

S H O L E M A S C H

The Apostle

TRANSLATED BY MAURICE SAMUEL

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1943, BY SHOLEM ASCH

All rights reserved This book, or parts thereof, must
not be reproduced in any form without permission

This complete copyright edition is produced in full compliance
with the Government's regulations for conserving paper and
other essential materials

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY
H. WOLFE BOOK MFG. COMPANY, NEW YORK

CONTENTS

PART ONE

1	First Fruits	3
2	From the Ends of the Earth	14
3	The Preacher Istephan	26
4	The Breaking of Bread	35
5	Stronger than Death	47
6	Khaifa, the Rock	59
7	Saul of Tarshish	71
8	Rabban Gamaliel	82
9	The Two Miriams	91
10	The Zealot	97
11	The Stoning	106
12	The Parting of the Ways	115
13	Day of Atonement	121
14	Reb Jacob Ben Joseph	130
15	Quicksands of Conscience	139
16	The Brink of the Abyss	152
17	The Road to Damascus	161
18	Metamorphosis	172
19	The Foretaste	185
20	"I Will Send Thee"	195

PART TWO

1	Alexandria	207
2	Difficulties of Divinity	219
3	The Tidings Reach Rome	229
4	The Stiff-necked People	245
5	Khaifa Breaks the Barrier	254
6	Saul Waits	263
7	The Call	273
8	Among the Gentiles	279

9	Antioch	285
10	From Saul to Paul	293
11	Across the Mountains	306
12	"Persecutions and Afflictions"	315
13	The Opened Door	326
14	"In Thy Blood Shalt Thou Live"	343
15	In Battle with Gods and Men	353
16	The Unknown God	372
17	The Fool of the Messiah	379
18	Hellas	389
19	Of One Blood	402
20	The Birth of the Church	410
21	Unto These Last	428
22	The Portent	436
23	The Breaking Point	446
24	Paul the Apostle	458
25	For Love of the Gentiles	467
26	One Day in Ephesus	481
27	Diana of the Ephesians	489
28	A Threat to Business	496
29	With Rod and Love	506
30	"I Also Am an Israelite"	515
31	Granite between the Millstones	529
32	Pharisee and Son of a Pharisee	539
33	The Song of Lukas	550
34	For the Hope of Israel	554
35	Shipwreck	564

PART THREE

1	Out of Strength Cometh Forth	
	Sweetness	577
2	I. Rome	587
	II. Paul before Seneca	600
3	Disputation	605
4	The Ringing of the Chains	612
5	Peter in Rome	626
6	One Family in God	636

7	Antonius the Stable Boy	641
8	"As a Beloved Brother"	647
9	Sabina Poppea	654
10	"With Jews a Jew"	662
11	Babylon	665
12	Nero	675
13	The Day of Wrath	683
14	In Search of a Scapegoat	692
15	The Great Trial	700
16	In Green Pastures	708
17	Kaddish	721
18	In the Catacombs	723
19	"I Have Kept the Faith"	730
20	"The Grace of the Lord Be with You"	737
21	"L'on?"	744
22	The Meeting of the Ways	749

PART ONE

Chapter One

FIRST FRUITS

SEVEN weeks had gone by since that memorable day when on the hill of Golgotha Yeshua of Nazareth had been crucified by command of Pontius Pilate. The disciples and followers of the crucified one had left the city and gone into hiding among their own on the Mount of Olives. And now the hosts of the *Ebionim*, the poor, the homeless and forlorn, streamed into Jerusalem up the narrow, winding path leading from the Kidron valley. They came down from the Mount of Olives and up again by way of the Kidron valley into the Akra quarter, the immemorial home of Jerusalem's poor. They slipped through the festive crowds of Jerusalemites and strangers who filled the streets, and their gray, tattered coverings of burlap stood out against the multi-colored garb of the holiday celebrants. Their feet were unsandaled, their heads uncovered; their raiment of sackcloth was tied about their waists with girdles of rope. The women among them were not in better case than the men; only to some of them the black veil of widowhood imparted a certain distinction, and there was one whose tall, slender figure and air of stately sorrow brought to the mind of passers-by the memory of Naomi returning to her native city from the fields of Moab.

The men were powerful and muscular, their beards and faces covered with the dust of the road. They carried on their broad backs vast bundles of household goods, mattresses woven of bamboo rushes, folded tents, basins, cruses, and baskets of provisions—onions, cucumbers, lettuce, and flat cakes. Clearly they were coming into the city for a prolonged stay.

The hosts of the *Ebionim* attracted little attention. Jerusalem was accustomed to the spectacle of groups of families, and even of entire villages, moving in for a sojourn of several weeks. But no children were to be seen in this throng which moved steadily toward the ancient King David wall opposite the muddy Siloah spring, where the women

of Jerusalem's poor came for their water. The cave-dwellings which rose, tier above tier, in the massive wall, were by tradition the refuge of the homeless, and here the *Ebionim* could claim the imprescriptible rights of squatters. Hillel the water-carrier, who was of the companionship, had on one of the tiers his dwelling, in which the Rabbi, whom they now called the Messiah, had eaten the last supper with his disciples.

But there were others besides Hillel the water-carrier who belonged to the *Ebionim* and who had already made their homes in the David wall. They were on hand now to welcome and install the new arrivals. Some of them waited at the foot of the vast ruin and helped the women up the narrow steps to the upper tiers. The men unfolded their tents and pitched them side by side with those of other poor sojourners, on the damp level in front of the wall.

It was the time of the great festival of first fruits, and countless pilgrims were bringing their offerings to the House of the Lord; and since these fruits could only be such as had grown on the soil of the Holy Land, the soil flowing with milk and honey, the great majority of the Pentecost pilgrims were native Jews.

Every province sent the fruits and vegetables which ripened earliest within its borders. There was a rivalry of long standing between the patricians of Jericho, great landowners in the rich Jordan valley, and the poorer Galileans of the north, as to who should bring to Jerusalem the first figs ripened in advance of the season, or a new variety of vegetable, a thornless artichoke, a stringless bean, or some other novelty springing in sacred soil.

A hot east wind blew from the desert and covered with a fine dust the houses glittering in the fierce sunlight. In the streets the dust never settled, but hung in a low cloud about the feet of the countless pilgrims. The city was filled to overflowing; men and women, young and old, sought shelter from the parching heat in the shadows of the arcades which surrounded the houses of the rich in the upper city near the Temple entrance. Others clustered under the awnings of sackcloth or branches which the shopkeepers put up in the great marketplace to keep the sun, the dust, and the flies from their stores of wine, honey, incense, flour, and vegetables. Still others found refuge in the niches between houses in the alleys of the lower city.

And even when it seemed that not another foothold remained in Jerusalem, the crowds of pilgrims continued to pour in and were still

absorbed, not without some degree of order. For, according to the custom, the shopkeepers and artisans of Jerusalem waited in the streets for the deputations from their native provinces; and when these approached, carrying their baskets of first fruits, the cry of welcome rose: "Ho, you, brothers of such and such a village, come in peace!" Every group came marching in to the sound of flutes and timbrels; an ox, the sacrificial offering, led the way, its horns adorned according to the means and social status of the deputation, with costly ribbons or with a wreath of olive leaves. The farmers of the neighboring village of Modiin carried the fresh vegetables which were considered such a delicacy in Jerusalem; those that came from remoter areas brought such fruits as would retain their freshness over a longer journey. In the procession of gifts were to be seen yellow sheaves of early wheat from the rich fields of Benjamin, while here and there, from among the sea of rough-woven baskets resting on the broad shoulders of peasants, flashed a fine-wrought golden tray heaped with figs and held aloft in the jeweled hands of a patrician.

The second day of the inbringing of first fruits was the festival of Pentecost, the most joyous of all the Jewish festivals, for it commemorated the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Many Jews who lived abroad, and who therefore could not bring their first fruits to the Temple, were nevertheless drawn to Jerusalem for the festival. The sacred area was filled with visitors from every corner of the Diaspora, who came to take part in the brilliant ceremonies, to fall on their faces in the Temple courts, to hear the Levites blow the silver trumpets and play on their harps, while they sang verses from the Psalms. In the innermost court of the sanctuary the white-robed Priests stood barefoot, offering up the sacrifices prescribed for the festival. During those hours the whole Temple was a stormy ocean of colors, a pageant of fantastic costumes, and ten thousand faces were lifted eagerly to the light which streamed from the innermost sanctuary. There were Jews from Babylon in long mantles fastened up to their throats, and Jews from Cilicia and Cyrene in cloaks of woven goat's hair; there were Jews from distant regions of Asia, men whose faces were bronzed almost to blackness, whose bodies and limbs were lean and bony, as if the blazing sands had burned away their flesh; there were Jews from Persia and Medea, with long, curled beards and thick-plaited black hair; there were poor Jews from the provinces of Arabia,

whose only covering was a white sheet; there were even Jews from Rome, wearing proudly the toga of their adopted city.

On this day of Pentecost, seven weeks after the crucifixion on Golgotha, several men stood in a corner of the Temple court, the center of a crowd of curious pilgrims. It was not their appearance which attracted attention, for their dress and bearing were those of Galileans, familiar figures in Jerusalem: a robe of sackcloth, bony, protruding arms and legs, high heads thickly covered with black curls, tangled beards, flashing eyes. It was what they were relating and their manner of relating it—a marvelous and incomprehensible story told with wild and eager gestures, as if they were feeling the story with their fingers while they told it with their lips.

The principal speaker was a man of middle age, who bore his years like one unaccustomed to them, as if they had come upon him not singly and slowly, but suddenly and all at once. His dense, bristling beard and his close curls were half black, half gray, but his eyebrows, like his eyes, had the luster of youth. His earnest face, furrowed with the marks of labor and tribulation, impressed all beholders with the man's sincerity and truthfulness. But his voice carried even more conviction than his appearance, for though he kept it low, it rang with inspiration. The language he used, a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew, was barely intelligible to the listeners, most of whom used Greek as their mother tongue; yet, by the intensity of his conviction, by the pressure of his desire to impart his tidings, he compelled not only their attention, but their understanding, too.

He told them an incredible thing: that Yeshua, whom Pontius Pilate had crucified on the Passover before this Pentecost, was none other than the promised Messiah; that he, the crucified one, had risen from death and had revealed himself to his followers and disciples on the Mount of Olives, where they had hidden themselves after his death that they might not be swallowed by the storm. And the speaker went on—amazing his listeners with his learning—to add to his own testimony the corroboration of holy script, quoting verses from the Psalms and from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, which foretold, each in its own place, how the Messiah would suffer and how God would raise salvation for Israel from the loins of King David. This man, this very man whom Pontius Pilate had crucified, was indeed the Messiah for whom all waited. He was the first to have risen from the dead; he had

shown himself in the flesh to them, his disciples ; he had sat with them, had partaken of food and drink with them ; and he had commanded them to carry the tidings to the children of Israel and to all the other peoples, even to the Samaritans, in every corner of the world ; he had bidden them say to all and sundry that before many days would pass, he, the Messiah, would come down from heaven, and that the Kingdom of Heaven would begin on earth. He had bidden them go to Jerusalem, which they had indeed done, and impart the tidings to the House of Israel.

The speaker told further how one of the disciples had refused to believe that the stranger appearing to them in the flesh was he who had been crucified by Pontius Pilate. This was how it had come to pass : they, the disciples, were seated together in a garret, and they broke bread in the manner their Rabbi had taught them, and suddenly there was a stranger in their midst, one whom they did not know, and he hailed them with the Jewish greeting, "*Sholom aleichem.*"

"His face was the face of a man who had passed through death, and yet he was alive. And he spoke like one of us, and he broke bread with us"—so the doubting disciple had told the story. "He sat among us and was one of us. I looked upon his hands, and I saw where they had been pierced by the nails ; the blood was still hardened on the holes, and the wounds were not yet healed. And he took my finger and he thrust it into the wound, and then I knew that it was he, it was Yeshua of Nazareth, who had been crucified by Pontius Pilate and had risen from death, as a Messiah and deliverer for the House of Israel."

Among the bystanders, Jews of Palestine and Jews from abroad, there were some who remembered vividly the strange advent of the Rabbi of Nazareth on the preceding Passover ; there were others whose recollection of the incident was vague ; but in all of these the passionate speech of the Galilean stirred deep memories of hopes and dreams. It stirred up also the bitter taste of disillusionment and shame. There were still others, however, recent arrivals in the city, who listened wonderingly but did not understand the allusions, and they, inquiring of their neighbors, heard for the first time the story of the high promise and the bitter disappointment.

"So early in the morning, and already so full of sweet wine," said one man.

"Not only with sweet wine, but likewise with the poison of the Evil One," said another.

Then a third voice: "These men do not speak as drunkards do." He that raised the objection was a man of Tyre, as could be seen from his skillfully braided beard.

A learned potter lifted his voice: "So! He sent you even to the Samaritans! Has it ever been heard that the Messiah will come for the Samaritans? Why stop with them? Perhaps he has come for the gentiles, too."

"Yes, for the gentiles too, in the remotest corners of the world," asserted one of the messengers.

"Has it ever been heard that a man shall rise from the dead? Behold, it is written: 'The dead shall not praise the Lord,' and 'those that sleep in the dust shall not praise Him,'" said one man, loudly. He, by the colored girdle round his oddly folded garb, which fell down to his ankles, showed himself to be a member of a Sadducean priestly family. He passed his fingers gracefully through the strands of his beard, and continued: "These men should be driven from the Temple court for spreading such follies among the people." He turned to his neighbor, to explain himself more intimately: "The reward of the righteous man is given him in this life, and the punishment of the wicked is likewise visited upon them in this life. Do not listen to these ignorant Galileans."

During this interchange of views a young man had been thrusting his way swiftly through the throng, until he stood side by side with the Sadducean and face to face with the men of Galilee. He fixed on the latter one fierce and challenging eye, which seemed to concentrate in itself the power of two, for his other eye was almost closed, the heavy lid lying lifeless over the pupil and leaving only a glimmer of white at the bottom. Clearly the young man had heard both the message of the Galileans and the adverse comment of the Sadducean, for, turning from the former with a contemptuous grimace of his tight lips and his thin, hawklike nose, he said:

"No, it is not for their belief in the resurrection that these men should be driven from the Temple court. It is only you unhappy Sadduceans who deny the resurrection. What would our wretched life in this world be were it not for the great life of the world to come? This has been the teaching of our sages!" He darted a glance heaven-

ward. "No! They should be thrust forth from this sacred place because they take a hanged man and exalt him as the holy person of the Messiah, whereas it is written in the sacred script: 'The curse of God rests on him that has been hanged!'"

The Galilean leader turned toward those who stood about the Sadducean and the young man, lifted up his arms, and cried: "This was the fulfillment according to the sayings of all the Prophets, who said as with one voice that the Messiah must first suffer. Hear these words of the Prophet: 'We wandered like lost sheep, each of us went his own way; and God put upon him the sins of all of us. He was oppressed and tormented, and he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a young sheep is dumb before the shearer, so he opened not his mouth.'"

"Whence come the words of the Prophets on the lips of these men? I know them, these Galileans!" interjected a bystander, in a baffled tone of voice. "Is not that the fisherman of K'far Nahum, who followed the Rabbi in his life?"

"See how the spirit of God rests on them! They speak like the learned, yet they have never received instruction!"

"Jews!" cried the young man, hotly. "These are misleaders and blasphemers! They have given the name of the anointed of God to a man that was hanged!"

He would have said more, but at this moment he felt a plucking at his elbow. Another young man, evidently his companion, had worked his way to the front of the crowd more slowly. His bearing was, in contrast to that of his friend, sedate and quiet. Tall, graceful, his face framed in a young beard, his curled hair parted and falling on either side of his forehead, he looked like a scion of some rich family of a Canaanite province or of the islands of Cyprus.

"Saul!" he said, gently. "We shall be late for the morning dissertation of Rabban Gamaliel."

"Right, Joseph! You are right!" answered Saul, convulsively. "The babblings of these Galileans will rob us even of our Rabbi's discourse." And, as abruptly as he had thrust his way forward, he now turned and thrust his way out of the throng.

* * *

The two young men who hastened across the court to the arcade where the illustrious Rabban Gamaliel was to deliver his festival dis-

course that morning were of the non-Palestinian Jewish community of Jerusalem. The older and shorter of them, Saul, who was all motion and restlessness, as if his veins ran quicksilver instead of blood, came from the famous town of Tarshish, in Cilicia. Following the custom of all pious Jews in the Diaspora, his father had sent him to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of great Rabbis, so that he might learn, together with the Torah, the ways of godliness. His companion came from the rich Sidonian province of Cyprus, famous for its delicious wines, its costly stuffs, its incense, and its copper mines. Descended from a Levitical house, he too had been sent to Jerusalem by his father, in order that he might learn the service of the Levites, and to take part in the Temple ceremonials, such as the singing of the songs of praise on the fifteen steps before the Sanctuary, when the Priests brought the sacrifices. As a further act of piety, his father had bought him a parcel of land in Palestine, so that he might not feel himself a mere sojourner in the Holy Land, and also that he might be able to claim the rights and privileges of one born in Palestine.

Both of these young men had passed their early years in the heart of the gentile world, a world of sin, whoredoms, and despair. They had seen about them, in those years, complete moral chaos, utter bestiality; and they clung now to the one hope in the storm, the Rock of Israel. They had perceived, as they believed from the depth of their hearts, that there existed only one salvation for man, the God of Israel, to whose Temple they had come in order that they might be filled with the spirit radiating from the Rabbis, the sages, and the words of the Torah. And both of them were proud to call themselves disciples of the illustrious Rabban Gamaliel.

In those days a new power had grown up in Jerusalem side by side with the Hasmonean-Herodian dynasty and the hegemony of the High Priesthood: it was the power of the people, focused in the leaders of the Pharisees. As the outstanding representative of the Pharisees Rabban Gamaliel kept a great house, which was frequented not only by Rabbis and pupils but likewise by men of secular and worldly learning and by men of wealth and influence who felt themselves drawn to the Pharisees, such as Nicodemon ben Gurion and the fantastic ben Kalba Shebua. From abroad, too, every Pharisee with sufficient influence and means would arrange to have his son, whom he sent to study in Jerusalem, received in the house of the Nasi, the Prince or

Master, the head of the Pharisees. To be accounted of the pupils of Rabban Gamaliel was not only a matter of pride; it was also an important step forward for one who dreamed of a career; it was, further, the guarantee of an education in the best tradition of the great Hillel.

As the two young men threaded their way rapidly toward the arcade of Rabban Gamaliel, he of Tarshish continued the denunciations which his companion had interrupted.

"A Messiah who has been crucified, who was buried, and who has risen from the dead!" he exclaimed, violently. "Where have they learned such things if not from the heathen? What are we? Are we Canaanites, whose Adonis rises from death? Are we Babylonians, whose Bel Marduk dies and comes back to life? Oh, I have seen enough, and more than enough, of these abominations in the city of my birth. It is the way of the heathen. These are the abominations which they would plant in the garden of Israel. Tear them out by the roots, I say!"

"But, Saul, how can you compare those heathen beliefs with what the men of Galilee were preaching? They based themselves on our Prophets. They do not deny our God, neither do they turn from the Jewish way. On the contrary, they call men to repentance, and they prepare for the great day to come. Are you not at all astonished that the words of Isaiah should be so apt for the death of their Messiah? Do not we, too, believe in the resurrection? Is there not something in the words of those men which it would be well for us to ponder, Saul?"

"Joseph!" The older man brought his companion to a halt and fixed on him his one blazing open eye, while his lips tightened ominously. It seemed to Joseph of Cyprus, however, that the half-closed blind eye of Saul was examining him with equal intentness, boring implacably into his secret thoughts.

After a brief pause the companions resumed their way.

"The hope of Israel, the anointed Messiah, one that was hanged!" burst out Saul. "He who will come on the clouds, attended by the heavenly legions, who will harvest the nations of the world and lay them like sheaves at his feet! He of whom King David sang: 'In a little while I shall make the nations of the world a footstool for thy feet!' He whom God has appointed as a light unto the peoples! He,