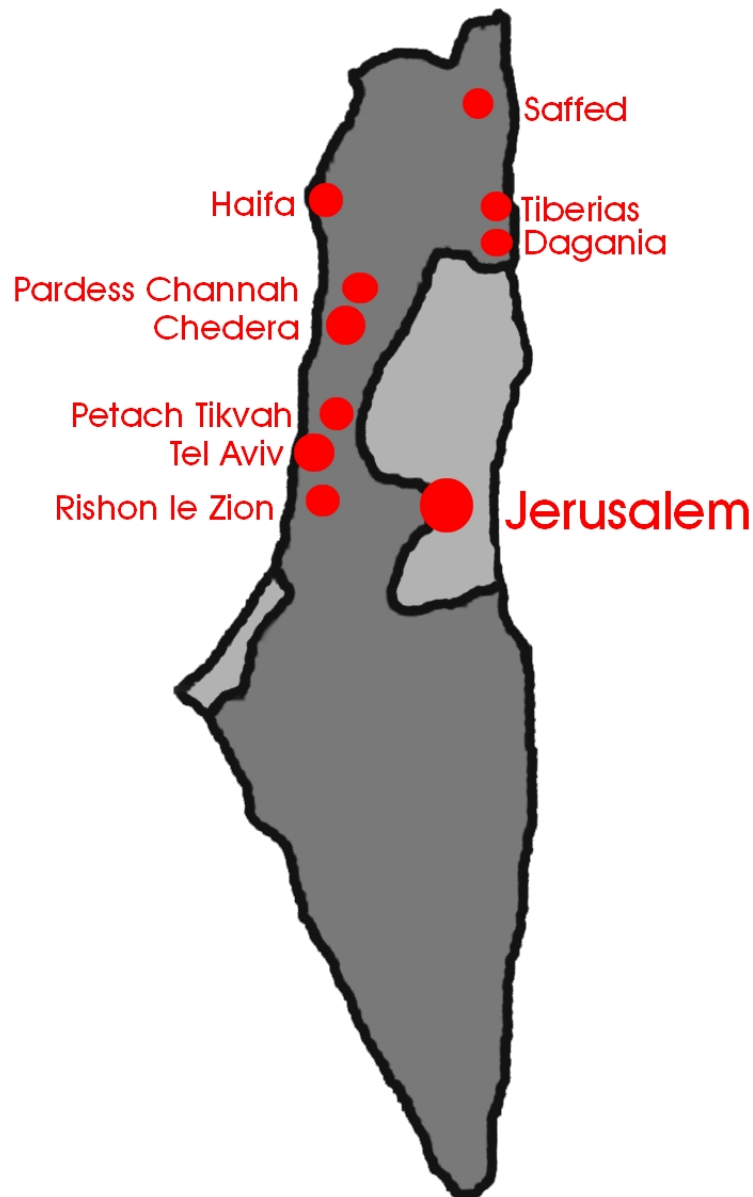




## Honeymoon in Palestine 1933



© rijo-research.de

by  
*Philip S. White*

## Credits & Editorial Notes

First and foremost *rijo* likes to thank the Seligsberger-White family, in particular Dr. Ruth White and her mother Anna, for providing the text and the pictures. Only by this kindness we were able to make Philip S. White's most authentic, vivid and honest report about his and his wife's trip to the then British Mandate of Palestine in the crucial year of 1933 accessible to the public.

In the process of editing his account, the author's transliteration of Hebrew and Arabic names of places, organizations etc. has been left unaltered. If additional information seemed necessary it is given in rectangular brackets [...]. In order to structure the text, most of the headlines were inserted by the editor.

To *rijo*, Philip S. White's text is a lucky strike for several reasons: Not only that he has been a gifted writer and thoughtful observer of the conditions in Eretz Israel but he also adds the perspective of a would-be immigrant from Fürth, giving the reader an impression of the difficult individual decisions many German Jews faced after the Nazis' seizure of power. These qualities make "Honeymoon in Palestine" a perfect contribution to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State of Israel, especially because the author's wishes for the country in October 1933 still are of astounding relevance after 75 years:

*Holy Land of Moslems and Christians, Holy Land of the Jews, promised thousands of years ago to our fathers! Though we leave you now, your countenance will stay before our eyes, as will that of the tens of thousands of pioneers who have carved new features into your weathered face. They labor and they rest not, they burn in the merciless heat of your sun and faint of thirst, they shake with fever in the plains and shiver in the cold of the mountains; they race in shiny cars over slick highways and stoop toiling painfully in the orange groves, they chase after foolish business ventures and try to outsmart each other over a foot of land, they sleep on bare ground and give birth in fragile tents; they joyfully sing and dance together and tear each other apart in fits of irreconcilable discord. Quite unholy themselves, they form a holy army, three hundred thousand men, women and children, the chosen of the chosen people - God willing, a power for good and not for evil. May their lot be peace and not war, joy and not sadness; may their hopes blossom into fulfillment until we meet again!*

*Gerhard Jochem*

---

# Honeymoon in Palestine 1933



**Philipp and Anna Seligsberger during a stopover in Greece en route to Eretz Israel**  
(photo: Philip S. White)

## Preface

This diary was written immediately upon my return from the British Mandate of Palestine in October of 1933, and translated from the original German in 1977. The translation follows the original text closely; some additions have been made, particularly at the beginning, to provide more background for the actual report of our travels in Palestine. No change has been made in the expression of sentiments reflecting the immediate response to conditions and events as we experienced them at the time of our trip.

The charming bride of this diary, my beloved wife Anna, has been the good and faithful companion of my life ever since, and the mother of our three wonderful children, for which I thank God.

## **How the trip came about: Marriage in Nuremberg, traveling through Italy, going aboard in Naples & crossing the Mediterranean**

It was Friday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1933, when the “Roma”, a magnificent 33.000 ton Italian ocean liner, arrived within sight of the Palestinian coast near Haifa at five o’clock in the morning.

Anna, my bride of ten days, and I had boarded the pride of the Lloyd Triestino a few days before in Naples. We were married in Anna’s mother’s apartment on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, with only the closest members of the family present; hundreds of thousands of uniformed Nazis were celebrating the first national party rally since Hitler had come to power on enormous expanse of the stadium outside the city of Nuremberg, where Anna lived. With the streets of the city filled with marching and singing columns of storm troopers at all hours, it had appeared highly dangerous to hold a wedding in the Synagogue. A canopy, according to ancient custom, had been erected in mother Roederer’s living room, under which Anna and I stood, when I put the ring on my bride’s finger, repeating the traditional words of betrothal after the Rabbi; a delicious meal was served in the dining room; heartfelt good wishes were expressed in the usual humorous speeches, tempered only, as it were, by the terrible threat which faced

the Jews of Germany. The railroad station was awash with brown and black Nazi uniforms, when we left on our honeymoon.

Our ultimate destination was the British Mandate of Palestine, the Promised Land of the Bible, the dreamland of Theodor Herzl, the new Jewish homeland of the Balfour Declaration; after Hitler's advent to power in January of 1933 young German Jews, their future in the land of their birth dark, if not completely hopeless, were looking in increasing numbers to Eretz Israel as a country, where they could start a new life. Some of our friends, longtime Zionists and new converts alike, had already done so; combining pleasure with serious business we intended to explore the chances of our integration into the pioneer economy of Palestine.

For a few days, however, we traded the part of prospective immigrants for that of carefree newlyweds; thus we spent a couple of sunny days in beautiful Bolzano in Northern Italy, rode a badly overcrowded train to Rome, while sitting on our suitcases all night in the gangway of our railroad car; took a horse drawn carriage for a five hour tour of Italy's magnificent capital and luxuriated for two days in Naples, staying at the elegant Hotel Continental at the waterfront, across the street from the ancient Castel Nuovo. Like thousands of honeymooners before us, we boarded an excursion steamer for a trip to the romantic island of Capri; we tasted paradise lunching in the tropical garden of a lovely hotel in Anacapri, high above the sea where later, before returning to the mainland, we clambered into a madly lurching boat for a trip to the fairy tale magic of the Blue Grotto.

But as soon as we were aboard the "Roma", the stark reality of our situation struck us again with full force. True, there was a sizable contingent of Americans on the ship who had boarded the luxury liner in New York and meant to enjoy their Mediterranean holiday to the fullest; I was shocked to see them dance in the evening to the gay tunes of the ship's band at a time when hundreds of thousands of their brethren in Germany were threatened with economical, if not yet physical destruction. They, as well as a few American followers of the Bahai cult, visiting their shrine in Haifa, formed the minority of the passengers; the greater number of them had come aboard in Naples and consisted of German Jews, most of them academicians: physicians, dentists, lawyers, public employees already deprived of their livelihood by recent exclusionary anti-Jewish laws. They were mostly men and women in their late twenties and early thirties; together with them we listened to several talks, given by functionaries of Hitachtuth Olej Germania (Organization for German Immigrants) in one of the ship's salons, dealing with the problems of immigration, the British authorities, the climate and other relevancies. The lectures were given in Yiddish, and, while requiring strenuous listening on our part, became soon readily understandable and enlightening, as well as somewhat discouraging. We were not spared the realization that life in Palestine would present a totally new experience, a complete breakaway from our middleclass German existence.

### **Friday, Sept. 15, 1933: Landing in Haifa**

Nevertheless, we looked forward to our destination with high excitement and greeted the morning of our landing with the feeling of great exhilaration. We were up bright and early, as we had been told that disembarking procedures would start at seven o'clock in the morning. As a matter of fact, the government launch containing the British immigration officials drew alongside at that hour; the exceptional draught of our vessel made docking at the newly constructed mole of the harbor impossible and we had to drop anchor some distance from shore. It soon became clear, however, that getting off the ship would take a good deal longer than getting on. All morning long ugly scenes of pushing and shoving took place in front of the

door to the liner's main salon, where the members of the immigration team, seated at long tables, checked the passports of the passengers; those, who came from Germany, were the subject of intense investigation. Ominous looking books, evidently blacklists, were studied, questions were asked and re-asked; the trustees of the Mandate wanted to make sure that we were bona fide tourists and not immigrants posing as casual travelers. It was two o'clock when we, after slipping an Italian steward a bit of change, finally made it to the screening room; thirty minutes later we found ourselves on a gently rolling raft, tied up alongside the "Roma", where a peremptory inspection cleared our luggage. Minutes later a motorboat took us ashore. Now all hell broke loose: porters, taxi drivers, coachmen tried to run off with our suitcases, yelling and pleading; we finally made a deal with a tall Arab, who seemed to know how to take us to the offices of the German Immigrant Help Association. We had heard through the grapevine that all hotels were full and that the people at the Hitachtuth would place tourists in private homes. An incredible ride in the horse-drawn carriage followed, on paved streets, across rock-strewn open fields on what seemed to us an enormous detour; the price, which the driver asked at the end of our ordeal had the helpful officials of the Hitachtuth quickly engaged in a fierce shouting match with our coachman. The enraged Arab would not take the amount from me, which our Jewish friends told us was the proper fare; I could not bring myself to heed their advice and simply throw the money on the ground and leave. Somehow we settled. It was late in the afternoon, when we found lodging with a charming Polish family, where Anna and I could share a couch in their living room. Overtired after the somewhat nerve-racking experiences of the day, unaccustomed to the intense heat, and overstimulated by drinking a cup of the obligatory cafe turque after dinner in the overcrowded dining room of a nearby hotel, we spent a rather restless night on the narrow couch. The first impression of Eretz Israel was a bit dismaying, but it would, fortunately, not be the last one.

### **Saturday, Sept. 16 - Sunday, Sept. 17, 1933: Haifa - shuk, Hadar Hacarmel, Har Carmel**

We spent the next day, a Saturday, walking through the streets of Hadar Hacarmel, the rapidly growing Jewish part of the town of Haifa, observing an astonishing building boom, which created in its wake mountains of rocks, rubble and dust. Haifa is divided into three parts: the predominantly Arab port city, called shuk, with an imposing number of Arab and Jewish wholesale houses, international banks and shipping agencies; higher up on Mount Carmel the Jewish quarter Hadar Hacarmel, featuring retail stores, medical and legal offices, restaurants and hotels, surrounded by blocks and blocks of apartment houses and private homes; and finally, Har Carmel, the top of the mountain, an area of rest homes, sanatoriums, child care centers and an ever increasing number of exclusive private residences.

We noticed the lack of green space and missed the foliage of trees; a smallish stand of grey-green junipers on Mount Carmel was euphemistically referred to as a forest! The long dry period and the heat of the summer had turned, what little there was of vegetation, into a sad and dusty grey; yet older settlers pointed with pride to the modest beginnings of parks and the plantings of trees, none of which had been in existence when they had arrived.

By good chance we managed to obtain a hotel room for Saturday night, although the owner threatened to throw us out again when he heard that we planned to leave the following Monday morning. We bade our private hosts goodbye and received from the little Polish tailor an admonition which I should not forget for the rest of my life. "Seien Sie nicht kein Kundschafter", he said, meaning that we should not be like the spies who in Biblical times had explored the Promised Land on Joshua's orders and who had come back with tales of fear and woe.

Haifa teemed with visitors: every week hundreds of Jews from Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and other countries landed here, overcrowding every kind of accommodation. Hoteliers needed not go out of their way in giving service. Still, there were few complaints; meals everywhere were tasty and ample, although some gourmets may have found the inevitable chicken for dinner revolting. For religious reasons, neither Jewish nor Arab eating places features pork; we were outraged to hear that some of our fellow tourists bragged of finding a German owned restaurant where the forbidden meat was served. The average charge in better hotels for American Plan was sixty to seventy piasters; one hundred piasters were one Palestinian Pound; ten mils, equal to one piaster, were also called one grush. The Palestinian, like the English Pound, was worth five Dollars.

We spent Saturday and Sunday in Haifa, walking around, riding the vehicles of Jewish and Arab bus lines down to the port city, the shuk, and from there up to Har Carmel; no direct highway existed yet from Hadar Hacarmel to the top of the mountain. The streets were narrow, but well paved; the drivers took the many curves up- and downhill with a skill and daring that left you breathless. From the highest elevation the view of the Bay, and, on its opposite shore, the ancient walled town of Acre with its slender minarets was one of indescribable beauty. We even managed to go for a refreshing dip in the ocean at Khayat Beach, an Arab resort reached by jitney from the shuk in about twenty five minutes. For a couple of short hours one could forget the rest of world and live for the beautiful moment.

### **Under suspicion**

While still aboard the "Roma", I had, without success, attempted to join a group of Jewish tourists, mostly professional men, in a planned group-bus-tour of Palestine; the refusal, in fact, was rather brusque, I thought. Through a friend of mine, from my hometown and also on board, I found out afterwards that, blond and blue-eyed as I was, I was suspected of being a Nazi spy. What a joke! In my native Fürth the police had demanded a deposit of two thousand German marks before handing us our passports, which was to be forfeited in case we would make any statements abroad detrimental to the Nazi Regime!

[Philipp Seligsberger had to sign a form with the following German text:] *Die Empfangsbcheinigung (Bankschein) ist gesperrt, z. G. der Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth. Es gilt zu Gunsten der Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth als verfallen, wenn sie sich nicht bis 1. November 1933 bei dem Passamt Fürth gemeldet haben oder wenn festgestellt wird, dass sie während ihres Aufenthaltes im Ausland das deutsche Ansehen schädigende Äußerungen gebraucht haben.*

[English translation:] *This deposit receipt (bank draft) is restricted in favor of the Nuremberg-Fürth Police Department. It will be considered forfeited to the Police Department of Nuremberg-Fürth if you have not reported back to the Passport Division in Fürth by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1933, or if it is ascertained that you have made remarks detrimental to the prestige of Germany during your stay abroad.*

Strangely enough, a couple of days before we left, the money was being refunded to us, with the explanation that the order had been rescinded. Less than one week after our return, I received a phone call from the police department to appear. A summons like that was a frightening event: one never knew if one would come back from the lion's den. In my case. Herr Kandl, the local terror of all Jews dealing with the passport division, explained smilingly to me that my deposit was to be returned to me. I replied with equal joviality, that I had already

received the money before leaving and that my receipt would certainly be on file, thank you. I shall never know whether it was a crude attempt at entrapment or just bureaucratic oversight, but it was a scare which left me shaken.

**Monday, Sept. 18, 1933: Leaving Haifa for a tour of northern Palestine: Shunat Ovdim, Acre, Meron, Saffed, Tel Chaj, Lake Hule, Metullah**

We had made the acquaintance of a very nice couple from Hamburg during our stay at the Hotel Continental in Naples; we had dined together repeatedly in the kosher dining room of the "Roma"; now, as we met in Haifa again, we decided to hire a sedan from the Egypt Lloyd for the four of us for a tour of Northern Palestine. The driver, who picked us up Monday morning, was a true pioneer: born in Russia, where, he said, his brother was a commissar, he had come to the Holy Land 13 years ago, had been a policeman at one time; he knew countless people everywhere, spoke English, German, Yiddish, Ivrit and Arabic. Deeply tanned and sinewy, looking smart in his khaki shirt and shorts, he impressed us as the ideal guide for our excursion and, as it turned out, he did not disappoint us.

Our trip, at first skirting the south shore of the bay, where we passed Shunat Ovdim, a new suburb for Jewish workers, took us eventually northward to Acre. This town, rich in history from the time of the Crusaders to the days of Napoleon Bonaparte, studded with imposing palm trees, magnificently located by the seaside, was predominantly Arab. The British had turned the ancient fortifications into a prison for Jewish extremists: the famous Revisionist firebrand Jabotinski served time there; we passed the walls resenting the politics of the Mandate Power. Driving past the Jewish match factory called Nur lifted our spirits. The evidence of the accelerated economic development, which one could see everywhere, always proved a powerful tonic. After a short stop in Acre we followed the highway to the east, as it climbs steadily into the hills of Galilee. The scenery soon lost the tropical splendor of Acre; the ground appeared barren and rocky, with only sparse vegetation. We passed several impoverished looking Arab villages; there were no signs of Jewish colonization. Here and there vultures picked morosely at gleaming skeletons; camel caravans floated by; herds of black and yellow goats, sheep and small donkeys nibbled at what little grass was growing bravely on the pebbly slopes. To the north, row after row of treeless scorched brown mountains rose skyward, as far as the eye could see.

Toward eleven o'clock, after a steep climb, we arrived at the historic Jewish city of Meron, a small community inhabited mostly by Sephardic Jews, who wore the traditional fez and depended for their livelihood on the tips of tourists and the contributions of far-off sponsors supporting the local Yeshiva. A bearded guide led us on a tour of the massive ruins of an ancient synagogue, offered us a glance into the present day shul, alive with the soft chant of "Lernen", showed us the grave of the famous teacher Hillel and those of some of his followers, and finally, after receiving the customary gratuity, sent us on our way with a "Mi sheberach", a benediction asking the Lord to bless my wife with a dozen children. We left with the feeling that we were closer in spirit to the hustling pioneers of Haifa than the pious mendicants of Meron.

Shortly afterwards we reached the equally ancient town of Saffed, where Jews have lived for many, many centuries. After the bloody riots of 1929 almost one half of the Jewish inhabitants left, especially as there had been little economic progress in the intervening years. We were told that about twenty five hundred Jews still lived here, many of them elderly, among twice as large a number of Arabs. There was talk that Saffed, due to its altitude of close to

eight hundred meters above sea level, may be turned into a spa with various healthcare facilities. The widow of an American tycoon, we were told, had left her fortune to the city, and there were expectations of renewed growth of Jewish investment. I noticed that a goodly number of the Arab townspeople were tailors: one could look into their shops where they were working on European style men's suits. The sight perturbed me, the owner of a custom tailoring shop in Germany: how could a merchant tailor prevail against such low priced competition? - On another thoroughfare we found Arab weavers producing some rough fabrics on handlooms right in the open air, as they had probably done for centuries. Progress seemingly had not reached the north of the country, which appeared poor and lagging behind the rest of Palestine.

In vivid contrast, the Hotel Herzliah, where we took rooms for the night, surprised us with its almost luxurious comfort in the midst of sleepy backwardness; it offered running water and showers in every room, WC and excellent cuisine. We freshened up in our room; after a short while the water changed to a mere trickle, as the cistern on top of the hotel had run dry. We ate our noontime meal in an attractive dining room, located in the cool basement. Here, for the first time, we tasted squash, a vegetable we had never known in Germany.

Shortly afterwards we left Saffed on an afternoon's excursion, leading us on an excellent highway with innumerable perfectly constructed curves to a fork in the road near the old colony of Rosh Pinah. Turning north, we soon reached historical Tel Chaj, where our driver stopped at the grave of Joseph Trumpeldor, Russian-born hero of the Jewish Mule Corps of World War I, who, with five other brave defenders, fell here in 1920, while trying to hold the frontier settlement against a superior force of Arab marauders. His name has become a symbol of the invincible spirit of the Jewish settlers. A guestbook at the cemetery contained the names of many famous - and less famous - visitors, among them that of my good friend Dr. Max Walter from Fürth. We entered our names feeling proud and humble at the same time.

From here, we pushed on to Metullah, the northernmost Jewish colony of the country. Previously, we had passed Lake Hule, a large, shallow swamp. The dark heads and backs of water buffaloes rose here and there above the vegetation which covered the marshy expanse. Jewish settlers, braving heat and malaria, had planted stands of Eucalyptus trees at various spots along the shoreline in an effort to claim the swamp for future colonization.

Metullah, at a higher elevation, provided us with a beautiful panorama of its surroundings, although clouds partially obscured the snowy summits of Mt. Hermon and Lebanon in the not too far distance. We feasted in the local restaurant on refreshing grape juice, sweet preserved fruit and Russian style cookies. A sunburned chalutz [pioneer], sharing the table with us, proudly pointed out the progress made in agriculture by the Jews. He talked with us in Yiddish as most locals did; we had no difficulty understanding him. The Germans, he said, meaning the Christian peasants of the German village of Saarona, used to be the best colonists in Palestine, but "mir haben sie über den Higel gejagt" - literally, we have chased them over the hill: modern Jewish farming methods surpassed the traditional ways of the old established German settlers.

Before returning to Saffed, we paid a short visit to one of the many agricultural settlements along the highway. This was a kvutzah, a cooperative enterprise. A tractor hummed in the field, attracting in its wake a swarm of exuberant children. From the stables came the happy sound of lowing cattle. We admired the extreme cleanliness in the handling of milk, and noticed with surprise the garb of the farm women: we were not used to see German peasant women in white blouses and black shorts.



It was dusk, when we reentered our hotel. The manager greeted me with a serious complaint: I had failed to close the faucet in our room at noon, when the last trickle had stopped; in the meantime all the water in the newly filled cistern had run out through my negligence, and the Arab worker, whose job it was to carry water from a well to the tank on the roof, had to do the work all over again, after the leak had been discovered. I felt sorry and foolish. One had to learn that among other things limitless supply of water could not be taken for granted as a European traveler was wont to do.

After supper we took a short stroll through the streets of the peaceful town. The heat of the day had given way to refreshing coolness, making it necessary to wear a light coat. The night sky was of rare beauty, clear and alive with glowing meteors streaking across it. We slept in our Hotel in perfect quiet, hardly aware that we were far away from home in a country still strange and vastly different from anything we knew.

### **Tuesday, Sept. 19, 1933: K'far Nachum (Capernaum), Lake Tiberias, Tel Or powerhouse, kvutzah Dagania, back to Tiberias**

The next morning saw us again on the now familiar road to Rosh Pinah. Looking south, we were again overwhelmed by the magnificent view of the landscape, sloping down to the valley of the Jordan river and Lake Tiberias, its shining blue contrasting vividly with the yellow-brown tones of the surrounding shoreline; distance did not seem to diminish the intensity of the colors of the semi-tropic panorama. Down and down we went, serpentine after serpentine, until, reaching the valley and turning south, the road straightened out, heading for the city and the lake of Tiberias.

We turned off the highway for a short drive to biblical K'far Nachum - Capernaum - situated at the shore of the lake, two hundred meters below sea level. Leaving the car was just like stepping into a brood oven. An old Spanish monk guided us through the ruins of the famous ancient synagogue, a jumble of well preserved columns, capitals and friezes, reliefs of five- and six-cornered stars of David. We snatched a few dates from the date trees lining the road, and we learned that dates are red before the ripen to their familiar black color. We snapped a picture of a horde of little black Bedouin urchins and managed to escape their grasping hands barely by throwing a handful of small coins - Baksheesh! - far away over their heads.

Continuing on to Tiberias, we saw for the first time long stretches of "pardessim" - orange plantations - on both sides of the road. Many of the trees were still small; a fence of some kind of matting protected the young seedlings against the wind. The daughter of Lord Melchett was said to own many dunams [Hebrew square measure] in this area. A large sanatorium, built not too many years ago, stood deserted and empty at the foot of the Judean hills to the West. Somewhat higher up, Arab villages clung to the side of the mountains.

Tiberias proved to be a lively little town; two thirds of the population are made up by Jews. A short distance from the older section of the town by the lake, a new tract of residences had sprung up. The climate is hot, but there was a slight breeze, and toward evening a pleasant coolness prevailed. We had reservations in the rambling Hotel Guberman in the center of town. We arrived just in time for the tasty five course dinner, served, European style, shortly after the noon hour.

Shortly thereafter, the car was ready to head further south for a visit to the giant Tel Or powerhouse, constructed according to the plans of the Russian-Jewish engineering genius Rutenberg. Presently, the waters of the Jordan river and its tributary, the Yarmuk, drove two energy producing turbines; two more were to be added shortly to satisfy the growing demand for electric power.

The Rutenberg Company held the concession for the entire length of the river; three additional dams and generating plants were projected to keep in step with the further development of the country. The workers, all Jews, lived in attractive one-family houses nearby, each featuring a tiny well kept front yard. Two foreign engineers, on loan from England, oversaw the installation of newly arrived machinery. We stood in admiration of the skill and speed with which the Jewish workers went about their business in the thundering noise of their surroundings; the Jewish engineer, descending from his switching station high above, shook hands with them in a comradely manner. Coming from a country where rank meant everything, we were impressed.

We continued on for a visit to the kvutzah Dagania, a settlement of imposing dimension and stateliness; barns bulging with healthy looking cattle, huge henhouses, children's dormitories, school buildings, repair shops ranged over many dunams. The work on the land, under a burning sun, the lungs filled with windswept dust, was hard, stoop labor in the pardessim with the turiah, a short hoe, backbreaking. Boils and inflammations, insect bites and stomach disorders made life difficult for the new farmer. Yet the men and women stuck to their jobs with single-minded determination, taking the unaccustomed hardships in stride bravely, sinking their roots in their land as true and proud peasants. The children looked strong and healthy; their wellbeing was the foremost consideration of the commune; to them went the first fruits of the labor of their parents, rich or poor. In the kibbutzim the children were the possession and joy of all members. They slept, ate and studied together, separated from their parents, under the supervision of social workers and teachers, while fathers and mothers went about their work on the farm. Special hours were set aside to unite the family. To hear the children speak Ivrit as their native tongue was a strange and wondrous experience.



**Kvutzah Dagania**  
(photos: Philip S. White)



**Snapshots from Daganía**  
(photos: Philip S. White)

After our return to Tiberias, our travel companions, whose further itinerary differed from ours, left us to return by bus to Haifa, while we got ready to call on a friend of ours from Fürth, who lived with her husband, a physician, in a new tract of homes, some distance from our hotel. The solitary walk along the highway, climbing steadily in an easterly direction, proved a bit nerve-tingling, as darkness quickly enveloped us; to find the right house proved not too easy. We were astonished by the large number of trucks passing us, heading for Haifa and the coast. They were mostly antiquated monsters, their engines straining and backfiring frequently; the explosions sounded like gunfire in the still of the moonless night. We had a nice visit with the conversation, as it would on many such later occasions, dealing with two topics: news from home and possibilities in Eretz Israel.

**Wednesday, Sept. 20, 1933: Tel Or, Beisan, entering the “Emek Israel” - Beth Alpha, kvutzah Ain Charod, past Jenin and Nablus to Jerusalem**

On the following morning our driver retraced at first the previous day’s trip to Tel Or and beyond, until we hit a stretch of primitive and dusty road leading to the wholly Arab town of Beisan [Bet Shean]. As we drove quickly through the center of the community, we were amazed by the busy multitude filling the narrow thoroughfare, milling in front of bazaars and stalls; this truly was the many-colored, strikingly animated picture of the Orient of one’s imagination, suddenly come alive before our very eyes. Noticeable in the crowd were numerous people who were one-eyed or totally blind, lame, epileptic or otherwise disabled: we realized why the Bible refers so often to these poorest of the poor.



**Arab village**

(photo: Philip S. White)

Presently we entered the Emek Israel, one of the proudest areas of colonization in the country. The first colony we reached was Beth Alpha. When construction was started here, in the twenties, the pioneers came upon the ruins of an ancient synagogue, and preserved the precious excavation by erecting a protective shelter over the site. Unfortunately the man with the keys could not be located, and we had to be satisfied with a view through a window, revealing in particular the colorful mosaic on the floor of the synagogue. Beth Alpha was a far-flung settlement, based, like all kvuthoth in the Emek, on a mixed economy of cattle and poultry raising, truck farming and the harvests from extensive orchards and acres and acres of wheat. Further west in the Emek, the broad expanse of valley running from east to west between the highlands of the Lower Galilee and Ephraim, we visited Ain Charod, the largest kvutzah in the Mandate. We marveled at the vast expanse of the community, boasting modern barns, silos, schools and children's dormitories on a grand scale next to the condominium-type living quarters. The box-like, flat roofed buildings, so different from those of the German countryside, struck us by their utilitarian beauty. Trucks and tractors, passing us, carried the name of the settlement in large letters. The biggest thrill however, like on previous such visits, was the sight of the darling children and the wholesome young girls, under whose supervision they played.

We were informed that a kvutzah like Ain Charod operated along the most modern principles of management, with stringent rules for every department and yearly profit and loss statements like any profit-making corporation. Naturally, every one of the communes had to re-invest its entire profit over and over again, due to the never ending influx of additional settlers and the intensification of its productivity. Quite often personal comforts had to be sacrificed for the common good; new stables had a higher priority over new dwellings.

At the town of Afule we turned south on an excellent highway leading to Jerusalem. Shortly afterwards we were stopped by an English policeman and, to the great dismay of our chauffeur, given a ticket for exceeding the fifty kilometer speed limit (which nobody observed). Outside the Arab town of Jenin we had, to our surprise, to pass through a fruit quarantine, instituted, no doubt, to keep agricultural pests from spreading. Next, we drove past the important Arab city of Nablus, resplendent with many elegant mansions, and close to Mount Geritzim, once the strongpoint of the ancient sect of the Samaritans. A few of their descendants still lived in the area. Slowly, the road began to climb into the hills of Judea. We were in Arab territory, in land which appeared poor and barren; olive trees represented the main species of vegetation.

Toward noon we got our first glimpse of the skyline of Jerusalem. My interest in the comments of our driver had waned more and more - strangely enough -, while Anna had fallen asleep. In spite of the burning midday sunshine, the draft in the fast moving car made me shiver and I found it necessary to put on my coat. Finally we arrived at the Hotel Eden in Jerusalem, where we had reservations. Here we said goodbye to our driver. I had to force myself to eat a bowl of soup and some meat. I felt miserable, cold and weak and did not object when Anna packed me off to bed and made me take some aspirins. I slept for a couple of hours, while Anna went to the post office to pick up mail from home, and to a pharmacy to buy a fever thermometer. It showed one hundred degrees in the late afternoon, after I had awoken in a light sweat.

#### **Thursday, Sept. 21 - Saturday, Sept. 23, 1933: Bed-struck at the Eden Hotel in Jerusalem**

Anna, after eating a sad and solitary dinner, went to bed early, awaking the next morning with a temperature of hundred and two degrees, while mine was still a bit higher. Our eyes hurt; we felt back pains. We put in a call for a physician, who came after a while: a fine Russian Jew, who had opened his office in Jerusalem eight years ago. He diagnosed our illness with a smile as "papadatjee", a sickness supposedly transmitted by the sandfly. Everybody, the doctor said, gets it sooner or later, some people after one week's stay in the country, others after five years. The fever lasts two to three days. In our case, the prescribed medicine reduced it quickly, while some people incur temperatures up to hundred and seven degrees, fainting spells and depressions. So we were fortunate after all. The hotel personnel was most attentive to our needs; I was forced to keep a strict diet for a few days while I suffered from severe dysentery. Much to our regret, this unwelcome interlude kept us from celebrating Rosh Hashanah in one of the Holy City's synagogues, to which we had looked forward with great anticipation. It was Saturday evening when we got up for the first time and tottered more than strolled in front of the hotel for a couple of minutes. After dinner, we barely made it upstairs to our room.

#### **Sunday, Sept. 24 - Tuesday, Sept. 27, 1933: Jerusalem - National Library on Mt. Scopus, Old City with Jaffa Gate & Wailing Wall, Mosque of Omar & El Aqsa Mosque on Temple Square, King David Hotel**

As our strength returned only gradually over the next few days, we were unfortunately limited in our sightseeing activities. We managed to visit the National Library on Mt. Scopus, an imposing building in a beautiful setting. From the top of the mountain we enjoyed a magnificent view of Jerusalem. Before us, a tightly packed labyrinth of homes, was the old city, surrounded by the historic wall, giant towers here and there allowing for ingress and egress through mighty portals; almost one fourth of the old city seemed to consist of the enormous Temple Square, where the Grand Mosque (also called the Mosque of Omar) and the less spectacular El Aqsa Mosque faced each other across the vast expanse of the square. Entering the library, we marveled at the rows upon rows of books from the four corners of the world, many of them scientific tomes; original manuscripts by famous Jewish writers formed a valuable part of the library, including an extensive collection of manuscripts, first editions and memorabilia of the writer and poet Bialik. The ease and speed, with which attendants handled the borrowing and return of books, bespoke a smoothly running organization.



**View from Mt. Scopus to the Temple Square with El Aqsa Mosque (left) and the Mosque of Omar**

(photo: Philip S. White)

Situated opposite the library were the buildings of the University, hardly the equivalent of its European counterparts in size and architecture. We visited a modest physics lab and viewed a fauna- and flora exhibit in another hall. Additional buildings were under construction, meant to alleviate the present lack of space. After walking through a tiny stand of aromatic pines we reached a broad terrace which offered an overwhelming panorama of the Judean desert, the Dead Sea and the heights of Transjordan at the horizon. At the noon hour, the air was incredible clear, making distances hard to estimate. Like the settings of a giant stage repeating themselves over and over, yellowish-brown sand dunes stretched down to the Dead Sea. The shimmering blue of the water, the bright azure sky above contrasting with the brown of the desert combined into a picture of indescribable beauty and frightening desolation at the same time.



**Jerusalem, Lions' Gate**

(photo: Philip S. White)

Late in the afternoon on one of the following days we decided on a visit to the Old City. We took the bus to the Jaffa Gate, a huge tower in the outer wall, and proceeded from there on historical ground. Soon we found ourselves in a narrow lane, flanked by bazaars on either side. Walking slowly, we passed an incredible array of tightly packed stores, domed stalls and open-air-displays of goods of the most divergent nature: bakeries, butcher chops, tailor chops, shoemakers, fabric stores, fishmongers, purveyors of the most varied services one could think of. Remarkable in the most unusual setting was the cleanliness of most of the establishments and the abundance of merchandise for sale. A colorful throng of buyers and sellers rubbed elbows in the narrow space of the crowded passage: Jews in black kaftans, their faces framed by long ear-locks, Arabs of all hues and garb, - some of them asleep on the ground, some sit-

ting on low stools smoking the hookah, the traditional water pipe, - native Christians, Armenians, hundreds of tourists, local street urchins beseeching them incessantly: “Need a guide? Mosque! Glaggemauer!” (Klagemauer, German for Wailing Wall).

We made our way slowly, below the span of arches and in the shade of awnings; there was a step at about five meters interval, as we pursued our downward course. In a vault-like stall, a camel went round and round turning the wheel of a grinding mill. Another camel and its driver patiently edged through the human multitude; donkeys nudged us gently trying to pass. A pungent indefinable smell pervades the entire area.



**Jerusalem, Old City**  
(photos: Philip S. White)

Finally the lane turned. Here we changed a bill into copper coins: beggar was standing next to beggar, lame, blind, crippled; Jewish women with the marks of leprosy or some other horrible skin disease were stretching their hands out to the cry of “Rachmanuth! Rachmanuth!” - have pity -. They seemed to come from holes and caves - we shuddered, as we passed.

At long last, we faced the Wailing Wall. Weeping and lamenting women pressed against the stones, kissing the rough surface. To one side a minyan had formed, and the words of the kedushah drifted across to us: “Boruch kefoid adonoi mimekomoi”! The Wailing Wall rose to an unexpected height, its upper part seemingly newer than its lower section. The wall circled the huge Temple Square we had seen from Mt. Scopus, on which the Grand Mosque and the El Aqsa Mosque stood. The difference in level in front of and behind the wall made the assumption plausible that older ruins may be buried below the present surface. We left after a short while, fleeing the hordes of beggars and mindful that we did not want to walk back it got too dark. It had been a moving experience, but the accompanying circumstances could not fail to detract from its intensity.



**At the Wailing Wall**  
(photos: Philip S. White)

On the following day, we visited both mosques on the Temple Square. A huge boulder inside the Grand Mosque was, according to the guide, the rock Moriah, on which Abraham was to sacrifice his son Isaac; even the place, from which the goat came, which finally took Isaac's place on the altar, was pointed out to the assembled tourists. Pious Jews do not enter the mosque, which is a most holy shrine for Moslems. The floors of both mosques were covered with magnificent carpets, and visitors were asked to wear soft slippers over their shoes upon entering. The price of admittance was exorbitant, and baksheesh was due here and there on top of it. But the splendor of mosaics, wood carvings, antique and contemporary stained glass windows more than compensated for the expense. Pious Moslems, lying prostrate on the floor, paid no attention to the curious tourists. No Moslem women were to be seen; they, like orthodox Jewish women, are restricted to a separate, out of sight section.



**The Mosque of Omar**  
(photo: Philip S. White)

In deep contrast to this setting was the enormous King David Hotel - it and the YMCA Building were the two towering landmarks of the new city - where we went for tea on afternoon. It was in this palatial setting where the High Commissioner and local society met; the Ritz in London could not be any more elegant or spacious.

### **Wednesday, Sept. 27, 1933: Leaving Jerusalem for Tel Aviv - Allenby Road & Rothschild Boulevard**

On Wednesday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of September - Anna's birthday - we left Jerusalem at ten o'clock in the morning. Our jitney sped handily through the Judean mountains, with our driver taking the many downhill curves with the customary skill and bravado of the chauffeuring fraternity. The road was busy with Jewish and Arab owned buses, which traveled the distance from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv by way of Jaffa in one hour and fifteen minutes, charging ten or eight piasters for the ride, respectively - a relative bargain. The English had started a reforestation job on the barren mountains; young trees pushed up bravely between rocks and rubble. Right outside Jerusalem, the highway, uphill for a short distance, passed the small hamlet of Moza, where in 1929 seven Jews were murdered by Arab rioters in one house. In the meantime new Jewish settlers had moved in to counterbalance the Arab superiority in population. An illegal Jewish defense group was founded, with a tendency toward outright nationalism, perhaps even revisionism. I had the impression that Revisionism, under the leadership of the fiery Jabotinski, had a better chance of succeeding than was generally believed; every clash between Jews and Arabs was bound to enhance its attraction especially as the Mandate Power had in many instances been amiss in protecting Jewish lives, and had therefore lost the trust of the settlers. At the moment, however, the Revisionists were forcibly dispersed, wherever they gathered, and the more moderate Histadruth was firmly in control. The Agudah represented a



position similar to that of the “Zentrum” [Catholic conservative party] in Germany, and the Mizrachi also came close to it. These movements appeared to play a game of turning the right against the left, something we had seen before at home. A newly founded fascist party among the Arabs was said to gain in popularity by the hour.

The Jerusalem-Jaffa road led at first through mostly Arab held land; after leaving the highlands behind we reached the first pardessim. The closer we came to Tel Aviv, the greener became the landscape. Plantation abutted plantation, road signs pointed to well known places: Ben Shemen, the children’s village; Rishon le Zion, the famous winery, and others. Finally the highway entered the large Arab port city of Jaffa. We turned off to the right and soon found ourselves in Tel Aviv. The two cities have no visible borders: the increase in Jewish pedestrians and the change from Arab to Hebrew lettering on the store signs told us that we had arrived in Palestine’s first all Jewish city. For everybody, and for us no less, the emotional impact of that moment was tremendous. This sprawling city with its modern, flat-roofed houses, their fronts adorned with airy balconies, built almost overnight, its streets already too narrow for the enormous traffic, its already worn pavement, its many stores, refreshment stands and vehicles might have been somewhere in the west of America - were it not for the fact that this was Tel Aviv. And because it was Tel Aviv, the thought hit home with overwhelming force that here everybody, the bus driver and the traffic cop, the soda jerk and the milkman, the construction worker and the street cleaner, the doctor and the engineer was Jewish. Yet you could not have told from the outward appearance, so different were the many faces in the crowd. We had heard some of our friends in Germany say that they could not imagine living among Jews only, yet, strangely enough, that ghetto-feeling was lacking entirely. These men and women were like people everywhere, poor, rich, tall, short, good looking, homely - but they were *our* people - we felt at home with them, like we once had felt at home with our neighbors in Germany. By the way, we got along very well speaking German; especially in Tel Aviv where the typically Berliner idiom could be heard everywhere. Cars with Berlin license plates and even taxis with the green and white stripe on the side denoting the German capital were everyday sights.

We stayed at the Hotel Talpioth, on Achad Ha-am Road, which we had picked for its central location. The planners had laid out the city in a manner that a number of long streets, the most important of them the famous Allenby Road, running parallel to each other, led all the way to the seashore; the cross streets, including the well-known Rothschild Boulevard, featuring a narrow green space for a divider strip, were of equal length. Prominent hotels and business establishments lined the main thoroughfares. Frequent buses handled the traffic expediently; the fare was all of five mil. Everybody seemed to ride the buses, many passengers heading for the beach; the heat made walking rather strenuous. It was great fun, however, to stroll down busy Allenby Road in the cool of the evening. Scores of boys and girls, the latter quite heavily made up, met in front of the many kiosks selling Gazos, the popular soft drink. The whole population seemed to have spilled out into the street to enjoy the welcome breeze.

In the outskirts, building was heavy. We heard of as many as twelve hundred houses presently under construction, with an additional two thousand in the planning stage. Practically all flats were rented before the houses were even completed, in spite of the fact that one year’s lease had to be paid in advance. Many immigrants resided temporarily in the Hotel Talpioth, and the conversation returned again and again to the same topics: finding permanent accommodations, locating a place to temporarily store the “lift”, the huge packing case in which entire household furnishings arrived from the former German homes. Physicians were discussing where to open offices, worried businessmen where to make a new start and how. Our Hamburger friends, whom we met at the Talpioth again, felt almost guilty being mere tourists

among all those busy newcomers - and so did we. The appearance of some celebrities as guests raises our spirits, and it was truly a thrill to share the dining room with such VIP's as the great poet Bialik, the famous scholar Soloweitschik, the Revisionist leader Soskin. People of lesser importance assembled on various evenings in a little front yard: A German Club, an Austrian Club, members of the B'nai Brith Lodge. Rooms rented for sixty to seventy piaster, American plan; the food was strictly kosher. Most rooms in the Talpioth were taken.

On the afternoon of our arrival Alfred Freund, a friend of ours from Fürth, dropped in; we had notified him by postcard of our coming. He looked well enough in his face, but had lost quite a bit of weight and walked with a slight limp. He had come - so he said - on an errand from his home in Petach Tikvah, a twenty minute bus ride from Tel Aviv, and used the opportunity to look us up, to mutual enjoyment. Within a couple of days we returned his visit. The road to Petach Tikvah was one of the most heavily traveled highways in the country. The town, for some reason still classified as a village, had close to ten thousand mostly Jewish inhabitants, among them some of the earliest and some of the latest contingents of settlers.

#### **Thursday, Sept. 28, 1933: Visiting a friend from Fürth in Petach Tikvah**

The Tel Aviv - Petach Tikvah highway was flanked by acres upon acres of orange groves, but some stretches were taken up with industrial plants: a chocolate factory, a textile mill, a small foundry, a rock working plant: a founder's paradise in the making. The bus stopped in Saarona, a prosperous village started many decades ago by German settlers from Swabia, who had grown rich by selling the produce of their expertly run farms to the markets of Tel Aviv. The high gables roofs of their houses reminded us strongly of the farmhouses of Germany. Other stops included Ramat Gan and B'nai B'rak, the same B'nai B'rak, which we had known from the Haggadah since early youth. This truly was the land of our fathers.

Modern dwellings interspersed with tumbledown shacks lined the street of Petach Tikvah; wrecking and rebuilding bespoke a recent boom. Alfred Freund received us limping heavily. His trip to Tel Aviv had aggravated an outbreak of boils on his legs, which had made life miserable for him for weeks. His condition was typical of that of many newcomers. Physically not too strong, he, like many others, had broken out with painful furuncles after hardly ten days of hard labor in the fields. We followed him to his "home", a tiny whitewashed cubicle which used to house the oven in what had formerly been a bakery. A bare cot, without the comfort of a mattress, served as his bed. He had been unable to work for ten weeks. Fortunately the Chupat Cholim, the Jewish Workers Health Insurance, supported him with a modest disability payment in spite of the fact that he was an illegal immigrant. Hoarding his pennies, saving on food, hoping to find other ways of making a living he suffered his hardship patiently, his morale buoyed by his profound idealism. He told us about his plan to associate with a young Polish immigrant in the manufacture of floor tiles. A partnership agreement had been drawn up but he hesitated signing it, as he was deadly afraid of losing his meager savings of twenty-five pounds, which was to be his investment in the business. He inquired anxiously of us, as he did of his old friends in Germany, whether he stood any chance of succeeding in the venture. He had been a textile manufacturer's agent in Germany; here, in Palestine, he faced, like many immigrants, an economy which had few opportunities for newcomers from such a background. We promised to return on Sunday with a taxi, which would give the three of us a chance to look up an old acquaintance from Fürth who lived in a nearby community.

### **Friday, Sept. 29, 1933: Erev Yom Kippur in Tel Aviv**

We spent the next day - Friday - in Tel Aviv, sightseeing and running a few errands. In the evening, we enjoyed a hearty meal at our hotel: "Es wurde abgebissen", as one used to say at home. Soon we were on our way to a house of prayer. It was Erev Yom Kippur, the eve of the Day of Atonement; business throughout the city had come to a standstill. Earlier, heralds had blown the trumpet on the streets to warn the population of the approach of the holiday. The crush of vehicles had disappeared from the streets, when we, together with some other guests of our hotel, walked to a minyan, a prayer meeting held in a temporarily converted office on Rothschild Boulevard. All of Tel Aviv - men, women and children - seemed to be walking to services. The city was dotted with synagogues like a German town would be with churches; the largest, most imposing one, capable of holding thousands of worshippers, faced Allenby Street. It was already so overcrowded that there seemed to be no chance for even one more person to enter it. Building extensions on either side of the synagogue were reserved for Yemenite and Sephardic services. Lonely Arab droshkies, warning bells ringing, made their way slowly through the crowds depositing wealthy passengers at synagogue entrances. Most pedestrians walked on the streets where the pavement was better than on the sidewalks. Here and there a Sephardic Jew wore a fez; Ashkenazi Jews could be seen wearing the "kittel", the ceremonial white robe orthodox Jews put on on Yom Kippur. Some worshippers, their prayer shawls over their shoulders, were strolling up and down in front of their synagogue, taking a break in their praying. The services we attended were conducted according to Polish ritual; most of the participants looked like they might have come straight from the Temple in Grenadierstraße in Berlin, where most Eastern European Jews congregated. The evening service lasted two hours; after its conclusion we went for a short stroll before turning in.

### **Saturday, Sept. 30, 1933: Tel Aviv - Yom Kippur services, in the evening Habima performance of "Jud Süß" at the opera house**

On the next morning we arrived at ten o'clock, in time for the Mussaf prayer, which lasted until 2 p.m. - too early in the day to start with the afternoon prayer, the Minchah. So a recess of one hour was declared; everybody went outside, trying to find a comfortable bench on Rothschild Boulevard. A lively crowd, which seemed not inclined toward participation in religious services, filled the streets. After a second short interruption in the afternoon, our services came to an end around 5.30 p.m. with the blowing of the shofar, the ramshorn, and we headed back to our hotel. Huge crowds filled the streets, streaming homeward, the bells of Arab droshkies jingled, the sound of the shofar was heard from synagogues where the service was just coming to an end. It was for me a moment of the highest emotional impact, and I was close to tears. Within minutes the spell vanished. Suddenly and all at once the innumerable Gazos stands were open, and scores of thirsty people milled around them clamoring for a bubbling fruit drink to moisten their parched throats. Our hotel treated us to enormous quantities of coffee and cake. Dinner followed shortly afterwards.

A special treat was yet in store for us this evening: a performance by the Habima, the Jewish Theater Company, on the main floor of the impressive Opera house on Allenby Street (the second floor housed a movie theater). Attendance was good. The play, presented in modern Hebrew, was a dramatization of Lion Feuchtwanger's book "Jud Süß" (Jew Süß) and held us in breathless suspense, although we barely understood one word of the conversation on the stage. Heavy make-up gave the faces of the actors a strange, mask-like appearance; a moving stage provided the changing background for the players, achieving a stunning counterplay of actors and scenery. There was, for us, a disturbing relevance in the person of Jud Süß, the

powerful, yet despised financier for the ducal court of Württemberg, estranged from his people, yet unwilling to save himself by cutting his ties to them; we sat choked with emotion watching a scene in which an old rabbi, standing next to the dead body of Jud Süß' daughter, lighted the candles and intoned the traditional prayer for the departed: "Hatsur tomim ..."

**Sunday, Oct. 1 - Sunday, Oct. 8, 1933: "Our days in Tel Aviv" with excursions to Jaffa, Petach Tikvah, Rishon le Zion, moshav Rechovoth & kibbutz Rodges**

Our days in Tel Aviv were filled with action. One morning we went on a stroll along the strand toward Jaffa, the Arab twin-city to Tel Aviv, together with our friends from Hamburg. It was a cloudy morning, and we reached for our raincoats, but left them at the hotel when everybody made fun of us for taking such unnecessary precautions at that time of the year. Well, a sharp wind blew right through us as we walked along the sandy beach, and not much later it began to pour, sending us scurrying for shelter. The natives joked that the German immigrants had brought their native climate with them. Arab Jaffa was an important port city. The old town resembled that of Jerusalem with its many bazaars and colorful shops. The port bustled with activity: small boats, making their way precariously through shoals and heavy breakers brought passengers to the shore from ships anchored some distance out at sea; automobiles were hoisted overboard on to the top of lighters bound for the beach, which, to our amazement, was studded with dozens of lift-vans, the huge packing crates containing the household goods of new immigrants.

One nice sunny day Anna and I hired a taxi and drove to Petach Tikvah to take Alfred and his future partner for a ride through the countryside. Our first stop was Rishon le Zion, famous for its huge winery, supposedly the second largest in the world. We walked through the enormous subterranean vaults containing row upon row of gigantic vats, but were told that at the moment only some of them were actually used for the aging and storage of wine: many vineyards had been converted into more profitable orange groves, and thus wine production had been reduced accordingly. We watched Pesach wine being readied for shipment to the United States; the work was done on a fast moving conveyor line. The refreshing coolness in the cavernous wine cellar contrasted sharply with the outside heat. Naturally, we did not miss the chance to sample the potent product of the grapes in a hospitable wine-tasting room. We heard that the conversion of the winery into a brewery was under discussion, but the suitability of the local water for the production of beer had not yet been established.

We continued on to Rechovoth [Rehoboth], a lovely, busy village with many attractive new homes. Rechovoth was considered as one of the proudest moshavim, the fine farm cooperatives of the country: even the casual observer could not fail to notice the signs of the prosperity of its settlers. On we drove to Gederah, where we hoped to call on an old friend from Fürth, only to learn that he had moved. This visit had really been the purpose of our trip, but we were undismayed: the excursion through the fertile countryside, the view to the west of picturesque Arab villages dotting a chain of low hills, the occasional glimpse of the blue Mediterranean through cuts in the range compensated us richly. Before turning back to Tel Aviv, we made one more stop at an experimental farm, just in time to watch the decking of a cow by a carefully chosen bull. After soaking the soles of our shoes with Lysol, we were permitted to enter the barns and have a look at the rest of the cattle. Everywhere the latest scientific methods were applied to raise farm productivity and efficiency, and many time-worn formulas of peasant tradition had gone into discard.

Back in Tel Aviv, Anna rested up at our hotel, while I accompanied Alfred home to Petach Tikvah by bus. It was after the close of business, and the crush was so tremendous that we had to pass up three overcrowded buses before getting on to the fourth one. Alfred's game leg did not make things any easier besides. At one point a closed railroad crossing held up our progress; in an instant over a dozen vehicles were stopped on either side of the intersection, horns blaring, people shouting, even the engineer blowing the train whistle to join in the general joyous cacophony. When the crossbars went up, the resulting traffic jam was indescribable, but it cleared up within seconds without an accident.

Alfred and I ate supper in the community kitchen of kibbutz Rodges - strictly kosher -, where I met a couple of young men of my age from Fürth, Regensburger and Warshawski, the former a baker turned construction worker, the latter a cabinet maker. Regensburger followed his new trade with no ill effects and was proud to earn as much as seven shillings a day. The mishada, the restaurant, was alive with young people, many of them from Germany, where they had held white collar jobs. The topic of all conversations was the change to a new life in Palestine, which some welcomed, while others voiced bitter complaints. Many of the German immigrants expressed their fervent hope to rise quickly above the lowly job of spreading camel dung in the pardessim, urged on by a tough foreman; there were stories told of newcomers who had already achieved the rank of "mashgiach" and were drawing fifty piasters a day. A Polish-born socialist scolded the German immigrants for their ambition to advance, declaring heatedly that he would never want to leave the ranks of the proud common laborers. There were inquiries from table to table about the health of mutual friends: sickness took its toll from everyone of these young people, unaccustomed, as they were, to the searing climate and the hard work. The tourist, conscious of the softness of his hands, felt somewhat ill at ease among these tired, battle scarred pioneers. The food was good and reasonably priced; the fare of fruit-soup, potatoes and scrambled eggs, tea and cake amounted to ten piasters for the three of us, equal to two shillings. The waitresses were members of the Kibbutz. One paid the bill with chits which could be obtained at the door. Tipping was not allowed. Conversations were carried on in a mixture of German and Hebrew, the latter used again and again for words of local reference, which have no effective counterpart in the German language. The new immigrants were surprisingly estranged from their old homeland; the only reports from "back home" which aroused their interest were news of friends expected to make their aliyah shortly. These young men and women were totally absorbed with their daily problems, and those of the country at large. Their own future was inseparably connected with the future of the land of Israel, toward which the great sacrifices of the present were directed. While they had been branded garbage at home, here they had become fertilizer, from which, they hoped and prayed, the harvest of the future will draw nourishment.

Contrasting sharply with this setting was the scene at the beach in Tel Aviv. There rows upon rows of comfortable beach chairs, fine sand, pleasantly warm water and a backdrop of luxurious hotels put this waterfront in competition with Europe's finest. In the midst of looking and questioning and listening, Anna and I took a day off for reposing blissfully under the blue sky of the Mediterranean coast and swimming through the gentle breakers rolling in from the high sea. The shore was crowded; every region of Germany was represented by its dialect, if one cared to listen to the conversation of the bathers.

### **Monday, Oct. 9, 1933: Outing to Pardess Channah**

On Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, we, together with a couple from Berlin and their son, went on a promising outing to a cooperative settlement to the north of Tel Aviv. We started out on the

Jaffa-Jerusalem line, traveling third class, which we found clean, but crowded. In Lydda, a few miles southeast of Tel Aviv, we changed trains and boarded the train for Haifa. Every station we passed was brimming with life: soldiers, travelers of all sorts coming and going, Arab porters besieging the passengers, vendors racing along the train offering refreshments; all this was accompanied by an earsplitting noise of haggling over prices, without which the luckless traveler found himself monumentally overcharged. As we continued on due north, the railroad tracks served practically as a boundary line between Arab territory to the east and Jewish settlements to the west, and the number of Arab passengers increased, as did the noise level of conversation in the cars. We traveled almost the full length of the Plain of Sharon, with the highlands of Samaria forming the backdrop on our right, and orange groves in decreasing numbers on the left. Eventually the soil, either barren or recently harvested, turned a reddish color, and at one time a dust cloud went up, when a swarm of perhaps twenty vultures took off, their wings flapping lazily, as the clatter of our wheels put them to flight. Occasionally, a few tents and vehicles of the British occupation force came into view, leaving no doubt that the Mandate Power kept a military presence in strategic places.



**“Tents and vehicles of the British occupation force” en route to Pardess Channah**  
(photos: Philip S. White)



**Chedera train station**  
(photo: Philip S. White)



**On the way to Pardess Channah by minibus**  
(photos: Philip S. White)

In Chedera [Hadera] we left the train and boarded a minibus, which, following an incredibly sandy and dusty road, took us to our destination, the village of Pardess Channah. Pardess Channah was an attractive cooperative settlement of neat one-family cottages, crisscrossed by broad palm studded streets, still unpaved and covered with sand. The main highway from Tel Aviv to Haifa was supposed to run through here; at the moment no direct road link between the two important cities existed. Our travel companions had come to let their boy stay with one of the local settlers - formerly from Berlin also -; the youngster had attended a training course in agriculture in Germany and was going to serve his apprenticeship here. Visiting with the family of the boy's future employers we learned some interesting facts about this particular farming project, sponsored by PICA. Upon payment of twelve hundred pounds, a family would receive thirty dunam of ground, of which twenty dunam would be set aside as pardess, with an expected first orange harvest in four to five years. Five dunam were reserved for dwelling and yard area, with another five dunam for unspecified use. Development costs, such as drainage, cultivation and installation of utilities amounted to four hundred pounds, or one third of the initial investment; it took three hundred pounds to erect the little two bedroom house with kitchen and enclosed patio. During the first five years, while there was no return from the investment, the settler would receive a yearly refund from the association in the amount of ninety-five pounds to cover his most elementary needs. Naturally, the more enterprising homesteader could augment his income by planting a vegetable garden, growing fruit trees, raising chickens, possibly even stabling a cow, all of which would entail the need for additional funds. After five years, when the orange groves were ready to produce, PICA would place a three hundred pound mortgage on the land, to be repaid in eight yearly installments. Once the farm was in full production, a return of between ten and twenty per cent on the total investment could be expected, depending on the prevailing price of oranges. The Palestine pound was worth about five dollars; one dunam was the equivalent of one thousand square meters or 0,23 acres.



**Pardess Channah**  
(photos: Philip S. White)

Beside PICA, other corporations were offering similar plans, for instance Yachin, which was involved in a project further south in an area called Vaadi Chavarith. The German Government, in order to speed up emigration of Jews, had entered into an agreement with the British Mandate powers with the establishment of a special trade account, through which German marks could be exchanged in payment for Palestinian imports to Germany. This measure enabled German Jewish “capitalists” to transfer their funds to Palestine without losing the biggest part of their fortune in the exchange of currencies: The German mark was selling on the free market at a tremendous discount. Although Germany leveled a 25 % tax against these transfers, an increasing number of would-be-emigrants applied for this opportunity, and the pipeline was filling up at a very rapid rate, requiring already many months before the actual transfer could take place. To receive an immigration visa from the Mandate Power, Jews either had to be “capitalists” or provide proof that they had attended courses which provided them with special skills in agriculture or the crafts; university trained professionals were admitted freely also and the number of physicians per capita of the population was setting a record. As a consequence of these restrictions, the number of illegals was growing, and the Jewish community did everything to protect them against deportation.

Anna and I had arrived at the conclusion that joining one of these agricultural development companies would be a sensible and secure way for a middleclass immigrant to start a new life in the country, provided he was willing to become a working farmer himself; there was no room in this scheme for a hired hand. The start of a business in the city called for a larger investment and involved higher risks. The cooperatives protected the member and saw him through less productive years, so that he was in no danger of losing his farm. In fact, the growing development inside Palestine had its impact on some of the older settlements, affording the old pioneers a certain hard-won prosperity through the increase in land values and higher and better use of their properties. Clearly, the future success or failure of the entire Jewish community throughout the land was inseparably connected with the general welfare of Palestine, and the absence of political or economical trouble. What had already been achieved appeared tremendous; one could not help but hope with all one’s heart that the enormous sacrifices in blood and sweat would not have been in vain.

### **Tuesday, Oct. 10 - Saturday, Oct. 14, 1933: Haifa**

Upon our return to Tel Aviv, we decided to leave for Haifa the next day in order to obtain exact written date on the Pardess Channah project for presentation to the German authorities upon our return. Rather than taking the train from Jaffa and changing trains in Lydda, we took a bus to Ras El Ain, which we reached after a thirty five minute ride from Tel Aviv, quite a



shortcut to the Haifa-bound train, if the traveler did not mind risking - so it seemed - his life while the bus swayed and lurched crazily through oceans of sand and deep ruts in the so-called highway. Our arrival in Haifa was quite different this time: We knew our way around, and were neither intimidated nor overcharged by porters and taxi drivers. We took a room in the Hotel Hauser; the rooms for rent were on the fourth floor of a large house, which was owned by a wealthy Arab, and, just weeks after completion, fully rented and occupied. The furnishing of the hotel rooms was nearly done, but the living quarters of the Hauser family were still in a state of genial disorder. The Hausers - father, mother and one young son -, recent arrivals from Berlin, where Mr. Hauser had been a manufacturer, brought a lot of enthusiasm and good will to their new job. Their day started at five o'clock in the morning and ended at midnight, and was made more difficult by the lack of a gas range (yet to be installed) and the necessity to preserve water.

Our business in Haifa took longer than expected, what with obtaining documents from private and public organizations, and thus we found it necessary to postpone our departure for home. Over tiny but potent cups of café turque at the Haifa office of the Lloyd Italiano we arranged to switch from the "Roma" to a much smaller ship, the liner called "Italia" which was to leave one week later. To make up for the difference in the general comforts between the two ships, we were offered a first class cabin, worthy of any honeymooning couple, at hardly any increase in fare, which we gleefully accepted. We attended the sailing of the "Roma" on Wednesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, bidding farewell to a goodly number of her passengers, whose faces had become familiar; in a small country, like Palestine, one met the same people, pursuing the same ends, again and again, and friendships, however temporary, resulted easily.

Between errands and appointments we managed to see more of Haifa, and had the privilege to visit the renowned painter Herman Struck in his charming house with a beautiful view of the Bay. German-born, and famous for his drawings, etchings and oils - mostly related to Jewish subjects - he had settled in Palestine already before Hitler came to power; his great love for the country of his choice showed in the many works of art which covered the walls of his home. How we would have liked to pull out the checkbook and buy! We took the bus for an afternoon on the dunes of Khayat Beach; we spent an evening drinking in the unimaginable beauty of the Haifa Beach in the light of the full moon from the top of Mt. Carmel. For the visitor from the temperate zone the daytime temperature still seemed unbearably hot, but at nighttime a cold wind came up which forced us to wrap ourselves tightly in our overcoats, as we watched the lights of Haifa, the star-filled sky and the magic display of innumerable shooting stars from the balcony of our hotel.

### **Sunday, Oct. 15 - Monday, Oct. 16, 1933: Tel Aviv & Petach Tikvah again**

In the process of putting together all the necessary documents for our PICA project we had to return to Tel Aviv, where we spent one night at the Hotel Talpioth; the next day we went once more to Petach Tikvah, much to the surprise of our friend Alfred Freund, who naturally believed us to be far away on the high seas on our way home. We found lodgings in the local inn; in the evening a theater group called Ohel gave a performance in a large hall of the building. The play dealt with the biblical story of King David's betrayal by his son Absalom and was done in Hebrew, of which we understood little. Still, the highly dramatic performance, underlined by the choreographic manner, in which the actors moved, impressed us deeply. A Fürther landsman was supposed to be the director of the play, but, much to our regret, he was not present at the performance. The last meeting with Alfred turned into an unforgettable experience, but taking leave was sad.

## **Tuesday, Oct. 17 - Wednesday, Oct. 18, 1933: Back to Haifa and farewell to Eretz Israel**

Tuesday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, we returned to Haifa. On the following day, we locked our suitcases for the last time. With a full day on our hands until the departure of our ship, we decided to take the bus once more to sunny Khayat Beach. It was a lovely day, yet the number of bathers was small; an Arab waiter explained the absence of the usual crowd as a consequence of the “cool” weather. We found it wonderfully warm, drank in the blissful sunshine and cooled off tumbling into the white capped breakers until the middle of the afternoon, when we noticed that we were the only Europeans left at the beach. At this moment a little sports car stopped at the entrance of the installation; a young gentleman approached us, introduced himself in French as a member of the French Consulate in Haifa and offered to take us back to the city in the car, as, he assured us, it was not advisable for us to remain in the company of natives only. We accepted his invitation, although we thought his concern unfounded. Still, there had been repeated talks of impending Arab riots; our Palestine-wise driver on our initial motor tour had already voiced his concern. “I have a feeling that Colonel Lawrence is here”, he had said, “inciting the Arabs against us. The Foreign Office does not like it when we get along too well; they fear that we might get together and throw them out in the end.”

The time had come to say goodbye, to steal one final look from the balcony of our hotel across Haifa, across the glittering bay below the azure sky, the amber-colored hills rimming the horizon - not without a feeling of sadness, now that the rime to depart had come. A droshky brought us and our five pieces of luggage to the harbor for seven and one half piasters, compared to the thirty piasters we had paid at the time of our arrival. For some additional baksheesh five quick moving, Herculean Arabs rushed our four suitcases and the big steamer trunk on board of the “Italia”, berthed securely at the quay. We were early, which gave us time to watch the fascinating scene before our departure: The arrival of the passengers, the hustling of the stewards, the strutting of the officers. Finally a whistle sounded, heavy chains pulled the anchor up; a long toot came from the smokestack, and a small boat pulled us slowly away from our berth. The big screw came alive, sending a tremor through the ship, as we turned and headed for the mouth of the harbor, an opening between two moles approaching each other at right angles, a lighthouse guarding the entrance at either end. The pilot left; we headed for the open sea. It was suddenly night, as we stood in silence at the rail, watching the lights of the port, of Hadar Hacarmel, of the mountaintop retreat quickly into the night. Our thoughts turned back to the day of our arrival, when, in the bright light of the morning, we beheld the yellowish brown tones of the land, and, coming closer, palm trees and the gleaming white houses of Haifa marching up to the top of its famous mountain. Shalom - lehidraoth! Holy Land of Moslems and Christians, Holy Land of the Jews, promised thousands of years ago to our fathers! Though we leave you now, your countenance will stay before our eyes, as will that of the tens of thousands of pioneers who have carved new features into your weathered face. They labor and they rest not, they burn in the merciless heat of your sun and faint of thirst, they shake with fever in the plains and shiver in the cold of the mountains; they race in shiny cars over slick highways and stoop toiling painfully in the orange groves, they chase after foolish business ventures and try to outsmart each other over a foot of land, they sleep on bare ground and give birth in fragile tents; they joyfully sing and dance together and tear each other apart in fits of irreconcilable discord. Quite unholy themselves, they form a holy army, three hundred thousand men, women and children, the chosen of the chosen people - God willing, a power for good and not for evil. May their lot be peace and not war, joy and not sadness; may their hopes blossom into fulfillment until we meet again!

Amen.



**Young grapefruit tree**  
(photo: Philip S. White)

## Postscript

Shortly after our return from Palestine we obtained the necessary forms for our PICA project from the German authorities, but we failed to file them for the actual start of emigration procedures. In the face of worldwide disaster in agriculture causing farmers to lose the land which generations had tilled before them, I doubted my ability to succeed on a tiny plot in a yet strange land, and with no previous experience; I did not possess the Zionist fervor of many of my friends, though I admired them greatly for it; eventually the pipeline for the transfer of money to Palestine had become hopelessly clogged. Both Anna's mother and mine were widows, and the thought of leaving them behind was heartbreaking. In 1935 the only surviving brother of my father, who lived in Oakland, California, wrote of his concern about our future, and offered his help in facilitating our immigration to the United States of America. We accepted gratefully. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1936, with our eight months old son Leon in our arms, we arrived in San Francisco, California, and settled in Oakland. America has been good to us, and we are thankful. In 1948 the State of Israel was established: we pray for its peace and the welfare of all its inhabitants.

[Index\\*](#)

[Home\\*](#)