

Jewish Books in Review

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Marienbad Is Not Just Marienbad

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Marienbad: A Novel. By Sholom Aleichem. Translated from the Yiddish by Aliza Shevrin. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1982 222 pages. \$13.95.

Reviewed by
Jacob Kabakoff

In his autobiography, Mark Twain wrote that humor had a life expectancy of only thirty years. Yet Sholom Aleichem's writings have retained their vitality to such an extent that even a minor work like *Marienbad* continues to sparkle with wit and comic situations. Originally serialized in the Yiddish press in 1911, it comprises part of the volume of the author's collected works entitled *Zumer-Lebn* (Summer Life).

Sholom Aleichem was obliged for health reasons to spend a good deal of time at various spas and health resorts. Here he observed the goings-on of nouveau riche urban Jews and their social climbing wives. In *Marienbad* he chose the epistolary medium — a literary form which he had perfected in his celebrated Menachem Mendl stories — to depict the antics of Warsaw Jews from the Nalevkis, the central Jewish business thoroughfare of Warsaw. *Marienbad*, of course, is the resort town famous for its mineral waters.

"You think *Marienbad* is just *Marienbad*?" asks Beltzi Kurlander in her letter to her husband who has stayed home to mind his business on the Nalevkis. "Marienbad is Berdichev, Marienbad is Warsaw, Marienbad is the Nalevkis." Or, as Beltzi's husband Shlomo puts it: "Should someone in Marienbad sneeze, someone in the Nalevkis will say 'God bless you!'" The letters fly up and back not only between the young, flirtatious Beltzi and her considerably older and jealous husband, but between a whole host of characters who become embroiled in a three-



ring circus of comic events. Their letters expose the foibles and weaknesses of a whole segment of middle-class types and skillfully lay bare their character traits.

We leave it to the reader to discover how Sholom Aleichem resolves his comedy of errors. His novel has been ably presented by Aliza Shevrin who had endeavored to overcome the many knotty problems of translation by paying attention to the special nuances and flavor of the various individualistic styles of letter-writing that make up the work.

Dr. Jacob Kabakoff is Professor of Hebrew Literature at the City University of New York and editor of the *Jewish Book Annual*.

Foundation (from page 1)

work directly with the Capital Campaign, supervise the financial systems of the Foundation including record keeping, billing, etc. She will also work in the area of newcomers to the community helping to locate additions to the Jewish Population.

IF YOU HAVE A SPECIAL HANUKAH STORY, POEM, DRAWING, RECIPE, ETC. PLEASE SUBMIT BY NOV. 10.

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Jewish Survival Theme Of UJA University Essay Contest

The United Jewish Appeal announced the second annual University Essay Contest, funded by the Morris J. Kaplun Foundation. The theme of the contest is: "Jewish Experience as a Source of Survival Strategies."

Robert E. Loup, National Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, in announcing the contest, said: "The current voices of dissent concerning the crisis in Lebanon remind us of the value of educational programs which provide a forum for Jewish youth to add their voices to our continuing concern for peace and the primacy of unity for Jewish survival."

The nationwide competition is open to any American undergraduate or graduate student under 27 years of age enrolled in an accredited institution of higher learning. The 1,500 to 2,000 word essays will be judged by a distinguished panel of educators and writers.

An all-expense-paid trip to Israel and a \$500 commendation stipend will be awarded to the authors of the eight winning essays. The 10-day trip in August, 1983, will include visits with Israeli heads of State and tours of border settlements, archaeological excavations and other events of historical, social, and education value.

According to Dr. Henry Feingold of the City University of New York, the Chairman of the UJA University Essay Contest Committee, the focus of the contest is educational. The objective is to stimulate creative thought on the perennial problem of Jewish physical and spiritual survival. Applicants are encouraged to interpret the theme as broadly and critically as they wish, using any combination of disciplines as well as personal experience. "The unforeseen dividend of last year's contest was that the maturity and eloquence of the essays identified future leaders of the Jewish people," Feingold commented.

Loup added: "Last year's winning essays, chosen from entries from 79 of the finest universities nationwide, of-

fered creative and novel ideas for the survival of the Jewish people."

The contest is being run under the auspices of the Hon. Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem. Among the educators serving on the contest committee's Academic Advisory Council are Professor Alan Dowty, Notre Dame University; Professor Jane Gerber, CCNY; Professor Norman Lamm, Yeshiva University; and Professor Seymour Martin Lipset, Stanford University. The Israel Contest Committee, headed by Avraham Hartman, president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is comprised of the presidents of all the universities in the State of Israel. Issachar Miron, UJA national director of Creative and Educational Programs, is the Contest Coordinator.

For contest rules and other information, contestants may write to: Contest Coordinator, UJA University Essay Contest, 4th Floor Room 32, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10104.



BBYO...

By Jodi Mond

Halloween Party

Chaverim BBG and Mickey Aberman AZA sponsored their annual Halloween Party for the patients in the Pediatrics Ward of Memorial Hospital on October 25. Dressed in costumes, the BBYOers handed out treats and balloons to the children, played games, sang songs and told stories. The helium balloons were donated by "Monkey Business." Mr. Irving Greenberg donated "Beeboppers" for the patients. This party is always one of the most successful and rewarding events done by the two chapters.

Monte Carlo Night

Chaverim members will be "coat check" girls at the B'nai B'rith Lodge's Monte Carlo Night. All tips will be gratefully accepted for the chapter's many important projects.

Winter Cultural

All four of the BBYO chapters in Charlotte have been busy for weeks on the annual Winter Cultural Convention taking place in Charlotte on November 12-14. Coordinators of this convention are Tamar Rocklin and Evin Somerstein. The preparation of all the welcome bags is being coordinated by Jodi Mond. Various businesses, banks and airlines in the community have been most generous in contributing small gifts for these kits. A complete list of contributors will appear in next month's issue of the "CJN."



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