INTRODUCTION

In 1936, Joseph Margoshes (1866–1955), a writer for the New York Yiddish daily *Morgen Zhurnal*, published a memoir of his youth in Austro-Hungarian Galicia entitled *Erinerungen fun mayn leben* [“Memoirs of My Life”], which is presented here for the first time in an English translation by Rebecca Margolis and Ira Robinson. In it, we enter the world of Margoshes’ youth in Galicia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even from the perspective of the mid-1930s when he wrote this memoir, the Jewish Galicia he evoked had been changed almost beyond recognition as a result of the events surrounding the First World War, and was shortly to be completely obliterated by the Holocaust.

Eliezer Joseph Margoshes was born in 1866 in Lemberg (Lvov/Lviv) into a family with a distinguished rabbinical ancestry (*yihus*), as described in an appendix to these memoirs, and into a society in which that *yihus* counted for much. After his father’s death, he moved to Tarnow. He received a traditional Jewish education in Bible and Talmud, as well as grounding in the German language and European culture. He married into a family of wealthy landowners and spent his early married years administering agricultural estates in Western Galicia.

Because of severe personal financial reverses, compounded by a serious agricultural depression in his country, he first emigrated to America in 1898. He evidently found adjustment to America difficult, because he returned to Europe in 1900. However he came back to America in 1903, this time to stay. At the time of his second arrival in New York, he established what would be a lasting connection with New York’s then burgeoning Yiddish daily press. He started working with the *Tageblatt*, with which he was affiliated until 1911. In that year, he began work in the Bureau of Jewish Education, which had been

established by the New York Kehilla movement, led by Judah L. Magnes, and helped edit the Kehilla's *Yearbook*. In 1914, he became a writer for the Yiddish daily *Der Tog*, where he worked until 1921. From that year and for the rest of his life, he wrote for the *Morgen Zhurnal* (which merged with *Der Tog* in 1954), while also contributing to many other Yiddish newspapers and periodicals.

He was a founding member and first secretary of the Y.L. Peretz Writers' Association, the union of Jewish writers in New York. He was prominent, in the 1920s, as one of the founders of the American branch of YIVO. He was also noted as an avid collector of books, amassing a personal library of some 20,000 volumes.

As a journalist, Margoshes became well-known for numerous series of articles on topics related to Jewish history, thought, and folklore. Examples of such series include "Maimonides," the Ten Tribes," "Great Figures in the World of Hasidism" and the "Belzer Dynasty." He was also engaged in an extensive study of the history of Jewish journalism in America. The *Erinerungen* originated in just such a series of journalistic pieces in the *Morgen Zhurnal*, and constitutes his only published volume.

In telling the story of his life, lived in a world that had passed away, and that he doubted would ever be revived, Margoshes provides the reader with important insights into numerous areas of the Jewish life of Austro-Hungarian Galicia. We read of Orthodox and Enlightened Jews and their conflicts, Jewish urban and rural life, the multifaceted relationship between Jews and their gentile neighbors, and much more.

Margoshes was an eyewitness to the beginnings of an organized Orthodox Jewish political movement in Galicia. He provides important insights into the inner workings of the nineteenth century Galician Jewish press. He is an important witness to the Jewish presence as estate owners and in the livestock trade of Western Galicia. This book is an important evocation of an entire Jewish society and civilization, and bears comparison with his contemporary Yehiel Yeshai'a Trunk's masterpiece, *Poyln* as a vivid evocation of Jewish life in late nineteenth century Poland.

Ira Robinson and Simcha Fishbane