

***SOLOMON
MAIMON***



***SOLOMON MAIMON:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY***

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Solomon Maimon

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WIT, WISDOM, AND PATHOS,

WITH A FEW PIECES FROM THE "BOOK OF SONGS."

INTRODUCTION.

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The inhabitants of Poland may be conveniently divided into six classes or orders:—the superior nobility, the inferior nobility, the half-noble, burghers, peasantry and Jews.

The superior nobility consist of the great landowners and administrators of the high offices of government. The inferior nobility also are allowed to own land and to fill any political office; but they are prevented from doing so by their poverty. The half-noble can neither own land, nor fill any high office in the State; and by this he is distinguished from the genuine noble. Here and there, it is true, he owns land; but for that he is in some measure dependent on the lord of the soil, within whose estate his property lies, inasmuch as he is required to pay him a yearly tribute.

The burghers are the most wretched of all the orders. They are not, 'tis true, in servitude to any man; they also enjoy certain privileges, and have a jurisdiction of their own. But as they seldom own any property of value, or follow rightly any profession, they always remain in a condition of piteable poverty.

The last two orders, namely the peasantry and the Jews, are the most useful in the country. The former occupy themselves with agriculture, raising cattle, keeping bees,—in short, with all the products of the soil. The latter engage in trade, take up the professions and handicrafts, become bakers, brewers, dealers in beer, brandy, mead and other articles. They are also the only persons who farm estates in towns and villages, except in the case of ecclesiastical

properties, where the reverend gentlemen hold it a sin to put a Jew in a position to make a living, and accordingly prefer to hand over their farms to the peasants. For this they must suffer by their farms going to ruin, as the peasantry have no aptitude for this sort of employment: but of course they choose rather to bear this with Christian resignation.

In consequence of the ignorance of most of the Polish landlords, the oppression of the tenantry, and the utter want of economy, most of the farms in Poland, at the end of last century,[6] had fallen into such a state of decay, that a farm, which now yields about a thousand Polish gulden, was offered to a Jew for ten; but in consequence of still greater ignorance and laziness, with all that advantage even he could not make a living off the farm. An incident, however, occurred at this time, which gave a new turn to affairs. Two brothers from Galicia, where the Jews are much shrewder than in Lithuania, took, under the name of *Dersawzes* or farmers-general, a lease of all the estates of Prince Radzivil, and, by means of a better industry as well as a better economy, they not only raised the estates into a better condition, but also enriched themselves in a short time.

Disregarding the clamour of their brethren, they increased the rents, and enforced payment by the sub-lessees with the utmost stringency. They themselves exercised a direct oversight of the farms; and wherever they found a farmer who, instead of looking after his own interests and those of his landlord in the improvement of his farm by industry and economy, spent the whole day in idleness, or lay drunk about the stove, they soon brought

him to his senses, and roused him out of his indolence by a flogging. This procedure of course acquired for the farmers-general, among their own people, the name of tyrants.

All this, however, had a very good effect. The farmer, who at the term had hitherto been unable to pay up his ten gulden of rent without requiring to be sent to jail about it, now came under such a strong inducement to active exertion, that he was not only able to support a family off his farm, but was also able to pay, instead of ten, four or five hundred, and sometimes even a thousand gulden.

The Jews, again, may be divided into three classes:—(1) the illiterate working people, (2) those who make learning their profession, and (3) those who merely devote themselves to learning without engaging in any remunerative occupation, being supported by the industrial class. To the second class belong the chief rabbis, preachers, judges, schoolmasters, and others of similar profession. The third class consists of those who, by their pre-eminent abilities and learning, attract the regard of the unlearned, are taken by these into their families, married to their daughters, and maintained for some years with wife and children at their expense. Afterwards, however, the wife is obliged to take upon herself the maintenance of the saintly idler and the children (who are usually very numerous); and for this, as is natural, she thinks a good deal of herself.

There is perhaps no country besides Poland, where religious freedom and religious enmity are to be met with in equal degree. The Jews enjoy there a perfectly free exercise of their religion and all other civil liberties; they have even a

jurisdiction of their own. On the other hand, however, religious hatred goes so far, that the name of Jew has become an abomination; and this abhorrence, which had taken root in barbarous times, continued to show its effects till about thirteen years ago. But this apparent contradiction may be very easily removed, if it is considered that the religious and civil liberty, conceded to the Jews in Poland, has not its source in any respect for the universal rights of mankind, while, on the other hand, the religious hatred and persecution are by no means the result of a wise policy which seeks to remove out of the way whatever is injurious to morality and the welfare of the State. Both phenomena are results of the political ignorance and torpor prevalent in the country. With all their defects the Jews are almost the only useful inhabitants of the country, and therefore the Polish people found themselves obliged, for the satisfaction of their own wants, to grant all possible liberties to the Jews; but, on the other hand, their moral ignorance and stupor could not fail to produce religious hatred and persecution.

CHAPTER I.

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My Grandfather's Housekeeping.

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My grandfather, Heimann Joseph, was farmer of some villages in the neighbourhood of the town of Mir, in the territory of Prince Radzivil.[7] He selected for his residence one of these villages on the river Niemen, called Sukoviborg, where, besides a few peasants' plots, there was a water-mill, a small harbour, and a warehouse for the use of the vessels that come from Königsberg, in Prussia. All this, along with a bridge behind the village, and on the other side a drawbridge on the river Niemen, belonged to the farm, which was then worth about a thousand gulden, and formed my grandfather's *Chasakah*. [8] This farm, on account of the warehouse and the great traffic, was very lucrative. With sufficient industry and economical skill, *si mens non laeva fuisset*, my grandfather should have been able, not only to support his family, but even to gather wealth. The bad constitution of the country, however, and his own want of all the acquirements necessary for utilising the land, placed extraordinary obstacles in his way.

My grandfather settled his brothers as tenants under him in the villages belonging to his farm. These not only lived continually with my grandfather under the pretence of assisting him in his manifold occupations, but in addition to this they would not pay their rents at the end of the year.

The buildings, belonging to my grandfather's farm, had fallen into decay from age, and required therefore to be repaired. The harbour and the bridge also had become dilapidated. In accordance with the terms of the lease the landlord was to repair everything, and put it in a condition fit for use. But, like all the Polish magnates, he resided permanently in Warsaw, and could therefore give no attention to the improvement of his estates. His stewards had for their principal object the improvement rather of their own condition than of their landlord's property. They oppressed the farmers with all sorts of exactions, they neglected the orders given for the improvement of the farms, and the moneys intended for this purpose they applied to their own use. My grandfather indeed made representations on the subject to the stewards day after day, and assured them that it was impossible for him to pay his rent, if everything was not put into proper condition according to the lease. All this, however, was of no avail. He always received promises indeed, but the promises were never fulfilled. The result was not only the ruin of the farm, but several other evils arising from that.

As already mentioned, there was a large traffic at this place; and as the bridges were in a bad state, it happened not infrequently that these broke down just when a Polish nobleman with his rich train was passing, and horse and rider were plunged into the swamp. The poor farmer was then dragged to the bridge, where he was laid down and flogged till it was thought that sufficient revenge had been taken.

My grandfather therefore did all in his power to guard against this evil in the future. For this purpose he stationed one of his people to keep watch at the bridge, so that, if any noble were passing, and an accident of this sort should happen, the sentinel might bring word to the house as quickly as possible, and the whole family might thus have time to take refuge in the neighbouring wood. Every one thereupon ran in terror out of the house, and not infrequently they were all obliged to remain the whole night in the open air, till one after another ventured to approach the house.

This sort of life lasted for some generations. My father used to tell of an incident of this sort, which happened when he was still a boy of about eight years. The whole family had fled to their usual retreat. But my father, who knew nothing of what had happened, and was playing at the back of the stove, stayed behind alone. When the angry lord came into the house with his suite, and found nobody on whom he could wreak his vengeance, he ordered every corner of the house to be searched, when my father was found at the back of the stove. The nobleman asked him if he would drink brandy, and, on the boy refusing, shouted: "If you will not drink brandy, you shall drink water." At the same time he ordered a bucketful of water to be brought, and forced my father, by lashes with his whip, to drink it out. Naturally this treatment brought on a quartan fever, which lasted nearly a whole year, and completely undermined his health.

A similar incident took place when I was a child of three years. Every one ran out of the house; and the housemaid, who carried me in her arms, hurried forth. But as the

servants of the nobleman who had arrived ran after her, she quickened her steps, and in her extreme haste let me fall from her arms. There I lay whimpering on the skirt of the wood, till fortunately a peasant passing by lifted me up and took me home with him. It was only after everything had become quiet again, and the family had returned to the house, that the maid remembered having lost me in the flight, when she began to lament and wring her hands. They sought me everywhere, but could not find me, till at last the peasant came from the village and restored me to my parents.

It was not merely the terror and consternation, into which we used to be thrown on the occasion of such a flight; to this was added the plundering of the house when deprived of its inhabitants. Beer, brandy, and mead were drunk at pleasure; the spirit of revenge even went so far at times, that the casks were left to run out; corn and fowls were carried off; and so forth.

Had my grandfather, instead of seeking justice from a more powerful litigant, rather borne the injustice, and built the bridge in question at his own expense, he would have been able to avoid all these evils. He appealed, however, persistently to the terms of his lease, and the steward made sport of his misery.

And now something about my grandfather's domestic economy. The manner of life, which he led in his house, was quite simple. The annual produce of the arable lands, pasture-lands, and kitchen-gardens, belonging to the farm, was sufficient, not only for the wants of his own family, but also for brewing and distilling. He could even, besides, sell a

quantity of grain and hay. His bee-hives were sufficient for the brewing of mead. He had also a large number of cattle.

The principal food consisted of a poor kind of corn-bread mixed with bran, of articles made of meal and milk, and of the produce of the garden, seldom of flesh-meat. The clothing was made of poor linen and coarse stuff. Only the women made in these matters a slight exception, and my father also, who was a scholar, required a different sort of life.

Hospitality was here carried very far. The Jews in this neighbourhood are continually moving about from place to place; and as there was a great traffic at our village, they were frequently passing through it, and of course they had always to stop at my grandfather's inn. Every Jewish traveller was met at the door with a glass of spirits; one hand making the *salaam*,^[9] while the other reached the glass. He then had to wash his hands, and seat himself at the table which remained constantly covered.

The support of a numerous family along with this hospitality would have had no serious effect in impairing my grandfather's circumstances, if at the same time he had introduced a better economy in his house. This, however, was the source of his misfortune.

My grandfather was in trifles almost too economical, and neglected therefore matters of the greatest importance. He looked upon it, for example, as extravagance to burn wax or tallow candles; their place had to be supplied with thin strips of resinous pine, one end of which was stuck into the chinks of the wall, while the other was lit. Not unfrequently by this means fires were occasioned, and much damage

caused, in comparison with which the cost of candles was not worth taking into consideration.

The apartment, in which beer, spirits, mead, herrings, salt and other articles were kept for the daily account of the inn, had no windows, but merely apertures, through which it received light. Naturally this often tempted the sailors and carriers who put up at the inn to climb into the apartment, and make themselves drunk gratuitously with spirits and mead. What was still worse, these carousing heroes, from fear of being caught in the act, often took to flight, on hearing the slightest noise, without waiting to put in the spigot, sprang out at the holes by which they had come in, and let the liquor run as long as it might. In this way sometimes whole casks of spirits and mead ran out.

The barns had no proper locks, but were shut merely with wooden bolts. Any one therefore, especially as the barns were at some distance from the dwelling-house, could take from them at pleasure, and even carry off whole waggonloads of grain. The sheepfold had, all over, holes, by which wolves (the forest being quite near) were able to slink in, and worry the sheep at their convenience.

The cows came very often from the pasture with empty udders. According to the superstition which prevailed there, it was said in such cases, that the milk had been taken from them by witchcraft,—a misfortune, against which it was supposed that nothing could be done.

My grandmother, a good simple woman, when tired with her household occupations, lay down often in her clothes to sleep by the stove, and had all her pockets full of money, without knowing how much. Of this the housemaid took

advantage, and emptied the pockets of half their contents. Nevertheless my grandmother seldom perceived the want, if only the girl did not play too clumsy a trick.

All these evils could easily have been avoided of course by repairing the buildings, the windows, the window-shutters and locks, by proper oversight of the manifold lucrative occupations connected with the farm, as also by keeping an exact account of receipts and disbursements. But this was never thought of. On the other hand, if my father, who was a scholar, and educated partly in town, ordered for himself a rabbinical suit, for which a finer stuff was required than that in common use, my grandfather did not fail to give him a long and severe lecture on the vanity of the world. "Our forefathers," he used to say, "knew nothing of these new-fashioned costumes, and yet were devout people. You must have a coat of striped woolen cloth,^[10] you must have leather hose, with buttons even, and everything on the same scale. You will bring me to beggary at last; I shall be thrown into prison on your account. Ay me, poor unfortunate man! What is to become of me?"

My father then appealed to the rights and privileges of the profession of a scholar, and showed moreover that, in a well-arranged system of economy, it does not so much matter whether you live somewhat better or worse, and that even my grandfather's misfortunes arose, not from extravagant consumption in housekeeping, but rather from the fact that he allowed himself by his remissness to be plundered by others. All this however was of no avail with

my grandfather. He could not tolerate innovations. Everything therefore had to be left as it was.

My grandfather was held in the place of his abode to be a rich man, which he could really have been if he had known how to make use of his opportunities; and on this account he was envied and hated by all, even by his own family, he was abandoned by his landlord, he was oppressed in every possible way by the steward, and cheated and robbed by his own domestics as well as by strangers. In short, he was *the poorest rich man* in the world.

In addition to all this there were still greater misfortunes, which I cannot here pass over wholly in silence. The pope, that is, the Russian clergyman in this village, was a dull ignorant blockhead, who had scarcely learned to read and write. He spent most of his time at the inn, where he drank spirits with his boorish parishioners, and let his liquor always be put down to his account, without ever a thought of paying his score. My grandfather at last became tired of this, and made up his mind to give him nothing more upon credit. The fellow naturally took this very ill, and therefore resolved upon revenge.

For this he found at length a means, at which indeed humanity shudders, but of which the Catholic Christians in Poland were wont to make use very often at that time. This was to charge my grandfather with the murder of a Christian, and thus bring him to the gallows. This was done in the following way: A beaver-trapper, who sojourned constantly in this neighbourhood to catch beavers on the Niemen, was accustomed at times to trade in these animals with my grandfather; and this had to be done secretly, for

the beaver is game preserved, and all that are taken must be delivered at the manor. The trapper came once about midnight, knocked and asked for my grandfather. He showed him a bag which was pretty heavy to lift, and said to him with a mysterious air, "I have brought you a good big fellow here." My grandfather was going to strike a light, to examine the beaver, and come to terms about it with the peasant. He however said, that this was unnecessary, that my grandfather might take the beaver at any rate, and that they would be sure to agree about it afterwards. My grandfather, who had no suspicion of evil, took the bag just as it was, laid it aside, and betook himself again to rest. Scarcely, however, had he fallen asleep again, when he was roused a second time with a loud noise of knocking.

It was the clergyman with some boors from the village, who immediately began to make search all over in the house. They found the bag, and my grandfather already trembled for the issue, because he believed nothing else than that he had been betrayed at the manor on account of his secret trade in beavers, and he could not deny the fact. But how great was his horror, when the bag was opened, and, instead of a beaver, there was found a corpse!

My grandfather was bound with his hands behind his back, his feet were put into stocks, he was thrown into a waggon, and brought to the town of Mir, where he was given over to the criminal court. He was made fast in chains, and put into a dark prison.

At the trial my grandfather stood upon his innocence, related the events exactly as they had happened, and, as was reasonable, demanded that the beaver-trapper should

be examined too. He, however, was nowhere to be found, was already over the hills and far away. He was sought everywhere. But the blood-thirsty judge of the criminal court, to whom the time became tedious, ordered my grandfather three times in succession to be brought to torture. He, however, continued steadfast in his assertion.

At last the hero of the beavers was found. He was examined; and as he straightway denied the whole affair, he also was put to the test of torture. Thereupon at once he blabbed the whole story. He declared that, some time before, he had found this dead body in the water, and was going to bring it to the parsonage for burial. The parson however had said to him, "There is plenty of time for the burial. You know that the Jews are a hardened race, and are therefore damned to all eternity. They crucified our Lord Jesus Christ, and even yet they seek Christian blood, if only they can get hold of it for their passover, which is instituted as a sign of their triumph. They use it for their passover-cake. You will therefore do a meritorious work, if you can smuggle this dead body into the house of the damned Jew of a farmer. You must of course clear out, but your trade you can drive anywhere."

On this confession the fellow was whipped out of the place, and my grandfather set free; but the pope remained pope.

For an everlasting memorial of this deliverance of my grandfather from death, my father composed in Hebrew a sort of epopee, in which the whole event was narrated, and the goodness of God was sung. It was also made a law, that the day of his deliverance should be celebrated in the family

every year, when this poem should be recited in the same way as the Book of Esther at the festival of Haman.[\[11\]](#)

CHAPTER II.

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First Reminiscences of Youth.

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In this manner my grandfather lived for many years in the place where his forefathers had dwelt; his farm had become, as it were, a property of the family. By the Jewish ceremonial law the *Chazakah*, that is, the right of property in an estate, is acquired by three years' possession; and the right is respected even by Christians in this neighbourhood. In virtue of this law no other Jew could try to get possession of the farm by a *Hosaphah*, that is, an offer of higher rent, if he would not bring down upon himself the Jewish excommunication. Although the possession of the farm was accompanied with many hardships and even oppressions, yet it was from another point of view very lucrative. My grandfather could not only live as a well-to-do man, but also provide richly for his children.

His three daughters were well dowered, and married to excellent men. His two sons, my uncle Moses and my father Joshua, were married likewise; and when he became old, and enfeebled by the hardships to which he had been exposed, he gave over the management of the house to his two sons in common. These were of different temperaments and inclinations, my uncle Moses being of strong bodily constitution, but inferior intelligence, while my father was the opposite; and consequently they could not work together well. My grandfather therefore gave over to my

uncle another village, and kept my father by himself, although from his profession as a scholar my father was not particularly adapted for the occupations of household-management. He merely kept accounts, made contracts, conducted processes at law, and attended to other matters of the same sort. My mother, on the other hand, was a very lively woman, well disposed to all sorts of occupations. She was small of stature, and at that time still very young.

An anecdote I cannot avoid touching on here, because it is the earliest reminiscence from the years of my youth. I was about three years old at the time. The merchants, who put up constantly at the place, and especially the *shaffers*, that is, the nobles who undertook the navigation, the purchase and delivery of goods, for the higher nobility, were extremely fond of me on account of my liveliness, and made all sorts of fun with me. These merry gentlemen gave my mother, on account of her small stature and liveliness, the nickname of *Kuza*, that is, a young filly.^[12] As I heard them often call her by this name, and knew nothing of its meaning, I also called her *Mama Kuza*. My mother rebuked me for this, and said, "God punishes any one who calls his mother *Mama Kuza*." One of these *Shaffers*, Herr Piliezki, used every day to take tea in our house, and enticed me to his side by giving me at times a bit of sugar. One morning while he was drinking his tea, when I had placed myself in the usual position for receiving the sugar, he said he would give it to me only on condition that I should say *Mama Kuza*. Now as my mother was present, I refused to do it. He made a sign therefore to my mother to go into an adjoining room. As soon as she had shut the door, I went to him and

whispered into his ear, *Mama Kuza*. He insisted however that I should say it out loud, and promised to give me a piece of sugar for each time that it was spoken. Accordingly I said, "Herr Piliezki wants me to say *Mama Kuza*; but I will not say *Mama Kuza*, because God punishes any one who says *Mama Kuza*." Thereupon I got my three pieces of sugar.

My father introduced into the house a more refined mode of life, especially as he traded with Königsberg in Prussia, where he procured all sorts of pretty and useful articles. He provided himself with tin and brass utensils; we began to have better meals, to wear finer clothes, than before; I was even clad in damask.

CHAPTER III.

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Private Education and Independent Study.

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In my sixth year my father began to read the Bible with me. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Here I interrupted my father, and asked, "But, papa, who created God?"

"God was not created by any one," replied my father; "He existed from all eternity."

"Did he exist ten years ago?" I asked again.

"O yes," my father said, "He existed even a hundred years ago."

"Then perhaps," I continued, "God is already a thousand years old?"

"Silence! God was eternal."

"But," I insisted, "He must surely have been born at some time."

"You little fool," said my father, "No! He was for ever and ever and ever."

With this answer I was not indeed satisfied; but I thought "Surely papa must know better than I, and with that I must therefore be content."

This mode of representation is very natural in early youth, when the understanding is still undeveloped, while the imagination is in full bloom. The understanding seeks merely to grasp, the imagination to grasp all round.[13]

That is to say, the understanding seeks to make the origin of an object conceivable, without considering, whether the object, whose origin is known, can also be actually represented by us or not. The imagination, on the other hand, seeks to gather into a complete image something, the origin of which is to us unknown. Thus, for example, an infinite series of numbers, which progresses according to a definite law, is for the understanding an object, to which by this law definite qualities are attached, and an object just as good as a finite series, which progresses according to the same law. For the imagination, on the other hand, the latter indeed is an object; but not the former, because it cannot grasp the former as a completed whole.

A long time afterwards, when I was staying in Breslau, this consideration suggested to me a thought, which I expressed in an essay that I laid before Professor Garve, and which, though at the time I knew nothing of the Kantian philosophy, still constitutes its foundation. I explained this somewhat in the following way:—The metaphysicians necessarily fall into self-contradiction. According to the confession of Leibnitz himself, who in this appeals to the experiment of Archimedes with the lever, the Law of Sufficient Reason or Causality is a principle of experience. Now, it is quite true that in experience everything is found to have a cause; but for the very reason, that *every* thing has a cause, nothing can be met with in experience which is a *first* cause, that is, a cause which has no cause to itself. How then can the metaphysicians infer from this law the existence of a first cause?

Afterwards I found this objection more particularly developed in the Kantian philosophy, where it is shown that the Category of Cause, or the form of hypothetical judgments used in reference to the objects of nature, by which their relation to one another is determined *a priori*, can be applied only to objects of experience through an *a priori* schema. The first cause, which implies a complete infinite series of causes, and therefore in fact a contradiction, since the infinite can never be complete, is not an object of the understanding, but an idea of reason, or, according to my theory, a fiction of the imagination, which, not content with the mere knowledge of the law, seeks to gather the multiplicity, which is subject to the law, into an image, though in opposition to the law itself.

On another occasion I read in the Bible the story of Jacob and Esau; and in this connection my father quoted the passage from the Talmud, where it is said, "Jacob and Esau divided between them all the blessings of the world. Esau chose the blessings of this life, Jacob, on the contrary, those of the future life; and since we are descended from Jacob, we must give up all claim to temporal blessings." On this I said with indignation, "Jacob should not have been a fool; he should rather have chosen the blessings of this world." Unfortunately I got for answer, "You ungodly rascal!" and a box on the ear. This did not of course remove my doubt, but it brought me to silence at least.

The Prince Radzivil, who was a great lover of the chase, came one day with his whole court to hunt in the neighbourhood of our village. Among the party was his daughter who afterwards married Prince Rawuzki. The

young princess, in order to enjoy rest at noon, betook herself with the ladies of her court, the servants in waiting and the lackeys, to the very room, where as a boy I was sitting behind the stove. I was struck with astonishment at the magnificence and splendour of the court, gazed with rapture at the beauty of the persons and at the dresses with their trimmings of gold and silver lace; I could not satisfy my eyes with the sight. My father came just as I was out of myself with joy, and had broken into the words, "O how beautiful!" In order to calm me, and at the same time to confirm me in the principles of our faith, he whispered into my ear, "Little fool, in the other world the *duksef* will kindle the *pezsure* for us," which means, In the future life the princess will kindle the stove for us. No one can conceive the sort of feeling which this statement produced in me. On the one hand, I believed my father, and was very glad about this future happiness in store for us; but I felt at the same time pity for the poor princess who was going to be doomed to such a degrading service. On the other hand, I could not get it into my head, that this beautiful rich princess in this splendid dress should ever make a fire for a poor Jew. I was thrown into the greatest perplexity on the subject, till some game drove these thoughts out of my head.

I had from childhood a great inclination and talent for drawing. True, I had in my father's house never a chance of seeing a work of art, but I found on the title-page of some Hebrew books woodcuts of foliage, birds and so forth. I felt great pleasure in these woodcuts, and made an effort to imitate them with a bit of chalk or charcoal. What however strengthened this inclination in me still more was a Hebrew

book of fables, in which the personages who play their part in the fables—the animals—were represented in such woodcuts. I copied all the figures with the greatest exactness. My father admired indeed my skill in this, but rebuked me at the same time in these words, "You want to become a painter? You are to study the Talmud, and become a rabbi. He who understands the Talmud, understands everything."

This desire and faculty for painting went with me so far, that when my father had settled in H—, where there was a manor-house with some beautifully tapestried rooms, which were constantly unoccupied because the landlord resided elsewhere, and very seldom visited the place, I used to steal away from home whenever I could, to copy the figures on the tapestries. I was found once in mid-winter half-frozen, standing before the wall, holding the paper in one hand (for there was no furniture in this apartment), and with the other hand copying the figures off the wall. Yet I judge of myself at present, that, if I had kept to it, I should have become a *great*, but not an *exact*, painter, that is to say, I sketched with ease the main features of a picture, but had not the patience to work it out in detail.

My father had in his study a cupboard containing books. He had forbidden me indeed to read any books but the Talmud. This, however, was of no avail: as he was occupied the most of his time with household affairs, I took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded. Under the impulse of curiosity I made a raid upon the cupboard and glanced over all the books. The result was, that, as I had already a fair knowledge of Hebrew, I found more pleasure