

Four Generations

By L I. Cohen Van Delft

Play no. 31

Opening show: 25/11/1935

Hebrew by : J. Hurvitz

Staged by : Zvi Friedland

Settings by: E. Luftglass

Conductor: Fordhaus Ben Zissi

Cast

Act 1

Solomon Neeman: M. Gnessin

Matilda, his wife: T. Robins

Nachman Hirsch, Matilda's brother: S. Finkel

Ziporah, his wife: H. Rovinal

Joachim Eichengreen: I. Avita

Louisa, his wife: H. Govinska

Karl August Schulze: A. Varshaver

Amande, maid in Neeman's home: F. Liubitz

Act 2

Otto Neeman, Solomon Neeman's son: I. Bertonov

Otilia, his wife (of the house of Elchengreed) : H. Govinska

Paul } Their : A. Kutai

Arnols } son : I. Avital

Martin Hirsch: S. Finkel

Henrietta Hirsch, his sister: H. Rovina

Werner Schultze: A. Varshaver

Agnes, maid in Otto Neeman's Home: S. Doar

Act 3

Arnold Neeman, Otto Neeman's son: I. Avital

Henrietta Hirsch, his sister: H. Rovina

Heinrich: Their Ben-Haim

Fritz: childrens F. Liubitz

Paul Neeman, Arnold's brother: A. Kutai

Elza, his daughter: T. Robins

Martin Hirsch, Henrietta's brother : S. Finkel

Johan Schultze, Werner Schultze's grandson: A. Varshaver

Thea, maid in Arnold Neeman's Home: H. Hariel

Act 4

Heinrich Neeman, the son of Arnold Neeman: Ben-Haim

Elza, his wife, the daughter of Paul Neeman: T. Robins

Karl Neeman, Elza's brother: A. Kutai

Martin Hirsch : S. Finkel

Johan Schultze: A. Varshaver

Zeidel, worker: I. Avital

Hampel, worker: I. Rubinstein

erlin, 1815. It is the end of those "Dark Ages" and ghetto days, and the dawn of Emancipation. There is a song of birds heard in every Jewish home, the harbingers of an age of equal rights and privileges.

Solomon Neeman, the banker, is one of the first to break forth from the Ghetto and to rejoice over the Emancipation and freedom. He marries Matilda, of the House of Hirsch, the sister of Nachman, who is a skeptical Jew, not ready to go into ecstasy over the new movement, for it is likened to something found which can be taken away from the finder by the king at will, as the Talmud says. He wants to preserve all the remnants of the past and watch over the burning spark of Jewish life even in the new Germany.

Solomon, in the dedication of his new home, yields to his brother-in-law, Nachman, and they go round affixing a Mezuzah to each door-post. "Can you imagine a Jew without a Mezuzah?" But Solomon starts back upon thinking of the abuse of his parlour, which is meant to be a meeting place for his friends, who would come to spend an hour in talking over problems of liberty and equality and citizen rights. The secret – counsellor, Schultze, the German neighbor, announces, in the meantime, that the hammering disturbs him and he warns his Jewish neighbor against it. This, however, does not stop Matilda from elaborately decorating the house for the glorious days to come. "Are you really happy?" is the skeptical question put to her by her sister-in-law, Ziporah, who also tends to doubt things like her husband. She goes on to laud the Ghetto: "They have been embittering our life for many years, but there was one thing they could never bereave us of, Matilda, and that was our peace of mind".

The Elchengreens call on Solomon, extending their congratulations upon the dedication of the house. They admire the hangings and upholstery but pay no heed to the Mezuzah. They are enthusiastic patriots and sing songs of liberty even before they have had a chance to taste of it. They talk much of the theatre and of art and speak highly and in a bombastic tone of "the Spirit of Tolerance as the motto of the modern state".

In a heated discussion on the Ghetto, Solomon breaks the antique vase, one of the household's remnants of the past (one of the fifty which his grand father Was completed to buy from the government factories and without which he was not allowed to marry). This, to him, symbolizes the passing of the accursed Ghetto days never again to return. Nachman, in the meantime, makes note in the family record-book of the statement of the Talmud about that good article which was found, which the ruling forces will yet take out of their hands.

At the end Schultze bursts in and in the style of pre- Emancipation days he protests against the noise his neighbours make.

Act 2

1882. The Jews in Eastern Europe are on the parting of roads. It is the period of Pogroms and the beginning of the "Love of Zion" movement. These, however, have not yet reached the Jewish home in Germany. It is one general movement of assimilation and intermarriage, and even the voice of Jewish animosity coming up from Dresden is not powerful enough to put an end to it. The home of Otto Neeman, the son of Solomon and Matilda Neeman. He has married Otilia Etchengreen, and both of their sons, Paul and Arnold, are

successful. The former is a high official in an important bank, and the latter passed the Bar and has become a lawyer. Preparations are being made for Christmas and for the Tree. Arnold and his fiancée are expected, the latter being Uncle Nachman Hirsch's side the stigma of the family in the opinion of the modern mother.

Paul himself is also not satisfied with the new connections made with the Jewish branch, but he is even dissatisfied with his own mother and with himself: his "Jewishness" is in his way to success. The high position meant for him at first was given to a Gentile. He pours out his heart to his mother and complains bitterly: "Why did your parents and father's parents have to bring forth Jewish children? What an accursed to his mother that he has decided to marry Arne Schultze, the daughter of their purely German neighbor.

Martin Hirsch, (the grandson of Nachman Hirsch), who is the brother of Arnold's fiancée, calls upon the family. He is an altogether undesirable guest... Henrietta, the bride herself, arrives. There is some confusion and uneasiness in the house. In the meantime Schultze arrives; he has heard of the relations between Paul and his daughter and the matter has begun troubling him. There ensues a short conversation between the two parents. Schultze doesn't, of course, mean to offend his Jewish neighbor, but it is his opinion that an end should immediately be put to the whole matter. They understand each other, but their children are not ready to condescend. Paul informs his father that he is no longer a Jew and that a few drops are sufficient to sanction the marriage.

At the end, the stunned father is brought the bill for the Christmas Tree.

Act 3

1914. The beginning of the World War. The house now belongs to Arnold Neeman who has married Henrietta, Nachman Hirsch's granddaughter. Their sons are true and loyal citizens going to the front. The mother is making ready for her parting with Heinrich; she is preparing certain preserves for him. Everyone volunteers and joins the army, and every heart is filled with the desire of self-sacrifice for the Fatherland. Paul Neeman, who was "baptized" as a young man and married Schultze's daughter, considers himself a true German, and is more enthused. But even in his house there is no peace; His children do not love him; yet he loves them. Elza, his daughter, is like a riddle to the other members of the family: she is inclined towards the Jewish branch at the family, while the others tend towards the Schultze branch. She is especially fond of Martin Hirsch, Henrietta's brother, and sees in him the most perfect Jew. Uncle Martin reveals his innermost feelings to her, telling her that when he heard the prayer in the Synagogue for the life of the Kaiser, he recalled that "at that very moment, Jews in Paris and in Warsaw and in London... and before a similar Holy Ark, were also saying the same prayer, each for his own King and Kaiser, while Jewish boys were attacking one another with brandished daggers". He too is registered in the Reserve Corps, and, he adds without any enthusiasm whatever, 'when the Fatherland will give the order that forty-five-years-old should join her ranks, I will have to join too'. "And where is your love for your Fatherland, Martin?" asks the converted brother. "And where is the Fatherland love for us?" Returns Martin. "We fought in 1815 and in 1870. We always volunteered. We weren't such bad

citizen after all. But when a fire breaks out in a house, or some trouble lights on it, the foundling is the first asked to leave...

Elza enters, thus interrupting the discussion. Military music is heard coming close. In dashed the youngster, Fritz, who is only seventeen, announcing that he has enlisted in the army.

Act 4

1933, the year when the Swastika is supreme: the year of the expulsion of Jews from Germany.

Elza, in spite of all obstacles, was married to Heinrich Neema. The house now belongs to them but it is in ruins, and Heinrich is shattered and broken up. His only support in life is Elza, the 'semi-Gentile'. Heinrich is a disciple of German culture and cannot conceive of the progress of events; but Elza, the granddaughter of Nachman Hirsch, understands everything, knows the effects and consequences and also fully realizes her duties. She is preparing too go to Palestine and leads the remainder of the family too towards the new life, much to the joy of old Martin Hirsch.

In the meantime, Karl, the son of converted Paul, is invited to Heinrich; the latter wishes to transfer to him the remainder of the property. Paul is sure of his career in life as a real German who served in the army and even invented something of importance for the good of the Fatherland. But in the course of events the new regime comes along and robs him of this invention: The honour is bestowed upon his "friend" and kinsman on his mother's side, the officer Johan Schultze who comes to take his secret away and to subdue him. Thus ends the complete fall of the home which Solomon has built in the very down of the period of Emancipation, and the Talmudic statement which the late Nachman Hirsch made note of in the family record book (viz "A person finding anything, however good I may be, still has nothing but bad resulting from it, for if the king hears of it, he may take it from him)" – this statement comes true.