

None but this scattered people could restore the land that had been their first home four thousand years before, the land to which during their long exile they had been attached with every fibre of their being. In every corner of the globe sons of that people had waited for the return to their own land. And while they waited they could attach themselves to no other land, finding peace and comfort in no other place whatsoever. Over all the highways of the earth they wandered in the invisible hope, that one way their wanderings would end in the land of their fathers. At long last, when two millennia had passed, they found their way back to the land. Then they began to till its soil and to drain its swamps. They built white cities and green villages in their land; they thronged its every highway and byway. Once again they found themselves at home in the hills and the plains of their ancestral land.

This land we speak of is one of the smallest in all the world, a mere narrow strip lying between three continents along the eastern shore of the blue Middle Sea. There are merged all the grandeur and beauty of Creation. The mountains of the little land cast heavy shadows under the rays of its bright sun. A great white moon illumines its hills and lakes and valleys with unutterable radiance. Its soil stretches from the hills of Galilee in the north to the range of Judaea in the south. The hills of Ephraim encircle a broad and fertile plain. The River Jordan flows swiftly down through the land from north to south. Rising in the snowcapped Hermon and entering the land at its northernmost tip, the River broadens the little Lake of Hule and flows out again into the Lake of Galilee with its deep blue waters, its steep cliffs, its shores where nestle pioneer villages. The waters of the Lake mirror the ancient town of Tiberias, with its age-old houses of learning and new Kevuzoth on its outskirts. From a distant mountaintop beckons the fortress town of Safed, whose terraced streets wind in and out among ancient houses of prayer. From the southern tip of the Lake of Galilee the Jordan emerges to flow down through the broad plain between the hills of Gilead and the hills of Ephraim to the Dead Sea, there to lose itself in the

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salty waves. Steep cliffs cast black and violet shadows upon that inland Sea, in whose dark depths the stream of the Jordan leaves sunken treasures now redeemed for mankind.

In this land stands Jerusalem, most ancient of holy cities. There, on the rocky height of Moriah, the Lord of Hosts demanded from Abraham the sacrifice of his own son. There king David built his strongholds, there the mighty Solomon erected the sanctuary of the Eternal. For thousands of years the city of Jerusalem has stood upon its foundations of rock, sheltering within its bosom the shrines of three religions to which come millions of pilgrims from distant realms. Jerusalem on her steep heights is a city of faith and learning, of sorrow and joy.

In the broad coastal plain has arisen the Jewish city of Tel-Aviv (the Hill of Spring), a city built on the seashore by the sons of the home-returning people. Tel Aviv is a city of thronged streets and joyous festivals, of young workingmen and able civil servants, of gay shops; a city without a past which, in the fragrance of its orange blossoms, yields itself to the pleasures of the day, a city of schools and workshops.

Beside Tel Aviv towers the ancient fortress of Jaffa, for which many people fought in many ages: Jaffa, the sanctuary of foreign gods to which flowed the gold and the gems of foreign peoples; Jaffa, the city of Arabs in long robes and waving headcloths.

Northward from the sister-cities of Jaffa and Tel Aviv stretch green villages with orchards and poultry runs and market gardens, – villages in whose midst lie embowered cube-shaped white cottages within whose walls dwells a happy generation of sowers and reapers.

In the north of the Land, beside a broad bay stands the port of Haifa, a great city of commerce to which lead many broad highways. From the foot of Mount Carmel the city climbs halfway up the slope to the garden suburb of Hadar Hakarmel (the Glory of Carmel) which the homecoming sons of the land have built for themselves. From Hadar Hakarmel the city climbs up and up till it reaches the very summit of the mountain. At every turn in the road beautiful new houses and garden suburbs gladden the eye of the beholder. On the mountain top men find rest and recreation, landscapes of surpassing beauty; profound stillness for meditation.

From the coast to the Gilboa range stretches the great Emek Jezreel, once a vast swamp, where the home-returning sons of the land have created life anew. From the broad bosom of the plain have sprung happy villages and free communal settlements, all astir with cheerful toil. In the Emek a new Jewish peasantry is tilling its soil and rearing its children, making the laws

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of its new social order and dedicating itself to a life of comradeship and labor. So the folk of the Emek are making a new life for their people on the soil of the Holy Land, restoring it to its pristine fertility with untold effort by the work of their own hands.

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Leavetaking

The Gray House

At long last Rachel came downstairs to the assembly hall. The children looked up as she entered. So here she was, come to help them with the decorations for the farewell celebration before she herself left them. And what a celebration it was going to be! In the whole history of the Jewish youth nothing like it had ever been seen! The next morning a group of boys and girls from the Gray House in the little street of the great stone metropolis would leave the northern realm for the land of their fathers, a little land that lay between three continents beside a blue sea.

For two thousand years the Children of Israel had wandered over numberless highways around the globe; but now they had heard the call of their Homeland to come back to her and redeem her captive soil with the work of their hands.....

Rachel was tall and slender. Her deep blue eyes glowed with the light of love; her black hair was piled high on her head like the crown of a queen. Her clinging gown of fine red cloth swayed gracefully from her hips as she walked; almost she might have been taken for the beautiful young matriarch whose name she bore.

Seeing her thus, the children were deeply moved. For them she had always been the friend who laid a gentle hand on their foreheads when they were ill, and sang them to sleep when they were restless. She had laughed with them in their happiness and wept with them in their grief. But tomorrow she was to leave the Gray House with their older comrades for the sunny southland, for the Land of Israel, where she would work on the soil of her ancestors that it might be restored to its ancient fertility.

Before coming down to the hall, Rachel had made her rounds of the Gray House for the last time. In the large playroom where she had taught and sung with the little ones, she placed a green wreath over a portrait that hung between the two high windows, - the portrait of Beracha, the beloved housemother, who was to lead the first Youth Group from the Gray House to the distant Homeland. Her gaze would always be bent upon the children she must leave behind in sore distress in a hostile land. But they would be comforted by reading from her lips the promise to send for them as soon as she could obtain permission from the foreign power that ruled over the Land of Israel.

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From one dormitory to the other Rachel had gone, leaving on each bed a small gift wrapped in pretty colored paper with a green twig in token of greeting....

Clever blue-eyed Eva had never known a home of her own, from for her father had been killed in a pogrom in Russia and her mother had fled to a distant country overseas. Rachel's gift to Eva was a little book about the trees of the Land of lsrael. The girl, who herself resembled a slender birch swaying in the spring breeze, dreamed of working in a tree nursery in Emek Jezreel, tending saplings in a treeless land. On the flyleaf of the little book Rachel had written a verse from a ballad by a pioneer woman poet who had died all too young in the Land:

By Jordan I planted
A tree in your soil,
And I wore out a path
In the field of my toil.

The mother of chubby Nurith had died at her birth while fleeing from Poland, and her father had fallen in France during the great War. The girl did not know where her parents lay buried, and brooded incessantly over the unknown whereabouts of the graves of her dear ones. On Nurith's bed Rachel laid a tiny cushion of down, because the girl wanted to work on a poultry farm, helping the chicks to hatch, and so increasing the store of eggs and feathers in the Land of Israel. Nurith was to go in the second Youth Group from the Gray House to a children's village on the western slope of Mount Carmel, there to work and to study.

Active young Haim's father had been taken prisoner while fighting in the Russian army and never again been heard from. In the five years that had passed since Haim came to the Gray House, his mother had worked very hard to keep her three younger children. Haim's dearest wish was to prepare the ground in the Land of Israel so that he might send for his mother and the younger children. For Haim Rachel left a packet of seeds because she knew that, just as soon as Beracha gave the word, he would eagerly follow his friends to the Land of Israel so that he might sow and reap in the fields of a Kevuzah.

In silent meditation Rachel had stopped beside each bed, leaving a farewell caress when she moved away. Slowly, very slowly, she had walked down the stairs to the hall where the children were working so industriously. First she helped them festoon the walls with green boughs sent by friends at whose cottage in the woods they had spent many happy vacation

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days. Then the children handed her bright flowers and colored ribbons to hang over pictures of fields and woods, sowers and reapers, workers and students in the Land of Israel. How lucky they were, thought the children, that though they were surrounded by a wall of hate, they could still join with their fellow-Jews in celebrating an occasion compact of legend and reality, faith and effort, hope and aspiration.

As she worked Rachel hummed the refrain of a song to whose melody she and the children had often danced. Its theme was the confident hope that linked her to the Homeland and to her own future there:

We have come to the Land,
To build and to plant!

Next Rachel went down to the wardrobe room where the last touches were being given to the packing. The travelling bags bulged with clothing and underwear, books and tools and gifts from friends. How jolly it all looked with the paint-boxes and cameras, the fountain pens and the diaries, the pictures, the sewing-boxes, the pen-knives, and the sweets that had lovingly been provided for the journey, so that the children might lack nothing within the gifts of the Gray House. Neat name-tapes were sewn to each piece of clothing; all the bags were carefully labeled; bunches of keys hung in orderly rows from the moulding. Into each bag Rachel slipped a Mezuzah, a tiny parchment scroll with Bible verses, which the children would attach to the doorposts of their new homes in accordance with the ancient custom. The scrolls were the gift of the elders of the community as a reminder to the children to observe the commandments of their faith in the Holy Land.

Rachel helped to close the bulging bags and saw to the final details. The address of the new home had been deftly painted on each piece of luggage by busy young hand: Neve Shaanan, Haifa, Palestine.

The devoted committee of women who had sponsored the Gray House from its first day had done their utmost to equip the youthful vanguard of their people with the best of everything needful for their new life in the Land of Israel. For twelve years, ever since the homeless orphans had been brought to the northern metropolis in the year of famine following the great war, these kindly women had dedicated themselves heart and soul to the welfare of their wards. When the children first came to them the horrors they had seen were still reflected in their eyes: brutal murders and the burning of houses that had robbed them of parents and homes. Bewildered and questioning they had come, understanding nothing of the whys and wherefores of all that had befallen them. Only very gradually, after the

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women had made them feel at home in the Gray House (to which the name of Ahawah – Love – had been given) had the rigid barrier of the children's reserve been broken down. In the Gray House they had first learned about the distant Homeland of their nation with which their own future was to be bound up. Slowly and patiently the women had planted seed in the hearts of the children, seed that had sprouted and blossomed despite the enmity that surrounded the Gray House. Their maternal love had endowed the children with strength for the pioneering tasks that awaited them in the Land of Israel.

Suddenly the notes of a flute sounded the melody of "Hatikvah," the song of hope that had been accepted as the national hymn of the Jewish Renascence because it voiced the age-old longings of the people. At the summons light feet scudded down the stairs and along corridors, hastening from kitchen and dormitories, courtyard and cellar.

Rachel went out to the vestibule where the children were ranging themselves in twos to the music of the flute played by their leader David. This was the last time they would respond to his call. David had come to the Gray House with his younger brother Reuben at the age of eight. Their mother had brought them to the northern metropolis, but the horrors she had witnessed and the hardships of the way had been too much for her. Soon after she fell into decline and wasted away. David himself would never forget the ghastly scenes he had witnessed in his native Eastern European town, or the anxieties of his parents, or the fear that savage hordes might appear at any moment to kill and destroy. All these things had left an indelible impress on his sensitive young soul.

Rachel walked beside him at the head of the procession, turning now and then to give slight signals to the children to keep them marching in perfect order and in perfect time to the music. First of all came the tots, three and four-year-olds who tripped with wondering gaze, and were followed by the five- and six-year-olds from the kindergarten. All were dressed in their Sabbath best, and carried lighted candles in their little hands. Slowly they marched upstairs to the assembly hall, where the young pioneers were to gather for the last time with their leaders and teachers, with the staff of the Gray House, and with the elders of the community and the rabbis.

Next came the school children who in turn were followed by the Youth Group that was about to leave for the Land of Israel. In loose formation, with a measured and easy stride, right hands on their partners' shoulders and left hands behind their backs, the children marched upstairs to the slow strains of the flute. Bringing up the rear came the gentle Leah, who

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had opened the Gray House when a great multitude of refugees had swarmed into the city bringing with them children orphaned in the war and the pogroms. Leah was to remain in the Gray House to prepare succeeding Youth Groups, and would leave only after the last child had been sent out from the Exile to the Land of Israel. Beside her walked Beracha, the strong motherly woman who had taken the children under her wing from the day of their coming to the Gray House. Beracha knew and loved each and all of them, and had brought them up carefully for pioneering in the Homeland. Now she would lead the first Youth Group from the Gray House to the Land of Israel.

Louder and louder resounded the strains of "Hatikvah", a song of hope for those who were going away, a song of yearning for those who would remain behind.

Slowly the procession entered the lavishly decorated hall. In the centre of the hall, before the ark, stood the venerable rabbi who had organized the first group for the national movement in the northern capital, and who had counselled and befriended the children of the Gray House in all their joys and sorrows. On either side of him sat the elders of the community, while before him were gathered the young pioneers and the leaders who were to accompany them.

In their midst sat Beracha, the mother of the Gray House, and Leah, its guardian angel. On the benches on either side were ranged all the other children, while seats had been provided along the walls for the relatives and friends of the first Youth Group.

From the gallery a boys' choir greeted the assembly with the ancient Hallelujah psalm of the royal poet. As the last notes died away, the aged rabbi rose and slowly stretched out his hands towards the boys and girls who on the morrow would leave for the Holy Land, as he himself had ardently wished to do in his youth. He knew each of the children intimately, and loved them all with a father's affection. It was he who had welcomed them to the Gray House twelve years earlier, he who had prepared the boys for the great day when they went up to the ark to read a portion of the Scriptures before the congregation, he who had comforted the weeping orphans on the death anniversaries of parents killed in the great war. It was he, too, who had counselled them when, in bitterness of spirit, they had sought to understand their place in the world as Jews, and he who had consoled them when they suddenly found themselves treated as pariahs by their former friends. The homeless children, quiet Rita, clever Benjamin, gentle Eva, jolly Yithhak, capable Rivka – had grown as dear to him as his

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own. Here they sat before him, features composed and tranquil, eyes gazing into far distances, thoughts dwelling affectionately on all who had cared for them during the long years of their orphanhood and had now gathered to wish them Godspeed. On the morrow, mused the rabbi, these children would go out from the Gray House to such a future as he had planned for himself in his own youth in response to the stirrings of the new national movement. He had wanted to take his part in restoring the land of the fathers; he had looked forward to tilling its soil and to identifying himself so closely with the Homeland that it would endow him with new powers for the service of his people. But his resolve had not been strong enough to ensure its own fulfillment. He had been weak and vacillating, too closely attached to the comforts of the great city; he had rated too highly the value of his services to his congregation. And now he eagerly scanned the faces of the youngsters who were ready to devote their lives to the ideals that had once been his own, who were going up to the Land of Israel in his stead.

As he surveyed their young faces he recalled the long years when he had championed the national ideas and planted its seed in the hearts of these very children. A thrill of happiness passed through his veins as he thought that on the eve of their departure for the great adventure of their young lives, they preferred to receive the benediction from him rather than from any other. "My dear young friends," he began in measured tones, "in this hour when we have gathered for the last time before you go to the work that awaits you in the land of our fathers, in this painful hour of parting, I can come to you with no words other than those which the God of Israel spoke to our ancestor Abraham in the day when he commanded him to go up to the Promised Land: 'I will bless thee ...and thou shalt be a blessing.' Today, more than at any other time in the history of our people we grasp the significance of those words, for today begins a new chapter in our history. When Abraham four thousand years ago went up to the land God had chosen for His people, the call came to him not as a promise of his own personal happiness and prosperity, but as a duty to endow his posterity with strength to take root in the new home and flourish there. In this sacred hour when you, my dear young friends, are sent by our community as harbringers of the redemption of our people from Exile, you will grasp the import of God's message to Abraham. With you goes the affection of all who remain behind, of all who will follow you when you have paved the way for them, and above all of those who will stay with your younger friends to rear them as strong and upstanding young people like yourselves to follow in your footsteps. To you it has been granted to witness

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the realization of a dream cherished by our people throughout the centuries since it was proclaimed by the prophet in imperishable words: 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.'

As a little group of fifty young sons and daughters of our people, you go out to till the soil that awaits your coming to redeem it. In the sweat of your brow you will sow and reap, build and plant, study and teach. You will be sustained by the vigor of your youth and the resolve of your people.

You will take with you to the land of your fathers neither treasures nor possessions. On behalf of our unhappy community I restore upon you, in parting, two symbols of our people. In your right hands I place the wanderer's staff which will guide you from the Exile to the eternal home of our people, and in your left I place the Bible, the Book which for thousands of years has been the most precious source of insight and guidance, comfort and protection, promises and sanctification for our people. With these two tokens in your hands you will go up to the land of your fathers. May the ancient commandment of our God be fulfilled in you: 'Thou shalt be a blessing!'"

The white-haired rabbi stopped short. No word more could he speak for he was grieved at parting from the children, and overcome by the marvel of the coming redemption and fulfillment. At the rabbi's last words, the young pioneers rose to their feet, closed their eyes, and held up their hands toward their aged teacher in token of thanks for his blessing.

Now the rabbi turned his gaze toward the centre of the group, where Mother Beracha sat in the midst of the orphans she had reared. Covering his head with the white prayer shawl, he held out his hands towards her in benediction. Thereupon she rose slowly to her feet, facing him, but keeping her gaze fixed upon the ground. "Blessed be the youth of Israel and blessed be you, Mother Beracha," he began. "In your labors in the Gray House you have united the love of a mother for her children with the love of a daughter for her people. In this hour of trial and tribulation our community entrusts to you its most precious possession. To you it has been granted to lead these children to the goal of our hopes. Blessed are you above all women in the congregation, for to you it has been given to complete that which you have begun. You have cherished these children throughout the years. In thou they have found the affection of a mother and the kindness of a father. And you have reared them as pioneers for the land of our fathers. In this hour of parting your heart is heavy with anxiety, for a weighty responsibility rests upon you, and you do not clearly see your way to your goal. But be reassured. In our distant Homeland a woman

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awaits you with hands outstretched in welcome, – a woman who for many years has led and guided her people, alleviating its suffering and distress; a woman who has found ways and means of carrying out the unique plan of transferring thousands of Jewish children from the Exile to the Promised Land. She holds out her hands in token of her readiness to work with you, to give what only women can give to children. Together you and she will comfort these children when they long for the dear ones they have left behind in Exile, when the work is hard and the path stony. Together you will encourage them when fulfillment is near and they have set their feet in the way of achievement. Into your hands, Mother Beracha, we entrust the destinies of these our children.

After all your years of toil, superhuman effort is demanded of you. We pray for your success in the words of the high priest, which for thousands of years have imbued our people with strength to live and to serve: 'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'" The words of the aged rabbi echoed through the room and were received in spellbound silence.

After a tense moment David rose to his feet. The children followed his example. Them all together lifted up their voices in song, chanting their farewell to the Exile in the words of the ancient psalmist who spoke for their generation as for his own:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion
We were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing;
Then said they among the heather,
The Lord has done great things for them.
The Lord has done great things for us;
whereof we are glad."

Hand in hand the children descended the stairs to the triumphant strains of the psalm, and entered the large dining hall where the tables had been festively adorned for the last meal in common. On each table stood lighted candelabra that had been saved from burning synagogues and given the children as keepsakes when they fled from Eastern Europe. The gleaming fruits and vivid flowers on the table had been sent as a gift by young pioneers who were preparing themselves on a farm on the outskirts of the city for work in the Land of Israel.

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When supper was over, laughing-eyed Ruth of the golden hair led a vivid pageant around the tables. Masked figures related stories of the Homeland to the children. Ruth herself, robed in a Moabite gown and carrying golden sheaves on her arm, had much to tell about the hospitality of the Israelitish folk toward strangers from other lands. Behind her came Reuben and his friend Michael, both arrayed in the brown cloaks worn on the desert wanderings. Bearing huge clusters of grapes, they described the fruit and the grain of the land they had been sent to spy out. Ah, and here was Hadassah, a young nurse in a blue gown, cautioning the travellers to be moderate and careful in the hot southern climate of the Homeland. Stately in a splendid cloak, Miriam explained how to care for the infant she carried in a spotless basket. Joseph, a radiant youth garbed in a coat of many colors, interpreted for the company their dreams of the future in the Land of Israel. Messengers from the faraway Homeland in distant ages reached out their hands to one another.

When the whole procession had passed, the children rose from their seats to follow. Then all scattered to their dormitories.

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Sand

All lights had been extinguished in the dormitories of the Gray House, and the children slumbered peacefully. Their leaders, however, still sat in the hall, where the tables had been laid for a very early breakfast before the journey. In silent accord the four young people – David and his brother Reuben, Rachel and her twin-sister Ruth – rose and went out together into the clear November night. David's slim figure moved with a free and supple stride, as befitted an energetic young scion of a weary and wandering race who was resolved to play his part in opening up a brighter future for his people. With his rhythmical tread mingled the swinging steps of his friend Rachel, whose quiet and pensive mood was pervaded with tranquil happiness in the knowledge that in the Land of Israel they would work together as one, giving all their youthful energies to the great ideal that had brought them there. Behind them Reuben and Ruth walked with firm, rapid strides that betokened their confidence in the future and the harmony of their aims. Reuben's gait was marked by characteristic energy, as one who knew just what he wanted to do and rejoiced in his ability to do it. Ruth, quick-moving and quick-thinking, was in complete accord with him in purpose and outlook. Her heavy golden plaits swung free in the night breeze, her merry gray eyes were fixed on far distances.

The young people made their way through dark, dank lanes, past the huge and crowded tenements of the poor, past malodorous beer cellars and reeking brandy shops, where ancient gramophones creaked out raucous music from scratched records, and vulgar voices were raised high in bickering. On they went into a wide thoroughfare with blocks of flats were, through the lighted windows, the working people could be seen sitting at their frugal evening meals.

Their way took them past great factories whose machinery clattered all night long. Silently Ruth bade farewell to the people in the crowded little flats whom she had visited so often as a welfare worker. Many a one there had she helped and comforted and encouraged in his hour of need. Affectionately her thoughts turned to the many children she had helped to rear and the love with which they had rewarded her. How splendidly these working folk had held their own, by dint of incessant toil, ingenuity, and devotion to the public good, through the violent vicissitudes of the post-war years.

Leaving behind them a little suburb where the poor tenements could barely be distinguished in the darkness, the young people turned into the

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quiet road that led to the Jewish cemetery. In silence they trod the highway on which day after day their fellow-Jews accompanied the dead to their last resting-place, or visited the graves during the penitential season and on the death anniversaries of their kindred. Beside the high iron fence their friend Jacob the gardener's son waited to open the gate for them, and then led the way into the grove where the tombstones gleamed in the silvery air of the autumn night. As they passed the mortuary chapel they recalled that only a few weeks earlier they had been there to attend the funeral of their friend Rolf. Of too delicate a fibre to endure the insults and ostracism that had fallen to the lot of his people, he had quietly shuffled off the mortal coil.

Under the shade of the evergreen arbor vitae, leaders of the Jewish community rested in handsome marble tombs. By the light of the moon the young visitors read tributes of love and esteem and noted words of hope that one day those who lay underneath would rise to new life and follow in the path that led to the land of their fathers. On they went past the lowly mounds where thousands of toiling and suffering Jews rested after their hard lives, past the magnificent marble monuments of the rich, past the graves of teachers and students, of the wise and the simple, children and aged folk, families and those who had lived out their lives alone. Here were seen the memorials of fifty years in the life of a great and proud community, the tokens of its rise and progress as recorded in the names of scientists and physicians, merchant princes and small tradesmen, leaders of the assimilationist movement who had rejected everything that was distinctly Jewish, leaders of the movement for the restoration of the faraway Homeland. Here too were the graves of fathers and mothers who, outcast and despised, had labored all their lives for their children, fighting bravely in the petty daily struggle for existence. After all their wanderings in alien lands, they had been laid to rest among brethren who had understood and sympathised with them. From this last resting-place no one could drive them out.

Green willows and arbor vitae grew luxuriantly in the well-tended grove of the dead; ivy spread its leaves far and wide. Yet some of the graves had an air of neglect. Their greenery was fading for lack of loving hands to tend and replant, for their kindred had been scattered over the wide world by brute force. In place of the tendrils of ivy, small stones appeared on the graves which had been left there by friends of the dead in conformity with ancient custom.

From the circular lawn a path led to the grave of Hannah, mother of David and Reuben. The moon shed a mild and silvery light upon the grave, over which drooped a slender weeping willow. The visitors gazed in silence

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at the white tombstone on which was engraved the name of the dead and a verse from the Psalm: "And if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow."

The sight of their mother's grave stirred the brothers to fresh grief for the father whom they had lost in a pogrom after the great war. Since the whereabouts of his grave was unknown to them, they saw in their mother's resting-place the memorial of both parents. How hard the little mother had worked for their sakes! If only she might have lived to see them go up as pioneers to the Land of Israel!

Above the quiet graveyard the stars shone bright as they moved in their eternal courses. David put his flute to his lips and played the ancient hymn for the dead that is so conforming to mourners. Rachel and Ruth stepped quietly to one side. The hymn reminded them of their own parents – of the father who had fallen in the ranks of the Polish legion on the soil of France, of the mother who had perished in the flight from Russia. Of neither father nor mother did they know the grave. No sheltered childhood had been theirs; they had known no parental home. Their work in the Homeland was to be their monument to their parents; they would take part in the restoration of the Land of Israel, so that their children and all Jewish children might have a permanent home, that they might be spared the bitter taste of Exile.

After the hymn for the dead, David played the song of "Sand and Stars" by a modern Jewish poet.

The moon shines bright,
The stars gleam white,
Night falls softly
On hill and dale

Before me lies open

The ancient Book

I read and read again
A thousand times o'er

How excellent, how sweet
The words of Holy writ!
A Voice I hear:
"By Myself have I sworn it
O, My people!
Thou shalt be

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As the stars of heaven,
As the sand of the sea."

Lord of the Universe:
Of the words of thine oath
Not one shall fail.
By Thy holy will
All things are established, –
Each in its season,
Each in its place.

That one already hath been fulfilled
Alas, of a certainty do I know:
We have become
As the sand of the sea –
Downtrodden under
Every man's heel!

God above, verily,
Like to sand and stones,
Are we dispersed and scattered,
Scorned and despised.

But the stars,
The bright, the gleaming stars,
The stars –
Where, O God, are the stars?

Silently David and Rachel reached out their hands to one another, raising their eyes to the heavens where the stars wheeled in their immutable courses and then looking down at the sand of the mother's grave. Seizing a shovel that lay beside the grave, David dug up some of the earth and placed it in a small sotto sack he had brought with him for the purpose. And in his thoughts David addressed his dead mother: "This is our last visit to your grave, mother dear! But our farewell does not signify a parting. Rather is it a sacred bond, a pledge for the future. This earth we take from your grave will not be scattered like the sand of the seashore. When we plough the soil of our Homeland, we shall scatter this earth from your grave in the furrows, that it may mingle with our ancestral earth. No longer shall we wander aimlessly from land to land. All the toil and care you lavished on us will yield rich harvests in the fields of Eretz Israel!" David lifted up his eyes from the grave to the heavens. "These stars, mother, that circle over your

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grave, will light us on our way to the Homeland. Under its southern skies these same stars will show us the course we must steer, the work we must do, the plans we must make for our lives. Now that we are about to set out for the Land of Israel, they assure us that never again shall we be hunted from pillar to delete post. These very stars, mother, that shine down upon your grave here, will light us in our new life over there."

The young people remained for a few moments longer to pray at the mother's graveside. In those moments they knew themselves initiated into the fellowship of the builders of the Homeland. Theirs was to be the high privilege of fulfilling the destiny of their people, of paving the way for multitudes of other pioneers.

Hand in hand they walked back through the aisles of the dead to the chapel, where candles had been lighted before the ark. There the aged rabbi awaited David and Rachel, that he might unite them for life on the eve of their departure for the Land of Israel.

Ruth and Reuben held the wedding canopy aloft over the heads of the bridegroom and bride. Under her crown of black hair Rachel's gentle features were radiant with the light of devotion to the playfellow of her childhood, whom she took now for her wedded mate. Taking her right hand in his, David placed the ring on her finger and recited the ancient, moving formula: "Behold, thou art consecrated to me by the law of Moses and Israel!" The venerable rabbi took the right hands of the bridal pair between his palms and gave them his blessing: "Give yourselves to one another, my children! Be fruitful and multiply and rear a generation of free Jews in the Land of Israel!"

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Homeward Bound

At daybreak Reuben left the Gray House to fetch the buses that were to carry the travellers to the railway station. The vehicles were already waiting, and a lorry for the luggage besides. Reuben jumped into the first bus, which led the way to the Gray House from the central station in the north of the city, past huge factories whose sirens were summoning the workers to their daily tasks. Hundreds of trams carried thousands of workers to shops and offices; heavily laden trucks clattered out to the suburbs. Reuben was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he hardly noticed the throngs of harassed and careworn workingmen hastening to the factories. As the bus passed his old school, he saw some of his old companions rushing boisterously through the wide gateway. But he did not venture to hail them, knowing that to be greeted by a Jew might bring misfortune upon them. Many of the workers hurried down the deep shafts of the underground railway without so much a glance of their surroundings, intent only on reaching their places of employment in good time. Brown-uniformed soldiers carrying their banners aloft marched through the streets to the strains of a song of hate against Reuben's people. He had no eye now for the folk in whose midst he had lived for many years; all his thoughts were centred on the departure of his group for the Homeland. There they would live and work in a village community far from the vast metropolis whose significance he could not grasp and whose ways he had never been able to understand.

The line of buses suddenly lurches into the gray street and stopped in front of the Gray House. Wearing their warm winter coats, the children were waiting in the courtyard, with their brown leather bags and knapsacks piled up beside them. Among those who had gathered to bid them Godspeed were the children from the school next door, their comrades of the Gray House who were remaining behind for the present, the kindly nurse whose care had been lavished on them for years, their teachers and the workers of the Gray House.

At a signal from Rachel the young travellers ranged themselves in line and marched two by two out into the gray street, where the buses waited. Last of all to leave the Gray House was Beracha, wearing a blue cloak with wide sleeves that fluttered like pigeons and a nurse's cap with a red Shield of David. Her heart was heavy as she embraced the little ones in farewell, for she would not be able to take Michael to school for the first time, or indulge Rena, who had just recovered from a long illness, or console Lola who grieved at seeing her only sister go, or cheer up Shmuel, who was

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very unhappy at having been expelled from school. But she could not help smiling when they urged her not to worry. "Soon we'll be seeing you in the Land of Israel!" they assured her cheerfully.

The buses turned out of the gray street into a narrow thoroughfare through which slowly moved a stream of metropolitan traffic. For the last time the children from the Gray House drove through the stately, linden-bordered streets and along the municipal park, now glowing in golden autumn array, where they had had so many jolly games and excursions. Among the passersby were many Jews whose shoulders were bowed under the burden of the tragic destiny of their race, stricken anew by a revival of anti-Semitism in its most virulent form. As they left the Exile, the children from the Gray House felt more than ever bound to the fellow-Jews who remained behind, and sped them silent good wishes from their hearts. In silent greeting they called out to them, "Hail and farewell! We go to prepare the Homeland for your children no less than for ourselves!"

At last they reached the railway station. Descending from the buses, they marched slowly down the length of the station until they came to the last coach of the long train, on which a placard announced their destination. Rachel led the way into the coach, and assigned each of her charges to a seat. Many of the relatives and friends of the youngsters had come to the station, wishing them Godspeed with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow. As the train pulled out of the station those in the coach and those on the platform joined in singing "Hatikvah," the song of hope.

The train puffed along the bank of the river in which the young travellers had often swum and played water games. Presently it climbed into wooded hills where they had had many a pleasant ramble. Then, all of a sudden, the engine halted at a station in the hills. This was the little city of Weimar, where Goethe had written his immortal "Faust," in which he urged his fellowmen to return to the land by the verses.

Before the hills a marshy plain
Infects what I so long have been retrieving;
This stagnant pool likewise to drain
Were now my latest and my best achieving.
To many millions let me furnish soil,
Though not secure, yet free to active toil;
Green, fertile fields, where men and herds go forth
At once, with comfort on the newest Earth,
And swiftly settled on the hill's firm base.

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Created by the bold, industrious race,
A land like Paradise here, round about;
Up to the brink the tide may roar without,
And though it grew to burst with force the limits,
By common impulse all unite to hem it.

Yes! To this thought I hold with firm persistence;
The last result of wisdom stamps it true;
He only earns his freedom and existence,
Who daily conquers them anew.
Thus here, by dangers girt, shall glide away
Of childhood, manhood, age the vigorous day;
And such a throng I fain would see, –
Stand on free soil, a people free!
Then dared I hail the moment fleeting:
"Ah, still delay, thou art so fair!"
The traces cannot, of mine earthly being, –
In aeons perish, – they are there! –
In proud fore-feeling of such lofty bliss,
I now enjoy the highest Moment, this!

Ruth, who stood looking out of the window of the coach, turned to Haim, one of the young teachers from the Gray House. "How strange," she mused, "that though it is a hundred and fifty years since the wise Goethe proclaimed that mankind could achieve true happiness only by tilling the soil, his teaching has not been taken to heart neither by his own people nor any other. Why has it been granted only to us, the smallest and most dispersed of the nations, to adopt his idea of a community united in fellowship by cultivation of the soil and liberating itself by so doing?"

Haim regarded her thoughtfully. "We are only at the beginning," he replied at length. "A great task still lies before us. Goethe's vision will come true for us only after we have achieved inner freedom, when we shall have set up a just social order. The collective settlement of Deganya, where I intend to live, was the first to organize such a society. Perhaps it has been granted us, rather than any other people, to find our way back to the soil because no other people has been imbued as we have been, owing to our long wanderings over the face of the globe, with so keen a desire for the land. Collective agricultural settlement in our Homeland holds out the only promise for our future as a nation. That consummation alone – and no other – can save us at this time when our people is suffering more intensely

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than at any stage in our long history. Only so can we strike root deeply enough in the Homeland, so that nothing may ever be able to part us from it again."

"I too believe that," responded Ruth. "Do you remember the poem we used to read together at the Jüdische Volksheim:

'Measureless as the sorrow of our hearts
Must be your longing ere it can liberate you.'

Only a people that has undergone bondage and affliction like ours can strive for the happiness Goethe described: liberation of humanity by going back to the land."

Silently Haim reached out his hand to Ruth in token of assent.

The train chugged its way southward to Frankfort, where a Jewish community had flourished for a thousand years. There a Jewish merchant had founded a great banking house, and from there his descendants had gone out to great European capitals to exercise a potent influence in the world of finance.

When they reached Frankfort, the travellers found a delegation from the Hashomer Hazair association waiting to greet them. The stalwart, bronzed young people were preparing themselves for life on the land in Palestine. As a matter of fact, they had almost completed their training, and soon they too would be on their way to the land of lsrael. "Soon we'll meet you in Galilee!" they cried cheerily as they parted from their new friends.

At the last station on the border, where passports and luggage were examined once again, the children had to leave many of their treasured possession behind. When the train crossed into Switzerland, all breathed a sigh of relief, as if a heavy burden had been lifted from their shoulders. Rachel reminded the children that it was in this very city of Basle that the resettlement of the Jews on their ancestral soil had first been proclaimed to the world. It was Herzl, she recalled, who had conceived the great idea of freeing his people from their hard exile of thousands of years. In spite of obstacles that seemed insuperable, he had won acceptance for his bold idea. And when the early Zionist congresses had assembled in Basle, great torches had been lit in front of the building as beacon lights to summon Jews from all parts of the globe. Delegates had come in their hundreds and thousands from many countries, and at each congress the plans for the restoration of the Land of Israel had taken on even more definite shape.

In the meantime, David was having a talk on the station platform with Daniel, a boy from the Gray House. "What a remarkable destiny it is,"

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Daniel was saying, "that compels us to seek our historic sites in every country in the world. May it not be that the glimpses we have of some of them on our journey will help us to shape our lives in the Land of Israel?" "Yes, indeed," agreed David, "but the miracle of the fulfillment can be understood only, when we recall the beginnings that were made in this place. And we can learn a great deal from the history of the little Swiss nation, which fought so bravely for its own freedom hundreds of years ago. The Swiss patriots used to gather in the mountains by night and swear to become a united nation that would never again tolerate disunion, no matter what trials and dangers might beset them. 'Rather death than slavery!' was their motto. With this proud little nation we are united by a common destiny, and it was in this hospitable city of Basle that our own movement for freedom was launched."

The train rolled on through the wide Italian plain where so many momentous battles had been fought, – battles that had decided the fate of nations for centuries. Now it was passing through a great city with a magnificent marble cathedral, and so down to the shores of the blue Mediterranean. The youngsters rushed out gleefully from the coach in which they had spent two days and two nights, overjoyed to have reached the last lap of their journey.

At the station the rabbi of Trieste, who had made arrangements for the group to spend the night in Jewish homes, was waiting with his son Giulio to welcome them. Soon the weary young travellers were sound asleep in their overnight quarters, but David remained for a talk with Giulio who, as he could see, was deeply moved by meeting the Jewish destiny face to face: Giulio had never before seen persecuted Jews. Now he told David about his education, his love of the Italian poets and painters and philosophers. All his life long he had been very happy in the sunny land of his birth, whose melodious language was his mother-tongue, whose sweet songs he sang, and whose lovely women he admired. So closely has he identified himself with Italian culture and Italian ways that he had heard nothing about the great new movement that had released creative forces for the rebirth of his people and its ancient culture.

David listened in amazement. He too admired the poetry and language and culture of Italy. He too was charmed by the Italian people. Nevertheless, he could not understand how Giulio could have steeped himself so thoroughly in a civilization very different from that of his own people's. He told him about the movement for the restoration of Jewish nationhood, and how this movement had focused Jewish energies in a great effort to

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liberate the people from age-long Exile. In glowing phrases David told his new friend how barren wastes had been transformed, how a new culture was springing up out of the old soil, how a new social order was being evolved in the pioneer settlements in the Homeland. In the old-new land the despised and persecuted outcasts of Europe had found a new purpose in life, were helping to build up a new civilization.

When he had finished his story, David took up his flute and played for Giulio the song of the Emek, the erstwhile swamp transformed by the toil of the pioneers into fertile valleys and flourishing vineyards:

The cornfields sway like the sea,
The shepherd pipes his lay.
This is our land, these are its fields.
Hail, Emek Jezreel!
Blessed art thou, and greaty to be praised
From Beth Alpha to Nahalal.

Giulio listened in rapt silence. Never in all his life had he seen such exaltation in any man's eyes, never before had he heard of such readiness to sacrifice all for an ideal.

Rachel and Ruth, too impressed him deeply. "The women of this country," he told David, "are lovely and charming; and to one of them, the stately Cordelia, I consider myself bound for life. Yet I admit that it is only after meeting these two that I realize the true role of womanhood in the life of society and of the nation. It is the greatest of pities that you must leave us so soon. My meeting with you has awakened in me emotions and energies I was never before conscious of. I doubt whether I shall ever be able to leave this country with its old palaces and paintings, its splendid poetry and philosophy. But the desire to attach myself to my own people, which has been roused in me by meeting you and your friends, will never again be quenched. Always remember that I shall be with you in spirit in all your toil and hardships and joys."

The children woke at dawn, and lost no time in dressing and gathering up their belongings. In their impatience to be off, they hardly took time for breakfast and for thanking their kind hosts. Beracha assembled them for the walk down through the hilly city to the port. On their way they saw many other Jews on foot and in trams, buses, and cars, all bound for the same destination as themselves. Some were young and hopeful, others older and more sedate. Soon they spied the masts of the "Gerusalemme," the great white ship that was to carry them to the Land of Israel.

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Beside the gangway David and Ruth marshalled the youngsters into line and handed each his ticket and passport. The Jewish youth of Trieste had gathered at the pier to see them off. As the ship weighed anchor and glided out to sea, the strains of "Hatikvah" resounded from the bow and from the pier below. At the end of the long mole Giulio stood alone, following with his eyes every movement made by his new friends and the children in their charge. Long after the ship had left the harbor, he stood as if rooted to the spot, strangely happy in his newfound Jewish consciousness and wishing the pioneers success with all his heart.

On board the children were plying Rachel with questions about the Land of Israel. They seemed never to hear enough about its history, its landscapes, its cities and villages.

Ruth had come on board with the first group. Having a little leisure for the moment, she paced the top deck and looked out over the waste of waters. As she watched, Ruth envisioned every stage of the journey through the Mediterranean, as she had so often discussed it with her friends. Standing in the bow, she forgot the petty cares of the day and relaxed to the rhythm of the waves. Near her stood a traveller who had left behind him the snow and fogs of his island home in the north and was now, like herself, bound for the Land of Israel. He was a famous financial magnate, whose purpose in visiting the Land was to ascertain whether it had oil in commercial quantities, whether the chemicals of the Dead Sea were worth exploiting, whether it would be worth while to build a new port on the red Sea.

Breaking into Ruth's reverie, he engaged her in conversation, and soon was telling her about his investments and his plans for exports from Palestine. Then he asked what she intended doing there. She explained that she and her friends proposed to cultivate the soil with their own hands and to enter into the fellowship of the collective settlements. While she agreed that his plans might be of great benefit to the Land of Israel, she felt that for herself she had chosen the better part. "We must make sacrifices," she said, her gray eyes aglow, "in order to restore the soil to its old fertility. If we want a Homeland of our own, we must be willing to gain it by patient effort."

The stranger regarded her with a quiet smile. "What can a little group like yours," he asked, "without experience of work on the land and without backing from the great world of commerce and finance, expect to accomplish? My child, your enthusiasm and ability could serve larger purposes. Come with me, help me with my plans for exploiting the oil of Palestine for the whole world. You would be richly compensated, and would share

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in the great economic development of our time. I am looking for someone who will understand my plans and who will help me carry them out with such zeal and enthusiasm as yours. You would grow with the work from the start."

Ruth shook her head gently. "I thank you, sir, for your good opinion of me; but you offer a kind of life I do not want. You believe that we should serve the interests of other nations for our own profit. Your plans embrace the whole world. But we – my friends and I – mean to serve our own nation. We shall help to gather in the exiles, and try to bring out their creative energies for the restoration of the Homeland. Only by work on the land shall we be able to receive the ancient Jewish culture in a modern form. We aspire to nothing less than this: that the Jewish people, once again established in its Homeland, should give new spiritual values to the world, now as in ancient times. But first we must find ourselves as individuals if we are to refashion our people according to the laws of its own being."

The stranger showed signs of dissent. "I too am a son of your people," he told her. "I too love it with all its virtues and all its faults. I too should like to help it develop its powers freely as a nation in the society of nations. But that consummation is possible only if the Jewish people will remain in the midst of the nations, if its pulse will beat in time with the rhythm of the great world. Only in that way can we become free and powerful. With its own limited energies the Jewish people will not be able to strike root and flourish in the Land of Israel. No, it must identify itself with the great world, take part in the work of the great world. Only there can it advance and progress, only there can it achieve greatness.

I like your faith, Ruth" he went on after a pause. "I admire your determination and intelligence. You could take part in great enterprises – help to blaze new trails in the world, influence the trend of world commerce."

Ruth faced him with a searching glance. "No," she replied firmly, "I cannot go with you. I should lose myself in your work, whereas I want to save myself for service to my people. But if you really want to help, why do you not give a part of your fortune for land in the Land of Israel, land for us to cultivate? I ask you for land for your hundred fellow-Jews, to enable them to begin life anew in the collective settlements. Sir, listen to my plea! Perhaps it is bound up with your personal destiny ..... You remember how Herzl asked one of our greatest financiers to buy the Land of Israel for his people. The Sultan of Turkey was ready to grant us a charter in consideration of a sum that represented only a small fraction of the millionaire's fortune. But he understood neither the meaning of Jewish

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history nor the significance of the new national movement; and so he sent our leader away and kept his millions. Opportunity had knocked at his door, the opportunity to open up the Land of Israel for the millions of persecuted Jews who were wandering from one alien country to another; but instead he chose the role of gatekeeper of his treasury. And because he ignored the fateful opportunity, a near kinsman of his is confined in a grim prison cell by the new oppressors of his people, and no amount of money or influence has availed to free him. In the meantime, the vast fortune of his family is being squandered by our enemies for their own purposes. You too, sir, are a man of great wealth. You can still seize the opportunity that other millionaires missed. In this fateful hour a sacred law requires that you devote your wealth to freeing your people from their bitter Exile."

"Ruth," responded the stranger, shaking his head thoughtfully, "you do not fully understand the laws of world history. Nor do you understand the laws of finance. But you will carry out your purpose in the Homeland – that much is clear. Here is a draft on my bank for the purchase of land when you and your friends are ready for settlement."

"I thank you," said Ruth, taking the slip of paper from him, "on behalf of my friends. This gift shows your sympathy for our aims. Yet my heart bleeds for you. You might have played a great role in the salvation of our people. I pray that you and yours may be spared the fate of that other Jewish millionaire. Still, it may be that after you have travelled all over the world you will finally make your home in the land of your fathers."

With that she left him. The stranger followed the girl pensively with his eyes. Her resolute purpose and her readiness for sacrifice had made a deep impression upon the worldly man. If only he could enjoy the peace of mind that was hers!

The sun sank slowly into the blue waves. The stars shone in the southern heavens with a brilliance our friends had never before seen. Rachel and David leaned over the ship's rail, gazing up into the radiant night skies. "There," cried Rachel, pointing to a southern constellation, "is the Archer, who points the way we must take. Following in the course fixed for him, he moves unerringly toward his goal. It is an omen for us: Having set out our predestined course, we shall proceed unerringly to our own goal."

In the meantime the children were besieging Ruth for a story. She chose a legend about king David. "Once upon a time," she began in fairy-tale fashion, "two shepherds who slept in the light of the full moon were shown in a dream how to bring king David back to life and to his throne. On waking they started out at once for the holy city of Jerusalem. On the way

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there they met a dove grieving for the little ones that had been stolen from her, a palm tree disconsolate for the leaves of which a storm had stripped it, and a brook weeping for the spring that has been dried up at its source. All three – the dove, the palm tree, and the brook – begged the shepherds to help them. Presently the man reached the rocky heights of Jerusalem, where the old keeper of the city gate told them how to go about their mission. 'The king,' he said, 'lies stretched out like a lion on a golden couch in a golden cave. His harp of gold hangs on the wall, and on the table lie his crown and scepter and a golden psalter. Beside the head of his couch stands a jar filled with water from the Garden of Eden. Pour out some of the water from his jar and moisten the king's hands with it. Then he will rise from his couch and gather our scattered brethren together from the end of the earth and bring them back to Jerusalem, the holy city.'

The shepherds went down into the cave of the king, but the glitter of the gold and the gems so dazzled them that they forgot their vow and never even looked at the king's uplifted hands. The shepherds were so greedy for the treasure," concluded Ruth sadly, "that they left the king as they had found him, and the People of Israel was left waiting for its redemption even to this day."

The children thought it was a great pity that the king had not been brought back to life, and all because the shepherds had been too entranced at the sight of the gold to remember what they had come for.

"Tell us, Ruth," begged Gabriel, with tears sparkling in his dark eyes, "whether we shall be allowed to visit the tomb of king David when we go to Jerusalem?"

"Of course we shall," she replied gravely. "We shall ask the shepherds to help us find the dove and the tree and the brook. Perhaps the old gatekeeper will let us in when we tell him we have come a very long way to moisten the king's hands with the water of Paradise. We shall not, I promise you, give so much as a glance at the gold and gems in the cave, but make straight for the water jar."

"These old legends," declared Haya sententiously, "remind us what a long way we still have to go to reach our goal. We shall have to work hard and do without many of the things we have been accustomed to. In our new life we shall have to muster all our energy for building up a Homeland for our people."

"Well said, Haya." commented Reuben. "The king and the shepherd are so many symbols for our guidance. Not by treasures of gold and jewels can we win our way to freedom, but by love of our fellow-Jews. We must sym-

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pathize with their sufferings and help them in every way we can. Always remember that the dove robbed off her little ones, the palm tree stripped off its leaves, and the brook that found nothing but dry stones in its bed are all symbols of the sufferings and losses of the Jewish people."

On the last day the ship turned into the narrow waterway that divides the verdant islands of the Greek archipelago from the mountain passes of the ancient Ionian realm. As the "Gerusalemme" glided past the height crowned with the ruins of Athene's many-columned temple, David turned to his brother, saying: "In this little country an infinite world of ideas was shaped. Happily, the Jewish people has not ignored the wisdom and beauty conceived here. Our ancestors eagerly learned and assimilated the spiritual values of the ancient Greeks." "True," assented Reuben. "I always look back to the discussions about Plato we used to have in our Greek study circle. How overawed we were by the idea that all truth, beauty, and goodness are centred in the Godhead! In our Homeland the spirit of Plato will still seem close to us and even more intimately linked with the history of our people. The temple of Athene is the last monument of the classic world that we shall see on our way to the Land of Israel!"

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The Homecoming

Little by little the sun rose out of the sea. The whole ship was tense with expectation, for all knew that at dawn the Land would be sighted. There would be the bay and the shore on the east, and Mount Carmel with a bustling city on its slopes. All hurried up on deck to catch the first glimpse of land. How quietly they stood there, – the boisterous and the sedate, the children and the old people, the men and the women. All their dreams and prayers, all they had ever heard or read about the Land of Israel, would take on reality within the hour. As they watched for land, the sun's red orb leaped up from behind the mountains and its first rays gilded a yellow strip of beach.

Hand in hand David and Rachel stood beside the ship's rail. Never had their love been so close and pure and radiant as in the moments when they waited together for their first sight of the Homeland. David slid his arm softly around his wife's waist.

All of a sudden the silhouette of the long Carmel range loomed into view. Then came the blue waters of the bay and Acco with its white Arab houses. The Brook Kishon gleamed like silver as it wound its way through the plain to the sea. The city on the mountain was revealed in the sunlight, and the figures of the people on land – Jews and Arabs – could soon be distinguished quite clearly. The colorful scene was a medley of ships lying at anchor, mules and camels, white houses on brown heights.

At last the "Gerusalemme" cast anchor. A motorboat chugged out quickly to meet her, carrying government officials to examine the passports of the travellers.

Since daybreak a quiet white-haired woman had been waiting on the pier. The hot sun beat down on the exposed landing, and now and then warm spring showers freshened the air. But the frail woman waited patiently for hours in sun and rain so that she might be the first to welcome the children to their Homeland. She had been the first to descry the ship on the horizon, and now she followed every move of the motorboat as it approached the ship. With profound emotion she stepped into a second motorboat in which already sat the port physician.

Long years ago – ever since the day when her father, a rabbi in the distant Western Hemisphere, had opened his home to refugees from Eastern Europe – this unassuming woman had dedicated herself to the service of her people. The refugees' reports of the persecution they had suffered solely because they were Jews, their protest against the homelessness of the

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Jewish people and their devotion to the Land of Israel, had left an indelible impression on her sensitive spirit.

Two decades had passed since she gave up her home in the West for the Jewish Homeland in the East, leaving her work and her kin behind her, so that she might bring health and vigor to the children of her people. It was she who had brought the first district nurses to the Land, she who had opened centres where children were treated for the dreaded Egyptian eye disease, where expectant mothers and infants were cared for. Later she has had a leading part in building up the system of Hebrew schools and had organized a network of social services which was spread throughout the Land. Then had come the call from the National Council of the Jews of Palestine to save the young victims of brutal persecution in Central Europe by transplanting them to the land of their fathers. With all her heart she had responded to that call and worked out to the last detail the large-scale plans for taking the children out of the gloomy industrial centres of Europe and training them for life on the land in the sunny villages of Eretz Israel. Only a few weeks earlier the first group of those children had been placed in the cooperative settlement of Ein Harod in the broad Valley of Jezreel.

None knew better than this woman how heavy were the responsibilities she had shouldered, and no one sympathized more with the parents who had entrusted their children to her in their hour of sorest need. It was only recently that she had journeyed to the capital of the Third Reich to confer with those parents about the education of their children in the Land of Israel. Never would she forget the sad, uneasy glances of the fathers and mothers to whom it was not granted to educate their children at home, but were forced to send them far away. She knew her duty to those sorrowing parents, – the duty of rearing their children as free men and women who would help to restore the soil of the Homeland. Late that same night she had sat for many hours with Beracha to consider how the children of the Gray House might best be settled in the Land of Israel. Once again the scene in the Gray House flashed before her vision, once again she heard the words spoken by herself and the others.

All the spiritual forces that had welled up in her during the long and toilsome years, all the powers that had matured in her in her father's house and in her struggle to build up the Homeland, had crystallized at the last for service to the children of her people. Both the burden and the joy of her responsibility toward them inspired her to a great new effort. She could envision no nobler aim, no more hopeful task than this of enrooting the refugee children in their Homeland. The strength she would need would be

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drawn from her close ties with her God and her people. The children she was to mother were destined to lives of severe toil; no hardships would be spared them. And because it was so she must rear them as upstanding men and women who would be equal to the struggle that awaited them. In that moment she felt within her an upsurge of the primordial maternal strength that is given the women of Israel, the strength that enables them to clear all stumbling blocks from their path, the strength that shapes and forms all things. Overwhelmed by the weight of her responsibility, she closed her eyes and prayed silently: "Thou, O Lord God of Israel, didst lay this task upon me. Give me of Thy strength that I may worthily perform it!"

A few moments later she was surrounded by a merry group of youngsters on the deck of the "Gerusalemme," singing the Song of Hope in greeting to her. Closer and closer they pressed to her side, seeing in her the mother of the Homeland. She, for her part welcomed them as only a mother can. Then she reached out her hand to Beracha, and in that handclap was consummated a lifelong covenant of service to the children of their people.

One by one the children filed past the officials who examined their passports, and then on the doctor's room for vaccination against the diseases of the Orient. These formalities over, they ran down the gangplank into the motorboats that were to carry them across the narrow strip of water that still separated them from the destination. Once they had set foot on the soil of the Homeland, the lively youngsters fell silent and stood for a moment as if in prayer. A warm current of happiness coursed through their veins; at last they were in the home from which they could never more be banished.

Teachers and old friends from the Gray House, seen now in the guise of veteran pioneers, waited to welcome them at the landing. Soon they were singing vociferously in the buses which passed through the port area, the Arab quarter, and the Jewish town on the mountainside to the little suburb of Neve Shaanan, where they were to spend their first year in the Land. There they found many of their friends from the Gray House – teachers and farm laborers now in Eretz Israel – who had come from all parts of the country to share in the festivities of their first day in the Homeland.

Beside Beracha stood Haggai, who had left the Gray House three years earlier to become a youth leader in the Land of Israel. At her call he had come up from the village in the valley to help her adjust the children to their new surroundings and to carry out the plans for their education. When all were assembled in the front of the house, Beracha handed him a beautifully wrought little silver case containing a tiny parchment scroll, which had been entrusted to her by the aged rabbi of the northern metro-

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polis as a parting gift from his community to the children. The elders of the community, he had told her, had removed the silver case from the portal of their oldest synagogue, to which it had been affixed for two hundred years. As Haggai nailed the little token to the doorpost, all present recited the prescribed benediction in chorus.

The children formed themselves into a procession, with Henrietta and Beracha leading the way into their new home. Flower-decked tables were set out with the choicest produce of the land – pitchers of milk and jars of honey, great bowls of crimson tomatoes and tender green cucumbers, black olives and white leeks, gray bread and yellow butter, white eggs and golden oranges.

When all had taken their places at the table, Henrietta rose to greet the newcomers on behalf of the National Council of the Jews of Eretz Israel. "To you who have entered our Land this day," she began, "I extend a welcome as the youngest scions of our people. Young as you are, you have already suffered much. Twice you have been exiled from the countries of your domicile in the Diaspora. The joys of a parental home have hardly been known to you; all that is dearest to the heart of a child has been taken from you. Your teachers and friends grieved at the necessity for sending you so far away. But you have come willingly, pledging yourselves to work and to study. Here you will learn the language of our people, the language of the Holy Scriptures, which was preserved for us throughout the vicissitudes of two thousand years of exile by our forefathers. You will learn about the Land itself, – its history, its mountains and valleys, its animals, its stones. The principles on which our new community is being built will be explained to you. Finally, you will learn how to bring forth good fruits from the land.

For one year," she went on, "you will live in this little house on the mountain, from which you can see the site of your future village on the shore of the Mediterranean. You and we together will lay the cornerstone of the village, for which the land had been provided by the Jewish National Fund. Shoulder to shoulder you will clear the fields of the village, which will be a home not only for you, but for many who will come after you. God bless you all! On behalf of the Jewish Community of the Land of Israel, I welcome you home!"

Impressed as hardly ever before in their lives, the children listened closely to every word that fell from Henrietta's lips. Then they fell to with a will, and the produce of the Land quickly disappeared. When breakfast was over, all trooped out into the quiet little street. Henrietta linked arms with

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little Ephraim and jolly Hannah. The others quickly formed a circle around them, and for the first time in the Homeland danced the national dance to the tunes of its pioneer ballads. None among the dancers was more joyous than Henrietta herself, who in every movement radiated her love for the children of her people, her sorrow for their sufferings, her resolve to rear them as worthy citizens of the Homeland. Soon her rhythm communicated itself to all the others, – the rhythm of labor in freedom, of the joy of homecoming to the land of the fathers.

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The Homeland

Stars

Meanwhile a party of young people had gathered on the mountain ridge. Some were youth leaders who, after years of service in the Gray House, had accompanied the children to the Land of Israel. The others, who also had given years of service to the Gray House, had preceded them to the Land. The reunited friends rambled slowly on the mountain top by the light of the full moon. In the quiet night greetings were wafted to them by the green forests, the steep slopes, the dark ravines now spectrally lighted by the moon, the deep blue sea on whose shores had arisen in ancient times civilization which still fructified the life of mankind. Reverently the young people looked down on the little land that lay wedged between three great continents, the little land wherein Divinity had thrice manifested itself. The feeling that the desert was very near made them shiver a little. They gazed down on the winding Kishon, on whose banks the prophet Elijah had taught eternal truth to his people. On this mountain top were the caves wherein the prophet hat taken refuge, wherein he had drawn new strength from communion with his god. Presently they sat down to rest by the edge of the forest, whence they could overlook the bay shore which lay bare and deserted, awaiting redemption by the work of eager hands.

David turned to his friends saying, "We have met here this day to make a fresh beginning in our Land. Tomorrow we shall disperse, and each of us will go to the scene of his labors; yet all of us feel that for us there can be no real separation. The Homeland encompasses us all, we are aware of its breath at every turn. At every moment of the day we shall be following its progress. We shall always keep in touch with one another, wherever we may be and whatever we may be doing. All of us will know what each of us is doing, watching one another efforts to lay the foundation stones for the Homeland. Step by step we shall follow each other's trials and struggles, each other's efforts to find a place in the new life of our Land. Each will be aware of the joys that may fall to the lot of all the others, each will know of the dangers that menace them. For, all of us are united one to another by a great idea; and we shall serve that idea faithfully, allowing no personal factors to interfere. The marvel of our meeting here to serve the Homeland is too great for us to grasp or to express at this moment. Each of us will learn to express it in his own way through his work, through the efforts to attain to our single common goal, the redemption of the soil

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of the Homeland. The Land of Israel is too beautiful not to intoxicate us continually with its loveliness, too much a part of our being not to infuse new strength into us.

It is most fortunate, it seems to me, that we shall have to live and work here under certain self-imposed limitations. No longer shall we try to imitate peoples very different from ourselves. We want no honors that others can bestow upon us. Only within our selves, within our own voluntary limitations, shall we find the energy to create and produce, to shape a new life out of the substance of our national being whose unique laws bind us to a specific course of action. In the Diaspora one of our great philosophers said to us: 'If you can be your own self, be no one else!' By that principle we shall ever be guided in Eretz Israel. By it we shall chart our course, and in that course we shall proceed, just as the Pleiades above us, shining far more brightly than in the Exile, move in their predestined course. Just as the Pleiades obey the eternal laws of attraction and repulsion in time and space, so must we in our charted course obey the laws of our being, maintaining sufficient distance between one another to allow the individual to develop freely in his own way, and yet keeping close to one another, since it is our union that determines the form of our society."

"I agree," interposed Hayim. "The greatness of the hour can hardly be better apprehended than by looking up at the stars here on the mountain top. Here in the Homeland we realize much more keenly than in the Diaspora how our people has been driven for ages about the globe without having been drawn by the great magnet that has finally attracted us hither. Like a lost atom without meaning or power or ties, our people time and again attempted to integrate itself into an alien world. Here, in our tiny Homeland we are aware of the laws of the stars, which will also determine our own course in harmony with the unique laws of our being."

"Nothing," added Ruth, "can surpass the joy of this union, which endows us with the strength to develop in our own way. Our effort to attach ourselves once more to our Homeland makes hardly a ripple in the great tide of world affairs; that we know. Yet, in this hour of our rebirth in the Holy Land, every stone and every path, every bush and every wave, every insect and every breeze, carry a message to us. All these, following the laws of their being, betoken that we too shall be integrated under our starry skies according to the laws of our own being, that we may fulfill our own destiny."

"When I listen to the sea murmuring below us," declared Reuben, "I seem to hear the voice of the Psalmist who so well understood the power of

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the stars three thousand years ago: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.'

Here in our Homeland," he continued, we witness the union of our world with the universe; here we know ourselves to be received into the society of mankind, for here we too cannot do other than follow the course determined for us by the eternal laws of our being. Just as the stars are maintained in equilibrium because they move in fixed courses, so we have found our equilibrium now that we have come back to our own land, where we have re-entered the fixed course predestined for our people. Here we are free to choose whether we will walk in the path defined by the law of our being. This freedom of choice is the happiness allotted us under the starry skies of the Homeland. Wherever we may chance to meet one another – on the city beaches, down in the plain below us with its little cluster of garden suburbs, on the summits of Carmel, Tabor, or Scopus, on the Plain of Sharon, in Emek Jezreel or on the low-lying shores of the Dead Sea – and whether we meet at work or at play, on excursions, or in the quiet of our Homes, or in the ancient holy city of our race, we shall always be aware that we must continue in the path in which we have now set our feet. Our course in life will be determined no longer by an effort to demonstrate our worth to others, or by the desire to rid ourselves of a sense of inferiority. No longer shall we be obliged to adjust our lives to the ways of other nations. Our development will be determined by our own capabilities, by our own natural gifts. So we shall be able to give the best that is in us. We shall study our national character; and, when we have really understood it, we shall develop it in accordance with its own laws. With the brighter stars of our Homeland shining above us, we shall learn anew every evening that only by being true to ourselves can we attain perfection in our own way. Our community and our work, our friendships and our friendly rivalries, – all these will reveal their inner laws to us. In this first hour of our life in the Homeland we are strong and pure in the knowledge that we have come hither to fulfill our destiny."

The friends silently clasped hands. In the stillness of the night, David raised his voice to sing the Song of the Sand and the Stars...

Lord of the Universe:
Of the words of Thine oath

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Not one shall fail.
By Thy holy will
All things are established, –
Each in its season,
Each in its place...

God above, verily,
Like to sand and stones
Are we dispersed and scattered,
Scorned and despised.

But the stars,
The bright, the gleaming stars,
The stars –
Where, O God, are the stars?

Singing in the chorus the young people made their way back over the ridge to the little house where the children slept.

Ruth and Reuben, walking hand in hand, brought up the rear. "Tomorrow," began Reuben, "I shall go down to the large collective settlement at the foot of Mount Gilboa, where I shall learn to sow and reap and build up our new social order. You, my Ruth, will remain here to teach the children. It will be a red letter day for me when I come up from the plain to visit you or when you will come down to visit me. Hand in hand we shall walk as in the days of our childhood, with ever deepening affection for each other. And then the day will come, I hope, when we two, united for life, shall take part in founding a settlement of our own, where we shall till the land and rear a new generation of Jewish children for the Homeland."

"I thank you, Reuben," replied Ruth, "for all the love and care you have shown me since that day, long ago, when we fled together from the spies and the murderers. We can never be parted, even though at first we shall not be together. Yet, dear Reuben, let us leave ourselves this year free to live as our own natures dictate, without ties or promises, each of us going his own way. Then, later, we can decide whether it would indeed be well for us to unite our lives. Do let us have this year of freedom, dear Reuben!"

"Be it as you wish, my Ruth! But I agree with a heavy heart. It is all the more difficult now that we are so near our goal, with you walking by my side in the Homeland, your youthful beauty set against the radiant light and clear atmosphere of our Land with its background of sea and mountains. But I know that our union will be all the more joyous if one day you hold out your hand to me of your own free will. Then we shall be bound all the

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more closely to one another, as we go up side by side to settle on our land in the mountains of Galilee. Peace be with you, my Ruth, in the days of our separation at the beginning of our life in the Homeland!"

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The Cooperative Settlement

The next morning Rachel rose very early. David waited outside the house to see her off on her journey to Galilee. As they started down the mountain road the sun rose behind the Carmel range, irradiating the dark gray and red shadows of the hills, brightening the slopes on which lay the sprawling city and the blue bay and the little white cottages on the ridge where the children from the Gray House were to work and study during their first year in the Homeland. As they walked down to the city the sea was always before them.

On the opposite shore lay the old Crusaders' town. Sailboats bobbed up and down on the surging breakers. On the eastern shore of the bay gleamed the vast silvery tanks to which oil was piped from the well of a neighboring country.

The young couple rambled down through the Arab quarter with its closely barred houses and courtyards, from which men in flowing robes were starting out for their day's work. And now their way led through the old town with the picturesque Jewish and Arab markets where the bright fruits of the land were displayed, and then along the harbor road on which heavy lorries speeded to meet the incoming ships.

The bus that was to take Rachel to the northern mountains stood in a large open space. Among the passengers were men and women carrying heavy bundles, and sick folk who sought healing in the hot springs of the ancient Roman city. Young people in blue blouses were going back to their work in the settlements. That they were closely attached to the Land could be seen from their easy bearing, their lively chatter, and their use of the revived national tongue of their ancient people.

David's eyes were bright as he pressed Rachel's hand in farewell, and he stood where she had left him until the swiftly moving vehicle was well out of sight.

Soon the narrow confines of the old town were left behind, and the bus rolled past new factories where building materials were being worked up for houses and agricultural produce was conserved for the settlements. Soon they found themselves in the broad expanse of the Emek, the home of the Jewish pioneers who in the short span of two decades had transformed swamp lands into fertile fields. The first settlement on the road was Yagur, where lived hundreds of men and women who went out to work daily and developed a communal society with the proceeds of their own labor. Next came a village founded by pious land-workers whose religious beliefs had

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prompted them to leave the cramped Ghettoes for diligent labor on the land in God's open spaces. Then there were Waldheim and Bethlehem, the villages of pioneer peasants from a northern land, and after them numerous Jewish settlements founded in recent years. From a hill top in the distance gleamed the white structures of Mishmar ha-Emek (The Guardian of the Valley), a cooperative settlement with a famous boarding school. Thriving villages and settlements were seen on every hand.

The first stop was made at Afuleh, the only town in the Emek, where roads from all parts of the country converge. The passengers alighted and exchanged greetings with friends from the settlements, asking for news of every district. Then they returned to the bus and continued happily their way.

In front of the little hotel Rachel espied Avigdor, a young preacher from her native city, now a youth leader in a nearby cooperative settlement. Beside him sat Hayim, a young laborer from a village on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. The young man greeted Rachel with the ancient Hebrew salutation: "Blessed be the new comers!" Having studied philosophy and pedagogy together in their northern city, the three young people were soon engaged in a lively discussion about the latest developments in psychology. Rachel learned that in the schools of the cooperative settlement's parents and teachers, farmers and intellectuals worked together. When she left, they had arranged to meet again in the cooperative settlement of Deganya in Lower Galilee, where Rachel intended to work for some time.

The bus turned northward through the Emek on its way to Galilee. From the windows the passengers looked out toward the round dome of Mount Tabor, where of old many armies had gathered and where revelation was granted to ancient Hebrew seers.

The road passed alongside Nazareth, where the founder of Christianity spent his early youth. The streets of the hilly town hummed with traffic. Everywhere one saw blooming gardens, spacious stone houses with shady inner courts, hospitals, churches, monasteries, schools. As the bus ascended along two wide curves in the road, enchanting views of the Emek revealed themselves. In the distance shimmered the blue Lake of Galilee in its setting of white cliffs. In the background loomed the snowy crown of Mount Hermon. Inside the bus all was gay and merry. In the exuberance of their spirits and in their joy in living in the Homeland, the young people began to sing verses from the Song of Songs as the Lake of Galilee came into view. "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies," trilled the jubilant young voices, raising the echo in the mountains of Galilee.

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The bus clattered down to the shore of the lake and into the old city of black basalt lying below sea level which had been built in Roman times, and two thousand years ago, in days of dire persecution, had served as a refuge for the Jewish faith. Here were memorials of every period in the history of the Jewish people. On the northern shore of the lake relics of ancient Jewish architecture lay scattered, – masonry and columns of the ruined synagogue of Capernaum. On the outskirts of the city lay the flat tombstones of Jewish sages of old: Meir baal ha Ness, Akiba, Yohanan ben Zakkai, Maimonides. There, too, was the domed structure, the tomb of the venerable teacher Rabbi Meir baal ha Ness, to which came thousands of pilgrims to dance and to pray in token of their devotion to the teachings of their fathers. The steaming hot medicinal springs beyond the city, where hosts of sufferers found healing for their ailments, were reminiscent of therapeutic practices dating back to ancient Roman times. Beyond the outskirts of the city, too, were seen new Jewish cooperative settlements which were blazing new paths in collective modes of living and shaping a new social order.

In the local park Rachel was greeted by several settlers, and her old friend Zwi, a fellow-student in pedagogy, guided her through the old streets which were thronged with picturesque Jews from many Oriental countries. On the shore of the blue-green shimmering lake rows of fishing boats lay anchored. Sailboats furrowed the wide expanse of the waters. Merry boys immersed their supple brown bodies in the waves.

After a visit to the new Jewish quarter of Kiryath Shmuel, they returned to the bus, and a few moments later Rachel found herself at the entrance to Deganya (Cornflower), a cooperative settlement founded twenty years previously by a group of young Rumanian Jews. After untold hardships and deprivation, danger and experiments, they had finally founded a thriving village with fields of grain, herds, orchards, and workshops. Rachel firmly believed in the new form of social organization which Deganya had been the first to evolve. She was met by friends who were already living there and taken to the blockhouse at the end of a long avenue of palms where the affairs of the settlement were conducted. There she found her old friend Shelomo deep in his books and accounts. Mira, a young kinswoman of hers, met her at the nursery. In the new school building, which was a gift from some American friends, she was welcomed by a group of children. Standing on the roof of the school house Rachel surveyed the prosperous settlement, the blue lake, the old Roman town, snow-capped Mount Hermon, and the great white cliffs of the opposite shore.

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Beside her stood Zevi, who had come to the Gray House after the pogroms in Russia, and was now a teacher in Deganya. "Never before," remarked Rachel, turning to him, "have I seen a school set in such magnificent natural surroundings. Reared in such an environment, a child cannot help readily absorbing all that is lofty and noble in his instruction. In a booklet about Deganya which I once read, I found the wording of the parchment scroll which lies buried under the foundation stone of our school. 'The children of the Jordan Valley,' – so runs the text – 'will here be taught to study and to work. God grant that within the walls of this house, to which its builders pin their dearest hopes, our children may acquire wisdom and knowledge. May they learn the social virtues of loyalty and devotion, so that they may continue the tasks we began here when we transformed a hot and arid region into a land yielding abundant harvests and blesses with a large working community which restored the soil to its ancient fertility.'

I have always wished," continued Rachel, "to come here and help to shape the characters of the children. I count myself most happy to have this task in your community."

"Well said!" remarked Zevi. "It is a privilege indeed to live and teach here. This landscape more than any other makes certain demands upon us. It gives us an opportunity to instill into the children's minds an awareness of the beauties of Nature, of the majesty of Creation in these mountains. Here, more than anywhere else, it is clear that education has a twofold function. The child must be made receptive to everything in the universe that reminds him of things beyond the range of time and space; his personality must be formed as a part of infinity. That is one of the functions of education. The second is to show the child how to adjust himself in our contemporary society, how to prepare himself for work in the settlement and for service to the larger community of our people, how to school his energies for his daily tasks so that his labors may be productive. Our children must be taught to be socially minded and brave, neat and conscientious, industrious and well informed, so that they too may have a share in restoring this Land and in establishing a home for the Wandering Jew.

I have observed," added the young teacher after a moment's pause, "that the children of this little settlement are also aware of the unhappy destiny of our people. The sorrows of the Exile cast a shadow over their earliest childhood. They too realize that this stage in our history demands reconquest of the Land by labor, by a hard struggle for every foot of ground. Ours is the task of preparing the children for their struggle.

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This demands close study of the laws which govern the development of a child's personality, and research in the field of pedagogy. We are happy that you have come, Rachel, to help us in this task."

Rachel's days passed in rhythmical succession among the children of Deganya, with work, study, and recreation alternating in a pleasant routine. Her frequent talks with the settlers gave her growing insight into the new methods of education in a collective society.

One morning she was invited by Nurith, an old pupil of hers from the Gray House, to visit her in the village of Meir Shefeye on the western slope of the Carmel range. Nurith was very eager to meet her former teacher again and to tell her about her own experiences in the Land. Rachel gladly consented to come, for she loved young Nurith like a sister. Her journey took her through the mountains of Galilee to Haifa, and thence by the main road to the high-lying old village of Zichron Jacob with its orchards and wine cellars, which was only a short distance from the children's village that nestled in the hills. Here one's eye ranged over a lovely landscape with rolling hills that extended down to the Mediterranean shore. From the bus Rachel saw Arab shepherds leading their flocks to pasture and Arab peasants working in the fields. Merry youngsters from Meir Shefeye were on their way to the village on some errands of their town.

At the last turn in the road the charming children's village came into view. The bus entered through a wide gateway, passing the Youth Aliyah dormitory and the school on the way to the community hall. Nurith was awaiting Rachel in a lovely garden with large grass plots, rare plants, and white benches set against green hedges. She made a charming picture in a blue working frock and a bright kerchief on her black curls. She ran joyously forward to greet her guest, and a moment later was introducing her to the head of the children's village, Simeon ha-Nassi, who was engaged at this moment in an earnest discussion with Henrietta, mother of the youth of the Land. She had come to attend the laying of the foundation stone for a little infirmary that was to be built by the women of America in memory of their associate Elisheva. Elisheva had always befriended the children of the Land, whom she had once served in the Land itself. Throughout the years she had kept in close touch with them through letters and worked for their welfare as long as she lived.

The visitors who had come from many parts of the Land were escorted by the children in the pine wood and shown to their seats. Teachers and children then ranged themselves in a semi-circle in an opening in the wood. Two of the children, Zahava and Zeev, paid tributes to the memory

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of Elisheva, telling of her love for the Land, her attachment to its children, her plans for the future of the children's village, and her fervent wish to return to the Land and share the trials and joys of her young friends. Reverently and with rare sympathy they rehearsed the life-story of the woman who had been so close to them and who had just passed away after a long and painful illness. Then Joel came forward and recited the Kaddish prayer for the dead. A choir of young voices followed with the song of sorrow and of hope.

In the midst of a clump of pale green larches the children had dug a little trench for the foundation stone of the infirmary. The leader of the boys' group, Johanan, wearing a white smock, stood with trowel in hand beside the trench. Slender Jonah stepped out from the group and read a dedication from a parchment scroll in which the children expressed their thanks to the woman who from across the sea had done so much to promote the health of their fellow-Jews in the Land, and prayed that the new house might become a centre for fostering the health of their little village community.

Dark-haired Leah inserted the parchment scroll into a heavy glass flask and handed it to silvery-haired Henrietta, who was to lay it in the ground. The guests were then invited to shovel earth into the trench while the children's choir sang their songs. After the ceremony all assembled in the large dining hall for a luncheon prepared from the produce of the village itself.

In the meantime Rachel and Nurith had rambled in a shady green wood planted twenty-five years earlier on the edge of the village by its founders. Snuggling close to Rachel, Nurith spoke of her work in the poultry run, the work she had dreamed of when she was a little girl in the Gray House. She described the daily life of the children in their collective society, and praised the kindliness of the director, who loved them all like a father. She spoke of many more things – of the devotion of Tova, the young housemother, who was so deeply concerned for the children's personal welfare, of the musical evenings arranged by the children's orchestra, of the sense of responsibility which characterized the children's conduct of the affairs of the village.

"As for myself," went on Nurith, "I want to study poultry-raising here for a year, and then join my brother, who is getting his agricultural training in the village of Hedera. Then we shall go up with you to settle at Hanita. There I shall apply all I have learned here, caring for the chicks, watching over the eggs, working beside you and Ruth just as we planned it in the Gray House. I still have much to learn about the care of poultry, and I

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shall learn everything I can, so that I may have a responsible task in our settlement."

"God bless you, Nurith," said Rachel out of a full heart. "I always knew you should be loyal to our plans, and I imagine no more beautiful spot for your year's apprenticeship than this children's village on the Carmel slopes."

In her walk through the grounds Rachel encountered Simeon ha-Nassi, the head of the village, who led her into a well-lighted room where many pictures hung in rows. "Every month," he explained, "we show our children works of art on a certain theme. Here is a collection of paintings which we call 'The Bible in Art.' These paintings have been loaned to us for a few weeks by the Bezalel Museum of Jerusalem, and we have quite a number of reproductions of our own. It is our aim to acquaint the children with the masterpieces of art throughout the ages. In a discussion our oldest group had last night they tried to find the answer to a question they had posed for themselves: Why is it, they asked, that the painters rendered Biblical figures in the manner of their own day and their own countries? And how is it that each artist could give his own personal interpretation to the ideas and personalities of the ancient Hebrews? That is just to give you a notion of their approach to art. They believe, by the way, that re-settlement in the Land of Israel will stimulate the artistic gifts of the Jews, and that they will devote their new skill to portraying the ancient historic figures which gave our people strength to endure their sufferings during the long Exile. And we, their teachers, hope that by showing them the best in the world of art, their own creative energies, so far as they may be endowed with them, will be aroused."

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The Feast of the First Fruits

It was a late spring day in the Homeland, and the whole country was in blossom. Lavender cyclamen and yellow broom, blue cornflowers and golden narcissi, red anemones and white roses burgeoned in fields and gardens. On the render young twigs of the fir trees the brown cones stood erect like tall candles.

The busy city beside the bay was all astir. This was the day when the festival of the first fruits was to be celebrated, and settlers would come from every part of the country bringing produce of their fields. In Hadar Hakarmel, the Jewish suburb on the slope of Mount Carmel, joyous preparations were proceeding for the great event. Herzl Street, the main thoroughfare of the suburb, was thronged with an expectant multitude.

At the bottom of the street a large platform has been erected where the elders of the community were to receive the first fruits. This platform overlooked the blue sea with its white sailboats, the port where lay anchored the Italian ships which week by week brought Jewish immigrants to the Land, the factories in the plain, the heights of Carmel crowned with forests and monasteries, the winding stream of the Kishon, and the wide gateway into the Emek Jezreel, which the Jewish pioneers had transformed from death-dealing swamps into luxuriant gardens.

In Haifa the festival was to be celebrated after the Jewish customs of ancient times, when the peasants brought their first fruits in the spring of the year and laid them on the steps of the altar of the Temple. It was to commemorate the union of man with Nature through the tilling of the soil, the redemption of the soil by the children of a people forced to wander for many ages, the soil in which the miracle of growth proceeded by eternal law, – it was to commemorate all these that the reborn People Israel celebrated the ingathering of the first harvest of the year in its own Land.

The festive procession assembled on the road below for the ascent from the plain to the mountainside. From every part of the Land they came, bringing the first fruits of field and garden, herds and flocks, as offering to the elders of the people. The procession was headed by the boys and girls from the children's villages of Meir Shefeye and Benshemen, carrying great trays of tender green lettuce, white and red radishes, peas, and cabbages, and leeks. In their midst trotted little Hayim of Benshemen, proudly carrying in his arms the first lamb born in the village during the month. The children's eyes were aglow with pride that they too had helped to bring

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harvests out of the arid soil, awakening it to new life after untold struggles with the forces of Nature!

Behind the children rolled wagons from the Emek laden with rye and wheat, calves and lambs and chicks. Among them rode golden-haired Shulamith on a splendid gray horse, carrying before her a great cornucopia filled with fruit and vegetables. Beside her were messengers from Ein Harod, Tel Joseph, and Beth Alpha in the Emek, bearing the first fruits of the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate bush, and the date palm. The feast of the first fruits was a day of blessing and fulfillment, a day of testimony of the rebirth of a people on its native soil.

From every rooftop were heard gay greetings, music, and songs. Blue and white flags waved everywhere. Spectators were crowded at windows and on terraces. Laborers, officials, physicians, social workers, teachers, nurses – all had gathered to hail the produce grown by Jewish hands on the soil of the Homeland.

With a blare of trumpets the procession approached the platform where the representatives of the Jewish National Council had assembled to receive the offerings of the first fruits. Shmaryahu, most venerable of the elders of the people, read out from the Talmud the description of the manner in which the feast of the first fruits was celebrated of old:

"The people of each district assembled in the chief town of the district. And they slept in the streets, for they were a mighty throng. At dawn, the appointed one rose and proclaimed: 'Arise, let us go to Zion, to the Lord our God.' Those from nearby the villages brought fresh figs and grapes, and those from afar dried figs and raisins. And the bull went before them, its horns plated with gold, its head crowned with a garland of olive leaves. And the flutist preceded all. Thus went out in procession till they came near to Jerusalem. And the people of Jerusalem came out and adorned their first fruits, the lesser dignitaries first, then the assistants, and finally the stewards. And the craftsmen of Jerusalem welcomed them and asked after their peace, saying 'Your coming be in peace, O brethren!' The flutist led them in music to the mountain of the lord. Here the king, Agrippa himself, took a basket of first fruits on his shoulder and proceeded until the courtyard was reached. Whereupon the priests burst into song: 'I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.' The doves perched on the baskets and dipped their heads into them, and that which they brought forth in their beaks was given to the priests."

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In the centre of the stadium a huge blue and white flag stretches across the septagonal platform, which was built up on four tiers of steps. Around this central flag seven smaller green flags stood furled. Seven entrances led to the platform, representing the seven varieties of the fruits of the Land. Each entrance faced a side of the platform, with a Gate of the wheat, a Gate of the Barley, a Gate of the Vine, a Gate of the Fig, a Gate of the Pomegranate, a Gate of the Olive, and a Gate of the Honey (of the Date Palm). In the centre of the platform the elders stood ready to receive the first fruits. As the groups approached the platform, their leaders mounted in first steps and gave a signal for the baskets to be lowered to the ground. All the while complete silence reigned. But as soon as the baskets had been set down, those on the platform chanted: "And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest." And the others responded: "And the land shall yield her increase."

The bearers of the produce swung their empty baskets above their heads; the orchestra played an accompaniment to the words of the Psalmist: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion;" and the bearers of the baskets formed a circle about the stage and swayed in a joyous dance. The children in the procession sang a song of their own, and those are its words:

With our baskets on our shoulders
And our heads becrowed,
From every corner of the Land
Do we our first fruits bring.

From Judaea and Samaria
We have come all the way.
Hei, hei, hei with the drums.
Hei, hei, hei with the flutes.

From the midst of the dancers Ruth and David led out a group of children who carried baskets of seeds and saplings grown in their own little garden in Neve Shaanan. They were bound for still another celebration this day, for the foundation stone was to be laid beside the bay for the future home of Ahawah. There they would plant the first seeds and saplings, so that in days to come trees would adorn the village and give it shade. From Hadar Hakarmel they rode down to the city, past the port, and the new factory district, and the workingmen's garden cities. On the site of their future home they met friends from Neve Shaanan, who had come with the leaders and friends of Ahawah. Soon cars appeared with the heads

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of the Jewish National Council and of the National Jewish Funds, all of whom gladly came to the ceremony of the laying of the foundation-stone. A fence had been built around the large tract allotted by the Jewish National Fund for the children's village, which would face the blue bay and have the mountains of Galilee for a background. In the centre of the tract a temporary stage had been erected for the guests of honor. The other visitors and the children themselves stood in a large semi-circle facing the stage, in front of which a small trench had been dug for the foundation stone.

The head of the National Council congratulated the children and their teachers, and praised the transfer of Jewish children to the land of their fathers to be reared for work on the land and life in a collective society. The Jewish community of the Land of Israel, he added, cherished great hopes for these children as the future citizens and pioneers of the Land.

The head of the Jewish National Fund pronounced a benediction on the tract of the children's village, which had been bought with offerings sent by Jews in all the countries of the world. He prayed that the village might prosper and prove to the whole world that the Jewish National Fund was a blessing for the re-settlement of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Then he held out the parchment scroll, which was to be buried in the ground with the foundation stone, to the aged Henrietta, head of the movement which brought Jewish children to the Land. She took the scroll from his hand and laid it in the earth with a benediction. Then she picked up a spade and shovelled the first clods of earth upon the stone, giving thanks to the Creator of the world for having brought the Jewish people, after thousands of years in Exile, back to their own land and their own soil.

Ranged in single file, the children came forward in turn to cast their spadefuls of earth upon the foundation stone. Then with the heads of the National Council leading the procession, the children walked around their land and paid their respects to the site of their future home. In the vanguard marched the children who carried the baskets of seeds and saplings. To the music of flutes played by their comrades, they planted their seeds and saplings in the middle of the tract, where their future garden was to be laid out. Proudly they explained the plans for the farm and the buildings to their guests, and then escorted them, singing all the while, through the suburb to the high road.

Then they went back to their teachers and set up the land marks on their tract. When that task had been finished, they asked for details about the plans, arrangements, and programs of their collective settlement. Mother Beracha led them over the tract, describing the plans she had conceived in

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the distant northland, the goals she had set for the children in her care, and the consummation that had enabled her to bring them to this place beside the shore of the Mediterranean, at the foot of the mountains, where they could work in freedom and in love for their Homeland. She called to mind the trying times at the Gray House when she had had to struggle very hard to persuade people to let her have the means for carrying out her plans. Lastly, she spoke of the happiness it had given her when she was able to come to the Land with the children she had brought up in the Gray House, so that she might be with them at this turning point in their lives. Then she turned to the teachers who had worked faithfully at her side for many years and thanked them for having helped her to attain the goal she had set before them.

Now she would take the children back to Neve Shaanan and keep them there until all was ready for their reception. But not all of her wards were to go back to Neve Shaanan. Twenty boys and five girls would stay behind to help build their new village. A small blockhouse had been prepared for them, and there David would teach them and Ruth would look after their needs. In the children's help in building Ahawah village Beracha saw a symbol of the system of collective labor in the Land.

She went back to Neve Shaanan with her young brood, rejoicing in the thought that at the year's end she would lead them down from the mountain to the new cottages; and then they would begin in earnest to build up their own collective community on the shore of the Middle Sea.

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The Youth Rally

The children's Village of Benshemen had sent out invitations for a great rally to the Jewish youth of the whole Land. To every city and village the call had come, and now the broad highway from the Arab town of Ludd swarmed with trim scouts, members of the Akiba League, brawny working youth. From Meir Shefeye on the slope of the Carmel and from Ahawah on the shore of the Haifa Bay they came, swinging up the road in their blue and gray blouses, singing gleefully to the accompaniment of their flutes and guitars.

For weeks the boys and girls of Benshemen had worked untiringly to prepare for the entertainment of their guests. There had been food and beds to provide, tents to pitch, blankets to gather, tables to set on the lawn, candles to find for blessing on the Sabbath eve, decorations to arrange. Four hundred strong, the youth of Benshemen were resolved that nothing should be lacking that was needed to make the rally a memorable event in the annals of the youth of the Homeland. When the guests arrived they were shown over the block-houses and the gardens, the fields and the agricultural museum and everything else there was to see.

The headmaster of Benshemen, Shelomo, met David, who had brought a group of children from Ahawah, with a very hearty welcome. Soon the two old friends, rambling over the grounds of the village, were indulging in lively reminiscences of the settlement house in the northern realm where they had first met, David being then the youngest pupil at the settlement. Shelomo recalled the great day when he had brought a group of orphans to the Land, for whom he intended to found a village which should be built and conducted with the children's help. That was ten years ago. Even after the site had been secured, there had been serious difficulties in the establishment of the village.

"New educational methods were needed," continued Shelomo. "To teach the children how to work and to train them in administering the village affairs was not enough. Far more important was it to receive our ancient Hebrew culture, so that we might apply its teaching to our own problems. We had to work out a new form of humanistic education based on our national culture of old; a synthesis had to be found between the practical and the spiritual aspects of life in the Homeland that could be applied to forming the characters of our children. Creative effort was demanded of our teachers if the Bible was to become a source of inspiration for present day educational needs."

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"To be sure," assented David, "we love and revere our ancient cultural values. But for the restoration of the Land there must also be a passionate desire to shape a new future, an unremitting devotion to the ideals of justice and humanitarianism, a striving toward creative achievement."

"Today," Shelomo assured him, "you will see a step in that direction. The children will show the life-story of Jacob in a series of tableaux on our outdoor stage. In that performance you will see portrayed all the forms conceivable in any human society. There you will have all the problems that arise in the family and the community, in work and at play, in the shaping of character and political life, in the rearing and education of children. You would have been delighted to see how zestfully our children have tackled these problems, how year by year they have given ever more mature thought to the ancient legends that have taken on a new meaning in our times. They have pondered the rights and the wrongs, the loves and the hates of the Jacob legends, and discovered in them the prototypes of all our modern domestic and social problems. How clearly the children have recognized the close connection between work and a collective society, which is implicit in Jacob's blessings to his sons, will be shown in the final tableau."

Long tables had been laid in the courtyard beside which stood young women teachers blessing the candles. Suddenly David espied his own wife among them. Rachel had brought a party of children from Deganya, and the prospect of reunion with her husband for even a brief span filled her heart with quiet joy. The next instant she hurried forward to meet him, and they went hand in hand to their seats at the lower end of the table.

Around the Sabbath board were gathered a thousand boys and girls who were bronzed by the warm southern sun, supple from work in the fields, and happy in their comradeship in a common cause. The tables were laden with the produce of the fields of Benshemen which had been grown by the children themselves. Each plate was heaped high with red radishes, white eggs, and greenish-yellow grapes. The candles sent their beams down the length of the tables, and youthful voices rang out joyously in Hebrew folk ballads to which the children's orchestra of Benshemen played an accompaniment. Experiences were eagerly exchanged between the comrades, and new ties of friendship were cemented between young exiles ingathered from the farflung Diaspora.

Shelomo arose and announced the formal opening of the Youth Rally. "We have invited you," he began, "to meet with us here so that the youth of the Land might meet and understand one another, so that they might

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consider how they themselves could best serve our national ideals, so that they might plan how to resolve our inner conflicts. This festive Sabbath eve will be a happy precursor to morrow's discussions.

In our Land," he went on, "a new generation is growing up which is united by a common ideal of labor. This generation is conscious of its responsibilities toward the future of our people; it unites all groups and classes in the resolve to complete what its fathers began. May this Rally strengthen our national consciousness and unite the youth of the whole Land!"

After supper hosts and guests danced and sang until it was time for the play which the children of Benshemen had written especially for the occasion.

The writing of the play had been preceded by numerous discussions, in which the children tried to make clear to themselves how so many domestic and social problems could have arisen in a circumscribed life like Jacob's, and how it was that the patriarch's experiences reflected all the problems which confront modern educators. The central idea of the play was based on Shelomo's belief that the ancient national values must be revived in the new Jewish life in the Land and applied to its problems.

The young people were ranged on the stone benches of the open air theatre beside teachers, laborers, officials, relatives, friends of Benshemen village, and guests from the neighboring Arab villages. The stage has been built in the centre of a circular plot against a dark background of trees. The first scene showed Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, in a state of acute anxiety: her approaching motherhood had aroused in her mind the fear of the unknown, the uncertain future. In her distress she walked restlessly to and fro, and then fall suddenly on her knees to pray for help in her sore need. Presently her prayer was answered with a Divine message: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manners of people shall be separated from thy bowels." The forecast of the destiny of her children to the end of days reassured and comforted her.

Scenes followed showing the childhood of the two brothers: domestic cares and passions; the favoritism shown by the mother for one son and by the father for the other; the unhappy consequence of that favoritism; the sale of the birthright and the stratagem whereby Isaac's blessing was won for his younger son; Jacob's great love for Rachel; his marriage with the two sisters; his return to his home; his assumption of the patriarchal state; the death of the beloved wife; and the cycle of the Joseph legend. All the scenes were so played as to bring out a new and modern significance in the ancient

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tales. All the problems involved in the rearing and education of children, all the economic problems of the clan and the community were stressed in the scenes which followed in slow succession. In the final scene Jacob, lying on his deathbed in Egypt, showed his twelve sons what the future held in store for each of them, explaining that whatever came to pass in their lives would be the inevitable action of their own natures.

The play made a deep impression on the youthful spectators, for it brought home to them many of the old problems that had to be solved afresh in their own lives. The players themselves were so absorbed in their parts that they identified themselves completely with the historic personages and events of the drama. Shelomo has obviously not erred in assuming that they would appreciate the historic national values all the more through the vicarious experience of dramatic performance.

After the play, the children gathered around their leaders to discuss the problems suggested by the Jacob legend. Rachel's group, seated in a semi-circle on the grass, was wholly engrossed with a moving scene which had been based on a Talmudic legend about Rachel and Leah. Rachel had appeared in her sister's tent weeping bitterly because she feared the contempt of her lover for having revealed to Leah the token whereby she might take her place in the wedding night. Though Rachel loved Jacob and he loved her, she was filled with pity for her sister's sufferings, knowing that a woman can suffer no keener sorrow than to be scorned by the man she loves. In Rachel's struggle between her love for her cousin and her compassion for her sister, pity had triumphed. While Leah listened incredulously to her sister's offer to reveal to her precious token, the voice of an angel was heard in the darkness announcing that Rachel's sacrifice had found favor in the sight of the Lord. – "Thine is the noblest deed ever performed by woman on earth," proclaimed the angel. "Thou hast made the supreme sacrifice, renouncing the love of a husband for the sake of a sorrowing sister. Therefae hath the Lord decreed that hereafter thou shalt always comfort people in their numberless trials and afflictions. Throughout their wanderings thou wilt ever be beside them, giving comfort and consolation. Such is God's blessing upon thee, for thou hast overcome thine own self, the self of flesh and blood, dust and ashes, with superhuman effort for thy sister's sake. Ever will thy people call upon these by the name that arouses men's deepest emotion and their tenderest love: in sorrow and distress, they will cry out unceasingly: 'Rachel, our Mother!'"

Under an ancient terebinth near the gateway another group of children sat clustered around Reuben. They were concerned with the problem which

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Jacob's blessings on his sons has raised in their minds: the place of each individual in society. As all his sons stood gathered about his deathbed the venerable patriarch had predicted the destinies of each in times to come. In the wisdom of his great age he showed each son his place in the community and foretold the course of his life. He had won through to the tolerance which knows neither prejudice nor repulsion, for experience had taught him, that good and evil are distributed among mankind, and that each man's place in society is allotted to him according to his knowledge and ability.

In each of his sons Jacob saw a continuation of his own life, and in their lives he relived his own struggles and exertions. Each son manifested an aspect of his own being. For each he foresaw a sphere of action and a specific mode of living. When he closed his eyes in eternal sleep, he left behind him a proud and powerful clan that would endure to late generations.

"We too," said Reuben to the boys and girls before him, "we too are a people this day with faults and virtues; we are both brave and cowardly; we esteem both material and spiritual values; we are unselfish and egotistical; but ever we strive toward fulfillment. All of us, the strong and the weak alike – must serve in his own way, serve each and all of his brethren, helping them to find their places in our community in harmony with their abilities and inclinations."

"That is just what I think, Reuben," cried Haya, one of the pupils from Ahawah. "No longer should we suffer as the chosen People who has always lived under the compulsion to appear better and wiser than we are. To surpass others in knowledge and achievement, even against our own inclinations, was a need forced upon the Exile. That need has no place in the upbuilding of our Land. The idea of the chosen People, as it is expressed in the Bible and in our new life here, is utterly different from the Exile conception. Chosen we are indeed, but only in the sense that each of us must choose between right and wrong, action and passivity, life and oblivion. The choice rests with us; and only by choosing wisely shall we be able to serve the future of our people in the Homeland. Each and all of us must choose how we will serve the community, adjusting our special abilities into the framework of the whole. Each and all of us must renew our inner struggle day by day, questioning whether we are really giving the best we are capable of. Freely and of our own choice we must grapple with every task we perform in the Homeland, even as Jacob grappled with the angel, saying, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me!'"

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"You are right, Reuben," interposed demure Deborah of Benshemen, "in demanding that each of us decide for himself what place he can best fill in the community. Yet the legend of Jacob's blessings does not convey, as far as I can see, any message to the women of Israel. On his deathbed the father allotted each of his sons a place in the community, but not a word did he say about the women of his family. And because he assigned no place in the community to his only daughter, Dinah, a kindred people was massacred for his neglect. Yet the Bible tells us about many women who, each in her own way, made a place for herself in the life of her people and served it well. Consider Eve, the mother of the race, who with her husband formed the first social group, with all its virtues and faults; or Sarah, the matriarch, who opened her tent to the women of her race, but shut out from it the mother of Abraham's son Ishmael; or Rebecca, with her error and vacillations in her domestic problems; or Leah and Rachel who, through their sons, established the House of Israel; or Miriam, the guardian of the helpless infant and singer of the praises of her people in the wilderness; or Deborah, the staunch champion of her people's rights; or the gentle and pious daughter of Jephta, who sacrificed herself willingly for her people; or Judith and Esther, whose courage and wisdom saved their people from peril and annihilation.

We, the daughters of the reborn Jewish people," she went on, "have dedicated ourselves single-mindedly to the purpose of working side by side with our brothers in restoring our Land. For we aim to become a united people and a united community, bringing new life into the community and bringing up our children to serve their people."

On the sabbath morning the children rose early and tramped across the fields to the Herzl Forest, whose dense groves of pine and cypress gave refreshing shade and invited wayfarers to rest. The children of Benshemen proudly pointed out to their guests the trees they had planted in the forest year after year. Their pride in the trees was natural in children of the Land, for to them every tree is a treasure, to be loved and tended as a symbol of the restoration of Land and People. They have no favorites, but cherish them all, – the young pines with their shining cones, the broad-leaved fig trees, the low, fernlike palms, the feathery-leaved eucalyptus, the orange trees with their white and reddish-yellow blossoms in the spring and their golden globes of fruit in the autumn. Tenderly their eyes dwell on dense clumps of trees in the orange groves, on slender files of trees in the olive orchards, on single trees standing majestically alone on rocky heights.

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The New Year of the Trees, which is celebrated in the early spring, when the sap rises and all the Nature is reborn, is the children's own festival. On that day they troop out from the cities and villages into the fields, where they plant little green saplings in the moist brown earth.

The gay troop in the Herzl Forest was summoned from its recesses all too soon by the gong for the assembly on the village green.

Black-haired Abraham, a veteran pioneer from Russia, portrayed the kind of community which he believed should be developed as a foundation for the Homeland. "The ideal community," he told his young listeners, "must be based on justice alone – justice toward our fellow-Jews who, like ourselves, are dedicated to the restoration of the Land. The national revival, which has begun to take concrete shape in our Yishuv here, can come to full fruition only if we recognize that all Jews have equal rights; only if we devote ourselves to the welfare of the community as a whole. Such devotion, however, means giving up something that was treasured by the Jews of the Exile above all else. I mean the development of the individual's special gifts for his own benefit. Yet thousands of years ago Moses proclaimed from Sinai that the community was the basis for an ethical national life, saying: 'And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.'

It was not possible to realize that ideal in the Exile, because a people that was continually wandering from country to country could not build up a stable community. The Jewish people was split up into scattered communities which were always trying to adjust themselves to the nations in whose midst they happened to be living. A national home in Palestine with a stable community can be established firmly only on a foundation of justice with every member of the community having equal rights to life and freedom and happiness. In that way, alone, and in no other, can the Jewish people attain to a national life in the highest sense of the term.

You, my friends, are still young. To you the Jewish people offers an opportunity to fit your lives into the Homeland in early youth, – a privilege that was not granted to your fathers. You assume a free Jewish people settled on the redeemed soil of the Homeland as a matter of course, a natural right. You are correct in that assumption, but the right carries with it the duty of service to the national community, the duty that requires the individual to give up all hopes of a life of ease, to shape his whole life with a view to serving the community."

Though the young audience had listened very attentively, by no means all were in agreement with the views of the speaker. Abraham was a popular leader accustomed to ready applause for his platform speeches; but he

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realized that here he was to be put on his nettle, that he must exert himself to convince and persuade. These young people were no ordinary audience, but had come to Benshemen to clarify their ideas and obtain an insight into the new development in the Homeland.

Reuben was the first to launch the attack. "Show me," he cried, "show me where the national idea is manifested in our community here. In the cities the old, anti-social forces are already at their destructive work. Everywhere you find class distinctions, with the population divided into rich and poor. Places of amusement have sprung up in great numbers, but they offer nothing save the stale old diversions of the Exile. Thousands of laborers are compelled to work for a wage that is insufficient for the barest needs of their families. The hovels in the old cities and the tin huts and the jerry-built flats in the new quarters are unfit for human habitation. It is from the new-type settlements, with their devotion to hard work, the simple life, and their ability to create their own opportunities – it is from there, I say, that a wholesome influence must radiate to the cities.

Show us how we can enthrone Justice in our life in the Land! We who live in the collective settlements do see a just social order in our little communities. But the trend in the cities and the private villages causes us much anxiety. There we see no striving toward national unity in our language, our press, or our literature. There we see no single goal or common method for the education of our children. Our demand for justice will remain a dead letter unless we can permeate it with the spirit of our new movement."

The next speaker was Eva, once a refugee from Holland and now working in a girl's farm in the Emek. "Do you really believe," she inquired, "that we can live righteously in a society that has taken over the corrupt old ways of the west, a society where money and influence dominate every sphere of life? What kind of justice is shown to the exploited child wage-earner whose very right to an education is not recognized? I grant you that in the collective settlements the educational methods are exemplary, that more is done for children there than anywhere else in the world. I grant you that our national language is taught and our national culture fostered in our school system. But the number of collective settlements is not large, and thousands of our children never see the inside of a school building. There is no greater privilege for a people than to provide for the education of its children. But what opportunities are allowed to these children to study and to develop their personalities? Show us how to secure for the children the freedom and justice we hope, when we ourselves were still in the Exile, to find the Jewish people enjoying in the Land of Israel!"

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"Tell us," pleaded dark-haired Benjamin, a boy from Kieff who had helped to found the frontier settlement from which he came, "tell us if the prophecy of our national poet – 'Ye shall wander long in the wilderness. Your road is steep and your path hard' applies to us. Show us how to fight for justice, justice for all in the Land and for all who will eventually come to the Land. Teach us how to be just in all our ways. We stand in the midst of the fray, but do not know how to fight."

"It is obvious, my young friends," replied Abraham, "that you are well aware of the gravity of our problems. You demand absolute justice; but it is not possible for us to reach our ultimate goal without delays on the way. You must realize that many a year will pass before our plans can mature in their entirety. Your demand for justice in our new community can be satisfied in one way, and in one way only: We must put soul into our work. Our task must not be performed in the spirit of the slave labor of the factories abroad. We must love our work for its own sake, for the sake of service to the community. We must love it because it attaches us to the soil which we cultivate. Only when we love our work will it cease to be servitude. Only then shall we be able to advance toward our goal. Only if we love our work can justice be made to prevail in our community.

Time and again your conscience will remind you to consider your ways. Time and again you will have to fight against cowardice in your own hearts, against soullessness in your own actions. Time and again you will have to make new demands upon yourselves to strike out into other paths after backslidings. Time and again you will have to give up your accustomed ways and start afresh, so that by willing work on the land you may blaze a trail that will lead to a just form of society. Only by battling with your own selves can you pave the way for justice in our Land. Only thus can you obtain their due for the underprivileged children. Only thus can you help to create a sound national culture!"

There was much give and take between the young people and their leaders that Sabbath morning. The discussions ranged far afield, taking in the rights of the individual and the community; work and recreation; the relationships between adults and children; morals and religion. The more violently opinions clashed, the more eagerly did the youth struggle to achieve insight, the more closely did they feel themselves bound to their comrades, and the more strongly did they realize their attachment to their leaders.

As soon as luncheon was over, Joseph, the oldest boy in Benshemen, rose and announced that the afternoon would be given up to aesthetic pleasure.

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"We young people," he said, "realize that we must try to understand all the moral and spiritual manifestations in the life of our people if we are to contribute something worthwhile to the new national life in the Homeland. But we also realize that we must try to understand other peoples, obtain an insight into their ways and aims and activities, so as to find a place for our own people in their midst. Therefore, before we part, we have arranged for a series of national dances. The dance being that form of art in which the soul of a people reveals itself at its best. At our invitation friends have come from all over the Land to take part in the closing exercises of our Youth Rally. This afternoon we welcome Arab friends from neighboring villages, Persian and Yemenites, Russians and Poles, Norwegians and Swiss, Scots and Netherlanders. To all of them we extend our warmest thanks for having come to us to promote mutual understanding through the poetry of motion."

Hosts and guests seated themselves on the round grass plot fronting the assembly hall, and the dance began. The first to step out were Arabs in flowing silken robes who danced with slow and dignified movements to the long-drawn-out notes of the cymbals. They were followed by a Persian couple in garments of gold brocade, who danced out the story of their love in slow and charming measures. Dark-skinned Yemenites in embroidered robes yielded themselves up to the joys of movement, withdrawing as they danced from the outer world into the remote recesses of their inner selves. The northern couples in white and red native costumes held bright bouquets in their hands as they leaped around the maypole in an ecstatic dance of the springtime. Russians arrayed in high boots and colorful flying petticoats manifested their wild lust for life in shouts of joy as they danced the Karkawiak. Very graceful were the Poles in gold-laced vests of soft velvet. The green- and yellow-kilted Scotch soldiers circled warily around their swords. Jolly Frisians in heavy wooden shoes tramped out the measures of their love for their native land.

Finally the dancers formed a wide circle around the grass plot, and the young Hebrew stepped forward. Boys and girls in their teens, with arms around one another's shoulders, poured out their mutual affection and their ardent love of the Homeland in their own national dance, the Hora. In the swinging movements of the dance and the swaying of their young limbs, they betokened all their longings for their distant kindred, all their hopes for their unknown future, all their will to union with their comrades.

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The circle broke up with ringing cheers, and the hosts of Benshemen speeded their guests on their homeward way after a notable rally of the youth of the Land.

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Redemption

The Holy City

After the Youth Rally dispersed Rachel and David stayed on with their friend Shelomo in the starlit summer night.

Tranquilly happy in their reunion, the young couple rambled in silence along the path which led past the dormitory where the children were preparing to retire. At last they sat down under the dense foliage of a many-branched terebinth to rest and to discuss their plans.

"At the end of the children's first year in the Land," began David, "before the early rains, I intend to go up to Hanita, which lies high up in the mountains on our northern frontier. The land and the equipment for our settlement will be provided by the national Jewish funds. Ruth and Reuben and four of the older Ahawah children will join us when we enter a group of settlers who have had long pioneer experience and are familiar with the ways of the country. It will be no easy task to cultivate the stony soil up there; and a settlement so isolated and remote will always be exposed to danger. But to found new settlements on the frontier is a very important service to the Yishuv, and there we shall rear a new generation of pioneers. When you go back to Deganya, my Rachel, it will be necessary to begin your own preparations."

"With all my heart I welcome your decision," replied Rachel, leaning against her husband's shoulder, "for your choice is right and good. There, in our mountain nest, we shall achieve what we longed for when we were still in the Exile, and what we have waited for so impatiently ever since setting foot in the Land. But you will not misunderstand me, my dearest, when I tell you that I shall not go up to Hanita with you before the early rains so as to work by your side from the very beginning of the settlement. I have not reached this decision without a severe struggle with myself. I was indescribably happy when we came to the Land together, when I began my life here anew, when I was privileged to teach the children of pioneers on the shores of the magnificent lake under the shadow of Mount Hermon. There I have found joyous fulfillment. There, for the first time, I grasped the essential aim of the restoration of our Land. There, for the first time, my longings were fully satisfied, for I saw that longings could be transformed into realities in the midst of our people on the Homeland soil. Yet – yet the time has not come for me to go up with you to Hanita.

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The time has not yet come because I cannot for a moment forget our brethren who have been suffering unspeakable torments since they were banished from their homes, and are trying desperately to reach the Homeland, which is their sole refuge. Ever since I first heard of their plight their call has rung unceasingly in my ears. That is why I must go to them. If in the future I am to merge my life in the life of my people, if I am to rear my children in their midst, if I am to work shoulder to shoulder with you, my beloved, if I am to help win through to our national goal, I must go now to our suffering brethren in the Exile. I must pass through the crucible of suffering that I may be purified. I must plunge into the struggle over there. If I am to take part in shaping the new life of our people here, I must be with our brethren in their sorest trials, and share with them the terrible ordeals which have made us a race of wanderers without a country."

"But why not stay here with me?" pleaded David. "Here too you can grow and merge your life into the life of our people. You can have your share in the founding of our settlement, you can help to prepare the ground there for us and our children."

"Between us two, my dearest," gently responded Rachel, "a conflict is unthinkable. We love and trust one another too much for that. But I do know that I must go to our people in their hour of sorest need, that with them I must feel the age-old tragedy of the Jew. I must be able to understand the frame of mind of the refugees who come to us on the 'hell ships,' and share all their sufferings. I must seek out our people where the woes of the Exile mount to their highest pitch, so that I may understand both their weakness and their latent strength."

"It is most difficult, my Rachel, for me to agree to this decision of yours and to part from you just at the moment when we had planned to make our new home together, just when our first child is growing under your heart. Yet your resolve is too lofty and your love for our people too deep for me to discuss you."

David and Rachel left the children's village together early in the next morning. The roads were thronged with Arabs and Beduin, town-dwellers and peasants, wearing long loose cloaks and fluttering headcloths. Over a bridge ornamented with Egyptian lions they journeyed to the ancient town of Ludd, and thence to Tel-Aviv (the "Hill of Spring"), the only Jewish city in the world.

"Let us go to Jerusalem, the Holy City," suggested Rachel, "so that we may visit the Tower of David and the Tombs of the Kings, the Pools of Solomon and the Wailing Wall. Let us once more behold the Holy City of

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her heights, with her blue shadows and rosy light, her pinnacles and towers, her institutes of science and her houses of learning. There, in the midst of our historic monuments, you will understand my plan and approve to my resolve. Let us go, also to Bethlehem, the birthplace of your namesake, King David, and pay our respects to the Tomb of Mother Rachel. There I shall pray and there strength will be given me to carry out my resolve."

"It shall be as you say," agreed David. "Before beginning my new life at Hanita, I too wish to meditate on the history of our people at the shrines of the Holy City and the memorials of our past harbored within her walls."

They made their way to the station from which omnibuses every quarter of an hour carried new groups of passengers up to the hills of Jerusalem. Here was a lively scene, with working boys and girls on an excursion, parents and small children, young laborers and aged rabbis, merchants and invalids, tourists and tradesmen filing into the conveyance. Through the working-class quarter with its open workshops, provision stalls, and picturesque fruit market, the bus wended its way, skirting the Arab city of Jaffa with its lovely minarets and great domed mosques. Between the two sister-cities no dividing line could be discerned. Beyond in the open country, the travellers passed Arab and Jewish orange groves behind prickly cactus hedges through which could be seen golden fruit hanging against a background of dark foliage. Further on lay military encampments to which heavy-armored cars turned in. It was not long before the bus passed through the busy Arab town of Ramleh with its beautiful park and extensive graveyard. Now the road cut through a wide plain where the ploughs turned up the earth in deep furrows. All along the road pedestrians were seen: Arabs in picturesque costumes striding along with free and dignified steps, peasant women bearing great trays of fruit on their heads; shepherds driving flocks of sheep and goats before them. Beside the gateway of the agricultural school pupils in blue working smocks were bidding farewell to some of their comrades. Beyond the Trappist monastery where silent monks tilled their wide fields, rose hills planted with many thousands of trees by an international organization of tree lovers. From a point still higher in the hill country, wide perspectives opened over the blue sea and the white cities of Tel Aviv and Jaffa. The ascent grew steeper as the bus strained up the hill past the workingman's convalescent home set in a green grove, from which could be seen the Arab village of Ein Karem peeping out from among slender pines. The next turn in the road brought into view the plateau whereon was built the Holy City with her towers and spires, hills

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and slopes. Though the ascent seemed too steep for the heavy vehicle, the climb was achieved within a few minutes.

Jaffa Road in Jerusalem was alive with a colorful throng in which mingled Arabs in a variety of costumes, Jews in long robes and wide fur hats or the long silken mantles of Bokhare. Young Jewish laborers in blue shirts predominated in the scene. From the centre of the city Rachel and David walked slowly up a broad avenue to the offices of the national Jewish institutions, where a semi-circular garden plot formed the approach to the residential quarter of Rehavia. Jews from all parts of Palestine came in and out of the great stone edifice on their various errands.

In a few moments the young couple was receiving a hearty welcome from their friend Joram, a teacher in the Mount Scopus University, and his wife Yehudith, who was preparing an early supper, as this was the eve of the Day of Atonement. Joram silently pondered what the young couple told him about their plans, – the one to join the pioneers of Hanita, the other to aid the refugee brethren abroad. After a long silence he turned to them saying: "The paths you have marked out for yourselves, my young friends, are very difficult; but such is the call of our destiny. Our soil must be reclaimed foot by foot; and our brethren in the Exile must be brought to the haven of the Homeland and help us in its upbuilding. In these momentous days it is less than ever permitted us to follow our personal desires; for we must be prepared to go wherever the needs of our people call us. May you succeed and prosper in all your ways! Rest assured that you will always be cherished in the thoughts of your friends!"

After supper Rachel and David sat with Joram, Yehudith, their gay young daughter Esther, and Jonathan, a leader of the working youth. By the light of the tall candles lit in memory of departed kindred, Joram related in Yiddish the sad tale of Menashe Haim of the community of Buczacz who lost all his worldly goods, and in his dire poverty forsook the ways of the Lord and fell into grievous sin. Yet, though he was outcast and accursed, Menashe Haim refrained from plunging the lives of others into gloom. Jonathan's eyes were fixed on far, invisible distances as he told how the man Menashe Haim allowed the world to think him dead rather than sully the good name of his wife Kreindel and her child. And Menashe Haim stoned for his great sin by great suffering. Deeply moved by Jonathan's narrative, his listeners pondered the eternal problems of sin and repentance, as was fitting on the eve of the Day of atonement, the great White Fast. The life and death of Menashe Haim passed swiftly before their vision, sweeping them on toward the mysteries of the Beyond.

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The next morning Rachel and David walked down to the Old City of Jerusalem, entering by the Jaffa Gate. Below them lay the Valley of Hinnom with the little Arab houses; before them rose the high city wall and the massive Tower of David. The Old City lay brooding in the hot sunshine while hundreds of Arabs bartered and smoked in the marketplace.

Arab beggars lay on the ground whining for alms. Among the passersby were brisk Arab merchants in red turbans, Beduin in white robes, rich peasants whose kuffiyes were bound around their heads with heavy golden cords, peasant women carrying great baskets and trays on their heads as they moved along with a stately swaying gait.

Inside the Jaffa Gate the young couple paused to observe the thick stone walls, massive bridge, and spacious courtyard of the Citadel, and then walked on through the marketplace, where Arabs in bright cloaks led their heavily laden asses with loud shouts through narrow lanes pervaded with the odor of fresh spices. In the immaculately clean shops, meat and bread, fruit and spices, clothing and shoes, rugs and jewelry were heaped up in lavish profusion to attract the passing multitude.

The Jewish quarter, where numerous synagogues were built below as well as above ground, and shops with merchandise jostled cramped dwellings, seemed smaller and poorer than its Arab counterpart. Men and women were entering houses of worship with slow and solemn dignity. Here Rachel and David glimpsed a world that was wholly of the past. In Oriental Jerusalem men still wore costumes reminiscent of the European country where their ancestors had lived for centuries; their wide-brimmed fur hats and flowing silken robes called to mind the knights of medieval Germany. Well in keeping with the garb of the age of the Minnesinger were the stone arches under which on weekdays merchandise was displayed in bright profusion. Those arches dated back to the days when the Crusaders had come from northern lands on an uncomprehended adventure to destroy precious ancient shrines, to hew down with western implements of war eternal values created by the East.

At the entrance to the Jewish quarter they were met by Dalliah, a social welfare worker from the Jewish Community Organization of Jerusalem. Rachel and David had known her for many years, ever since she had come to their northern city to study the methods of modern social service when they were children in the Gray House. How well they still remembered her stories about the Holy Land and the children's village where she then lived!

"Let us accompany you on your rounds," suggested Rachel. Dalliah nodded and led them past synagogues where for many hours worshipers

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in white graveclothes and praying shawls had been pleading for Divine forgiveness and making vows of repentance. Dalliah had gone down to the old city even on this day to help and comfort those who were too ill to attend prayers and lay suffering in their gloomy stone hovels. She led her companions through damp narrow courtyards to a single-roomed hovel that lay far below the ground. On the floor Yonah, a madwoman who had been bound to her bed for seven years because there was no room for her in the asylum, tossed in pain. The hole in the rock that was her home also housed her old mother, her husband, several small children, and her oldest boy, Saul, who had been able to find work as a porter in a hotel thanks to his knowledge of languages.

Not a ray of light penetrated into the cell-like room. The sick woman moaned with thirst, there being but little water in the city of stone. Muttering under her breath, she shook her fists in the direction of the door. Dalliah made up her bed afresh and gave her some water out of a wicker bottle she carried with her. Her companions looked about them in bewilderment. Was it possible that Jews were housed so in the Land of Israel, in the Land where a new life was being fashioned for the Jewish people? Without a word they followed Dalliah out of the hovel, and up some stone steps into another tiny room resembling a hole in the wall.

There a woman lay writhing in pain on a narrow cot. She was suffering from an ailment common in the Old City, where the rain leaked through the roofs. The dampness of the walls often gave rise to incurable maladies. Three times Dalliah had the patient sent to the hot springs of Galilee, but she had always sickened again on returning to the dripping walls of the so-called home. The poor woman complained to Dalliah that her young daughter Simah, rebelling against confinement with a sick mother in the dreary stone hovel, had gone her own way, ignoring all the teachings of her dead father.

Entering another courtyard, the party came upon a knot of shrieking women who ran to and fro pointing to an opening in the pavement where deep water could be seen. Two-year-old Heindele, daughter of Taeubchen, had fallen into the well. Children playing in the courtyard had run to fetch the women, who came but did nothing except wail helplessly. Dalliah sent David to the little hospital nearby where there was a first aid station, while she herself fetched a ladder and let it down into the well. After many fruitless efforts, she finally succeeded in clutching at the frock of the unconscious child. Painfully she made her way up the ladder with her heavy, dripping burden, and laid the child in the arms of Nurse Ahuva who

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had arrived in the meantime with a physician. The women led the weeping mother back to the synagogue.

David was amazed that people could be so careless as to leave a well uncovered. "Ah," sighed Dalliah, "if you only knew how often I have complained to the police and the health-department. They demand that the people of the Old City defray the costs involved; but this they cannot afford to do, and the danger increases from day to day. It is a miracle that no child has fallen in before this. I shall report the incident at once. Perhaps something will be done after this."

Their next visit was to a tiny dark room, where an old man of seventy lay on the floor. On a stool beside him sat a young girl of thirteen whom he had married a few weeks previously. Dalliah explained that she had appealed to the women's right league to prevent the monstrous marriage, but all their efforts had been in vain, and she could do no more than come to see the child occasionally. The girl was reading the prayers to the blind man, who mumbled the words after her. Her young eyes had a vacant look, her face was troubled and prematurely old; but her white frock revealed the youth and grace of her slender little figure. Dalliah put her arm around the child and stroked the hair. The girl leaned against her for a moment, but the old man was showing signs of impatience, and she went back to her task.

When they had left the room Rachel turned to Dalliah, asking: "How can a people which is beginning a new national life permit its young girls to be bound to dying old men? Why does it not care for and educate them as its most precious national asset?"

"Now perhaps you will be able to understand," replied Dalliah sadly, "why I feel that I cannot accompany you to Hanita. I am attached to this place with every fibre of my being. Here I listen to the heartbeats of our people, who are given stones for bread. When we import plants from the South of France, we tend them carefully. When our friends send us pedigreed cows from Holland, we nurture and cherish them. But our children are allowed to run wild in the streets instead of being turned loose in the fields and meadows to grow up strong and healthy in body and mind. When I take a few youngsters from the Old City to a children's farm every summer, I realize afresh how utterly wrong it is to keep them shut up in these stone caves.

I cannot forgive these who remain lukewarm and indifferent in the face of the sufferings and degradation of their people. Day after day I voice my protests against the indifference that is destroying one of our best hopes through neglect of these children. Blessings on those who go out on the

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land to build and to plant! But as for me, I must remain here with the afflicted of our people. Day after day I must fight the ignorance and cowardice of our own brethren. When I came to you in the northern city I had but a single aim: to learn modern methods of social service so that I might join my friend Gad in a children's village. But now I know that my fate binds me to Jerusalem, which cherishes in ancient shrines, but lets the God-given young souls be blighted. I still have a long way to go, and my strength is beginning to fail me. Yet I continue to battle for our most precious asset, the children of our people. For them I have given up the desire of my heart, renounced my peace of mind. Day after day I must cry out against the guilt of our brethren. Here I shall stay, and here I shall work until the last child has been taken out of the stone caves, until the last boy has been taught a trade, until the last mother has been helped in her hour of sore need!"

In silence the three ascended the narrow lane of the Old City to the parapet of the western wall, and from there looked down into the broad, dry Kidron Valley, whose flints point the way to the Dead Sea. From where they stood they could see clearly the gradual rise of the Mount of Olives with its innumerable ancient graves.

"There," pointed David, "you see the towering monument of Absalom, son of King David, hewn out of the rock for eternity; the resting-place of Jehosaphat of the era of the Second Temple; and the caves of the priestly clan of Chesir with the monument to the prophet Zechariah. All these are constant reminders of the days when ancient custom gave way to new ideas, with their struggles and revolts and persecutions and successes in the eternal round of death and resurrection. To our generation it has been granted to bring about a change such as has never before been known in the history of mankind: the return of a people from all parts of the world to its ancestral land, there to forge unity out of multiformity. Among these arid hills on the outskirts of our Holy City, with their strong light and vivid shadows, we apprehend our goal as never before. In the midst of this eternal city of graves on the silent rocks, we realize that this Land was given us so that we might shape a single people out of a multiplicity of tribes, and so that this unity might be achieved in obedience to the command of our mighty desert leader: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself!' In the fusion of the individual with the community, in the denial of self that leads to the fulfillment of self, lies the secret path that ascends to national unity, just as those shadows yonder lose themselves in the hills, only to arise from the hills once more. It is thus, my Rachel, that I understand your resolve to go to our distant brethren, to bear their sorrows as your own, to become one

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with them in their sufferings and to share with them the tragic destiny of our people. May the blessings of our Homeland, from the heights of our Holy City, follow you in all your undertakings!"

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The Ordeal

Night had fallen when Rachel boarded the ship at Haifa. David accompanied her as far as the iron gate, and there they clasped hands in silent farewell. Once on board Rachel went directly to the cabin the shared with the Jewish women who were travelling to the Balkans to bring back some of their endangered relatives and with a Christian nurse who was going abroad for post-graduate study. As soon as she had finished unpacking Rachel went up on deck, where she found a quiet nook so that she could be alone with her thoughts. Her gaze was fixed upon the lights of Haifa, the gleaming electric power station beside the bay, the cars speeding down the mountainside like so many glow worms, the great technical institute, the welter of cube-shaped white houses on Hadar Hakarmel. Every window on the mountain top blazed with lights. To one side of the summit lay the ridge where David lived and worked with the children from the Gray House. On the shores of the Bay twinkled the thousand lights of the workers' quarter in the industrial zone facing the little fortress town of Acco.

"How dearly I love our Homeland!" mused Rachel in the pain of parting. "In three short months I have become attached to it with every fibre of my being; never shall I forget this blue bay with its surging breakers. When I am far away on alien soil the Homeland will be drawing me back like a magnet, this Homeland which is being built up with so much sacrifice. I shall return with brothers and sisters who have been freed from the slavery of the Exile and will help to restore the Homeland by the sweat of their brow. To witness the sufferings of the refugees will be a severe ordeal for me, and the journey on the crowded ship will tax on my energies to the utmost. There I shall find poverty and disease, discontent and disorder and uncertainty. When we approach the coast the children will hold out their little hands to the Homeland, but they will not be permitted to disembark. Only secretly and in the dark of night will the refugees set foot on the soil of their fathers; in fear and anxiety they will strain their eyes for a safe landing point near the villages of their own people."

When siren blew, anchor was raised, and the ship sailed out into the dark night whose gloom was pierced only here and there by a rare star. In the steerage the passengers assembled for their supper. There were but few of them because expenditure for foreign travel was looked upon with disfavour in the Homeland, and, above all, because they were needed at home to plough the fields and to bear the weapons of defense. The ship slowly furrowed her way through the dark waves. After a brief stop at Cyprus, a

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lovely island of woods and waterfalls, she wound in and out among the isles of Greece, and skirted herthward along the coast of Asia Minor, where a progressive new Turkey had arisen out of age-long torpor. On she pushed through the Dardanelles, that well-guarded passage between East and West, through the Sea of Marmora, past the gleaming lights of Stambul, and so through the narrow straits of Bosphorus in the Black Sea. The sun rose and set, the moon and stars illumined the night skies.

Among Rachel's fellow-passengers were nuns and monks, Greeks and Turks and Arabs, and a few Jews who had urgent business in Europe. But she noticed little of what went on around her, for her thoughts dwelt continually on the purpose of her journey. She considered how she would meet the unhappy victims of a brutal destiny, what she could do to help them. As one of themselves she would approach them, coming close to each and all, seeking to understand them, planning their lives in the Land, doing what she could to alleviate their sorrows and sufferings. If only she could give wings to the ship, that it might carry her the more quickly to her destination!

At last Constanza, the port of Rumania on the black sea, was seen above the horizon. Rachel hurried from the ship carrying the single bag into which she had packed the bare necessities for the long journey. In the port there was much traffic, for Constanza had become the point of embarkation for the multitudes of refugees who fled from persecution in the hope of finding a haven somewhere, anywhere, on the face of the globe. Along the shores of the Black Sea lay moored the ships of many nations. Rachel's destination was a dilapidated cargo ship on the Danube, a strange craft whose like is unknown in the history of mankind. In order to reach it she had to travel all the way across Hungary to the banks of the Danube; and thence to the no man's land where the boat had been shuttled back and forth for many months. At last she found herself on the little old river craft with its cargo of refugees to whom all countries denied admittance. Its two hundred and fifty souls were completely cut off from the world, and so crowded together that they could neither work nor relax, but lay on the deck in a confused heap like so many animals. There was little food on board; and when small boats occasionally brought supplies the poor refugees parted with their last pennies for a loaf of bread to keep the breath of life in themselves and their little ones. The lavatories were in disrepair, and foul-smelling refuse lay scattered about. Rats crept out of their holes and gnawed at the few scraps of food and the few garments that still remained to the refugees. The boat had crossed and recrossed the river

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in innumerable attempts to land its unhappy passengers; but every attempt had been frustrated inexorably.

The homeless ones looked out despairingly upon a world that would make no room to them. They were like prisoners who lack the poor amenities of a prison, and even the very hope of release. A few had succeeded in securing passage on a ship that was ready to risk a journey from the south of Greece without a fixed destination. Since they had ship tickets, they would be permitted to go on shore and to make their way to the port where they would be joined by fellow-Jews fleeing from persecution in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Carpatho-Russia.

When Rachel came on board the people eyed her with a mute question: Had she brought a crumb of hope, or must they abandon hope altogether? When the first group, for whom she had brought immigration certificates, withdrew to prepare for their journey, those who were left behind looked even more depressed than before. Despair and pleas for help spoke from their every gesture.

The crew helped the departing passengers over the side of the boat into a small craft in change of German guards. The men, seven women, and eight children took their places in the little boat, and it rowed away in the darkness. On the river bank several cars waited to take them to the nearest railway station for their journey to the port of embarkation.

The refugees travelled along in the same route as that by which Rachel had come, and then through an arid and rocky region in Greece to the port where a courier waited to take them on board. The bark of their hopes was a battered old hulk with room for only about 200 passengers, but many hundreds were rushing about asking to be shown to their sleeping quarters, tables and washing facilities. The passengers from the Danube cargo boat where the last to come on board. Their escort assigned each a place in the groups which stood rigidly marshalled on deck, and then showed them their quarters. For the women and children beds had been made up on the floor of the small salon, with a "berth" for every three women with their children. The men and the young girls had to make shift on deck as best they could. The deck was so crowded that walking there was possible only in single file along the ship's rail. Five hundred Jewish souls were huddled together in a tiny space because they had been brutally expelled from the countries of their domicile. Many had been forced to leave their homes at a few days' notice. Among them were some who came from countries where a policy of expulsion had not yet been officially adopted; but their

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government had so severely restricted their liberties that they had had no choice but to flee.

The ancient craft had been leased by an entrepreneur who arranged for the transportation of the refugees to the Greek port at an exorbitant charge that left them almost penniless. Though they would be destitute when they reached the Land of Israel, they hoped that friendly folk there would help them make a fresh start in life. Among the refugees were very young and very old people, sick and invalids, judges and criminals, tramps and houseowners, artists and scientists, great merchants and small shopkeepers. The accents of twelve languages mingled on the ship, for the children of a common stock could barely communicate with one another. They brooded with horror over the sufferings they had undergone and were filled with anxiety for the fate of those they had left behind.

One of the passengers was a boy named Carl, who had escaped from the prison camp in no man's land where his mother had died and his father had fallen dangerous ill. There were also three young couples from Bruenn who had been unable to take their children with them for lack of room on the ship. They thought continually of their little ones, despairing that they would ever see them again. An old man of sixty who knew nineteen languages sat haggard and forlorn on a packing case with no mind for anything but the books he had saved at the risk of his life. Day and night he sat motionless on his packing case staring vacantly at the waves that bore him to an unknown destination. In a corner of the deck crouched a famous lawyer whose brilliant speeches had won freedom for thousands of accused; now he himself was cooped up and fleeing on.

Rachel did her best to befriend and encourage them all, telling them about conditions in the Homeland and what prospects it might hold out for them. At first glance she saw that Maria, a darkhaired girl of seventeen, was an expectant mother. She put her arm around the girl and drew her down beside her on a blanket spread on the deck. "Tell me," said Rachel, "why you are travelling alone without your husband or parents when you are so near your time? I can see that you are unaccustomed to hardships and deprivation. Do you care to tell me why you are here, and where you intend to go?"

"My parents," replied the girl in a low, soft voice, "are Hungarian Jews living in a village near the frontier. They own large mills from which they have always derived a comfortable livelihood. I myself knew nothing of Jewish laws or customs. We lived just like our neighbors, celebrating their festivals and attending their churches. We loved the simple villagers who

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poured out their hearts in joy or grief in folk ballads or impressioned playing on their violins. We shared all their happiness and all their sorrows.

All my life I have loved Michael, the son of a wealthy peasant for whom our mills worked. We went to school together and played together on the village green. Together we assisted at the birth of calves and together we worked in the harvest fields. When we grew up we became sweethearts. Then came political changes and our village was annexed to the Slovak territory when it came under the rule of the Third Reich. Soon the laws of racial discrimination were introduced into our village as well. Foreign spies watched our every movement, so that Michael and I were no longer free to love one another. The thought was unbearable, but I dared no risk danger to my beloved. So I decided to join the refugees who were going to the land of our ancestors, of which I knew and still know nothing whatever. Michael and I met secretly for the last time, knowing that our paths had diverged and that we should never meet again. I had meant to be strong, but I could not resist his pleas for a final union. So I yielded. At dawn I took up my bag and walked to the nearest town, and from there I started out for the Land of Israel. Just before I left my mother braided a foreign banknote into my long and heavy hair. With this money I paid my way to the Russian port where the refugees were to meet. The journey took many months, and in the meantime I learned that I should not enter to the Land of Israel alone, for I bore with me the fruit of my union with Michael. Our child will be born in about two months. I have been told that we shall reach our destination after one month. But I find the sea journey very trying, and I suffer terribly for lack of proper food and elementary comforts in this crowded ship."

"I shall help you," Rachel assured her. "You shall come with me. I too am soon to become a mother. My husband and I are settling on the land. Our life will be hard and we shall have no superfluities; but we shall have a roof over our heads, and land and farm implements will be given us by the Jewish funds. You will join our new settlement. We shall be there together when our hour comes."

The girl's sad eyes sparkled with a gleam of hope as she laid her head wearily in Rachel's lap. A current of fresh life passed between the two young women who were bringing their children to be born in the Homeland. Rachel put Maria to bed in one of the "berths" in the salon, and went to seek out others whom she might comfort. The first person she met was Dan, a boy of fifteen who got a certification from the Youth Alijah who stared out over the sea with smouldering eyes. She addressed him in the

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language of his country, but he replied in fluent Hebrew. "Where do you come from?" she asked. "Where are your parents? Have you no brothers or sisters? I always see you alone."

"My parents are dead," explained the boy. "My mother died in the Czech city where I was born, and my father last year in Rumania. He left Czechoslovakia because my mother died there, and came to Bucharest to build new factories. I attended a secondary school and was to go to England to study manufacturing processes. But my father died suddenly of a heart attack on the anniversary of my mother's death, to which he had never reconciled himself. Then a relative took me into her home, but I left school because I could no longer pay the tuition fees. My kinswoman then placed me in a workshop as an apprentice. But I wanted to study and make a career for myself as Father and I had planned. Then I heard that it was possible to obtain an immigration certificate from the Youth Alijah. I knew nothing about the new life there, or that one could study and work there as in Rumania. But I joined the group, and a wealthy coreligionist paid my passage. I know that life will be hard over there, but I am very much attracted by what I have heard. They say that there are Jewish merchant ships in the Land. I should like to be a sailor and see the world. There is one advantage when you're a seaman; no one asks to see your passport! I shall be one of the millions who carry goods from their own countries to foreign ports, but always return to their homes."

Conditions grew worse on the ship from day to day. There was no water for washing, and even the ration for drinking and cooking was very scant. As the ship's stores diminished, the rice ration grew smaller and smaller. Soon sickness spread throughout the ship. The children were the first victims. An epidemic of measles set in, but there were no medicines and little nourishing food on board. The physician attended the little ones but could not do much for them. And so they whimpered continually, fraying the already ragged nerves of the mothers. One night the first death occurred. The corpse was shoved overboard from the bow to the chanting of the ancient Jewish profession of faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One!"

When the slight craft was tossed to and fro in a storm and many of the passengers became seasick, Rachel did everything she could to help. She gathered a group of young people around her, taught them how to care for the sick, and sent them to all who were suffering. Suddenly she herself was summoned down by the damp, close hold, where the physician was attending a woman in the pangs of childbirth. A Jewish child came into the

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world amid pain and sorrow on a tiny storm-tossed vessel crowded with homeless refugees. The little one was born into a community which in all the centuries of its wanderings had never known such a desperate plight. Rachel took charge of the infant, whose parents had named it "Tikvah" ("Hope"). When she laid the little girl beside her mother's breast and she began to feed greedily, the unhappy woman's face beamed with joy, – just as if she had born her child in a well-ordered home in a time of peace and plenty for her people.

When the vessel finally neared the shores of the Homeland, the sea was so stormy that the captain looked about for a place where he could safely land his passengers. Suddenly, however, he espied a Jewish village and came as close inshore as he dared. That night was very dark and there were no lights to be seen anywhere. Rachel joined several men in supervising the descent from the ship and the swim to shore, which were very difficult because the passengers were encumbered with luggage. Several young men swam out first to explore. Parents clasped their children in their arms. Frail old people managed with great difficulty to wade to shore. Some of the refugees took their shelter in the tents and barns of the village. Others went on further, but were caught by the patrols and arrested. These managed somehow to escape and soon all the dispersed groups found themselves in a small Jewish village in the Plain of Sharon.

The settlers welcomed them heartily and led them in silence in their homes. Messengers were immediately sent to fetch buses from the nearest settlement so that the refugees might be brought to safety. Yocheved, the social worker in the village to which the messengers had been sent, quickly organized the women so as to provide beds, baths, linens, and food for the refugees. Each householder took the number assigned to him. Many of the newcomers were too exhausted to speak. Others wept, clinging mutely to the hands of their hosts. When they finally sat down to the tables, they were too exhausted to eat. The children fell asleep at once for sheer weariness. Their elders could hardly believe that they had reached their journey's end and were being sheltered and cared for by their own people.

Rachel was among the last to leave the ship. It took all her energy, in her condition, to swim through the breakers and drag Maria along beside her. When she was taken into the home of Asher, a citrus planter, she was so spent that she asked to have a messenger sent at once to David in Hanita to say that he was to come to fetch her and her companion. For she was resolved to bear her child nowhere but on the soil where his home was to be built by the labor of his people.

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Despite her utter fatigue Rachel had kept Yocheved beside her bed for hours so that they might decide how best to help the refugees adjust themselves in the Homeland. The young woman who had born her child in the ship's hold she asked to have sent to sister Shoshana's home in Jerusalem, where the delicate infant would have the proper care and the mother's strength would be built up again. The boy Dan she suggested to be sent to the trade school in the Emek so that he might be trained for work in a settlement. The old professor who carried his books with him was to be taken to the home of his friend, a professor of philology in the university on Mount Scopus. The boy Carl from the prison camp in no man's land was to be placed with a Jewish family in Tel-Aviv, where he could go on with his studies and learn a trade. The three young couples from Bruenn were to be helped to bring their children to the Land of Israel. And for all the other refugees Rachel made plans with Yocheved as to how they were to be enabled to make a new start in life.

Yocheved carefully noted all the details given her by Rachel, and the very same day communicated with the social service workers in other communities concerning the care of the refugee children.
At the same time she reported their arrival to the authorities.

When the plans had been discussed for each and all of the refugees, Rachel sank back exhausted on her pillow to wait for David, who had gone up to the settlement on the northern frontier only a few days previously. Now she could wait calmly for him to come and take her and her companion to their home in the Mountains of Upper Galilee.

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Settlement

In the days when the refugees were sorely distressed – when their old homes in the Diaspora had been destroyed and their new homes in the Land of Israel were endangered – a long procession might have been wending its way along a solitary path in the barren mountains of the north, on the frontiers of Lebanon. From the watch of Zebulon, a collective settlement beside Haifa Bay, heavily laden cars and lorries, mules and horses had set out for Hanita, where a new settlement was about to be founded. In the procession marched a hundred men and women pioneers, accompanied by friends from the Emek who had volunteered their help, for the settlement had to be completed within a few days, and there would be need, besides, of extra guards in that wild and desolate region while the work was in progress. A hundred masons from the city, carrying their tools, also marched in the procession, which was escorted by a squad of sixty auxiliary police. Last of all came representatives from the national institutions in Jerusalem to take part in the celebration at the end of the first day's work. Soon the little path disappeared, and the procession moved on through undergrowth and thickets. With every step the perspectives widened: the lonely mountain region was no longer isolated but a part of the Homeland landscape, taking in the busy town of Haifa, the ancient port of Acco, the new seashore village of Naharia, and the wooded slopes of the Lebanon.

For twenty-five centuries no Jewish foot had trodden on this soil. No Jewish peasant had sown and no Jewish woman had planted there. No Jewish child had there first seen the light of day; no aged Jew had been laid to rest there. And now a miracle had come to pass on the redeemed land. On this day and in these rocky solitudes a new village was to be founded for the Jewish people, a new settlement would be marked on the map of the Land of Israel. Within the brief span of a single day, from sunrise to sunset, the village of Hanita would rise complete with landmarks and fences, a watch-tower and block-houses, barns and stables, dining hall and nursery, electricity and tents, tractors and infirmary. So much could be accomplished in a day because the new settlers and their friends had toiled for many weeks to prepare the planks and the stones, the fences and the wire, the tent cloths and the ploughs. The plans had been worked out to the last detail, with the site fixed and all tasks assigned. Every one of those hundreds of workers knew precisely what he or she had to do.

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Mounted on a black horse David seemed to be everywhere at once for the responsibility for that day's work rested on his shoulders. Down at the end of the line his brother Reuben, keeping a sharp lookout for the enemy, led the guards entrusted with the defense of the settlement.

In the meantime Ruth, with several young girls to assist her, marched beside the little Red Shield of David ambulance. She bandaged wounds, distributed medical supplies, supported the older women. In a blue linen frock and a blue kerchief bound over her golden plaits she made a charming picture as she moved with a free and vigorous stride to meet Reuben, her husband, at the lower end of the column. As she approached her husband Ruth cried out joyously: "On this day, Reuben, the dream of our childhood has come true. This day we go up side by side to settle on the soil of our Homeland. This stony and desolate region, which has waited for redemption for twenty-five centuries, is a symbol of our future life in Hanita. The stony soil is ours no less than the fertile; it too is part and parcel of the Homeland, which we shall restore by sowing and reaping. The beat of our footsteps on this ground, which has lain for many a generation under a spell, awakens the sleeping stone and the surface of the land begins to throb with life. The birds in the woods, the beetles and the bees, the shrubs and the flowers, the thistles and the cacti, the eagle in his eyrie and the lizard under the stones turn to us, asking: "What does it all signify? Has Israel indeed returned to his home? Has Israel come back at last to the mountains of Galilee? And the ringing tread of our caravan gives answer: 'Truly, truly, Israel hath returned again to its native soil.' Our dreams of helping to regain the Homeland is a reality this day; but a hard struggle lies ahead of us. Everywhere among these rocks and bushes lurk enemies who are resolved to deter us from our undertaking. We shall have to struggle unremittingly with the bandits who lie in wait. From our watch-tower we shall have to be on the lookout night and day so that no harm may come to our children and our homesteads." The procession came to a sudden halt. The leaders had already reached the site of Hanita. Workers began to pitch tents that would serve as the settlers' first habitations. Others set up the fences that were to mark the boundaries of the new settlement. Still others dug a path on the mountainside so as to ease the ascent for the rest of the procession. In the meantime pipes were laid to a nearby spring from which a supply of pure water would be brought to Hanita. In a trice a new Jewish settlement had come into being.

Meanwhile Asher, the planter of Rehoboth, was speeding on his motorcycle along the winding curves of the rocky path. Alighting near the barbed

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wire fence he asked for David, and was directed to the spot where the watch-tower was being set into place. "Peace be unto you, my brother David," cried Asher as he espied him. "You must have heard reports about a refugee ship that has landed its passengers on our shores. Two days and two nights have passed since the refugees struggled through the breakers to the beach. Somehow they found their way to a Jewish village in the vicinity, and from there they were taken to Rehoboth. Your wife came back with those refugees.

She is now at my home, where she has been put to bed, as she is very near her time. She asks you to come immediately to fetch her, so that your child may be born here on the very day of the establishment of Hanita. We have begged her to allow us to take her to a hospital, but she would not hear of it. And so I have come to take you back with me on my motorcycle. A Red Shield of David ambulance is waiting in Rehoboth, and our midwife, Elisheva, will accompany Rachel and a refugee companion of hers who is also about to give birth to her first child."

David handed over the direction of the work to his friend Meir, and asked Ruth to tell Carmela, the physician of Hanita, that the two young women were being brought to the settlement. He seated himself on Asher's motorcycle, and the two young men started down the path at a tearing pace. They sped on through the streets of Haifa, along the broad highway that runs through the flourishing villages of Samaria, through the Arab town of Ludd, and so into Rehoboth. The hot rays of the sun beat down upon the plain. Just on the stroke of noon Asher stopped his motorcycle in front of his home. Yocheved, who had waited anxiously for David for many hours, led him to Rachel's bedside. She held out her hand to him with a mute, questioning glance. Within a few minutes Rachel and Maria had been comfortably bedded in the ambulance. Elisheva seated herself beside them, and David sat in front with the driver. The slow journey up to the heights of Hanita began. Carmela, Ruth, and the other women of Hanita were waiting for the ambulance when it drew up at the settlement, and helped its occupants into the block-house where beds had been made ready for them. Both Rachel and Maria were in travail by this time, and it was seen that difficult hours lay ahead for Rachel. Carmela and Ruth placed themselves at her bedside, while Elisheva gave her attention to Maria. David stood at the foot of his wife's bed. Slowly twilight descended upon Hanita. Just as the first stars came out, Maria gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Yashuva (the home-returning one)! The midwife took charges of the

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infant, and the young refugee mother sank back to rest on her pillow under the starry skies of her new Homeland.

Rachel's pangs were still prolonged. Her leap from the ship into the cold waves and the struggle with the breakers had greatly weakened her. With her last strength she clung now to the beloved sister who stood by to help and encourage her.

Sudden shots broke the stillness of the night. The new settlement was attacked at the very moment when its first children came into the world. Ruth's thoughts dwelt anxiously on Reuben, who was in charge of the defense. The shooting died down gradually and cries were heard in the distance. In that moment Ruth knew in her heart that the hardly won Homeland had taken a new sacrifice in the person of Reuben, the father of her unborn child. Summoning all her powers of self-control she calmly continued to help the physician until, at last, Carmela held up a male infant who was to be named Yiffrach.

As Ruth gazed down into her sister's happy eyes with unspoken congratulations, Rachel's lids suddenly drooped and she lapsed into unconsciousness. Ruth quickly took the infant from Carmela, so that the physician might devote herself wholly to Rachel. As she made preparations for the little one's first bath, Ruth suddenly noticed Davids upraised hands, held out toward her dying sister. And Ruth knew then that the two she loved best in all the world had given their lives for the Homeland, that David, her childhood friend, had lost his beloved wife and devoted brother in the first hour of their consummated hopes.

A brooding silence filled the little barrack room. The two young people who had given up these they loved best in a critical hour for the Homeland were overwhelmed by their loss. With a heart that ached to breaking, Ruth laid her sister's child in a basket beside the infant of the sleeping Maria.

The tense silence was at length broken by heavy footsteps as comrades came carrying a bier with the corpse of Reuben and set it down before the hut. Ruth hurried out for a last look at the face of her beloved. David stood beside her, bidding a long farewell to the dear companion of his childhood days.

Long the two stood there motionless, for their grief was too great to be realized as yet, too overpowering for words. In their boundless sorrow they still realized that they must take heart again and rear the children of their loved ones for a collective society such as all four of them had envisioned in the Diaspora, a society fashioned at the cost of unspeakable suffering but with unprecedented strength of resolve. They knew even then

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that their grief would be bearable only if they merged their lives wholly in the Homeland, holding nothing back, if they identified themselves with the cherished home of their dreams, now become a reality, so that from its midst might arise a free and noble future for their children. So they bid farewell to husband and brother.

As they turned to go back into the hut for a last look at the face of Rachel, the deathly stillness was broken by a sudden cry from the infant Yiffrach. Elisheva the midwife had laid him at the breast of his foster-mother Maria.

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Sand and Stars

The rays of the morning sun fell upon the slopes of Lebanon, gilding with their radiance the outcroppings of stone, the tangled boughs of the greenish-brown thickets, the dark trunks of the olive trees with their silvery crests. Softly the rays glided into the settlement of Hanita, with its tents and its block-houses, its dining hall and watch-tower, and thence through the openings of the barn, the hen houses, the toolshed, and the shelter for the wagons. Fingers of golden light caressed the vegetable garden with its red cabbages, long string beans, crimson tomatoes, intertwined potato plants, and fragrant garden of herbs. Then the sun sent its beams to summon the settlers to their daily tasks.

David rose from his cot in a block-house and went out into the cool air of the morning. The next moment a stream of cold water from the standpipe was playing vigorously over his bronzed limbs. In the room next to David's Ruth began her day by feeding her infant son Gideon at her breast. Then she walked across the grounds to the common nursery, where she prepared breakfast for the tots.

By this time David had left the dining hall and was on his way to an outlying field. A flock of sheep gambolled past him as they made for their grazing ground on the stony slopes, the ruminating cows descended with Yizhak the cowherd to their pasture, the hens cackled loudly in their wooden coops, the vegetables ripened in their beds behind the houses. David stopped for a moment to let his eye revel in the brilliantly colored flower beds beside the houses, and he walked past the workshops where he greeted Jonathan the blacksmith at his anvil and listened to the vigorous hammer-strokes of Hannoch and Nathan, the village carpenters. His way took him through young vineyards, fields of waving corn, closely serried rows of fruit trees with snow-white blossoms, and so up to the border of the field where the summer wheat was to be sown.

As David stood facing the ploughed-up field with a sack of seed girded around his loins, a thrill of joy coursed through his whole body at the thought that he had been privileged to sow the fields of the Homeland, with his own hands to restore their fertility. Into the furrows he would cast seed mingled with sand from his mother's grave in the distant north. With a slow and rhythmical stride he moved up and down the brown field, strewing his seed gently now to the right and now to the left. Every step he took proclaimed his conscious kinship with the soil wherein he buried his seed so that it might sprout with new life.

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Striding thus up and down his field, David thought of the great northern capital he had left just four years previously. Scene after scene of his experiences flashed before his mind's eye as he worked. There had been the journey across the Mediterranean with his beloved Rachel and the children from the Gray House; the landing at the port of Haifa; the greetings of the kindly woman who had been the first to welcome them all to the Homeland. Then had followed the happy year when he taught the children from the Gray House in their temporary home in Neve Shaanan on the Carmel and then in their own new village beside the Haifa Bay.

His memories bore him swiftly back to the wife he had loved and lost, and to their marriage ceremony in the little graveyard chapel on the eve of their departure for the Homeland. He thought of her hazardous journey back to the Exile so that she might help to ease the sufferings of the refugees. And in the end she had been taken from him in the first joyous hour of her motherhood. He saw himself again standing beside the two open graves that had been dug for the wife and the brother who had laid down their lives for the Homeland on the very day of the founding of Hanita.

Tenderly David's thoughts turned to his little boy Yiffrach, who was being brought up by his mother's sister Ruth. Each day in the life of the child marked a new stage in the progress of the settlement. The thought was a reminder of Gabriel and Nahum, two young comrades who had fallen in Hanita's defense in its early days. How those lads had loved the Homeland, with what utter devotion they had served her!

Still meditating on the past, David recalled his first months in Hanita, when grief for his wife and his brother had overwhelmed him. From the comradeship of the settlers alone he had drawn the strength to carry on his work and to rear his child for his people.

One by one he reviewed the memorable days in the progress of the settlement during its first year. There was the day when the heavy packing cases with gifts of books had been received from friends in Jerusalem, and the books had been arranged in the library even before block-houses were built for living quarters. And what rejoicing there had been when a great spout of water had gushed up from the new well; but that day had been followed by a day of grief when Jacob and Eli were killed in an attack just as the road was completed. Memories of still other days came crowding thick and fast: the day when the first motor lorry opened up regular communication with the outside world; the day when the signpost bearing the legend "Hanita-Haifa" had been proudly set up on the road outside the settlement.

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Musing thus on the early days of Hanita, David recalled his first night on guard with his comrades; his first ascent of Mount Lebanon, of which he had dreamed ever since he had begun to read the Bible. Then had come the erection of the first block-houses in Upper Hanita and of the wall around the settlement, which had been made bit by bit by the comrades after their long day's work; the laying out of the vegetable garden, the installation of the first Diesel engine; the first time the electric light was switched on.

Of quite a different character had been the day when comrades had come up from Yagur, the settlement in the plain, to build the dining hall; the day when the road had been laid from Lower to Upper Hanita; the day when the first machine had cleared the stones from the fields; the day when the first shed had been built for the dynamo; the day when the comrades from the plain had gone back to their own work.

David's thoughts roamed back to the day when the first tender had been brought to plough up a field; the day when the three large watchdogs had been brought to Hanita. And what a day they had made of it when a party of comrades, three hundred strong, has come up from Haifa with the factory workers of Shemen and Nesher to build a barbed wire fence around the camp! On the New Year of Trees, the first day of spring in the Land, friends had come from Yagur to plant the first seven fruit trees in Hanita. Next in the stream of David's crowding recollections came the day when the searchlight had been placed on the watch-tower so that the approach of hostile bands might be detected from afar. Another memorable day had been that of which the first cultural committee of Hanita was elected, and the aged leader, Ussischkin, had sat down to a festival meal with the comrades. With overweening pride David thought of the day when parching winds had first blown over the settlement but had not been able to force the comrades to down tools despite the terrific heat to which they were unaccustomed. Pride gave way to sorrow as he remembered the four comrades who had been treacherously murdered while working on the road. An event not soon to be forgotten was sitting at table with Herzfeld, the agricultural leader, and Rubashow, the leader who had so much to teach in the things of the spirit. And what a happy day that had been when the first wireless set had come as a gift from Jerusalem. No sooner had the strains of the Ninth Symphony died away then the comrades joyously chanted.

Memories, grave and gay, ran their full gamut as David cast his seedcorn now to the right and now to the left, hour after hour. In his ears still rang the songs of Bialik, the nation's poet laureate, which had been sung at the

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first Oneg Shabat in Hanita as the beginning of the cultural committee's activities. How gaily the young people had danced on the village green by the light of the full moon! Joy welled up again in David's heart as he recalled the first furrow drawn by a tractor in the fields of Hanita.

Among his most vivid memories was the first Passover eve celebrated in Hanita. Never before had he been so profoundly moved by the recital of the story of his people's exodus from slavery to freedom. The new melody to which his comrades chanted the ancient hymns in the starlit night on the mountain top still rang in his ears. But the very next day there had been another attack, and four young comrades – Yehudah, Zeev, Arjeh, and Yair – had laid down their lives in defense of the settlement.

David forgot his grief as he thought of the happy day when the comrades had left the camp below for their permanent home in Upper Hanita. It was there they had first met some of their Arab neighbors, and the fact that both tilled the stony soil of the mountains had created ties of friendship between the neighbors. And it might have been yesterday, so clearly did he remember all that had happened, that Ruth gave birth to her child in the little infirmary of Hanita, and his dead brother's bright eyes had looked out at him from the face of his tiny Gideon.

As David stood gazing out over the wide plain that stretched up to the foot of the Gilboa range in Emek Jezreel, he remembered that once upon a time the fertile fields of Emek and Samaria, Sharon and Galilee had been as desolate and forsaken as the rocky soil of Hanita. But the early pioneers had braved hardship and danger for the privilege of restoring the arid soil to its ancient fertility with their own hands, so that they might test their own capacity for building up the Homeland. In that hour it was borne in upon David that for the Jewish people, as for all other peoples, the Divine promise had been at last fulfilled, the promise given to the new race of men that arose after the Deluge: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Surveying the wide field he had sown that day, David turned to go back to the settlement. Just then Ruth came out to meet him, her golden plaits covered with a blue kerchief. With her left hand she led little Yiffrach and on her right arm she held the infant Gideon, who looked out upon the world with the merry eyes of the father he had never known. To Ruth's skirts clung the toddler Yashuva, daughter of Maria, the Hungarian exile who had come home to Hanita.

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The sun stood low in the heavens, and the shadows of the mountains deepened with the decline of day. David crossed the field toward Ruth, who stood looking intently upon the sown field, the mountains, the tide on the beach far below. The setting sun had bathed the rocks in a flood of rosy light. "This field which I have sown today," said David to Ruth, "is a symbol of the destiny of our people in these times. The curse has been lifted from the wandering Jew after thousands of years of drifting about the world like the fugitive sand of seashore. Just as the courses of those stars rising above us are fixed within the arch of heaven by eternal laws, so our people has found the course of its destiny now that it has come back to restore its own Land.

We have sought and found," he went on gravely, "a way of life for our children, the way of labor on the soil of the Homeland. In our children we see a symbol of the happiness of our people in returning to its little home after wandering so long in the wide world. These stars in their courses have guided us to our new beginnings."

Ruth silently reached out her hand to David. Standing so they looked lovingly down on the little ones who were destined to bring to full fruition their own painful efforts to restore the People Israel to the Land of Israel.

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