

THE MUTUAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM

IN COOPERATION WITH

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

PRESENTS

RAYMOND MASSEY

IN

"THE BITTER HERB"

BY

MORTON WISHENGRAD

Wednesday, April 2, 1947
8:30 - 9 P.M. E.S.T.

OSIAS: (COLD) If a man has two eyes, is it not for seeing? If a man possesses ears, is it not for hearing? If nostrils are given for smell, and hands for touch, and a heart for passion, and a throat for the utterance of sound, surely, then, is not the mouth given for speech? And of what things shall I speak if not of the things mine eyes saw and my fingers touched? I have tasted the bitter herb and broken the bread of affliction. I have come forth out of the land of thick darkness....and I am redeemed.

(CANTOR: REGISTER FULL WITH CHOIR IN "V'HI SHEH-OMDOH" AND FADE DOWN)

ANNCR: The Mutual Broadcasting System, in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee, presents Raymond Massey in "The Bitter Herb," a drama for the festival of Passover by Morton Wishengrad.

(CANTOR: UP WITH CHOIR AND DOWN)

VOICE: When the sun is down this Friday evening, there will begin a freedom-festival known as the Passover. Throughout the world---in the cities and towns of the Western Hemisphere, in the displaced persons camps of Europe, in the pioneer settlements of Palestine ----millions will celebrate once again the exodus of Israel out of Egypt. This is a story of the family of Osias Korman--a true story of a second exodus. It will be told by the distinguished American actor, Mr. Raymond Massey.

(CANTOR: UP WITH CHOIR AND OUT)

(SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ASCENDING STAIRS...FEATURE)

OSIAS: It began this way...upon an ordinary, commonplace sound. Feet ascending a flight of stairs. A sound as commonplace as blowing wind, as expected as April rain. (CUT FOOTSTEPS) It was 1938, nine years ago..there was a knock on the door. (SOUND OF KNOCK)

OSIAS: It was a rather civil knock upon a civil door, the kind of knock
(CONT) you would make to deliver a letter or a pound of beef. (KNOCK
REPEATED) And when we opened the door for him, (DOOR OPENS) he
was a common place man.

(SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS...REGISTER AND BUILD)

He did not speak. He merely walked through our house. Not speaking.
And then with extreme politeness he said in a commonplace voice...

GERMAN: I will sit down.

(PAUSE)

ROSA: How do you do.

(PAUSE)

GERMAN: Rosa Korman. Born Rosa Laufer.

(PAUSE)

ROSA: My maiden name.

GERMAN: Sister of Oswald Laufer. Shot to death by SS troopers two days after
Herr Hitler was elected chancellor.

(PAUSE)

OSIAS: Why are you here? What do you want?

(PAUSE)

GERMAN: Osias Korman.

OSIAS: What do you want?

GERMAN: Osias Korman...Polish national. Herr Korman...you, your wife,
your two sons....twenty-four hours to leave Germany, ten minutes
to leave the house. You will take nothing. Absolutely nothing.

(CANTOR: REGISTER "V'HI SHEH-OMDOH" WITH CHOIR & DOWN)

OSIAS: We were deported to Poland. A second exodus. (PAUSE) If you
would meet my wife you would see that she is a woman like other
women, shorter than some, taller than others. My sons are sons

OSIAS: like other men's sons. And I am a man like other men. And if
(CONT) our recollection holds less of laughter than some and more of
pain than some, perhaps that, too, is commonplace. (CANTOR AND
CHOIR FADING OUT) In 1939 we spent the Passover in Poland. Four
human beings. One family. We sat around a Passover table eating
the unleavened bread of affliction, tasting the bitter herb of
exile, and each in turn...we spoke the traditional blessings.

GERHARDT: (ABOUT ELEVEN) May the Compassionate One grant that we earn our
bread in dignity.

MANFRED: (ABOUT NINE) May the Compassionate One bless my father and teacher,
the master of this house, and my mother, the mistress of this house.

ROSA: May the Compassionate One bless me and my husband and my offspring
and all that is mine.

OSIAS: (VERY SOFTLY) Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, Who has preserved
us and sustained us and brought us to this season.

(CANTOR: REGISTER "NA-AR HOYISI" WITH CHOIR & DOWN)

OSIAS: There is a verse for the Passover that may only be sung softly and
with the delicacy of hope. For if the words are not yet true, they
will become true or else there will be no words left and no breath
and no mouth for speech. "Na-ar hoyisi.....I have been young, and
have become old, but I have not seen the righteous man forsaken or
his offspring begging their bread. God will give strength to His
people; God will bless His people with peace." On a Passover festi-
val eight years ago we sang those words; we believed in them.
Perhaps you will say that it is a song for fools. Perhaps. But
if we must be fools, let us at least be God's fools.

(CANTOR: UP SOFTLY WITH CHOIR AND DOWN)

OSIAS: I will tell you something. When we sang, my wife and I put our arms

OSIAS: around our sons. And they put their arms around us. Four human
(CONT) beings. One family, holding itself together. A sentimental
gesture? Oh, yes. But then isn't the human family a sentimentality
of Creation? And can sentimentality be allowed where terror is
commonplace? (CANTOR AND CHOIR OUT) In the mounting terror of
1939 I took steps to dissolve a sentimentality.

ROSA: Gerhardt, your father is going back to Germany.

GERHARDT: And leave us here?

ROSA: Yes.

GERHARDT: Mother, why?

ROSA: You might ask him yourself.

OSIAS: Rosa, you're making it more difficult. Tell me, Rosa, are you
happy in Poland?

ROSA: No.

OSIAS: Why not?

ROSA: I'm afraid. When you're afraid, it's hard to be happy.

OSIAS: Is there anywhere on the continent of Europe where you would be
less afraid?

ROSA: One or two countries...but I'd still be afraid.

OSIAS: Rosa, Gerhardt, Manfred...I'm afraid, too. Every Jew in Europe is
afraid. I've thought it over. In America we wouldn't be afraid.

GERHARDT: Then you're going back to Germany because of America.

OSIAS: Our savings are in Germany, Gerhardt. Perhaps I can get a part of
what we have saved. Perhaps there will be enough money for me to
go to America. And then I'll send for you.

(PAUSE)

ROSA: You are breaking up our family.

OSIAS: No, Rosa, I'm saving our family. A family that's always afraid isn't

OSIAS:
(CONT) human. Rosa, Manfred, Gerhardt...don't fight against me. Help me. Say I'm right. You know I'm right. It's the Passover. All over again. Do you want to remain in Egypt?

(PAUSE)

MANFRED: Father, when you are in America, you will send for us.

OSIAS: (SOFTLY) I will stand on the dock, Manfred, and I will say, "Blessed be he who comes."

MANFRED: I think he can go to Germany.

OSIAS: Manfred, do you think this is easy for me?

MANFRED: No.

OSIAS: Gerhardt, do you think it's easy?

GERHARDT: I don't know, Father.

OSIAS: It isn't easy. You are my children. I am under your skin and you are under mine. We are sealed in each other's flesh. (PAUSE) Rosa, you haven't said anything.

ROSA: There is nothing to say. We are a family. We don't have to make speeches to one another. (PAUSE) Take off your shirt and let me wash it. If they catch you in Germany....at least let them catch you in a clean shirt.

(CANTOR: NA-AR HOYISI WITH CHOIR & DOWN)

OSIAS: Have you ever departed from your own flesh? Have you ever taken your wife and your sons by the hand and walked with them to the place of parting? And if you have, did you speak or were you silent; and did you see the setting of the sun and did you know the destitution of the pit?

(CANTOR: UP WITH CHOIR AND SEGUE TO "Y'TZIAT MITZRAYIM"....IN SLOW TEMPO AND FADE DOWN)

OSIAS: In the early spring of 1939 I returned to Germany. Israel had gone forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from the midst of a barbarous people....For them the sea beheld and fled and the mountains skipped like rams...but for me it was as though the flowing waters had turned to flint.

(CANTOR & CHOIR OUT)

GERMAN: A visa to the United States, Herr Korman, is out of the question; however, the necessary arrangements could be made for a visa to Cuba.

OSIAS: At least Cuba is close to the United States.

GERMAN: For a consideration, I shall be happy to make the necessary arrangements.

OSIAS: The "consideration" amounted to nearly half of what I had. In May 1939 the "necessary arrangements" were made. I left Germany on the ship St. Louis...bound for Cuba.

(CANTOR: REGISTER "BETZEIS YISROEL" WITH CHOIR & DOWN)

OSIAS: When Moses led Israel forth from Egypt, did he have to contend with immigration quotas? There were men aboard the ship St. Louis who had been doomed to death and reprieved...and when we reached Cuba, the reprieve was rescinded and the death sentence pronounced again -- not by Nazis -- but by those decent men who themselves denounced the Nazi barbarians. (CANTOR & CHOIR HAVE DROPPED OUT ABOVE)

CUBAN: The Cuban Government must regretfully refuse to admit you. Our little country is already overcrowded with immigrants. You will have to return to Germany.

(SOUND OF WIRELESS...ESTABLISH AND FADE TO B.G.)

OSIAS: The month was May, 1939...thirteen weeks before the outbreak of the war. We appealed for asylum to the countries of the Western Hemisphere. We drifted in the waters off Miami Beach...in sight of the men and

OSIAS:(CONT) women at play on the sands...and we waited for word of asylum...

ONE: Bolivia.

TWO: No.

THREE: Chile.

TWO: No.

ONE: Brazil

TWO: No.

THREE: Argentina.

TWO: No.

ONE: Mexico.

TWO: No.

(OFF MIKE)

FOUR: (FILTER) It was announced today that a special U.S. Senate sub-committee met last night in Washington to consider the application for admission into the U.S. of refugees aboard the S. S. St. Louis. While affirming the American tradition of asylum, Committee members pointed out that the immigration law makes specific reference to.....

TWO: No.

TWO: No.

TWO: No.

TWO: No.

TWO: No.

TWO: (ON) NO!

(ORGAN: CHORD...SEGUE TO "NA-AR HOYISI"...AND DOWN)

(CANTOR: REGISTER WITH CHOIR AND DOWN)

OSIAS: It is sung on the Passover..."Na-ar Hoyisi....I have been young and become old but I have not seen the righteous man forsaken or his offspring begging their bread."

(CANTOR UP SOFTLY WITH CHOIR AND DOWN)

OSIAS: We were returned to Europe and distributed to four countries...England, Belgium, France and Holland. "Distributed" human beings...interned as aliens. I was interned in Holland. When the Nazis broke through the Low Countries and invaded France...we were "redistributed."

(CANTOR AND CHOIR...CUT SHARPLY)

OSIAS: My story suspends now; for my life was suspended. Between 1939
(CONT) and 1946 I had no life; for a cipher has no life, and I was a
cipher. But there was Rosa, my wife. And there were my sons.
And there were letters which came through the International Red
Cross. Letters which began to come before the outbreak of war.

(SOPRANO: REGISTER "V'HI SHEH-OMDOH" WITH CHOIR AND FADE BEHIND)

ROSA: Dear Osias, For us it is always the Passover again, isn't it?
I take comfort from the "V'hi sheh-omdoh" that we sang together....
"This is the promise which has stood by our forefathers and stands
by us." Osias, wherever you are they will bring you my letters,
won't they? I want you to know that you were right to try to
leave Europe. Human beings cannot live in fear all their lives
and remain human beings. Next week, a children's transport sails
from Gdynia harbor for England. Manfred and Gerhardt will be on
board. Osias, I'm the fortunate one. For I shall be a mother who
will see her children go from her to a place of safety.

OSIAS: I tell you the story now as best I can. The letters were mailed
regularly and often...yet they came rarely. But I knew that Rosa
remained in Europe trying to secure passage for America. And I
learned that Manfred and Gerhardt had arrived safely in London,
and from London they had been taken to a village named Telaton in
a place called Devonshire. Gerhardt told me in his letter.

(SOPRANO OUT)

(SOLOIST: PREFERABLY A BOY ALTO...HE CONTINUES THE MELODY)

GERHARDT: Dear Father, Manfred and I are together. Where are you? Mother is
in Poland, but where are you? We have learned to speak English....
it is a language that is somewhat complicated by the spelling, but

GERHARDT: Mrs. Gosling, the lady who has opened her home to us, teaches us
(CONT) and does not laugh at our mistakes. Manfred and I go to school
and he has become less of a nuisance than usual. Manfred will
write to you. Papa, where are you? (SOLOIST OUT)

(CANTOR: CONTINUING WITH CHOIR AND SEGUE TO "NA-AR HOYISI" & FADE BEHIND)

(SOLOIST 2: ANOTHER BOY...REGISTER & DOWN)

MANFRED: We have been in England a long time now...Anyhow that's the way
it seems. I am growing very nicely. I like the English, Papa, but
the cooking is not like Mama's. I have grown one inch. By night
the houses are dark and the searchlights stick long fingers into
the sky. Sometimes there is the sound of a big gun. It is very
interesting. I hit a friend of mine in the nose today because he
said you were dead. Papa, you're not dead, are you? Your loving
son, Manfred. P.S. Did you ever eat crumpets? P.P.S. I forgot the
main thing.

(CANTOR, CHOIR & SOLOIST FADING OUT)

In one month it will be Passover again. Gerhardt is very unhappy
because we will be alone for the Passover Seder. (FADING) I wonder
if we'll even have a Passover Seder.

MRS. GOSLING: Don't mope, Gerhardt, you can have your Passover Seder here just as
I've told you.

GERHARDT: Thank you, Mrs. Gosling. But how can you have a seder without
matzohs?

MRS. G.: I shall be glad to bake them for you. I shall write to London for
the recipe. If your...did I say something wrong?

GERHARDT: Matzohs are not easy to bake, Mrs. Gosling.

MRS. G.: Gerhardt, sometimes I wonder if you really like my cooking.

GERHARDT: (HASTILY) Your cooking is fine, Mrs. Gosling. (SLOWLY) It really

GERHARDT: doesn't matter about Passover.
(CONT)

MRS. G.: You must not speak falsehoods, Gerhardt.

GERHARDT: No, Ma'am.

MRS. G.: It does matter to you and Manfred, doesn't it?

GERHARDT: Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. G.: I shall write to Bloomsbury House in London. They will send you the Matzohs you need.

GERHARDT: Thank you, Mrs. Gosling....My mother would....

MRS. G.: Comb your hair, Gerhardt. It's untidy again.

GERHARDT: Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. G.: Gerhardt, what do you need besides matzoh for the proper celebration of the Passover?

GERHARDT: Wine.

MRS. G.: I beg your pardon?

GERHARDT: Matzohs and wine.

MRS. G.: Brush your hair, boy, brush your hair. (PAUSE) I'll get you the matzoh. But I'm really not certain of the wine.

(BOY SOLO: MAH-NISHTANUH...REGISTER IN THE CLEAR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND HOLD UNDER)

OSIAS: In 1940 in the village of Telaton, which is in Devonshire, two boys celebrated the festival of the liberation of Israel from Egypt. They broke a cake of matzoh which an English lady had obtained for them and, Manfred, who was the younger, spoke the traditional Four Questions, and Gerhardt, who was the elder, sat in his father's place and answered,

GERHARDT: "Slaves of Pharaoh were we in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us forth from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

OSIAS: And perhaps an English lady named Mrs. Gosling looked on and took a mother's place....

MRS. G.: God bless you, children.

OSIAS: And two children who were the flesh of my flesh ate of the bitter herb and were reminded how the lives of their forefathers had been made bitter in Egypt.

(CANTOR: REGISTER IN "ELIYAHU HANAVI" WITH CHOIR...IT SHOULD BE SUNG CONTEMPLATIVELY AND SLOWLY)

OSIAS: It was on the Passover that Manfred and Gerhardt learned that somewhere in Holland I was alive. And it was on the Passover that somewhere on the bloodsoaked continent of Europe a woman named Rosa, a woman like other women, shorter than some, taller than some, a woman... it was on the Passover that Rosa Korman obtained, at the risk of her life, a visa to emigrate to America.

(CANTOR: UP WITH CHOIR AND SEGUE TO SOPRANO SOLO.... IN THE CLEAR AND DOWN)

ROSA: Dear Osias....I have come out of the continent of death to the land of the living. I am writing from American soil. Do not ask me to explain the miracle of it or the wonder of it. I am here. I have cabled to England. The boys are well. As soon as passage can be obtained they will come here. And at least three of us will be reunited. Shall I say that I miss you? It is such a foolish thing to say. Silence is so much better. But, Osias, not too much silence. We have had enough. We have borne our share. It is enough. I want nothing. Neither wealth, nor station, nor eminence. I am a wife who wants her husband, I am a mother who requires her sons. It is such a modest hope. I pray God it is not too much to ask.

(CANTOR: HE HAS COME IN WITH CHOIR UNDER FOREGOING...UP NOW AND OUT)

OSIAS: On September 10, 1940 Rosa Korman was reunited with her sons. Septem-

OSIAS:
(CONT) ber 10, 1940. Between that date and July 21, 1946....five years, ten months, and eleven days elapsed. Five years, ten months, and eleven days during which I was a prisoner of the Nazis, a displaced person, and a man suspended upon a frail thread of hope. On July 21, 1946 I landed on American soil and a woman who was like other women, shorter than some, taller than others, spoke in a voice like other voices.

ROSA: Blessed be he who comes.

OSIAS: (COLD) "Blessed be he who comes." Where six millions have been slaughtered, by what presumption do four human beings remain alive? And if we are alive, by what further presumption are we in America and not behind the barbed wire of Cyprus? I stand on American soil and I marvel.

(CANTOR: SOLO...."OD'CHO"...IN THE CLEAR AND DOWN)

OSIAS: If a man has eyes, is it not for seeing? If a man has ears, is it not for hearing? If nostrils are for smell, and hands are for touch, and a throat is for sound, surely, then, is not a heart for passion and thanksgiving. We have tasted the bitter herb and broken the bread of affliction. I say to my soul, be tranquil again; for the Lord is bountiful unto thee. I shall praise the Lord who delivered my soul from death, and mine eyes from weeping, and my feet from stumbling.
(PAUSE) I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

(CANTOR: UP...ADD CHOIR....AND CONTINUE FULL TO CURTAIN)

ANNCR: (PAUSE) You have just heard Mr. Raymond Massey in "The Bitter Herb," a drama for the festival of Passover based upon the true experiences of the family of Osias Korman. And now we take pleasure in presenting the Honorable Herbert H. Lehman, former Governor of the State of New York and first UNRRA Director General. Mr. Lehman.

LEHMAN:

Unfortunately not many families who have escaped Nazism find themselves reunited like those in the drama to which we have just listened. In this, the second year after Hitler's defeat, the Passover "Bitter Herb" stands as a symbol of the six million men, women and children tortured and done to death in the most savage mass murder of human history. All the more must we see to it that, for those who have survived, the tradition of human liberty is made real and living.

There are still eight hundred fifty thousand homeless victims of Nazi persecution in the camps of Europe. They are of many religious faiths and many nationalities. Of these six hundred fifty thousand are Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Protestants. Some two hundred thousand are Jews. About one hundred fifty thousand of the total number are children under eighteen years of age. Almost half of these children are five years old or younger.

These surviving children and adults are asking of the world and of us a chance to renew their lives, to work, to hope, and to help build a future of peace and security. Each of the United Nations shares a deep obligation to these first and most deeply wronged victims of Nazism.

Our responsibility in the United States is a special one. The fathers or the forefathers of all Americans were immigrants. Immigrants have cleared our continent, have built its railways, waterways and industries. They have brought the skills of their hands and brains to make ours a land of opportunity and of hope for all mankind.

For the past fifteen years the annual immigration quota of our country has not been filled. During the war years, only seven percent of those authorized under the quota were able to come here. The countries with the largest quotas, England and Scandinavia, have never filled their quotas during the twenty-two years of the present immigration law. Since the immigration quotas may not be transferred from one country to another or carried over from one year to the next, thousands of desperate human beings in Europe have been denied entrance to the United States while unused quota numbers have gone to waste.

Thus, under our present laws, it has been impossible to carry out President Truman's directive to admit 39,000 displaced persons during 1946. Up to October, only five thousand reached our shores. Although the law provides for admission of more than one hundred fifty thousand every year, technical and administrative difficulties have made it impossible to carry out even this pitifully small objective set by President Truman.

Let us now be mindful of America's proud tradition of asylum and hope and opportunity for the oppressed. Let us admit our fair share of these victims of Nazism to our shores. Let us do so in the solemn reaffirmation of those values for which Americans have fought and died on the battlefields of the world. If we take the lead other nations will follow -- if we fail in our humane duty the situation will remain tragic beyond description.

ANNCR: Thank you, Mr. Lehman.

(CANTOR: REGISTER "ADIR HU" WITH CHOIR AND DOWN)

ANNCR: If you would like a free copy of this broadcast write to The American Jewish Committee, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, New York.

(CANTOR: UP AND DOWN)

ANNCR: The Mutual Broadcasting System and the American Jewish Committee have brought you Raymond Massey in a Passover drama by Morton Wishengrad. The musical soloist was David Putterman, Cantor of the Park Avenue Synagogue of New York, and the music for the choir was arranged by Max Helfman and conducted by Emerson Buckley. The organist was Alexander Richardson. Members of the cast were Bryna Raeburn, Teddy Rose, Ronny Jacoby, Betty Caine, Lon Clark, Gilbert Mack and Maurice Tarplin. The entire production was under the direction of Jock MacGregor.

(CANTOR: TO CODA)