

KAPLAN



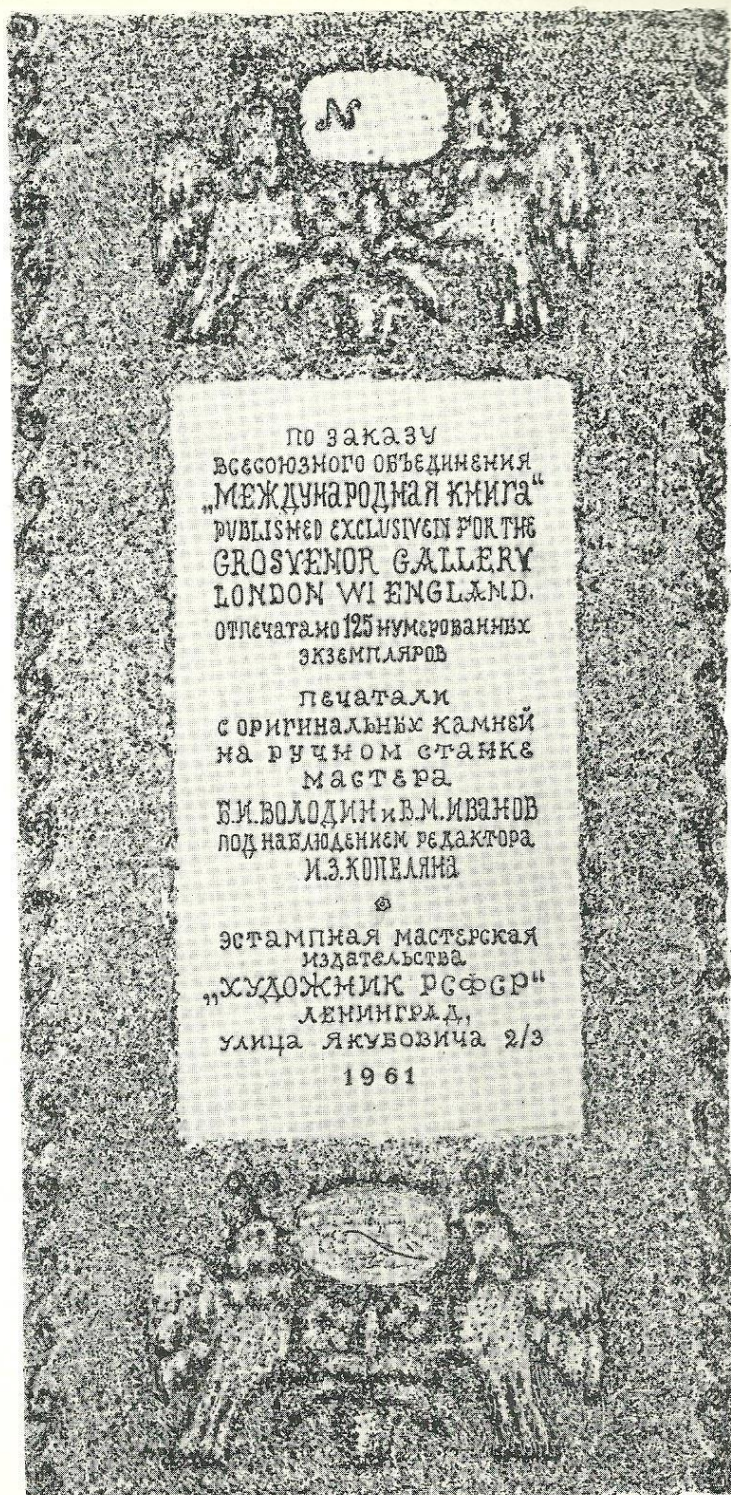
11-12/1961

GROSVENOR GALLERY

KAPLAN

ANATOLI
KAPLAN
LITHOGRAPHS
22ND
NOVEMBER
TO
31ST
DECEMBER

THE WORLD OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM AND OTHER SCENES, TALES AND SONGS OF RUSSIAN PROVINCIAL LIFE



по заказу
всесоюзного объединения
"МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ КНИГА"
PUBLISHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE
GROSVENOR GALLERY
LONDON W1 ENGLAND.
Отпечатано 125 пронумерованных
экземпляров

печатали
с оригинальных камней
на ручном станке
мастера
Б.И. ВОЛОДИН и В.М. ИВАНОВ
под наблюдением редактора
И.З. КОПЕЛЯНА

эстампная мастерская
издательства
"ХУДОЖНИК РСФСР"
ЛЕНИНГРАД,
улица Якубовича 2/3
1961

Imprint for
'The Little Goat'
Translation of Russian Text

Ordered by
The All Union Group
'Mezhdounarodnaya Kniga'
Published Exclusively for the
Grosvenor Gallery
London W1 England
There have been printed
125 numbered copies
Printed
From original plates
on a hand press
by Master Craftsmen
B.I. Volodin and V.M. Ivanov
under the supervision
of the Editor I.Z. Kopelyan
The printing workshop
of the publishers
'Khoudozhnik RSFSR'
Leningrad
Oulitza Yakoubovitch 2 - 3
1961

В книге иногда бывают две вещи, которые огорчают автора: предисловие и иллюстрации. В предисловии посторонний человек на четырех страницах излагает то, что автор пытался рассказать на четырехстах страницах, и затем на других четырех говорит о том, чего автор не написал, и читает ему за это нотацию. Другой посторонний — дежурный иллюстратор, считая, как и автор предисловия, что автор ничего не умеет, а читатель ничего не понимает, старательно изображает различных персонажей романа или рассказа. Все это не имеет ничего общего с искусством.

Анатолий Каплан — художник. Он не разъясняет, он создает свои образы, рожденные и от поэзии любимых им книг, и от ощущения зрительного мира. Я знаю его литографии, порожденные рассказами Шолом-Алейхема. Они печальны и поэтичны, в них любовь молодых и мудрость старых, в них сказки старых, давно исчезнувших Касриловок. Они, может быть, действительно рождены повестями большого писателя; но они живут самостоятельной жизнью. Это не приложение к книге, а замечательные произведения пластического искусства, где черный и белый цвета взяты настолько живописно, что создают впечатление полной цветовой гаммы.

Когда я гляжу на литографии А. Каплана, я вспоминаю произведения художников, которых можно назвать его земляками: Каплан родился в Рогачеве, Марк Шагал в Витебске, Сутин в Смилевичах. Их объединяют не только воспоминания о деревянных домиках, вывесках лавчонок, бородатых старцах, мечтательных юношах, но и ощущение сказочности, трагизм и в то же время страстная любовь к жизни. Все это выражено не литературным пересказом, а языком искусства.

На стене комнаты, где я работаю, висят литографии А. Каплана, они приносят мне много радости. Я убежден, что подобную радость испытывают и обладатели этих листов.

Илья Эренбург

There are sometimes two things in a book which are grievous for an author: the introduction and the illustrations. In the introduction an outsider states in four pages what the author tried to tell in four hundred, and then in the other four pages he speaks about the things missed by the author reprimanding him for it. Another outsider, the first illustrator to hand, holding (just as the author of the introduction) that the writer is unable to do anything and the reader is unable to understand anything, portrays zealously personages of the novel or of the story. All this has nothing to do with art.

Anatoly Kaplan is an artist. He does not explain, he creates his images arisen both from the poetry of his favourite books and from the visual sensation of the world. I know his lithographs created from the stories by Sholom Aleichem. They are sad and poetic. The love of the youth and the wisdom of the old age, the tales of old villages like Kasrilovka, disappeared long ago, are seen in these lithographs. They may indeed be born by the stories of a great writer, but they live their own independent life. It is not a supplement to a book, it is a wonderful work of fine art, where the black and white colours are used so vividly that it creates an impression of a full colour scale.

Looking at the lithographs by Kaplan, I am reminded of the works of other artists whom one can call his countrymen: Kaplan is born in Rogachev, Mark Shagall is born in Vitebsk, Soutine was born in Smilovichy. Not only the memories of wooden shanties, of shop-signs, of bearded elders and dreamy youngsters unite them, but also the sensation of the fairness, of the tragedy and at the same time a passionate love for life. All this is expressed not in a literary paraphrase, but in the language of art.

There are lithographs by A. Kaplan on the walls of the room where I work, they bring me much joy. I am sure that a similar joy will be experienced by the owners of these lithographs.

Ilya Ehrenburg

Anatoli Kaplan infuses all his best work with a deep vein of poetry. At a time when, at any rate in the West, for an artist to be 'literary' is regarded almost as an insult, he, with his roots in the rich sub-strata both of Russian folk-lore and Jewish tradition, has interpreted Jewish folk-songs and Sholem Aleichem in a way that touches us deeply. Indeed the finest of his lithographs are almost unbearably poignant.

What, in this age of jet travel and the hundreds of thousands of words of print poured out every day, is a sorry commentary on the scarcity of contacts between Russia and this country where the visual arts are concerned is that until very recently Kaplan was quite unknown outside the Soviet Union. Yet although this will be the first one-man show of his work in the West it has already had the impact it deserves; witness the large number of museums and private collectors in this country and in America that have bought his prints.

That Kaplan's work should be recognised is just: that it should occasion surprise to be expected. In England we have seen little of modern Russian art and a substantial part of that little – the 1959 Winter Exhibition of Russian Art at the Royal Academy – did not include the graphic arts in which at the moment more good work is being done than in any other medium and was in other ways unfortunate. Nor is the impression current outside Russia of exactly what is implied by 'Socialist Realism' a balanced one. Whatever the demerits of that theory, and like so many bodies of ideas that attempt to define the role of art, it has many, not least among which is the tendency to develop into dogma, it is, in artistic circles in Russia, the subject of much more discussion than is imagined in the West. That it is now also more flexible than what has until recently been known in London of Russian art is proved by Kaplan's work.

Anatoli Lvovitch Kaplan was born at Rogatchev, in Byelorussia, in 1902. In 1921 he joined the Academy of Arts in Leningrad from which he graduated in 1927. Thus his first student years were at a time

when art, like everything else in Russia, was in a ferment. What is also relevant is that in these formative years, and subsequently, he has been in contact with others among the best known Russian graphic artists working in Leningrad, such as Charnetskaya, Ermolaev, Matiukh, Shenderov, Skouliari, Sudakov and Vedernikov.

For ten years after leaving the Leningrad Academy, Kaplan worked as a scenic artist and designer, and it is clear that these years have had a lasting influence on his work. Thus some of his more recent lithographs, such as the charming 'The Little Goat' series are decorative in a bold way that recalls stage designs. Then in 1939 Kaplan was accepted as a member of the Union of Soviet Artists and he regularly exhibits in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere in Russia, his work including watercolours, tempera and prints, like the twelve sheets of 'Views of Leningrad during the days of the Blockade' issued in 1946, and, having been bought by 18 Russian museums and galleries, well known all over the Soviet Union.

What is of especial interest is that during the late thirties he began to produce some of his best prints, which are now being seen outside the Soviet Union for the first time. The years between 1938 and 1941 were among the darkest for Russia. Yet this is the time when Kaplan was working upon his illustrations to Sholem Aleichem's 'Kasrilovka'. The best of them are moving. They touch gently, but with pathos, upon universal human emotions. In them we experience again the measured music of that Russian sense of the dignity and inherent tragedy of man, which in the past, and in Pasternak, has run through so much of Russian literature. The magic of Chagall which has so ensnared the western world, and rightly so, finds in Kaplan deep, less insistent, but I believe more constant and richer expression.

That Kaplan can affect us so deeply is in part due to his technical accomplishment. There has, in recent years, been a remarkable resurgence of print-making in Britain, and the technical aspect of his work should attract widespread attention. The

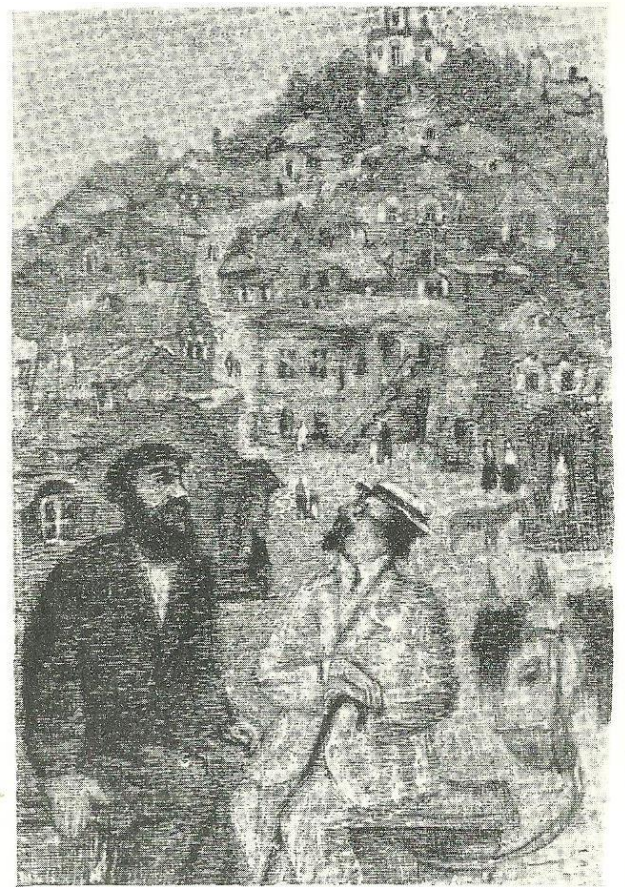
tendency here has been towards simplified design and a boldness, that is too often bald. In his earlier 'Kasrilovka' and the recent cycles of 'The Bewitched Tailor', 'Shir Hashirim', 'Jewish Folk Songs', 'The Little Goat' and 'Tevia the Milkman', Kaplan tends in a very different direction. The lithograph has seldom, if ever, been used to produce such subtle results; the rich black and grey texture of these prints is a delight in itself. There is for instance one print in the Kasrilovka series in which the rain drives across the print bending a tree before the darkened sky and isolating the figures of man and animal in a way that seems symbolic.

Impressive as is Kaplan's technical ability, and it is evident again so clearly in the vignettes, in which scenes are startlingly realised, on some of the 26 sheets of his 1957 'The Bewitched Tailor' album, it is above all the emotion he conveys that affects us.

In fact the range of sentiment he conveys is wide. His portrait studies in the 'Tevia the Milkman' albums, specially produced for the Grosvenor Gallery in 1961, are shrewd; he is capable of an occasional robustness of the sort that Chekhov knew so well how to employ and many of his character studies are not only humorous, but also display wit. Yet above all what moves us are those interiors and scenes with old Russian wooden houses and clustered villages in which men and women, and those sad animals, stand for all the weight and sorrow upon man and express not defeat, but resignation and dignity and the abiding human emotions. This gentle poet, who can command both whimsy and pathos, and who so easily moves us near to tears has a message of the humanity of man of which today we cannot be reminded too often.

- 58 Frontispiece to 'Tevia the Milkman', Volume I
- 59 'Tevia the Milkman'
- 61 Evening – Tevia's house

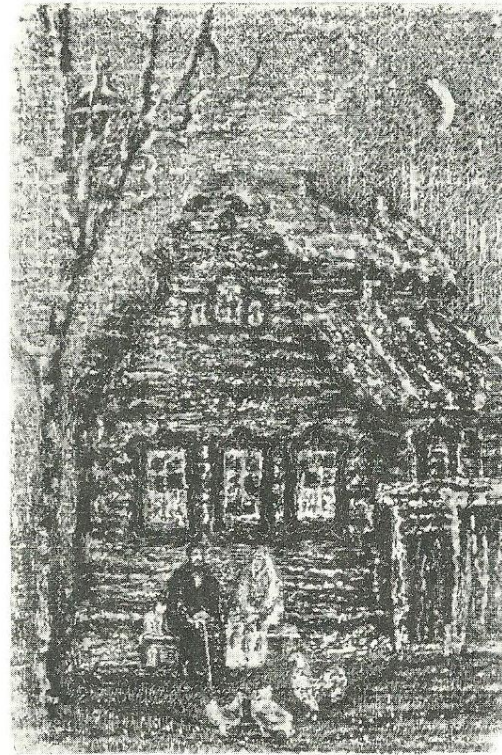
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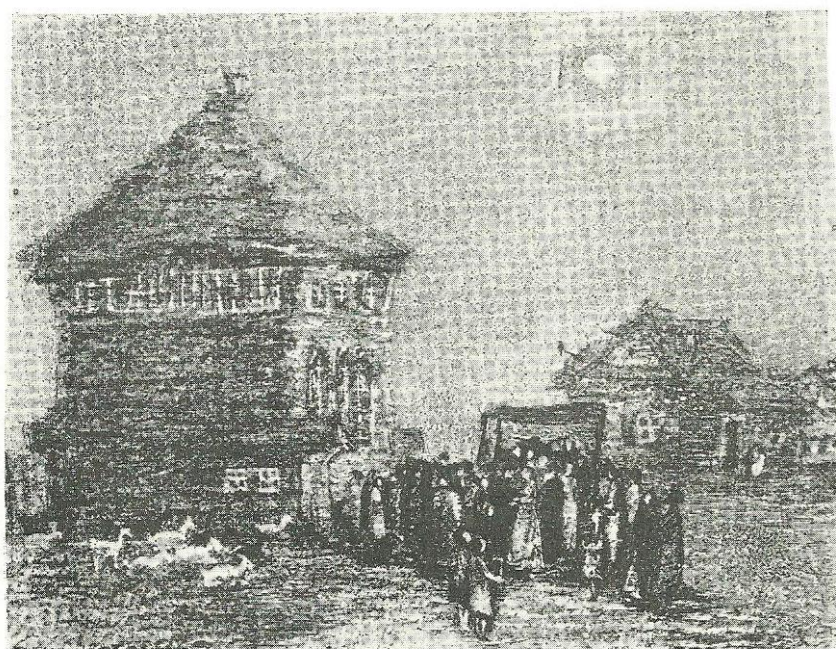


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- 79 The betrothal of Zeitel
- 88 Tevia and his wife Golde
- 112 Title page in Yiddish – 'The Little Goat'

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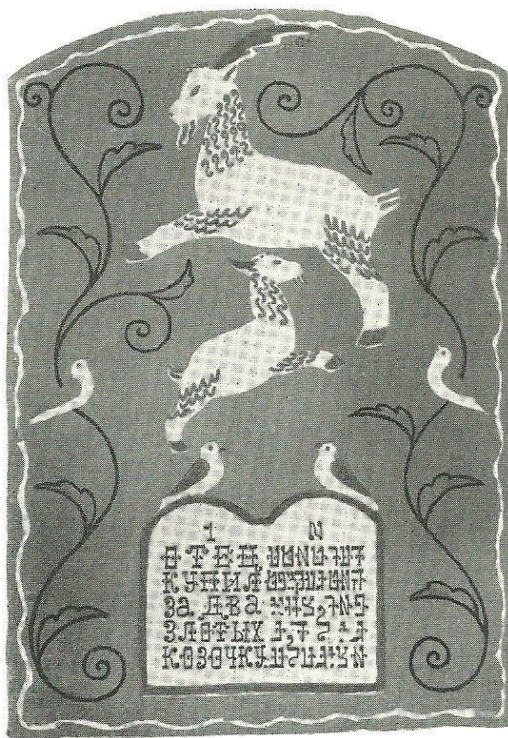
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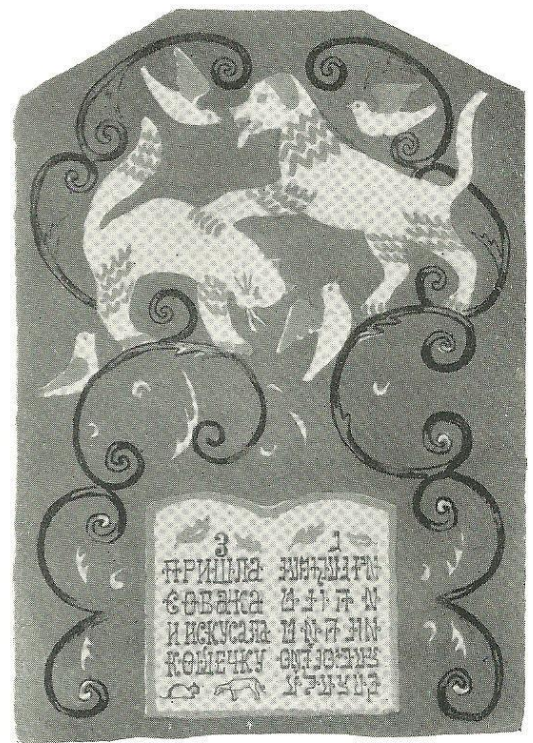


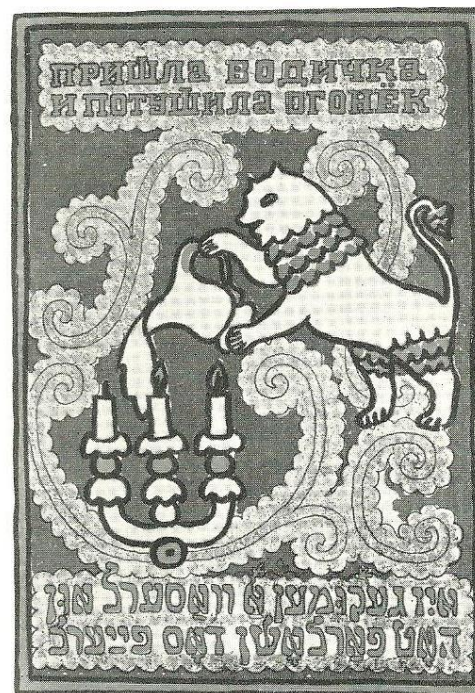
- 115 Verse I – 'Father bought a little goat'
- 117 Verse III – 'Came a dog and bit the cat'
- 119 Verse V – 'Came a fire and burnt the stick'
- 120 Verse VI – 'Came the water and quenched the fire'

115



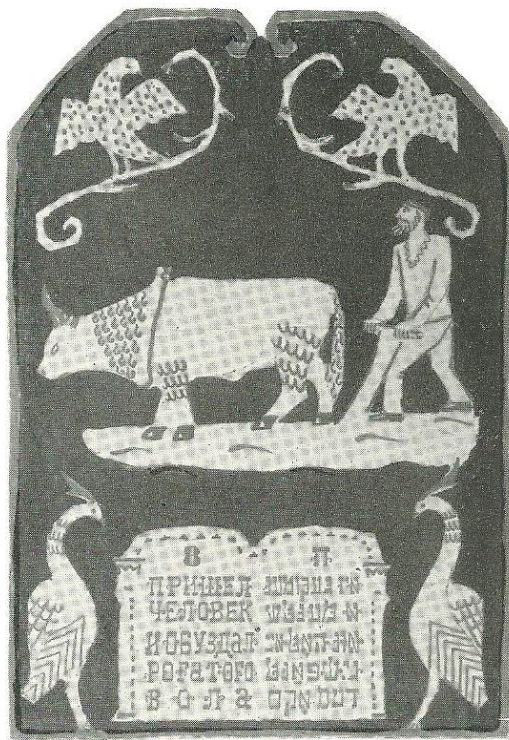
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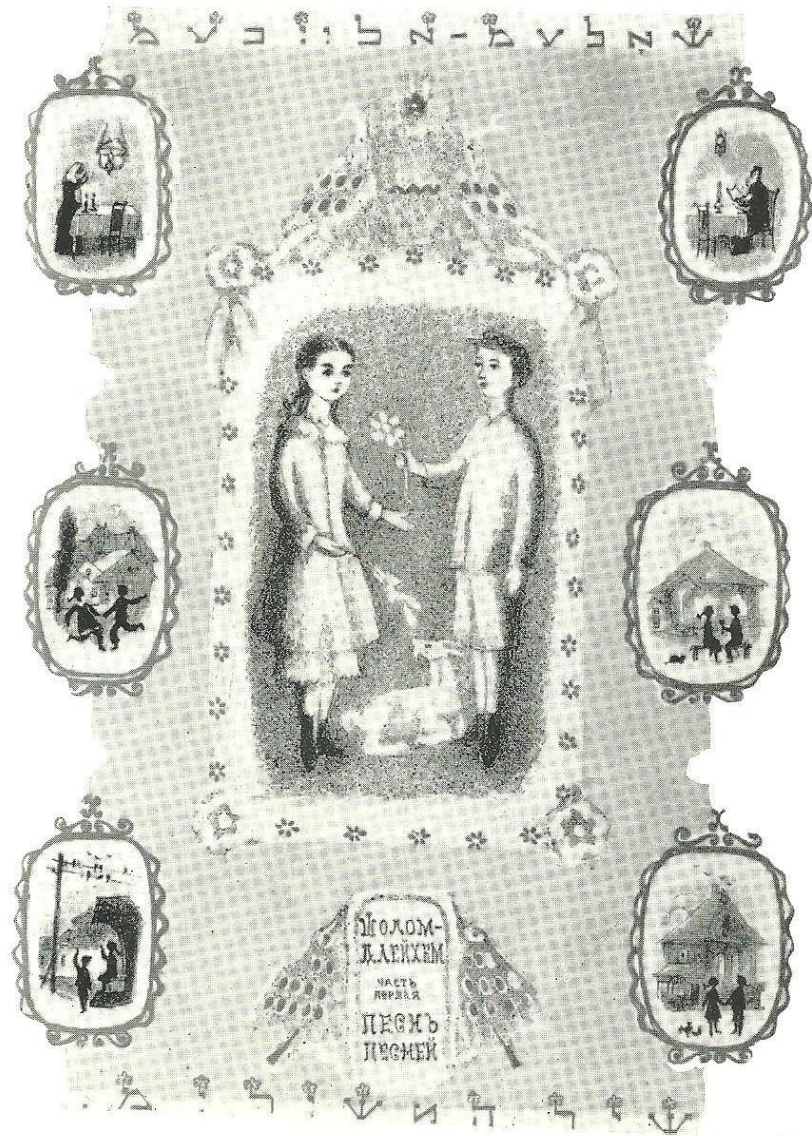
- 122 Verse VIII – 'Came a man and yoked the ox'
- 127 Verse V – variant – 'Came a fire and burnt the stick'
- 49 Chapter I – Shir Hashirim

122



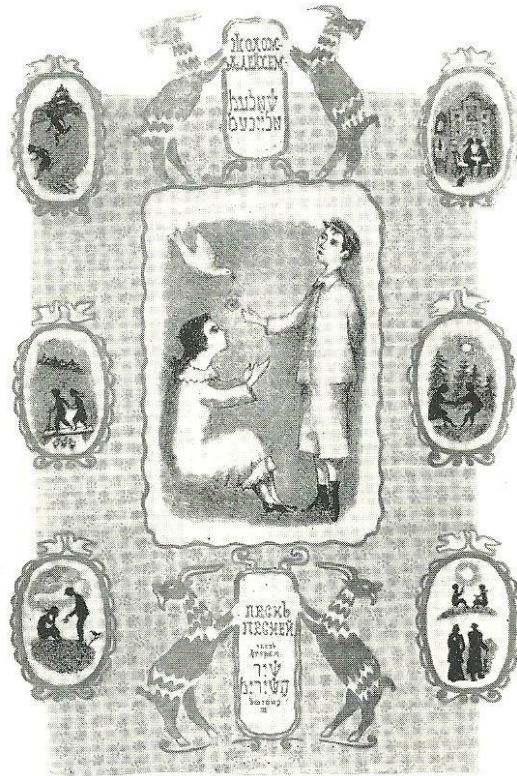
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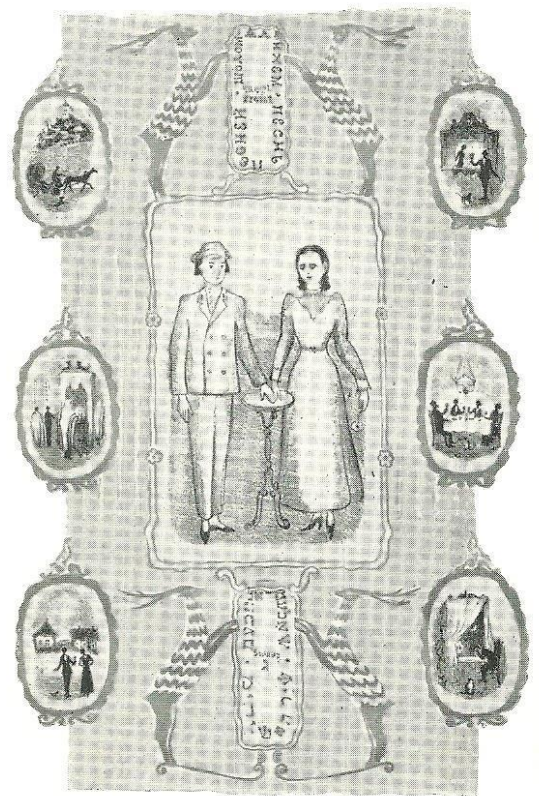


- 50 Chapter II – Shir Hashirim
- 51 Chapter III – Shir Hashirim
- 53 Yiddish folk song – 'Feigele, feigele'

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51





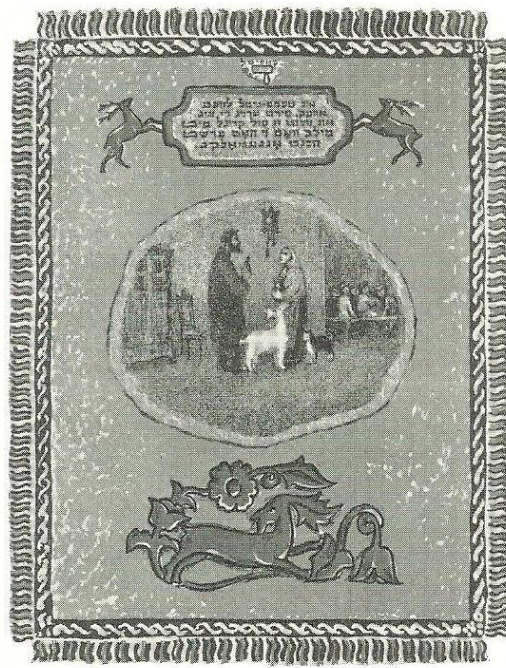
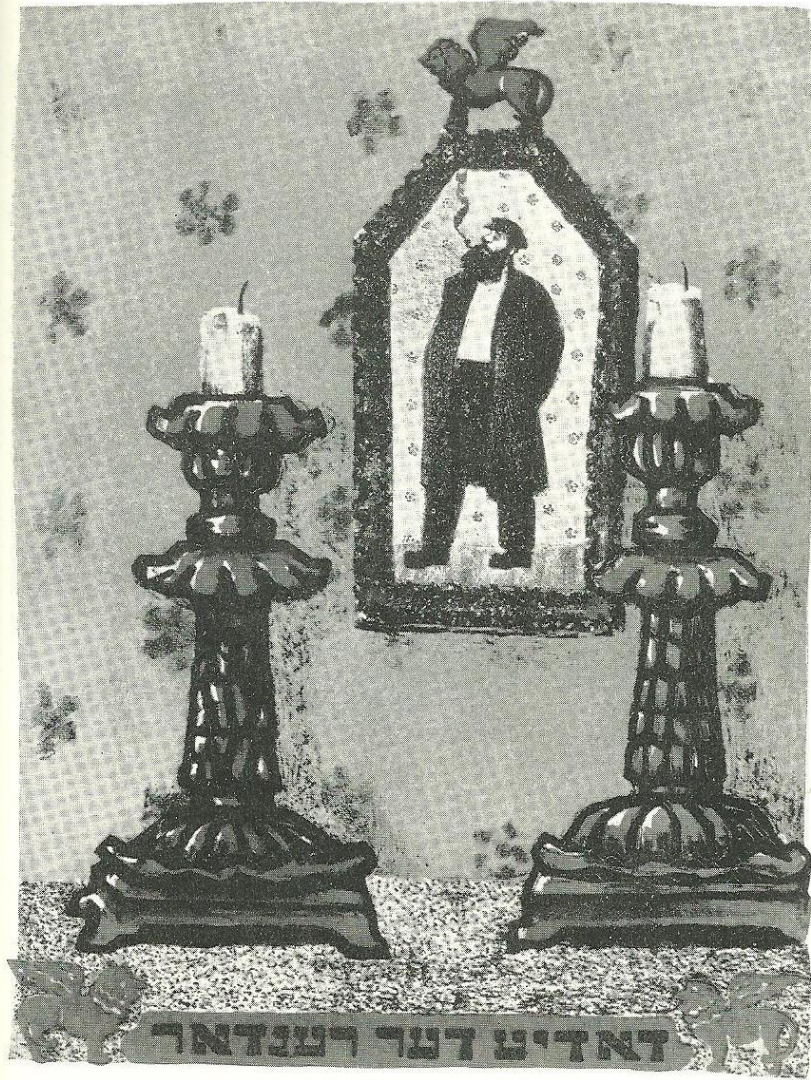
- 55 Yiddish folk song – 'Oifn a pripetchok'
- 56 Yiddish folk song – 'Ot azoineit a schneider!'
- 16 Dodya, the inn keeper
- 23 Vol 1: Chapter 4:
The teacher's wife shows the Tailor her goat and a jug of milk the goat has just yielded

55



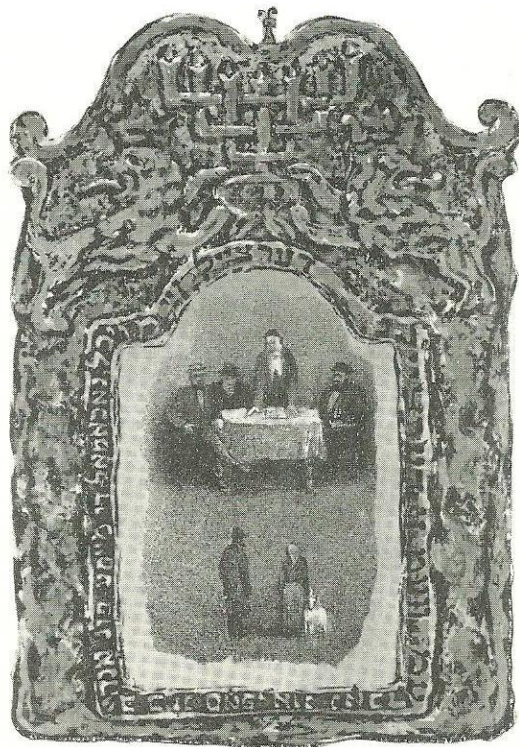
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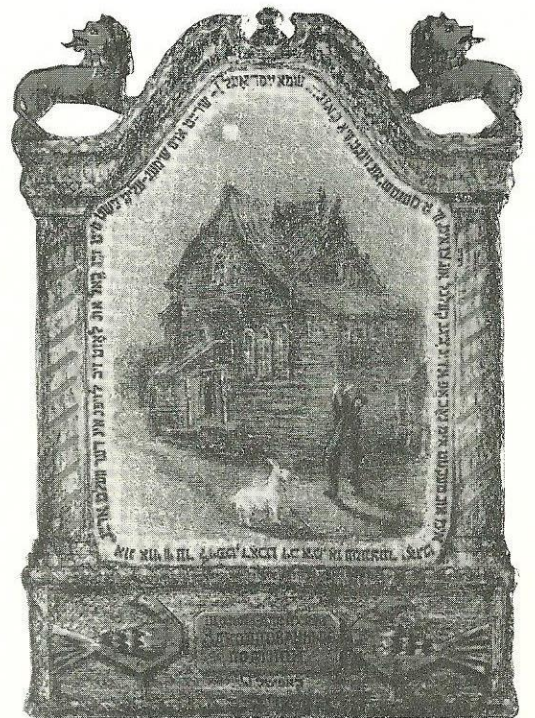


- 26 Vol 1: Chapter 7:
She goes to the Rabbi
- 29 Vol 1: Chapter 10:
The Tailor takes the goat back in disgust to have it changed
- 35 Vol 2: Chapter 3:
How best to buy a goat – a few tips from the innkeeper

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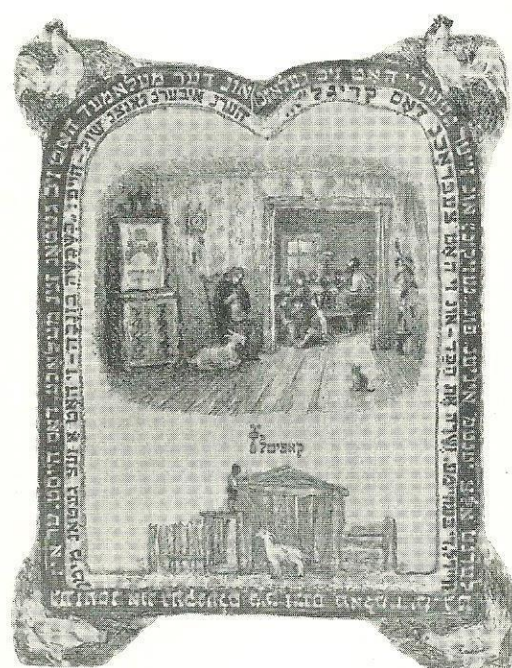
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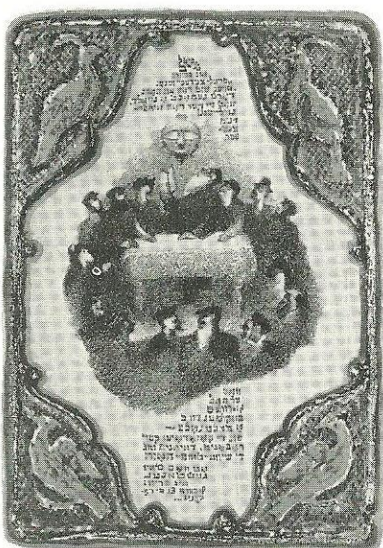
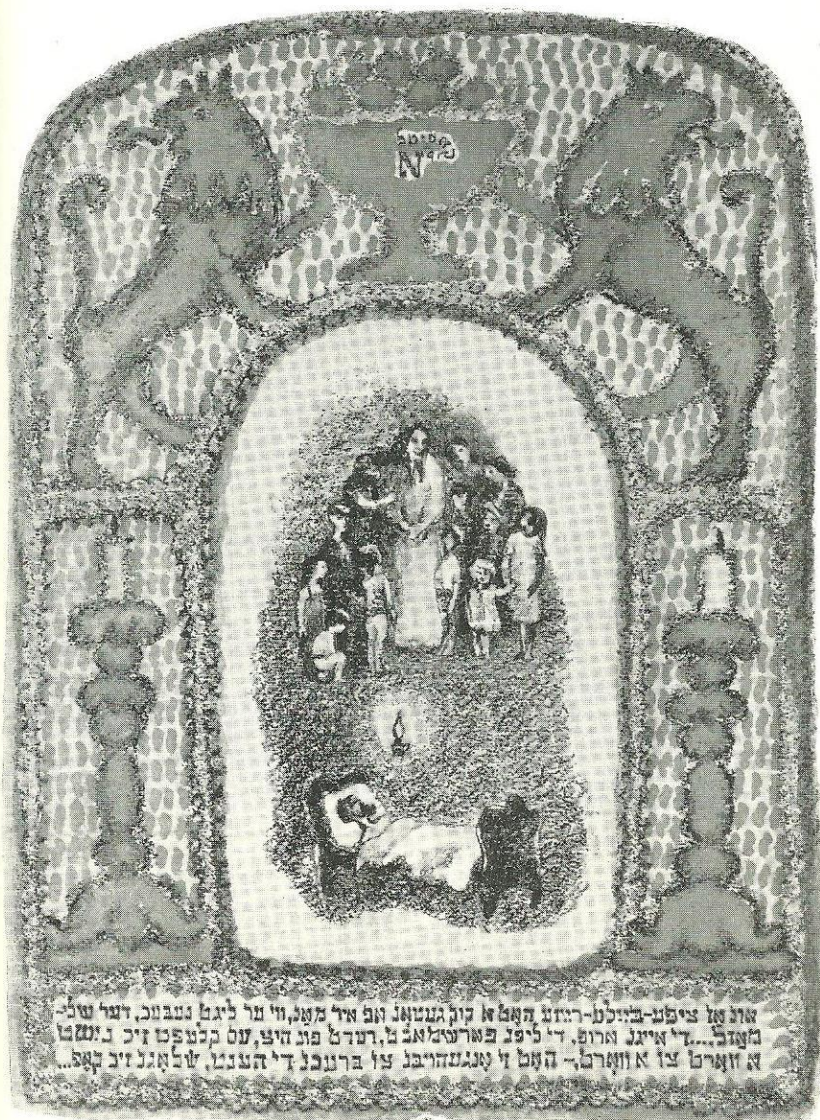
- 38 Vol 2: Chapter 6:
The Tailor and all his children celebrate the goat's arrival
- 39 Vol 2: Chapter 7:
But alas, the goat turns out to be a billy-goat
- 43 Vol 2: Chapter 11:
Surrounded by his wife and progeny the Tailor lies dying
- 44 Vol 2: Chapter 12:
The Rabbi is consulted: can the innkeeper be sued?
- 45 Vol 2: Chapter 13:
The Tailor is dead and his widow publicly proclaims her grief, while the goat, the cause of his end is set upon by neighbours

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- 1 Storm
- 6 A Jewish family
- 11 Cow looking through window

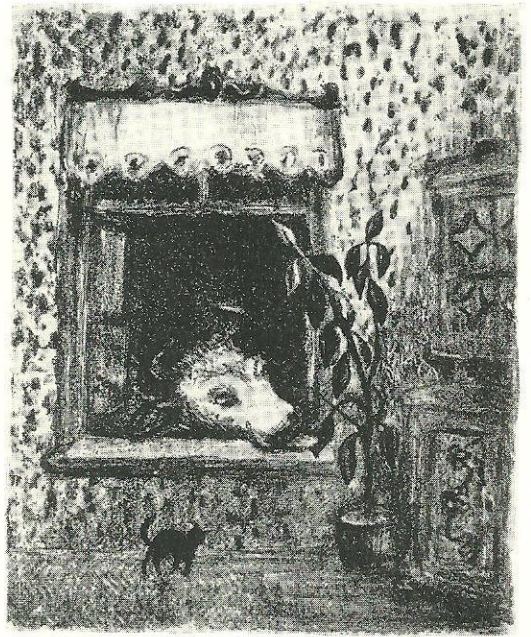
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- 3 Grandmother
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- 5 Child in cot
- 6 A Jewish family
- 7 An old couple
- 8 Bride and bridegroom
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- 15 The Tailor's wife – Zippe Beile Resel
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- 17 The teacher, Chaim Chonye, and his wife, Teme Gitel
- 18 The little town of Zlodeyevka

- 19 The little town of Khozodeyevkha
- 20 Vol 1: Chapter 1: The Bewitched Tailor
Though poor, Shimyon Elie the tailor is a happy man
- 21 Vol 1: Chapter 2:
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- 22 Vol 1: Chapter 3:
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- 23 Vol 1: Chapter 4:
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- 26 Vol 1: Chapter 7:
She goes to the Rabbi
- 27 Vol 1: Chapter 8:
The Tailor brings the little goat home
- 28 Vol 1: Chapter 9:
His wife and children mock him – the goat is a billy goat
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The Tailor takes the goat back in disgust to have it changed
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- 35 Vol 2: Chapter 3:
How best to buy a goat – a few tips from the innkeeper
- 36 Vol 2: Chapter 4:
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- 37 Vol 2: Chapter 5:
At last the goat is his . . . all that milk, all that butter!
- 38 Vol 2: Chapter 6:
The Tailor and all his children celebrate the goat's arrival
- 39 Vol 2: Chapter 7:
But alas, the goat turns out to be a billy-goat

- 40 Vol 2: Chapter 8:
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- 41 Vol 2: Chapter 9:
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Surrounded by his wife and progeny the Tailor lies dying
- 44 Vol 2: Chapter 12:
The Rabbi is consulted: can the innkeeper be sued?
- 45 Vol 2: Chapter 13:
The Tailor is dead and his widow publicly proclaims her grief, while the goat, the cause of his end is set upon by neighbours
- 46 Vol 2: Chapter 13 (A):
The Tailor is dead and his wife laments
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- 47 Portrait of Sholem Aleichem (preliminary title page to Shir Hashirim – Song of Songs)
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- 51 Chapter III – Shir Hashirim
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- 53 Yiddish folk song – ‘*Feigele, feigele*’
- 54 Yiddish folk song – ‘*Unter a klein boimele*’
- 55 Yiddish folk song – ‘*Oifn a pripetchok*’
- 56 Yiddish folk song – ‘*Ot azoineit a schneider!*’
- 57 Yiddish folk song – ‘*A tzig – a tzigele*’
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- 59 ‘Tevia the Milkman’
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- 61 Evening – Tevia’s house
- 62 The carter
- 63 Holiday makers
- 64 In the house of the rich
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92	Holiday makers (<i>datchniki</i>)
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109	Frontispiece to 'The Little Goat'
110	Frontispiece to 'The Little Goat'
111	Title page in Russian – 'The Little Goat'
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- 117 Verse III – 'Came a dog and bit the cat'
- 118 Verse IV – 'Came a stick and hit the dog'
- 119 Verse V – 'Came a fire and burnt the stick'
- 120 Verse VI – 'Came the water and quenched the fire'
- 121 Verse VII – 'Came an ox and drank the water'
- 122 Verse VIII – 'Came a man and yoked the ox'
- 123 Verse I – variant – 'Father bought a little goat'
- 124 Verse II – variant – 'Came a cat and ate the goat'
- 125 Verse III – variant – 'Came a dog and bit the cat'
- 126 Verse IV – variant – 'Came a stick and hit the dog'
- 127 Verse V – variant – 'Came a fire and burnt the stick'
- 128 Verse VI – variant – 'Came the water and quenched the fire'
- 129 Verse VII – variant – 'Came an ox and drank the water'
- 130 Verse VIII – variant – 'Came a man and yoked the ox'
- 131 Centenary lithograph of Sholem Aleichem, illustrating his birthplace and seven of his most famous works

WORKS BY ANATOLI KAPLAN

Early Kasrilovka 1937-1939
 Kasrilovka 1937-1941
 Leningrad during the Blockade 1946
 The Bewitched Tailor, Vols I and II 1953-1957
 The Little Goat 1958
 Shir Hashirim – Song of Songs 1958-1960
 Yiddish Folk Songs 1959-1960
 Tevia the Milkman, 1957-1961

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
 The Russian State Museum, Leningrad
 The Pushkin Museum, Moscow
 The Kiev Museum
 The Kharkov Museum
 The Minsk Museum
 The Baku Museum
 Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
 Victoria and Albert Museum, London
 Bezalel Museum, Jerusalem
 Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
 The Cincinnati Museum of Art, USA
 The National Gallery (Lessing Rosenwald Collection), Washington
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York
 The Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art, USA
 The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



Imprint for
'The Little Goat'
Translation of Russian Text

Printed from original
plates on a hand press
by Master Craftsmen
B.K. Volodin
and
N.F. Fyodorov
under the supervision of
The Editor
I.Z. Kopelyan
The Printing Workshop
of the Publishers
'Khudozhnik RSFSR'
Leningrad
Oul Yakoubovitch 2-3
1961
Ordered by the All Union Group
'Mezhdounarodnaya Kniga'
Published Exclusively for
The Grosvenor Gallery
London W1 England
There have been printed
125 numbered copies

GROSVENOR GALLERY
DIRECTOR
ERIC ESTORICK
15 DAVIES STREET
MAYFAIR 2782
AND
HYDE PARK 3314
TELEGRAMS
SEVENARTZ LONDON W1

DESIGNED AND PRODUCED
BY
THE WOULDHUYSEN
DESIGN GROUP
AND PRINTED IN
ENGLAND
BY H. HACKER LIMITED
LONDON