After my grandmother's death, my grandfather announced he wanted to move out of the apartment they had shared for ten years. Too many memories, and also, for one person, it was expensive. My mother and aunt filled out forms for subsidized housing and my grandfather was placed on a waiting list. If a spot opened up he would be able to save hundreds of dollars each month. Of course, the money wouldn't change his life. His needs were minimal. Tea, potatoes, cottage cheese, black bread, chicken, milk, preserves. My mother and aunt bought him his clothes at Moore's—a discount chain whose labels read: Made in Canada. He never traveled, never went to concerts or movies, and had no hobbies aside from the synagogue. That he had no immediate use for the money wasn't the point. When he was gone, the grandchildren would have more.

My grandmother's yartzheit came and went and my grandfather was still no closer to getting an apartment. Thousands were on the waiting list and there was no way of knowing how much longer he would have to wait. My mother told me a year wasn't that long, she had heard of others who had waited three or five. The waiting list outlived more applicants than she cared to mention. Sholom Zeydenbaum's son, Minka, received a letter a month after Sholom's death. Minka said he didn't know whether to laugh or cry. When he told the story, he laughed.

The system was inscrutable. At least in Russia you knew who to bribe.

But, unable to give up, my family sought angles. My mother made inquiries in the community. Apartments had been had. Others had experienced success. No doubt an apartment existed, and waited, like America, to be discovered. My father canvassed his patients in search of a lead. Many patients were the children of Polish Jews who had made their money in real estate. They owned buildings all over the city. Surely one of them could find a suitable place for an honest man, a war hero and a pious Jew. My uncle played his trump card and exploited a political connection from his days doing business with the new Russia. The man had been an ambassador, the man had served on the city council. Such a man must be able to help. My aunt wondered why it had to be so hard. Didn't all these people have parents of their own? Were their hearts made of stone? My uncle informed her that these people did indeed have parents of their own and that their parents were probably the reason why my grandfather couldn't get an apartment.

More months passed. A possibility here and a potential opportunity there. All of them came to nothing and my grandfather, never an optimist by nature, resigned himself to the fact that it was a lost cause. Some people had a talent for making things happen, he was not one of them. Once, during the war, he had had a chance to make some money. A man in Kyrgyzstan had a load of hats he wanted to move. Good woolen hats of a very desirable fashion. My grandfather and his brother had the inside track on the hats. One railway car to Moscow and they could have made a fortune. They could have been extremely wealthy men in Russia, but their father wouldn't let them do it. He was a very honest man. He never

invited trouble. So the hats went to someone else—who naturally made a fortune—and my grandfather worked with his hands for the rest of his life. Like the hats, so the apartment. My grandfather entertained no illusions, unless, of course, they were illusions of exaggerated bleakness.

All along, at the margins of the apartment search, there was one possibility that neither fully materialized nor completely disappeared. A building owned by the B'nai Brith was in fact subsidized. It was only a short bus ride from my grandfather's current building. It faced a park. Most of the people in the building were either widows or widowers. On the ground floor was a common room where concerts were occasionally held. My grandfather had a few acquaintances who lived there and he felt the building would present him with more social opportunities. Since my grandmother's death he had seen less and less of their old friends. My grandmother had always been the one to make the phone calls and the arrangements, and now that she was gone, he felt that most of their friends had indeed been her friends. On his own, my grandfather found it hard to break the old patterns.

The B'nai Brith building seemed the perfect solution. And, it appeared that there was a slim chance that he could gain a preferential place on their waiting list. Word had spread at the tiny Russian community synagogue that my grandfather was looking to find an apartment. This word had reached a popular and well-respected rabbi who knew my grandfather to be a pious man and regular synagogue attendee. This very fact made him an attractive candidate since the B'nai Brith building had its own one-room synagogue which was no longer drawing a minyan for Friday night and Saturday morning services. I couldn't believe that, in a building whose entire population consisted of old Jews, they

couldn't find ten men, but my grandfather insisted that it was true. Even though the building was Jewish, the people were old. Some were sick, some were atheists, and more than half of the residents were women. It was a serious problem. The synagogue was Orthodox, and without ten Jewish men, they could not hold proper services.

Since I was conveniently between jobs, it was my responsibility to drive my grandfather to the B'nai Brith building to meet with Zalman, the synagogue's gabbai. Zalman was a Romanian Jew who spoke Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, and quite a lot of English. For years he had overseen the day-to-day running of the synagogue. If my grandfather could impress upon him his level of religious commitment, then Zalman would be able to use his influence with the building's manager. The manager was sympathetic to the synagogue's plight and might be willing to manipulate the waiting list in order to bring in the right kind of resident. In other words, a spiritual ringer.

On the way to meet with Zalman my grandfather repeated that it probably wouldn't do any good. If Zalman could do anything, he would have done it long ago. The trip was a waste of time. Nevertheless, he clutched the letter of recommendation that the rabbi had written for him. I told him not to worry. He replied that when you got to be his age there was no longer much to worry about. Everything was in God's hands. Who are we to know His plans? What is getting or not getting an apartment compared to losing a wife? God does what He does for His own reasons. If it was meant for us to get the apartment, then it would happen, if not, then not. What could anyone do? I said he could pray, but he didn't get the joke.

The synagogue was indeed one room which was divided into two sections by a flimsy latticework partition. On the left

was the women's section; on the right the men's. Each side could hold thirty people. Zalman pointed out what went where. Here the prayer books, there the tallisim are folded, over there the ark and the Torah. He opened up the doors so that we could take a look at the scrolls in their velvet cover. My grandfather said it was a very good synagogue and gave Zalman the rabbi's letter. Zalman promised to do what he could, so long as we understood that there was no telling when an apartment might open up. Did we understand what it meant for an apartment to become available in such a place? Unfortunately, my grandfather said, he understood very well.

On the way out, Zalman escorted us through the lobby. We passed two Russian seniors who studied us with unconcealed malice. Zalman explained that these were two of the ones who wouldn't come. Atheists, Zalman said. One a product of Stalin, the other of Hitler. But what do you say to a man who asks you where was God when the Germans were shooting his parents and throwing them in a hole? It isn't a pleasant conversation. And who here didn't lose someone to the Nazis? I lost my grandparents, three beautiful sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins. So what am I supposed to do, let the bastards win? Because who wins if a Jew doesn't go to synagogue? I'll tell you who: Hitler.

Three Russians who didn't understand Hebrew sat in the back of the synagogue. One was missing an arm. Two Polish Jews sat in front of them. One had his place by the partition so that he could stretch his bad leg, the other kept his walker near for emergency trips to the washroom. I was between them and the front row where my grandfather sat with two other men. Herschel, a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania, sat beside my

grandfather, and Itzik, a taxi driver from Odessa, sat beside Herschel. Zalman was at a small table beside the ark. On the other side of the partition were half a dozen women. There was no rabbi and so the responsibilities for the service were divided between Zalman, my grandfather, and Herschel. The task of lifting the heavy scrolls fell to me, as I was the only one with the strength to do it. The Saturday morning services started at nine and lasted for three hours. Most of the old Jews came because they were drawn by the nostalgia for ancient cadences, I came because I was drawn by the nostalgia for old Jews. In each case, the motivation was not tradition but history.

After services everyone went to the common room for a kiddush. Zalman brought a bottle of kosher sweet wine and a honey cake. The Russian man with one arm contributed a mickey of cheap vodka. It takes only one arm to pour and only one arm to drink. Thank God, he said, at least here it is no disadvantage to be a one-armed man.

One of the women distributed the wine in small paper cups and also circulated a dish with the slices of cake. When everyone had drunk their wine and munched their cake, they wished one another a *gut Shabbos* and wandered alone or in small groups back to their particular lives.

On those mornings I accompanied my grandfather back to his new apartment, where we drank tea and played checkers. The new apartment was slightly smaller than the old. The brown sofa had been sold and replaced with a blue one. The brown sofa hadn't folded out; the blue one did. (Now, in the event of familial tragedy, my mother and aunt wouldn't have to spend the accursed nights on the living room floor.) The bedroom remained identical and in the kitchen were the same chipped plates and the same enamel Soviet bowls good

for warming soup. I would spend a few hours with my grandfather, his only visitor all week. The change of locale hadn't done much to improve his social situation. For every reason to leave his apartment he could always find ten to stay where he was. My grandfather had expected Zalman to make more of an effort, but Zalman was always preoccupied with unspecified concerns. He also had a wife. Only Herschel, the survivor who sat beside my grandfather, had extended invitations—to come over for tea, to read some Yiddish poetry, to play cards, to go for a walk in the park. He is a very intellectual man, my grandfather said. A professor.

Despite this, my grandfather had yet to accept any of Herschel's invitations. He would go, he said, it was only that every time he was invited something needed to be done. Once he had been salting pickles, another time he had needed to mend a pair of shoes, yet another time he had had an appointment to get his toenails cut. But when the time was good he planned to go. Other people said things about Herschel and Itzik, but he had lived a long life without listening to those kinds of people. Who can know about the truth between two people? Both had had wives. Itzik had two children. What's to say that they aren't even cousins? Who knows? Would someone think to say a word if two cousins shared an apartment?

The following Saturday I noticed how, when Itzik coughed, Herschel placed a hand on his shoulder. I also noticed an undercurrent of disapproval emanating from the back of the room. After Herschel read from the Torah the other men took his outstretched hand without enthusiasm. Previously undetected signals were everywhere. It seemed less like a coincidence when Itzik and Herschel were the last to receive their paper cups of wine. It was evident that the one-armed man barely acknowledged Herschel as he happily made an ob-

servation in Yiddish. Itzik sat alone at a table, his thick chest spasmodically wracked by terrible hacking. Young person, he said, could you bring me some water? The devil has me by the throat.

When I returned from the water fountain with a paper cup, Herschel was standing beside Itzik. At the front of the room Zalman was announcing a Chanukah party. I handed the cup to Itzik. Herschel asked me how tall I was. In his shtetl I would have been a giant. You can only get so big on cabbage, he said. His brother, a Communist before it was a good idea to be one, had been big for a Jew. He'd broken the arm of a Pole who had cracked Herschel's skull. The Pole was a blacksmith's apprentice. He had arms like legs. Herschel wondered if I would be able to come to their apartment and change a lightbulb. Itzik used to do it but it wasn't such a good idea for him now that he wasn't feeling well. And even standing on their tallest chair, Herschel wasn't big enough to reach. You could only sit in the dark for so long. Herschel spoke to me in English. Itzik, when he spoke, spoke to me in Russian. They spoke Yiddish to each other.

While beating me twice at checkers, my grandfather told me what he knew about Herschel and Itzik. They had been neighbors in another building. Their wives had been friends. Herschel had come to Canada in 1950. During the war Herschel's wife hid in a cellar; Herschel was sent to Auschwitz.

Like our family, Itzik left the Soviet Union in 1979. He had been a successful man in Odessa. He drove a cab. He had his own car. Sometimes he went for long trips with a full trunk and when he came back the trunk was empty. People said he brought dollars with him from Odessa. How else could he have bought his own taxi so soon after coming to Canada? Later he had three cars and rented them out. He wasn't like

my grandfather and the other old men. On the first of the month he didn't have his nose in a mailbox sniffing for government envelopes.

Four years ago Itzik's wife died. He put himself on a waiting list for a subsidized apartment. The next year Herschel's wife also died. Herschel also put himself on a waiting list. But unlike Itzik, Herschel couldn't sit and wait. Even though he was no newcomer to the country, he had no money. He was an intellectual, a man of ideas. Not a practical man. Without his wife's check he could barely afford to pay for the apartment. So Herschel moved into Itzik's apartment. Maybe Itzik did it as a mitzvah, because everyone knew he didn't need the money. But then again, a man loses a wife, another man loses a wife—this is an unimaginable loneliness. Who knows who is helping who? One hand washes the other.

So when Itzik finally got this subsidized apartment Herschel came too. Again, what choice did he have? To pay for Itzik's apartment was no different than paying for his old apartment. In other words, impossible. And by then they had been living together for two years. They move in here and people talk. Two men in a one-bedroom apartment. Old people are no better than children. Worse, because they should know better. But what can you expect from old Jews? We come from little villages; we come from poor families. What kind of education did we get? How many of us finished school? By fourteen you start working. You get maybe eight years of school. The rest you learn from life.

I knocked and Herschel opened the door. He was wearing a white cotton undershirt and a pair of faded trousers. His body showed the effects of prostate treatment. The hormones had

atrophied his muscles and made his breasts grow. They hung loosely beneath his undershirt. He invited me in. He had a pair of slippers ready for me. The slippers were probably a little small, Herschel said, they weren't accustomed to giant visitors. Itzik sat on the couch in front of the television. He was seized by another fit of coughing and then strained to catch his breath. Look, the workman is here, he said. He is joking with you, Herschel said, this is how he jokes. When you're done with the light, Itzik said, you could take a look at the toilet.

I helped Herschel carry a chair from the kitchen. He held it as I removed the fixture and unscrewed the dead bulb. Can you believe we had no light here for three weeks, Herschel said. If you can do something, it only takes a minute, but if you can't do it, it stays like that forever. He threw the switch and marveled at the light. Wonderful, he said.

I trailed after Herschel as he went into the bedroom. There were two night tables flanking the queen-size bed. Each one supported a night-lamp. A small stack of books was piled on one of them. A glass of water rested on the other. Herschel went over to the one with the books and retrieved his wallet. He returned to me holding a five-dollar bill which I refused to take. It was late in the afternoon and I could also not accept his offer of tea. He thanked me repeatedly as he escorted me out into the hallway. As Herschel closed the door Itzik clutched his knees and steadied himself against another barrage of coughs.

The next Saturday was Chanukah and Itzik did not come down for the service. Without Itzik there were only nine men and so Zalman stood in front of the building and attempted to convince Semitic-looking passersby to come inside. He spent a half hour in the cold before two blackhats, a father

and son, agreed to come in and help. When Zalman returned the three Russians in the back were already putting on their coats. Zalman glared at them and they sat back down. Because of the delay everyone was anxious. The service lurched, Zalman stumbled through the Torah reading, the women kibbitzed behind their partition, the Russians in the back complained about the time. When it was Herschel's turn to approach the Torah he asked Zalman to say a prayer for Itzik. He pledged eighteen dollars to the synagogue and stood solemnly, his hands shaking, as Zalman asked God to deliver Itzik from his illness and provide him with a full recovery.

The events of the morning put a damper on the Chanukah party. Nevertheless, Zalman's wife brought jelly donuts and the women passed them around on greasy napkins. I sat with my grandfather and Herschel as Zalman sang Chanukah songs. A few of the women joined in, although some could only hum the melody. Most of the others sat in their coats, their lips gleaming with oil and speckled with sugar, waiting for the opportunity to leave. Herschel asked if he could have a second donut to take upstairs to Itzik. Not that Itzik could eat it. It was hard to imagine, Herschel said, such a man. A real Odessa character, right out of the pages of Babel. He had even grown up on Babel's street. As a young boy Itzik had carted watermelons for Babel's uncle. What hadn't he done in his life? At thirteen he was working two shifts in a munitions factory. At seventeen he was at the front. He fought the Germans, he survived the Communists, he had an appetite for the world—and now, he didn't even have the strength to eat a donut.

As Itzik lay dying, strange and not-so-strange visitors appeared at Zalman's door. Zalman's apartment was on the same floor as Itzik's and these visitors no doubt heard the sound of

coughing and rasping as it echoed through the hallway. In the last days, Itzik's son came from New Jersey to sit at his father's bedside. Many years had passed since he had seen or spoken with his father. Herschel stayed mostly in the kitchen cooking their meals and reading at the table. To allow Itzik and his son some privacy, Herschel spent several hours each day at my grandfather's. As he waited for the elevator to ride the four floors up to my grandfather's apartment, Herschel saw the people who knocked on Zalman's door. Those who knew him avoided his eyes.

Seated at my grandfather's table, Herschel seemed oblivious to the conspiracies that were threatening to turn his tragedy into disaster. He spoke about how wonderful it was that Itzik's son had finally returned to his father. No matter what happens, in the end a father is a father and a son is a son. His own regret was never having children. But after the Holocaust there were two types of people. There were those who felt a responsibility to ensure the future of the Jewish people, and then there were those, like Herschel's wife, who had been convinced that the world was irrefutably evil. Those were the two kinds, Herschel said, and as always he was neither one nor the other. For him, the world held neither mission nor meaning, only the possibility of joy. But because of the way he was, for the same reasons that he never had any money or became an important man, he allowed his wife to decide for them. He had rationalized that if joy existed in the world, then joy would continue to exist even if he didn't have a child. He was capable of these rationalizations, he said. His wife wasn't. She had made a decision in a Polish cellar and no amount of America could change her mind. He could understand her, Herschel said. He could also understand Itzik's son, and the people in the building who wouldn't meet his eyes. He could

understand all of them. That was his problem, he said, he could understand everybody.

Itzik died on a Friday night and the funeral was held on Sunday. To ensure a minyan at the grave site, Zalman insisted that all of the synagogue regulars attend. I drove my grandfather, Herschel, and two of the old women to the chapel. Zalman came with his wife and the two Polish Jews. Itzik's son called Itzik's three cabbies and they brought everyone else. Aside from the people from the synagogue and the cabbies, almost nobody else came. Itzik had lived in Toronto for twenty years but hadn't had much to do with anyone after his wife died. The rabbi who had written my grandfather the letter of recommendation delivered the eulogy. He had not known Itzik well and made no secret of it. Zalman wrote some notes on a loose piece of paper and the rabbi studied the sheet before speaking. Itzik had been an unusual man, the rabbi said. He came to this country already an old man and had become successful. He had his own business and never asked anyone for anything. He supported his family and always gave money to the Jewish Russian community. In his last years he rediscovered his Jewish roots. For two years he never missed a Saturday service. Not looking at the sheet, the rabbi added that with the passing of Itzik the world lost another piece of the old Jewish life. His death was a tragedy not only for the people who loved Itzik but for all Jews everywhere.

After the rabbi spoke he asked if there was anyone who wanted to say anything more about Itzik. Herschel, who sat between me and my grandfather, wiped his eyes and looked over at Itzik's son. Itzik's son did not look up from the floor. Nobody moved and the rabbi shifted nervously beside Itzik's coffin. He looked around the room and asked again if there wasn't someone who had a few words to say about Itzik's

life. If someone had something to say and sat in silence, they would regret it. Such a time is not the time for shyness. Itzik's spirit was in the room. To speak a kind word about the man would be a mitzvah. Finally, using my knee for support, Herschel raised himself from the pew and slowly made his way to the front of the chapel. Each of Herschel's steps punctuated silence. His worn tweed jacket and crooked back delivered a eulogy before he reached the coffin. His posture was unspeakable grief. What could he say that could compare with the eulogy of his wretched back?

Facing the room, Herschel composed himself and spoke clearly. Itzik was my last and dearest friend. Hitler killed my family and I never had children. When my wife died I thought I would be alone until God decided it was finally time to take me also. That Itzik was my dear friend these last years was the blessing of my old age. Without him I don't know what would have become of me. He was a wonderful man. He was an honest man. He was a strong man. He said not one word he didn't mean. I will miss him like I would miss my right arm. Living a long life is both a blessing and a curse. Today it is a curse. I don't know if it will ever again feel like a blessing.

At the cemetery, there were two-foot-high snowbanks. The earth from Itzik's grave was frozen in clumps and piled slightly higher than the snowbanks. The gravediggers had cleared a semicircle around the grave. Herschel stood by himself. Itzik's son held a shovel, another shovel was lodged in the frozen mound. The old people stamped their feet and wiped their noses. Zalman sang the prayer for the dead and the rabbi said some other prayers. Everyone dropped a hard earthen clod onto the lowered coffin. Then the rabbi, Itzik's son, and I filled the grave. Digging into the mound was like striking con-

crete. Each thrust sent a shock through my shoulders. Itzik's son stopped to rest but never relinquished his shovel. The rabbi and I would each dig for a minute and rest for a minute. It took nearly twenty minutes to finish the job. By the end sweat had stiffened my hair and milky icicles hung from the rabbi's beard.

As everyone stomped back through the snow toward the cars, Itzik's son thanked me for helping to bury his father. He hadn't said a word to me before. The only time I heard him speak was when he had asked the rabbi how he was to pay him for the service. Ahead of us the old people tottered through the snow. They walked in twos and threes, their arms linked to steady one another. Itzik's son stopped and watched them. Look at them, he said, who knows how many they robbed and cheated and screwed? He turned back toward Itzik's grave. He spent seven years in jail, my father, did you know that? I have brothers and sisters all over Russia. I don't even know how many. For him nothing was forbidden. That was my father, you understand? He raised his fist to his face. He was like this, Itzik's son said. He drove his fist into a snowbank. He looked at me to see if I understood. I nodded that I understood. Like this, he repeated, his fist in the snowbank.

No death in the building went unnoticed and Itzik's was anticipated. The people who had knocked on Zalman's apartment now slipped envelopes under the door. A bottle of vodka was left on his threshold. There were many in the building who disapproved of this behavior. My grandfather overheard conversations. But even those who disapproved felt they had no choice but to act. Everyone knew someone on the waiting list. Not to act was to guarantee that only people without

principles would succeed in getting Itzik's apartment. The people with principles came to see Herschel as he sat shivah for Itzik. They brought eggs and bagels and honey cake and apologized for what they had to do. Herschel said he understood. He understood it had nothing to do with him.

For the week Herschel sat shivah Zalman refused to make any decisions. Still, everywhere he went that week, Zalman was oppressed with desperate stories. He had to understand. The list was, figuratively speaking, a cage, old Jews peered out through its bars and stretched their plaintive hands out to Zalman for salvation. It was no longer a secret that Zalman had the manager's ear and that soon enough the manager would come to him looking for a suggestion. Everyone also knew that Zalman needed to fill another place at the synagogue. With Iztik's death and not counting me, he was down to eight regulars. All kinds of pressure were being applied. The one-armed Russian man swore he would stop attending services if his brother-in-law was not allowed to take Itzik's apartment. His brother-in-law was a good Jew. He lived in an overpriced apartment. His building was full of blacks. He had diabetes. Why should he have to suffer because of Herschel? Just because this one shared a bed with another man he should be rewarded with an apartment? In Russia he would have been given ten years! And if this was the kind of synagogue Zalman was running, he'd sooner go to church than sit through another service.

Others appealed to Zalman with dubious temptations. Word had spread. Men who had never set foot inside the synagogue pledged regular attendance if only Zalman helped their deserving relatives. Zalman should do the math. In one move he would fill two spots. Sure, they hadn't come before, but now they would repay Zalman's mitzvah with one of their

own. It was only fair. They had nothing against Herschel, but what right did he have to the apartment? Was he Itzik's wife? Is this the kind of world we were living in?

On Saturday morning more than twenty men appeared for the service. Almost as many women settled in behind the partition. Despite the air of sinister motivations, the room was transformed and Zalman walked through the aisles with a sense of purpose. He threw himself into the service with exceptional vigor. He sang out page numbers in Russian and Yiddish. He called the new attendees up to the Torah. Everyone made an effort at making an effort. Zalman. The new attendees. Voices battled each other for distinction. Herschel sat as usual beside my grandfather. He sang loud, his voice mingling with those of the others. The synagogue swelled with beautiful and conflicting prayer. God in His heaven was left to sort it out.

After the service Herschel followed me to my grandfather's apartment. My grandfather brought out the checkerboard and Herschel watched as we played. He preferred chess, he said, but he had always liked that all the pieces in checkers looked the same. It appealed to his socialist sensibilities. As if there was nothing else to talk about, Herschel looked over my shoulder as I contemplated moves. He dunked crackers into his tea and hummed a vague Yiddish-sounding melody. We played one game and then another. Herschel watched as if engrossed. He applauded clever moves and clucked his tongue at my mistakes. I finally asked him what he intended to do. He said he didn't know. What could he do? He'd lived a long life. So many things had happened. God had always watched over him. Why would He desert him now? He was on the waiting list like everyone else. Maybe his name would come up? What was the point of talking about it? You lived as you lived while

you lived. Today he was drinking tea and watching checkers, why ruin a nice afternoon worrying about tomorrow?

I left Herschel with my grandfather. They were setting up the board for a game. Herschel was remembering how, so many years ago, his brother carved beautiful birch checker pieces. The Sabbath elevator arrived and I climbed aboard. The elevator descended, stopping automatically on every floor. Two floors down Zalman joined me in the elevator. He thanked me again for coming to the services. If he had more people like me, he wouldn't have any problems. I told him I was sorry about his problems. The laws were clear, he said. The old rabbis weren't fools. What do you need for a minyan? Ten Jewish men. The elevator stopped on his floor. Zalman stepped out. He had more to say. I followed him to his apartment and told him I wanted to know what he would do with Herschel.

Zalman looked up and down the hall to make sure we were alone. His eyes shone with intensity. Let me tell you, I am not a stupid man. I have my own opinions, but I am in charge of the synagogue. Do you think I liked the business with Itzik and Herschel? You shouldn't speak ill of the dead, but Itzik was a difficult man. And there are people who say they know very well why Herschel has no children. But for two years they came. I never said a word. Because my job is to have ten Jewish men. Good, bad, it doesn't matter. Ten Jewish men. Only God can judge good from bad. Here the only question is Jew or not. And now I am asked by people here who never stepped into a synagogue to do them a favor. They all have friends, relatives who need an apartment. Each and every one a good Jew. Promises left and right about how they will come to synagogue. I've heard these promises before. And they say, With so many good Jews who need apartments, why

should Herschel be allowed to stay? This is not my concern. My concern is ten Jewish men. If you want ten Jewish saints, good luck. You want to know what will happen to Herschel? This. They should know I don't put a Jew who comes to synagogue in the street. Homosexuals, murderers, liars, and thieves—I take them all. Without them we would never have a minyan.