

CHAVA SHAPIRO; A WOMAN BEFORE HER TIME

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An abstract:

This is a study of Chava Shapiro, a woman writer, born in 1876 in the Ukraine, who died in 1943 in Nazi Czechoslovakia. It describes her conventional Hasidic upbringing, her successful rebellion against it and her subsequent studies in Switzerland which led to a career in Hebrew journalism. It follows her return to Russia in 1914, her escape to Czechoslovakia after the pogroms of 1919 and 24 years later her tragic end in Terezin.

Dominating the study is the well-known Hebrew writer, Reuven Brainin, 1862-1939, with whom Chava Shapiro fell in love and who exerted an extraordinary influence on her life.

Using original, never before published materials from the Jewish Public Library Archives in Montreal, the study seeks to define the woman as a feminist and a Hebrew writer.

CHAVA SHAPIRO - UNE FEMME A L'AVANT-GARDE

Un résumé:

Le sujet de notre étude est Chava Shapiro, une femme écrivain, née en 1876 en Ukraine et décédée en 1943, en Tchécoslovaquie nazie. Nous décrivons son éducation traditionnelle hassidique et sa révolte contre ses contraintes, ainsi que ses études ultérieures en Suisse, qui l'ont conduite à une carrière en journalisme hébraïque. Nous suivons son retour en Russie en 1914, sa fuite en Tchécoslovaquie après les pogromes de 1919, et, 24 ans plus tard, sa fin tragique à Terezin.

Une figure dominante dans cette étude est l'auteur hébraïque bien connu Reuven Brainin (1862-1939) dont Chava Shapiro tomba amoureuse et qui exerça une influence de plus importantes sur toute sa vie.

L'étude utilise du matériel original, jamais publié auparavant, des archives de la bibliothèque publique juive de Montréal et a pour but une description de Chava Shapiro en tant que féministe et auteur hébraïque.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study is about the life and work of Chava Shapiro, a virtually unknown Hebrew writer who occupies an important symbolic position as a feminist and Hebrew writer in the transition period between the shtetl and the modern era.

Chava was born in December, 1876, in Slawuta, the Ukraine, and died in February, 1943 in Terezin, Czechoslovakia. In 1908, she published a book of fiction called A Collection of Sketches, under the pseudonym of Em Kol Chai, (Mother of All Beings). She also wrote numerous articles for Hebrew journals over a period of thirty years.

The study makes use of several hitherto unknown sources by and about Chava Shapiro, enabling us to reconstruct her unusual life through her own words. This remarkable woman was one of the pioneers of the Jewish feminist movement who used her life and pen as the weapons in the struggle for self emancipation. She was not only a woman in a male dominated world, she was also a free thinker in an age of religious conformity, a Jew living in a Christian world, an intellectual amongst the Philistines and a non-conformist living in a sea of conformity. In all cases she was always on the outside .

Chava was born into a strictly observant Hasidic family, in a small Ukrainian shtetl. Her brilliance was acknowledged and encouraged from an early age and she was taught privately both religious and secular subjects. After her

marriage she moved to Warsaw where she not only became a member of the famous Yiddish writer I.L. Peretz's literary salon but Peretz himself taught her how to write and David Frischman, another well known writer and editor, published her first literary efforts. In 1903, to further her education, Chava felt compelled to leave her husband and abandon her only son.

From an early age Chava showed an unquenchable thirst for the world beyond the Pale of Settlement. She found the constraints of her social and religious life stifling and eventually shattered every convention to free herself from her bonds. Her success despite the many difficulties, was due to her courage and strong will. But courage and will, although essential, were not enough. Chava needed a catalyst, someone who would help her take that important first step. That person was Reuven Brainin, the well known Hebrew writer and sophisticated man-about-the-world. Chava met him in 1899, when she was a twenty three year old married woman and mother of a child and he, 14 years her senior, a married man with four children. He epitomized for her, as he did for so many other young Jews at the time, the cultivated, educated, modern Jew. Chava not only fell in love with Brainin but also tried to emulate his way of life. She gradually appropriated his love of Hebrew, his profession and his nomadic existence. She wanted him as her lover, her father, her best friend as well as her role model and mentor, demands which Brainin, not surprisingly, found impossible to fulfil. For Chava it was an all-

encompassing passion, a spell, as she would call it, which affected and influenced her entire life. From the moment she met Brainin, Chava knew for certain that she had to change her life, regardless of the consequences and so began plotting her escape, making Brainin her reluctant accomplice. Her short term goal was to acquire a university education. Her long term goal was full emancipation.

By the end of 1903 she had made her escape and the next seven years were the best years of her life. She was free of her marriage, free of her parents and free of Russia. She first went to Vienna and attended some preparatory courses - she had never previously attended school. By 1905, she was attending the University of Bern, studying philosophy in German. In 1910, aged thirty four, Chava graduated with a doctorate in philosophy. Her thesis was based on the German, 18th century philosopher-mathematician-physicist-satirist, Georg Lichtenberg.

For the next four years Chava made Berlin her base, and as a professional Hebrew journalist of independent means, travelled, wrote and led a sophisticated, cosmopolitan life.

During these years Chava met Brainin only infrequently but corresponded with him regularly and extensively. Although her initial hopes that he would provide her with love and security were quashed early in their relationship, she nevertheless kept on hoping that somehow the two of them would get together. She was convinced that it was

their common destiny.

In 1910 her hopes were dashed however, when Brainin moved to North America. Chava, who ached for some permanence, could have seized this opportunity to settle down to a more conventional life. But that was not to be. In 1913 Brainin visited Europe and spent two full months with her, the happiest and longest time they had ever spent together, reawakening in Chava all her old hopes of a permanent relationship. Brainin, however, had no such intentions. After his departure, aside from two letters written by him in the spring of 1914, never wrote to Chava again.

When the war broke out in 1914 Chava left Berlin and returned home to Slawuta. She spent the next five years living intermittently in Slawuta and Kiev. In 1919 a wealthy forester who had been an associate of her father's, helped her and her son escape to Prague, Czechoslovakia. In Prague Chava found herself cut off from her family and friends, with worthless Russian currency in her possession. For the first time in her life she had to earn her keep. She tried by writing articles for journals such as Hatoren, Haolam and Hadoar, but found it very difficult to make a living. The wealthy forester helped her for a while but Chava finally chose a more permanent solution. In 1930, at the age of 54, she married a Czech citizen, a Dr. J. Winternitz, hoping to find some long sought for peace and security. Unfortunately the man turned out to be mentally deranged and Chava's life became a living hell. For

over 10 years she was subjected to the worst mental abuse and reduced to a state of helplessness and apathy. It seems incredible that she found deliverance only when she was deported to Terezin in 1941. In Terezin she regained her composure and her dignity as well as her warm and generous personality and for a short while she truly became the Mother of All, Em Kol Chai.

Throughout her turbulent life Chava always clung to her love of the Hebrew language. It is important to realise that Chava chose to write in Hebrew even though she could have written in German or French. She made this fateful choice, the central determining choice of her life, because of her relationship to Brainin. Since the 1880s, Brainin had been a member in good standing of the exclusive intellectual club of Hebrew writers. This small group of dedicated Hebraists knew that they were relegating themselves to a marginal existence. They knew that the number of Hebrew readers was very small, and for the most part was made up of other Hebrew writers. But as Stanley Nash writes in The Hebraists of Berne and Berlin Circa 1905,¹ these men were romantics, they enjoyed viewing their lives as heroic and tragic and did not mind being alienated and unhappy. These very words aptly describe Chava's own view of life. But whereas Brainin always lived in large cities and was surrounded by a coterie of other Hebrew writers, Chava never lived in a milieu that facilitated her chosen field. After 1914, when she returned to Russia, she refused to move to

Odessa, where the main Hebrew center was located, in spite of Bialik's invitation. Instead she chose to live in the isolated Slawuta. Later, when the center shifted to Palestine, she was living in Prague and although she expressed some wish to go to Palestine, it was already too late. She had, by then, become imprisoned in an existence which was much worse than the one she had originally broken away from.

This study will attempt to understand the contradiction that was Chava. Was she in fact a trailblazer, marching in the avant-garde of the feminist and Hebrew revivalist movements, or was she a very bright but selfish, spoilt and high strung, poor-little-rich-girl, who had the misfortune of falling in love with the wrong man.

RUSSIA AND THE JEWS

On her father's side Chava was the descendent of the famous Hasidic rebbe, Pinhas from Koretz, while on her mother's side, the Sheinbergs from Kishinev, she was influenced by the Haskalah movement. Her mother, born around the 1850s, spoke and wrote Hebrew fluently and taught her to do the same.

Both Hasidism and the Haskalah movement were strong reactionary forces that set out to destroy the prevailing structure of the Jewish community, one that had been in place in Russia since the 18th century.

Until the 16th century the history of the Jews in Russia was a relatively uneventful one. From the 16th century an era of mistrust began, caused by growing hostility towards the Jewish religion. All Jewish immigration, even for temporary reasons, was banned², leaving Russia Jewish free until the partitioning of Poland, when in the space of 23 years, from 1772 to 1795, she acquired, together with her new territories, nearly a million Jews. Yet even then, according to Michael Stanislawski, the Jewish problem was only a marginal one. Policy towards the Jews was spontaneous and unreflective, dictated by national and economic interests which were prejudiced by the Russian fear ^{CF} ~~from~~ "The Enemies of Christ".³ The Jews were either separated from the general population and sent to colonize the remote regions of the empire or were expelled from the countryside and forced to integrate with the rest of the population. Whichever policy was in place, the Jews, to impede commercial competition, were taxed twice as

much as the rest of the population.⁴

It was during the reigns of Alexander I and especially Nicholas I, that the Jews became a "problem". Under the guise of "educational" and "correctional" measures a system of social experimentation developed which openly aimed at transforming and ultimately converting the Jews, who were considered to be anarchic, parasitic and cowardly.⁵

The single most deplorable restriction was the Pale of Settlement which began around 1791 but was made into law by Nicholas I in 1835. By 1897, nearly 5 million Jews, or 94% of the total Jewish population, were crammed into its borders. Most of the Jews lived in the countryside. Some were managers and agents of the great landowners' estates or leasers of government concessions and taxes. Some 30%, in 1817, according to the Encyclopedia Judaica (15: 1156) were factory owners in the Ukraine. The Shapiro family belonged in this group. The majority however, lived in small towns in great poverty, their occupation restricted to small commercial enterprises and crafts such as tailoring and shoemaking. Competition was intense and living conditions were deplorable.

The Pale nevertheless allowed the Jews some measure of independence. They lived within an autonomous administrative framework, free to practice their religion, speak their Yiddish language and follow their unique way of life and social customs. It also served to separate and isolate them from the rest of the population who were even poorer and less

enlightened ^athen they were.

Life in the Pale revolved around two centres of power. The first was the Russian Government with its myriad taxes and regulations and the second was the Jewish religion with its 613 mitzvot.⁶ Both powers were represented by the same executive agency, the Kahal⁷, which was chosen by the Jewish community. By being responsible for all administrative, religious, judicial and educational matters, the Kahal bore heavily down on all Jewish men and women from the moment they were born to the day that they died. This handful of well-to-do, self perpetuating clique of officials ruled within the Pale by the authority of the Talmud, or rather the Shulchan Aruch, which is the codified version of the Talmud and its commentaries, as compiled by Joseph Caro in the 16th century. But whereas the Talmud and its commentaries were the result of lively discussions, arguments and input from different and differing rabbinical sources, the leaders of the Pale, in the 18th and 19th centuries, allowed no deviance from the letter of the law. They were unimaginative and doctrinaire, forbidding any questioning or new interpretations.

The education system in the Pale was for males only. Girls were not given any formal education as the Orach Chayim, 249.19, in the Shulchan Aruch, states:

“We have never taught women from a book, nor have we ever heard that people actually do so. Rather, every mother teaches her daughter or daughter-in-law those

well known rules women should know.

The curriculum for the boys was the same everywhere. It consisted of the Pentateuch, the Siddur (prayer book), the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch, all taught in Yiddish. The specific aim of this education was to guide the student in his daily life as an observant Jew. The Hebrew or Russian languages were not taught, just as any subject that did not have a direct bearing on Jewish religion was forbidden.

The concentration of so much power in the hands of so few caused rampant corruption and mishandling of public affairs, adding more suffering to the already exploited Jewish people.

In the 18th century a new movement called Hasidism emerged in Podolia with Israel of Miedzborz, The Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760), and challenged the rule of the rabbis. ^{THE HASIDIM} They believed that man was saved by faith and not by religious knowledge and that worshipping God should be a joyous affair, accompanied by songs and dances, not a rigid and pedantic ritual. They congregated around charismatic leaders, whom they called "Rebbe" or "Zaddik", a just man in Hebrew, who they believed possessed special powers to intercede with God on their behalf.

Chava Shapiro's great great grandfather, Pinhas ben Avraham from Korets, had met the Baal Shem Tov. He too believed in the importance of devoted praying and its influence in the upper spheres of heaven.

The Hasidim considered their present miserable life only

temporary, with real life starting upon the arrival of the Messiah who would lead them back to the Holy land. Hasidim did not recognize the legitimacy of the temporal powers of the state and consequently saw no reason to obey its laws or pay its taxes.

At its best, the Hasidic movement provided a large number of hopelessly destitute Jews with a sense of solidarity and mutual help in the face of the rabbinic establishment and the Russian authorities. At its worst, the movement became mired in the personality cult of the rebbes, its illiterate followers believing in superstition and black magic.

The rabbis were shocked by the Hasidic threat and tried everything from informing on ^{THE HASIDIM} ~~them~~ to the authorities to excommunication, in order to eradicate the movement. ^{THE} ~~Their~~ persecution ^{OF THE HASIDIM} ended only when a third force, called Haskalah, entered the picture.

Haskalah or the Jewish Enlightenment appeared in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century, challenging both the rabbis and the Hasidim. It had originated about 50 years before in Prussia with the teachings of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) who in turn was influenced by the precursors of the French Revolution, Voltaire, Diderot and J.J. Rousseau. The resounding slogan of the that revolution of 1789: "Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité", had stirred the spirit of people in Western Europe and Rationalism, Liberalism and the rights of the individual became universally known concepts.

The first Maskilim did not reject Jewish traditional values outright. They were fighting against the corruption of the true spirit of Judaism as practised by the rabbis in the Pale. Their aim was to reform Judaism from within, improve the educational system and integrate Judaic studies with secular studies. They were mostly self educated people, living in isolation, not very familiar with the outside world and naive when it came to politics. They believed, like their brothers in Western Europe, that absolute monarchies were predisposed to helping Jews.

That belief coupled with the vociferous opposition from the rabbis pushed the Maskilim to seek support from the Tsar. Isaac Baer Levinsohn, 1788-1860, who was considered the Russian Moses Mendelssohn, received a reward of 1000 rubles from the Tsar for his book Teudah Beisrael, (Testimony in Israel), published in 1828: " For having as its object the moral transformation of the Jews".⁸ Understandably this only worsened the Maskilim's standing among the Jewish establishment.

By the time Nicholas I came to power, the break between the Maskilim and the rabbis was complete. The second generation of Maskilim, after not gaining any support from the rabbis or the Jewish masses, threw their lot in with the Russian authorities, cooperating with them in their "Russification" efforts. This was done mostly in the education field, through the network of state sponsored schools for Jewish children, erected by the government and staffed by Maskilim. There were

even cases of Maskilim informing ~~to~~ the authorities on other Jews, as in the case of the Shapiro brothers who in 1835 were framed by two converted Jews and ^{AA P} their printing press ~~was~~ shut down. (See note 63 below for more information.) Yet in spite of the Tsar's flagrant mistreatment of the Jews, they continued to express their loyalty and patriotism to him.⁹

During Alexander II's first decade in power, from 1855 - 1868, it seemed that the Maskilim's efforts might finally bear fruit and the Jews would gain emancipation. Alexander abolished the dreaded Cantonist system of army service (1855), reformed and modernized the entire school system (1859), leaving religion out of the curriculum and forbidding proselytizing. In 1861 he forbade the baptizing of children under 14 without their parents' consent and eased the censorship laws which made publishing Hebrew journals easier.

Empowered by these reforms the Maskilim turned once more to the Jewish communities and tried to bring forth some desperately needed religious reform. They were fighting both the archaic anachronisms of the rabbis, and the irrationality and backwardness of the Hasidim. Their weapons were books and journals, in Hebrew and Russian, that were published in the new centers of the Enlightenment: Odessa, the new capital of the New Russia; Vilna, the old capital of Lithuania; and Warsaw, the capital of the defeated Poland. Hebrew journals such as Hamaggid (1856), Hamelitz (1860), and Hazefirah (1862) penetrated into all the corners of the Pale, in spite of the

rabbis, and were read by the young even in the Yeshivot, hidden inside the books of the Talmud. They brought about a revolution in the sheltered life of the Pale, opening up the ghetto to the modern world and while doing that also undermining the authority of the rabbis and changing the very essence of traditional Jewish life.

The Lamdanim and Hasidim¹⁰ naturally perceived the Maskilim as being a great danger to Judaism, and banded together, in spite of their major differences, to fight this common enemy. But when Haskalah was defeated it was not defeated by the rabbis or by the Hasidim. It was defeated by the very people it was so anxious to join and integrate with, the Russians.

By the second half of Alexander II's reign, 1868-1881, liberalism seemed to be dead in Russia. After the Polish revolt of 1863, a reactionary mood set in, resulting in new repressive measures. After the Tsar's assassination in 1881, complete absolutism returned once more.

The attempts of the Haskalah to reform the Jewish religion failed as well. The old Jews clung to their old ways, whether they were Orthodox or Hasidic, while the young stopped being observant. David Frischman expressed the mood of his generation when he wrote: "My grandfather would rather submit to martyrdom seven times a day than yield one letter of the law, while as for myself, if there remains but one letter for me to observe, I shall completely disregard it if it will in any way prove

burdensome."¹¹

The 1881-1882 pogroms were followed in 1903 by additional casualties, first in Kishinev and then in Zhitomir. In 1891 the Jews were driven out of Moscow and other Russian cities. In 1905, 100 Jews were killed in Kiev and 800 killed in Odessa and in 1906, 200 Jews were killed in Bialystok.

As far as most of the Jews were concerned there was only one response possible to tragedies of such magnitude: Mass emigration. In the years between the assassination of Alexander II and the outbreak of First World War, approximately one third of the Jews left their homelands heading west, mostly to America.¹² (Chava reversed the trend by immigrating back to Russia in 1914.)

The Haskalah as an ideology was helpless to deal with such cataclysmic events. Some of its adherents became outright assimilationists, others sought solutions to the Jewish problem elsewhere. Some became Zionists and believed that the answer lay in the establishment of a Jewish homeland and the revitalization of the Hebrew language. Amongst those was Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885) who started a new Hebrew journal in 1869, in Vienna, Hashahar. His aim was to stem the growing trend of assimilation among the Russian Maskilim by stressing Jewish nationalism. It is interesting to note, for the purposes of this study, that it was by writing about Smolenskin that Reuven Brainin first broke into print. His article: Gesisat Hasopher (The Dying of The Writer), which described

Smolenskin's death, appeared in Hamelitz in 1888 and created quite a stir. He also wrote Smolenskin's biography, Peretz ben Moshe Smolenskin, his Life and Works in 1896.

Other Maskilim joined the rising tide of Socialism, believing that social justice and equality for all was the answer for people everywhere, regardless of race or religion. Chava remained an outsider, she joined neither the Zionists nor the socialists.

Whichever way they chose, the post-1880s were stirring times for the Jewish intelligentsia. Political parties came into being, newspapers and journals in Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages proliferated, and public meetings and international conferences were organized. This activity which ignored geographical boundaries and was international in scope, resulted in powerful cross-fertilizations of ideas about politics, literature, language and religion. It also gave rise to such new professions as publicists, journalists, essayists and social activists. The literary intelligentsia assumed a dual role. It became a pressure group within the Jewish community, wresting political power away from the traditional Jewish establishment, while at the same time it was also a dynamic debating circle, where new socio-historical ideas were advanced, criticised and revised.

Chava Shapiro and Reuven Brainin, until the outbreak of the First World War, belonged to this new breed of Jewish intellectuals. They, like so many others, spent their adult

lives in perpetual motion, crisscrossing Western Europe and Russia by train, travelling to North America and Palestine by ship, rushing from Paris to Vienna or from Berlin to Zurich to attend meetings and congresses. They kept in touch with one another in their favourite cafes, where they spent hours arguing and gossiping. They were the uprooted ones, those who left the shtetlach behind, never to find a permanent home again. Having had the courage to reject the old ways, they were desperately seeking for something new to fill the void. It is as though Erich Muhsam was describing them when he wrote:¹³

 "Onward, onward without rest
 to the north, east, south, west!
 Seek, soul, seek!...
 With your ticket sallying forth
 to the west, east, south, north.
 Seek, soul, seek!
 See your life flash by in pain
 from the window of a midnight train.
 Shriek, soul, shriek!

THE SOURCES ON CHAVA SHAPIRO

The information that is available about Chava Shapiro in the usual reference books is scant, amounting to only a few lines.¹⁴ Fortunately, there are five additional sources that together provide a full description of who Chava was.

They are:

- A. Letters written by Chava to Reuven Brainin.¹⁵
- B. Chava's diary.¹⁶
- C. Chava's only book of fiction.¹⁷
- D. Printed articles written by Chava.¹⁸
- E. Chava's doctoral thesis.¹⁹

None of these sources is widely known. The first source was not known to exist before 1985. The second source has been available to scholars since 1956, but has been ignored except for one mention in a published journal. The third source, Chava's book of fiction, came out in 1909 and after some initial interest, ^asunk into oblivion. The fourth source, her printed articles, can be found in back numbers of out of print journals, but have never been examined seriously before. The fifth source, the thesis, remains to this day unexamined but the choice of its subject adds another dimension to Chava's character.

A. THE LETTERS TO REUVEN BRAININ

The first and most important source is the collection of 184 hand-written love letters, in Hebrew, that Chava wrote to Reuven Brainin, over a period of 29 years. (1899 -1928)

Reuven Brainin (1862-1939), was one of the leading intellectuals of his day, first and foremost known for his devotion to the Hebrew language, which he helped to revive

through his writings, and his work with groups of people whose purpose was to learn Hebrew. Secondly, he was known for his Zionist activities which brought him into close contact with Theodor Herzl²⁰ and other leading Zionists. Finally, he was known for introducing, through his writings, new subjects into Jewish literature, such as biographical studies of Jewish personalities, articles about music, the theatre, painting, travel, as well as descriptions of scientific discoveries. His firm belief, which he followed in his own life, was that a Jew could partake in the ways and ideas of the outside world and still remain a good Jew in his own home. His writings, and his frequent public lectures all over Eastern and Western Europe, made him a very popular figure, especially among the young Eastern European Jews, who saw in him a role model.

From 1888, when his article on Peretz Smolenskin, "Gesisat Hasofer" (Death of the Writer), appeared in Hamelitz²¹ until 1922, when his 60th birthday was celebrated, Brainin maintained his position as a respected and admired writer and critic.²²

In the last seventeen years of his life, however, his prestige suffered a great reversal. Probably to compensate for his embitterment and frustration for having become a forgotten man whose great promise had never been fulfilled, he became involved with the American Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union (ICOR). Under its sponsorship he visited the Soviet Union in 1926 and when he returned, instead of criticising the Soviet Union's treatment of Jews, he applauded

its achievements and advocated Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan. By doing that he brought upon himself the wrath of the Zionist intelligentsia who to this day have not forgiven him.

Chava met Brainin in 1899, at the height of his career, and as a result of this meeting her life was changed forever. We shall follow this relationship in greater detail in the second part of this study.

B. THE DIARY

The second of the sources is Chava's handwritten Hebrew diary, covering the years 1900 to 1941. It begins on a spring day in Warsaw when Chava is 24 years old and ends with a hurriedly scribbled note, sometime in the fall of 1941, in Prague, on the day of Chava's deportation to Terezin. From the first entry we sense the inner turmoil of a married woman who since the previous year had been carrying on an extra marital affair with a married man:

It is said that life appears empty after one has experienced unfulfilled hope or deep despair. But my emptiness comes from something else. I have felt emptiness even before I knew what despair was, before I knew what hope or an unfulfilled wish was.²³

The one thing that the diary does make absolutely clear is

that writing for Chava was essential. It began as a very private pastime:

/ In his sketch In My Child's Room, Brainin wrote:

"I am fed up with my ink and pen, they are my instruments of torture." But I regard them as my good and trusted friends, to whom I can always reveal everything that is in my heart and so lighten my burden.⁴²⁴

and again:

/I cannot agree, under any circumstances, that I should be suspected of something of which I am innocent, namely, that I wanted my name to be known or that I wrote out of pride.

I would never have shown my manuscripts to anyone ever, because I never thought I expressed anything that was worth while expressing, even though I always have a great deal to say. If it weren't for Brainin [Chava's underlining] who recognized, from my letters to him that: "I had noble and sublime ideas", and that my style was "captivating". He very frequently pleaded with me that I shouldn't kill the "talents that are in me" (his words) And in spite of that I

haven't made myself known to any of the
writers here. ↗²⁵

While she was selective as to what she chose to write about, she was at the same time sorry that she did not write more revealingly, as though she expected the diary to be read by others at some point in the future. Here was how she herself put it on three different occasions:

"I made up my mind not to write about the enormous changes that occurred inside myself. I will guard them inside my heart and not reveal them even to my diary. Who will read or pay attention to the sighs and cries of a soul at odds, the doubts and inner turmoil of a Hebrew woman?

I didn't write when unheard of things happened to me, when I was living life to its fullest or when I was struggling within myself. I didn't write even when I should have marked down certain things, for the record, to vindicate my behaviour and justify actions that otherwise could not have been understood. I didn't write because I have long known how useless it was to try to explain to someone the inside of one's heart."²⁶

"As I reread my diary I see that it is truthful, even if I wrote infrequently and only bits of thoughts, fragments of feelings. I regret I didn't write more of what went on in my inner self..."²⁷

And thirteen years later:

"When I realise that these pages, the pages of my life, do not express the inner turmoil of my soul, I feel great regret. The truth is that of all the external and internal events that happened to me in my life only the ones mentioned in the diary are important...the others have no connection to my real "I"..."²⁸

Chava carried on this inner monologue for the next forty years of her life. Whether she wrote daily or less regularly, she kept a running commentary on everything that happened around her, expressing herself in a natural and uninhibited way. / She described her social and literary milieu in Warsaw, where she met such writers as I.L.Peretz, David Frischman and later, ^{IN ODESSA, WHERE SHE MET} H. N. Bialik, ~~in Odessa~~ / She described political events such as the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905, and the great upheavals after the Revolution of 1917. She expressed horror after the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 and the Ukrainian

pogroms in 1917-9. She talked of her emotional entanglements with Brainin and other men, like Shmuel Aba Horodesky² and after 1930 she wrote bitterly of her tortured relationship with her second husband, Dr. Winternitz, who turned the last years of her life into a nightmare.

Chava gave free reign to her emotions in the diary. She rhapsodized over nature, especially over the sea which she adored, she exclaimed with joy at her sense of freedom after her divorce, she glowed with a sense of accomplishment when she received her doctorate, and she cried inconsolably when she was forced to separate from her son or when her beloved mother died. The last entry which Chava wrote before handing the diary over to some unknown strangers, so it would not perish with her, proves how precious the diary was for her:

"For more than forty years I have made entries into this diary. It has become part of my soul. I haven't written Hebrew for the last two years and now I take my leave of this diary too and hand it over to some strangers.

My son is overseas and who knows where I am going. My people's fate is mine too. A month ago I was still full of life, how I hoped, as I shall go on hoping, to see my son again. Now I am very weak yet I have still so much to endure! My son, my son,

let him be happy in his life. God take him and look after him!

It is so difficult to bid farewell, even from a diary, even from this lifeless piece of paper that breathed the same air as I, who used to write in it! "30

As we have seen, Chava began writing in her diary when she first came to Warsaw. She was lonely and misunderstood and was spending a great deal of psychic energy trying to fit into the role of a conventional wife and mother, in a milieu which she found unbearable. As a means of survival Chava turned to an occupation that did not need anyone's support and that she could do in secret. The diary became Chava's therapy. In later years it substituted for the family that she once had and lost and the close friends and confidantes that she so badly needed.

C. COLLECTION OF SKETCHES

The third source is Chava's only book in print: Collection of Sketches, which appeared in Warsaw in 1909 under the pseudonym Em Kol Chai (which in Hebrew means Mother of All Beings). ^{THIS WORK} is a slim 63 page paperback, dedicated to her beloved mother.

The book, which is full of autobiographical references, consists of 15 sketches³¹, ranging from one to five pages ^{IN LENGTH.} long. They bear the following titles:

1. The Rose.
2. The Hawk and the Sparrow.
3. The Wilted Roses.
4. The Clipped Wings.
5. The Lonely Woman.
6. The Old Maid.
7. Types of Women: a. The Gossip. b. The Fickle One.
c. The Moody One.
8. In the Library.
9. The Worldly Woman.
10. The Dreamer.
11. The Poet of Sorrow.
12. Breaking the Tablets.
13. Fame.
14. The Teacher.
15. The Sanctification of
the Moon.

Six of the sketches deal with different kinds of betrayal; of love, of trust or ~~the betrayal of~~ ideals. Three sketches deal with the uniqueness of motherhood. Another three deal with the difficulty of being different. Two sketches describe relationships between older men and younger women. The rest are either taken directly from Chava's life, like "The Sanctification of the Moon" or don't fit into any special category, like "The Teacher". All but two of the sketches have a female as the central character, whether a flower, a bird or a woman. In all cases Chava's women start out by being innocent and trusting, as well as noble and caring. In fact they are superior to men in every way, and yet consistently end up having their life destroyed and their illusions shattered by men who take advantage of them, corrupt them and condemn them to a life of suffering.

The suffering can take on different forms. For someone who gave up a great love in her youth, like the woman in the sketch "The Old Maid", the suffering means being mocked by younger people and realising that she will always remain alone and never know the joy of having children. In "The Worldly Woman", suffering is being condemned to a life of promiscuity amid the glitter of high society, paying for the "crime" of having once given her love in trust to a man, daring to want to be loved back! For this, like others of her sex, she has to pay with blood by giving up her self respect and her chance at personal happiness. Men mislead, abuse and sin against women all the time, and yet they never have to pay for their crimes! (Chava's exclamations).

Suffering is also caused by the incompatibility of the sexes. Men and women seem to strive for different things, even when they love one another. In "Breaking the Tablets", a man and a woman meet on top of a mountain. The man is world weary, disappointed, sad, pessimistic and desperate. The woman is young, innocent and trusting, filled with joy and hope. (Chava always believed that more adjectives were better than less.) He finds in her strength and support, she is like a breath of fresh air for him. She finds in him experience, knowledge and the ability to teach. He is her waker, her guide. She leaves him, after a while, because she wants to experience life at first hand, but in the real world all she finds is ugliness, sadness, despair, slavery, hatred, pettiness, envy and bigotry.

She realises that he was right and is drawn back to him. They meet again on top of the mountain, this time she finds that in her absence he has reverted back to his old tired self. She realises that coming back was a grave error because he no longer holds any answers for her.

Chava barely disguises here the progression of her own relationship with Brainin. It did not take long before she understood, as the letters make amply clear, that Brainin did not have the answers to her problems, yet she kept going back to the top of the mountain, over and over again, in spite of that.

Another example of the incompatibility of the sexes is "The Poet of Sorrow", which is one of the longest of the sketches. Here Chava describes the relationship between a poet and his beloved. In the spring they vow eternal love. That winter, however, the poet leaves for the city to try to make a name for himself: "It was your love that revealed the spark of the poet in me, my love poems will express my devotion to you", he tells her. "What happens when you finish writing the poems?" She is anxious to know. The following summer they part. He tells her that feelings change. "I only need love's yearnings, and those are inspired by your memory, not you yourself. Don't pity me, sorrow is good for poets! If it weren't for my sorrow I would be small, ordinary, insensitive...like everyone else", he says. "And for this senseless notion you will sacrifice your happiness?" she asks. "My happiness is my talent. You will see,

my day will come."

His day does come and he is discovered for his poems of sorrow. In every one of the poems he writes about his beloved who disappointed him, who betrayed him, and caused the great sorrow that he carries in his heart...

This sketch works particularly well because Chava does not try to settle any personal scores. She describes a situation which rises above specifics. It reaches the reader because of its universal appeal. All of us recognize the truth in her description of two human beings who are on an unavoidable collision course.

There are three other sketches in the book which are worth noting. They are: "The Rose", which was Chava's first foray into print, "The Lonely One", Chava's anguished cry against her own fate, and "The Dreamer", which seems to be a repudiation of what Chava believed in.

"The Rose" appeared in 1902 in David Frischman's paper Hador³² and was the fruit of at least two years of hard work, probably under Peretz's supervision. We deduce this from an entry in Chava's diary which she wrote on March 25, 1915, upon receiving the news of Peretz's death. Chava had deeply cared about Peretz, and was always grateful for the warm friendship he extended to her at the time when she first came to Warsaw. In this entry she remembers how he taught her to write back in 1900:

'He (Peretz) would push me to write, not to publish, but to write, just to write. And he himself would look attentively at everything that came out of my pen. He looked at the lines and read them after making sure I had shown him everything I had written. He never stinted with his time.

He gave me themes to work on to see how good I was and to make me improve and practice. He would see how I dealt ^{WITH} and ^A used certain material. Then he would draw my attention to the necessary corrections, especially the many things I had left out. He liked to highlight every detail, but accidentally, not through long descriptions which he thought were wrong. The hint, the outline, the light touch, were very important to him. He would reprove me when I didn't pay attention to the rewriting. "Even the shoemaker" he would say, "isn't born in one minute, but has to work hard to improve his craft until he reaches perfection, and you don't take the time to go over what you have written. Look at me, I am older than you

and I am used to writing, yet I never allow anything out of my hand before I have gone over it at least 20 times."

"The Rose" tells the story of a beautiful, tall and proud rose who is taken from the garden into the house, where she is placed in a pot, to provide pleasure for her mistress. Very soon, however, she begins to wilt and fade away. She is saved in the nick of time by being returned to the garden, where she is replanted in the rich soil and becomes strong and superior to all the other roses. When she is asked by the other roses what her secret is, she replies: " My roots were sown with great care, deep in the heart of the earth. My roots give me life, courage and strength. I become strong and brave because I believe in myself. Now even if they were to pick me or cut me, only I alone would perish and in my place a new young rose would grow, surer and stronger still, a free rose who would believe in herself and in her strength and would refuse to accept the burdens you want to place on her or recognize the limits you want to bound her to. I may die, but my seed will live forever! To which the other roses admiringly exclaim: "You are so marvellous!"

It seems obvious that Chava meant "The Rose" as an allegory, where the soil, the roots and the notion of revival are the central symbols. The rose could be a symbol for

Judaism, while the deep roots are the Jewish tradition and the seeds are the continuation of the Jewish race, free and strong, in some future time, upon the return from exile. In her diary, during the Days of Awe of 1907, which she spent in Slawuta, Chava wrote that in the old days, when she was young, she used to feel a special kind of holiness during the prayers of the Day of Atonement. The prayers filled everyone with an inner sense of purity and joy, but that was no longer so. She noticed that the prolonged stay in exile had corroded the soul of her people:

" When I now listen to the prayers and their special lilt, I no longer hear the innocence and purity of our people's sighs. I see only the long and bitter exile that left its mark on each and everyone of us... I see the individuals and the collective, the people and the nation - and on all of them, the same stamp of exile, inside and out... I no longer speak about our outer exile, but how much have we lost, how much was taken away from us and how much was killed within us by our inner exile! - Alas, bitter cursed exile of our souls, will we never rid ourselves of it?"³³

The rose could also be the symbol of feminism and motherhood, with the seeds representing the future birth of

generations of women who will rise one day, strong and free. Whatever her intention was, Chava's own reaction to her first piece in print was not very positive, as we see in this following passage:

"Two weeks ago my first piece of fiction "The Rose" appeared in print. I did not feel any of the pleasure or satisfaction that one hears all young writers supposedly feel when their first fruits appear in print.

I feel no happiness or joy at the sight of my name in print and my heart is not elated to know that others will read me now. All I feel is that my heart is full and that I have a great deal to say. Thoughts, plans and pictures are constantly running through my head or appear before my eyes. I am not content with what I wrote because it is not what I intended to say. I cannot rejoice because I haven't said everything I wanted to say. When I reread what I wrote I failed to find in it what I was searching for. Nothing is clear or complete and my most important point is missing...

Brainin's praises do not satisfy me. When

I read my manuscripts I feel like burning and destroying them, because they don't express what I want. There is so much more within me to express. And that is why I am not happy that my piece is in print."³⁴

"The Lonely One", which is five pages long, opens with a lavish ballroom scene where women vie with one another for the privilege of being chosen by the men as dance partners. The pretty ones are chosen every time, the plain ones sit and wait patiently for the next round. The sound of music and dancing take hold of the dancers as they move their feet, their hands, their hearts, their bodies , eyes and lips... The dance is in honour of 28 year old Deborah, who sits uncomfortably in a corner, feeling out of place, seemingly forgotten by the guests. Her sister, younger and more beautiful, is dancing every dance and is having a wonderful time. Deborah thinks back on all the long days and nights and years that she spent abroad, bent over books, convinced that all else was empty and frivolous. She remembers when she met and fell in love with Dr. N. and realised that she was different from other women, that she lacked feminine charms. This realisation made her so unhappy that she was ready to trade all her talents and abilities for the simple beauty of her maid. Back at the party, Dr. N. suddenly appears. He comes over to Deborah, accompanied by a younger man, and compliments her on her improved looks,

then adds: " The truth is, dear lady, that when I read your dissertation a few years ago, I refused to believe that a woman had written it. I didn't believe that a woman's mind was capable of thinking such thoughts. None of the ladies here could do it. You, Deborah, are different, you are not like them!"

Deborah feels she must leave the room. Around her all is lightness, warmth and movement but in her heart lies a terrible unhappiness. She sits down in another room, feeling weak and helpless. Suddenly she is startled by Dr. N.'s voice and her sister's laugh coming from behind the screen. " I have loved you from the first moment I laid eyes on you" Dr. N. tells the sister. "You must have said the same to my sister and she believed you because she is older and smarter than I am", teases the sister. "Now I understand, I have to like your sister because she is intelligent? What an innocent child you are", says the doctor. "Don't you want me to be as learned as my sister?" "As your sister, no! I love you the way you are, you'll learn enough just from being in my presence. Don't feel sorry for your sister, ha ha, she has other matters on her mind, she doesn't care about such things as love! What concern is she to us anyway?" Deborah does not hear the rest. She suddenly feels all alone, alone in this house, alone in the entire universe. She feels a sharp pain in her heart... her strength leaves her and she loses consciousness.

The sketch in spite of being quite melodramatic expresses

some genuine pathos. It combines a number of Chava's themes: betrayal, incompatibility of the sexes, older man-younger woman relationship and the difficulty of being a smart woman. In this case the betrayal is double edged, ^{by} first the sister, who is a rival, in spite of the family relationship, and then ^{by} the doctor, who is the older lover-mentor hero.

In her diary, in 1907, possibly at the very time that Chava was writing this sketch, this poignant passage appeared:

" When I come back here, to my birth place, I see how with every succeeding year I grow further away from my surroundings, more distant from everything. I feel that even here I am not in my element, even here in the place where I was born and have grown up, I am a stranger. Everything is strange to me.

I try and get close to people and many actually get close to me, but they don't feel that inner wall that separates us. Everything is strange to me. And it is my impression that I will never be able to get close to anyone without feeling this strangeness that separates me from the rest of the world."³⁵

Deborah is Chava's most feminist creation. Through her she expresses her own feelings of frustration against a male dominated world which does everything in its power to

discourage a bright young woman's quest for independence.

The final sketch, "The Dreamer", expresses quite a different message. When the heroine was a young child she had a marvellous talent for making up stories. When she grew older, in addition to her stories, she also defended her dream: Equality for the sexes. She rebelled against everything that limited or belittled the value of the weaker sex. She would get all heated up and her eyes would glitter with inner fire while she shouted at the men: "You, only you, killed within us our courage and our strength, you did it with your pity, selfishly, for your own advantage and pleasure! Let us develop, don't suppress our soul, don't limit our potential, don't put obstacles in our way, only then will you see what we are capable of!" And she dreamt and preached that the day would come when there would be no more laws that would force the weaker sex to remain on a lower rung, in a narrow and limited sphere... and that day women would reach the highest levels of society and humanity.

Many days pass and the young woman marries and becomes a mother. Now she says: "Only a woman who feels herself unhappy as a woman could advocate such ideas as I did in those days. We as women have special privileges and we shouldn't betray them... a woman must recognize her true uniqueness, her true purpose, which is to give birth to children, especially sons."

Chava advocating marriage and children, in 1909, two years

after getting her final divorce, and one year before obtaining her doctorate is only following the ethos of the times. Even such a contemporary professional feminist as Bertha Pappenheim, who formed and led the Jewish feminist movement in Germany from 1904-1924, believed that being a wife and a mother were sacred duties that came before all else.³⁶ It may also be that Chava's grief, at this time, over having had to leave her son behind, the price for gaining her freedom, was causing her some second thoughts about the sanctity of the family.

The appearance of the book Collection of Sketches was greeted as an important literary event, mostly because there were so few Jewish women writers at the time. The reviewers noted the delicate way in which Chava described women and their suffering caused by men who took advantage of their weaknesses, and then proceeded to discuss other women writers, or other articles of Chava's.³⁷

Surprising was David Frischman's reaction to the book, considering that he was the one responsible for printing Chava's first sketch in 1902. He based his entire review on a sentence that Chava wrote in the introduction to her book, referring to the fact that every time a male writer described a woman's feelings "We feel as though a stranger's hand has touched us. We have our own world, our own sorrow and longings." ³⁸ "Very well", said Frischman, "she does not want a male critic to review her book, she wants a division of

labour in this field too! I am a polite man, I shall not review the book but wait until a woman reviewer will come along and write her opinion." He then went on to say that even when women will be describing their own feelings, men will still not be able to understand them, because women speak a different language. They say the right words, but they intend them to mean different things. Words for a woman, like a smile, a certain look or a dress, are used as a code, for which only she has the cypher. A woman is so modest, her instinct is to hide, to disguise. How could she ever reveal her true feelings. And he concluded that if we would ever learn a woman's special language, know what her "yes" meant in the morning and what it meant in the afternoon, what "give me a glass of water" meant in the summer and what it meant in the winter, what was she saying when she was silent and what was she trying to hide when she spoke, "only then, if a woman wrote a tale, would it be possible for us to understand her world, her pain and her longings. All those things which we wish so ardently to understand."³⁹ And with this condescending tone he refused to comment any further on the sketches, neutralising Chava's importance as a writer by not taking her writing seriously.

To conclude, Chava never published another book of fiction.⁴⁰ Years later, on the occasion of her fiftieth birthday, she noted in her diary:

"Of all the things that I regret, the one that pains me the most is that I didn't succeed to

give expression to my ideas through a suitable literary form. I didn't concentrate my talent, if I had any, on one field. More precisely, I didn't go on writing more stories and sketches as I did in the beginning. Those sketches created themselves, and I turned away from them - to where? Now I am sorry, not because my name hasn't been established as a writer of a certain genre - although perhaps that contributes to it, but that I wasted away the strength of my spirit and my soul. Why didn't I focus my talents into one area? I lived- and life was more interesting and worthwhile than all those sketches - I always lived after the facts...This is a bit strange but really so - Whenever I thought that something had already past, things would happen and hit me in the face... and strangely pull at me, almost against my wishes."⁴¹

D. THE PRINTED ARTICLES

As we have seen Chava considered herself a writer from a very early age. What started out as a hobby turned into a more serious pursuit once she moved to Warsaw where she became acquainted with some famous writers. Two of those writers, I.L.Peretz and David Frischman, took a special

interest in her work, while a third, Reuven Brainin, was a constant presence, in spirit if not always in person. In addition to "The Rose", she also wrote some book reviews during her student days, one of which appeared in Hed Hazeman in 1908.⁴² Her resolve to become a professional writer is evident from what she wrote Brainin from Bern, on June 24, 1910, even before she finished her studies:

"Please write to Sokolov,⁴³ and tell him that I am ready to take on a job in his editorial office as soon as I finish my studies. Tell him some nice things about me. Because of my affection for the Hebrew language I would like to be part of a Hebrew paper. If he will give you some definite answer, I could see him still in August, upon my return to Russia."

A month later on July 25, 1910, she wrote to Brainin from Wiesbaden:

"Before I left Bern I met with Klatzkin⁴⁴ and we spoke about work in the "Welt". It is possible that I will write some "essays" for him. He also wants me to translate from Hebrew but that I don't think I will do. Perhaps I'll translate something of yours? What do you think? I would only like to translate original manuscripts. Perhaps I'll meet Sokolov in

Warsaw."

By August 20, 1910, Chava informed Brainin in a letter that she was already doing some book reviews for Klatzkin's Die Welt.

Various factors may have contributed to Chava's choice of journalism as a profession. Journalism at the time had great prestige and enjoyed the participation of almost all the leading Jewish writers of the day. Writers such as H. N. Bialik, J.H.Brenner, Zalman Shneur, Ahad Ha'Am, J. Klausner, N. Sokolov, M.J.Berdichevsky, to name just a few, were regular contributors to the many Jewish journals that proliferated all over the world, in the period leading up to the 1939,⁴⁵ and of course Chava's role model and beloved, Reuven Brainin, was himself a journalist. Chava, who was independently wealthy, without a permanent home, was not looking for full-time employment. The life of a free lance journalist perfectly suited her restless spirit and love of travel. There were also not many other job opportunities for well educated Jewish women in 1910 and Chava was not ready to sink back into obscurity after her years of effort to become free and educated.

Chava's first stage in her career as a journalist started around 1910, when she graduated from university and continued until the time she left Russia in 1919. During these

years, Chava wrote at her own pace, mostly about subjects that interested her, not caring whether the journals printed them or not, or how promptly she was paid.

At this time Chava wrote "The Brothers from Slawuta",⁴⁶ her account of her grandfather's and great uncle's tragic brush with the Russian authorities, ^{THIS BEING} ~~A~~ family legend, based on historical fact; ^{AND ALSO} ~~And~~ "From the Writings of a Tuberculosis Patient", an impressionistic story, describing the inner anguish of someone who knows he is going to die.

Other articles at this time reflect the hectic life Chava was leading in Berlin, going to the theatre, the opera, reading the latest books and being generally au courant. These articles show the extent of her general knowledge and erudition. She was capable of discussing, with equal ease, Gerhart Hauptmann's naturalistic novels and plays, (starting first with a lengthy introduction to German literature) and Frank Wedekind's supermodern expressionistic style as it appeared in his latest play "Samson". She then compares the play to works by Shakespeare, Lessing and Gutzkow, because they too feature Jewish heroes in their plays. In one article, entitled "On Death", she reviewed ^S~~ed~~ Maurice Maeterlinck's French book by the same name, while in another, entitled "False Prophets in Israel and the Nations", she brings examples from ancient history, European History, as well as the Bible, (quoting sources from Latin and French) to show that throughout history only the illiterate masses followed false

prophets, because the prophets told them things they wanted to hear. The better educated knew better than to fall prey to such lies.

The second stage of her career began in 1919, in Prague, and continued to the start of the Second World War. There was a marked change in Chava's attitude to journalism in this period, dictated by the changed circumstances of her life. She had lost all her wealth as a result of the Russian Revolution and for the first time in her life was forced to make a living for herself and her 21 year old son, who accompanied her to Prague. She no longer could afford to play at journalism, she now had to make a living at it. She began to send unsolicited articles to different editors, (first, badgering them to print the articles, and then pleading with them for the money they owed her.) There are 18 separate letters, written between November 25, 1920 and December 21, 1928, (including the final one that Chava wrote to Brainin, which we shall print in full in the second part), from Chava to the editor of Hatoren in New York, that have to do with her desperate financial situation.⁴⁷ We also know from Simcha Bloch's article in Hadoar⁴⁸ that Chava tried to add to her income by applying for a teacher's position in a Jewish school in Czechoslovakia but was turned down. There were also two attempts by well wishers to improve her situation by collecting money on her behalf. Both occurred in 1937, which was the thirtieth anniversary of her writing career, counting 1908,

when her Collection of Sketches appeared as the start, and were addressed to Reuven Brainin in New York.⁴⁹

There is no doubt that it was because of her precarious financial situation that Chava, hungry for security, decided in 1930 to marry again.

In her articles, which she always signed Dr. Chava Shapiro, she tried to pick subjects of current interest that would interest the editors and their readers. She wrote "Letters from Prague", "Letters from Czechoslovakia". She interviewed Thomas Masaryk, on his 75th birthday⁵⁰ and attended Zionist congresses and reported on their proceedings. She also wrote about the new Russian literature, quoting from Gorki and Andreyev, as well as from the new Symbolist poets like Bunin, Sologub, Bely and Blok.

An interesting article that Chava wrote in 1930, called: "The Figure of the Woman in Our Literature",⁵¹ affords us an invaluable look into Chava's inner world, showing us what she thought about the two central issues of her life, feminism and Hebrew literature. In the article she takes to task Hebrew writers before Mendele Mocher Seforim (Shalom Yaakov Abramovitch, 1834?-1917) for never creating believable women characters. Writers like Smolenskin and I.L.Gordon, she claims, included women in their stories not for the women's sake but only to further emphasize their opposition to the old, outdated ways of the Rabbinic establishment. Mendele was the first writer who described Jewish women as accurately as he

described nature or the characters living on the Jewish street. Women, in his stories, whether they were young or old, ugly or beautiful, gentle or tyrannical, were not set apart from the men. They shared their opinions and attitudes because they were bound together by a common destiny. Jewish women, according to Chava, would always feel respect and affection for the "Grandfather" because he was the first to discover and sensitively describe their inner world. He knew that true love was not allowed to survive on the Jewish street or that marriage had nothing to do with love, only with an obligation to marry and procreate.

Chava writes that she believes Jewish women are different from other women, they have a harder life to bear. The main difference begins at the young and tender age when the Jewish girl is forced to marry. At the time when other women are beginning to think for themselves, the Jewish woman is forbidden to think, even dream, about other possible kinds of life. At that crucial point in her life she is forced to sacrifice her soul and freedom forever.

According to Chava modern Hebrew writers like Gnessin, Feierberg, Berdichevsky and Kabak, have dealt at length with the difficulties of the new Jewish man who is torn between the old world and the emerging new one. They have been so completely preoccupied with him, that they have totally ignored and failed to examine the inner turmoil of the Jewish woman. Yet Jewish women, according to Chava, by being exempt

from studying Jewish Law⁵² were introduced through their readings of foreign literature to the new ways, even earlier than Jewish men. They too have great difficulties moving from the old traditional world to this new strange one, where different outlooks prevail. We are surrounded by great figures of Jewish women who are striving and working towards a new life, Chava writes, surely some of them are worthy of being included in the new literature. It is true, Chava concedes, that the Jewish woman herself is somewhat to blame for the situation, for not participating actively in the literature. She is absent as a creator and not very much present as a reader, she reads more foreign literature than Hebrew. The strange truth is that the daughter of Israel hardly knows what contemporary Hebrew writers say about her because she is not well acquainted with the works of Mendele, Peretz, or those of Shoffman and Brenner. They all speak in her name without her knowledge. Let's face it, Chava writes, most of our male poets and writers are read and admired by other males writers. She concludes the article by pointing to great writers like Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Ibsen, who created male and female characters that had become immortal and through them immortalized their own generation. Hopefully a new generation of Hebrew writers will rise, including women writers, who will rectify the omission and will fill in the missing figure of the new Jewish woman.

This article was written by Chava 21 years after her

book of sketches appeared. It is a well thought out article that tells her readers how things stand in the male dominated Jewish literary world. Instead of being strident and emotional she is logical and calm. Her arguments are backed by a knowledge of literature as well as a lifetime of personal experience.

In fact, from reading the articles a new Chava emerges before our eyes. One we had not met yet in any of the previous sources. In her letters, as will be seen later, Chava assumed the role of the beloved in all its myriad permutations. And even though she reported in them about her family, her studies and the external world, they remain one dimensional because everything in them is filtered through her relationship to Brainin. The diary too does not give a full picture of Chava. While we catch some glimpses of life on the outside and some descriptions of family members, most of the diary is focused on Chava's inner emotional life. Her book of fiction, although autobiographical, dates from Chava's early period, when she was still immature, both in the chronological sense and in her writing style. Her formal studies and serious travelling had not yet begun.

The Chava of the articles elicits from us respect for her intellect. We see her here as we have never seen her before. She presents herself through the articles as a well educated woman, whose mind is rigorously trained in such diverse disciplines as literature, languages, psychology,

history and philosophy. She uses her knowledge without showing off and always manages to throw some original insight on her subjects. This is also a woman who can separate her inner life from her external one, /A woman who is capable of doing research, writing methodically and meeting deadlines, regardless of what is happening to her at the same time in her personal life. /

E. THE THESIS

The fifth source, Chava's doctoral thesis, comple⁸ments the articles but goes even further in attesting to Chava's growing intellectual powers.

The thesis is in German and its title is: Lichtenberg als Philosoph, (Lichtenberg as a Philosopher). Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799) was a German scientist and philosopher who studied science and mathematics at the university of Gottingen, and later taught there. Chava never mentioned in either her letters or her diary why she chose to write on Lichtenberg. One possibility is that her philosophy professor Ludwig Stein in Bern⁵³ was acquainted with Lichtenberg's work and knew that his manuscripts were readily available at the university of Gottingen. It is also possible that Professor Stein, through his work on Leibnitz and Spinoza, knew of Lichtenberg's interest in Spinoza⁵⁴ and Moses Mendelssohn⁵⁵ and drew Chava's attention to these Jewish subjects. There could have been many reasons. Lichtenberg himself wrote: "I

have scattered seeds of ideas on almost every page which if they fall on the right soil may grow into chapters and even whole dissertations."⁵⁶

Lichtenberg was not a systematic thinker. He believed in absolute relativity and did not belong to any specific movement within philosophy, although he admitted to having been influenced by Spinoza, and Kant who was his own contemporary. He rejected the idea of the soul and believed that in reality there was no division between matter and soul, only a distinction between the inner and outer worlds. Lichtenberg's intention was to discover the meaning of that distinction. His pursuit of reality through science, philosophy and art, believing that reality did not fit into any one system. Lichtenberg was suspicious of language and its ability to communicate. Pure philosophy, he believed, used impure language of colloquial usage which by its nature was imbued with false philosophy. Philosophy spoke with a language about things that were beyond that language.

Lichtenberg's interest ⁱⁿ with verbal expression gradually overtook his interest in scientific research. His aphorisms are the link between the two. They are not as lifeless as Mathematics but more orderly than the arts.

Lichtenberg was highly prized by his contemporaries for his great philosophical grasp and his talent for teaching. His reputation as a writer and thinker today rests on his nine Notebooks which he kept during thirty five years of his life.

They were: "A book wherein I write everything as I see it or as my thoughts suggest it to me."⁵⁷ In them are jotting, extracts, calculations, quotations, autobiographical observations and his polished aphorisms: "Brevity with force and thunder after the flash".⁵⁸

Chava mentions her work on her dissertation in her letters to Brainin. In one of the letters, dated April 24, 1909, Chava writes from Gottingen:

" I came here to visit Professor Husserl⁵⁹. I have never met such a nice and pleasant man. He received me in the library and I have already fallen in love with him and will very willingly comply with his wish to see him again. His intelligent face, kind eyes and wise and appealing words have won my heart. I like the city too, it is cultured, small, attractive and knowledge peers out from the walls of its library, which is the richest and largest of all the libraries in Germany.

I have to meet with another professor and then I will know whether I can leave for Bern at once, or whether I have to stay on here."⁵⁹

And two days later, on April 26, 1909, on a post card, still from Gottingen, Chava effusively continues:

" Dear God, I wish I would always have dealings

with professors and doctors, and maybe if you reached the rank of professor I would agree to have dealings with you too... I have achieved more than I had hoped. The second professor was even kinder and promised to hand over to me all of my Lichtenberg's manuscripts and the ones that I need the most they will send to me in Bern, as long as the university library there will vouch for me. If you had only seen how hard my beloved professor Husserl tried to explain to me all the things I needed to know and how helpful he was with his advice, you might have been jealous of a student like me."

From a letter to Brainin dated May 10, 1910, we learn that Chava had some distressing, last minute news, in regard to her dissertation.

"....Brainin, I cannot talk now. I must tell you that I haven't written Hebrew for a long time and that I have altogether stopped writing letters, as I am too busy. For a while, because of Stein's removal from the university⁶⁰, it seemed that I would have to remain here another semester and change my dissertation to comply with the demands of the new professors, but now my dissertation has been accepted by the

decision of the University Senate, and I have to prepare myself for the doctoral exams. It looks to me that in a month's time I shall receive the title of doctor. (Will my value rise in your eyes?...) And so I am busy now with my studies---but your letter came, Brainin...with that small handwriting that has the power to cast a spell on my spirits, your letter came- and I am completely under its influence..."

And on June 11, 1910 Chava writes a post card from Bern to Brainin in Brussels:

" My friend!, naturally I would prefer being at the Brussels exhibition than be preparing for the examinations. But - the exams, the exams! they are not to be trifled with - general examinations, "Doctorexamen"! - and it wont be you who will examine me but... the devil knows who. And not only "the examiners" but my friends here too think that I am full of shortcomings, not only do I lack a great soul, I have no soul at all, I am too light-headed..."

That Chava succeeded in her examinations and her dissertation was accepted we learn only from her diary. On

August 4, 1910, back at her parents home in Slawuta, she writes:

" I finished my studies. I came out crowned with the title "Doctor of Philosophy". My inner self esteem has not increased as a result by one bit. What I was - I still am. The knowledge that I had acquired is mine, and the title did not add anything more to it. I also don't feel any special satisfaction. All I wish is to start, to create, to work, to take advantage of my independence."

And after complaining how stifled she feels in Slawuta, and how little in common she has with members of her family and how she would like to live alone, apart from them all, she concludes:

"Sometimes I wish - what a strange idea!- to be far from myself too, to cast off completely all the things that are known as the "burden of heritage", I wish I could be free from culture, as well as from love and ambition. to be like a bright spot that has no contact with the other spots or the outside world. To be without aspirations, without memory, without hope, without any ties that bind. I wish reality were just a blur."

Was this a normal depression that follows a period of

heightened activity or was Chava beginning to express, what will become from now on a recurrent theme, disappointment with life accompanied by bouts of depression? After four years of mental anguish suffered under her husband's roof and seven years of struggle and hard work to make something out of her life, she wished she could turn into a star and disappear into some kind of oblivion?

For the next 4 years Chava did work and take advantage of her independence but whether she gained any real satisfaction from doing that is questionable.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF CHAVA SHAPIRO

"Our literature is missing the participation of one half of the human race, that of the weaker sex. My most fervent wish, as I hereby enter this alien domain, is that members of my sex will awaken and follow in my footsteps. Our literature will remain impoverished and colourless as long as women will not take an active part in it."

So opens the introduction of Chava Shapiro's book Collection of Sketches. Brave words for a woman ~~to make~~ even today, let alone in Russia at the beginning of this century. Chava, in these few brief sentences dramatically cast herself as the flag bearer of not just one revolutionary movement but of two: The Emancipation of Women and The Revival of Hebrew Literature.

Yet as we watch Chava Shapiro's story unfold it becomes painfully apparent that she cared little for women and not that much for Hebrew literature. That in fact what she would have liked to cry out was:

"Life is missing the participation of me... Chava Shapiro... and my most fervent wish is that now that I have awakened and am on the way to independence and academic achievement, in spite of the obstacles, that I should find recognition, as well as personal fulfilment."

Whatever conclusions we shall reach about Chava's motives, it is certain that her story is a very moving one. We have the opportunity here to witness at first hand a personal drama that occurred almost one hundred years ago, told through the words of the protagonist herself. The story's main theme is the individual's struggle against her environment.

Chava's words express emotions and aspirations that are as relevant today as they were in her time. Through a lively and descriptive style she bridges the time between herself and us, creating a persona of real flesh and blood.

THE SHAPIRO FAMILY ORIGINS.⁶¹

The Shapiro family were printers of Hebrew books since 1792 when Moses Shapiro, the son of Pinhas ben Abraham Shapiro of Korets (1726-1791), the well known Hasidic Zaddik⁶², opened a printing press in Slawuta. From the start,

the press was famous for its well-appointed technical arrangements and included a paper factory. The Shapiro press enjoyed a good reputation printing editions of the Babylonian Talmud, the Bible, and the Zohar. In 1835, while under the management of Shmuel and Pinhas, the sons of Moses the founder, the press was shut down under some tragic circumstances. The brothers were falsely accused of killing one of their bookbinders, Leizer Protogin, whose body was found hanging in the Tailor's synagogue. The alleged motive was that Protogin knew that the Shapiros were publishing Hasidic literature which was a contravention of the censorship laws. They were put under arrest, tortured severely and tried by a military court. Contrary to the evidence they were found guilty and thrown into jail where they languished under unspeakable conditions for twenty years. In 1856, Tsar Alexander II, upon his ascent to the throne, freed them.⁶³

As a result of this incident, all Hebrew printing presses were closed in Volhynia and Lithuania in 1835 and thousands of Hebrew books were burnt. Between 1837-1846 only one Hebrew printing house was allowed to exist in all of Russia: The Romm firm in Vilna. This monopoly ended in 1847 when Shmuel Shapiro's sons bid the highest price for the right to establish a new printing press in Zhitomir. From then on the two Jewish printing houses of Romm and Shapiro, following the strict censorship laws of Russia, maintained a very tight control over what was published in Jewish circles in Russia.

They decided which books to print and which not, while at the same time controlling the price of books. By refusing to print anything but religious and Hasidic works, they stifled the Haskala movement in Russia which happened to suit both the authorities and the Jewish establishment, and forced the more progressive Jewish writers to print their works abroad.

By the time Chava Shapiro was born in 1876, however, only the paper factory remained in the hands of the Shapiro family.⁶⁴

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Chava was born on December 26, 1876 ⁶⁵, in Slawuta, province of Volhynia, in the Ukraine, which after the second partitioning of Poland, in 1793, became part of Russia. As we have seen, Chava's father, Yaakov Shamai Shimshon, was a descendent of Pinhas from Koretz, the founder in 1791 of the first Hebrew printing press in Slawuta. His business was paper manufacturing, for which he leased forests from the local nobleman, the Duke or Prince Szangorsky.⁶⁶ Judging from the high standard of life that he provided his family, Yaakov Shamai was a very successful businessman and one of the leading citizens of the community which in 1897, numbered, out of a total population of 10,000, 4891 Jews.

In a letter to Brainin, Chava describes how she arrived one night at 2:30 in the morning at the Slawuta railway station, to find, to her chagrin, that her telegram had not

been received and no one was there to await her:

" Imagine arriving in the middle of the night at Slawuta station and no one there to meet you. Darkness all around, no horses or carriages available, ... I asked to be brought in front of the station master himself and here I became a "true Shapiro"! "Himself" at once ordered a horse and carriage for me to bring me into town and wanted to accompany me himself to my home. I thankfully declined, I was afraid and proceeded alone to my parents' house."⁶⁷

Chava's father had been married once before, and had two daughters from that first marriage. From his second marriage to Chava's mother, there were five children: ~~three~~ three sons, Chava and a daughter, who died from scarlet fever in 1893, at the age of eleven.⁶⁸ Chava does not mention her father in her letters or in her diary until his death. On March 11, 1912 in her diary she writes:

" My father died. The nest was broken up. Although I haven't been overly attached to him in his life, (I and my brothers lavish all our love and admiration on our mother who is always prepared to give her soul for us) he was the head of the family, he was our father. If he did not have much to do with us, he also did not overburden us with demands, especially in the last few years when he let us

live as we wanted, even when he did not approve. He made an effort to be agreeable to all of us, hoping that we knew that he was on our side. And indeed every time I stayed at my parents' home I felt that he gave in on many issues. But I knew that he felt that we were a family and that all was well.

He was capable of sacrificing all for his love of the truth, and in this sense he was strong and steady as a rock. He is missed in the house. Somehow he was its head. I feel I have become an orphan, father is no more and childhood has receded even further away. Life is becoming serious."

It was with her mother that Chava had a very special relationship. And even though there were other children, it was never a secret that Chava was her mother's favourite. She was her first teacher, her staunch supporter, her friend and ally, the person who was always there when she needed her. From birth until Chava left Russia at the age of 43, her mother was the only constant in her life, and Slawuta the only real home she ever had.

According to both Chava and her brother M. (in his covering letter to Genazim, see below note 16) their mother, Menucha Sheinberg, was an exceptionally intelligent and talented woman, who came from a well educated family in Kishinev. She ran the Shapiro household in a very traditional

way as befitted a family descended from the Koretser Rebbe, but at the same time managed to be progressive in her outlook. She allowed Chava to sit with her brothers while they studied the Talmud and the Bible but could not allow her to study the Torah, even though Chava was considered an Iluy, a prodigy, from an early age. Jewish Law excluded girls from studying because they were not allowed to participate actively in religious ritual.

In the Mishna, women are exempt from the time-bound positive mitzvot of the three daily prayers, the reading of the Torah in public places and the participation in prayer sessions, Minyans, where ten men must be present. In addition to the above, women are also exempted from some positive mitzvot that are not time-bound, like studying the Torah, redeeming the first born son and the responsibility for the circumcision and education of their sons.⁶⁹

There are some very clear interdictions regarding the study of Torah by women. Moses ben Maimon, the twelfth century sage, wrote in Hilchot Talmud, 1,13:

"A woman who learns Torah has a reward but it isn't the same as a man's, since she isn't commanded to learn. And even though she has a reward, the sages commanded that a man not teach Torah to his daughter, since most women's minds are not geared toward being taught and they turn words of Torah into nonsense."

However as Rabbi Moses Isserlis, the 16th century halakhist admitted in Yoreh Deah, 246,4,: "Nonetheless, a woman must learn the laws that apply to her". Since women were charged with the important responsibilities of keeping Kosher, preparing for the festivals and raising children in a religious atmosphere, it fell on the mothers to teach their daughters the important things that they needed to know.

For Chava this limited education was very frustrating. In "Kidush Halevana"⁷⁰, the last sketch in her Collection of Sketches, Chava gives vent to her anger of growing up female in a Jewish household. She describes the excitement of the first appearance of the new moon and how the male members of the family rush out, anxious not to miss the first view...looking for their siddur and finding the right page for the blessing...while Chava stands on the sideline, nervously looking on, knowing that she will be the butt of her brothers' jokes: " Look who is here! Why? You too have to bless the moon?!" Her own brothers took advantage of such an occasion to insult and anger her, 'proving' their superiority over her.

Chava was particularly hurt at such times as most of the time she was considered one of them. She took part in all their games, running and skipping with them. She was permitted to construct the sukkah and study with them, even if the old rabbi who taught them, always sighed: " If only she were a boy, what a pity!" and was forced to exclude her from his Torah

teaching even though she yearned to study the Torah! What was even worse, her own mother, whom she considered far superior to everyone there, was also excluded. As females, she and her mother, were not even allowed to look at the celebrants, they were forced to cover their eyes, lest something terrible befall them...

It was her mother who came to Chava's rescue whenever she could. She hired private tutors for her who taught her Hebrew, foreign languages and secular literature. Chava mastered French, and German, in addition to Russian, Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish.

Chava always remembered her childhood as a warm and happy period, spent in an idyllic setting. There is never any mention in her letters or her diary of any economic hardships or political unrest. At a time when the situation of the Russian Jews was exceptionally hard, her family seemed to lead a charmed existence. They had a large home, many servants, and travelled abroad whenever they wished. The family home was situated outside the town proper, in the midst of forests, lakes and a rolling country-side, a setting that instilled in Chava an abiding love for nature. In an illustrated post card, depicting La Galerie Sanatorium of Slawuta, Chava writes to Brainin:

" When I come to our gates, every lane, every narrow path is familiar to me. I recognize the young tree over here and the tall one over there. It seems to me that the trees

know me and welcome me with greetings. Everything around here awakens in me memories of my childhood. Here is where I ran and danced when I was a little girl, there is where I wept when I began to understand...

A few days later, she sends another illustrated post card, this one showing Les Villas du Sanatorium, and she writes:

" My friend! This time I am not writing to you from the upper spheres but from the lower regions where the bulls and donkeys are trampling over the field mice." ⁷¹

MARRIAGE

This idyllic life came to an end when Chava reached marriageable age. According to Jewish law, women, although ostensibly free and legally responsible, were never quite considered grown up. They were always under the authority of a man, first their fathers and then their husbands who were chosen for them by their fathers. For Chava to suddenly discover that because she reached a certain age, she ceased to be the same as everyone else, must have been a catastrophic discovery. She, who was smarter than most, had to become virtuous, pious and compliant and never use her brains again. Marriage was the only destiny for girls of her time, even her mother could not prevent it from happening.

A picture taken of Chava around this time shows a plain looking girl, leaning with her left elbow against a

wooden cabinet with both her hands clasped in front. Her well rounded face is expressionless. Her most arresting feature is her hair, which is parted in the middle and cascades down to her knees. She is wearing a high waisted skirt and an elegant white, long sleeved blouse with two rows of buttons on its front and a wide contrasting band of silk on the collar and the cuffs. A necklace of what appears to be fresh water pearls, adorns her neck.

Chava married Limel Rosenboim in 1896, at the age of 20. Two years later a son, Pinhas, was born. They lived in Slawuta with Chava's parents until 1899 or 1900 and then moved to Warsaw where they set up their first home. Chava mentions her husband very rarely. All we know is that he was from a well to do family of bankers and that he worked with his father. Limel had several married brothers and Chava became very friendly with one of her sister-in-laws, Regina. The Rosenboims lived very well. They owned summer homes in Ottwock, a suburb of Warsaw, and often vacationed at various spas in Germany.

THE JEWISH BOURGEOISIE OF WARSAW

The Rosenboim family life style was quite typical of the new class of rich Jews that lived in Warsaw at the time. Judging by their German name they probably came to Warsaw under the Prussian rule (after Poland's second partition in 1793) when a Jewish community began to emerge, made up of German and Austrian foreigners. These newcomers brought no social or

cultural traditions with them, setting Warsaw apart from cities like Brody or Vilna where Jews had settled much earlier. Under Polish rule Jews were not allowed to live in Warsaw and those who tried were expelled time and time again. During the Prussian rule families like the Rosenboims had to buy, for large sums of money, the privilege of settling and working in the city. They were obliged to renew this privilege annually. It was not until the uprising of 1861 that the Russians gave the Jews the right to live in Warsaw. The first Jews who lived in Warsaw were bankers, industrialists and business men. Under the Russians, especially after the 1861 uprising, there was an intense push for russification which polarized the Jewish community into two distinct groups: a very assimilated, small class of rich Jews, like the Rosenboims and a very large class of very poor, very pious Hasidic Jews. The rich Jews found themselves in the forefront of a great economical boom, encouraged by the Russian authorities to industrialise and open new markets in Poland and Russia. It was Jewish money and enterprise that built the railroads and created new industries and factories, opening up thousands of new jobs which led to the emergence of a new social class of wage earners, otherwise known as the proletariat.

The period between 1860 and 1914, saw the greatest transformation in the Warsaw Jewish community. To gain favour with the authorities, the Jews secularized their way of life, changed their way of dressing, learnt Polish and Russian and

began to send their children to secular schools. The influx of Jews from the countryside which quadrupled the population, brought diversity and excitement to all aspects of cultural life. A new Jewish intelligentsia emerged, cutting across the class barriers and consisting of teachers, artists, publishers writers, scientists, free professionals, high school and university students. For the first time Jews established contacts with their Polish counterparts and together contributed to Warsaw's special vitality.

During the three years that Chava lived under her husband's roof she shared the life style of the Jewish bourgeoisie. She had a nanny for her son as well as other household help, freeing her to pursue her own private interests in peace. She spent her time going to the theatre and the opera. She visited friends and entertained them in her home. She attended lectures, browsed in book stores, sat reading in libraries and wrote. In Peretz's house she met all the important writers and publishers and in the coffee houses she sat with the aspiring artists, or "Bachurei Chemed" (playboys?), as she referred to them on a post card that one of them drew for her, which she sent to Brainin.⁷²

The period of great economic and cultural growth did not last for very long. The Poles, who never forgot the loss of their kingdom, blamed the Jews for collaborating with their Russian enemies, no matter how sympathetic the Jews had always shown themselves to be to the Polish cause. Antisemitism which

had abated for a while began again with the pogrom in Warsaw in 1881, and never diminished until 1918, when Poland regained its independence. In 1899 an economic recession began which grew worse between 1900-1905, resulting in large numbers of unemployed, terrible famine and epidemics. The Jews were blamed for all the hardships. As we have already seen, assimilation as a tactic for peaceful co-existence failed, and in its stead new ideologies, like socialism and Zionism sprung up.

Chava never mentioned any of this in her writings. She was neither a socialist nor a Zionist and whatever opinions she had on the subject of politics she kept to herself. What she did express was her deepening dissatisfaction with her private life. An example is this entry in her diary. After first describing the summer day as heavily overcast and shrouded by darkness, she adds:

"It all suits my inner world, there too heavy clouds have taken over and neither sun nor hope are visible... and this in a month like Ellul which during my youth was always bright and sunny. But then there was hope everywhere. Now, it seems my days of youth are over, everything is covered by heavy cloud, and I cannot believe that these clouds will ever disperse and let brightness and hope appear again."⁷³

Chava hid her growing frustration by following a

rigidly established routine. In the fall and winter she kept herself busy in Warsaw. In the spring and part of the summer she travelled with her mother or another female companion to the bathing resorts of Germany, returning to Slawuta for the High Holidays.

Taking the cure was a very popular pastime of the rich at the time. It provided, especially the women, with a legitimate excuse for getting away from their husbands and leading an independent life, albeit accompanied by a chaperon. Chava expressed her disdain for such women by writing from Francisbad, where she herself was staying:

" When I go out on the promenade and see the female species float by, their faces showing no worry, no knowledge, no freedom, no ambition and no wishes, I begin to understand "The Woman Question". One has to admit that when one sees such sights (and here one encounters everywhere hordes of such creatures), one gets to recognize the weakness of these unhappy creatures. They are weak in body and spirit, devoid of all strength. Here, like in all the other spas that belong to the lucky spoilt, you encounter faces that are tired and satiated from having had all their desires fulfilled. They don't ask for anything and don't lack anything. They only worry about their health

which is more precious to them than gold."⁷⁴

THE ENCOUNTER WITH BRAININ

It is more than probable that given the mores of the time, Chava would have gone on living in the same manner for the rest of her life. But in May of 1899, while on a trip to Francisbad with her mother, she met Reuven Brainin and from that moment her life suddenly became unendurable:

"Nothing angers me more than to hear: you must do it this way because that's how it's done, you must think this way because "this is how they think". Is there anything more stupid or idiotic than to adopt an opinion just because many people share it? I encounter idiocy, hypocrisy and petty mindedness everywhere I turn. And I so hoped for another kind of life, another sort of environment."⁷⁵

She had nothing but criticism for the milieu to which she belonged. She lashed out at its assimilation and superficiality:

" Give me life, space, light, freedom! I am choking! Alas, how petty, impoverished, sad and small life is if it only consists of daily worries, small matters that only deal with the needs of the hour. How glorious and grand life

can be when it consists of an inner world filled with spiritual uplifting, mental aspirations and great deeds!

I don't know which life style I would choose. But when I only see people of the first type so empty and far removed from anything noble or great, from any strong ambition or sublime sentiment....when I see how they desecrate holiness, its purity and glory with their ignorant boorishness, when I see how they joke and dismiss with laughter things that are beyond their understanding and feelings, when I see how quickly they are content with pettiness and emptiness and feel no need for something holy, like poetry or beauty, not even seeking it or wanting to borrow it,...I just wonder how it is possible to live.

I admire members of the older generation. They at least had religion to elevate, purify and cleanse them. They felt during their entire prosaic, ordinary lives that there was something else, something sublime, poetic, grand and glorious and it satisfied them. But what do the present people have? Emptiness, pettiness and meanness. Their heads are immersed in their affairs, in their jokes and

silly witticisms. They feel no need for uplifting ideas and don't recognize the existence of a great inner force and they don't even feel deprived. The poor do not feel their own poverty." ⁷⁶

She met Brainin just at the time when she was searching for some solution to her private misery:

" On the one hand I experience strong feelings of power that give me courage to resist and rebel. I wish with all my heart and soul, with all my strength and might to break out, to remove my bonds, to be strong so I can escape my prison, break down the chains, shatter and destroy them and reach for freedom and the open spaces.

On the other hand I experience feelings of weakness and helplessness, feelings of submission, self pity, doubt and despair that they will make me give in , force me to accept my so called duty and account for every step I take, cause me to accept my fate and sit still because that's how it was ordained. There is a mighty war within my soul." ⁷⁷

Brainin was the catalyst that Chava needed to galvanize her into action. Meeting and falling in love with him increased her frustrations and anger at having to live a life that was not of her own choosing. How Chava developed such a

strong sense of self, born and brought up as she was amongst people who always put the collective's rights ahead of the individual's, is a mystery. Yet from the earliest time she complained of the mediocrity and small mindedness of her own people and her biggest fear was that the longer she stayed around them, the more she would come to resemble them. She knew in her heart that there was more to life than what "they" said, and that the key to a different life was education.

A photograph that Chava sent Brainin around this time shows her standing with her favourite younger brother. They are both wearing fashionable winter coats and hats. Chava's coat is trimmed with a fur collar, matching the puff inside which her hands are tucked. The brother, who is clean shaven and quite handsome, looks straight at the camera with a jaunty look. Chava, who is much thinner than in her previous picture, has a sad expression on her face as her eyes gaze out into infinity.

" I realise now that I cannot change my feelings. During the last several years I tried to prove to myself that I could do it, but I failed. I understood that according to my feelings, my mood, my outlook and tendencies, I cannot continue such a life. That it was necessary once and for all to break off the bonds and put an end to such an artificial and lies filled situation, in spite of the great difficulties and the sacrifices that I and others have had to make. I would have considered it a terrible crime, and myself despicable and unworthy, had I

continued living like that, had I not found enough strength in myself to stand up to my convictions and instead would have given in to their pleadings and disapproval and would have continued to mislead my soul while deceiving others.

No, no and again no! We must free and save our souls from such a life while it is still possible, while we haven't yet become too much like them and haven't caused others to become like them!"⁷⁸

Chava's relationship with Brainin was from the start fraught with difficulties. Brainin was 37 years old in 1899, a married man and the father of four children. Although he was a well known and widely published writer, his work did not provide enough for him and his family to live on, especially not in the style that he envisaged for himself. He is often described by his contemporaries as an "aesthete" who always conducted himself stylishly. He lived in nice apartments, dressed fashionably, travelled a great deal and collected art and books. When he had money he spent it lavishly; when he did not, he complained to his editors, publishers and friends, and was not averse to begging for loans. After knowing Chava a little more than a year he asked her too for money, and in a letter written on July 29, 1900, she replied that she was complying with her mother's instructions, and sending him 100 rubles. (Chava referred to this loan 28 years later while she

was starving in Prague, but more about that later). To make ends meet Brainin's wife worked as a masseuse in the fashionable spas of Germany, thereby binding her husband to her more securely than their marital bonds could have ever done.

From the beginning Chava blithely disregarded Mrs. Brainin's legitimate claims on her husband, never showing the least bit of sympathy to her as the wronged party. But from the frequent remarks that Chava makes in her own letters about her, it is obvious that Brainin did not have an easy time of it at home. It is certain that Brainin never expected to unleash such an emotional floodgate when he began corresponding with Chava, especially since she was the daughter of an esteemed friend of his family.⁷⁹ He certainly was not interested in assuming the responsibility of becoming the guide and ally of such a distraught young lady like Chava. His life was complicated enough. As a confirmed lady's man he expected a short lived flirtation, consisting mainly of letter writing. From the only letter that survives on his side of the correspondence⁸⁰, we see how he intended to be playful with her, flatter her, compliment her brilliant mind and lofty thoughts, call her a noble Hebraist, tell her that he saw her not as a member of the gentle sex but as a symbol of purity and innocence, even show some sympathy for her "terrible" life in Warsaw, but nothing more. When Chava tells him in June of 1903 that she intends to leave her husband, Brainin immediately grows alarmed, advising caution and further reflection,

bringing forth from Chava an extremely disappointed response:

" When you uttered with your own mouth, the words that I have to return to Russia! - the ground fell out from underneath my feet! I lost my only hope, my only support, my much needed help! And yet in spite of that I shall stand firm! In spite of that I will not be discouraged, on the contrary I shall fight even harder! ... Whatever I have to do I will do. Once I have made up my mind I will not reconsider, even if I fall dead on the battleground I will not give up: I shall never return to Russia, no matter what!"⁸¹

True to her word, after her usual summer vacation in Francisbad and Karlsbad, Chava came in September to Slawuta, fully resolved never to go back to her husband. Unfortunately the price for her freedom was tragically high. She was forced to leave her beloved six year old son Pinhas behind. She was devastated:

" These are not empty words when I say that my heart is torn into shreds. I have two hearts now and both are wounded and dying, tortured and aching. A mother's heart! No words can describe! My son! I left you, I abandoned you! Will you remember me or forget me, curse or bless me? My son! This is one word that is sufficient to cause hot and bitter tears to flow from my torn and wounded heart. My son! I remember you and my soul is in turmoil, I see

your picture, your small soft body, your tiny delicate hands reaching to me, your large eyes asking, wondering, searching. I see, I see, my son!!! Where is he? Give me back what is mine! Who gave you the right to cut my soul, to break my heart. What have I done to you - or to myself. My son?! You are not permitted to see your mother! My son, will you forget me? Where are you my son?! Alas!"⁸²

The guilt over the abandonment of her child haunted Chava for a long time. For the next few years Chava could only see him in Warsaw, in the presence of his father who refused to let the boy visit even his grandparents in Slawuta. Chava complied with the restrictions in spite of their awkwardness, and spent all her free time in Warsaw. Eventually the boy was allowed to come to Slawuta to spend the summers with his mother. In July of 1911, when Pinhas was 13 years old, Chava comments in her diary that after spending five weeks with him she realises that, in spite of their frequent separations, they feel close to one another. "When I am with him, it is as though we have never been apart". In the summer of 1913 she writes: " The only thing that has remained mine is my son, and only in him, in his eyes, in his innocence, in his devotion and love to me, I see my own pure happiness".

It is unclear at what point Chava's son came to live with her permanently but in 1919 they fled together to

Czechoslovakia where Pinhas shared his mother's unhappy life. He studied engineering in Prague, and in the late 1930s Chava succeeded in getting him out of the country and into the United States. He apparently lived in St. Louis, Missouri and died there in a car accident in 1953.⁸³

The three months (from September to December 1903) that Chava spent in Slawuta were the most difficult period of her life. Fortunately her family supported and stood by her in spite of their own misgivings and the pressures put on them by the Rosenboim family. Her husband begged her to come back. He promised to leave her alone and let her lead her life in whichever way she chose. His father was less understanding, he was furious and at first refused to return Chava's dowry. Chava also had to contend with her grief over the parting from her son and her disappointment over Brainin's tepid support. And if all this were not enough, she had to plan the future course of her entire life. On December, 16 when she was finally ready to leave, she summed up the period in her diary:

"No matter how I hated my life here or how devoid of content it was, one thing I must point out, I feel after spending three months here as though I have been thoroughly wrung out and cleansed. I came out cleaner, richer and purer, overflowing with spirits."

By contrast to the previous year, 1904 was Chava's

happiest year. She was 28 years old and finally launched on a new life, doing exactly what she always wanted to do.

" Is it possible? Is it possible? is it really me who lives and breathes in freedom, weightless, with no inside pressure? I am so filled with life, liberty, such special inner lightness that it is difficult for me to believe that I am the same person as the one who lived, depressed and burdened, through these last few years, since I left my childhood home. I have never felt as young, as free, as good as I do these days. Even as I sit in my room, bent over books all day long, I feel the same lightness, the same liberty that only those who experienced oppression can appreciate. I breathe the air with special feeling and with each breath I draw, a wave of life, the dew of childhood, come over me! My God, how pleasant and beautiful is this world!

I feel like a small child who holds in his hands a most precious toy and looks around him fearful that someone may at any moment take it away from him, I too am afraid that someone will attack me suddenly and steal my freedom away from me, that I shall be deprived, separated, from it, as though it were possible for anyone to force me to give it up. I am afraid to lose it only because it is so precious."⁸⁴

Chava who had never attended school in her life got down to some serious studying, preparing herself for the

entrance examinations to the University of Bern, a university that did not require a high school leaving certificate. By the following March, 20, 1904, she could look back on the previous year and write in her diary:

"All the torments, struggles and trials I have suffered have elevated my spirits and made me stronger. They have given me courage... yes. Only now I feel life in all its beauty and glory. I am filled with childlike glee, with innocence and sheer joy. Emotions that until now others have stolen and smothered within me.... I haven't felt like this in seven years...I cannot recognize myself... I am intoxicated by life..."

In December 1905, Chava and her younger brother were in Bern, sharing an apartment and attending courses as external students. They were preparing for the examinations which would allow them to enrol in the university as full time students. For the next five years Chava concentrated on her studies, working hard to catch up with the years that she had lost. Her mood, while it did not stay at its euphoric high of 1904, managed to maintain a positive tone.

Her relationship with Brainin during this time fell into a frustrating pattern due primarily to Brainin's very complicated travelling schedule. Between the summer of 1905 and the summer of 1910, for instance, they only met a total of four times, even though they were both in Western Europe.

During this time Chava met several eligible gentlemen whom she quite liked but who lost their appeal the moment Brainin chose to reappear, which he uncannily did every time Chava removed herself from his sphere of influence. We see from her letters that Chava hoped to pin Brainin down to a more stable relationship and no matter how deviously Brainin dealt with her she refused to admit that he had no such intentions.

Brainin's ultimate betrayal came in 1910, when he and his wife, after travelling for six months in North America, decided to settle in Canada, in effect putting an ocean between himself and Chava. For the next three years there was very little communication between them. Chava, after receiving her doctorate, chose Berlin as her base. She saw a great deal of A.S. Horodesky whom she met while they were both students in Bern, wrote articles, travelled in Europe and enjoyed her life as an independent career woman. Just when it seemed that she had her life well in control, the 51 year old Brainin turned up unexpectedly. He arrived in August, 1913, spending four months in Europe, the last two with the 37 year old Chava. Two whole months - the longest and most intense time the lovers had had since their meeting fifteen years before. For Chava the experience revealed what true love was really like and she was more convinced than ever that the two of them were bound together by destiny. In her diary she wrote:

" Who expected this? I once had a dream, a beautiful wonderful dream. Or perhaps - it was not a dream but a

strong and beautiful reality. It was too beautiful though to be a reality and so I called it a dream. An unfulfilled dream that had faded away, disappeared like a mist in the night.

What was lit from the start with such a flame! with such innocence and purity is impossible to extinguish or diminish. Actually, a great deal has changed, the situations, the outlooks, the opinions and especially the object! How the object has changed! how he has been weakened and squeezed dry by the obstacles, the hard struggles and his compromises. And all this because "he was fulfilling his duties"! How he has changed and yet for me he has remained the same as he used to be!

How he has been bent and twisted. They stole his physical and spiritual strength, they oppressed and broke him! and still, the same spark in his innocent eyes! If I could only erase the many difficulties that he has known, if they could be forgotten, skipped over, blotted out - and there would emerge that strong mind that I had once known and liked so much, the mind which won my heart for ever! And maybe I too have changed! But he sees only the outer changes in me, he thinks my silly actions, my hopping and jumping and dancing around are the real me. He does not realise that all this far from my inner essence, that I only seek this so called "lifestyle" because I have nothing else!"⁸⁵

After the two months of ecstasy were over Brainin returned to Canada and aside from two letters (in April of 1914) he never wrote to Chava again. Chava was convinced that Brainin could not write to her because of his wife. But rather than accuse him of passive acquiescence, she pitied him for being a mistreated victim. It took Horodesky to point out some painful truths to her:

" Horodesky thinks that I am "Brainin's victim". For 15 years he has held me in his net and does not let me go. How much truth is in this? ... Is he my personal disaster, pushing me off the straight road and preventing me from ever reaching a safe haven? Do I have to remove his chains to prove to myself that what Hor. sees is right?

If only he who is devoted to me had the strength to save me from the error or "disaster" of my life! If only someone could prove to me that this was actually a disaster!"⁸⁶

Horodesky also accused her of being too preoccupied with outward appearances and having neglected her true nature (something that Brainin had noticed too):

" The bitter truth is that I have been wandering hither and yonder throughout my whole life because I lack that special place where I could settle and sum up the total of my life, the events and adventures, my worries, my

feelings and my thoughts - and the result is that I cannot concentrate, as Horodesky says. So it is not I who am guilty but my cruel fate. This is so upsetting. I wish I too had a special corner, a sacred and dear place where I could warm myself beside the burning fire, with someone made just for me, and unburden my heavy heart."⁸⁷

But Chava ends the passage defiantly by writing that she will continue to lead her life her way and not according to what someone else may think was a better way. She is clearly referring to Horodesky when she adds that she cannot accept feelings which she is incapable of reciprocating. She prefers her situation, even if it is a hard one: "Because here there is no shadow of deceit." Horodesky, unfortunately did not have the strength to break Brainin's hold over Chava.

DISENCHANTMENT

On June 28, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo thereby precipitating the start of a world war. Germany declared war on Russia by August the first and by September the first, Chava was back in Slawuta, dismissing her previous concerns as insignificant in view of the universal conflict looming over everyone's lives. By the following February Chava was in Kiev, alone in a foreign city. Her explanation was that although she enjoyed being surrounded by her loved ones in Slawuta, she could only tolerate them for short periods of time. She claimed that she

enjoyed solitude yet she was feeling very lonely and depressed in Kiev, convinced that everything she had hoped to accomplish in life would never come to pass. She went home for the holidays during Passover, 1916 and stayed on for the next two years. First her mother became very sick and then it looked as though her son would be taken into the army. The whole family was living under constant pressure, their lives filled with worry and fear. Chava was continuously depressed, her nerves badly strained. She was overwhelmed with the minutiae of everyday life and wondered whether she was condemned forever to lead this type of "soulless" existence, like some lower caste of human being.

It was the Russian Revolution that put an end to Chava's suffering and brought her out of her apathy. On April 21, 1917 she writes in her diary:

" Almost two months have passed since the big changes have occurred in Russia and I have not yet written one word. Even the most enthusiastic dreamers did not expect such a big transformation - such a revolution will spur every living person who is capable of understanding social life, to work toward an awakening. There is new life everywhere, life that is filled with demands and aspirations for new light. And our own world is filled with joy and freedom, hopes and aspirations, so much so that cooperation between the different groups is impossible. No one can arrive at any agreement or come to any consensus. The heart is

filled with both happiness and fear.

My hands are filled with work and I have no time to write about the current events."

But eight months later Chava has a change of heart:

" Revolution, upheavals, change after change. Life is filled with interest, with work, grief and worry but the intoxication of triumph too. There is not enough time. Even in this small town one cannot excuse oneself from community work. The day before yesterday I returned from Kiev. This is the third time since the summer that I have visited there. I spent several weeks there and there too life is filled with work. Actually while the hands are filled with work, the heart is empty. Public life, in general, may have become more meaningful, more interesting, but private life has become dull, dull and empty! it has diminished and is melting away. The private "I" blends and disappears within the great multitudes of the collective. There is no inner expansion or education of the potential "I" and this saddens me."

By January 28, 1918, she feels apologetic when she writes in her diary that she feels incapable of being swept up by the general enthusiasm of the revolution. None of the heightened activity around her succeeds in nourishing her soul. She spends July and August in Odessa, enjoying the city and

especially the sea. She meets Haim Nachman Bialik, the great Hebrew national poet, who advises her to move to Odessa where she will find a thriving Hebrew literary circle and many congenial people whose interests ^{are} were similar to hers. This milieu, in Bialik's view, will satisfy her much more than her existing life in a small town. She does not take Bialik's advice and returns to Slawuta. In March, 1919, she writes in the diary that pogroms are raging everywhere but so far have not touched her. By May however, the situation grows much worse. For the previous three months, she writes, every person in Slawuta has been under a constant death threat. Chava herself has had to hide in some stranger's home for a whole week because of her name. The events have not enriched her soul, she writes, but they have taught her a great deal about her own people and how others treat them. She describes how she passes her time reading books, they are her only consolation. She mourns the passing of precious time, feeling that the best years of her life are wasting away. She yearns to escape and go to some far away place where she would be able to live under different conditions.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Chava's yearning to escape from Russia was realised in the fall of 1919. By reconstructing some of her diary entries we find that she and her son left Slawuta in September, 1919, with the help of a Czech business associate of her father's. Her mother and brothers stayed behind. According to some unsubstantiated reminiscences of a contemporary of Chava's son, the Czech who saved Chava and her son was the supervisor of the forests that belonged to Prince Szangorsky whose castle was in Slawuta. The forester was a tall, good looking bachelor, who lived in a villa at the edge of the forest. He was a solitary person who did not associate with people from the town. It seems that Chava, who probably met the man through her father, developed a close intimate relationship with this Christian and visited him often in his villa, raising in the process quite a few eyebrows."

When Chava arrived in Czechoslovakia she settled with her son in Prague. After having been cut off from the world for almost six years, she at once tried to reestablish contact with her friends. She sent off a barrage of letters to Brainin, in Hebrew and in Yiddish, telling him of her miraculous rescue from the jaws of death, certain that he had worried himself sick over her during the past six years. But Brainin who had taken a vow of silence did not reply even under these special circumstances. In July she was granted an interview with President Masaryk for the purpose of an article, and in

September after having located her old friend Horodesky in Bern and her sister-in-law Regina in Lausanne, she was on her way to Switzerland.

After this initial burst of energy a reaction to the horrors of the last few years, set in. Her emotions and thought processes, which were frozen in the period just following her rescue, began to thaw out and as her sensations returned she began to understand what she had actually gone through. In her diary, at this time, she remembers how Jewish culture was systematically eradicated in Russia and how people were forced to return to the state of forest animals, hiding from the predators, concerned only with self defense and survival.⁹⁰

Chava was traumatized by the things that she had seen and experienced during the pogroms and she sank once again into one of her recurring depressions. This time she was in real trouble. She had no money, no work, no contacts, and her great love, Brainin, had not even acknowledged her letters. And for the first time, because of the political situation, she could not go home to Slawuta. In October 1921, she left her son in Prague and withdrew to Munkacs⁹¹, where her Czech protector provided her with a safe refuge. She remained in his care for the next 4 years.

"From the heavens I was sent this "goy" friend. I had nothing to do with it, it was thanks to my father. Without his help, it is certain that I and my son would not have been saved two years ago in Russia. If it were not for

him, my life here would be much harder, if it were not for him... I owe him so much. I have to admit that I have never met, even within our own people, a man with so much heart who thinks that no sacrifice is too big when it comes to doing one's duty and who only thinks of others, never of himself. Yet in spite of that.... Almighty God, how can we ask others to love us when we, since our births, with our mothers milk, inherited, if not the hatred, for sure the suspicion and the lack of trust in them and in all their actions towards us? . I yearn to be with my own kind! Perhaps it is only a fallacy, but I feel it: In my people's company I feel I belong, in this company I am a stranger, a stranger, always a stranger, even when they honour and respect me a thousand times, for them I remain a stranger..."⁹²

In spite of these strong sentiments Chava continued to live in Munkacs, doing her work, receiving visits from her son and travelling to Zionist congresses in different parts of Europe. When the news of her mother's death arrived in the summer of 1922, she burrowed even deeper into her protected shelter and cried inconsolably for her mother, for herself and for the way life turned out to be:

"The heart is empty, everything is all the same now - my mother is gone. Mother, mother! How she wished to see us, how the dear woman hoped. Two years she was alone living

without her children, far from them but in her house where she waited and waited: Maybe, maybe she 'll "be lucky to see them". She died alone and no one was with her in her final moments. My good mother, my unhappy mother! My tears will not make it easier for you or for me. Something was severed from my life and I feel the "breath of death". Without mother, without the idea, the hope of seeing her, of supporting her, of consoling her, bringing her some hope, life has no meaning left. This is an ending. The happiest and best period of my life is over. I once had a mother who encouraged me from afar. Her memory alone made my life easier to bear and she? she only lived for us, hoping to see us and do whatever she could for our happiness, for our good. All her life she did just that. Mother, mother, mother! Who will answer my call now that she cannot hear me!"⁹³

In 1923 Chava was still in Munkacs even though she detested the place with a passion:

"Who is forcing me to remain here? I ask myself this question for the hundredth time. But I have no home, no place to call my own, everything was lost. Mother is not alive and my home town has lost its attraction for me, even though I would now welcome the sight of my friends and acquaintances from there. To think that I used to complain in the past whenever I had to spend some time

there. I am completely alone here, lost in a foreign city, in a foreign country, among strange people. I don't even have the pleasure of working with friends . I thought this was a good place, a city of Jews! Almighty God, one has to be capable of tolerating such people. It is better not to meet with them at all. I would not have believed the existence of such strange creatures, they have nothing else in their lives but stories about their "rebbe's" miracles "4...Even the "intelligent ones" amongst them are not any different.

I regret the vitality I feel in spite of my passing years. I am still relatively young and could be of benefit. But I refuse to be a burden on anyone. My son is finishing his studies and I, I would like so much to go to Palestine, be among friends who are close to my heart, work, be active, help others, but my hands are tied. Without money it is not possible and here I am choking...I have nothing, no life, no friends, no relatives. If this is my fate, I must fight it!"⁹⁵

Having no money forced Chava to swallow her pride and endure Munkacs for another two years. Finally in 1925, just before her 49th birthday, she moved back to Prague. She begrudgingly admitted upon her return that "the dark corner" where she had spent four years of her life was somewhat of a home which did offer her some moments of happiness and

tranquillity. With that she closed that chapter of her life and never mentioned Munkacs or her Czech gentleman friend again.

It was around this time that Simcha Bloch met Chava and gave us his impression of her. (See below note 48) He tells us that Chava had acquired the reputation by then of being very aloof and interested only in her literary work. But upon visiting her in her modest apartment, the author found her restrained yet warm and overflowing with motherly care. He saw before him a middle aged, short, thin woman whose looks had faded but who had a pair of extraordinary intelligent grey eyes, sad but alert. She talked of her early life in the Pale of settlement and her subsequent life in the cultural capitals of the world. She said that she was working on a monograph about President Masaryk as well as gathering material for her autobiography. She hoped her autobiography would be published in Palestine where she yearned to spend her last years.⁹⁶

After his first visit, Bloch returned a number of times and enjoyed himself each time. Chava was always youthful and vital and never stopped planning for the future. Bloch was taken with her crystal clear logic and sharpness of mind and her ability for analyzing the political issues of the day. She especially surprised him with her honesty and empathy with human weakness and her capacity for forgiveness. Her erudition was astonishing. She discoursed on foreign cultural matters as easily as on questions of the Talmud and the Midrash. She was

a brilliant and persuasive conversationalist.

Their last encounter was the most memorable. It was a dark and wintry evening and Chava had run out of all food. The table was bare. Suddenly a group of young children appeared and brought forth fruits, drinks and other goodies. Chava smiled with motherly pride and explained that the children were from her neighbourhood and they must have found out that it was her birthday, and in spite of everybody's great poverty, they went and brought her presents. For the rest of the evening the door kept opening and more children came, bearing roses and other flowers which very soon filled the whole apartment with a lovely smell. Chava's explanation for this remarkable sequence of events was simple: "The children know I always have a warm corner for them in my heart and in my small home." This was their way of reciprocating. She then went on talking about children and the different methods of education, discoursing about the right methods and the wrong ones.

In 1925 Chava had another interesting encounter. After a twelve year absence she met Brainin again. Astonishingly, the meeting which took place during the World Zionist Congress in Vienna, turned out to be only a minor episode:

" It is hard for me to know how much I have changed with the passing of the years, I don't feel the change. But the change in him! It is not that he has grown old, all of us

grow old. It is as though time has accentuated those qualities in him that were probably always there but were not as apparent. When he was younger they added to his attraction, now they have grown prominent and they stand out. His tendency for self admiration and his love of honour have increased to a ridiculous degree and his petty involvement with his sons' lives reminds one of a doting grandmother. The flattery that he gets from people who need him because of his influential position or from those who think he can help them, strengthen in him the conviction and gives him great satisfaction that he is "a great man" in the American sense of the word. The whole thing is so sad! He, Brainin, who used to always aspire to a wider horizon, to greater personal development, accepts now the smooth flattery of a few as "the real thing", as the sign that he is really grand! and whoever mentions the truth - either "does not know" or has been influenced by his enemies..."⁹⁷

Only two years before, on the occasion of Brainin's 60th birthday, Chava had written an article⁹⁸, which was quite different in tone. The article which ostensibly described Brainin's literary career, overflowed with bittersweet memories of what Brainin had meant and still meant to his adoring fans, among whom Chava counted herself.

She described what he looked like when she first saw

him, coming to his apartment in Berlin with an introductory letter from a mutual friend. His face was thin, pale and tired. He had a wide forehead and fine and straight dark hair, a small black beard and beautiful eyebrows. The expression on his face was one of suffering. And his eyes? Dreamers eyes, filled with deep silent sorrow, doubt and longings. He had a delicate soft voice and the questions he asked were ordinary but the way he asked them was special. He tried hard to conceal his inner thoughts but without much success.

Instead of a hard, angry and difficult critic, Chava found a soulful, tender man, with the qualities of a young poet. She went on to say that Brainin was always a dreamer who had trouble differentiating between his dream world and reality. He believed in all his dreams: The return to Zion, the establishment of a university in Jerusalem, the revival of the Hebrew language, the enrichment of Hebrew literature. The young adored him, they knew that whenever he spoke to them he would teach them something beautiful. He loved beauty, in life, in art, everywhere. He enriched his audiences by sharing with them his own riches which grew daily as he went on acquiring new impressions, new discoveries, new sensations. He had been accused of spreading his talents too thin but that was his strength. He had also said that in the 20th century the Jewish people will find a compromise between the heart and the brain, the past and the future, between the love of a nation and that of the individual, the Jew of the old country and the superior

man of the future. This was Brainin's thirst, his ambition, his hope and his certainty. Chava concluded the article by writing that Brainin was the best of their generation.

Judging from this article Chava was still very much under Brainin's spell. So what happened only two years later in Vienna? One can only speculate that the 63 year old Brainin, accompanied by his sons, chose to be consistent with the vow of silence that he had imposed upon himself since his last meeting with Chava, in November of 1913, and avoided all personal contact with her in Vienna.

Around 1926 Chava became emotionally involved with a new man, a Doctor J. Winternitz, citizen of Czechoslovakia. His name first cropped up on March 24, 1920, when Chava, pleading with Brainin to send her money, gave Winternitz's name and address as a return address, thinking it was safer than her own. In the ensuing six years nothing further was heard of him until she mentioned him in her diary in 1926. From the start Chava was very ambivalent about her relationship with Winternitz. She was attracted to him, she respected and admired him, yet she knew she was getting involved with someone who behaved strangely. "This is no good, this is not the right choice, but life is so meaningless without an emotional commitment". When she first met Winternitz he had withdrawn from life and lived in isolation, looking after a mentally sick wife. Chava knew that he was a peculiar man leading an abnormal

existence but hoped that when circumstances changed so would he.

For four years, 1928-1932, Chava does not write in her diary. In 1932, when she resumes, she is already married and the marriage is an unmitigated disaster. The home that Chava was hoping to establish for herself and especially her son, became a hellish place. Her husband with his twisted, paranoic personality, turned their life into a nightmarish existence. His opinions were different from hers. He didn't like Jews or Judaism. He found fault with everything. He was forever angry, irritable and dissatisfied and no matter how Chava tried to adapt to his ways and adjust her life to his, nothing pleased him. He continually insulted, mocked and abused her. She likened herself to a dish rag, too passive and helpless to do anything about her situation and she sank into the depth of despair.

Her one accomplishment, as Europe was becoming increasingly dangerous for Jews, was to send her son to the United States. Their parting was soul wrenching. She was sending the only person she had consistently loved away, not knowing if she would ever see him again.

The proof of how low Chava's self-esteem was at this time, was her perception that she was justly punished "for all the grief I had caused others in my youth, even though I did not mean to". Her fighting spirits were gone and she was displaying the classic symptoms of an abused victim, paralysis

of the will and the inability to change the situation by removing herself from the scene of her humiliations.

"Yes, the years pass and I am still in the same place, in the same mess. My life is filled with nothingness! Nothingness, complete void! I never imagined that I would spend my years like this. Sometimes it seems to me that my real life has ended, that I continue to exist, not to live, just to survive in this miserable existence, which is similar to the existence of our brothers in Western Europe. I exist, but my soul is destroyed. My disappointment is so great and I suffer so much. Everything could have been different, if it weren't for this man's poisoned being, filled with unfounded suspicions. I am incapable of understanding such things, I never dealt with a person who did not trust anyone. All these things are so depressing."⁹⁹

Another four long years had to pass before Chava found relief by exchanging one nightmare for another. She and her husband were deported to Terezin, probably in 1941.¹⁰⁰ The next confirmed date is February 28, 1943, the date of Chava's death in Terezin.

For the final episode of Chava's life we turn once again to Simcha Bloch. One of the children who visited Chava in her apartment on the night of her birthday, was deported with Chava to Terezin. She witnessed Chava's life and death there and survived to tell Simcha Bloch about it. In the ghetto Chava

became a saint. She rose above the daily suffering and humiliations and offered strength and hope to everyone around her. In spite of her age and physical infirmities she seemed to have been endowed by some higher force with a mysterious power which enabled her to provide the desperate people around her with warmth, solace and a sense of security. She truly became Em Kol Chai, the "Mother of All Beings".

Chava found in the camp an old childhood friend whom she protected and looked after. One day they were transferred to another camp where a sadistic guard liked to play pranks on the women prisoners. He would pick women out, one by one, from their ranks and take them away, returning later with his gleaming white smock splattered with blood. The sick joke was that the blood was chicken blood, not human blood. Newcomers like Chava did not know that. When her friend was picked out of their row and taken away, Chava burst into hysterical laughter and fell to the ground. Gradually her laugh turned into a heart breaking wail. Her head fell back against the wall and she died.

NOTES

- 1) Stanley Nash, "The Hebraists of Berne and Berlin circa 1905", in The Great Transition: The Recovery of Centers of Modern Hebrew Literature, ed. Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt (Totowa, N.J.: Rowan & Allanheld, 1985), 44-58.
- 2) Louis Greenberg, The Jews in Russia, the Struggle for Emancipation, v.1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 7.
- 3) Michael Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 4.
- 4) Greenberg, The Jews in Russia, 9.
- 5) Simon Dubnow, History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, (New York: Ktav, 1975), 339.
- 6) 613 precepts or in Hebrew "taryag mitzvot", according to Rabbinic tradition are the number of commandments and prohibitions a pious Jew is responsible for fulfilling in a lifetime of true observance.
- 7) KAHAL or kehilah, the designation for a social unit within the Jewish community which came into being after the loss of Jewish independence. The Kahal existed primarily in urban settings, paralleling the Christian or Moslem communities within which it dwelt. It controlled the religious, economic and social behaviour of its members.
- 8) Dubnow, History of the Jews in Russia, 129.
- 9) Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I, 120, 187.

- 10) Lamdanim, a Hebrew word meaning scholars, but a term which came to represent the established, conservative rabbis who were also known as Mitnagdim, or opposers of Hasidism. Hasidim, the pious ones, were members of the Hasidism movement. Maskilim, the enlightened ones, belonged to the Haskalah or the Enlightenment movement.
- 11) Greenberg, The Jews in Russia, 123.
- 12) Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 26.
- 13) Erich Muhsam's untitled poem, appears in Frederic V. Grunfeld, Prophets Without Honour, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 120. Muhsam who died in a concentration camp in 1934 at the age of 44, was himself a cafe poet.
- 14) Chava is mentioned for example in G. Kressel, Lexicon Hasifrut Haivrit, (Encyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature), v.2, (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1967), 968, and in Zalmen Reyzen, Lexicon fun der Yiddisher Literature un Presse, (Lexicon of Yiddish Literature and the Press), v.4, (Vilna: B. Klastkin, 1929), 456.
- 15) Chava Shapiro's letters are in the Jewish Public Library Archives's R.Brainin Collection, Group III, box t. They were given to the library by Brainin's sons in 1941, part of a large collection of literary papers and books that Brainin left the library after his death.
- 16) Chava's diary, from here on referred to as C.S.D., was given by her brother M. Shapiro to Genazim, the

Bibliographical Institute in Tel Aviv, sometime in the 1950s. Unfortunately no details are available as to the circumstances in which the diary was handed over or what became of the brother. Excerpts from the diary as well as an accompanying letter from the brother were published in Genazim, v.2 (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1965), pp. 36-60.

- 17) Em Kol Chai (Mother of All Beings), Kovetz Tziurim, (Collection of Sketches), (Warsaw: 1908). The Hebrew titles of the 15 sketches are: Hashoshana, Hanetz Vehadror, Shoshanot Novlot, Ketzizat Knafaim, Habodeda, Betula Zkena, Tipusei Nashim: a. Hamevina, b. Haohevet, c. Hafachfachit, Beveit Hamikra, Isha, Haholemet, Meshorer Hatzaar, Shivrei Luchot, Hamefursam, Hamore, Kidush Levana.
- 18) See the bibliography of Chava's articles in the appendix.
- 19) Ewa Schapiro, Lichtenberg als Philosoph, thesis, deposited in the State and University Library of Bern, Switzerland, Log.var.1434.
- 20) Brainin was the first biographer of Herzl. However of the planned three volume biography only the first volume appeared: Hayei Herzl, (The Life of Herzl), (New York: Assaf, 1919).
- 21) Reuven Brainin, "Dying of the Writer", (in Hebrew) first appeared in HaMelitz, no.59 (1888), reprinted in Reuven Brainin, Ketavim Nivharim, v.1, (Selected Writings), (New

York: Assaf, 1917), pp. 231-243.

22) See the entire issue of Hatoren 9, no.8, (1922).

23) C.S.D., First day of Hol hamoad, Taras, (April 16, 1900).

Hebrew dates appear only when Chava uses them herself.

24) C.S.D., Thursday, Av 7, (August 2), 1900.

25) C.S.D., Shvat 4, (January 24), 1901.

26) C.S.D., March 27, 1902.

27) C.S.D., September 20, 1903.

28) C.S.D., January 27, 1916.

29) Shmuel Aba Horodesky (1871-1957) was the descendent of a long line of Hasidic rebbes and wrote extensively about Hasidism, mysticism and Rabbinic literature. He met Chava in 1908, at the university, in Bern, Switzerland and conducted a very warm friendship with her which lasted into the 1920s. Chava alludes to Horodesky several times in her correspondence and her diary. However, in his memoirs, which he published in 1957 at the age of 86, Horodesky did not mention Chava even once.

30) The last entry in Chava's diary, a nervous scrawl, is not dated.

31) According to the New Century Handbook of English Literature, (New York: Appelton, 1956), 1009, a sketch is a brief, slight or hasty delineation, a rapid or offhand presentation of the essential facts of anything. A rough draft, an outline.

32) Hador was founded and edited by David Frischman in

1901. It was a literary weekly of high quality which attracted many talented Hebrew writers. It was forced to close after one year due to lack of subscribers.

33) C.S.D., September 17, 1907.

34) C.S.D., Teveth 15, Tarsab, (January 6, 1902).

35) C.S.D., September 1, 1907.

36) Marion Kaplan, "Bertha Pappenheim Founder of German-Jewish Feminism", in The Jewish Woman, New Perspectives, (New York: Schocken, 1972), 149-163.

37)a. M. Ungerfeld, "Dr. Chava Shapiro, Twenty Five Years Since Her Murder", (in Hebrew), Hapoel Hatzair, 26 March, 1968.

b. Joseph Klauzner, "An Only Daughter, On the Thirtieth Anniversary of Dr.Chava Shapiro's Literary Endeavour", (in Hebrew), Hadoar, 23 Kislev, 1939,

38) See Chava's Collection of Sketches, p.1.

39) David Frischman, "Letter Fourteen" in Kol Kitvei David Frischman, (The Collected Writings of David Frischman), (Mexico: Lilli Frischman, 1951), 447-448.

40) The book on Masaryk was published as T.G. Masaryk Hayav Vektorato, (His Life and Teachings), (Prague: HaBrith HaIvrith, 1935), Chava's autobiography was probably never completed.

41) C.S.D., December 20, 1926.

42) Chava mentioned the name of the article, "Days of Awe", which appeared in Hed Hazeman, a Hebrew Warsaw daily, both

in a postcard to Brainin on October 8, 1908, and in a letter to Zalmen Reyzen, (Zalmen Reyzen Archives/YIVO Archives 104669/2951).

- 43) Nachum Sokolov (1859-1936), was a brilliant writer, newspaper editor, linguist and ardent Zionist, who published numerous journals, books and collections of writings over a 62 year writing career.
- 44) Yaakov Klatzkin (1882-1948) was a writer and newspaper editor in Hebrew and German. From 1909-1911 he edited The World, the German organ of the Zionist Organization.
- 45) According to Shelosh Meot Shana Laitonut Hayehudit Baolam, 1675-1975, (Three Hundred Years of International Hebrew Journalism), (Jerusalem: World Zionist Congress, 1975), 37, in the period leading up to the second World War, 230 journals were published in Poland, in Yiddish alone.
- 46) See Chava's bibliography of articles in the appendix.
- 47) Between March 25, 1920 and December 21, 1928, Chava sent 18 letters, all dealing with urgent money matters to the Hatoren editorial offices in New York. JPL Archives, R.Brainin Collection, Group III, box t.
- 48) Simcha Bloch, "Dr. Chava Shapiro, Ten Years Since Her Martyrdom, Tishrei, Tashyab" (in Hebrew), Hadoar, 17 Marheshvan, 1953.
- 49) Letters were written from Prague in June, 1937, by Nachman Wajsbord and Z.R.Rozanski. R.Brainin

Collection, Group III, box r and box i respectively.

- 50) Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937), philosopher, statesman and ardent liberal, became in 1918 the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia, a post he held until 1934.
- 51) Chava Shapiro, "The Image of the Woman in Hebrew Literature", (in Hebrew), in Hatekufa, v.26-27, (1930): 617-633.
- 52) Deborah, R. Weissman, "Education of Jewish Women", in Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook 1986-87, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1987), 29-36.
- 53) Chava mentions his name in a letter to Brainin written May 10, 1910. According to the Encyclopedia Judaica (v.15 p.356), Ludwig Stein (1859-1930) was born in Hungary and studied religious and secular studies in Berlin, becoming a rabbi and a professor of philosophy.
- 54) Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), was an influential Jewish philosopher, born in Holland and excommunicated by the Amsterdam Jewish elders because of his independence of thought.
- 55) Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), German-Jewish philosopher, generally considered to be the father of the Jewish Enlightenment or Haskalah. His translation of the Psalms and the Pentateuch into German was one of the first steps on the road of Jewish integration into German society.

- 56) J.P. Stern, Lichtenberg: A Doctrine of Scattered Occasions, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), xiii.
- 57) Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), German philosopher, founder of the Phenomenological Movement. Taught at the universities of Gottingen and Freiburg.
- 58) J.P.Stern, Lichtenberg, p.15.
- 59) Ibid., p.111.
- 60) Horodesky in his book Zihronot, (Memoirs), (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1957) 95-96, writes about the controversy surrounding the dismissal of the generally well-liked Professor Stein, from the University of Bern.
- 61) See the Shapiro Family Tree, in the appendix.
- 62) Simon Dubnow, Toldot Hahasidut, (History of Hasidism), (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1967), 104-106.
- 63) Chava Shapiro, "The Brothers from Slawuta", (in Hebrew), Hashiloah 30, no.6, (1914):541-554. Also H.D.Friedberg, Toldot Hadevus Haivri Bepolania, (The History of Hebrew Printing in Poland), (Tel Aviv: Baruch Friedberg, 1950), 104-109.
- 64) The letterhead on Menucha Shapiro's stationary states in Russian: Pinhas Shapiro, Paper Manufacturer. See letter sent to R. Brainin on July 18, 1900, in JPL Archives, Reuven Brainin Collection, Group III, box t.
- 65) Chava's birth year varies from 1876 to 1880 in biographical references. In her diary however, Chava

specifically mentions several birthdays, confirming that her birth date is December, 1876.

- 66) Szangorsky's name appears in M. Shapiro's (Chava's brother) letter which precedes the diary excerpts in Genazim v.2, (note 16) as Duke S., while in Israel Fogel's account in Davar, September 12, 1986, he has the title of Prince.
- 67) Chava's letter to Brainin dated September 14, 1903.
- 68) C.S.D., October 7, 1901.
- 69) Rachel Biale, "Women and Jewish Law", in Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook, 1986-7, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1997), 16-2).
- 70) The English translation is Moon Sanctification, a happy ritual, celebrated within 3 days of the sighting of the new moon, signifying the start of a new month. Jewish men, dressed in holiday clothes, bless ^{the moon} and dance outdoors. See Dalia Hardof Renberg, The Complete Family Guide to Jewish Holidays, (New York: Adam Books, 1985), 19.
- 71) Postcards sent from Slawuta, on September 5 and 9, 1901.
- 72) Chava's postcard to Brainin from Warsaw, dated November 7 1901.
- 73) C.S.D., 17 Ellul, Taras, (September 11, 1900).
- 74) C.S.D., July 25, 1907.
- 75) C.S.D., 4 Iyar, Taras, (April 3, 1900).
- 76) C.S.D., October 3, 1903.
- 77) C.S.D., August, 4, 1903.

- 78) C.S.D., October 2, 1903.
- 79) There are two letters from Menucha Shapiro, Chava's mother, to R. Brainin, in the R. Brainin Collection, Group III, box t., attesting to this friendship.
- 80) See R. Brainin's letter to Chava in the appendix.
- 81) Chava's letter to Brainin, dated June 30, 1903.
- 82) C.S.D., September 20, 1903.
- 83) See M. Shapiro's account in Genazim. (full reference in note 16).
- 84) C.S.D., March 20, 1904.
- 85) C.S.D., November 2, 1913.
- 86) C.S.D., January 24, 1914.
- 87) C.S.D., December 15, 1912.
- 88) C.S.D., December 15, 1917.
- 89) Israel Fogel, "Chava Shapiro, Em Kol Chai" (in Hebrew), Davar, September, 12, 1986. Fogel was 88 years old at the time he wrote the article.
- 90) "In all, the year 1919 witnessed 623 major and 949 minor attacks on Jews. The direct loss of Jewish lives was enormous, easily exceeding 50,000 slain." Salo W. Baron, Russian Jews Under the Tsars and Soviets, (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 184.
- 91) Munkacs or Munkacevo, belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1920, when it became part of Czechoslovakia. It had a rabbinic seminary and until 1939 was known as a Talmudic centre.

- 92) C.S.D., December 14, 1921.
- 93) C.S.D., August 30, 1922.
- 94) Haim Eliezer Shapira (1872-1937), the Munkacs Rebbe, was known for his fanatic dislike of any attempts to reform the Jewish religion, preferring to ally himself with the authorities rather than work with Jews. See Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 155.
- 95) C.S.D., February 25, 1923.
- 96) Chava visited Palestine once, in 1911, accompanied by her parents and Mr. and Mrs. David Frischman. They were part of a delegation from the Warsaw Yiddish daily Haynt. She referred to the trip in her article: "Memories from Frischman's Life", which appeared in Hatoren. See the bibliography of Chava's articles in the appendix.
- 97) C.S.D., December 27, 1925.
- 98) Chava Shapiro, "Reuven Brainin, His Intellectual Image", (in Hebrew), Ein Hakore, no.2-3, (1923):74-82.
- 99) C.S.D., April 15, 1937.
- 100) Terezin served as a ghetto from 1941-1945. The removal of the Jews from Prague began in November of 1941.

PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

"Any exchange of letters between two personalities may be considered a kind of a pseudoepistolary novel, provided that the quantity of literary material produced by the two parties (or even by only one) is sufficient to allow for narrative interpretation. Given such a "narrativity", the correspondents become the main characters of the "novel", and other persons mentioned become the minor characters. A communication that is prolonged in time and that includes various locales, can create the effect of dialogue (even if only one part of the dialogue has been preserved), and a plot pattern can emerge."¹

The Shapiro - Brainin correspondence includes all the above mentioned elements. It consists of 184 dated letters written by Chava Shapiro to Reuven Brainin from various locales and spans 29 years. The effect of a continuous dialogue is created, even though we have in our possession only one letter written by Reuven Brainin to Chava Shapiro. Moreover, as Shaked further notes:

"Progressing through the correspondence, the reader finds that the images of the two major participants lose their documentary value as signifier of external referents and gradually

become figures in a fictional world in which each assumes functions accorded him by the other."²

In the fictional world that Chava and Brainin (Chava rarely addressed him by his first name) created in their correspondence Chava presents herself as the compromised young maiden, imprisoned in a "golden cage", yearning to be set free to fly into the great blue yonder to explore the "real world", Brainin is the strong, experienced knight whose role is to lead the beautiful princess out of captivity and escape to some secluded place. There, unencumbered by previous commitments, the two will settle down to a serene existence of love and mutual self-respect, studying and developing their minds, cultivating only the most spiritual of values, inspiring and encouraging one another and successfully creating great works of literature, in Hebrew.

In the real world the situation was quite different. An entire cast of secondary characters, conveniently absent from the fairy tale interfered with constant demands. In the lead, not surprisingly, was Brainin's wife, mother of his beloved children, who tenaciously hung on and refused to give an inch of ground. Also, for all their mythmaking, Chava and Brainin were real people with real personalities. Brainin's personality was shaped and formed years before he ever met Chava. He was anything but a knight in shining armour. He was, according to Chava, weak, indecisive, henpecked. Yet viewed more

objectively however, it is possible that Brainin in fact was a loyal and caring husband as well as a loving father who refused to wreck his home just to please Chava.

Chava herself was anything but an innocent young maiden. She was strong minded, bright and resourceful, and early on realised the advantages of being self-reliant. She was too clever not to see through the fiction that she and Brainin were creating. Yet even though she often acknowledged the tension between the fairy tale and reality she refused to accept the harsh truth that the relationship was doomed. She never gave up on the fairy tale. She needed to believe that Brainin was her knight in shining armour.

During the twenty nine years that the correspondence lasted the relationship underwent many trials. Several times it seemed that the emotional attachment was gone and the two protagonists would go their separate ways. But rather than let that happen it was always Brainin who relit the flame and reawakened Chava's passions, much to her chagrin. Why did he do it? Why couldn't he let her get on with her own life? The probable answer is that he was a very selfish man. Whenever he felt frustrated with the way his own life was going, whenever he saw that he was no longer the promising young, talented Hebraist whom everyone adored but instead was an aging writer who wasted his talent and had a hard time making a living, he would turn to the only person who had always believed in his greatness and who adored him unconditionally, who was also

young and pretty - Chava. All he needed to do when his morale was low and he was feeling depressed was to jot a few lines to Chava, pushing on the right emotional buttons. It never failed. No matter how she resented it and how bitterly she objected to his tactics, she quickly fell under his spell again and again. There obviously was a deep bond between them because no matter how long they had not met or communicated they always managed to reestablish a strong emotional contact, leaving Chava ecstatic in its wake.

In the end however, Brainin behaved abominably. After a hiatus of three years, in the fall of 1913, he breezed back into Chava's life and spent two whole months with her. He then left and returned to his family in Canada. Except for two letters, written 6 months later, he never again communicated with her. Chava, older and less resilient, experienced in a relatively short period of time this personal tragedy, the outbreak of the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the pogroms of 1919 in the Ukraine. She never recovered from the effects of this devastating combination of events.

For the purpose of this study 81 of the most representative letters have been chosen. Repetition was avoided whenever possible and only those letters which add new information to our knowledge of the two principal players have been included, thereby achieving a sequential progression of the romance.

The letters are presented chronologically, in the

form of a narrative, interspersed with direct quotes from the original Hebrew. Unfortunately a great deal of the vividness of the Hebrew language as well as the energy of the style are lost as a result of this approach. We hope, nevertheless, that this sampling will succeed in conveying some of Chava's special spirit and character.

THE LETTERS

The letters fall into four main groups:

1. 1899 - 1903 Chava's emotional awakening and break-out from her milieu.
2. 1904 - 1910 Chava's attainment of freedom and subsequent life in the outside world.
3. 1913 - 1916 Chava's final encounter with Brainin.
4. 1919 - 1928 Chava's desperate years in Czechoslovakia.

A number of themes run through the correspondence, the central one being Chava's love for Brainin. Repeatedly Chava reminds Brainin how he means everything to her, how before she met him she was not really alive, that it was he who made her realise what life was all about and how her survival depends on him. She consciously turns him into a god-like figure because she needs him to be perfect, first in order to justify the sacrifices she has made on his behalf, such as the abandonment of her son, and second to rationalize the failure that her life eventually became.

A second theme, which is the result of this all-consuming love, is Chava's frequent attacks on Brainin for having such a hold over her. She often lashes out at him in anger, frustration and despair, for causing her to be in such a wretched situation. Her favourite ploy is to berate Brainin on his weakness of character, demolish his self esteem, cast aspersions on his wife and children and in the next breath build him up by reassuring him that she loves him regardless of his many flaws and that she is the only one who is capable of redeeming him, as a man and as a writer. Her love is the only true love.

It is interesting to note the ways Chava addresses Brainin in the letters. At the start of the correspondence when the relationship must have been platonic, she calls him: "My Friend!" after 1903, when the relationship progresses into a love affair, she chooses to call him : " My father!" and soon after: "My beloved father!" and "My darling, my sweet father" or in a more relaxed mood: "My lovable old man". When the relationship sours however, it is back to "My friend" or just plain "friend" or "Brainin".

As the correspondence was clandestine, it caused both parties great worry that the letters were not reaching their destinations safely. A third theme, therefore, is verifying safe addresses and the arrival of letters, with frequent resort to telegrams.

As long as Chava was living with her husband in

Warsaw or with her parents in Slawuta, she had to keep her letter writing secret, since as a married woman she had no business writing to another man. The arrangement was that in both places Brainin's letters were to be sent to the main post office, where either Chava or a trusted go-between, like her younger brother or Mr. Sandlar, the post office clerk in Slawuta, would pick them up. After 1903, when she left her husband, Chava had no more problems in this regard, the letters were addressed directly to her, wherever she happened to be.

Brainin however, continued to be married and to a very watchful wife whom Chava nicknamed "The policeman". To throw "the policeman" off, the lovers used different tricks. They wrote in Hebrew because that was a language that Mrs. Brainin did not know. To fool Mrs. Brainin further Chava used the male gender in the text of the letter and sometimes signed "Dr. Chaim Sheinberg", Sheinberg being her mother's maiden name. They referred to each other in the text as brother and sister and Chava addressed her letters to "Mr. Kulmus" (pen in Hebrew) or "Mr. Federmann" and sent them care of "Post Restante" wherever Brainin happened to be. To the credit of the European post office, the letters always arrived. In 1908-9 alone, Chava's letters followed Brainin from Wiesbaden to Antwerp from Antwerp to Paris, then to London, Glasgow and Berlin.

Yet in spite of these precautions Mrs. Brainin knew what was happening and did not like it, forcing Chava and

Brainin to conduct most of their letter writing either during her absences from home or during his travels.

Chava's constant craving for love and emotional support caused her to claim that the correspondence was unfairly one-sided and this too became a frequent theme. Her letters are filled with exhortations to Brainin to write, write, write. He must write promptly, often, lengthily and in great detail, revealing in his letters everything but everything that transpired in his life. She demanded exclusive rights on his soul and refused to take any note of others who ~~may~~^{could} also have claims on him.

To gain his sympathy she often resorted to describing some "serious" physical symptoms such as a palpitating heart, great pains in her left shoulder, blood in the stool, loss of weight, and so on, symptoms which mystified the doctors and which Chava felt certain could not be cured. Typically she would write that she did not care because she did not want to live long anyway. What was there to live for? It was better for her to die and cease being an obstacle in Brainin's and everyone else's way. She several times mentioned suicide and as we shall see later, she actually made one attempt.

The external world did not often intrude in Chava's letters. She occasionally gossiped about some mutual family members or mentioned some encounters she had had, through her acquaintance with I.L.Peretz or other Jewish writers. But as far as political events, in 29 years, she mentions only three.

The first was the Zionist Congress of 1900 which Brainin attended and which elicited from her some comments about the Jewish situation. The second was the Russian Revolution of 1905, on which she commented only by way of contrasting the serenity of Switzerland with the turmoil of Russia. The third, which she experienced most dramatically, were the pogroms in the Ukraine after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Finally, lest we think Chava is only filled with doom and gloom, there are several instances in the letters when a lighter side of her personality emerges. One example of her humour appears in her letter of October, 21, 1901³, when she writes: "The letter that you promised me today, will I get it tomorrow? No? Then please enlighten me, because you know how weak I am in mathematics. If tomorrow is equal to 2 weeks and another tomorrow - to another two weeks, then how long until "après demain"? "

Another example is her sarcastic reaction to receiving Brainin's portrait, a pompous gesture that she greets with wit and humour, (post cards dated 9th and 10th of June 1904), or the time she is preparing to have a wisdom tooth removed (February, 2, 1908) and asks Brainin to write and send her eulogy forthwith so she can edit it in time.

GROUP ONE: 1899 - 1903

Of the original 184 letters, 68 were written between 1899 -1903, making it the second largest group of letters. The

four years covered here, are the most tumultuous of the entire relationship. They describe how Chava first met and fell in love with Brainin and how her whole life consequently changed.

1899

In the first letter, written from Wiesbaden, on the first of August 1899, about three months after their initial meeting,⁴ Chava describes herself sitting next to Brainin in a carriage, driving through Berlin, unseeing and unhearing, feeling as though she ^{WERE} ~~was~~ fatally struck dumb by a dangerous disease. In Wiesbaden she is oblivious to her surroundings because: "This is not my kind of world, not my kind of life". Her real world is deep within her. Brainin had understood that, "There is an entire universe inside of you" he had written to her and he was right. She has always lived on two levels.

She feels miserable and has lost all hope and is certain that she will not live long. What is the point of living, she wants him to tell her.

1900

Early on Chava realised that Brainin was not honest with her, constantly using excuses and lies, trying to please both her and his wife. One of Chava's most persistent complaints was that he always made promises that he knew were impossible to keep. He promised to answer her letters on the very day that he received them and then would wait two or more

months, only to drop her a short note saying that a much longer letter was following. Or he would promise to regularize his letter writing in the "future", yet even the most distant future, writes Chava, becomes eventually the present and then the past. When Brainin blamed his silences on his complicated life, Chava sympathized and pressed for more details. "I want to know and I must know everything". (June ?, 1900)

Brainin then tried to put some distance between them and suggested that they correspond only twice a year, In her letter of August 19, 1900, Chava was shocked, she refused to hear of such an arrangement. She persisted in writing, begging him to answer. She had so much to tell him that even if she wrote three times a day it would not exhaust it all. She described how carefully she read and reread the few words that he had written to her, finding new meanings each time. She tried to picture him sitting at his desk, imagining the ideas that ran through his head... "I can't forgive you that you devote to me only a few hours each day. I wish you would devote to me two whole days or perhaps one whole summer..."

Her letter of August 23, 1900, is that rare time when Chava comments on outside events. She is writing to London, where Brainin is attending the Zionist Congress (August 13-16, 1900). First she mentions how disappointed she is that she could not be with him, even though he promised that they would "travel to the congress together". She so wishes she too had the chance to see the fine spectacle of so many Jewish

delegates, gathered from all over the world to discuss their people's destiny. She goes on to say that such a setting must surely awaken in each participant's mind memories of a happier time when Jews sat peacefully in their own country and were responsible for their own affairs.

She then criticises the bickering of the different Zionist groups who spend their time at the congress fighting amongst themselves. Who could have imagined, in that distant past, that one day the sons of our ancestors would feel ashamed to belong to the Jewish nation and spend so much time bickering among themselves. Don't they understand, Chava asks, that they are only hurting themselves?

Brainin who was 14 years older than Chava must have often dwelt on the difference in their ages and Chava always assured him that she preferred "old men" to empty-headed playboys. In her letter from June ? 1900, she writes: "Do you really believe that the young are always happy? A happy person, in my opinion, is not he who amuses himself all day with fun and games but rather he who suffers no mishaps, whose body and soul are not wasted away by some slow-working poison." And to his question whether she will ever betray him, she answers, "never".

Chava expressed how alone and isolated she felt when she wrote of herself in the third person, in July ?, 1900: "Please write at once to your young sister and tell her everything. I feel sorry for her. She is so young and tender

yet her thoughts are so sad and gloomy. Perhaps you will succeed, even if only for a short time, to lighten her spirits and cheer her up. The world is beautiful, the sky and all of nature so magnificent, but I can't enjoy any of it, it as though I am near-sighted, everything appears blurred."

1901

By 1901 the pattern of the relationship was set. Chava travelled to Pyrmont, a noted German spa with mineral springs and mud baths, in the province of Hanover, accompanied by her fun loving sister-in-law, and the two excitedly planned for Brainin's promised visit. Chava cheerfully imagines what it would be like to see the sights with him. She writes to Brainin every day, describing her state of being: " Hurrah! How pleasant everything is, everything within me has revived, all my dormant feelings together with my yearnings and my dreams. Yes! I feel well. Hope is sneaking into my heart, how good and comforting that feels! (July 16, 1901). Brainin answered that he too cannot live without his sister and Chava's euphoria lasts through to September when she spends the holidays with her parents in Slawuta. However, by the time she was back in Warsaw and wrote to him on September 24, 1901, she has not had any letters from him and felt awful. She described how she lay in bed at night, beset by terrible thoughts and indescribable horrors, realising that she was no longer what she pretended to be, namely, a virtuous wife and mother. Her life has become a

lie, every minute of every day is filled with contradictions. She feels like screaming out the truth...

Chava's attitude to Mrs. Brainin was mixed. She was furious with her when she thought Brainin acquiesced to every one of her wishes, ignored her totally when things between her and Brainin were going well and sometimes even took her side. Most of the time she was very suspicious of her motives. In her letter of October 30, 1901, Chava had just learnt from Brainin that "he", (one of the ways she used to refer to Mrs. Brainin), is planning to go to Russia for the winter, to work, and he will accompany her and will visit Chava at the same time. Chava is skeptical and would like to know the following: a. If Mrs. B. is planning to work in a Christian house for over three months (she was a masseuse), why would she give her hard earned money to Brainin to pay for a passport so that he too could go to Russia when she probably does not want him in Russia at all? b. How can she even go to Russia if her tax on her passport is not yet paid? c. Even if they were both in Russia, "he" would watch Brainin's every move and either not allow him to go to Warsaw or join him there herself. (expressing herself in series of a.b.c. was a favourite device of Chava's.) Chava believed that Mrs. B. was capable of terrible things and if she came to Russia it was only to harm and ruin what she hated most, namely Chava. She adamantly refused to be judged by Mrs. B.'s standards or be punished by her. We learn later that Mrs. B.

had in fact forbade Brainin to come with her to Russia and Chava, in a gentler mood, asks Brainin not to aggravate "him" too much, justifying "his" pain, for once.

In the same letter Chava criticises Brainin's "Two Testimonies", a sketch which appeared in Hashiloach. She can hardly believe that having modelled one of the two women characters so transparently on her, he would kill one off and dismiss the other from his heart. It is not the heroine's fault if her mystique suddenly palls and she appears to be leading an ordinary life, married and surrounded by playboys. What is Chava to think? The "first" is dead and the "second" forgotten?

In the next letter, of November 15, 1901, Chava sends Brainin her opinion of his newest work "The Painter", which also appeared in Hashiloach. She finds his descriptions alive and true, especially the portrait of the mother and the atmosphere of the home. For obvious reasons she adores the painter with his dark hair and burning eyes... She believes Brainin is truly dedicated to finding and awakening the "dormant soul of beauty" in art and showing and developing it, strengthening and establishing it. Chava completely agrees with what he is trying to express when he writes: "Art speaks to the emotion, in the language of emotion, that is why art speaks to every human being, everywhere, in all languages, to all generations." She finds his thoughts so true and well articulated that no matter in what language they were written

they would equal "their" (Western European) classics.

She takes him to task for one thing, however. Why was it necessary to describe the painter's "first sin" and in such detail too? She is aware that all great writers have done the same but nevertheless is revolted: "I can't read those descriptions without feeling ashamed, as though I myself were guilty, even when everyone justifies it by saying it is "natural"."

The character of Rachel, who is the painter's love, evokes such strong feelings from Chava that for the next several weeks she signs her letters Rachel. She is still upset over the killing of the "second" woman in his previous work "Two Testimonies" and wants to know why must he reveal these things publicly.

Chava often had to cheer Brainin and boost his morale while it was she who really needed the boosting. Whether appearing distressed was just a tactic on Brainin's part to distract Chava from her own preoccupations or he truly was going through difficult times is impossible to know. What is known is that Brainin tended to live beyond his means and was forever getting into critical situations. We know that within two months of their meeting Brainin asked Chava for a loan because in her letter of July 7, 1900, she tells him that she is sending him 100 rubles. After that she went on a personal austerity program to save money. She refrained from going to

the opera or the theatre and decided against hiring a French tutor. Whenever she went to the cafes she made sure someone else picked up the tab - usually Peretz (Nov. 11, 1901). Peretz even offered to hire her as a secretary, to take dictation, and pay her 15 rubles a month for working three hours a week. The reason she was economizing was to save enough money so that Brainin could pay for his degree from the university of Vienna, something which apparently he could not do, and yet needed badly to improve his financial situation. Chava kept apologizing for bringing up such crass matters and admitted that she was hopeless about money, she kept losing and misplacing sums of it all over the place.

1903

From Chava's letter of March 18, 1903, we learn that the lovers have not met for the last two years. Her sister-in-law has just returned from Berlin, and for the past 24 hours, the two have been closeted in Chava's room talking about Brainin whom she has seen there. This fresh evocation of Brainin brings forth an explosion of hysteria from Chava. Her tears are flowing, not from her eyes but from her heart, warm, bitter tears as she bemoans her cruel destiny. Her sister-in-law's words prove to Chava how alive her passion for Brainin still is and that her love is her true essence. "Brainin, Brainin! I must see you, I must talk with you, no matter what. If I don't see you in the coming summer, see and spend time

with you... I can't guarantee what I'll do... You are so afraid of your wife's anger that she can do with you what she wants, you have lost all your independence. Brainin, Brainin, when will I see you? Nothing else matters to me, not life, health or wealth. I can overlook all troubles, small or large, because deep, deep in my heart I have a much greater pain. Your troubles are all your own fault, you allow people to treat you like an "old woman", like a dish rag, I can't see why you yield all the time. No, I can't say anymore. Do as you please, you are Brainin, and what you decide is always right - but everyone can step all over you and suck your blood dry - and you remain mute. Please answer me right away, and don't blame me for these harsh words."

The harsh words, though, bore fruit and Chava did see Brainin. Three months later, however, she was broken hearted again. For a short while, she wrote on the 29th of June, she dwelt in heaven, amidst the light, then she was left behind and abandoned on earth, once again walking in darkness. "I am totally transformed in your presence. If I knew it was for your good and happiness I would put an end to my life, so I would not be in your way, Brainin, why do I love you so much, I am going mad, I don't know what I am writing..."

This time, however, was quite different. Chava had come to a momentous decision. She was not going back to her husband. On June 30, 1903 she writes: "At this very moment, 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I am disclosing to you the results of

my talk with my mother. We talked for about four hours and she is ready and willing to help me as much as she can. She agrees with everything I have decided to do. As far as money, she said not to worry, she will give me all that I need so I will not have to sell my jewels."

The next day Chava had not heard anything from Brainin and she was experiencing sharp pains in her heart and side but she was not paying any attention to them, she felt that her death would solve many problems: "I never imagined I was capable of such powerful emotions, oh Brainin, why did you set them loose, why did you burst into my heart and ^{light} ~~lit~~ the flame and create such a storm there? Why? Why? Answer me!"

Yet in the very next paragraph she sounds extremely sober: "I can see, my darling, that I am all alone and have no one at my side. Still, I feel brave and ready to do whatever is necessary. Let me explain, when you advised me to give up and go back to my husband I was shocked. Those were the very words I thought I would never ever hear from you. It made me realise that you, too, my only hope and comfort, will not stand by me. Yet in spite of that I shall not give up. On the contrary, I shall continue to fight with greater determination. First I must study and further my development. I feel I have enough strength to achieve my goal which is to throw off the bonds that others have placed on me. The time is ripe. I have suffered and waited for six years, but no more. All I have to do is find enough resolve within myself and make sure that I

don't listen to the wrong people - then there is hope for me yet. But if I return to Russia - I shall be lost forever. No, I shall go on fighting and win my freedom!"

In the letter of September 14, Chava describes how heavenly it is to be in Slawuta without her husband. All the members of her family are very supportive of her decision, she reports, no one suspects her relations with Brainin and everyone is trying to devise a way of how to get her dowry back. She has left all her belongings in Warsaw, coming to Slawuta wearing the proverbial shirt on her back. She is delighted at having left her old way of life behind once and for all. The only thing she truly regrets is having had to leave her son with her husband, but she is planning to visit him in Warsaw, in secret. She begs Brainin for letters: "I live only through your letters - don't forget that and remember too that my whole life depends on....(you?) Good bye my darling! Your daughter will not forget you, not for one moment, they will never separate us, I shall remain faithful! You can depend on that - please believe in your daughter Rachel."

Contrary to his usual delays in replying to her letters, Brainin wrote often during this difficult period, eliciting the following grateful remarks from Chava: "My beloved father! I'll tell you honestly I can hardly believe my eyes: Is it really you who writes to me so often? I was so afraid of your habitual silences. Such happiness! I thank you, my love, with all my heart and hope you will continue acting

this way\ (October 11, 1903), Brainin was expressing his love so passionately that on October 8, 1903, Chava writes: "The truth is that I am getting angry with you. Why do you love your daughter so? Why do you light the fire in my heart and tear apart my soul. Why? Why? I am so unhappy without you. My God, why are we so far apart? And so many obstacles, so many hurdles and snags, separating the two of us?"

She writes that she has decided to go abroad. Her family wants her to go to a safe city, preferably one where an old family friend like Brainin can keep an eye on her. Brainin, on the other hand is understandably reluctant. So before making her arrangements Chava wants Brainin to tell her what his travel plans are for the near future and in which cities he plans to visit, so she can avoid those places. Again she repeats how much his letters mean to her. She would enjoy their poetry, their charm and their sentiment even if they were not addressed to her. "Your love is beautiful by itself - so sublime and uplifting" and she signs, Rachel.

On October 18, Chava again writes how happy she feels in Slawuta without her husband: "Imagine, I get up in the morning and I don't see that face, those eyes... I sit down to eat and that mouth does not remind me: Eat, drink. Hurrah, heaven, earth and its people all rejoice in my happiness. If I were a poet I would write the longest, most powerful liberation poem . My love! I have emerged from slavery and exile into freedom, but from darkness into darkness, from grief back to

grief. Without you I have no light or joy."

Chava's

mother was especially kind to Chava during this time. It was as though she was trying to atone for having forced her daughter to marry against her will. In the same letter Chava writes: "My mother would not object to anything that I decided to do at this point, even if it was objectionable and against her better judgement. Her biggest disappointment, she claims, is that I refuse to believe how much she loves me."

By the end of October the first clouds appear. Brainin suddenly informs Chava that his children are in boarding school in Geneva and he and his wife will be spending the winter in Meran⁵. She is flabbergasted and cannot understand why he had not prepared her for the news. She does not hear from him for a whole month and then only after having contacted him by telegram, through her sister-in-law, who is also in Meran. On November 11, 1903, Chava mockingly writes that she is not complaining, after all what does she have to complain about. Everything is just dandy! She is happy, healthy, cheerful and serene, dancing with joy almost every day, he has nothing to worry about. Brainin had explained to Chava that he refused to take on the "moral responsibility" of deciding about her future. Chava says fine. She knows what she wants to do and will do it alone. If she makes any mistakes, they will be her mistakes. She has no plans of living in the same city as he, his "policeman" need not worry. When Brainin accuses her of turning him into "a great and awesome god",

Chava admits that she has transformed him into a paragon of virtue, perfect and pure. She needed to do that so she could sustain herself during this difficult period. Still, she loves her father and is completely devoted to him. (November, 17, 1903)

On November 22, 1903, Chava takes objection to the criticism that Brainin has made about her manuscript "Clipped Wings"⁶. She begs to differ with him over his interpretation of the bird's overly developed sense of independence. A bird who is in a cage with her wings clipped can never fly again, even if in her imagination she can still feel as though she were free, as Brainin maintains. To actually fly and escape from her cage the bird must have real wings, imaginary wings will be of no use. Imagining freedom would only make the bird feel worse about the open skies and real freedom. Anyway, Chava assures Brainin that she is not describing her own life. If he chooses to hear some familiar echoes, that is not her fault. There is no connection between her own perception of personal freedom and her sketch. She accepts his judgement with love and will pay special attention to his remarks about economizing with words. She will try to do just that in her letters to him. But even in the two words, "love forever", she can say so much.

By November 23, Brainin is preparing to leave Meran. Chava cannot understand why he went in the first place. "For a few weeks you and your wife could have lived separately, why do you need to drag after her skirt everywhere?" She is still in

Slawuta waiting for her travel documents. Brainin makes Chava furious when he reveals to his wife that Chava will be coming to Western Europe. "He will never believe that I come to study, only that I come to steal you from him." And she adds a curious sentence: "Do you have to tell him (i.e. Mrs. Brainin) all your deepest thoughts and aspirations?"

By the time the final letter of 1903 is written Chava is at the end of her tether. She has suffered more in an hour, she writes, than other young women suffer in a whole year. She

cannot take any more of the constant war and haggling over her divorce and her dowry and her future plans. It is sheer torture. She worries that her problems will defeat her and wonders where she will draw sufficient strength to cope with all the difficulties, as new ones seem to be cropping up all the time. She could pray to God and let him hear her silent screams and plead with him to strengthen her, but it seems that she prefers Brainin: "My father, the best hopes are dying inside of me, my will and resolve are weakening and fading away. Soon they will die and darkness will take their place. Please save me, who else can I turn to?"

GROUP TWO: 1904 - 1910

71 letters make up this largest group of letters which cover Chava's happiest years. After the first four years which were filled with nothing but turmoil, struggle and emotional upheaval, there followed a period of seven years that

were quite different. Chava was now independent and free, doing what she most wanted to do, study and expand her mind. She was meeting new people and savouring the sophisticated life of the capitals of Europe. She was no longer as dependent on Brainin as before.

1904

The first letter, dating April 20, Vienna, is the first time Chava has written in a month, testing to see how long Brainin could stand not hearing from her. Here she has been, she writes, all alone, in Vienna, far from home and surrounded by strangers, and yet Brainin seems not to be concerned at all. Her own conscience towards him is clear. a. Because she always gets news about his health and whereabouts from their mutual friends. b. She cannot write directly to him because of her old fear of his wife and c. She did not leave a beloved daughter "without whom life was not worth living", like he did, alone in a small room, in a state close to madness. (Brainin probably met Chava on her arrival in Vienna and settled her in.)

" Yes, there were days when I was sure I would be taken to the asylum, that my brain would explode... but I am still alive, still sane! The miracle of my survival is due to only one thing, my youth and my ability to find consolation

in other young people. I openly admit that I have not been faithful, I confess my sin. Good for you if you can always be so noble and virtuous! But are you really so virtuous? Always promising something that is impossible to keep, talking about dreams and revolutions, inner and outer transformations and staying exactly the same? You could say that I betrayed you(!) and I shall repeat again that "One cannot worship two idols at the same time". I am tired of this game, I have told you a hundred and one times that I refuse to be your second idol. One cannot be a thief and a "respectable" husband at the same time. What was acceptable five years ago - is not acceptable now. I shall never agree to such an arrangement."

She closes the letter by saying that she has a great deal to tell him after such a long silence, but she will not do it now and signs the letter "your daughter".

A month later, on May 24, she greets him: "My beloved, sweet and darling father". In his last letter Brainin had evidently complained that Chava did not write to him enough and his letter was filled with despair, something Chava was not

used to hearing from him. Despair was only for mean spirited people, not for someone like him who had a daughter like her, so devoted and willing to sacrifice her life for him. "If only I had such a daughter". After professing her love she takes him to task for not telling her the truth about his travel plans, pretending to be in charge, promising her to meet in various places, when all along he knows that his wife would not let him do any such thing.

'Why don't you admit that we would understand each other perfectly if it weren't for you always trying to justify your constant trips to places you have no wish to be in, trying to prove the contrary by saying that it is essential that you be there, so that all would agree that you have no choice in the matter. Your lofty words and stupid actions! You write: "My heart tells me that something new, like a storm in my heart, a revolution in my spirit, will shortly happen". What new thing can possibly happen if you go to Marienbad? How can anything new happen if everything continues exactly as before? Why mock me, why ask if I still feel anything for my father, you know very well how I feel, my life depends on you. Be strong my darling

father and do whatever pleases you best,
don't worry about me.'

On June 8 Chava writes that she is getting ready to leave Vienna and spend the summer at home in Russia where she will stay until the fall. Earlier Brainin expressed surprise at her choice of words when she wrote: "Who knows if we shall ever see each other again", or that she felt that the relationship between them was changing. Why does that surprise him, when during the entire time she spent in Vienna they did not meet even once. Still, she has no regrets about coming abroad. And using her favourite abc method again, she explains: a. She would never have been able to study in Russia. b.

"My time is more precious than yours. I have already wasted my youth in utter boredom and here in Vienna I feel like an 18 year old again. I want to study and live , not waste time in false dreams and wait around to hear whether I should send my letters to Marienbad or Meran... But if you claim that you are not enslaved by the "policeman" (B.'s wife) and that everything is different from what I imagine - great! But how do you know how I imagine "him"? I picture "him" as a redeeming angel, an angel that hovers over

you. Why do you accuse me of thinking differently? And what right have you got to make disparaging remarks about my imagination, calling it "sick". I tell you I am perfectly well, both in body and in spirit. Since when are you a psychiatrist who can make a diagnosis based on.... the imagination, even your own very healthy one. The symptoms you talk about have nothing to do with a pathology. And c. Who mentioned anything about ending this tragic play that is our love? An end will only come with my death and therefore it cannot be written by me. Perhaps it will be you who will finish the play. I repeat, one cannot talk of an end while I am still alive. Perhaps this turbulent five year old relationship which is the essence of my life, will end differently."

On June 9 she writes: "My friend, my pal, my companion, Mr. Reuven Brainin! I never dared address you in this fashion before but you have granted me that privilege by finding me worthy of your portrait. How can I ever thank you properly, being aware as I am of my infinitely limited capabilities. I can't decide what pleases me more, the gift itself or that you have found me a worthy recipient. Frankly I

had imagined a picture of another kind....like your own surprise appearance here... but we have learnt to live together "in the spirit", so to the spirit of R. Brainin I hereby bequeath the spirit of Em Kol Chai."

The next day, June 10, after further examination of the portrait, she adds that he seems to have aged a great deal since she last saw him, he looks at least 50 years old. (Brainin who was very vain, was in fact only 42), his smile is so sarcastic, the only time she had previously seen such a smile was on his wife's face. Then the lightness of her tone changes and she reminds him again of his tricky, sneaky ways. Why apologize or fabricate reasons for not coming to see her in Vienna when the reason is so obvious, for the summer "season" he has to go to Marienbad and for the winter "season" to Meran...

Now that a meeting is unlikely, she can reveal to him a surprise: she has secretly posed for his brother Isaac, the sculptor, for a life-size plaster bust. He will never see it because she is taking it back to Russia. "Why, why did you not come from Munich to Vienna, even if just for a few days? I would never have stopped you from continuing on to your "serene corner" in Marienbad? Sorry, this sigh just burst out against my wish. Please return all my manuscripts, your suffering friend".

This letter caused a flutter of activity as Brainin, who had known Chava's departure date for a whole month,

suddenly woke up at the last minute. She was angry, all her travel arrangements had been made and she had only one day to spare. They discussed the different possible cities on the rail-line between Marienbad and Vienna. Dresden? Pilsen? Letters and telegrams were exchanged. Four days later the flurry was over. On June 14 Chava wrote: "Aren't you a typical "old maid" - you are angry with me because you could not arrange to meet me. I am fed up with all this "sneaking around", the pre-planning and the post-apologies. I accept your anger but what is truly upsetting, is that we did not meet." She tells him that she will be seeing her son either in Warsaw or in Ottwock, a summer resort outside of Warsaw, depending on what her husband decides. She is leaving Vienna heavy hearted, forced to say good bye from a distance.

By the first of July Chava is back in Slawuta and a new torture begins. Her family is trying to convince her to go back to her husband. Apparently he is ready to take her back and allow her to do whatever she wants, even study abroad, as long as she keeps her married name. The advantages are obvious. Chava would have financial security, she would be able to see her son whenever she wanted and her respectability would remain intact. What does she have to lose? She wants Brainin to advise her, but not "from his own experience", as she knows how often he had compromised in his own marriage, so that he and his wife could appear together in public as a respectable couple.

Brainin does not reply for two months and when he does his

advice is unacceptable. In September Chava writes: "You hurt me with your reply, don't say anything more, I'll soon suspect that you want me to.... I better leave it unsaid." She is filled with despair. Her younger brother is thinking of going to Zurich to study engineering, perhaps she 'll go with him, what does Brainin think of Zurich, will her "literary talents" develop there? She wants to know what his travel plans are. Is he going from Geneva to Berlin, and where will he spend the winter, will the "policeman" stay in Geneva or will "he" accompany Brainin wherever he goes. What is the situation between them? Her sister-in-law told her that the "policeman" did some awful things during the summer, has "he" exhausted his anger yet? Everything is done to please "him", yet "he" still cannot calm down and relax.

1905

The next letter dates from a year later. Chava is in Warsaw, excitedly waiting for Brainin's visit. Brainin has been on a lecture tour of Russia, complaining in his letters of the difficulties of his nomadic existence. He has already visited Horki and Ersha and is now back in Horki, planning to go to Vilna before finally coming to Warsaw. Chava begs Brainin not to do what he has done in the past, namely go to Vilna for a day and then stay for two weeks. She implores him to hurry to Warsaw so they have some time left before Brainin has to leave for the World ^{ZIONIST} Congress.' "My God!" She writes on June

22, "Why do we have such rotten luck? You have spent four months in Russia and in the end we will have only one or two days left for ourselves when I had hoped for a few weeks at least. Please come right away, my patience is all gone. Send me a telegram at once that you will be here before the 25th. I am going to take my revenge for all the waiting and yearning I have done during these last four months and I shall keep you here until the very last moment. My darling! I am sending you the "Old Maid"⁸ so that you can hand her over (not the maid herself, but the story about her) to Hed Hazeman, the Hebrew journal, and get a lot of money for her, like she deserves, I am waiting for you desperately, come!"

Six months later, Chava and her younger brother were in residence in Bern, Switzerland, sharing an apartment and attending university. On December 2 she writes: "This love of mine is growing and expanding and requires words which my Hebrew vocabulary lacks. Brainin, how can I live without you when I handed over to you my soul and all my inner goodness? Everyone around us is so petty and foolish, always conspiring.... But you, my love, you are so different, you are the best, aren't you? Tell me, my darling, that I have to trust you in everything, tell me! It seems to me too that I have never loved you or been as devoted to you as since our last encounter. Reuven, why did you take my soul? I am not crying or sighing but my face doubtlessly reflects my emotions and grief because my brother (who knows everything) has just begun to

play his violin. What is he playing? All I know is that he is playing on my heart strings, so I lower my head and stifle my sobs. Oh my God, how difficult and painful! At least, my darling, you have realized that my love is bottomless -you said so yourself."

She goes on to contrast the last stormy weeks she spent in Russia with the peace and quiet of Switzerland. "It is like a sanatorium here", she writes, yet she suffers a great deal, both physically and mentally... She has so far been registered as an external student but has decided to present herself for the entrance examinations by February and become a regular student. There is much to study in such a short time. She has to pass French, German, World History, Swiss History, Geography and Latin. All this work will be good though, it will help her forget her pain and longing. Perhaps in April they could take a trip together through French and Italian Switzerland and from there on to Rome. "What do you say to such an idea? Probably that I have lost my mind. So I'll soften the blow a bit and add that from Rome we could go on to Paris." She expects this letter will be the last long letter for a while and then adds that life in Switzerland is cheaper than Vienna but the people are boring. Only the young Russian men and women students liven things up. She finishes by asking him his honest opinion about the future of their relationship. "We must face the truth and admit to ourselves that perhaps we are wrong."

1906

On January 3, Chava, taking time out from her studies, replies to Brainin playfully that she cannot satisfy his thirst and hunger, all she can send him is a few drops of ink. She suggests that he should find satisfaction elsewhere which she is certain he already has. She herself has grown very modest and does not socialize at all. As for her preoccupation with the decrepit "Madame Latin" that he claims she prefers to the live and "enlivening" Brainin, a. She is studying many subjects, not only Latin. b. They had both decided that she should write her entrance examinations in February, rather than wait until next July and what is the most important: "If I could truly devote my time to you, believe me I would not choose Mme. Latin. But as the heavens have decided that I cannot spend all my time with my dearest one, why is it so strange that I immerse myself in my studies in order to forget my pain? Don't believe, my darling, that I have such an easy time here. As for studying while Russia is blowing up⁹, let me tell you that I only respect active participation. Talking, shouting and feeling angry, are wasteful, not compulsory activities. I have not found a direction to my life yet but nothing so far has been better or more interesting than studying. My strength has not abandoned me, quite the contrary... my eyes are bright, my faculties intact."

She bemoans the fact that she never sees any Hebrew or knows what is happening in the literary world. She is

enclosing something she has dashed down in Hebrew but had no time even to reread. "Please write to me something that will cheer me up, even for one moment , even if with false hope. I would so much like to lean on your chest and cry, cry and give vent to my stifling sobs. I feel so miserable. Peace be with you, my friend, Chava."

On the 17th of January, she is in a different mood. She has received Brainin's letter and although she has no time at all she is writing to him to let him know how well she feels. "I am full of life, cheer, freedom, joie de vivre, my darling, everything within me is singing. There is a whole ocean of life inside of me, life I haven't yet experienced but whose beauty I can sense". Yet she knows that without him everything is empty and worthless.

Her studies are going very well, her professor is full of praise but she doubts she will be ready in time for the exams. Brainin's prayers, though, are not necessary. First, because "the pitiable one" (as Brainin nicknamed her) is fine, she is not tearing her hair out and her brain is still intact. Secondly, she does not believe in the value of prayers from a "zaddik" (a 'righteous' man) like him. "I have sensed a change in the tone of your letters, is it because of the Latin? What harm can an added language or further self-enrichment bring?" She insists that he stop calling her "my friend" and write out her full name. She is still dreaming of a trip to Milan in April while he is "only hoping" to be able to get away, because

it does not depend on him... She thanks him for correcting her manuscript and begs him to write to her three letters for every one of hers. She also wants to know how things are between him and his wife and whether or not Mrs. Brainin has been working in Berlin.

1907

On January 7th Chava writes Brainin from Paris: "Please don't waken this powerful force within me again, be well, old friend, and write to me in the style that old friends use."

Towards the end of the year, on November 12, writing from a coffee house in Vienna where she is sitting with his brother Sigmund, Chava announces to Brainin that her divorce has been granted and all her money returned.¹⁰ She is now once again Chava Shapiro. She asks him to give her an address where she could write to him privately.

Brainin responds quickly to congratulate her. But he is wrong, Chava writes, to think that "her fate is in her own hands now". As for arranging a meeting, perhaps she should write directly to Mrs. Brainin, since she is the one who is truly in charge. "I suggest Vienna or perhaps Munich in about 2-3 weeks. For the birthday of the "mamzer"¹¹ I would like to be in Italy. Let me know what is the decision from "above". I know you will be angry with my words, my love, the truth is so bitter. I want to see you, walk with you, talk to you, argue,

fight and make up. I want to tell you everything and ask your advice. But for such thoughts I am punished and covered with dust...¹² Let's meet, if only to discuss a marriage offer I have received, even your "friend" could not object to that.¹³

She then writes of Vienna. "I like everything about this city, my studies, the libraries, the art and the theatre. All is of the very best. I have found a wonderful apartment and live in the style that befits a "rich" lady like myself. I am thinking of travelling to Rome, Naples and Venice as soon as I find the right (pleasant) companion. You have to treat me with respect now that I have become rich. I know you like the rich, so obviously you like rich women."

1908

For reasons that she does not make clear, Chava left the University of Bern sometime in the summer of 1907 and returned only in the fall of 1908. She spent the time mostly in Vienna and Warsaw.

The first letter of 1908, written on January 14, starts ominously with the greeting: "My respected friend!" Brainin had previously notified Chava that his wife had forbidden him to write any more letters and Chava was flabbergasted. "This is an intolerable moral sin, a spiritual murder. How can anyone object to my writing to an old time mentor, a brother, a father confessor. This is violence, stubbornness and cruelty of the worst kind. This is deliberate

torture. You know how much I have had to bear, how much I have had to give up, doesn't any of that count? I demand to be answered!" And ignoring the ban, she insisted on knowing whether Brainin had received her article on Peretz.

Brainin refrained from writing and by April Chava was very impatient. She begged him to bestow a few moments of his time on her and tell her where she could reach him.

The next communication is dated October 8, from Warsaw to Wiesbaden. It pains her, Chava writes, to realise that she wastes time with friends and acquaintances with whom she has nothing in common while with him, with whom she shares so much, there have only been a few open letters, filled with innocuous generalities. "What a joke?! I want to meet you so much, but not like the last time, I am not used to slavery."

In the next letter Chava objects to Brainin's criticism of her lack of psychological insight into her characters, which, according to him, causes her to solve their problems in a crude fashion. She tells him that while she is ready to accept his judgement on form and style, he has no monopoly over psychological solutions to mental problems. She then changes the subject and tells him that she was supposed to hear Peretz read from his work, in a hall next to her home, but she did not go. "He probably detests me, God have patience with the old! Write and don't be angry, don't forget whom you are dealing with (!), a Jewish writer¹⁴, one who intends to be a doctor (through her own efforts...), so don't slight my

honour - "

Four days later in a letter to Antwerp she bitterly reminds him that they have known each other for ten years and never once have they met when she or he really wanted to meet. It has always been either on the way to Berlin or from Vienna or on route to a congress..."You are the son of slaves! Never once have you done a thing to help me or point me in the right direction". Why does he keep on making promises for the future when she needs to meet him now? She is not chasing after him, as his "friend" thinks, she has a valid reason for wanting to see him. On October 27, she politely denies that she has been angry in her previous letter, she never loses her temper, she is always good-natured. She would prefer to say pleasant things but what is the point when he is so far from her? "Write to me my one and only darling, (only figuratively speaking, I cannot lie.) Write to me about yourself and forgive my frivolity."

By November 11, Chava is in Vienna, on her way back to Bern. She is too busy to write. She spends the days on the streets and in the cafes and the nights in the theatre. "Tell me of your dreams, my darling, tell me everything and don't be afraid of the "old maid's" bad disposition. With God's help I shall not always be filled with gallows humour. What else can I do, my friend, when my heart is so heavy."

Back in Bern she is pining for her son whom she got used to seeing on a daily basis while in Warsaw. On November 28 she writes that she is in bed awaiting to have her wisdom tooth

removed. She is morally outraged at Brainin for travelling with his wife and at the same time writing love letters to her. She can no longer accept such a situation. It is clear from the evidence that "you cannot exist without her even for one hour and so I pray to God that he should prolong her life until the Messiah comes or at least until you grow old." In spite of Brainin's great exaggeration of the subject, Mrs. Brainin's health seems to be excellent, did she not go with him to the Scandinavian countries? In fact she drags after him and he drags after her everywhere. And why should she not? Their "children" are 18 and 20 years old and no longer require supervision.¹⁵ So why does Brainin have to start stirring up the old feelings again, talking of a "pure and loyal" love. Does he not have any sense of responsibility? Hasn't she suffered enough? She hasn't been knocking on his door or demanding anything from him, why does he feel "obligated" to write love letters to her, describing his reawakened yearnings. She would have been happy to remain a good and understanding friend. "Do these many trips bring you at least some material wealth? Have you given yourself up completely to travel and forgotten that you used to be a writer? What is the matter with you? You say travel liberates you, you and liberation! Ha, ha. I have been writing at length only because I am sick but now goodbye! After all this or because of this you are still the closest to my soul. That's the truth. I told Horodesky¹⁶ to cable you in case I die during the operation. Even your

"friend" would allow you to attend my funeral."

1909

In February, Chava receives an upsetting letter from Brainin. He sounds hurt and worried and his soul "conceals an entire universe" which she wishes to share with him. She cannot bear his pessimistic tone and swears to change his mood. She then proceeds simultaneously to scold and love him. She first lashes out at the way he has been manipulating her emotions. She recalls their meeting ten years before when she was an innocent, wig wearing¹⁷, young girl who fell in love, became a woman and from that moment on lost her peace of mind forever. She realises now that he is not the ideal that she has made of him but still believes that he has the potential to be one. She appreciates his talents like no one else and pays no attention to those who belittle him and accuse him of being mean-spirited and superficial. Why do we feel ashamed to express open admiration for our writers, the way other nations do, she wonders. She tells him how much she loves him: "Tell me, my darling, don't you feel that our souls are intertwined? I am not asking whether you love me or not, only that in spite of everything, it is an undeniable fact that spiritually we belong together. Tell me, talk to me, I must hear your opinion." She loses her self-control and berates him for the attention he gives his children even though they have never given him anything comparable to what she has. "You have been everything

to me in my life. I never questioned whether you were worthy of my sacrifices. You and my son are all I have. So why don't you pay more attention to this daughter of yours too."

By March 5, her mood has improved. She is busy working on her thesis which will be "good and thoroughly modern". She is planning to leave Bern by the tenth of March and would very much like to meet Brainin, not just plan to but, for once, really meet. Why has he become such "an old Jew", weighted down by so many obligations? She is willing to delay her trip home if he accepts the following three conditions and thereby shows his willingness: a. Not meet or at least be seen together, in Frankfurt. b. Arrive there by the 16th or 17th the latest. c. Realise that she must be in Warsaw by the 21st. If this meets with his approval he should telegraph one word: "Understood", if not: "Impossible" and she will leave for home at once.

Her next letter is from Warsaw, six weeks later. In a cruel tone Chava writes that he has become a lost case. In the ten years since they met everything under the sun has changed except him. He looks like a man but only accidentally was he born male. It is difficult to watch someone so dear deteriorating like that. She is planning to travel through Berlin, on her way from Russia, even though he has no permission to meet her, where she will stay in her usual hotel, rest from her trip, stock up on provisions and continue the following day to Gottingen.¹⁸

Brainin must have intercepted her in Berlin because in her letter ^{of} from April 23, from Gottingen, she is rhapsodizing about their love, turning it into a mystical experience: "My dear friend, in the dearest sense of the word! I did see you, didn't I? We met, we talked and then it flew by like a dream. Like a dream? Not really, because what is a dream and what is real. It is doubtful whether any reality could surpass our dream. I doubt reality when I am in our dream. Is it possible that reality does not exist and only our dream is real and strong and exists in itself? No one can take away what we give each other spiritually, through our faith in our dream. Our realness will live and die with us. It is stronger than any other reality because it is nurtured by our most sacred being, animated by our soul. Is there anything more private than a soul? Who cares about other people, other matters? All else is lifeless, soulless and obscene. The essence is the one glorious hour in the midst of all the ordinary. The hour we snatch by force to prove that we had not been wrong." And two days later she continues : "Brainin, Brainin, why are you not here with me? Why? Why?" She yearns to share with him the trembling of her soul. Even though she sees his shortcomings so clearly, she does not care. "If you were with me you would not be what you are today. I am not sure whether you would be better off but you would not be in a decline. If you could only pull yourself together and cheer up! I feel fully awake, all my creative forces have revived, everything within me is flowering, spring

has entered my veins..." She wonders whether he really knows her. When he met her she was obedient and docile, her head filled with old wives' tales, her pure heart and spirit thirsting to learn. "And I did not disappoint your hopes! With a proud head, lifted high, I can honestly say that all I have achieved I did with my own strength - you did not help one bit - Yet in spite of the tremendous change in me and all the ups and downs of my life, in my heart and soul I have remained the same. I have not sullied the pure heart that God gave me. But you? I wish you were big, huge, large in spirit and my symbol of perfection. I would like you to be my light, my guide. But your "luck" or rather character flaw, has changed you from a hero... to a victim....I could bear anything except resignation.... You must fight!"

Not surprisingly perhaps, Brainin did not reply to this letter or the two others Chava sent from Gottingen.

1910

Having completed her studies in August, Chava went on a well deserved vacation to Abbazia¹⁹, in September, with one of her married brothers. The relationship with Brainin was beginning to wind down, reaching bottom in the fall, when Brainin departed for North America.

Her letter from September 3 is upbeat and relaxed. She admits that she too has been seized by a frenzy of travel, not able to stay long in any one place. Yet she knows that one has

to stay put if one wants to do some serious work. But like him, she is driven forever elsewhere. She wonders whether she will achieve anything in life, if even one of her dreams will come true. She then goes on to describe the pleasant seaside resort and the daily routine of swimming, flirting and touring by automobile the nearby countryside. In a more serious vein she adds: "I would hate to part from the Hebrew language, I would so much like to come back and devote my life to it! Please, my sweet, now that I have finished my studies, remember, you must help me get Hebrew work, do not forget!" Playfully she tells him that none of the "stupid Germans" at the resort want to believe that a lady as young as ^{SHE} ~~her~~ (H) can be a doctor. She scolds him for having wanted her to rest in safe and boring Slawuta instead of exciting Abbazia.

In the next letter she writes about her "cure", how marvellous she looks and how everyone says she could be a living advertisement for the place. She adores the sea but cannot stand or get used to mixed bathing. She mentions how nice it would be if the two of them could live and work near each other. But in the next breath she tells him that she plans to stay another 3 weeks in Abbazia and then travel through Budapest to Slawuta. Perhaps they could meet in Budapest and what are his plans for the next two months. She closes by asking him to "reveal to me all your thoughts".

Ironically, she was the last one to find out what Brainin's thoughts were this time. He had gone on a North

American lecture tour in January, 1910, taking his wife and sister with him. He saw Chava in May when he probably knew that he was planning to leave Europe for good, yet neither then nor throughout the entire summer did he even hint to her of his upcoming plans. The entire Brainin household moved to North America in November, 1910. Chava's reaction is not known as there are no letters for the period between September 10, 1910 and November 22, 1913. From her diary we know that during these years she travelled a great deal and grew close to A.S. Horodesky. In an entry, from the summer of 1913, she writes that she once had a great love and was happy only occasionally, now she is surrounded by her beloved son, mother, brothers and their families and she is happy all the time.

GROUP THREE: 1913 - 1916

For three years there was no contact, as far as we know, between Chava and Brainin. In August of 1913, Brainin came to Europe, stayed for four months, spending the last two with Chava, probably in Berlin. It was the longest time they ever spent together since their meeting in 1899.

On the 18 of November Brainin sailed from Hamburg to New York, on his way back to Montreal. Three days later, on November 22, Chava began a letter to him which she continued writing until December 29, waiting all the while to hear of his safe return. When all she received were two letters from aboard ship, she finally decided to send her letter off, because, as

she put it, she did not want Brainin to worry about her. The long letter is a litany of the injustices that fate and Brainin have dealt her over the years. Since she does not want to express her anger only against Brainin, for fear of alienating him completely, she casts him at times as a victim of his wife and children, which enables her to show him some love and sympathy. America too becomes a target and she transfers some of her seething anger to "her".²⁰

1913

In the first instalment, November 22-25, she reassures him that her "guest" (menstruation period?) arrived and how happy she was to welcome him. She is filled with pain and longing. Everything around her is empty and unpleasant. She thinks her brain will explode and her heart will break, but neither happens. Madness does not overcome her, instead everything becomes crystal clear. "Why did you leave me behind? why did you first run away beyond the ocean and then why did you return? Have you not sinned enough against me and yourself in these last 15 years? So many times we met and so many times we said good bye, yet never once did I feel what I am feeling now. I never found it this difficult. I can no longer bear as much suffering as I did in my youth. Now that the fire has been rekindled it cannot be put out, not with all the water of the Atlantic. I shall not fight it this time. Let the fire burn and let the flame grow... Since you sailed away I have not gone

out. I prefer to be alone with my grief, spilling my tears on the pillow. You made my life bitter again. If you only came for some fun and games, you had no right to do that to me. If there is any justice in the world where is what I deserve for the 15 years of torture that time and you have inflicted on me. For the last 12 years I have been a nomad, living apart from my only son. There is not a soul who cares about me, I have no teacher, guide or defender, I have no home, I have nothing. You never cared about my situation, you thought this is how it should be. You only cared about your children and now that they have grown, you went overseas where you continue to sacrifice yourself for them. Why did you come back? To show me how they sucked you dry? I only wished for some rest, now you have taken that too from me. You say "suffering is nobler than happiness" and that "happiness is only for little people" but I have only known suffering, never any happiness or satisfaction." And she signs this portion - Dr. Haim Sheinberg.

In the December 2-4 portion she reverses herself and writes that her only consolation is that he had remained with his family and did not sacrifice anything on her behalf.

On December 7 she tells him that she has no wish to go to the theatre, drink champagne, or appear attractive to anyone. All desire has died within her. Her only pleasure is writing to him. Does he feel the same way, or is he busying himself so that he can forget her.

On December 11, she writes that she has already

noticed an article of his in the Kanader Adler²¹ which means that he has arrived safely in Montreal. Her mother has delayed her trip back home because Chava has blood in her stool and she may be seriously sick. She does not want to die, she is so thirsty for life. She feels so sorry for her mother, son and him too. After her death he will regret he has not spent more time with her. She has always loved the good in him which she knew how to separate from all the rubbish. She does not agree with his often stated philosophy that "a dear soul remains close even from across an ocean while an unloved one remains remote even when standing in the same room."

By December 12, the doctor has given her a clean bill of health. Her problems are caused by nerves and the doctor recommends she stop worrying. Horodesky was at the doctor's with her. She remembers that Brainin had told her that he needed time to sort out his feelings towards her, surely he had contemplated enough by now, why does he not write.

On December 16 she fondly recalls how great he used to be, "You used to be so modest and work with such dedication, you always looked for ways to improve yourself and never followed the rule of the majority. Now you do your work mechanically and waste your energy on trivialities. You exaggerate and embellish everything the way Americans do, always praising the excellence and advantages of "your" America and dismissing anyone who dares contradict you. Have you stopped searching for the truth because you have already found

it? What you have found is so far from your youthful aspirations... I hate "your" America now a thousand times more than I have hated her before. No corner of the world is as hateful to me as that weird place, America, she who changes people into machines and erases the image of God from their faces and souls."

On December 20th there still is no letter from Brainin and Chava writes that she is going out of her mind, although she does mention in the next sentence a visit she made to a newly-opened coffee house and the cinema next door to it.

By December 21, she begins to suspect that he has been forbidden to write to her, even though "the danger has now past". She has been reading his newspaper and is not very impressed: "Your "Eagle" which you told me was "scientific, literary and universal", is perhaps all that for your Americans - personally, I find it an insult to the intelligence, even your articles are not up to your old standard. The "Adler" is not worthy of you!"

On December 29 she is bewildered by his silence. "You have no God in your heart, how can you not write to me? You came from America, where you have found a home, a job and a respectable life and then criticised everything about my life. Why do I live in Berlin and not in Slawuta, why don't I do this, instead of that, behave thus and not thus. I too would like to find a home and some permanence, but I will not... The only thing that would calm me down is if you promised to come

back soon... tell me that you will, but don't mislead me..." And she finally sends the letter that she began almost six weeks before.

1914

On January 2, Chava writes that she cannot live without letters from him. He should at least have inquired whether she has died. She cannot see how he can harden his heart and close his ears and manage to live happily. On the 7th she sounds more desperate, "I cannot believe you are depriving me of your letters knowingly, what are you doing to me?"

On the 10th she tells him that she likes his articles in the "Eagle" better. His writings however, increase her bitterness, she is jealous of the time and energy he bestows on others, and not one line for her. What would others, or another woman, say if someone left them for three years without one letter. On the 15th she asks, "Doesn't your conscience bother you, don't you want to know me anymore?" She begs him for a sign. "I am made of flesh and blood and your insulting behaviour poisons my blood. I cannot believe that you can be so cruel towards me."

Chava's undated note, written on stationary from the Dom Hotel in Berlin, which from its contents, its irregular handwriting and unfinished message, appears to be a suicide note, in my opinion, belongs here. It reads:

"Brainin! I ask you to forgive me I know I shall

cause you perhaps great anguish. But I must do this. I cannot bear it any longer. I love you, my darling, more than anyone can imagine. I myself cannot believe it but my love has grown stronger than me. Forgive me for causing you this grief. I am compelled to do this. I realise that I am an obstacle in your life and your career. There is not one person I bring joy to and I myself am so miserable, even you cannot help me. Now my final hope, something I have been yearning for these last few years, has also disappeared. I see now that I have been wrong about everything. Everything that I held to be sacred, that transported my spirit, that transformed me from a weakling into a heroine... My last hope is gone, and that is worse than death. Oh my God! I am so sorry! And you my son, I feel so sorry for you, you are so young and tender and you will have to witness such a terrible scene, my hands are trembling " (the message peters out)

The next letter is dated February 20, Chava writes that she now knows that Brainin has made a vow not to write to her, yet he promised to write twice a week... "You will never be able to forget me, you are thinking of me in spite of yourself. I hear your voice, see your eyes, feel your hand caressing mine, you are so near to me I shudder, It is like dreaming while I am awake." On the 25th of the month she wishes him a

happy birthday (March 12) and tells him that she has three wishes: 1. That he should send the "Eagle" to her Slawuta address, as she is leaving Berlin in a month. 2. She wants him to send her article entitled "Epigrams" back to her. 3. "I will not reveal my third wish, if you have any feelings in your heart, you will guess it yourself".

By the first of May, in Slawuta, she still has not heard from him. Not even his newspaper was sent to her. And then suddenly, out of the blue two letters arrive. On May 5 she writes: "So there is a God in the universe and miracles do happen!" But what he writes floods her with despair. She likens him to an exotic plant that has been plucked and transplanted into foreign soil. His new compatriots understand him "as well as pigs understand diamonds". How is it possible for him to adapt to the new world when he has been nurtured in the old for so long? The young could perhaps manage such a change, someone his age, never. His children are also unreasonable, how can they be so demanding. "I too have a son whom I love more than myself, but I too am worth something, not just my son!" Brainin has always lived chained and will never do anything to loosen his bonds. What about the books he planned to write and the Hebrew language he loved so much. When will he come back to Europe? She can see that her duty is to strengthen him through letters, "if I were sure that my words would liberate you and pull you back, I would never stop writing, is there any hope that you may come in the summer, the mere thought intoxicates

me. You are a Hebraist who lost his way, now you alone must find the way back. You know the sins that you have committed and not just against your soul... I put my hand over my mouth to stop a scream so powerful that it could reach Montreal." She signs the letter Dr. Sheinberg.

On June 7, she is angry with all Canadians for their reaction to the sinking of the "Empress of Ireland". They, the Canadians were demanding "blood money" for the casualties, she fulminates, as though one could ever equate human life with dollars.²² She is afraid to ask him to come to Europe now because of the danger in the seas. She describes the situation in her home in Slawuta. Things have changed since her father had died (he died in 1912). Her mother is no longer the mistress of the house and Chava does not feel at home there. She is thinking of leaving: "Once again I do not know where I am going, to whom or for what purpose. I am a stranger everywhere, with little prospects. I feel so alone...Please, my darling, write to me and cheer me up."

1916

Brainin never wrote to Chava again. In 1916 she sent him a letter written in Russian, dated June 28, from Kiev where she now lived, telling him that she heard he was publishing a new magazine²³, and that she would love to see him and speak with him. She ends: "I shake your hand, dear friend, Ewa"

GROUP FOUR: 1919 - 1928.

Three years past, during which, we know from her diary, Chava lived in Slawuta and Kiev, witnessing and living through the Russian Revolution and the bloody pogroms. In 1919, through the intervention of a Christian friend, she and her son, managed to escape from the Ukraine to Czechoslovakia.

1919

On October 19, from Prague, she dashes off two triumphant letters to Brainin, one to Montreal and one to the office of the Jewish Daily Forward, the Yiddish newspaper, in New York.

"My dear old friend, I am alive, I am alive. I and my son have escaped by some miracle from the jaws of death. Let me know at once how you are , where you are and what you are doing

I cannot believe I am back in Europe. You can well imagine my desire to reconnect with living people, old friends I had given up hope of ever seeing again. I am anxiously awaiting your answer, please guide me as to which paper I should write for. I must support my son and myself through my work. Our money from the Ukraine is worthless here. I can write Hebrew or Yiddish, just tell me what to write and where to send it to. I squeeze

your hand, Chava."

Three weeks later she writes to him again, having received his current address in New York from a London source. She repeats her news and adds that she is sending him via Hatoren, the journal Brainin was editing at the time in New York, articles about her experiences in the Ukraine which must remain unsigned (not to endanger her family). He can shorten or change them. She would also like her fees for some articles she had sent Hatoren during the war. She has not seen any Hebrew for over a year or read anything that had been published in Europe in the last five years. She closes by asking whether he still remembers her.

1920

On January 14, she writes that she has heard that a shipment of mail from America had arrived in Prague after a long delay. It seems it had fallen into the water. She fears that his long awaited letter was in there and she begs him to write again. She repeats her news and adds that as much as she hates to she must ask for money, she is totally cut off, a refugee, living among strangers. She wants to have news of him and his family and wonders how much they know of what befell the Jews in Russia. "Do all you can to save our miserable brothers there, their lives hang by a thread."

In February she sends Brainin a letter through

Lausanne, still deluding herself that he had not received her previous letters. "I find it hard to believe that just because you live well in a safe country and are far removed from the grief of your brothers and sisters in the Ukraine, that you choose to ignore your sister who is close to you in spirit, but so far in distance. I cannot believe it and that is why I am writing again."

At the end of the month she finally receives some good news. Horodesky in Bern has received some money on her behalf from the editorial office of Hatoren.²⁴ At least it is a sign from Brainin, even if not a real letter. She wishes so much to see his tiny handwriting again...The remittance however, makes her realise that all her letters had reached their destination. She is puzzled by his behaviour: "I cannot understand a thing, did you really not write? Why? But that is impossible, so why have I not received anything? Please, please write to me everything about yourself. My patience is wearing thin."

When four months later she still has not heard from him, she fires off the following letter on June 27, addressed to "Mr. Reuven Brainin":

"Your behaviour towards me, to put it mildly, is dishonourable and indecent. Rest assured that even if I were starving I would not turn to you for help. I am not writing to you because of my failing

health or my impoverished circumstances. I know what a busy man you are, preaching in your articles for help for our Russian "brothers and sisters". There are matters that go beyond hunger. Try and recall your own early days of struggle, even if they happened to be your greatest and most creative days. Search your heart for some remaining human emotion. I have the right to ask you for help and it is your duty to do whatever you can do for me. Nothing in the world will exonerate you if you refuse. I am off to Lausanne to build up my health and try and put my life together again. I have lost contact with my family in Slawuta where the "Reds" have returned. My heart bleeds when I remember their fate. Have all the others, and not I, been right about you, during these last 20 years? !... My present pain is worse than what I suffered during the worst period of the pogroms, when I came face to face with the beasts of humanity."

Chava writes again on August 7 . She has heard that Brainin had been to Europe and did not contact her. She cannot describe how disappointed she is. For 20 years he was her

blazing star, the friend she and her mother, believed they could always rely on. How wrong they had been! She endured with him his good and bad times and yet now, after seven terrible years and her miraculous rescue from hell, this inexplicable behaviour. She goes on and on, dwelling on her pain, not able to accept Brainin's silence.

Sometime in the fall of 1920, Brainin asked for an accounting of the monies that were disbursed to Dr. Chava Shapiro. On December 22, 1920, the manager of Hatoren, informs him that two payments have been made. One on January 23, 1920 for \$43 and another on September 29, 1920, for \$22,20.

1928

After 1920 Chava stopped writing to Brainin. She continued corresponding with Hatoren on professional matters, demanding payment for her articles, asking for their English language press certification, wanting her manuscripts back or discussing future articles. And then suddenly, on December 21, 1928, her 52nd birthday, she writes one final letter to "Mr. Reuven Brainin":

"A quarter of a century ago, when you were in great financial difficulty, you turned to me with a request for money. I sent you 200 rubles and never mentioned the matter again, until this day.

Times have changed, "the shoe is on the

other foot" and I find myself in the same predicament. I am forced to remind you.

Brainin do not delay!

And another thing: Please return all my manuscripts that you have collected over the years, as the editor of Hatoren, as well as payment for my last article which I have still not received.

With regards, Chava Shapiro.

Chava lived for another 15 years, frustrated and unhappy. Brainin after losing his wife in 1934, and suffering from Parkinson's disease, went to live with his son Joe and his family, who nursed him devotedly, until his death five years later.

The letters Chava wrote to Brainin were among the literary archives that were given by Brainin's sons to the Jewish Public Library, in 1941.²⁵ It took another forty years for the Reuven Brainin Collection to be sorted and properly organized. In 1985 in the course of the work, the letters, which were in a separate bundle, carefully tied with a ribbon, together with three photographs of Chava, were discovered. Eighty six years had passed since the first letter had been written. It seems clear that the letters accompanied Brainin through his travels in Europe and were brought with him to North America, in spite of Chava's regular admonishments to

destroy them and his own silence towards her from 1914 until his death over a quarter century later.

CONCLUSION

The life of Chava Shapiro Rosenboim Winternitz could be judged disastrous if viewed only through Chava's words, but extraordinary in the perspective of time. Hedwig Doem, (1833-1919), a German feminist of Jewish origins, could have been describing Chava when she wrote: "Women are full of contradictions, they are oppressed but powerful, rational but emotional, confined yet unlimited"²⁶. Chava lived life to its fullest, experiencing misery, turmoil, joy and exhilaration.

It was definitely not an easy life. Of her 67 years only the first seventeen were worry-free. Another ten years, from 1904 to 1914, were relatively gratifying. The rest, which amount to forty years, were filled with struggle, depressions, unhappiness and tragedy.

Chava was a product of the Haskalah movement on the one hand and the Russian Jewish embourgeoisement on the other. The first legitimized her rebellion against traditional Judaism and the second afforded her a life of leisure which she spent educating herself and learning how to be a writer. After her marriage she began to question the sexual status quo of the existing patriarchal family, feeling intuitively that women were as capable of determining their destinies as men were.

Chava became a feminist when she began to write. She

was never a social or political activist and she did not spend her life thinking and writing only about feminist issues. She was a working intellectual who gradually won her autonomy through the pen.

She was also a woman caught between two worlds. The old world where women were taken care of and the new one where the price of independence was insecurity and loneliness. The irreconcilability of the two explains in part Chava's recurring bouts of depression. Some psychologists at the turn of the century maintained that female hysteria and nervous disorders were signs of good health that showed the "full humanness" of women and that resisting the historically arbitrary, culturally local, value models was a positive thing.²⁷ For Chava, however, the rejection of the status quo did not guarantee permanent relief. Her life continued to be dominated by men. She, who fought so hard to be free of them, ended up only exchanging masters. Her first husband Limel Rosenboim, replaced her father. Brainin, with her own permission, almost replaced Rosenboim, and her second husband, J. Winternitz, turned out to be the worst choice of the four.

Chava's anguished cry, in 1903: "Give me life, space, light, freedom! I am choking!" could have been made in 1933 too, with one important difference; in 1903 she also wrote: "I wish to break out, to remove my bonds, escape my prison, shatter my chains and reach for freedom " (see note 77 in chapter 1) and succeeded in doing just that, while in 1933 she

had no right left in her.

Yet even in 1903, bursting with positive energy and ideas, she would have been very happy to let Brainin take control of her life. It was only when he refused that she reluctantly assumed responsibility for her own destiny.

For ten years, from 1904 to 1914, she had social and economic control of her life. In her sketch "The Rose" in Collection of Sketches, which was published during this time, she exalts in her new power. The rose is the symbol of a strong, life-enhancing female. In the next sketch, "The Lonely One", however, she is realistic enough to acknowledge the difficulties and heartbreak that are the fate of such a woman, even if at times there are compensations:

"Each breath I draw is special, filled with the dew of childhood, with purity and freedom. My God, how pleasant and beautiful this world is! I feel like a small child who holds in his hands a most precious toy and looks around him, fearful, that someone, at any moment, will snatch it away." (see note 84 in chapter 1)

Looking back at this period in her life, Chava's only regret was that she had squandered her writing talents by writing and researching different subjects, superficially, instead of concentrating on the field of belles-lettres. But: "I lived real life- and life was more interesting and

worthwhile than all those sketches". (see note 40 in chapter 1)

Perhaps given more time Chava could have resolved her personal difficulties but unfortunately time was something that she did not have. Stefan Zweig (1881-1942), the well known Austrian writer, born 5 years after Chava and dying one year before her, summed up their generation's plight in the following manner:

"Actually, it is not so much the course of my own destiny that I relate, but that of an entire generation, the generation of our time, which was loaded down with a burden of fate as was hardly any other in the course of history. Each one of us, even the smallest and the most insignificant has been shaken in the depths of his being by the almost unceasing volcanic eruptions of our European earth. I know of no pre-eminence that I can claim, in the midst of the multitude, except this: that as an Austrian, a Jew, an author, a humanist and a pacifist, I have always stood at the exact point where these earthquakes were the most violent."²⁸

Chava ^{AS} ~~being~~ a Russian citizen fared much worse. The physical collapse of her world, brought on by the first World War, signalled the collapse of her inner world too. Returning to her childhood home at the age of thirty eight she became a "has been" whose life had permanently lost its momentum. From

then until her arrival in Terezin, 29 years later, she never again regained control of it. She withdrew from life around her, living in almost complete isolation. The Russian Revolution succeeded in shaking her out of her lethargy for a short while but it was not long before she was complaining that her privacy was being violated. (see note 88 in chapter 1)

Socialism, Communism and Zionism were swirling around her, movements in which educated women, regardless of religion, were participating as equals with men. Yet Chava sat on the sidelines, indulging her individuality. Already in 1907 she wrote:

"I try to get close to people and many people really get close to me, but inside there is always a wall that separates us. Everything is strange to me and it is my impression that I will never be able to get close to anyone without feeling this strangeness that separates me from the rest of the world".(see note 34 in chapter 1)

To sum up, Chava achieved in ten years everything that she set out to do. She freed herself from an unhappy marriage, earned an academic education and was socially and professionally in control of her life. During those years she was in the avant garde of the feminist and Hebrew revivalist movements. But then History conspired against her, as it did against millions of others, and for the rest of her life she

poured all her energy into the struggle for survival.

It is tempting to speculate what would have happened had Chava, after her graduation from university in 1910, decided to emigrate to Palestine. In Palestine she would have found a growing number of women writers like Hemda Ben Yehuda, Nechama Puchachevsky or Yehudit Harari-Eisenberg, who too were the product of the Russian Enlightenment but who came to Palestine imbued with an ideology and became part of the new historical process of the Return to Zion. They imparted, through their writings, their new experiences which they shared with the people at home and the new settlers in Palestine. Unlike Chava, they were neither alone nor isolated, and what is even more important, there was a continuity and future to their work.

It was Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the famous revivalist of the Hebrew language, who cried: "Our heart is dry, dry, dry! Our brains are finely honed but our hearts have shrivelled up. What we need is an emotional outpouring of the soul that will raise us, if only for a moment, above the banality of our lives." He believed that only women writers and only in Palestine could resuscitate the "dead, forgotten, dried out, hardened " Hebrew language.²⁹

Chava however, chose to be a Hebrew writer in Europe, accepting the loneliness and marginality of that life and wallowing in the tragic air that it lent her.

Like Mirele, in David Bergelson's book, When I'll Is

Said and Done, she too could say: "I lived through my autumn... from my birth on, I lived through it, and I have never had any spring... someone lived through my spring".³⁰

NOTES

1. Gershon Shaked. The Shadows Within, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 40.
2. Gershon Shaked. The Shadows Within, p.41.
3. All of Chava's letters that are mentioned from here on end are in the Reuven Brainin Collection of the Jewish Public Library in Montreal. A separate listing of the 81 letters used in this study appears in the appendix.
4. Chava alludes to May, 1899 as the anniversary of their first meeting, several times in the correspondence.
5. Merano, in the province of Bolzano in the north of Italy or South Tyrol, was noted for its mild and healthy climate.
6. "Clipped Wings" later appeared in her book Collection of Sketches.
7. It was the 7th congress which took place in Basle from July 27 - August 2, 1905.
8. "The Old Maid" was one of Chava's sketches that were eventually included in her book Collection of Sketches.
9. Chava is referring here to the Russian Revolution of 1905.
10. Among the correspondence of R. Brainin (RB Archives, Group III, Correspondence) is a letter from M. Helmer who on June, 15 1908, a year after the divorce, writes to Brainin that Chava's former husband and father-in-law were still spreading rumours that Chava had converted under the influence of a certain writer from Berlin.
11. Mamzer is bastard in Hebrew. Chava is referring to Jesus' birthday at Christmas.
12. "His clothes rent and dust on his head", (II Samuel 1:2), is a sign of mourning and distress in the Jewish religion.
13. Chava mentions in her diary several marriage offers that she received during these years, never mentioning any specific names.
14. Chava's book Collection of Sketches was published that year in Warsaw.
15. In actual fact the four Brainin children were younger. Miriam was 18, Berta - 16, Moe - 15 and Joe only 13.

16. Please refer to note 29 in the first chapter.
17. Chava is referring to the wig Jewish brides don after their marriage as a sign of modesty.
18. Chava was going to Gottingen to do research for her thesis.
19. Abbazia is the former name of Opatija, a seaside resort on Kvarner Gulf in Yugoslavia.
20. In Hebrew the word, America, is female, therefore Chava refers to it as "she", which adds poignancy to her anger.
21. The Kanader Adler, (Canadian Eagle), a Yiddish daily newspaper, was the reason Brainin came to Montreal 1910. He became its editor and remained in that position until 1915.
22. The "Empress of Ireland", a Canadian Pacific passenger liner, was rammed on May 29, 1914, in the fog by a Norwegian collier, while outward bound from Quebec City. 1014 of the 1477 on board drowned. Encyclopedia Canadiana, (Toronto: Grolier, 1975), v.3, p.416.
23. Brainin left the Kanader Adler in 1915 and began his own Yiddish paper, Der Veg, which folded 9 months later, after which he decided to leave Montreal and move to New York City.
24. Chava had earlier given Brainin Horodesky's address in Bern, thinking it was safer to send money there because she did not have a permanent address in Prague.
25. Brainin, together with Yehuda (Kaufmann) Even Shmuel, founded the Jewish Public library in 1914, while the two were living in Montreal. (for further information see my article "The Jewish Public Library of Montreal: A Portrait of the Founders", Judaica Librarianship, 5,1 (1990):80-82). Brainin left Montreal in 1916 but kept close touch with the city and the institution and after his death in 1939, bequeathed his literary archives to the JPL.
26. Renate Duell-Klein, "Hedwig Doem, Passionate Theorist", in Feminist Theorists, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 165-183.
27. Marion A. Kaplan. The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979) 33.
28. Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday, (London: Cassel, 1944) 5.
29. Yaffa Berlovitch, Sippurei Nashim Bnot Haaliyah Harishona, (Stories by Women of the First Aliyah), (Tel Aviv: Tarmil, 1984) 187-195.

30. David Bergelson, When All is Said and Done, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977) 304.

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CHAVA SHAPIRO - CHRONOLOGY

- 1876 Chava is born on December 26.
- 1893 Chava's younger sister dies of scarlet fever.
- 1896* Chava marries Limel Rosenboim.
- 1898* Son Pinhas (Popus) is born.
- 1899 Chava meets Brainin in May.
- 1900* Chava moves to Warsaw.
- 1901 Chava meets I.L. Peretz.
- 1902 Chava's sketch The Rose appears in Hador.
- 1903 Chava meets Brainin in Zurich in June and decides to leave husband. She returns to Slawuta in September and in December leaves for Vienna.
- 1904 Chava is studying in Vienna.
- 1905 Chava is taking courses as an external student at the University of Bern, Switzerland.
- 1906 Chava is accepted as a full time student in the faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bern.
- 1907 Chava's divorce comes through.
- 1908 Chava's article "Days of Awe" is printed in Hed Hazeman, she meets A.S. Horodesky in Bern and her book Collection of Sketches appears in Warsaw.
- 1909 Chava is doing research at Gottingen University.
- 1910 Chava finishes her studies successfully and obtains her doctorate. Brainin leaves for North America.

- 1911 Chava tours Palestine with her parents and Mr. and Mrs. David Frischman.
- 1912 Chava's father dies in Berlin.
- 1913 Brainin comes to Europe in August and rekindles the relationship with Chava.
- 1914 Chava returns to Slawuta as World War One breaks out.
- 1915 Chava spends time in Kiev. I.L. Peretz dies.
- 1918 Chava visits Odessa where she meets with H.N. Bialik.
- 1919 Terrible pogroms in the Ukraine. Chava and her son, with the help of a Christian friend, escape to Czechoslovakia.
- 1920 Chava lives with her son in Prague. She interviews President Masaryk as part of her work and travels to Switzerland to meet her old friend Horodesky.
- 1921 Chava moves to Munkacs; her son remains in Prague where he is studying engineering.
- 1922 Chava's mother dies in Slawuta.
- 1923 Chava reports from the Zionist Congress in Karlsbad.
- 1925 Chava meets Brainin at the Zionist Congress in Vienna. In December she returns to Prague after a four year stay in Munkacs.
- 1930* Chava marries Dr. J. Winternitz in Prague.
- 1937* Chava's son leaves Prague for the United States.

1941* Cnava and her husband are deported to Terezin.

1943 Chava dies on February 28 in Terezin.

1953 Chava's son dies in a car accident, in St. Louis,
Missouri.

* Dates were deduced from diary and letters only and could not
be otherwise verified.

LIST OF LETTERS USED IN THE STUDY.

1899

1. August 1. Letter from Wiesbaden.

1900

2. June (?). Letter from Warsaw.

3. June 13. Postcard from Warsaw to Berlin.

4. July 29. Letter from Slawuta.

5. July (?). Letter from Slawuta.

6. August 19. Letter from Slawuta.

1901

7. July 15. Letter from Pymont to Berlin.

8. July 16. " " "

9. August 11. " " "

10. September 2. Letter from Slawuta.

11. September 24. Letter from Warsaw to Vienna.

12. October 21. Postcard from Warsaw to Berlin.

13, October 30. Letter from Warsaw.

14. November 15. Letter from Warsaw.

15. November 25. Letter from Warsaw.

1903

16. March 18. Letter from Warsaw.

17. June 29. Letter from Slawuta.

18,. June 30. Letter from ".

19. September 14. Letter ".

20. October 8. " "

21. October 11. " "

22. October 18.	" "
23. October 21.	Letter from Warsaw.
24. November 11.	Postcard Slawuta to Meran.
25. November 17.	Letter from Slawuta.
26. November 22.	" "
27. November 27.	Postcard from Slawuta to Meran.
28. December 1.	Letter from Slawuta.

1904

29. April 20.	Letter from Vienna.
30. May 24.	" "
31. June 8.	" "
32. June 9.	Postcard from Vienna to Marienbad.
33. June 10.	Two postcards from Vienna to Marienbad.
34. June 12.	" " " "
35. June 14.	Letter from Vienna.
36. June 24.	Letter from Ottwock.
37. July 1.	Letter from Slawuta.
38. September(?)	Letter from Slawuta.

1905

39. June 22.	Letter from Warsaw.
40. June 23.	" "
41. December 2.	Letter from Bern.

1906

42. January 3.	Letter from Bern.
43. January 17.	" "

1907

44. January 7. Postcard from Paris to Berlin.
45. November 15. Letter from Vienna.
46. November 22. " "

1908

47. January 14. Letter from Vienna.
48. April 2. Letter from Lausanne.
49. October 8. Postcard from Warsaw to Wiesbaden.
50. October 14. " " "
51. October 18. Postcard from Warsaw to Antwerp.
52. October 27. " " "
53. November 2. " " "
54. November 11. Postcard from Vienna to Paris.
55. November 18. Postcard from Bern to Paris.
56. November 28. Letter from Bern.
57. December 2. Postcard from Bern to Paris.
58. December 8. " " "

1909

59. February 22. Letter from Bern.
60. March 5. Postcard from Bern to Glasgow.
61. April 20. Postcard from Warsaw to Berlin.
62. April 23. Letter from Gottingen.
63. April 25. " "
64. May 2. Postcard from Bern to Berlin.

1910

65. June 24. Postcard from Bern to Marienbad.
66. September 3. Letter from Abbazia, Yugoslavia. (today
Opatija)
67. September 10 " "

1913

68. November 22 - December 29, continuous letter from Berlin to
Montreal.

1914

69. Undated. Suicide note.
70. May 5. Letter from Slawuta.
71. June 7. " "
72. June 11. Letter from Slawuta.
73. June 28. Letter from Kiev.

1919

74. October 19. Letter from Prague to Montreal.
75. November 3. " " "

1920

76. January 14. Letter from Prague to New York.
77. February 15. " " "
78. February 17. " " "
79. June 27. Letter from Lausanne to New York.
80. August 7. " " "

1928

- December 21. Letter from Prague to New York.

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Reuven Brainin's only letter to Chava Shapiro.

14/VII/99

My respected friend, hello!

I have received and read your letters, countless times and feel incapable of expressing my thanks to you, my friend. "Thank you" is an empty word, everyone uses it casually and without feeling. No, I will refrain from saying thank you but deep in your generous heart you will know what my heart really feels for you. In these last few weeks I have come to realise that not only is your soul pure and innocent, your thoughts and feelings sublime and wondrous and that like a heavenly angel you float among the female species but now I have found out that you are also courageous and capable of truly great deeds. I humbly lower myself and bow at your feet! From the day I have come to know you my soul has soared because I see with my own eyes that there really are great and marvellous lady Hebraists - At least I have had the privilege of meeting one and talking to her for many hours.

Your hard work on my behalf has spoilt my cup that until now has been brimming over with happiness due to your uplifting letters. When I think in detail of all that you did, my friend, I feel it is my soul's sacred duty to tell you to your face that you are a noble Hebraist and there is no one like you amongst our daughters.

Your modesty, innocence and purity have won my heart and soul for ever. Who but you, my friend, know that I admire and respect you (even love you, dare I whisper) not as a "female" and not as one who belongs to the "beautiful sex", but as a superior creature, a symbol of innocence and purity. I love you for your great soul and your sharp intellect. In your proximity even scoundrels become honest while honest and simple people (to which group I think Brainin belongs) become pure saints.

You have asked me again about my beloved sister and even though I don't know why you are so interested I shall be indulgent with you, my gentle one and tell you certain things about her. All my current thoughts focus on my beloved sister. I have her in my mind all day long and at night the angel of dreams brings her to me in dream like apparitions. I am aware that people would laugh at me if they knew that I loved my little sister more than my self. The love of a brother for his sister is not well understood in our day. But let them say what they want, I love my beloved sister with all my heart and soul.

I was angry when she asked me whether I would advise her to come through Berlin and whether I would like to see her. Do I want to see her? What bitter irony! I would gladly give my life for a short glimpse of her face and a chance to talk to her. My sister knows this very well, so why does she ask such things? And what would you say, my friend, to such a question?

If I knew for sure that my small sister would be here on her way to Marienbad, my happiness would cure my serious affliction. I don't know why I have such pain. My heart is wounded so deeply and I cannot find any rest. If it were not for my literary work and my obligations to my people and my children, that take up most of my time, why then, I would succumb to this intense grief and give in to this fatal blow which has eliminated the sunshine from my life.

I never believed I could feel so sad or irrational. My emotions are stronger than I could have ever imagined. I did not write to you yesterday because I find writing hard. I have difficulty finding words to express the turmoil in my soul and this causes me to feel angry and betrayed by my usually loyal pen. I am also not sure whether my letters get safely to your hands. If I knew that for sure I would write to you a long letter, my friend, every single day. Two days ago I sent you my first letter, did you get it? When you receive this one kindly let me know. Let me also know whether I should go on writing to you in Slawuta, I am afraid that my letters will not reach you because you are getting ready to leave. Please reassure me by sending a telegram the minute this letter reaches your hand. How anxious I am to know everything about your health and well being and of what goes on in your home.

About myself I can tell you only a few things. In the last few days some very unpleasant things happened which upaw me greatly. I will only add at this time that it was only due to my courage and bravery that I managed to rid myself of them. If it were not for my constant thoughts about my beloved sister - my problems would have overcome me for sure. But now my soul is unaffected, it radiantly soars to the upper spheres.

You will probably find these last lines very mysterious but you will find out more in due course. The letters from my beloved sister have awakened all my dormant forces and I am filled with new power, hope and life and aspire to do great things.

The favour that you bestowed on me, my friend, saved me from great harm and I shall remember that always. Please, my friend, write me about yourself. Give my regards to your respected mother and kiss your son for me.

Keep well and be strong!

With friendly and faithful wishes

I am completely yours R. Brainin

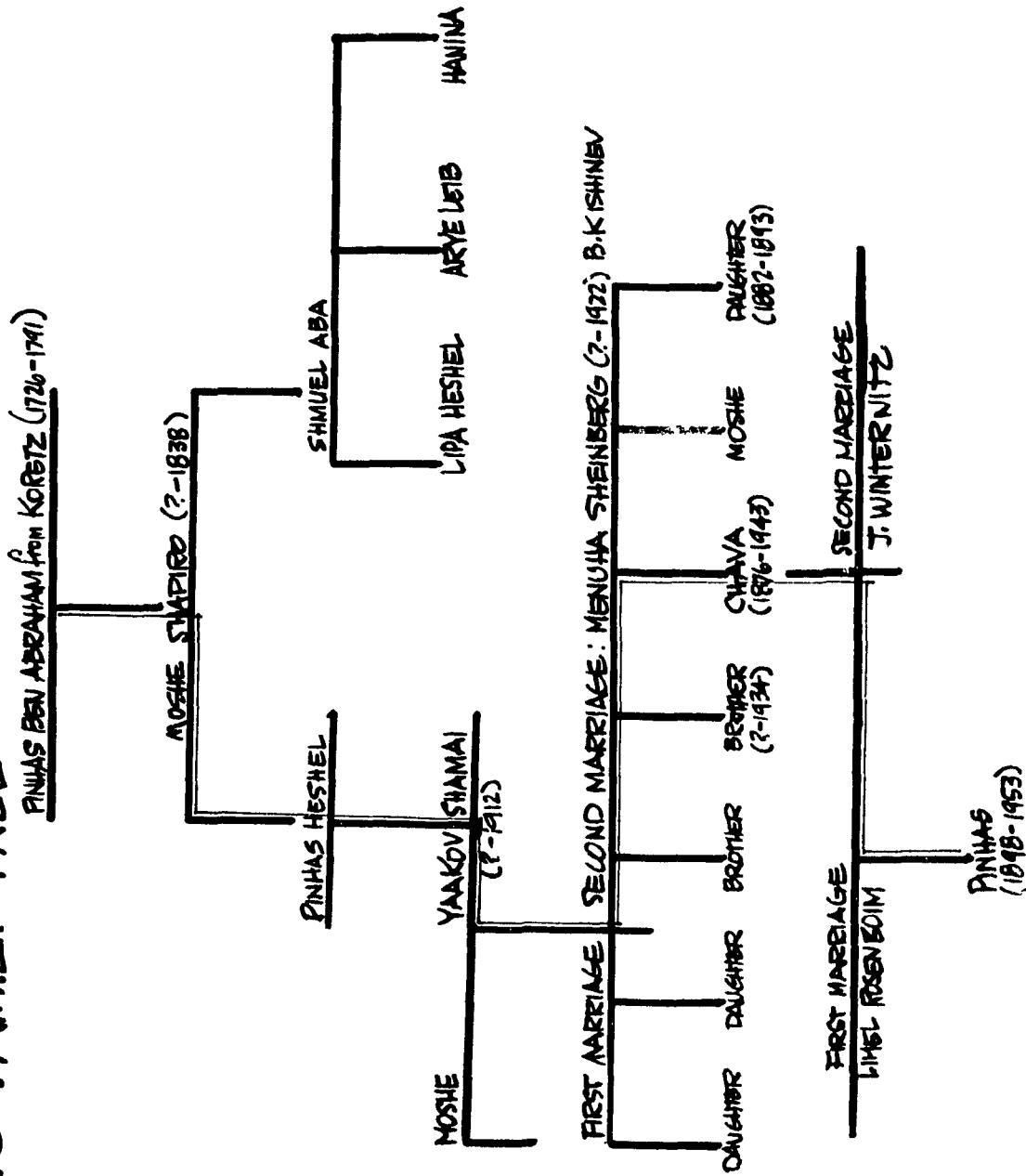
BRAININ - CHRONOLOGY

- 1862 Birth in Liady, March 15, Purim.
- 1866 Study in Heder.
- 1868 Study in Yeshiva.
- 1878 Leaves Liady for Harki to study Agronomy.
- 1879 Goes to Smolensk and begins to write.
- 1880 Is in Moscow where he organizes a student Bnei Zion group.
- 1885 Edits HaMelitz in St. Petersburg.
- 1888 Marries Masha Amsterdam in Moscow. Article on Peretz Smolenskin appears in HaMelitz.
- 1890 Birth of daughter Miriam.
- 1891 After expulsion from Moscow goes to Vienna where he attends university and the rabbinical seminary.
- 1892 Birth of second daughter Bertha. Moves to Berlin where he begins Zionist activities.
- 1893 Birth of son Moses.
- 1894 Founds and edits new Hebrew journal Memizrach Umimaarav, which folds in 1899.
- 1895 Birth of son Joseph.
- 1897 Attends First Zionist Congress in Basle. Lectures at Berlin University.
- 1899 Two infant sons born in the previous two years die. In May he meets Chava Shapiro in Berlin.
- 1902 Founds an Ivria group in Basle. In June has a

- breakdown and spends six months in hospital.
- 1907 His mother dies in Vienna.
- 1909 Visits North America for the first time.
- 1910 In January he visits Montreal and tours the U.S. with his wife until May, editing the Hebrew journal Hadrór while he is there. He returns in November and negotiates with the publisher of the Kanader Adler, Wolofsky, about becoming the editor of the K.A. and starting a new Hebrew journal Haderech. Fiftieth birthday celebrations include a plan to gather all his writings into a 20 volume edition. (only three volumes were ever published.)
- 1912 Arrives in Montreal with family and starts work as the editor of the Kanader Adler on March 12.
- 1913 Daughter Miriam marries Dr. Sam Ortenberg in Montreal. In August he travels to Europe where he stays until the end of November.
- 1914 Founds with Yehuda (Kaufmann) Even Shmuel the Jewish Public Library of Montreal.
- 1915 Leaves the Kanader Adler and starts a new Yiddish daily Der Veg which folds within 9 months.
- 1916 Moves to New York City.
- 1918 Daughter Miriam dies during the Influenza epidemic.
- 1919 Becomes the editor of the Hebrew journal Hatoren where he remains until 1926.

- 1921 Son Joseph marries Shulamit, the daughter of David Naimark.
- 1922 Sixtieth birthday celebrations. Plans include the publishing of all his works in a 30 v. edition.
- 1925 Visits Palestine.
- 1926 Visits the U.S.S.R.
- 1929 Visits South America. Has polemic war with Bialik.
- 1934 Wife Masha dies in the summer while visiting Montreal.
- 1939 November 30, dies in son's apartment in NYC. Is brought by train to Montreal and is buried at the Shaar Hashamayim Cemetery, in Mt. Royal Park on December 1.
- 1941 Sons Moses and Joseph give the Jewish Public Library of Montreal their father's book collection and literary archives.

SHAPIRO FAMILY TREE



IN DER NAHE VON
BAHNHOF FRIEDRICH-STRASSE UND
UNTER DEN LINDEN —————
KÖNIGLICHEM SCHLOSS UND DOM

[illegible]