

## Hospitality of Rural Jews During Holidays

At one time there were quite a number of rural Jews around Wyoski Dwór [Aukštadvaris]. On the High Holy Days, they and their families all gathered in the town. Even though they could convene a *minyán*<sup>1</sup> in the countryside, they did not wish to remain among Christians on these holy days. On such occasions, the population of the town increased by a fourth, even a third. Each rural Jew went to the home of relative or a good friend. Despite the crowded conditions that this created, the guests were treated in a most hospitable manner and were put up in the best of part of the house. The rural Jews would arrive in large wagons driven by teams of horses. As they entered the town they were greeted first by the adults and then by the children, who stared at the visitors with great curiosity. Children in the town were especially envious of the children from the countryside, because they had the opportunity to ride on horses.

In general, the town was very hospitable. After prayers, particularly on the holidays of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot, a guest would be invited “to recite a blessing,” that is, to partake of refreshments. Sometimes the guest would “recite a blessing” at four or five different homes, in order not to hurt anyone’s feelings. Refreshments might include cookies, preserves, fried *kreplekh*,<sup>2</sup> strudel, compote, honey cake, or other typical Jewish treats. Of course, there was plenty of whiskey.

Excerpted from Hirsz Abramowicz, “A Lithuanian *Shtetl*,” in *Profiles of a Lost World: Memoirs of East European Jewish Life before World War II*, ed. Dina Abramowicz and Jeffrey Shandler, trans. Eva Zeitlin Dobkin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press in cooperation with YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1999), 88.

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<sup>1</sup> Quorum of 10 men needed for formal prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Meat dumplings.