

“What is to Become of Me?”

Diary Entry of Moshe Flinker, a Young Jewish Refugee in Belgium - December 8, 1942

December 8, Night

Shortly after we came to Brussels and found an apartment, my mother began to question my father about my future. I was spending my days idly. At times I read Hebrew, but my mother considered that this would lead nowhere. The first time she expressed her views, I laughed, and even father paid little attention to them. I wondered how she could worry about a happy future when we were faced with the problem of life or death. My father gave her a similar answer whenever she broached the subject to him.

During the last few days when my mother raised the question of my future, my reaction was again one of laughter, but when I was alone, I too began to ponder this matter. What indeed is to become of me? It is obvious that the present situation will not last forever – perhaps another year or two – but what will happen then? One day I will have to earn my own living. At first I wanted to drive such thoughts away but they kept coming back. So I started thinking seriously about the problem. After much deliberation, I’ve decided to become... a statesman. Not any sort of statesman, but a Jewish statesman in the Land of Israel. Even though it would take a miracle to free us now, the rest of my idea – living in our land – isn’t so far-fetched. Then perhaps, the rest of the world might slightly change its attitude towards us. The relations between other nations may also alter a bit. But our people are so exiled-minded that many generations would have to pass before we became a free people physically and mentally (the latter is the main thing). That is why we will need leaders to guide us in the road to true spiritual freedom.

Another reason for my deciding to become a leader of our people if that other arts require a great deal of study. Statesmanship, as opposed to science, does not demand systematic study, an activity which is impossible for me these days. Rather, everything one knows is useful, and most useful of all is knowing

how to use one's head. And, of course, as a "religious" Jew, I hope that the Lord will help me when my own intelligence is inadequate.

Therefore, from today on, everything I do will be directed towards this aim. Of course, I will continue to study the Bible, because only according to its spirit can Israel survive. In addition, I will learn as much as I can about Judaism and about my people.

Now for today's news: the man from The Hague who tried to get to Switzerland had just returned to Brussels. It seems that the people who were to help him cross the borders were liars. In the middle of the journey they suddenly jumped from the train. So he jumped after them, thinking that now they were going to get him into Switzerland. In jumping through a window, he hurt his hand. When he recovered from his fall, his guides were nowhere to be seen. He waited some time for them and then understood that he had been tricked. After many hardships – he had to go two days without eating – he got back to Brussels. All this cost him a lot of money. Now my father feels strengthened in his views because all the time my mother has done nothing but praise this man, his decisiveness, his forthrightness, etc.

But now it seems that difficulties have arisen in renewing our permits to stay in Brussels. Tomorrow our three months are up, but my father is hopeful that we will get our extensions. It's late, so I'll go to bed. I'll close with this verse from the Bible: "Though your dispersed were in the uttermost part of heaven, yet will I gather them from thence."

Source: Moshe Flinker, *Young Moshe's Diary*, Yad Vashem, 1965, pp. 35-37.