

Avraham Atijas



SOLI I ISO
U OBEĆANOJ ZEMLJI
novela

AVRAHAM ATIJAS

**SOLI AND ISI
IN THE PROMISED LAND**

Novella

Avraham Atijas
SOLI I ISO U OBEĆANOJ ZEMLJI

Urednik i izdavač
Avraham Atijas

Tehnički urednik
Željko Hrček

Dizajn korica
Igor Hrček

Tiraž
150 primeraka

Štampano u Jerusalimu

***Onaj ko okleva, neće nikada
stići do Jerusalima!***

(stara jevrejska izreka)



PREDGOVOR AUTORA

*Već sam ranije čuo neke priče koje liče na ovu, ispričanu u noveli **Soli i Iso u obećanoj zemlji**, ali sam siguran da postoje i brojne druge, meni nepoznate storije o ljudima kojima je useljenje u novu domovinu – Izrael otvorilo put u jedan novi, do tada nepoznati i nedoživljeni život. Da li se u tim slučajevima radilo o igri sudbine, slučaja ili možda, po nekima, božjoj nameri i volji, ostaje svakome da o tome stvara svoje zaključke. Ne bi trebalo odbaciti ni ubeđenje koje su imali Soli i Iso, glavne ličnosti ove novele, da im se po dolasku u „svetu zemlju“ dogodilo lepo čudo (kod Jevreja se ono smatra biblijskom pojavom) u koje su mnogi njihovi sunarodnici verovali tokom milenija, a i danas u to veruju.*

Jevrejskom narodu se mnogo toga dogodilo pre i nakon njegovog dolaska u obećanu mu zemlju, smeštenu između reke Jordana i Sredozemnog mora. Nakon što su Jevreji bili prisiljeni da napuste ove prostore zbog rimskog osvajanja i rušenja Jerusalima sedamdesetih godina prvog milenija nove ere, morali su da nastave život u tuđini, u dijaspori. Tokom stoleća koja su usledila Jevreji su bili konstantno i često sistematski proganjani na gotovo svim prostorima na kojima se su naseljavali. Krajem 15. veka oni

su postali žrtve pogroma i progona (izgona) iz Španije od strane kraljevske krune i katoličke Inkvizicije. Ove pojave su se širile Evropom i carskom Rusijom da bi kulminirale tokom Drugog svetskog rata, u kojem je hitlerovski nacizam fizički uništio 6 miliona pripadnika ovog prastarog naroda. Uprkos svim istorijskim nevoljama koje su ih snalazile, Jevreji su nastavili da postoje. Štaviše, na prostorima njihove pradomovine je 1948. godine, kao feniks iz pepela, ponovo iznikla obnovljena jevrejska država – Izrael, koja je prostor prekriven beživotnim pustinjским peskom i stenjem oplodila, da bi konačno postala moderna i razvijena mediteranska država. Tokom decenija nakon stvaranja ove države, u Izrael su se useljavali milioni onih koji su iz raznovrsnih razloga želeli da postanu njeni građani. Posle Drugog svetskog rata, ali iznad svega odmah po proglašenju nove države, u nju su prvi pohrlili preživeli iz Holokausta. Kasnije useljenike su motivisali i drugi razlozi za emigriranje u Izrael: ekonomski, tradicionalistički i verski, a u nekim slučajevima i želja da se izbegnu neki novi antisemitski ispadi u sredinama u kojima su živeli. Nakon raspada Sovjetskog saveza, početkom devedesetih godina dvadesetog veka odande se u Izrael doselilo blizu milion ljudi koji su prema određenim kriterijumima bili Jevreji (po majčinoj ili očevoj liniji). U najvećem broju slučaja tu se radilo o ekonomskoj emigraciji, mada bi kod manjeg broja ovih emigranata, kao još jedan od motiva trebalo pridodati i neizvesnost nastavka života zbog njihovog je-

vrejskog porekla, mada je Staljinova era sibirskih gulaga bila već prilično dugo za njima. Na kraju, ne bi se smeo zanemariti još jedan važan motiv: priključenje članovima porodice koji su se već nalazili u Izraelu!

Uprkos brojnim surovim a nametnutim ratovima koje je tokom 60 godina od svog stvaranja Izrael bio prinuđen da vodi sa svojim neprijateljski raspoloženim arapskim susedima, useljenje u tu državu nije jenjavalo. Čak ni novije metode koje su Arapi primenili u borbi protiv Izraela i njenih jevrejskih stanovnika (samoubilački napadi), nisu mogle da odvrate ljude od odluke da se usele i žive u novoj domovini. Stoga bi se, možda i opravdano, moglo postaviti pitanje: „Na čemu se, zapravo, zasnivaju motivi svih tih ljudi, novopečenih ili starijih stanovnika te male države, da opstanu i žive u zemlji koja, naizgled, može da eksplodira svakog trenutka?” Za pojedine segmente izraelskog društva, na primer religiozne cioniste, još bi se i mogao pružiti neki određeniji odgovor o njihovim motivima, ali za celinu kompleksnog izraelskog društva pravi odgovor je teško formulisati. Jer, nije u pitanju samo klasični patriotizam, rodoljublje Izraelaca. Naravno, u dobroj meri je i on zastupljen, ali postoje i drugi kao što su: odbrana demokratskog društva i proklamovanih sloboda, protivljenje slepom islamskom fanatizmu, zaštita određenih jevrejskih tradicionalnih vrednosti i simbola, borba za bolji, bogatiji ekonomski život i još neki drugi razlozi. Ako se sve to skupa poveže, moglo bi se doći do zaključka

*da stanovnici Izraela, posebno njegov jevrejski deo, ipak vole i žele da žive i stvaraju u ovoj zemlji, ali bi bilo idealno da to ostvaruju u uslovi-
ma mira unutar svog naroda i stanovništva i sa
susednim državama i nacijama.*

*Imajući navedeno u vidu, može se zaklju-
čiti da su alžirska Jevrejka Soli i Isak iz Bosne,
iako oboje još uvek pod utiskom gubitka svojih
supružnika, dolaskom u Izrael uspeali da zajed-
nički pronađu izlaz iz svog tužnog i pomrače-
nog životnog tunela. Obnovili su nadu i vero-
vanje da su u stanju da ostatak života prožive
zajedno u relativnom zadovoljstvu, pored svoje
dece koja su takođe počela da stvaraju svoje po-
rodice u novoj domovini. Soli i Iso su na taj način
potvrdili staru misao koja kaže da živi moraju
sa živima, a mrtvi s mrtvima. Ipak, uspomene,
posebno one lepe, na ove poslednje ne smemo
nikada potpuno izbrisati iz naših sećanja.*

Avraham Atijas

Ljudski život je prepun raznovrsnih događaja, dobrih ili neprijatnih. No, čovek nije u stanju da ih mnoge unapred sagleda ili predskaže, a ako se ipak dese, često nije u mogućnosti da na njih reaguje na odgovarajući način. Ljudi koji nisu pobožni nastoje da takve pojave tumače kao igru slučaja, sudbine, sreće ili nesreće. Međutim, vernici u tom pogledu nemaju dileme jer kažu da na ovoj planeti i u vasioni sve nastaje i postoji po božjoj volji i stoga joj se čovek mora potpuno da prepusti. Po njima, jedino što može i treba da se uradi jeste da smernim i pobožnim načinom života čovek nastoji da pridobije **Njegovu** milost, kako bi u dobrom zdravlju, materijalnom i duhovnom zadovoljstvu proživeo ovozemaljski život i da bi potom **On** ljudskoj duši podario onaj drugi, večni – naravno u raju!

Životna priča Soli, sefardske Jevrejke poreklom iz Alžira takođe je obeležena mnogim zanimljivim događajima i obrtima. No, ono što joj se dogodilo u njenim pedeset i nekim godinama navelo je tu, u mladosti sasvim umerno tradicionalnu ženu na verovanje da je neka viša sila, po svoj prilici sam Bog, umešala svoje prste u tok njenog daljeg života. To se dogo-

dilo kada je slučajno upoznala Izraelca Isaka-Isu, poreklom s balkanskih prostora, koji je na svom životnom putu takođe doživio sudbinske momente neverovatno slične njenim.

Jevreji su po tradiciji skloni verovanju u čuda koja su im, kažu, tokom njihove duge istorije donosila zaokrete na bolje u situacijama kada su gubili svaku nadu. Jedno takvo čudo nije mi-moišlo ni Soli, a niti Isu u njihovom odmaklijem životnom dobu. Bar su njih dvoje u to poverovali nakon svega što im se tada dogodilo.



Soli je rođena u alžirskom gradu Sidi Bel-Abesu, u sefardskoj porodici Bensimon, u vreme kada se rasplamsavao Drugi svetski rat. Smešten šezdesetak kilometara južno od mediteranske luke Orana, taj grad je dugo godina bio značajno utvrđenje Legije stranaca. Otac Avram, glavni knjigovođa u Velikom mlinu gazda Kohena, i majka Danijela nastojali su da Soli i njenom dve godine mlađem bratu Mihaelu obezbede srećno i bezbrižno detinjstvo. Učila je u francuskoj školi koju su većinom pohađala francuska i druga nearapska deca, ali se Soli družila i s manje brojnim arapskim vršnjacima koji su pohađali istu školu. U okruženju porodice i brojne jevrejske zajednice rano se upoznala s tradicijom i istorijom svojih sefardskih predaka koji su se pre nekoliko vekova, bežeći ispred španske Inkvizicije, doselili na prosto-

re severne Afrike. Međutim, to ipak nije navelo Soli da u mladosti postane veoma pobožna.

Soline pubertetske godine pomutili su nemiri i pobune arapskih nacionalista protiv Francuza i drugih nearapskih osoba koji su živeli i radili u Alžiru. Kao i ostale jevrejske, ali i veći broj drugih nearapskih porodica u Alžiru i Bensimonovi su bili francuski građani. Uprkos tome, Francuzi iz metropole su ove prekomorske sugrađane zvali uvredljivim nazivom *pieds noirs* (crna stopala). Naime, u početnoj fazi kolonizacije ovih krajeva Francuzi su tako nazivali alžirske Arape. Kasnije su ovu pogrdnu „titulu” dodelili i vojnicima Legije stranaca, a zatim i ostalim Francuzima koji su trajno živeli ili duže vreme boravili u Alžiru.

Tokom pedesete decenije dvadesetog veka napadi arapskih nacionalista na Francuze i na ostale strance su se bili pojačali i umnožili. Ubistva iz zaseda ili otvorena, na ulicama gradova, sve su više zagorčavali i ugrožavali živote čak i onih stanovnika koji su, kao i Bensimonovi, u Alžiru živeli generacijama i uvek se sasvim lepo slagali s arapskim sugrađanima. Što se tiče odnosa prema politici, Avram je bio levo orijentisan i zato je imao mnogo prijatelja među Arapima, posebno radnicima i službenicima s kojima je svakodnevno saradivao. Radi toga je s nevericom primao upozorenja dobronamernih Arapa da mora biti oprezan, jer on i njegova porodica mogu da postanu žrtve ekstremnih nacionalista.

Krajem pedesetih a naročito početkom 60-tih godina, za nearapske stanovnike je u Alžiru život postajao sve manje podnošljiv. Decu je u odlasku u školu i na povratku kući obavezno pratio muški deo porodice, otac, stariji brat ili ujaci. Posle završene nastave Soli je iz koledža morala da odlazi pravo kući u pratnji oca ili nekog službenika iz mlina. Prestale su njene šetnje s prijateljicama ili rođacima u predvečerja. I deca i odrasli su već pre mraka morali da budu u svojim domovima. Ulazna vrata su bila stalno zaključana i ne bi se otvarala onome koji bi pozvonio ili zakucacao na vrata a da se predhodno nije identifikovao.

Avram je početkom tih nemirnih šezdesetih godina najzad shvatio da bi zaista bilo opasno da njegova petnaestogodišnja kćerka nastavi pohađati od kuće prilično udaljeni koledž. Dogovorio se s dobrom poznanicom, apotekarkom Ajaš da Soli započne raditi u njenoj apoteci smeštenoj odmah pored stambenog objekta mlina u kojem su stanovali Bensimonomi. Ova mlada devojka je očito bila zadovoljna što je dobila priliku da se upozna s interesantnim zanimanjem, a uz to da za svoj rad bude i plaćena. Tako je započelo Solino šegrtovanje u farmaceutskoj struci.

U Alžiru je na proleće 1962. godine većini Francuza, "stranim kolonijalistima", kako su ih Arapi nazivali, već bilo jasno da im nema opstanka u zemlji u kojoj više nije bilo sigurno izaći na ulicu čak ni u sred belog dana. Brojni ljudi su već smrtno stradali ili bili ranjeni od

metaka ispaljenih iz raznih pravaca ili od eksplozija bombi podmetnutih u radnjama, restoranima ili na drugim javnim mestima. Danju i noću civili-nearapi živeli su u psihozi straha i neizvesnosti, pitajući se da li će živi dočekati naredni dan.

Avram je teška srca prihvatio naredbu francuske kolonijalne uprave da pripremi porodicu za hitnu evakuaciju u Francusku. On je ipak odlučio da ostane u Sidi Bel-Abesu sa starom i bolesnom majkom koja je uporno odbijala da napusti svoj dom. Ako i kada bude bilo neophodno, iako nije verovao da se to ikada može dogoditi, s njom će napustiti Alžir i priključiti se supruzi i deci. Najvažnije je da su njegovi već bili na sigurnom!

Sredinom maja te godine Soli se s majkom, bratom i s još nekoliko članova njihove šire porodice u luci Oran ukrcala na veliki parobrod koji se ispunio s tada već alžirskim izbeglicama s francuskim državljanstvom. Danijela je sa sobom ponela samo dva kofera u koje je spakovala samo njenu i dečju odeću i obuću. Kao i Solijeva mama i mnogi drugi saputnici su se nadali da će se jednog dana, a verovatno uskoro ipak vratiti svojim domovima i poslovima, pa zbog čega da se opterećuju suvišnim stvarima! A i vremena za pakovanje nije bilo na pretek jer je naredba francuske uprave o evakuaciji stigla iznenada.

Nada za povratak im se, na njihovu žalost, nikada neće ostvariti. Štaviše, za manje od dva meseca i Avram se s majkom pridružio porodi-

ci u Francuskoj, nakon što ga je jedan prijatelj – Arapin upozorio da ga neki njegovi saradnici, ultra-nacionalisti nameravaju likvidirati u mlinu čim narednog jutra stigne na posao. Popodne tog istog dana Avram je sa staricom već bio na putu za Francusku. Poneo je sa sobom samo jednu ručnu torbu!



Izbeglički život članova porodice Bensimon prvih godinu dana u novoj sredini, upravo kao i mnogih drugih “crnonogih” Francuza koji su morali da potraže utočište i spas u zemlji matici, protekao je u nastojanju da se što pre priviknu na novonastalu situaciju, u prilično odbojnom okruženju “pravih” Francuza. S Francuskom su do tada bili povezani jezički, obrazovno i administrativno, u izvesnoj meri i ekonomski, ali ne naročito patriotski ili emotivno-sentimentalno. Što se tiče zaposlenja u novoj sredini, svako se snalazio kako je znao i umeo, koristeći za to rodbinske veze, naravno, ko ih je imao u Francuskoj.

Odredište Bensimonovih bio je Lion, grad u kojem je živio Avramov rođak, trgovac cipele. Ovaj je odmah zaposlio Danijelu kao prodavačicu, uz neznatnu novčanu naknadu. Kada bude stigao iz Alžira, Avram će neko vreme voditi njegovo knjigovodstvo i blagajničke poslove. Zato im je gazda dao na korišćenje jedan manji stan čiji je on bio vlasnik.

Budući da je još u Alžiru stekla izvesno iskustvo kao apotekarski pomoćnik-preparant, Soli nije imala poteškoća da nađe posao u Lionu i uskoro je počela da radi u apoteci doktora Daklena. U tom istom lionskom kvartu iznajmila je sobu u jednom pansionu za devojke, kako ne bi morala da se svaki dan noću vraća u stan svojih roditelja na drugom kraju tog velikog grada. Uz to, morala je svoje slobodno vreme da provede u učenju da bi što pre položila državni ispit i stekla zvaničnu kvalifikaciju *apotekarskog preparatora*.

S druge strane, ne sme se zaboraviti da je ova devojka u svojoj sedamnaestoj godini već sama zarađivala svoju koru hleba!



Tri godine kasnije Soli je upoznala Alberta, mladog i skromnog avio-tehničara koji je takođe izbegao iz Alžira. Ubrzo su se venčali, a godinu dana kasnije rodio im se sin Samuel. Kada im se posle četiri godine porodica proširila s još jednim sinom – Avijem, bračni par je odlučio da se presele u naselje blizu Sent-Etijena, grada udaljenog oko 60 kilometara od Liona. Soli je vrlo brzo našla posao u lokalnoj apoteci. Fabrika u kojoj je radio Albert ionako se nalazila u blizini tog grada.

Godine su prolazile i život u Solinoj porodici tekao je manje-više kao i u mnogim porodicama srednje francuske klase. Stariji sin Samuel

je završio srednju školu i otišao u Pariz na univerzitetske studije. Kada ih je okončao a zatim i magistrirao, tamo je ostao, zaposlio se i ubrzo potom i oženio. Aviju je škola išla znatno teže nego njegovom bratu. Međutim, roditelji su otkrili da dete ima dobar sluh za muziku i zato su ga upisali u muzičku školu da uči violinu.

Kao jedan od najboljih u svojoj klasi Avi je na vreme završio srednju muzičku školu u Sent-Etijenu. No, na veliko iznenađenje i razočarenje svojih roditelja, talentovani mladić nije želeo da nastavi muzičko usavršavanje, već je tvrdoglavo insistirao da ga jedino interesuje zanat graditelja violina. Nikakva ubeđivanja roditelja nisu pomogla da njihovom 18-godišnjem sinu izbiju iz glave ovu ideju, tako da su bili prisiljeni da mu potraže odgovarajuću školu. Konačno su, uz pomoć nekih svojih prijatelja, uspeli da ga upišu u jednu takvu ustanovu, ali tek – u Londonu!

Nakon petogodišnjeg stručnog školovanja u Engleskoj mladi majstor Avi se vratio u Francusku, odslužio vojni rok i odmah potom uselio u Izrael da bi se tamo okušao u svojoj novoj profesiji.

U međuvremenu i Soli je odlučila da ispita svoje sposobnosti, ali kao samostalni trgovac. Kupila je malu radnju za prodaju veša s ušteđenim novcem od plata, koji su ona i Albert već duže vremena stavljali na stranu, uprkos sve većim izdacima, naročito za školovanje dece. Posao s tim artiklima joj je krenuo veoma dobro i iz meseca u mesec sve bolje napredovao. Međutim, Albert se iznenada razboleo, a neko-

liko meseci kasnije njegovo zdravstveno stanje se bilo toliko pogoršalo da je morao da zauvek napusti posao. Zbog toga je i Soli bila prisiljena da proda radnju jer je samo na taj način mogla da se potpuno posveti nezi svog teško obolelog muža.

Proteklo je još nekoliko meseci a onda se dogodilo ono najgore. Jednog jutra Albert je ispustio svoju dušu. Na njegovu sahranu došli su i Solijevi sinovi i ostali pored majke dok je trajao period žalosti. Potom je tužna udovica ostala potpuno sama u stanu u kojem je godinama bujao srećan porodični život.

Takvo stanje nije moglo dugo da potraje. Soli je samo tri meseca nakon muževljeve smrti donela hrabru i razumnu odluku da što pre promeni sredinu. To se ubrzo i ostvarilo. Rasprodala je ili poklonila više od polovine stvari koje je imala u njenom dobro opremljenom stanu. Preselila se u iznajmljeni stan u Lionu i tamo prenela samo ono što je smatrala neophodnim za njen budući život usamljene udovice.

Njeni sinovi su već bili krenuli svojim životnim stazama i Soli je dobro znala da se oni više neće vratiti u njen dom, što je prihvatila kao nešto sasvim prirodno. Samuel je sa svojom porodicom i poslom bio u Parizu, a godinu dana pre njenog preseljenja, mlađi sin je postao građanin Izraela. U Lionu je Soli bila u mogućnosti da često, gotovo svakodnevno obilazi svoju mamu Danijelu koja je takođe ostala udovica nekoliko godina ranije. Susretala je povremeno i brata Mihaela koji je sa svojom

porodicom živeo u predgrađu Liona. Obnovila je prijateljstvo s nekoliko žena s kojima je bila bliska ranije, dok je živela u tom gradu, a pre odlaska za Sent-Etijen. Igrom slučaja i one su ostale bez muževa: neke su bile razvedene a neke su, kao i ona, postale udovice. U svakom slučaju, Soli je morala da se pripremi za novi, usamljenički život udovice koja sa svojih pedeset i nešto godina nema baš nikakve iluzije a ni nameru da se ponovo udaje!

S obzirom da je već ranije bila prestala da radi, Soli je tekuće troškove pokrivala novcem koji je dobijala na ime nepotpune penzije preminulog muža. Ako je nepovoljni razvoj finansijske situacije bude naterao, razmišljala je ona, možda će povremeno čuvati neku stariju ženu ili bebu. To se zaista i ostvarilo, ali samo u kratkom vremenskom periodu. Ubrzo je napustila ovu vrstu posla jer je shvatila da on zahteva kontinuirano i vremenski duže angažovanje, što bi joj onemogućilo da ispunjava svoju moralnu obavezu, ali i želju da povremeno boravi kod sinova. Uz to, i 80-godišnja mama Danijela bila je prilično zahtevna, iako u dobrom fizičkom stanju, tako da je Soli bila obavezna da je obilazi gotovo svakodnevno.



S vremena na vreme Soli je putovala u Pariz u posetu svom sinu i njegovoj porodici koja je u međuvremenu dobila novog člana,

Žaka, rođenog dve godine nakon prvorođene Karol. U tim prilikama bi pomagala snahi Mirijam oko dece i u spremanju stana. Opeglala bi gomile veša a i kuvala bi im neka posebna jela, naročito specijalitete iz ukusne alžirske kuhinje, u kojima nisu imali čestu priliku da uživaju. Nije želela da im bude suviše na teretu, posebno zbog skućenog stambenog prostora u njihovom malom stanu, tako da je svoje boravke tempirala kada im je zaista bila neophodna. Ostajala bi kod njih najduže dve do tri nedelje.

Soli nije zapostavljala ni mlađeg sina Avija u Izraelu. Išla bi mu u posete barem dvaput godišnje, o velikim jevrejskim praznicima, na primer za *Pesah* i *Sukot* i kod njega bi ostala tri nedelje ili najviše mesec dana. Za to vreme njegov iznajmljeni stan u Haifi a kasnije, po preseljenju u Jerusalem i stan u ulici Ben-Cion, izuzetno bi sinuli pod vrednom Solijevom rukom. Oprala bi, ispeglala i složila u ormane gomile ne samo Avijevog veša i posteljine, već u Jerusalemu i njegovog „cimera” Jakova, takođe poreklom iz Francuske. Svakodnevno bi pripremala ukusne obroke i servirala ih na lepo aranžiranom trpezarijskom stolu. Stan bi uvek bio besprekorno čist i uredan. No, Soli je bila potpuno svesna da joj ni tu nije mesto, bar ne za neko duže vreme i da je za nju najbolje rešenje da se od sinova uvek vraća u svoju „bazu”, unajmljeni lionski stan u ulici Arloen Kej pored obale reke Saone koja paralelno sa Ronom teče delom Liona, da bi se po izlasku iz grada spojile u jednu.

Soli je bila ubeđena da će ubuduće tako „leteti” povremeno kod sinova, malo kod jednog, malo kod drugog, sve dok joj za to Bog bude dao snage i zdravlja. Već se bila pomirila s činjenicom da će na taj način proživeti ostatak svog života.



I te godine Soli je doputovala u Jerusalim da bi s mlađim sinom provela praznike *Jom Kipur* i *Sukot*. Predhodne je s njim bila za *Pesah*, ali u Haifi gde je on nastojao da pronade klijentelu i razvije posao u svojoj maloj radionici instalisanjoj u jednoj sobi iznajmljenog stana ispod brda Karmel. Posao mu, na njegovu žalost, tada nije krenuo kako je želeo i očekivao.

Avi je za *Sukot* u svoj stan u Haifi pozvao u goste Rubena, svog dobrog poznanika iz Jerusalima, poreklom iz Sarajeva. Ruben se sporazumevao na francuskom, koristeći znanje tog jezika, stečenom još u srednjoj školi. Sada mu se pružila prilika ne samo da uživa u specijalitetima alžirsko-francuske sefardske kuhinje što ih je pripremila Soli (uz koje su bile poslužene table *macesa*, kao zamene za kvasni hleb), već i da s njom i s Avijem razgovara na francuskom.

Nekoliko meseci nakon ove majčine posete Haifi, Avi se preselio u Jerusalim da bi tamo u svom specifičnom zanatu okušao sreću koja mu u lučkom gradu podno Karmela baš nije

bila naklonjena. Radi toga je odredište Solijevih narednih putovanja u Izrael bio najsvetiji grad na svetu.

Čim je saznao da je Soli ponovo stigla kod sina u Jerusalem, Ruben ih je oboje pozvao na ručak drugog dana *Sukota*. Želeo je ne samo da uzvрати njihovo prošlogodišnje gostoprimstvo u Haifi, već i da Soli upozna s njegovim ocem Isakom-Isom koji se godinu dana ranije uselio u Izrael.



Od dolaska u novu domovinu Iso je živeo u Rubenovom iznajmljenom stanu. Bio je udovac jer ga je supruga Tea zauvek napustila pre godinu i po dana, kada je podlegla neizlečivoj bolesti. Približavao se šezdesetim godinama života što mu nije pružalo nikakvu šansu za zaposlenje u Izraelu. Pored toga, nije bio u mogućnosti ni da ostvari penziju na osnovu dugogodišnjeg rada u Bosni. Ta novostvorena država je u posleratnom periodu postala potpuno ovisna o stranoj pomoći i donacijama.

Kao i brojni sarajevski Jevreji, u strahu da se ne ponovi strašna situacija u kojoj se njegov narod našao tokom Drugog svetskog rata, Iso je pobjegao iz svog rodnog grada kada je shvatio da među-etničke svađe prerastaju u pravi građanski rat. Po njegovom izbijanju uspeo je da stigne do Beograda u kojem je boravio neko vreme. Potom je odlučio da ostatak svog života

provede u Izraelu i da se više ne vraća u Bosnu. Regionalni ured *Jevrejske agencije* mu je pomogao da brzo ostvari ovu svoju odluku.

Sve u svemu, Iso je bio zadovoljan što se ponovo našao sa svojim starijim sinom. Tuga za izgubljenom suprugom, s kojom je delio život gotovo tri decenije, još ga je duboko potresala, ali je ipak verovao da će se oporaviti u novoj ili, kako je odskora počeo da govori, “njegovoj” sredini. Nije želeo da nastavi usamljenički život na onom tužnom delu Balkana, rastočenom fizički, duhovno i moralno među-etničkim ratovima koji su počeli prvo u Sloveniji, a onda se proširili na Hrvatsku i Bosnu i Hercegovinu. Nije bio ubeđen da će neukrotljivi Balkan ikada trajno moći da se smiri.

A onda se u jednom trenutku setio nekih istorijskih perioda kada su Jevreji bili prvi na udaru sila mračnjaštva i postajali njihove žrtve. To je Isu još više učvrstilo u uverenju da mu je pravo mesto tamo, u državi svojih jevrejskih sunarodnika i da je sasvim normalno i opravdano da s njima deli dobro i zlo. Bilo mu je žao što mnogo ranije, već u svojoj mladosti nije imao dovoljno motiva i hrabrosti da se odluči na korak kojeg je, evo, napravio tek sada, u relativno poznim životnim godinama.



Prvi susret Soli i Ise dogodio se na ručku kod Rubena, u praznički okićenoj kolibici –

suka koju je on montirao na travnjaku ispred zgrade. Ručak je protekao u relativno prijatnoj, mada pomalo uzdržanoj atmosferi. Iso se dosta dobro snalazio na francuskom jeziku tako da nije imao poteškoća da se sporazumeva s njom i s Avijem. Posle ručka svi su izašli da prošetaju po okolini na još uvek prijatnom oktobarskom suncu. Nakon duge sušne sezone, za praznik *Sukot* se u Izraelu očekuju prve kiše. Ali, ako ne padnu baš tih dana, veruje se da će se to uskoro potom dogoditi. Kiši se svake godine u to doba nadaju stanovnici ove bliskoistočne zemlje kojoj hronično nedostaju obilne i dugotrajne jesenje i zimske padavine. Za vreme *Sukota* vernici mole posebne molitve da Bog što pre podari Izraelu kišu!

U međusobnom razgovoru Soli i Iso su ustanovili da su u životu prošli neverovatno slične sudbinske trenutke. Na primer, Isina Tea je болоvala od iste bolesti kao i Albert a on je umro samo mesec dana pre nje! Ili, da su oboje imali dva sina gotovo istog uzrasta. Njegov mlađi sin Dani bio je muzičar kao i Avi. No, ovaj njihov prvi razgovor je najvećim delom sadržavao opise tokova bolesti preminulih supružnika i do kraja Soline posete to im je ostala gotovo jedina tema razgovora. Ovo je pobožnim mladićima Aviju i Rubenu prilično pomutilo raspoloženje koje su nastojali da pod svaku cenu održe u svečarskom i vedrijem duhu.

Posle ovog ručka Soli i Iso se više nisu susretali jer je ona uskoro morala da otputuje za Francusku. Za vreme tog prazničkog obeda ipak

su razmenili adrese, kako bi mogli jedan drugome da čestitaju poneki značajniji jevrejski praznik. Uoči njenog polaska Iso joj je telefonom još jednom poželeo srećan put – *bon voyage*.



Prolazile su nedelje a zatim i meseci. Soli i Iso su se ponovo okrenuli svojim životima, svako svojoj svakodnevnicu. Na njenu kratku čestitku, koju je primio za prolećni praznik *Purim*, uzvratio je isto tako kratkom, kurtoaznom prazničnom željom. Izgledalo je da će se njihova veza nastaviti samo putem povremene razmene takvih čestitki.

Iso je imao dobar razlog da taj njihov susret potisne u zaborav. Naime, jedan radostan događaj koji mu se uskoro desio potpuno ga je zaokupio. Sin Ruben je verio lepu devojkicu Saru, takođe poreklom s balkanskih prostora. Njihova svadba je bila zakazana za početak novembra te godine. Ponosni i srećni otac Iso je oko pripreme, a kasnije i tokom svadbe imao pune ruke posla!

Nakon verskog ceremonijala, venčanja pod tradicionalnim baldahinom – *hupom*, nevesta i mladoženja, zajedno s njihovim porodicama i mnogobrojnim gostima veselili su se do dugo u noć uz prigodnu muziku, obilno se služeći brojnim jelima i pićima u luksuznom jerusalimskom restoranu. Među gostima nalazio se i graditelj violina Avi. Njegova mama

Soli je dan pre svadbe mladom bračnom paru uputila čestitke iz Francuske putem kratkog telefonskog razgovora s Isom.

Odmah nakon venčanja mladenci su se preselili u stan koji je Ruben unajmio u kvartu Kirjat Moše, pretežno naseljenom jevrejskim ortodoksnim vernicima. Ruben i Sara su upravo i želeli da žive u takvom okruženju bliskom njihovim verskim ubeđenjima i ponašanju. Uskoro je i Iso promenio svoje boravište i uselio u drugi stan na kraju Katamona, lepog jerusalimskog kvarta. Imao je dosta posla i troškova da prilično zapušten stan dovede u red. U tome je uspeo i pored ograničene sume koju je mesečno primao od države kao socijalnu pomoć.

Njegov mlađi sin Dani, koji je bio pri kraju muzičkih studija u Filadelfiji, najavio je nameru da se useli u Izrael čim diplomira. Ovu svoju želju i nameru posebno je učvrstio kada je stigao u Jerusalim da bi prisustvovao Rubenovovoj svadbi. Samo se po sebi razume da bi po dolasku u Izrael neko vreme stanovao kod oca, dok se ne bi osamostalio i snašao u novoj sredini.

U aprilu naredne godine mladi bračni par je za *Pesah* pozvao Isu u stan koji su unajmili u Kirjat Moše-u, što je on rado prihvatio. Tradicionalno čitanje *Hagade*, mitske priče o izbavljenju Jevreja iz egipatskog ropstva, kao i ceremonijal koji prati *seder* večeru trajali su do iza pola noći. Radi toga je Iso odlučio da tu noć ostane kod njih. Tokom večere Ruben je najavio da su sutradan u podne svi pozvani na ručak kod Avija koji stanuje u istom kvartu. Za-

tim je dodao, čudno se osmehujući, da je i Soli ponovo došla u posetu sinu.

Ovu novost Iso je kratko i nezainteresovano prokomentarisao:

“Ma nemoj mi reći, opet je došla? E, pa baš lepo od nje!”

Prihvatio je poziv bez nekih posebnih emocija, ali je znao da je vrsna domaćica kao što je bila Soli, za ručak sigurno pripremila nešto veoma ukusno!

U svakom slučaju bio je uveren da će mu mala promena ambijenta biti od koristi.



Kod Avija je prijatna atmosfera bila brzo uspostavljena ne samo zbog odličnih specijaliteta koje je Soli pripremila, već i zbog Isinog vedrog raspoloženja. Njegova prošlogodišnja „diplomatska”, pomalo hladna učtivost koju je prema toj ženi tada ispoljavao, sada se potpuno izmenila. Iznenada je počeo da pokazuje neki neobični interes i želju da što duže razgovara sa Soli. Bilo je očito da ga je ona svojim srdačnim osmehom i neposrednošću u razgovoru najzad počela da privlači. I deca su izgledala zadovoljno dok su slušala njihov prijatni razgovor i posmatrali ih tako vedre i raspoložene.

Posle ručka, Ruben i Sara su odlučili da se vrate u svoj stan da bi se malo odmorili, a i Avi i njegov „cimer” Jakov su želeli da prilegnu.

Naprotiv. Soli i Iso su se dogovorili da zajedno izađu u šetnju. Pravidali su se deci da to čine zbog bolje probave a, ustvari, oboje su osećali neku nedefinisanu unutrašnju potrebu da se što pre nađu negde vani i da neko vreme ostanu potpuno sami.

Podnevna šetnja trajala je skoro dva sata i za to vreme nisu ni za trenutak prekidali razgovor. Oboje su želeli da mnogo toga ispričaju i jedna tema je smenjivala drugu. Najviše su razgovarali o svojim porodicama, interesantnim doživljajima s decom, naročito kada su bila mala. I ovaj put su se čudili neverovatnoj sličnosti njihovih životnih puteva i sudbina. Samo sporadično su oboje doticali bolnu temu o bolesti i smrti njihovih supružnika, ali to je bilo daleko od onoga koliko su time bili preokupirani prilikom njihovog prvog susreta, kada je gotovo ceo njihov razgovor bio posvećen tim tužnim događajima.

Tokom razgovora, Soli i Iso su se gledali pravo u oči, a široki osmesi su lebdeli na njihovim usnama. Kada bi ona ili on ispričali nešto zaista smešno, oboje bi prasnuli u gromoglasni, veseli smeh. Tek kada je Iso u jednom trenutku bacio pogled na ručni sat, shvatili su kako im je tih dva sata prijatne šetnje proletelo kao tren. Bilo je već krajnje vreme da se vrate svojoj deci. Dogovorili su da se sutradan pre podne nađu negde u gradu i da nastave prijatan razgovor i druženje.

Dok se približavao stanu svog sina Iso nije ni zapazio kako je veselo, kao neko dete,

poskakivao prolazeći kroz dve manje ulice koje su delile zgrade u kojima su stanovali Avi i Ruben. Pre nego što je ušao u stan imao je sasvim dovoljno vremena da poluglasno izgovori:

“Hej, pa ova Soli je sasvim pristojna i fina ženska! Kako to nisam primetio kad sam je prošle godine prvi put susreo?”

Uz to, radovalo ga je što je uspeo da se prilično sporazumeva na francuskom jeziku.

Mladi bračni par je već bio budan kada je Iso ušao u stan. Ruben se pripremao da sa Sarom ide u obližnju sinagogu na popodnevnu molitvu – *minha*. Odmah je primetio da se sin i snaha nekako čudno i tajanstveno osmehuju. Tek što je seo na kauč u nameri da skine cipele i malo prilegne, Ruben mu je izlazeći, kao tobož uzgred, dobacio:

“Ne samo meni, već i Sari se čini da je Soli idealna žena u svakom pogledu i da bi zbog toga, tata, trebalo da se malo više zainteresuješ za nju, da se bolje upoznate!”

Iso mu nije ništa odgovorio već je, pre nego što je legao, nezanimljivo samo odmahnuo rukom, kao da ga se sinovljeve reči nisu ni najmanje dojmile.

Čim je bračni par izašao iz stana, Iso je pokušao da se uspava u prijatnoj tišini subotnjeg popodneva. Međutim, to mu nikako nije uspevalo. Umesto sna počele su da mu naviru misli o Soli i o onome što mu je sin rekao. Stvarno, zašto da ne nastavi održavati kontakte s tom ženom kad se već u njenom društvu oseća tako lepo? A ko zna, možda bi kasnije mogao

da ustanovi da mu ona toliko odgovara da bi s njom vredelo uspostaviti i neku dublju vezu!

Ove misli su mu potpuno razbile pospanost i želju za odmorom. Samo petnaestak minuta kasnije ustao je, seo za sto i pripremio sebi jaku kafu. Duboko zamišljen, ispijao ju je polako iz velike šolje.

Tek što su se Ruben i Sara vratili iz sinagoge, Iso se izvinio iznenađenom bračnom paru što s njima neće ostati do isteka *Šabata*. Nekoliko minuta kasnije već je bio vani i kretao ka svom stanu, što je zahtevalo gotovo sat vremena hoda. Verovao je da će mu ta šetnja dobro doći kako bi usput razmislio o svemu što mu se tog dana desilo. Izgubljen u mislima, silno se iznenadio kada je primetio da je ušao u njegovu ulicu na Katamonu i već bio na domaku stana.



Soli i Iso su se ponovo susreli, ovaj put na autobuskoj stanici preko puta pijace *Mahane Jehuda* koju Izraelci jednostavno zovu *šuk*. Njihova duga šetnja niz ulicu *Jafo* završila se ispred kafane *Nava*. Ušli su u taj restoran poznat po dobrim kolačima, a on je bio i sastajalište iseljenika iz bivše Jugoslavije. Za divno čudo, to prepodne u njemu nije bilo drugih gostiju poreklom iz tog dela Balkana, što je Isi izuzetno odgovaralo. Uzeli su nekoliko kifli – kroasana i uz kafu i u vedrom raspoloženju nastavili razgovor koji su započeli predhodnog

dana. Povremeno bi, verovatno sasvim spontano, navodili slučajeve nekih poznanika koji su takođe izgubili supružnike i prepričavali njihove žalopojke o lošim stranama samačkog života u poodmaklom životnom dobu. Oboje su pokazali razumevanje i saosećali s njima.

Pričali su i o iskustvima nekih udovica i udovaca ili pak razvedenih ljudi koji su ponovo zasnovali brak i u njemu našli zadovoljstvo i smirenje. Oboje su navodili i suprotne slučajeve u kojima nove bračne zajednice nisu uspele i brzo se raspale, često zbog nespremnosti pojedinih partnera da se prilagode navikama, možda i određenim „slabostima” druge strane. Ovu temu su Soli i Iso nastavili da razglabaju i kada su izašli iz kafane, sve dok nisu stigli do najbliže autobuske stanice. Nakon što su razmenili pozdrave stiskom ruku, rastavili su se da bi se ukrkali svako u svoj autobus!

Sledećeg dana su Soli i Iso u Krunskoj sali *Teatrona* (pozorišta) slušali popodnevni koncert jednog gudačkog kvarteta iz Jerusalema, nakon čega su došetali do Isinog stana. Tamo su jeli sendviče, popili po šolju čaja, neko vreme gledali televiziju, a zatim je on otpratio do njenog stana.

I sutradan je usledio novi sastanak i zajednička prijatna poslepodnevna šetnja po Starom gradu, koja je morala da se ranije završi. Na njihovu žalost morali su da je skrate jer Soli još nije bila spakovala stvari za povratak u Francusku. Njen avion trebalo je da poleti već sledećeg jutra.

Tog četvrtka ujutro Iso je ispratio Soli na aerodrom *Ben-Gurion*, a pre nego što je ona ušla u bescarinsku zonu, konačno su učinili ono što su oboje žarko želeli. Razmenili su dugi i topli poljubac koji je i njoj i njemu mnogo značio i nagoveštavao. Obećali su jedan drugome da će se redovno dopisivati. Iso joj je poželeo srećan put a oboje su još dodali i “do viđenja, do sledećeg susreta”!



Neka nova osećanja su prodirala u duše i srca ova dva pomalo usamljena bića koja su ulazila u jesen njihovih života. To stanje se odlikovalo i u pismima koja su Soli i Iso počeli da razmenjuju. Istini za volju, prva su bila najvećim delom posvećena opštim, filozofskim razmišljanjima o njihovoj usamljenosti i besciljnosti nastavljanja takvog samotnog života.

“Lepo je biti blizu naše dece, no ona imaju pravo na svoj lični život, uz sve obaveze prema njihovim vlastitim porodicama”, oboje su u svojim pismima o tome meditirali na isti način.

Povodom ove teme, oboje su bili saglasni da roditelji i deca, zbog generacijske razlike ne mogu uvek najbolje da se razumeju i prihvataju mišljenja druge strane, što su i ona i on ipak primali kao sasvim prirodnu pojavu.

Potom su se ova opšta “mudrovanja” sve više usmeravala ka njihovim konkretnim viđenjima načina na koji bi usamljenost mogla da se

prevaziđe, kao na primer: putovanjima po svestu, učenjem nekih veština, recimo slikanja, vezenja, umetničkih zanata ili uključenjem u humanitarne aktivnosti. A onda je u svojim pismima Iso počeo da se određenije izjašnjava oko mogućnosti da se ponovo oženi. To bi, kaže, bilo ostvarljivo, ali pod uslovom da budući partner bude „takav i takav”. Da je neko treći mogao da pročita ta njegova pisma a dobro poznavao Soli, lako bi je prepoznao u opisanoj osobi!

U svakom slučaju, za verovati je da je u opisu njegovog mogućeg izbora i Soli bila u stanju da prepozna sebe, pa mu je valjda iz tog razloga u svojim pismima davala za pravo, dodajući da bi i ona možda bila spremna na takav korak ako bi taj „neko” prema njoj bio pažljiv, tolerantan, srdačan i veran. Sada je i Iso mogao da zamisli, čak i da poveruje da upravo on poseduje takve osobine!

Uz sve to, Soli je sa zadovoljstvom mogla ponovo utvrditi da je Iso bio u stanju da sasvim lepo i gotovo bez greške piše na francuskom jeziku.



Kao što je već postalo uobičajeno i za očekivanje, Soli je nagovestila svoj novi dolazak u Izrael uoči jevrejske Nove godine – *Roš-Hašana*. Ovu vest je Iso primio s velikim uzbudjenjem i vidljivim zadovoljstvom, što nije moglo da promakne pronicljivim osobama kao što su

bili Sara i njegov sin Ruben. I Avi ga je nazvao telefonom da mu saopšti tu novost. Bilo je očito da je i on zapazio obostranu međusobnu zainteresovanost a pogotovo kod svoje majke, jer se ona u svakom telefonskom razgovoru s njim raspitivala o Isi.

U vreme kada je pretpostavljao da su Avi i njegova majka već stigli kući s aerodroma *Ben Gurion*, Iso im je telefonirao. Imao je sreću, jer su tek pre neki minut njih dvoje bili ušli u stan. Poželeo joj je dobrodošlicu – *bienvenue*, ali s obzirom da je već bilo prilično kasno, obećao je da će doći do nje u sledeće jutro oko deset časova.

Kada je sutradan zazvonio na Avijeva vrata s velikim buketom ruža u rukama, otvorila ih je nasmejana Soli. U istom trenutku su se jedan drugome bacili u naručje, a kada je Iso shvatio da ni Avi ni njegov „cimer” nisu bili kod kuće, zagrljaj je začinio toplim i dugim poljupcem koji mu je strastveno uzvratila zadovoljstvom preplavljena Soli.

Uz kafu koju su lagano ispijali, utonuli su u dug i živahan razgovor o tome šta im se sve u međuvremenu događalo. Ovaj put su se čvrsto držali za ruke, kao da su bili zaljubljeni gimnazijalci! Već su sasvim otvoreno izjavljivali koliko su nedostajali jedan drugome svih proteklih meseci razdvojenosti.

Proveli su zajedno gotovo polovinu tog dana, što im je pružilo dovoljno vremena da iskažu još mnoge druge misli koje su se negde skrivale u njihovim glavama i srcima, nagoveštavajući razvoj njihovih odnosa o kojem do ne-

davno čak nisu smeli ni da sanjaju. Sve ono što su u svojim pismima pisali o usamljenosti osoba koje su ostale bez supružnika i o mogućnosti da izađu iz tog stanja, sada se pretakalo u reči i rečenice koje su se odnosile samo na njih dvoje.

Nekoliko dana kasnije, Soli i Iso su dogovorili da se vere još za vreme njenog boravka u Jerusalmu. Pre tog čina želeli su da saznaju šta o tome misle njihova deca. Vrlo brzo su oboje shvatili da bi njihova deca, Samuel, Avi, Ruben i Dani bili veoma zadovoljni ako bi ta veza postala trajna. To je bio dobar signal, „zeleno svetlo“ za Soli i Iso da se tim putem usmere i to brzim koracima! Nekoliko dana kasnije svojim najbližim porodicama su i zvanično saopštili datum koji su odredili za zaruke.

Svečanom večerom u jednom simpatičnom jerusalimskom restoranu kojeg je Iso odabrao, Soli i on su, u prisustvu Avija, Rubena i Sare proslavili taj za njih srećni trenutak u kojem su ozvaničili svoju odluku da ostatak života provedu zajedno.



Samo nedelju dana nakon zaruka Soli je morala ponovo da putuje u Francusku. Ovaj put je tamo imala zaista mnogo toga da obavi. Pre svega, želela je da novost saopšti svojoj majci Danijeli, bratu Mihaelu i njegovoj porodici, a i najbližim prijateljima. Na putu za Lion svratiće u Pariz da bi starijem sinu Samuelu i

njegovoj Mirijam ispričala detalje o tom događaju, mada su oni već ranije bili upoznati s njenom odlukom.

Odmah po dolasku u Lion uspostavila je kontakt s *Jevrejskom agencijom* da bi se informisala o proceduri za useljenje u Izrael. Ako sve bude išlo tokom koji su ona i Iso odlučili da slede i da kraj tog puta krunišu zajedničkim životom, bila je spremna da ostavi sve i svakoga u Francuskoj i da se trajno pridruži Isi u za nju novoj postojbini.

U februaru, Iso je nekoliko dana proveo u Francuskoj da bi se upoznao sa Solijevom porodicom i najbližim prijateljima i da s njom dogovori još neke detalje, pre svega da utvrde datum kada će obaviti ceremonijal verskog venčanja i da odluče o izboru rabina koji će ga obaviti. Dvodnevni zajednički boravak kod Samuela u Parizu, pred Isin povratak u Izrael, bio je za njih veoma prijatan. Čak su i Solijevi unuci Karol i Žak odmah zavoleli njihovog budućeg „papi“, kako deca u Francuskoj nazivaju dede.

Dva meseca kasnije Soli je ponovo stigla u Jerusalim. Svega tri dana kasnije rabin Šalom je pod *hupom* obavio ceremonijal verskog venčanja Soli i Isaka-Ise, u prisustvu Avija, Rubena i njegove Sare a zatim i Danija, koji je zbog toga doputovao u Izrael, kao i još nekoliko bliskih rođaka i prijatelja. Posle obreda, mladenci, rabin i ostali njihovi gosti otišli su u lep košer restoran u ulici Nešarim, u kojem je za njih bio priređen svečani ručak.



Soli je u stanu svog novog supruga ostala samo mesec dana jer je morala da se vrati u Francusku da završi preostale poslove i obaveze u Lionu. Pre svega, morala je s *Jevrejskom agencijom* da utvrdi datum putovanja i da obavi ostale formalnosti oko useljenja u Izrael, ali i da reguliše administrativne obaveze prema francuskim vlastima. No, čekala je još jedna važna, možda i najteža obaveza. Morala je u kratkom roku da pripremi i spakuje sve što je nameravala da ponese sa sobom. Samo četiri godine nakon preseljenja iz Sent-Etijena u Lion, sada joj je ponovo predstojala briga ne samo oko pakovanja, već i oko ponovnog likvidiranja većeg dela njene imovine koju je imala u svom lionskom stanu.

Dok se pripremala za novo putovanje u „obećanu zemlju”, ovog puta s avionskom kartom u jednom smeru, Soli je toliko bila ophrvana mislima o tome da li je napravila pravi potez u ovoj fazi svog života, da su joj noći postale gotovo besane.

“Bože dragi, šta me sve očekuje u novoj sredini? Kakav je, ustvari, Iso kao čovek, da li će prema meni ostati pažljiv i srdačan kao što je odavao utisak sve vreme od kada sam ga upoznala? Možda se upuštam u jednu avanturu koja ko zna kako može da se po mene završi!?”

Pokušavala je da zamisli situaciju u kojoj bi ova idila s Isom potrajala samo kratko vre-

me, a onda se ubrzo i završila. Plašila se da joj tada ne bi preostalo ništa drugo već da se vrati u Francusku i pokuša da nadoknadi izgubljeno, barem u materijalnom pogledu. Smatrala je da bi to u njenim godinama bilo gotovo neostvarljivo. O psihičkim posledicama nekog takvog „crnog” scenarija nije se usuđivala ni da razmišlja. Te i slične misli proganjale su je danju i noću.

Soli će uskoro saznati da su slične misli i dileme razdirale i Isu, ali će i on kao i ona na kraju doći do optimističkog zaključka da će sve ispasti kako valja.

Uprkos svih tih tmurnih misli, neko unutrašnje osećanje je Soli ipak govorilo da se nije prevarila što je odlučila da se veže za Isu. Na kraju je stekla i neko čudno ubeđenje da joj takva poruka stiže od samog Boga i da stoga ne treba da bude zabrinuta za svoju budućnost. Ranije je to nazivala sudbinom, ali od sada postaje sve više ubeđena da je „onaj gore” tako želeo i odlučio. U svakom slučaju, osećala je da je zaista zavolela tog čoveka, a nadala se i on nju pa stoga zašto ne verovati da će tako ostati i u godinama njihovog budućeg zajedničkog života, a koje im Bog bude još podario. Naravno, ne može niti želi da zaboravi duge i srećne godine provedene u braku s njenim Albertom, ali zbog tih uspomena ne treba sebi zagorčavati ostatak života. Uostalom, po jevrejskim zakonima i tradiciji, ona treba da ponovo zasnuje bračnu zajednicu, a ne da ostane tugujuća udovica doveka!



Ohrabrena optimističkim zaključcima svojih razmišljanja i psihički rasterećena, Soli je razdragano krenula u „obećanu zemlju” na trajni susret s Isom, čovekom koji je odskora osvojio njeno srce.

Na aerodromu *Ben-Gurion*, ovaj put beskrajno srećna i zadovoljna, Soli se bacila u topli i čvrsti Isin zagrljaj. Oboje su već bili potpuno ubeđeni da od sada kreću u novi, zajednički život koji im nudi mnoge mesece, verovatno i godine koje će osvetliti i ispuniti toplinom njihova srca i do tada pomalo izgubljene duše. To će biti kraj njihovim usamljeničkim tumananjima stazama jeseni njihovih života tih predhodnih nekoliko godina.

Čudo i to ono dobro i lepo dogodilo se i ovim ljudskim stvorenjima i to u Obećanoj zemlji. Radi toga će Soli i Isak smatrati da imaju dobar razlog da ubuduće veruju, više nego što su to ranije činili, da zaista postoji neko ili nešto što je nedodirljivo, van njihove moći shvatanja, a što određuje i upravlja njihovim sudbinama, bez obzira kako neko nazivao tu vanzemaljsku silu!



To these two human beings a real miracle, in their case the good and the nice one, happened in the Promised Land. Therefore Soli and Isaac had henceforth good reason, more than they had had in the past, to believe that something or someone beyond the man's power, his reach and comprehension decides and is master of human destinies, no matter how one would call that extra-terrestrial force.



she felt she had really fallen in love with that man and hoped Isi loved her in the same way. So why not to believe it will remain like this in the years of their future common life, as long as God will accord it to them? Of course, she could never forget the long and happy years while being married with her Albert, but why should she make the rest of her life miserable? After all, according to the Jewish laws and tradition, she is expected to re-establish a new matrimonial unity and not remain a grieving widow – forever!



Encouraged by the optimistic conclusions of her contemplations and psychologically relieved, Soli cheerfully left for the Promised Land, towards the everlasting meeting with Isi, the man who conquered her heart.

At the *Ben Gurion* Airport, this time enormously happy and delighted, Soli threw herself into the warm and firm Isi's embrace. They had been both absolutely persuaded that from that moment on they started a new life which would grant them many happy months, probably years to come and enlighten and fill with warmth their until recently somehow lost hearts and souls. It would be the end of their solitary roaming those previous couple of years along the paths of the autumn of their lives!

“My God, what is expecting me in that new milieu? In fact, what kind of a man is Isi? Will he remain so kind and cordial towards me as he seemed to be all the time since I have met him? Maybe I have been launching myself into an adventure that could lead to who knows what kind of outcome?”

She tried to imagine the situation in which that idyll with Isi would last just a short time and then soon definitely come to its end. She was afraid that then she would have no other choice but to return to France and try to make up again, at least from the economic point of view. She thought it would be almost impossible to achieve it in her age. She even dared not think about the psychological consequences of such a black scenario. Those and similar thoughts haunted her day and night.

Very soon Soli will learn similar thoughts and dilemmas had also been haunting Isi and that at the end he will come to the same optimistic conclusion that everything will be all right!

In spite of such somber considerations, a certain feeling from her interior started to tell Soli that she was not wrong when she decided to get united with Isaac-Isi. Finally she got a strange persuasion that such a message came from Almighty himself and therefore she should not be worried for her future. Earlier she would call it destiny, but from now on she became more and more persuaded that *He from above* wanted and decided it! Anyway,

ny, the fresh married couple, accompanied by the rabbi and all their guests went to a nice kosher restaurant at the Nesharim Street, to enjoy in a gala wedding lunch.



Soli stayed in the apartment of her new husband only for a month. She had to come back to France in order to settle some personal business and other commitments and obligations she left behind in Lyon. First, she had to fix with the *Jewish Agency* the departure date and to accomplish other formalities concerning her immigration to Israel, but also some administrative procedures towards the French authorities. There was another important, perhaps the most complicated task she had to carry out: in a very short time to prepare and pack all what she intended to take with her. Four years had passed since she moved from Saint-Etienne to Lyon and now, once again, she had to worry for not only the packing, but also how to get rid of the most of her property she had possessed in her Lyon flat.

While she was making preparations for the new journey to the Promised Land this time only with the one-way air ticket, Soli was obsessed by contemplations about whether, in that phase of her life her next move was a right one, to such a degree that her nights became almost sleepless.

friends. On her way to Lyon she would make a stopover in Paris in order to see her elder son Samuel and his wife Miriam and tell them some more details on that event, although they had already known her decision.

As soon as she arrived in Lyon she got in touch with the *Jewish Agency* asking information on proceedings for immigration to Israel. If all takes the course that she and Isi decided to follow and the end of that road would be crowned by their unification, she was ready to leave behind everything and anyone in France and join Isi forever in her new homeland!

In February Isi traveled to France just for a couple of days in order to get acquainted with Soli's family and some of her best friends. That was also an occasion for him to discuss some arrangements with her, among others to fix the date of the religious wedding and to agree about the rabbi who would marry them. Their two-day visit to Samuel in Paris, before Isi's departure for Israel, was very pleasant for both. Even more, the Soli's grandchildren Carol and Jacques immediately "fell in love" with their future *pappy*, as kids in France use to call grandpas!

Two months later Soli came again to Jerusalem. Only three days after her arrival the rabbi Shalom carried out their religious wedding under *chuppah*, in the presence of Avi, Reuben, Sarah and also Danny who arrived in Israel just for that occasion, as well as of some relatives and closest friends. After the ceremo-

they had not even dared to dream of. All what they had been writing in their letters on loneliness of persons being left by their spouses and on possibilities to get out of such a situation, now poured out through words and sentences that directly concerned themselves.

A few days later Soli and Isi agreed to get engaged while she was still in Jerusalem. Yet, they wanted to know first what their children's point of view was about it. Very soon they found out that Samuel, Avi, Reuben and Danny would be very happy if their connection becomes a permanent one. This was a good signal, "the green light" for Soli and Isi to embark on that road in a rapid pace! A couple of days later they officially announced to their closest families the date of their engagement.

At the solemn dinner in a pleasant Jerusalem restaurant chosen by Isi, he and Soli, accompanied by Avi, Reuben and Sarah celebrated that happy moment in which they officialized their decision to spend the rest of their lives united.



Only a week after their engagement Soli had to travel again to France. This time she really had many things to accomplish there. Before all, she wanted to communicate that news to her mother Danielle, her brother Michael and his family, as well as to some of her closest

his mother's. In each telephone conversation with him Soli was asking news about Isi.

That day had finally arrived! By the time Isi and his mother were supposed to arrive home from the airport *Ben Gurion*, Avi phoned there. He was lucky because just minutes earlier they had entered the flat. He wished her welcome – *bienvenue*, but as it was rather late he promised to come and see her next morning at ten o'clock.

When the following morning he rang at Avi's doorbell with a big bouquet of roses in his hands, it was Soli who opened the door. Instantly they embraced each other passionately and when Isi noticed that neither Avi nor his partner was at home, the embrace was "reinforced" by a long and warm kiss to which Soli, overwhelmed by pleasure, responded in a passionate way.

While they were slowly drinking coffee that she had just prepared, they again dived into a long and vivid conversation on what had happened to them in the meantime. This time they were firmly holding each other's hands as if they were two young collegians fallen in love. Quite openly they stated how much they missed each other all those past months of separation.

They spent together almost half a day and so they had enough time to reveal to each other a lot of thoughts that had been hidden somewhere in the depth of their minds and hearts and which were predicting further development of their relationship that, till recently,

activities. And then, in his further letters, Isi started to be more explicit about a possibility to marry again, but under a condition that the possible future partner be “so and so”! If somebody “third” could have read his letters and had been Soli’s friend, he would have easily recognized her in the described person. In any case, one could guess that in the description of his possible choice Soli was also able to recognize herself and probably for that reason in her letters she agreed with him, adding that she too would be ready for such a move if “someone” would be kind, tolerant, cordial and faithful to her. Now Isi could already imagine, even believe that he possessed exactly those characteristics!

Moreover, Soli could also state with pleasure that Isi was able to write in French quite nicely and almost correctly!



As it had already become habitual and expected, Soli announced her next arrival in Israel on the eve of the Jewish New Year – *Rosh-Hashana*. Isi received the news with great excitement and visible pleasure, which the intelligent persons like Sarah and Reuben noticed immediately. That day Avi also called by telephone to tell him about the date of her arrival. It was obvious that Avi too had noticed the interest they showed for each other, especially

predicted a lot to both of them. They promised each other to exchange letters regularly. Then Isi wished Soli a farewell and they expressed to each other a “see you soon”!



Some new feelings were pouring into the souls and hearts of those two rather lonely human beings who were stepping into the autumn of their lives. The letters they were exchanging reflected such sentiments. It is true that their first letters were mostly dedicated to some general, philosophical considerations about their loneliness and aimlessness of such a lonely life.

“It is nice to be near our children”, they meditated in the same way in their letters, “but they have right to their own lives full of obligations towards their own families!”

Then, on the same subject, Soli and Isi agreed with the fact that parents and children, due to generation differences, are not always able to understand or accept opinions of the other side, which the two considered as being quite a natural phenomenon.

Later on, the “philosophic” thoughts were more and more directed towards their concrete ideas how to overcome loneliness, for example by traveling around the world, by learning some skills like painting, embroidery, art crafts or being involved in some humanitarian

They were also telling some stories about the experiences of some widowed or divorced people who got married again and by it found some satisfaction and tranquility. Both quoted some opposite cases, too, where new marital associations were unsuccessful and rapidly disintegrated, often due to a lack of readiness of one or the other partner to adapt to some habits or even to some “weaknesses” of the other side. Soli and Isi continued to mull over this subject even when they walked out of the café, till the moment they arrived at the nearest bus stop. After exchanging *bye-bye* and shaking their hands, they separated, getting into their respective buses.

The next day Soli and Isi went to the *Theatron* (theatre) hall to listen to the afternoon concert of a string quartet from Jerusalem and then they went on foot to the Isi’s flat. There they ate sandwiches, drank tea and watched the television for a while. Later in the evening he accompanied her home.

The following day they met again and made together a pleasant afternoon promenade in the Old City. To their sorrow it had to be shortened because Soli should yet prepare her luggages for the return journey to France. Her plane was sceduled to take off next morning.

On that Thursday morning Isi accompanied Soli to the *Ben Gurion* airport. Before she entered the duty-free zone they finally did what they both desired so much. They exchanged a long and a hot kiss that meant and

ing in the direction of his apartment, which required almost an hour walk. He believed the march would be a good opportunity to review all what had happened to him that day.

Lost in his thoughts he was very much surprised when he noticed that he had already walked into his street in Katamon and was very close to the flat.



Soli and Isi met again, this time at the bus stop, in front of the market *Mahane Yehuda*, simply called by Israelis – *souk*. Their long walk down the Jaffa Street ended in front of the *Navah* coffee restaurant. They went into that café well known by its good pastries and which was a meeting point for some immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. Surprisingly, that morning there were no guests originating from that part of the Balkans and this convened Isi very much. They took coffee and a few croissants and in a cheerful mood continued the conversation they started the previous day. From time to time, probably quite spontaneously, they would cite the cases of some of their friends who, too, had lost their spouses and made comments on their complaints about the bad sides of a solitary life in an advanced age. Both showed understanding for that sort of feelings.

his shoes and rest a little, the outgoing Reuben told him as if by the way:

“Not only to me but to Sarah as well seem that Soli is an ideal woman in all aspects and therefore, dad, you should show much more interest for her so that you could better know each other!”

Isi did not reply. He just waved his hand indifferently and then lay down on the sofa, as if his son’s words had not impressed him at all.

As soon as the couple went out he tried to get asleep in a pleasant silence of the *Sabbath* afternoon. However, he could not have his nap. Instead, he started to think about Soli and what his son had just told him. Indeed, why shouldn’t he keep on contacts with that woman, since he felt so well in her company? And, who knows, later he could perhaps come to a conclusion that she fits him so much, that it would be worthwhile considering a deeper connection with her!?

Those thoughts had completely broken his drowsiness and wish to relax. Fifteen minutes later Isi stood up, sat at the table and prepared a very strong coffee in a large cup. Deeply sunk in his thoughts he started to drink it slowly...

As soon as Sarah and Reuben came back from the synagogue, Isi, to the great surprise of the couple, apologized for not being disposed to stay with them till the end of *Sabbath*. Few minutes later he went out and started march-

ing when practically all their conversation was dedicated to those events.

While chatting, Soli and Isi were looking each other straight into their eyes, keeping broad smiles on their lips. When she or he was telling something funny, both would burst into a loud, cheerful laugh. Only when in one moment Isi had a look at his wristwatch, they realized how this two-hour's walk had passed quickly! It was high time coming back to their children's flats. However, they agreed to have another rendez-vous the following morning somewhere in the downtown, in order to continue their pleasant conversation and their companionship.

While approaching his son's apartment Isi did not notice how cheerfully, like a child, he was leaping while crossing the two small streets that separated dwellings of Avi and Reuben. Before he entered the flat he had enough time to exclaim in a semi-voice:

"Say, this Soli seems quite a decent and nice woman! Why hadn't I already noticed it last year when I first met her?"

Besides, he was very happy to have managed to communicate with her in pretty good French.

When Isi came in, the young couple had already been awakened and Reuben was almost ready to go with Sarah to the neighboring synagogue. He immediately noticed that both his son and his daughter-in-law were smiling in an awkward and mysterious way. As soon as he sat down on the sofa wanting to take off

towards that woman the previous year, now completely changed. Surprisingly, this time he showed an unusual interest and desire to talk to Soli as much as possible. It was obvious that she finally started to attract him thanks to her cordial smile and straightforwardness in conversation with him. The young couple and Avi also looked pleased while listening to their chat and seeing Soli and Isi in such a cheerful and good mood.

After lunch, Sarah and Reuben decided to go to their flat in order to take the afternoon rest. Avi and his cohabiting partner Jacob wanted to rest as well. However, Soli and Isi decided to go out for a walk. They tried to explain to the children they were doing it for the reason of having a "better digestion". In fact, they both felt some non-defined inner necessity to go out together as quickly as possible and stay alone for a while.

The mid-day promenade lasted almost two hours and during that time they did not stop conversation for one single moment. They wanted to tell many things and one subject succeeded another. They were mostly talking about their families, the interesting adventures with their children, especially when they had been small. Once again they wondered how incredibly similar were their life paths and destinies. They were only marginally touching the painful subject about illnesses and death of their spouses but it was far from how they had been preoccupied with at their first meet-

In April of the following year the young couple invited Isi for *Passover* in their hired flat in Kyriat Moshe, which he readily accepted. The traditional reading of the *Haggadah*, the mythological narrative on redemption of Jews from the Egyptian slavery and the ceremony that accompanies the *Seder* dinner lasted until after midnight. That was the reason why Isi decided to spend that night with them. During the dinner Reuben announced that the following day at noon they were all invited to have lunch with Avi in his flat situated in the same neighborhood. Then, with a bit awkward smile, he added that Soli had come again to visit her son.

Hearing this news, Isi made only a short but indifferent commentary:

“Don’t say! She has come again? Well, it’s nice of her!”

He accepted the invitation without any special emotion, but he knew the excellent cook that Soli was had obviously prepared for lunch something very tasty.

In any case he was convinced a small change of milieu would be beneficial to him.



At Avi’s home a pleasant atmosphere was established very quickly, not only because of the excellent specialties Soli had cooked, but also because of Isi’s cheerful mood. His “diplomatic”, in a way a cold politeness he had shown

into the night in a luxurious Jerusalem restaurant. There an appropriate classical music was being played while dishes and drinks were abundantly served to them. Avi was among the guests as well. Soli congratulated to the new weds in a short phone conversation she had from France with Isi on the eve of the wedding day.

Immediately after the wedding, the new couple moved into the flat Reuben had hired in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood, mostly populated by the Orthodox Jews. Sarah and Reuben indeed wanted to live in such a vicinity, close to their religious convictions and behavior. Soon Isi also changed his dwelling place and moved into another flat at the end of Katamon, a beautiful Jerusalem neighborhood. He had to spend a considerable sum of money to put in order a neglected apartment. He managed it in spite of the inadequate sum of money he had been receiving monthly from the state as a kind of the social support.

Isi's younger son Danny, who had been finishing his musical studies in Philadelphia, also wanted to immigrate to Israel as soon as he graduates. His intention will particularly be emphasized during his visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of Reuben's wedding. It is understood by itself that, after his arrival in Israel, he would stay with his father for some time until he should manage to become independent, namely to find his own way in the new milieu.

After the lunch Soli and Isi did not meet any more, as she soon had to leave for France. Nevertheless, at that lunch they noted down their home addresses in order to exchange postcard wishes on the occasion of some important Jewish holidays. On the eve of her departure Isi phoned Soli to wish her once again a pleasant journey – *bon voyage*.



Weeks and then months were passing by and Soli and Isi turned back to their everyday lives. To her short message of congratulation for the spring holiday *Purim* he replied with the similar short and courteous wish. It seemed their relationship would continue only through the occasional exchange of such congratulations.

In fact, Isi had a good reason to forget their meetings, because soon a happy event took place, which entirely absorbed him. His son Reuben got engaged to a beautiful girl Sarah, who also originated from the Balkan region. They announced their marriage for the beginning of November. Isi, the proud and happy father, was very busy with preparations and then carrying out of the wedding.

After the religious ceremony under the canopy – *chuppah*, the bride and bridegroom, together with their families and numerous guests were entertaining and celebrating late

passed in a relatively pleasant, but a little sustained atmosphere. Isi got on pretty well in French, so he had no difficulty to communicate with her and with Avi. After the meal was over they all went out for a walk not far from the house, in a still pleasant October sunshine. In Israel, after a long dry season, the first rainfalls are expected for *Succoth*. However, if it does not happen exactly in those days, there is belief that rain will certainly fall soon after the holiday. Inhabitants of that Near-Eastern country, chronically deficient in long and abundant rainfalls during the autumn and winter season, do have such a hope at that time of each year. In the period of *Succoth* the religious people use to say special prayers so that God gratify Israel with rains as soon as possible.

During their conversation Soli and Isi stated that they had passed the incredibly similar fateful moments in their lives. For example, Isi's Teya suffered from the same illness as Albert but he died only a month before her! On the other hand, his younger son Danny was a musician like Avi. The main subject of their first conversation was how diseases of their two defunct spouses had been developing and it remained almost the sole subject of their dialog till the end of Soli's visit! This in some way spoiled the mood of the religious young men Reuben and Avi, who were trying hard to preserve at least a little more solemn, if not a cheerful atmosphere.

All in all, Isi was happy to be again with his elder son. He was still deeply shaken and overwhelmed by the grief due to the loss of his wife, but nevertheless he believed he would recover in the new or “his” milieu, as he recently started to call it. He did not like the idea of going on to live his lonely life in that gloomy part of the Balkans, torn physically, spiritually and morally due to the inter-ethnic wars that started first in Slovenia, and then spread into Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He did not believe that the untamed Balkans could be calmed down ever and forever!

At the moment he evoked some periods of the history, in which Jews, though completely innocent, had been victims of the forces of obscurity and were persecuted by them. This reinforced Isi’s conviction that his right place is there, in the country of his Jewish brethren and that it is quite normal and justified to share with them the good and the bad. He was sorry because much earlier, in his youth, he had not had enough motivation and courage to undertake such a step, which he did now, in a rather advanced age.



The first encounter between Soli and Isi took place at the lunch table in the festively decorated hut – *Succah*, which Reuben set up on the lawn in front of his dwelling. The lunch

to have lunch with him on the second day of *Succoth*. He wanted not only to reciprocate for their hospitality of the previous year in Haifa, but also to introduce Soli to his father Isaac-Isi, who had immigrated to Israel a year before.



Since his arrival in the new homeland, Isi had been living in Reuben's rented flat. He was a widower because his Teya had left him forever a year and a half earlier, having succumbed to an incurable disease. He was approaching the age of sixty, which did not give him any opportunity to find a job in Israel. Moreover, he had no possibility to get his pension based on his long-time service rendered in Bosnia. After the war was over, the newborn state entirely became dependent on the foreign aid and donations.

Like many Jews from Sarajevo, fearing the repetition of the horrible situation which had been so disastrous for his people during the World War II, Isi ran away from his native town when he realized that the inter-ethnic quarrels were turning into a real civil war. In its outbreak, he reached somehow Belgrade, stayed there for a while and then decided to spend the rest of his life in Israel and not to come back to Bosnia any more. Soon the regional *Jewish agency* helped him to carry out his decision to emigrate.



That year Soli again came to Jerusalem to spend the holidays of *Yom Kippur* and *Succoth* with her younger son. The previous one she had been with him for *Passover* in Haifa, where he lived for some time trying hard to find the clientele and develop business in his workshop installed in one of the rooms of the small rented flat at the foot of the Mount Carmel. To his regret the business had not got off as he wanted and expected to.

For *Succoth*, Avi invited to his Haifa flat Reuben, his good acquaintance from Jerusalem, who originated from Sarajevo – Bosnia. Reuben got along pretty well with the French language, which he had learnt in the secondary school. Now he got an opportunity not only to enjoy the specialties of the Franco-Algerian Sephardic kitchen prepared by Soli (served with the *Matzoth* tablets instead of bread), but also to make conversation in French with her and Avi.

A couple of months after that visit of his mother to Haifa, Avi moved to Jerusalem to try his luck in his specific profession, as the fortune had not been too much in his favor in Haifa, the seaport town at the bottom of the Mount Carmel. Consequently, the Soli's destination of her future voyages to Israel became the holiest town of the world!

As soon as he heard that Soli arrived again to her son in Jerusalem, Reuben invited both

they really needed her. She would stay there for two to three weeks at the most!

Soli did not neglect her younger son in Israel, either. She used to visit him at least twice a year on great Jewish holidays like *Passover* (Pessah) or *Succoth* and would stay with him three weeks to one month. Under Soli's laborious hands, his rented flat in Haifa and, after having moved later to Jerusalem, the one in the Ben-Zion Street, would then become extra clean and shining. She would also wash, iron and arrange in the cupboard not only heaps of Avi's laundry, but also that of Jacob, his cohabitant in the Jerusalem flat, who was also of the French origin. She prepared every day very tasteful meals and served them on the nicely arranged dining-room table. The flat was always perfectly clean and in order. However, Soli was quite aware that it was not a place for her to live in, at least not for a longer period. It was better for her to come always back from her sons to her "basis", the rented flat in the Kay Arloing Street, situated not far from the river Saone which runs through that part of Lion parallel with Rhone and flows into it at the outskirts of the town.

Soli was persuaded that from hence she will hover a little to one son, a little to the other one, as long as the Almighty would give her strength for that and keep her alive. She had almost become convinced that she would thus spend the rest of her life.

contemplated, she would take care of an old person or become a baby sitter from time to time. It indeed happened but only for a short period. She abandoned such kind of jobs as soon as she realized they demanded a continuous and long-term commitment, which would not permit her to fulfill her moral obligation and wish to pay visits to her sons from time to time and stay with them for a while. On the other hand, her eighty years-old mum Suzanne was a very demanding person, although in a rather good physical shape, and Soli was obliged to visit her almost every day!



Occasionally, Soli traveled to Paris to visit her son and his family, which in the meantime got a new member, Jacques, born two years after the first-born daughter Carol. In such occasions she was helping her daughter-in-law Miriam over the children, cleaning the flat and ironing heaps of laundry. She would also cook special meals, in particular those from the tasteful Algerian kitchen in which otherwise they had not so many opportunities to enjoy. She did not want to become a burden for them, especially because of the shortage of space in their small flat and therefore she was choosing time and duration to be with them just when

change the milieu as soon as she could. Soon it happened indeed. More than a half of what she had in her well-equipped flat, she sold or distributed gratis. Then she moved to a flat she had already rented in Lyon and brought there only what she considered indispensable for her future lonely life as a widow.

Her sons had already set off on their own life paths. She knew well they would never come back home, which she took as something quite natural. Samuel worked and lived with his family in Paris and her younger son had become the Israeli citizen a year before she left her home. In Lyon she had opportunity to pay frequent or even day-to-day visits to her mum Danielle, who was also widowed a few years before. From time to time she could also meet her brother Michael who lived with his family in a suburb of Lyon. She renewed friendships with a few women she had been close with earlier, while she had been living in that town, prior to her departure for Sent-Etienne. By chance, they too lived no more with their husbands. Some of them were divorced and some became widows like herself. In any case, she had to be prepared for a new solitary life of a widow. In her mid-fifties she had absolutely neither illusion nor intention to marry once again!

Since she had earlier stopped working, Soli managed to pay her current expenditures with what she was receiving as a sort of an incomplete pension of her defunct husband. If her financial situation would aggravate, she

to some friends, they finally found such an institution, but only – in London!

Five years later Avi finished his vocational school in England and as the young master returned to France. As soon as he had accomplished his military service he immigrated to Israel to try his luck in the new profession.

Meanwhile, Soli too decided to test her skills but as an independent merchant. With the savings from their wages she and Albert had been putting aside for a while, Soli bought a small underwear shop, in spite of the increasing expenditures they had, especially for payment of the school fees for their children. She started her business with that merchandise quite well and it was developing more and more in the following months. However, Albert unexpectedly fell ill and few months later his health deteriorated to the point that he was obliged to stop working forever. For that reason Soli had to sell her shop so that she could entirely take care of her seriously sickened husband.

Several months later the worst had happened. One morning Albert passed away. Soli's sons came for his burial and stayed with their mother during the mourning period. Then, the bereaved widow remained alone in the flat where the happy family life had been flourishing for many years.

Such a situation could not last for a long time. Only three months after her husband's death Soli took a brave and wise decision to

nician, who also was a refugee from Algiers. Soon they got married and a year later their son Samuel was born. When four years later in their family another son – Avi was born, the couple decided to move to a suburb of the town Sent-Etienne, 60 kilometers far from Lyon. Soli easily found a job in a local pharmacy. The factory, in which Albert was working, anyhow lied near that town.

The years were passing by and life in the Soli's family looked more or less like that of a number of the French middle-class families. The elder son Samuel ended his secondary school and then went to Paris to follow the university studies. When he graduated and then got his master's degree, he settled there, got a job and married soon hereupon. In the school Avi was less successful than his brother. However, his parents discovered that their younger child had a good ear for music and therefore they enrolled him in the music school to learn the violin.

Avi finished in time his secondary musical studies at the Lyon conservatory as one of the best in his class. However, to a great surprise and disappointment of his parents, the gifted young man did not want to go on in his musical education, but stubbornly insisted that he was only interested in stringed-instrument making! All parents' efforts to make their 18 years old son forget this idea failed and they had to look for a corresponding school. Thanks

his own way, using his family connections in France, of course if he had any.

The Ben Simons' destination was the town of Lyon, in which lived Abram's cousin, the shoe-shopkeeper. He immediately employed Danielle in his shop as a saleswoman, but for a rather miserable wage. Upon his arrival from Algiers, Abram for some time took over his cousin's bookkeeping and even worked as the cashier. In return, the boss let them live in a small flat he owned.

Having already acquired some professional experience as the auxilliary pharmaceutical *preparatory*, Soli had no difficulty to find a job in Lyon and soon started to work in doctor Daclin's pharmacy. She rented a room in a neighboring boarding house for girls, in order to avoid late going back every night to her parent's home at the other end of that big town. Besides, she had to spend all of her free time in learning and preparing for the examination in order to get the official recognition as the qualified *preparatory* in the pharmacy.

After all, one should not forget that this, almost seventeen-year-old girl had already been earning her own living!



Three years later, twenty years old Soli met Albert, a young and modest aero-tech-

to their jobs soon, so why to be loaded with “unnecessary” stuff! Besides, she had not had much time for packing, as the order for evacuation came suddenly.

Unfortunately, their hope to return home will never be fulfilled. Moreover, two months later, Abram with his mother joined the family in France, after one of his Arab friends warned him that some of his colleagues, considered as ultra-nationalists, planned to assassinate him as soon as he comes to his office the following morning. The same afternoon Abram and the old woman were already on their way to France. He took with him only a single handbag!



The first year of life in “exile” of Ben Simon’s family, like of many other *black-feet* (pieds noirs) French who were obliged to find refuge and safe haven in their mother country, was marked by their attempt to get adapted to the newly created situation as soon as possible, in a not so friendly surrounding of the metropolitan French people. Up to that time, the most of them had had some links with France through the language, education and administration and to some extent economically, but not too much patriotically, emotionally or sentimentally. As for the employment in the new milieu, each one tried to get on in

Two years later, in spring 1962 most of the French citizens, “the foreign colonialists” as the Arabs used to call them, wondered if they would be able to stay any more in the country in which there was no more security in the streets even in the middle of the day. Too many people had already died or had been injured, hit by the bullets fired from all sides or by the explosions of bombs planted in shops, restaurants or other public places. Day and night the non-Arab civilians were living in a psychosis of fear and suspense, wondering if they would be still alive the following day!

With a heavy heart Abram accepted orders of the French colonial authority to prepare his family for the urgent evacuation to France. However, he decided to stay in Sidi-Bel-Abbes with his old and sick mother who was stubbornly refusing to leave her home. When and if necessary (although he was not persuaded it should ever happen), he would then leave Algiers with his mother and join Danielle and their children, who at least would meanwhile be in security!

In the mid-May of that year Soli, her mother and brother, together with some of their cousins boarded a big steamship in the port of Oran, which was soon filled up with the Algerian refugees of the French nationality. Danielle took two suitcases in which she packed only clothing and shoes for herself and for her two children. Most passengers believed, as Soli’s mother did, they would come back home and

he could not understand and accept warnings coming from some good-intentioned Arabs around him that he and his family should be watchful, because they could become victims of the extreme nationalists.

By the end of the Fifties and in the beginning of the Sixties, life of the non-Arab residents in Algiers became almost unbearable. Male members of the family, father, older brother or an uncle were regularly accompanying schoolchildren to school and back home. Accompanied every day by her father or an employee from the Mill, Soli, too, had to walk back home directly from her college. There were no more promenades with her girlfriends or cousins. Before nightfall all children and adults should have already been at home. The entrance door was always locked and not opened to anyone ringing or knocking at it, unless he could previously identify himself.

In the turbulent years of early Sixties Abram had finally grasped that it would be extremely dangerous for his fifteen years old daughter to continue attending the college, which was rather far away from their home. That is why he arranged with his good acquaintance, the pharmacist Mrs. Ayash to employ Soli in her pharmacy situated next to the Mill and close to Ben Simons' flat. The girl was obviously satisfied to get an opportunity to learn something that interested her and even more, to be paid for her work. And thus Soli's apprenticeship started in the pharmaceutical business.

tors who had settled in North Africa a couple of centuries earlier, fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. However, this had not induced young Soli to become a deeply religious person.

Unrests and riots of the Arab nationalists against the French and other non-Arab population, who lived and worked in Algiers, perturbed Soli's teens. Like other Jewish or non-Arab families, Ben Simons also had the French citizenship. In spite of that fact, the metropolitan French called them by a cynic nickname *pieds-noirs* (black feet), originally attributed to the Algerian Arabs in the initial phase of colonization of these territories by the French. Later, this mocking "title" was also attributed to the soldiers of the Foreign Legion and eventually to all other French that lived or worked in Algiers for a longer period of time.

During the fifth decade of the 20th century attacks of the Algerian nationalists on the French and other "foreigners" intensified and became more and more frequent. The ambushed assassinations or those committed openly in the town streets put in danger lives of Ben Simons and of other non-Arab population who had been living in Algiers for many generations. However, previously they had had good relations with their Arab co-citizens. As for his attitude towards politics, Abram was left-oriented and had many good friends among Arabs, especially among the workers and employees with whom he had been cooperating on the daily basis. Because of this fact

force, most probably God himself, mingled into and influenced further course of her life. This occurred when she by chance met Isaac-Isi, an Israeli man originating from Balkans, who had also experienced in his life some turning moments amazingly similar to those of Solis'.

It is known that, according to their tradition, Jews are inclined to believe in miracles. The story goes that in a number of situations during their long history, miracles have brought them improvements when they had been losing all hopes. A miracle happened to Soli and Isi in their rather advanced age, too. At least they belived in it after all what had occurred to them in that period!

Soli was born in the Algerian town Sidi-Bel-Abbes in the Sephardic family Ben Simon when the World War II had been blazing up. The town, situated 60 kilometers south of the Mediterranean port Oran, had been for many years an important fortification for the French Foreign Legion. Her father Abram, the chief accountant in the Grand Mill of master Cohen and her mother Danielle did their best to create for Soli and for her two years younger brother Michael a happy and a carefree childhood. She was educated in the French schools mostly attended by the French and non-Arab children, but Soli had some friends among a few Arab classmates as well. Surrounded by her family and amidst a large Jewish community, in her early age she had been acquainted with the tradition and history of her Sephardic ances-

Human life is filled with various events, good or unpleasant ones, but a man is not able to foresee some of them. However, when they happen he often cannot react on them in a right and an appropriate manner. The non-religious people try to interpret such occurrences as a stroke of incident, destiny, luck or misfortune. However, believers, the Jewish ones in particular, have no dilemma in this regard, for they say that everything on earth and in the universe had been created and still exists through the divine will and therefore a man has just to comply with it. For them there is only one thing to do: with his humble and religious way of life a man should try to make **Him** as merciful and graceful as to let him live this earthly life in a good health and in spiritual and material tranquility. After his death, man's soul would be granted with another, everlasting life, of course in paradise!

Some interesting events and turnabouts also marked the life story of Soli, a Sephardic Jewish woman originating from Algiers. In her earlier life she had been just moderately traditional, but what happened when she was fifty-something made her believe that some major

and symbols, struggle for a better and richer economic life and some other incentives. If we put together all those motives, it is possible to come to a conclusion that the Israeli population, especially its Jewish part, like and wish to live and creatively perform in that country, but for them it would be more perfect to do it in peace prevailing among its own people and co-citizens, as well as to live in peace with the neighboring countries and nations.

Having all above mentioned in view, it may be possible to conclude that the Algerian Jewish woman Soli and Isaac from Bosnia, though both still under a gloomy emotion caused by the loss of their spouses, when they came to Israel, succeeded to jointly find the way out of their sad and rather dim life-tunnels. They renewed their hope and beliefs that the rest of their lives they would be able to spend together in a relative satisfaction and close to their children who also started to create their own families in the new homeland. In this way Soli and Isi had confirmed an ancient saying that people alive must stay with other alives while dead should be with dead! Nevertheless, memories, especially the nice ones of those latter, should never be entirely wiped out of our minds.

Avraham Atijas

these cases it was primarily about the economic emigration, though in a few cases to this motive should be added uncertainty for some people to continue to live there because of their Jewish origins (although the Stalin era and the Siberian gulags had been long behind them). Finally, one more important motive should not be forgotten: a desire to join members of the families already living in Israel!

In spite of a number of brutal and imposed wars Israel had to fight during 60 years from its creation against the hostile Arab neighbors, immigration to the country has not been declining. Even the new methods Arabs have introduced in their fight against Israel and its Jewish population (suicide attacks) could not dissuade people from coming and settling in their new homeland. Therefore one could ask the following, perhaps justified question: "What effectively motivated all those people, the new or the old-timer citizens of that small country, to exist and live in a state which, seemingly, could explode any moment?" For certain segments of the Israeli society, for example the religious Zionists, an answer about their motives could be found, but for the totality of the complex Israeli society the right answer is difficult to formulate. For it is not only in question a classical patriotism and love for the country. Of course, these motives do exist on a larger scale, but there are also some others, such as: defending the democratic society and the proclaimed liberties, opposing the blind Islamic fanaticism, protection of certain Jewish traditional values

almost systematically persecuted all over the regions they came to settle in. By the end of the fifteenth century they became victims of pogroms and expulsion from Spain, executed by the royal crown and the catholic Inquisition. This kind of events expanded throughout Europe and the Tsarist Russia, culminating during the Second World War, in which the Hitler's Nazism physically destroyed 6 million members of that ancient nation. But, in spite of all historic misfortunes that had befallen on them, Jews have continued to exist. Moreover, on the spaces of their ancient homeland, like the Phoenix from the ashes, in 1948 sprouted again a renewed Jewish state - Israel, which succeeded in turning fertile the region once covered with arid sands and rocks, finally becoming a modern and developed Mediterranean country. During the decades after its creation, to Israel have immigrated millions of those who, for various reasons, wanted to become its citizens. Immediately after WWII and especially as soon as the new state had been proclaimed, among the first ones to rush there were the Holocaust survivors. The later immigrants had some other motives as well, like economic, traditional or religious ones and in some cases they wanted to avoid the renewal of anti-Semite incidents in regions they had been living. After disintegration of the Soviet Union, at the beginning of the Nineties of the twentieth century, from there emigrated to Israel almost a million people who, following certain criteria, were Jewish (on mother's or father's side). In most of

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

*I have already listened to some stories similar to one told in the novella **Soli and Isi in the Promised Land**, but I am sure there exist others, to me unknown stories about the people to whom immigration to their new homeland-Israel has opened the way to a new, until then unknown and inexperienced life. Whether a hazard, destiny or, for some people God's will and intention had played a role in those cases, should be left to each individual to make his own judgment. Neither should be rejected the conviction of Soli and Isi, the main personalities of this novella, that a nice miracle (for Jews it is a biblical phenomenon) had happened to them. Anyhow, their compatriots had believed in miracles for centuries, as they continue to do even today.*

A lot had happened to the Jewish people before and after they arrived in the Promised Land, situated between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. After being forced to leave that region because the Romans conquered and destroyed Jerusalem in the seventies of the first millennium of the new era, they had to continue to live abroad, in Diaspora. In the centuries that followed, Jews had been permanently and

***One who hesitates will
never reach Jerusalem!***

(Jewish proverbial saying)

Avraham Atijas

SOLI AND ISI IN THE PROMISED LAND

Editor and Publisher

Avraham Atijas

Translation in English

Avraham Atijas

Technical Editor

Željko Hrček

Coverage Design

Igor Hrček

Printed in 150 copies
in Jerusalem

AVRAHAM ATIJAS

**SOLI AND ISI
IN THE PROMISED LAND**

Novella

Avraham Atijas



SOLI AND ISI
IN THE PROMISED LAND
Novella