

**S. J. AGNON'S IDDO W'EYNAM**

**A STUDY OF A MYTH ABOUT MYTH AND ITS SYMBOLS**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. AGNON AND THE PROBLEM OF HIS LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Shmu'el Yoself Agnon, is recognized as the greatest living Israeli Novelist. Why has he not been acclaimed more widely in the western world? For the Western reader who reads him only in translation he is no longer the master stylist. Kafka, to whom Agnon has often been compared employs German, whose terms of reference are within the Western tradition. Agnon writes in the Hebrew whose psychological referents are alien to the West. No wonder that translators, who have worked on Agnon, have often despaired.<sup>1</sup>

One of the stories that has up to the present, not appeared in translation,<sup>2</sup> is the story treated in this essay, Iddo W'eynam. It is an example of the many levels on which Agnon creates, and the difficulties one experiences in making these level rehensible to the Western reader. King James' English is a language of p'shat, the simple and manifest meaning. This becomes an inhibiting factor in the translation of such material as the story Iddo W'eynam.

We want in this present essay to explore some of the myths

which Agnon introduces in this story, compare them with other Agnon materials, and try to make a few educated guesses about their meaning. These will be based upon the clues that Agnon has left for us, some of which are enlightening, and others misleading. Agnon is not above using a good red herring from time to time, to move his reader into a direction that only serves as a ploy.<sup>3</sup> There are many levels to our story. The game of interpreting it therefore is a rather complicated one, often leaving us, after the interpretations have been offered, more in the dark than before. Much of the substance of his art seems to lead us to the cosmic "AHA;" the moment of illumination. Illumination, however cannot be vouchsafed by another person. It is the soul seeing as subject - and seeing itself as object - a sort of reflexive - hithpa'el. This is a terrifying moment and we scramble back in to the forgetfulness of the safe roles we play. This is why we are so susceptible to Agnon's teasing. We are entertained - kept involved - and pleasurably teased while being grateful that we have not been unmasked: Our story is one in which the author almost, but not quite, unmask himself; a very profound striptease in which the lights go out before we see ourselves mirrored in our own nakedness.

The task of writing Iddo W'`eynam is a difficult one, especially in the form in which this has to be done. It would have been far easier and perhaps, far more in keeping with our medium, to have simply written a commentary, very much like that of Rashi on the Canticle, because in the Canticle Rashi makes sure not to

read anything in its plain meaning. Agnon himself would probably feel that Iddo W'`eynam is not quite accessible to interpretation on the level of plain meaning. The reader could then have followed both the story and the commentary as one studies any sacred text in the medieval manner, reading the marginalia back into the text and the text into the marginalia. Thus, it would have been possible to accompany sentences with their interpretation. One could say of them from time to time: Kifshuto - according to its plain meaning, or ke'targumo - according to its translation, or "this sentence demands nothing else but to be interpreted allegorically."

#### B. Allegory, Symbol and Myth

There are times when the interpreter who claims that a particular text is an allegory has to work hard in order to convince his reader that he is really dealing with an allegory. In the case of Iddo W'`eynam it would not be necessary to do so. This story is obviously not an objective account, nor a fictional account of something that could be objective. It must therefore be, we conclude, an allegory. An allegory of what? That remains the question. In fact, no single allegory is available to us that clearly resolves this story. We are dealing with so abstract and yet so basically primal a myth, that it appears in several possible allegories. On that level, this story may be one of the most profound ones written by Agnon. If we may be permitted an allegory ourselves, there are times when there is a simple melodic line

which is accompanied by bass chords and by harmonies that are above the melodic line, but as long as the melodic line is there, the musical pattern is discernible. In our story we find bass chords and harmonies but the melodic line, seems to be missing or comes in only intermittently. However, by itself and for itself it does not constitute a score. This story then is not Tchaikovsky; it is more like something by Schoenberg.

### C. Our Task: to Supply the Letters

Perhaps the following is a more Agonesque metaphor. The Torah was given and written into the scroll of the Pentateuch only in consonantal letters. Invisible around the letters and only in the full masorah, there are the diacritical marks, the vowels cantillations points as well as the taggin, (crowns, crowning the letter 'sh', 'ayin', 'tet', 'nun', 'zayin', 'gimmel', 'tzaddek'). In Iddo W'eynam, we have the mode, the diacritical marks and vowel signs as well as cantillation signs, but the letters are gone. We hope to be able to restore some of the letters and guess at the others. We cannot be as successful as one interpreting The Whole Loaf, since the murky symbolism in our story will remain to plague us. If only we could hear Agnon read this story to us, how much he could give away by the inflection, the cantillation, and the underscoring of words. This would be like hearing a Kabbalist<sup>4</sup> read to us the story of the meeting of Joseph and Judah. We could then understand that one is dealing in a different realm.<sup>5</sup>

That which seems plausible on the oral and aural level may seem rather far fetched by the time it gets written and read. This is one of the connotations of the word legend, i.e., that which is recited. A legend told creates at least a temporary suspension of disbelief. The academic essay is not the best way in which one could handle a midrash on a complicated and complex tale by Agnon. For this reason, the writer begs the reader's indulgence and asks him at times, to sound phrases out with cantillation.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLOT IN FOUR MOVEMENTS

#### A. The Greifenbachs, Their Home, and Their Boarder

The Greifenbachs who own a house in one of the quiet valleys surrounding Jerusalem are preparing to leave the country for a holiday abroad. Due to a tremendous shortage of dwelling space, the Greifenbachs are obsessed with the fear that squatters might break into their home. Agnon, the narrator, who is present, volunteers to check on their house from time to time. The Greifenbachs then intimate that there is a boarder in the house who is unreliable. He is Doctor Gynt<sup>1</sup>. Except for the day on which he rented the room, he had not occupied it. He is generally traveling. The narrator whets our appetite as to the person of Gynt and tells us of his great achievement in philology and linguistics, the rediscovery of a language that had been forgotten. Dr. Gynt can be friendly. On the Greifenbachs' wedding anniversary, he gave them two tobacco-like leaves inscribed with some secret script. We are told they are s'gulloth, doubles from Dr. Gynt's collection.

Touching on the problem of the squatters Greifenbach introduces a sub-theme. He tells how he waited for a bus and overheard a conversation between a husband and wife. He gathers that the husband, someone named Guenther has returned from the war and his wife have been unable to find a dwelling for themselves in which they could live as a married couple. Their landlords moved by greed, do not permit them to live together. No wonder people resort to breaking and entry and become squatters!

The narrator reassures the Greifenbachs and reiterates the promise to keep an eye on their home and leaves. The Greifenbachs depart. This is the prelude of the story.

We now come to the first movement. The narrator visits the Greifenbachs' home. His wife and children are out of town.<sup>2</sup> It is in the middle of the lunar month, and there is a full moon. (After a description of the scene, the Greifenbach home with the Greifenbachs away, Agnon, the narrator, trying to settle down for a restful night, is interrupted by the intrusion of Gabriel Gamzu, a bookseller whom Agnon likes.

#### B. Gamzu, the Anachronistic Lover and His First Night's Tale

The narrator invites Gamzu to enter. What brought him to wander about at night? Returning from his evening prayers he was about to help his sick wife to settle for the night and found her gone. Agnon who knows that she is bedridden asks how this is possible. Gamzu tells us that G'mulah, his wife is a lunatic - a

somnambulist. Gamzu knew of her condition when he married her. G'bharyah ben G'u'el, her father had told him of this. When Gamzu in his love for G'mulah insisted on marrying her, G'bharyah gave to Gamzu a set of leaves, inscribed with secret formulai which have the magical property to bring B'mulah back home after her nocturnal wanderings. (We will call the magical charm amulet leaves by the same name the narrator gives them - S'gullah sing.; S'gulloth pl.).

Agnon makes sure that we will understand the power of the s'gulloth. Gamzu treats us to a discourse on the potency of s'gulloth and he tells us of the strange way in which G'bharyah gave them to him.

Without further prodding we connect the Greifengach leaves with those that Gamzu used to place on his window in order that G'mulah may find her way back.

As Gamzu continues his narrative we hear about a secret language in which G'bharyah and G'mulah conversed. (Could this be Iddo?) and of songs they sang (The Eynamite hymns?)

Agnon asks Gamzu why he now cannot rely on the leaves' potency and Gamzu replies that he has sold them to a 'scholar'. But to which one he cannot remember.

Earlier in Gamzu's narrative we learn about his courtship with G'mulah, and about her people who are of the tribe of Gad, one of the ten lost ones. A Hakham from Jerusalem had spent some time with these people during Gamzu's absence from them (Gamzu had gone to Vienna to seek treatment for his eye). Agnon does not want us

to identify Dr. Gynt too soon and confuses us by an unsure chronology.

Gamzu now lapses into a monologue on the power of s'gulloth in which he tells us of angels and stars, how male-female and heaven have one numerical value and how on occasion one has to abduct a bride.

Gamzu interrupts himself and takes us with him to archaic Jewish settlements. He went there in search of old manuscripts. At this point he also tells us about reincarnation, Hassidic interpretations and comes back to Dr. Gynt whom he does not know but admires from afar for his refusal to seek the limelight and contrasts him with an unscrupulous publicity seeking 'academician' whom he met in London. The discussion of public recognition brings a strain into their discussion. Gamzu is about to leave and promises Agnon to report the developments regarding his wife.

Agnon tries to settle down to a restful sleep and in his reverie he hears a yodeling song sung by a woman's voice. Dream and reality mix. The full moon is yodeling too. In the morning Agnon leaves the Greifenbach home.

Not finding any water in his own water barrel, the narrator returns to the Greifenbach home where there is a cistern. He then tells us the history of the Greifenbach home and its various gimmel

initiated occupants.<sup>1</sup>

Musing on this, night falls on Agnon, the full moon rises and Agnon decides to stay another night. Gamzu appears and Agnon admits him.

C. What Gamzu Found and Lost

His Second Night's Tale

Yes, G'mulah did return. This night Gamzu dared to leave her because he placed a wet mat near the bed and is sure that G'mulah will awaken if she leaves the bed. He learned this trick at the Yeshivah where it helped another somnambulist.

Gamzu settles down for another evening's conversation. As he made his way unconsciously toward the Greifenbachs' house, he heard an outcry "Guenther my love, are you alive"? An Arab had surprised the helpless couple at their tryst and bared his blade at Guenther. Gamzu is now at the house. To entertain his host he tells him of his discovery of the Adiel Hymns. (Agnon here slips in some historiography by identifying the author of Adon Olam and other hymns).

When Gamzu had finished this narrative he tells us the second part of the story of his courtship with G'mulah. While Gamzu was away from G'mulah there appeared at G'mulah's place a man by the

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name of Hakham Gidon. (Here, the narrator teases us into identifying Hakham Gidon as Gynt). Gamzu battles Gady ben Gey'im, wins G'mulah and marries her. (From time to time during Gamzu's tale either the narrator or Gamzu wander in the direction of a sound. Of course, we are expected to direct our ears to the room of the boarder, Dr. Gynt). Gamzu then relates how he fell in love with poetry. As a result he enters into the work of searching for old manuscripts. Several vain attempts are made to continue with the narrative, but the sounds keep intruding. While Agnon is lost in reverie, Gamzu leaves the room to check on the source of the sound. The narrator seeks Gamzu and finds him outside. The tableaux shows a young man sitting at a table, writing down the words of a song. A woman is singing. This we surmise is G'mulah. Despite Gamzu's urging, G'mulah does not want to leave Dr. Gynt. She promises to sing the song of the Gryphith bird, and to die together with Dr. Gynt. She requests Gamzu to bury them side by side. Gamzu takes her away.

#### D. The Fatal Song of the Gryphith and What is Said

##### When There is No More to be Said

We move from one lunar period to another. A month has elapsed. The night brings the narrator to review in his mind the items of scenes two and three. The stage, therefore, is set for the final theme wherein the narrator reads the newspaper, and learns that the Doctor G'Y'L'T' has died, and that the Greifenbachs are returning. There is a funeral at which Gamzu wails over G'mulah,

and a young woman, who obviously was Guenther's lover, wails over Gynt. As soon as the two funerals are ended, and the narrator returns, he meets the Greifenbachs. They want to talk, but a policeman on the scene rushes the traffic on and prevents them from talking. They have very little to say to one another. A will of Gynt is found in his room asking his executor to destroy his writings. No one would do that because as the narrator in the final sentence says: "For when a person dies, his soul becomes ever more effulgent. It shows itself from the books that he has written, whoever is not blind, will take delight in the light they contain."

CHAPTER III

OF AYINS, GIMMELS AND NUNS

G-d and the Writer Conceal to Reveal

To read Iddo W'eynam as a story like other stories about interesting people is to miss the cues Agnon gives us. How are we to read it?

Agnon is a Torah centered person. His style is a Torah style and an Addadic one at that. We must treat it like the Zohar treats the stories of Genesis, that is to say, as an archetypal myth. The Aggadic Poet sees G-d as the hero who "likened in many visions yet is One behind all the diverse imaginings."<sup>1</sup> Three hours out of every day the Holy One, blessed be He, studies Torah.<sup>2</sup> Thus our Sages in a Jewish metaphor say the same thing the philosopher says: G-d is Thought Thinking Itself.

Even in the subtlest thought, there are unvoiced words. He, blessed be He, must utter them. This is why we can call Him and He responds, because the whole Torah is but a list of His names.<sup>3</sup> As we call Him, He comes and makes Himself available vis-a-vis anyone who studies the Law.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, He speaks and He puts all of Himself into His speech. ANoKhY - The great I AM is read as a shorthand of Ana Napshi Katavith Yahavith<sup>5</sup> - All of My Self have I

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written into this Scripture and I have given Myself to you. In His writ He is presenting His presence to us.

His Name begins with a Yud - a jot. All letters begin in a point. But the point is not yet an extension. Without elaboration into length and width, there is no meaning. So He creates - extrudes - Bara<sup>6</sup> - bar - outside of the point and the Yud point becomes a Heh extended. All that is in existence and extension is of the Heh - "With the Yod He created the World to Come."<sup>7</sup> when all will be One - But the world's multiplicity is created by the He - the breath, "by the Hevel of His mouth all their hosts"<sup>8</sup> - Solomon said, that the spirit-wind breath goes all around<sup>9</sup> and all is Hevel.<sup>10</sup> For this Hevel He created and suffers - the smashing breaking, vexing of the spirit<sup>11</sup> - So does the artist.

In Hassidism - D'bhequt - adsorption, to G-d is a great value<sup>12</sup> - But as the sages have already stated - To cleave to Him - How so? - Cleave to His modes - As He is...to be you...<sup>13</sup> Agnon follows this counsel and writes himself - he is the grammatical subject who writes and the substantive subject about whom he writes.

#### B. Persona - the Manager of Deeper Selves

The social persona is easily available to the self and to others. It is the outer layer of the personality, the first letter of its names.

Few people get to choose their own name. Shmucl Yosef Chatchkes did. He is, by his own choice - or better, by the paradoxical necessity of choice, Agnon. The A of his name is

easily accessible to others and to himself. But what fascinates him and what - unless he shares in utterance of tongue or ink - is not available to him, is the second layer - the gimmel layer of his being.

The man on the way to individuation - particularization has on that second layer not one, but many different selves. The many selves are the artist's Hevel, his game and vexation as well as his vanity. Each one of these levels of hevel can only crowd to the stage when there is an audience - So Agnon shows us many of his selves in order that he may meet himself in his selves.

i. Adiel 'AmZeh Who is Not Here - but is

When Agnon is Adiel Amzeh,<sup>14</sup> he is the great student lost forevermore in the record vouchsafed him by the Little Sister (another one of the Torah figures - she is unmarried, virginal). Adiel-as G-d is my witness, I am - unrecognized and unpublished - with this people - Am Zeh. Adiel AmZeh, beginning this name with the Ayin is Agnon's Yud, his persona - the way in which [he] dramatizes himself socially.

Multiplicity and extension come to Agnon in the second letter of his name, the Gimmel. In our story all the significant persons' names begin with the Gimmel. The interaction of one's self-extensions, what each does to the others, their actions, and their passions all constitute a man's inner story. Each one plays his own theme. Do they all form one symphony? Or is it a chaotic cacophony? Who knows before his death? As Agnon expresses it in The Orchestra,<sup>15</sup> each one plays and disregards the other player -

but the result is a symphony. The song constituted by all the parts is a mystery no one can plumb before the end. No one - perhaps not even G-d Himself. He, too, must wait until that day on which He again will be one and His name ONE.<sup>16</sup> Agnon begins to play out these interacting games and invites us to join him. We read and are stimulated to watch all the games current in ourselves and read them back into the story. Perhaps Band is right and each preacher who uses Agnon's text is bound to preach himself and to project. To interpret Agnon's second layer Gimmel story is to confess.<sup>17</sup>

ii. The 'COMPLEAT' "A" "G" "N" "O" "N"

There is some Freudian preoccupation in Agnon. However, if there is much in Agnon that could be understood in terms of modern depth psychology, it is Jungian. We are made to face Agnon's anima, which sings Eynamite hymns and speaks the language of Iddo. In fact, we are not facing an anima that is integrated and that knows where it is going. Nor one that uses the ego to write its last will and testament and to forgive. (As Agnon is being used by Tehilla,<sup>18</sup> a fully individuated anima form.) G'mulah is not like Tehilla, and the house of Greifenbach is in the present, not like the city and citadel of Gumli-data. Agnon is here a spectator and commentator rather than a participant in the drama. In this story, he does not have something specific to achieve for his own individuation. Here he is not facing the frustration of another unatoned Yom Kippur, but only looks through the dark specularia, and in the end of the story we will still have the sense that the full AHA - insight into the tragedy is not as yet acceptable to him or to the reader.

The reader may have the impression that Agnon is an artificer who uses symbols in order to cheat, or sells his birthright for a

pot of message. The dark symbols in The Whole Loaf,<sup>19</sup> once they are identified, leave one cheated. This is not the case in Iddo W'eynam. To reveal the meaning in The Whole Loaf is like peeling a banana; Iddo W'eynam is like peeling an onion. In the banana we have core; while the onion keeps on inviting us to peel it further and further. Or to put it differently - the reader, who in The Whole Loaf looks for myth, is cheated because The Whole Loaf is only an allegory. If the reader wants allegory in Iddo W'eynam he must also remain disappointed; Iddo W'eynam is myth. In fact, it is a myth about myth.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that man is doomed to be born, to live and to die in a solipsistic universe. Does he really get to know the people with whom he lives, or are people nothing but projections of his life, i.e., secondary selves. Agnon is happier in the empty Greifenbach home than with Gerhardt and Gerda. Agnon, a young man who grows up in an era of peace, still has much of Greifenbach in him.<sup>20</sup> Even if he cannot boast that in his life all the furniture stays neat and clean, he is also Gerda, if for no other reason than for his wish to be like her. He is G'mulah for not having experienced the joys of being feminine and, as poet, he is touched by the moon. He is Dr. Gynt. His Berlin days are still very much with him and, even while the great song is sung, he holds his pen to record it. As a male, he has not ever experienced that detumescence in which he can say that he has the feminine altogether in himself. Had he done so, he would have died having discharged himself finally in the one cosmic orgasm in

which the songs of the split selves unit in harmony. Finally, he is also Gamzu. He strays from the Yeshivah, from the way of prosaic study, and this results in art and poetry.

iii. Names, Reflected Light and She

There are two kinds of light - Or Yashar and Or Hozev<sup>21</sup> - Light issuing from the luminary and light reflected. Light issuing from the luminary is invisible - it has no being save to make the luminary visible. The moon is an invisible object made visible by the disappearance of the sun from view. We are fascinated by the moon's resplendence in the reflected light. As a woman is made lovelier by being loved and more attractive in this reflection, so are the facets of Woman - Shabbath - Soul - Torah Shekhina lovelier and more attractive when courted.

Agnon has a deep respect for femininity. It is She, the one who is like the moon who comes to dwell with us, who makes herself small, because "there cannot be two kings wearing one crown."<sup>22</sup> She, now smaller and darker, will be restored to equal the sun in light at the millenium.<sup>23</sup> She gives meaning to all the things that, without Her, would be caught in the senseless, ceaseless flow, turning from one corner of the earth to the other in a never-ending cycle. The moon's waxing and waning are the source of meaning. There is nothing new under the Sun, but every twenty-nine-and-a-half days, there is a New Moon. While our story is not an allegory, both persons and significant objects are drawn carefully

and suggestively.

Adam named the world.<sup>24</sup> His wisdom was great, knowing what animated each being, he gave it names. Each Adam continues to name persons and things. As long as that day on which all forms and names merge into the one Name has not yet arrived, we must study names in reverence. The Kabbalah dares to unveil the mysteries by deliberately intending the names.<sup>25</sup> In knowing the name, there is glory and salvation.<sup>26</sup>

### C. Iddo and Sh'mayahu and a Lost Midrash

Iddo was known as the Seer,<sup>27</sup> Sh'mayahu was known as the prophet.<sup>28</sup> They both were chroniclers of the Northern Kingdom. The divine voice accompanying the tragic split under Jeroboam comes through them. Sh'mayahu prevented the war which Jeroboam planned against Judea in the South.<sup>29</sup> Jeroboam's hand withered because he was about to lay hands on Iddo bringing down G-d's wrath.<sup>30</sup> Iddo is the author of a book - the Midrash of Iddo (what a strange word for is a scriptural record!). Kimchi<sup>31</sup> tells us that Iddo was the fatally for sunstruck child which Elisha, the prophet, resurrected. This child was born because Elisha blessed the barren Shunamite Grand Lady, who built for him a room with chair, table, bed, and lamp.<sup>32</sup> (These objects were the same that Greifenbach gave to Dr. Gynt.)

Between Sh'mayahu and Iddo some hidden drama is played out.<sup>33</sup> One is made to disobey G-d through the other's enticements. The disobedient prophet is killed by a lion<sup>34</sup> and the false prophet, who entices the other by claiming to have a word from G-d, now has the holy man for his burial neighbor.<sup>35</sup> Who di what to whom? We are not quite clear. According to the commentaries<sup>36</sup>, it could be either one - Sh'mayahu or Iddo who did this to the other. Why? Perhaps because his love for the other was so great.

If only we had Iddo's Midrash! But as Kimchi<sup>37</sup> informs us it was lost and (in a Midrashic tour de force) Rashi<sup>38</sup> informs us that Midrash here means a "book which the kings of Israel researched." The Sepher Hayashar mentioned in Joshua<sup>39</sup> and the other parallel

chronicles in the Bible, always whet our appetite. We are informed that the rest of the deeds of so and so are further told in the book of -- which alas, is not extant, and so we are left in suspense. This information Agnon must have filed away in the back of his memory, together with his suspense and fascination. No wonder it comes up when he writes a story in which he deals with such a find as the Eynamite hymns. The language of Iddo, is a good symbol to gether together all the fascinations of the secret language.

Spoken language is primary to the written word. Shim'on Hasaddiq, the one who remained from the Great Assembly and whose words are the earliest recorded ones of the oral Torah was also named Iddo.<sup>40</sup> The mind enjoys its own play. Homo faber is also - or maybe primarily - homo ludens.<sup>41</sup> Prophets to whom allusions are made and who elude us by not leaving records in black and white are excellent screens for projections of the play and we enter into collusion<sup>42</sup> with them. So does every writer of fiction invite us to enter into collusion with him. This collusion is the temporary suspension of disbelief.

In order that we may be able to do this, two conditions are necessary. One - that the material not represent 'reality.' We have so much of it we would not be entertained by more. We want to see the fruit of the artist's crystalization of reality. In reality, everything is there. We want to see some of the everything removed and the rest highlighted by sharing the artist's view. Two - we must also remain in touch with what the artist sees

so that he can communicate with us. Thus, the second condition is that the pattern of his art must evoke a response which sustains the illusion and holds disbelief suspended. The best screen has no image of its own.

No wonder that Iddo, like Elijah and Elisha, serves as a better projection screen than the major prophets. Though the latter recorded great theophanies, they are not sought as heavenly mentors, but Elijah is. He who tells all has no more to tell us, and he who withholds, holds us with him - spellbound disciples snared by the master's cloak.

Iddo and Eynam begin with an Ayin. On the Ayin screen Agnon projects the Gimmels. Iddo is a good projection for Agnon. Lesser known than Elijah, he covers more than he reveals. This is in the character of the myth, and this is Agnon's technique. Thus, Iddo is as mysterious as it is impenetrable. That someone wrote a dictionary of Iddo - had identified nine-nine words of it, is bound to be impressive. Ninety-nine is not a hundred; the barrier has not fully given way. One hundred-and-one would be an indication of having overcome the problem.<sup>43</sup> Ninety-nine is not yet much more than a good fragment. And now, a grammar of Iddo appears - Iddo the mystical, undefinable has rhyme and reason! Surely only a real genius can achieve that penetration of the mystery. R'Nahman of Bratzlav, in his eulogy<sup>44</sup> of the Moses figure, has him find order where all others would only reel from chaos. Agnon, as the shy savant, can write on grammar of the ineffable Iddo idea. Iddo is a language G'mulah and her father, G'bharyah, invented "from their

heart"<sup>45</sup> for glossolalic dialogue - to enjoy themselves with. Speaking-in-tongues, a pentecostal game, is very close to madness and lunacy. By definition, madness follows no grammar. In having deciphered Iddo and written its grammar, Agnon's alter ego has symbolically recovered Iddo's Midrash.

D. Eynamite Hymns, With a Woman's Voice,  
Leaves of Grass, and the Tree of Life

The word Eynam, in the title of this story, remains a puzzle. The root of the word in there is ayin - eye - spring. Hence, eynam - their well spring, or their eye. Two meanings for ayin make Agnon happier than one. This becomes clearer when he uses the adjective E'Y'N'M'a'Y'i'M, which can be read EYN MaYiM. Exodus 15:27 gives us this word twelve, eynot mayim, springs of water. (Interestingly - the palcre, close to Sinai has its own numerology, the twelve wells and the seventy date palms - an oasis of healing.) G'mulah and her father are singing the Eynamite Hymns, 'the songs of the deep' on the plains where the springs are, and also the 'songs of the mountains.' The hymns permit the singer to ascend and descend "All the singing ones go out in song."<sup>46</sup>

We are on the terrotpru pf Gad where bands of g'dudim are being organized. Thus our sages speak of Babylon where bands were being organized for the study of Torah - a Torah that is not written on scrolls, nor of parchment, nor leather and skin. To be written on animal matter is the prerogative of the written Torah;

prerogative of the oral Torah is that it is always written on paper, on vegetables, of smashei adama, that which grows out of the earth. Perhaps more telling about the leaves than earth for adama, is adam, - man. There is a Torah Incubated heavenly seed sprouts from man's earthy mind and becomes a Tree of Life, a plant of delight - even a forest of trees on which grow Talmud folios.<sup>47, 48</sup>

Agnon saw fit to rewrite the story of the 'revelation of the leaves to Gamzu'. He was not done with his fascination when he wrote the first edition and had to expand the passage and add to it ~~it is a multihued shimmer, aflame in hashmalic fire, it sears the eye of the beholder, blinding it perhaps more than the sandstorm which blinded one of Gamzu's eyes. The leaves look like ordinary leaves but the letters dance like flames.~~ in a multihued shimmer, aflame in hashmalic fire, it sears the eye of the beholder, blinding it perhaps more than the sandstorm which blinded one of Gamzu's eyes. The leaves look like ordinary leaves but the letters dance like flames.

When Rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel studied Torah such flames issued from him.<sup>49</sup>

Like the Second Tablets where man shapes the matter and G-d inscribes it, so does earth - man grows the leaves while the scepter, in the 'Iddo-Eynamite tongue, comes from Above.

When did Torah sh'b'al pen appear? The given Torah, the written Torah is an historic event. The oral law is a pre-historic event. "It ties that which is at the beginning of history with that which [proceeded] it."<sup>50</sup> Two thousand years before the world was created, the Torah was created.<sup>51</sup> And when the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create the world, he looked into the Torah and created it.<sup>52</sup> Which Torah was it? Surely not the written

Torah. It is the oral Torah which pre-exists in G-d's anticipation of man's partnership with him. The Midrash shows G-d taking counsel with the souls of the righteous<sup>53</sup> (and all thy people are righteous)<sup>54</sup> before the world was created. Then the righteous had their being in the divine anticipation of their existence. The letters on the leaves and on the Tablets have their root in this anticipation of their existence. The letters on the leaves and on the Tablets have their root in this anticipation.<sup>55</sup> These letters are created by G-d inscribed by His finger; but who created the letters in G-d? Man and Earth and anticipation. Earth-man is the ground from which grew the script and the leaves.

The skin of an animal, on which the written Torah is written, cannot grow. Leave it to the oral law to continue to grow; leave it to the oral law to connect world to world, leave it to the oral the law to be the true 'Etz Hayim'<sup>56</sup>, the Yigdrasil<sup>57</sup> the World Tree, the Arbor Vitae. Because it is the ground of creation, it has more power than the cause has on effect. It can affect stars, it can affect everything. It is that s'gullah that gives Israel its centripetal force, when everything else drives Israwl into a centrifugal peripheral exile. True - the world who took the Torah, the Dr. Gynts who posed as Jerusalem sages, can make G'mulah sing the Orphic melod, but it is a fatal song. Poor Gamzu, the Talmudic Jew, can't sing this kind of a song by himself, that is why he needs the s'gullah, the Torah sh'b'al pen, to bring G'mulah, Torah sh'nikhtaw, bestowed on him by G'bharyah, the Moses figure, back to him.

If only Gamzu, the Talmud Jew, could trust Life and Death as dispensed justly by Him who ordains life and death, and thus causes salvation to unfold. He could then listen to the Orphic Melody and perhaps he could also consummate his marriage to G'mulah. If the Jew who believes in the messianic consummation would dare to pretend for a little while that it has taken place (after all, what is the sabbath if not a little pre-tending, a taking before the final time of the messianic fulfillment of what will be our common experience after the consummation. That is why those who "taste Her will merit life")<sup>58</sup> and then expire in his ecstasy, he might be able to live. The Torah only remains with him who is ready to die for Her.

He who lives in the anticipation of the millenium can make history because he derives his life from the mythic pre-post historic realm. To tie history to pre-history is important, yet, Agnon wants us to know we are not to look in the 'Eynamite hymns for historical content. But rather, "for the strength of their spirit and the pride of their song."<sup>59</sup> So, while he again mentions that it is wonderful to have ninety-nine words of a language, whose name we do not even know, to have the grammar of such a language is even more amazing.

Not only do they represent a discovery of the unknown, but even if it would have been known, their value stands by itself and needs not be enhanced by the fact that they were unknown. Agnon's fascination with the problem of the authorship of the Torah is our own fascination. When we are most worried that the Torah might

(far be it) not of divine origin, we argue for it on the basis of its intrinsic value.

Dr. Ne'eman of The Whole Loaf<sup>60</sup> insists that Herr...wrote the book -"but even thoas who say that he wrote it himself agree that the world has changed for the better." Here the value of the book is pragmatic if not divine. And in our story, too, there are some people who did not want to believe that the hymns were 'Eynamite, yet, nevertheless, they wrote commentaries to it, because here the value is scientific. Whenever the Torah needs to be justified in extrinsic germs: literature, pragmatic, scientific, She is more feminine.

Of course, the Torah has often been called masculine,<sup>61</sup> and is generally seen as the work of men, but as Agnon, the poet, well knows those who read scientifically read it without cantillation. In other words, the non-Jew, the Gentile scholar is bound to his knowledge of the critical apparatus and the text then seems masculine to him. How different it would be if he could sing it in the same aima femininity that the lamdan in the Beth Hamidrash saw in the Torah. Not for nought is the word, Torah, feminine, and of course, Agnon lets us kow that it makes a great deal of difference whether one reads the Torah for the sake of Wissenschaft or for enjoyment of it.<sup>62</sup> If this is so with the Torah, how much more so it is with the Qabbalah (Jabbakag). In fact, a case can be made that G'mulah and the hymns and the s'gulloth and this entire story is the story about the Kabbalah. Of course, Agnon has no reason to want to see any of the Kabbalah located in the Thirteenth century.

The Kabbalah is a science dating from before the world was created. It ties us to that which preceeded history. In fact, this is the view that the Midrash had about the Torah. At any rate, as it is studied, read, understood, on high as p'nimi' uth ha'Torah, (the innermost part of the Torah).

We refer to it as the Kabbalah. But while the Kabbalah is the song, it is allso a game "a language they had invented so they might converse in it." As long as G'bharyah lived, G'mulah's conversing in this tongue was a sign of health. G'mulah must converse or die. Gamzu never learns to understand tne speak the language and Gynt only wants to publish, neither of them want to sing the 'Eynamite hymns.

The yihud song is for dying, for ecstasy, for knowing and death. It may be taught and learned, but when it is sung it is for expiring. As long as the song is from the feminine realm it brings death.<sup>63</sup> As long as the leaves are here this death is only a journey with the promise of return implicit. The leaves are a guarantee of life. No matter what keeps Gamzu from seeing fully, he is committed to life. He may be an anachronism, yet he is a viable one; whereas G'mulah without Gamzu or G'bharyah is deadly, a lunatic, a necrophiliac atavism. Gamzu's clothes are ripped by G'mulah, he is bruised by her; yet she keeps him alive and he keeps her alive, and because of the leaves, she finds her way home each time she wanders away.

It is very hard to live with a lunatic female, even if she be the written Torah, the G'mulah Torah, but we can be consoled. As

long as we leave the Talmud leaves on the window, G'mulah comes back.

"Burn no fire in all your habitations."<sup>64</sup> is the scriptural statement. Who can live like that? How can there be Shalom Bayit<sup>65</sup> - familial harmony - unless we have light? So the oral law in the service of life contradicts scripture in order to keep it from straying from life. Does the oral law forsake the law of life? It can do so in a tragic moment and then all that is left is a hospital bed. Does the written law forsake the law of life? On moonlit nights it breaks the familial bond and wanders. If it were not for the oral law with its obligating prose<sup>66</sup> symbolized by the leaves bringing the written law back to life, it would end in death.

The nations of the world want to own the scriptures by translating and betraying them - both tradire - but without the oral law. For the nations of the world the Talmud is for burning. The oral law was in danger. When? At the time when it was to be redacted. And so, Rabba bar Nahmani ran from Pumbedita to Eyna d'maya<sup>67</sup>, to Pumbedita. (That entire section of Baba Mesiah is 'Agnonesque'). An 'Eyna d'maya spring also figures in the escape of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohay and his son from the Romans. To save Jewish life and the oral law, one needs to get to 'Eynam. But poor G'mulah! Poor Gamzu! If only they were to see the living letters of the s'gulloth and sing the 'Eynamite hymns - speak the hidden Iddo tongue (not as a liturgical exercise but for the sheer fun of it as G'mulah did with her father).

In the shtetl many a man considered a halakhic work to be useful - but a hassidic work - an aggadic work, a Zohar - was a good s'gullah and not a hymnal for recreation.

For all the Talmud's halakhic masculinity, you study Aggadah and the sound of a woman's voice is heard. Even the melody with which Aggadah is studied is not as specific and hard, is not as discursive nor as dialectical. It is yearning, a yearning 'to thy man'.<sup>69</sup> The student of the Talmud studying Aggadah becomes feminine and yearning, and wishes to be taken up in rapture. Saul Raskin paints such Yeshivah student types.

"Though one thing puzzles me. All 'Eynamologists state that gods of 'Eynam and their clergy were males. How then did they not sense the lovely discourse and song of woman?<sup>69</sup> I may be mistaken because I am no researcher but one who reads for pleasure." This last sentence so humbly disavows Agnon's authority, and at the same time establishes it with even greater pride. As if Agnon said to all the academicians; if hymns are for singing, you must ask a singer, for the singer shares more with the author of the hymns than the critic. And if a hymn is to be sung, not analyzed then a myth is to be played out and experienced rather than interpreted. This is a thought Agnon would like to linger on, but the Gerda Greifenbachs and their anxiety cannot permit any mythic intrusions.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHOSE STORY IS IT?

#### A. The Greifenbachs

The Greifenbachs are tired of dwelling in the land. Agnon has celebrated people who know how to dwell in the land such as one who, when he drinks the wine after the grace, will add water at the words "a good and ample land"<sup>1</sup> in order to show how precious the land is. A learned person knows how to dwell in the land. Greifenbach, who only knows Gesenius' grammar and not much else in Hebrew, is not learned enough to appreciate that in this land one could really relax and rest. How dwelling in such a beautiful and quiet house like that of the Greifenbachs can ever turn into drudgery and tiredness can only be understood by seeing Greifenbach as a bourgeois "Jecke."

To dwell in one house with Gynt and not to find out more about him and get to know him better, is also, a source of our amazement. Of course, the answer is clear. They want to visit their close ones, their g'robhim, who are outside of the land. They are far closer to the people who are outside of the land, than to the people who are inside of the land. Yet, they own THE HOUSE. The irony is not lost to us. Then again, those who appreciate the

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poetic are not given to "fix the house and furnish it, to bring in electricity and water and other modern conveniences." The poet has not even rainwater in his barrel.

We note that Greifengach rents the place to Dr. Gynt on condition that he will not have to serve him or do anything for him except give him a bed, table, chair and a lamp. The same implements furnish the prophet's room in the Shunamite's home.<sup>2</sup> She would only be too glad to serve the prophet. Of course, the Shunamite woman had a flair for the qualities of the prophet, as our sages say: "After having inspected his sheets, she saw that his dreams were pure and he had no nocturnal emissions."<sup>3</sup> But this is something that a Greifenbach would never think possible of anyone, least of all, as his boarder, Dr. Gynt.

We see the reversal of Greifenbach's attitude toward Gynt when he reports how Dr. Gynt says to him: "I promise you I will not trouble you much. I am a person who often is away on trips and only come to town to rest between voyages. I do not bring guests to my house."<sup>4</sup> Greifenbach then gives him a second look, and he is amazed how at first he did not see all that he now sees in this man. Here again, we have Agnon's fascination for the one who, like Saul, "is hidden among the utensils,"<sup>5</sup> as one who is shy of the

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public eye. His great people therefore, are 'Adiel 'AmZeh and Ga'bhriel Gamzu and not the people who sell their soul for bread.

While Agnon rhapsodizes on the feminine quality of the songs, he puts into the mouth of Greifenbach the cynical statement: "However, one thing I am permitted to say, in every generation there are things that look like revelations that could never be surpassed; in the end, they are all forgotten.<sup>6</sup> Because a new revelation has occurred. So it is also with revelations of Dr. Gynt."<sup>7</sup> Little does Greifenbach know that the revelation of Dr. Gynnt is identical with the revelatioin of G'bharyah ben G'u'el. For that matter, all revelations are the same revelation in which that which cannot be put into words puts itself into words, and at once succeeds and fails. It succeeds because it manages to put this thing into words, and fails, because so much is left yet unsaid. Therefore, it attempts a new revelation, though all revelations are identical. Greifenbach<sup>8</sup> we could read as one who wants to grip the stream, hold it, arrest the dynamic and only allow the static, who wants to step into the same river twice, and is unable to do so.

What do we know about Greifenbach? He was a doctor who does not practice anymore. In contrast, Dr. Ne'eman is a practicing physician. Like G'bharyah, he is a healer. The Greifenbachs do

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not take in boarders regularly. It is only because Dr. Gynt does not stay in very much or very often, and has a separate entrance and "doesn't trouble us," that he was accepted into the household.

Greifenbach must always be in control. His great fear is that of invaders, squatters. No wonder, in this story Greifenbach most closely resembles a rational being who has a quite house, separated from everyone else in a valley of privacy, and who hates to have people come into his own house, especially when he is not there to admit and control them. Even though his name, Gerhardt, places him among the warriors,<sup>9, 10</sup> the way of life, of the Greifenbachs was even-keeled, the narrator reports. The realities of "dwelling in the land" had exhausted them, and so they seek to rest a bit, in other countries, where diversions would be welcomed. The air of the land of Israel makes one wise by refusing to allow its residents to be "diverted."

Gerda is the down-to-earth person. She has to deal with Gracia, the maid, and she manages enough Hebrew to do so. Gerhardt, on the other hand, who gets his Hebrew knowledge from secondary sources, still manages to be a bit of a dreamer. Gerda is a good housekeeper, so much so, that her influence palpably makes itself felt even though she is away from the house, (having exacted an obedience from the very furniture and the walls). Gerhardt is the present owner of the house, and for most of this

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story, an absentee landlord.

Greifenbach's interest in philological origins is only of amateur standing, which is contrary to Adnon's, who adds what he learned about the genesis of language from the Kabbalah. How tragic then that Greifenbach had two of the 'leaves' and did not give them to Bamzu who so desperately needed them. To Greifenbach, they were only a curiosity - Gerhardt collects curiosities while Gamzu needs the s'gulloth to save his wife, or at least to help her return.

Dr. Gynt, the mysterious boarder, the author of the grammar and vocabulary of Iddo, and the 'discoverer'<sup>11</sup> of the 'Eynamite Hymns exerts great power on all other persons in this story. We wish we could know him as a person. But this is not given to us by Agnon. The narrator states that he has never seen, nor has he met anyone else who knows him on a face-to-face level. Greifenbach, who had the opportunity of knowing him, only knows him as an undemanding boarder. Even when Dr. Gynt gives him two of the duplicate leaves, he does not make this an occasion for seeking a closer acquaintance. G'mulah knows him and loves him as Hahkham Gid'on. Gamzu has heard about him from G'bharyah's people.

We who read the story are in the dark. Agnon has given him the name Gynt, although no first name is mentioned.

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B. Dr. Gynt

We might explore just one more connection with Agnon's Dr. Gynt.<sup>11</sup> Having opted for this spelling, a parallel suggests itself with great force. Ibsen wrote a play, Peer Gynt. It is a play about a wanderer - a pilgrim. A wild lover, he enters a shevuath emunim - a covenant of love with a girl called Solveig and leaves her to seek his fortune. After an Odyssey, Peer Gynt returns to his native land and finally is reunited with his beloved Solveig who waited for him all the years of his exile. As Peer Gynt returns, Solveig sings her song and we are given to understand that Peer Gynt dies. Whether Solveig dies with Peer Gynt at the song's end or not, we do not know because the curtain falls.

Solveig is very close to the Russian solovey which means nightingale. And if magrefah<sup>12</sup> is the meliflorous temple instrument, the whole circle of meaning is webbed together by calling the bird g'ruphit - Gryphith.

Peer Gynt has no face of his own. This is the reason why the button man with his ladle is such a great threat to him. If he has any being, it is given to him by Solveig. Dr. Gynt, we never meet in this story as a man with a face of his own. Whatever Dr. Gynt really accomplishes stems from G'mulah, who has faith in 'Hacham Gid'on'. Dr. Gid'on Gynt, the 'Haham Yerushalmi', is not the wild Peer Gynt. It is enough that Agnon should let us into this secret

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that "I have not yet met a person who has said that he has met him face to face." Begriffenfeldt - (Greifenbach) does meet him face to face in the tense moment when Peer Gynt communes with the Sphinx. Begriffenfeldt makes him an occupant of his mad house.

Could it be that the episode in Longon with the man who had himself photographed with Gamzu's manuscripts is the same Dr. Gynt before his becoming Gid'on by G'mulah's grace?

Peer Gynt in Morrocco is the epitome of cynicism. Agnon's description of the academicians shows that same cynicism. What makes Agnon's Dr. Gynt so mysterious is that we don't even know Gynt as a pseudo-person, whereas in Ibsen's Peer Gynt we at least get an interesting pseudo-person. On the other hand, the lunacy which we see in Peer Gynt, we can only find here in G'mulah.

Now we come to another character in Ibsen's book and that is the man who cut his finger off in order not to have to fight in the war; a pathetic and tragic man. He is everything that the world wanted Peer Gynt to be, yet what did he achieve in his life and in his death? This futility in Agnon's Gynt is part and parcel of Gamzu's situation. Both of them are ba'aley mum, now quite complete, of injured limbs - Gamzu with a dead eye, and the other one with an incomplete hand.

The consonance of Ibsen's and Agnon's symbols, creates a difficulty for us. Agnon does not want to admit that he is a cultural product of Western Europe, and that Ibsen or Kafka...are also resident Agnon Gimmels, i.e., alter egos. Both Ibsen and Kafka managed to give expression to surrealist symbols and myths.

Not only does Greifenbach misjudge Dr. Gynt, but so does Gamzu. As Gamzu puts his finger to his dead eye; he finally says: "It is Gynt that I sold the s'gullah to." He would have never given Gynt credit for knowing a s'gullah for a s'gullah. It is as if Agnon wants to reveal a precious secret: No one else knows how to die with the Gryphith song any more. Only G'mulah, who is sick unto death in the daylight world, and who only lives and yodels on moonlit nights can die Gryphith-wise. However, she, the daughter of G'bbharyah, has always been known as a lunatic. To think that Dr. Gynt, a European, would also be capable of such rapture only Agnon, who was in on the secret from the beginning, knows.

Gamzu is a tragic husband who never consummates his marriage. Yet Gynt is the tragic lover. The separated lovers only meet in death.<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Nathan of Acco quoted in Vidaz' Reshit Hokhman<sup>15</sup> tells of an unconsummated love in which the princess tells the commoner that she can only meet him in the tryst of the cemetery. But was Dr. Gynt really G'mullah's lover? Agnon keeps us in suspense.

In Agnon's view, Dr. Gynt is a great man - all the more so because he does not seek publicity. As Agnon says "that little bit you hear of him is an unconscious find. The unconscious find! - There are three things that come unconsciously, behesseh hada ath, when the mind is distracted; a find - a mesiah, the Messiah, and a

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scorpion's sting."<sup>16</sup>

Agnon invites us to turn the phrase around - in his usual punning use of Hebrew, a find - in the unconscious. Now we may pursue this further in psychoanalytic terms, though these terms are not the ones in which Agnon usually makes us confront the primary imago material which he allows us to interpret. One could see the language of the unconscious as the language of Iddo, and the aesthetics of the unconscious as that of 'Eynam. In general, we will not follow a psychoanalytic interpretation here. Not that it is impossible. Like the Had Gadya, this story is capable of many, many interpretations. Most interpretations of the Had Gadya have favoured an historical one; one of Heilsgeschichte. Yet there exists a commentary<sup>17</sup> of the Had Gadya in terms of the psycho-social development of man. Agnon is far too much at home in Midrash to feel comfortable in depth psychology. Yet, like the material of the creators of Midrash, his living imagoes are grist for a depth psychologist's mill.

At the double funeral Agnon watches a young woman who moves her slight thin body in rhythm to her very sad song. "I did not understand a single word of her song. But her voice, her walk, and her face caused everyone to weep."<sup>18</sup> The woman took out a picture of a young man, looked at it, and continued to sing songs over his

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charm and beauty...his young years, and the many more years that he had yet to live had not the angel of death caught him untimely. She looks like Guenther's wife, yet we are not sure. We are sure however, that she manages somehow to speak the non-verbal language and to cry and sing her song in it. We are sure of this for two reasons; one, because we can never understand a single word of what she was saying, and secondly; because the narrator says that surely G'mulah would bewail her father, thusly.

Why did Agnon not make it more transparent if he meant us to see that Guenther and Gynt were one and the same person? Perhaps one of the reasons was that he did not want to cause the Greifenbachs to feel that they prevented a great and licit love from being consummated, but this remains merely a guess.

The primal myth is also the myth of the dance of separation and union. No poet wants to admit that he gets his symbols second-hand.. In fact, we hear Agnon refer to the mashal hagadmoni - primeval allegory. What is this mashal hagadmoni?<sup>19</sup> The Torah, the logos is the mashal hagadmoni for all realities that are to happen. It is not a symbol. A symbol is static. The mashal hagadmoni is a myth. It is the primary primeval myth. A myth clothes itself in thousands of garments. Though the labels of the dramatic personae in the myth change, their roles are fixed. For Jews they are G-d, Torah, and Israel, and Agnon is very much concerned about the interaction of these three.

G-d, in writings of Agnon wears many faces. We find him in The Orchestra<sup>20</sup> as the invisible conductor. In his story, The Other Tallis,<sup>21</sup> He is He of Whom we do not think, but Who never forgets us. Agnon's G-d persons all posse the same enigma; we do not know Him but His solicitous concern for us is manifest. Like the pictures in the Sarajevo Haggadah, G-d is not depicted, only His effects are.

The Torah, Dr. Ne'eman's book, G'mulah, the book of Gumli Data, all these represent Torah. The oral law, as we have pointed out, are the leaves or[?] Dr. Ne'eman's letters; the stories that bored me and that entertained my children, which Ribeizen tells are the Eynamite - (Aggadic) hymns.

When we explore the dimension of Israel, our problems are more complex. Who is Israel at present? What is the true identity of Israel when stripped of all the gallut defences and accretions? In The Good Years,<sup>22</sup> Agnon explores this by introducing us to people who are at the same time younger and older. The old, old man and the young, old man; Tehilla herself, are very important symbols for Israel. Her name points in this direction - this people I have created for me to tell of my Tehilla.<sup>23</sup> Tehilla has a daughter who turns Christian. It is as if Agnon were to ask whether Israel is

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still alive? Tehilla puts her affairs in order and dies. What has remained? It is not that Agnon offers no advice as to what Israel must do. Israel can turn the winds of this world from enemy into lover if it builds on solid rock.<sup>24</sup>

What happened in the great tragic myth, in which G-d, Torah and Israel are the Jewish labels for the dramatis personae? G-d is invisible, the Torah is written but unconsummated at present. The letters of the oral law are not being sent on. The Torah is sleepwalking, the leaves are stolen; what can Israel do?

C. Guenther, Squatters and Separated Lovers

The squatters and the housebreakers are not altogether bad. The narrator feels for them. He knows that their lawlessness is not innate but is subject to a situation where the proper opportunities are not available. Where landlords conspire to keep a married couple apart, who, after all, deserve being married in the eyes of G-d and man, to spend their time together and not to have to meet in cafes. Agnon then, is even more of a defendant than the Talmud. The Talmud makes it very clear -

"A man once had a cow, and instead of feeding her straw, he fed her beans. What caused the cow to kick over the pail? Was it not the beans that the cow was fed?

A lion does not roar from a heap of straw but from a heap of meat.

What about this man who dressed his son, anointed him, perfumed him, and gave him money, and seated him in front of a brothel? What should this son do and not sin?"<sup>25</sup>

From all of these we can understand the process, but we still do not become convinced that the lawbreaking is just. It is natural. And now comes Agnon and points out to us that the polishin, the squatters, have a real claim. And then he tells us the story of Guenther and his wife, which he overhears in a bus. A bus, omnibus, we all together; omnibus is a great plural in the first person, in which we are all involved. No one travels through time by himself; it is a collective experience. But what can you do in Jerusalem, which is like everywhere else, because we all are in the omnibus predicament. When you don't need the bus; it comes. And at times when you do, you wait and wait and wait, and there are more people waiting than there are spaces on the bus. Squatters, housebreakers, infiltrators are a danger to the Greifenbachs. No lock can keep them out.<sup>26</sup>

Fantasies that enter the mind unbidden, establishing domicile, are squatters. Not respecting the mind's censoring sphincters, they enter and are not easily rid of. Why are they kept out? Because the bourgeois ego, the landlord is afraid of them. Why do they push themselves into the mind? Because fantasy is the lover of reality, because yearning is the lover of the discerning and all want to

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dwell under the roof of the Self. We, ourselves, have separated these lovers in order to manage better. Thus, we have made life bi-polar - we wanted to be knowers of good and evil instead of adhering to the one Tree of Life.

It is a primal crime to prevent the union of lovers and the tragedy of love is what its intensity feeds on the lovers' being prevented from their union. Perhaps each love is nurtured only to the degree to which the lovers are kept apart. Yet, where the barriers are external, the lovers still have a chance, even if this makes them break and enter into homes not their own. They are well polarized toward each other. Not so Gamzu and G'mulah. What keeps them apart is not of the nature of a reality that solves its problem by 'reality measures' like breaking and entering. It is some intangible thing. Perhaps it is the ghost of the Dr. Gynt's side of the triangle.<sup>27</sup>

In the dyad of love, the problem is soluble. Either the partners love or they hate each other. They must relate to one another. Not so in the triangle. One of the three can remain completely uninvolved, the other involved with him, and the third involved with the second. Insoluble problems need s'gulloth. Yet s'gulloth do not solve problems; they shift them, and not even permanently. For some problems this may be a solution, but in our case they are asymptomatic palliative. All the s'gulloth have not helped Gamzu to consummate his marriage.

In Israel and G-d tradition sees the prototype of marriage. The giving of the Torah, fascinates Agnon enough to make a collection of Midrashim, and to publish them under the name Atem Re'item. This is not merely a coincidental theme in Agnon. The letters that Dr. Ne'eman gave to the author, the figure of Dr. Ne'eman, the old judge in The Orchestra, all point to this preoccupation of Agnon. Something has taken place at Mount Sinai, but it was not brought to fulfillment. G-d's gift has been given. Consummation still lacks on our part. G'mulah does not give herself to Gamzu. G'mulah has been sick all the time. Gamzu suffers. But despite his tacit insistence - that even-this-is-for-the-good, Gamzu is at least partially at fault. The consummation awaits his meriting it, for "if they merit it I shall hasten it."<sup>28</sup>

How could the Torah be seen as virginal? The Ba'al Shem Tov put this succinctly. The Torah of G-d is perfect, like a virgin; no one has touched her yet.<sup>29</sup> It stands unknown as it did when it first was given.

Agnon's Yamin Nora'im shows his other great concern, The High Holy Days. Agnon wants to celebrate either Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, but he never quite accomplishes this.<sup>30</sup> Once he has to borrow a tallit, once he is tempted to drink on a day of total

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abstinence, (in his earlier novel when Agnon still wants to return to Butchatch {Buasasz}, his home town) he only meets disappointment. And so, what Agnon cannot do in space, he now tries to do in time, and does not succeed either. No wonder Agnon is preoccupied with the theme of the High Holy Days - he is yet to make his one Yom Kippur count.

Agnon could have created a Haggada rich with symbolism, but somehow, on Pesach Agnon has fewer ambivalences. It is during the High Holy Days that he cannot act. This does not mean that during the High Holy Days G-d is not to be found. Agnon wrote (for De'oth)<sup>31</sup> Asseret Hayamim, (The Ten Days) subtitled A Story of Lovers, about a king and his ten sons. This is a parable on the ten days of penitence, and here, everything happens on schedule. Liturgically, these ten days have power of their own. G-d has made it possible for man to meet Him and to be met by Him. Man's - Agnon's problem, is that he does not wash up on time, that he arrives too late, that he is overwhelmed by the grandeur of the day, and the orchestra that plays a symphony without any one player aware of what his own part in the symphony is.

Agnon (everyman as long as he has discrete existence) suffers from lack of consummation. If Agnon would only have his wife and children with him in the domestic peace! But he is the cerebral-object-less-lover; he loves only fantasies and realized consummation is not idealization.

Agnon has no redemptive Messiah figures. Revealers, Moses figures and judges are not Messiah figures. The Messiah brings union and consummation - but wholeness in male-female terms as a state finally achieved is always only an ideal - "Das ewig werbliche zieht uns hienan." - for Goethe consummation gives victory to the devil. Redemption for him lies in the unfulfilled. For Jews, consummation is Messianic.

Thye masculine doing Jew is also constantly reinforced to yearn by Torah - Sabbath - Soul - en fin - by G-d the Female, by the Shekhinah. All activity begets something devilish and Promethean - (Prometheus is only a would-be Messiah). Perhaps the Messiah will first have to redeem Prometheus, himself - before he can redeem others.

Humanism is optimistic. Man can do and achieve. Agnon cannot do and achieve. This does not make him a misanthrope. There are some good people - The pure in heart. Agnon-s art also to some extent hinges on the predicament of man. Kurtzweil is right when he says<sup>32</sup> that Agnon is a rebel and he means by that, that he is a modern man. The messianic consolation is not enough for him. At least verbally, Agnon is not one who longingly looks for salvation. Tragedy cannot suffer a Messiah. A Messiah spoils the tragic play by turning the passion of life into a Comoedia Divina. The only relief Agnon permits is that of redemptive persons like Hananyah. Hananyah from The Heart of the Seas is a person who no longer needs

the Messiah, whereas all of us who need the Messiah, will not be able to complete anything of real renewal, of real forgiveness by ourselves.

The wedding of the Song of Songs is the giving of Torah, but it, too, was not consummated. It is a wedding day; we have been sanctified by His commandments; in fact, we pronounce the blessing - 'Asher qid'shanu b'misota', Rabbi Schneor Zalman of Liadi points out - 'As a man who sanctifies his wife, so did He sanctify us with His commandments, and He commanded us'<sup>33</sup> which he reads as sawata-w'hibbur, closeness and union. For our part, the union has not yet been consummated, and will only be consummated at the coming of the Messiah. The engagement was before the Genesis, before the world was created, as our sages say - 'T'nai hitna ha'qadosh Barukh Hu be'ma' aseh b'reshith'.<sup>34</sup>

During this time we are still waiting for consummation. The temptations that might ultimately prevent us from ever achieving the union are very great. The sickness that keeps G'mulah from her husband, as well as her marriage to Gamzu which keeps her from Dr. Gynt, do not allow the lovers to be united. The lady who represents the non-Jewish power of this age, offering the peddler all sorts of security in an illicit union,<sup>35</sup> keep us suspended in exile. The lovers are cut down by the Cossaks. Exile is a disease

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and there seems to be no cure. We must make sure that the myth will be understood as a myth, that is not remain history. The lovers are always the same eternal lovers. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, in one of his tales, tells ua about the love pangs of the Heart and the Spring.<sup>36</sup> The Heart symbolizes the feminine and the Spring the masculine. (But by choosing heart and spring as symbols R'Nachman's symbols are reversible. The bride is called the 'closed spring', the 'ma'ayan hatum'<sup>37</sup> and the heart sues for the love, pleads for it, does all the courting and brings a new day. Reb Nachman's lovers are in the abstract.)

The theme of divorcee, the forsaken, unfulfilled woman (Agunoth), has plagued Agnon for a long time. Tehilla and Shrage cannot get together. Purposeless hate, the cause of the destruction of the temple is also the cause of this tragedy. G'mulah is moonstruck and so are we all.

Israel is compared to the moon, waiting like the moon to be restored to its greatness. Only by the same light of the moon does B'mulah find her song again. The celebration presaging the coming of the Messiah cannot be maintained when the moon is not full (or invisible). If the moon is the centrifugal force sending G'mulah wandering, then the s'gulloth are the centripetal force, always bringing G'mulah back.

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D. G'mulah and Selene

What do we know of G'mulah? We have her name. G'mulah, undeserved bestowal, a gift. Agnon's G'mulah dances like Ibsen's Anitra, the Beduin chief's daughter.<sup>38</sup> Her dance is Anitra's dance, except that G'mulah not only dances, but she causes her friends to dance. And here, Agnon significantly lets us know how many there are, and since he gives us two numbers this is even more revealing. Her friends are twenty-two and twenty-seven,<sup>39</sup> the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet plus the five final letters. Agnon tells us that G'mulah makes the letters of the alphabet dance. In the description of G'baryah ben G'u'el, there are some traces of Eldad Hadani's description of the sons of Moses. We find a description of how he engages in battle, and how he deals with his enemies. "With the song and the two-edged sword."<sup>40</sup> Agnon reads some of the attributes of his children back into Moses.

G'mulah is not like Tehillah who comes alive in more than one dimension. We never meet G'mulah save in the abnormal somnambulist role. When Gamzu first meets her, G'mulah is about twelve years old. The Midrash already states that "if a man sells his daughter as a maidservant "Isn, is the Holy One Blessed Be He, his daughter," is the Torah.<sup>41</sup> This sale - marriage - can be cancelled

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by the daughter when she reaches the age of discretion<sup>42</sup> (at twelve or at the latest, twelve-and-a-half).

Here we face a curious mechanism. G'mulah wants to be betrothed to Gamzu. She rejoices when he wins her, rivalling Gadi Ben Ge'im. But she also does not want to settle into the role of wife. Does she only want to remain a betrothed for the rest of her life? She is proud of the fact - (so she tells Dr. Gynt) - that Gamzu has never seen her flesh. She remains virginal and intact, the object of romantic admiration.

G'mulah may even want to be mother, but not wife. The Torah has no husband. She has a son the Ben Torah. There is no Ba'al Torah only a Baal Horaah, who has the father's consent to husband her and Him<sup>43</sup>- She does have many admirers and much peace is her reward for them.<sup>44</sup> G'mulah Torah is a damsel betrothed, a na'arah ham'urassa, she is not a wife.

G'mulah's yodel song, is expressed by Agnon in a very interesting formula - "YoDL, YoDL, YoDL, WaH, PaH, MaH." Agnon himself gives us a clue.<sup>45</sup> He tells us how the moon itself travels through the whole world and sings the song: - "YoDL, YoDL, YoDL, WaH, PaH, MaH." What does the song mean? Agnon makes it clear

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that in one of Gamzu's speeches<sup>46</sup> "the Hassidic rabbi has a right to twist sentences...that they are Saddikim because they study Torah for its own sake and their intention is for the sake of Heaven and thus, they learn to bring in a moral, religious, and divine idea, and for this reason the Saddikim of the Hassidim twist the sentences." Agnon knows Kabbalistic images, and as has already been shown, he also knows Greek Mythology.<sup>47</sup> According to Bahat,<sup>48</sup> Orpheus and Eurydice have some bearing on our story.

The moon signifies not only Selene. It is also a symbol for malkhuth, majesty, the last of the ten spheres. What is the song that malkhuth sings? Malkuth has nothing of its own,<sup>49</sup> like King David who was born without years. King David signifies malkhuth as we see in the setting of the guests that appear at Succoth time. Hoshanah Rabah,<sup>50</sup> is the day of malkhuth and David is the presiding guest. Malkhuth is poor. It does not own anything and because it does not own anything needs to acquire constantly, it wants to draw King into itself. The YoDL song renders three YDL forms: 1. dalo to draw water. 2. dal eynay raise up, and 3. dal poor. Three interpretations are given by Reb Schneur Zalman of Liadi on the

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sentences "Aromimkha Elokai ki dilitanti."<sup>51</sup> I will exalt you G-d, for thou hast drawn me up, and made me poor and hast exalted me. The three interpretations make for the three yodels.

Now we come to the next syllable, WaH. Of the divine name, the tetra-grammaton, 'yud', 'heh', 'vav', 'heh'. Only the 'vav' and the 'heh' are subject to exile and go into galuth.<sup>52</sup> The 'yud' 'heh' are always free and always in union.<sup>53</sup> Malkhuth is also called 'peh', the mouth. As we find it in Tiqunei Zohar speech of Elijah, "malkhuth, peh qerinan lah."<sup>54</sup>

'Mah' on the other hand, is what malkhuth is lacking. There is sh'khinta ila'ah and sh'khinta tata'ah, the Supernal Presence and the Lower Presence, they correspond to Mokhmah ila'ah and hokhmah tata'ah. Hokhman, wisdom, is to be read Koah Mah, a power dealing with quality, what-ness, essences, Sophia hence the letters, MaH,<sup>55</sup> nothingness, annihilation, non-being. In this way that malkhuth is interpreted. When Moses speaks of himself and Aaron, he says "W'anahnu mah", and we are Mah?<sup>56</sup> Or better: "What are we?" What is our identity and role? Thus, this is the proper song of the lunatic. This song is echoed from the mountain. It

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could even be the song that the lovers, the heart and the spring sing to one another in Reb Nachman's Seven Beggars. Thus, Agnon tells us "as I am thinking about the world, how its closed itself in, (in other words, it does not want to offer anything of itself,) we are unable to reach the place we want to reach, except the moon, and the moon is the one who goes about the whole world and sings - "YoDL, YoDL, YoDL, WaH, PaH, MaH."

The song is beautiful - a song of mountains and valleys and of the striving of the valley for the mountain. But even striving can be an escape from what one is striving for. Singing can be an escape from what one is striving for. Singing can be an escape from the lyrics' obligation. If G'mulah yearns for the hills she can attain them, for after marriage, her father stated, **a woman receives her sustenance from her husband**. All that the Torah - Malkhut seeks is now available in Israel the husband. This is why the husband has the s'gulloth - the oral law. G'mulah could easily gain her fulfillment and even beget children if only she embarked on her wifely and maternal role. She could have said to Gamzu: Give me children for if not I shall die.<sup>57</sup> in the virginal role because he can only adore and love from afar. We are not given any indication of Gamzu's impotence by Agnon.<sup>58</sup> But respecting the story as Agnon tells it, we see that G'mulah would rather keep singing the song than act on obviating the message of her yodeling.

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She could be no longer the poor one, but rather "the center of the household", "the rejoicing mother of children, the crown of her husband..."<sup>59</sup> Unless....she fears that she may also have daughters and they might cause her the same anguish Tehillah's daughter caused her mother<sup>60</sup> or bite her nose off like Gaenseklein's wife bites her mother's nose off<sup>61</sup> in order to make her ugly in her (unnamed - ineffable) husband's eyes. Perhaps G'mulah is afraid that she might die in childbirth like her own mother; or perhaps G'mulah is frightened by the prospect that she may be Gamzu's wife and in becoming this, the song would be finished - the last vestiges of Oedipal yearning the secret language between her and her father would be lost!

As long as she is not fully wedded to Gamzu she can receive some sustenance from her father<sup>62</sup> - (like the daughter of a Kohen married to a commoner she may until the consummation - the huppah, still eat the T'rumah of her father's house...) Anyone who has a feeling for Agnon's style would be able to imagine Agnon rounding off this discussion by a remark like this; "Perhaps it is one of these reasons or none of these reasons or none of these but some others which the pen cannot write out or perhaps all of these together with the inexpressible ones. But I would rather leave the

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interpretation of the facts and return to the facts."<sup>63</sup> The fact is that for all the ceremony and celebration that went into the wedding G'mulah's marriage is no marriage.

Agnon wants us to know that his name is Gamzu; he wants to point us to the first Gam-Zu we know, the one mentioned in Talmud; Nahum, the Gamzu man.<sup>64</sup>

Nahum Ish Gamzu receives his name due to the fact that in everything that occurred to him in his life, he would say: Even this too, is for the good. On his way to Rome, on his way to present the Emperor with a box of jewels, they are stolen from him and dirt is put in their place. When he sees this, he consinutes his way to Rome, presents the dirt to the Emperor, who sees in this an insult. Ish Gamzu is unflustered, he says: This is very special dirt, each grain when cast at your enemies will turn to a large stone and kill many. Thus the Talmud tells us, no matter what happened, Ish Gamzu saw it for the good.

Agnon's Gamzu is not a person who can take a bad situation and turn it to the good. His resignation and his lack of interaction, of involvement, only compounds his losses. He reads no new books, for in order for him to read something, the book must, like the Shulkhan Arukh, be four hundred years old. He knows all about first editions, but is basically, an antiquarian. If there is a Nahum Ish Gamzu property in him, it is not being celebrated by

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Agnon, but rather, emphasized in its negation. Agnon wants to reveal to us his Gamzu secondary self, an irresolute procrastinator.<sup>65</sup>

Agnon doesn't walk; his feet lead him. Gamzu doesn't walk; he is being led by his feet. Fate moves him around. Fate serves him quite well up to a point. He would never have met G'mulah, married her and anticipated his bliss with her had not fate conspired it. In Gamzu's world fate can even be coerced by s'gulloth, temporarily that is. Ultimately only real causes can change fate. Otherwise the fate-spinning Moiras<sup>66</sup> the Lunar divinities win.<sup>67</sup> The Gamzu who relied on s'gulloth lost his s'gulloth.

Agnon not only gives us the beautiful poetic rationale for the s'gulloth, he also, shows us that the person who deals with the correlation reaction of s'gulloth, and not with the causative exertion(?) of regu'oth, is bound to be a failure; that the price of his romance because of primary-love experiences, which he later celebrates in song. Gamzu falls in love with poetry. It is his search for written poetry which brings him to the ends of the earth and not his search for real experience.

Gamzu becomes one side of the triangle that leads G'mulah, with Dr. Gynt being the other. Dr. Gynt, in his open persona, is a

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scientist. He is also a hakham Yerushalmi. Gynt is a Peter Pan, who does not want to grow up. G'mulah too, does not want to grow up, and assume her marital responsibilities. She wants to be bride not wife: consort for singing and dancing, for climbing mountains, and speaking a secret language, because she is driven by the moon and she is a lunatic. She is Lilith, a night companion, but no Eve - a mother. Gamzu cannot grow young!

Gamzu can talk about the moon, yet, he is not a moon, yet he is not a moon person. When Gamzu begins to sing the moon poetry, it is not poetry that he creates himself, but poetry that someone else has written, and which he appreciates. Gamzu is one-eyed, a sun person.<sup>68</sup> He has another eye, but it is dead, a glass eye. Now if Gamzu could only see both sides of the situation. However, he has no parallax, no sense of what is near and what is far. His eyes do not appreciate distance, but only large and small, and from what seems to him large and small, he must judge his distance. His love for poetry was an accident begotten by his buying "a book in which the lines were like the confession on Yom Kippur," indented with acrostic. Agnon shares with us his secret pain at the fact that so much beautiful Jewish liturgical poetry is printed with straight and undifferentiated lines. Jewish graphic art is not in the service of the Muse.

Gamzu goes not altogether unrewarded, for the author of a book of hymns appears to one who inherited it, and orders him to give it

to Gamzu. Thus, Gamzu is recognized at least in heavenly circles, as a worthwhile person. Gamzu is not unaware of his lack of success on earth. This is very painfully apparent to him, as it becomes clear in the episode with the publicity seeking researcher.

To sum up, all goals that are proper for Gamzu are missed by him because of his involvement with poetry. He is dismissed from the Yeshiva, he falls in love with G'mulah, wants to marry her despite the fact that he cannot understand her secret language. He relates to that secret language in the same way as he relates to his poetry - he loves it, but he could not possibly write a grammar of it. He loses his wife to Dr. Gynt, who, on the other hand, manages to understand the language, to write a grammar and to move in harmony with it. Obviously, G'mulah could never feel what she feels for Gynt, under that name. She has to call him Gid'on, and here the names tease us again because Gerhardt<sup>69</sup> in the old Germanic, means almost the same thing as Gid'on.

E. G'bharyah and Gilgamesh -- and Leaves

G'bharyah is a Moses figure. His name G'var - Yah is a perfect parallel to Ish Ha - elokim, one of Moses' epitaphs. G'bharyah's death carries many of the overtones of the demise of Moses. G'bharyah went up to the mountain in order to learn how the eagles, the phoenix, renewed their youth.<sup>70</sup> The eagle is one of the

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four faces of the merkabah.<sup>71</sup> On one painting at least, Moses is painted with wings. The winged immortals battled with Moses. The eagle also figures in the Prometheus story.<sup>72</sup> And although Moses did not steal the fire and came as a man of peace, without weapons, he was attacked by the angels<sup>73</sup> as if he were Prometheus. The eagle would have killed G'bharyah then if he were not so much the Moses figure. The battle here is also reminiscent of Jacob's battle with the angel. His left side is ripped, but G'bharyah does not pay attention to his fatal wound.

In the Midrash, Moses is quoted as having asked G-d to permit him to come into the Holy Land as a bird.<sup>74</sup> This was refused to him. Before Moses' demise, there is a celebration of seven days, in which the book of Deuteronomy is spoken and Moses' Song is sung. So, too, G'bharyah's hands lead the dances, "and the hands of Moses wage war."<sup>75</sup> At this point our symbolism does not carry us further because Agnon is bent on telling us how a Jewish wedding ought to be celebrated - eight dances during the day and seven dances during the night. We know of the seven dances corresponding to the seven blessings. What is the eighth dance during the day?

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Night is the time when truth comes via faith, emeth we'emunah. The heavenly beast then bears the sign emunah, and represents the exile, the galuth, or the dark night. Therefore, King David's harp had only seven strings.<sup>76</sup> The instrument of the Messianic Temple will have eight strings.

During the day we get a glimpse of the day that is to come. It is a day when everything will be connected by fifteen conjunctions, emeth, w'yagibh, we'nakhon, we'qayam, etc.; when the seven of the night will join to the eight of the day. Just as Adam and Eve begot children, going up on the bed as two and coming down, five, so too, will wedding and birth be celebrated in the same twenty-four hour period.

Gamzu describes how he got the leaves. Agnon did not detail this in the first edition of that story. It is significant that he saw fit to include it in the 'final' edition. It is also worthwhile to quote the passage in its entirety and to underline the especially significant phrases.

"On the way he opened the pitcher and showed me a bundle of dry leaves that were different than any other leaves that I have ever seen. On them there were the forms of letters in a strange script which I do not recognize. The colour of the ink in which the letters were written is unlike any colours we know. At first glance, it seems that the scribe mixed gold and T'kheleth<sup>70</sup> blue and purple and

scarlet with all principle colours of the rainbow, and that he wrote the letters with them.<sup>71</sup>

While I am standing and looking, the colours change before my eyes, and turn to the blues of those flora from the depth of the sea, like those which Dr. Rechnitz seined from the sea of Yaffa."

Agnon wants us to connect this story with his Shbhu'at Emunim. This phrase has otherwise nothing to do with Gamzu's narrative. It only fits if we see the Gimmel initialed names as alter egos for Agnon. Shebhu'at Emunim is not a 'Jewish' story, it is pagan. In it Agnon refers to Dr. Rechnitz as a god.

Gilgamesh is here a very close parallel. Ut-Napish-Tim counsels him how to find the plant of immortality in the depth of the sea.<sup>77</sup> Gilgamesh loses the plant when the Serpent distracts him. There is too much coinciding symbolism for Agnon not to include it. Plants with special powers! Echoes of the plant that provided Hesse's Steppenwolf with the Magic Theatre!

We continue with Agnon's narrative.

"...In between one and the other, the snaked silver fibers the likes one can see in the moon.

I looked at the leaves, and I looked at the letters, and I looked at G'mulah's father, and G'mulah's father seemed at that hour as if he had completely transcended the space between world and world. That which seemed to me first as being in my imagination, more and more clarified itself as being absolute truth, and if you will ask me, what the meaning of this is, I cannot answer you. For I, myself, see the thing absolutely clearly and I am still amazed at myself that I can say such things. Am I lacking words? Nevertheless, the thing is much clearer than one can express in a whole bucket full of words. But at that hour, my tongue was taken and so was my power to ask questions. It was not because of the leaves or the letters, but it was the very being of the father of G'mulah that brought this on. The letters and all their colours that I first saw, were plucked up, and they changed completely and I do not know clearly how the letters left their colours and when they changed. And as I stood all amazed, G'mulah's father put the leaves back into their vessel, and talked to me in very simple language, and this is what he said:

'These are growths of the earth. There has been given to them a power to influence a supernal air.'

It is interesting that in the whole section, Agnon does not call G'bharyah ben G'u'el by name but refers to him consistently as the father of G'mulah. It would seem that this has some significance.

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is, as it were, "planted" among men.

As long as G'mullah is not married, that is, as long as the Torah is not given to anyone, and as long as Gadi ben Geyim, (to be read not as g'di - the lamb, or the back, but as Gadi, one who belongs to a g'dud or who is and represents a g'dud, a band of angels, the son of ge'im - of the proud ones who said: "Give the Torah to us,")<sup>86</sup> wanted to marry G'mulah she was a heavenly being "like the angels of the Presence." As soon as G'mulah is married to Gamzu, and receives her sustenance through him, she becomes a different creature. This she cannot face.

Agnon intimates that if it were not for the oral law, the written Torah would go all lunatic, and lose its way. This has some interesting inter-religious polemic possibilities. It is true that the Torah lost her way. She was translated into Greek and when she became the property of the Christians, as the Old Testament, or as the Kitab El Muqquddas in the Islam. So, too, does the Torah presently lose its way. It is being read as literature. In Greek fashion G'mulah is loved for her beauty. But G'mulah has healing power,<sup>87</sup> the power to bring back sight. When Gamzu calls G'mulah T'mimah, or Tamah, we not only have a Torah eulogy but we also have a confession of Gamzu's adoring impotence.

The Torah has prescriptions about food. After a rhapsody of G'mulah's virtues, we also hear of her prowess in baking the flat

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cakes, (see Patai, the Hebrew Goddess) and in broiling meat, as clear Passover symbol. She is an only begotten daughter to her father. All the treasures of the parents are given to her. "The father did not want so much wisdom to be lost, so he gave it all to his daughter." He was her pedagogue.<sup>88</sup>

What is curious and tragic to us then, is that this Torah does not love Gamzu as much as it loves and appreciates Dr. Gynt. What does Dr. Gynt have that Gamzu does not? In the Maggid in Hakhnasat Kalah Gamzu's missing eye is no blemish. Gynt also heals. He makes the impression of a holy man, of one of the wise men of Jerusalem.

Because Dr. Gynt could heal without superstition or magic, and because he taught them something that could make life easier, Gamzu came to the conclusion that he must be a European. The Torah seems to love the intellectual. She responds to him; she caresses him; She gives him insights; she sings her songs. She can even bring him to expiration. She cannot bring him, however, to live with her or to marry her. At the crucial moment he says to G'mulah: "Go back to your husband." If Dr. Gynt could have yielded to love, he, in the desperation to consummate it, may have used s'gulloth. The intellectual who loves the Torah must give up his autonomous ethic. He must, in inheriting the covenant, accept a heteronomous one. This, however, is just what he cannot do. But Dr. Gynt is direct, he needs no s'gulloth. He heals with real

medicines which in no way threaten the fates, and the fates cannot attack him.

Gamzu is vulnerable because he wants to fight the fates and they have many a trick they can play on him. The fates are experts in the domain of the unconscious. But this domain is also the domain of the mythic and it invites the magic of sympathetic paralellism. The one-eyed Gamzu and the moonstruck G'mulah invite an attempt to get to the union beyond the opposites.<sup>89</sup> Then Sun and Moon could be one. All the partial hierophanies could become the ultimate theophany.

In the realm of the sympathetic magic one needs no causation. Correlation is more than enough. The midrashic method is not an analytical one. Nothing needs to be proved, only correspondences explored and demonstrated. The language of the sympathetic myth is not "because" or "wherefore" but "in the same way as..."<sup>90</sup> K'shem sh... is also the language of Midrash. Popular mythology has many a planting custom based on moon - vegetation correlation. Who is to say which corresponding element must precede the other? Each has the "power to influence" the other. The magic of becoming the moon is better than the sun.<sup>91</sup> The moon's hierophanies are more fascinating. Fertility, periodic regeneration, time and destiny as

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well as flux and change, are in the moon.<sup>92</sup>

The Kabbalists have seen much of the origin of evil in the "damage of the moon."<sup>93</sup> The evil shells attach themselves to the menstruous woman.<sup>94</sup> Her flow is her disease which keeps her from her husband. But the source of life is also in the very same vessel. The plant of life comes forth from a vase.<sup>95</sup> The letters of the alphabet are related to the moon.<sup>96</sup> That which language cannot express happens when in one person the sun and the moon are united.<sup>97</sup>

Agnon who generally seizes the slightest opportunity to edify us on matters of Jewish custom does not touch in Qiddush L'vanah in this story. This is significant. The moon here is not yet sanctified. The term is to renew the moon L'haddesh et hal'vanah and the ceremony is called Qiddush not hiddush. In Rav Kuk's terms:<sup>98</sup> the new needs Qiddush - to be sanctified, and the old needs hiddush - to be renewed. In our story neither happens. Nothing is renewed in Gamzu. Nothing is sanctified in Dr. Gynt. Kurtzweil<sup>99</sup>

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is right. Agnon does point to Ecclesiastes. All is futility.

F. Where the Devil is He?

Missing in this entire story is a devil figure. We don't have a Black Charna,<sup>100</sup> or a Mr. Gressler,<sup>101</sup> (should we say that the plagiaristic scholar is the devil future?) A wild Peer Gynt could have been an antagonist of Gamzu. Dr. Gynt is not an open antagonist. He becomes that only by Gamzu's default. Gynt is not to blame, that Gamzu is a one-eyed person and that he has to absent himself from the place where G'mulah is and to go to Vienna and have his eye treated. It is not Dr. Gynt's fault that on that fateful day when he sold the s'gulloth, Gamzu was upset. People came to buy books and Gamzu was confused. There is nothing diabolic about Dr. Gynt's relationship to G'mulah. G'mulah comes to visit him. Dr. Gynt makes no overtures in G'mulah's direction. Perhaps there are no devil figures in Agnon at all. (Perhaps even Gressler is not a devil figure. Surely he is not a malicious one. Gressler only means to be helpful and diverting,<sup>102</sup> and does so only on the invitation of someone who considers himself a friend, for Gressler is a friend to everyone.)

Something Greek in Agnon singles out his people for a tragedy

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for which they morally cannot be held responsible. It is as if all sorts of fates conspire against man. Perhaps the great peche - the sin, the fate and its sured evil are Satan? Nowhere in Agnon do we find the same intentionality of evil as we find in Peretz. There is no satanic headquarters on Ararat, no devil takes the job of seducing Monish<sup>103</sup> or R'Zainvele Porissover.<sup>104</sup> Surely there are no Singer imps and demons in Agnon. No Gentleman from Krakow<sup>105</sup> brings temporal wealth. For Singer and Peretz the polarity of good and evil are outside of man. For Agnon they are inside the personal self. The ambivalences and ambiguities are forever commingled in the fickle self. Indeterminacy is the personal malaise of Agnon's Man. Agnon has opted for seeing Evil in Qeri - happenstance. Caprice is evil, fates are evil. But even the most diabolical design is of the reality of order and therefore redeemable. The curse of this age is that we are all Agunoth - forsake ones of the Husband<sup>106</sup> - drifting in the sea of accident. Only Hananyah who lives an essential order, crosses this sea of the heart on his kerchief.<sup>107</sup>

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## CHAPTER V

### EROS, DEATH AND PILGRIMAGE

The use of night and moon is reminiscent of Thomas Mann's use of the moon in connection with Joseph and Benjamin.<sup>1</sup> If Ecclesiastes says that everything that is done under the sun is useless, everything that is done under the moon at least seems hopeful. Things that are not seen in the light of day - like the moon - become visible in the light of night. What is man, the creature, to do vis-a-vis the sun which continues in its same path and day by day? Perhaps he should do nothing more than to seek the renewal of the phoenix.<sup>2</sup> In the phoenix there is the union of the sun and the moon. If Dr. Gynt leaves us nothing but ashes at the end, this fits the myth because the song of the Gryphith that G'mulah sings, is the song that the phoenix sings before it sets fire to itself.

Agnon, who is concerned, if not upset by the place of eros in life, makes, as Kurzweil well observes,<sup>3</sup> a union between poetry, death and love. Where the phoenix dies because it is alone and must renew itself in this way, there is still the fire of consummation which at least symbolically if not really, is celebrated by G'mulah and Gynt as she sings him the song and as the

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two of them die. Perhaps Agnon hints that a consummation has taken place because of the fact that no record of the Gryphith song remains. The game of courtly love<sup>4</sup> yielded poetry while it did not yield consummation. If the poetry was gone, burned to heaps of ashes, it shows in a sense that a consummation has taken place.

There is an abiding fascination in Agnon towards the pilgrim. Anyone who has travelled the journey - within shares this fascination. When the Baal Shem Tov makes his 'Aliyath Han'shamah'<sup>5</sup> he too is a pilgrim. He says that he who knows the mystery of the forty-two journeys has nothing to fear.

The son who follows the goat,<sup>6</sup> even the narrator of The Whole Loaf<sup>7</sup> is a pilgrim. Pilgrimage means not only travel to a specific place, but --

"The 'sacred journey' has origins in prehistoric religious cultures and myths. Man instinctively regards himself as a wanderer and wayfarer, and it is second nature to him to go on pilgrimage in search of a privileged and holy place, a center and source of indefectible life. This hope is built in to his psychology and whether he acts it out or simply dreams it, his heart seeks to return to a mythical source, a place of 'origin', the 'home' where the ancestors came from the mountain where the ancient fathers were in

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direct communication with heaven, the place of the creation of the world, paradise itself with its sacred tree of life. Sacred in the traditions of the great religions, pilgrimage takes the faithful back to the source and centre of the religion itself, the place of cleansing, renewal and salvation."

Perhaps Cain is the very first --

"'peregrinus' or pilgrim, who sets out on his journey not in order to visit a sacred shrine, but in search of solitude and exile. His pilgrimage was an exercise in ascetic homelessness and wandering. He entrusted himself to Providence, setting out with no definite aim, abandoning himself to the Lord of the universe."

Far from being a --

"Face-saving form of penance. The penitent pilgrim was driven forth as an outcast, dressed in rags or sackcloth, perhaps even wearing a chain. He was under strict obligation to keep moving, for he was a 'wanderer' ("let him not spend the night twice in the same place" said one of the Penitentials). He was easily recognizable as a sacred person, one on whom the curse of G-d rested, one who was being punished and healed, whom man might not touch. He was, so to speak, a holy outcast, a consecrated tramp, living under a mystery of execration and protection, overshadowed by inscrutable love, a mystery and portent to every man. It was a sacred duty to protect him, feed him, give him shelter and show him his way."<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps all our dramatis personae are pilgrims.<sup>9</sup> The Greifenbachs leave home - and the narrator bewails them<sup>10</sup> - What did they see that made them leave a beautiful house and furniture and take themselves to other places. What do all those see who leave their homes and stray from place to place as if a statute from Genesis (Cains?) caused them to do so? Or is it an illusion as if the primal myth were to say at the place where you are not - "There is your happiness!" The narrator himself cannot find rest: "I had not desire to return home...so I dragged myself after my feet."<sup>11</sup> This is what brings him to the Greifenbach house. Gamzu after no longer being able to remain at the Yeshivah begins his errands among Widows. "Soon he was sent to faraway places...where no European had set foot even to the divide of the desert he came."<sup>12</sup> Now that he is married in name only, he is not at home with his wife! G'mulah is of such interest to us

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because she wanders abroad as a lunatic. Gynt, we hear, is very seldom at home. Guenther has no home. He too wanders and has to meet his wife at cafes.<sup>13</sup>

As long as the myth moves no one is at home. When Rachel need weep no more "and the children will have returned to their borders"<sup>14</sup> the myth is over. Up to that time we all have to search and be pilgrims. Hesse's wanderer on the Journey to the East also becomes lost when he loses his counterpart of the s'gulloth. Unless we have a s'gullah that brings us back in between, we dare not travel. So we know the way back to periodic regeneration - We come home on the Sabbath. There Sun and Moon are conjoined for twenty-six hours - in the presaging of the day on which - HVYH - twenty-six - twice AHaBaH - Love is One. But what is a home? We know what a house is. But a home is a woman - Beyto Zo Ishto<sup>15</sup> - In absence of his wife he goes to seek a quiet home, a wife surrogate - for thus is the way of Man to seek after (to return? - lahazor) to his wife. Death too is a home to which one returns; it is in the Valley of the shadow and quiet there "the exhausted rest." G'mulah leaves home at the moons' beckoning. In being a myth about Myth it is

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G'mulah's story. G'mulah is the Torah. The Torah is the Jewish myth.

What is a myth: A myth is a dynamic symbol in flux. It is the development of a theme which begins in rest and breaks into tension only to be resolved in rest. One can say that a myth is like everything. Sholem Aleichem would have said via Tevia; a myth is like a man. It begins in earth and ends in earth and in between is vexation. A myth is what happens when nothing happens. At the end of the myth it may be as if nothing had occurred but in between, potential actualizes itself in tensions and resolves itself out of them. The story is how all this happens and when it is all over there is no more to tell or to sing about. The Torah begins in the beginning. It ends on that day when all is One again. And in between it is the history of man and the guide to life. But "the Torah is" also "that man dies in his tent".<sup>16</sup> A halalkhic view would only begin the laws of Passover. This in itself is important. The guide tells how to pass over and through with loins girded and the bundle on the back,<sup>17</sup> it is the guide to the pilgrimage. But the myth needs a beginning so that one may justify being a squatter in the land - on earth. In order to be

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a pilgrim one needs the halakha, the walking guide, the Tao, the way. G'mulah could have been the way for "the L-rd established me as the beginning of His way." Had Gamzu not become arrested in anachronisms he could have gone on with G'mulah.

G'mulah is at once the heroine of the story and the very story itself. Each month when the power of the moon, the reflected light is in ascendance G'mulah must break out and walk anew in the bright night and yodel her song. To him who is patient and who has not lost the s'gullah (is still of the s'gullah people) she may return. If he has the s'gulloth and is not afraid to die (each orgasm is a life begetting death) she may still sing her song to die in his embrace. But he who has only one eye and an anachronistic one at that may not see that link of death and life. All he can think of is to find a hospital for G'mulah for he sees her as incurable. And so she is. Her disease will come with each month's renewal.

Unable to stand the periodicity of Galut Chernichowsky wants to worship an anachronistic, one-eyed classical Appolo.<sup>18</sup> Agnon reaches for the moon.

page 84 missing - [apparently beginning of Chapter 6]

On the other hand, the Western scholar who can fully understand the mythic language, also cannot be her lover. He is far too objectively involved in taking down verbatim the mythic song which she sings. His scientific curiosity on the other hand makes him risk his life, but not his love of G'mulah, the myth woman - the woman myth. He dies as he hears the g'ruphit - gryphon - Gryphith song, but the last Song, the key to all other songs, can never be published; and all that is left of it is a heap of ashes. The union of the West with the myth remains in our story as the cause for two funerals. The narrator's alter egos are Gynt and Gamzu, G'bharyah and G'mulah. He lives in the house of the Greifenbachs during those fateful nights, trying to guard the house against intruders who want to possess it. He remains a fragmented person. In Jungian terms, the ego is the narrator, the traditional conscience is Gamzu. The father archetype G'bharyah offered him all the solutions for the lunar problems. The objective, reality - ego Gynt understand and deciphers the songs but cannot find union with the anima - singer. Neither can Gamzu, the conscience find this union. He sold the myth binding s'gulloth to the objective ego. The poor narrator himself only heard of the hymns, but never heard them sung, except in the Garmisch - Patenkirchen dream.

The narrator, Israel's story teller and poet, has no

solution for the modern generation. If it persists in playing the games of the fragmented personae, -- something has to give. Either Gamzu, the traditionalist will learn to sing the song as songs of life rather than as liturgical gems; either he will start to look like Gynt and start reading material that is fresher than that which has been made stale by four hundred years; either he will regain the sight in his other eye, or he remains a widower or, Gynt must forsake his objective games and become the lover of woman - myth, G'mullah's Torah. Otherwise he dies and the myth with him.

What of the narrator and the reader? They cannot even tarry to exchange pleasantries with the bourgeois Greifenbach. After paying the fee to the reciter of death psalm (dead psalms?) he has to move on for fear of the traffic cop. Before the tragedy, poor Gamzu frequented cafes and beat joints, with another lost soul - the son of a Samaritan-conservative high-priest.<sup>2</sup> There is no promise of continuity there." Neither is there promise in his frequenting with the artists after Gaugin's model.<sup>3</sup> The narrator's wife and children have returned, so has the water to the cistern.

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Bourgeois Greifenbach can rest assured. As long as the traffic cop keeps the traffic moving, the intruders were kept out. Besides who is to be concerned if the intruders have a case for wanting to consummate their marriage? The Greifenbachs will never risk what Gynt risked; they could never permit themselves -- "to allow grave doubts to bring them to suicide."

It all would be just too tragic, too much human experience would have been lost had people taken Gynt seriously and burned his books. If there is any hope, it lies in the frivolity of literature, which permits people access to the Eynamite mythic hymns via the aesthetic gate. Literature is the final winner. Gynt's soul (he would have denied that he had one) "increases to shine from his books, and he who is not blind can see and bask in his light." Where the teacher and the preacher fail, the raconteur succeeds; and this is the secret of the myth about the myth; for even G-d himself is but the Great Raconteur, and we are the suckers for His stories.

For after all, as the book of Yetzirah, the greatest myth book says: "He who dwells on high and is holy created His world with three sephers, with the sepher the script, the sopher the scribe, and the sippur the description, the tale."

[First page #88 - missing from biblio]

Up to that time he had only heard his father read. His father read the text of the Meggilah, the king was none other than G-d, Esther none other than the Shekhina, Mordecai none other than the Great Tzaddik who always pleads for all of Israel, and Haman, the Satan."

"The Elder Rebbe himself would read in the Torah. At one time it happened that for the reading of the Admonitions, the Elder Rebbe was not presenting Lyozhno and the Mittler Rebbe who was yet before his Bar Mitzvah, heard the reading of the Torah from someone else. The great pain from the curses, which are in the Admonitions, brought him to such heart-ache that on the day of Yom Kippur, the Elder Rebbe was in doubt whether he would be able to fast. When they asked the Mittler Rebbe why he was in such pain, since he had heard this reading before this year, he answered; 'When father reads it, one does not hear any of the curses.'" From Hayom Yom. p. 88.

## Chapter II

"The Elder Rebbe himself would read in the Torah. At one time it happened that for the reading of the Admonitions, the Elder Rebbe was not present in Lyozhno and the Mittler Rebbe who was yet before his Bar Mitzvah, heard the reading of the Torah from someone else. The great pain from the curses, which are in the Admonitions, brought him to such heart-ache that on the day of Yom Kippur, the Elder Rebbe was in doubt whether he would be able to fast. When they asked the Mittler Rebbe why he was in such pain, since he had heard this reading before this year, he answered; 'When father reads it, one does not hear any of the curses.'" From Hayom Yom. p. 88.

## Chapter II

### 1. Gynt.

These are the consonants; if one were to vowelate them one could read that name Ginath, however, generally the word Ginath, since it stands in the genitive, would demand another noun to lean on. This being absent, and there being some more symbolic reason to read it Gynt, I have preferred this spelling. (Though Agnon, in writing to Mr. H. Rome of Schocken Publishing Company, asked that the spelling be Ginath. In this case we will let the genitive stand in the same way as Agnon uses the name Hemdath, which is the genitive and generally cannot stand alone, and does so for symbolic reasons of his own. To this writer it seems that this spelling represents a red herring.)

2. Abodah Zarah 3b. They are so seldom at home - see opening to The Whole Loaf. Agnon is a male Agunah - a forsaken one.

3.

The House. The way the narrator introduced us to the house and to its history; he uses the word gilgul that stands for reincarnation. There have been many reincarnations for Jerusalem houses. There is no house that does not have stories and stories. (See From Foe to Friend, Elu Wa'elu. p.480).

Especially, the early houses that were built outside of the wall. Some clue is there in its being outside of the wall. Occupancy - occupation begins with Senior Gamliel Giron of the might ones of Galipoli. Mr. Giron could not find a house because of the large population inside of the wall. It is as if we were dealing with a Roman. The fact that he mentions that we needed to import people to pray, would lead us to think in terms of Jupiter's temple, which simply fell into disuse after a while. And that caused it to be sold. The next person is a German, Gotthold Gaenseklein, who headed a sect of retrenchers, a group that issued from the Gemeinschaft der Gerechaen which was founded in Goerlitz by Gottfried Treilich. Again the German names and the city of Goerlitz seem to be red herrings, but since he makes it clear that he is dealing with Christians, though the meaning of Gaenseklein (German slang for fricassee)-- little goose, escapes us in this connection, we may be dealing here with a group of Nazariners. In describing the scene we see a group that was founded by Gottfried, the peace of G-d to whom the Greulich thing had happened, we might be dealing here with a Christ figure and Gotthold, the g-d holder. Hold is praiser from the old German huldiger - a Knight Templar. And now, when the picture gets completed for us by the wife of Gaenseklein biting the nose off her mother in order to to cause her to be ugly to her husband who is unnamed, we have an image of Israel and her daughter, religion, Christianity. (See the fascination with Christianity, mother and daughter in Tehillah). This argument and battle caused Gaenseklein to move his household from the country. The three Georgian brothers-in-law give us a picture of Turks or those who are close to the Turks. The manufacture of cheese seems a very peaceful situation. They could have dwelled easily in the land, had it not been for Gemal Pasha's war-like interpretation of their

activity. There is a war and we are then dealing with George Gnadenbrod, (by the grace of G-d), who comes from Glasgow with his wife, Guendelein, and who comes as delegate, a missionary from the council of the apostles, and here we have a crusader image, however, he does not remain there after capturing it and cleaning it up, as his wife Guendelein does not like to say there. He returns to Glasgow. An image of Richard the Lion-hearted. We are told that the house was made into an office, an agency, a mandate? but the roof fell in. For many years no one lived there on a permanent basis until Gerhardt Greifenbach comes and brings electricity and running water. All this is a good allegory of the occupants of the Holy Land over a period of history. Why don't the Georgians return to make some more cheese, before Greifenbachs came? At least they could have given us some kind of a struggle between Greifenbach and the Georgians. We suppose that A. did not want the Greifenbachs, the modern Israelis (to) seem unjust in their occupation of the land.

### Chapter III

1. Shir Hakabod, in most prayer manuals. Silverman. Hartford, Prayer Book Press, 1948. p.58.
2. Abodah Zarah, 3b.
3. Nahmanides in preface to Torah commentary. Yonath Elem, chapter 9. Zohar, Vol. II, 87a.
4. Elijah Rabbah, chapter 18.
5. Shabbat, 1051.
6. Hirsch Pentateuch. Gen. 1:1
7. Menahoth, 29b.
8. Psalm 33.
9. Ecclesiastes 1:6
10. Ecclesiastes 1:2
11. " 1:14
12. Sawwa'at Haibhash, Nos., 71, 72, 88.

13. Shabbat 133. Yerushalmi, Peah, Chapter I.
14. Ad Olam. Ha'esh W'ha'esim. p. 315.
15. Hatizmoret. Samukh Wanir'eh. p. 196.  
Jewish Heritage. Wintner 61/62. p. 50.
16. Zechariah 14:9
17. We have another story, L'ahar Has'udah, in which Agnon climbs the Vav (the fourth letter of his name). This leaves the letter nun which occurs twice in his name to be written about. But the nun, the fiftieth gate of understanding is not reached evey by Moses until AFTER his final song. For us this must needs remain a conjecture.
18. Tehillah. Ad Henah. p. 178.
19. Samukh Wanir'eh. p. 143.
20. Kurzweil. Massoth. p. 14.
21. Igrot Haqodesh. Tania If). p. 31.
22. Hulin 60b.
23. Brakhot 59a.
24. Genesis Rabban, Chapter 3, 4.
25. See my paper on Qabbalistic prayer intentions in the Amidah.
26. Psalm 91:13
27. Chronicles II 12:5
28. Chronicles II 12:5 (also 15).
29. Kings I 12:22
30. Rashi on Kings I 13:13
31. Kimhi. Kings II 4:8
32. Kings II 10:2
33. Like the play of light and shadow - Yin and Yang each complementing and denying the other at the same time. This dualism also occurs in

Boraisha - Geyer, chapter 8.

34. Kings I 13
35. Kings I 13
36. Miqraot G'dolot ad loc.
37. Kimhi ad loc.
38. Rashi ad loc.
39. Joshua 6:13
40. Seder Hadorot. p. 93. He was also named Hananya  
- like Agnon's hero in The Heart of the Seas.
41. Huizinga. Homo Ludens.
42. R. D. Laing. The Self and Others. Quadrangle  
1962. p. 9.
43. Hagigah 9b.
44. Liquey Maharar. (LM 65). p. 65.
45. Ad Hena. p. 364.
46. Shabbat 5:1. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Comment  
Liquey Torah III 77c. p. 289.
47. Ribalow. p. 281. And Agnon's character imagine  
that the leaves of the trees in Poland have  
volumes of the Gemara inscribed upon them.
48. Elu W'elu. Polin, Qedumoth. p. 354.
49. Baba Bathra 134a.
50. Ad Hena. p. 344.
51. Midrash T'hillim. pp. 90, 12.
52. Tanhumah on Genesis I.
53. Chronicles 1 4. Liquey Torah Behar 41b.
54. Isaiah 60:21
55. Ad Hena. p. 218. Rechnitz, one of Agnon's  
characters elsewhere proposes "let us cast off  
for the sea - the place where the ancestors

lived."

56. Tania p.248.
57. Eliade. Patterns in Comparative Religion. New York, Meridian Books, 1963. p. 276.
58. Shabbat Mussaph Liturgy.
59. Ad Hena. p. 344.
60. Samukh W'nir'eh. p. 143.
61. Ad Hena. p. 344.
62. Ibid.
63. Zohar B'shalah. p. 44b. "He who issues from female side finds death preceding him."
64. Exodus 35:3
65. Shaggat 23b.
66. E. Simon in Dimensions of Jewish Existence. B.B.H.F. Washington, 1964. p. 59.
67. Baba Mesia 86a.
68. Shabbat 33b.
69. Genesis 3:16
70. Ad Hena. p. 344.

#### Chapter IV

1. Elu W'elu. p. 463.
2. Kings II 4:10.  
"The Shunamite woman, Kimchi claims was Avishag's sister and Iddo's mother. Thus Iddo was the resurrected child.
3. Kings II 4:9. Sepher Hassiduth Belz. Vol. 2, p. 226.  
A zaddik causes holiness to dwell wherever he is. Even if he leaves the place his holiness remains. Anyone who comes there is affected by the zaddik's holiness.

According to this we can explain the meaning of the Talmudic statement (B'rakhot 10b). The Shunamite woman said that Elisha was a holy man because she had inspected his sheets and never found any stain pointing to nocturnal emission. Rabbi Shalom of Belz asked why was this an indication, he only stayed a short time at her home? But he answered because other people who were not holy slept in the bed from time to time and they too were not polluted so she knew that it was due to Elisha's holiness.

4. Ad Hena. p. 346.
5. Samuel I 10:23
6. Ha'esh W'ha'etzim. p. 314.
7. Ad Hena. p. 346.
8. Begriffenfeldt, Ibsen's Peer Gynt. The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. New York, 1964. p. 167.

In Ibsen's Peer Gynt, Begriffenfeldt is the owner of an insane asylum. In both cases, there is the same word - grip, greifen, Begriff, concept - that with which one grabs hold of, a thought. Dr. Gynt lives in a conceptual field. The field of the concepts that imprison is a mad house.

9. In Agnon's style, names are extremely important. Thus Gressler in The Whole Loaf, and the German word Graesslich - horrible, make for a Satan figure. Ribeizen is a boring person; Hofni, the handful, is also, a great bore. He grabs with his fist, and is the inventor of the mouse trap.
10. Kolatch. These are the Names. Jonathan David Company, New York, 1948. p. 15.
- 10b Agnon credits Gamzu with the discovery although Gamzu only does not discover them either but is the recipient. (Like Moses who received.) Modern man discovers, invents or explores. He never receives a revelation.
11. El ginnath egoz yarad'ti, egoz numerically means het - sin. (Soulchan Aruch Harav, Hil'khot Erev Yom Kippur). "This egoz is known in the

words of those who preceded us."  
Abraham ibn Ezra ad loc. Canticle.

12. Erljom 11a.
13. Henrik Ibsen. Peer Gynt. Signet Classic, 1964.  
pp. 102, 200.
14. Elu W'elu. p. 356.
15. End of chapter 4. Gate of Love.
16. Sanhedrin 97a. Agnon is fond of this statement.  
See Hakhnassat Kallah. p. 272.
17. Yaabetz in Haggadah Migdal Eder. Rom Vilna, 1892.  
p. 94.
18. Ad Hena. p. 393.
19. Samuel I 24.
20. Samukh R'nir'eh. p. 196.
21. Ibid. p. 202
22. Elu W'elu. p. 463.
23. Isaiah 43:1.
24. Elu W'elu. p. 480.
25. B'rakhot 32a.
26. Hulin 43. Sanhedrin 89.  
As their name Polshin related to Plishtim -  
according to hassidic lore Liquey Torah, Vol.  
IV, 5a., the same root as the Talmudic Negev  
Mofullash the hole pierced through a vital  
organ and the Mavo Mofullash, the yard open at  
both ends, indicates they are not respecters of  
locks and doors.
27. Kurzweil. Massot.
28. Sanhedrin 98a. Yerushalmi Taanit I. 1.
29. Psalm 19:8. Maor EynayimU, huqat, Sepher Ba'al  
Shem Tov. Mendle of Gvartchov, edit.  
Brooklyn, 1948. p. 46.
30. Kurzweil. Massot. p. 269.

31. Agnon's in Depth.
32. Kurzweil. Massot. p. 328
33. Tania. Chapter 46.
34. Shabbat 88a.
35. Samukh W'nir'eh. p. 92. Kurzweil. Massot.p 123.
36. Tale of Seven Beggars. Liquey Sippurim.  
Nanman of Brazlaw.
37. Canticle 4:12.
38. Chorus of girls and Anitra. Ibsen's Peer Gynt.  
Signet Classic, 1964. p. 147.
39. M. Schneerson, edit. Hayom Yom. (Simhat Torah).  
Kkkehhot Publishing Co.
40. "He who reads, the Night Shema on his bed is  
likened to a warrior with a two edged sword  
destroying the demons) as it is written  
etc." Baba Mesia 159b.
41. Shemot Rabbah. Mishpatim 30.
42. Yebamot 13:1
43. You have prevailed my children - but this applies  
only to the manifest part of Torah not onto  
the mysteries of the esoteric kabbalah.  
Baba Mesia 159b.
44. Psalm 119:165
45. In discussing this story with Agnon, he said to  
this author "Hafoch bah be'hafoch bah, de'kulah bah."  
A statement found in Pirkey Avoth by Ben Bagbag, and  
Ben Heh'heh, two very interesting names. Bagbag and  
Heh'heh are both called by the names because they are  
gerim, proselites. Heh stands for the heh in Avraham,  
and the heh that was given to Sarah in exchange for her  
yud and Bagbag who says everything is to be found there  
in the Torah. If Agnon let on that everything is to be  
found there in this story, if one turns it around  
properly and one searches for it, this writer feels  
that he is not taking undue midrashism on himself if he  
searches in Agnon's words for a clue.

46. Ad Hena. p. 365.
47. Ibid. p. 216.
- 48.
49. Sifri, Numbers 855. Manahem Ricanatti 6a. L'vushey Or Yaqrut. Jerusalem, 1961. Sha'ar Mi'ut Hayare'ah, Pardes Rimmonim of R'Moshe Kordovero. Jerusalem, 1962.
50. I. Horwitz. Sha'ar Hashamayim. N. Y., 1954. p. 632.
51. Psalm 30:2. Liqutey Torah, B'rakhah Siddur Liqutei Torah. p. 52. Schneor Zalman of Ladi. Wilna, 1912.
52. Notes on the Midnight Lamentation in his Siddur . Liqutey Torah. p. 78.
53. Zohar II 56a., Vol. III, 4a.
54. Tiquney Zohar, Tiqun I.
55. Tania 13, 43.
56. Exodus 16L7
57. Genesis 29:1
58. And we have no indication of Tamzu's barrenness - even to be maimed on one eye - a Freudian displacement of the scrotum (A Galician obscenity had it he can beget.
59. Psalm 113:9
60. Ad Hena. p. 189.
61. Ibid. p. 368.
62. Leviticus 22:13
63. L'shar Has'udah. Molad. p. 291.
64. Ta'anit 24. Seder Hadoroth mentions Gamzu as a place name. See Arukh on Gamzaz.
65. In this he was even better than R'Akiba - who used to say: M'an da'avid Rahmana l'tav'avid' all

that G-d sees is in the end for good - whereas N'ahum said even this thing is good in itself.

66. Homer. Odyssey. Chapter VI. p. 197.
67. Gittin 89a.
68. Ad Hena. p. 359. Francis William Bourdillon. Light.
69. Gerhardt means warrior-like. Kolatch. These are the Names. Jonathan David, 1948.
70. There is an eagle nesting in Yigrasil - the Tree of Life. Eliade. p. 277.
71. Ezechial 1:10, 17:7
72. Robinson and Wislon. Myths and Legends of All Nations. Bantam. p. 124.
73. Shabbat 88.
74. Deuteronomy. Rabbah, Brakha 11.
75. Rosh Hashanah 29.
76. See J. I. Schneersohn in Havaye Yehatu M'rivaw. 1936.
77. "Why is the blue called T'khelet? Because all colours are included in it. (Sh'koleleth kol haggavhim)" Mishnat Hazohar. p. 152.
78. Philosopher's stone first black white yellow and red, more red than any blood color 61.
79. Since the nomenclature often shifts and various sources identify different colors with different s'firoth and for our purposes it is not essential to identify s'firah with particular color we will leave it at that. For fuller treatment see color 63 and Mishnat Hazohar A. 152.
80. A plant of immortality is mentioned in Zoheleth Rabba II.
81. "O herbs who are mother G-desses!" Yajur Veda IV, 2.6.
82. Isaiah 14:14

83. Baba Mesia 59b.
84. Tana D'bey Elijah Rabbah 18.
85. Beth Ahron ad Loc.
86. "Who gave us His Torah and planted eternal life in us. Second Torah blessing.
87. Baba Mesia 59b.
88. Psalm 19.
89. Opening Midrash Rabba.
90. Eliade 184.
91. Eliade 157.
92. The sun represents being. Eliade 154.
93. Eliade 157.
94. Cordovero. Pardes Rimmonim, gate 18.
95. Eliade 160. Ezra 36:17
96. Vas - is a medical term for part of the reproductive system. (See also Eliade 283)
97. Eliade 172.
98. Eliade 179.
99. Igrot Haryiah. (have not been able to verify source often quoted from op. at.
100. Massot 160.
101. The Orchestra. Samukh W'nir'eh p. 196.
102. The Whole Loaf. Samukh W'nir'eh p. 143.
103. But then again Purah the angel of forgetfulness - of death - is a Satan. Yahid and Yehidah Singer in The Short Friday).
104. Monish, Peretz. Peretz's Oytzer. Edit, Yefroykin. Arbeiter Ring, 19552. p. 205.
105. Peretz. Liptzin. YIVO, 1947. p. 217.

106. Gentleman from Krakow. Gimpel the Fool. Singer.  
Noonday, 1963. p. 23.
107. Isaiah 50:1
108. Bilbhabh Yamim.

#### Chapter V

1. Thomas Mann. Der Junge Joseph.  
Bebeman-Fishel. p. 31.
2. Robinson and Wilson. Myths and Legends of All  
Nations.  
The phoenix was a fabulous bird worshipped by the ancient Egyptians at Thebes, the phoenix was said to be the only one of its kind and believed to live from five hundred to one thousand years. Then at the close of his life he comes from an assortment of Arabia with spices, sings a melodious dirge, flaps its wings to set fire to the pile, burns itself to ashes, and comes forth with new life to repeat the cycle once again.
3. Massot. p. 150.
4. The Art of Courtly Love. Chaplain Andrew.
5. Qodesh Haqodoshim. M. J. Gutman, edit. p. 38.
6. Eli W'elu. p. 373.
7. Samukh W'nir'eh. p. 143.
8. Merton. Pilgrim and Crusader. Unpublished paper.
9. Kurzweil. Massot. p. 158. Zoref. S. J. Agnon  
W'i'ysirato. Niv, 1957. p. 202.
10. Ad Hena. p. 352.
11. Ibid. p. 351.
12. Ibid. p. 363.
13. Ibid. p. 350.
14. Jeremiah 31:17
15. Shabbat 118b.

16. Numbers 19:14. Brakhot 63b.
17. Exodus 12:11
18. Chernichovsky. Kol Shirey Chernichovsky.  
Schocken, 1957. p. 72.

#### Chapter VI

1. S. Y. Penueli. Yesirato Shel Agnon.  
Tarbut W'hinuh, 1960. p. 177.

1. (Text missing)

2. (Text missing)

3. (text missing)

4. e consonants; if one were to vowelate them one could read that name Ginath, however, generally the word Ginath, since it stands in the genitive, would demand another noun to lean on. This being absent, and there being some more symbolic reason to read it Gynt, I have preferred this spelling. (Though Agnon, in writing to Mr. H. Rome of Schocken Publishing Company, asked that the spelling be Ginath. In this case we will let the genitive stand in the same way as Agnon uses the name Hemdath, which is the genitive and generally cannot stand alone, and does so for symbolic reasons of his own. To this writer it seems that this spelling represents a red herring.)

5.

1.

2.

8. Psalm 33.

9. Ecclesiastes 1:6

10. Ecclesiastes 1:2

11. Ecclesiastes 114

12. Sawwa'at Haibhash, Nos. 71, 72, 88.

13. Shabbat 133. Yerushalmi, Peah, Chapter 1.

14. Ad Olam. Ha'eesh W'ha'esim. p. 315.

15. Hatzimoret. Samukh Wanir'eh, p. 196. Jewish Heritage.  
Winter 61/62. p. 50.
16. Zechriah 14:9
17. We have another story, L'ahar Has'udah, in which Agnon climbs the Vay (the fourth letter of his name). This leaves the letter nun which occurs twice in his name to be written about. Bit the nun, the fiftieth gate of understanding is not reached even by Moses until AFTER his final song. For us this must need remain a conjecture.
18. Tehillah. Ad Henah. p. 178.
19. Samukh Wanir'eh p.141.
20. Kurweil. Massoth. p. 14.
21. Irgrot Haqodesh. Tania If). p. 31.
22. Hulin 60b.
23. Brakhot 59a.
24. Genesis Rabban, Chapter 3, 4.
25. See my paper on Qabbalistic prayer intentions in the Amidah.
26. Psalm 91:13
27. Chronicles II 12:5
28. Chronicles II 12:5 (also 15)
29. Kings I 12:22
30. Rashi on Kings I 13:13
31. Kimhi. Kings II 4:8
32. Kings II 10:2
33. Like the play of light and shadow - Yin and Yang each complementing and denying the other at the same time. This dualism also occurs in Boraisha - Geyer, chapter 8.
34. Kings I 13
35. Kings I 13
36. Miqraot G'dolot ad loc.

37. Kimhi ad loc.
38. Rashi ad loc.
39. Joshua 6:13
40. Seder Hadorot. p. 93. He was also named Hananya - like Agnon's hero in The Heart of the Seas.
41. Huizinga. Homo Ludens.
42. R. D. Laing. The Self and Others. Quadrangle 1962. p. 9.
43. Hagiqah 9b.
- 44.
45. Ad Hena. p. 364.
46. Shabbat 5:1. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Comment Liqutey Torah III 77c. p. 289.
47. Ribalow. p. 281. And Agnon's characters imagine that the leaves of the trees in Poland have columns of the Gemara inscribed upon them.
48. Elu W'elu. Polin, Qedumoth. p. 354.
49. Baba Bathra 134a.
50. Ad Hena, p. 344.
51. Midrash T'hillim. pp. 90,12.
52. Tanhumah on Genesis I.
53. Chronicles 1 4. Liqutey Torah Behar 41b.
54. Isaiah 60:21
55. Ad Hena. p. 218. Rechnitz, one of Agnon's characters elsewhere proposes "let us cast off for the sea - the place where the ancestors lived."
56. Tania. p. 248.
57. Eliads, Patterns in Comparative Religion. New York, Meridian Books, 1963. p. 276.
58. Shabbaat Mussaph Liturgy.
59. Ad Hena. p. 344.

The Party Is Over  
by S. J. Agon  
Translated by Z. M. Schachter

ALEPH

The banquet had ended. When first entering the hall, the guests' arrival stirred great fuss. Suddenly the meal had come to a halt. Before the banquet was all served the party was over. The tables laden with all kinds of delicacies and famous vintages still groaned under their burden, yet the hands of the guests hung limply to their sides no one managed to overcome h's inertia to help himself to the food. We, all of us who attended this dinner, were abysmally tired. They had offered many hors d'oeuvres, so much had been munched and sipped, drunk and eaten, that when the meal was served no hand could touch a bowl, no cup **could** touch the mouth.

Food and drink have no discrimination, nor are they of a mind to reveal to you what will be served afterwards. People take of everything that is first served and finally, when dinner is served, the very hand that so eagerly acquired from all that was on the table now remained passive as if no longer in this world.

The guests now sit but their manner of sitting has changed. As long as they were busy with food and drink, their faces shone and they each looked like the other. With quick flash of teeth and moulding movement of their tongues they had leaned forward. But as soon as their hands, weakened from the meal, hung limply, all connections broke. Hands that had perspired from pleasure now sweated from frustration over pleasures no longer tempting. Eyes, first as large as bowls, had now become so small that even if sleep were to overtake them, they would not have spend time to close them. One, who permitted his mouth dominion over his eyes, was now mutely eyeing the orphaned remnants of the meal. How many courses and drinks were left after the meal? What has happened to man's capacity? No strength was left to mix for himself another small drink or to take a small bite

of desert!

Facing the party guests are the servants who prepared the house for the party. They had already come to clear the dishes and to sweep the floor. Invisible before the meal, it seemed that now the servants filled the house, ever since the party guests had been overcome by fatigue.

Suddenly, all at once, my heart felt oppressed. I did not know the reason why. And since the reason was obscure to me, I became confused, my mind taking a mournful turn persuaded me to leave.

The servants' looks showed their impatience with the guests. Their glares demanded that the gorging and swilling stop. Did they not know that the dinner was over?

It seemed to me that I am wanted somewhere. I heard no call, no sound reached my ear. Not even a small whisper, and yet in myself I knew that I was wanted.

I set my heart to know the reason why I was wanted, for the sake of what they wanted me, and who it was that wanted, and where it was, that I need to be. I raised my eyes to my fellow guests. I did not expect that they would answer my questions. I just wanted to know whether they noticed that I was being taken from them.

They all sat stuck to their seats. The hands of some of these were stretched out toward food still unconsumed and others argued with their dreams over sleep that refused to come. During that time one of them shook himself and said: Are you going? As soon as he had mouthed the words he turned to slumber again.

I sat and thought: Why am I singled out from all the guests in this house? Perhaps all the others are also being taken from the party, but because they are asleep they do not know it, and I, who am awake, do know. However what gain is there in my knowledge that I am wanted, if I do not know I am wanted and how to get there.

Yet one thing was sure, as long as I remained in the banquet hall I had no hope of knowing. I sat, and shivered, and was amazed. I wanted to know whether I was wanted for things that I did in the past or for things due to happen in the future. The anxiety over the past and that over the future, stuck to one another and became one big anxiety. Many thoughts passed through my mind; over what has already occurred in the past and what the future would be. Since I saw that there is no end to thoughts, I said to myself, "If I don't stop them. They will not stop of themselves."

GIMMEL

Arresting, my thoughts, I bestirred myself and set my mind to think of myself and my way. A man dwells where he does, in a permanent or a temporary dwelling. Suddenly he must leave. It is well for him, who knows what road to take. But if he does not know, he just stands looking at the walls of the house.

In all propriety, the walls should tell him, where he is to go for the other sides of the walls face the outside. But since there are four walls, each one facing another side and they stand in disagreement with one another. Which one is a man to heed? Turning his eyes from the wall, he looks at the door. The door, stands between inside and outside allowing the outsiders in and the insiders out. But all those who leave, leave on different routes and the door cannot help one to know the way.

I felt the domestics observing me. Had I asked them they might have told me. But, then again, they might have asked me to wait until the house was swept before they would direct me. As long as the banquet was in progress the domestics were all flattery. But as soon as the party was over all kinds of bad jokes were on their lips like "why don't you wait until we sweep the house then we'll show you through the heap of refuse.

I turned from the servants to my companions. Even they, because of their torpor, are unawares of my departure, I thought it rude not to take my leave of

them, so I once more looked at them--the people with whom I had spent the time of the banquet from its beginning to its end.

Before lifting my eyes to look at them I asked myself? In case they will wish to ask me "Why did you rise from the table and where are you going to during the banquet?" What shall I answer them? I cannot tell them the truth--for how does one leave such a table decked with all the good and go to a place which one does not know? Even the way to it is hidden? And not to tell them the truth is also impossible, since at such a time when one is about to embark on such a road how is it possible to be clever and to dissemble on the truth?

DALETH

I rose from the table and turned to be on my way. None of the table companions asked why and where I am going. Excepting the servants of the house no one marked my departure. And even the servants only noticed because I left an empty place for they were in a great hurry to sweep the house.

Turning from the servants I turned to the banquet companions. How much time did we share at one table and as I am about to leave their company no one cares to notice my parting. Even the one who sleepily had asked me before if I was leaving did not take notice and did not ask. Engrossed in his sleep he did not mark my rising and departing.

So anxious was I concerning the way that I forgot the first rule of travellers, that being; that one first has to know which road to take. Depending on the length of the road one has to prepare. But I, not knowing whereto I was to go, and not knowing the road to take, was totally unprepared for the way. All I had was the knowledge of my departure.

Stepping two three steps ahead, I happened on an old building, its shadow fell on the building in which the banquet took place. Shocked and amazed I stood there, this building standing only two-three steps away from the building in which the banquet was served and all during the time I sat there, and even

before - when I first came, I knew nothing of this building. But then I remembered how I rushed to the party with all my fellow guests, who still are sitting in the banquet hall, completely unaware of this building. My amazement was twofold, first, because I had missed to notice it before, and secondly; the building itself urged my curiosity. My eyes once glued to the building refused to depart from it.

VAV

This building was shaped like an erect Vav which had turned its head toward the right. Pegs were set in its left side like a ladder of ascent. They were made of ancient iron, thin and crusted. Owing to their thinness and to their crust and to the rust that had raised thorns they seemed like the legs of that creeping beings that has legs from its head to its tail, (which in the language of the Torah is called "The many legged-Marbeh Raglayim" and in the language of the Mishnah "Naddel"). Between each one of the pegs there was the space of a small mar.

I don't know if they were first made in this manner or if due to the lapse of time long past the pegs in between had fallen off. There is a way of seeing if this way and that; this way--because of the evenness of the space between the pegs and that; because they are so thin and if these still exist surely others must have broken and fallen off in the passage of time, and this caused the spaces between the pegs.

Because the building is made like an upright Vav I shall call it at times the building and at other times the Vav, depending on the need of the content and the meaning of the words. It is good to call it 'house' or 'building' because in this way I remove it from the realm of the parable and grant it being of its own.

I stood before that building and examined the rungs of the ladder. Who

would go up on this ladder? If one holds on to one of the pegs, your hands would shiver because of their being wet and even if one closes his eyes to the wetness, the barbs of rust will hurt you. And if one were to hold on to them and not let go, they would break because of their thinness. It would be best if they were to break when one still stands on the lowest rung because then there is less danger than if they were to break at the time when one stands on one of the high rungs, causing his own destruction.

In the meantime, this person (the narrator) is only looking but his heart is already filled with fear as if he had perceived a command "ascend!". And so I say to myself -- What is the meaning of "ascend!" if I don't know where to? Do they mean the head of the Vav? The head of the Vav is turned toward the right and the rungs are fastened to the left of the Vav. Not only this, but there is no connection between the rungs and the head of the Vav at all. Even if one were to rise and go up and reach to the uppermost rung, what would he do then afterwards. However, so high is the Vav and its rungs are so many rung past rung -- and since the uppermost rung, the one which is most high, and the one that comes after all the other rungs once it is reached, there still is no connection between the head of the Vav and the ladder. A person stands in front of the ladder, going up and surely the ladder is for going up. If not, what reason would there be for the ladder to be there? But then in the end what good is it all if the uppermost rung has no connection to anything. Thus this person stood in front of the ladder and he only has his amazement.

This amazement is difficult to bear because it comes without words. On account of the great amazement, the tongue of a person is silent and each word is arrested and kept back in the mouth. For if at least he had words in his mouth he would have asked and might have gotten an answer, because words bring to more words, but the person who is smitten, with amazement and has no words,

in his mouth to begin with. A matter that can be expressed in words you can dismiss with words, but that which cannot enter into words cannot be dismissed with words.

I had sat at a large banquet with my brethren, the fellow banqueteers. Suddenly I asked to go to another place so I rose from the banquet and left, and went. I still did not know where this place is and by what road one reaches it. As soon as I left the banquet house, I encountered this house with its ladder, I set my foot on the lowermost rung of the ladder in order to give my foot some rest. I was very tired. With my two hands I held on to the next rung above so that I might not fall. My intention wasn't at all to go up but to rest my foot a bit. But from this moment on I am climbing upward, climbing upward surrounded by air.

In order to run my eye from the danger into which I was set, for it is a great danger for a person who has no wings to find themselves suddenly in the air. I hung my eyes in space above me. What did I see there? What did I not see there? What I saw I am permitted to tell only in part. I saw a bird flying in the air. I saw such a bird of the fowl of heaven whom we know by name and color of his wings and other signs as each person according to his knowledge knows. I set my eye to see which place that lonely bird of heaven will choose for himself. And while I am looking at it I see another bird flying in its direction. As soon as they notice one another they begin a dance. They approached one another, and they separated, they approached and separated, and through their separation they approached one another again. When they came close to one another a sound was heard and they began to disappear in the upper reaches. And because heaven is so great and wide and our eyes are so small I will turn my eyes from them and simply look at the rungs. I do not know if there are more rungs above than below me now. They are all narrow and thin and I am very amazed that they do not break

under my feet.

I climb and rise from rung, to rung. These narrow and thin rungs, that are below me, I can reach by descending, those that are above me by ascending, and in front of me is the wall on which these rungs are fastened. There are all kinds of signs on that wall, a bent body, a turned head, grabbing hands, lifting feet. All kinds of ugly visages. Had I known that the wall was showing my own shadow, I would have been upset.

A person has three beings. The first being is the way in which a person perceives. The second is the way in which a person is seen by others and the third being is prior to the first and that is the being by which he was created by Him who created him. If a person merited and did not damage the being which his Creator made him, then that being overwhelms the other two and then even his shadow inspires grace and beauty.

TETH

In order that I not fly loose in lofty thoughts I lowered myself intentionally to the lesser level in which people like me exist. I paid attention to "here" and "there!" Why is it that I am so close to the banquet hall and I do not hear any sound from the banquet guests. And if they are asleep then at least the servants of the house are not asleep. But it is also possible that the servants of the house are already asleep due to their heavy work, because they had to work very hard to prepare the party. When they came after the banquet to clear away the remains of the party, and to sweep the house, sleep fell upon them and they all together, servants and guests, are asleep. What does this person do from the time that he has left the party? He climbs and climbs from rung among the rungs of the rung. I do not know if the rungs that I have ascended are more or fewer than those that I have not ascended. In the end, I have done what I could.

I sat there on one of the rungs and thought many thoughts about my fellow party guests and the banquet, the banquet hall and myself. Concerning myself I thought many thoughts. Why am I climbing in order to go up? What is the purpose of this ascent?

And because these are weighty questions which begot only weak answers I set myself to the matter at hand, not because it was good but because it happened. For things that have actually happened cannot be doubted. In thinking about these things, I remembered something that had happened to me. I had learned this from myself--then when I remember something I remember it because I now stand in a situation that is in some ways like the situation that I remembered for if not so why did I remember it right now? At no other occasion did I try to raise the details of the memory. Many years have passed since that happened and yet I manage to remember everything according to its proper order without adding or detracting. I keep on saying so many things and still have not told you the thing that I remembered. Let me leave all the side issues and tell you what I remembered.

One day I heard that Napoléon was bedridden. Whether this was so because he was sick or because he enjoyed to rest I do not know. The heart of kings cannot be fathomed.

I went to visit him.

When I entered I heard how he commanded that a horse be brought to him so that he could ride and that his meal be brought to him and I said to myself "let me depart". And as I turned to go, Napoléon heard and commanded that I be brought back. I returned. He pointed to a chair and I sat. They brought him his meal. He ate it on his bed, and I sat and watched him. His face looked like his famous picture and one lock was as it usually was on his forehead. His face looking as innocent as that of a child. After he ate and drank he turned his

face to the wall. A short moment and I saw that he was dead.

I sat before the corpse and wanted to explain his death to myself. And this is the way in which I explained it to myself: A person's act are written on his face, and when the time for his death comes, he turns his face to the wall. He sees the shadow of his actions on the wall and he becomes frightened and dies. So it was with Napoleon. He saw his visage on the wall, was frightened and died. And now I return to my own matter.

YUD

Due to the effort of the ascent, I forgot the purpose of the ascent, I became involved in the rungings of the ascent. The purpose of the ascent, I did not remember.

From afar I could see the head of the Vav, whether it was an actuality seen with my eyes or with my picturing it in the imagination of my heart I do not know. Be it one way or the other, it still was far and it seemed to be dwelling lonely, hidden in its own self and not connected either here or there. I began to take hold of the rung above the rung on which I stood, held on to it and drew myself up and went up one more rung, so I did with all the rungs. I stood on one, embracing the next one above it, and so drew myself from rung to rung. Thus I did on all the rungs. From afar I could see the head of the Vav. Whether I saw it with my eyes or with my heart I do not know. And with every rung that I rose the head of the Vav moved farther away from me.

The reason why it removes itself was due to two things, which in reality are one. It increases the distance and does not decrease. It increases the distance and does not decrease it.

YUD ALEF

In order that I might not forsake the order I return to the ladder and to its rungs and to the person who climbs from rung to rung. And since this person is no one other than myself, I shall tell the rest of the story in the first

person. My feet stood on one rung and my hands embrace the next rung and draw myself from below to above, from rung to rung, from the rung on which I stood to the rung which is above it. And if you are wondering how come that the thin rungs did not break under my feet set yourself to wonder -- how I stand the barbs of rust? For the barbs of rust are difficult to take, for one reason and for its opposite. They are wet like swamp abomination and their stinging is like the stinging of the thorns of the desert, which due to the burning sun of the desert have become dried and heated like white-hot spears.

As I drew myself from rung to rung standing on one rung, reaching for the rung above it, it may seem as if it is exactly the same but it is not so, for the rungs that first were my handhold became my foothold afterwards. And all these rungs I did not lift my eyes and did not look to see if the head of the Vav was close by or far away, but I kept on climbing. I climbed and I ascended and I stood on one rung I reached for the next rung above it and drew myself and rose until the next rung. This I did with all the rungs. Drew myself and rose. Sometimes because I fully wanted to and sometimes because of force of habit. While the actions did not change their significance changed.

It seems to me that everything is so simple and explained but I must add that the rungs are many and there is no end of rungs. And even if you reach to the end you never reach, -- and why is this so? -- because the rung which is above all the other rungs has no rung higher than it, and if you want to stand on it, there is nothing to hold on to. And if you can't hold on to it there is no way of standing... and if there is no way of standing then you cannot remain on that rung.

YUD BETH

And because all these things are so exerting, and I was so tired, I sat on one of the many rungs of the ladder to rest a little and because the ladder was

fastened on the wall, if you want to sit on it you must turn your face from the wall and look at the world.

When I turned my face from the wall toward the world and closed my eyes it so that the world should not disturb my thought. I had thought many thoughts on the rungs that I ascended. There were so many rungs, so many thoughts each one evolving from the other and rising up from it. The day became increasingly smaller. I rose from my place, turned to the wall and continue to climb on the rungs. I did not become intimidated by the barbs of the rust and not by the rungs that can break under my feet due to their weakness although the danger increases with every step higher. From the wall I saw the shadow of a man climbing, rising. He must have a reason for climbing up but I in my poverty do not know. By and by, that person came to the topmost rung which has no rung higher than it.

All my bones were shaking due to the fear of the void and had I not returned to the rung below it I would not be able to stand for before I had risen up to it, to that rung, it served me as a handhold but when I rose to that rung I had nothing to hold on to.

So therefore I descended one rung. I must say, that although it was a descent in comparison to all the others it still was an ascent. I looked from the heights of my place and I saw how far I was from the place from which I had come. I had no strength to stand and I had no strength to return to the place from which I came.

And above I saw the head of the Vav. There was no connection between it and the rungs of the ladder except the air. It was not the same air that surrounds me or that is above my head and it is not even the air that is above that air. It is another kind of air which has no relation to these airs.

And because a person is a social being by his nature I set my thought to the

banqueteers who still sat in the party hall, resting from the banquet, in their dreams, revelling from banquet. My thoughts were not clear at all. One thing was clear. The fright that flowed from these thoughts.

YUD GIMMEL

I raised my eyes above me, an anxious darkness overwhelmed me from above I turned my eyes downward, an anxious darkness rose from below, all the way up to the uppermost rungs. Due to this darkness, I did not see my hands and if I would not feel the barbs of the rust I would have thought that I lost my hand.

It is impossible to return to below for the darkness below and to rise above is impossible for the darkness above. And even if I were to try to rise I could not hold on to anything and I remembered the fellow banqueteers, sitting in the party house and wondered what happened to them. The amazement at first begins in amazement and ends in terror, developing from amazement into terror it turned back from terror into amazement.

The night was dark. Like a web of darkness was of the darkness of that night. All the rungs of the ladder were covered in the darkness and they had become invisible except the rust that shone through the darkness.

I had compared the rungs to a centipede just filled with legs from the beginning -- from its head to its tail. I must add that if this animal places its feet on the flesh of a person, the flesh becomes swollen and grave sufferings

beset the man. And if you try to remove the centipede you leave some of its legs in the flesh and that brings on diseases. From the great pain, from my great suffering I almost let go the rung on which I held and now you can understand how great are the pains of a person who holds on, who knows that if he would not hold on to the rung he would fall, and nevertheless he wishes to let go of his hand from the place which it holds on. And when that does happen?, when he stands at the highest heights, close to the place which he desired. What is

prepared for him if he were to let go his place only a fall from the high mountain to the deep abyss?

I overcame my suffering and sent my eyes from the barbs of the rust standing in my place, my foot on one rung and my hand holding the rung above it, I stood and wondered. A ladder is made for climbing and its rungs are only to transport you past them. Now that I have reached the end of all the rungs where can I go from the end than further. Could I continue to the head of the Vav no matter how tall the ladder was it still did not reach the head of the Vav.

I looked from the heights of the ladder and above and due to the darkness my eyes did not see anything except the air which wafted above the ladder. And even the ladder does not reach the head of the Vav and there is nothing between the head of the Vav and the head of the ladder except air. And even the air -- its end on this side is not like its end on the other side for the one end wafts in this direction the other end wafts to the other direction and there is no connection between the two airs. If I did not silence my heart, I would have said that the only common of thing these two airs was that they were called by the same name.

YUD DALETH

The darkness surrounded the ladder and all its rungs and I stand at the head of the ladder on the last rung, on the penultimate rung. In comparison it is a rung like all the other rungs but for a person like me it is the end of all the rungs and if I wish to stand on the last rung I could not find a foothold.

And so the darkness surrounded the ladder and all its rungs and I stood on ladder in the midst of the darkness. So thick was the darkness that when I stood in the dark I seemed to me like a peg stuck in wood. Where did the peg's place hide in? So deeply was the peg sunk in the wood that its place was not visible and so I was stuck in the dark. From the dark side the parable likened itself

to the well-known parable of the guard of the house. From the side of my position, my position was weak, and if I would not hold on to the rung above me, I would fall. I held on to the rung with my eyes turned upward and I looked into the air that wafted in the air above the ladder, and I saw that there was no connection between it, and if I did not silence my heart I would have said that only a name do they share in common. I looked at those airs and saw that there is another air between air and air and it was not an air to connect but to separate. Then I realized that if these airs cannot touch one another how much more so is it impossible for a person who raised himself with all difficulty to come to the air below the ladder and with all difficulty climbed the rungs of the ladder and with all difficulties came to the top of the ladder and not even the top of the ladder itself for if he were to come to the top of the ladder he would not have anything to hold on to and so therefore he left his place at the head of the ladder and stands on the rung just below it. What can one expect of such a person?

It is impossible to stand a long time and it is impossible to return for I was very far from the ground, I raised my eyes above and I cast myself upward to the place of the head of the Vav. And because the thing is so difficult and all the explanations are so difficult, I will let go of the explanations and turn to the rest of the story.

TETH VAV

After I cast myself up, what happened? Well after I cast myself up, I reached the head of the Vav. Very close to the head of the Vav. And from there, namely from close to the head of the Vav I came to the head of the Vav itself.

I saw myself standing in the head of the Vav, in its very midst. In the very centre of the Vav. I opened my hand and brought them close one to the other and then I separated them into here, into there, and opened my eyes for before I had closed my eyes. I no longer remember when I closed my eyes or for what reason

I closed them. I imagine that this came about because the Vav lowered itself, and took me and caused me to enter into its head. And as I opened my eyes, stood and looked below, I saw the extent of all the effort that person exerted himself in order to reach the Vav. I connected and added up all the actions that were tied to one another, how they are combined with one another and how they are explained one through the other and they are related one to the other without a separation, without a wall, without a question, without an objection, without a wonder and without an answer. All of these things remove themselves prior to even holding and taking hold in the throat. And before they could associate themselves, by themselves and were lost by themselves and were forgotten in their being lost and no longer remembered.

And when all the questions had become lost and all the causes and effects had become hidden, and everything was immersed in the midst of everything, all the rungs began to vibrate until the voice was heard and reached me. And I heard and I said 'What kind of a sound is this?' I peeked and saw that people in great haste are coming up on these very same rungs on which I had ascended and they are running like a party of the holy brotherhood, running to bury a man on Mount Olivet in Jerusalem on a Sabbath eve at dark. I am a humble person and never in my awakened state or in a dream did I dream that a person would exert himself for my sake, especially not many people, especially not such a great exertion. I nevertheless thought that they all had come for me. And because I was so tired and had no longer any strength to help them I said, if I cannot help them and ease their effort let me accompany them with my eyes. Let me see and watch them as they ascend. And because I am so meek, I did not dare to look at their faces. I lowered my eyes just to their ankles and saw how they raised their feet and rose from rung to rung. And this is how they drew themselves to the higher rungs from below to above, climbing and rising in the same manner as I have climbed. But I

had climbed with great effort and they climbed with facility. I went up little by little and they go up with great rush. I was amazed. What is all this rush? Am I really so worthy in their eyes? Had it not been for the fact that I had come to the head of the Vav, I would have been very close to pride.

Blessed be He who bestows knowledge to man, for He gave me knowledge to know the purpose of their ascent. I stood and looked at them as they set their feet on one rung and held on to another rung and climbed from rung to rung in the manner in which I had climbed. Let my compassion float to them and my eyes were covered with tears, and if it were not for my pity that saddened my mind from standing and watching I would have been able to see and know how they ascended and how they came to that person and how they raised him up and how they went down with him. I would have been able to see where to they had gone and where to they had brought him and what they had done to him. All these things are connected one to the other and there is no cause that has no effects after it, until in the end they all annihilate themselves and lose in themselves because the final effect is the first cause.

And this is the story of the great party and some of the things that happened to one of those who attended. And because a story does not at all approach the reality over those who troubled themselves for him as they climbed those thin and weak rungs between which there is nothing to connect him to the place in which I stood except an air the likes of which is without--whatness.

The Party Is Over, by SJ Agnon is one of his most surrealistic stories. To help the reader with facile interpretations of what has to be experienced in the reading will not help much and is superfluous. The meaning is contained in the feeling it builds with the repetitions. They are intended to focus the reader to the silent terror the author experiences over death and only when this is faced does he see that death is not a final state of **extinction**. The episode with Napoléon and the reference to the burial society point to death. Moreover the meal which stands for life, the companions who cannot **help** him because of their own torpor and preoccupation with their own dreams, point to the loneliness of dying.

What is puzzling is the meaning of the Vav. Agnon lets us know that the building is only a parable. He calls it building so he can talk about the ineffable. According to R" Ahron, the Great of Karlin (d 1772) the Vav represents consciousness. He interprets the sentence Vayahalom - "And he dreamed" (Jacob's ladder dream) as "and he Holomed" - the Holom being the Vav with the dot on top. There are three centers in man, the liver, the heart and the brain. When the dot, awareness resides in the liver the sound is i. When awareness rises to the heart and mouth is filled to overflowing the Vav is dotted in the middle and the sound called M'lu-pum (full mouth) is u. When the awareness rises even higher to the brain and over it to the transrational the dot stands over the Vav is called holom and the sound is o. The dot has moved to the air beyond the head of consciousness.

There may be another function if the Vav's use by Agnon. In his fondness for symbols Agnon uses the initial Ayin for a hero in a story that in some sense is a celebration of the author's position as a quiet idealistic writer; Adiel Amzeh (See Forevermore, Commentary-----). The next letter of his name Agnon he celebrates in his story-novellette Ido V'Eynam (Now published as the second of Two Tales - Schocken).

There all the characters are named with a Gimmel, Gamzu, Gynt (Ginath), Greifenbach etc. In this story Agnon celebrates the Vav, the fourth letter of his name. The chapter Vav, is the longest and almost contains the entire story.

We conjecture that Agnon has another story, already written in which the letter Nun is featured. Moses for all his attainment only reached the 49th gate of understanding. The fiftieth (Nun has the numerical value of 50) is not reached by anyone in this life. This letter appears as the 3 and 5, the last letter of his chosen name, his Pen Name. Agnon's real name Chachkes has now been replaced by Agnon which is also his present legal name. We suppose that the story will not be published during his life time. May that time be very distant when the Nun story appears.