

**The Tale of Yutke Mikhkes Gershater**  
**(This manuscript is untitled and undated)**

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**(Page 1)**

This is a story on Yutke [spelled with *t* here, and with *d* (Yudke) in all the following instances] Mikhkes Gershater,<sup>1</sup> [that] had *hot ibergefirt* (ruined, let down) the whole Soviet Union. How so? He was a janitor in a bathhouse and a great pauper. In the fall all farmers bring the old horses, that can barely move their legs, to the market. And they used to sell them for almost nothing or they used to bind (tie) them [the horses] and go away. And Yudke took them to a place behind the *mohilnik* (Christian cemetery<sup>2</sup>) and slaughtered them, taking off their skin, and he sold it for ten zlotys per a skin. He used to do that in the Polish times.

Now that the Soviets came and liberated us from the Polish power, Yudke run to them with a red kerchief, that his wife Basheve used to wear. So he tore the kerchief from his wife's head, and attached it to a stick, as a red banner. And he run on the road, and they gathered under the banner that he made from Basheve's kerchief.

And in the fall he came to the market and found two old horses

**(Page 2)**

that were left by the farmers because they could not work with them anymore. And so, he took the two horses, as he used to do in the Polish times, behind the cemetery and slaughtered them, and took the skins off them. And then he brought the skins to the *selpo* (the Soviet store - of *the rural consumer association*), to sell them there. They asked where the skins come from, and he told the truth. The head of the *selpo* took (the skins) and then informed the NKVD that Yudke had slaughtered two horses and brought the skins to sell. The NKVD showed up right away and he was arrested and was charged with the slaughter of two horses and that he let down the whole Soviet Union by this. And in three days from Vorniany came a group of the court officials to try Yudke in Michaleshik for the crime which he had committed against the citizens of the Soviet Union.

We went to see what will happen there. And so, the prosecutor presented a fiery speech about the damage that Yudke had done

**(Page 3)**

killing the two horses. And he said: *Imagine, citizens, how much land the two horses could plough, and how much rye could be sown on that plot, which could be ploughed by the killed*

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<sup>1</sup> Yudke [also Udl] Mikhkes Gershater, son of Mikhkes and Etká, was born ca. 1881 in Micháleshik. He was married to Basheve Samson in 1904. They had three children, Moishke (who married Chana Vaynshteyn in 1932, Chaíke (who married Abram Baltsinik in 1934), and Jankele. They resided in house no. 119 on the Berl Klor map behind the Jewish slaughterhouse.

<sup>2</sup> *Mohilnik* also can mean a place where slaughtered sick livestock is buried.

*horses. And how much grain can be gathered from there, and how much bread can be baked from that grain. And how many working people can be fed by that bread. And Yudke had destroyed all that by killing the two horses.* And he asked the court to put a heavy punishment of Yudke.

And then the defender started to talk. He said that he agrees with all that the prosecutor said. But he said that the court must take into consideration that all his life Yudke was poor and waited that the Soviets should come and liberate [him] from the Polish power, and he went out with a red banner to meet the Soviet Red Army.

**(Page 4)**

And so, he asks that they should give him a light punishment. The judge with two jurors came out and read the verdict, that they have sentenced Yudke to five years in prison *far zayn greysn farbrekhn gegn der mentshayt* (for his great crime against the people).

And they took him right away to Oshmiany to the prison, and he sat there till the Soviets run away. The guards opened the gates of the prison, and all got out to freedom, and Yudke as well. And that was the end of the Yudke's crime against the Soviet Union.

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