

# Izik Huberman: Poet of Youth

*The following is based on an article by Moscow literary critic Chaim Baider that appeared in the Jewish newspaper Sholom Aleichem. We are grateful to Dr. Natalia Meshkov for translating the article from the Ukrainian.*



**D**uring the middle twenties, a fresh voice arose from the chorus of the new Jewish poetry -- that of Izik (Ayzik) Huberman (see photo). Huberman was born on April 1, 1906 in Podolia in the village of Felshtin (known today as

Gvardeyskoye). He wrote of the new young Jewish generation seeking its role in the great era. Huberman was a teacher and a 1929 graduate of the Odessa Pedagogical Technical School. He lived and worked in Odessa during all of his lifetime, except for the years spent in the military and in Stalin's concentration camps. Once a man of robust health, he returned from his ordeals tortured and broken.

His first poems were published in 1928 in an Odessa newspaper. Next year, a Minsk journal *Shtern* published a group of his poems.

In "My Questionnaire," the poet tries to find meaning in the eternal theme of parents and children. He did not use the vulgar sociological jargon of the time, and expressed genuine sorrow for the world that had disappeared, victim of brutal laws: "*Everything is downhill, downhill -- the wagon is broken, my father sits in it with a lost head.*" He was promptly condemned by critics as a small, bourgeoisie epigone. The young poet, who just produced his first pieces, was then subjected to torment that he did not deserve. He paid dearly for his honesty.

Huberman wrote most of his poems with the attributes of the time. Nevertheless, his poetic

lyricism reigned. The collection of Radiansk Jewish poetry was enriched by his inspired lines about spring, love, and bright dreams. One such poem ("Trees, Trees") describes how at midnight, a lyric hero, tired of wandering in town, is suddenly stopped by a tree. They embraced each other -- poet and the tree -- and became one. Then they begin a discourse about spring and the joy of life.

Izik Huberman had two of his poems published, "Podolia, My Home" and "A Cottage by the River." In the thirties, these poems enjoyed great popularity among young people. The poems describe how Jewish boys and girls leave their village ties behind, break away, and aspire to change the world. While achieving their dreams, they long for the old life, home, and traditions, which at the time were outlawed.

During the thirties, Izik Huberman abandoned poetry and devoted himself solely to writing plays. His play *A Young Woman from Moscow* was extraordinarily popular. It was performed in almost all the Jewish theaters in Radiansk Union. Later, he wrote *The Coward, A Joyful Encounter*, and others. *A Joyful Encounter* remained in the spotlight until 1947.

During this period, the sword was lowered on Jewish culture, and Huberman was sent to one of the camps in Tchukotzi. This, of course, was not the time for creativity. Nevertheless, he embarked on translating the work of Tchukotzi poets and brought it back after his rehabilitation. He also revised his 1948 play *It Is Good to Be Alive*.

The last work of Izik Huberman, *The Round Earth*, published in the journal *Soviet Homeland*, marked the culmination of the creative life of one of the most talented Jewish poets whose wings were clipped early.

*Izik Huberman died in 1966. — Editor*