

Bavta

By **Miriam Kainy**

Play no. 391

Opening show 24/01/1987

Creative team

Directed by: Tom Levy

Music: Sasha Argov

Musical Design and Arrangments: Rafi Kasishson

Set and Costums by: Ruth Dar

Lighting by: Michael Liberman

Cast

Bavta: Yona Elian-Keshet

Miriam Barat-Yoseff, Bavta's mother: Miriam Gavrieli

Shimon Ben-Menachem, Bavta's father: Israel Rubinchik

Yeshua Ben-Yoseff, nachem, Bavta's first husband: Ehud Buchman

Yeshua Ben-Yeshua, son of Yeshua and Bavta: Yuval Klein / Yanir Shitrit

Rachel, nurse of Miriam Barat-Yoseff and Bavta: Shoshana Duer

Yochanan Ber-Yoseff, Bavta's guardian: Eliezer Yung

Shimon The Hunchback, his son, a guardian: Uri Varahami

Abedabdat Bar Iluta, a Nabatian, Bavta's guardian: Dov Reizer

Agripina, Bavta's friend, a guardian: Liat Goren

Bruria, Agripina's mother, a merchant in the market: Yael Druyanov

Yehuda Kimbar, a merchant, Shlomzion's husband: Eliezer Apelboim

Bavli, a merchant in Mehoza: Rolf Barin

Yehuda Bar Elazar, Bavta's second and Miriam Barat Ba'ayens's husband: Avraham Mor

Miriam Barat-Ba'ayen, his first wife: Tova Pardo

Shlomzion, their daughter: Yael Amit

Yehonatan Bar Elazar, the leader of the rebels, Miriam Barat-Ba'ayen brother: Avi Pnini

Eliezer Bar Shmuel, a member of the rebels: Haim Zehavi

A Singer: Elki Jacobs / Yael Cohen-Lev

"Bavta" is an historical musical drama, which takes place in the Second Century. It is based on Bavta's 35 documents, on Bar-Cosiba's letters to Jhonathan Bar-Bayen and on various archeological findings discovered by Prof. Ygael Yadin, during the years 1960-61 in a cave on Wadi Hever on the western coast of the Dead Sea.

The discovered documents, reveal the economic, social, political and personal life of a few families in Mehoza – a port town on the south coast of the Dead-sea. (Masada mountain lies mid-way between them).

During that époque, the years under Adrianus Caezar's rule, the area surrounding the Dead-sea was one of the richest parts of the Roman Empire, and its inhabitants could have been considered to be millionaires even in today's American's terms. Besides being self-sufficient, their wealth came mainly from two export corps, the "good date" – the palm tree fruits, which had great demand around the entire Empire, and the persimmon, the balsam which was growing then only in two places in the world and served for medicinal purposes and incense in the Roman temples. The profits produced by the Dead sea people were enormous. An inscription, found in the Ein-Gedi synagogue, written in those times, says: "Cursed be him, who reveals the secret of the persimmon to the gentiles".

The play takes place during the years 120-140 A.C. Beginning with Bavta's youth in her home-town-Mehoza – through her marriage, her widowhood, her fight with her son's guardians, her accumulation of wealth like palm gardens, citron and persimmons. Her second marriage in Ein-Gedi, once again widowhood, fighting over her second husband's inheritance and all this during the time of upheaval, and through Bar-Cochva's revolt. The period events are not only a background to Bavta's life, but an inseparable part of her life's actions and of the play's events. The rebels, like Jhonathan Bar-Bayen, Bar-Chochva's local leader in

Ein-Gedi and their opponents like Yehuda Ben-Elazar are some of the play's central characters.

Bavta couldn't read or write. All the documents found in the cave were written for her, or addressed to her. But she kept them very well, hiding them when necessary in a slit in the cave, hoping, maybe to get them out one day, after the troubled times, as a proof of ownership to her properties.

The revolt fails, hundreds of thousands lose their lives for the adventurous liberty-delusion of Bar-Chochva and Rabbi Akiva. Bavta, like many others, went as a captive to Rome, she becomes a slave, redeems herself and makes a living out of "selling" the story of Bar-Chochva. As a success story, since that is what the refugees from Yehuda want to hear.

At the centre of this play stands Bavta, but any of the other characters could become the focal point in a play of his or her own.

