

Classic Poetry Series

Jirí Mordechai Langer
- poems -

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Jirí Mordechai Langer(19 March 1894 – 12 March 1943)

Jirí (Georgo) Mordechai Langer was a Hebrew poet, scholar and essayist, journalist and teacher.

Early Life

Langer had been born to the assimilated Jewish family and attended Czech schools. However, already in his early years he felt attracted to Judaism and studied Talmud and Kaballah with his friend from school: Alfred Fuchs. At the age of 19 he decided to leave his family home and went alone to Belz to join the hasidic court of Yisakhar Dov Rokeah?. Later this journey and his experience in the hassidic shtetl he had described in the book 9 gates to hasidic misteries (cz. "Devet bran"). At the outbreak of World War I he was drafted to the Austro-Hungarian army, but refused to obey military orders because of his religious beliefs. For refusing to obey orders he was imprisoned in military jail. After being released he came back to the Rokeah's court upon its exile to Hungary during the war years. In this time he deepened his studies of Torah, Talmud, Midrash, and Kabbalah and lived the hasidic life together with the community.

With the end of World War I Jirí Langer left the hasidic court and decided to move to Vienna, where he studied at the Hebrew Pedagogic Academy. This was also a time when his philosophy turned into the direction of religious Zionism. Later he came back to Prague, where he joined the work of Zionist institutions and worked as teacher of Jewish religion in Czech schools. This was also a time when he developed his friendship with Franz Kafka and Max Brod. He was the brother of František Langer.

On The Margins Of A Poem

The poem
that I chose for you
is simple,
as are all my singing poems.

It has the trace of a veil,
a little balsam,
and a taste of the honey
of lies.

There is also
the coming end of summer
when heat scorches the meadow
and the quick waters
of the river
cease to flow.

Anonymous Submission

Jirí Mordechai Langer