

Shomrim (Watchmen)

By Ever Hadani

Play no. 42

Opening show: 24/08/1937

Creative team

Staged by : Z. Friedland

Settings: Ar. Aroch

Musical Director: Pugachov

Dances: F. Liubitch

Cast

Israel (Chief Watchman): S. Finkel

Deborah, his wife : H. Rovina

Mamanov, the Caucasion (a Watchman): A. Meskin

Avigdor, (a Watchman): H. Amital

Kash:] R. Klatzkin

Isaac:] Recruits A. Kutai

Ruvke: Z. Friedland

Nechamke: H. Henderl

Mr. Shneur:] S. Bruk

Reb Jakov: Farmers] I. Rubinstein

Zalman:] M. Benjamini

Reb Jakov's wife: T. Judelevitch

Zalman's wife: F. Liubitch

PROLOGUE

A dark night in the mountains of Galilee. Near a settlement. While two men drive along in a wagon, there comes a shot from ambush. One of the men falls, while the other returns fire. At the sound of the shooting, young men come running from the settlement. General indignation. Step to be taken are considered.

Act 1

A group of Watchmen behind the wall of the settlement, during the harvest. Newly recruited watchmen are being instructed by experienced farmers and veteran watchmen. Shots suddenly resound in the fields, shaking the quiet of the night. The settlement is greatly perturbed. It is discovered that one of the recruits, without waiting for orders, has galloped off to the place from which the shooting was heard, riding the Chief Watchman's mare.

The watchmen rush out into the fields. The farmers are very apprehensive lest one of the thieves be killed by a watchman, so that the settlement may be involved in the blood feud with the Arab neighbours. At the end of the skirmish, it is learned that one thief has really been killed by the recruit who rode the Chief Watchman's mare. When cries for revenge are heard in the distance from the killed man's next of kin, the farmers demand that the watchman should leave the settlement. Although his comrades agree, that "by watching the settlement they have acquired equal rights upon it with the farmers", the Chief Watchman decides to leave. The recruit's rash act,

however, is to be considered by the Watchmen at their next convention, since his action has sullied the glorious reputation of all the Watchman.

Act 2

Much ado in preparation for the annual convention of the Watchmen. Watchmen and guests arrive from Judea and Samaria. At the convention, recruits are to be admitted to full membership. There is also the likelihood of a wedding. Yet the atmosphere is tense. The names of fallen comrades are commemorated and there is a discussion concerning the continued assaults upon the Yishuv. The attitude of the farmers to the Watchmen adds to the oppressive feeling prevailing. There is also the danger of imminent war, imperiling the entire Yishuv. Great irritation asserts itself against the Chief Watchmen, and the malcontents are led by the recruit to be arraigned. Two points of view clash at the convention, that of the Chief Watchman, urging Responsibility and Discipline, and the one sponsored by the young rebel, advocating "bullet for bullet", particularly in war-time, with anarchy spreading throughout the country. The Chief Watchman's view wins the day. While the other two recruits are admitted as full-fledged members of the association, the young rebel, Ruvke, is excluded by way of punishment. One of the two incumbents, Kash, asks for permission to spend a year with the Beduins in order to train as a shepherd, and the other, Isaac, marries his girl, Nechamke, while the convention is still progress.

The merry-making is interrupted by the sound of aeroplanes, the first signal of war! But the Chief Watchman calls the conference to order, for there is still one important matter to be decided upon – the settling of the watchmen on the land.

Act 3

Despite all obstacles, privation and starvation of the war-time, the watchmen attempt to establish their settlement, the fulfilment of a long-cherished dream. Deborah, the Chief Watchman's wife, lets her imagination play with the new ideal forms of life to be developed. But a new disaster overtakes the group. The Government is out to find in the Yishuv suspects spying for the enemy. Among the latter, the name of the young recruit, Ruvke, is mentioned. Although he has been expelled from the Watchman's Association, the panicky farmers insist that he must be found by his former comrades and turned over to the authorities. The watchmen plead that they have nothing to do any more with that recruit. But the latter arrives and begs for shelter. Some of the watchmen are inclined to shelter him till the danger is over, but the Chief declares that the criminal who has endangered the existence of the entire Yishuv must be handed over to the authorities. Ruvke threatens that he will betray the watchmen, informing the authorities that they are all his abettors. He jumps up, about to escape, but the Chief of Watchman shoots him, and delivers his body to the farmers, who shrink away declaring, "Our hands have not shed this blood..." But this hand", retorts the Chief Watchman, "has shed it – for the blood making our Banner is Responsibility, and the fire distinguishing it is Discipline".