

HANUKKAH AND PASSOVER

As the Hanukkah week draws to a close, I think of some conversations with friends who wonder why children in day school should have vacation this week, when their parents are working and really don't want them home. Somewhat the same reaction takes place on the Passover week.

Both circumstances date back to the Old Country – the *shtetl*, if you will. Yeshiva students got the week off to celebrate with their families. My father of blessed memory used to look forward to those weeks when he could return to his village home, see his sisters who didn't go to school, his brothers who were too young to go to school, and his parents who were working – in the house. My grandfather had his shoemaker's workbench standing in a corner of the family home, and that's where he did his work. If he had to go out in the field, to pick potatoes or to care for the orchard of the local nobleman -- the *poritz* – he took a son or two with him.

Today's circumstances are different, very different. But the pull of family reunion can still be there.

I remember Solomon Golub as a type of troubador who dramatized Jewish life in songs that he created, performed and published, many of which became true folksongs. Here's his Hanukkah lyric, about a young wanderer who returns home for the holiday. (If you want to try the Yiddish original, check this pronunciation guide: **a** as in father, **ai** as in aisle, **e** as in bed, **ee** as in keep, **ey** as in grey, **I** as in if, **o** as in boss, **u** as in pull.)

Borukh a-te
Zingt der ta-te
 Un er tzint dee likht,
Un dee shtral'n
Mil-de fal'n
 Oif zain blas gezikht.
Un a faier
Heylik taier
 Fun dee eyg'n laikht,
Un dee meeder
Mit dee gleeder
 Hot zekh oisge-glaikht.

Borukh a-toh – words of blessing
Sings the father
 As he kindles the lights,
And their beams
Fall gently
 Over his pale face.
And a fire
Dear and holy
 Shines from his eyes,
And the tired body
Flexes its limbs
 And straightens itself up.

*Un es dakht zekh
Un es trakht zekh
 'Siz nokh ep-es do,
'Siz gebleeb'n
Vos tzu leeb'n,
 Heylik iz dee sho.
Alte klang'n
Lang far-gang'n,
 Neyn, es klingt nokh a tzind,
Zing mir ta-te
Borukh a-te,
 Ikh far-blaib dain kind.
(reprise:)
Borukh a-te....*

Comes an idea,
Comes a thought:
 There's still something here
Remaining --
Something to love!
 Sacred is this hour.
Old echoes
Long gone?
 No, they sound again!
Sing me, father,
Those words of blessing,
 I am still your child.

Borukh atoh...

If you had a Hanukkah moment like that, be glad. And if not – hang in there, Passover's coming!