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Aviva Butt
M.A. Honours Thesis
The academic year of 1980

Supervisor: Dr. Yossi Gamzu
The University of Sydney

THE IMPACT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ON MODERN
HEBREW POETRY IN ISRAEL
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My thesis "The Impact of the Old Testament on Modern Hebrew Poetry in Israel" deals with representative Younger Poets of the Generation of the Fifties, as well as with two poets who first published their work in the 1940's prior to the Israeli War of Independence of 1948-9. The latter are poets who, in the case of Amir Gilboa represent the transition to the poets of the 1950's, or, in the case of Haim Gury, have since changed their style in keeping with post-independence trends. Thus, although in the narrowest sense, a "younger poet" is a poet who first published his work during or after the War of Independence, the poets of the Generation of the Forties discussed in my thesis are usually classed as Younger Poets.

The lay-out of this thesis is very easy to follow. Each chapter focusses on one poet, and analyzes one or more of his poems. However, in chapter four, although the poet under discussion is basically Natan Zach, for purposes of comparison, I have also analyzed a poem by Natan Alterman, a poet of the Generation of the Twenties, who has been called the "father" of the Younger Poets.

Appendix II, which consists of the poems analyzed in the body of the thesis, and Appendix III (English translations of the poems) do not include poems from which I have quoted only a few lines for discussion purposes.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, quotations from poems or reference works are translated by myself.
The poems in the appendices which I have translated are as follows:

- An Initiation of a Prophet in an Army Camp
- A Sort of End of Days
- King Saul and I
- An Exact Account of the Music the Biblical Sāul Heard
- Behold a Day of Battle and Its Eve Have Ended
- Another Poem about Absalom
- Gifts from Kings

Where Hebrew words or proper names have already been accepted into the English language with a conventional spelling (e.g., Saul, Absalom, kibbutz, and so on), I have kept that spelling. With the poets' names, I have followed previously published transcriptions. Where there are variations (e.g., Gury or Gouri, Amichai or Amihai, Sach or Zach, and so on), I have chosen what seemed to me to be the personal preference of the poet himself.

At times, it has seemed appropriate to romanize isolated Hebrew words or phrases, both within the main text and in the footnotes, especially in discussions on poetics. These words have been rendered, for the purpose of maximum simplicity, in a system of transcription that indicates minimum phonemic contrasts. In other words, where Israeli speakers make a variety of additional distinctions in their speech, and where these distinctions are optional (e.g., between א and י; כ and ס; ב and פ; ʼ and ʼ [all ṣ], and so on),
it seems to me that intelligibility is not impaired through their omission. However, the following points should be noted:

(1) Between vowels and at the beginning of words, נ and י are not indicated. In the traditional view of Hebrew, all syllables must begin with a consonant, so that where there is no symbol, the reader will at any rate supply something by way of a glottal stop.

(2) At the end of words, נ , י , נ and י are not indicated. However, they are implied by orthographical conventions.

(3) Where for grammatical reasons the shewa is pronounced as a short vowel sound similar to the segol, the shewa is indicated as א. Where conceivably a consonant cluster could occur, or where the shewa could indicate a closed syllable, the transcription does not show the shewa.

(4) The symbols used to represent the Hebrew characters are the same as those used by Haim Blanc in The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself (S. Burnshaw, T. Carmi, E. Spicehandler, edd.). For convenience, I am listing the less obvious equivalents, as follows:

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I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Yossi Gamzu, for the great help he gave me throughout the year, and for what is beyond thanking anyone for — his own experience as a poet and involvement in the historic commitment of the Jew to Israel.

I am very grateful to Professor Rifaat Y. Ebied, head of the Department of Semitic Studies, for having allowed me to consult him at various stages throughout the preparation of my thesis; and I also wish to thank him for his overall very great kindness in assisting and encouraging me in my studies.

I thank Steven Brent, who is presently studying Chinese (also at the University of Sydney), for having helped me understand how the Hebrew language could be written in a system of romanization.

Finally, I very much thank Dr. Avraham Wajnryb for his interest in my thesis topic and timely loan of the book by Amos Oz, Under This Blazing Light.

Aviva Butt

Sydney
1980
SYNOPSIS

"The Impact of the Old Testament on Modern Hebrew Poetry in Israel" deals with different ways in which poets of the Generation of the Fifties have handled biblical motifs. Various literary trends, such as the trend to individualism as versus personalization of the national and historic, are considered.

My thesis is that the aim of the modern Israeli poet in his handling of biblical themes, is not to retell an ancient story, but rather to insert the stuff of his own current reality into the biblical narrative, which serves him as a frame for a modern content.
Chapter One

Much can be learned about the way in which modern Israeli verse deals with biblical themes by reference to Erich Auerbach's discussion of European literary traditions in his oft translated book Mimesis. The biblical narrative, he says, omits descriptive details. He summarizes the reason for this as follows:

The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality — it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of all mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it. The Scripture stories do not, like Homer's, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us — they seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels.

Let no one object that this goes too far, that not the stories, but the religious doctrine, raises the claim to absolute authority; because the stories are not, like Homer's, simply narrated "reality." Doctrine and promise are incarnate in them and inseparable from them; for that very reason they are fraught with "background" and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning. In the story of [the Binding] of Isaac, it is not only God's intervention at the beginning and the end, but even the factual and psychological elements which come between, that are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore they require subtle investigation and interpretation, they demand them. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon.

1 E. Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton, N.J., 1971, pp. 74-75. Mimesis was written in Istanbul between 1942 and 1945, subsequent to Auerbach's expulsion from Germany.
Thus, according to Auerbach, the biblical epic does not purport to give the reader aesthetic pleasure. Rather, due to the pervasive nature of Hebrew monotheism, the narrative serves a didactic and ethical aim. Descriptive details which do not bear directly upon the action, that is, the progression of events, are omitted. The scenery, time of year, physical characteristics of the protagonists and so on may not be mentioned at all.

Exactly the opposite is evident in Homer's Greek epic, the Odyssey, an archetypal work of equally great antiquity. The polytheism of the Odyssey does not convert the story into a tool for didactic or ethical aims, since, for Homer, literary aesthetics are possibly more important, certainly not less, than ethical teachings. As Auerbach says, the Greek epic is full of descriptive details, digressions, idyllic pictures and so on.

Extension and adaptation of Auerbach's dichotomic typological distinction between the Homeric and biblical literary styles provide a key for understanding how modern Israeli poets have been able to repeatedly represent the reality of their own times in a biblical context. It is, in fact, relatively easy to intromit a new content into the biblical narrative, since the Old Testament does not admit many descriptions. In other words, the biblical story is full of lacunae,

\footnote{Auerbach's theory concerning the original cause of the aesthetic effect produced by the Homeric style is beyond the scope of this paper.}
and these gaps serve as openings for the modern poet to embellish the biblical epic, in such a way as to give it a modern connotation.

Haim Gury's poem His Mother is an excellent example of how a modern Israeli poet takes a current topic, in this instance, the wars between the Jews and Arabs, and inserts it into the frame of the biblical narrative.  

The Book of Judges tells us almost nothing about Sisera's mother; certainly not how old she was, nor what color her hair was:

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Behold, they have found, they have divided: to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a spoil of garments of divers colours, a spoil of varicoloured embroidery, of varicoloured embroidered stuffs on the necks of the captives.

(Jud. 5:28-30)   

3 Haim Gury. See Appendix I for biographical notes on the poets.


5 A. Harkavy, rev., The Holy Scriptures, N.Y., 1936 (reprint, 1951). All biblical quotations in English are from Harkavy.
Likewise, in the previous chapter, the Book of Judges did not describe Sisera's appearance after Jael had stabbed him with a tent peg:

Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and it pierced through into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. (Jud. 4:21)

Suppose Homer had written the story! Judging by, for example, his having written eighty verses on an incident at the time of Odysseus' homecoming revolving around the scar on Odysseus' thigh, and another seventy verses digression on the scar and its history, it seems safe to say that he would have composed quite a few verses describing Sisera's mother, as she waited for her son's return; or, described Sisera at even greater length after Jael had served him milk and butter, and then killed him in his sleep.

However, as the frame for His Mother is biblical, not Homeric, there is no such detailed description. The poet has ample space to insert modern material into the descriptive gaps, and Gury, taking advantage of this, writes:
A woman whose hair is a streak of silver.

A prey of divers colors of needlework
Divers colors of needlework on both sides meet
for the necks of them that take the spoil,
the maidens saw:
At that very moment he lay like a sleeper in the tent;
His hands [were] very empty.
On his chin, traces of milk, butter, and blood.

(His Mother)

In these lines, Gury inserts descriptions of Sisera's mother and Sisera, but does not deviate from the biblical plot. Far from it. He underscores the irony of the biblical situation, where the reader knows what Sisera's mother does not — that her son is already dead.

Why does the modern poet feel a need to superimpose descriptions upon the raw frame of the biblical narrative? Ahad ha-Am (Asher Ginzberg) in his essay on "Imitation and Assimilation" defines what could be taken as a poet's two-fold stance in the time dimension of modern Israel. On one hand, as a member of a stable society, he feels a need for artistic imitation of the past,
and on the other hand, as a member of a developing society, he feels a need to revitalize his impersonal collective heritage by a competitive and personal artistic imitation of the details of his own environs:

Just as the results of Imitation during all the generations of growth have been combined into a single form of life, so, too, those who made that form in those earlier generations are now combined, under the name of "ancestors" or "predecessors," into a single abstract being, which is the central object of imitation. Before this model the men of later generations, great and small alike, efface their own particular individuality; on this they gaze with reverence and say, "If our predecessors were as men, then are we but as asses."

At the same time, the imitation of one man by another within the living generation does not cease...

This kind of Imitation differs from the other in its character as in its cause. At the stage that we have called self-effacement the imitator wishes to copy the spirit or personality of the model, as it is manifested in his actions; he therefore imitates these actions in every detail, faithful to the impress stamped upon them by the personality by which he is attracted. But at the stage of competition, the whole desire of the imitator is to reveal his own spirit or personality in those ways in which the model revealed his. He therefore endeavors to change the original impress, according as his personality or his position differs from that of his model.

This kind of Imitation, also, is of benefit to society. The self-effacing imitation of the past secures stability and solidity; the competitive imitation of one individual by another makes for progress...

By filling in the descriptive gaps, Gury effects a modernization of the impersonal biblical narrative, which is all the more impersonal insofar as it is devoid of descriptive material. He conveys the immediate message that "his mother" could in fact be an Israeli mother, or for that matter, an Arab mother, at any rate, a mother awaiting her son's return from war. Hence, the story

---

becomes close and personal to the modern reader, and Gury has achieved his goal as two-fold imitator.

Making it even more clear that the poet is talking about the wars of his own times is his inclusion of himself in the story, in the first person — obviously, the poet could not have been alive in Sisera's times:

In another place Gury says:

The quiet was not shattered by [lit. to] the 
horses and the chariots; 
My silence touched their silence. 
(His Mother)

Thus, in the poem His Mother, which on the face of it is about a Canaanite general's mother, it is immediately felt that Gury had in mind, not Sisera and the wars between the Hebrews and Canaanites, but, his own times and the wars between the Jews and Arabs. The biblical frame serves him as a poetical pretext, although, no doubt, the poet's personal need to describe these wars is all the more as he himself fought in them. As there is almost nothing in the Old Testament about Sisera's mother, there are descriptive gaps, and there is room to insert modern material — motivated descriptions of Sisera's mother and her son.
So far, it is clear that the biblical epic leaves descriptive gaps, and that this fact enables the modern poet to utilize the biblical frame to tell a story entirely modern. Were the poet to choose the Homeric narrative as his frame, his task would be much more difficult. Here, as already noted, there are no such descriptive gaps. The story already seems complete down to the last exact detail of where, when, who and how, and it is therefore relatively difficult for him to insert the stuff of his reality into the Homeric frame. Another poem, by the same poet, Haim Gury, should serve as a convincing example of this difficulty.

In his poem *Odysseus*, Gury's technique, albeit he is one and the same poet, varies considerably from his methods in composing the poem *His Mother*. In *Odysseus*, Gury does not include himself in the story in the way he did in *His Mother*. The poem takes place as if in exactly the same period as the Homeric. And, it is not only as regards historical time that the poet stays within the boundaries of the Homeric period, but also in regard to place. That is, everything happens in Greece:

9) ANEFSIM SHARER ZEHUT ANAHRA

... people who spoke different Greek. *(Odysseus)*

9 Haim Gury, op. cit., p. 115.
Towards the end of the poem, Gury introduces
the Homeric character Euryclea, but does not elaborate
on her, or for that matter, on the scar by which she
recognizes Odysseus:

Water came, and bathed his feet, like old Euryclea,
And did not see the scar... (Odysseus)

This is a far cry from Gury's treatment of the story of
Sisera's mother in the Book of Judges, where he adds
descriptive details telling us that she has a "streak of
silver" in her hair, and Sisera, "traces of milk, butter,
and blood" on his chin. However, it would probably have
been impossible for Gury to think of a description of
Euryclea that would in any way add to the story, since
Homer has already portrayed her in every detail:

...the scene in which the old housekeeper Euryclea,
who had been his nurse, recognizes him [Odysseus] by a
scar on his thigh. The stranger has won Penelope's
good will; at his request she tells the housekeeper to
wash his feet, which, in all old stories, is the first
duty of hospitality toward a tired traveler. Euryclea
busies herself fetching water and mixing cold with hot,
meanwhile speaking sadly of her absent master, who is
probably of the same age as the guest, and who perhaps,
like the guest, is even now wandering somewhere, a stranger;
and she remarks how astonishingly like him the guest
looks. Meanwhile Odysseus, remembering his scar, moves
back out of the light; he knows that, despite his effort
to hide his identity, Euryclea will now recognize him,
but he wants at least to keep Penelope in ignorance. No
sooner has the old woman touched the scar than, in her
joyous surprise, she lets Odysseus' foot drop into the
basin; the water spills over, she is about to cry out
her joy; Odysseus restrains her with whispered threats
and endearments..."11

11Auenbach, op. cit., p. 3.
Nor is the modern poet able to compete with Homer as regards Odysseus' scar, since Homer not only describes it in a detailed and lifelike way, but also gives us a long flashback on the history of the scar:

The interruption, which comes just at the point when the housekeeper recognizes the scar — that is, at the moment of crisis — describes the origin of the scar, a hunting accident which occurred in Odysseus' boyhood, at a boar hunt, during the time of his visit to his grandfather Autolycus. This first affords an opportunity to inform the reader about Autolycus, his house, the precise degree of the kinship, his character, and, no less exhaustively than touchingly, his behavior after the birth of his grandson; then follows the visit of Odysseus, now grown to be a youth; the exchange of greetings, the banquet with which he is welcomed, sleep and waking, the early start for the hunt, the tracking of the beast, the struggle, Odysseus' being wounded by the boar's tusk, his recovery, his return to Ithaca, his parents' anxious questions — all is narrated, again with such a complete externalization of all the elements of the story and of their interconnections as to leave nothing in obscurity.12

All in all, Homer leaves almost no lacunae for the modern poet to fill in, and this poses a problem when the poet comes to grafting a modern connotation onto this ancient epic. In Odysseus, Gury does not attempt to intromit descriptive details, but rather allows himself to add a detail to Homer's plot. Thus he tells us that the water, unlike old Euryclea, did not see Odysseus' scar, and did not recognize Odysseus:

כָּאִי פַּמְיָא לֹא יָכֹּב לָאִיבָּם לְאָבֵּרָם אָבֶּרָם
לֹא יִתְמָלֵל לָאִיבָּם לְאָבֵּרָם בָּאָבָּרָם לָאָבָּרָם

(אָבֶּרָם)

Water came, and bathed his feet, like old Euryclea,
And did not see the scar, and continued down the slope as water does. (Odysseus)

12 Auerbach, op. cit., p. 4.
By this device of personification, whereby it is as if the water, an inanimate element, were a human being or beings, it becomes apparent that the Homeric story is actually a symbolic representation of reality in a modern Israeli context. Now, retrospectively, Gury's line, "A wanderer tired as a dreamer and full of longing," takes on a personal tone and instead of expressing Odysseus' feelings on his homecoming to Ithaca, expresses Gury's feeling that he, the poet, is a stranger in his own homeland, Israel:

A wanderer tired as a dreamer and full of longing
Among people who spoke different Greek.

When Gury talks about a "different Greek," he is not referring to another language, but rather to different ideals. His generation, the poet says, was idealistic, a generation of dreamers; whereas, the younger generation, newcomers to a state for which they did not fight, are a new breed who have "continued down the slope as water does":

A外国语 (Odysseus)
The word "slope" (the Hebrew word means 'slope' or 'decline') indicates that Gury is talking about a moral decline. He says that the new actuality in Greece (Israel), from the moral standpoint, has been of a lower order since the 1948 War of Independence. In other words, during the war, which left an indelible mark ("scar") on Gury's generation, idealism was stronger.

The poems His Mother and Odysseus have served as examples of how a modern poet is able to insert a new and modern content into the frame of the ancient classical epic. The poem His Mother, which elaborated on a minor figure mentioned in the Book of Judges, demonstrated that the material of the biblical narrative is malleable, a material the poet is able to work with with relative ease. Indeed, the biblical frame has been used again and again by poets in modern Israel. The aim of the Israeli poet, however, is neither to reiterate the content of the biblical story, nor to compete with the literary power of the Old Testament as regards form. As I shall show in the forthcoming chapters, the aim and sole contribution of the Israeli poet is to tell of his own current reality: to this end, he utilizes many poetical devices, as well as other methods, to overlay the biblical frame with an updated and modern connotation.
Chapter Two

As already said, the biblical narrative leaves many gaps, and this makes it easy for the modern poet to utilize the Old Testament epic as a frame for his own creativity. Amir Gilboa takes advantage of this characteristic of the biblical narrative in his poem Isaac, and inserts several completely new elements into the frame of the original episode of the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22).

Firstly, Gilboa effects a change of location. In the biblical original, the story takes place in the hills of Jerusalem, to be specific, on Mt. Moriah, the Temple Mount. There is no description of the nature of these mountains in the Old Testament, and except for the mountains, nothing is mentioned about the scenery. Therefore, Gilboa is able to fill in the gap by adding a description which immediately transfers the biblical story from one place to another: instead of the hills of Jerusalem, the story takes place in a forest in Russia; instead of a Middle Eastern landscape, the scenery is typically European:

*Early in the morning the sun took a walk in the forest.*

(Isaac)

2S. Burnshaw, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 137.
In the same first line of his poem, not only has the poet inserted a new location into the biblical frame of the story of the Binding of Isaac, but he has also inserted a new time dimension. Instead of the ancient times of Abraham and Isaac, the story is transplanted into the twentieth century in the period of anti-Semitic pogroms between World War I and World War II, that is, during Amir Gilboa's childhood. In the next line of the poem, the poet inserts not only a new time chronologically speaking (the twentieth century instead of the biblical period), but he also inserts a new aspect of time, a personal time. The plot involves not Abraham and Isaac, but the poet himself, when he was a little boy, and the poet's father, who fills the role of Abraham:

Together with me and with Father

In line three of his poem, where the poet alludes to another book of the Old Testament, the Song of Songs, he closes the gap in time between Abraham and Isaac and his father in Russia:

(1) Early in the morning the sun took a walk in the forest
(2) Together with me and with Father
(3) And my right hand in his left.
That is to say, the original biblical story does not describe the scenery, and so Gilboa is able to insert a European Russian landscape into the Middle Eastern context. The biblical original is impersonal (we do not feel the presence of a narrator telling the story of Abraham and Isaac), and so Gilboa is able to insert a personal aspect, whereby Gilboa's father becomes Abraham and the child Gilboa Isaac, and the now adult poet tells us about what happened to him and his father many years ago in the poet's childhood. Furthermore, the biblical original is devoid of description of the psychological and emotional reactions of the protagonists, of which there is only the barest of hints:

And so, although we know what happened, we know almost nothing about what Abraham or Isaac felt at these very dramatic moments. Therefore, Gilboa is able to insert a description of the emotions of father and son at the time of the event of the Binding of Isaac, by which it becomes apparent that there is a very strong mutual love between father and son. This insertion, line three of the poem *Isaac*, "And my right hand in his left,"
alluding to the biblical, "His left hand is under my head, and right hand doth embrace me" (Cant. 2:6), tells us not only of the relationship between Abraham and Isaac, but, as the time dimension and location have been modernized, describes the very strong bond between the child (poet) and his father. The cold, objective biblical narrative has been transformed into a warm, subjective story, the story of Gilboa's childhood memories. We now find ourselves in the midst of a very personal drama.

Gilboa links the biblical to the modern drama by filling in the interpretative gaps in the Old Testament with an interpretation of his own, which is, at the same time, linked to his own modern life story:

Like lightning a knife flamed between the trees. And I fear so the terror of my eyes facing blood on the leaves.

(Isaac)

These lines firstly fill in an interpretative gap in the Old Testament, where the biblical Isaac perhaps feared his father when he said:

...Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? (Gen. 22:7)
The biblical narrative goes on to describe Abraham's submission to God's will:

...and he said, Behold, here I am...And Abraham rose up early in the morning...and went unto the place of which God had told him...And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; so they went both of them together.

(1,3,8)

However, at this point Gilboa's personal story is in contrast to the original biblical story: it could be called, instead of the episode of the Binding of Isaac, the episode of the Death of Gilboa's Father:

The son is not the victim, the father is:

It is I who am being slaughtered, my son,
And my blood is already on the leaves.
And Father's voice was stifled.
And his face pale.

(13,8)

These lines too, a reply of father to son, fill in an interpretative gap in the Old Testament. They supply us with what could have been an emotional outburst on the part of Abraham when he bound his son on the altar and stretched forth his hand to
slay him:

...and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

(Gen. 22:9-11)

However, whereas in the Old Testament a miracle takes place, in the actuality of the poet's childhood there is no saving angel. The victim (the poet's father) is actually killed. Therefore, instead of a child's fear of what his father might do to him, there is the awful fear on the part of both father and child of what could happen to the father through an unnamed horror, anti-Semitic pogroms:

Like lightning a knife flamed between the trees. And I fear so the terror of my eyes facing blood on the leaves.

(Isaac)

The Death of Gilboa's Father is presented as the poet's nightmare:
And I wanted to cry out, writhing not to believe
And tearing open the eyes.
And I woke up.

And bloodless [lit. helpless-of-blood] was the
right hand.

(Isaac)

When the poet awakens from the nightmare, he sees that
his right hand is "bloodless." That is to say, his
father's death was not just a bad dream. His father's
blood, spilled many years ago, is the blood now missing
from the poet's "right hand." It is clear that the
"right hand" is an allusion to the biblical idiom
meaning one's most needed person.

In this his poem, Amir Gilboa tells his story
through the eyes of a child. That is, the dramatic
element and the trivial element are combined one with
the other, as in the thought of small children.
Accordingly, the little Isaac (the poet) asks his
father to save him (as indeed was saved the biblical
Isaac), so that he can sit at the table for his midday
meal with his father and all the family:

לך, חיבי אחין א異なる, סתם בטוח.

Father, Father hurry and save Isaac
And no one will be missing at lunchtime.

(Isaac)

What would sound foolish and even comical in an adult's
speech, sounds natural and authentic when said by a
child. The family's midday meal is a symbol of the
ordered self-contained world of family life, wherein
no one is missing at the table.
All in all, in the poem Isaac, Gilboa conveys a very personal message, one which relates to our modern times and the world of Gilboa the adult: namely, that many years after his family's murder by anti-Semites, the poet's world remains shattered, incomplete and macabre. His table lacks his family members, and his right hand is "bloodless" — due to the nightmare of the destruction of European Jewry.

In the poem Isaac, we had an example of a modern poet's use of the frame, the ancient biblical narrative, to show what was common to both biblical history and scenes from his childhood — as well as what was at variance (the modern day scene in Isaac presented a horror absent from the scene of the biblical epic, in which God was all-pervasive).

In Joshua's Face, another poem by Amir Gilboa, there is, as in Isaac, a simultaneous consideration of the poet's memories and of the Jewish tradition. In Joshua's Face, however, despite the fact that there is reference not only to the biblical narrative, but to other traditional sources as well, the link between the modern situation and the biblical is much weaker.

As in Isaac, so too in Joshua's Face, the poet's nightmare is vivified. This time the dream centers around his father, but the memory of his brother Joshua, who was killed by Germans in World War II. The nostalgic memory of his brother pursues Gilboa even in his dreams, and to the point that he is sick with longing:
A cold dream. A mummified dream.
And at my feet the sea beats eternities toward
the shore.
I am sick with its lament. It seems I am about
to die.

(Joshua's Face)

His death wish places the poet in an ambivalent position,
since at the same time Gilboa feels a strong need to live
on. It is, after all, his task as a poet to make sure
that a sign remains, something to bear witness, evidence,
of the dead Joshua and of all those who were killed.
That is, he must stay alive for the sake of making Hebrew
history live into the future:

But I must, I must await alive
The "Always."
Above, my brother's face rises in the cloud.
To tell [foretell] my footsteps in the [sea]
washed sand.

(Joshua's Face)

4Amin Gilboa, op. cit., p. 344.
5S. Burnshaw, ed., op. cit., p. 142-3. In this
translation, nehiyot is rendered as 'its lament'.
This is not an exact translation as nehiya means
'yearning' or 'longing'. The translator may have
been thinking of the word nehi, which is similar
in meaning to king 'lament'.
In the Talmud, a comparison is made between Moses and Joshua:

The face of Moses is like the face of the sun; the face of Joshua is like the face of the moon (Baba Bathra 75a)

The opening lines of Gilboa's poem describe Joshua's face as being, like the sun, of "beaten gold." Aside from being an allusion to I Kings 10:16,17, where this expression is used in a different context, it is an allusion to the Talmud (Baba Bathra 75a). Above all, it establishes the nightmarish, ethereal and phantasmagoric mode of the poem. The scene shifts from Moses to Joshua (in the Talmud, Moses is described as having a face like the sun; in Gilboa's poem, the poet seems to confuse Moses and Joshua); from Joshua to the poet's brother Joshua; from this world to the next; and, from times of yore to the present:

And Joshua from above looks at my face. And his face is beaten gold. (Joshua's Face)

The analogy that Joshua the brother is to the poet as Moses is to Joshua in the Old Testament emphasizes the basic problem of Jewish existence, and underscores the two part nature of accomplishment (i.e., vision

7 Talmud Bavli, Zitamin, 1859.

8 Sahut in context means "beaten," but its homonymous meaning is 'slain', 'slaughtered'. By this poetical device (homonymy), the second line of the poem contains the information that the poet's brother was slain.
and practice). Just as in the Old Testament, Moses, who was a prophet and essentially a man of vision, was followed by Joshua, upon whom was imposed the task of carrying out the vision and of giving his people a homeland, so too the brother Joshua preceded the poet, who was later to fight on Israeli soil to fulfill the historical role of making a homeland for the Jewish nation. However, Joshua the poet's brother, is like the biblical Joshua in that he too fought many wars. The wars and suffering are a typical mark of Jewish existence in our times, as they were in the biblical period. The poet stresses this similarity:

Joshua too is now resting from wars.

(Joshua's Face)

At this point, the stories of Joshua the brother and the biblical Joshua diverge very conspicuously.

The Book of Joshua describes Joshua's death, as follows:

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

(Jos. 24:29,30)

The slain brother Joshua has no grave, and certainly not in the Land of the Fathers. He was killed somewhere in Europe, and as the poet says:
Joshua of the Old Testament fulfilled the great historical role Moses had imposed on him, and lived some time in the Holy Land and was buried in its earth. Moses, on the other hand, did not enter the Holy Land and his grave is unknown. In the case of the biblical Joshua, we know the place of his burial; but in the case of Joshua, the poet's slain brother, we do not know where he is buried, or if indeed he was buried at all in a proper way. This last possibility, that the brother was not buried at all, but died in an unknown place with no mark to bear witness (as was the case with millions of Jews during World War II) — this possibility makes an opening for a poetical description reminiscent of old English and Scottish ballads, where a ghost comes out at night, roams around the heavens or earth, and haunts living family members. Gilboa's allusion to the talmudic

8So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. (Deut. 34:5,6)
words, "the face of Joshua as the face of the moon" (Baba Bathra 75a), tied in with the story of the biblical Joshua, creates the link to his ballad-like description, where the poet changes the moon, which sails into the sky at night, into the face of his brother Joshua:

Therefore he goes out night after night
To walk in the sky.  
(Joshua's Face)

In these lines, four levels of connotation are linked: the level of the biblical story of Joshua bin Nun; the level of the talmudic commentary describing Joshua's face; the demonological level where dead ghosts sail forth to walk round at night; and, the level of the poet's personal nightmare of his brother's death.

If Gilboa had written a poem about Joshua his brother, but without the biblical and talmudic dimensions, we would have a modern poem without any allusion to the historical past of the poet's people. In this instance, unless the poet's artistry in imitating the present exceeded all bounds, his brother's story would have remained a private family matter only.

If, on the other hand, the poet had written a poem about Joshua bin Nun, faithfully reproducing
the biblical story, it is more than probable that he would have been unable to compete with the literary force of the Old Testament. We would have wondered why a modern poet had bothered to retell an old, known story, without making any changes to introduce new material.

However, in Joshua's Face, we have an excellent example of a modern poem springing from a very personal source and linked to the twentieth century, as well as being connected very interestingly with the Old Testament and the Talmud, and even the European ballad. In this instance, the affair of the poet's brother Joshua becomes not a private or even a modern matter, but a collective, national and historical symbol. What ties in Joshua bin Nun with Joshua the brother is a new and old common dream, that of finding a homeland. Joshua bin Nun found a homeland and those who came after him built it. Joshua the brother did not find a homeland, but the fact that his brother, the poet, is alive, changes his death into a will and testament of the continuity of Jewish existence. At some point in time after the death of the brother Joshua is the inevitable death of the poet. Nonetheless, the continuity of Jewish historical existence is a fact, just as it is a fact of existence that wave after wave comes in from the sea to the shore. Even if the wave is broken, ceases to exist in a specific moment of time, the sea, symbol of the collective historical existence of the nation, remains for always:
And I am sick, it seems I am about to die
Walking barefoot in cold moon-sand
At the water’s edge
And murmuring within me, murmuring within me is the end
Which beats my death at my feet
Wave after wave —

Upon the faces of many lives
May he be raised and glorified.

(Joshua’s Face)

The last line contains an allusion to yet another ancient source, the Mourner’s Kaddish, a traditional Jewish prayer, which begins with the Aramaic words:

הושיע הנ假日 שומא רבי אבשלום

Magnified and sanctified be his great name in the world...

(Mourner’s Kaddish)¹⁰


¹⁰ Ibid.
The poem *Moses* also by Amir Gilboa is, as its title suggests, another poem based on the Old Testament. However, unlike for example in the poem *Isaac*, the biblical background does not provide a specific situation or defined story. Rather, *Moses* is based on several verses of the Old Testament, which describe the biblical Moses as he arrays the armies of the children of Israel. The poet alludes to the following verses in the Book of Exodus and the Book of Numbers:

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And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people, that thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: (Ex. 33:1)
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And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. (Nu. 1:1-3)
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In Moses, as well as in the previous poems discussed, it is more than clear that the poet is not attempting to repeat the biblical story as is. The modern poet is not interested in reconstruction of the biblical narrative, but rather in a modern paraphrase of the ancient text.

As already demonstrated, one of the ways in which Gilboa treats biblical raw material in his poetic laboratory is through personalization. That is, he inserts his personal life history into the ancient impersonal frame, the biblical narrative, with the result that the biblical story, as we saw in his poem Isaac, steps out of the category of ancient myth, the collective consciousness of the whole nation, into the frame of Amir Gilboa's private life story. Likewise, in Moses, the story of Moses arraying his armies in the desert to prepare for ascent to the Holy Land abruptly steps out of the category of national myth into the frame of Gilboa's personal and modern life story.

11 An example of personalization, where the poet makes the objective ancient biblical story step into the subjective modern frame of his personal life story, was seen in Gilboa's Isaac when he described the Binding of Isaac as if everything had happened not to Abraham and Isaac, but to Gilboa the child and his father. Personalization should not be confused with personification, a literary description of an inanimate thing, which gives it, as it were, a life of its own. An example of personification is evident in the first line of the same poem Isaac, "Early in the morning the sun took a walk in the forest."

12 I am using the word "ascent" to render the Hebrew word aliya in reference to ancient times, and the word "immigration" in reference to modern times.
Amir Gilboa, who immigrated to Israel in 1937, at the age of twenty, while still in Europe, along with many other young people, went through a stage of preparation for immigration. That is, he was involved in the Pioneer Movement, a movement which trained prospective immigrants to Israel to cope with an agricultural way of life. The Jewish youth, girls and boys, who underwent this preparation, spent some time on farms for girl-workers and boy-workers respectively, in villages in Russia, Poland and so on. Looking back to this time of his life, the poet recalls a girl with long legs who worked on one of the farms for girl-workers. The poem (Moses) does not reveal the exact significance of what remain the poet's own memories of both the long-legged girl and a girl called Sara, in whose name he planned to build a city:

13 "Pioneer Movement": Hebrew – tuvat hehaluts.
14 "Farms" havot; "workers" poalim, -ot.
I went up to Moses and said to him:
Place the armies thus and thus.
He looked at me
And placed them as I told him to.

And who did not see me then in my glory?
Sara from childhood was there
In whose name I had planned to build a city.
The long-legged one from the girl-workers' farm
was there.

(Moses)16

The poet sees a parallel, in his own immigration to Israel in 1937, with Moses and the children of Israel, who spent years in the desert to prepare themselves to meet a new life in the homeland; and he, accordingly, intertwines the biblical narrative with his own personal story and that of the young pioneers of his generation.

The poet prepared himself again for a second homecoming to Israel, when five years later (in 1942) he volunteered for service with the Hebrew Unit of the British army. During this period he traversed Africa, Malta, Italy, Yugoslavia and the Lowlands (the Netherlands Plain). Once again, the poet, then a soldier, knew he would return to Israel; and, therefore, the various places and women he became acquainted with at that time are memories which in his mind paralleled Moses' preparation of the armies of the children of Israel:

And Melvina from Rabat in Malta.
Dina from the Italo-Yugoslav border.
And Ria from the Lowlands in the North.

(מֹשֶׁה)

When Gilboa weaves the ancient collective Moses myth into his own personal life story, he is intertwining contrasting elements. Not only in this regard does he introduce contrast into the poem Moses. Another instance of this feature is in the contrast between the mood in the beginning of the poem and at the end of it. The poem starts out by expressing the childish pride of a boy who feels that he is readying himself, just as did Moses and the children of Israel, for ascent to the Holy Land. Here we see the poet in a period of naive idealism. Full of exaltation, he identifies so strongly with the two-dimensional homecoming, that of Moses in days of old and of himself in modern times, that the gap in time is closed, and there is no difference in importance between the poet and Moses. On the contrary, he even gives instructions to the great Moses ("I went up to Moses and said to him:/Place the armies thus and thus"). The poet's enthusiasm and idealism reflect a concept typical to a young adolescent boy: the interconnection of honor and self-respect with the erotic experience. Anything he tells Moses to do, Moses does ("He looked at me/
And placed them as I told him to"). The glory shed on him for his role as advisor to Moses is
expressed instantly, immediately, in a truly automatic way, in the raising of his stocks in the eyes of the girls.

At the end of the poem there is a strong contrast in mood. The innocent boy who went to Palestine in 1937 became a soldier who went through all the horrors of the front in World War II, in Africa and Europe. He now knows what he did not know before. Glory has a very high price! Suddenly he is sure that all the charming girls from his childhood and youth (all these girls, accumulated in his memory, in the final analysis, in one collective girl) are either no longer alive, or no longer alive in his memory. Some of them, as perhaps Sara or the long-legged girl from the girl-workers' farm, could have been murdered by the Nazis amongst the six million in Europe. It could be that the girls like Melvina from Malta, Dina from the Italo-Yugoslav border and Ria from the Netherlands were simply wiped out from his memory. But, not only the girls have vanished. That is, not only the reason and motivation for the glory have disappeared, but the innocent and idealistic exaltation associated with immigration to Israel is no more:
And very proud, I hurried to Moses
To show him the right way
When suddenly it became clear to me
That she who within my name
Is carved and rightly (firmly) emplaced
Was not [present].

(Moses)

In his younger days, the poet thought worthwhile the participation in the historic mission of emulation of the biblical Moses, who arrayed the armies for entry to the land of Canaan. After seeing blood and suffering, the awful price of glory, the same poet is tired, and no longer wishes to participate in his historic responsibility as exemplified by Moses who led the nation to the Promised Land. He who in his younger days wanted to be a man, in his maturity wants to be a small boy. The weariness expressed in the last stanza of Moses is not only a physical tiredness, but is a tiring of the big national ideals, Zionism and humanitarianism (socialism) — a tiredness that is typical of the whole generation of modern Israeli poets from the beginning of the fifties. This trend begins with Gilboa and is continued, as I shall show in the forthcoming chapters, with the poets who came after him: Amichai, Zach and others. In the last stanza of Moses, Gilboa, with excessive artistry, retreats from his own modern life story to the biblical background. He says to Moses:

מְשַׁה מֶשֶּׁה נֵיהַ אֶת קְנֵה.
לֵאמֶה יֵאֵין כָּל-כְּלָן גִּלְוָה לִישָׁנָה וּלְעִיר.

(Moses)

(משה)
Moses lead the people.
Look, I am so tired and I wish to sleep some more.
I am still a boy.

(Moses)

In almost exactly the same words, the prophet Jeremiah tells God that he does not want to be a prophet, that he resigns from this glory, since he is still a boy:

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. 

(Jer. 1:1-6)
Chapter Three

Amir Gilboa bridges the poets of the so-called Palmach Generation and poets of the 1948-9 Israeli War of Independence with the Young Generation of poets of the fifties, of whom Yehuda Amichai is the most outstanding.¹

As far as age and life story are concerned, there is not much difference between Gilboa and Amichai. Amichai, too, was a soldier in the British Army, and both returned to Israel twice — Amichai, the first time in his childhood, from Germany to Jerusalem, and the second time when he returned from World War II directly to the war of '48. However, from the literary point of view, Amichai begins a new period, not only in his expression of new ideals, but also insofar as his use of the Hebrew language is much less sacral and solemn, and his treatment of biblical themes differs, especially in the great use he makes of the elements of irony and sarcasm in confrontation of Old Testament and our modern times.²

¹"Palmach" means the striking force of the Haganah, the Jewish self-defence organization established in Palestine, especially against Arab attacks during the British Mandate.

²The most epic-making example of Amichai's simple language and skeptical, pessimistic ideas, as compared with those of the poets of the Palmach Generation and War of Independence, is contained in the following lines from his well-known poem *A God Full of Mercy*:
Just as Gilboa, in his poem *Moses*, opens as if it were a window from his own private life onto the biblical story (an allusion to the young Jeremiah who did not want to be a prophet and tried to escape historic responsibility), so, in Amichai's poem *An Initiation of a Prophet in an Army Camp* (henceforth, *An Initiation*), we find a similar phenomenon. The poet describes himself in the role of a young soldier in an army camp, shaving, before the sounding of morning roll-call. As reminiscences from the poet's younger days, this could have been a beautiful poem in itself. But, in much the same manner as did Gilboa in the poems *Isaac* and *Moses*, Amichai intertwines the collective national past with his own private present, and, at this stage, as exemplified in *An Initiation*, we see his reverence for the past without evidence of antagonism or irony.

In the poem *Moses*, Gilboa analogizes that the historic Moses who prepared the nation for ascent

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_A God full of mercy,  
If not for the God full of mercy  
There would be mercy in the world and not only in Him.  
I, who have picked flowers on mountains  
And gazed down at valleys,  
I, who brought corpses from the hills,  
Am qualified to say that the world is devoid of mercy._

_I, who use only a small part  
Of the words in the lexicon._

_The Hebrew original is in Amichai's *Shai Am 1948-1962*,  
Tel Aviv, 1977, pp. 69-70._
to the Holy Land was like the young Gilboa who prepared himself for immigration to Palestine. Amichai, in *An Initiation*, uses a similar analogism: he infers that just as the prophets of old were set apart from ordinary people in that God had given them a special vision and perception of all that was round about them, thus, poets in our modern times differ from other people. God (or inspiration) has instilled in the modern day poet, instead of the spirit of prophecy, the gift of poesy, the art of composing poems, which is also a sort of special type of vision and perception of the world round about:

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He too returned like water from far off
To his comrades, tired, as from afar,
And he had seen a great light. ...

*(An Initiation)*

Just as in the Old Testament details of the everyday world take on solemn meanings, now, details of the modern world surrounding the young soldier all of a sudden protrude in a surrealistic manner, that is, with "background," multi-layered, and have solemn meanings. Thus, the blast of the bugle is changed into its biblical equivalent — the blast of the trumpet: changed from a simple trivial thing to a
symbol of calling by God (or inspiration), to a call to prepare oneself for the role of a modern prophet, that is, to be a poet:

He wrapped his knife with love.
He dried his face; he heard, as superfluous,
The sound of the blast of the bugle
At all events he was ready and full of peace.

(An Initiation)

In the light of the above comparison to Gilboa, there is not much by way of innovation in Amichai's attitudes — that is, going by the poem An Initiation. The real innovation begins when Amichai introduces an ironical and sarcastic element in the course of confronting the high-sounding promises of world peace in the Old Testament with the brutal reality of unceasing war in the modern period. It is possible to clearly see Amichai's innovation by comparing the words of the prophets Isaiah and Micah concerning the "end of days," the final period of history from the prophetical viewpoint, and a poem, typical of Amichai, called A Sort of End of Days (henceforth, End of Days).

Amichai's poem End of Days paraphrases several biblical verses, especially verses 1-4, chapter four, of the Book of Micah. These verses from the Book of Micah are in themselves reminiscent of the Book of Isaiah:
And he shall judge among the nations, and shall decide among many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(1s. 2:4)

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

(Mic. 4:1-4)
Amichai's modernistic handling of the biblical raw material differs greatly from Gilboa's treatment of those biblical verses upon which Gilboa based his poems. Both deliberately intertwine the biblical with the modern time dimension. But, Gilboa had none of Amichai's pronounced use of irony and sarcasm.

The substance of Amichai's irony is his bitter disappointment in regard to the prophetical pacifistic promises in the Old Testament, which sound so glorious, but have not eventuated, and do not seem likely to do so in the poet's times. The poet's irony takes shape in the parodization of otherwise pompous sounding biblical prophecy. That is, he converts what sounds solemn and sacral in the Old Testament into caricature, by means of satirical understatement.

Thus, the words of the prophet Micah, "And they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid... ," afford Amichai, in the first stanza of the poem End of Days, a chance to paraphrase in such a way that Micah's bombastic sentence takes on a ludicrously modernistic connotation. In his poem, Micah's words, "...and none
shall make them afraid..." do not reflect the outcome of the fact that people are sitting under grape-vines and others under fig-trees, which fact, Amichai goes on to show, is not a guarantee against fear of war. In his times, the poet says, the man under the fig-tree and the man under the grape-vine could just as well represent a military picture of two liaison officers from their respective army units, sitting by the border and communicating important military information to each other:

The man under his fig-tree phoned the man under his grape-vine:
"Tonight they are surely likely to come.
Armour the leaves shut the tree well,
Call the dead home, and be ready."
(End of Days)

"They" means the enemy. And, the fact that even the classic symbols of peace, the fig-tree and the grape-vine, need to be armoured like a tank or military post, proves that nothing can escape the reality of war, not even in surrealistic terms.⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵ To "sit under one's vine and fig-tree" is a biblical idiom for 'peaceful times'. Cfr. Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10; 1 Kings 5:5; Is. 36:16 = 11 Kings 18:31.
In the first stanza, Amichai intertwines not only the ancient time of Isaiah and Micah with his own modern period, but, in the words "call the dead home, and be ready," he intertwines two semi-times, both of which are contained within the poet's times. One semi-time is of the soldiers present on the border far from their homes, but alive. The other semi-time is when the soldiers return home, but dead. Amichai's sarcastic parody takes on phantasmagoric shape, as if the poet were a modern prophet who had already seen in the live soldiers on the border, the dead ones of the morrow, who would return home to the graveyard.

Amichai's satire expands in the next stanza, wherein he parodies Old Testament imagery for something of least likelihood, the co-existence of wolf and lamb, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid..." (Is. 11:6), as follows:

The white sheep said to the wolf:
"People are bleating and my heart hurts:
They will come to bayonet battles there,
By next meeting between us, the matter will have been decided."

(End of Days)

That is, Amichai submits that the co-existence of wolf and lamb is far more likely than the peaceful
co-existence of human beings, who are after all of the same species.

Yet another satirical effect is achieved when, at the linguistic level, the poet contrasts the classic biblical style with the modern bureaucratic Hebrew of the line, "By next meeting...the matter will have been decided." This line not only creates a mix of linguistic styles from one line of the poem to the next, which underlines the multi-layeredness of the poem, but also contrasts with the biblical verse to which it alludes, "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall decide among many peoples" (Is. 2:4). That is, Amichai deliberately confronts the fervent and lofty biblical style and its grave prophetic content with the cold and dry bureaucratic Hebrew in context of a poem with a modern almost cynical content, and thus creates a satirical effect.

In his next lines, Amichai puns on the association of the name "United Nations" (U.N.), whereby protruding as a sort of caricature are Micah's prophetic verses, "...and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:1-4):
All the nations (the united ones) will flow to Jerusalem
To see if Torah has come forth, and meantime,
Since it is now spring
Gather flowers from round about.

(End of Days)  

Amichai's irony gets its most sarcastic punchline at the end of the poem when he gives a literal interpretation, vulgar on purpose, to the very famous and pacifistic verse in the Old Testament, "...and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares [spades for gardening], and their spears into pruning-hooks [shears for gardening]..." (Mic. 4:3). His last

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6 In the above lines of Amichai's poem, there is an echo of very concrete reality. Yehuda Amichai, being a Jerusalemite, is well acquainted with the daily life of Jerusalem. In the fifties, United Nations observers were supposed to keep the peace between divided Jerusalem, East Jerusalem under Jordanian administration and the New City in the State of Israel. Aside from the obvious connotation of the line "Gather flowers round about," meaning that the United Nations is ineffectual and a mere decoration in the event of an outbreak of fighting, by comparing End of Days with another of Amichai's poems, The U.N. Command, Jerusalem, it is possible to further understand what he wants to say. The following translation is from D. Silk, ed., Fourteen Israeli Poets, London and Tel Aviv: Andre Deutsch Ltd. and The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature Ltd., 1976, p. 19. (The original is in Amichai, op. cit., p. 16.)

And their diplomatically-immune chauffeurs
wait below, like stalled horses,
And the trees which shade them are rooted
in no-man's land,
And the delusions are children who went out
to the field to pick cyclamens
And do not return.

Where they stay a day or two
And rest...
And later sail away.
two lines finish the poem on a sarcastic note, telling us that perhaps because of so much beating and sharpening, the iron of contention in the world will grind itself to a halt ("end") and there will be no more war:

מַגְּבִּין עַל חֲרֵב לַטּוֹם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ לַחֲרֵב
שָׁחַרְתִּי לַטּוֹם כָּל לַחְרוֹן
שְׁאֵלֵב בֵּשַׁמֶּשׁ בָּשָׁמֶשׁ כָּהָה
כָּכַלָּכָלָכָלּ כְּכַלָּכָלּ (פְּזִי יְרֵדָה נִמי)

From The U.N. Command, Jerusalem, a poem entirely on the subject of the United Nations, we understand that the United Nations not only pick flowers in the sense that they pass their time ineffectually, but whilst they sit shaded and immune, their delusions send soldiers who are yet children, the "flower" of youth, into the field to die fighting.

Amichai often makes use of this device of literal interpretation of the Old Testament and of other classical texts as well. By this means, scriptural verses appear in caricature. A well-known example is the vulgar and literal interpretation he gives to the words of the Jewish devotional epithet in the phrase "God full of mercy," when he says:

A God full of mercy,
If not for the God full of mercy
There would be mercy in the world and not only in Him.

(A God Full of Mercy)

Another example is when Amichai makes a laughing-stock of the traditional expression "the hand of God." He says:

The hand of God is in the world
Just as my mother's hand is in slaughtered chickens' insides
On Sabbath Eve.

(The Hand of God is in the World)

The above quotations are from Amichai, op. cit., pp. 69 and 65 respectively.
Another especially typical example of Amichai's modernistic use of the ancient biblical frame is the four poem cycle called King Saul and I. In King Saul and I, as did Gilboa in the poems Isaac, Moses and Joshua's Face, Amichai in his role as modern poet, deliberately, intertwines the ancient biblical time dimension with his own modern times, and also the objective, impersonal quality of the biblical narrative with his own subjective personal life story. With Gilboa, the modern content comes upon us unforewarned, a surprise, since the title has no such implication. However, in Amichai's King Saul and I, it is immediately obvious from the heading of this cycle of poems that we are not about to read a mere repetition of the ancient epic, but rather a comparison between King Saul of the Old Testament and the present day poet, Amichai.

In the Old Testament, as well as in Amichai's cycle of poems, it is clear that King Saul was exceedingly unfortunate and altogether a very tragic figure. Therefore, the difference between Saul and the poet is not to be understood as a disparity between an exuberant king and a pathetic or tragic poet. Rather, there is a much less transparent difference between the king and the "I" of Amichai's verses — a difference of two
kinds of tragism. The nature of the tragic element in Saul's story as compared to the poet's school of tragedy is paralleled by the description of Anton Chekhov, the great Russian author, of the difference between tragism in classical literature (Greek) and the tragism of the heroes in his own writings. Chekhov says: the heroes of ancient works, such as Prometheus, Antigone, Medea and so on, are involved in all kinds of trials and ordeals; whereas to Chekhov's own heroes nothing ever happens, and this nothingness is the tragedy of their existence and the source of their misfortune.

Prometheus, Antigone and Medea are not fortunate. On the contrary, they suffer greatly. However, they suffer for the sake of an ideal, an aim in life, be it positive or negative: Prometheus suffered for the sake of the ideal of bringing fire to mankind; Antigone suffered for the ideal of giving an honorable burial to her dead brother, placing the value of family loyalty higher than political loyalty; and, Medea labored for the sake of revenge, which, although perhaps a negative goal, nonetheless gave consuming content to her life. In contrast, Chekhov's heroes suffer because nothing important ever happens to them, and no ideal or strong instinct urges them towards a fateful decision. They fritter away their lives without having made any decisions, without any ideals, and even without having experienced a strong
urge. Perhaps Antigone was a fanatic and Medea possessed by a negative instinct when she avenged herself through killing her own two children. However, we must admit that at any rate these classic heroes and heroines were not anaemic. They had great strength, whether positive or negative. Chekhov's heroes, in contrast, do not do anything either positive or negative, are old when young and too tired for this world before they have lifted a finger.

The difference between the ancient Greek classical heroes and Chekhov's own heroes seems to describe the nature of the difference between Saul, the king, and the poet in Amichai's *King Saul and I*.

*King Saul and I* is to a great extent a paraphrase of three divergent biblical accounts of the anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel. In these chapters of the Book of Samuel, Saul is described as being head and shoulders above all the children of Israel in strength and valor, and, as having in a rage hewed to pieces a yoke of oxen, when the spirit of God was upon him:

\[
\text{choose a young man, and goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.} \\
(1 \text{Sam. 9:2})
\]

\[8\text{I Samuel 9:1-10; 10:17-27; 11.}\]
And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.  
(I Sam. 10:23)

And the spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen and hewed them in pieces...  
(I Sam. 11:6,7)

In all three traditions, Saul had never presupposed that he would be king. His very name means 'asked', and he is described as chosen (bahur) and as a prince (nagid). According to the first tradition, he was chosen king through an incident which began very simply. His father Kish had lost some she-asses, and sent Saul to find them. Saul and his servant searched far and wide and eventually arrived at the city where the prophet and judge Samuel was. To Saul's amazement, Samuel told him that he had found not only the she-asses, but a kingdom as well. This story is so well-known in the Jewish tradition that up to this day, when one wants to say that somebody did not intend to reach great heights but nonetheless did, one compares him to Saul, the king in the Old Testament, and says metaphorically that "he went to search for she-asses and found a kingdom."
Amichai, taking poetic licence, seems to ignore the fact that Saul had never intended to become king. In the first line of the first poem of the cycle King Saul and I, the poet says almost the opposite. Using very colloquial Hebrew, the poet describes Saul as if he were greedy, a man who takes more than is given him:

They gave him a finger and he took the whole hand.  
*(King Saul and I)*

In contradistinction to the king, who took more than they gave him, the poet shows how he, Amichai, is weak, lacking ambition and anaemic:

They gave me a hand and I did not take even the little finger.  
*(King Saul and I)*

Amichai continues with the comparison and further emphasizes the difference between the king and the "I":

9Amichai, op. cit., p. 120.
Whilst my heart trained lifting first emotions,  
He trained in rending bulls.

The pulsating of my pulse was as drops from a tap.  
The pulsating of his pulse as hammering of hammers  
in a new building.

He was my big brother  
I got his used clothes.  

(King Saul and 1)

The last two lines of the first poem, "He was my big  
brother/I got his used clothes," can be better understood  
by referring to similar imagery in other poems by  
Amichai, as for example Instructions to the Waitress:

The phrase "...lifting first emotions" is a  
comparison to the lifting of weights, which  
image can be understood from Amichai's poem  
A God Full of Mercy:

I. ...........................................
Whose heart has lifted weights of pain  
In the awesome matches.

The original Hebrew is in Amichai, op. cit...
Do not clean the glasses and the plates from the table. Do not wipe the stain from the cloth! Better that I know: They lived in this world before me.

I buy shoes that were on the feet of another man.

My love is a married woman.
My night used in dreams.

In the margins of my book remarks that others noted down.

Therefore, do not clean the table.
Better, that I know: They lived in this world before me.

(Instructions to the Waitress)

Judging by this poem, one might think that the poet is glad that there were always people before him, and that all he has, the table in the coffee-house, the woman, the book, the clothes and the shoes, is used. However, a look further afield reveals that the poet's attitude is ambivalent. In essence, he is not always glad that there were people before him, since he lives in Jerusalem, a city with an historic past that weighs heavily on the people who live in it at present. In his poem The Roads are New, Amichai says about Jerusalem:

In the twenty-second poem of the cycle of poems, *Songs of the Landmark Jerusalem*, Amichai describes the difficulty of living a modern life in an ancient city with as much history as Jerusalem:

And to love anew is like a problem
For architects in an old city: to build
Again in places where already were
What seem as from then, and yet are of now.

In the twenty-eighth poem from the same cycle of poems about Jerusalem, he says:

---

12 Amichai, op. cit., p. 212.
13 Id., Meghore Kol Ze Mistater Ozer Gadol, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1974, p. 18.
14 Ibid., p. 21.
Who has not laid the table?
Kings and commanders and even prophets
Who played blocks on Jerusalem the table
(Songs of the Landmark Jerusalem)

Therefore, the poet finds it not only a pleasant fact that he lives in a city full of historical memories, an old city which many generations used before him, just as people before him, metaphorically speaking, used his clothes, his shoes, his book and even the woman he loves. In the instance of historical memories deriving from the Old Testament, this fact is oppressive. Just as Chekhov's heroes are weak, anaemic and tired in comparison with the heroes of classic Greek tragedy, so Amichai seems to himself small, weak, tired and anaemic next to a tragic hero like King Saul.

In the last lines of the first poem of the cycle King Saul and I, "He was my big brother/I got his used clothes," when the poet says that Saul was his big brother, we understand that he lives in the shadow of his big brother, just as new roads in Jerusalem live in the shadow of ponderous historical memories. When he says that he got his used clothes from Saul, it is clear that these clothes are grandiose traditional norms, "clothes" too big for Amichai.

The poet develops this idea in the third poem of the cycle, when we are told that although he now lives in an Israel which is united with its history and united insofar as nationhood has been achieved, he, Amichai cannot cope:
...he went forth to look for she-asses,
Which I, now, have found.
But I do not know how to care for them,
They kick me.

(King Saul and I)

Again, in the last poem of this cycle, Amichai, on the same point, is even more outspoken:

He is a dead king.
I am a tired man.

(King Saul and I)

From this we understand that the king is not dead. Rather he is alive, in a manner of speaking, and much more so than the poet. The unalive Amichai is not only tired from wars and hardships in a modern world, as is any other modern poet, but, he is also weary from the pathos and kudos associated with the fanatic and messianic absolute values of the Old Testament. This latter weariness is typical only to the modern Hebrew poet.

Like many modern Israeli poets, Amichai perpetually finds himself in a dilemma without solution. That is, he is unable to do without the biblical tradition, and, on the other hand, he is not able to live with it. The reason for this dilemma is in the antithesis and imminent conflict between a secular Jew and a tradition
from which it is very hard to separate either culture or religion. A religious Jewish poet is not caught up in this conflict, as he accepts the biblical tradition as a religion, a culture and a way of life. Amichai, however, like many other modern Israeli poets, is not prepared to accept the categoric values of the Old Testament, although he is also not prepared to completely detach himself from the richness of this biblical tradition. Therefore, his poetry expresses constant confrontation of the biblical past and the secular present. Therefore, this disharmony and unceasing painful conflict finds expression in his poetry in more than one way: in elegy, sarcasm and satire.
Chapter Four

The group of poets who started publishing in the fifties are accordingly called the Generation of the Fifties. Obviously, not all the poets who are of this generation fall into the same age-group. Yehuda Amichai, for example, started publishing at a more mature age and is older than most of the other poets of his generation. In the categorization of poets, there is yet another discrepancy. The preceding generation, the "literary generation" of the forties, is usually referred to as the Palmach Generation. However, Amichai, for example, who is not of the Palmach Generation, actually served in the Palmach during the Israeli War of Independence, and conversely, there are poets and writers of the Palmach Generation who were not in the Palmach, as for example Amir Gilboa, T. Carmi and so on.¹ Perhaps for this reason, the Palmach Generation is also known under a more general name, the Generation in the Land. By this designation is meant the first generation of Hebrew writers and poets born in Israel, in the sense that it is the first native literary generation. The writer or poet himself may not have necessarily been born in Israel, but would have been

¹During the 1948-9 War of Independence, the fighters of the Palmach served as a unit in the Israeli army. Amichai served in the British Army during World War II and subsequently fought in the Israeli War of Independence in the Palmach.
educated in Israel from his youth, as distinguished from the previous generations of Hebrew writers whose childhood and youth were spent in the Exile.²

Natan Zach, both in age and literary outlook, is distinctly of the Generation of the Fifties. He is, in fact, one of the most important poets of his generation — the generation pioneered by Yehuda Amichai. Neither Amichai nor Zach were born in Israel. However, both went to Israel as children and were educated in Israel, and consequently the Hebrew language is entirely natural to them. Zach's attitude to the language is even more secular, and under Amichai's influence, Zach in his poetry uses colloquial Hebrew expressions to an even greater extent.

Amichai imparted a new note to Hebrew poetry. He did so by writing poetry, without having written any ex-literary expressions (critical works). Zach, on the other hand, has been from the start not only a poet, but also a critic. He attacks the Palmach Generation and even more sharply the generation of Leah Goldberg and Natan Alterman. The latter generation, the Generation of the Thirties, strongly influenced the Palmach Generation. Zach's attack is focussed in particular on Alterman, rather than on Avraham Shlonsky, who is older and the real pioneer of the Shlonsky-Alterman

²"Exile": *i.e.*, *diapora.*
critical school of thought. This could be because Alterman's poetry has always been more popular. When he criticizes the Generation of the Forties (Gury, Gilboa, Carmi and so on), it is noteworthy that he does not attack Amir Gilboa. Gilboa links the poets of the generations of the forties and fifties and does not hark back to prior literary concepts, although the earlier poetry of Gilboa, influenced by Shlonsky and Alterman, would no doubt not be in accord with Zach's literary taste. Gilboa's later poetry, being closer conceptually to the poetry of the fifties, would be in accord with Zach's taste, remembering that Zach himself is an important exponent of the fifties. Zach's whole generation, in fact, tends to relate sympathetically to Gilboa, seeing in him the pioneer of the new style to which Amichai first gave clear expression.

In his role as spokesman of the Young Generation of poets of the fifties, Zach sets out to destroy the old and make room for the new. He opposes the poetics of Shlonsky-Alterman and the Palmach Generation, arguing along the lines that the poetics of Shlonsky-Alterman and later of the Palmach Generation gave rise to poetry that is ornate and without substance; that overindulgence in sacral phraseology, virtuoso rhymes and uniform metre may produce a pleasant, colorful and musical atmosphere, but at the expense of true and exact content. He asserts, moreover, that poetics and poetry of the Shlonsky-
Alterman brand are effectively an endeavor to seduce the ear and heart; that coquettish superficiality, a rococo effervescence, creates an impressive veneer, for which reason this poetry is popular, especially with young readers, and also greatly influenced the poets of the Palmach Generation — in particular, Haim Gury. All in all, Zach recommends a new type of poetics, simple, serious, forthright and virile, producing poetry which does not seduce, but does demand that the reader make an active effort.3

Zach, and Amichai before him, introduced innovative techniques into Hebrew poetry. It is interesting to note, however, that Amichai's popularity in the fifties, both with his readers and other poets of the fifties, was much greater. This could be due to Amichai's having used techniques which, although greatly different from those of Alterman, nonetheless produced very pleasing poetry. In fact, Amichai's great popularity in the fifties was not founded on very different psychological elements from those on which Alterman's popularity rested, one generation before. Despite the many differences between Alterman and Amichai, in language, rhyme, metrics and entire Weltanschauung, and although their sentimentalism is of a different order, both

are sentimental poets. Zach, on the other hand, seems to want to be to Hebrew poetry what Bertolt Brecht was to German poetry. His ideas find expression in his more colloquial language, in those of his poems which have no rhymes, and, by way of his own innovation, in lines which do not coincide with the end of sentences, and rhymes which are not at the end of lines. In short, he expresses himself in a new simple genre, deliberately unvirtuose, and in which are what he calls "grammatical rhymes."

Let us take some lines of Alterman's poetry as an example to demonstrate the kind of poetics to which Zach is opposed:

The above lines are the first two lines of the first poem (which has no name) in Alterman's first book of poetry. They are not only lines, but are also self-contained sentences. The first line is a definitive statement about "a tune," and the second a statement about "a way." That is, each line is a graphic unit, and, at the same time, a syntactical unit. The next

4 "Grammatical rhymes," Hebrew ḥanuzim dikdukiyim.

5 čEman Alterman, Širim Šemikvan, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv, 1971, p. 7. This volume is a later collection of poems which includes Alterman's first book, Koḥavim Baḥuts, Nahkarot Lesifrut, Tel Aviv, 1938.
two lines of Alterman's poem provide an example of a feature which Zach condemns even more vehemently:

(3) And a cloud in his heavens and a tree in his rains
(4) Is still waiting for you, O Wayfarer.

The third line of the poem is a graphic unit, but not a syntactic unit, and the same description applies to the fourth line of this the first stanza. In this specific instance, Zach would criticize Alterman for having interrupted the sentence with the word besamav 'in his heavens' and again with the word bigsamav 'in his rains'. He holds that this sort of thing is done arbitrarily in order to achieve a coquettish phonetic and musical effect — the effect achieved by the three rhymes in the first stanza: lašav 'in vain'; besamav 'in his heavens'; bigsamav 'in his rains'.

As mentioned above, Zach's syntactic unit does not necessarily coincide with his graphic unit, and neither do his rhymes necessarily fall at the end of either his line or his sentence. As an example of this Zach's innovative technique, let us take a few lines from his poem I Always Want Eyes:

6 "Line" pura; "sentence" mispat.
And I do not want even to be blind to the beauty of the world whilst yet I am alive. I can do without other things but I cannot say enough to seeing this beauty in which I live. And in which my hands walk like ships and devise and conduct my life with courage, and not less than this, with patience, patience without limit. (I Always Want Eyes)

Not only in the placing of his rhymes is Zach different from the poets who preceded him. In complete contrast to Alterman, and Shlonsky too for that matter, Zach shows a predisposition for what is at best considered unvirtuose rhyme. Whereas Alterman was the "great magician of surprise rhymes," Zach prefers banal rhymes even to the point that his rhymes are so-called bad rhymes. In terms of technique, a rhyme is generally considered a better rhyme the more similar it is from the end of the word backwards. For example, the words ḥoṣvot and yoṣvot are thought to rhyme excellently. In these two words, not only the last morpheme "-ot" is identical, and not only the last syllable "-vot" (in Hebrew, a syllable begins with a consonant, as does the traditional rhyme), but, working backwards, the sounds "ז" and "ו" coincide. Zach, however, chooses to rhyme only a minimum at the very end of the word:

7 Natan Zach, Mivḥar, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1974, pp. 63-64.
And in which my hands walk like ships and devise
And conduct my life with courage, and not less
(I Always Want Eyes)

The underlined words, Zach's "grammatical rhymes,"
have in common only the final consonant and preceding
vowel; in the case of the words mehalhot 'walk',
oniyot 'ships', ḥosvot 'devise', osot 'conduct', the
feminine plural ending "-ot."

Through his technique, a technique in which
planned negligence is the outstanding characteristic,
Zach expresses a Weltanschauung which dictates that
poetry should be brusque, abrasive and direct. The
poet's technical equipment, Zach says, is there to
serve the content, unpretentiously.

It is true that Zach's poetics are influenced
by modern English verse, but essentially they express
the opposition of Amichai's adherents to the national
pathos of the generations of the forties and fifties,
as well as a different spirit. This new spirit speaks
in simple language, on problems of the present, and
does not speak in terms of blown-up historical national
slogans.

In this light, it is interesting to see Zach's
attitude to the Old Testament, and how he relates to
biblical material in his poetry. His poem An Exact
Account of the Music the Biblical Saul Heard seems
an appropriate example.
And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the Lord. Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him in chains. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: for Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

(I Sam. 15:26-35)
In the next chapter of the Book of Samuel, we read:

But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our Lord now command thy servants, that are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now and man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (I Sam. 16:14-23)
The above quoted passages from the Book of Samuel are a guide to understanding what Zach has to say in his poem. The Old Testament tells us that King Saul did not kill Agag, the Amalekite king, and that his sparing of Agag was in accord with the will of the people (I Samuel 15:9). At the same time, however, it is clear that Samuel regarded Saul's conduct as an act of disobedience to the God of Israel. Here we have an example of the conflict between the old order, the rule of the judges, and the new. Samuel speaks for an unrelenting God and for unbending justice. Saul, on the other hand, pleads that he has essentially fulfilled the onus laid upon him by God's prophet (I Samuel 15:20). Thus it is that Saul's lack of ruthlessness and humanity cause Samuel to reject him, and bring about the bitter situation wherein the young David is anointed king whilst Saul is yet alive.

Zach takes the biblical narrative as an allegory

8Saul, as the first king of Israel, was the pioneer of a new order replacing the rule of the judges, of which Samuel was the last. Saul's struggle to establish the monarchy is described in Amichai's emotional and lyrical style in the cycle of poem's discussed in chapter three above, King Saul and I:

Roots stood out on the forehead of the earth From exertion.
The judges fled from the scene, Only God remained and counted:
Seven...eight...nine...ten...
The nation from its shoulder and downwards exulted. No one stood up. He won.

His arms are chains in the harbour For a burden beyond time.
(King Saul and I)
and a parable, the story of a man who listens to music for relief and who wants to enjoy a normal relaxed life at an individualistic level, without dwelling on the weighty problems of the nation.

That Zach intends to use the frame of the biblical narrative as an allegory with a moral is immediately apparent from the cynicism of the adjective "exact" prefaced to the word "account" in the title of the poem — An Exact Account of the Music the Biblical Saul Heard. The programmatic style of the poem is also brought home in the title, all the more by his insertion of the non-Hebrew modern colloquial word músika into the biblical context, instead of using the biblical Hebrew word negina 'music' with its lyrical ring.

The biblical Samuel and his God, in Zach's poem, are equated with what is in modern parlance termed "the establishment":

אילו מוסיקה מושלמת?  
שאול Şōwél  
אילו דקלים מוסיקליים?  
שאול Şōwél  
כמובן, דקלים למדים.  
שאול Şōwél  
כל דקלים מוסיקליים.  
שאול Şōwél  
מהו את זה למדים?  
Saul is listening to music.
Saul is listening.
To what music is Saul listening?
Saul is listening to music
Which gives him respite.
Saul is listening to music,
Just music.
And the people round him are non-existent, as if
Vanished, the whole nation silenced.
Since Saul is listening to music.
Is this the music
Saul should listen to
At a time like this?

(An Exact Account of the Music the Biblical
Saul Heard, henceforth, The Biblical Saul)

From these lines, it is clear that Saul refuses to
listen to music that would teach him what he should
do to please the establishment. Instead, he indulges
in music for pleasure, music per se, individualistic
music giving respite to none but himself. The result
is that everybody round him, together with all the
pressing national problems, fade away. But, should
not he in his role as king be thinking of weighty
problems day and night? The angry voice of the
establishment declares, "Is this the music/Saul should
listen to/At a time like this?"

It is not exactly forbidden to listen to light
music. The establishment understands that Saul is
human, and especially when he is tired and sick he
has to entertain himself a little. "Is this the music/
Saul should listen to" means that to, listen to music

9Natan Zach, Minhar, op. cit., p. 32.
like this is permitted, but in no way "at a time like this."

When Zach inserts the words "at a time like this" into the biblical narrative, he is alluding to a modern corny and worn-out Hebrew idiom, one of the national catch-phrases in Israeli politics since the days of the British Mandate: beyamim trufim éle 'in these troubled times'. The implication is that the establishment expects the Israeli poet to abandon any pre-occupation with details of everyday living, until better times, and dedicate himself to the national patriotic muse. That is, he is expected to write poetry which motivates the historic struggle for the continuity of Jewish history. Thus, at one level, Zach's rhetorical question asks whether the biblical Saul should not have done something to extricate himself from his awkward political situation, and, at another level, represents the Israeli establishment directing a very personal and insinuating question to the poet Zach: Is this the poetry that you, Natan Zach, should write at this time!

Zach answers simply and decisively:
Yes, this is the music Saul
Should listen to at a time like this
Since there is no other now
And perhaps will not be
Until Gilboa.

(The Biblical Saul)

The poet's assertive answer warns that if the need of the individual is ignored, it is inevitable that there will be a national disaster parallel to the chaotic situation in biblical times after the defeat and death of King Saul at Mount Gilboa. After the heroic and pathos-filled period of the British Mandate, Zach says, it is high time for the poets of the Generation of the State to write individualistic poetry.10 There is, indeed, no choice ("no other") if we are to maintain a sense of balance until the next round of national trials and tribulations ("Gilboa"). Neither the individual, nor the nation, can or needs to remain at the highest of tension levels. Rather, at times, it is essential to focus on the problems of the individual, without whom there is no nation, and only by doing so will it be possible to again rise to the occasion and meet the next historical challenge.

I have showed how Zach in his poem The Biblical Saul uses the biblical subject, David playing before

10 The first generation of poets to publish their works after the establishment of the State of Israel are called the "Generation of the State."
King Saul, as a parable to express his opinion on the literary controversy between the poets from the days of the British Mandate and those from after the Israeli War of Independence (Amichai, Zach, Avidan, Ravikovich and so on). Therefore, it seems in order to highlight Zach's divergence from Alterman, the "father" of the Young Poets, a divergence from after the Israeli War of Independence, which Haim Gury in his poem Odysseus describes as water going down the slope (see above, pp. 17-18). The most suitable poem for my purpose is Alterman's Behold a Day of Battle and Its Eve Have Ended (henceforth, A Day of Battle). This poem likewise deals with a controversy, albeit a controversy of a very different nature, and it is also based on the Book of Samuel, centering around the same biblical figure, King Saul.

The Old Testament describes King Saul's noble but tragic death as follows:
And the battle went sore against Saul, and the men shooting with the bow hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

(1 Sam. 31:3-7)

King Saul was aware, before this his last encounter with the Philistines, that defeat was inevitable; and the sages of the Talmud praise his nobility for having of his own free-will chosen to participate personally in the fighting. However, Alterman in his poem A Day of Battle is not concerned with the biblical Saul's personal values, but rather with Saul in his role as king. He alludes to Saul's relations with Samuel only in terms of the biblical narrative as being the story of a national tragedy, and does not dispute the Jewish orthodox religious view that Saul transgressed a statutory decree by God and thus sinned:

ִהַלִּכְּרָת פְּלֵסְטִים

The Law has chastised the King.

(A Day of Battle)

[Natan Alterman, Kol Kitve Natan Alterman, Hakibutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv, 1972, pp. 184-5.]
Alterman wrote *Behold a Day of Battle*, a very moving and lyrical poem, during the 1948-9 war period. In this period a great many Jewish boys died fighting, and many people in Israel asked themselves if the price of national independence were not too high. *Behold a Day of Battle* is Alterman’s reply to the many bereaved parents. He says that although it really is a very high price to pay, nonetheless, at this time in Jewish history, for the first time after thousands of death-ridden years, there is rhyme and reason to the death of their sons.

Alterman does not take an example of a military victory from the Old Testament, although the Old Testament is full of military victories, and despite that in the final analysis the War of Independence was to end as a very great military victory. Instead, he takes an example of a well-known military defeat, that of King Saul on Mount Gilboa in the war with the Philistines. The reason for Alterman’s choosing to describe a defeat and not a victory is that he wants to emphasize that even if from a military viewpoint there is a defeat, from a national historic viewpoint, if this defeat is on the soil of the homeland, it is at any rate not the end of the chapter:

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אַחַת נַעֲמָתِ לָלִי́שׂ יָשָׁם
אֵיךְ לַעֲלִי אֶמְתָּה יָכַם,
אֵיכַל לַעֲלִי לְהָמֵה יָכָם.
אַּמְלַעְלְיָה יָכָם.
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Then she said to him to the youth: Blood
Will cover feet of mothers,
But seven times will the nation arise,
If defeated upon its earth.

The Law has chastised the King,
But an heir for him will rise in time,
For upon its earth he leaned
His sword upon which he died.
    Thus she spoke and her voice trembled.
    And it was so. And David heard.

(Behold a Day of Battle)

Saul the king is dead, Alterman says, but because he leaned his sword on Jewish soil, the soil of the Land of Israel, another king will come to continue the chain of Jewish history; and there is hope that the battle of the morrow will end in victory.

In conclusion, examination and comparison of the two poems, The Biblical Saul by Zach and Behold a Day of Battle by Alterman, show a sharp contrast in ideology expressed in styles very different from each other. Alterman expresses the ideology of the pioneer spirit of the fathers; Zach the ideology of the ordinary generation of the sons. However, despite the contrast in ideology and style, both Zach and Alterman are able to use the same biblical subject, and both use their subject as an allegory to express their own up-to-date idea in connection with the situation of their own respective periods. With Alterman, the emphasis is
on the national collective spirit. With Zach, the emphasis is on the feeling of individualism of the man who is tired of national slogans.
Chapter Five

Moshe Dor, whose poetry was first published in 1954, is a younger poet of the Generation of the Fifties. Like Amichai and Zach, Dor's attitude to the Old Testament is that of someone who sees the national culture and roots in it, but not at all a religion. As I shall show, through examining a very representative poem of his Does David Still Play Before You (henceforth, David), Dor gives radical expression to the secular Jews' atheistic understanding of the Old Testament. He does not, however, voice himself in ways sarcastic or antagonistic to the biblical original, as do Amichai and Zach. Nor does he strive towards a more colloquial Hebrew (his language is more literary than theirs). He rather builds a philosophical and ideological edifice — one of extremist opposition to religious and traditional concepts of the inherent nature of the Old Testament. This, of course, stands out in complete contrast to the expression of those poets who are themselves religious, as for example Uri Zevi Greenberg.¹

¹ Uri Zevi Greenberg (born 1895 in Galicia) and Avraham Shlonsky (born 1900 in Russia), both poets of the Generation of the Twenties, pioneered the use of Israeli pronunciation in Hebrew poetry. Greenberg had a hasidic upbringing and has a religious mystical view of Zionism. In theory, he opposes the use of European forms in poetry, and prefers to rely on intrinsically Israeli sources, such as pre-biblical Canaanite and biblical literature. Although his poetic genius is recognized, his ultra-nationalistic approach is not representative of mainstream contemporary thought in Israel.
Moshe Dor's poem *David* starts off with a question which seems like a flash into a cineramic void. It evokes the scene of the biblical David playing on the harp, not before King Saul, as we saw in for example Zach's poem *The Biblical Saul*, but, before God.\(^2\) From here on, the poet builds up a series of scenes with a succession of evocative questions, all based on motifs from the Old Testament, except the question based on the story of Jesus in the New Testament. The poet is not concerned with the relationship between David and Saul, or Solomon and those listening to Solomon's words of wisdom ("fox fables").\(^3\) Nor, in the second stanza, does he concern himself with the relationship between Elijah and Elisha, who watches Elijah go up to heaven in a chariot of fire, or Ezekiel and the nation who hear his prophecy. In the third stanza, he is not interested in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples or enemies who witness Jesus' miracles and proclamations. Instead, Dor focusses on the posture of the prophet (David, Solomon, Elijah, Ezekiel and Jesus) or poet, as the case may be, before God.\(^4\) This is because

\(^2\) *The Biblical Saul*. See above, p. 74 ff.

\(^3\) "Fox fables" *mele idalav*. An allusion to the Book of Proverbs, which in Hebrew is called *Mele*.

\(^4\) See above, p. 44 on *An Initiation*. As with Amichai, Dor considers the poet to be the modern equivalent of the prophet.
the attitude of the prophet or poet appears to be a pretext for the more important relationship, that of prophet or poet to God.

In this vein of thought, David's music serves as a communication cable for the prophet to speak to God; the people who hear Solomon's wisdom, Elisha who sees Elijah go up to heaven and Jesus' disciples and enemies are all an audience, and an audience which would be at best a medium through which the poet or prophet strikes up communication with God.

The interesting point about all this is that the communication is one-way. David, Solomon, Elijah, Ezekiel and Jesus speak, via the ears of their audience, to God, and God hears.

Dor's poem thus contrasts with the Old Testament in that in the Old Testament there is frequent two-way communication: God speaks and the prophet answers. Sometimes, in particular when the prophet does not want to be a prophet, there is even an argument. A good example is from the first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah:

Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say
not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

(Jer. 1:4-7)

That is to say, there is a fundamental dissimilarity in Dor's modern variation on a biblical theme. In the Old Testament, God and the prophet hear one and other. In Dor's poem, the prophet speaks and God does not utter a word. A deeper look at the texture of the poem reveals that in complete contrast to the God in the Old Testament, who is active, in David, God is passive. At the outside He exists as an audience for poets and prophets. The naive reader might object: After all, if Moshe Dor asks God one question after another, in order to do so, he must believe there is a God — otherwise, why turn to Him? But, here we have a God who does not speak to give orders, a God denuded of all the power orthodox religion attributes to Him. This God only listens, and from this we conclude that the poet is himself a non-believer. For him, the audience serves the prophet as an excuse to actualize in speech what would otherwise have remained hidden in his heart, whereby he fulfills a human need for self-expression. In other words, more than that God created man, man created God, to fulfill this need.

David plays to Saul, Solomon commands with wisdom, Elijah climbs to the heavens and so on. But, in actuality, David does not mean his music for Saul; Solomon does not intend his wisdom for his listeners
at the royal court... . They direct themselves to God, a God of great importance to them and whom they address with great respect. However, the address on High to which they send their message is a God who exists, even more than in the universe, in the prophet's own heart.

Dor's secular concept of God is reminiscent of several very religious versions. For example, the Baal Shem Tov, founder of modern Hasidism, held that for the believer communion with God is possible in field and forest, and without synagogues, prayer books or rabbinical guidance — that God always listens, everywhere. The panentheistic tendency in Hasidism is an outgrowth of the pantheistic concept (a philosophical mysticism found not only within the bounds of Jewish culture) wherein "God is everything" and "everything is God," and therefore, of course, there is no need of mediation between the believer and God. The pantheistic formula opposes the theistic approach, and thus it is that a religious covering removed may reveal a juncture with the secular concept of God.

Returning to Dor's poem David, it is hard to see any real pantheistic concept lurking behind it. As the poet is a non-believer par excellence, it is a more likely supposition that he thinks God has a metaphorical existence, that God is a sort of symbol, something to which the poet may address himself:
Does David still play before you
on the golden harp?
And Solomon,
does he still invent, in your hearing,
his fox fables?

And from which field does Elijah take off
in a chariot of fire and with horses of fire?
and Ezekiel,
what being hammers him, with what creature
does he struggle in the stormy, shining substance?

(David)

In the first stanza, God is present as a passive
listener, having at least the role of audience. He
listens to David's music and Solomon's wisdom. Then,
in the second stanza, Dor's atheistic concept of a
metaphorical God comes into focus. By the end of
the stanza God has completely disappeared from the
picture, insofar as the second question is not directed
to Him. At this point, it becomes clear that the
struggle Dor envisages is not between Ezekiel and

5 Moshe Dor, Sippad Umotehet, Ramat Gan, 1965, p. 155.

6 Moshe Dor, Maps of Time. London, 1966, p. 34.
God, as is the drama between the prophet and God in chapter one of the Book of Jeremiah (God argues against Jeremiah's wish to evade his prophetical mission, and Jeremiah struggles with God as he knows the fate awaiting him if he complies). Rather, the drama Dor conjures up is a war which parallels what is to him the prophet's metaphorical struggle with God — the war in the prophet's own heart, or his struggle with the symbolic representation of his own dreams. Dor asks, "and Ezekiel/what being hammers him, with what creature/does he struggle in the stormy, shining substance" (David), in the face of the Old Testament having already provided us with the information that Ezekiel saw visions of a strange creature with six wings. It is therefore clear that the poet means that he himself went through a tough interior struggle, as if wings of a strange creature had been beating him. Not God, but the poet or prophet is all important to Dor.

The most conspicuous proof of Dor's atheistic concept awaits us in the fourth and last stanza of the poem. No doubt, at first hearing the poem's opening lines, "Does David still play before you...And Solomon... still invent in your hearing...," seemed to be addressed to a passive God, and the second stanza, "...with what creature does he struggle...," addressed to a metaphorical God. Retrospectively, however, on the basis of the question which makes up the fourth stanza, this is shown not to be the case:
And from out which savage Bible
of erupting, extinguished suns
do your hands, hardened
in the arteries, grope regretfully to tear
up disappointed promises?
(David)

Dor, throughout the poem, does not address God! In this stanza, Dor asks the address to which he turns throughout the poem, from which bible do hands hardened from time tear out broken promises. It is illogical to suppose that God, if it were really He who made all the promises, would abruptly turn around and tear them up. Was it He who promised to give Abraham the Land of Israel? Was it He who promised Moses to give back the Land to the children of Israel?

Although structurally the poem is integrated by the word yadeha 'your hands' in the last stanza, which seems as if a continuation of the lefanéha 'before you' and beoznéha 'in your hearing' in the first stanza, nonetheless, the word yadeha is the key to a complete turn about. Yadeha, like lefanéha and beoznéha, is not addressed to God, but rather to the "I" of the poet himself, of Moshe Dor himself.

As it turns out, the poem David is not only atheistic (the poet does not believe in God), but anthropocentric (man is the center of the universe,
not God) and, on top of this, megalomaniacal. The poet looms large, becomes God, and tears up the Old Testament.

Moshe Dor's message is that we shall wait unto eternity if we expect God to fulfil the promises in the Old Testament. We must learn to depend on ourselves, and join hands to search for a new bible, in which all the non-eloistic promises will be kept.
If Yehuda Amichai could begin a new literary generation although he himself was of the age-group of the Palmach Generation, it comes as no surprise that Haim Gury or Natan Yonatan, who are approximately the same age as Amichai, were able to abandon the style of the Palmach Generation under the influence of the school of the Generation of the Fifties. That is, the biblical original characteristically serves them, not as with Alterman and his generation, as material for poetry on subjects appealing to the collective national consciousness, but, as a model representation of human philosophical problems relevant to the individual in a very personal way. The poem I shall deal with next, Yonatan's Another Poem about Absalom (henceforth, Absalom), which was first published in 1970, demonstrates the poet's addiction, retained from his earlier period, to the Old Testament. As well as being a typical example of the way in which the Young Poets relate to the Old Testament, it is a daring commentary on a sociological problem which by analogy on a national scale, and through the poet's multi-layered presentation, comes through as strong criticism of the present day political scene in Israel.

Natan Yonatan's first published volume of poetry in 1951 was in the style of the Palmach Generation. It has been only through the years that he has identified with the poets of the fifties and incoming trends.
Yonatan's poem Absalom is based, obviously, on what is known to us from the Book of Samuel. From comparing I Samuel and II Samuel, we find that Absalom takes after his father David to a remarkable extent. Absalom, like David, is very good-looking. Scripture describes David as "...ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at..." (I Sam. 16:12), and Absalom as "...none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (II Sam. 14:25). Not only in his personal appearance did Absalom resemble his father the king, but also in his character. Both father and son were great lovers and of somewhat dubious reputation: Absalom did not hesitate to use his father's concubines, "...Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (II Sam. 16:22). Both had political ambition: Absalom had no moral compunctions when it came to deciding between his own ambition and loyalty to his father (he arranges an open political rebellion against David), and similarly, David, in times gone by, had found his loyalty to his own political egoism always more intense than his loyalty to Saul and Michal. In the light of the great similarity between them, the ambivalent attitude of the old David towards Absalom can be better understood.

As discussed in my first chapter on Auerbach and his theory on the difference between the biblical
and Homeric narratives, the Old Testament itself gives only the bare facts and leaves many questions open and unanswered. The basis for David's strange ambivalent attitude to Absalom is another question which the Old Testament leaves unanswered. David, on one hand, loves Absalom so deeply that he mentions him as if Absalom were his one and only son, and, in fact, the narrator gives this impression elsewhere, "...would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son..." (II Sam. 18:12), where the king's other sons seem to drop out of the picture. On the other hand, David sees Absalom as a competitor and dangerous enemy, and the facts show that the old David made almost every effort to break Absalom's conspiracy (II Sam. 15-18). Nevertheless, when Absalom is defeated, David is left with a broken heart:

(1)

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (II Sam. 19:1)

Indeed, the Old Testament does not explain the fact that David had not in the least wanted Absalom's death, rather only to defeat him from a military and political viewpoint:
And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

(2 Sam. 18:5)

However, it is impossible to excuse David for the death of Absalom, since, from someone with as great a political and military past as David's, it is to be expected that he understand that during war it is very hard to distinguish between one soldier and another, and that often those suffer whom we do not want to suffer. All in all, the Old Testament tells us about David's ambivalent attitude, the love and enmity he bore Absalom; and the reason for Absalom's so very tragic and clear cut end — the non-ambivalent nature of war, which does not distinguish between half love and half animosity.

In chapter one, I discussed Haim Gury's poem His Mother and noted that the poet added motivated descriptive details not in the biblical original, which he was able to do as the biblical narrative omits descriptive details. In Natan Yonatan's Absalom, however, the poet makes no attempt to insert innovative descriptive details. In fact, the descriptive details more or less reduplicate those in the Old Testament:
Cunning as a woman beautiful as a snake shy as a god
Always with a band of his friends, with horses with gold

And the weeping of his father, the old lover,
the man of wars

(Absalom)

In these lines, where Absalom is described as cunning, beautiful, shy and sociable, and David as an old lover and veteran of many wars, not only the content coincides with the Old Testament, but Yonatan even takes as a starting point a linguistic style which is reminiscent of the ancient idiom of the Old Testament. The innovation he makes is in his combining of this ancient style with modern even colloquial language, and even Israeli slang of the sixties and seventies:

A tree in the forest, that is what remains of all of Absalom

Thus to break a back of a father, To make fun of death, of everything!

You could not wait, Spoiled child...

(Absalom)

He even uses ungrammatical expressions of the variety referred to in Hebrew by the technical term "barbarism":

َاנָא נִתְנֶה אֶתְנָה סֶפּוֹק עַשְׂרָה בְּכָסָלַת הַכָּלָלִים
..............................................................
ןַבְּרֵד אָנוּכָה בֶּן כְּלָלִים לא
(שורש עֲלוֹת בֶּשָׁלֻשׁ)

Did you not know what hidden danger is in suchlike locks?
Your father loved in you all that he was not. (Absalom)

Thus, it can be seen that although from the viewpoint of content, Yonatan's descriptive details are not innovative, his style, a mixed idiom in which he even resorts to ungrammatical modern usage, is. It is clear from his style that he wants to say something up-to-date. The image, Yonatan says, of a simultaneously loving and hostile father is not confined to biblical times, but recurs in our own times.

Just as Amichai intertwined the biblical style with modern bureaucratic Hebrew in the poem End of Days (cfr., p. 50), and Zach in The Biblical Saul inserted the political idiom of the establishment (cfr., p. 77), Yonatan too inserts a bureaucratic tone into Absalom:

ךֵק
אֲחִי אוּמְסָה לְאַהַּבְוָה לְךָ מִלָּחָה
פִּוִּיו בְּאֲפֵנָה לְעַסֵּךְ נְבֵלָל לְיוֹדָה?
וְלְפִקָּלוּ לִבֹּרֵךְ יִשְׂעַר בְּכָלָלִים
(שורש עֲלוֹת בֶּשָׁלֻשׁ)

why
Do you think, I did not give you kingship —
From [great] concern for the nation? Because of your age?
Would that we could have spoken about this calmly
(Absalom)

3 Grammatical Hebrew would be "betaltalim kaale," looks like these; "sehu enenu."
Now, retrospectively, the three questions which precede this line ("why/Do you think, I did not give you kingship ..." [Absalom]) assume a modern level of connotation in reference to the nation. The poet is commenting not only on modern individual human relationships in a universal context, but on a very real and actual situation in present day Israel. "David" of his poem is a symbol of the older generation of Israelis, the founders of the State; and, "Absalom" a symbol of the younger leaders of Israel. The point Yonatan makes is in contrast to the Old Testament, insofar as the biblical Absalom was neither afraid nor ashamed to come out in the open against the old David; but, the younger generation in Israel have not produced any outstanding visionaries, and do not have Absalom's daring. They are politically impotent, waiting for the old reign to "give" them their due. The situation referred to by Yonatan is vividly described by the well known Israeli writer Amos Oz in a recent publication:

...Kibbutz members, and actually the good ones amongst them have the temperament and emotional make-up of obedient "combat soldiers." They are accustomed to being sent but not to plot the course. To carry out missions but not to ponder ideas. The predominant state of mind amongst the dedicated and idealistic kibbutz members could be described with the help of a well known line from a poem by Hana Seshk: "A voice called me — and I went." And it could be described, with perhaps a smidge of irony, by a well known line from an old lyric of the Nahal Entertainment Band: "Wherever we are sent — there we about face."

They ask the kibbutz to round up some volunteers — they always do. And for any mission whatsoever, because of the dogmatic assumption that the voice that calls us "knows what is right and what is important." Next they call upon us to save the standing army — the kibbutz takes it on. To send emissaries to one or another diaspora — of course. To go down to the Negev, go up to the Galilee, to settle the Golan Heights, to settle Pithat-Rafiah, to establish holdings on the banks of the fresh water canal at Ismailia (if heaven forbid
another war brings us there) — and why not. There will always be a response, big or small. For better or worse, to aid development towns or to conquer the sources of the Tigris. The dedicated volunteers will always come forth from the ranks of the kibbutz "we shall do it" unto "we shall hear." And always pictured, vaguely, in their imagination is that somewhere in the government, in the Trade Union Executive Committee, in the authorized institutes, in the military leadership, some Bein Katznelsos, Takenkins, Ben Gurions are seating themselves, and they know exactly what is right and what is wrong and we are educated to be an obedient front line for every mission to which they choose to send us. Or if their names are not Ben Gurion and Bein but Galili and Golda — no matter: they of course know what is right. And I am afraid that even when their names are Begin and Dayan, there will be suchlike amongst us that will react with something like an old stipulated reflex, with a feeling of "we shall do and we shall hear," since they, on top, of course know what is good for us and we as you know are "we are always first, in broad daylight and in the dark."

We must stop and think now: who is sending us. To where do they send us. And to what end. Let us no longer be the orchestra and "they" — in the party, in the unions, in the "authorized institutes," in Menachem Begin's government — the conductors of the orchestra. This is not an easy change: our mental make-up is not seditious. We are not used to "striking" or serving on "limited credit." But it is just these things that we must do from now on. And perhaps we should have already begun long ago. Now after these enormous changes — no, not only in the knesset and in the government but in all walks of life — the question is not "what to do now" but: "What to become from now."

(Under This Blazing Light) 4

Having given his poem a modern connotation through his unique linguistic style, Yonatan goes on to fill in an interpretative gap in the Old Testament narrative. He gives us a very interesting and original explanation

4Amos Oz, Beon Hatekelet Haaza, Sifniat Poalim, Hakibbutz Haartsi Hasonen Hatsain, 1979, pp. 142,3.
to the difficult question of why an old king (the older generation in modern Israel) who loves his young son (the younger generation in modern Israel), who is so very similar to his father, clearly capable of taking the reins in hand although he is young and his father old ("Your father loved in you all that he was not" [Absalom]) — why would David not want to pass down the crown, which after all he could not hold on to unto eternity, to Absalom?

In answer, the poet describes the nature of the king's love for Absalom, a love which is simultaneously altruistic and possessive; a two-fold explanation, one contained within the other. Firstly, the poet tells us that David loves Absalom much too much to allow him to join in with David's other sons in fighting and warring:

And still has stored away in his heart a last scheme To rescue at least one child of his From the crown from the wars.  

(Absalom)

It seems, at first glance, that David wants to keep Absalom away from the dirtiness and danger of wars, which is to say, his love is altruistic. He regards Absalom as pure and good, and wars as nasty and dirty. But, looking behind these altruistic pretexts, we see David's ambivalent attitude to his son, and Yonatan's second answer to the question of why the old David
was unwilling to let his son have the crown. David's altruistic love in fact is a cover for the possessive egoism of an old father:

You could not wait, 
Spoiled child — until we grew [so] old
That the crown would cost us less in grief.
And your locks what, your locks —
Did you not know what hidden danger is in suchlike locks?

( Absalom )

The truth is, that the king who is somewhat weary from his toys, the crown and the wars, which he has enjoyed for such a long time, wants in the last stage of his life, one last toy, just for himself — and that is Absalom:

I wanted, my little fool, only you, Absalom

At the modern level, we understand from this, that the Israeli leaders of the older generation make every effort to withhold the "crown" from the younger leaders for the sake of the paternal pleasure of getting comfort from such adorable young ones who are, as Amos Oz described so aptly in the passage above, such expert executants; excellent soldiers and builders of many beautiful settlements, who never dirty themselves with politics.
In the final analysis, Yonatan wants to say, it was David's love, its combination of altruism and possessiveness, which did succeed in saving Absalom from the crown, but not from the wars and in fact caused Absalom's tragic death.\(^5\)

Yonatan's poem Absalom is a typical example for the justification of the fundamental thesis of this paper, that no modern Israeli poet uses the ancient biblical material to retell the same story again. Every modern poet knows that to compete with the Old Testament from a literary viewpoint is impossible, and that furthermore there is no reason to do so. What is possible and reasonable is to try to insert an up-to-date modern content into the biblical narrative.

\(^5\)Natan Yonatan's own son, subsequent to his writing his poem Absalom, was to fall in action during the October War of 1973. Lior was twenty-one years old.
Chapter Seven

Dalya Ravikovich is one of the youngest of the Young Poets of the fifties, as far as her age is concerned, but even with her first book Ahavat Tapúah Hazahav, published in 1959, she claimed a very important place for herself in their ranks. Her success could have been in some measure just because she was much less defiant towards the poets of the preceding "literary" generations. It could be said that what is special to her first book of poetry is its, in fact, being neo-classical. That is, in Ahavat Tapúah Hazahav, she uses non-colloquial, high-sounding language and sacral phraseology. To a much greater extent than other poets of her generation, she utilizes the literary and linguistic original sources, the Old Testament, the Talmud, medieval verse and so on. In this regard, she is much more similar to the great poets of the preceding generations, such as Shlonsky, Alterman and Yonatan Ratosh. In complete contrast to Amichai and Zach, she does not make sarcastic use of the traditional sources. Rather, she uses the imagery and motifs of the ancients as fables, frames for her own modern and personal story, with her own moral.

In her subsequent publications, Ravikovich has become more and more similar to other poets of the fifties in that her language is simpler and more colloquial.
She also begins to write on subjects which are outside the realm of the perpetual problems of man in that he is human, which is to say, outside the realm of the individual, and touches on the national and historical.

The poem I have selected for discussion, *Gifts from Kings*, is from her first book *Ahavat Tapúah Hazahav*. It, incidentally, is one of the few poems in this book which has a hint of involvement with collective experiences. However, the reason for my choice is that this poem of all the poems in this book, has the most pronounced use of the Old Testament as a frame, rather than the Talmud or other traditional source.

The biblical background of *Gifts from Kings* is from I Kings. In chapters 9 and 10, the narrator tells us that after Solomon had finished building the Temple and his palace in Jerusalem, various kings sent him gifts. Hiram, king of Tyre furnished him, amongst other things with cedar-trees (9:11), and later, when Solomon had built a great ship, or perhaps several ships (9:26) to bring gold (and gems [10:11] ), the same king sent experts to help Solomon run the ships.

In chapter 10 of I Kings, which chapter gives the most essential background to Ravikovich's long poem, *Gifts from Kings*, the Old Testament tells us that the queen of Sheba visited Solomon, brought him many gifts, and tested his wisdom with riddles; and, Solomon answered her questions and gave her of his hospitality:
...she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their cup-bearers, and his burnt-offerings which he offered in the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

(I Kings 10:1-5)

Gifts from Kings is structured in two main sections, the first section of the poem consisting of the first four stanzas, and a second part, which is the first "chorus."

In the first stanza, the poetess starts out as if retelling the story of chapter 10, I Kings. She writes that the King, obviously Solomon although he is not explicitly mentioned, went down with his loved one to the bottom of one of his ships, no doubt one of the ships associated with Hiram, king of Tyre, which brought such wondrous treasures from far off:
The King went down with his beloved
To the bottom of the ship
To the bottom of the ship
To choose a gift for her from amongst his treasures.

In the second stanza, we understand from the words "with my love" that the King is offering the queen of Sheba, his beloved, to be to her just what Moshe Dor described in his poem David (see above, p. 86ff.), a communication cable for her to speak to God:

— I shall give you cavaliers and attendants
I shall build you temples for prayer
I shall tell your prayer to God
Your prayer for you - with my love.

In the third stanza, the King brings her exotica, "ivory and peacocks," to stir her fantasy (her erotic impulse) and promises to reveal his heart to her:

1Dalya Ravikovich, Ahavat Tapuah-Hazahav, Hakibbutz Ha'antsi Hasomer Hatsair, Tel Aviv, 1959, pp. 26-29.
I shall bring you ivory and peacocks.
Scholars and sages shall serve you.
And all that I have probed and weighed with wisdom
I shall reveal to you— with my love.

(Gifts from Kings)

In the fourth stanza, the lover-King says that he will rouse the passion of his loved one by bringing her all the paraphernalia that came with the real queen of Sheba, which is the only way to make logical sense of "And chariotry of Sheba." If she were the real Sheba, she would already have the "chariotry of Sheba." At this point, the biblical story is personalized and steps into a modern context:

I shall bring you midgets and Cushites
And chariotry of Sheba and her prince and her commander
Your head will spin on you like a top from my passion.
I shall bring you the chief jewel.

(Gifts from Kings)

To tell this modern and personal story, the poetess uses the phraseology of the Old Testament to a great extent. For example, the first line of the third stanza, "I shall bring you ivory and peacocks," reflects verse 22 of I Kings 10:

Malachi 22, 22

...once in three years came the navy of Tharshish,
bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and
peacocks.

(I Kings 10:22)
The third line of the same stanza, "And all that I have probed and weighed with wisdom," presumably reflects a verse from the Book of Kohelet:

וַתִּפְקְדָה שְׁאָלָה לְחַלָּה חִיבָה נְאוֹ נְאָר לְפָרֵד לְרֵישָׁה אֶל-תּוֹב כַּל

וַתִּנְסָרֵן מְשָׁלִּים כֶּדֶשׁ

(9:3)

And moreover, because the preacher [Kohelet] was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

(Eccl. 12:9)

And, the last line of the fourth stanza, which is also the last line of the first part of the first section, mentions, as the last of the gifts promised by Solomon to his loved one, "the chief jewel." This expression occurs in the Book of Zechariah, as follows:

וְהָעָנָא אֲמָרֵיהּ לְזְרָעָבָל לְפָרֵד לְרֵישָׁה לִפְיָר

עַל מִזְאָה אֲמָרְתָּה נְרַעֲשָׂה מָשְׁאָה חַד כַּלּוֹ(וּרְבֵּה 7)

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone with shouts of, Grace, grace unto it.

(Zech. 4:7)

If we take it that the "Kohelet" referred to in the biblical text was King Solomon, it is easy to see that Dalja Ranikovich based her third line on the Book of Kohelet 12:9. The Jewish tradition ascribes the Book of Kohelet to Solomon (mainly on the basis of what is in itself a superscription, "The words of the Preacher [Kohelet], the son of David, king in Jerusalem," [Ecc. 1:1]), although Solomon's name is not explicitly mentioned in the text.
The same stone is described in the previous chapter of the Book of Zechariah:

For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. (Zeck. 3:9)

The Old Testament tells us that the stone was very precious, had seven eyes engraved on it, and magic power; and an expression in modern Hebrew, lehabit beseva enayim 'to look with seven eyes (to look well)' suggests that the ancients really believed in the stone's magic.

The chorus, which concludes both sections of the poem, is similar to the chorus of Greek tragedy in that it gives the opinion of the composer. The two lines of chorus which conclude the first section actually give the illusion of being the first two lines of one four line verse, protruding in the middle and at the end of the poem (the last chorus). This effect unifies the formal lay-out of the poem, and the four lines together ultimately convey the fundamental message or "moral" of the story in its entirety.

At the end of the first section, the chorus tell us that the "chief jewel" will bring good fortune to the person who possesses it:

The chief jewel, the chief jewel
Happy is one who holds it and possesses it. (Gifts from Kings)
The second section of the poem starts out with three verses spoken in the first person — a "solo." That these verses are in the feminine singular is unequivocally clear from the line, "I want the chief jewel." In these verses, the beloved says that she possessed the "chief jewel" passionately ("Ramming [my] head on the chief jewel"), the extent of her yearning and physical expression of her desire being "enough for six or even seven" other women:

然而，我们了解到，她狂热的爱抚给她带来的不是满足。"首席珠宝"给她带来了非常深刻的心境。也就是说，她所倾慕的美丽和魔法，是恋人本质的性质，她不可能被捕捉、占有或拥抱，尽管不管她所使用的可用的和人类的方式表达她的爱 —— 这一异常导致她要受苦。

I projected all my desire
As much as my desire grew
My desire was insatiable
I projected enough for six or even seven.
I want the chief jewel
To touch the chief jewel
To lick the chief jewel
Ramming [my] head on the chief jewel.
(Gifts from Kings)
After these three verses of monologue, the poem continues in an objective neutral style, and, just in case the reader was in any doubt as to what the poetess meant by the "chief jewel" up to this point, she now gives a clear explanation:

המלך הוא הקבש הראשה
המקוהים המקוהות ווד קובע עלים
בר מכים ישארים יואים כולם
מוכי לא יראו את הקבש
אין את המלך
מקהלו הקבש?

The King is the chief jewel.

From the bottom of the ship to the ends of the world
It is bad that his servants are all of them blind
Will they not see the fire
Coming forth from the bramble
Burning in their King?

(Gifts from Kings)

The King is rare and precious like the stone. Both attract the heart; both promise the magic of happiness. But, on the other hand, both provoke desire, the urge to possess them, which causes suffering—and an agony which is murderous. The poetess again warns us of the pain of loving by referring to yet another motif from the Old Testament ("Will they not see the fire/Coming forth from the bramble/Burning in their King? [Gifts from Kings]). This motif is based on the Book of Judges, where Abimelech (the son of Jerubbaal [Gideon] ) wanted to rule and therefore killed seventy of his father's sons, leaving alive only one son, Jotham:
And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: and there was left Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal, for he hid himself. 

(Jud. 9:5)

The biblical narrator goes on to tell how when the men of Shechem then chose Abimelech as king, Jotham stood on Mt. Gerizim and told them in the form of a fable that Abimelech was a murderer:

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them: and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to hold sway over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to hold sway over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to hold sway over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

(Jud. 9:8-15)
In conclusion, the poem *Gifts from Kings* serves as an example of how a modern poetess is able to use the stories, motifs and symbols of the Old Testament to say something of universal and eternal significance. Ravikovich tells us that love has a dual nature. It brings great happiness, but also, the opposite — great suffering. This message, which does not belong exclusively to the Old Testament or to Judaism, is a very beautiful content which appears in this poem in ancient biblical garb within the ancient biblical frame.
In this work, I first of all tried to show how due to its special nature, the biblical narrative (in contrast to the Greek epic) leaves what I have called "descriptive gaps." These gaps, in which the Old Testament gives no detail or interpretation, provide the modern poet with a chance to fill in with all kinds of additions from his free imagination.

I have gone on to show that the modern Israeli poet does not, in fact, aim to write anew the same story as the one already told in the Old Testament: there is no reason to do so, and, furthermore, the poet wants to give us a new message of a sort that touches on the problems of Jewish or Israeli life or on the problems of the individual in a general context, in our times. The biblical motif serves him as a frame, an ancient frame for a new and modern content.

The poets from whose work I took examples (Haim Gury, Amir Gilboa, Yehuda Amichai, Natan Zach, Moshe Dor, Natan Yonatan and Dalya Ravikovich) are all Israeli citizens, and, as such, it is clear that they as artists give expression to the values of modern Israeli culture. As the State of Israel sees herself as a modern continuation from the times when the people of Israel lived in the land of Israel in days of old, it follows that in the desire of the modern poets to use the frame of the biblical narrative to
present a modern content is also an expression of the return of the Jewish people, after almost 3,000 years of exile to its ancient homeland and to its ancient language — the land and language of the Old Testament. Even the most sarcastic or atheistic of the poets (as for example, Amichai or Zach), are Zionistic, and transmit the ancient tradition, despite their opposition to certain areas of it. Any nation develops its national culture in two basic ways: on one hand, it preserves the frame of its literature and ancient culture, and on the other hand, it creates new modern layers, grafting them onto the previous layers of that culture. In any other culture, this is a normal and natural process, but, because of the long interruption caused in life in the land of the Old Testament by Jewish life in the diaspora, the Israeli case is a special case. In Israel, a great effort is needed to bridge, culturally speaking, the time from the Old Testament period to our modern times. It seems to me that I have succeeded in describing this effort in relation to the contribution of Israel's poets, as well as the ambivalent attitude of the modern poet to the Old Testament and its motifs: on one hand, they are very Israeli and very Jewish, but on the other, they are very modern in ways as are other poets in the world at large.
APPENDICES

BIBLIOGRAPHY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POET</th>
<th>date/place of birth</th>
<th>in Israel since</th>
<th>began publishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMIR GILBOA, poet, translator</td>
<td>1917 Volhinya (Ukraine)</td>
<td>1937 (as illegal immigrant)</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAIM GURY, poet, novelist</td>
<td>1923 Tel Aviv</td>
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<td>1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>YEHUDA AMICHAI, poet, novelist</td>
<td>1924 Germany</td>
<td>1936 (Jerusalem)</td>
<td>late 40's</td>
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<td>NATAN ZACH, poet, critic.</td>
<td>1930 Germany</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOSHE DOR, poet, novelist, critic</td>
<td>1932 Tel Aviv</td>
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<td>1954</td>
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<td>NATAN YONATAN, poet.</td>
<td>1923 Russia</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>DALYA RAVIKOVICH, poetess.</td>
<td>1936 Ramat Gan</td>
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<td>1959</td>
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</table>

AMIR GILBOA, poet, translator (French plays for Hebrew stage). During World War II, he volunteered for the Hebrew Unit of the British Army and later the Jewish Brigade in Italy. Then, he fought in the Israeli War of Independence, after which he worked in a publishing house.

HAIM GURY, poet, novelist. He served in the Palmach; in 1947 the Hagana sent him to Europe. He fought in the 1948 War of Independence. In 1954 he started writing a column in the daily LamerHAV.

YEHUDA AMICHAI, poet, novelist. He served in the Hebrew Unit of the British Army in World War II and the Palmach during the War of Independence.

NATAN ZACH, poet, critic. He undertook a year in Tel Aviv and has worked as a journalist and teacher.

DALYA RAVIKOVICH, poetess. She has written and translated children's books. She spent a year as resident writer at Saint Cross, Oxford, and has worked as a journalist and teacher.
Appendix II

Chapter One

האמ

לאם יפור. בנו העבר רבדור.
שנעתה את עיניה רכז הפסים אציו הפסים לפעל.
כבר בעיון של פסיפס מפריטות בעלת.
ואציו הפסים יערות.

שלל צבעים רקמה.
ездוע הקמטים לציבור שלל, יואר קמטיה.
אותם פסיפס כשב כболק קמצה.
ניר הירוק קמד.

על כותרת מבוגר חバル חمكان תם.

השניים לא פסיבר את הסופים של הקמטים.
שנעות החוכמיה של מקטיה.
אשר למרא את הקמטיה השמע.
אם להוריפ בול מקרדיפ.

ארקינס ענה קשקה הארך. ארקינס ענה
לא תתרח מברק וכבר ארץ מתרחלא בענו עני
זכותית.

ابل להיא פקיה. אם בברך אחרים מתה בן.
אורייסמ

בעבר: אלאoteric מובילות קעוז בז
הדרים שלושה בני זה של בני הנון

ששה י六合יה יבש טבוס. קלח
ששת הלולים חזרה-chan ח劳务派遣
נזר עז קרפיח-פרברני טפוסי בין ליר
לבגאו את להבה אלא ליר מובילות של יxlsx חפה פים.

מלך סיטות חולים ונטיפות מאור.
בי נט essen שריבר, לgrese והקה נ越來越.
מלכים שוניים גזע יצי עד ליר חפה מפוסות..Port.

ברג קלח על נוכיס ליום בריב
뇨ורآل ארקל ולאל קמיה כלראוקופ אוח.
ולא קרש צינו.

אות שאול אוקס תתנשאות ותנ תקיב אוח.
מהות גפוקקים.
краונוגテスト רוח גוח קושלי את הטיב.

כמי המנדרים קצלא חנוילדי ששכות נעובה
ברוב

קישוב אוקס.

 görünt היגוי ונקחי קמיה את הטיב.

אכ לע מה בין אל ראש.

 vrai מי גוהס קוקי שבאריטכל體驗ו חפה.

לא ראו את מעלתת והמשמשי בקצלא ברך הטיב.
APPENDIX II

Chapter Two

Amin Gilboa, p. 213.
APPENDIX II

Amin Gilboa, p. 344.
משה

אם לא ראה את הסדר;
ואני לא מצא את המילים.
זもらった של עתידים
ב<typename CLASS הדרHaz
.

ענני אל מי��ריפו;
ז réfé את המילים כניקוי;
וזיון הוספתל כר.
ונברע לעיני כולם.

ודי לי ראה את כל�ו:
זניקתי את כל גלויי
שלﬂים⎡שלים למענה מר.
זניקתי את כל תרשים
לﬁריפום המילים בﬁריפום.

כתי המילים פקשות № בפמות.
זדני מﬁריפום ﬂיאסקליטוקים.
וזריה מﬁריפום ﬂפרים.

צעצוע בראשם אל משות
ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄ל⁄lכחרים ל⁄ל⁄lכחרים
כפי בוﬂח ﬂח ﬂחﬂח
— ﬂח 들וה ﬂח
. ﬂח פמות.

משתמשת שמחה את כל ﬂח.
זראת את כל ﬂח זה ﬂח ﬂח ﬂח
. ﬂח פמות.

Amin Gilboa, p. 214.
APPENDIX II

כציו אטריה מטיר

ואיש בטוח שאמות כלים לא בטוח הבטוע.
ולאלה הם מהלולים קולליים ל何度も.
שננה את הצליבי כריה וscriber את המלך.
ובא להכרים כביר, וכן מביא.

תקבץ כליםкажет אפר לובש:
בֶּן ראם מעון לולי מתואר.
בֶּן יונה של לזר קרבות צדו.
בֶּן עשה את פעמים יזר וזר והר.

לכט פנימי (מאתה) צ初めて עלישלם.
לראות בני ישראת תורה, ובריות.

זיהו מקצב איבר.
לкраוט קדושים מקצב.

בצעת חרב לעברת ומוקפת לעבר.
והורה לילדה לשבב דילנו הקצ.
asStringGcsom אפיו מקצבים ומקצבים קצב.
ברוק חרב כנישים כללו הקצב.

APPENDIX II

(א)

[ל stronghold] את כל העצמות של כל קשר.

[ב]

[ל stronghold] את כל העצמות של כל קשר.

[ג]

[ל stronghold] את כל העצמות של כל קשר.
APPENDIX II

Yehuda Amichai, Ḡinim 1948-1962, pp. 120-122.
Chapter Four

Natan Zach, Mivhar, p. 32.
נוגד רוד יגנוג לקְינָה?

סִעְרֵה דִּרְיָה שְׁעַרְנוּ וּלְפַעְנָה
כְּמוּר טַהוּב וּלְפַעְנָה
שְׁעַרְנוּ מַמְשָׁלִים בַּעֲקָף
אַחַת פִּקְלִמַת אוֹתָלִים

כְּבָאַחַת פִּקְלִמַת אוֹתָלִים
בַּכְּבָב אֵשֶׁה וּפָה יְשִׁפֵּה
גַּרְנָה אָוּב
שָׁוֶה לְכָנָה וּפָה אָוְנָה
בַּכְּבָב יְסָמְרוּלָה וּפָה יְסָמְרוּלָה

וַּעֲנֵי עַלְּקַרָה
סִעְרֵה לַפְּלוֹת לֵאלִיה
בַּכְּבָב שֵׁיֶה הַחֲמִית הַכָּלִים מִכָּלָה
שָׁלָה לְיָשָׁה בַּכְּבָב יוֹחֵה

וּפְּשָׁקִית הָנְיָר פְּרוּשִׁי
שָׁלָה לְפִשְׁקִית הָנְיָר פְּרוּשִׁי
כְּבָב כְּבָב שֵׁיֶה הַחֲמִית הַכָּלִים מִכָּלָה
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שָׁלָה לְיָשָׁה בַּכְּבָב יוֹחֵה
פרות ובנאיה,ǝplements ǝבישנן, ǝבישנן, ǝבישנן
תמיית טברך מאריך, בוסיסן ǝבישנן
וחברך, יאושirate ǝבישנן
;משתשך, יאושirate ǝבישנן
;פקולות מחוזהוֹות עביו?
ןוג ברץ, רוח ב любом שבישנן
ובכז, יש ל תאמנ, תאמנ תאמנ איו שפילמצות
;מאכל רבך מתא שפילמצות
;כבה לрабך ובישל איב.
;פרק מחוזה פלקנאות, שפילמצות
;אאושיר ובן אבישנן
;לא יפילך חפילות?
;לך חפילך - ערב שביתך.
;שכבהו וירדנו コיא
;ןוטלפליות ǝבישנן, ǝבישנן.
;לא Trọng איו שבישנן שפילמצות ǝבישנן חפילות
;לך זך דריך מער דריך
;שביתך מכם קדהו
;איאבא ביבי תאמנ
;סיבך תאמנ בך שחל עלא, א"ע.
;מאיא ירא תאמנ, ירא חפילך - ǝבישנן שחל עלא, א"ע ǝבישנן חפילות
;ברד ראזך לשת עבישנן, ǝבישנן
;לך ברך לברך לע כב שפילמצות
;ןוג ברץ ישאר כביש איו איב שפילמצות
;מעניפות. ǝבישנן בה
;לך מסות פרך שחל שפילמצות
;יאופר כביש ביבי חפיל תאמנ
;לך מסות פרך שחל שפילמצות
;מעניית. שפלש שפלש, ǝבישנן, ǝבישנן.
Chapter Seven

APPENDIX II
אניплеיתבעלותילםמקמתי
ככלאשרכיינומקתי
והנהמהנהלתניארפי
נשלייתכללאשרויםמהנה.
אניירזאתאתהאגןהתאושש
ලམשווחתחאןברוחuesta
ולכלאתהאגןותרואה.
בגמלארוסיאלךגןתרוחתה.

מקאתיתחיהלכעקריה
ורומנ言ってשיםולאלרגוח.
אשיקהתברוךוהאאתכלמקאתית-
אניירזאתאתהאגנההתאושש
למשלאתהאגןותרואה.
לוזלייצהל佁שו
各种各样
וזלייצהל佁שו
זכיזיישפניאיתחיהלכעקריה.

сыהמחימהוזויא всякףתרוחתה.
somןמקחתמקחתות乩זוגותעלם
ברבצרישרשויותאוירשםכל
מאמלארומאותהเกษ.
נייראתמדוקדוק
בוקחתנכףכל.

םהלתהתאוםךכםורתירה.

מקהלה:
נושלגרישים,ךכםברוחשת
סוביילוגעלאחרברישה.
Chapter One

HAIM GURY

His Mother

Years ago, at the end of the Song of Deborah,
I heard the quiet of Sisera's chariots, which were
late in coming.
As I looked at Sisera's mother watching at the window,
A woman whose hair is a streak of silver.

A prey of divers colors of needlework
Divers colors of needlework on both sides meet for the
necks of them that take the spoil, the maidens saw;
At that very moment he lay like a sleeper in the tent;
His hands [were] very empty.
On his chin, traces of milk, butter, and blood.

The quiet was not shattered by [lit. to] the horses
and the chariots;
The maidens also fell silent, one after the other.
My silence touched their silence.
After a while, the sun set.
After a while, the twilight went out.

Forty years — the land was calm. Forty years.
Horses did not gallop and dead horsemen did not stare
with glassy eyes.
But she died a short time after her son's death.

Translated by Dan Pagis

*S. Burnshaw, ed., op. cit., p.159. The translator,
Dan Pagis, is himself a prominent Israeli poet. The
words in brackets are the translator's own inter-
polations.
And upon returning to his native town, he found a sea
And various fish and grass floating on the slow waves,
And a sun weakening on the rim of the sky.

Error always recurs [returns], said Odysseus in (to) his tired heart,
And he returned to the crossroads that are near the neighboring town
To find the road to his native town which was not water.

A wanderer tired as a dreamer and full of longing
Among people who spoke different Greek.
The words he had taken with him as provision on the path
Of his voyages had died meanwhile —

For a moment he thought he had been (fallen) asleep for many days
And had returned to people who did not wonder upon seeing him,
And did not stare wide-eyed [lit. did not tear eyes open].

He asked them with gestures and they tried to understand him from beyond the distances.
Purple grew into violet on the rim of the same sky.

Then the adults arose and took the children who were standing round him in a circle
And drew them away.
And light after light grew yellow in house after house.

Dew came, and fell upon his head.
Wind came, and kissed his lips.
Water came, and bathed his feet, like old Euryclea.

And did not see the scar, and continued down the slope as water does.

Translated by Dan Pagis

\[S.\,\text{Burnshaw, ed., op. cit., p. 154.}\,\text{The words in brackets are the translator's own interpolations.}\]
Chapter Two

AMIR GILBOA

Isaac

Early in the morning the sun took a walk in the forest
Together with me and with Father
And my right hand in his left.

Like lightning a knife flamed between the trees,
And I fear so the terror of my eyes facing blood
on the leaves.

Father, Father hurry and save Isaac
And no one will be missing at lunchtime.

It is I who am being slaughtered, my son,
And my blood is already on the leaves.
And Father’s voice was stifled.
And his face pale.

And I wanted to cry out, writhing not to believe
And tearing open the eyes.
And I woke up.

And bloodless [lit. helpless-of-blood] was the right hand.

Translated by Arieh Sachs

1S. Burnshaw, ed., op. cit., p. 137. The words in
brackets are the translator’s own interpolation.
AMIR GILBOA

Joshua's Face

And Joshua from above looks at my face. And his face is beaten gold.
A cold dream. A mummified dream. And at my feet the sea beats eternities toward the shore. I am sick with its lament. It seems I am about to die. But I must, I must await alive The "Always."
Above, my brother's face rises in the cloud. To tell [foretell] my footsteps in the [sea] washed sand.

The sea beats (attacks) and retreats. Beats and retreats. Elemental wars conditioned by law. Me (myself). In the wind. Different (other). Escaping. Distant. Joshua too is now resting from wars. For he left an estate (heritage) to his people, But did not hew himself a grave In the mountains of Ephraim. Therefore he goes out night after night To walk in the sky. And I am sick, it seems I am about to die Walking barefoot in cold moon-sand At the water's edge And murmuring within me, murmuring within me is the end Which beats my death at my feet Wave after wave —

Upon [the faces of] many lives May he be raised and glorified.

Translated by Anieh Sachs\(^2\)

\(^2\)S. Buneshaw, ed., op. cit., p. 142-3. The words in brackets are the translator's own interpolations.
AMIR GILBOA

Moses

I went up to Moses and said to him:
Place the armies thus and thus.
He looked at me
And placed them as I told him to.

And who did not see me then in my glory?
Sara from childhood was there
In whose name I had planned to build a city,
The long-legged one from the girl-workers' farm was there.
And Melvina from Rabbat in Malta.
Dina from the Italo-Yugoslav border.
And Ria from the Lowlands in the North.

And very proud, I hurried to Moses
To show him the right way
When suddenly it became clear to me
That she who within my name
Is carved and rightly (firmly) emplaced —
Was not [present].

Moses Moses lead the people.
Look, I am so tired and I wish to sleep some more
I am still a boy.

Translated by Anih Sachs

3S. Burnshaw, ed., op. cit., p. 138. The word in brackets is the translator's own interpolation.
Chapter Three

YEHUDA AMICHAI

An Initiation of a Prophet in an Army Camp

When he raised his face whilst shaving
The beard on his hardened chin,
Looked towards the other side of the mirror. And a wind
Carried the smoke from the kitchen.

And suddenly he saw a little sky
And sharp tents pointing there,
And the taps all making water stream
From within the earth, the place of its source.

He too returned like water from far off
To his comrades, tired, as from afar,
And he had seen a great light. By heart, he approximately
knew the place of the gate. Like an infant

He wrapped his knife with love.
He dried his face, he heard, as superfluous,
The sound of the blast of the bugle
At all events he was ready and full of peace.

And an early morning wind lifted his hair
And the staccato shrill
Pushed him without knowing
To the ranks, with all the others.

And he saw the sands of the covered and autumn
And he saw distant peace and winter;
Suddenly he loved, like a woman, the neck
Of the man, who stood before his eyes.

And he loved in himself the incision and the scar,
And he loved...and only an hour passed,
Since amongst his comrades, in silence,
The spirit of prophecy was upon him.
A Sort of End of Days

The man under his fig-tree phoned the man under his grape-vine:
"Tonight they are surely likely to come.
Armour the leaves shut the tree well,
Call the dead home, and be ready."

The white sheep said to the wolf:
"People are bleating and my heart hurts;
They will come to bayonet battles there,
By next meeting between us, the matter will have been decided."

All the nations (the united ones) will flow to Jerusalem
To see if Torah has come forth, and meantime,

Since it is now spring
Gather flowers from round about.

And beat sword into pruning-hook and pruning-hook
Into sword
And so on and so forth, again without respite.

Perhaps from beating and much sharpening,
The iron of contention in the world will end.
YEHUDA AMICHAI

King Saul and I

I

They gave him a finger and he took the whole hand,
They gave me a hand and I did not take even the little finger.

Whilst my heart trained in lifting first emotions,
He trained in rending bulls.

The pulsating of my pulse was as drops from a tap,
The pulsating of his pulse as hammering of hammers in a new building.

He was my big brother
I got his used clothes.

II

His head like a compass always leads
To the absolute north of his destining.

His heart is like an alarm clock
Set to the hour of royalty.

When everyone sleeps, he shouts
Until all the quarries are hoarse.
No one interrupts him!
Only she-asses lay bare yellow teeth.
At the end of his way.

III

Dead judges turned wheels of time,
Whilst he went forth to look for she-asses,
Which I, now, have found.
But I do not know how to care for them,
They kick me.

I was raised up with the chaff,
I fell with heavy kernels.

But he breathed in the spirit of its history.
He was anointed with royal oil
As with oil of wrestlers.
He wrestled with olive trees,
He subdued them.
Roots stood out on the forehead of the earth
From exertion.
The judges fled from the scene,
Only God remained and counted:
Seven...eight...nine...ten...
The nation from its shoulder and downwards exulted.
No one stood up. He won.

IV

I am tired,
My bed is my kingdom.

My sleep is my night,
My dream, the sentence.

I hung my clothes on a chair
For tomorrow.

He hung his kingship
In a frame of golden rage
On a wall of heaven.

My arms are short, like a string too short
To tie up a parcel.

His arms are chains in the harbour
For a burden beyond time.

He is a dead king.
I am a tired man.
REMARK:

For the sake of convenience, rather than type quotations in Hebrew, I have reproduced any material in Hebrew characters by photographic copy from the works cited in the footnotes.