

Kabbalists (152-56)

I. Initial Situation: Is Torah the best merchandise?

- A. Rebbe-disciple: Reb Yekl & Lemekh
- B. How can the hunger be overcome?
 - 1. Fasting
 - 2. Kabbalah

II. Hasidic Torah

- A. The 3-fold melody
 - voiceless melody = highest level of mystical contemplation
- B. The 2 bowls of grits
 - Reb Tevel's coarse voice
 - Reb Yekl's heavy boots
- C. Lemekh's "sin"

III. Lemekh's Divine Death

- A. Epiphany of the inner voice
- B. Ecstasy of pure spirit
- C. Sudden death
- D. Denouement:
 - 1. Whole shtetl envies him
 - 2. Reb Yekl's great disappointment: one more rung to go!

Using Hasidism against itself

- A. Bitter indictment of a society that allowed its mystics to achieve transcendence only by starving themselves to death
- B. Material struggle outweighs all spiritual yearnings
- C. Shtetl intelligentsia vying with each other about who can die more mystically = FAKE MIRACLE
- D. Romantic ideal of a writer drawn to music as a route to transcendence

Q: Why is the yeshiva in decline?

A: Extreme poverty; Shtetl in crisis

Written @ same time as Impressions of a Journey

A: Total spiritual bankruptcy

Peretz and the Hasidic Revival

Mekubolim / Kabbalists (1891/1894) – *Peretz Reader*

Oyb nisht nokh hekher / If Not Higher (1900) - *Peretz Reader*

Tvishn tsvey berg / Between Two Mountains (1900) - *Peretz Reader*,

Mishnes khsidim / The Missing Melody (1894/1902) – *Peretz Reader*

Hisgales, oder di mayse fun tsignbok / Revelation: or, The Story of the Billy-Goat (1904) – *Peretz Reader*

Der Bal-shem firt oys a shidekh / The Baal-Shem Tov Arranges a Marriage – Neugroschel

Ken Frieden, *Classic Yiddish fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz* Albany, N.Y. : State University of New York Press, 1988, pp. 281-309. **BB**.

I. Who was I. L. Peretz?

NAHMAN BEN SIMHA OF BRASLAV	YITSKHOK-LEYB PERETZ
Bilingual author; leading intellectual	Ditto
Storytelling: his last hurrah; sense of messianic urgency, despair	Storytelling: quaint relic Midlife crisis; new creative beginning
Fairytale	Legend, monologue, dialogue
Written transcript of real oral delivery	Written transcript of invented oral delivery
Reworked traditional narratives to suit his radical agenda	Ditto
Spawned many imitators	Ditto

Note on nomenclature

ROV

REBBE

REB