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XXXI

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Manuscripts must be sent to  
The Department of Hebrew Literature, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem,  
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 9190501, Israel  
myerushalayim@gmail.com

*Style Editor:* Varda Lehnardt  
*English Abstracts Style Editor:* Jeffrey Green

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## ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

### HERMENEUTICS AS POETICS: THE CASE OF *MIDRASH HAĞADOL*

Gilad Shapira

One of the fascinating characteristics of Midrash is its dual nature as both poetic and hermeneutic. Late Midrash has been shown to accentuate the literary, rather than the exegetical dimension of given genres (e.g. the Mashal, the retold biblical narrative). This paper addresses the place of hermeneutics in a seminal work of Late Midrash – *Midrash HaGadol* (Aden, Yemen, 14<sup>th</sup> century): This discussion is centered on the hermeneutical expression, ‘*zehu sheamar hakatuv*’ (this is what Scripture said) and the way it functions to create bundles of textual units around thematic focuses, and it indicates their components. Based on that, the paper argues that the function of hermeneutics in Midrash Hagadol is primarily poetic.

### THE ROAD TO LYDDA: A SURVIVOR’S STORY RABBAN YOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI’S FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM ACCORDING TO *EICHA RABBA* 1:5

Moshe Shoshan

This article presents an analysis of the story of the escape of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai from Jerusalem as it appears in *Eicha Rabba*. This version of the story differs markedly from the accounts found elsewhere in rabbinic literature, most notably in that it does not refer to R. Yohanan’s request to save ‘Yavne and her sages’. The *Eicha Rabba* account focuses on the survival of the Jews rather than on the establishment of a center of Jewish study and practice to succeed Jerusalem. Torah is presented as a source of practical wisdom, which gives the rabbis the ability to save a remnant of their people. The article also explores the implications of the identification of the figure of Abgar with the figure of the same name known to us from Christian legend. In light of this, the story should also be read as an anti-Christian narrative.

WHY ARE THERE LAWYERS IN HEAVEN?:  
RABBINIC AGGADOT ON THE DIVINE COURTROOM

Richard Hidary

Although the rabbis barred lawyers from their earthly courts, numerous aggadot nevertheless imagine the divine court as packed with advocates. This is especially curious considering that the Talmud is suspicious of adversarial court procedure because it does not promote honesty or lead to justice. This article argues that the rabbis nevertheless continue and expand upon Second Temple traditions that describe angelic advocates, because this system provides a mechanism for tempering the harshness of divine justice. The rabbis appreciated the power of rhetorical persuasion and adversarial advocacy and – although wary of them in human courts – found an important role for them in engendering God’s mercy.

These findings will confirm the complex and nuanced approach of Talmudic sources towards truth and rhetoric that we have developed in previous papers. The rabbinic heavenly court contrasts sharply with that of Plato, who describes a heavenly court without advocates or rhetorical persuasion but based on absolute naked truth. The rabbis instead promote a tradition that God wishes to have mercy and therefore permits and encourages advocacy and rhetoric typical of Roman courts precisely because of their ability to sway from strict justice toward leniency.

SOLVING A RIDDLE OF JUDAH HALEVI

Kedem Golden

R. Judah Halevi’s poetic *œuvre* contains a significant section of literary riddles. The article is devoted to one of the most opaque of the poet’s riddles, the short poem beginning with  $\text{הֵאָרְאָה־לִּי־אֶת־פְּנֵי־יְהוָה}$ , which has hitherto been misunderstood by modern scholars. While the solution given in the standard edition of Halevi’s work is uncertain, the present article offers the correct explanation of the poem: it is shown to be a sophisticated linguistic puzzle, whose ‘solution’ can apply to any of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. This explanation was in fact well known among the early modern readers of the poem, whether or not they knew it was written by its illustrious author. The recurrence of an identical explanation of the poem in various unrelated sources from different localities also sheds light on the transmission of pre-modern Hebrew poetry.

‘EVERYBODY WANTS TO LIVE’:  
A LITERARY READING OF THE *MAQAMA*  
BY YEHUDA AL-ḤARIZI, ‘THE ROOSTER’

Idit Einat-Nov

This paper proposes a new reading of ‘The Rooster’, one of the best-known *maqamas* in Yehuda Al-Ḥarizi’s *Sefer Tahkemoni*, by comparing it to the original Arabic version by Ibn al-Shahīd. This reading stems from the hypothesis that this art of storytelling is based on the poetic principle of uncertainty and is therefore associated with various forms of the ambiguous and the ambivalent (the grotesque, the uncanny, the ironic, etc.). As I have argued elsewhere about other rhymed Hebrew stories, this approach is appropriate to the character of some of the most fascinating rhymed stories produced in medieval Hebrew literature. In the present study I suggest yet another demonstration of the benefit that can accrue from the adoption of this approach.

*OLAM HA-ZACHAR* (THE WORLD OF THE MALE):  
THE IMAGE OF SARAH IN ZOHAR *LEKH-LEKHA*  
(ZOHAR I: 95B-96A)

Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

This paper explores the image of the biblical Sarah as she is portrayed in Zohar *Lekh-Lekha* (Zohar I: 95b-96a), focusing on her dominant matriarchal role in the rite of Isaac’s circumcision. It focuses on Sarah’s identification with the upper *sefirah* of *Binah* and traces the original process by which the Zohar incorporates female biblical heroes within the sefirotic system. In addition, the paper examines the issue of gender reversal, fluidity and androgyny in Kabbalistic literature, the fertile encounter between psychoanalytic theory and Zoharic homiletics, and Judeo-Christian polemics during the Middle Ages.

ALLUSIONS TO THE MISHNA AND TALMUD IN SALKINSON'S  
TRANSLATION OF *OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE*

Rachel Weissbrod and Avishai Magence

Researchers dealing with Hebrew translations of the Enlightenment period have pointed out that the main, almost exclusive origin of their language, idioms and allusions was the Bible. This generalization was also applied to the translations of Yitzhak Edward Salkinson, including his translation of Shakespeare's *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, even though some researchers noted his uniqueness in relation to other translators of this time. In this article, we shed light on an aspect of his translation that has barely attracted attention in previous research, namely his massive use of Tannaitic sources: the Mishna, the Talmud and Midrashim, in ways that contribute to the meaning of the text and therefore cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. To prove our point, we analyze allusions to the Mishna and Talmud in different parts of the play. Calling attention to these allusions leads to a re-valuation of Salkinson's translation and makes it possible to present a fuller picture of his work. Our research is grounded in Translation Studies and follows a target-oriented approach which is interested in allusions, whether or not they derive from the source-text. This approach is particularly fitting with respect to a translation which is an artistic creation in its own right, whose connections with Jewish sources remove it far from its Shakespearean source. To explain our findings, we refer to the three stages in Salkinson's biography: a yeshiva *illui*, *maskil* and convert.

THE ROLE OF ARABIC-HEBREW TRANSLATIONS IN THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARAB CULTURE  
IN THE EYES OF THE JEWISH READER FROM 1931 TO 1993

Huda Abu Much

This study examines Arabic works that were translated into Hebrew between 1931, when the first modern Arabic novel was translated into Hebrew, and 1993, when the Oslo accords were signed. I study the characterization of the Arab and his culture in the translation of long narratives, novels and novellas. The translational work shall be divided into three phases; each phase shall be determined in accordance with the appearance of innovative translations that present new translational norms.

The first phase begins with the appearance of the first Hebrew translation of the Egyptian novel *The Days* by Taha Hussein in 1931 and continues for about four decades. Since these translations were all colored by Zionist ideology, their approach tends to be Orientalist, portraying Arabic culture as backward, Other, and inferior. In some of the works, the original text shows sympathy for Western culture and even an attempt to collaborate with it. At the same time no novels and novellas by Palestinians authors are translated, as this culture was intentionally ignored.

The second phase begins in the mid-1970s and continues for about a decade, with the translation of the Palestinian novel *The Sabar* by Sahar Khalifeh (translated into English as 'Wild Thorns') at the outset. This novel deals with the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank following the Israeli occupation in 1967. The publication of this translation shows some acknowledgement of the Palestinian suffering under the Israeli occupation. This is an intermediate period as it paves the way for changes that took place in the Hebrew translation of Arabic works during the 1980s.

The third phase begins in 1984 as *The Pessoptimist* by Emil Habibi is translated into Hebrew. This period is characterized by openness and the penetration of marginal voices into Hebrew literature. Works expressing the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 war, which challenge the Zionist consensus, are translated.

## THE ETHOS OF THE STUDY OF TORAH

Adiel Cohen

The story *Or Torah* by S.Y Agnon, as it appears in the collected Writings of S.Y. Agnon, was initially published in an alternative version. This paper compares the initial version of the story with the later one, and demonstrates that although the story's structure is preserved in the later version, it reverses the message. Whereas the initial version glorifies the ethos of the study of Torah, the final version subverts and undermines it.

## FROM THE OTHER TO MYSELF: THE CHARACTER OF ELISHA BEN ABUYA IN AGNON'S 'PAT SHLEMA'

Irit Nagar

This article deals with Agnon's story, 'Pat Shlema', in which he follows the protagonist's journey as a way to examine the theological meaning of the Torah study in the modern era. The article focuses on a single character who meets the hero during the journey, Mr. Grassler. The numerous intertextual references that refer to Mr. Grassler show that Agnon intended him to resemble the Talmudic figure of Elisha ben Abuya, the heretic, known in the Talmud as Other (*akher*). Ben Abuya, who was raised in the Beit Midrash, and who lived after the destruction of the Temple in a difficult period of persecutions, chose not to keep the Shabbat commandment and to violate the three commandments that must be observed under any circumstances. Although Elisha ben Abuya rejects obedience to Halakha, he still takes intellectual pleasure in Torah study, leading the rabbis of the Talmud to deal with the tough questions: What is the value of the Torah without its observance? and is it possible to relate to ben Abuya's Torah as isolated from his deeds?

The article shows the complex relationship between the sages of the Talmud and Other: while they condemn him and his theology, they still preserve tales about him. This article shows how Agnon's use of the figure of Elisha ben Abuya in the story 'Pat Shlema' is not provocative. Rather it continues a Talmudic tradition.

English Abstracts

THE EXPANDED VERSION OF 'THE LIMBS OF THE MESSIAH' BY  
S.Y. AGNON: A CRITICAL EDITION

Avi Shmidman and Atara Snowbell

Our recent discovery of a lost manuscript by S.Y. Agnon brings to light the expanded version of his story 'The Limbs of the Messiah'. We first address the question of the dating of the manuscript, adducing evidence that Agnon wrote the story toward the end of his writing career, most likely after the Six Day War in 1967. Next, we examine Agnon's use of the term 'limbs of the messiah', which underlies the present story, and uncover its roots in Hasidic literature. Finally, we identify a host of themes and expressions shared with the Agnon story, 'The Sign', while underscoring the points where the two stories diverge. The divergences are shown to be consistent with the differing geographical foci of the two stories: the first story, on the destruction of the Temple in the Land of Israel, and the second story, on the destruction of Agnon's home city of Buczacz. Finally, we present a critical edition of the story, including all *variae lectiones* from the manuscript, and a running philological commentary.

AFRANGIYA YAHUDIYA – THE LITERARY-DOCUMENTARY  
OEUVRE OF ADA AHARONI ON THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
EXODUS

Ilana Rosen

This article presents a literary-cultural analysis of the Hebrew literary-documentary *oeuvre* of Ada Aharoni, a Cairo-born (1933) Israeli woman, including: *The Second Exodus* (1985), *From the Nile to the Jordan* (1992), and *Bringing Hearts Together* (2010). In these three books Aharoni repeatedly delineates the persecution she suffered as a young Jewish woman in Egypt of the mid-twentieth century, with the collapse of the Golden Era of the country's Jews following the end of colonialism in the entire region and the escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Courageously recounting a sexual assault suffered by the heroine of the books under discussion, Aharoni explicitly connects political persecution on national-religious grounds to the inherent victimhood of women belonging to persecuted minority groups, such as Egyptian Jews in the mid-twentieth century. For decades Aharoni has been writing and promoting issues

of former Egyptian Jews living in Israel and elsewhere, advocating for acknowledgment of their disastrous expulsion from the country in which they had lived prosperously. She has written many books including literary and documentary prose, poetry, academic and publicist works.

WHAT TYPE OF ARAB-JEWISH NARRATIVE  
IS THE ISRAELI CONSENSUS WILLING TO ACCEPT?  
THE CASE OF AMNON SHAMOSH

Lital Abazon

This paper uses the Foucauldian notion of ‘Name of the Author’ to examine the ways in which Amnon Shamosh, whose work has generally been neglected in scholarship, functioned in the literary and cultural discourse of Israel in the 1970s and early 1980s, focusing on his famous 1978 novel – adapted for television in 1982 – *Michel Ezra Safra and Sons*. This popular novel, initially rejected by all major publishing houses in Israel, tells the tale of Aleppo’s wealthy Safra family throughout the twentieth century, as historical circumstances gradually force it to leave its beloved city, sending one part of the family to Israel and the other to South America. Shamosh claimed that the novel redeemed the image of the Israeli Mizrahi family and its members, portraying educated and proud Mizrahi subjects. Yet, a close reading reveals that the novel actually demonstrates the ways in which the Mizrahi subject is forced to shed his/her Arabic traits inasmuch as he/she approaches the Israeli mainstream and consensus – much as, it seems, Shamosh himself had to do. Using three geographic spheres – that of exile, of the Israeli urban space, and of the kibbutz – the novel depicts three possible ethnic modes of existence of Israeli Mizrahi, who is forced to surrender layers of Arab heritage as he/she approaches the Holy Mecca of Israeliness, the kibbutz.

The investigation of Shamosh’s biography, his literary techniques, his narrative, and the acceptance of his writings, leads to some intriguing conclusions regarding past and current possibilities of Mizrahi authorship in Israel; including Shamosh’s own. What type of Arab-Jewish narrative is the Israeli consensus willing to accept, and why?



‘TO THE SCENTS OF THE CYPRESS AND MOIST THISTLE I SHALL  
EXTEND A HIDDEN WING’: NATIVISM AND SELF-*JOUISSANCE*  
IN ESTHER RAAB’S EARLY POETRY

Nirit Kurman

Esther Raab’s first poetry book, *Kimshonim* (Thistles) was published in 1930 from a doubly marginal position: a woman-poet native to Israel in a literary field dominated by European male poets. Together with femininity and the relationship with the mother-land, the book deals with another theme – Orientalism. In this essay I argue that the three different themes combine in a complex pattern which I call ‘Self-*Jouissance*’, a pattern which does not entail a (sexual) partner and which is not aimed at procreation or conquest. ‘Self-*Jouissance*’ functions in the national masculine field as a struggle for acknowledgement and acceptance as well as independence and differentiation. As a ‘native’, Raab seeks to place herself in a privileged position compared to that of the European immigrants who came to the country in the name of national ideology. On the other hand, her ‘nativeness’ puts her in an underprivileged stance, as an oriental noble savage. Raab copes by projecting the oriental identity onto another population, the Egyptian-Arabs, in a group of poems about Egypt. These poems portray an abject sexuality which contrasts with the sublime sexuality of the mother-land poems. Nevertheless, because of its inferiority, oriental sexuality raises an option for *jouissance* and reveals a surprising similarity to the mother-land poems, blurring the boundaries between abject and sublime. The native sexuality by its very nature entails a ‘birth from the land’, and the autoerotic sexuality in the mother-land poems disrupts hetero-normative sexuality, thus challenging and threatening the nationally-oriented sexual paradigm of procreation and conquest, challenging national ideology and threatening to annihilate it. In this essay I introduce the pattern of ‘Self-*Jouissance*’ as a model of nativism, and illuminate the links between femininity, nativism and Orientalism, links which have not been discussed before.

‘THE MOST WONDERFUL STATE IN THIS FUCKED-UP WORLD’:  
THE STATE OF ISRAEL IN KISHON’S NATIONALISTIC SATIRE

Gideon Nevo

Kishon’s creative effort – his life work – was mainly channelled to socio-economic, or in certain cases personal-familial, satires in which the vicissitudes of economic man in the maze of modern life were vividly and elegantly portrayed. On these lay his claim to fame both in Israel and abroad. At the same time though, a significant portion of his writing was dedicated to the interlocked issues of the relationship between Israel and its Arab neighbors and the relationship between Israel and the world. In this area he articulated and concretized a vociferous nationalistic ethos, the systematic parsing of which requires a series of articles. In this ethos, the state of Israel, separate from and superior to all other political entities, serves as a conceptual and axiological cornerstone. This article illuminates the crucial place the state of Israel occupies, and the pivotal function it plays, in the multi-layered edifice of Kishonian nationalistic satire, the reverberations of which can be palpably felt throughout the public sphere in contemporary Israel.

‘DICKY’S DEATH’: AMICHAÏ’S TRAUMATIC TEXT

Michael Gluzman

This essay focuses on Yehuda Amichai’s collection of short stories, *In This Terrible Wind*, in order to underscore the fundamental differences between his poetry and his prose. Unlike Natan Zach, who asserted that ‘Amichai in long lines and in short lines is one and the same’, I argue that the poetry and short stories reveal two different, perhaps incompatible, aspects of his writing. In his poetry, Amichai’s voice is often placid, a tone that is achieved by means of linguistic self-control. In stark contrast, his short stories are often constructed as dreams or nightmares, and reveal a flaw in the fictional world that blights its linguistic representation. Unlike the emotional lucidity so characteristic of his poems, Amichai’s stories reveal the traumatic biographical foundation, and can thus be read as a form of textual ‘acting out’.

These differences are clearly evident in the different texts, verse and prose, that Amichai wrote about the death of his commander and friend Haim (Dicky) Laksberger in the War of Independence. Amichai grappled with Dicky’s death throughout his life, returning to the subject in his writing at least once every decade. While Amichai’s poetic voice is restrained and reveals only a trace of the war trauma he experienced, the short story ‘Dickys’ Death’ offers a traumatic and socially disruptive poetics that dramatizes both the extremity of emotion embodied in trauma and the failure to contain it.

‘WHAT IS ABYSMALLY THROUGH YOU’ –  
A REREADING OF DAN PAGIS’S ‘AKEVOT’

Yael Tamir

This article joins previous studies addressing various aspects of memory and language in the *oeuvre* of Dan Pagis, continuing the discussion of one of his most important works – the poem ‘Akevot’.

The reading I propose is based on the links created between Pagis’s poem and the piyyut by Yannai appearing in the work’s epigraph, with a focus on the place of the Tower of Babel trope in these two works. In this reading I seek to trace the ways in which Yannai’s poetic building materials, as a poet in the Land of Israel in the fifth and sixth century A.D., are employed by Pagis in writing about the speaker’s fall back to earth.

The poem ‘Akevot’, published in the collection *Gilgul* (1970), will not be examined alongside poems from the same collection, which like ‘Akevot’ address the Holocaust and its symbols explicitly, but rather in the context of the collection *Shahut Me’uheret* (1964), which preceded *Gilgul* and in many ways remained in its shadow. This reading is based on the possibility implied by the poems of *Shahut Me’uheret* – namely, that the Hebrew language is itself the hero of a ‘late return’ (*Shiva Me’uheret*), returning to a reality completely different from that which it left.

WHEN LILITH DISRUPTS THE CHESS GAME WITH ASHMEDAI:  
THE DEMONIC IN YAAKOV SHABTAI'S 'MA'ASE YERUSHALMI'

Ofir Maman

On his deathbed a rich merchant made his son swear to him that he would not sail the seas. The son defies his father's last will, and his journey ends when he encounters a big storm, which sends him to the land of the demons. There he marries the daughter of Ashmedai. She ends up killing him after he breaks his oath to her. In 1969 Yaakov Shabtai started working on a stage adaptation of this medieval tale, giving his play the name of the Hebrew story it was derived from: 'Ma'ase Yerushalmi' (A Jerusalem Story). This article examines Shabtai's adaptation strategy and what drew him to this specific story, permeated by Jewish demonology. The article begins by decoding the replacement of Ashmedai's daughter by Lilith as Shabtai's way of giving presence to the concealed passion in the medieval story and to confront instincts with norms. The article continues by showing how Shabtai restrains Lilith's destructive power (illustrated by her disruption of the chess game in the play) as he does to other nihilistic characteristics that he embeds in the play, which he found in Gershom Scholem's studies of radical Sabbateanism and the biblical text. This is part of the general orientation of the play, which creates complex and elaborate structures of order and disorder, blurring the separation between the demonic and human worlds. Additionally, this article argues that in using 'Ma'ase Yerushalmi' Shabtai found an echo of the problematic experience of his generation. This play is closely tied to his prose and addresses the society's loss of direction and inspiring ideals.

English Abstracts

THE 'MY THOUGHT IS HUNGRY':  
THE HEBREW WORKS OF GALI-DANA SINGER

Roman Katsman

The paper investigates the Hebrew works of the bilingual Israeli poet and editor from the former Soviet Union Gali-Dana Singer. Based on a discussion of her books of poetry, against the background of her activity as an editor of the Russian-Hebrew e-journal *Dvoetochie/Nekudatim*, we observe the poetical and philosophical elements of nonconformism, neo-symbolism, chaos theory, and others.



