Jewish Classicae Literature

read in Yiddish by Chaim Ostrowsky

Folkways Records FL 9975
CHAIM OSTROWSKY

CHAIM OSTROWSKY began his theatrical career in Moscow where he came as a young lad straight from the "Yeshivah." He organized and directed Hebrew and Yiddish theatres in various cities of Russia and Poland. In Palestine, he was director and leading actor of the First Hebrew Theatre "Teatron Irin" in Tel Aviv.

CHILDMREN ARE A JOY
By Sholem Aleichem

An exalted father describes the extreme happiness he derives from his abundant family: sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, when they congregate in his house to celebrate Purim.
Midnight in the Warsaw ghetto. One house remains standing. From that house a voice is heard — a father teaching his son the "Alph Beis"...
Friday night at the synagogue. A group of chassidim join the rabbi in a "Kolos Hashabbos" chant. Though they are all chanting the same prayer, the personality of each of the chassidim is expressed in the manner in which they chant.
This is one of the folk legends about the prophet Elijah, who comes to the aid of poor people in the hour of their greatest need and brings them joy and happiness. He usually comes disguised as a beggar, or a guest for the Sabbath — and whatever he touches turns to gold or precious stones...

In this story, which takes place in a small town on the eve of Passover, he comes disguised as a magician who, out of thin air, produces a complete and repastent seder for a poor, despantic family.
He was returning home from a short sojourn to Europe, and now, aboard ship, sailing the Atlantic towards America, he was the authority on the "American way of life" which he tried to explain to the new emigrants.

He knew it all — he'd lived here for several years. He was a success. "Just remember," he told them, "don't be a star-gazer or a philosopher. In America, you must be practical. Forget your ideals. Throw them in the ocean. Concentrate on making a dollar — and you'll be a success."

The sea was vast and the horizon was filled with clouds. In the distance, he could see the coastline of America. He knew this was the end of his journey.

"The American" by Sholem Asch
Jews Chanting

by Binyomin Dov Brand

They have given up. They tried hard all morning long to make a few pennies in the market. They are desperate. "Shabbos" is approaching. Their wives are waiting. What else can they do but turn to prayer? So they sat down on a bench in the city park and started to discuss the merits of their favorite cantors. Soon the park resounded with song.

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There is a Hebrew saying: "The soul that is above is the source of the soul that is below." A beautiful refrain. But that is not the point here.

The point here is that there is a sense of a higher source that permeates the lower and serves as a guide and inspiration.

As the day progressed and the sun began to set, the park became quiet. The benches were left empty. The only sound was the occasional rustle of leaves in the breeze.

Then, suddenly, a voice could be heard.

"The soul that is above is the source of the soul that is below."

The voice grew louder and louder, until it filled the entire park. People turned to look, but saw nothing.

"The soul that is above is the source of the soul that is below."

The voice continued to rise, until it seemed to fill the entire sky.

"The soul that is above is the source of the soul that is below."

The park was silent, as the voice projected itself into the night sky.

"The soul that is above is the source of the soul that is below."

And then, just as suddenly as it had started, the voice disappeared.

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The park was still, except for the occasional breeze. The benches were empty, and the only sound was the rustle of leaves.

But there was a sense of peace, of tranquility, that permeated the entire park. A sense that the higher source had touched the lower, and that the soul that is above had become a source of inspiration for all who had heard.

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