

Editor's note: The following is taken from the original notebooks of Walter I. Resnikoff, written in Yiddish (see front page). It was painstakingly translated by Harvey Ladin, our late editor, a relative of the author. Because of the length of the tale, we have condensed it for publication and have summarized the events leading up to the start of this narrative:

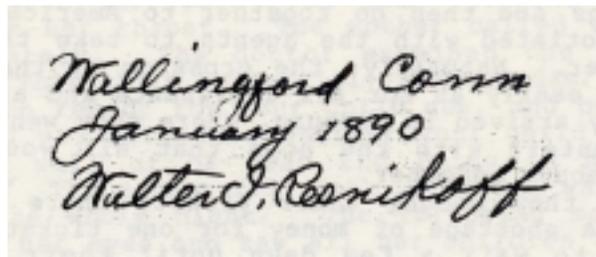
The year is 1888 and the place is Gorodisht, near Kiev. S. Sokoloff is the bread commissar. Mr. Sokoloff is strapped financially and tells his son, Sam, that he needs money to pay his debts. The best way to do this is for Sam to marry the daughter of the rich Mr. Rabinovitz for her dowry. Sam is unreceptive to this idea because he is in love with someone else, his cousin Hannah, Uncle Shiom Resnikoff's daughter. The Resnikoffs are leaving for America and Sam wants to go with them. Shiom sends his son, Israel, to Elizabethgrad to say goodbye to his friend, Jacob Smirnoff, where Israel falls in love with Jacob's daughter, Mina. They part and vow to write each other. The Resnikoffs start their voyage to America.

From their city they rode to Warsaw where they went directly to the agents who handle passengers to America and who also took people over the border. When the agents asked them how much money they had, the agents figured out

that they were short for one passenger ticket. It was a difficult situation for the family, being in a place where they had no good friends or acquaintances. But they could do nothing. They decided that they should all go to Hamburg and there they would sell some of their belongings and then go together to America. They then negotiated with the agents to take them over the border. Naturally, the crossing of the border was made easily as for all immigrants and after two days they arrived in Hamburg, where they went to the ship counters with the hope that all would soon leave Hamburg together.

When they bought their tickets there was, of course, a shortage of money for one ticket. They decided to wait a few days until their baggage arrived, and they would sell some things, and buy the ticket. They waited four days and their baggage did not yet arrive. Every day was very costly for them for sleeping and eating. They then realized that if they remained in Hamburg a few more days they would use up all their money. So they decided that the mother and the children should leave for America and the father should wait until the baggage arrived and he would sell some things and then also come to America.

It became very difficult for the mother



Wallingford Conn
January 1890
Walter I. Resnikoff

and children to separate from the father and also to sail on a sea which their grandparents never knew about and to go to a land that was very strange to them. But they saw that there was no better plan than this. The day came for their ship to leave. Their hearts were truly broken thinking about the difficulty they found themselves in. None of them could speak a word. They took their bundles and made their farewells, overflowing with great tears. The father, in a heart-rending voice, said, "*You must not be discouraged my dear ones. The trouble will be over soon, and great good awaits us. I pray to God that he will bring us together again soon.*" He began to cry and fell into a trance. People took the father away and the mother and the children were led into the ship.

The passengers were very happy with the great German ship *Russia* which traveled between Hamburg and New York. Only the wife and the children of Schlomo Resnikoff felt in every way the most unlucky people in the world. They were very weak from the journey up to now and they felt very miserable without their father. But everything was not as bad for them as the event which happened the second day of their trip. The three-year old child became seriously ill and had to be taken to the ship's hospital. The mother and children were very unhappy and spent a terrible night. Late at night the child began to choke and the mother saw that

the child would soon suffocate from this sickness which was deep in her throat. The mother called the doctor immediately. The doctor examined the child and said, "*This child is terribly sick, madam. There is only one remedy for your child now, and by tomorrow morning you will know whether your child will live and be well or be dead and lying in her watery grave.*" The mother fell into shock and was terribly sick the whole night. The following morning she opened her eyes and saw all her children around her crying and begging her, "*Mother—don't leave us.*"

The children were very pleased when they saw their mother sitting up. For a long time she could not speak. Then she suddenly stood up and began to shout, "*My child is in the water, let me go. I want to run to my child.*" At the same time the doctor came in. He saw what was going on. He said, "*Madam, you are the mother of children. You are sick and you must remain resting.*" "*No, doctor, I cannot remain quiet when my child is dead in the water,*" she replied. "*No, this is not true,*" the doctor said. "*Your child is alive and in a short time will be entirely well. It is surely a wonder that we were able to save your child. But that wonder could only happen just this time. Therefore I beg you madam, remain resting until you feel better and I will bring your child hopefully to health.*" And that is what happened. A few days later when the mother felt much better and the children were around her the doctor brought in the

child. They cried with great joy and thanked the doctor for his great service of saving the mother and child from an early death.

The 17-day trip was very long for the passengers. Finally the day came when the captain declared that today the ship would arrive in New York. A great joy came over all the people. They all began to wash up and put on their best clothes. There was an uproar, mothers yelling to their children, "*You will soon see your father!*" Others shouted, "*Soon you will see your brother,*" and other childhood friends. Only Mrs. Resnikoff and her children sat still, as sad as ever. They had nothing to feel good about and also no friends to meet in the new land. The ship finally anchored and the passengers disembarked.

The passengers were led in to Castle Garden, where they were questioned about where they came from, to whom they were coming, and how much money they had. They answered the questions truthfully, and were allowed to go to their friends who were waiting for them. Finally, the time came when the official asked Bas Sheva Resnikoff where she was going with her children. She told them her story, but they could not believe that her husband would arrive immediately to take care of his family. They decided that the woman and the children should be sent back to Hamburg. All the crying of the mother and children did no good, and after six

days they were led back to the ship Germania to sail for Hamburg.

Bas Sheva Resnikoff and the children remained in tears on the ship. Their 7-year-old daughter, Fannie, who had become blind on the second day of the return trip was lying on a cot near them. All the remedies that the doctor of the ship had given her had not helped. From minute to minute the condition of the sick child worsened. "Mother," the sick child asked, "*will I never again be able to see my father?*" "No, my child. There is no medicine for you on this ship. But do not worry my child. You will not be the only one who will not see your father again. The fates are against us. We can no longer withstand the bitter wrath which follows us at each step. You have it much better my child. You will not see the bad end which awaits us."

"Momma, do you remember, before we started out of our city, our grandfather said that we had a Great God who helped all people. Surely the same God will help you and bring you and your children back together with our father. But I will always have to shed tears from my blind eyes, with which bad fortune has struck me." "My child," said the mother tearfully, "*if God can help me in this present need he can help you too, to enable you to see.*" "No, Momma, it seems that I cannot be helped because the doctor said that he hasn't the right medicine on this ship to help me. And by the time we get to Hamburg the entire sight of my eyes will be gone. Oh how

unlucky I am. Call the doctor for me once more. Momma." The mother brought the doctor directly. "Doctor," the child said, "do you think that I will have to remain a blind creature for my whole life?" "Yes," was the answer. "Is there already no hope?" "No," the doctor answered. The child began to cry and again said, "Doctor, I want you to answer my question truthfully. Will we meet any other ships on this trip?" The doctor answered, "Perhaps." "If so, I ask you to find out if ships may be close to our ship, and if they can hear us when we get near. I beg you, ask them to send over to you the items which are necessary to cure me from my great misfortune." The doctor thought it over and the plan pleased him very much. "I am going directly to ask the captain about this and give you an answer soon." He returned soon with a smile on his face. He said, "In an hour's time the ship *Dania* will be close to us. It will go very close to us and at that place I will ask for the items for you." The child was overjoyed when she heard these words. She begged her mother to take her up to the deck where she would wait for the help. Soon they saw the huge ship *Dania* coming opposite. The captain of the *Germania* gave the signal to the captain of the *Dania* asking that he slow down. When they were near enough to each other, the doctor shouted, "On our ship there is a mother with six children who are so unfortunate that they have been sent back from America. And one of the children has become blind. And we do not have any eye salve on this ship. Help if you can."

Soon they tossed over the needed salve and the doctor promptly applied it to the little eyes. The child immediately began to see. "There—I see the ship which has saved me." She pointed and said, "and I see my father there too." Then there was a great joy on both ships because they all had the opportunity to see a miracle at sea. And the ships went on their way. "No, my child," the mother said, "it cannot be that you saw your father. You only imagined it." The child did not allow herself to be convinced. And she continued to believe that she did see her father on the ship which saved her. When their ship arrived in Hamburg, the mother and the children went directly to the same counter where they had left their father. The agents there became frightened when they recognized them. The mother related everything and asked about her husband. "Went to America" was the answer "on the ship *Dania*."

Then the mother cried out "*Dania!*" That was the same ship that saved my child and separated my husband from his wife and children," and began to cry bitterly. The agents were afraid that serious trouble would befall them if the police would learn of all that had happened and decided to send the mother and the children back to America at their own expense. So they sent the mother and the children off that same day to Yetkon, a German city at the Russian border, and gave them a loaf of bread and 50 pfennig.



An early portrait of the author, Walter I. Resnikoff

It was a very dark night. The rain was pouring and a terrible wind was blowing when Schlomo Resnikoff arrived not far from Castle Garden talking to himself. *Oh, how unfortunate I am. There is no longer any place in this world for me. There is certainly nothing left of my family. They must have starved to death long ago. My heart told me that my child was the unlucky one who became blind on that ship. It was not for nothing that I was standing with tears in my eyes, when the captain of the Germania announced that they would rescue an unfortunate child who became blind on the Germania. But why do I still remain alive, when all my family are surely dead by now?*

He said he had given up on this world and he started to jump into the sea. At that moment someone clutched him by the hand and pulled him back. It was a policeman. The policeman talked to him, but Schlomo did not understand. The policeman saw that he could do nothing with him, so he led him to the station house and kept him overnight. Schlomo fell into a deep sleep. On the following day he was taken before a judge who asked him what he was trying to do the previous night. *"I wanted to take my own life." "Don't you know that taking your own life is a crime in this country?"* Schlomo replied, *"But there is nothing better for me in the world than death."* And he explained the story, which brought tears to everyone in the court house. After a long deliberation the judge said, *"I can understand how*

hard it is for you here now. But you should not behave in this way. You must steel yourself and do everything possible to locate your family. You will surely find good people who help folks like you. I will send you to a place where they will help you," and he instructed the policeman to take him to the Baron Hirsch Committee on 8th Street. When Schlomo explained everything to the staff they immediately questioned the officials in Castle Garden and confirmed that everything the man had said was correct. So they agreed to help him. They sent a special telegram to Hamburg stating that if Mrs. Resnikoff and the children were located in Hamburg, they should promptly send them back to America at the expense of the Baron Hirsch Committee. They received an answer that they had left Hamburg. The people of the Committee told him he should not worry. They would not rest until they bring his family back. In the meantime, they sent him off to Wallingford to work, and gave him hope that he would see his family soon.

Bas Sheva and her children were in tears and hungry when they arrived in Yetkon. They did not know where to go and whom to ask for help. Finally, they inquired about and contacted a Jew they heard of named Feldman. He operated a hotel and arranged to take people across the border. At first Feldman thought he would earn a few marks from the woman so he treated the family well. But when he learned

that they were very poor and needed help, he told them to leave. It did not help that they begged him with tears in their eyes. Finally after long deliberation, they decided to ask the German police to turn them over to the Russian police who would send them back to their own city. All together they could not think of a better plan and they reluctantly started to go to the police station. When they were not far from the station they met two young Jews who would come over from Russia every day to buy merchandise. The youths recognized from the appearance of the mother and the children that they were in great need. So they stopped and asked them where they were going. The mother told them the whole story of what happened to them, and where they were going. The two youths had true compassion for the unfortunate ones, and they tried to find a way to help. They gave them five marks and told them not to give themselves up to the Russian police, because it would take a very long time to get to their city, and that would not be good for them. Because they had no pass, they would be treated as criminals. They told them to turn around and find Yechel Berlovitz in the same city. He was a very good person who would surely help them, Bas Sheva obeyed. She thanked the youths profusely. It did not take long to locate Yechel Berlovitz. The mother told him their story. He was very sympathetic to them. He directed his wife to bring them into the

house and give them something to eat, and invited them to stay and rest while he found someone who could take them over the border.

Bas Sheva and her children were ready when Yechel Berlovitz returned and told them that they would be taken over the border that day. He gave them food, hired a wagon to take them to someone he knew, Sheikevskiev, who would take them over the border. They were very happy with this information. When they got to Sheikevskiev they delivered a sealed letter to him. When he read the letter he cried out with anger, "Why didn't he help out the beggars himself?" He ordered them out of the house where they waited a long time. It was Friday, the sun had set long before, and a great cloud covered the sky. It seemed as if the whole world would soon pour out tears upon their bad fortune. Finally, it started to rain and they could not remain outside. They asked to be allowed into the house overnight. But it appeared that the last human feeling was wasted for them. Sheikevskiev said angrily, "*I have a large house and room enough for many people. But I have no place for beggars.*" Finally, after much crying and begging he allowed them to sleep in the barn but they had to be careful not to disturb the horses from their rest. Tired and hungry, they collapsed on the rotten straw. The children fell asleep immediately. Israel also wanted to sleep but couldn't. But he was resting

quietly so that he would not disturb the small children from their sleep. Only the mother could not rest. The thunder storm brought very frightening thoughts to her. When she saw that all the children were asleep she began to talk to herself:

Sleep my dear children, who knows how much suffering it is our fate to suffer. It seems to me that I and my children may die of hunger and freezing. Oh how frightening it is. It seems that on my account you have been denied help, my dear children. If you have to appeal to strangers they would help you. But if I go with you they think I am a beggar, dragging strange children around with me. I can no longer live this way, to see my children finally die from hunger. This is the time that I should die.

She took out a knife which she had in one of her bundles, and with tears in her eyes she said, "Be well, my dear children," and put the knife near her breast. At that moment Israel jumped quickly and grabbed the knife from her hand, and began to cry and said, "Is it not enough that we are separated from our father and everyone is hard on us? Do you also want us to be without our true mother? Do you call that motherly love when you can die while your children live in hunger in this unfriendly world?" The mother realized that she had almost done a great wrong, so she began to cry. Soon all the children were awake and began to cry—"Mother, do not leave us alone."

And they could not go to sleep any more. It was already quite light when they left the barn. They were very tired from that night and frightfully hungry. The small children began to cry and beg for bread. It was already noon when the caretaker of the house brought out a piece of dark bread and handed it to the mother and said, "Divide this among all of you." They existed on this alone that entire day. The second night was a nice night. They slept on the grass. On the following day, Sunday, they realized that they would not be taken over the border. So they decided to go back to Yechel Berlovitz. After about six hours they finally arrived half dead of hunger, to Yechel Berlovitz. He became very frightened when he recognized them. They told him everything. He directed his wife to give them food and he cried out, "He has a heart of stone—that murderer—Sheikevskiev. I hope he will pay for this sin which he did against these honorable, poor people."

And he went off to engage a man to take them over the border. That same night they were taken over the border, and he gave them two rubles to take with them. He expressed hope that they would be finished with the adverse conditions of their life very quickly. It took three dreadful weeks for the family to travel from the border to Pinsk. It is impossible to explain everything that they lived through in these three weeks. Many days went by when they would have considered

themselves lucky with a small piece of bread. Many nights they spent under an open sky or were soaked by the rain, or were burned by the sun. Here in Pinsk their hopes were high. They thought they would find good people who would help them get to their friends in Gorodisht, their former home. But hopes turned into only a sad dream. In ten days they could not find anyone to help them in their plight. *"I want to drown myself,"* the mother said with tears in her eyes.

"It is hard for me to live this way, I no longer have the strength to wander around from city to city, and to see how you, my children, are degraded. If you will mind me, my children, we will all go over to the shore and ask one of the ship captains to bring us to Kiev. If we don't get any help there either then the only right way for all of us is to throw ourselves into the water together."

The children saw that she meant this earnestly, and they were all satisfied with this plan because they were too tired to continue with such a sad life. The mother gave out pieces of bread to the small children. At the same time Israel sent a letter to Mina in Elizabethgrad. And Hannah sent a letter to Sam with these words,

"My dear Sam, I write this letter to you in the last hour of my life. Perhaps in one hour's time we will all be part of the departed. Pardon me, my dear Sam. Perhaps it was because of you that I sinned.

The present step we are about to take is because we are now in the most dreadful condition, and were driven to it. Pardon your Hannah, who is faithful to you and loves you to the last minute of her life. I wish you luck. Your faithful Hannah"

She sent the letter and they headed for the water. As soon as they came to the shore Bas Sheva approached the captains of the ships for help but she found none. She turned around to her children and with tears she told them that there was no one who would help them. *"Oh, how great is our misfortune,"* the mother said again. *"Do you see that ship standing there with the name Freedman?"* she asked her children. *"That ship belonged to your father's best friend Jacob Freedman."* *"And to whom does it belong now?"* the children asked. *"This I don't know, but two months ago, when we were in Kiev on the way to America, we read in the newspapers that Jacob Freedman was drowned."* *"Terrible,"* the children said. *"Yes,"* said the mother, *"it was terrible, but our misfortune is more terrible than everything else."* The mother got everything ready, so that they should be close to their friends when they drowned, with no help from anybody.

"No, children, no, this is the time for everything to come to an end. Come with me my dear children. We have lived together and we will die together. In this water we will all find our rest which we have not had for a long time. Forgive me.

God, for the following which I am now going to do. You are the only one who knows how much we have suffered and there is no other way before us, except to make our watery grave here. As you would do with your great troubles.

The mother cried out and gathered all her children and started off toward the water. But she had not noticed that while she was speaking someone was standing nearby and heard everything. Just as she was ready to jump into the water, two swift arms grabbed her and a voice cried out, "Live—don't despair, as long as I live I will strengthen your life." The mother, frightened, replied, "Let me and my children die. People are even jealous of our deaths." "But what drives you to kill yourself and your children?" "Because there is no more hope for us. I have no more friends in the world." "If there is no one else, then I will be your friend and will help you in your need." "Who are you, then, who will interest yourself in us." "I am one of your husband's best friends, Jacob Freedman." "But this is not who you are. Jacob Freedman is dead," said Bas Sheva. "I was not far from death," Freedman said. "I remained alive only to save you and your children from certain death." He took them right into his own ship which took them directly to Kiev that same day, and he gave them enough money to take them from Kiev to Gorodisht.

It was a summer evening. The sun was already setting. The air was very fresh near the Dnieper River in the great Russian city of Kiev. Not far from the large bridge between Kiev and Slobodka two youths were sitting. They were appointed by the city officials to be life savers. If any one fell into the water, their work was to save them. The older one, Maxim, said to Petroschkin, his mate, "You know that today we earned our day's pay easily. "But you wish," said Petroschkin, "as I understand it, to see a person in misfortune." "Maxim burst into laughter, and said, "As I understand it, you have become a pious one. As you get older you cannot stand it when someone falls into the water." "This concerns me very little—it is just that I do not want to sit unoccupied." At that moment they noticed that a person jumped from the bridge into the water. With their small boat, it did not take long for them to get to the spot where the person fell. Maxim threw himself into the water. In about five minutes he swam over with the drowned body to the bridge. The victim was immediately taken to the hospital where a doctor declared that it was still possible to save him. After about a half hour the man opened his eyes and the doctor said it would not be long before he would be back to health. It was a young man of about 17 years and in his clothes two letters had been found. One letter stated, "When someone finds me in the water, I beg that my dead body and the other letter addressed to my father

be sent to my father in the city of Gorodisht." The second letter said,

"My dear parents, I beg you to forgive me for the shame I have brought you by my suicide. I was also always faithful. But I could not longer live because I had always hoped to live happily with my beloved Hannah. But inasmuch as I have received a letter saying that she is dead, then I decided to also die with her. I beg you to forgive me and forget me. Your faithful son, Sam"

The doctor prescribed a great deal of rest and in two days Sam Sokoloff was in perfect health. He was sent back to his parents in Gorodisht. Mirel Sokoloff, Sam's mother, was sitting in tears, all alone in her house.

"I cannot understand this—that my son went away four days ago and he left twenty rubles with me—his monthly support—and since then he has not come back to the house. He was very sad lately, probably from hearing nothing at all from my brother Schlomo and his family. Who knows if something very bad happened."

Just then the door opened and her husband walked in. "Why do you look so distraught, my wife," he asked. "What have I got to be happy about?"

"What do you mean—what have you—I have a very pleasant thing to tell you. Inasmuch as I had figured on being in Kiev for ten days, but I was not able to do any business at all there, so on the third day I

came back home. On the trip I stopped off in Korson with my sister. She told me that the big shot Rabinovitz had gone bankrupt and did not have a cent left and his one and only daughter had run away with a commoner."

"So what kind of pleasure is that to you," Mirel asked. "What do you mean—what kind of pleasure is that to me? I am pleased with this because Sam was smarter than I and did not allow himself to be talked into something by me. It was better that he should go to America rather than fall into such mud. Overall I see that come what may we will have to go to America." "But you became aware of this too late, my husband," and she told him that Sam was already missing for four days, Sokoloff became very upset.

Just then someone knocked at the door. Mirel opened the door quickly and the Rav of the city came in. Sokoloff became very frightened over the fact that the Rav had suddenly sought them out, and he asked him what that meant. "A very worthwhile thing brought me to you." He took a letter from his pocket and showed it to Sokoloff to read. The letter read as follows,

"Because of the carelessness of the officials in Castle Garden in the city of New York, America, they sent back a woman named Bas Sheva Resnikoff with her children. We have done everything possible to bring her back, from her route, to America, but we were not able to do it. Therefore we have

turned to you--the Rav of the city—you could help us out greatly to bring this family back to their father who will feel very sad without his family. You should not refrain from spending any money, and we will repay you for your time and effort. We hope that you will help us in our undertaking, and let us know promptly as soon as you locate the woman and the children. We remain, your friends. Baron Hirsh of New York, America."

The letter struck Sokoloff and his wife like a bullet. They remained seated and did not know what to do next. The Rav started, "*Do you know that with our silence we will not accomplish anything? We must find them quickly—perhaps they will be found in some predicament.*" "*Therefore we must look for them in every place,*" said Sokoloff. Sokoloff told the Rav about his son and said, "*As I understand it, your son's drowning was influenced by Schlomo's misfortune. But no matter how that is, we must not be quiet. Perhaps we will now come upon a right way.*" And it was left that on the next day they would begin to do something about that. And the Rav left. When Sokoloff was left alone with his wife they remained paralyzed—not able to move. They became very confused. After a long time, Sokoloff called out, "*No—with my sitting I will accomplish nothing. We must go to my father-in-law and tell him everything.*" At the door he was met with a telegram which said, "*By a great miracle we have survived to wire you that we are now in Chercosse and*

tomorrow morning we will get to you in our old home. B. Resnikoff." He and his wife did not know what to do for joy. She immediately ran to her father and Sokoloff ran to the Rav. Soon all were at Sokoloff's house and could only pray that their son should return to them quickly. Then they would have complete joy. Soon the Rav telegraphed the Baron Hirsch Committee that the family was here and they were waiting for help.

Sokoloff and his family arose very early on the day that Bas Sheva was expected to arrive. And the whole city also knew all about it. The route from the railroad station to the city was lined with people because Schlomo Resnikoff and his family were the first people from the city of Gorodisht to go to America.

When Bas Sheva and the children got off the train, their friends were shocked when they saw the sad and thin condition of the family. Soon they brought them to Sokoloff's house. They brought a doctor who gave them medicine and prescribed rest. When all the strangers had gone, only the immediate friends remained around the table and wished that Sam would also return. Then a police officer arrived and asked if this was the Sokoloff residence. "Yes," was the answer. "*If that is so, here is a letter from your son who sent it with me. I am a police officer from Kiev.*" The father began to read the letter, and fainted. All who sat around

the table did not know what it was all about. They began to cry, but at that moment, Sam also came in. He looked deathly. His throat choked up. His mother began to kiss him and the Rav who was near did everything possible to revive Sokoloff. When he opened his eyes he saw Sam. He did not know what was going on. After a while everyone realized what had happened and were satisfied that it all worked out for the best. Later that same day it was decided that all should rest up for two weeks and when the money was received, Bas Sheva and the children should travel to America with Sam. They immediately sent a letter to Schlomo telling all that had happened. Only Israel felt bad when he heard that Jacob Smirnoff had left because of failing business. But he could not really find out whether he had gone to America or to Brazil.

The two weeks that Bas Sheva and the children remained with her friends passed very quickly. During that time they received enough money to get new clothes and to make a fine trip. On the day of departure, all the friends gathered in Sokoloff's house to celebrate and bid farewell to their friends. The Baron Hirsch Committee did not withhold any money and the unfortunate ones had the pleasure of repaying people who helped them. Most of all they thanked Yechel Berlovitz for his idealistic character. They gave him 50 marks, which he

divided that same day to the poor people of the city of Yetkon. Everything was carried out as they wished. The ship on which they sailed was a fast ship. It took only 9-1/2 days from Hamburg to New York. Finally the day came which they had long been waiting for, the time that they would meet their father. When they saw each other they opened their hearts with tears of joy. The father took them directly to Wallingford where he had a residence ready for them. They all rested a few weeks and then the father took Sam, Hannah, and Israel into the shop where he worked, and the younger children went to school to learn the English language. And soon it was determined to send for Sam's parents and all their friends.

Schlomo Resnikoff was pleased to have his family and Sam with him. In the eight months since Bas Sheva arrived they had saved up a nice few dollars. It was decided that Sam should send for his parents and Schlomo for his parents and all their friends. And as soon as they all arrived, the wedding of Sam and Hannah would take place. Only Israel kept going around constantly in meditation. He looked very bad and he became weaker every day. His father had recognized this often. More than once—either in anger or in goodness—he spoke out from his heart, that everything Israel was worried about was foolishness and only a childish dream.



The wedding picture of Annie (Hannah) Resnikoff and Sam Sokoloff

MR. & MRS. S. RESNIKOFF
request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of
their daughter

ANNIE to SAM SOKOLOFF,

Sunday Dec. 30th, 1894, at 4 o'clock

Bride's Residence, Washington St., Wallingford, Conn.



מר • אונד מיססעס שי • רזניקאף

לאדען ויא אונד איהרע ווערטהע פאמיליע העפליכסט איין צור טראונג
פון וייער טאכטער

הינדע צו ישעיה סאקאלאף

וועלכע אס ואנטאג דען 30סטען דעצעמבער, 1894 אום 4 אוהר
נאכמיטטאגס שטאטטסינדען ווירד.

בלהיס וואהנונג וואשינגטאן סט. וואללינגפארד, קאנ.

The wedding invitation of Annie and Sam Sokoloff

Here in America there were enough girls who were more beautiful and smarter than Mina Smirnoff. But it didn't help a bit. Once when Israel was deep in thought and was alone in his room, his father came in and said, "*I would like very much to ask you one thing, my son. I hope you will not deny me this.*" "If it is possible I will certainly not deny you," Israel answered. "*Inasmuch as we have all decided that Sam and I should send for all of our friends, and here in Wallingford we cannot buy steamship tickets, and we must ride to New Haven, and inasmuch as you understand the language here better than I or Sam, therefore I want you to go to buy all the steamship tickets which we require, and to send them. You will have the opportunity to become acquainted with lots of different people, and forget some of your foolish ideas.*" Israel was satisfied to take the trip. He had wanted to go to New Haven many times but he had no good opportunity until then.

The next day Israel went to New Haven. He immediately attended to the business which his father had sent him for. And then he took a walk to look around New Haven. On Congress Avenue he noticed that many carriages and people were standing near a large house. He approached and saw that this was a funeral. He was told that a Jewish woman named Smirnoff from the city of Elizabethgrad had died. He was shocked when he heard the name, Smirnoff, and he immediately

recognized the elder Jacob Smirnoff. He wanted to run over to him, but realized that this was not the time. He waited awhile, and they carried out the body. And soon the children came out. They all looked very sad and were crying with bitter tears. Israel recognized Mina. He didn't know what to do. He grabbed a pencil out of his pocket and wrote a few words on a piece of paper which he handed to Mina. In her great sorrow Mina paid no attention and put the paper in her pocket. They were all seated in the carriages and drove away. The same day, Israel returned to Wallingford. His father was pleased that he had sent for his parents and friends and he also noticed that Israel seemed like a new person. From then on, Israel went to New Haven very often.

The Smirnoff family felt very saddened since the mother died. After several months went by Mina found the paper which someone had given to her, but she did not remember who or when. The message read, "*Mina, I saw you at your saddest moment—that was the time when your mother was carried to her heavenly rest. Your sadness was also mine. But don't worry. From this time on I will take the place of your mother. I will do everything possible to make your life happy. Your devoted friend.*" Mina thought for a long time about who this friend could be, but she could not figure it out. After much thinking she thought, the place of my mother can never be filled

by another. Only one person could possibly be able to make me happy, but I heard long ago that Israel and his whole family had drowned on the way back from America. Tears spilled from her eyes, and then someone knocked at her door.

Schlomo Resnikoff was seated at the table with his family and Sam, and was thinking about why their friends were not there yet. A month had already gone by since they should have been there, and nothing at all was heard from them. *"The accidents which had happened recently on the seas make us uneasy,"* Schlomo said. *"Furthermore, we must not rush to send invitations, because, until they can all come, the wedding cannot take place."* "Positively," said Sam. *"But what do you think we should do, Uncle?"* "I think," said Schlomo, *"as long as Israel is going to New Haven soon, I will ask him to go to the steamship ticket office to find out."* *"That is not a bad idea,"* Sam said. The father told Israel what he wished from him, and Israel promised to find out the correct information for him. That day, he set out for New Haven. When he got to New Haven he went directly to the steamship ticket office. He asked about his friends. The managers of the office told him that because of an illness, all the passengers were delayed one month. They were expected to arrive in New Haven the next day. *"If you wish to wait until tomorrow,"* the office manager said to Israel, *"you will be able to take*

them with you to Wallingford." Israel was very pleased with this new development, and decided to wait until the next day. It was already 8 P.M. when Israel left the office. *"Now is the right time,"* he said to himself. *"I and they have already suffered enough. Now, when all the friends have arrived safely, and will all be at my sister's wedding, and I should have some pleasure too."* And he let himself walk towards the Smirnoff house.

Before Israel came to Smirnoff's house, the old Mr. Smirnoff and his older daughter were sitting and talking. *"God has shortchanged me—in that I have been tossed up in a strange land. My wife—your mother has died, and you have to also bring sadness. Now, when there appear such possibilities for you, you can still not remove the foolishness from your head. You know that you put a foolish idea into your head, that it is impossible, that who knows where Israel might be now. You should believe me that he doesn't have you in mind as you have him. You should remind yourself and not bring so much suffering upon me."* "I have considered it all," said Mina. *"I cannot sell my heart, and otherwise I don't know what I live for--"* and she went to another room—very angry and took out the piece of paper which she had found in her pocket, thinking about who that could be. At the same time the doorbell rang and Mina opened the door. A young man came in. *"Does Mr. Smirnoff live here?"* the man asked. "Yes," said Mina. *"Can*

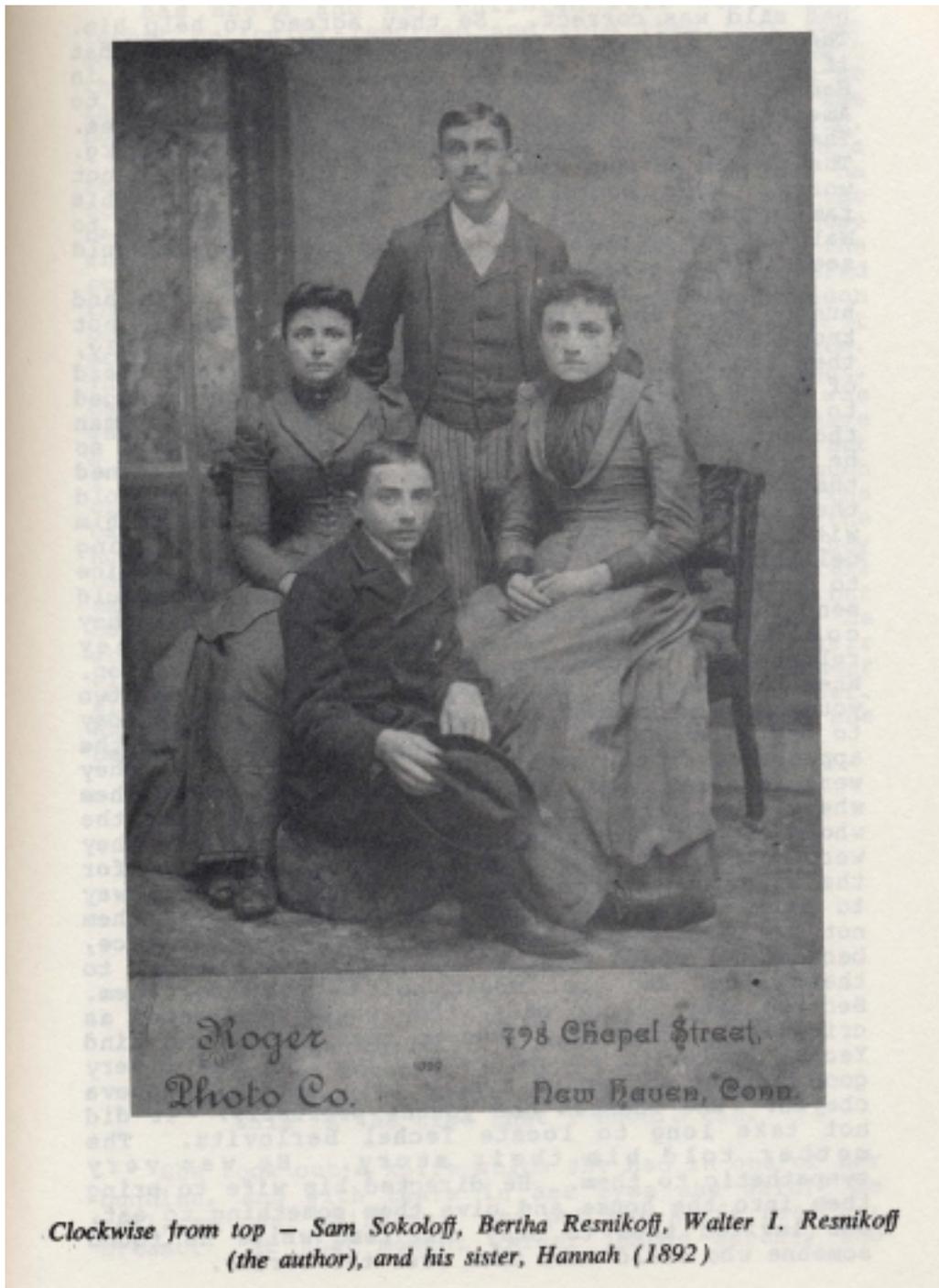
I see him?" Mina led him into the room where her father was sitting. Smirnoff asked him to be seated. At the same time, he asked him how he was getting along. "Very well," said Israel. Israel pushed his chair nearer to Smirnoff, and said, "My very dear close friend, a young man well formed, from very good parents, and with good prospects has asked me to call upon you and ask if you will allow him to call upon your daughter. After I hear from you I will also see your daughter directly. He will consider himself lucky to marry your daughter."

Smirnoff answered, "Yes—there is not one young man of the good families of New Haven who hasn't asked to marry my daughter, but even so I have no luck." "I don't see how you can say you have no luck when such fine young people would consider themselves lucky to marry your daughter." "Yes, it does seem that they would be lucky and I would be lucky too, to see my daughter married to an upstanding young man. But my daughter (and he had pointed with his finger to Mina) , does not want to hear about these prospects." And the old man told him all the background, about this young person who lets so many opportunities go by because of an illusion. Then Israel asked, "Do you think you can do any good with your whim?" he asked Mina. "I can't answer that either. In time we will all be shown. But I do not see why you are trying to convince me. I am sorry your efforts will be for nothing." "As long as it seems," said Israel, "that you are one of

those people who cannot be talked into things, and, as it seems that I will not earn a marriage broker's fee here, I am very sorry." Mina said, "I hope you will have better luck in your other undertakings." He got up and said it pained him very much that he was not making progress in matchmaking. Mina said, "Until now I didn't even want to look at a matchmaker, but I must ask you who the young man is." Then Israel said smilingly, as he sat down again, "As I see it, I have also been approached by a matchmaker. And also, you shall know who the young man is. I can tell you that I am the very same one, and I hope that you will tell me hopefully what you think about me." At that moment the younger children came in. The father introduced them to the man and in this way asked the man his name. Before he had time to tell him who he was, the younger Smirnoff son called out first, "Father, I think this man looks just like Israel Resnikoff who stayed with us just before we took off for America." Mina heard this, and she recognized him immediately. She cried out, "Israel," and fell into a faint. It did not take long before she was brought to her senses. They were all delighted with these developments. They spent a very happy evening together. Israel told them all about what happened to them up to this time, and it was decided that the next day they would all ride to Wallingford together. The next day Israel came to the steamship ticket office. He greeted their friends who were already waiting for him. He took

them all to the depot where the Smirnoff family members were waiting. In a half hour they came to Wallingford. He put the Smirnoff family in a special carriage. Schlomo, his family, and Sam were delighted to have their parents and friends. When they were all sitting around and enjoying themselves Israel

brought in Mina and the whole Smirnoff family. Schlomo and the family were overcome when they recognized them. Israel explained everything—how he had found them. Finally at the table everyone told what happened to him. Finally, Schlomo called out—"Thank you. God."



Clockwise from top - Sam Sokoloff, Bertha Resnikoff, Walter I. Resnikoff (the author), and his sister, Hannah (1892)