

**ISRAEL HISTORY (Yishuv to 1948):
THROUGH THE LENS OF ISRAELI POETRY**

By

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Table of Contents

I	Title Page	i
II	Section 1: Introduction	1-9
III	Section 2: Texts	10-74
IV	Section 3: Analysis	75-90
V	Appendices*	91-(88-108)
VI	Bibliography	109-113

**Appendices: due to formatting limitations, pdf-ed appendix contents received pagination treatment before final edits. Therefore, although appendix officially begins at page 91, the page numbering of pdf-ed appendices begins at page 88-108, instead of 91-111.*

Section One

Introduction

Overview:

If one were to begin counting Israel-State-centric history with biblical Joshua's leadership, then Israel's history spans over 3200 years. It is a vast, complex, multi-variegated, epic history. It is rich in its roster of personalities that include the best and the worst of humanity's examples, it follows conquests and it exiles Israel's people and, it is situated in a region of the world that continues to make headlines: the Middle East. Parallel to the making of history is the way in which history is documented. In the ancient past hieroglyphics, cuneiform tablets, and parchment written in archaic languages there exist descriptions of a culture's day-to-day activities; leadership, family intrigues, conflict and peacemaking, often provide archeological proof of a culture's existence. Within the styles, methods, and forms of documented history are the tellers of history. They may have been classical cultural historians¹, prophets, teachers, authors and poets or those to whom literacy transcended from the oral word to the written word. These history tellers are essential to our understanding of history and no matter when they transcribed their perspective on a certain chain of events, their analysis is interpreted as their individual point of view and their history telling may be the only artifact that has survived. In the case of current events, every fragment, every morsel of event telling from the disparate range of history tellers, to the journalists, to the

¹ Josephus Flavius is the renowned Jewish historian at the time of the 2nd Temple's destruction.

bloggers, to the pundits, to the leaders, to the historians, to the poets together yield a composite picture of that particular event. Historians approach history differently from poets, in that they are bound to their distinct definition of history. It may be either through the study of what people have done and said and thought in the past; of biography as “a work of creative imagination in which the historian attempts to recreate the life and thoughts of a particular person who actually lived at a certain time”; or as “the study of man in his social aspects both past and present.”² Poets reflect on history through their feelings assembled into words that may portray the consciousness of a movement or of a time or event. Theirs is a creative display as compared with a historian’s academic but also creative acumen.

Rationale:

This thesis has a singular purpose: to thoroughly understand the underpinnings of a particular time in State of Israel’s history, while choosing a less common documenter or creative teller of history that tells the underlying story through the words of the Israeli poet. The selected era in Israel’s history is both dramatic and fundamental. This is the state-building period leading up to and following the 1948 War of Independence. It is through the lens of uniquely modern translated Hebrew poetry that this student of history will explore this Israel-centric, era driven moment in time in Jewish-Israeli history. This thesis will analyze two themes within the poetry and history

² Norman Cantor and Richard Schneider, How to Study History, (Harlan Davidson, Inc, Wheeling, Illinois, 1967) 17.

including socio/cultural and political. A third strand that straddles both themes is the domain of biblical references. They will also be analyzed within the Israeli poet's use of bible reference as metaphor.

The tensions discovered within the context of these themes will tease out the era's distinctions and then, through the words of poetry, identify the deeply rooted connections between what the conditions are on the ground with what is surfacing in the national consciousness. The merging of an in-depth analysis of both Israeli history and poetry fulfills a personal passion for each of these subjects. It beckons this student to hypothesize that poetry is an uncommonly researched vehicle by which to teach a creative and piece of literary history-poetry- and that by reading and understanding the era's greatest poetry voices one can peer into the psyche of a culture at this momentous time in Israeli-Jewish history.

Why this thesis? Exploring poetry and history together in a relational sequence will have a multiplicative effect: It will further my understanding of Israel's historical pre and early statehood successes and challenges and also will embellish this history lesson with the analysis of essential Israeli voices who, through poetry, creatively express Israeli deepest and sometimes darkest feelings.

Context:

Hebrew poetry has had a long illustrious history, a fruitful present, and a fluid future. Historically, our sacred Torah itself contains verses that are lyrically written

communications of events. A notable example is the Song at the Sea³ attributed to Moses (Exodus 15: 1-18) and to Miriam (Exodus 15: 20-21), Moses' sister. As *The Song at the Sea* describes their experience of the miracles of the splitting Reed Sea, the Children of Israel's narrow escape into freedom, and the demise of Pharaoh and his chariot-powered troops as they drowned in the sea. Within the writings of the 21-canonized Books of Prophets, poetic expressions are in written formats that include a variety of poetry infused prophecies often foretelling Israel's dismal behavior and its resultant misery in exile as well as jubilant enunciations of future good times. Isaiah, within the first chapter's second verse, resorts to poetry to describe his observations of the Kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Judean kings⁴. The *Kituvim*, the writings, include 13 books of Lamentations (*Ei-kha*), Psalms⁵, *Song of Songs* and other *Tanakh*⁶ specific books. They comprise the balance core of Judaic scripture and are quite literary-historical anciently produced and currently studied texts, and, they are nearly all prose and poetry.

The history of Hebrew poetry that is topically flavored within the context of the Judaic lens did not end with the *Tanakh*. It has continued throughout the ages and has been influenced by world cultures with whom Jews have lived. Much of what

³ The Song of the Sea, JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation-Second Edition. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999). A copy of this text is found in the Appendix.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Isaiah 1:2-9. A copy of this text is found in the Appendix.

⁵ There are 150 Psalms. Succinctly described in the ArtScroll Book of Psalms, "In illness and in strife, in triumph and in success, the Jew turns to his Book of Psalms and lets David become the harp upon which his own emotions sing or weep."

⁶ *Tanakh* is the Hebrew Bible consisting of the Five Books of the Torah, The Books of the Prophets (21), and the Writings (13).

constitutes poetry within liturgy in contemporary prayer books is poetry known as piyyut. Piyyutim (the Hebrew plural form of piyyut) are supplemental-prayer poems that have been written since the 6th Century Palestine near the end of the Talmudic period. Piyyutim have been placed in significant service liturgy sections for both weekly and holidays as augmentations. Their mention is essential: tens of thousands of piyuttim have been written throughout the ages.

One can identify a piyyut's origin by its syntax, meter, form, construction and length. A 9th Century medieval Spanish pi'tan's *Adon Olam*⁷ is fundamentally different from a pi'tan's *Lekha Dodi* from 14th Century Safed⁸ and one can detect within the language of the piyyut the distinct development of Hebrew.

Poetry is dominant in modern secular and religious Jewish cultures and is used extensively within one of two streams: Jewish liturgy and secular creative expression. Across all Jewish denominations' prayerbooks-*Siddurim*, are amalgamations of *Tanakh* phrases derived in particular from Psalms, from pre and post- 2nd Temple era pi'tanim⁹ (those who compose piyyutim are called pi'tanim in the plural or pi'tan in the singular)

⁷ *Adon Olam* is a piyyut attributed to Solomon ibn Gabirol, (1021-1058) that is found in many *siddurim* defines God's supremacy and is used to introduce morning services and conclude Shabbat and holiday morning services. Its use is so ubiquitous that it may be used as part of a nightly prayer, as a prayer recited at synagogue following the death of a loved one, and as a wedding song in Moroccan tradition. (Adapted from the [Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer](#) by Macy Nulman.)

⁸ *Lekha Dodi* is a piyyut attributed to Rabbi Solomon Alkabetz in 1529. This piyyut is specific to the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service on Friday evenings, is steeped in Kabbalist imagery and combines both rabbinic and biblical fragments with themes spanning Jerusalem, Shabbat's value, and redemption. [Adapted from Macy Nulman, [Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer](#) (Jason Aronson, New Jersey-London, 1993) 223.]

⁹L. Lieber, *Piyyut* (<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199840731/obo-9780199840731-0059.xml>, August 2012).

as well as from many contemporary poets. Liturgy is brimming full of poetry. However, liturgically merged poetry's purpose differs from contemporary poetry in that poems like piyyutim are specific to a liturgical sequence, as in *Shabbat* or a particular holiday such as *Yom Kippur*, and are therefore religious, whereas non-liturgically based poetry broadly expresses a poet's inner contemplations on any and all topics. Similarly, the pi'tanim speak the language of their cultural influences. Although the study of piyyutim and liturgical poetry in it of itself is a fascinating topic to explore, this thesis will be steeped in the confines of contemporary post-Ben Yehuda Hebrew poetry, in particular, modern Israeli poetry.

Poetry also functions as a looking-glass into moments in time. Historians are more disciplined in their approach to history and are also a type of looking glass depending on the historian's frame of reference. If they are political-institutional historians, then they will tell us about specific individuals' accomplishments, what were their most significant speeches and how did government and law affect the details. If they are intellectually inclined, they may mine the feelings of ideas found in philosophy, art, literature and science. If they are economic historians then they will be mindful of the way in which a culture provides sustenance and how it controls its physical environment. If they are viewing history from a cultural perspective then they are considered a generalist and they will synthesize social, political and economical aspects from which to develop their ideas. In other words, historians have a broad range of perspective from which to paint history.

As compared with historians, poets speak in voices that often, whether directly or indirectly, give the reader hints or clues on how a people may be reflecting on an event that penetrates the population's psyche to the core. Poets often speak in metaphor and simile, making use of language in a way that engages the reader in imagery, tempo and even rhyme. Poets can also have the effect of giving a reader a sense of emotion; how one is feeling as a result of an event; descriptions of all things sensual are the domain of a poet's descriptions.

And what of these events? The emergence of the State of Israel following the War of Independence and British Mandate rule had the world wondering whether or not this small, untested country could manage to survive. The odds were against survival: six-hundred thousand inhabitants against a vast sea of forty million Arabs surrounded on every side by hostility, rhetoric and an imbalance of military resources. This calls to mind *Parashat Shelah Lekha* (*Bemidbar*-Numbers 13: 25-29) during which the spies representing each tribe were sent into the God Promised Land to report back their findings. The spies noted that within the land and on every side other inhospitable-warring cultures reigned: Anakites within, Amalekites to the south in the Negev, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites to the north, and Canaanites to the west by the sea and to the east along the Jordan River. What was the probability that the Jewish State would not see the light of day and that all efforts of the past 50 years of the Zionist experiment would dissolve into yet another Jewish tragedy to be mourned by Diaspora Jewry? Fortunately, Israel survived this costly test.

The following table provides the salient literature sources referencing the intersection of history and poetry:

Table 1: Framework for Crosswalk of Poetry and Historical Events

Salient Literature: Readings, Poems, and Historical Resources	History (only)	Poetry Themes(only)		Use of Biblical quotes
	1948 era	Social-Cultural	Political	
Israel: A History Shapira (2012)	x			
Israel: Gilbert (1998)	x			
Israel Its Role in Civilization: Davis (1955)	x			
The Israelis: Founders and Sons: Alon (1971)	x			
ISRAEL AS A JEWISH STATE: Elazar (Fall 1990)	x			
Jewish-Israeli Poetry, Dahlia Ravikovitch, and the Gender of Representation: Tsamir (2008)		x	x	x
The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself: Burshaw (1966)	x	x	x	x
History of the War of Independence: Milstein (1997)	x			
The Zionist Ideology: Shimoni (1955)				
How to Study History: Cantor (1967)	x			
Poets on the Edge: An Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew Poetry: Keller (2008)	x	x	x	x
Israeli Poetry: A Contemporary Anthology: Bargad (1986)	x	x	x	x
No Rattling of Sabers: An Anthology of Israeli War Poetry: Raizen (1995)	x	x	x	x
T. Carmi and Dan Pagis: Mitchell (1976)				
Points of Departure: Pagis (1981)		x	x	x
At the Stone of Losses: Carmi (1983)		x	x	x
The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai: Bloch & Mitchell (1986)		x	x	x
Found in Translation: Friend (2006)				
Language And Theme In The Piyyut — And Its Derivations: W. Jac. Van Bekkum (1985)				x

Articles in Hebrew Studies and Prooftext by Gluzman (1993, 2003 & 2012)	x	x	x	x
Articles In Hebrew Studies by Ari Ofengender (2006 & 2010)	x	x		x
Does David Still Play Before You: Israeli Poetry and the Bible: Jacobs (1997)				x

Section Two will synthesize the 1948 era’s note-worthy historical circumstances together with poetry through which common themes of social-cultural, political, or biblical will be elucidated. It is the opinion of this researcher that these themes may be understood best as perspectives with the subtext that both history and poetry analyses can be, among many angles, categorized by their effect on a society’s social-cultural delineators. A political category is perhaps, the basest and nearly always stated descriptor but its mention is necessary due to its ever-present demeanor. Biblical is not a category and may at first be considered an odd choice, however, under the guise of both Israel and poetry, there are many instances when history of a neighborhood or a mountain pass or a biblical aged inference coated with archeological evidence is described, noted, compared to modern day neighborhoods or mountain passes. The Hebrew Bible is relevant and the occurrence of its mention is like taking a template that serves as a first 5000 year old surface and overlaying it with a current today’s surface, connecting the two.

Section Three will serve as a conclusion whose purpose is to answer the only question a thesis may ask: Did we learn something from this exercise? Did this study add another fragment of knowledge to the infinite pool of interpreting history through the lenses of poets?

Section Two

I. A Review of Pre-State History: Political ramifications

The State of Israel did not magically transform itself into a functioning, coordinated, centrally organized entity overnight. Rather, by the time the thirty–eight signatories penned their names to the Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948, a short 51 years of thoughtful organizational practice had transpired from the 1897 First Zionist Congress, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the 1922 League of Nations Mandate which recognized “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” and the “grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country,¹⁰” provided by and the United Nations General Assembly vote on November 29, 1947 affirming the two-state partition proposal.

Organization, however, was not created in a vacuum. Since the First Aliyah Zionists landed in Palestine under Ottoman Empire jurisdiction to the arrival of the pre-State post-Holocaust survivors at the end of the British Mandate, Jewish immigrants brought with them some institutions (Examples include but are not limited to *Poale Tzion*. It was brought from Eastern Europe.) while others were developed only in *Eretz Israel* (EI) such

¹⁰ The 1922 League of Nations resolution recognized the Balfour Declaration as the basis for giving Great Britain a Mandate over Palestine. Every Mandate approved by League of Nations had a final goal statement, the Balfour Declaration was such a statement by England.

as the *Kibbutz* and *Histadrut* which organized completely new Zionist movement leadership and party structure replete with committees to manage individual movements' members. It must be noted that Jewish communities in exile from the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C.E. were well tuned and had practiced the art of regulating, legislating, and thoroughly caring for its own on all levels within other kingdoms, commonwealths and countries. Many of these self-help institutions existed in EI as in the Diaspora before and at the time of the Zionist movement.

The establishment of the *Histadrut*, The General Federation of Jewish Labor in 1921, is illustrative. Prior to its founding there existed several labor Zionist groups which competed for workers' memberships. With the influx of the Third Aliyah's 35,000 young, idealistic left-leaning Zionistic immigrants predominately Russia leaving to fulfill their socialist and Zionist ideals and from pogrom-ridden Poland, a new energy forced the merging of the disparate labor organizations into one centralized group. The creation of the *Histadrut* was both an attempt to find a way of uniting labor factions after an attempt to unite labor parties into one party (*Hapoel Hatzair* and *Poale Zion*) into one new party (*Ahdut*). After unification of parties failed, labor leaders were fearful that lack of unity would cause the Zionist enterprise to develop along "capitalist" lines. The *Histadrut* was an attempt to either prevent or weaken that development. Its strength lied in its leadership and the resolve of idealistic young Zionists who were inclined to not only speak the language of A.D. Gordon, but to act on it¹¹. Unlike other

¹¹ A.D. Gordon was the quintessential Labor Zionist thinker. He was a member and an ideologue of *Hapoel Hatzair* not Labor Zionist- Briefly Labor Zionist or *Poale Zion* considered themselves both Marxist and Zionists, *Hapoel Hatzair* saw their socialism as developing from other sources- they turned to AD Gordon

labor organizations in either the Diaspora or the *Yishuv*, the *Histadrut* provided the impetus, substance, and resources to absorb, settle, and create working opportunities for immigrants. It had two main arms: “the constructive arm, assigned to building the country through settlement, cooperatives, and contract work, and the professional arm, representing the workers in relation to the employers.”¹²

In the case of the *Yishuv*, one of the main challenges to the governing body, the Jewish Agency¹³ was to function as a parallel government separate from the British Mandatory one.¹⁴ Many parties (ideologically different Zionist movement groups) represented the full political and religious spectrum from extreme right (*Betar*) to the extreme left Jewish Communist party, each wielded power within their ranks. Reining in each separate party’s leadership into a singular all-*Yishuv* leadership was an incremental process beginning as early as the 1920’s. The Jewish Agency for Palestine only became a formal institution in 1929. It was both political-consulting frequently with the British

for inspiration. According to Gideon Shimoni in his book entitled, *The Zionist Ideology*, (Brandeis University Press of New England, Hanover, NH, 1955), 212, “Given Gordon’s diagnosis of the Jewish problem and his vision for Zion, it followed that no means were more important than Jewish self-labor in the up-building of the envisioned society.” In Gordon’s words, Zionist regeneration was individualistic Zionism. “...it demanded of each and every one that he transform himself so that the *galut* Jew within him becomes a liberated Jew; so that the impaired, shattered, unnatural person within him may become a natural, healthy, person true to himself.” *Ibid.*, 213.

¹² Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, (Brandeis University Press, Walham, MA, 2012) 122.

¹³ Challenges to the *Yishuv*’s Jewish Agency were not confined to compliance with the Mandatory government’s laws. They were many, including the politics of immigration, in-fighting with both internal and external right and left leaning parties, and basic management of developing economic, social, and cultural infrastructures.

¹⁴ “One could argue that Jewish Agency began to assume some of these functions, but it certainly was not officially supposed to. The formation of Jewish Agency was based on a clause in the Mandate which called for a Jewish agency which Great Britain would consult before major policy changes or initiatives. Formally it wasn’t even Zionist as 50% of its membership and leadership positions were held by Non-Zionists.” This quote is attributed to my thesis advisor, Dr. Jerry Kutnick.

(From the beginning it had its own political department.) and economic (it called itself interested in "upbuilding" Palestine). By the 1930's the Jewish Agency's dominant concern consisted of matters of economic development including private versus public capital to build the country. Monetary concerns were then superseded by matters of national authority. Then, in the later half of the 1930's the focus shifted yet again from the governance of the national authority to matters of security and dealing with illegal immigration.

Security

The *Haganah* was established in the 1920's to provide security to outer lying *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* and *moshavot* settlements but its role was marginal both in its meager funding and its operational significance. It became a department within the labor movement's *Histadrut* organization. As a reaction to the *Haganah*'s weak stature and purpose, the *Irgun* (*Irgun Tzva'i Leumi*-the Hebrew acronym "*Etzel*" for National Military Organization) broke off in 1931 to become an extreme-ist right-wing activist military arm that answered only to its movement's leader, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky. This reactionary group split again into a more fundamentalist group in 1940 called *Lohamei Herut Yisrael* ("*Lehi*" is the Hebrew acronym meaning Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), or the Stern Gang. Both the *Irgun* and the Stern Gang were underground organizations that were not under the control of the national authority.

The Jewish Agency, in keeping with the Mandatory government's edicts, did not formally manage the *Haganah* because to do so would be in direct violation of the law

because defense matters were officially the responsibility of the Mandate Authority. Once Ben-Gurion became the Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, the dominant member of the Jewish Agency in 1933 after more than a decade leading the *Histadrut*, the *Haganah*, although still under the wing of the Histadrut, accepted the Jewish Agency's authority in a curious way: by establishing a paramilitary body with its own separate leadership that ultimately took orders, albeit unofficially, from the Jewish Agency hierarchy. This arrangement allowed the Haganah to act as if it was still an insignificant Histadrut weak department and not a military arm of the Jewish Agency under the close watch of the Mandatory government¹⁵. Between the 1936 Arab Revolt, the issuance of the 1939 White Paper and at least the first two years of World War II, there were moments of security-military cooperation with the Mandatory powers. As violence became pandemic within the Yishuv both against Arab militias and British troops, the *Haganah* was forced to go underground in order to plan and execute defensive and offensive tactics.

Illegal Immigration

Up until the presentation of the Peel Commission's Report on July 27, 1937 which suggested that Palestine be partitioned into two states, the annual legal immigration cap was set at 60,000. The 1936 number represented the highest cap allowed during the Mandate period. Each year economists would suggest a different

¹⁵ That is not to say that the Mandatory government wasn't aware of who was ultimately in charge of the *Haganah*. A British military operation called "Operation Agatha" in June 1946, rounded up hundreds of members of leadership in both the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency to stop the underground military's weapon stashing, catching the Yishuv by surprise on a day also known as "Black Sabbath."

one based on the economy's ability to absorb new immigrants. Arab protests and pressure caused the British government to severely restrict Jewish immigration at a time when European Jews were feeling the brunt of Nazi anti-Semitism. March 1938 marked Hitler's extended rule over Austria, the 1935 Nuremberg Laws were enforced in Austria and deportations began to Dachau concentration camp. Legal immigration became restricted and in 1938-1939 only 4,235 Jews emigrated. The 1939 White Paper provided the Jewish Agency the impetus to found the *Mossad I'aliya bet* (Organization for Immigration Bet-the code word for illegal immigration), an arm of the *Haganah*, whose expressed purpose was to manage the details enabling illegal immigration in all its dimensions. Illegal immigration was truly spawned by unrealistic immigration quotas imposed by the Mandate which clearly did not want the Jews to gain majority status. Originally, the Jewish Agency opposed it because illegal immigrant numbers were subtracted from legal quota numbers, but by 1938, the pre-state national authority supported it wholeheartedly. After World War II, even the Zionist Executive implicitly supported illegal immigration as one method to thwart British efforts to limit immigration.

In summation, under Ben-Gurion's leadership by consensus the Yishuv's Zionist Executive did the seemingly impossible: this consensus "comprised the emotional, psychological, and organizational foundations that made it possible to mobilize most of the public institutions, organizations, and groups of the Yishuv for the struggle for

independence.”¹⁶ And the glue that fastened it together was the immigrant populations’ identification with a nationalist objective based in Zionist ideology.

Social-Cultural Ramifications

Pre-state Yihuv’s social-cultural dimensions may be characterized by many factors. Isolating a particular component, the demographics, will suffice to explain the importance of the perceived difference between the old-world Diaspora Eastern-European¹⁷ Jew and the new Jew. The old Jew was weak¹⁸, averse to physical work, quiescent to government control, and unable to stuck in a completely dependent often impoverish existence. According to this view, the new Jew was the antithesis and the reason that Zionism became the new Jew’s movement was rooted in their absolutist features: strong, nature-loving, pioneering, productive, secular, worldly-educated and, driven by a utopian image of controlling their own destiny by establishing their own state. It was the new Jew who would emigrate to Palestine and despite the hardships, would tough it out, countering the urgings of parents in Europe to come to their senses and return “home”.

It was the concept of *halutz*-pioneer that grabbed the spirit of members of the European Zionist youth movements. Martin Buber, in his essay entitled, “Character

¹⁶ Shapira, 130.

¹⁷ Eastern European Zionist youth movement members dominated the first three waves of immigration. There were also Yemenite Jews as well as Jews from Western countries, however, their numbers paled in comparison.

¹⁸ It is important to state that pro-Zionist activists held this controversial depiction of the religious, orthodox, Jewish stereotype.

Change and Social Experiment in Israel”¹⁹ is careful in his translation of *halutz*. “...a *halutz* is a very singular kind of pioneer. He is, first of all, a pioneer who does not want to create something new, but to restore in a new and modern form something that existed in its glory many centuries ago, And the memory of the glory will restore it, not as it was, but in a new form adequate to our needs of today and our modern mode of life, to our longing and our most profound feeling as Jews and as men.” Buber calls attention to those who made the journey, as either being spiritually or naturally selected and regards them as the best representatives of this new Jew who were cosigned to build the Jewish state.

The two stanzas of Shaul Tschernichovsky’s poem²⁰, “I Believe,” written in 1892 represent the core of the future halutz:

Then my people too will flourish
And a generation shall arise
In the land, shake off its chains
And see light in every eye.

¹⁹ Moshe Davis, *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, (The Seminary Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1956) 206-207.

²⁰ In an October 2013 issue of Ha’aretz, Tschernichovsky’s poem, “I Believe,” was being considered as a replacement to Israel’s national anthem, “Hatikvah.” Vivian Eden, [This Is the Poem That Could Replace 'Hatikvah'](http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/poem-of-the-week/.premium-1.552160) (<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/poem-of-the-week/.premium-1.552160>Poem of the Week, Oct 13, 2013). Refer to the Appendices for the complete poem.

It shall live, love, accomplish, labor

In the land it is alive

Not in the future, not in heaven –

And its spirit shall henceforth thrive.

-----²¹

The new Jew, besides not being afraid to pick up a hoe and learn to farm or lay down roads, or build settlements was also not afraid to take up arms and defend him/herself. The sabra, an indigenous prickly fruit-producing cactus, became the symbol best fit to describe the halutz: thorny on the outside and sweet on the inside. They were said to be “frank and direct, honest and brave, free of the hypocritical mannerisms of bourgeois society, with strength that lay not in words, but in deeds.”²²

Much credit must go to the failure of Soviet’s Bolshevik Revolution in pushing many young Jewish revolutionaries to realize that they would not reap lasting sustenance from any other country’s revolution. Their experience with organizing for a cause, embracing fundamental ideology that included egalitarianism and socialism from which to build a new society was key to helping form in Palestine its essence based in a collectivist spirit. The Second Aliyah was more about the individual. The Third Aliyah, from which the heart and soul of the burgeoning leadership of the *Yishuv* derived, was cut from collectivism. This culture expanded on the kibbutz movement initiated by the

²¹ Throughout this thesis, ----- will indicate that the poem being discussed is only part of the poem.

²² Shapira, 137.

2nd aliyah and greatly expanded thru 3rd Aliyah. The reality of individualism versus collectivism can be best understood when one analyzes numbers of ideological young immigrant Zionists whose words and passions spoke louder than their actions. Many began with intentions to be a good laborer or a kibbutznik and a startling number ended up moving to Tel Aviv abandoning ideology for their pursuit of individual gain. The good news for the ideologically minded immigrants is that they were free to choose a preference or even to vacillate between the individual and the collective. A proper demonstration of this dynamic is found in Nathan Alterman's poetry. His weekly newspaper column, "The Seventh Column,"²³ shared with wide-readership poems that were examples of the collectivist strand of *Yishuv* ethic. His first book, *Kokhavim Bahutz (Stars Outside)*, was cut from the individual's perspective.

Regarding intellectual activities that informed social/cultural development in the *Yishuv*, one may understand it by reviewing art, music, and the evolution of the modern Hebrew language. Mordecai Narkiss's essay, "*Jewish and Universal Trends in Contemporary Israeli Art*,"²⁴ describes that as early as 1906, the visionary Boris Schatz, a sculptor on his own right, founded Bezelel, an art school in Jerusalem. Schatz wanted a school that would give the Jewish artist freedom not only from the restrictions of creative expression endemic in other European cultures and within some religious Jewish circles, but also free from persecution that had previously limited their

²³ The "Seventh Column" by Nathan Alterman was featured in the Labor Movement's weekly newspaper, "*Davar*", which later became a two-volume collection that documented the thirties and forties as it transpired. The poems in the column reflected that week's events and distilled, from his poetry and personal perspective what was happening on the ground at that particular moment in time.

²⁴ Davis, 194-196.

participation. His vision still applies to today's Israeli art. The earliest generation of new *Yishuv* artists were caught in the groove that had on one side a Jewish lens from which to cast their skill and on the other side the universal methods that predominated. After all, art was born by European art styles and Europe-born Jewish artists, such as Chagall and Soutine were moved by "Jewish thinking, Jewish feeling, even the sharp irony and self-criticism of Jewish humor, [which] became integral parts of this art whose influence came to be like that of the giant Sholom Aleichem upon the old Jewish learning and the modern Jewish literature."²⁵ Chana Orloff represented artists who were born in Europe, immigrated to Palestine in 1905, and then traveled to Paris to study at the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs. Orloff's sculptures were frequently known Israeli notables captured in sculptural portraits. A number of her monuments were connected to Israeli history but her art was influenced by her exposure to pre and post World War I Paris including the styles found in other Jewish-European artists, Jacques Lipchitz and Amedeo Modigliani.²⁶

Music, according to Milton Katim's essay, "*Music-Making in Israel*,"²⁷ "is a basic essential of life itself." He remarks that music was everywhere and that, in the early days of the new State, in the Tel Aviv-Jaffe population of 358,000, there were 10,000 subscribers to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra's (IPO) season and a lengthy waiting

²⁵ Ibid., 201-202.

²⁶ Adapted entry from Ruth Markus, *Artists: Yishuv and Israel: 1920-1970*, (The Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/artists-yishuv-and-israel-1920-1970>).

²⁷ Davis, 185.

list. A comparable ratio would include over one quarter of a million subscribers to New York City's Philharmonic season's ticket holders. Music may be regarded as a cultural norm that gives all members of the population access. Katims, a guest conductor to the IPO provides an explanation of his experience at the end of a concert and the concert go-ers reaction. "... these people sense the need for expressing through their cheers and applause, the triumph of their cause-the vindication of their sacrifices."²⁸ His observations of children in rural and urban settings were regarding their broad and on-going music education which ranged along the spectrum of liturgical, folk and contemporary to the classics.

Hebrew contributed largely to the cultural cohesion of the Jewish *Yishuv*. Ben-Yehuda may be considered the father of modern Hebrew. Curiously, the earliest known reference to spoken Hebrew attributed to him exists in only one line in his now famous article entitled, "*A Weighty Question*," published in the Viennese Hebrew Monthly, *Hashahar*, in March 1878. "We Hebrews, indeed, have an advantage in that we possess a language in which we can even now write anything we care to, and which it is also in our power to speak if only we wish." Originally, he believed that Hebrew's revival would be literary since there were centuries of precedence and that in order for this new literary Hebrew era to occur all that was needed was a homeland in which to write it. One can argue that Hebrew did not go through a revival. It had never died. Hebrew has been a language leading a "partial life, as long as it is regularly employed by a

²⁸ Ibid., 186.

community for some social purpose.”²⁹ An interesting anecdote to Ben-Yehuda’s shift to embracing the possibility of spoken Hebrew came on the heels of him receiving news of the *Hashahar* article’s publication. He met a visitor, a Mr. Zundelman, some random guest of a friend with whom he wanted to share his good news, and the two of them conversed about the article and the future of Zionism and the implications of the Hebrew language for two hours in Hebrew, without stammering. This expeditious meeting caused Ben-Yehuda to come to the realization that Hebrew WAS in fact a language that can be spoken. He also realized that in order for the language to become more user-friendly and modernized, it would require distinct augmentations. The publication of his article elicited support all over Eastern Europe and soon thousands of Jews in the Pale of Settlement began speaking Hebrew to one another.

The actual revival began when Ben-Yehuda shifted his thinking as he considered speaking Hebrew a pure and unadulterated political act. Itamar Even-Zohar in his essay, *“The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948”*, reviews the migration of predominantly Eastern European to Palestine and how they deliberately invented a “new Jew” governed by Zionist ideology, thus creating an alternative culture from that of their birth countries. Within this new culture was their acceptance of Hebrew. He presumes that a fundamental reason for adoption of the Sephardic pronunciation lies in the mere fact that Ashkenazi pronunciation sounded too much like Yiddish, even though Ashkenazi forms were closer to correct pronunciations. However, Hebrew was secondary to Yiddish for most immigrants. Hebrew moved from position of

²⁹ Chaim Rabin, *The National Idea and the Revival of Hebrew*, (Studies in Zionism, 7, Spring 1983) 34.

sacred written language of Judaism to a secular one while the opposite occurred to Yiddish-it became a “high “ language of literature. There was distinct competition between the two languages. The Zionist Movement, while garnering support in Poland, was averse to banning Yiddish’s use because even its leadership, including Ben Gurion, used it to communicate to its constituents at rallies. The language tide began to turn as mass immigration began filling pre-State streets, forcing new immigrants to learn Hebrew. As early as the mid-1920’s a Tel Aviv organization existed named the Legion of the Defenders of Language. It functioned as a Hebrew language police. The organization promoted Hebrew speaking both in the Yishuv and the Diaspora.³⁰ However, it was Hitler’s killing machine that did tip the balance of Eastern European Yiddish speakers. The Holocaust and its millions of Yiddish speakers lost did more to extinguish the Yiddish flame than any Yishuv mandates to force Hebrew on its population.

Socialization of the disparate fractions of the pre-State demographic was an essential component that resonated in both public and private domains and was intentionally orchestrated. This included propagating the *halutz* ethic with Hebrew teaching for all ages as well as by disseminating daily newspapers that featured the goodness of left leaning Labor Zionism. The *Histadrut* established its own publishing entity, *Am Oved* (working nation) designed to provide intellectual, cultural, and political nourishment for the movement’s readers as well as for all of society with the intent to change it into a “worker’s” society. A theatre (*Ha’ohel*-the Tent), a sport organization

³⁰ A 1927 Jewish Telegraphic Agency clipping noted their first conference in Jerusalem in which Haim Nahman Bialik among others convened seminars to promote methods to spread the use of Hebrew.

(*Hapo'el*-the Worker), as well as worker's housing in planned neighborhoods equipped with schools, green spaces and vegetable gardens all helped define and socialize families of *Histadrut* officials and permanent Jewish labor. This left leaning sizable population was easily identifiable by their external cultural expressions including their choice of clothing, folk dancing, group sing-alongs, and the secularization of the Jewish calendar.³¹ In distinct contrast to the left's pronounced efforts of fanning the flames of all-things-labor/socialist perspective there existed the opposite bourgeois culture. Tel Aviv was its capital. For all immigrants for whom the bell of leftist labor ethos did not toll, a European-styled culture replete with high fashion shops, street-sided open coffee houses and cafes, beaches, movie theatres, and an annualized festival schedule posed as a seductive counterbalance to the simple socialist culture. Together, both "sides" memorialized the passing of their heroes with rally-like public funeral displays of mourning. Large public gatherings were common for political events as well as demonstrations of solidarity and loyalty to the *Yishuv* leadership.

It was the educational system that fundamentally brought all groups together. Part and parcel to its purpose was to "inculcate in the younger generation a commitment to the Zionist idea . Every Friday children came to school with a donation to the Jewish National Fund(JNF), which they put in the JNF Blue Box. The class that collected the most money won a commendation, with songs in the accompanying

³¹ The Labor Zionist Movement reinvented the 3-main pilgrimage holidays, *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Succot* from religious biblically derived and described holidays to purely agricultural ones. In example, *Pesach* was recast without the traditional recitation of the *Haggadah* and instead, replaced with a composite of current readings that reflected contemporary issues.

ceremony stressing the importance of these contributions for redeeming the land.”³²

The concept of “*art-zenu*,” our land, and “*ertetz moledet*,” homeland, become school children’s mantra. Tree planting making the desert bloom was implicitly encouraged, as was the rhetoric that blamed the Arabs for the destruction of original forests. Youth movements along with school curriculums emphasized Jewish history of the land by showcasing biblically referenced locations and infusing old biblical history with new Zionist history in the making, driving home the point of Zionism: this is our land and it has been our land for thousands of years. Anita Shapira assumes that had a survey been taken after World War II and before the Independence Day War “the majority would have recited the standard slogans about ‘inverting the pyramid³³’ and establishing a workers’ class in Palestine, the importance of the pioneer, the wonders of the country’s youth, the malice of the British, and the backwardness of the Arabs.”³⁴ There was a collective sense that everyone would follow the lead of Ben-Gurion and that most would be willing to do whatever was asked of them for the greater good of the pre-State enterprise.

³² Shapira, 150.

³³ As it pertains to the *Yishuv* and its governance, Ber Borochov, one of the founders of the Labor Zionist movement “argued that the class structure of European Jews resembled an inverted class pyramid where few Jews occupied the productive layers of society as workers. A Jewish state would allow immigrants to form the proletariat, carrying out the goals of a Marxist class struggle. The base of the pyramid—the long base raising up above the triangle’s point—would have the masses of workers controlling the country’s economy.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

II. A Review of the U.N. Partition Plan Vote through The War of Independence

It would be presumptuous to write that there was a complex set of conditions that escalated into the War of Independence following the November 29, 1947 United Nations General Assembly vote to partition Palestine. One can be assured that between the British who were soon to abandon their Mandate hold on administrating Palestine, the indigenous Arab communities, and the external Arab states, Ben-Gurion had little time to celebrate the U.N.'s vote. So keen was his sense of what was to come that he had already solicited the support of American Diaspora wealth in 1945 to begin arming and developing an arms industry for the eventual new state army. By the fall of 1947, the *Haganah*, previously a side-branch of the *Histadrut*, became official. Ben-Gurion led this newly organized National Command, a clandestine³⁵ army under the leadership of Yigael Yadin with four brigades: in the south, north, center and in Jerusalem consisting of 2,100 men and women with arms experience and more than a thousand that had been trained, at the ready.

Israel Galili, the chief of the *Haganah* High Command, prophetically remarked in October 1947: "The trouble will not begin with someone blowing the big horn and announcing throughout the country, 'Let's start rioting.' The beginnings are normally 'not serious', sporadic, insignificant. A few shots here and there, some isolated attacks; these accumulate, ignite and spread gradually, step by step."³⁶ The next five months

³⁵ The *Haganah* was illegal according to the Mandatory government therefore everything related to defense or strategic planning was conducted undercover. Pseudonyms became code names for everything: bullets were cherries or plums, rifles were pipes and pistols were sprinklers.

³⁶ Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, (William Morrow & Company, Inc., New York, 1998) 151-152.

marked frequent but not coordinated acts of terror throughout the *Yishuv*: a bus was attacked traveling from Netanya to Jerusalem, the Tel Aviv Hatikvah Quarter attacked by Jaffe Arab residents, the Jewish commercial center in Jerusalem was attacked by a mob of 200 Arabs with the British troops looking on but doing nothing to stop the looters. Outer lying settlements were particularly vulnerable. Many settlements in the Negev were isolated, however the National Command provided some support in the way of arms and *Palmach* (*Pelugot Hamahatz*-meaning striking force, was the elite *Haganah* forces that originally functioned as a branch of the *kibbutz* movement's defense organization) to resist Arab incursions. The fighting and killing was not one-sided. The Stern Gang and the *Irgun* actively fought back, often killing innocent civilians. By the end of 1947 the *Haganah* formed a new policy of retaliation warning Arabs by distribution of leaflets and radio broadcasts that offenders would be eliminated. The *Va'ad Leumi*-National Council consisted of twenty to thirty members representing all the major factions in the *Yishuv*. The *Va'ad* primarily concentrated its efforts on the internal affairs expanding to the management of education, welfare and health care services. Its Political Department was tasked with Arab relations. It was through this department that the released a proclamation to the Arabs stating 'Expel those among you who want blood to be shed, and accept the hand which is outstretched to you in brotherhood and peace.'

Through the spring of 1948 details of individual isolated and deadly battles, secretive arm caches strategically unloaded from random planes and boats and redistributed to settlements under the cover of night, weary British troops counting the

days of their exit from the two-sided powder keg all speak to the chaos that became the War of Independence. One tragic and horrific massacre of Arab civilians during these pre-war skirmishes was carried out by the *Irgun* and Stern Gang's on April 9 at Deir Yassin-a tragedy that continues to foment hatred in the psyche of Palestinian Arabs to this day. The tit-for-tat wanton killing was reciprocated on April 15 with the death of Jewish doctors, nurses and patients on their way to *Hadassah* Hospital. Yigael Yadin and the entire *Haganah* adopted strategic plan, Plan D or *Daled*³⁷ which became the *Haganah's* operational plan. It's introduction states:

"1. Introduction

- (a) The objective of this plan is to gain control of the areas of the Hebrew state and defend its borders. It also aims at gaining control of the areas of Jewish settlement and concentration which are located outside the borders [of the Hebrew state] against regular, semi-regular, and small forces operating from bases outside or inside the state...

Plan *Daled* effectively gave *Haganah* units the authority to clear Arab villages, stipulated in the Plan's directive to gain control of areas. Another dynamic also working to encourage mass Arab migration out of cities came directly from the Arab Higher

³⁷ There is much controversy related to the consequences of the *Haganah* proceeding with Plan D. Benny Morris, a contemporary historian writes widely on this topic. He objects to the actions associated with Plan D. According to Morris, the actions precipitated the forced migration of the local Arabs, many of whom generations later, still reside in refugee camps. Please refer to the Appendices for an abridged version of Plan D.

Command based in Damascus³⁸. In the case of Haifa, Jewish residents campaigned to dissuade the exiting Arabs in an effort to prevent their exodus, but to relatively little effect.

Both the Arab and the *Yishuv* defense forces jockeyed for position throughout the spring of 1948 before the British troops formally pulled out. The *Haganah* captured Safed and Tiberius and lost the *Eztion* Block on May 13 during which their last radio message reported "...a desperate *Masada* battle was waged in the village." There were no survivors. Fighting continued to intensify. At the same time, the United Nations debated the United Nations immediate role but failed at the 11th hour to negotiate an agreement that would have put Jerusalem under U.N. jurisdiction. On May 14, 1948 three historic noteworthy events occurred: The complete British evacuation ending the Mandatory rule; the UN had functionally abandoned its right to succession of rule over Jerusalem;³⁹ and the signing of Israel's Declaration of Independence before *Shabbat*. Summarily stated, "There was to be no United Nations administration in Palestine, only

³⁸Sidney Zabludoff in *At Issue: Palestinian Refugee issue: Rhetoric vs. Reality*, (*Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 20, No. ½, Spring 2008), 48 reviews the historical record estimating that 550,000 Palestinians became refugees from November 1947 to December 1948. He characterizes their fleeing from their homes due to one of three reasons: Arab states said they should leave their homes and get out of the way of the war until the Jews were defeated-then they could return home; others left because of their fear of the fighting; others fled because Jewish forces drove them out.

³⁹ The November 29, 1947 UN Resolution 181, also known as the Partition Resolution would have had the UN administer under international control the area of religious significance surrounding Jerusalem. An additional UN General Assembly resolution 303 designated Jerusalem a "corpus separatum"-a separate body. The original Resolution 181 was to have had the UN administer Jerusalem as an international city. The UN has never ceased to consider Jerusalem a corpus separatum and has not relinquished this definition.

a struggle for power between the Jews and Arabs in direct confrontation...In war or peace, Arabs and Jews would have to work out their destiny of their land alone.”⁴⁰

And this they did. The War of Independence did not formally begin when the signatures in ink were drying on Israel’s Declaration of Independence. According to Uri Milstein in History of the War of Independence: The First Month, it began at the moment the UN announced the passage of the Partition Plan on November 29, 1947. Already over 1,200 Jews had been killed in battle and in the 6 months from the Partition Plan announcement to Independence Jewish forces swelled from a paltry 4,500 to over 35,500. It was during this 6 month period and under the fatigued eyes of the British Mandate that the surrounding Arab countries waited. This in between period was known as the “intercommunity conflict”, a civil war of sorts between Jew and Arabs internal to Palestine. Many Jews in the *Yishuv* even doubted that the British intended to leave and that their real purpose was to destroy the *Yishuv*. The Jewish *Yishuv*’s assumptions about the British intention may have been based on false intelligence as historians report that their plan was to merely to “safeguard their withdrawal routes in Palestine and the gradual dismantling of their military and civil infrastructures.”⁴¹

The Declaration of Independence reads like a concise history of modern Zionism. Its preamble’s opening declares that the Land of Israel is the birthplace of the Jewish people and “...Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland...Pioneers...made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language,

⁴⁰ Gilbert, 185.

⁴¹ Shapira, 157.

built villages and towns, and created a thriving community, controlling its own economy and culture loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood." The choice of naming the new country Israel had been debated but Ben-Gurion's genius won out over *Ziona, Judaea, Ivriya* and *Herzliya*.

On the day the calendar marks Israel's self-proclaimed independence, the Egyptian airforce dropped bombs on Tel Aviv with no loss of new Israeli life, only damage to the few planes the young state owned-small single engine planes in a hangar at *Sde-Dove*, the Tel Aviv airstrip. The armies of five independent Arab states, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, although not well coordinated, began their incursion across the new States' territory. The land held by Israel on May 15 represented 20 percent of what was considered Mandatory Palestine and, remarkably throughout the war, new settlements were established as soon as Israel took claim to the surrounding land.

One of the first actions of the new State, besides miraculously fending off the better armed, better supplied, experienced armies of five hostile Arab countries was the creation of a Provisional Council of State. In addition to directing its immediate security needs, its first order of business was to abolish all restrictions to Jewish immigration. This ordinance, on its own right, paved the way for mass immigration to the new state for Jews still stuck in post World War II Displaced Person Camps.

On June 11, within a short four weeks since independence, the first of several truces was negotiated by the United Nations which momentarily stopped the war. It was

to last four weeks. "Both eastern and western Galilee were under complete Israeli control, as were the Jezreel Valley from Haifa to the River Jordan, the coastal strip down a point just north of Isdud (Ashdod), a large pocket in the central Negev, though not the main Negev town of Beersheba, and, kept open at such heavy cost, a corridor from the coast to Jerusalem."⁴²

The second truce began on July 19, but not before the largest forced expulsion of Arab residents in Israel's interior included the Arab cities of Lydda and Ramla. Over 50,000 Arabs were marched and bused to Arab Legion lines, shocking Arab residents who had fully expected an Arab Legion victory over the Zionist intruders. It is at this juncture in history that one can assess the hardening of Israeli opinion and policy toward indigenous Arab populations, considering them a hostile 5th column.

The war continued into 1949. Because the five Arab countries had no united command, each negotiated terms of agreements to end hostilities. On February 24, 1949, the Egyptians signed an armistice agreement that included their withdrawal from the Negev and their continued presence in the Gaza strip, home to many Arab refugees from Jaffe and villages in southern Israel. Jordan signed next on April 3, 1949. Iraq simply withdrew forces refusing to recognize the new State. Syria held out until July 20 refusing to recognize an international border but eventually agreed to a demilitarized zone on both sides of the border along the Hula Valley. Lebanon was the easiest of negotiations, concluded on March 23, 1949. The natural border between the countries served as the new international border. The war had ended. Israel felt the pain of over

⁴² Ibid., 208.

6,000 casualties and 15,000 wounded calculated as nearly 1% of the entire Yishuv population.⁴³ A number of towns and settlements had been destroyed. Despite the grim reality of loss, the new Israelis had cause for celebration. The young country with relative little military experience became the region's strongest military force and as a result of their success, enlarged its territory well beyond the confines of the United Nations Partition Plan. The biggest losers in the war were the Palestinian Arabs.⁴⁴ Nearly 700,000 had been exiled from their homes. Israel's policy⁴⁵ rejected Arab return to their villages and cities. They became refugees. Concurrent with Palestinian Arab's trauma was the dynamic of Jewish immigration that continued throughout the days of the war. Jewish immigrants began pouring in from all corners of the world at a time when the new State had not yet established absorption mechanisms and institutions to manage this historic massive wave. From May 15, 1948 to the end of 1954, 740,000 immigrated to Israel, 90% arriving between mid-May 1948 to mid-year 1951. .⁴⁶

⁴³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs statistics
(<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/History/Pages/Israels%20War%20of%20Independence%20-%201947%20-%201949.aspx>)

⁴⁴ "Palestinians have demonstrated a remarkable consistency in their demands on Israel. From 1948 to 1988, Palestinians officially maintained their demands for the whole of Palestine, whether through expulsion of the Zionists (in the Palestinian Charter of 1968) or a secular state, which all assumed would soon be predominantly Palestinian." Adapted from an article by Paul Scham, Benjamin Pogrud and As'ad Ghaneman, Introduction to Shared Narrative-A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, (Israel Studies, Volume 18, No. 2, Summer 2013) 7.

⁴⁵ Israel's policy was consistent with European policy following World War II. The main difference between Israel and Europe was that in Europe, refugees were absorbed into surrounding countries, whereas Palestinians were hardly absorbed by surrounding countries. To this day, there exists today six generations of Palestinians living in refugee locations.

⁴⁶ Statistics include: 34% from Asiatic countries (125,000 from Iraq, alone), 16% from Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria), 50% from Europe (122,000 and 107,000 from Rumania and Poland respectively). (Moshe Sicron, *The Role of the Immigration Wave of 1948-1954 in the Population and Labour Force of Israel*, 1969)

European Displaced Person camps whose in-mates were previously prohibited from repatriating to other countries suddenly were emptied and its in-mates largely moved to Israel. Whole communities of Bulgaria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq were transferred lock, stock and barrel. These enormous numbers of humanity included “a high proportion of large families, a high proportion of children, a low proportion of working population, and an occupational structure unaligned to a country’s needs.”⁴⁷

Even before all agreements had been signed ending the war, on January 25, 1949, Israel conducted its first democratic national elections. Proportional representation ruled the day, Chaim Weizmann was elected President⁴⁸ and Ben-Gurion was given the task of forming a coalition government. In short order, the Cabinet consisting of coalition partner leadership⁴⁹ formed ministries of defense, food rationing, labor and social insurance, justice (an independent judiciary from the Knesset and Cabinet, similar to the United States model⁵⁰, providing for separation of power), and foreign affairs.

⁴⁷ Moshe Sicron, The Role of the Immigration Wave of 1948-1954 in the Population and Labour Force of Israel, (Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies, Vol. V, Division V: Research Projects-Reports and Articles Based on the Projects’ Findings: Jewish Demography, World Union of Jewish Studies, 1969) 345.

⁴⁸ The electorate does not elect the President directly, rather elected in secret ballot by *Knesset*.

⁴⁹ There were 12 total ministers in the Cabinet from a coalition that included forty-six members of *Mapai*, two Arab members from the Democratic List of Nazareth, sixteen members of the United Religious Front, five members of the Progressive Party, and four Sephardi List members. *Herut* and the Communist parties were intentionally excluded because of their extreme differences related to governance. This leadership paradigm did not significantly shift until the 1970’s.

⁵⁰ Israel’s model is similar to a European Parliamentary model that developed after World War II. It is not based on the American balance of power model but one in which the Parliament is the top power. Parliament decides which party will govern. Losing a majority in Parliament will topple a government at any time. This is different from US separation of powers.

Although the above section is but a cursory treatment of pre-State Yishuv's history ending with the new State at the end of the War of Independence, the intention is to grasp a basic understanding of some of the conditions on the ground such that the heart of the thesis, the Poet's voice, can now be explored.

III. Modern Hebrew Poetry

In the previous discussion on Hebrew it was stated that the language itself has never been "dead," in the way that classical Greek or Latin confined to liturgy has become over the past hundred years. Hebrew has been used throughout time for all manners of literacy: liturgy, Torah study, literature, correspondence, and record keeping at the communal level. From the perspective of living languages, as compared with French or English, Hebrew is a very young language. Hebrew's young-ness places Hebrew poets in a unique place: they come from a long line of Hebrew literary usages emanated through Hebrew-centric writers. But today's poets are positioned to write in Hebrew unlike others throughout the millennium. They have an uncommon distinction. They are linked to the poetry of the Bible, giving it an ancient presence and yet, at the same time, their poetry is younger than that of their contemporaries. Their pre-twentieth century use of Hebrew had been as members of the collective religious or emancipated Jewish community and jumping ahead to the *Yishuv* era, their voice became more individualistic with tones of Zionistic ideology often punctuated with biblical reference. Even when they began to transcend into the secularization of Hebrew letters, their

thoughts and words still comingled with Judaism's biblical and religious past creating a tension that didn't exist for other poets.

Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) and Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943) may be considered the Modern Hebrew poetry fore-writers of the pre-State Yishuv. It was Bialik who was "writing poems on the crisis of modernity in Jewish culture, the traumatic disruption of traditional Judaism by culturally reformist *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and by the nascent nationalist movement itself."⁵¹ Bialik was called The Hebrew National Poet. He defined his own voice by infusing traditional language with biblical idiom by sometimes reversing the meaning. His brand of poetry was more old world Ashkenazi-flavored meter and motif but he told the story of his take on history. Bialik's poetry, following the philosophy of his mentor, Ahad Ha'am, "is a paean to and a eulogy for the world of traditional Judaism"⁵². Ahad Ha'am believed that Palestine should be the Jewish spiritual center that included the development of a secular Jewish society that had Hebrew as part of its core.⁵³ Bialik's poem, "*Alone*"⁵⁴, demonstrates this old world transitioning to new world, albeit begrudgingly. In it, he uses the *Shehinah*, the feminine

⁵¹ Warren Bargad & Stanley Chyet, Israeli Poetry: A Contemporary Anthology, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1986) 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵³ Ahad Ha'am theoretical machinations were counter Herzl whose vision was practical and urgent. Ahad Ha'am saw in Hebrew and Palestine a method for spiritual redemption and that its purpose was to stop western assimilation and to give rise to a national identity. He also wrote that the process should be slow and deliberate and that participants would be selected carefully and deliberately, whereas Herzl lived in the real world feeling the pressure of an immediate solution to the Jewish problem including mass immigration of the Jewish downtrodden. Herzl's Jewish problem was how to save the Jews; Ahad Ha'am's Jewish problem was how to save Judaism.

⁵⁴ Please refer to the Appendices for a complete Hebrew-English translation of Bialik's *Alone*.

manifestation of God's presence, to represent old world Judaism and has her, with broken wing, sheltering the *Gemara* learning student from the inevitable future of Western influence. He looks to the window and the light-indicative of the world that lies beyond *Shekhinah's* protective wing.

Alone

She'd been expelled from every corner, leaving nowhere but
a silent, bare and empty hidden space for her to go –
the house of study – and as she was covered by the shadows
I was with her in her woe.

And when I'd grown weary of my place beneath her wing
and my heart yearned for the window, for the light, so bright and clear –
she lay her head upon my shoulder, and onto
my *Gemara* dripped a tear.

Saul Tchernichovsky bridged the gap between Bialik and what would become a new generation of Hebrew poets including but not limited to Goldberg, Amichai, Gilboa, Kovner, Gouri, Bernstein, Carmi, Pagis, Shifra, Avidan, and Ravikovitch. Tchernichovsky was a true to form Renaissance man: physician, translator of the classics into Hebrew, author of medical texts and poetry. His poem, *Eagle! Eagle!* written in 1936, reflects on

the bird of prey that appears in the Avram story in Genesis 15:11, that he shoos away from his first sacrifice to God.⁵⁵ In Naomi Sokoloff's article, "Hopkins' "Windhover" and Tschernichovsky's "Eagle! Eagle!" states that Tschernichovsky's Eagle! Eagle! poem was written at the time of the Arab riots of 1936. The eagle may be interpreted to be analogous to the precarious position of the Jewish settlements in the *Yishuv* and the inherent threat to their existence. Other commentators refer to Tchernichovsky's frequent writing on the concept of martyrdom and that this poem is a reaction to the politics of the moment. Baruch Kurzweil, one of Israel's true pioneers of Israeli literary criticism, "claims that the bird symbolizes freedom and appears against the backdrop of a landscape saturated with history."⁵⁶ Sokoloff's opinion is consistent with Tchernichovsky's intimate understanding of the historical moment such that he re-interprets it into his poem. "This reading, one more in accordance with Tchernichovsky's other poems and the network of imagery in them, regards the bird as an embodiment of the essentially asocial vitality, grandeur and fierce beauty which Tchernichovsky saw as foreign to traditional Jewish values but necessary for Zionist cultural rebirth."⁵⁷ He was an advocate for the new Jew, one with courage and strength, such as one exhibited by the eagle who soared over the land.

⁵⁵ Genesis 15:11 is the first instance that Avram, not yet Avraham, is told by God that future generations will live in a foreign land, be enslaved for four hundred years, and then become a free people.

⁵⁶ Naomi Sokoloff, Hopkins' "Windhover" and Tschernichovsky's "Eagle! Eagle!" (Prooftexts, Vol. 3, No. 2, May 1983) 192.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

Eagle! Eagle!

Eagle! eagle over your mountains, an eagle is flying over your mountains!

Slow and light — it seems as if for a moment — it is merely floating,

Floating, sailing in a sea of blue, alert to the song of delight in the heart

Of the heavens — of the sky, circling mutely in searing light.

Eagle! eagle over the mountains, an eagle is flying over your mountains!

Straight of body, heavy-pinioned, black of feather and broad of wing;

Soaring taut — arrow from a bow — an eagle makes the rings of its (sweeping)
circles;

Tracking from above the signs of its prey in meadow and in rock-crevice.

Eagle! eagle over the mountains, an eagle is flying over your mountains!

Soaring, gliding-gliding, and with wondrous touch did not move a wing.

For an instant — it froze, then — his barest movement [lit. movement-no-
movement] in its wings,

The slightest tremble suddenly — and it rises toward the cloud.

Eagle! eagle over your mountains, an eagle is flying over your mountains!
Slow and light — it seems as if for a moment — it is merely floating...
[O] Land (earth) [an] eagle [is] over your mountains — over you face, a massing
of shadow,
From the giant wings passes, caresses the mountains of God...

The English does not capture the soaring and wistful floating on wind currents offered by the music of the Hebrew.⁵⁸ Additionally, the poet's use of certain Hebrew words, such as *hashrat*, in line 15, occurs only once in the *Tanakh* (Samuel II 22:12) describing clouds that gather around God in an almost pretentious display of God's power. *Harrere el* (Psalms 36:6) references God's righteousness and it is purposefully punctuated by an ellipsis, indicated that the thought is incomplete or that there is more to come and that "perhaps, Tchernichovsky implies, there will be further developments in the future, for these are events that have consequences."⁵⁹

The example of Eagle! Eagle! does indeed speak a poet's words for his generation's grappling with the pre-State *Yishuv*: somewhat barren, a place that combines guarded danger with freedom, and a place where a collective spiritual identity can endure exceeding the individual's physical existence.

Both Bialik and Tchernichovsky's visions affected future generations of poets by each of their approaches to Hebrew verse. Bialik, with his upbringing learning the sacred

⁵⁸ Please refer to the Appendices for the original Hebrew and a complete English translation.

⁵⁹ Sokoloff, 199.

texts in classic yeshiva study and Tchernichovsky with his relative freedom learning Hebrew from tutors who then introduced him to biblical texts allow for two remarkably different approaches to prose: Bialik, well-schooled and ever capable of introducing *Tanakh/Midrash/Talmudic*-centric phrase fragments, allusions, which provided a style and a vocabulary relied upon by all future generations of Hebrew poets. Tchernichovsky, for his part, was quite independent from traditional renderings and because of his adaptive Hebrew and his life's incessant periods of wandering, he became a model for future Hebrew poets whose Hebrew was fresh (Sephardic!) and whose work "was a response to the physical presence of the Land of Israel and to the human effort of its rebuilders."⁶⁰

The examination of how the voices of Modern Hebrew poets processed through their words during Israel's early state history, one must understand Abraham Shlonsky (1900-1973). Shlonsky, the leader of the Hebrew Moderna of the 1930's and 1940's, fused Socialist Zionism with "a style (*nusah*) of linguistic abundance, complexity, and reliance on ready-made verses (*melitsah*)."⁶¹ The irony of Shlonsky's work is that it represented not Zionism, per-se, but modernism and the will of much of the Zionist movement's desire to develop a secular state. His poetry is largely non-ideological and specifically non-socialist-Zionistic, stressing cultural themes, and connecting the modern

⁶⁰ Stanley, Burnshaw, T. Carmi, Ezra Spicehandler, The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself: from the beginning of the modern movement to the present: the original Hebrew poems, (Schocken Books, New York, 1965) 35-36.

⁶¹ Ari Ofengenden, Radical Recasting of Tradition: On Abraham Shlonsky's Hegemony in the Hebrew Poetry of the 1930's, (Hebrew Studies, Vol. 47, 2006) 328.

world to Hebrew's ancient language. It was this non-ideological approach to his writing that caused much tension with other more idealistic Third Aliyah immigrants, many of whom aspired to the philosophy of Socialist-Zionism-*halutz*-Jewish workers-kibbutz-collectivist mentality. Additionally, his poetry was anything but simplistic. It relied on his intimate grasp of Hebrew for which he innovated new words⁶² and expressions as well as his re-interpretation and use of Biblical themes to convey the modern context of the secular Jew in his own land. In "*Revelation*" Shlonsky juxtaposes his own voice with the voice of (1 Samuel 3:1-20) the youthful Samuel. In the Biblical story Samuel thinks he hears the voice of Eli the Priest when it is God's voice. Instead of God calling Samuel, Ofengenden and other commentators interpret that God is calling the poet to write poetry.

Revelation

Who has called me: listen.

Who has called my name.

What?

Who?

Eli said: go back and lie down,

Eli said: in vain.

⁶² Ibid., 339-Ofengenden lists 20 examples of these words, all of which either he invented or, according to Ofengenden, "he rediscovered."

Eli said: there is no vision, because my
eyes have darkened.

I know to here YHWH will come.
Here he will come and kiss you
Wounds in a storm/rage.

And Eli is very old. And his sons are
scoundrels.

And I am still a youth.

But here the universe roars
Here it hurts and sings
And in the red east the finger of
lightening calls me.

-Speak YHWH because your servant
hears you.⁶³

⁶³ Please refer to the Appendices for the original Hebrew and a complete English translation.

Revelation “uses a prophetic persona (that) radically secularizes Jewish culture.” Offegenden continues to explain the essence of Shlonsky’s method. His poems “attempt privatization and depolitization of religion which...is a direct continuation with the modernization project of the Jewish *Haskala*. They uphold the individual conscious, the inner voice as the source of ultimate authority. Second(ly) they actively seek to delegitimize religious authority and its institutions by making use of the binary opposition of Prophet-Priest.”⁶⁴ The prophet is the risk taker, the one who does the heavy lifting heckling in the face of the authority institution whereas the Priest is safe inside the institution and safe inside the old world religion where everything is ordered. Shlonsky IS the self-styled prophet pushing against religion. Analogous to the priest, *Revelation* metaphorically embraces secular Jewish culture over authoritative organized Jewish religion. Shlonsky, even more than Tchernichovsky, takes the pre-*Yishuv* poetry’s voice past biblical innuendo and to the next level of pre-World War II *Yishuv* secular Jew persona.

And because of the non-ideological nature of his poetry many Third Aliyah immigrants (of which he was a dominant literary member,) who aspired to the ideal of the *halutz*-Jewish manual labor, kibbutz fundamentals and its inherent collectivism and who were VERY Zionist/politically motivated supported his work: they were believers of an egalitarian existence who thoroughly rejected religion. His poetry marked a diametrically opposite position from that of Bialik literally unseating Bialik’s romantic

⁶⁴ Ari Ofengender, *Days will Come and They Will Demand an Account. What will I Give?: The Dynamic of Secularization in Abraham Shlonsky’s Writings*, (Hebrew Studies, Vol. 51, 2010) 334-335.

nationalism with a modernist, secular sensitivity to Hebrew culture.⁶⁵ Although Third Aliyah immigrants were largely from Orthodox and Hasidic backgrounds their wholehearted discarding of anything Jewish religious replaced by everything secular is what bound Shlonsky's voice to their collective voice.

But the world of the pre-State *Yishuv* quickly changed with the advent of Nazi persecutions, World War II, the Holocaust, leading up to the Independence War of 1948 as did the voices portraying these profoundly challenging times. As per the analysis described in The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself, Bialik and Tchernichovsky were the dominant poets of the European Period (1880-1924). The Palestinian Period (1920-1947) consisted of predominantly European born but Hebrew proficient poets including but not limited to Rachel (1890-1931), Shimoni (1886-1956), Shlonsky (1900-1973), Alterman (1910-1970), and Goldberg (1911-1970). Uri-Zvi Greenberg (1896-1981) was their contemporary with an uncommon distinction: he became the written poet's documenter of feelings for inconceivable loss the Holocaust rained on all of Jewry and his own personal reality. Greenberg's entire family perished in Poland. He narrowly escaped Poland in 1939, returning to Palestine after assisting the Revisionist Party with Jabotinsky at its lead, by enabling Polish Zionists to emigrate.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 330.

Within the context of his Holocaust specific work⁶⁶ there are common thematic threads that join much of his new genre⁶⁷. Particularly poignant was his repeated use of the word *kosef*-yearning. Tamar Wolf-Monzon in collaboration with Zohar Livnat⁶⁸ comment that "...a close reading of "*Streets of the River*"⁶⁹ reveals that *kosef* is an immanent concept in the Jewish consciousness and conceptual world, and that after the terrible destruction by the Nazi tyrant it is more closely bound to the yearning for redemption." *Kosef* appears 140 times throughout "*Streets of the River*" changing the nuance of its meaning but always within a texture of yearning. "The semantic shifts of the term *kosef* reflect the multiple aspects of human existence after the destruction of European Jewry. The attempts to reconstitute an entire spiritual world that was destroyed are interlaced with the personal-biographical utterance of the poet, with a national expression of the search for redemption in the messianic and sovereign sense and with a universal view, that describes situations of general human existence through the various contexts of the term *kosef*."⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Greenberg did not use the term "Holocaust." He maintained, "that it implied a natural catastrophe without intention, malice, or criminal perpetrators. What took place was better designated by the ancient Hebrew word *hurban* (destruction), which implied the existence of a destroyer, an intention to destroy, and an entity that was destroyed." D. Miron, Grinberg, Uri Tsevi, (YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe.http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Grinberg_Uri_Tsevi)

⁶⁷ Prior to his prolific Holocaust era work, Greenberg was renown in Labor Zionist circles until his falling out during his "prophetic" writings in the 1930's that warned the Labor Zionist leadership of indigenous Arab's disdain for Zionism and its preoccupation with creating a Jewish state.

⁶⁸ Wolf-Monzon and Livnat, The Poetic Codes of Rechovot ha-hahar -"Streets of the River", (Shofar, Vol. 23, No. 2, Special Issue: Shoah and Israeli Writing, Winter 2005) 21-23.

⁶⁹ Streets of the River is one of several Holocaust poetry collections by Greenberg. This collection came from his daily poetry centric bi-line in the newspaper *Ha'aretz* from 1945. It contains the poem, *Under the Tooth of Their Plow*.

⁷⁰ Wolf-Monzon and Livnat, *Ibid.*, 30.

Greenberg's poem, *Under the Tooth of their Plough*, graphically displays his pain and bitterness.

Under the Tooth of their Plough

Once more the snows have melted there...and
the murderers now are farmers.

There they have gone out to plough their
farmlands, all of which are my graveyards.

If the tooth of their plough, rolling skull-like
over the furrow, should churn up

A skeleton of mine, the ploughman will not be
saddened or shocked,

But will grin and recognize it, recognize the
mark where his tools struck.

Spring anew over land: bud and bulb and lilac
and warbling birds.

By the shining stream of shallow waters, the
resting place of herds,

The roving Jews are no more: no more with
their beards and side-curls.

They are no more in the inns with tallit and
tsitsit over their shirts;

They are no more in the grocery store or the
clothing store,

They are no more in their workshops and
traincars now,

They are no more in the synagogue, even, or in
the marketplace,

They are all under the tooth of the Christian
plough.

For the Lord doth visit His chosen goys with
grace.

Greenberg hardly composes *Under the Tooth of their Plough* with metaphor. He is very literal in his annunciations. The first 5 lines in Hebrew repeat the SHIN alliteratively as if to quell the hush-ing sound evoked from the rural, quiet, setting: snows melting, farmers plowing, birds singing only to be tragically disrupted by the fact that beneath the tranquil fields are unmarked graveyards filled with skeletons of

murdered Jews. The farmer even admires his work, “But will grin and recognize it, recognize the mark where his tools struck.” The word “mark” in Hebrew is “*makat*” which can also be additionally translated as hit. The tools used for the job of killing Jews were knives or axes, not to be confused with their plows found in the poem’s title. Much of the poem reminds the reader of the absence of Jewish presence in the farmer’s present. The poet carries his rage in the form of sarcasm with his use of “*berov hesid*” the biblically derived⁷¹ and liturgy descriptor of God’s abundant compassion. In line 14 “God has remembered (visited) His Gentiles with abounding compassion,” as if to infer that God has compassion for those who kill God’s chosen.

Greensberg’s contribution to pre-State *Yishuv* literature molted from being the consummate political poet for the Labor Zionist Movement, falling from their grace, and then becoming the Yishuv’s pained voice of the Holocaust. His pre-state Labor Zionist preferred work “related to the past through a mystic, messianic poetry that would give heroic dimensions to the reconstituted homeland.”⁷² Greenberg’s form overwhelmed readers with words and his words lashed out at his disdain for Christian and Europe to be replaced with Jewish and Judaism and a Jewish state. His efforts created an ultra-nationalist voice through which “he preached a quasi-messianic mysticism of blood and race...”⁷³ He provides a necessary link to the poets’ voice as the pre-state transitioned to sovereign state. Following the 1936 Arab riots Greenberg called for revenge and

⁷¹ *berov hesid* is found twice in the Tanakh in identical passages referring to God’s abundant compassion attribute, Exodus 34:6 and Numbers 14:18. “The Lord! Slow to anger and abounding in kindness...”

⁷² Stanley, Burnshaw, T. Carmi, Ezra Spicehandler, 205.

⁷³ Ibid.

published a book entitled, *“The Book of Denunciation and of Faith”* in which he denigrated his comrades for their inability to forecast the eternal hatred that existed against the Jews by Muslims and Arabs. It may be that his extremism caused his actual fall from grace among the Labor Zionist ranks.

The state of Hebrew poetry formally became modern Israeli poetry on May 15, 1948. Within the context of Statehood, a new group of writers, the “Native School” began publishing. . This Native School had two distinct groups: the older and the younger. The older ushered in the modern Israeli poetry, had been influenced by their Zionist youth movement upbringing and their European parents. Although many of the older group was not born in Israel, they identified with the new Israel and had lived in the pre-State *Yishuv*. They were developing as the state become Israel while the younger group only knew Israel and were too young to participate in the War of Independence. Their influences were nearly purely English and American based. Unlike the European born, pre-state molded realists, many of whom had Yiddish, or Russian, or Polish or Hebrew from the rabbinical teachings of *Tanakh* and *Talmud*, this new generation had modern Hebrew as their “mama lashon” and their cultural preferences looked across the pond to both England and America. English was their second language and so was the literature of the West. Their common bond was their adept grasp of the Hebrew language. “The aim of their predecessors to create an idiom out of a living, spoken language was now fulfilled as the colloquialisms and the conversational rhythms embedded in contemporary Hebrew verse lost the somewhat forced ring that they once had. The landscape has taken on reality-it is no longer something idealized in the Zionist

dreams of an immigrant poet from the Diaspora, nor is it an earth viewed with pained ambivalence by an artist whose childhood memories were rooted in the North.”⁷⁴

Their poetry was no longer modeled after European influenced cadence and examples. They were products of the Israeli educational system which still contained mandatory coursework in Bible. If a poet had had a religious background, then it was typically one generation removed from the confines of European styled Orthodox Judaism. Many were secularized Israeli Jews, however, nearly all mined the language of the Bible for common idioms and reference points around biblical personalities, framing them in contemporary casts.

Commentators are uniform in their assessments that following the War of Independence stating that a crisis of ideology was evident. The promise of Zionism with its broad, brush strokes of optimistic dreaming about Jewish sovereignty that would bring about an idyllic Jewish utopia were shattered with economic and political realities. Ideology in poetry was, for the most part, set aside. Poets were now less confined and freer to explore individualism and new rhythms.

Amir Gilboa (1917-1984) began writing Hebrew poetry while still living in Ukraine. Arriving in Palestine on an illegal boat in 1937 he played the role of labor Zionist building roads, working in settlements, and orange groves. During World War II joined both the North Africa British Hebrew Unit and eventually joined the Jewish Brigade in Italy. He picked up the tools of war again in 1948 as a member of the Israel Defense Forces. Gilboa’s poetry, especially the poems of his second collection, *Sheva*

⁷⁴ Ibid., 207.

Reshuyot, Seven Domains, published in 1949 were war-centric. In *Morning-Selah*, Gilboa likens the spilled blood of his friends, his comrades as though it is as fresh as spring water. He believes they will return, a reference to the coming of days, when the dead will be resurrected, “waving their swords” wearing their shrouds, “in blessing.”

Morning-Selah

All my friends will come shouldering salvation

Their spilled blood streaming toward their veins

From springs-

In their hearts resurrection storming

The valley brilliant

With the sanctity of shrouds

Unveiled to the secret of life.

All the mornings enfolded in darkness

For their sake, when daylight comes on,

Waving their swords in blessing

Laden with light and quiet-

For they've hidden their treasure till the moment appears

In the steps of kingdom.

Gilboa's combined war experiences and his losses (his entire family perished in Europe) of family and friends profoundly affected him-his collected work, "*Early Morning Songs*" (1953) speaks of his personal anguish reliving Holocaust trauma and feeling alone. He also is skilled at personalizing biblical personalities.

Kingdom of Silence

Cries still linger on the battlefield
And the High Priest gives thanks
for the victory. Piles of ashes
bear the news: the bloody summer is consumed.
Silence settles. The throng's sounds
dim in the dusk.
Silence. The leaves are falling
falling. Soon it will be fall.

This poem follows the seasons but not without inferring religious tones of the High Priest who is removed from the battle, who despite the death and carnage, gives thanks for that battle's victory. Summer finishes with silence bringing in autumn with falling leaves and approaching winter rains.

It will all be so distant. All so distant.
The ground will all be
at peace again. The rain will fall again
on chimneys belching smoke. And suddenly
a storm will surge through the streams.

Even though battles come and go, there is the presence of the Holocaust. The rain is the singular natural entity that deals with the horror of what the chimneys represent, as if to clean it surging though the streams.

Among smoking pages
parchment scrolls will sing praises
to a kindom of silence. The sleeping will sing
praises to a kindom of silence. Fragments
of lament sink
lower sink lower.

Gilboa interplays with images of the death innate to the meaning of chimney smoke and smoking pages of parchment scrolls. He may be inferring the age-old question asked by Jews, Where was God during the Holocaust? The Torah is burning but its essence still sings praises to a silent God.

All things bound in books will be at rest. Selah. All the
generations will be at rest. Selah. Opaque-
Eyed firebrands
are silent
silent are
the legions.

And there's no one else to come. No one
else to flee. No voice
for the dead to bequeath their will.
And one alone is left, standing still.

The poem's use of the word *selah* is a curious Hebrew word used in liturgy and Psalms as a concluding word meaning pause, or silence.⁷⁵ Is he suggesting that the past during which Jews could rely on books for solace and comfort are no longer relevant? Gilboa seems to use *selah* both as a concluding word and as an emphasized semi-religious silence even beyond his word, silence, which he repeats time and again. At the end, the devastation is complete leaving the storyteller alone with no one else.

At the end of the War of Independence, after armistices were signed, the Jewish world realized that another Holocaust had been averted but the memory was still very

⁷⁵ Translation from Reuben Alcalay's The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary. (Massadah Publishing Co., Jerusalem, 1965) 1775.

fresh, especially for the new Israelis. All Israelis had been personally affected by the war's death and wounded toll. *Kingdom of Silence* represented one way in which they were tormented by the recent past.

Another poet who became a renown Israeli songwriter, Chaim Hefer, (1925-2012) wrote the poem, *We Left Slowly* during the war. Similar to other poets in the Native School, he was born in Poland and emigrated to Palestine in 1936, joined the Palmach in 1943 and became a founding member of the Palmach's musical band, Chizbatron. Among his poems written during the war, *We Left Slowly* became one early statehood years recorded songs widely sung⁷⁶.

We Left Slowly

We left slowly. The night was pale.

In the distance the lights flickered.

And you were all loveliness like your two eyes

With tears cupped in them.

The jackal howled as you went to the vineyard

Your tears flowing like sap from a tree.

And you remembered the hours before

We went out to battle by the narrow path.

⁷⁶ Yaffa Yarkoni - Bab El Wad (The Gate To Jerusalem) (LP) was released in 1966. Among the discography's notes were ones related to Haim Hefer's song, *We Left Slowly*.

You remembered our laughter like a stream.

You remembered a dance and a lilting harmonica.

You remembered the haystack,

And the hand's touch of the only one...

And if you are left, with loneliness enfolding,

And you walk in the vineyards slowly-

You will wait. Therefore, in such silence

We parted with a smile in our eyes.

The interplay between the impending battle and the memory of young love is punctuated by the lover's tears and parting smile is a common, hopeful theme.

Nathan Alterman (1910-1970) was Shlonsky's able disciple. Alterman didn't fit the Native School membership criteria, however, because his poetry was so integral a part of Israeli early state culture, the inclusion of *The Silver Platter*. It is doubly appropriate given that it was recited for generations by school children. The title was a purposeful response to Chaim Weizmann's proclamation "A state is not served to a people on a silver platter."

*The Silver Platter*⁷⁷

...The land is hushed, a reddening sun

Slowly dims

Over Smoking borders.

And a Nation stands-heart-torn yet alive...-

To encounter the miracle

Then only miracle...

In preparation for ceremony she rises athwart the moon's crescent

And stands, before daybreak, swathed in celebration and awe.

--Then from afar come

A maid and a youth

And slowly, slowly they pace toward the Nation.

Clad in ordinary attire but with military harness and heavy-booted,

In the path they proceed,

Advancing without speaking.

They have not changed their clothing nor yet laved-away with water

The marks of the day of toil and night in the line of fire.

⁷⁷ An alternative translation is provided in the Appendices. Notable differences include more modern phrasing as well as "a maid and a youth" translated as a more accurate "a girl and a boy," which significantly changes the imagery of who is pacing toward the Nation at the end of the second stanza.

Infinately weary, withdrawn from rest,
Dripping with the dew of Hebrew youth—
Quietly the two approach
Then stand motionless,
And there is no sign whether they yet live or have been shot.

Then the Nation asks, flooded by tears and wonderment,
Who are you, and two softly
Answer her: We are the silver platter
Upon which was served to you the Jewish state.

Thus they say, and fall at her feet, shrouded with shadow.
And the rest shall be told in the history of Israel.

The miracle that Alterman refers to is the actual battle-scarred birth of the state as a nation. Alive with much heart-torn trepidation, so fresh, that along the borders smoke is still present from battles recently won. It may be presumed that the maid and the youth, otherwise translated as the girl and the boy represent the sacrifices by young women and man with their lives in order that the new State may come into being. This ethic, the ethic of communal sacrifice for the existence of the State is part of Israel's core fabric. In fact, when the war was raging, Alterman's words, beyond his poetry, were

publicized to give all new citizens hope including “Fate has given us millions of tomorrows,” as well as “And it is not in vain, my brother, that you have plowed and built: We go to war for our lives and for our homes...We will not fall back, for there is no other way. No nation would retreat from the trenches of its life.”⁷⁸

Abba Kovner’s (1918-1987) grew up in Vilna at a time of pre-State Zionist strength, graduating from a modern Hebrew gymnasium. His early years involvement in *Shomer Ha’tzaer* leftist Zionist ideological provided the basis for both his poetry and his future adult affiliations. His activism and revolutionary spirit bore fruit when he led Jewish partisans in their escape from the Vilna Ghetto as Nazi organized deportations to extermination camps were proceeding. The *Brikhah* (translated as “escape”) movement founded by Kovner, helped move 300,000 European immigrants to Palestine after WWII. He immigrated to Palestine in 1946 where Kovner’s military leadership translated into action during the War of Independence where he led the Givati Brigade as the officer in charge of cultural affairs.

His poetry is interwoven with his life experiences of war and one can find the background of his words in battlefields, landscapes, family, religious rites, and Jerusalem. “The pervasive setting, however, is a visionary one. By projecting memory and experience...through dreamlike scenes, Kovner⁷⁹ creates in his poetry an emotive

⁷⁸ Haaretz published an article on June 18, 2010, the 100-year anniversary of Alterman’s birthdate-Tisha B’Av, describing his impact even in today’s Israeli culture. Israel Harel, [Where is the Silver Platter?](http://www.haaretz.com/beta/where-is-the-silver-platter-1.296919), (Haaretz, , cited on July 31, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/beta/where-is-the-silver-platter-1.296919>, June 18, 2010).

⁷⁹ Besides Kovner’s poetry related to war-time experiences, his role as head of cultural affairs for the largest War of Independence era brigades, *Givati*, positioned him to write missives for battling warriors. The missives were designed to psychologically prepare soldiers for battle, however, they were crude

immediacy and a mythic grandeur. The central images and voices convey a shared experience of personal and national dimensions.”⁸⁰ *Opening* relates to the duality of a soldier’s existence: the reality of death and the reality of place, in this case, the desert.

Opening

Wells of old gather suddenly in the eyes

All the rivers of my blood are alert in double river beds

And the heart is then locked. From leaving, from entering, from approaching.

And only the clamor of mighty waters and an ancient voice:

Don’t sleep my friend, our feet are strange here

And he, my friend, steps. And our feet are superfluous

Here our footsteps are being extinguished.

You are not the one here who is

The great wanderer, my friend

My friend stretched forward the hollows of his hands,

Bent down, a touching of palms

And the earth came toward him.

forms of propaganda such that one officer “remarked that the missives bordered on sadism and that the Jewish people, who had felt the blade of slaughter on their own flesh, should not be advocating such slaughter.” Michael Arbell, Abba Kovner: The Ritual Function of His Battle Missives, (*Jewish Social Studies*, Volume 18, Number 3 (Spring/Summer 2012) 106.

⁸⁰ Warren Bargad and Stanley Chyet, *Israeli Poetry: A Contemporary Anthology*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1986) 35-36.

Herd upon herd, she (the earth) murmurs softly about your feet
With plundering light. And his feet trace and do not trace a path.
My friend, we shall fall- Oh then all of her (the earth) shall come
In a wave to your arms:
This earth.

Without a moment's notice, Kovner's first image of old wells and alert rivers depict biblical reference. (Judges 5:21-known as Deborah's war song⁸¹) Waadis are dry riverbeds that fill a run full and dangerously during winter month's rainy season. It is here, in the Negev, that he is a soldier and where his heart is surrounded, cut off, and locked. The ancient voice is very much a part of his entire affect and it warms him of his peril. Commentators interpret the voice's warning of the earth beneath his feet "streams constantly under his ephemeral steps; he is transient and he is an intruder."⁸² In order to attempt to control this streaming earth he makes real contact by stretching his palms to it-this idiomatic phrase means "begs" the earth for compliance or even mercy. The landscape takes hold. Herds are perceived as sand dunes and his steps, in the plundering light, show no trace of any steps at all. This plays with the protagonist's very existence, as his steps are immediately buried and unperceivable. A comrade in

⁸¹ A verse from Deborah's war song describing a river-brook: "The brook Kishon swept them away, that ancient brook, the brook Kishon. O my soul, tread them down with strength."

⁸² Stanley, Burnshaw, T. Carmi, Ezra Spicehandler, 149.

arms exhibits a soldier's greatest fear, death without leaving a trace, to which the speaker responds, that only in death will mother earth come "in a wave to your arms."

Esther Raab (1894-1981) is the first of modern women Hebrew poets to be born in Palestine. Her parents were among a group of settlers who settled Petah Tikvah. Thematically, Raab did not write about war but rather about the land of Israel. Her depiction of landscapes was quite different from her predominantly male European-born cohort in that her connection to the natural environment lacked the ambiguousness found in poets who had other country/language experience. In the first place, her main language was Hebrew and she grew up at a time in the Yishuv when the development of modern Hebrew paralleled her own adolescence and formative years. She "reconstructed an ideal female subject through the portrayal of both the Hebrew language and the Hebrew homeland. Both the language and the land as two female representatives (in Hebrew, *safa* and *moledet*, are feminine nouns) were portrayed as bare, wild and impoverished."⁸³ In *Today I am modest*, Raab displays a feminine voice, but one with open arms with the hopefulness of what Israel will offer in its unknown but yearning future.

Today I am modest...

Today I am modest like an animal,

Open like rain-drenched fields.

⁸³ Riki Avidan, "Bad Snow-Whites": Israeli Women's Poetry of the 1960's: the Poetics of Dalia Hertz, Yona Wallach, and Rina Shani, *A Dissertation*, (Brandeis University, 2007) 207.

With a little fat hand I guide my life
toward compassion and children.
Every stranger, every sufferer
comes to me today.
The little gifts of my heart
patter about me like rain.
And I am already carrying Tomorrow-
a heaviness
closed
and leaping again
toward the unknown.

Today I am modest in its sparse language also plays on the image that any new State resident experienced: the open-armed, come as you are presence of a country willing to take all immigrants, “every stranger, every sufferer.” Tomorrow is unknown and heavy and in the first years of the following the war, especially for new immigrants, they were “leaping toward the unknown.”

T. Carmi (1925-1994) was born in the United States to a Hebrew speaking family, graduated from both Yeshiva and Columbia Universities, and published his first Hebrew poems while still in America. Before settling in pre-state Israel in 1947, he moved to France where he worked with French Jewish war orphans. Carmi’s background lent itself to his pursuit of not only Hebrew language nuance and Biblical and *Midrashic* tradition,

but also his interest in formal ideas heard within Hebrew language conversations in common parks and café's with bartenders and taxi drivers. This selected example is indicative of a poet at ease in his new Israel surroundings. *To the Pomegranate* is a poem that makes use of the poet's voice to order the poem's objects around at a set time of the poet's beacon call: in full day light.

To the Pomegranate

Go away, go away from here

Go to other eyes.

I already wrote about you yesterday.

I said green

To your branches bowing in the wind

And red, red, red

To your fruit shining like dew

I cried light to your root,

The moist and dark and stubborn.

Now you are not

Now you block the day from me

And of the moon that hasn't yet risen.

Come.

(I wrote about you the day before yesterday,
And your young memory
Inflames my hands like nettle.)
Come and see the strange pomegranate:
His blood is in my soul, in my head, in my hands
And still he is implanted in his place.

Carmi is insistent on asking the tree itself to be gone, as if he were a magician ordering an object to disappear. Lost in translation are the sounds the pronouncements of the intense fruit's red color repeated three times, *adom, adom, adom*, paralleling the sounds of the prayer liturgy, *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*, "Holy, Holy, Holy, found in the *Kedushah* prayer in which the angels are singing to God about God's holiness. The pomegranate is unrelenting. It is daytime and it already foreshadows the future presence of the moon, which, it's view it will obstruct-*Hutzbah!* For a moment, a young woman enters the poem, if only as an afterthought and surrounded by parenthesis, possibly to bear witness to this edifice, this tree for which he has no control. Although, it may be the reverse: that the tree has been called upon to see this person who has burned and stung her memory into the poet's thoughts. The poem ends with the poet failing to wish the tree away and instead, the tree and he become one where "his blood is in my soul, my head, my hands."⁸⁴ "Read one way, the poem is clearly touched with

⁸⁴ This verse fragment may be a reference to the biblical verse in Leviticus 17:11 in which God speaks to Moses saying that "for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation." Rashi's commentary

the tragic awareness of modern Israel-its possession by a landscape and a history which it wished merely to use for its own creative purpose-but only if we do not labor the point.”⁸⁵

Dan Pagis (1930-1986) survived the Holocaust as an adolescent by escaping from a Ukrainian concentration camp in 1944. He immigrated to pre-State Israel in 1946. Robert Alter, emeritus professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at UC Berkeley notes that “within a few years of his eventual arrival in Palestine, Pagis was publishing poetry in his newly learned language and guesses that this rapid determination to become a poet in Hebrew...was not only a young person’s willed act of adaptation but also the manifestation of a psychological need to seek expression in a medium that was itself a radical displacement of his native language. He cautions that he does not mean to suggest that Pagis is estranged in any way from the language in which he writes. In fact, the revolution in Hebrew verse that he helped bring about was above all the perfection of a natural sounding colloquial norm for Hebrew poetry.” His was a poetry steeped in the early state culture of destruction and rebirth which allowed for a genre that incorporated the terrible fact of the Holocaust paired with the project of nation building. *Honi* seems to be an attempt by Pagis to affect a collective amnesia by placing

states that **For the soul of the flesh:** of every creature is dependent upon the blood, and therefore, I have given it to atone for the soul of man. [In this way,] one “soul” [namely, the blood of a sacrifice] shall come and atone for another soul. Edited by Rav Mordechai Leib Katzenellenbogen from his Hebrew language edition of Torat Chaim, Chamisha Chumshei Torah, Volume Vayikra, (Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel, 1988) 15.

⁸⁵ Stephen Mitchell, T. Carmi and Dan Pagis Selected Poems, (Penguin Book, England, 1976) 11.

a character in Jewish Midrashic history who slept for seventy years only to wake up to a new reality without anyone or anything familiar.

Honi

When he returned and opened his eyes and stood there, uncalled for
at the highway's edge, wrinkled up in his old coat,
he remembered and knew the night and was no stranger:
As always, the clouds, stealing across borders, hurried by,
And a blind rain, begging at doors, tapped
on its tin for a penny,
and a city of passers-by revolved
in glass lights as if in some other darkness
And so, brought back by God, he dreams on.
The year's not so urgent; he's no longer late.
He can still ascend to the circle that opens on high
and go back to sleep,
Forgotten amid the Milky Way.

Pagis, representative of many new Israelis as Palestine became Israel were living in a duality of metaphysical reality. Part of them wanted only to forget the past and in this Pagis supported those, like him, who rebelled against the pain of memory. The other part surged forward, looking to heroic examples that shifted the victim paradigm.

In *Honi*, the protagonist is a wanderer, following the clouds and the rain in a well-worn coat, not exactly fitting into his environment. He returns to the night, a place where moderns have less comfort, and to his sleep that shielded him. Pagis, in many other examples, bears witness and speaks out in a language appropriately described as the feeling one gets when one has sand in one's shoes: it makes walking difficult and running toward some bright future quite impossible. Pagis voice was essential in the early state years. Jews may be defined by our collective memory since we choose to remember that which is the most painful. Pagis provides a creative, literary mechanism and "without the building blocks of communal remembrance, the individual would face personal history with no vocabulary at all. Without the bits and pieces of oddly stitched together personal remembrance, the public past would become a deadly weight on the present, and on the future."⁸⁶

Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) was born in Germany in 1924. Schooled in Hebrew at the Israelitische Volksschule he did not formally begin speaking Hebrew until his immigration to Jerusalem in 1936. In WWII he served under British command in the Jewish Brigade and prior to the War of Independence he joined the Palmakh. Amichai, more than other poets of his generation, the older Native movement members, provided a necessary bridge to the newer half of this distinct literary group. His poetry is accessible and was known to open up the landscape characterized by the complexities of modern Israeli culture, exposing the individual's angst about war, politics and religion.

⁸⁶ Vera Schwarcz, Notes on the Wall, Chapter 4 of Bridge Across Broken Time: Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory, (Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, 1998) 74.

He was exceptionally adept at wordplay and would often infuse biblical idiom and metaphor directly out of the *Tanakh*, skilled in crafting new midrash. *To the Full Severity of Compassion* is an example epitomizing his edge in observing and commenting on politics, “issuing a call-to the reader or to himself-to observe, identify with, and take responsibility for those people, described in the poem’s first stanza, whose houses have been ruined.”⁸⁷

In the Full Severity of Mercy

Count them

You are able to count them. They

are not like the sand on the seashore. They

are not innumerable like the stars. They are like lonely people.

On the corner or in the street.

Count them. See them

seeing the sky through ruined houses.

Go out through the stones and come back, What

will you come back to? But count them, for they

do their time in dreams

and they walk around outside and their hopes are unbandaged

and gaping, and they will die of them.

⁸⁷ Chana Kronfeld, *Beyond Thematicism in the Historiography of Post-1948 Political Poetry*, (*Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society*, n.s. 18, no. 3, Spring/Summer 2012) 183.

Count them.

Too soon they learned to read the terrible
writing on the wall. To read and write on
other walls. And the feast continues in silence.

Count them. Be present, for they
have already used up all the blood and there's still not enough,
as in a dangerous operation, when one
is exhausted and beaten like ten thousand. For who is
the judge, and what is the judgment,
unless it be in the full sense of the night
and in the full severity of mercy.

True to Amichai's Hebrew form but not obvious in the English, the opening imperative word in Hebrew for Count! is not the colloquial typical *s'for* but the formal *mene*, a verb infrequently found in the Tanakh, but notably found in 2 Samuel 24:1 denoting God's anger against Israel. "He incited David against them saying, Go and number Israel and Judah!" *S'for*, on the other hand, the usual way in which God talks endearingly with Abraham, is about counting the future ancestors, that they should be as numerous as the stars in the heavens or the grains of sand. (Genesis 15:5, 22:17.) In other words, the poem is already beginning with an imperative to count, but it is a

negative accounting. The poet relegates those to be counted NOT as numerous as the stars or grains of sand—they are fewer and they are alone. “Biblical promises of plentitude are thus rejected in favor of the world of lonely, separate people who are always victimized in Amichai’s poetry by their own dependence on impossible dreams and empty promises. Their hopes are like open wounds that will eventually kill them.”⁸⁸

The writing on the wall is not simply a cliché. It is another allusion referring to a biblical passage (Daniel 5) regarding Belshazzar and those that helped him rule stating that “God has numbered the days of your kingdom, has weighed in the balances and decided to cut off your kingdom from you...” This indicates that those who fail to see the signs of impending disaster cannot therefore see the writing on the wall and their doom is imminent. The word for numbered, in Daniel, is once again from the Hebrew root of count, repeated throughout the poem, *mem-nun-hey*.

As per Chana Kronfeld’s commentary, “Amichai says...it is these people, who are entitled—after all the waiting and hoping—to the full severity of mercy...”

Amichai may be a prophet in a poet’s uniform foretelling the plight of the Palestinian people. The Full Severity of Mercy may be his cry out to anyone listening that what has happened to the Palestinian Arabs at the beginning of Statehood may haunt us in the future and is he inferring that all we do is take note by (negatively) counting them. This sentiment was not supported by the new Israeli administration. Amichai’s poetry had been targeted at one point early in the young State’s independence as “dangerous.”

⁸⁸ Chana Kronfeld, *Allusion: An Israeli Perspective*, (Proof texts, Vol. 5, No.2, May 1985) 153.

Amichai continued his pursuit of unbridled censoring throughout his expansive and prolific career.

Section 2 Summary

Modern Hebrew poetry evolved from the idealistic days of early Zionism when poet's words held sway, speaking anthems and truly represented the collective spirit of post-Enlightenment, emancipated secular Jews. Up until the moment of May 14, 1948 when Zionism achieved its fundamental goal, Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, poets were regarded with the highest esteem. They shaped the words of the movement and their words were recited and their personas were revered. 1948 not only marked Israel's rebirth but also the "threshold of a new epoch in which Hebrew poetry gradually relinquished its national role."⁸⁹

Did the poets of the *Yishuv* up to the moment of Statehood represent the true voice of those participating in the Zionist enterprise? There are divergent answers to this question because literature, and in particular poetry is not defined in terms of black and white. The answer may lie in the gray area. Modern Hebrew poetry takes many forms. It cannot be only characterized as a tool for a movement's members to coalesce their collective thoughts into verse as mantra. It can connect a generation's suffering and feelings to deeply rooted Biblical metaphor. It can tell a personal story with idiom that is a nation's personal story. It can share its love relationships with others and with

⁸⁹ Michael Guzman, Sovereignty and Melancholia: Israel Poetry after 1948, (Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society n.s. 18, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2012) 165.

landscapes that inspire love. It can praise and it can damn God. It can simply be an individual's personal creative expression.

The history of the *Yishuv* to Statehood is complex. Mandatory Palestine, Aliyah waves, governance, security, cultural machinations, collectivism and individualism all fit together in a messy, unscripted manner calling to its nearly imperceptible, unbelievable success. Our history does not lend itself to a smooth, well ordered dovetailing of Modern Hebrew poetry overlaying or sewing together its parts. But, that is not its design.

Section 3

Cross-Analysis and Synthesis

The purpose of this thesis is to study a significant Israeli historic period through the lens the history of Modern Hebrew poets and to examine how poetry reflects on and is reflected by the history of its time and subject and to determine the degree to which the poetry reflects on history. This thesis considers the pivotal period of Jewish history before the establishment of the new State of Israel and posited the theory that poets, similar to historians, tell the story of history through their unique perspectives as a conduit of social consciousness. The question raised in this thesis is, “How Do readers of Modern Hebrew poets understand history through their poetry?”

Historians typically rely on facts, figures, biographies, and events that have occurred. “History is what historians have the vision to find, or what they chose to do... The true historian is moved by curiosity, the rage to know just for the sake of knowing, and by the desire to relate for the sake of relating. When they identify and describe events, historians write history... And, since events do not coincide with the perceptions of their actors or their witnesses, it is the historian who makes the event, or remakes it, out of the evidence he has the sense or luck to lay his mind on. Historiography is not arbitrary, but it is subjective.⁹⁰” The subjectivity that is innate to a historian’s perspective is guided by his grappling with the judgments he makes, the relationship he

⁹⁰ Eugene Weber, *History is What Historians Do: Writing History: Essay on Epistemology* (NYTimes Book Review, July, 22, 1984).

has with particular facts, and the assumption he makes regarding specific details on human life. In cases of recent history, as in the study of pre-State Israel, historians have direct access to seemingly infinite primary sources that may even include autobiographical interviews. Secondary sources are also abundant. Imbedded within the sources are facts often considered to be accepted judgments on evidence. However, a cautionary statement must be made about sources: they are, in all likelihood, both facts and opinions that are derived from a particular point of view. It is clear that facts exist. The real tension is not about the actual facts but rather about inferences that are considered to be “complex cumulative judgments on the relationship between facts...inferences are the bridges built by a historian’s mind to relate these fixed points in a network of meaning.”⁹¹ And, according to Cantor and Schneider in *How to Study History*, the best history written is that which has the greater number of inferential lines drawn between the specific facts. It goes without saying that historians’ craft is quite creative.

Poets begin with a different premise than historians. Poets’ objective for taking to pen is not about the historical context and reflecting within that which they write. Poet’s premise is not typically linked to actual facts or events. Poets are creative writers who are more adept at obtrusiveness, “allusion, symbol, meaning, sound and the like...”⁹² and they are not governed by dates, personalities, events and politics but rather by their own individual voice painting with words on a paper canvas illuminating

⁹¹ Cantor and Schneider, 25.

⁹² Burnshaw, Carmi, Spicehandler, xiii.

the page with imagery and perspective. To conjecture that analyzing poetry during a specific era is likely to give readers understanding about the specific history of that era may be wishful thinking. This thesis posits the argument that one can understand history through the poet's words and perceptions of historical events. It is also probable that at a time in history when Modern Hebrew poets were employing the tools of "new" Hebrew, that which Ben Yehuda helped to establish, their collective efforts of the written word in the form of poetry did contain essential characteristics of history interpreters. Additionally, and in no small part, their use of new Hebrew relied on their use of "old" Hebrew; that of the Bible, portions of the *Mishna* and *Talmud* and its legends, *Midrash* and its commentaries, liturgical sources as well as Jewish philosophical texts. Therefore, a limitation tacitly implied in this thesis is that reliance on English translation does a supreme disservice to the integrity of the original Hebrew in each poem. Translations are at best approximations of content and to truly do a thesis of this nature justice, one would be more successful writing it in Hebrew, and interpreting the written word from its original. Hebrew's rich rhyme patterns, alliteration capacity, homonymic range, cadence and raw sound are innate to its form and difficult to match, translate, and interpret due in large part to its imbrications. Language was a limitation to this study, however, one can overcome this limitation by critically reading both the Hebrew in its original form and the translation. Nonetheless, poets and their poetry discussed in the previous section, even when interpreting English translations, allow for one to sample a moment in history through their words, interpretations, feelings and personal experiences.

Haim Nahum Bialik (1873-1934) and Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943) demonstrated in the early days of the *Yishuv* at the turn of the 20th century that poets are well suited as movement spokespeople. Their poetry defined the essential foundational angst Jews experienced in a world that was molting out of traditional clothing into garments of a new age. This included a significant demographic of Eastern European Jews transitioning from the particular Jewish religious tradition to the universalist political movements—for Jews this could take the form of Zionism or Socialism or other isms. In “*Alone*,” Bialik’s poetry reflects this angst. Bialik eschews the past as the *Shekhinah*, God’s divine female presence, as she sheds a tear when she comes to the realization that the old world Judaism may be coming to an end.

Tchernichovsky’s *Eagle! Eagle!* written in 1936 was a reaction to the 1936 Arab riots. Imagery of an alpha bird of prey souring over the Judean desert has been interpreted as both the precarious condition of *Yishuv* settlements and the threat to their existence.⁹³ The eagle, exemplified by Tchernichovsky, is what the new Jew must aspire to be: a force to be reckoned with. In both examples, one must read into words to speculate as to the poet’s real intention regarding the poem’s meaning. Do either of these two poems truly represent history? One can read the poem and say, “the poet is referring to the loss of tradition in *Alone*” (Yes!) and the poet in ‘*Eagle, Eagle*’ is describing anguish regarding uncertainty and the eagle is who we aspire to be as a new Nation (Maybe.). Herein lies the challenge of ascertaining a direct correlation between

⁹³ Naomi Sokoloff, Hopkins’ “Windhover” and Tschernichovsky’s “Eagle! Eagle!, (Prooftexts, Vol. 3, No. 2, May 1983) 192.

poetry's words to meaning if one is looking to the poem for a glimpse into history. In specific cases, there may be a direct correlation. In other instances the reader may be groping for connections or be required to conjecture as to whether the poet meant for a particular allusion to represent a history-driven marker, a clue imbedded within the words to indicate a moment in history.

A recurring theme written in many articles about the socio-dynamics of the pre-State is that of the emergence of a new Jewish entity embodying secularism in the name of Socialist Zionism.⁹⁴ An entire school of poets were under the tutelage of Zionism which was, "in many ways a product of literary utopianism, and Hebrew literature was an integral element in the Labor Zionist goal of forging a polity based on nation, territory, and language...writers who did not or could not write as national subjects...faced great obstacles and were relegated to marginality."⁹⁵

Abraham Shlonsky was a leader of the Hebrew Moderna, the *Yishuv's* Hebrew poet's movement of the 1930's and 1940's that practiced marginalization of other poets. Dahlia Ravikovitch's was one such poet. She was a highly regarded poet in the Statehood Generation yet her poetry was marginalized in part because Hebrew

⁹⁴ Ari Ofengenden, Radical Recasting of Tradition: Abraham Shlonsky's Hegemony in the Hebrew Poetry of the 1930's (Hebrew Studies, Vol. 47, 2006) 329; Moshe Davis, Martin Buber: Character Change and Social Experiment, (The Seminary Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1956) 205; Ari Ofengenden, 'Days will Come and They will Demand an Account. What will I Give?': The Dynamics of Secularization in Abraham Shlonsky's Writings, (Hebrew Studies, Vol. 51, 2010) 229-230; Chana Kronfeld, Beyond Thematicism in Historiography of Post 1948 Political Poetry, (Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society, n.s. 18, no. 3, Spring/Summer 2012) 180-181; Adam Rovner, Michael Gluzman: The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry, (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2003) 248-250.

⁹⁵ Adam Rovner, 249.

literature had an androcentric bias. Michael Gluzman in his article, “To Endow Suffering with Elegance”: Dahlia Ravikovitch and the Poetry of the Statehood Generation states rather matter of fact-ly that Hebrew literature has always been seen, both by writers and critics as patrilineal. She intentionally distanced herself and her art stylistically composed “intricate imbrications in all the historical strata of the Hebrew language” and she was “working against the historiographic script of intergenerational rebellion.” Additionally, she intentionally wrote poetry that simulated poets of the previous generation. Ravikovitch is not “the victim of a canon that ignored or rejected her. On the contrary, right from the start, by the mid-1950’s she was recognized as a poet of the first order...nevertheless, as a poet Ravikovitch could never be considered a spokesperson of the generation or a representative of the collective...precisely because she was recognized as a (personal-universal) poetess...”⁹⁶ In other words, she may have been ahead of her time, and for the purposes of this thesis, her beautifully composed poetry did not conform to movement driven content and therefore not easily pigeon-holed as poetry correlate-able within the historical context of the pre-state poets, as compared with Shlonsky who was cognizant about the zeitgeist of this era.

Section 2’s analysis of Shlonsky’s *Revelation* reveals an example of how he manifested radical secularization into one of Judaism’s most pronounced symbols, that of prophets, and in this particular poem, commentators surmise that he writes himself into the persona of the “secular” prophet. Although *Revelation* depicts the poet taking

⁹⁶ Michael Gluzman, To Endow Suffering with Elegance”: Dahlia Ravikovitch and the Poetry of the Statehood Generation, (Prooftexts, Vol. No. 28, 2008) 285.

Tanakh-religious Judaic topics and true to Labor Zionist movement's intention he metaphorically inverts them into a secular mindset. This not only speaks to the era but to a particular event or sequence in history.⁹⁷ One would be required to review later poems, in the 1950's (Stones of Parchment, published in 1960) by Shlonsky to hear his matured voice describing a Tel Aviv neighborhood such that one could project a historic description on this neighborhood and remark, "That's Tel Aviv, circa 1954!"⁷

Uri Zvi Greenberg's voice in the pre-State era reflected his personal tragedy: losing all members of his family in the Holocaust. His poetry is rich in biblical allusion and his devotion to Zionism, showcases a level of extremism. During the 1936 Arab riots and prior to his personal loss of family as a result of the Holocaust, The Book of Denunciation and of Faith, by Greenberg was considered racist by the mainstream. It was an anti-Arab call to take revenge "denouncing the complacency of his generation in failing to see the eternal enmity borne by the 'cross and crescent' against the messianic destiny of the Jews."⁸ His extremism was not only pronounced in his writing: he was also active as a member of the right-wing Revisionist military underground force, the Irgun. Greenberg is also representative of a class of Modern Hebrew poets who continued to look back at what was and lament angrily, using biblical metaphor, rather

⁹⁷ Shlonsky's effect on secular Hebrew culture is thoroughly discussed in E. Zakim's article, To Build and Be Built: Landscape Literature, and the Construction of Zionist Identity, (Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 100.

⁷ Shlonsky's poem from the collection, Stones of Parchment, is entitled, "Mr. X Speaks about his Neighborhood." In it he continues to use biblical reference even within the title: *Neum* is typically used in biblical discourse as the word of God in the mouth of God's prophets. He uses the biblical spelling and combines it with the rabbinical *Neum Ploni*-Mr. X speaks- used in edicts, verdicts and contracts during the rabbinic period.

⁸ Burnshaw, Carmi, Spicehandler, 60

than to look forward to the end of exile and freedom. *Under the Tooth of their Plow*, is one such poetic rendering with Greenberg displaying his hatred toward the perpetrators of the Holocaust and his dismissive regard to God, who, from his secular-Zionist perspective, abandoned the Jews altogether.

Amir Gilboa straddled the fence between warrior and poet but from a more centrist position as compared with Greenberg's reactionary political and military actions. He affiliated with the North Africa British Hebrew Unit in World War II, the Jewish Brigade in Italy, and the Israeli Defense Force in the Independence War and not with the illegal *Irgun*. Gilboa, too, lost his entire family in the Holocaust but did not display his bitterness and hatred in the same vein as Uri Zvi Greenberg.⁹ Rather, he channeled his energy into what can be defined as war poetry. An entire collection of his work, *Sheva Reshuyot-Seven Domains*, is dedicated to his wartime experiences. As with the poetry of his contemporaries, Gilboa's is filled with biblical reference while managing to pour out his heart to lost comrades in arms. With Gilboa, his pre-State poetry is directly correlate-able to the history at hand. His 1953 publication, *Songs in Early Morning*, is a collection of poems that leaves behind his war poetry and diverges into a new State feeling. Two such poems, *If There Were a Hundred Hats* and *Joy* are both symptomatic of tempered euphoria related to the new State and the realization that with joy comes pain and sorrow.⁹

⁹ Refer to the Appendices for both complete poems and their translations.

Of particular note on how poetry reflects historical events is the poet Chaim Hefer. He crossed over to great renown as one of the early state's preeminent songwriters. Even during the State's formative period his military service took unusual prestige as he founded the Palmach's musical band. His poetry became lyrics in songs that were revered and sung patriotically with all the intent of a Zionist propaganda, identifying strongly with the social culture through analogizing land with nostalgia, people with history and movement with religious tones. Nathan Alterman's poetry is similar to Hefer's both in symbolism and broad appeal: Hefer's became songs and Alterman's remained poetry, but Alterman's words, in particular *The Silver Platter*, were committed to memory and were recited out loud by generations of school children. *Silver Platter* exemplified early state Zionist spirit and is read, to this day, annually at national *Yom Hazikaron*-Day of Remembrance celebrations.⁹⁸ It's imagery punctuated what all Jews held close to their hearts then as well as now: that the state will be hard fought, that our children will stand ready, that some will not return home and that survival and future are not handed on a silver platter. Alterman excelled as a ballad-ist and because he published weekly in *Davar*, the Histadrut-Labor Zionist newspaper, he was widely read. His *The Silver Platter* rivaled Hefer's *We Left Slowly* and both poets shared in buoying the population's spirits with messages of hope and better future.

Abba Kovner may be appropriately grouped with Hefer and Alterman for his reach, range and intent. His intense military experience in Europe led him to writing

⁹⁸ Alterman wrote this poem in response to Chaim Weizmann's words pronounced in December 1947 following the UN Partition Plan vote saying, "No state is ever handed on a silver platter...The partition plan does not give the Jews but an opportunity."

poetry comparable to Gilboa's war poetry. Imagery of desert landscapes and references to biblical battles (Deborah's war song "*nahal kdumim*-rivers of old verse from Judges and *afik*-river bed a simile from Psalm 126:4 are alluded to in *Opening*.) fill the many lines of his pre-State poetry. Kovner's activism within the *Shomer Ha'tza'er* aptly placed him as the Cultural Affairs Officer to the *Givati* Brigade in the War of Independence. Here his missives were often extreme forms of propaganda promoting slaughter and were considered "over the top" promotions to the troops readying them for battle. Even so, his poetry and leadership are well regarded by the new State citizenry and his contribution to Modern Hebrew poetry is that of war correspondent or narrator.

The last four poets representing this thesis' analysis projected their voices differently from those already discussed: Esther Rabb, T. Carmi, Dan Pagis and Yehuda Amichai. Esther Raab, unlike all others, was born in pre-State Palestine. Her upbringing, her frame of reference, her academic studies of Palestinian flora and fauna, her landscape vistas, her everything was based in the land that all other poets previously viewed yearned for and aspired to be part of. Raab was known as the "landscape poetess."¹⁰ Her use of Hebrew is fluid and natural. Her subjects are often inspired by the fresh and untamed environment that surrounded her upbringing. *Today I am Modest* speaks to her unique perspective as one who is native-born who welcomes the new immigrants with open arms and who gives them hope for a new future. This line

¹⁰ Fellow poet, Natan Zach was quoted calling her the landscape poet. Barbara Mann's article, [Framing the Native: Esther Raab's Visual Poetics](#), (*Israel Studies* 4:1, 1999) 241, thoroughly describes Raab's native affection of the land fully analyzing Raab's creative use of alliteration in Hebrew language. In one example, Mann describes a poem that gives profound meaning to colors without even writing a singular word for color.

epitomizes the depth of her connection to the land: “ "I will cling at evening [*edbak*] to the edges of your hills/ like a parched wailing weed [*chilfa*].”¹¹ One can dovetail the progression of her written word with the urbanization of her beloved home’s vistas. Raab’s 1920 era poems spoke to her awareness of the intense urban growth during the decade of the 1920’s, swelling immigration numbers, and building booms.⁹⁹

T. Carmi has the uncommon distinction of being born in the United States. Hebrew was spoken at home; his first language was Hebrew and at school he was taught biblical and Midrashic tradition. His poetry is regarded as quite natural, combining both Modern Hebrew idiom under laid with Judaic context. *Pomegranate* is emblematic of the newer age of Modern Hebrew poet who is already universalist in his perspective and does not speak for a movement’s membership or to a particular –ism’s philosophy. Comparable to Raab’s native-born poetic intuition, Carmi’s words feel rooted to the land and like the pomegranate tree in the poem, he becomes one with it much like new immigrants to the young State and their profound connection to the land of their ancestors.

Dan Pagis and T. Carmi are found together in a classic poetry book entitled, T. Carmi and Dan Pagis: Selected Poems, translations by Stephen Mitchell. The

¹¹ Esther Raab, *Tel Aviv*. Similar to all poets analyzed, Raab freely made use of biblical language, beginning the poem like 1:8 in the Book of Lamentations in which Jerusalem is likened to a sinful woman whose unfaithfulness has led to her ruin. *Tel Aviv* begins with “ How can I weep when there is no tear...” as compared with Lamentations “How [*eycha*] does the city sit solitary, that was full of people, how is she become like a widow, she that was great among the nations. . . . she weeps [*bachu*] sore in the night and her tears are on her cheeks, she has not [*eyn*] a comforter from among her lovers . . .”

⁹⁹ Raab’s poem, *Tel Aviv*, is found in the appendices. This poem diverts completely with soft landscape images by expressing with tears, rebellious feet, and cement stones her personal loss at the changed landscape from rural pastoral to urban paved.

Introduction is by M. L. Rosenthal who writes “An urgent desire—a lust—to isolate spiritual resources that will make us as strong as possible in the face of history’s savage blows while we remain responsively open to reality and the creative possibilities within it may be endemic to the modern mind. If so, these two Israeli poets are compellingly accurate spokesmen for that mind, as well as for their own country’s special and precarious poise and for their own very individual natures.”¹² Even though their upbringings couldn’t have been more different, Carmi’s safe American environment versus Pagis’ hostile European Holocaust survival, Pagis took to Hebrew poetry like a newborn duck to water. *Honi* is a representative poem of yet another poet’s voice who was forced to transition from a world one tried desperately to forget to a new hopeful world full of promise. Both Pagis and Carmi are similar to Raab as individualistic reconnoiters of the new State era’s narrators, each from their unique perspective, unlike the Shlonsky writers who were beholden to a movement’s mindset.

Yehuda Amichai closes the chapter on the pre-State era poets, becoming the poet emeritus of a generation. Amichai is representative of the accessibility of his Hebrew fully rich in biblical allusion, with his fearless confidence to speak his mind. Throughout his prophetic and prolific career, Amichai broke away from most political constraints. “*I Want to Die in My Bed*” “was a poem memorized by a generation.”¹³ It is ultimately patriotic and makes use of biblical battle scenes to punctuate its story telling

¹² Stephen Mitchell, *T. Carmi and Dan Pagis: Selected Poems*, (Penguin Book, England (1976) 20.

¹³ Chana Kronfeld, 186.

nature, but it is not a pacifist poem. In it the protagonist is a reluctant soldier who must take up arms to defend his country-but don't call him a hero. His letters to his beloved girlfriend Ruth, which made up the basis for this poem, reflected "a living testimony to the national frame of mind: a mixture of grief, caused by the many casualties, with an unparalleled courage and resilience."¹⁴ Amichai's poetry may be directly correlated to the history of this era from a sociological perspective. He writes on topics including how one feels about war, what is the relevance of religion, and how politics pollutes ethics. He is the true universalist poet with deep love for Israel and all its people.

Implications for Jewish educators

Jewish educators are at liberty to swing wide of typical and often mundane Modern Jewish history lessons by telling the history through the lens of a poet or a comparative analysis of poets. Three examples illustrating the point are as follows:

- 1 Instead of reading statistics about the Holocaust, its survivors, and how many lived out their days in Israel, one could isolate one poet, for example Amir Gilboa or Dan Pagis, read several of their poems out loud that are Holocaust thematic (both in Hebrew and English), translate, identify biblical references using a *Tanakh* with translation, and then back-read the poet's personal history.
- 2 Conduct an Israeli geography of flora and fauna unit through the poetry of Esther Raab that might allow students to paint while hearing a poem's recitation.

¹⁴ Gold, Nili Scharf, *Yehuda Amichai: The Making of Israel's National Poet*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England / Brandeis University Press, 2008) 123.

- 3 Select two Amichai poems, one from the pre-State period and one from the Six-Day War era, analyze translations, make good use of a *Tanakh* to identify specific biblical allusions, and determine the “politics” or intent of the poems in relation to the era in which they were written allowing for the examination of poetry in order to understand an historical era. You might mention “education” in your brief introductory remarks as well.

Limitations of this study

Hebrew to English translations challenged the potential for a more profound analysis of the poetry which may have diminished meaning as well as intent: cadence, repetitive sounds, tones, onomatopoeic sequences, and rhymes are not seen or felt. Studying the work of Modern Hebrew Poetry is best conducted in Hebrew. Additionally, many articles were available in the original Hebrew with no available translations. Access to these articles in English may have augmented understanding of both the period and the content of the poetry selected.

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to view history through the words of poets. Attempt is an instructive framing for the task at hand because poetry is not history. Poetry is not confined to an exact form or science because poets are not scientists solving hypotheses governed by laws of physics or mathematics. Poets are also not historians. Although analyzing poetry in an effort to find history may in many instances be a needle in

haystack search exercise, it is a fabulous exercise that yielded many positive benefits. Among them, the selection of 20th Century poets and the pre-State *Yishuv* era in which they wrote allowed this student to encounter the distinct evolution of the poets and their personal histories on how and about what they wrote in addition to gaining knowledge of this pivotal period in Jewish history.

As a group, these poets helped enrich Hebrew as the new/old language of a future Jewish State, giving the *Yishuv* and Diaspora Jewish communities contemporary Hebrew “piyyutim”. Their poetry was revered to the extent that common citizens as well as school children committed many poems to memory. Poetry mattered. Because Modern Hebrew poets drew on the deep well of biblical allusion even with the secularization of the *Yishuv* society, and within the context of poetry, it rooted an immigrant generation to the land. Poets wrote about their experiences. Frequently, their poems directly mirrored history’s events including the Holocaust and participation in wars. With equal frequency poems exposed feelings and emotions about the new era of moving from exile to the Promised Land in allegorical language.

Where this research fits into the wider swatch of *Yishuv* era poetry analyses is in its effort to fit a round dowel into a square hole: it fits, sort of, if you wiggle it back and forth a bit. This study is tangential to other studies in that it posited a known truth that poetry doesn’t formally tell the story of history but that it can, in many instances, represent a voice within the context of history, giving that particular history an “un-factual” rendering.

Future studies spawned from this thesis suggest conducting comparative analyses of the pre-State era poets with other generations of Modern Hebrew Poets, again using their voice in relation to history.

ISRAEL HISTORY (Yishuv to 1948):
THROUGH THE LENS OF ISRAELI POETRY

Appendix

Table of Contents

I	Song of the Sea	89-90
II	Isaiah 1:2-9	91
III	<i>I Believe</i> -Shaul Tchernichovsky	92
IV	<i>Alone</i> -Haim Nahman Bialik	93
V	<i>Eagle! Eagle!</i> -Shaul Tchernichovsky	94
VI	<i>Revelation</i> -Avraham Shlonsky	95
VII	<i>Under the Tooth of the Plough</i> - Uri Tzvi Greenberg	96
VIII	<i>Silver Platter</i> -Nathan Alterman	97
IX	<i>If There Were a Hundred Hats</i> - Amir Gilboa	98
X	<i>Joy</i> -Amir Gilboa	99
XI	<i>Tel Aviv</i> -Esther Raab	100
XII	Plan Daled	101-108

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IX	<i>If There Were a Hundred Hats</i> - Amir Gilboa	98
X	<i>Joy</i> -Amir Gilboa	99
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15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD. They said:
 I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously;
 Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.
²The LORD^a is my strength and might;^b
 He is become my deliverance.
 This is my God and I will enshrine^c Him;
 The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.
³The LORD, the Warrior—
 LORD is His name!
⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his army
 He has cast into the sea;
 And the pick of his officers
 Are drowned in the Sea of Reeds.
⁵The deeps covered them;
 They went down into the depths like a stone.
⁶Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
 Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the foe!
⁷In Your great triumph You break Your opponents;
 You send forth Your fury, it consumes them like straw.
⁸At the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up,
 The floods stood straight like a wall;
 The deeps froze in the heart of the sea.
⁹The foe said,
 "I will pursue, I will overtake,
 I will divide the spoil;
 My desire shall have its fill of them.
 I will bare my sword—
 My hand shall subdue them."
¹⁰You made Your wind blow, the sea covered them;
 They sank like lead in the majestic waters.
¹¹Who is like You, O LORD, among the celestials;^d
 Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
 Awesome in splendor, working wonders!
¹²You put out Your right hand,
 The earth swallowed them.
¹³In Your love You lead the people You redeemed;
 In Your strength You guide them to Your holy abode.
¹⁴The peoples hear, they tremble;
 Agony grips the dwellers in Philistia.
¹⁵Now are the clans of Edom dismayed;
 The tribes of Moab—trembling grips them;
 All the dwellers in Canaan are aghast.
¹⁶Terror and dread descend upon them;
 Through the might of Your arm they are still as stone—
 Till Your people cross over, O LORD,
 Till Your people cross whom You have ransomed.
¹⁷You will bring them and plant them in Your own mountain,
 The place You made to dwell in, O LORD,
 The sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands established.
¹⁸The LORD will reign for ever and ever!

Isaiah Chapter 1: 2-9

An example of Prophetic Poetry

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,
For the Lord has spoken:

"I reared children and brought them up —
And they have rebelled against Me!

3 An ox knows its owner,
An ass its master's crib:

Israel does not know,
My people takes no thought."

4 Ah, sinful nation!

People laden with iniquity!

Brood of evildoers!

Depraved children!

They have forsaken the Lord,

Spurned the Holy One of Israel,

Turned their backs [on Him].

5 Why do you seek further beatings,

That you continue to offend?

Every head is ailing,

And every heart is sick.

6 From head to foot

No spot is sound:

All bruises, and welts,

And festering sores —

Not pressed out, not bound up,

Not softened with oil.

7 Your land is a waste,

Your cities burnt down;

Before your eyes, the yield of your soil

Is consumed by strangers —

A wasteland as overthrown by strangers!

8 Fair Zion is left

Like a booth in a vineyard,

Like a hut in a cucumber field,

Like a city beleaguered.

9 Had not the Lord of Hosts

Left us some survivors,

We should be like Sodom,

Another Gomorrah.

ב שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהִאֲזִינוּ אֶרֶץ

כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר

בָּנִים גִּדְּלֹתַי וְרוֹמְמֹתַי

וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי

ג יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְיָהּ

וְחִמּוֹר אֲבוֹס בְּעֻלּוֹ

יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע

עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבוּנָה:

ד הֲוִי | גֹּי חָטָא

עַם כָּבֵד עֹן

זָרַע מְרֵעִים

בָּנִים מִשְׁחִיתִים

עֲזָבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה

נֶאֱצָו אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

נְזָרוּ אַחֲוֹר:

ה הֶעֱלֵמָה תִּכְּפוּ עוֹד

תוֹסִיפוּ סָרָה

כֹּל־רֹאשׁ לְחֹלִי

וְכָל־לֵבב דָּגִי:

ו מִכַּף־רִגְל וְעַד־רֹאשׁ

אִין־בּוֹ מָתָם

פָּצַע וְחִבּוּרָה

וּמִכָּה טְרִיָּה

לֹא־זָרוּ וְלֹא חִפְּשׂוּ

וְלֹא רִכְּכָה בְּשִׁמּוֹן:

ז אֶרְצְכֶם שְׁמָמָה

עָרִיכֶם שְׂרָפוֹת אֵשׁ

אֲדַמְתֶּכֶם לְנִגְדְּכֶם

זָרִים אֲכָלִים אֶתְּהָ

וּשְׁמָמָה כְּמַהֲפַכַת זָרִים:

ח וְנוֹתְרָה בַת־צִיּוֹן

כְּסִפְּהָ בְּכָרֶם

כְּמַלּוּנָהּ בְּמִקְשָׁהּ

כְּעִיר נְצוּרָה:

ט לֹוֹלִי יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת

הוֹתִיר לָנוּ שְׂרִיד כְּמַעֵט

כְּסֹדֶם הַיִּינוּ

לְעַמְרָה דְּמִינוּ:

I Believe

Shaul Tchernichovsky

Rejoice, rejoice now in the dreams
I the dreamer am he who speaks
Rejoice, for I'll have faith in mankind
For in mankind I believe.

For my soul still yearns for freedom
I've not sold it to a calf of gold
For I shall yet have faith in mankind
In its spirit great and bold

That will cast off binding chains
Raise us up, hold high our heads
Workers will not die of hunger
For souls – release, for poor folk – bread.

Rejoice for I have faith in friendship
I'll find a heart – in this I've faith –
A heart that shares in all my hopes,
A heart that feels both joy and pain.

And I shall keep faith in the future,
Though the day be yet unseen
Surely it will come when nations
All live in blessed peace.

Then my people too will flourish
And a generation shall arise
In the land, shake off its chains
And see light in every eye.

It shall live, love, accomplish, labor
In the land it is alive
Not in the future, not in heaven –
And its spirit shall henceforth thrive.

A poet shall sing a new anthem,
His heart aware of beauty sublime
For him, that young man, above my tomb
Blossoms in a wreath shall twine.

Written in Odessa in 1892. Translated from Hebrew by Vivian Eden.

שְׂחָקִי, שְׂחָקִי עַל הַחֲלוּמוֹת,
זוֹ אֲנִי הַחוֹלֵם שֶׁחַ.
שְׂחָקִי כִּי בְּאָדָם אֲאִמִּין,
כִּי עוֹדֵנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּךָ.

כִּי עוֹד נַפְשִׁי דְרוּר שׂוֹאֶפֶת
לֹא מִכְרַתֶּיהָ לְעֵגֶל-פֶּזֶז,
כִּי עוֹד אֲאִמִּין גַּם בְּאָדָם,
גַּם בְּרוּחוֹ, רוּחַ עֶז.

רוּחוֹ יִשְׁלִיךְ כְּבָלֵי-הַבָּל,
יְרוּמְמוּנוּ בְּמַתֵּי-עָלִי;
לֹא בְרַעַב יָמוּת עַבְדִּי,
דְרוּר דִּלְכָפֶשׁ, פֶּת דִּלְדָל.

שְׂחָקִי כִּי גַם בְּרַעוּת אֲאִמִּין,
אֲאִמִּין, כִּי עוֹד אֲמַצֵּא לָב,
לָב תְּקוּוֹתַי גַּם תְּקוּוֹתַי,
יְחוּשׁ אֶשֶׁר, יִבְנוּ כְּאֵב.

אֲאִמִּינָה גַם בְּעַתִּיד,
אִף אִם יִרְחַק זֶה הַיּוֹם,
אֵךְ בּוֹא יְבוֹא דִּישְׁאוֹ שְׁלוֹם
אִזּוֹ וּבִרְכָה לְאֵם מְלֵאָם.

יִשׁוּב יִפְרַח אִזּוֹ גַם עַמִּי,
וּבְאֶרֶץ יְקוּם דּוֹר,
בְּרִזְל-כְּבָלָיו יוֹסֵר מְנוֹ,
עַל-בְּעֵינָיו יִרְאֶה אוֹר.

יְחִיָּה, יֵאָהֵב, יִפְעַל, יַעֲשֵׂה,
דּוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ אֲמִנָּם חֵי
לֹא בְּעַתִּיד דִּישְׁמַיִם,
חַיֵּי-רוּחַ לוֹ אִין דִּי.

אִזּוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ יִשִּׁיר מְשׁוֹרֵר,
לִיפֵי וְנִשְׁגָּב לְבוֹ עַר;
לוֹ, לְצַעִיר, מַעַל קִבְרֵי
פְּרָחִים יִלְקֻטוּ לְאִזּוֹ.

Alone

Chaim Nahman Bialik

Wind blew, light drew them all.
New songs revive their mornings.
Only I, small bird, am forsaken
under the Shekhina's wing.

Alone. I remain alone.
The Shekhina's broken wing
trembled over my head. My heart knew hers:
her fear for her only son.

Driven from every ridge –
one desolate corner left –
in the House of Study she hides in shadow,
and I alone share her pain.

Imprisoned beneath her wing
my heart longed for the light.
She buried her face on my shoulder
and a tear fell on my page.

Dumbly she clung and wept.
Her broken wing sheltered me:
"scattered to the four winds of heaven;
they are gone, and I am alone".

It was an ancient lament
a suppliant cry I heard
in that lost and silent weeping,
and in that scalding tear.

כולם נשא הרוח, כולם סחף האור,
שירה חדשה את בוקר חייהם הרנינה;
ואני, גוזל רך, נשתכחתי מלב
תחת כנפי השכינה.

בדד, בדד נישארתי, והשכינה אף היא
כנף ימינה השבורה על ראשי הרעידה.
ידע ליבי את ליבה: חרוד חרדה עלי,
על בנה, על יחידה.

כבר נתגרשה מכל הזוויות, רק עוד
פינת סתר שוממה וקטנה נישארה -
בית המדרש - ותתכס בצל, ואחי
עימה יחד בצרה.

וכשכלה לבבי לחלון, לאור,
וכשצר לי המקום מתחת לכנפה -
כבשה ראשה בכתפי, ודמעתי על דף גמרתי נטפה.

חרש בכתה עלי ותיתרפק עלי,
וכמו שכה בכנפה השבורה בעדי:
"כולם נשא הרוח, כולם פרחו להם,
ואוותר לבדי, לבדי..."

וכעין סיוס של קינה עתיקה מאד,
וכעין תפילה, בקשה וחרדה כאחת,
שמעה אוזני בבכיה החרישית ההיא
ובדמעה ההיא הרוותחת -

Eagle! Eagle!
Shaul Tchernichovsky

Black the hawk above your mountains!1 Black the mounting hawk on high!

Light and slow it seems one moment merely floating in the sky...

Floating, sailing skyblue seas, alert to songs of sheer delight

In the heart of all the heavens- circling mute through searing light.

Black the hawk above your mountains! Black the mounting hawk on high!

Sleek the body, dark the feathers, broad the wings and bright the eye,

Soaring like a bowshot arrow, rounding out its careful gyre

Tracking trails of prey below between the crags and through the briar.

Black the hawk above your mountains! Black the mounting hawk on high!

Gliding wide with wondrous touch, with wings locked back against the sky,

Frozen for a moment, then a single pinion barely sways.

Now the slightest palpitation, and it surges through the haze.

Black the hawk above your mountains! Black the mounting hawk on high!

Light and slow it seems one moment merely floating in the sky....

Land! A hawk's above your mountains. A condensing shadow glides

From the giant's wing caressing mighty heaven's mountainsides2.

עיט! עיט על הַרְיָד, עיט על הַרְיָד עָף!
אט וְקל דְּנִדְמָה כְּאֵלוֹ רְגַע דְּאִינוּ אֶלְא צָף,
צָף-מְפֹלֵג בְּיָם שֶׁל תְּכֵלֶת, עַר לְרֶנֶן-גִּיל בְּלֵב
הַשָּׁמַיִם דְּהַרְקִיעַ, חַג אֶלֶם בְּאוֹר צוֹרֵב.

עיט! עיט על הַרְיָד, עיט על הַרְיָד עָף!
יֶשֶׁר-גֵּו וְכַבֵּד אֶבֶר, שְׁחוֹר-נוֹצָה וְרַחֵב-כְּנָף;
טָס מְתוּחַ (חֶץ מְקֻשֶׁת), עיט עַג עוֹגִיּוֹת חוֹגְיוֹ;
תָּר עֲקֻבוֹת טְרַפוֹ מִמַּעַל בְּאֶפֶר וּבַחֲגוֹ.

עיט! עיט על הַרְיָד, עיט על הַרְיָד עָף!
טָס גוֹלֶשׁ-גוֹלֶשׁ וּבְמַגַּע פְּלֶא אֶבֶר לֹא נִקְף.
רְגַע-קַל דְּקָפָא, מְשֻׁנְהוּ דְּנִיד-לֹא-נִיד בְּאֶבְרוֹתָיו,
רְטֹט כָּל-שְׁהוּא לְפִתַּע דְּוְעוֹלָה לְקִרְאֵת הָעֵב.

עיט! עיט על הַרְיָד, עיט על הַרְיָד עָף!
אט וְקל, דְּנִדְמָה כְּאֵלוֹ דְּרְגַע אִינוּ אֶלְא צָף...
אָרַץ, עיט על הַרְיָד, דְּעַל פְּנִיָּד חֲשֵׁרֵת צֵל,
מְאֶבְרוֹת עֵנֶק חוֹלְפֵת, מְלַטְפֵת הַרְרֵי-אֵל...

Revelation
Avraham Shlonsky

<p>Clothe me, goodly mother, in a splendrous coat of many colors,¹ And with dawn lead me unto my toil.</p> <p>My land wraps itself in light as in a tallit² Houses stand like tefillin, And like tefillin-straps the palm-paved highways all glide down.³</p> <p>Thus a beautiful new township prays at dawn to her creator, And among creators, Your son Abraham Is the hymnal poet-paver Of the roads of Israel.</p> <p>And at evening in the sunset Father shall return from labors And like prayer whisper gladly: Dearest son, my Abraham⁴ Skin and bones and veins and sinews: Hallelujah⁵</p> <p>Clothe me, goodly mother in a splendrous coat of many colors, And with dawn lead me Unto my toil.</p>	<p>הלבישיני, אמא כשרה, כתונת־פסים לתפארת ועם שחרית הוביליני אלי עמל.</p> <p>אוטפה ארצי אור כטלית. בתים נצבו כטוטפות. וכרצועות־תפילין גולשים כבישים, סללו כפיים.</p> <p>תפילת שחרית פוה תתפלל קיריה נאה אלי בוראה. ובבוראים בנך אברהם, פייטן סולל בישראל.</p> <p>ובערב בין השמשות ישוב אבא מסיבלותיו וכתפילה ילחש נהת: הבן יקיר לי אברהם, עור וגידים ועצמות. הללויה.</p> <p>הלבישיני, אמא כשרה, כתונת־פסים לטפארת ועם שחרית הוביליני אלי עמל.</p>
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Under the Tooth of the Plough

Uri Tzvi Greenberg

Once more the snows have melted there...and the murderers now are farmers.
There they have gone out to plough their farmlands, all of which are my graveyards.
If the tooth of their plough, rolling skull-like over the furrow, should churn up
A skeleton of mine, the ploughman will not be saddened or shocked,
But will grin and recognize it, recognize the mark where his tools struck.

Spring anew over land: bud and bulb and lilac and warbling birds.
By the shining stream of shallow waters, the resting place of herds,
The roving Jews are no more: no more with their beards and side-curls.
They are no more in the inns with tallit and tsitsit over their shirts;
They are no more in the grocery store or the clothing store,
They are no more in their workshops and traincars now,
They are no more in the synagogue, even, or in the marketplace,
They are all under the tooth of the Christian plough.
For the Lord doth visit His chosen goys with grace.

But spring will be spring- and summer comes fatly ever after,
The roadside trees are fruit-fat as garden trees, as never before.
The fruit has never been as red or juicy as it is now
That the Jews are no more.

The Jews didn't have any bells to beckon God by¹
Blessèd are the Christians, for theirs are the bells on high,
Bells whose voice booms gravely through the plain there now in spring,
Thickly spewed through the breadth of lands that fragrance and colors cover.
It is almighty and master of all: there is nothing more to pass over
As once He passed over the roofs of the Jews.

Blessèd are the Christians, for theirs are the bells on high,
To honor a God who loves all Christians and all of humankind.
And all of the Jews are corpses under the tooth of their plough
Or under the grass of pastures.

Or in the forest's graves
On river banks, on river bottoms, or dumped along
The roads where they belong.

O praise ye your dear sweet Jesus
With the bang of your big bells:
Bing-bong.

שוב הפשירו שלגים שם... והמרצחים הם עכשוד אכרים.
הם יצאו שם לחרוש שדותיהם, שדות קברי השדות הם!
אם בשן מחרשתם יחופר וגולגל על התלם
אחד משלדי, לא יעגם החורש, לא יחרד.
יחך... יכירהו... את מכת כליו הוא יכיר בו.

שוב אביב שם בנוף: פקעים ולילך וצפצוף צפרים.
מרבץ עדרים עלי נחל נוצץ ומימיו רדודים...
אינדעוד יהודים עוברי־ארח זקנים ופאות.
בקרצסמיס אינם בטלית־דוציצית על כותנת;
ואינם בחנויות הסידקית אריגימ ומכולת;
אינם בבתי מלאכתם, אינם ברכבת;
אינם בשוקים, אינם בבתי כנסת;
הם מתחת לשן מחרשתם של נוצרים
פקד אלהים את גוייו ברוב חסד־ד

אבל אביב הוא אביב ד והקיץ אחריו מדושן.
דשנים גמ עצי־ירכתי־ הדרכים כבגנים.
מימיהם לא היו אדומים הפרות כאשר הם
אחרי שאינם היהודים־ד

ליהודים לא היו פעמונים לצלצל לאלהים,
ברוכה הנצרות, כי לה יש פעמונים בגבוהים!
וקולם החולך במישור באביב־שם עכשו
בכבדות זרומה במרחבי נוף זיו וניחוח
הוא אדיר ושליט על הכול: אין על מה עוד לפסוח
כאש פעמ פסח על גגות יהודים־ד

ברוחה הנצרות, כי לה יש פעמונים בגבוהים!
לכבוד אלהים המיטיב לנוצרים והכל...
וכל וכל היהודים תחת שן מחרשתם מונחים
או תחת עשבי המירעה;

או בקברות היער!
או על גדות נחלים ואם בם..
או בצדי דרכים.

הללו לזונו בפעמוני הכובד ד בים בם:

Silver Platter
Nathan Alterman

<p>And the land grows still, the red eye of the sky slowly dimming over smoking frontiers</p> <p>As the nation arises, Torn at heart but breathing, To receive its miracle, the only miracle</p> <p>As the ceremony draws near, it will rise, standing erect in the moonlight in terror and joy</p> <p>When across from it will step out a youth and a lass and slowly march toward the nation</p> <p>Dressed in battle gear, dirty, Shoes heavy with grime, they ascend the path quietly</p> <p>To change garb, to wipe their brow They have not yet found time. Still bone weary from days and from nights in the field</p> <p>Full of endless fatigue and unrested, Yet the dew of their youth. Is still seen on their head</p> <p>Thus they stand at attention, giving no sign of life or death</p> <p>Then a nation in tears and amazement will ask: "Who are you?"</p> <p>And they will answer quietly, "We Are the silver platter on which the Jewish state was given."</p> <p>Thus they will say and fall back in shadows And the rest will be told In the chronicles of Israel</p>	<p>והארץ תשקוט, עין שמים אודמת תעמעם לאיטה על גבולות עשנים ואומה תעמוד - קרועת לב אך נושמת לקבל את הנס האחד, אין שני.</p> <p>היא לטקס תיכון. היא תקום למול סהר ועמדה, טרם-יום, עוטה חג ואימה. אז מנגד יצאו נערה ונער ואט אט יצעדו הם אל מול האומה.</p> <p>לובשי חול וחגור, וכבדי נעליים בנתיב יעלו הם הלוך והחרש. לא החליפו בגדם, לא מחו עוד במים את עקבות יום הפרך וליל קו האש.</p> <p>עייפים עד בלי קץ, נזירים ממרגוע, ונוטפים טללי נעורים עבריים דום השניים ייגשו, ועמדו לבלי נוע. ואין אות אם חיים הם או אם ירויים.</p> <p>אז תשאל האומה, שטופת דמע וקסם, ואמרה: מי אתם? והשניים שוקטים, יענו לה: אנחנו מגש הכסף שעליו לך ניתנה מדינת היהודים, כך ויאמרו ונפלו לרגלה עוטפי צל, והשאר יסופר בתולדות ישראל.</p>
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If there were a hundred hats

Amir Gilboa

<p>If there were a hundred hats on my head A hundred hats A hundred colors A hundred hats A hundred colors and shades of color A hundred hats A shower of colors</p> <p>If there were a hundred hats on my head I would go out to the square in the market Clearing a path for myself through the square in the market And throw them upwards with joy</p> <p>If there were a hundred hats on my head I would go out to the square in the market And all the people would clear a path for me Awaiting the moment of the waving of hats</p> <p>If there were a hundred hats on my head A hundred hats A hundred colors and shades of color If there were a hundred hats And a tall sun Straight at my head Straight at my colors</p> <p>And of the People Cries of admiration all readied in its throat And its great heart beating in the square The heart of the people waiting</p> <p>For the waving of a hundred hats A hundred colors and shades of color</p>	<p>לו מאה כובעים לראשי, מאה כובעים, מאה צבעים. מאה כובעים, מאה צבעים ובני צבע. מאה כובעים, מטר צבעים.</p> <p>לו מאה כובעים לראשי, הייתי יוצא אל כיכר השוק. מפנה לי דרך בכיכר השוק וזורקם על משמחה.</p> <p>לו מאה כובעים לראשי, הייתי יוצא אל כיכר השוק וכל האנשים מפנים לי הדרך: מצפים לרגע נפנוף הכובעים.</p> <p>לו מאה כובעים לראשי: מאה כובעים, מאה צבעים ובני צבע. לו מאה כובעים ושמש גבוהה, ישר אל ראשי, ישר אל צבעי.</p> <p>הו, העם, קריאות התפעלות, בגרונו נכונו ומתפעם לבו הכביר בכיכר. לב העם המצפה לנפנוף מאה כובעים, מאה צבעים ובני צבע.</p>
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Joy
Amir Gilboa

Everyone in the street asked what are you happy about
And I hadn't heard that I was happy (Or: I didn't hear, for I was happy)
Until I came almost to the end of the streets.
I chanced up a little child playing in the sand at the end of the streets

I said to him, come, be happy too
He said to me you are at the end of the streets.

Everyone in the street asked what are you happy about
And I hadn't heard that I was happy (Or: I didn't hear, for I was happy)
Until I came almost to the end of the happiness (or: rejoicing).
I found myself to be a small child who does not reach the end of happiness

I said to myself you will be joyful again and again
And never will you reach the end of joy.

Everyone in the street asked what are you happy about
And I hadn't heard that I was happy (Or: I didn't hear, for I was happy)
And besides I don't hear in t moments of joy.
It happened one long day that I wasn't happy
And I was perplexed about everyone who then asked about the joy
And a sorrow as great as the joy ate at the heart.

כָּל אֶחָד בְּרָחוּב שָׁאֵל מָה אַתָּה שִׂמְחָה
וְאֲנִי לֹא שִׂמְעָתִי כִּי הֵייתִי שִׂמְחָה
עַד שֶׁהִגַּעְתִּי כַּמְעַט לְסוֹף הַרְחֹבוֹת.
נִמְצָא לִי יֶלֶד קָטָן שֶׁשָּׂחַק בְּחוֹל בְּסוֹף הַרְחֹבוֹת

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ בּוֹא הִיּה גַם אַתָּה שִׂמְחָה
אָמַר לִי אַתָּה נִמְצָא בְּסוֹף הַרְחֹבוֹת.

כָּל אֶחָד בְּרָחוּב שָׁאֵל מָה אַתָּה שִׂמְחָה
וְאֲנִי לֹא שִׂמְעָתִי כִּי הֵייתִי שִׂמְחָה
עַד שֶׁהִגַּעְתִּי כַּמְעַט לְסוֹף הַשִּׂמְחָה.
נִמְצָאתִי לִי יֶלֶד קָטָן שֶׁאֵינּוּ בָּא לְסוֹף הַשִּׂמְחָה

אָמַרְתִּי לִי אַתָּה עוֹד וְעוֹד תִּהְיֶה שִׂמְחָה
וְלִעוֹלָם לֹא תִבּוֹא עַד סוֹף הַשִּׂמְחָה.

כָּל אֶחָד בְּרָחוּב שָׁאֵל מָה אַתָּה שִׂמְחָה
וְאֲנִי לֹא שִׂמְעָתִי כִּי הֵייתִי שִׂמְחָה
וְגַם אֵינִי שׁוֹמֵעַ בְּשַׁעַת הַשִּׂמְחָה.
נִמְצָא לִי יוֹם אֶרֶךְ שֶׁלֹּא הֵייתִי שִׂמְחָה
וְתִמְהַתִּי עַל כָּל אֶחָד שֶׁאָז שָׁאֵל לְשִׂמְחָה
וְתוֹנָה אֲכֻלָּה בְּלֵב גְּדוֹלָה כַּשִּׂמְחָה.

Tel Aviv
Esther Raab

<p>How can I weep when there is no tear, walking mincing on rebellious feet pon the sand of your earth--you. Neither threshing floor nor olive, (5) spoiled rows you wring out here, and cement-stones on your skinny chest. Your evenings will still spray a bit (10) of star-juice or sea-moisture; I will cling to the edges of your hills at evening like a parched wailing weed.</p>	<p>איכה אבך ודמעה אין, הלך וטפף ברגלי מרי על חול אדמתך - את. לא גרן ולא זית (...)</p>
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Note: The Hebrew section of the poem is incomplete.

Israeli War of Independence: Plan Dalet

(March 10, 1948)

War of Independence: [Table of Contents](#) | [Background & Overview](#) | [War Maps](#)

1. Introduction

(a) The objective of this plan is to gain control of the areas of the Hebrew state and defend its borders. It also aims at gaining control of the areas of Jewish settlement and concentration which are located outside the borders [of the Hebrew state] against regular, semi-regular, and small forces operating from bases outside or inside the state.

(b) This plan is based on three previous plans:

1. Plan B, September 1945.
2. The May 1946 Plan.¹
3. Yehoshua Plan, 1948.²

(c) Since these plans were designed to deal with the situation inside the country (the first two plans deal with the first phase of incidents, while the third plan deals with the possibility of invasion by regular armies from the neighboring countries), the aim of Plan D is to fill the gaps in the previous three plans and to make them more suitable for the situation expected to obtain at the end of British rule in the country.

2. Basic Assumptions

This plan is based on the following basic assumptions:

(a) *The Enemy*

1. Expected composition of forces:
 - The semi-regular forces of the Liberation Army affiliated with the Arab League, which operate from already occupied bases or bases to be occupied in the future.
 - The regular forces of neighboring countries, which will launch an invasion across the borders, or will operate from bases inside the country (the Arab Legion).³

- Small local forces which operate, or will operate, from bases inside the country and within the borders of the Hebrew state.

All three forces will be activated at the same time in accordance with a joint operational plan, and will sometimes engage in tactical coordination.

2. Actual operations expected from the enemy' .

- Isolation and, if possible, occupation of the eastern Galilee, western Galilee, and the Negev.
- Infiltration into the heart of the area of Sharon⁴ and Emek Hefer'. in the direction of Qalqilyyah-Herzliya and Tulkarm-Netanya, roughly.
- Isolation of the three major cities (especially Tel Aviv).⁵
- Disruption of food supply lines and other vital services such as water, electricity, etc.

3. Expected tactical methods:

- Attacks by the regular and semi-regular forces on settlements, using heavy infantry weapons, as well as field artillery, armored vehicles, and the air force.
- Air strikes against centers within our cities (especially Tel Aviv)
- Harassment operations carried out by small forces against transportation arteries and settlements to give the operations mentioned above direct or tactical support. These forces will also carry out sabotage operations against vital economic facilities and terrorist raids within cities.

(b) The Authorities

This plan rests on the general assumption that during its implementation, the forces of the [British] authorities will not be present in the country.

In the event that British forces continue to control certain bases and areas, the plan must be modified to deal with this situation in these areas. Additional instructions will be issued in this regard.

(c) International Forces

This plan rests on the assumption that there will be no international forces stationed in the country which are capable of effective action,

(d) Operational Objectives

1. Self-defense against invasion by regular or semi-regular forces. This will be achieved by the following:

- A fixed defensive system to preserve our settlements, vital economic projects, and property, which will enable us to provide governmental services within the borders of the state (based on defending the regions of the state on the one hand. and on blocking the main access routes from enemy territory to the territory of the state. on the other).
- Launching pre-planned counter-attacks on enemy bases and supply lines in the heart of his territory. whether within the borders of the country [Palestine] or in neighboring countries.

2. Ensuring freedom of military and economic activity within the borders of the [Hebrew] state and in Jewish settlements outside its borders by occupying and controlling important high-ground positions on a number of transportation arteries.

3. Preventing the enemy from using frontline positions within his territory which can easily be used for launching attacks. This will be effected by occupying and controlling them.

4. Applying economic pressure on the enemy by besieging some of his cities in order to force him to abandon some of his activities in certain areas of the country.

5. Restricting the capability of the enemy by carrying out limited operations: occupation and control of certain of his bases in rural and urban areas within the borders of the state.

6. Controlling government services and property within the borders of the state and ensuring the supply of essential public services in an effective manner.

3. Assignment of Duties

In view of the operational objectives outlined above, the various armed services are assigned the following duties:

(1) Strengthening the fixed defensive system designed to defend the zones, and coordinating its deployment on the regional level. In addition, the main enemy access routes to the lands of the state must be blocked through appropriate operations and measures.

(2) Consolidation of the defensive apparatus.

(3) Deployment in major cities.

(4) Control of the main transportation arteries country-wide.

(5) Encirclement of enemy cities.

(6) Occupation and control of frontline enemy positions.

(7) Counterattacks inside and outside the borders of the country.

(a) The Fixed Defensive System

1. The fixed defensive system in rural areas depends on two main factors: using protected areas for the purpose of defending the circumference, on the one hand, and blocking main transportation routes used by the enemy, on the other hand.

2. The security arrangements pertaining to the zones in rural areas, originally designed to repel small enemy forces, must be modified in terms of planning and reinforcement to suit the tactical measures expected to be employed by semi-regular or regular enemy forces. This will be effected according to instructions issued by the operations branch in charge of defense and planning in rural areas.

3. In addition, if we take into consideration the tactical measures expected to be employed by the enemy, efforts must be made to make a transition from a positional defense to a regional defense, so that the unit of defense is the region and not the zone.

4. In order to achieve this objective, the following steps must be taken:

a) Transformation of the regional staff from an administrative staff to a general staff (selection of a location, setting up a communications network, etc.)

b) Formation of a regional mobile reserve, to be recruited from the forces appointed to the zones, which would reinforce the forces or carry out counterstrikes in the zones within each region according to pre-arranged plans.

c) Adaptation and incorporation of the plans concerning fortification and opening fire in the zones to those of the region, as far as possible, taking into consideration geographical circumstances and types of weapons used. These plans must also be coordinated with the operations of the regional mobile reserves.

5. Settlements which because of their geographical location cannot be included in a fixed regional defense plan must be organized into local defense zones. Accordingly, they must be equipped to block transport roads used by the enemy, or if tactical circumstances permit, to control the heights, setting up fortifications and barricades and laying mines, etc. This will be done in addition to activating the zone's defensive apparatus. Additional forces must be assigned to carry out these duties, as will be detailed below. These specifications also apply to isolated regions.

6. Blocking the main enemy transportation routes.

a) The main enemy transportation routes which link his lands to the lands of the state, such as roads, bridges, main passes, important crossroads, paths, etc. must be blocked by means of: acts of sabotage, explosions, series of barricades, mine fields, as well as by controlling the elevations near roads and taking up positions there.

b) A system of barricades must be set up in addition to the fixed defensive system. The tactical plans concerning barricades must be adapted to and coordinated with the defensive plans concerning the zones located near these barricades. They must also be coordinated with the regional defense plans if this is possible from the geographical point of view.

(b) Consolidation of Defense Systems and Fortifications

The following operations must be carried out if the fixed defensive system is to be effective and if the rear of this system is to be protected:

1. Occupation of police stations.
2. Control of government installations and provision of services in each and every region.
3. Protection of secondary transportation arteries.
4. Mounting operations against enemy population centers located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force. These operations can be divided into the following categories:

Destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris), especially those population centers which are difficult to control continuously.

Mounting search and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the village and conducting a search inside it. In the event of resistance, the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.

The villages which are emptied in the manner described above must be included in the fixed defensive system and must be fortified as necessary.

In the absence of resistance, garrison troops will enter the village and take up positions in it or in locations which enable complete tactical control. The officer in command of the unit will confiscate all weapons, wireless devices, and motor vehicles in the village. In addition, he will detain all politically suspect individuals. After consultation with the [Jewish] political authorities, bodies will be appointed consisting of people from the village to administer the internal affairs of the village. In every region, a [Jewish] person will be appointed to be responsible for arranging the political and administrative affairs of all [Arab] villages and population centers which are occupied within that region.

(c) Deployment in Major Cities

Positions will be taken in the large cities according to the following principles:

1. Occupation and control of government facilities and property (post offices, telephone exchanges, railroad stations, police stations, harbors, etc.)
2. Protection of all vital public services and installations.
3. Occupation and control of all isolated Arab neighborhoods located between our municipal center and

the Arab municipal center, especially those neighborhoods which control the city's exit and entry roads. These neighborhoods will be controlled according to the guidelines set for searching villages. In case of resistance, the population will be expelled to the area of the Arab municipal center.

4. Encirclement of the central Arab municipal area and its isolation from external transportation routes, as well as the termination of its vital services (water, electricity, fuel, etc.), as far as possible. ,

(d) Control of Main Transportation Arteries on the Regional Level

1. Occupation and control of locations which overlook main regional transportation arteries, such as police stations, water pumps, etc. These elevated locations will be transformed into fortified surveillance posts to be used, when the need arises, as bases for a mobile defensive force. (In many cases, this operation will be coordinated with the occupation of police stations, which aims at consolidating the fixed defensive system.)

2. Occupation and control of Arab villages which constitute a serious obstruction on any of the main transportation arteries. Operations against these villages will be carried out according to the specifications given under the item pertaining to the searching of villages.

(e) Enemy Cities Will Be Besieged according to the Following Guidelines:

1. By isolating them from transportation arteries by laying mines, blowing up bridges, and a system of fixed ambushes.

2. If necessary, by occupying high points which overlook transportation arteries leading to enemy cities, and the fortification of our units in these positions.

3. By disrupting vital services, such as electricity, water, and fuel, or by using economic resources available to us. or by sabotage.

4. By launching a naval operation against the cities that can receive supplies by sea, in order to destroy the vessels carrying the provisions, as well as by carrying out acts of sabotage against harbor facilities.

(f) Occupation and Control of Front line Enemy Positions

Generally, the aim of this plan is not an operation of occupation outside the borders of the Hebrew state. However, concerning enemy bases lying directly close to the borders which may be used as springboards for infiltration into the territory of the state, these must be temporarily occupied and searched for hostiles according to the above guidelines, and they must then be incorporated into our defensive system until operations cease.

Bases located in enemy territory which are intended to be temporarily occupied and controlled will be listed among the operational targets for the various brigades.

(g) Counterattacks Inside and Outside the Borders of the State

Counterattacks will be used as ancillary measures for the fixed defensive system in order to abort the organized attacks launched by semi-regular and regular enemy forces, whether from bases inside the country or from outside the borders.

Counterattacks will be launched according to the following guidelines:

1. Diversionary attacks; i.e., while the enemy is launching an attack against one of our areas, [our forces will launch] a counterattack deep inside another area controlled by the enemy with the aim of diverting his forces in the direction of the counterattack.

2. Striking at transportation and supply routes deep inside enemy territory, especially against a regular enemy force which is invading from across the border.

3. Attacking enemy bases in his rear, both inside the country [Palestine] and across its borders.

4. Counterattacks will generally proceed as follows: a force the size of a battalion, on average, will carry

out a deep infiltration and will launch concentrated attacks against population centers and enemy bases with the aim of destroying them along with the enemy force positioned there;

alternatively, this force may split up to carry out secondary operations, such as acts of sabotage and diversion on the enemy's military transportation routes and arteries.

5. A detailed list of counterattacks will be included in the [list of]8 operational targets of the Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH].

4. Duties of the Armed Services

(a) Allocation of duties in the fixed defensive system:

1. The following duties are the responsibility of the Garrison Force [KHIM],⁹ defense of the zones and of isolated and fortified posts and formation of the regional reserves.

2. Within the framework of the fixed defensive system, the Field Force [KHISH],¹⁰ are responsible for the following duties:

Operations to block enemy transportation routes. For this purpose, every blocking operation will be assigned, on the basis of its importance and type, a specified Field Force unit whose size is appropriate to the nature of the mission.

In addition, the Field Force brigade in question will be responsible for duties related to consolidating the fixed defensive system, as outlined in section 3 (b).

3. In special and exceptional circumstances, Field Force units may be positioned in the regions or zones, or in isolated and fortified positions, in order to reinforce zonal or regional defense. Efforts must be made to decrease the number of such cases, as far as possible.

4. In addition to the duties detailed above, the Field Force's responsibilities within the fixed defensive system generally consist in mounting local counterattacks involving units no smaller than company (larger units should be used if possible) against enemy units while they are attacking the fixed defensive system in order to block their lines of retreat and destroy them. These counterattacks will usually be launched from fixed operational bases which will be specified for the Field Force in the context of the duties for which it is responsible in the region as a whole. These instructions require that the Field Force units be concentrated as much as possible, and not be divided up into secondary units.

5. The chain of command in the cases mentioned above will be in accordance with Addendum 1 to the Order concerning Regional Infrastructure, November 1947.

6. If the blocking system (which the Field Force is responsible for defending) is incorporated into the zonal or regional defensive system, the commander of the Field Force battalion concerned will appoint the commander in charge of the entire defensive system.

(b) In addition to the duties assigned to the Field Force brigade in question concerning the consolidation of the fixed defensive system, the brigade will also carry out the following duties:

- *Consolidation of positions in the cities.*
- *Control of main transportation arteries country-wide.*
- *Encirclement of enemy cities.*

- *Occupation and control of enemy frontline positions. This will be effected in accordance with the operational duties assigned to the various Field Force brigades.*¹¹

In order to carry out any or all of these duties, the supreme command can assign units of the Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH],¹² which constitute the country-wide reserves, to the Field Force.

2. During the implementation of joint missions with the Field Force, units of the Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH] will fall under the command of the Field Force brigade that controls the area in which these units are operating.

3. After completion of the mission, the units of the Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH] will rejoin the country-wide reserves.

4. Efforts must be made to ensure that the period during which units of the country-wide reserves are assigned to the Field Force is as short as possible.

(c) 1. The Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH] is responsible for carrying out counterattacks inside and outside the borders of the country.

2. The supreme command may reduce the number of duties assigned to one or another of the Field Force brigades as it sees fit (i.e. those related to the siege of enemy cities, control of transportation routes and occupation of frontline positions) and allocate them directly to the Strategic Mobile Force [PALMACH] instead.

(d) The various departments and services of the general staff are required to complete the above planning orders in their various areas of responsibility and to present the plans to the Field Force brigades.

==== Notes =====

1. This is Plan Gimmel or Plan C.

2. This is an early version of Plan D, so called after Yehoshua Globerman, a Haganah commander killed in early December 1947. Plan D itself was finalized on 10 March, 1948.

3. This was a British-commanded and financed army of King 'Abdallah's Transjordan, units of which served in Palestine under British army orders until the end of the mandate on 15 May 1948. .

4. Sharon is the coastal plain between Haifa and Tel Aviv, Emek Hefer being its central section (in Arabic Wadi al-Hawarith).

5. The two others are Jerusalem and Haifa.

6. These "police stations" were in fact fortresses, fifty of which were built by the British throughout Palestine after the Arab rebellion of 1936-39 in order to control the Arab population.

7. In the original translation, the word `srika' was translated as "combing." The reference is to a search for hostile forces.

8. This list is not in the Hebrew original of this document.

9. [KHIM] is short for Khayl Matzav, the second line troops. By fall 1947, they numbered about 32,000. See Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 862. *{Israeli sources give much lower numbers - A.I.}*

10. KHISH is short for Khayl Sadeh, the front line troops. By 1 May 1948, they numbered about 30,000. See Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 861. *{Israeli sources give much lower numbers - A.I.}*

11. See Appendix C, below (*A.I. - Not included in the Web version*).

12. PALMACH is short for Plugot Machats, i.e., crushing battalions. By spring 1948. this force was made

up of three brigades (Yiftach, Harel, and HaNegev) numbering just above 8,000 men. See Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), 861. (*The Palmach was originally formed with the intention of repelling an invasion from Vichy-controlled Syria - A.I.*)

Sources: [MidEast Web](#), Translated from Sefer Toldot Hahaganah (History of the Haganah).

[Back to Top](#)

