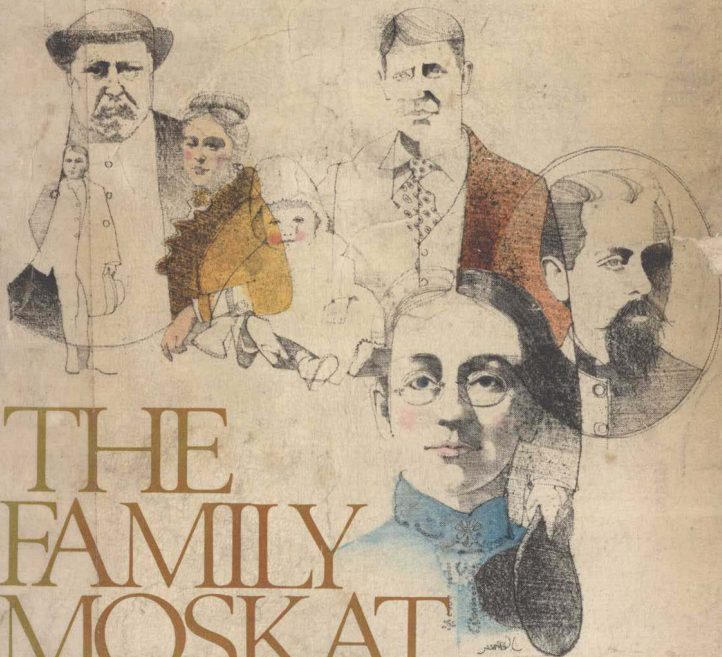


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*The*  
**FAMILY MOSKAT**

**Isaac Bashevis Singer**

**Translated from the Yiddish by A. H. Gross**

**FAWCETT CREST • NEW YORK**



*THE FAMILY MOSKAT*

THIS BOOK CONTAINS THE COMPLETE TEXT OF THE  
ORIGINAL HARDCOVER EDITION

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I wish to express my gratitude to those who made possible the publication of this book.

To my sorrow A. H. Gross died before finishing his translation, and I wish to record the passing of a highly gifted and lovable man. The work was completed by his friends Maurice Samuel and Lyon Mearson, and by his daughter Nancy Gross. Mr. Samuel translated a number of chapters; Mr. Mearson corrected and edited most of the manuscript; Miss Gross did additional translation and editing. For their selfless efforts I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

I wish to thank the *Jewish Daily Forward*, in which this novel ran as a serial for two years, and Radio Station WEVD, over which a dramatization of this novel has been broadcast.

Finally, I wish to thank Mr. Alfred A. Knopf and his editors Mr. Herbert Weinstock and Mrs. Robert Shaplen for their advice, most helpful in bringing the book to its final state.

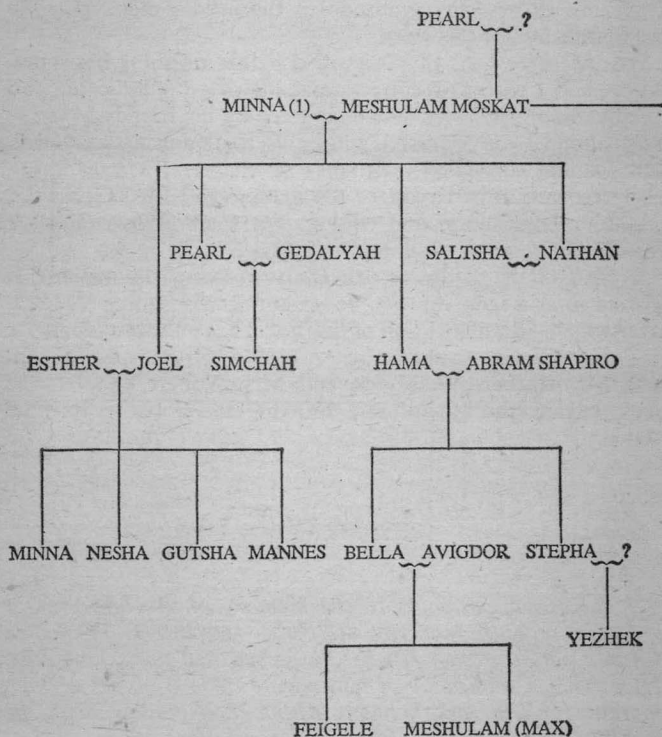


*I dedicate these pages to the memory of my late brother I. J. Singer, author of THE BROTHERS ASHKENAZI. To me he was not only the older brother, but a spiritual father and master as well. I looked up at him always as to a model of high morality and literary honesty. Although a modern man, he had all the great qualities of our pious ancestors.*

—ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

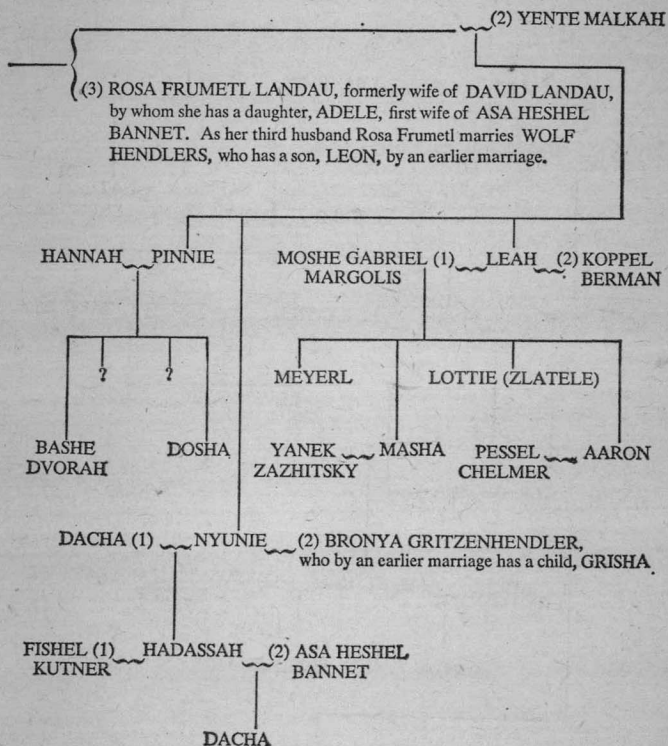


# THE FAMILY OF





# MESHULAM MOSKAT





2. MORDECAI BANNET

FEIGELE DAN KATZENELLENBOGEN

JONATHAN (1) FINKEL (2) PALTIEL

ZISSLE · ZADDOK

LEVI MAYER, MINDEL

DINAH . . . MENASSAH DAVID

ADELE ASA HESHEL (2) HADASSAH MOSKAT  
LANDAU (1) KUTNER

DAVID

DACHA

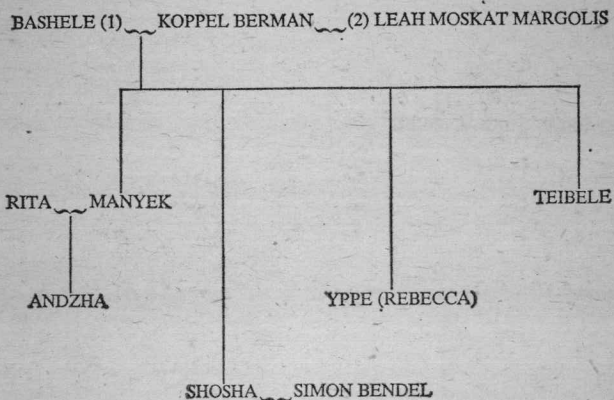
JERACHMIEL

TAMAR

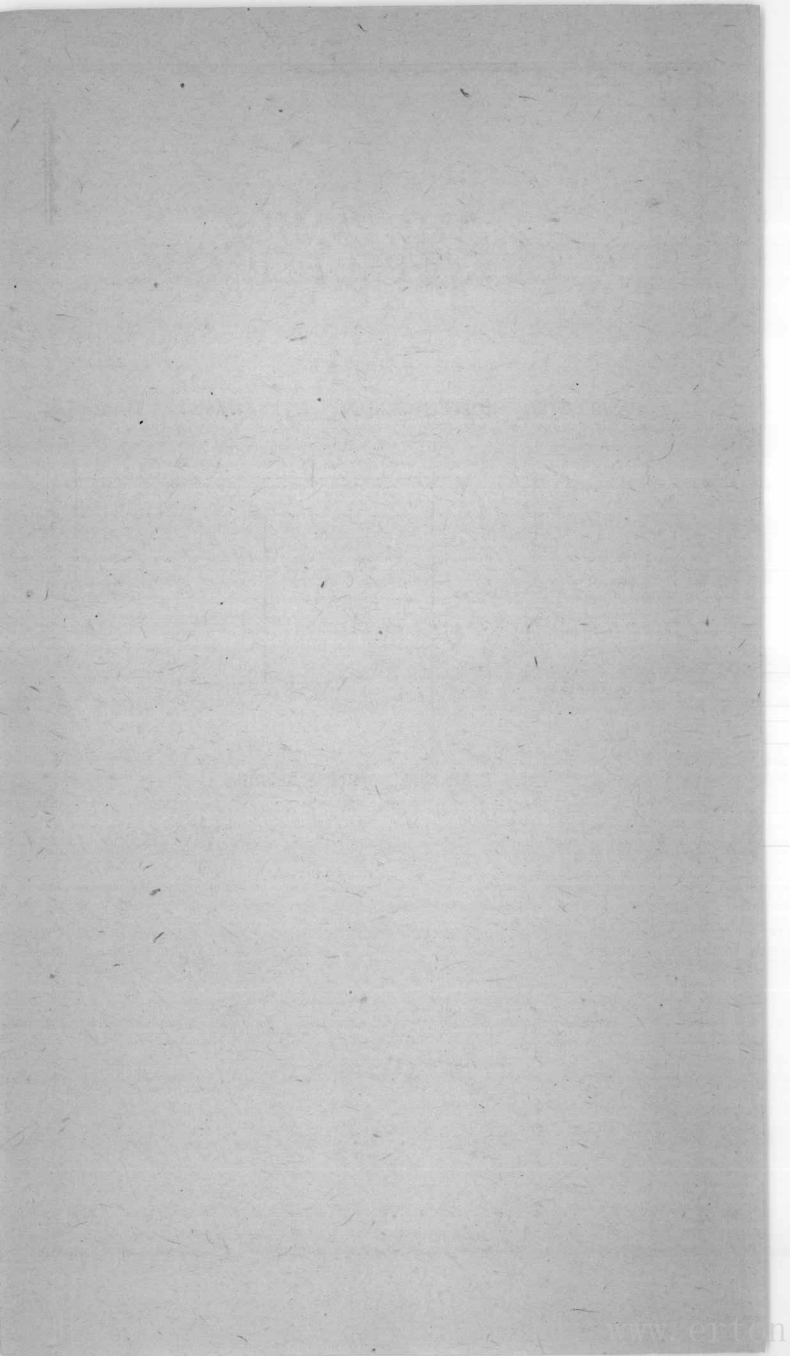
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# THE FAMILY OF KOPPEL BERMAN









PART  
ONE



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1

Five years after the death of his second wife Reb Meshulam Moskat married for a third time. His new wife was a woman in her fifties, from Galicia, in eastern Austria, the widow of a wealthy brewer from Brody, a man of erudition. Some time before he died, the brewer had gone bankrupt, and all that was left to his widow was a bookcase full of learned tomes, a pearl necklace—which later turned out to be imitation—and a daughter named Adele; her name was properly Eidele, but Rosa Frumetl, her mother, called her Adele, after the modern fashion. Meshulam Moskat made the widow's acquaintance in Karlsbad, where he had gone to take the waters. There he had married her. No one in Warsaw knew anything about the marriage; Reb Meshulam wrote to none of his family from the watering-place, nor was it his habit to give anyone an account of his doings. It was not until the middle of September that a telegram to his housekeeper in Warsaw announced his return and gave orders that Leibel, the coachman, was to drive out to the Vienna Station to wait for his employer. The train arrived toward evening. Reb Meshulam descended from the first-class car, his wife and stepdaughter after him.

When Leibel came up to him Reb Meshulam said: "This is your new mistress," and lowered a ponderous eyelid.

All the luggage Reb Meshulam was carrying was a small, well-worn portfolio thickly plastered with colored customs labels. He had checked his large metal-strapped trunk through on the baggage car. But the ladies were weighted down with all sorts of valises, packages and bundles. There was hardly enough room in the carriage to stow the stuff away; it was necessary to pile most of it on the driver's box.

Leibel was far from being a timid man, but at the sight of the women he turned red and lost his tongue entirely. The new Madame Moskat was of medium height and thin. Her shoulders showed the beginnings of a stoop, her face was heavily wrinkled. Her nose was red with catarrh and her eyes were the sad, moist eyes of a woman of gentle birth and breeding. She wore the close-fitting wig of the pious Jewish



matron, covered with a soft black shawl. Long earrings hung, glittering, from her earlobes. She was dressed in a silk outer coat, in the style of a pelerine, over a cloth dress, and pointed-toed, French-style shoes. In one hand she carried an amber-handled umbrella; with the other she held fast to her daughter, a girl in her early twenties, tall and slender, with an irregularly shaped nose, prominent-boned features, a sharp chin, and thin lips. There were dark rings under the girl's eyes; she looked as though she had gone sleepless for nights. Her faded blond hair was combed tightly back into a Greek knot and was thickly peppered with hairpins. She was carrying a bunch of withered yellow flowers, a package tied with red ribbon, a large box, and a book, from the edges of which a little bundle of twigs protruded, reminding Leibel of the osier branches used in the ritual on the Feast of Tabernacles. The girl gave off a scent of chocolate, a faint flavor of caraway-seed perfume, and something arrogantly foreign. Leibel grimaced.

"A show-off!" he muttered to himself.

"Adele, my child, this is Warsaw," Rosa Frumetl said. "A big city, isn't it?"

"How do I know? I haven't seen it yet," the girl answered in a flat Galician accent.

As always when Reb Meshulam left on a trip or came back from one, a ring of curious onlookers gathered around him. Everyone in Warsaw knew him, Christians as well as Jews. The newspapers had published stories about him and his enterprises more than once; even his picture had been printed. In appearance he was different from the Warsaw Jews of the old school. He was tall and lean, with thin features, sunken cheeks, and a short white chin beard, each individual hair separated from the next. From below his bushy eyebrows peered a pair of greenish eyes, steely and piercing. His nose was hooked. On his upper lip there was a scant mustache like the whiskers of a sea lion. He was wearing a cloth cap with a high crown. His overcoat, with a gathered waist and split back, managed to look like an aristocratic caftan. From a distance he might have been taken for one of the Polish gentry or even for a Great Russian. But a closer view showed indications of the sidelocks of the pious Jew on his temples.

Reb Meshulam was in a hurry. Every once in a while he poked Leibel in the shoulder to drive faster. But the loading of the luggage had taken a long time. Besides, the road from Vielka Street to the Gzhybov was blocked with fire engines



and it was necessary to drive by way of the Marshalkovska and the Krulevska. The street lights were already lit, and around the spherical greenish-blue lamps flew swarms of flies, casting darting shadows onto the sidewalk. From time to time a red-painted tramcar rumbled by, the electric wires overhead giving off crackling blue sparks. Everything here was familiar to Reb Meshulam: the tall buildings with the wide gates, the stores with the brightly illuminated windows, the Russian policeman standing between the two rows of car tracks, the Saxon Gardens, with densely leaved branches extending over the high rails. In the midst of the thick foliage tiny lights flickered and died. From inside the park came a mild breeze that seemed to carry the secret whisperings of amorous couples. At the gates two gendarmes stood with swords to make sure that no long-caftaned Jews or their wives ventured into the park to breathe some of the fragrant air. Farther along the road was the Bourse, of which Reb Meshulam was one of the oldest members.

The carriage turned into Gzhybov Place, and abruptly everything changed. The sidewalks were crowded with gaberdined Jews wearing small cloth caps, and bewigged women with shawls over their heads. Even the smells were different now. There was a whiff of the market place in the air—spoiled fruits, lemons, and a mixture of something sweetish and tarry, which could not be given a name and which impinged on the senses only when one returned to the scene after a longish absence. The street was a bedlam of sound and activity. Street peddlers called out their wares in ear-piercing chants—potato cakes, hot chick peas, apples, pears, Hungarian plums, black and white grapes, watermelon whole and in sections. Although the evening was warm, the merchants wore outer coats, with large leather money pouches hanging from the belts. Women hucksters sat on boxes, benches, and door-sills. The stalls were lighted with lanterns, some with flickering candles stuck on the edges of wooden crates. Customers lifted and pinched the fruits or took little exploratory nibbles, smacking their lips to savor the taste. The stall-keepers weighed purchases on tin scales.

"Gold, gold, gold!" a beshawled woman shouted out from beside a crate of squashed oranges.

"Sugar-sweet, sugar-sweet!" sang out a plump girl guarding a basket of moldy plums.

"Wine, wine, wine!" shrieked a red-faced, red-headed ped-



dlar, displaying a basket of spoiled grapes. "Nab 'em, grab 'em! Nuzzle 'em, guzzle 'em! Try 'em, buy 'em!"

In the middle of the street, truckmen guided overloaded wagons. The heavy, low-slung horses stamped their iron-shod hoofs on the cobbles, sending out sparks. A porter wearing a hat with a brass badge carried an enormous basket of coal strapped to his shoulders with thick rope. A janitor in an oil-cloth cap and blue apron was sweeping a square of pavement with a long broom. Youngsters, their little lovelocks flapping under octagonal caps, were pouring out of the doors of the Hebrew schools, their patched pants peeping out from between the skirts of their long coats. A boy with a cap pulled low over his eyes was selling New Year calendars, shouting at the top of his voice. A ragged youth with a pair of frightened eyes and disheveled earlocks stood near a box of prayer shawls, phylacteries, prayerbooks, tin Channukah candlesticks, and amulets for pregnant women. A dwarf with an oversized head wandered about with a bundle of leather whips, fanning the straps back and forth, demonstrating how to whip stubborn children. On a stall lit by a carbide lamp lay piles of Yiddish newspapers, cheap novelettes, and books on palmistry and phrenology. Reb Meshulam glanced out of the window of the carriage and observed: "The Land of Israel, eh?"

"Why do they go around in such rags?" Adele asked, grimacing.

"That's the custom here," Reb Meshulam answered with a show of impatience. For a moment he played with the idea of telling the two women that he remembered when these tall buildings were put up; that he himself had had no small part in the street's development; that at night, years before, this very same neighborhood had been as black as Egypt, and that goats and hens had meandered in the street in the daytime. But in the first place there was no time for reminiscences—the carriage was almost at its destination—and in the second place Reb Meshulam was not the man to sing his own praises or dwell on the past. He knew that the women sitting beside him were not particularly taken with Warsaw, and for a moment he felt a pang of regret over his hasty marriage. It was all Koppel's fault, he thought to himself. That bailiff of his had him too much in his clutches.

The carriage came to a halt at the gate of Reb Meshulam's house. Leibel jumped down from the box to help his master



and the women. The group gathered about at once broke into a torrent of remarks.

"Take a look!" one woman called out. "Strangers in town!"

"Who's the scarecrow?" shouted a boy in torn pantaloons, with a paper cone on his head for a hat.

"As I live, the old goat's got himself married again," the woman said, this time louder, to make sure the others would hear. "May I drop dead!"

"Oi, Mamma, it's too much!" a fat girl howled; she clutched a basket of fresh rolls against her chest.

"Hey, make room!" Leibel shouted at the top of his voice. "What the devil are you standing around for? A convention of idiots, may a plague take you all!"

He pushed a path through the throng and carried three valises to the steps leading to Reb Meshulam's flat. The janitor and his wife came out to help. A barefoot boy in pants too big for him darted in from the outskirts of the crowd and jerked a handful of hair from the horse's tail. The horse started violently. The baker's girl shouted at him: "Hey, you bastard! May your hands rot!"

"You too, you two-kopek whore," the boy yelled back at her.

Rosa Frumetl hurried her daughter along after her to get away from the vulgar talk. Soon the three of them—Reb Meshulam, his wife, and his stepdaughter—made their way through the front entrance of the house and climbed the single flight of stairs to the Moskat apartment.

## 2

Naomi, the domestic, and Manya, her assistant, had been preparing for the master's arrival ever since Reb Meshulam's wire had come. Now they were dressed in their finest. The lamps in the salon, the library, the master's study, the dining-room, and the bedrooms were alight—Reb Meshulam liked everything to be bright against his homecomings. The place was large, had twelve rooms; but half of them had been closed up since the death of his second wife.

The news that he had married again and was bringing a third wife and a stepdaughter back with him was passed on to the servants by Leibel the coachman. He whispered the tidings into Naomi's ear and she clutched at her enormous bosom