

KIBBUTZ HABONIM

MANSURA

YOMAN NO. 2

FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

JULY 1948

This anniversary issue is dedicated to

LEON LIGHTMAN

who shared our dream but is not here to see its realization. Leon gave his life, along with countless others like him, for the liberation of Israel.

Our First Birthday

We came here a year ago. What a year it has been for us and the whole Yishuv. The young Jewish State was still in its swaddling clothes when the armies of 6 Arab countries invaded its borders. The events which followed have gone to make one of the most heroic and unforgettable chapters in our history.

We were in Hadera when the Jewish State was declared on the 14th of May, 1948. The previous autumn we had completed our period of hachshara at Kfar Blum and established ourselves in a camp on the outskirts of Hadera - living the usual life of a working group in the moshava.

The following extracts from our diary describe our situation at that period:

June 1948. The last days in Hadera. There is a strong feeling that we will soon go on Hityashvut. Places have already been mentioned. One is Mishmar Hayarden and another is near Galed, in the Hills of Ephraim. We expressed a strong desire for the Galil. The declaration of the State has had a deep effect on all here as it has on the whole Yishuv. The reactions to the Arab invasion are also apparent. We have sent 5 chaverim as "tighoret" to Ein Geb and 34 chaverim have gone to help Afikim with bitzurim. We were told that we would probably go on hityashvut straight from the Jordan Valley

June 26th. We are told that our hityashvut will come any day now, and the place - Mansura el Het. We sent Moshe, Johnny and Yitzchar to have a look at the place. Chaverim from the Jordan Valley returned to Hadera to prepare. A very hectic week is in front of us. We elect a Vaad to plan the aliyah. We will have to make some painful decisions - who will go and who will stay behind.

We chose 11 bachurim and 12 bachurot to go up to Mansura.

June 30th. Neshef Pridah. Many visitors. Nobody slept much that night.

July 1st. We leave Hadera. We loaded beds and mattresses and domestic utensils onto 2 lorries and ourselves and belongings (each one was allowed to take only one sack onto 2 lorries. A few chaverim travelled up on the water tanker which arrived that morning. Our little convoy caused quite a sensation as we passed through Hadera. The locals had no need to ask where we were going. All over the lorries were scrawled "Hagalilla". The chaverim were in terrifically high spirits. We stopped for a few minutes in the middle of Hadera, one of the chaverim climbed onto the roof of a house and took down a flag and, to the cheers of the passers-by, stuck it up on our lorry.

We by-passed the main road to the Jordan Valley and travelled overland through Yavniel to the Kinneret and Tiberias. There we picked up medical supplies and then started uphill to Rosh Pina. There we were joined by Niumka, Shaul and Shelom Bordoley. We reached Machnayim (on the road to Mishmar Yarden) by 3 P.M.

It is not yet certain whether we will go up to M. this evening. The "equipment" hasn't arrived yet. We eat our sandwiches and inspect Machnayim. Looks as though it has had a warm time recently. During the evening we are told that all the bachurim and three of the bachurot (for first-aid) will go up to Mansura - at 3 A.M. The Machnayim chevra arranged a Neshef for us. Then we went to sleep for a few hours.

July 2nd. We are awakened, feeling very tired. We heard that an enemy patrol had been seen at Mansura but moved off when our covering party approached. We climb up in the dark onto lorries. The road is atrocious. There is a jeep leading the way. Our convoy reached Mansura safely and we immediately started building defences. We arrived just before dawn. What a queer feeling when it began to get light and we could see our territory. Our mazel that this should be an exceptionally hot day. We worked feverishly the whole day till dark. At the end of the day's work we put up the tents and washed with water brought by our tanker from Rosh Pina. Sicha after supper with Shaul, who reviewed the day's work and future tasks.

July 9th. The truce ended to-day. Fighting renewed all over the country. What a week it has been! We dig and we guard. Chaverim are very tired. We have started to sleep in "emdot". Much firing Mishmar way. Conditions here are very rough indeed in this abandoned village. It doesn't look as though it was ever much in its best days and they are well passed! If well cleaned out the houses might be usable as stables. But what a view of the Kinneret we have from here! Down below in a great wadi between us and the Hills of Golan (in Syria) flows the Jordan. From a nearby hillside one can see it, a winding silver stream, flowing into the Kinneret. A beautiful sight.

July 16th. To-day we were attacked from the air. Our water tanker out of action. Some miraculous escapes, not to mention the bomb which dropped outside one tent but didn't go off! Enemy Plane brought down at Ayeleth Heshacher. Had a nice break this evening. 15 of us went to Rosh Pine and had a shower under the water pipe, where we get our water. This pipe is on the open road. What a sight we made!

July 17th. Our first Shabbat since we came here. What a wonderful feeling it is to be "free" one complete day! Another pleasure was to see our planes overhead.

July 19th. The second Truce. A quiet night. Apart from Shomrim the rest of us are allowed to sleep in our tents - in our clothes. We decide to put up a chadar ochel. Since the tanker was hit, the water position is serious.

July 20th. Joel brought lorry to-day from Haifa, loaned to us by the Sochnut. Terrific winds, covering food and everything else with dust.

July 24th. We decide to lay a pipe line connecting us with the spring at Tube, more than 1-1/2 kilometres from here, up rough hillside. It will be a terrific job. There is no proper road to Tube and it means that the pipes (3" and over 6 metres in length) will have to be transported by hand.

July 29th. Decided to buy Tractor - TD 9.

July 31st. Shots and explosions heard, from the North. Syrians advance 1-1/2 kilometres into no-mans-land and dug themselves in on a hill between our lines and theirs. Sleeping in "emdot" once more.

August 9th. At asafe this evening discussed again the problem of contact with the group in Hadera. The lack of contact is badly felt. How long are we going to be separated?

August 11th. Letter from Niunka asking us for our views about further Aliyah from England - whether we want it? Eze Shela!

August 12th. KKL here to discuss question of our land. Boundaries still undefined.

August 13th. Decide to build bungalows and a proper chadar ochel before the rains start.

August 15th. Received compressors to-day to help us with our bitzurim. We have arranged shifts so that the compressors work unceasingly from dawn to dark.

August 19th. Starting laying the pipe line to-day. Very heavy going. To-day a wonderful sight - 2 cows and a heifer were bought. The beginning of our refet. It was good to see them, after doing nothing but bitzurim for so long.

August 26th. As the situation is easier, we decided to let the fathers visit Hadera once a month. Financial position is rather difficult.

September 4th. Decided to send Shuki and Michael for hachsharah in binyan. Chaim has already gone for hachsharah as paver and tile layer. Alfie is also on hachsharah in the garage of Kfar Giladi.

September 7th. Lorry out of order. No water for washing.

September 14th. To-day a new anaf appeared on the board of the Searen Avodah - Falcha

September 17th. We have received a warning to be prepared for trouble. We sleep in our clothes.

September 18th. The night passes quietly. We went out to work. At 6:30 in the evening we heard familiar music - machine gun and cannon fire. Bob returned from Kfar Blum to-day and told us that Bernadotte has been assassinated in Jerusalem. No water to-day.

September 19th. Yohannan returned with the news to-day that a general Arab attack is expected. A manouvre was held in the afternoon. We expected water to-day and waited up till near midnight (when it arrived) to have a wash.

September 23rd. It looks as though something is going to happen. The army sent us a first-aid man.

September 24th! The tension grows. 2 more army first-aid dressers arrived.

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The "alarums and excursions" continued until the winter and the rains set in, disposing of any likelihood of a major conflict breaking out again until the spring. However, we maintained Shmirah, except when the heavy rains made it well nigh impossible.

SHMIRAH AT MANSURA

Dusk. The working day is over. We can hear the chaverim making merry in the showers. In the morning when they went out to work we slept. Now it is our turn to work. For implements we take rifles and stens and grenades. We leave the chadar ochel and set out for our various posts. I am on duty with K at No. 3 post, north-east of our camp, directly facing the enemy lines in Mishmar Hayarden.

We avoid the trenches which drag their ugly length tortuously round the whole terrain and make our way as rapidly as the rough path will allow to our post. There we settle down to our night-long vigil, making ourselves as comfortable as we can, although the conditions do not exactly lend themselves to comfort. We have to see and hear without being seen and heard. Every hour we patrol the area between ourselves and the adjacent positions. The patrols are a relief. Standing still for hours on a cold night is no lark.

The great wadi which divides our territory from Syria is shrouded in shadow. Covered with rocks and crevices it provides ample cover from observation even in daylight. Now, a regiment could lurk there without being seen. We speculate: how close to our barbed wire fence could they approach undetected? From the depths of the wadi can be heard a sound as of a distant waterfall - the regular beat of the Jordan as it winds its way with a fall here and there, through the wadi into the Kinneret. We tell ourselves that "some-day, when this business is over" we'll go down there and inspect the Jordan at close quarters. We worked out a grand tiyul down the wadi, through the rice fields and round the Kinnereth to Ein Geb.

Suddenly we hear firing Mishmar way. Probably some nervous shomer in the Arab lines. Nevertheless we take cover. One doesn't take chances when the enemy are so close.

The hours pass slowly. A cold wind is blowing from the East and we feel the nip even through the armoury of pullovers and jackets in which we are swathed.

"This is no life for a Yiddishe boy", remarks my companion, breaking an hour's silence. He is of a somewhat taciturn nature and the utterance of this classical comment is his way of telling me that he also is feeling the effect of the east wind and the hours of watching in this oppressive darkness.

We can see the lights of traffic on the Damascus Road, heading towards the Jordan. Supplies for the Syrian forces in Mishmar Hayarden. Their convoys descend every night. There is something fascinating about these tiny pinpoints of light suddenly appearing out of the darkness, a kind of impudent challenge to the overwhelming blackness of the night. We almost feel a sympathy with them although we know they belong to the enemy.

At midnight our relief arrives and we go into supper. We can't get back to the kitchen quickly enough! We are a bit tipsy with the reaction and talk loudly and laugh at anything, forgetting that there are chaverim sleeping in tents nearby. In this mood our simple kitchen makes a wonderful sight - so warm and cosy and glowing with light and there is an appetising smell of cooking food.

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What is time? we reflected soberly, having come to the end of our supper. I glanced at the clock and then at my fellow shower. He nodded his understanding.

"We've only just come in", he said. Yes, we had only just come in. Our time was up. We went back through the trenches, although this was a long, tortuous journey because of the endless zig zags, but it was the only way to avoid falling down them.

We stumble round the last corner. A challenging voice rings out:
"Mi sham"?
Watchman - what of the night?

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AFTER A YEAR

Today most of us are living in bungalows instead of tents. We have our own water supply which is sufficient for domestic purposes, refet, etc. and no longer have to send our lorry to fetch water from Rosh Pina; we have a fair sized chadar ochel instead of the hornet-infested, broken-down shack which we used as an eating house last year (when we first came the moedoth were opposed to the erection of buildings - "in case something happened!"); near the chadar ochel is a small patch of cucumbers and 5 dunams of tomatoes; our refet has developed; we have 5 tractors; we.....but that will do for the time being to indicate the progress made since last year. Now for one or two items which have remained unchanged and which are adversely affecting our whole development as a kibbutz.

"Neighbours"

The Syrians are still sitting on our flanks in Mishmar Hayarden, as a result of which our chevra is still divided. Most of the bachurot and the children have remained in Hadera. Apart from the economic handicap of maintaining two machanoth, the separation is the source of considerable social strain. It is vital to unite the two sections of our kibbutz at the earliest possible opportunity and we are already taking the necessary technical steps towards this end, in the hope that the negotiations with the Syrians will prove successful.

Permanent Site

At long last the authorities are taking steps towards the final selection of our permanent site. Investments made while we are in this temporary camp especially so far as buildings are concerned, are bound to involve a good deal of wastage - in labour and material. Therefore, other reasons apart, the urgency of settling on a permanent site as soon as possible requires no further explanation - or stressing, so far as we are concerned.

The criteria for selecting a permanent site for a kibbutz are usually of a topographical and economic nature (centre of meshek - allowing for expansion-suitability for building on etc). However, in our case, as a border kibbutz the military factor also plays an important part in the final choice.

Recently we were visited by a committee (representing the various institutions concerned: KKL, Sochnut, Kibbutz Hameuchad and the Army) whose task it was to choose a suitable spot for our permanent machaneh. A site suggested by us was rejected by the committee on security grounds (from all other points of view they were prepared to accept it). The alternative suggestions offered to us was not received with enthusiasm on our part, to say the least.

From a scenic point of view its deficiencies are obvious (especially compared with the spot we had suggested). From a climatic aspect also it bears no comparison with the hill site which had been our suggestion. However the choice, unfortunately, is limited, and it looks as though we will have no alternative but to accept the site suggested to us.

This was the view arrived at, after much discussion, by our vaad hameshek, which decided at its last meeting, to recommend the acceptance of the site suggested by the authorities.

Transfer of Hadera Machaneh

At the same meeting the vaad hameshek accepted a plan for the transfer of the chevra in Hadera to Mansura before the winter (this winter!) It will require a terrific effort, involving amongst other things, the making and erecting of 5 bungalows (2 of them of special construction-double doors etc-for the children) before the rains start.

The plan is a double-barrelled one and provides: A. for the transfer direct to our permanent site - or, failing the necessary conditions, B. transfer to our present machaneh.

Most kibbutzim in their early years are compelled (mainly because of lack of capital - all available resources having to be invested in the development of the meshek) to establish "temporary" buildings for accommodation, etc. Eventually, these buildings become an eyesore, a kind of slumtown in the kibbutz, defacing the general

lay-out and an impediment so far as planned expansion is concerned.

Therefore, the main condition for our carrying out "A" plan transfer to the permanent site before the winter - is that the Settlement Dept. of the Jewish Agency prepares in good time - within 2 months - the blueprints of our future meshek. Thus armed we can avoid the erection of temporary buildings within the actual precincts of the meshek. These can be erected on a suitable area close to, but outside the actual framework of the kibbutz-to-be, and will therefore not interfere with the building plans within the meshek. The ideal, of course, would be to avoid temporary building, either in or near the permanent site, but all this means is additional inevitable investment in our temporary machaneh with the resultant wastage.

If the blueprints are not ready in time, we will attempt to carry out "B" plan - transfer to our present machaneh at Mansura, moving over to the permanent site as soon as possible.

The Water Problem

To carry out either plan will involve, besides the construction of the bungalows (perhaps the main problem because of our limited resources), considerable expenditure and much ingenuity. It is clear, for example, that if we increase our numbers at Mansura, the present supply of water will not be sufficient for our needs. There is an additional well at Tuba which can be cleared and joined on to our present source. Assuming this will provide sufficient for our immediate domestic needs, the next task will be to "carry" the water to our permanent site, which is about 80 metres higher than the source of the water at Tuba. Besides extending the pipe line another kilometre or so, it will also be necessary to use a pump and small reservoir in order to "raise" the water.

So far as a major supply of water for irrigation is concerned, it depends how soon the regional water scheme at Malachah (in the Huleh) is put into operation. No definite details or dates are forthcoming about this scheme.

Meshek

Falcha. During the past few weeks we have been harvesting hay at Khalsa (in the Huleh) with excellent results. 100 tons of hay were cut, baled and transported to Mansura. 60 tons will be kept for our own use and 40 tons (stored at Machnayim aerodrome) will be sold later in the season. The hay was transported by our "Mack", averaging 2 loads a day, which was good going considering the kind of roads it had to cover (the road from the aerodrome to Mansura is a test for an unloaded lorry, let alone one piled high with hay). At Khalsa we also harvested 100 dunams of Chilba (an Arab name for a green manure crop). Nobody seems to know its English equivalent. This crop as far as I can gather is not grown

in England) for seed. Here also the results were good yielding 80 kilos per dunam which is said to be well above average for this crop.

80 dunams of Barley were also harvested, but here the results were poor due to late sowing and insufficient cultivation (a result of conditions beyond our control. After the Second Truce we made along with many other kibbutzim - except that they were already established and were better equipped - a desperate attempt to get crops in, to make up for lost time. To this extent even the small yield obtained is a gain, apart from the value of the experience for our Falachim).

Harvesting has now begun in fields nearer home - in the area allocated to us near Machnayim aerodrome. Here there are about 200 dunams of beans and 80 dunams of barley.

General Remarks.

We have been steadily adding, according to the means at our disposal, to our falcha machinery, and to-day this branch is adequately equipped for the next season's work. Its equipment includes 4 tractors, combine, New Holland Baler, 4 furrow International plough, 4 furrow disc plough etc.

Gan

Market gardening without water is also an experiment so far as we are concerned. The experiment was carried out on a modest scale: 16 dunams of onions, 10 dunams tomatoes, 9 dunams water melons and a small patch of cucumber. The results have been good. Our first consignment of onions was sent to market a few weeks ago - a little over 2 tons for which we received £129. A second consignment was sent last week. We have also started to eat our own tomatoes and cucumbers and can vouch for the quality!

We are planning to increase the area of market gardening next season to 100-150 dunams. Before cultivation, the land will have to be first cleared of stones. The results have shown that the soil is rich and give some idea of the yields which irrigation would produce.

Sikul

Has been carried on up till now on a very small scale. Four chaverim with a waggon and mules have been clearing a field in the vicinity of our mechaneh. Apart from minor misadventures with scorpions a fairly good "norma" was maintained. "Norma" is an expression which will be cropping up a good deal in the future in connection with sikul. What does it mean? It's Hebrew for "norm"! The average cleared in a day.

We are paid for clearing the stones from the fields on a kind of contract basis by the KKL. A KKL surveyor inspects a given area and estimates the number of working days it should take to clear it,

and pays us on that basis. For example, he will estimate that a certain field will take 100 working days to clear and will offer us £120 to clear the field. Our job then is to clear it at least within that estimate in order to earn a minimum wage (the KKL are not over generous in their estimates. One has all one's work out out in order to earn the low wage of £1 20 grush per day). The aim in sikul is to produce the maximum results by the use of machinery and the most suitable methods for each particular area. After some experience in each area one can assess the amount cleared per person in a day. This is the "norma".

Yohannan, who is in charge of sikul, has got "norma" on the brain, so I thought it worth while explaining for the benefit of newcomers who are apt to jump to the wrong conclusion!

Tractors

Since our last report we have acquired 2 new tractors: a TD 9 and a D4 (with bulldozer). The latter is on outside work at Kfar Blum, where we did 225 hours work (£2-75 grush an hour) preparing sites for fish ponds.

In addition to the usual felcha crew (Johnny, Shimon, Reuben, Henan, and Bob) the following chaverim have recently been added to this branch: Leslie, Len, Cyril, Nocky and Blacky. Two more chaverim will be added later making a total crew of 12 for the 5 tractors. Alfie, who recently completed his period of hachsharah at Kfar Giladi represents our one-man travelling garage!

Carpentry

Our carpentry shop recently completed its first bungalow. It is well-constructed, with more conveniences (space for cupboards, etc.) than the pre-fabricated models obtained from the Jewish Agency. It also has the advantage over them in that it can be dismantled with greater ease and less damage to the material. This will be a telling factor when we transfer to our permanent site.

Our carpentry branch is in a similar stage of development as the rest of the meshek, that is, in a fairly primitive state, having to improvise constantly - insufficiently equipped, both as regards equipment and trained personnel are concerned. To make it possible for our carpenters to supply our requirements (on a payable basis) we will have to establish suitable conditions. A proper place of work and particularly, machinery.

Metal Workshop

The latter remarks about the carpentry branch apply, more or less, to our smithy. Its development follows a similar pattern. An important development will be made with the installation of electricity (the Generator will begin to function in a couple of weeks). There are three experienced chaverim working in this branch (Joe C. Mark and Michael J.). Two others are being trained (Frank at Afikim and Dave at home).

The Road

When we came here the army and the Sochnut and the KKL and Uncle Tom Cobbley all agreed that a good road must be built otherwise we'd be out off during the winter. Surveyors came to mark out the road last autumn but that was as far as we got with the road. Winter came, and the old path, which the Arabs and their camels had used for centuries, became almost unusable.

From Mansura to the aerodrome, in summer, it takes a little over an hour. In winter, through the botz, between 2 and 3 hours, dependant on your stamina and gumboots. We came to know every inch of that path, with its ruts and stones and wadis - up the slope from the top of which you could see the Syrian pill boxes, past Tel Roman, the graveyard at Khirbet er Munthar - not much farther to go now - now into the wadi, in winter almost impassable, up and on to the aerodrome.

Last week the surveyor came again and now work has actually started on the road. It has been marked out and cleared with picks and turias and now the paving has started. How long will it take? The estimates vary, but we will be happy if it will be completed by the winter.

Elections

Our annual elections are held at Rosh Hashona. However, owing to many changes taking place through chaverim going and returning from outside work, hachsharah etc., we found it necessary recently to hold elections for most of the vaadoth. Last week chaverim were elected to the following vaadoth:

V. Tarbuth: Rachel, Asher, Victor, Gershie, Dickie

V. Avoda: Izak, Alfie, Joe F. Marion

V. Kalkali: Johnny, Moshe, Nevvy, Yitzchak E., Menanel Cheshbonot
Mercaz Knioth and the Gizbar.

Mercaz Knioth: Mufti.

The following vaadoth remain to be chosen: Mazkiruth and Aliyah

	<u>Our Numbers</u>
Hadera	45 chaverim and 16 children
Mansura	70 "
Outside Work(Afikim)	12 "
Hachshara	15 "
	<u>142</u>

Fire! Fire!

There has been an epidemic of shrub fires breaking out throughout the country. The heavy rains this year encouraged the growth of dense flora and there were no wandering Arab herds of goats and cattle to keep it down. No doubt, in some cases, the fires were started by the farmers themselves. Scared of being taken off their guard, they start burning a stretch on their own territory hoping

to keep it under control, and then a sudden change of wind and the fire spreads furiously elsewhere-out of control. Valuable, hard-earned crops have been destroyed.

Mansura has also been in the fashion. Our first fire started a few weeks ago. Suddenly I heard a gong sounded, then saw a number of the boys running with fire-fighting equipment (wet sacks and mops!) towards the Arab houses on the eastern side of machaneh. Clouds of smoke were issuing from the hillside. The boys began banging away with their mops (a piece of canvas fastened round a stick - they are very effective).

Earlier in the day a fire had started down in the wadi and it had spread towards our machaneh, helped by the wind. If it reached the outskirts of the machaneh it would spread with ease because of the dry shrub which covered the whole site. The boys slashed desperately at the advancing flames. It looked like a gigantic fly-swatting contest - and it seemed as hopeless. The fire advanced inexorably.

The boys' faces were black with smoke and they could hardly keep their eyes open, but they were winning. The wind had veered to the south and was blowing the fire in that direction. If only we could keep it at bay till it passed the machaneh, we would be out of danger. Smoke and flame. The grim thudding of the mops and sacks. The firefighters were weary.

Suddenly a loud report - a stray bullet had become ignited and gone off. Fortunately, nobody was hit. Through the smoke I noticed an Arab horse moving away from the spot where the bullet had gone off. Then it came towards me - it was Teddy hopping out of the danger zone with the others close behind.

We succeeded in beating out the flames heading in our direction. The wind was still blowing strongly towards the south and it took the fire down the wadi. For the time being we were safe - unless the wind changed direction again.

The fire went on burning the whole night in the wadi. We watched it for hours. The flames could be seen for miles and made a wonderful sight in the darkness. There is something fascinating about the sight of fire at night, terrifying when it is heading in the direction of your home. We went to bed apprehensively, and the shomrim were instructed to call us out if the wind changed direction.

That was only the first of them. There were other fires to the north of our machaneh, even more menacing, spreading wildly from the region of Mishmar Hayarden and threatening our crops. One Arab field next to ours (Actually our field now. The Arabs formerly at Tuba have been allowed to come back to harvest the crops they sowed last year) was burned out and its valuable crop of wheat destroyed. We fought like madmen together with the Arabs to keep the fire at bay. It advanced rapidly. When the wind blew towards you, you hadn't an "earthly". Our technique was to attack in a unit after each gust of wind had spent itself. Then

we rushed along the line of flame panting, banging away and slashing at it - the Arabs with their sticks and we with our wet sacks and mops, black and perspiring, eyes red-rimmed and weary. No time to let up! The fire won't wait! It rushes on leaving behind black desolation. Fortunately, we managed to get it under control before it reached our crops. But it was a narrow escape.

The Dream

There are easier places of hity-shvut than Mansura. No doubt. But its Hobson's Choice, comrade. As they say where I come from, this is our cup of tea and we'll make the best of the drinking.

The Stones. Yes, first of all we'll get rid of the stones. The fields are just crying out to be relieved of their burden. When you load the trailer and gradually clear a patch of earth you can almost hear it sigh with relief.

Then we'll plant trees - apple trees and pears and vines (remember what it says in the Good Book: "the vines with the tender grape give a good smell") and we'll sow corn and green fodder for the cattle; we'll plant potatoes and grow onions and tomatoes and cucumbers and cream cheese ("Yesh binkim?") yes, for those who like it, binkom. We'll have cows and sheep and mules and vaedoth. We'll have milk and honey (if Annette's bees can make a peace pact with the local hornets). And then our secret weapon - the mifal.

There you are - our Five Year plan. Maybe they'll put me on the Vaad Hameshek for that! How fine and simple it sounds. How simple! But think! Just think how many asephot - how many meetings of the Vaad Hameshek - will sleep through - how many sichot on sikul - how many reports on water from Malachah - on the transfer of the machaneh from Hadera - how many, oh, Lord! How many visits of experts - of reports what Gavrieli said and what Herzfeld promised and what Nachmai refused and promised and agreed and didn't do - how many cube miles of hot air...gallons of blood and sweat stand between us and the fulfillment of the Dream - how many?

As Tabenkin would say (he did say it - last month at the Dafne moatza) "Ech komi-tragi haYofi shelanu" (to appreciate Tabenkin's style demands at least 5 years study at Chelm Yeshivah. Anyway his next step is to reverse the sentence and then dance down the middle. It's like musical chairs. Look - I'll have another go) "Eze yofi shel hatragi....echkomi ha tragi shalnu" (see what I mean? But I guess I'm wasting my time displaying the treasures of Tabenkin's art before infidels. James Joyce would have loved him).

Anyway, as I was saying, that sums it up: "Eze yofi shel ha komi-tragi ha Mansura shelanu". (for those in the Western Isles to whom the above is gibberish - don't worry! Some of your Eastern brothers are probably in the same boat).

And we'll have a few machines (one must keep up with the times) and if we have machines, we'll also need a place to repair them. And to work in the place where we repair machines - we will have to recruit chaverim; to take their precious hoes and turias from their hands and to drag them from their beloved fields. And they will stand in their machine shops, gazing longingly at their more fortunate comrades, walking freely on mother earth, bending elegantly now and then to pick up a stone which they flick into a nearby basket. And we will say to them - to you unfortunates who have to work with the cold, inanimate steel and iron, our hearts bleed for you, but every fifth year you will be released from bondage, your hoes and turias will be returned to you and the rubber baskets for sikul and you will return to the soil of your forefathers (we don't mean under it!) and life will be good.

Yes, its a fine dream, my chinas. Just close your eyes and think about the strawberries and cream.