

Giving the People Voice
The Poetic Song Writing of Naomi Shemer
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SUMMARY

This thesis: 'Giving the People a Voice – The Poetic Song Writing of Naomi Shemer' comprises five (5) chapters. There is very little written about Shemer's songs/poetry; there are three journal articles that deal with Shemer's work. Two of them deal with one song each, and the third is a vicious critique that is more political than literary. The materials used for this thesis are the songs books published by Shemer, literary articles and the many interviews and articles about Shemer that have been published by the Israeli newspapers and magazines, and journals that deal with literature and with music.

Shemer writes about everyday life things that are important to most people. Her background, both her growing-up years on *Kvutzat Kinneret* and her adult years in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, are the backdrop for many of her songs. Shemer's songs are located within the Israeli social and political/security context. It is hoped that this thesis will bring a better understanding of the writer and her songs; and the reasons that she has been so popular for over four decades and why she is considered by many to be the national songwriter of Israel.

The first chapter: 'Naomi Shemer' deals with the writer's life. Chapter two: 'Dan Miron's Critique' brings this important scholar's analysis of Shemer's work and the rebuttal by Amnon Navot, a noted critic and writer, and a rebuttal by the writer of this thesis. Chapter three: 'Jerusalem of Gold' brings some articles that tell of how this song came to be written, and the central section of this chapter is the wonderful analysis of this song by Natan Greenboim. The fourth chapter brings a selection of songs, from each of Shemer's songbooks that were published between 1967 and 1995. The final chapter: 'Epilogue' includes the words of the panel of judges that awarded Shemer the Israel Prize in 1983 and praise from Shemer's bitterest critic, namely Dan Miron. This thesis tries to show Shemer's enduring influence and popularity and the reason that she is considered

by many to be the national songwriter, and some even say that Shemer is the 'poet laureate' of Israel.

Naomi Shemer

Naomi Shemer¹ has had a long and illustrious career as Israel's national songwriter and unofficially proclaimed 'poet laureate.' She first began writing songs, for her pupils at *Kvutzat Kinneret*, after her return from army duty in the early 1950's. In 1956 she and her actor husband, Gideon Shemer, left for Jerusalem and then for Tel Aviv. Naomi Shemer has lived in Tel Aviv since the late 1950's. Her songs are renowned for their love of country and the countryside of Israel, and for the ordinary things in life. Her songs are filled with quotations from the Bible and other traditional texts. Shemer's lyrics are simple and tug at the heart. Her music -- for she composes the music for all her own songs -- is hummed by even her greatest political critics. She has been awarded some of the highest prizes available in Israel, including the Israel Prize for Hebrew Songs. She has honorary doctorates from most of Israel's leading universities, and she is currently the chair of 'Acum,' the Association of Writers, Composers and Music Publishers. She is part of the committee of the Academy for the Hebrew Language -- no small feat for any woman.

Shemer is married to Mordechai Horowitz (her second husband), who is a lawyer and a writer. She has two children, Haleli her daughter from her first marriage and Ariel, from her second.

Shemer was born on *Kvutzat Kinneret*, a kibbutz at the southern end of Lake Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee, in 1930. Her parents, Me'ir and Rivka Sapir, pioneers from

¹ This chapter, about the life of Naomi Shemer, is a composite taken from her various interviews and from her official Curriculum Vitae. All the newspaper and magazine articles will be listed in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

Vilna and were part of the Third Aliyah.² Vilna, the capitol of Lithuania, was considered to be the 'Jerusalem' of Eastern Europe (yerushalayim d'lita). The Zionist Movement and Hebrew culture were very strong there -- there were numerous Jewish day schools teaching Hebrew, Zionist youth movements, newspapers in Hebrew, Jewish authors who wrote in Hebrew, and theaters whose plays were in Hebrew. This was Eastern Europe's answer to the emancipation.³ Such was her parents' background, and that of their fellow pioneers, and hence, that of Naomi Shemer and her generation. Her schooling was at the regional schools of the Jordan Valley, in Kibbutz Degania. The teachers, especially Aminadav and Shoshana Yisraeli, had the students learn all the Israeli poets by heart, as well as many chapters of the Bible, Rashi and other traditional texts. As Shemer has said: 'we had a very intimate knowledge of the Bible because of the way it was taught. These words are part of my life, and therefore part of my songs.'

Shemer has said a number of times that as good as her mother was as a kibbutz worker that's how bad she, Naomi, was. It was made known to her from an early age that she was not a good worker, but she was a good musician. Her musical talent was discovered, at the kibbutz, at the very early age of three. This caused a number of problems within the kibbutz. The kibbutz society [not just in Kinneret] is based on equality. If one child is to get something then all children are to get the same thing, and

2 *Aliyah*, is the Hebrew term for immigration to Israel. During the decades, from 1881, preceding the Independence of Israel, there were 'waves' of aliyah, and they were 'numbered.' The third Aliyah was from the 1920's till the 1930's.

3 The 'Emancipation' was the Jews' description of the 'Enlightenment,' the process of freedom and equality that was started by the French Revolution and continued by Napoleon. Jews were permitted to leave the ghettos, receive a secular education, and become citizens of the countries in which they had dwelled for centuries. Western Europe, in its progress towards equality and democracy, emphasized the individual as citizen. The situation in Eastern Europe was a little different. The pressures were towards equality of all the nations within the Russian Empire, which led to the Russian Revolution in 1917. Jews were seen to be part of an equal national group, and were given a 'homeland' of Birobijan, after the Revolution. If in Western Europe the Enlightenment was centered on the individual, in Eastern Europe it was centered on the various national groups. Hence the phenomenal rise of Zionism.

similarly with adults.⁴ Her mother was in charge of her early musical education and training. Shemer acknowledges that 'to her I owe every part of my musical skills.' At that time a delegation of American Hebrew teachers visited the kibbutz and saw this little girl with great musical talent. They sent the kibbutz a piano for little Naomi. It was stormy during the kibbutz meeting in which they finally agreed that Naomi should learn to play the piano. Shemer has said in her interviews: 'From the age of six I remember myself at the piano my feet didn't reach the pedals, so they got me a special stool.' At six she was leading the communal singing on *erev Shabbat* and festivals. It was not that no one else could play the piano at *Kinneret*, but no one could improvise as well as she. For Shemer the community singing was her real university, even though she studied at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem. It was stormy, too, when it was suggested that she be sent to the music academy to continue her music education.

The influences on her music began at the kibbutz. The members sang everything from German canons to Bedouin songs. 'The songs were all put into a Hebrew version, and a big part of it was Hassidic,' said Shemer. All of this was despite the founders' renunciation of religion. 'They had to reject Judaism. They had to do this to carry out the revolution.'⁵ But still they carried the synagogue on their backs. These song fests were uplifting and religious "in the good sense". She walked kilometers for music lessons, in the region of her kibbutz, and when she had exhausted all the teachers, at the age of fourteen, she went to Haifa for lessons with Professor Hans Neumann. Shemer

4 I remember on my kibbutz, Galon, the discussions that raged for weeks about getting individual televisions for the members. How would they be distributed, who would get it first and so on. It was known that eventually everyone would get one. A more difficult problem was that of higher education. Not everyone is suited for tertiary education, nor is it particularly necessary on kibbutz. Someone would be sent to study if that were necessary for the betterment of the kibbutz as a whole, e.g. nursing, or becoming an electrical engineer for the ventilator factory. The stormy sessions were about who would be sent to such study.

5 The 'revolution' was to 'take the ghetto out of the Jew' and to make him a worker of the soil, an 'intellectual peasant.' The 'revolution' was to make the Jewish nation 'normal.' The base of the societal

says of him that was 'a great pianist who left in 1947, with the first shot.' Her musical education always mingled the conventional, academic approach with folk music. After her studies in Jerusalem, she returned to the kibbutz as a teacher, but immediately felt the lack of 'real songs from our life.' It was at that time that she wrote her first songs; eight children's songs whose subjects were taken from kibbutz life. She was never interested in becoming a concert pianist.

In 1951 the Israel Defence Forces discovered that Shemer had never served, conventionally, in the army. She was conscripted. She claims that she was a terrible soldier. Every item that the army issued to her she lost. They did not know what to do with her. On top of being a terrible soldier, lacking discipline and being insolent, she had a diploma as a pianist. They sent her to serve in the entertainment corps of the *Nahal*⁶ battalion. There Shemer served with such entertainment greats as Haim Topol, Yossi Banai, Yonah Atari and Dubi Zeltzer. Once Shemer got to Tel Aviv and began working as a composer, Haim Topol remembered her from their time together in the Army. He knew that she could also write lyrics. Topol gave Shemer the opportunity to write songs and that started her on her career as a songwriter.

Shemer has written hundreds of songs and recalls her career with untinted glasses. She has said: 'I see my work as applied art because every song I ever wrote was commissioned by a soloist, a theater, an army group, singing groups, the radio or television.' Shemer said that it was important to note that although she wrote for the army she never wrote about the army:

triangle was to be the peasants, as in all other societies. The Jewish society was 'up-side down' with the very few peasants at the apex, with merchants and middle-men at the base.

⁶ 'Naha' is the battalion in which the soldiers are also farmers. Most are the sons and daughters from kibbutzim and moshavim, and those youngsters who wish to become members of those settlements. Every Army command, i.e. north, south, central and so on, has its own entertainment corps. Musically talented youngsters are sent to these entertainment corps to do their army service. It has been the springboard to a musical career for many entertainers.

I composed for the army entertainment groups because they were an important medium in those years and gave many public concerts. My songs like 'Mahar' ['Tomorrow'], were written for the young people in the army; this is a song about being young and full of hope for peace. If you read carefully, you will see that I made sure that my songs were full of colors like green and blue and not khaki....

Shemer has been asked numerous times how she writes her songs and how she gets her inspiration. Her answer has usually been:

Are you mad, what has inspiration to do with it? With me the ears, heart and head all work all the time -- and if those are my small inspirations, then when the time comes to work, I simply sit at the table or next to the piano, and I write. And that is simply work: to write, to correct, to make a clean copy, again and again and again. When? At night, I usually don't work, because I like to go to sleep early I usually write during the morning hours, when my daughter Haleli [was] at school.

Shemer does not sit down and wait for inspiration. It is work that is done according to fixed criteria for rhythm and lyrics.

Shemer has been asked whether the lyrics come first or the music or together. Apparently there are different beginnings, most of the time the words and the music 'descend to earth' together, one intertwined with the other, however there are many exceptions. The song, 'Swan Girl' -- 'ילדה ברבור' *Yaldah Barbur*, that Moshe Beker sang was written some ten years earlier for [a section within] the newspaper *Davar*, the melody seemed to have been dictated to her one night, *in toto*. Shemer describes it as if it arrived by UPS. In contrast, another song she wrote, 'Time' -- 'זמן' *Z'man*, that she wrote at the same time was written four times and each time it was different.

Shemer says that there are things that one creates and things that one finds or discovers. Many times she has the feeling that 'this thing' is lying in some place, waiting for her like some archeological artifact, lying there intact not even broken, waiting to be uncovered. Shemer says that she feels that she finds the biggest things, that she does not create them.

Shemer, although she writes only in Hebrew, also wants her songs to be sung by non-Hebrew speakers. Therefore she has an English translation of the titles to her songs and has transliterated the text under the music in her songbooks. However she has not translated the lyrics of her songs, because she wants people to work a little in order to understand the original Hebrew. In addition to her own songs she has included in her songbooks songs which she has translated from French, setting them to her own music, and the poetry of the Beatles. She is currently adding Italian to her linguistic inventory.

Whenever an interviewer asks Shemer about her status as Israel's national poet, she disclaims that title, saying that she writes Hebrew songs. However, in the aftermath of her political activity of protesting the evacuation from Sinai, her critics have downgraded her from poet to songwriter. She notes that very well, and resents it.

Shemer's songs have generally been 'western' in tone. She was asked whether she has considered writing songs for 'cassette singers' -- זמרי קסטות, and 'Mizrakhi'⁷ songs in general.

Shemer's answer is similar to her remarks about 'high-brow' and 'low-brow' Hebrew. She has written for Haim Moshe, one of the 'kings' of *Mizrakhi* 'cassette singers.' For her singers are not divided into 'camp A' and 'camp B.' She took the interviewer to task, by telling him that good things do not come out of an intellectual decision about what type of song one writes. From a creative point of view these things have to come from the heart and not from the head. She said that nothing good will come out of it if one morning as she sits to write she would suddenly say 'now it goes *Mizrakhi*, onwards, *yallah*⁸, a *Mizrakhi* song.'

7 'Cassette singers,' are singers who record cassettes but are not usually heard over the radio. Generally, their ethnic background is that from Arab countries. These communities are known as *Eidot HaMizrah*, 'Eastern Communities.' Their music is 'Arabic' in sound and texture, having 'twirls' in the notes., the texts are in Hebrew. The standard of Hebrew is not 'high-brow.' This is 'Mizrakhi' music. These singers have large followings from among all the *Eidot HaMizrah*.

In the mid-1980's Shemer collaborated with Moshe Beker, a *Mizrakhi* singer, to release a ten-song C.D. They had met in a television studio and immediately took a liking to one another. She had liked the way he had sung one her songs a couple of years previously. They decided that they would create songs out of all the things that usually do not enter songs, all the chatter that makes up real life; that would be the stuff of these songs. Ten songs came out of their collaboration -- חפצים אישיים, *Khafatzim Ishi'im*, -- 'Personal Effects.'⁹ Shemer said that with these songs she feels that she has finally arrived to the 1980's and to Tel Aviv. For this process to have occurred, to take her out of the countryside and out of her beloved *Kinneret*, she needed a partner who was born and raised in Tel Aviv.

The biggest controversy that continues to surround Shemer is her political stance on the settlement issue in the West Bank and Gaza. Shemer has stated many times that she is not a 'political animal,' that she has no interest in politics, that she is not affiliated with any political party, nor is she the spokesperson for any political movement. Shemer states that her roots are in the soil of the Labor Zionist movement, into which she was born and within whose principles she was raised. Those principles include that Jewish communities are not uprooted, and that these communities help determine the borders of the country.¹⁰ She said that she went along with her upbringing, went along with 'settling the Land of Israel.' It is the others who went astray. She claims to be an

8 'Yallah' is Arabic for forward or onward. Like a number of Arabic terms it has become part of everyday Hebrew.

9 Two songs in chapter 4 come from this collection, 'Swan Girl' -- ילדה ברבור, *Yaldah Barbur* and 'Gai' -- גיא.

10 After the defeat of the Turkish Empire during W.W.I, The French and the British divided up the Turkish territories. The British took control of, among other regions, those areas where Jews had established their towns and villages, in what became part of the British Mandate of Palestine. The area to be given to the Jews as their homeland, by the U.N. was determined by where the Jewish communities were located.

extreme individualist and therefore is a political party of one. She refuses to be identified politically, even with her husband.¹¹

In 1979 Shemer demonstrated against the evacuation of *Yamit*.¹² The Greater Israel movement took her song *על כל אלה*, *Al Kol Eleh* – ‘All these Things,’ as their ‘anthem,’ because of the line *אל נא תעקור נטוע*, *al na ta'akor natu'ah* – ‘please do not uproot the planted.’¹³ As a result of her being identified with the Greater Israel movement (although she was not an official member), she became, according to Shemer, the brunt of the left’s ‘targeting’ and ostracizing her, and the d.j.’s did not play her album ‘*Khafatzim Ishi'im*,’ despite the very good reviews that it received. Shemer said that the broadcasters simply threw a blanket over it and smothered it. Shemer is livid at the way she has been treated and said that they, the left-wingers, should not be awarded the ‘crown of openness,’ that they invented one-sided freedom of speech and that they are arrogant, scoundrels, haughty and closed minded. After two years of such ostracism Shemer ‘screamed’ in all her interviews and the ‘blanket’ was lifted. In fact, when many thought that she might be dying of some disease, in 1991, the Army radio station and *Kol Israel*, the public radio station, as well as the public television station put on a marathon of her songs called ‘A Salute to Naomi Shemer.’ Even the critics of her political opinions appeared in the performances to sing to her. Shemer herself took part in a number of performances.

Shemer has noted that the modern poets such as Alterman, Tchernichovsky, Bialik and Rachel, have all influenced her and indeed, she has set many of their poems to her own music. It seems that above all these great poets, the one whose influence she feels most is King David, the writer of Psalms.

11 Mordechai Horowitz is a well known ring-winger, associated with the right-wing of the Likud Party.

12 *Yamit* was a city in north western Sinai that was built during the tenure of the Labor Party. As part of the peace agreement with Egypt, it was to be evacuated. Egypt had the option of buying the city, that is, the buildings and the infrastructure, but declined and so the city, after its evacuation, was destroyed.

13 Please see Chapters 2 and 4 for further discussion on this line.

Shemer loves all sorts of books, she endlessly devours rubbish and nonsense books. She 'inhales' biographies and good literature. Her idol is Proust. When asked about Hebrew poetry she confessed that it was difficult for her. She buys the poetry books, thumbs through them, gets the gist but they do not touch her. She said that perhaps she has a 'glass wall,' a barrier, that she may have put up in order to protect her inner voice. She has difficulty explaining it.

Shemer's songs are full of biblical images and quotations. She uses traditional texts as well. A number of her songs are perceived to be prayers, or similar to prayers, like '*Lu Yehi*' -- May it Be, '*Al Kol Eleh*'-- All These Things, '*Akedat Itzhak*'-- The Sacrifice of Isaac, '*Shirat Ha'Asavim*' -- The Song of the Grasses, and of course Jerusalem of Gold. Shemer says that religion is too important to be left to the religious. Another statement of hers about religion, especially that in Israel, is that she is expecting to see a modern definition of Judaism that will somehow reconcile the poles of religion and secularism in today's Israel. Shemer says that she is optimistic, and may be the only one, but if there could have been a renaissance of the land and water and language, then it is possible to have a renaissance of religion. This statement for me, as a Reform Jew, is both good and very sad. It is good in that many educated, modern Jews in Israel are ready for liberal Judaism. It is sad because it shows, that even educated people like Shemer, who have been in touch with many Jews in the United States, and must know someone in Israel who belongs to the Movement for Progressive Judaism, as the Reform Movement is known there, that the Reform Movement has made no impact on them. I find it sad that Shemer cannot see that the liberal sectors of religious Judaism are bridging the poles of religion and secularism; that these movements have shown that one can be a modern, thinking person and, according to one's Movement, an observant religious Jew at the same time. Most non-observant Jews in Israel still see Orthodoxy, and most probably Ultra-Orthodoxy, as the legitimate expression of religious Judaism.

Shemer does not see herself in any grandiose way, not as the nation's poet nor as the nation's songwriter, and not in any political manner. When asked whether she was a poet with a political mission, trying to get her message across via her songs, she seemed indignant. She denies having any political views and said that if she wanted to express a political opinion she would write a letter or prose, but would not set it to music.

Shemer's children, including her son-in-law, are active in *Shalom Akhshav*, the Peace Now movement.¹⁴ When asked how she gets on with her children, she has answered that there are so many important things to talk about other than politics, that they have no problems. She prefers that someone have an opinion that contradicts hers than have no opinion at all. She is proud of their involvement in *Shalom Akhshav*. Shemer states that freedom of speech begins at home.

In September 2001,¹⁵ Shemer gave, what was a scoop to one of the journalists. It was supposed to have been a regular interview about Shemer, her work and life and so on. However, for whatever reason, Shemer broke her own self-imposed silence about the political situation with the Palestinians. It caused a major sensation in Israel. In this interview Shemer states that there has been an upheaval in the country during the course of her lifetime. Things that once were seen as good and valuable are now seen as bad and even as sinful, such as settling the land; being drafted into the army was once a right, today it is an obligation; manual labor was honorable now it is shameful.

Shemer is honest with herself and incapable of lying to herself. She will not bend to what is seen by her circle of artist acquaintances as politically correct. Her ideas of Greater Israel are seen as detestable [מקצה -- *muktzeh*] by them. This, however, does not stop her from continuing to adhere to her 'non-kosher' ideas. The maximum that

14 *Shalom Akhshav*, is a non-party political movement that is active in trying to get Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza. It is identified with the leftwing of the Labor Party, and parties to the left of that.

15 תמי שמש-קריץ: נעמי שמר שוברת שתיקה: את, ספטמבר (2) 2001, גיליון 466.
Tami Shemesh-Karitz: Naomi Shemer Breaks Her Silence; *At Magazine*, September (2) 2001, Issue 466

Shemer was ready to do was to impose a political silence on herself. She does not see the difference between *התיישבות* -- *hityashvut*, settling the land within the borders of the State of Israel, and *התנחלות* -- *hitmakhalut*, settling the land 'over the green line,' that is in the West Bank and Gaza. With the evacuation ['expulsion' is the word that Shemer uses] from *Yamit* she came to understand that settling the land was not a supreme value, and that settlements do not determine the borders of the country any more. Shemer realized that she had no influence on events and so decided that it would be preferable to keep silent and to leave politics to the politicians. Shemer has kept her silence for nineteen years.

The interviewer said to Shemer that silence was not her only option. She could have been like Gideon Levi who writes every week about the pain of the Palestinians, even though it seems that most people do not want to hear it. Shemer replied that Levi is like the white corpuscles, he is needed to protect the Israeli society from moral disease. Levi confessed to having had an affair with a Palestinian woman who was green with envy at what Israel has achieved: the Weizmann Institute, the [Israel] Philharmonic, wide boulevards, street lighting. Shemer said that this spoke to her because the latest *intifada*¹⁶ has taught that there is no coexistence; 'it is either them or us.' When Shemer read what Levi had written she thought that it would be very sad to fold up the country, the Weizmann, the Philharmonic. She says that the Arabs want the Jews to fold up like an accordion, pack their things on their backs and leave. The first thing Shemer thought of was 'what will we have to pack up? the Weizmann Institute?' Shemer said that her internal dialogue is very different from the accepted public discourse.

Shemer is furious at the European nations who, after murdering millions of Jews, have the nerve to tell Israel how to behave morally. She said that the nations of Europe

have all fought their own wars for existence and for independence, for one hundred years, for thirty years. She says:

The whole idea of Return to Zion, *שיבת ציון* -- *shivat tziyon*, is not rational. This happened once in the history of humankind, that a nation returned to its homeland after two thousand years, extremely irrational, and after one understands this, the whole language -- they like to call this 'narrative' -- changes.

Shemer does not see Israel's holding of the 'territories' as conquest, she sees it as a rebellious minority living among the Israeli Jews, and that many countries experience that. Having a rebellious minority does not mean that one divides a country, especially one as small as Israel. Shemer says that Israel has made many mistakes,¹⁷ including not building apartment blocks for the Palestinians instead of having them in refugee camps after so many years. Shemer states that the Jews left the *Golah*, exile, because they were fed up with being a minority, and in Israel the Jews are uncomfortable with the role of being the majority. 'If that is so then we do not have a place anywhere on earth.'

Shemer continues her talk with Shemesh-Karitz, saying how she has remained true to her upbringing, that she did not turn to the right, but that the others veered from the original path. Some of the other things that Shemer says, in the interview, are indeed difficult to hear, especially if one believes that the Palestinians want peace and are prepared to live harmoniously with Israel. Shemer does not believe that this is the case. When asked about what sort of Israel she wants to leave to her grandchildren, her answer is to quote from the Ethics of the Fathers: *לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא אתה בן חורין להיבטל* 'ממנה' 'You are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.' No generation has to complete the work; it is permissible to leave the next generation the rest of the task.

¹⁶ *Intifada* means revolt in Arabic

¹⁷ These mistakes are not the regular ones that one thinks of in connection to Israel's being in the West Bank. Those are more like not allowing Arab countries to invest in the West Bank, not that there is much evidence to that affect, that the Palestinians were economically dependent on Israel for much of their livelihoods, etc.

It is easy to understand the storm that such an interview would have aroused. There is a difference between knowing that Shemer is against evacuating any Jewish settlement anywhere, and hearing her say, with great emotion, that the Palestinians are a rebellious minority and do not want peace. I do not know whether there will be any long term effect regarding her popularity in Israel. She has had these ideas all through her many years of silence, and they did not penetrate into her songs. As Shemer herself has said, there are so many other things that are important in life to talk about. It is now almost one and a half years since this latest *intifada* broke out, after the most generous offer made to the Palestinians, including parts of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Shemer may still be among the small minority within her circle of artist acquaintances to hold these views. However, there has been a great increase of numbers within the general population who today agree with her. Many of the Jewish Israelis have been bitterly disappointed with Mr. Arafat's violent response to Prime Minister Barak's offer. Many today believe that the Palestinians do not want peace. The situation in Israel, on this matter, is not a happy one.

One does need to agree with everything that Shemer believes about the Palestinians or about evacuating Jewish settlements from Judea, Samaria and Gaza, to feel her pain and frustration.

Naomi Shemer, has been awarded great recognition by illustrious institutions, by the State and by the people. Even though she rejects the title of poet, and national poet at that, a large number of people see her as such. Shemer could not have survived as a relevant songwriter, for more than four decades, had she not been able to sense the mood of the people, had she not had her finger on the pulse of the nation and been able to touch them deeply to their very hearts. Her songs are their songs; she sings their thoughts and feelings.

Dan Miron's Critique

'Songs from It-Never-Happened Land' 'זמירות מארץ להד"ס'

Dan Miron is world-famous professor of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He and Natan Zach, the renowned poet and a professor of Hebrew Literature at Tel Aviv University, publishing several issues of a very flashy literary almanac entitled '*Igra*.' In the very first issue Miron wrote a very lengthy and detailed article dealing with Israel's most well-known songwriter Naomi Shemer and her songs.¹⁸ I shall be utilizing both the original article and the translation that appeared a little over two years later.¹⁹ For this, the maiden voyage of his literary almanac, Miron chose to analyze Naomi Shemer in a critique that can only be called a vicious and malicious attack. At the outset Miron's words about Shemer are full of praise for her talents, both as a lyricist and a musical composer. He states that her work is dynamic and enduring, that she speaks to every social class, ethnic and age group. He declares that even Arab construction and sanitary workers sing her songs. Miron writes that of all the songwriters who began with her, in the 1950's, only she survives; the others are forgotten.

18 דן מירון: 'זמירות מארץ להד"ס': אגרא אלמנך לדברי ספרות ואמנות : בעריכת נתן זך ודן מירון. כרך 1 תשמ"ה 1984, כתר, ירושלים, 1984

19 Dan Miron: 'Songs from It-Never-Happened Land' translated by R. Flantz; *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Vol. 42, Spring 1987

However, Miron's admiring comments seem to have been made only in order to bring Naomi Shemer down. He castigates her for not being in the same class as the distinguished poet and lyricist Natan Alterman.²⁰ He labels her song writing as far inferior. Miron chastises Shemer for taking some of Alterman's rhymes and plagiaristically using them in a few of her songs.

Miron disagrees with Shemer's politics regarding the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, but he is inconsistent in the way he attacks her views. He upbraids her for being the voice of the Greater Israel movement, then later states that her lyrics do not in fact, contain anything political in them. He faults her for being duplicitous or diabolical in that whatever allusions she may have written into her texts are veiled and not conspicuous. In other words, her songs are not the mouthpiece for that movement. He berates her for *not* being their spokesperson openly and bravely but for rather working insidiously between the lines of her songs, as it were, to promote maximalist ideas.

Miron also critiques Shemer's music writing ability. I shall not be dealing with that aspect as I feel that I am not knowledgeable in such matters.

I shall be bringing in Amnon Navot's²¹ critique of Miron's article. Navot wrote his article about Miron and Zach just a few months after '*Igra*' appeared. Navot satirically attacks Miron's almanac and his article about Shemer. Navot pokes fun at '*Igra*,' calling it a chocolate box that is bought because of its elegant silver hard cover and its special paper. He says that a certain Tel Aviv lawyer bought several copies to be placed in each of the bookcases in his multiple-lawyer offices; that a well-known furniture store owner bought dozens of them to decorate the sideboards, with bookshelves, in his show-windows. Navot says that that is what the almanac is really good for, just for decoration. He claims that Miron and Zach were not actually interested

20 Alterman was a poet and songwriter in the 1930's and 1940's.

in a serious literary publication, but in financial success. Navot castigates Miron for 'going after easy pickings.' He says that Shemer is a songwriter and that Miron would have spent his time better, and done greater service to Hebrew literature were he to have critiqued someone like Yai'ir Howoritz or Sh. Shapira. Regarding Shemer and Alterman, Navot shows that she is very much the heir to Alterman's style and direction, in her lyrics and her music. I shall be bringing Navot's critique of Miron, after I discuss Miron's critique of Shemer.

Miron begins by quoting 'שיר נולד' -- *shir nolad*, 'A Song is Born' (the Second Song Book, song #7), in which Shemer writes that her song would 'sweep across the country' and become 'like an inflammation in the throat because until your final day/ you'll all hum it/ until all your bones say/ dai, dai ,dai' Miron writes:

The works of Israel's songwriter laureate rise from our inflamed national throat with a nagging, compulsive refrain which drones in our cultural consciousness like a musical mosquito of Titus. Modern psychology has taught us that a nagging tune, seemingly random, which appears to have forced itself on the consciousness, may reveal some of the soul's deepest secrets.

Miron makes no secret that he does not like Shemer's songs, certainly not the melodies. Titus's mosquito or gnat, that buried itself in his brain and tortured him with its incessant hammering, was according to midrash, the punishment for what Titus²²

21 אמנון נבות: בין "אגרא" ו"קווי אוויר": עכשיו -- ספרות - אמונת - ביקורת, #50 קץ-סתיו תשמ"ה - 1985.

22 Titus was the son of Vespasian, the Roman general who conquered Israel in the years 66 - 68/9. Vespasian was made Emperor, and Titus became general. Titus was the one who destroyed the Temple and took Jews, and the Temple treasures, as captives to Rome. The midrash [Bab.Tal. Git. 56a&b] about Titus states that Titus blasphemed against God, took a harlot into the Holy of Holies, spread out the Torah scroll and committed a sin on it. He stole all the vessels of the Temple and sailed to Rome to triumph with them in his city. On route a gale sprang up. Titus said that God's power was only on the sea and that Israel's God should fight with him on land. God answered him -- יצתה בת קול ואמרה לו: רשע בן רשע בנן של עשו הרשע בריה קלה אית לי בעלמי ויתוש שמה. עלה ליבשה ותעשה עמה מלחמה. 'Bat Kol,' i.e. God's voice, spoke: 'evil one son of an evil one son of Esau the evil, I have a small creature in My world, and it is a mosquito. Go up on the dry land and make war with it.' When Titus landed the mosquito entered his nose and knocked against his brain for seven years, giving Titus no respite. This was God's answer to Titus who had blasphemed, had desecrated the Holy of Holies, taken the holy vessels, destroyed the Temple and exiled many Jews to Rome. The story continues stating that when Titus was

did to the Jews, Judea and the Second Temple, and that the gnat probably shortened his life. The rabbis told that after Titus's death his head was opened and there was found a gnat/mosquito the size of a bird. Miron is saying that Shemer's melody is like a mosquito's non-stop buzzing which drives one to distraction, and may shorten one's life. Does Miron really think that Shemer's songs pose a national death threat? Miron does not allow for any poetic exaggeration. What would he say to Shakespeare who in his sonnet 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?' declared to his love 'as long as men shall breathe and eyes can see, so long lives this, and this gives life to thee?' Would Master Will Shakespeare also be compared to Titus's mosquito?

Miron continues:

Shemer's songs are an interesting phenomenon. Their centrality in our cultural life is unique -- her work is both enduring and dynamic..... all other popular songwriters who began with her are forgotten. Of all of the heirs of the master Natan Alterman, only she survives ... whose influence has grown consistently over three decades. She alone has shown herself capable of stepping into the esteemed place held by Alterman himself during the 1930's and 1940's, even though in terms of sheer talent, linguistic brilliance, sophistication, wealth of thematic hues and profundity, her name should not be mentioned in the same breath with his (and I speak here only of Alterman's stature as a lyricist). Where Naomi Shemer does resemble Alterman is in her ability to respond to the sweeping currents of feeling in a volatile, ever changing society. Naomi Shemer, who at first tried to bring an unpretentious gaiety to the harsh world of little Israel in the 1950's and 1960's, became the trumpet of the post-1967 Greater Israel, blaring forth the megalomania, the messianism, and the brutality of its cultural atmosphere. Thus both songwriters served as the 'wandering minstrel' (the self-image most loved by both, Shemer inheriting the 'persona' from Alterman).

Since Shemer has never claimed, at least in public, to be or even to want to be Alterman's heir, Miron is unfair in berating her for presenting herself as capable of stepping into Alterman's shoes. Surely this is up to the public to decide whom it sees as its national songwriter. Perhaps Miron cannot forgive Shemer for having enough talent

dying he said that he wanted to be cremated and his ashes scattered so he could not be brought before the God of Israel [for judgment].

to last so many decades, and just for surviving, but also for having an influence that continues to grow decade after decade. Miron states that Shemer, like Alterman responds to what is happening in Israeli society. Miron does not like what has happened to his 'little Israel' -- the megalomania, the messianism and the brutality of the cultural atmosphere.

Miron seems to suffer from loss of memory, he does not want to acknowledge what occurred in 1967 that led to a 'Greater Israel.' He is not being honest in ignoring the Six Day War, when 'little' Israel was under attack by her neighbors, aided by troops from many other Arab countries. Israel was not looking to expand her borders. Israel's southern port, Eilat, had its access to the Red Sea blockaded by the Egyptian navy. Egypt and Jordan demanded that U Thant, the Secretary General of the U.N., remove his troops from along the Egyptian Sinai border with Israel, and from the hill, overlooking southern Jerusalem, on which the former British Governor's mansion stood, and which was the U.N.'s headquarters in the region. This left no one as a barrier to the coming attack on Israel. Abba Eban, Israel's then ambassador to the U.N., ran around for weeks trying to persuade U Thant to bring back those troops. All to no avail. 'Little' Israel was attacked. The majority of the world's military experts expected Israel to lose against such overwhelming odds. Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel in 1967, fully expected the Arab countries to come forward and make peace with Israel after the debacle they experienced. Surely now they would understand that Israel was not a 'flash in the pan,' but was here to stay. The Israeli government was prepared to return to Jordan the entire West Bank (a term coined first by Shimon Peres) in exchange for a durable peace. They were prepared to do the same with the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan. There is no evidence here of megalomania. Messianism is another story. Many secularists, after the amazing victory in 1967, were talking of miracles witnessed and experienced in that victory, and of the days of the Messiah.

Miron should remember that he belongs to an ancient historic people. It seems to be 'politically convenient' for him to have forgotten that the West Bank is the area of the majority of the historic biblical Israel. The Greater Israel movement declared that they, and all Jews, have the right to settle in the entire Land of Israel. In fact, the first Jewish settlement established in the West Bank was under a Labor government in 1970, within an army camp. Throughout the history of the Jewish Diaspora, Jews have been praying for a return to the Land, all the Land, not just to 'little' Israel. Jews hoped to be able to pray at מערת המכפלה -- *ma'arat hamakhpelah*, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron, to visit קבר רחל -- *kever Rakhel*, Rachel's Tomb outside Bethlehem, and so on. All these places are in 'the territories.' For the nineteen years that Jordan occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem Jews were not permitted to go to the Western Wall, despite the fact that this was one of the agreements of the cease-fire with Jordan in 1951. The one they were praying for to lead them back home, was the Messiah. 'Little' Israel is a modern phenomenon, created by the U.N. and the War of Independence. Messianism has been deeply rooted in Jewish belief and prayer since the Mishnaic times. It is the basic belief that no matter how bad today is, or yesterday was for that matter, that there awaits a better tomorrow. Many Israelis truly believed that the victory of 1967 would herald a tomorrow of peace, of good relations with Israel's neighbors, of open borders. Shemer's messianism is fully within Jewish tradition and belief.

I am surprised by Miron's assertion of 'brutality of its cultural atmosphere.' I understand that Miron is politically opposed to the Greater Israel movement, however, in 1984 Menachem Begin's government was not 'brutal' to the Arabs living in the West Bank. It might be that Miron calls brutal that government's taking of common, unowned land, for the establishment of Jewish settlements. In Hebron there were clashes between Rabbi Levinger's²³ followers and the Israeli army (sic!) over their right to resettle Jewish

owned property in Hebron. However this does not constitute 'brutality of its cultural atmosphere.'

Miron writes:

Shemer accompanied the generation of 1948 and its successors, the *Nahal* pioneering soldiers' corps and the workers' settlements, who waxed pragmatic and ultimately became the exponents of the Israeli Empire ideal, blending a kind of messianic mysticism and an uninhibited political Machiavellianism.

The workers' settlements that Miron speaks of are the kibbutzim and the moshavim, established throughout 'little' Israel since 1909, to return the Jew to the soil, to make the 'ghettoized' Jew of Eastern Europe into a 'normal man,' a man who works the soil. Ber Borochov²⁴ saw the Jews of Eastern Europe living in an 'inverted triangle.' A normal social structure would comprise the masses of land-working peasants at the base of the pyramid, then a much smaller middle class and finally at the apex a tiny elite. The Jewish social structure, by contrast, was inverted: the land-working peasants were at the apex of the pyramid, for they were exceedingly few, whereas the middle class and the elite formed the base. The kibbutz pioneers viewed themselves as intellectual peasants -- working the harsh land by day, studying philosophy and other subjects at night. These pioneers were indeed pragmatic, the only way to get productive farm-land was first to drain the swamps and restore the desolated hill slopes and reclaim the desert. The *Nahal* corps of the Israeli Defence Forces (I.D.F.) mainly comprised of children from the kibbutzim and moshavim, and those youngsters who wanted to join these communities. Although most did not believe in a Messiah, they believed that they would help bring

23 Rabbi Levinger is a very influential spiritual leader in Gush Emunim, which claims the Jewish right to settle everywhere in biblical, historical Israel, especially in the cities and places that have traditionally been considered holy to Jews, like Hebron where the Patriarchs are buried. Levinger and other Jews 'settled' in houses that *Jews owned*, before being forcibly expelled, during the riots of 1929, by the Arabs.

24 Borochov lived in Russia (died during the Revolution aged 23), followed Marxist theory, and was one of the founding minds of the Hashomer Hatzair Zionist youth movement. The only place that a re-inversion of the Jewish triangle could take place was in Israel, the Jewish homeland.

about the Messianic age by their work. All the values that observant Jews believed and held dear, they valued as well. Their dream was of a society based on equality and justice for all.

The *Nahal* groups established army camps that were also farming communities along the borders and the security-sensitive areas of Israel. Many of these were later handed over to the government for civilian use and became kibbutzim and moshavim. The young people who were soldiers on these Nahal outposts also returned later as civilians. After 1967, the *Nahal* corps also established a few such outposts along the Jordan Valley and along the shores of the Dead Sea. Most did not become civilian communities nor did the army continue to maintain them.

Miron is saying that the kibbutz and moshav movements became the exponents of the 'Israel Empire' ideal. He is incorrect. Most of the members of these movements belonged to one of several wings of the Labor Party, which espoused the return of land in exchange for peace. The territories that came to be under Israeli control did so as the result of a war thrust upon Israel, not because of any 'Empire' ideals of the Israelis. 'Political Machiavellianism' is a very cynical term for Miron to use. There was no deceit, no underhanded methods used to gain these territories. All Israeli governments called for the Arab nations to come and negotiate, in good faith, with Israel. Menachem Begin, returned all of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in return for peace, and dismantled all Jewish farming communities and even towns that had been built there since 1967.

Miron writes further:

Naomi Shemer, in a strong and telling way that is instructive about Israel's cultural sociology, managed to reach beyond these bounds. Herself a product of the pioneer-labor elite of the pre-Independence days, she nevertheless speaks to all strata of the population. Despite the clear connection between her lyrics and the elitist labor-agricultural class associated with Berl Katznelson, she has been the poet of the right-wing Likud ... being the spokesperson for a segment of the population which feels nothing but hatred for the labor-Zionism from which she stems she somehow speaks for the people who are themselves incapable of

forming a sentence in that kind of Hebrew. Her Jewish associations are distinctly European-American models, yet it speaks to the new middle-class of the Oriental communities. Her songs bisect Israel's ethnic and cultural map ... she is not despised by the young. It seems that even Arab construction and sanitation workers sing her songs.

Miron seems to applaud Shemer for being able to speak to all the various strata of the Israeli society. He then slaps her down for writing lyrics that also speak to the right-wing Likud and people of little education, who 'are incapable of forming a sentence in that kind of Hebrew.' Surely it is the role of the poet, and the intellectual, to speak for those who cannot articulate well and speak for themselves. If Shemer is able to speak to all, even 'Arab construction workers,' then surely she is writing about what affects all people, namely the conditions of their everyday lives. Miron seems surprised that the new middle-class from the Oriental communities [i.e. from Arab countries --HBY] should be attracted to Shemer's songs. Some of these are people who see themselves as underprivileged and socio-economically deprived. Many of them also want to show that they have 'arrived' in the mainstream of the Israeli economy and the Israeli culture. The most prominent culture in the world today is the American, and to a lesser extent the European. Both are Western, and Western is desirable. Throughout the world we see people of a various cultures wearing Western business suits and dresses, people are wear blue jeans and T-shirts, eat hamburgers and pizza, drink Coke and Pepsi, and use American slang -- even if they do not know what it means, but it is 'cool.' The French decried the invasion of McDonalds and '*le weekend*.' In Eastern Europe one used to be able to pay for one's vacation simply by bringing a suitcase full of jeans and selling them. In Moscow, in the 1980's, a pair of jeans fetched the princely sum of \$100! We see the same phenomenon all over the world, from South East Asia, to Africa, to South America and throughout the Middle East. In the Moslem countries that try to project a moderate image like Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, the Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians, all professional

men wear suits and ties -- even when they sometimes also wear a *kafiyah*. Israel sees itself as a western country. Most of the hit songs have western melodies; Israelis have been watching western television programs since its inception in 1967, have been seeing American and European plays and musicals, in translation, for decades. High schools teach western literature and music. Shemer is seen as part of the mainstream culture; therefore it is to be expected that the new middle-class from the Oriental communities, and I might add also from the Israeli Arab community, would be singing her songs. Such is also the case with the Arab sanitation workers from Gaza or Nablus.

Miron continues:

Naomi Shemer's status infuses her songs with a large degree of interest and importance, beyond any critical evaluation of her art, and also beyond any political and social assessment of the public role she fulfills in her songs as the voice of the Greater Land of Israel movement (... after the Six Day War [some people suggested] that her song 'Jerusalem of Gold' replace 'Hatikva' as the national anthem). Gradually her corpus of work has become more than a collection of popular songs. They are a kind of symptom of the Israeli situation. Naomi Shemer's art would hardly have attained such a broad and enduring resonance were there not something embedded in its basic structure, in the musical language she actuates, in the range of images and concepts woven into her texts, through which she managed to 'touch' the heart of such a wide audience.

Miron is paying Shemer one of the highest compliments one can to a writer; namely, that her writings are relevant and speak the language of her wide audience, a language with which they identify. Indeed, her signature song 'Jerusalem of Gold' won instant acclaim throughout Israel and the Jewish world [see the chapter 3 about this song]. However, declaring that she is the voice of the Greater Israel movement is a stretch. The same Naomi Shemer speaks to all strata and to all segments of the Israeli public, including those on the left who are opposed to keeping the territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Were she indeed to be the voice of the Greater Israel movement, surely her admirers would be limited to the Likud, or parts of it, and to those who are to the right of the Likud, a fact that Miron does not state. One does not sing songs, or buy

record albums, whose words and ideas are contrary to one's political position. If I were for open borders and limitless immigration, say, I would not be singing songs that recommended closed borders and no immigration. Capitalists do not sing 'workers of the world unite;' pacifists do not sing pro-war songs. Therefore she may have been adopted by the right, but cannot be their voice.

Miron then goes on to attack Shemer for being simplistic, conservative, complacent, of pre-World War II vintage, western and Eastern European. Nevertheless, he says:

Her tunes, diverse as they may be, nevertheless all sound like the works of a single composer. This is not something that just anyone can do, it demands true musical talent, which Naomi Shemer undoubtedly possesses. Only the presence of real talent can explain the spell which her tunes cast over so many listeners..... the 'style' of this music, or more precisely, the personality reflected in it, aims to activate the listener by means of *manipulation, seduction and dismissal* [my emphasis --HBY], and by prettification and softening. In every place and in every situation they seek to capture the heart and to charm. Naomi Shemer marches with a gentle musical swaying of the hips also towards the young men falling in battle and their bereaved parents. From them too she asks for love and a caress. The gentler and sweeter she sounds, the more manipulative she is, and the more manipulative she is, the more sweetness and softness she imparts.

Miron is saying that Shemer is a fraud. The words and music she writes -- so says Miron -- so many in Israel take to heart and identify with, are written only for her own benefit. Shemer lures her listeners into a 'relationship' with her and her songs, she entices them to 'love' her, to buy her recordings, but she feels nothing for them; there is no empathy. Shemer's lyrics and music are only for personal gain. Once they are 'hers' she dismisses them; their feelings are of no importance whatsoever. Does Miron really mean to imply that Shemer has no feelings for lovers, for those who love Israel, for those who have lost a dear one in battle? Does he really mean that Shemer is a total sham? How does any Jew living in Israel not feel for the families of the fallen? Almost

everyone has either lost someone, or knows someone who has lost someone, no one is so lacking in feelings as to be dismissive of the very deep feelings of loss or love. To be as manipulative as Miron accuses Shemer of being, her talent would truly have had to have been prodigious to be able to fool all the people all the time, and for so many decades!

Onward goes Miron's diatribe:

Naomi Shemer tends naturally to 'universal' topics love, death, the poet as the 'wandering minstrel' and all the rest -- but she tries to infuse them with a contemporary dimension and a local background. In the latter aspect her songs stand out among recent Israeli songs, in which landscape and homeland have lost the importance they held during the period before the establishment of the State. In this context Naomi Shemer appears, at least at superficial glance, to be the most ardent exponent of the tradition of devotion to the landscape, the most consistent articulator of love and loyalty to it.

Contra Miron, 'universal' topics are also those that speak to everyone, for who, from adolescence at least, has not experienced the joys and hurts of love, or, and especially in Israel, who has not felt the loss of a loved one especially as a result of war? To say that Shemer infuses these topics with 'local background' is to be simplistic. Shemer is talking to her fellow Israelis about their shared lives and experiences; therefore she places these 'universal' topics within their common context -- Israel. Israel is such a small country and the vast majority of Israelis are intimately acquainted with its hills and valleys, its brooks and deserts, its towns and villages. Using the country as the background for whatever she is writing about is totally natural. Shemer was raised in the rural areas of Israel, and many of her songs portray the countryside of her early life. That later songwriters write less about the landscape is a natural development. Recent generations of writers were raised in an Israel that exists. They served, and serve, in the region's strongest army, and for them Israel is a given. They are urbanites. Their landscapes are the cities, not the countryside. Their songs reflect their concerns -- also 'universal' topics that can be sung in almost any western country -- they have acculturated into the general western culture.

Shemer and her generation, that fought in every war for Israel's continued survival, have a different attitude towards the country and its landscape. In the U.S. today, there are very few movies made about the 'wild-west,' about cowboys and Indians, about taming a wild land. Most movies and books are set in the cities -- a fact of life when the country has developed into a mainly urban society.

Miron:

In her early songs this reality defined itself as the here-and-now of a young Israel -- in a double sense: Israeli society during the first years of the State finding expression in the experiences of young people -- military service, youth movement hikes, ... going to the movies in a rain-swept city, mourning for a fallen comrade. The declared intention of the songs of this period was to represent the 'gray' daily continuum as if it contained the essence of the beauty and meaning of human existence, without 'slogans or flags.'

For most, if not all, of Jewish history, Jews have lived ordinary lives, either as farmers in the earlier biblical period, or as village and town dwellers after that time. Life was hard for most, trying to eke out a livelihood, whether in Israel or in the Diaspora. Jews were not a nation of *gevirim* (גבירים), wealthy aristocratic people. Already in the Mishnaic period the rabbis grappled with the problem of what gives meaning to the hard, ordinary life of a simple person. They came to the conclusion that it was in that life that meaning and beauty were to be found, in this world and not in some other lifetime, as the Christians or even the Hindus believe. Of course, the belief developed in '*ha-olam ha-ba*' -- העולם הבא, 'the world to come,' and particularly to address the problem of '*tzaddik ve-ra lo; rasha ve-tov lo*' or 'why good people suffer and the wicked prosper.' However, Judaism has always declared that this world and this life are holy. For example at the end of Genesis 1, God blesses all of creation with '*ve-hinei tov me'od*,' ונהי טוב מאד 'and [God] found it very good.' All of creation was very good, even though the serpent, ready to tempt Eve, is already in the Garden. With that declaration, this life, the 'gray' life has meaning, and is holy, and is beautiful. The Hassidim, in more recent

centuries, rediscovered that one's ordinary life with the ordinary activities that do not shake worlds, but rather enable life to continue and enabled the Jews to survive through terrible and horrific times, is what is ultimately the most important thing we have.

Shemer is wholly within Jewish tradition, and it is Miron who shows his ignorance and boorishness. There are not very many people, even in today's advanced society, who live 'colorful' lives which contain the 'essence of meaning.' Not everyone has the luxury of living in an ivory tower.

Miron:

At a later stage this reality became more generalized and ideological in character. The transition found clear expression as early as 'Jerusalem of Gold,' written [a few weeks before] the Six Day War, but reached full flower in the songs written after 1967. The State became transformed from the mundane into a 'Mighty Rock of My Salvation -- a hard and stubborn fort,' and the boys who fell were no longer the comrades from the same town [34 כל השירים: שיר מס. 34] 'All My Songs,' song #34] but Isaac arising from the sacrificial altar [Book Two, song #4]. The beloved Land of Israel was longer represented by a tulip blooming in a wadi and donkeys grazing by a furrow [מצעד האביב] 'ספר גימלי שיר #9, 'Spring Parade'], but became the fields of Bethlehem, the portion of David and inheritance of the son of Jesse [Book Two, songs #8 and #9].

Miron objects to Shemer's writing about a new reality in Israel, namely that Israel controlled (until such time as an Arab entity would come forward to make peace with Israel in exchange for the land) the biblical Land of Israel, which included Bethlehem, Mount Moriah, Hebron, Shechem, and so on. As mentioned earlier, the amazing victory and its consequences, had many Israelis talking about miracles and 'yemot hamashiach' ימות המשיח, the days of the Messiah. Since it was now again possible to visit Bethlehem, the birthplace of David, and the original City of David, it is really no wonder that people, including Shemer, were also writing about 'mashiach ben David' משיח בן דוד Messiah son of David son of Jesse. It was, and to some degree still is, part of the *zeitgeist*. Some

people feel that perhaps the better tomorrow, that Jews have prayed for over the millennia, would actually happen.

Miron:

She sounds as if she wanted to go on blessing the continuum of everyday life, with its honey and its sting, but the blessing is suffused with secret hopes and longings ... which ask to be interpreted as if they express the messianic political orientation of Gush Emunim these differences arise from Naomi Shemer's poetic and ideational development, just as they reflect the political development of Israeli society as a whole.

Miron has done an interesting leap of interpretation of his own. He says that Shemer's later songs 'ask to be interpreted *as if* they express the messianic political orientation of Gush Emunim.' In other words Shemer's songs do not express that orientation, but might be interpreted that way. Since interpretation says much about the commentator, this says much about Miron. Most writers have hopes and longings, some personal, some communal, so Shemer is not alone in that category. By stating all this together with 'interpreting her words as if....' it is Miron who is manipulating his readers by planting false ideas about what Shemer is writing about. Perhaps Miron is, as he has previously accused Shemer of being, manipulative and dismissive of his readers. He again says, in different words, that Shemer reflects Israeli society as a whole. The Western world has witnessed an interesting phenomenon, beginning in the seventies, the rise of spirituality. Christians, Jews and Moslems of the West have found that secularism and materialism do not 'feed' the soul, that there is something more to life than making money and acquiring bigger and better goods. Each has turned to his own tradition, and when that has not satisfied has turned to other religions. Witness the astounding rise in the number of Buddhists in the U.S. This great increase is not due to immigration nor to natural increase but to conversions. So Jews have turned to their age-old traditions, giving them modern definitions. In the Reform Movement in the U.S. the same

phenomenon can be seen. Classical Reform is giving way to a more spiritual, experiential liberal Judaism. In Israel the same has also happened. Jews who categorize themselves as secular, meaning non-observant and non-affiliated, speak in decidedly religious terms, and believe them. Shemer is not out of synchronization with the rest of her society. This leaves Miron uncomfortable with Shemer and with most other Israelis.

Miron:

Naomi Shemer, throughout her career, has cast those crumbs of reality which at a moment suited her essential sentimentalism and the Israeli mentality More precisely, she has gathered only those crumbs of reality which were capable of melting into the continuum, an unchangeable continuum, one composed entirely of the abstracts and generalizations of the sentimental view of life wherever it occurs. Whatever was too solid or lasting was discarded, for she has both the *skill of a professional* and a keen sense of kitsch, whose selection mechanism ... is no less efficient and active than that of *the artist of truth*, except that the selection of one preserves all that the other rejects, and vice versa. Let us take for example, landscape, one of her central themes. A study of the songs shows that Naomi Shemer is neither able nor perhaps even willing to give the landscape (her love of which she declares repeatedly) any real lyric concreteness ... almost all the lyrics of landscape are composed of categories ... not the presence of the landscape itself, but its stereotypical details. The vegetation is described through lists of varieties of vegetables, fruit and flowers... the seasons -- by a catalogue of the months of the [Hebrew] year the attitude to the landscape is essentially nominal. The songwriter organizes space and time in straight, clear lines from north to south or in consecutive numerations from Tishrei to Elul. Her space is that of the geographical map; her time that of the calendar. In other songs, where the emphasis falls on other experiences, the landscape is set up as decor ... the landscape performs a declared function of theatrical decor.

Miron continues to imply that Shemer is 'Machiavellian,' that she writes only that which will sell, and sell well. Her professional talents and skills are used only to exploit people for her own benefit, by selecting and selling 'crumbs of reality' and only those crumbs that are imminently marketable. It is astounding that other songwriters and other artists have not discovered this method of how to make themselves a durable and

marketable commodity. Miron contrasts Shemer with the so-called 'the artist of truth' meaning that Shemer is an 'artist of falsehood.' This is a very serious charge, but in keeping with Miron's statement about her being manipulative and dismissive. Miron attacks Shemer for not dealing in depth with the landscape of Israel or with time, such as the months or the seasons. Miron considers Shemer to be a writer of lists. One of the lists is the enumeration of the months 'from Tishrei to Elul.' Miron is utterly disingenuous. What he cites is a children's song:²⁵ בתשרי נתן הדקל/ פרי שחום נחמד/ בחשווןבכסלו נרקיס הופיע/ בטבת ברד/ ובשבט חמה הפציעה/ ליום אחד. 'In Tishrei the date palm gave/ delightful brown fruit/ in Kheshvan fell the first rain/ and danced on my garden In Kislev the jonquil appeared/ In Tevet hail/ and in Sh'vat the sun broke through/ for one day..' This is how children learn, by sequence and association.

Using the landscape as 'décor' is actually using the landscape as background to the placement of the 'action.' It is like the Impressionist painters who never felt the need to give great detail, only to give the impression. So, too, here with Shemer. She places the 'activity' in context and since most Israelis know their country well, their imaginations fill in the details, if and when necessary. Shemer is writing songs, not painting a highly detailed picture. Since she is writing within the context of Israel it makes sense that she is within the context of the map of the country. It is interesting that Miron says of Shemer that 'her time [is] that of the calendar.' Jewish life revolves around the Jewish calendar, whether it is *shabbat or khagim* שבת או חגים. Purim, Pessach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succot or the New Month, are tied to the calendar; shabbat is every seventh day. A Jew can be anywhere in the world and on certain dates, according to the Jewish calendar, can join other Jews in celebration. It is fully within tradition to have Jewish calendar time.

Miron:

Even the famous opening line [of 'Jerusalem of Gold'], 'Mountain air as clear as wine' (אוויר-הרים צלול כיין) must surprise ... If clarity is wanted, water, or as Naomi Shemer prefers to say, 'the pure water,' is preferable.... The songwriter, it appears has confused two cliches (clear as water and sharp and/or sweet as wine) -- *an act which can sometimes lead to figurative freshness*, but in the present case has led to nothing but a blurring of the sensory impression of the image.

Miron does not allow Shemer the poetic license to exaggerate or even create a new metaphor. When wine tasters and *mavens* test wine, one of the characteristics that is looked for is clarity. Cloudy wine usually means that it is spoiled. Greenboim in his analysis of 'Jerusalem of Gold' says that the opening verse of the song activates the senses: 'clear' צלול -- *tzalul*, is the vision and 'wine' יין -- *yayin*, is the taste and that the image of 'clear as wine,' activates the imagination.

Miron:

Whether as catalogue or as decor the landscape in Naomi Shemer's earlier songs comprised not a metonymy for reality but a substitute for it. Its form in these songs testifies not to experiential confrontation with it, but to a 'conquest' of it ... she 'conquered' it for herself not by poetic actualization but by naming

What we can tell Miron is that perhaps the reality of the situation is that the land has already been 'conquered,' has been tamed and returned to its much earlier fertile condition. The 'conquerors' were the early pioneers, like Shemer's parents (and today, the young people going into the Negev and Arava and making arid regions 'blossom as a rose'). Shemer, then simply inherited a fertile land, as all Israelis have, instead of the malarial swamps, deserts and desolated hills. In the second chapter of Genesis Adam names the animals, and presumably the birds and plants as well, and in so doing, according to the rabbis, he 'conquered' the land. In this context there is no negative connotation to the verb *likhbosh* 'to conquer' -- contrary to Miron's accusation against Shemer.

25 For a discussion of this children's song, please see chapter 4.

Miron:

If the songwriter has a portion in David and an inheritance in Jesse's son [8# אבל יש לנו חלק בדוד/ נחלה בבן-ישי, הספר השני, שיר #8], Book Two, song #8], she is already entitled to talk about 'all the sky' without getting entangled in the reddish mist and stars that 'fall into the swamp and sink in the heavy mist' or in her *other affective pictures*, just as she can say 'all the year' without enumerating the twelve months. The use of Deut.8:7 ... allows her to cite both the valley *and* the hill in a single breath without any superfluous nuances of landscape description: 'We have' [n]ational ownership, or the claim to national ownership, permits the poetic conquest.

Miron seems to have a serious problem with Jews owning any part of the Land of Israel. If Jewish Israelis claim such ownership, then it smacks of messianism and is, therefore, a priori, wrong and perhaps extremely parochial, but certainly not 'politically correct.' A people living in its own land often speaks in sweeping terms about that land, without detailing the landscape, enumerating everything in it, not even the months of the year. What would Miron make of the American song, virtually a second national anthem: 'America the Beautiful?' In this song the Americans unashamedly sing about the mountains and the plains from sea to shining to sea. Is Miron saying that any such similar sentiments by Jews in Israel are wrong or misplaced? Would he deny Israel's neighbors the right to sing about their countries in sweeping all-inclusive terms? Can it be that Miron's suspect status is reserved only for Jewish Israelis because their patriotic enthusiasm smacks of 'secret hopes and longings' and of messianism, and this embarrasses him?

Miron:

The shift in Naomi Shemer's work from the early stages to the later ones ... is dictated by ideological motives. In Naomi Shemer's verse, as in the verse of her contemporaries, this [stylistic conception] was simply a poetic legacy from the previous generation [of Shlonsky and Alterman]...[who] established a transition stage with distinct creative values in the development of the Hebrew literary language, while the approach of

26 'However we have a portion in David/ an inheritance in the son of Jesse.'

Naomi Shemer's is an anachronistic one and belongs to the Hebrew of fifty years ago.

Miron then goes on to say that Shemer's slang is old-fashioned and it is her way of showing off her 'domesticated literacy.'

One must admit that in the early songs the conception of ornamental slang or spoken language operates with a high degree of skill, and sometimes grace ... But this never brought about a living and continuous connection between the standard poetic language, learned at school, and the living language with its rhythms and intonations. Like the landscape component, the linguistic component too has ... been finally released from its affinity with reality by the means of the national-messianic definitions of this reality. The ideological ownership of reality frees one from grappling with it, and which it tries to display a kind of sensitivity it looks ridiculous and embarrassing Finding herself in need of slang in 1978, Naomi Shemer groped about in her memory and recalled the slang of 1948.

It would appear that only Miron is having trouble with the 'old-fashioned' slang used by Shemer. Miron has said that Shemer speaks to all the strata of the society, even to the youth. If her language usage were so outmoded as to be ridiculed by the youth, she would be ignored. However, that does not seem to be the case. Hence one can only conclude that no one finds her slang usage to be outrageously old-fashioned. As the American expression goes: 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Shemer's use of slang obviously works. Miron ignores a fact of Shemer's life, she has two children, and in 1978, her daughter Haleli was about 22 years old, and for some time she would have brought home all the latest slang from the army. At worst, Shemer's slang might have been one or two years out of date. Her son, Ariel, was about eight and he would have taught her the latest 'lingo' from the school-yard. Shemer is a wordsmith, and her ears have been attuned to any new slang or nuance. It is highly unlikely that Shemer would have had to recall the slang of 1948, when she herself was a teen-ager.

Miron:

What happens with the landscape and the language also happens with the social reality reflected in her songs. The early songs are full of young people with proper names ... Nevertheless, even here these are without

faces. You don't know who they are, what they're like, what their mental and social background are. No social or economic category is filled with any kind of content here. Here market vendors [27# שיר -- 'All the Songs,' song #27] ('כך רק היום בזל/ ומחותיים/ על הסכין, על הסכין')²⁷ are none other than the *illegitimate* [my emphasis -- HBY] sons of the vendors in the neighborhood markets of Alterman's songs,²⁸ as we learn from her text, which combines actual market cries with Alterman's cries of pathos: 'Tomorrow you'll grow old' – 'on the knife' על...מחר תזקין -- 'הסכין' -- *makhar tazkin....al hasakin*, [the literal translation of the cry of the watermelon vendors who offer to cut their fruit open for prospective buyers to look at or taste] --(compare Alterman's 'my daughter on the knife's edge/We'll never age' 'בתי, על הוד סכין/ לנצח לא נזקין' -- *bitti, al hod sakin/ lanetzakh lo nazkin*, from 'Song of Light' שיר של אור -- *shir shel or*, in *Poor People's Happiness*, שמחת עניים -- *simkhat ani'im*. Naomi Shemer copied this rhyme once more, in a song which is not about a market day, but about the 'Sacrifice of Isaac': 'Even if we live long and grow old/ we won't forget the knife was raised,' גם אם שבע נחיה ונזקין/ לא נשכח כי הונף הסכין -- *gam im sheva n'hkhiyeh v'nazkin/ lo nishkakh ki hunaf hasakin*. The crucial difference between the two contexts did not prevent a second plagiarizing of the same rhyme).

Miron expects Shemer to write books with all the relevant biographical material about her 'heroes.' However not all songs, or even most of them, lend themselves to including such material, and unlike books and articles, one cannot insert footnotes to complement what the body of the text omits. Most songs do not have the information that Miron demands. Miron calls Shemer's market vendors 'illegitimate' בניהם -- *beneihem ha-bilti khuki'im*, because vendors are also mentioned in Alterman's song about the markets. Does that mean that any subject dealt with by Alterman becomes illegitimate if someone else deals with the same subject years later, or is this uniquely reserved for Shemer? Now, Miron is very upset with Shemer because she has the audacity to use an image similar to Master Alterman's (she should not be mentioned with him in the same breath!). In her song about the market the refrain is the

27 These are words called out by the vendors selling watermelon: 'yes, just today it's cheap/ and tomorrow/ on the knife, on the knife.'

cry of the watermelon vendors 'על הסכין, על הסכין...../מחר תזקין/אתה/מחר תזקין' -- 'today you're young/ tomorrow you'll grow old/..... on the knife, on the knife.' Everyone who has ever been in an Israeli market during the summer has heard 'on the knife.'

Naturally, Shemer would have written that cry; it makes the landscape of the market authentic. And if this cry led her, knowingly or not, to associate it with Alterman's 'we'll never age,' she then gave her vendors the words 'tomorrow you'll grow old' -- i.e. the 'age' theme. Similarly with the 'Sacrifice of Isaac,' the main immediate image is that of the raised slaughtering knife. Here, too, the image of the knife is associated with long life and growing old. It is interesting that Alterman's rhyme is that of never growing old, whereas Shemer, in both her songs, has the image of growing old. If Shemer takes, as she has on numerous occasions, quotations from the Tanach, is that plagiarism? Agnon and Mendele Moicher Sfoirim (to give him the Yiddish intonation of his nom-de-plume) both quoted copiously from all Jewish sources. Their commentators have taken this to show their broad and deep knowledge of Jewish learning and tradition. Could not something of the same be said about Shemer -- namely that she took from the Master because of her love and respect for him and his works?

Miron:

She is incapable of presenting real people in her songs. Her unique skill reveals itself particularly in the presentation of blurred faces, empty frames into which it is possible to introduce the musings of the heart. This emptying of the face works in her verse with regard to the living, and even more with regard to the dead, whose presence sometimes demands an immediate and total blurring, more than does the presence of the living. Thus the dead too in Naomi Shemer's songs are ranged in faceless categories. [In her song 'בכל שנה בסתיו גיורא' 'Every year in autumn, Giora,' in Book Two, Shemer speaks of three young men who fell in battle, but in three different periods -- Yechiam Weitz fell in the struggle against the British; Tuvya Kushnir fell in the War of Independence and Giora Shoham fell in the Yom Kippur War]. This identification [of these three fallen men] is meaningless because it is based on one negative common denominator only -- the fact of untimely death -- while anything

connected to the positive reality of the lives in question is negated and erased. The lack of reality becomes a lie when Naomi Shemer identifies what the three have in common (death) not as non-existence but as existence, in contrast with which the reality of their lives is negated as unimportant. Life and death, like the markets and the fields of clover are for her sentimental ideas of equal value, and that is why they have no value at all.

These young men, of whom Shemer speaks in her song, all died, not in ripe old age, not in accidents but in war. Giora himself was only twenty-one. Their deaths are real. The pain of loss that their families feel is real. The untimely death, in battle, of so many young men and women, is a fact of life in Israel, in every generation and every decade for more than five decades. Every יום הזכרון -- *yom hazikaron* Memorial Day, the entire State of Israel comes to a standstill for two minutes in memory of all those who fell in the various battles for Israel's survival. Those battles are still raging, with ever more loss of life. No one takes this lightly. Everyone has lost someone close, or knows someone who has. This loss is immediate and very real. One hears stories of one particular person, and just by changing the name and the place and the year, it could be dozens of others. It is into such stories that one can instill one's own feelings, one's own pain. The faces do not have to be blurred for that to occur. The lives of the fallen do not have their lives negated or made valueless by their deaths. Were one to visit any cemetery in Israel, or elsewhere in the Jewish world, traditionally one would find stones on the graves and not flowers. Everyone can afford a stone. Death is the ultimate equalizer. Memorials have been established all over Israel. On these memorials are the names and the dates of death of the fallen. There is not a word about their lives, nor their socio-economic status, nor the standard of education which each reached. Does this negate their lives? In Washington D.C. there is the memorial to those who fell in Vietnam. It is a long black wall with row upon row of names. Everyone who visits this site is deeply moved. The only common denominator is their untimely deaths; are they

meaninglessly identified with one another? Also in Israel, when one mourns the fallen, the fallen include, not only Jews of every color, religious stream and socio-economic class, but also the Bedouin, the Druze and the Christian soldiers of the I.D.F. Their deaths are real and exist, every year in the summer. For Miron to accuse Shemer of blurring faces, presenting empty frames and then to also say that life and death for her are sentimental ideas having no value, is saying that she is a person lacking in feeling, and one who does not know what it means to lose someone in war. For someone to reach Shemer's age and not know such loss would be a miracle.

Miron:

How will we believe her statement that gives blessing 'For the honey and for the sting, for the bitter and the sweet,' על הדבש ועל העוקץ/ על המר -- והמתוק *al had'vash v'al ha-oketz/ al hamar v'hamatok*, in life and asks the good God to preserve for her both the one and the other, when in a detailed catalogue ... of 'all these' [על כל אלה] 'All these,' Book Three, song #1], which comes after the statement, there is not a single concrete detail that can be called bitter or a sting. On the contrary: anything connected to bitterness has to be removed. How can we believe in the very reality of Naomi Shemer's good God when ... she never grants Him real strength or presence?

In Isaiah 45:7 it states: 'יוצר אור ובורא חשך/ עשה שלום ובורא רע' -- '(I, Adonai,...) make light and create darkness/ make peace and create evil.' When the rabbis, in the Mishnaic period, wrote the blessings and prayers for the morning service, they quoted Isaiah, in the 'יוצר' the blessing for creation, but changed it a little: 'עשה שלום ובורא את הכל' -- 'who makes peace and creates everything.' Everyone knew the Isaiah quote, there was no need to elaborate on life's ills and miseries, that so many of the Jews experienced on their own flesh -- and throughout history. What was elaborated were the good things that existed in life, no matter how woeful it might be, and for which thanks should be given. In the same vein, Shemer can enumerate 'all these,' the good, and simply mention 'the bitter' and 'the sting.' Everyone knows them, all too intimately. Miron feels that he can berate Shemer while he totally ignores Jewish tradition.

Miron:

She quotes in [God's] honor again and again from Scripture, but she subordinates the quotations to a systematic process of distortion and sterilization, linking the titles and names of God with national institutions and military-political power structures. The 'mighty rock of my salvation,' מעוז צור ישועתי -- *ma'oz tzur yeshu'ati*, which it is fitting to praise, is none other than the State of Israel as a military fortress: those 'radiant in the seven heavens,' זוהרים שבעת הרקיעים -- *zoharim shivat ha-r'ki'im*, are not the righteous witnesses of God, but members of the Israeli Air Force ... which alone is the ladder whose 'feet are on the ground but it is in the sky of war,' הסולם רגליו באדמה/ אך ראשו בשמי -- *hasulam raglav ba-adamah/ akh rosho bishmei hamilkhamah*. On Jacob's ladder angels ascend and descend to and from the gates of heaven, while on Naomi Shemer's ladder pilots ascend and descend to and from the gates of war.

'מעוז צור ישועתי לך נאים לשבח' -- *ma'oz tzur y'shu'ati l'kha na'im l'shabe'akh*, 'the mighty Rock of my salvation, whom it is fitting to praise' comes from the Channuka candle-lighting service, and every Jew knows, certainly in Israel, 'מעוז צור' 'the Rock fortress' is God, who saved the Jews, yet again, from the hands of the Seleucid Greeks in the 2nd century B.C.E.-- it was the Maccabean Revolt, as every child knows. The song Miron is quoting 'על כנפי הכסף' -- 'On silvery wings,' *al kanfei hakesef*, ('All My Songs' song #41), has no reference to 'the mighty rock of my salvation' and no direct reference to God. Perhaps one can see the midrash on the refrain, which says that the sea retreated, as in the miracle during the Exodus escape, and the river dried up, when in the Book of Joshua the Israelites crossed the Jordan. In the *Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael* there is a long series of midrashim from שירת הים, 'the Song of the Sea,' in which the conclusion is that just as God redeemed us from Egypt back then, so God will continue to redeem us from our enemies, until the Final Redemption at the End of Days. In Shemer's song, the Israeli Air Force saved Israel from the Egyptians -- by destroying the entire Egyptian air force while it was still on the ground. Miron is making his own midrash about Shemer linking God's names with national institutions and

military-political power structure. She and all the Israelis admire what the various divisions of the I.D.F. did during the Six Day War. The soldiers (of whichever branch) were certainly were seen as מלאכים -- *malakhim*, messengers or agents of God, they were not perceived as 'angels.' Israel's fighting forces were viewed in 1967 as almost divinely powerful because they saved the nation. It had been perceived by Israelis themselves, by the Jews of the Diaspora, as well as by most military experts in the world that this war would bring certain and total defeat to Israel. In a similar fashion the Allied forces who liberated the Nazi concentration and death camps in Europe were seen as the agents of the Divine. Those Jews saw American, Russian, British, Australian soldiers (and others, too) as their saviours, as having been sent by God to redeem them from imminent death. The planes were the ladder which reached from earth to the heavens, and the pilots were the מלאכים, the agents and messengers who ascended and descended along that ladder. It would appear that Miron dislikes anything that might smack of Jewish national pride or Israeli nationalism. Perhaps Miron would suggest to the Jews worldwide that they should refrain from singing מעוז צור -- *ma'oz tzur* every Channuka. Perhaps he would suggest to the Israelis that they should not take pride in being able to defend themselves against their enemies when attacked. Does Miron want Israel to become pacifist, to turn the other cheek, not to defend itself? What nation on earth would not try to beat off attacking enemy armies? Is Miron embarrassed because Israeli Jews do stand up for their right to live?

Miron:

We do not believe that Naomi Shemer's nationalist excitements are real, [that they are] even in the most subjective sense, 'the birthpangs of the Redemption' [Book Three, song #4]. The only poetic proof she has to offer to support her declaration on this subject is nothing but another plagiaristic paraphrase of a well-known passage from Alterman's verse:

יש כאלה ששרים
מעבר לדממה
שפתיים אולי אינן נעות

אבל קולם
ישמע

There are those who sing
Beyond the stillness
Their lips perhaps do not move
But their voice

Will be heard

(Compare to Alterman's 'The Father's End' in *Poor People's Happiness*: 'The father's lips don't move,/ But his voice will still be heard,' שפתי האב אין נעות/ אך קול האב עוד יישמע. directly from Alterman's poem). The fact that the songwriter did not find a more original expression for her feeling that the Zionist awakening behind the Iron Curtain and the expected future immigration of the 'Jews of Silence' give our period a messianic character, arouses doubts as to the experiential honesty of her prophetic pretensions ('Here {Lo} it is coming') [הנה זה בא].

Miron is saying that one's nationalistic excitement can only be real if one expresses it in an original manner. Miron would probably have a hard time finding anyone who can do or does that. Many people, even the most creative borrow expressions from others. It is a known phenomenon that in the world of music, many artists have borrowed themes from others and have yet woven an original tapestry. Early Beethoven sounds exactly like Mozart. Would Miron say that Israel's national anthem 'התיקוה' 'Hatikva' does not express, in music, the deep feelings of the Jewish People because the melody is borrowed from the Czech composer Smetane? Perhaps we should not believe what Miron says about Shemer because he expressed his idea by plagiarizing Elie Wiesel's phrase 'Jews of Silence.' If lack of original phraseology is one of the bases of Miron's attack on Shemer, then he is on very thin ice. The Zionist awakening among the Jews of the Former Soviet Union aroused feelings that the Messianic age might be close. Golda Meir who was Prime Minister at that time in the early 1970's, and no one could accuse her of being a religious fanatic or even of being religiously observant, herself declared that when the U.S.S.R. would release its Jews it would be משיח ציטון -- *mashiyakh tzeiten*, Messianic times. The Jews, whether in Israel or

elsewhere, who were lobbying hard to bring about the release of the Soviet Jews, felt that when that event would happen the Messiah would not be far behind. Most of these Jews were not observant. They borrowed 'שלח את עמי'-- *shalakh et ami*, 'Let My People Go,' from Moses' words to Pharaoh, in the Book of Exodus. Would Miron state that they were not being experientially honest in their feeling and deeds?

Miron:

To stress the point, we cannot put much faith even in Naomi Shemer's known political sympathies for she has been cautious in a very suspicious way, not to give them clear expression in her main songs Nowhere has she tried to express the real experiences of the people of the Greater Israel movement and Gush Emunim, or to be the mouthpiece of their struggle, their frustration, their hates, their loves, their triumphs, their losses (like *Yamit*),²⁹ their fears, their hopes, their outlook on life. Like all other people she writes about, they do not exist for her as specific and real individuals. Even the well known verses, which during the withdrawal from Sinai were interpreted as given direct expression to the feelings of those who objected to the withdrawal, are actually no more than quotations plucked from the Bible, deliberately interwoven in a form which would deprive them of any meaning, while at the same time woven into the context of a song ('For All These,' על כל אלה -- *al kol eleh*) which has no clear connection with the specific political issue. On the contrary, it looks like a completely apolitical song. In the same way as the songwriter asks the good God to preserve the kindled fire and the pure water, so too she asks him not to uproot what has been planted -- in contrast to the biblical source (Ecclesiastes knew well that there was 'a time to plant and a time to uproot'). Of this vague God, she also asks 'Return me, and I'll return to the good land,' השיבני ואשובה/ אל הארץ הטובה -- *hashiveni v'ashuvah/ el ha'aretz hatovah*. But the truth is that there is no need to give her 'good land' a political interpretation. She has always sought good lands for herself -- 'it never happened lands,' ארץ להד"ם -- *eretz lahadam*,³⁰ [Book Two, song #1 שיר], as she herself called

29 *Yamit* was one of the towns and villages in Sinai that Israel evacuated when she signed the peace agreement with Egypt. This evacuation was felt to be a great loss to those who believed that no Jewish community should be abandoned; that Jewish communities determined the borders of the State.

30 *Lahadam* -- להד"ם -- 'never happened.' In this song Shemer voices her hopes for a peaceful orderly world, בארץ להד"ם/ פורחים בכל חודם/ פרחי החמנית וההדר/ בארץ להד"ם/ יורדים במועדם/ השלג, 'in it-never-happened land/ with all their majesty they bloom/ the blossoms of the sunflower and the citrus/ in it-never-happened land/ in their appointed time they fall/ snow and dew and rain.' This song tells of a person strolling with the sun shining on his day and the infant falling asleep peacefully. This is the land she yearns for -- קח אותי עכשו לשם -- *kakh oti akhshav l'sham*, 'take me

them. Her Greater Israel is no more than one of these lands

Miron is being suspiciously hypocritical. Earlier he has castigated Shemer for being the voice for the Greater Israel movement. Here he says that she has been cautious in a very suspicious way NOT to give them (her political sympathies) clear expression in her main songs....Nowhere has she tried to express ... or to be the mouthpiece of (the Greater Israel movement and Gush Emunim). The question is: if there is no clear expression, in her main songs, of Shemer's political sympathies how could she be their voice? Miron states categorically that Shemer is NOT their mouthpiece and does not give voice to any of their experiences and feelings. So Miron criticizes her for *being* Greater Israel's voice and criticizes her for *not being* their mouthpiece. It seems that Miron is playing the Machiavellian game of underhandedness. He states for most of his article that Shemer is 'such and such,' he emphasizes that again and again; therefore to maintain his 'intellectual integrity' he must then admit to the truth. However, by that time the idea of Shemer being the voice of Greater Israel 'drones in our...consciousness like Titus's mosquito,' the 'big lie' has settled in. Miron is being manipulative. Miron then says that even those verses that might be understood as portraying her political sympathies are so interwoven into the text of a song as to deprive them of all political meaning. If this is so, how can Miron say, originally, that they have political meaning? It is Miron who takes that line, or lines, and it is he who gives them the meanings he then ascribes to Shemer and impugns in Shemer. The main line to which he gives such treatment is from 'על כל אלה' -- 'All These Things' (Book Three, #1), which reads: 'אל נא תעקור נטוע' -- 'please, don't uproot the planted.' This line is the opposite of what is written in Ecclesiastes 3:2: 'עת לטעת ועת לעקור נטוע' -- 'a time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted.' Miron reads into Shemer's words, rightly or not, that she is referring to the settlements in Sinai (this song was written at the time of

there now.' This is not a political place, but a yearned for place, especially by someone who lives in a

the withdrawal from Sinai, or just after), that were left, sold to the Egyptians, or demolished, at that time. The historical period of the writer of Ecclesiastes, was one in which Israel was an agrarian community, with people living mainly in very small villages. Large cities like Jerusalem were a only few hundred people in size. The 'uprootings' that Ecclesiastes referred to would have been the fruit trees and vines that had to be replaced periodically. Old trees and vines do not produce much fruit. Hence a 'time to plant and a time to uproot.' Ecclesiastes would not have meant the destruction of villages and towns. It is not necessary to go back so far in Jewish history. The early pioneers came to the Land of Israel, made it fertile and fruitful, established their communities in the 'uninviting' areas of the land. They did not expect to 'uproot' them. In fact, they believed that their communities would form the boundaries of the Jewish homeland. This was the case in the 1920's when the British and the French divided up the remains of the Ottoman Empire. The British gained control of the 'finger of the Galilee' 'because of the Jewish settlements there. Later in the 1930's, with the various proposed division plans of the Land, it was the location of the settlements that determined which areas were to be part of the Jewish area and which would be Arab. During the War of Independence, the Israelis fought very hard not to abandon any community -- some communities were, because of lack of arms to hold on to them. The guiding principle was not to 'uproot' any Jewish settlement, whether it was called moshav, kibbutz, village or town. It is from this background that Shemer stems. Her pioneer-Labor-Zionist upbringing taught her that principle and she stills holds fast to it. Shemer has said in a number of interviews that she has remained in the same place, it is the others who have moved on that issue.

Miron is also trouble by 'the good land' idea, and he finds it in Shemer's song 'It-never-happened land,' ארץ לאחז"ם -- *eretz lahadam*, (which is not messianic or about

time of trouble and turmoil.

Greater Israel). In Deuteronomy 8:1 it states: 'למען תחיון ורבייתם ובאתם וירשתם את-הארץ' -- 'that you may live and increase and be able to inherit/possess the Land which the Eternal promised on oath to your fathers.' In Deut.8:7 it continues: 'אשר-נשבע ה' לאבותיכם' -- 'For the Eternal is bringing you into a good land....'

In Lamentations the Jews are crying and weeping because they are exiled to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia, conquered Judea and destroyed Solomon's Temple. Psalm 137:1 states: 'על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם-בכינו בזכרנו את-ציון' -- 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, as we thought of Zion.' Lamentations 5:21 says: 'השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה, חדש ימינו כקדם' -- 'take us back/return us, Eternal, to Yourself and we shall return, renew our days as of old.' This is also sung in the shabbat and festival services when we return the Torah to the Ark. In Jewish thought the purpose of the redemption from Egyptian bondage was to inherit the Land and to live there according to the commandments revealed at Sinai (that was the Jewish constitution). Exile was seen as punishment, being removed from the 'face of God.' Therefore Psalm 137 shows the deep sorrow and melancholy of the exiles in Babylon.

Lamentations shows us the Jews praying to be taken back to the Land, that is, to be again in that special relationship between Jew and God that exists only in the Land that God had given them. Isaiah 43:5-6 states: 'ממזרח אביא זרעך, וממערב אקבצך: אומר לצפון תני' -- 'I will bring back your descendents from the East and from the West I will gather you: I will say to the North "give up" and to the South "do not withhold," bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.' Would Miron say that God would return His children to anywhere but Israel? Ezekiel, speaking to the Israelite exiles in Babylon, states in 37:12 & 14: 'אני' -- 'פותח את-קברותיכם והעליתי אתכם מקברותיכם עמי, והבאתי אתכם אל-אדמת ישראל:.... ונתתי רוחי בכם וחיייתם והנחתי אתכם על אדמתכם:....' -- 'I will open your graves and will bring you up from your graves, My people, and I will bring you to the soil/land of Israel:.... I will put

breath into you and you will live and I will set you on your own soil/land....' Here there is no ambiguity with which Miron can argue as to whether the land is Israel or not. From the earliest Mishnaic period, the rabbis always considered that living in Israel, for a Jew, was the preferred place to live -- better to live as a pauper in Israel than as a rich man in exile. It was only in Israel that Jews qua Jews could live according to the traditions and mitzvot. For millennia, Jews have been praying for the end of the exile and a speedy return to the Land of Israel. Shemer has taken the words from Jeremiah, in Lamentations, and has made the unstated clear when she states: 'השיבני ואשובה אל הארץ הטובה' -- 'bring me back and I will return to the good land.' The original is in the plural, but Shemer is speaking for herself. This 'good land' is not Miron's 'never-happened,' (ארץ להד"ם) land; it is the real and concrete Land of Israel. It is a great shame that Miron is so ignorant of his own heritage and traditions.

Miron:

In her penchant for stereotypes and sentimentality Naomi Shemer is no exception among the producers of entertainment art everywhere. This is the stuff of entertainment -- to create the illusion of foggy well-being, not to confront and challenge.....Yet there *is* a point in coming out against the reductivism of entertainment -- especially because it is through such reductivism that the entertainer reaches the widest audiences -- when it aims not merely to simplify things and to dull their sting, but primarily to blur them completely, to camouflage them out of sight. Good, legitimate entertainment strives for some midpoint between truth and the stereotype. It uses the sentimental in order to draw some attention to social or national wrongs: it tries to mediate between the world of consciousness and the world of dreams. Quite a few Israeli entertainers attained this level [for example] Alterman in the prime of his popular song writing What good entertainment tries to reveal to the extent that it does not hurt too much, she tries with all her might to blur and to sweep under the carpet. We should not infer from this that Naomi Shemer's art lacks a social and political dimension. On the contrary: the banality and obfuscation are precisely what determine the social and political function of her songs. More precisely: they *constitute* this function. Naomi Shemer is, at present, *the* national songwriter because she is skilled in creating in her songs -- in comfortable melodies and ingratiating rhymes -- the nothingness which we prefer to fearful reality. She tells us that we are a military nation, which fights, and kills, and loses its sons twice or three

times in a generation, but that in some way we are also a pastoral nation, gentle and noble, living in a land of wells of water, huts and dales. She sings a lament for the old Land of Israel, lost and beautiful and forgotten . .. but hints to us that in some way we are still living in it She says that it is true that we were young and beautiful in the past, but nevertheless we are gentle and beautiful now too. Living by the sword has not made us ugly..... It is clear that when we tell ourselves how great the grace and charm is that pours upon the fallen sons, ... we do a political service to those whose acts and omissions cause the killing of sons every decade. When we do this we become morally flawed, forfeiting our capacity for pain and outrage, betraying those we have sent to their death. It is clear that the illusion that we are 'good people,' despite everything we do to ourselves and others, is comfortable for whoever has no interest in becoming truly good. Yet it is not this service, which Naomi Shemer offers to every regime in Israel[w]e need the seductive melodic ease, the comfortable slogans, the drugged fuzziness of her songs, as a sick person in great pain needs a narcotic. We use her like morphine... Her songs are our lyric face powder, covering scars, sores, creases, stains, distortions and flaws..... How, without her, would we be not only strong and aggressive but also gentle and tender, not only thugs but also wandering minstrels, not only lacking in moral scruples but also full of a delicate and sentimental melancholy? Briefly, just as at a certain age in a person's life, at a certain point in the process of physical aging, cosmetics cease to be luxury items and become a necessity, so Naomi Shemer's songs have become, in the process of moral pollution of Israeli society, a commodity we cannot do without. That is why we reward her with the 'consensus,' ... and come *en masse* to hear her singing her songs, and award her the Israel Prize. For if Naomi Shemer did not exist we would have had to invent her.

Here Miron also poses as the *maven* on what is 'good' entertainment and what its goals should be. Only the 'good' entertainers are interested in becoming, and enabling others to become, good people. This obviously does not include Shemer. However, he says that Shemer is not unique in not being political, there are others, too. Very few entertainers write or sing political songs. There are many political parodies and satires in song, (like 'Saturday Night Live' set to song) but that is not what Miron is referring to. In Israel so much of everyday life is political. The printed and the electronic media are full of everything that happens in the country, they are constantly holding up a mirror to the society and challenging both the people and the government. It seems that politics is

the very breath of the society. Is there another country with so many 'newsaholics?' Every hour the news is broadcast and several times a day in great detail and with commentary and commentators. We Jews have thousands of years of tradition and history in *parshanut*, 'commentary.' The amount of coverage, and minute detail, given to Israeli political and military life, is such that no scandal goes uncovered, nor unpunished, by the media. The public needs a respite. Miron does not berate Shemer for not writing about social issues like health, education and social services. There are no songs dealing with these issues. These matters are written about, and commented on, in the media. Like the rabbis who created the יוצר -- *yotzer* prayer, Shemer concentrates on the many good aspects of people's lives. Miron has forgotten that this concentration on the good is also needed for the public's mental health and well-being.

In this last section Miron has finally said what is troubling him, what is 'tying his *kishkes* in knots' -- to use my own phrase. Miron is deeply troubled by what he sees as the moral bankruptcy, the moral pollution, the ugliness, the aggression in Israeli society. He is deeply unhappy that Israelis have lost the beauty of the 'old Israel.' Miron is writing as a leftist during a time when Begin is in power. Miron is a very unhappy man. What is causing this unhappiness is that his segment of the political spectrum is out of power. This has little, if anything, to do with Shemer. She is merely a convenient whipping boy at which to vent his frustrations. We have read that whatever Shemer writes, or does not write, is wrong. Shemer has at least two strikes against her, as far as Miron is concerned. She wants to maintain and retain the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria, and the Gaza Strip (Greater Israel); she has superseded Miron's beloved Alterman as the national songwriter. I wonder whether Shemer's being a woman is also part of Miron's heartache. Would he feel the same way if Alterman's heir and successor were a man? Miron is lashing out against the entire Israeli society, painting it with wide brush-strokes of terrible accusations.

This article was published in 1984. Menachem Begin had been Prime Minister since 1977. Given Begin's ideology that all the biblical Land of Israel belongs to the People of Israel, he was not waiting for any Arab leader to come forward to talk about peace. He eschewed his original ideology of 'both sides of the Jordan,' but he staunchly kept to this 'Greater Israel' position. Menachem Begin's government expanded the number of settlements in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and in the Gaza area. However, it was this Begin who invited Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt, to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. It was this Begin who made peace with Egypt and dismantled the settlements in Sinai. This would have been a position favored by Miron, but opposed by Shemer. Miron apparently suffers from loss of short-term (and also of long-term) memory. Has he forgotten what led to Sadat's coming to Jerusalem? The Israeli intelligence groups came to Prime Minister Begin and told him that they had uncovered a plot to assassinate Sadat in Egypt, and they wanted to know whether they should do anything. Begin commanded them to immediately inform Sadat and to supply him with all the information -- names and addresses of the would-be assassins. Begin saved the life of one of the bitter and sworn enemies of Israel. If Begin were, as Miron accuses Israelis of being -- morally polluted, then Begin would have remained remain silent, and allowed the assassins to proceed with their plot. Begin would not have felt any moral responsibility towards Sadat. Miron seems to have forgotten the civil war in Lebanon, which was still going in 1984 although beginning to peter out. Every ethnic and religious group in the country was at war with every other. In 1978 when Israel realized what was happening there, especially in Southern Lebanon, Israel immediately made medical services available to the Lebanese, permitted them to work in Israel, paid the teachers and supplied schoolbooks so that ten-year olds could learn instead of toting Kalachnikovs. Israel bought all the agricultural produce that the farmers there grew, even though the quality was very poor. This was so that the people of Lebanon could feel that they had

earned the money and that it was not charity; it was done to preserve their self-respect. Even drinking water was provided to their villages -- a scarce commodity in Israel. Israel was also the only country in the world to bring the plight of the Christian groups to the attention of the U.N. No country, even those who consider that they operate according to biblical and Christian ethics, and not even the Vatican to whom most of these Christians owe allegiance, did these things. Surely this does not point to callousness or to moral pollution. All this was done by the same government that is an anathema to Miron. Perhaps Miron is calling Israelis thugs because the Christian Phalangists shot up two Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon. The Israeli Presidential investigating committee did not find Ariel Sharon, the Minister of Defence at that time, guilty of instigating or abetting the Phalangists. However the members of the committee stated that Sharon should have known how the Phalangists might act towards the Palestinians, whom they hated. Miron is blaming the various governments of Israel for the 'killing of sons in every decade,' without one word about who started those wars and battles. When Israel was yet 'little' Israel without any ideas of becoming an 'Empire,' there were almost ceaseless hostilities against the country. The Egyptians had the *fedayun* crossing the border along the Gaza Strip laying land mines in civilian areas; the Syrian army kept up an almost incessant barrage of rifle and artillery fire on the Jewish communities in the 'finger of Galilee' -- the Hula Valley, just north of the Sea of Galilee; the Jordanians were also not quiet, and they were within a few scant miles of Tel Aviv and virtually in the center of Jerusalem. I remember in 1964 (a few years before the Six Day War) being in Jerusalem and seeing the Jordanian soldiers on the walls of the Old City. What does Miron think would have happened to Israel if the Israelis were not 'living by the sword?' Would the war situation have gone away, or would Israel have 'gone away?'

It is not that the Israelis want to 'live by the sword,' they want *to live*, and therefore have no other choice. Miron wants Israel to behave as if it had Canada on its

northern border and Mexico on its southern one. I am sure that the majority of Israelis would love their country to be in a nice middle-class neighborhood, where 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation.' Unfortunately, Israel is not yet living in Isaiah's ideal time. Israelis acknowledge that they have the burden of bearing thousands of years of moral and ethical traditions on their backs. From the 1920's when Arabs were attacking Jewish communities in pre-State of Israel, there was the education of all Israelis towards *tohar hanesheq*, 'purity of arms.' Weapons were not to be used against innocent civilians and children. This is still the case today. Any soldier found to transgress this and the rest of the very high standard moral code is court-martialed. Of the various accusations brought against Israeli soldiers by Arabs, some of which are upheld and some not, the charges of rape and pillage are not among them. Just a few weeks ago, a young soldier was found to be throwing stones at Arab cars, on the road from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. He was immediately arrested and court-martialed. A number of years ago, Baruch Goldstein, an Orthodox reservist in the army, opened fire on praying Moslems at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. He was shot to death by Israeli soldiers, and the killings were condemned by every Orthodox rabbi (and by those belonging to other streams of Judaism) in the country, as well as by the entire government. These acts are never condoned, and the criminals are always brought to justice. This seems to fly in the face of Miron's accusations. All these activities were done by the government that Miron believes has brought about this 'moral pollution.' Miron has also forgotten what brought about Israel's being in the West Bank and Gaza. Miron seems to have forgotten the massing of armies along all the borders (except the Lebanese) of Israel, and that Israel was on the verge of annihilation. Israel did not begin the war, Israel did not fight in order to expand its borders. Israel was fighting because it was attacked and its life was at stake.

In 1982, the Israeli army crossed the Lebanese border to rid the area of the Amal, the predecessors of the Hizbolla, who were constantly firing Katusha rockets at civilian

communities in Israel. That operation called 'Peace for the Galilee' was supposed to have been a quick 'in and out' operation. However, by the time that Miron's article was published, nearly two years later, the Israeli army was still in Southern Lebanon trying to prevent those rocket attacks. Miron is probably referring to that battle too as 'living by the sword.'

It is Miron who has blurred the face of truth and reality of the cause of wars and battles between Israel and her neighbors. To use Miron's own words: 'this blurring has a political function as well as a moral price.....we do political service to those whose acts and omissions cause the killing of [our] sons every decade.' The service is not to Israel, and those causing the killing and the wars to continue are not Israelis. Miron should go to the mirror, take a hard, honest 'unblurred' look and see who is doing the manipulating, the blurring and who is being intellectually dishonest about the historical background.

Miron's accusation of Israelis being thugs, morally flawed and polluted, is a blind perception. If Miron is right then Israelis are constantly becoming worse in this respect. I should like to bring forward two examples, even though they took place years after his article, yet under the Likud government -- the massive immigration of Soviet Jews between 1989-91 and the airlift of the Ethiopian Jews. Over half a million Jews immigrated, the equivalent of the U.S. accepting some fifty million people in a two year period. Ordinary Israelis emptied their homes of clothing, blankets, pots, pans and dishes, and much more in order to give to the Jews who came with virtually only their shirts on their backs. Many took in a Soviet family, by tripling up their own kids or having their children sleep in the living-room. May 24th, 1991 witnessed the airlift of some sixteen thousand Ethiopian Jews, during a thirty-six hour cease-fire window within the civil war that was raging there. Everyone in Israel saw the scene of thousand of Jews silently boarding the planes and later descending the steps, as free men and women, onto אדמת ישראל , the soil of Israel. Menachem Begin said that this was probably the first time

in history that whites brought Blacks from Africa to freedom. Surely this demonstrates that Israelis are not totally morally lost. Miron would probably say that these two major events were Jews helping Jews, but that the moral flaw still exists in their behavior to others. When major disasters, like earthquakes, hit anywhere in the world, Israel always sends a fully equipped field hospital, with doctors and nurses and others to help in the rescue operations; for example Israel has sent such help to Armenia, to Turkey and offered to send rescue personnel to New York recently. Israel's hospitals have always been open to people from the Moslem world. The wife of one of Ayatollah Humeini's lieutenants, was medically treated at Hadassah Hospital, as have members of the Jordanian royal family. That list is almost endless. Palestinian children in need of cardiac surgery, which is not available in the Palestinian Authority areas are immediately treated in the hospital in Ashkelon -- the extending of medical treatment to the Palestinians is still going on. The reason that I have stressed what has gone on under the Likud government, and have not said what went on during Labor's governing years, is that Miron is particularly 'troubled' by the Likud and its policies.

Israel must be strong to survive in the neighborhood in which it finds itself. Israel is trying, not always succeeding, to be as moral as possible given the circumstances. The question that Miron might try facing is whether being strong and bearing arms in self-defence is really contradictory to being moral, and gentle and tender. Does it have to be an 'either-or' situation, or should one, given the traditions of millennia, try to be both? One may oppose a particular government and its policies, however, one should be fair in one's criticisms.

Naomi Shemer is not so much the aim of Miron's blistering and attacking article, as she is the scapegoat for Miron's political frustrations -- be they as righteous or exaggerated as they might be.

Amnon Navot, a noted literary critic and writer, wrote a response³¹, a critique of Miron's publication³² and his article. Navot pulls no punches, and is scathing of Miron -- of his almanac, his choice of subject and Miron's adoration for Alterman, to the extent that Miron is unable to see anything of value in later generations. I shall be giving extracts from Navot's article and paraphrasing others without much comment. Navot speaks for himself very eloquently.

Navot writes that under other conditions

it would have been worthwhile to remain silent about a phenomenon such as Natan Zach and Dan Miron's '*Igra*,' and doubly so to be silent about the symptom that heralds the creation of phenomena of the likes of '*Igra*' ... Except that the appearance of '*Igra*' was also accompanied by a public storm in a murky teacup, revolving around 'cultural heroes' of the lowest calibre (Naomi Shemer and her songs and the condemnation of sin, and the transformation of a popular songwriter into a supreme, legitimate commodity to demonstrate processes of dehumanization and an event of depersonalization [probably means the overthrow of a major personality] within the Israeli society). We have to remember, if we forgot, that '*Igra*' is not only a frontal attack on Naomi Shemer, but is within the framework of a 'total package deal' the public also 'bought' Sh. Shapir and Yaacov Orland and Zippora Kagan and Yoram Bronowski and Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Yehuda Leib Teller. In short we 'bought' literature.

Navot continues in a very cynically derogatory manner about '*Igra*,' especially its elegant silver hard cover and its special paper, that it will beautifully adorn one's bookcase, particularly if made of teak or mahogany. Navot tells of one renowned Tel Aviv lawyer who bought half a dozen of them, one for each bookcase in his multi-lawyer firm; and how a well-known furniture store, that sells sideboards with bookshelves, bought dozens of '*Igrot*' to include them in the display window models of the store.

Navot continues:

31 Amnon Navot, "עכשיו", op.cit.

The importance of the matter, above all, is extra-literary: the business success. '*Igra*,' at least to my understanding, is a sign of concurrent processes: relatively widespread granting of canonical status of the fictional prose of the '*dor hamedinah*,' 'the generation of the State' and its songs. What was in the 1950's and still in the 1960's was 'untouchable' in other words '*dor hamedinah*,' in its prose and poetry has turned out to be a matter that is worthwhile investing in [that is, a financially worthwhile investment -- HBY]. No one remembers Yisrael Berma the writer, but who has not heard of Natan Zach, Dan Miron, Naomi Shemer, Dalia Rabikowitz [and so on and so on]?...

Continuing in taking '*Igra*' to task, Navot continues

It is not co-incidental that in this almanac there is NOT ONE [Navot's emphasis] single solitary taking a position toward Hebrew literature or any one specific case within it. The only stand taken is on what is attributed to be a 'cultural case': Naomi Shemer. Clearly expressed: the wearisome dealing with in mere literature, whatever it may be, is undoubtedly much less profitable, less 'interesting' and less 'penetrating to the center of consciousness' and 'on the threshold of interest' of the ordinary Tel Aviv lawyer, than dealing, as seriously as may be, as detailed as may be, with the songs of Naomi Shemer and the wrongs these songs caused to Natan Alterman.... Before us we have a poverty of literary content, poverty of points-of-view and also poverty of theory Literature, according to the editors of '*Igra*' is an incredibly boring business, and they don't believe that discussion of literature or of poetics will pass the 'threshold of interest' of the buyer of the sideboard with the display cases who wants to fill it with content..... Before us is an almanac for literature and thought, but the adrenaline that provides fuel for the calcified veins of Hebrew literature (at least through Zach and Miron's prism) is the different conditions of degeneration in Israeli song writing. It is entirely clear ... that it is not the poems of Yair Horowitz .. or the poems of Meir Wieseltier .. or the narrative excerpt of Sh. Shapira 'make' the almanac, but the taking of a stand against the subculture of the boors, that is expressed in the 'internal relations' between the songs of Alterman and Naomi Shemer ... In the opinion of real readers of Hebrew literature ... '*Igra*' symbolizes conditions of literary amorphousness, anti-criticism, degeneration of all the literary systems to the point that they create a dovetailing of the media systems (the centrality of the polemic against Naomi Shemer is only a symptom of this)...It is symptomatic entirely that the only critical text in the manuscript that a literary critic like Dan Miron, edits is the article on Naomi Shemer. And this is perhaps the choice of lack of choice, for the texts suitable for the scrutiny of a murderous

32 Miron and Natan Zach, both are the editors of '*Igra*.' Natan Zach also contributed an article to this first issue. Navot is as scathing of Zach as he is of Miron. I shall not be including Navot's critique of Zach, as that is outside the purview of this paper.

critique, not less than this, that Miron levels against Shemer's songs, a critique, that would expose conditions of a disintegration, desiccation, and degeneration of texts spring from a numbing and babbling self-repetitiveness are the very same texts that are published in '*Igra*' itself. Perhaps I am mistaken, but to the best of my understanding, true literary criticism would not examine Naomi Shemer's song writing, but rather the texts published by Yair Horowitz. Perhaps the mistake is mine, but the literary texts that Sh. Shapira published are as in need of critique as air is to breathing.....However, it should be stated immediately, that apart from the enraged occupation with the one who, according to Miron, is liable to dethrone Alterman as the national songwriter, the very editorial decision (inasmuch as Dan Miron is not only the author of this essay but also its editor) is an erroneous foray, and springs, in fact, from loss of perspective. The question of who rules the sub-culture of the boors, is it Zvi Pik the singer, or Naomi Shemer (and perhaps Yoram Tohar-Lev is more correctly the authentic expression of this culture?) is worthy in and of itself, on condition that you define, a priori, your cultural world as comprised of Shemer's and Pik's songs. However, since we are speaking of a literary journal, it is the intrinsic strength of literature that needs to be tested, and not the *pizmon*, the pop-song of pop-song writers. Or perhaps the appearance of the article about Naomi Shemer is not so accidental, and this is a deliberate act defining 'the target population' to whom this literary almanac is directed? There is no doubt: that Miron, at great length and in enormous detail, raises Shemer to the level of 'a cultural persona' in order to throw her *מאגרא רמא לבירא עמיקתא* -- from an *igra rama l'veira amikta*³³ [from mystical heights into a deep abyss] but the basic suppositions in the name of which Miron attacks Shemer, are two-faced at best and unsubstantiated, to be more generous..... First of all, Naomi Shemer is the most distinctive disciple of Alterman in the matter of 'Greater Eretz Yisrael,' and her songs are a fleshing out and superficializing of both the 'Altermanic' themes and linguistic usages. Whoever attacks, in enraged severity, sentences of the song ['Jerusalem of Gold'], such as: 'the market square is empty' *ככר-השוק ריקה* -- *kikar hashuk reika*, as the depersonification of reality and does not see in historical perspective, *who caused* (Navot's emphasis) the processes of which Naomi Shemer became one [of several] voices, is either one of two things: either he is blind or he is lying and is actually asking to rewrite the socio-cultural process by means of his full power and public standing. It would have been appropriate for Miron to see the foundations of the dehumanization and the depersonification in such lines [of Alterman's] as: *אז אמרה לו לנער / דם רגלי אימהות יכס / אך שבע יקום העם / אם עלי אדמתו יובס*

33 Navot utilizes a well-known saying from the Talmud to create a wonderful pun. '*Igra*' means roof. So Navot has Miron raising Shemer to the '*igra*' the heights, which is also the name of Miron's journal.

'Then she said to the youth/ blood will cover the mothers' legs/ but sevenfold will arise the nation/ if upon its Land it be defeated.' [*Hinei Tamu Yom Krav Ve'arbo* -- הנה תמו יום קרב וערבו of *Ir Ha'Yona* -- עיר היונה]. The dividing line between Alterman, as a founding father, and Naomi Shemer and her world is here very quickly clarified. Similar things may be stated in connection to Miron's attack on the musical interpretation of Naomi Shemer in her 'Altermanic' poem 'a never-ending meeting' 'פגישה לאין קץ' -- *pegishah l'ein ketz*. Naomi Shemer expresses altogether authentically the potentially balladic character of the poem.

Navot shows how Shemer uses Alterman's usage of ballads, whose foundations are in England, Scotland and even France. Shemer is not inventing or even twisting Alterman's style, but she is the logical extension of it.

Navot quotes Miron: 'Naomi Shemer is not able to elevate in her songs specific people. Her special quality is especially revealed in elevating blurred faces, empty frames, where one can put one's innermost thoughts. This empty-facedness is directed by her towards the living and even more so towards the dead.'

Navot's rebuttal:

One can agree with this assertion, but it is necessary to discuss its degree of importance with regards to what Shemer's songs have spoiled in our lives and in our sensitivity to the [written] word, in comparison to what Alterman spoiled, in our world of sensitivities to the word, but also and especially in our sensitivities towards our world of ideas (the referential world).

Navot again quoting Miron: 'If we didn't have Naomi Shemer it would have been necessary to invent her.' And Navot's reply:

The genetic source which makes Naomi Shemer's place in our lives possible, is found in a place that Miron is really not ready to acknowledge..... [Alterman's writings -- HBY]. If we did not have Dan Miron, it would have been necessary to invent him as an indicator of the degree of manipulation that has for the most part been imparted to literary criticism, and now also in Hebrew cultural criticism. Miron was not and is not now familiar with the literature of the *dor hamedinah* and acts to cover this up, not just once, by 'leaps' of unexpected manipulation, that not a few relate to seriously because of his other studies and his academic status.

Miron's attack on Shemer is almost singular in its negativity and abuse. Navot holds Shemer to be the national songwriter who is heir and successor to Alterman, in stature as well as having followed in his footsteps, but not as the kind of literary persona that Miron constructs her to be. In fact, Navot adds, many in Israel call Shemer a poet, and have great respect for her.

Miron reminds me of a quaint Jewish story. One particular congregation is looking to find a rabbi to replace their beloved rabbi who is retiring. The search committee reports to the community that they have found the perfect candidate. He comes and leads Shabbat services, gives an outstanding *dvar Torah*, and leaves everyone utterly impressed. The evening comes when the candidate is to be discussed and voted on by the entire congregation. Everyone waxes lyrical. The man is lauded to the heavens. The perfect candidate has been found. The vote is taken, and to the surprise of the whole community there is one dissenting vote. The entire community comes to ask Moshe Fleck why he voted against such a wonderful rabbi. Fleck answered: 'who would remember me if I voted in favour?' So too, with Miron.

Jerusalem of Gold

The analysis of 'Jerusalem of Gold' by Natan Greenboim is so excellent that I felt it necessary to bring the article in a full translation. Through a partial commentary on Greenboim's commentary, I shall further clarify the social, literary and ideological context of Shemer's most well known song. To give the background to Shemer's writing 'Jerusalem of Gold,' I shall be bringing Dan Almagor's article that vividly describes how this song was born.

Twenty-eight years after Naomi Shemer wrote 'Jerusalem of Gold', Dan Almagor wrote a two-part article, in *HaDoar*, about the birth of this song.³⁴ He writes:

The year was 1967, the height of the crisis³⁵ and economic recession, that undermined the condition and mood of Israel in the mid-sixties. There was a heavy feeling of depression, disappointment and the shattering of the Zionist dream. These were particularly fruitful times for the world of entertainment. Just a few years earlier the curtain went up on the Hebrew production of the musical 'My Fair Lady.' There was no television in Israel at that time, and the Israeli public was starved for lavish musical entertainment, even during the days of the recession. There were a number of translated plays as well as original Hebrew ones. Theaters were packed every night during a period of 600-700 consecutive evenings. There were many entertainment and song productions. One of the most popular was the annual 'Song Festival' of *Kol Israel* public radio, and broadcast (within an auditorium before a live audience) every Independence Day as the central radio program of that festive day. Israeli poets, songwriters, composers and singers were asked to submit songs to the festival. A special committee selected the twelve new songs that would be presented to the listening audience, and during the evening, this committee, chose the three songs that were liked most. They were aided by polling booths that were positioned in various places throughout the country.

34 Dan Almagor: How the song was born 'Jerusalem of Gold': *HaDoar*, Folio 7 & 8, Aug.3rd, 1987.

35 The U.N. had been told by Egypt and Jordan to remove its forces from along the Egyptian border with Israel, and from the former British High Commissioner's House, overlooking the southern part of Jerusalem. The Egyptian army was massed along the Sinai border. The Israeli ambassador to the U.N., Abba Eben, was in N.Y. trying to persuade the Secretary General of the U.N. to return his forces. Their mission had been, since 1951, to be the barrier between the Arab countries and Israel. It appeared that war was imminent.

Almagor continues:

The festival won great popularity, and many of the chosen songs were immediately recorded. Hundreds submitted their songs to the competition. However, the organizers were faced with the same two critical problems every year:

- a) a great part of the most prominent composers in the country refused to participate;
- b) the counting of the votes cast in the various booths -- that began after each song was heard twice -- always lasted at least 45 minutes, and during this time there was a 'decrease in the tension' among the listeners to the program. It was clear to the producers that they had to come up with a gimmick to 'fill the hole.'

Then a few months before the scheduled time of the Festival, Dr. Yishayahu Shapira, programs director of *Kol Israel*, and Gil Aldame, composer and arranger, and a member of the department of Israeli music of *Kol Israel* and one of those responsible for the production of the Festival, came up with the idea to approach five of the most prominent composers of Hebrew song, who did not agree to participate in the competition, and to commission songs from them. These songs would be performed outside the framework of the competition, during that problematic time between hearing the last song and the announcement of the winner. In this way they would be able to solve both problems simultaneously. Among the five composers, to whom Gil Aldame turned, was Naomi Shemer, one of the most prominent and beloved of songwriters and composers in the country.

Almagor:

Under the influence of Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem, Gil suggested to all five to write a song about the city where the Festival would take place. 'Why especially about Jerusalem?' asked Naomi Shemer, who then lived with her daughter in a small roof apartment in Jerusalem. In answer, Gil told her that he had checked the files of the record and tape library of *Kol Israel*, and was shocked to discover that most of the songs, in the library, were liturgical hymns and traditional songs of the various ethnic groups, verses from the Bible or songs by Yehuda HaLevi and Shalom Shabazi. However, the number of new songs about Jerusalem, written by Israeli composers from the turn of the century [the 20th. century], and especially during the previous nineteen years when the city had been divided, since the War of Independence, and Jews did not have access to to the [Western] Wall, were not more than half a dozen.

Naomi Shemer said that when Gil approached the five, the other four were terrified and refused, she was terrified but accepted. Shemer said that for her Jerusalem was her personal city, beloved and important, and every summer the city revealed anew its charms. Whenever Shemer would try to express them a great fear would descend on her. She remembered every

word that had ever been written about the city from its ancient past -- King David, Yehuda HaLevi -- who could add even one letter? Months passed in futile attempts [to write] and she decided to give up. She called Gil and asked him to release her: 'it's too much for me, I am simply not able to write about Jerusalem.' Gil, the wise pedagogue, said to her 'don't write about Jerusalem, write about anything you want, but don't leave us without a song for the Festival.' When he replaced the telephone receiver he turned to the others in his offices and said: 'now she'll write about Jerusalem.' And so it was. That same night Shemer wrote 'Jerusalem of Gold.'

In her article 'Jerusalem of Naomi Shemer'³⁶ she writes that in her hand she had the thread of the Talmudic legend about R. Akiva, that she remembered from school. The story of his days of poverty with his beloved wife Rachel, and that when he would become rich he would give her the 'Jerusalem of Gold' [a golden piece of jewelry-- HBY]. Shemer writes:

The expression 'Jerusalem of Gold' suddenly shone forth from the depths of my memory as if to say 'behold, here I am.' I understood that this would be the corner stone of my song. It should be remembered just how gray, and not golden, was Jerusalem in those days, and that it was 'forbidden' to speak words of praise about her or to have parades in her: don't awaken and don't wake up. And so I was overcome by vertigo, and asked myself -- 'of gold? Are you sure, of gold?' and something from within answered, 'yes, yes, of gold.'

Shemer continues:

In the last verse I simply reported all the inhibitions that bound my hands and interfered with my writing until then: 'but when I come to the day to sing to you...I am the smallest of your children.' The next day I brought the song to *Kol Israel*, and Gil held the words in his right hand and the music in his left, he looked at these and at those 'with tears on his cheeks' -- as is written in Lamentations. It is important to note that this first version had only two verses -- the first and the last-- and of course the refrain: 'Jerusalem of gold and of copper and of light -- surely for all your songs I am a lyre.'

During the following days I would play the song to everyone who came to my home. Once I played it for Rivka Michaeli³⁷ and she asked: 'what

36 Naomi Shemer: Jerusalem of Naomi Shemer; *musaff* to *Yediot Akhronot*, May 22nd., 1987

37 Michaeli is one of Israel's prominent entertainment artists.

about the Old City?' 'Good,' I answered, 'if you really want.' I added the middle verses: 'how the water cisterns have dried up..' and 'the caves in the rock...'

Shemer:

The matter of the Old City needs an explanation. When I came to write about her I pushed it out of my mind, everything that was physical and tangible. In front of my eyes stood the abstract destruction [of Jerusalem and the Temple -- HBY], and not just of the past nineteen years. Through a sort of telescopic lens I saw, before me, a city in the heavens, and only its essence -- this one I wanted to capture. One day after the war Amos Oz³⁸ wrote in the '*Davar*'³⁹ -- 'what is this "the market square is empty" It is full of Arabs!' And in a like manner about the Temple Mount and the way via Jericho.⁴⁰

Shemer:

But twenty years have passed, enough time to 'cool down.' And now with a cool head and after much thought I want to say that the people have accepted the following words:

אכן ואכן,
בעיני,
ירושלים, שאין בה יהודים
היא עיר אבלה ושוממה
יתרה מזו:
ארץ ישראל
כשהיא ריקה מיהודים
היא ישימון בעיניי

ועוד:
כל העולם הזה כולו
אם הוא חס והלילה
ריק מיהודים
הוא בעיניי
חור שיור ביקום

38 One of Israel's premier novelists and a member of "*Shalom Achshav*" [Peace Now].

39 An Israeli daily newspaper.

40 Oz was upset about Shemer stating that the 'market square is empty,' because it did not take into account the Arabs who lived there. It appeared to turn them into 'non-people.' When Theodore Herzl came to Israel he said that it was empty. He meant empty of Jews. Although the country was sparsely populated at the turn of the 20th century, it certainly was not empty -- Jews, Christians and Moslems lived in various parts of the country. However, Shemer's view is through the Jewish prism, and the Old City was certainly empty of Jews.

yes, yes
in my view,
Jerusalem without Jews
is a city that mourns and is desolate
more than that:
the Land of Israel
when she is empty of Jews
is a wasteland in my eyes

and more:
this entire world
if it, God forbid,
is empty of Jews
it is
a black hole in the universe

There, I have said it.

Tamar Avidar,⁴¹ on the last day of the Six Day War wrote that Naomi Shemer went from place to place, from army camp to army camp and took with her 'Jerusalem of Gold.' Avidar stated:

She sang it at the beginning of the program, in the middle and at the end repeated it, and yet the soldiers would not say 'enough.' Again and again they request to hear it, the battle hymn that was written and composed by Naomi Shemer, even before they left for battle. All hum it with her, the heart overflows with emotion, pleasure and longings are satisfied. They tell her 'you know your "Jerusalem of Gold" its all ours.' She had difficulty believing it. She was singing her songs, appearing before soldiers on the El-Arish front accompanied by the thunder of mortars and other weapons.

Naomi Shemer did not want to change one word of her 'historic' song, but Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem, sent her a telegram requesting that she bring her song up to date in light of the events. She did. Shemer added two extra verses about returning to the Old City and descending to the Dead Sea via Jericho.⁴²

41 Tamar Avidar: Naomi brings her "Jerusalem" up to date; *Ma'ariv*, June 11th, 1967

42 Naomi Shemer: *All My Songs*; *Yediot Akhronot* Publication; 1967. Song #20.

Dan Almagor⁴³ wrote:

Perhaps, perhaps had this song not come into the world then the Six Day War -- that broke out about two weeks after the maiden performance of the song in Jerusalem -- would have been conducted differently, ended differently, and would have had a different effect on all that occurred in the region.

Almagor wrote his article only a couple of months after the Six Day War. It should be noted that the entire Jewish population world-wide was euphoric over this seemingly miraculous victory. 'Jerusalem of Gold' had become the unofficial anthem of Israel. Its melody and words seemed to encapsulate the longings of all the Jewish Israelis. Jerusalem: its very name evokes its ancient history and all the world famous persons who walked and talked and sang in its streets and Temple. Jerusalem is the city of David and Solomon, of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jerusalem of history, the Jerusalem of yearning, was not a divided city with enemy soldiers pointing guns at the Jews who looked towards their holiest place but could not approach it. The reality of Jerusalem was that it was a small, gray town with an illustrious past, divided by walls on which the enemy walked. 'Jerusalem of Gold' evoked both the yearned for and the reality. The refrain 'לכל שיריך אני כנור' -- *l'khol shirayikh ani kinor* I am a lyre for all your songs, allowed each and every Israeli Jew to feel an integral and personal part of Jerusalem's magnificent history. Those days of 1967 were historic days. Israelis knew that they were fighting for their lives. This song, that they took into battle with them, reminded them that despite all the horrors of the past, both far and very recent, that Jews survived, had returned to the Land of Israel, were building it up and were living in it. All their emotions of anger, fear, anxiety, yearnings and love were instilled into that song. Shemer's song gave everyone courage, elevated their spirits and enabled them to see beyond the coming war. With such a song, which the people transformed into a prayer, it was possible to win. Almagor had put his finger on the pulse of the people. Perhaps

without the hope that seemed to flow from the song, things might have been different. A people without hope cannot win a war, even if its very life is at stake.

About a year and a half after Naomi Shemer wrote her signature song *ירושלים של זהב* -- *yerushalayim shel zahav* 'Jerusalem of Gold,' Natan Greenboim wrote a beautiful literary analysis of it..⁴⁴ He wrote:

We have still not forgotten the excitement and the enthusiasm that was awakened within us when we heard the song 'Jerusalem of Gold' whose words and music were written by the poet Naomi Shemer. It won praise and tempestuous applause when it was first heard at the Song Festival the evening after the Day of Independence, 1967. Poetry experts predicted great things for the song, although no one reckoned on the scope of its amazing success and the extent of its emotional effect. With the increase in tensions immediately following the Day of Independence, and especially with the outbreak of hostilities, its words and melody began to dominate all who heard them; the sense of hearing sharpened in order to absorb it when its notes broke forth from transistors and cassette tapes; it accompanied us at home and in the [bomb] shelters, at work and at school, on the home front and on the front lines. The excitement was enormous. Mouths gaped, hearts trembled and in the eyes glistened pearls of tears. We felt -- without being able to give a more concrete expression to it -- that suddenly there were found words, the fabric of idioms and expressions, rhythm and melody, that gave expression to what made our hearts overflow. The soldiers who conquered the territories were conquered by it [the song], it dominated all its listeners, was heard and hummed by all mouths and aroused immense waves of enthusiasm. Its influence was so great such that it was suggested that become the national anthem instead of 'the obsolete HaTikva,' that according to the ones making the proposal, 'its words are disconnected from its meaning and its strange melody has lost its surety in our ears.'

Greenboim continues:

The unusual success of the song derives from three elements: its lyrics, its melody and the timing when it burst forth into the world. These three elements were combined so well that it is difficult to separate them. Each element has its own special importance, however it is clear that the poetic expression is the principle basis of the strength of the impression. In this article we want to differentiate the text from the melody, and from the reality of the timing, and to analyze the song's artistic-literary value.

43 Dan Almagor: op cit. 1996

44 Natan Greenboim: *ירושלים של זהב* : *BaSadah*, Kislev/Dec. תשכ"ח / 1968
This is a translation of Greenboim's article.

Perhaps, this analysis will enable us to answer the question why we were so enchanted with the song 'yerushalayim shel zahav.'
The basis of this analysis is on the original lyrics of the song before the addition of the last verses that undermine its poetic wholeness.

Subjects of the verses:

- first verse: description of the landscape at sunset
- second verse: condition of the city
- third verse: condition of various places within the city
- fourth verse: condition of various places outside the city
- fifth verse: the relationship of the poet to Jerusalem
- sixth verse: the influence of Jerusalem on the poet and her vow.

The first verse and its analysis:

אור הרים צלול כין
ורח ארנים
נישא ברוח הערביים
עם קול פעמונים

The mountain air is as clear as wine
the scent of the pines
is carried by the dusk breeze
with the sound of bells

In the landscape are found a number of objects like mountains, pines and bells, but in fact they are not the main objects but rather the accompaniment, the main objects are: air, scent, breeze and sound. These are incorporeal nouns that transfer the description from the concrete and tangible to the general and the abstract. It seems as if the description is pointing to specific places, but places are not given only their atmosphere, their scents and sounds. The time, too, is not defined nor specified: light and shade are confused in their mingling, not day not night, at dusk. This atmosphere and this time are enveloped by the sounds of church bells awakening the feeling of secrecy and mystery.

With the four lines of the first verse the poet is able to arouse many and varied spiritual forces within us: that activate all five of our senses, clear/צלול *tzalul*-- vision, wine/יין *yayin*-- taste, scent of pines/ריח ארנים *rayakh oranin*-- smell, breeze/רוח *ru'akh*-- contact and touch, sound/קול *kol*-- hearing. The image of 'clear as wine' activates the imagination. Our power of reasoning is aroused in its desire to get a true picture of 'sound

of bells' that are carried by the dusk breeze. The quality of the sound is not clarified by the content of the verse. If this verse were taken from a pastoral poem we could have surely thought, that what is mentioned is the sound of bells of the herd returning from the meadow at evening. However from the name of the song, especially from its refrain, we understand, for it hints at a place filled with churches, that are sounding their bells. The many spiritual emotions that are aroused create the feeling of the fullness of absorbing the description that is leading us, at the end of the verse, towards the mysterious elements that arouses the impression of holiness. The atmosphere of this verse is serene, calm and festive, the atmosphere that is moulded in it is idyllic.

The second verse and its analysis:

ובתרדמת אילן ואבן
שבויה בחלומה
העיר אשר בדד יושבת
ובליבה -- חומה

In the slumber of tree and stone
she is captive within her dream
the city that sits alone
and in her heart -- a wall

In the center of the second verse is the city. (Also from the graphic aspect -- at the beginning of the third line, and also from the number of words -- five words before and five -- after). In a few word sketches the poet points out its condition: the city drenched in sleep, dreaming, residing alone. The sleep condition is temporary, a condition that is likely to change like the condition of many trees, that in winter are exposed and frozen, but will awaken to new life with the coming of spring. However the slumber is not just the slumber of the tree, it is also the slumber of the stone, heavy, permanent, eternal. This double meaning of slumber tells of sunken deep in a state of stagnation like despair, one state, whereas on the other hand there is still the hope of awakening, of change, of renewed life. The city in this verse is closed in within herself, she is 'captive within her dream.' This picture, also, is open to two interpretations: the dream has taken her captive -- the city dreams and she is given over to being controlled by the dream -- this is one interpretation. According to the other interpretation, the city is captive because she is drenched in a dream, and while she is dreaming she is captive to external powers, alone and distant from her natural population. The third line of the verse brings with it emotional connotation of great significance: it is constructed from the first words of the 'Book of Lamentations' -- איכה/ יושבה בדד העיר/ רבתי עס -- 'Alas! Lonely sits the city once great with people.' The word that opens

this book of lamentations [how -- איכה] is missing from our line, but she will return and find her place in the song; she opens the third verse. The connection with the Book of Lamentations points to other motifs, the genre of our song which is a song of lament par excellence, similar to the lamentations of the sort 'ציון הלא תשאל' 'Zion won't you pray' of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, that was not mentioned here by coincidence. The last line concentrates and completes the woeful condition of the city. She is not just alone, deserted of her inhabitants and drenched in her widowhood and sorrow but she is also bleeding 'ובליבה -- חומה' *uv'libah-khomah*. I do not know if it is permissible to suppose, that in portraying such a shocking and sharp picture of the city, that in her heart is a wall, the poet saw the political situation of Berlin of our days and the psychological state of the Germans, that for many of them the Berlin Wall cuts through their midst like a knife through living flesh. Also with regard to Jerusalem this picture is valid realistically and symbolically. The wall⁴⁵ slices the city into two mutually hostile parts. This situation causes suffering and pain to the population on both sides. This wall is real and unattainable at once, and on it are seen the enemy and the barrels of the machine-guns of the soldiers, thrust like a slaughtering knife into the heart of Jerusalem which is bleeding, in pain and grieving. The atmosphere of this verse is saturated with sorrow and grief, suffering and burning pain, the description moulded in it is tragic.

Greenboim continues:

If we wanted to point to the relationship between the first two verses, we would be able to show that the idyllic description of the first verse is utilized as background and contrast to the tragic character of the second verse. The festive and calm basis of the first verse deepens the feeling of sorrow and grief of the second verse. It is clear that the first verse mingled the description of the city, but this was general and abstract of the atmosphere and the landscape, that causes pleasure and even happiness. In contrast to this the second verse describes the current situation of the city. A city divided, suffering and captive in the hands of forces that made her deserted and alone. This description arouses within our hearts feelings of sorrow and anguish. In the first verse Jerusalem is described as great and exulted, peaks and hills: mountain air, pines, carried sounds that rises from the towers: against this in the second verse Jerusalem is degraded, Jerusalem lowly-wretched, Jerusalem of slumbering stone who has no one to overturn this, Jerusalem who is given over to a captives' prison/בור-שבי/ *bor-shevi*, (the motif of ירידה - *yeridah*/descent will yet be broadened in the continuation of the song as in cisterns/בורות- *borot* 'and no one descends' ואין יורד - *ein yored* and so on). Next to the beauty and the

45 The 'wall' here is not the Western Wall alluded to in the song, but the walls of the Old City, especially on the northern and western and southern sides of it, which were part of the cease-fire lines between Jordan and Israel from the War of Independence in 1948.

eternality of ירושלים של מעלה *yerushalayim shel ma'alah* 'heavenly Jerusalem' that could inflame emotions of hope and longing, stands
 ירושלים של מטה *yerushalayim shel matah*—'earthly Jerusalem' who is
 wounded, captive and deserted, arouses feelings of grief and pain, and
 perhaps the desire to change her wretched condition, because this is not a
 permanent state, only one of slumber.

The refrain and its analysis:

ירושלים של זהב
 ושל נחושת ושל אור
 הלא לכל שיריך
 אני כינור

Jerusalem of gold
 and of copper and of light
 surely for all your songs
 I am a lyre

The opening words of the refrain gave the song its title and for us --- the motto of the battles of the Six Day War, the heartfelt joy, the essence of the vision of redemption: ['Jerusalem of Gold'] ירושלים של זהב. The poet came by this combination of words--also according to her -- from a legend about Rabbi Akiva. In the legend (Bialik-Ravnitzki: *Book of Agadot*, Dvir Publishers, T.A. 1957, pg.179): R. Akiva was the shepherd for Kalba-Shavua. Rachel, Kalba-Shavua's daughter, saw that he was modest and fine, she said to him: 'If I betroth myself to you will you go to the house of study?' He replied: 'yes.' She was betrothed to him in secret. When Kalba-Shavua heard this he threw her out of his house, from the beautiful dwelling and from all his possessions. She went and married R. Akiva. During the winter they slept in a barn, he would pick the straw from her hair. He said to her: 'If only I were able I would give you "Jerusalem of Gold"' (ירושלים של זהב).... The legend does not end here. But for our purposes we have gleaned the main thing. In an additional explanation of ירושלים של זהב, *yerushalayim shel zahav* states, that this was a 'type of jewelry on which the outline of Jerusalem was engraved.' The piece of jewelry was a symbol of wealth and pleasure, that the grateful husband wanted to bestow on his wife, since the barn is the symbol of poverty and wretchedness, in which R. Akiva and Rachel were drowning. It could be that the color and the brightness of the barn aroused in R. Akiva the association with the golden adornment. For our part the combination ירושלים של זהב *yerushalayim shel zahav* is about a precious city, a city of worth and beauty. The tangible lasting picture, perhaps, is that of the golden dome atop the Mosque of Omar, glowing in the last rays of the setting sun (dusk!). Perhaps, in the envisioned world

of the poet, the brightness of the sparkling golden dome is poured out on, and reflected from, its surroundings, as its color deepens and becomes brown, under the influence of the red of the sunset, another metal, copper, a shining golden brown, that coats towers and domes that thrust themselves towards the dusky sky *העריבים של-בין-העריבים ha-shamayim shel-bein-ha-arbayim*, that flood the entire city with a halo of splendour. All this gives a strong and great effect of light, Jerusalem-of-light, all of Jerusalem is dipped in a sea of light; this is the idyllic Jerusalem, the yearned for, the heavenly: the heavenly Jerusalem.. This is the Jerusalem that many generations of Jews have prayed for, have longed for and sung about. These prayers and these songs the poet accompanies with her lyre: *לכל שירך אני כינור l'khol shirayikh ani kinor*. As the melody follows after the words, so the poet follows after *ירושלים-של-זהב ושל-נחושת ושל-אור yerushalayim-shel-zahav v'shel-nekhoshet v'shel-or*. This entire combination is as if one word, a long expression, that marks the endurance of the poet, even though her power is weak in contrast to the magnificence of the idyllic Jerusalem. Her talent is not sufficient to give fitting verbal expression to the deep emotions that are aroused in her heart. Therefore the last line of the refrain is short; the shortest of all the song's lines. Very short in contrast to the long combination of 'Jerusalem of gold.....,' 'I am a lyre' ---- something burst forth in the middle, the bow [*kinor* in modern Hebrew means 'violin' -- HBY] is not long enough, the strings are not sufficient, the word is not able to redeem the emotion from its depths.

Greenboim:

The words 'for all your songs I am a lyre' (*לכל שירך אני כינור*) returns us to R. Yehuda HaLevi and his poem 'Zion won't you pray for the peace of your captives,' whence they are taken almost without change, just the order is reversed. It is proper to discern the connotation that the original words bring with them. In his poem, his lamentation, HaLevi says: *לבכות עונתך אני תנים, ואת אחלם/ שיבת שבועך -- אני כינור לשירך* 'to weep for your affliction I am jackals, and their wishes / the return of your exile -- I am the lyre for your songs.' The intention of the poet is that when he remembers the oppression and poverty of Zion, he wants to weep bitterly and howl like jackals, he wants to share in the sorrow of Zion. And even when he foresees the return to Zion, the coming of the Redemption, his heart fills with joy and gladness, he is the lyre that accompanies songs of joy. There is no doubt that for R. Yehuda HaLevi the Redemption is connected with the building of the Temple ('and their wishes for the return of your exile' and the close connection to the blessing 'and to Jerusalem Your city in mercy return, and dwell within her as You have spoken, and build her soon in our days....' -- the Amida prayer). Hence the words 'I am a lyre to your songs' point to Temple worship, and HaLevi's yearnings to take part in it: and is he not a Levi and counted among that tribe, responsible for the singing and the playing in the Temple?

understood, that the point of view of the poet is the point of view of a Jew. From the point of view of the Arab, for example, the water cisterns are not dry, and the market square is busy, of course, however with regards to the Jew, he has no access to these places, all is empty, desolate, dead. The Jew has no right to step on or roam about the holiest place for him, the Temple Mount which is in the Old City. The poet's feeling of sorrow and pain is deepened by the other meaning of the word 'visits' - 'פוקד' - *poked* that of remembrance. Not just that the Jew cannot visit the Temple Mount due to external barriers, but that he also does not think about it, does not remember what the Temple Mount symbolizes. ואין פוקד את הר הבית -- *v'ein poked et har habayit*, he does not remember the Temple, the magnificence of Jerusalem in the past, and therefore, perhaps, has no yearning to renew this magnificence. The aspiration of living the magnificence of the past is only possible if one remembers it. The role of remembrance (and the recalling to memory by the song itself) the poet takes upon herself in the last lines of the song.

Greenboim writes:

A peek at the internal musical mechanism of the poet will reveal how she cast the picture of empty cisterns. The words 'איכה ישבה' -- 'how [the city] sits' of Lamentations has remained in their natural state in the original, but there was the switching of letters in the second word, the sound 'yashva' became the sound 'yabshu'. The root 'ישב' *y-sh-b*, with all the negative connotations in the original, appears in the second and third verses of our song in the changing of the three letters: יבשו - יושב - יבשו *yavshu - yoshev yabshu*. All these forms designate the tragic condition of the city.

Greenboim continues his analysis:

The fourth verse and its analysis:

ובמערות אשר בסלע
מיללות רוחות
כי אין יורד לים-המלח
בדרך יריחו

In the caves in the rock
winds howl
for no one can descend to the Dead Sea
via Jericho

Caves are mainly mentioned in the Scriptures, the first and most famous is the Cave of the *Makhpelah*. But there are many others like the *Adulam* cave, the *Makedah* cave, the caves around Ein Gedi in which David hid, the cave in which Elijah lived. The latter caves mark places of shelter and

refuge, whereas the *Machpelah* cave symbolizes a holy place, a place to which the masses flow to prostrate themselves on the tombs of the Patriarchs. But without people, there is no place of refuge and no place of holiness. In the emptiness and in the desolation created by the absence of people, in the caves rule imaginative forces, in the caves howl spirits [rukhot - רוחות]. Without the living the place turns to impure forces. The roads of Zion are desolate and grieving 'for no one can descend to the Salt Sea via Jericho.' The Salt Sea is the Dead Sea, that we the Jews, by devotion, sacrifice and strenuous work turned into the Sea of Life (Kibbutz *Bet HaArava*, the Dead Sea works, Hotel *Kalia*). Death became life through the inventions of people their works and their arrival. Thus 'no one descends to the Dead Sea' again death rules everything. Jericho was the first to be conquered by the conquerors of Canaan. It is the symbol of might and success of the Jews in the Land of Israel. Now no one passes through her, there is no boldness, no conquest, no life. In the fourth verse the song broadens geographically and historically: we began by noting sites in the landscape -- hills, pines, we went to the city, we called her by name -- Jerusalem, we traveled within her -- cisterns, the market square, the Temple Mount, the Old City. Now, we moved from the boundaries of the city and passed near caves, we saw Jericho and the Dead Sea. From the historical point of view we marched backwards: from the Christian churches, via the destruction of the Second Temple and we reached Jericho, the beginning of the conquest. It now becomes clear that in the refrain which is repeated after the fourth verse the term 'Jerusalem of Gold' is broadened, and becomes the symbol of the whole Land of Israel, to her geographic width and her historic depth. In the refrain, which is now repeated for the second time, we taste a different flavour from the time before. There Jerusalem was perfect, longed and yearned for, the subject of hope and longings, and here -- Israel the desolate, assimilated, arousing feelings of sorrow and despair.

Greenboim:

The fifth verse and its analysis:

אך בבואי היום לשיר לך
ולך לקשור כתרים
קטונתי מצעיר בניך
ומאתרון המשוררים

But when I reach the day to sing to you
and to tie crowns for you
I am the smallest of your young children
and the last among your poets

The exclamation 'but' -- אך *akh*-- which opens the verse is one of

contrast, and hints at the contrast between the idea expressed in this verse and the idea 'for all your songs I am a lyre.' Until now the poet did not have the power to sing songs to Jerusalem, the most was to accompany the existing songs with her lyre. Jerusalem aroused within her longing and sorrow, hot emotions, yearning and a beating heart. However now, the spirit overcame her and inspiration gave of her sprinklings. Today she comes to sing to Jerusalem, to praise and to glorify her. How great is the difference between the subject about which she has come to sing, and the ability of the poet's poetic expression. Her status is extracted in one word: 'I am the smallest' -- קטונתי *katonti*. The words are unable to express the depth of the feelings that arise upon hearing 'Jerusalem.' Human language is too narrow and weak to give suitable expression to the abundant world of associations and to the variety of spiritual forces aroused by the term 'Jerusalem.' The subject is so mighty that a poet like Naomi Shemer stands opposite it open mouthed and powerless physically and spiritually, linguistically and poetically.

Twice in this verse the poet repeats the word 'to/for you' -- לך *lakh*, and both of them are directed at Jerusalem, But a careful analysis will reveal that the content of the first לך *lakh* is not identical with the second. Here too, Jerusalem appears in her two meanings: the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem. In the first line the poet comes to sing to Jerusalem of today, Jerusalem that is captive and suffering, desolate and distressed. Her attempt to sing to this Jerusalem is placed with God, for the sorrow and pain leave her powerless; she is as weak as a day old baby, קטונתי *katonti mitz'ir banayikh*. As if to bind crowns she comes to the higher Jerusalem, Jerusalem of prophecy and kingship. Here is uncovered her visionary and poetic meagerness; she is small 'among the last of the poets.' According to the subject matter the order of the lines should be as follows:

אך בבואי היום לשיר לך -- קטומתי מצעיר בניך
ולך לקשור כתרים -- (קטומתי) / ו / מאחרון המשוררים.

But when I come to the day to sing to you -- I am the smallest of your children

and to tie crowns for you (I am the smallest) / or/ the last among your poets.

Greenboim continues:

The sixth verse and its analysis:

כי שמך צורב את השפתים
כנשיקת שרף
אם אשכנח ירושלים
אשר כולה זהב

For your name burns the lips

like a seraph's kiss
 if I forget you O Jerusalem
 all of gold

While giving the reason for her poetic inability the poet concentrates on two basic motifs that run through the verses of the song like a scarlet thread: Jerusalem-of-now and Jerusalem-of-the-past-and-of-the-future. Jerusalem of concrete reality and Jerusalem of prophetic existence. 'For your name burns the lips as a seraph's kiss' -- the term 'burns' -- צורף *tzoref* has a negative connotation acquiring a limited meaning to the combination 'a seraph's kiss' -- נשיקת שרף *n'shikat saraf*, which gives rise to the image of a snake bite (*n'shikhah* - נשיכה -- *n'kishah* - נכישת) [a play on נשיקה - *n'shikah* -- HBY], for seraph is a synonym for snake, as it is written: 'God said to Moses: make for yourself a שרף *saraf* and place it on a standard, and all those who are bitten would look upon it and live, Moses made the copper snake'....(Num.21:8-9). The 'seraph's kiss' is a burning bite, poisoning and killing quickly, according to Rashi's commentary, according to the Midrash to the verse 'he looked upon the copper snake' (Num.21:9)...'because a snake bite quickly kills.' 'For your name burns the lips' --Jerusalem's condition arouses such deep sorrow, anguish and pain in the poet as to make it impossible for the poet to sing songs to her. This is the continuation of the idea expressed in the first line of the previous verse: 'but when I come to the day to sing to you.' From the point of view of this idea we have this matter in Deut.8:15: המוליכך 'who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it.' The seraph-snake motif connects here with the motif of wilderness that appears in our song in the fourth verse and with the motif of the parched land and lack of water that is expressed as the third in our song 'how the water cisterns have dried up,' this is the captive Jerusalem, and of desolation and of death. However the motif of the kiss, the seraph's kiss, gives a second meaning to the idea expressed in the first two lines of the verse: Jerusalem's name burns the lips like the kiss of an angel. This is the kiss of holiness and purification; this is the burning of coal that one of the angels brought to Isaiah the prophet, as it is stated: ויעף אלי אחד מן-השרפים ובידו ריצפה.....ויגע על-פי ואמר הנה נגה זה 'then one of the seraphs flew over to me with a live coal.....he touched it to my lips and declared: now that this has touched your lips, your guilt shall depart and your sin be purged away' (Isaiah 6:6-7). Here is embedded the idea that this Jerusalem is the Jerusalem of prophecy, of yearning and perfection, so sublime so holy and pure, that no person has the power to create poetry so exalted, hence, 'I am the smallest'... 'the last among the poets' ומאחרון המשוררים קטונתי... There is no expression of the depth of feeling, there is no formulation of the greatness of the vision. Only the heartfelt decision remains, just the

vow: 'if I forget you O Jerusalem' אִם-אֶשְׁכַּחךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם. In contrast is the abandonment, the indifference and forgetfulness ('ואין פוקד את הר-הבית' 'no one visits the Temple Mount'), of which we are guilty due to our being busy with our gray daily lives. The poet erects an old-new lighthouse, a lighthouse of remembrance, and thus gives, via her wonderful ways, renewed validity to the ancient vow that we vowed by the banks of Babylon.

It is worthwhile to understand the new meaning of the refrain that appears at the end of the song, and to return to the associative connotation of the sequence 'a seraph's kiss.' We have seen the negative snake bite and the positive angel's kiss and the meanings that derive from them both. Renewal and purification together with the pain and death that are combined in the expression 'a seraph's kiss' also unify the status of Moses, who died by the kiss of death. This was the elevation of joy within the unmediated contact with the Divine, and the descent into the abyss of sorrow and pain due to the absence of the possibility of reaching the longed for goal: the Land of Israel. Heavenly Jerusalem and earthly Jerusalem kissed each other in this kiss of death, the pain and its healing were coupled in this glorious-majestic event. The angel and the snake appear here as two sides of the same coin, elevation and degradation, captivity and redemption, life and death, the vision and the reality united in the double meaning of the term 'seraph.'

Moses was commanded to make the copper snake. This copper snake doubles the noun 'snake' -- נחש *nakhsh* ['copper' in Hebrew is נְרוּשֶׁת *n'khoshet* whose root is נֶרַשׁ *n-kh-sh* --HBY], it was the symbol of the scourge that spread among the people: 'God sent the seraph serpents among the people' (Num 21:6), but it is also the symbol of healing the people: 'he looked upon the copper snake and lived' (ibid vs.9). From the scourge came the healing, from the sorrow sprouted the joy, from the captivity burst forth the redemption. When? 'At the time when Israel looked towards the heavens.... they were healed.' (Rashi). After we saw the image of the snake in the last verse, we will be able to determine, that the word 'copper' -- נְרוּשֶׁת *n'khoshet* -- that appears in the refrain received a new meaning. This word נְרוּשֶׁת swallows up the term נחש *nakhsh*, that carries with it the pain and the sorrow of calamity, and thus next to 'Jerusalem of Gold,' 'Jerusalem of supreme and eternal joy' appears Jerusalem 'of copper,' Jerusalem of sadness pain and anguish. But this pain unites within it also disease and these distresses may change because this depressing condition of Jerusalem-of-now is not a permanent condition. This is the condition of sleep that can be changed when awakens Jerusalem, read Land of Israel in her geographic breadth and her historic depth, to life renewed. This will happen when Israel 'looks towards heaven,' when they will remember the glory of the past and will look up, towards the vision of the future. Therefore she combines 'Jerusalem of copper' with 'Jerusalem of gold' comprising one unit: 'Jerusalem of light,' 'all of gold' אֶשֶׁר כֻּלָּה זָהב -- these are the last words

of the song. This struggle between light and darkness, between snake and angel, light wins, gold wins, life wins, the elevation of the vision.

Greenboim writes:

The song 'Jerusalem of Gold' does not call for action and change, actually there is not one active verb in it, it is all a description that arouses emotion. Embedded within it are two basic emotions: the emotion of sorrow and the emotion of longing. The source of the former lies in the present condition of the city (the song was written before the Six Day War), the latter is founded in the past and looks towards the future, not to her magnificence but towards redemption.

Thus the song was born to events, actions and deeds, that brought to an end the sorrow and brought closer the tangibility of the longings. In this is the secret of its power and charm: it accompanied the deeds of conquest-liberation as the lyre accompanies the song. Of all the victory songs Naomi Shemer's 'Jerusalem of Gold' was the wonderful lyre.

Greenboim concludes with the formal structure:

The song has six verses and each verse has four lines. After each couple of verses comes the refrain. It is possible to divide the refrain into three lines or four lines. In the first instance the structure would be:

ירושלים של זהב
ושל נחושת ושל אור
הלא לכל שיריך אני כינור

According to the other division the refrain would look as follows:

ירושלים של זהב ושל נחושת ושל אור
הלא לכל שיריך
אני כינור

According to the former structure, 'Jerusalem of gold' remains as a line, isolated and without recourse, without an echo, without rhyme, whilst according to the other structure the line merits an echo, which does not rhyme however, but is complete, and makes the refrain equal in structure to the verses of the song. The former structure leaves 'Jerusalem of gold' disconnected from the other two lines of the refrain, that merit rhyming completion. The latter structure fits it better with the idea movement of the song according to the opening of the analysis: 'Jerusalem of Gold' is an ideal, a yearned for vision but undefined and unclear. In the refrain it does not merit completion by rhyme, in the third line, for in it, too, there is no clarity and no certainty, for the poet is powerless to sing songs to Jerusalem. In contrast Jerusalem of copper is real, Jerusalem exists her suffering and sorrow are felt, as are clearly felt the anguish and the pain of the poet, of the lyre. The rhyming of lines two and four declare completion, certainty and existence.

The rhyme in all the verses is crossed, abab. The rhyme of 'b' is full, the

rhyme of 'a' is assonance (similarity of sound built on equality of syllables). In the fourth verse rhyme 'b' is not complete (רוחות -- יריחו) *rukhot - yerikho* [winds -- Jericho]), and in the fifth verse rhyme 'a' is faulty (the explanation for this is in the body of the analysis); compensation for this is given in the sixth verse, the last, complete rhymes in lines a and c, and also in b and d. This verse is the summation and the essence of all the ideas and emotions, that were expressed in the previous verses of the song, and in it is also to be found the one decision and promise of the poet: to remember Jerusalem that is all of gold. The song is in iambic meter. In lines a-c of the verses are to be found four iambic pillars, there is compensation for השפלה *hashpalah* (unstressed syllable). In lines b-d are found three iambs. Lines a-c have feminine endings while b-d have masculine endings. This difference in crossed over endings gives a rhythm of tension, and this structure accompanies the tension in the content. The balance of the refrain depends on its division. According to the former structure, the two first lines each contain four iambs, and the third has seven iambic pillars. The fourth pillar is missing הרמה *haramah* (stressed syllable) but becomes complete via הקיסורה *hakisurah* (המפסק-*hamafsek*), that is after the word 'your songs.' According to the latter structure the third line has three iambs and its ending is feminine, and in the last line there are two iambic pillars. This is the shortest line in the entire song, which expresses, also structurally, the poetic helplessness of the poet. This idea ties in with the content of the fifth verse of the song.

At the request of Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, Naomi Shemer brought her 'Jerusalem' up-to-date. The two extra verses are:

חזרנו אל בורות-המים
לשוק ולככר
שופר קורא בהר-הבית
בעיר העתיקה

We have returned to the water cisterns
to the market and to the square
the shofar cries out on the Temple Mount
in the Old City

ובמערות אשר בסלע
אלפ' שמשות זורחות --
נשוב נרד אל ים המלח
בדרך יריחו!

In the caves in the rock

thousands of suns shine
again we descend to the Dead Sea
via Jericho!

In his analysis, Greenboim shows from what breadth and depth of the Jewish tradition Shemer pulls her images. '*Kinor*' -- כינור -- the 'lyre' was the instrument of one of our greatest musicians, King David, who played to soothe Saul's nerves, and who composed many of the songs in Psalms. '*Kinor*' is also the instrument for which lake *Kinneret* is named, because of its shape. *Kinneret* is also the name of the kibbutz where Shemer was born, and where she lived until just after the birth of her daughter. Shemer always talks of *Kvutzat Kinneret* in the warmest and most affectionate terms. One wonders whether these associations, added to HaLevi's poem, influenced her choice of instrument.

A biblical reference overlooked by Greenboim is קטונתי *katonti*. Its root is קטן *katan* -- small. This is the way that I translated it, although clearly I could have used 'least,' but that would not have incorporated 'small' as in size. In Genesis 32:11 Jacob is at the *Yabok* river, just across from Canaan, his twin Esau is fast approaching with four hundred men, Jacob is frightened and turns to God and says: קטונתי מכל החסדים *katonti mikol hakhasadim u'mikol-ha-emet asher assita et-avdekha...* 'I am unworthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which you have shown your servant....'.⁴⁶ Here too, there is the connection between Israel's ancient history, namely Jacob's return from 'exile,' from having to flee from his brother and his return, from *Haran*, after twenty years, and Shemer's immediate family history. Her parents' return to the Land of Israel after two thousand years of exile. As Jacob was

⁴⁶ Translation from the Jerusalem Bible; Koren Publishers, Jerusalem, 1982. This translation uses the term 'least', which some of the others seem to feel is redundant, using only 'unworthy.'

קטונתי *katonti* so too, is Shemer and that part of the verse can also apply to her. She feels that she is the smallest, unworthy to receive such mercies, kindnesses, as to have been invited to write about Jerusalem. As noted above, the other four writers were scared off by that daunting prospect, only she, despite her terror, accepted.

I remember June 1967. I remember the three weeks before the outbreak of the Six Day War. The fear we felt for Israel if war were to break out. I remember the meetings we attended in Melbourne, Australia. The need to be together, to pour out our innermost feelings and fears, to support one another in this dire hour of need. I remember how everyone in the Jewish community emptied their bank accounts to give to Israel. Until this time the *Bundists*⁴⁷ were, at best, apathetic towards Israel, some were bitterly anti-Zionist. However, the crisis and the ensuing war made everyone a Zionist in their prayers for the wellbeing of that country and her citizens. 'Jerusalem of Gold' had just come out, and it was played at all our meetings. We would begin with the '*HaTikva*' and end with 'Jerusalem of Gold.'

I was able to get to Israel a mere week after the end of that war. It seemed as if Shemer's song was the only song in the world. We wept with it, we sang with it. It seemed as if its composition were almost miraculous. One moment we were under threat and then attack, the next we were so victorious. It was compared to the biblical battles, not of David, but those of the Book of Judges, the few who were victorious against the many.

Just two and a half years earlier I was in Jerusalem, a city divided by the War of Independence and its cease-fire aftermath. I saw the armed Jordanian soldiers stationed on the walls of the Old City. On Mt. Zion we could get to 'David's Tomb,' and from the roof of the building we could glimpse into the Jewish Quarter and towards the Wall. On

Tisha B'Av, Jews would gather there to read the Book of Lamentations and weep for the destroyed Temple and the Jerusalem we could not enter. In 1967, just ten days after the war, I was stumbling over the rubble that before 1948 had been the Jewish Quarter, ignoring the mounds of garbage and the stench of stale urine. Suddenly I was looking up at the Wall. I was there with members of my kibbutz. All of us were devout atheists, we looked and we cried. We stood there and sang 'Jerusalem of Gold.' It touched all Jews deeply, no matter our political allegiances, no matter whether we were religious, agnostics or avowed atheists.

As Shemer's two added verses point out, we returned to the Old City, we were able to visit the Temple Mount and we are able to go to the Dead Sea via Jericho. Shemer writes that there are thousands of suns shining in the caves in the rock. However, one does not need to go to the caves to see that light. Modern Jerusalem has the majority of its buildings faced with limestone.⁴⁸ Limestone only looks white but has varying amounts of iron oxide in it giving it red, orange and yellow hues, which are 'bleached' out by the strong light of day. However, at sunrise and at dusk the rays of the rising or setting sun catch these hues and make the stone glow. Also the newer, taller buildings have large surface areas of windows, some are plain glass and some are bronzed. These windows glow red and golden when the sun is low on the horizon. At these two times of day the entire city basks in a very special light and reflects the golden-red rays of the sun.

47 *Bund* was the Jewish socialist movement which believed that Jews should play their part in the lands where they live to bring about a just society. They were against the Zionists who said that only in Israel could Jews be fully free to bring about the just society.

48 Governor Storr, who was the British Mandate governor during the 1920's, enacted an ordinance requiring all Jerusalem buildings to be faced in limestone. Since then limestone has been called אבן ירושלמית Jerusalem stone.

I live on French Hill and my apartment faces south and west towards the Temple Mount and the golden Dome of the Rock (now covered with real gold and not as previously, of anodized 'golden' aluminum). During sunrise and sunset the entire city glows golden. Today no one would ask Shemer question: 'is Jerusalem really of gold?' Everyone who lives in Jerusalem knows, and as every visitor learns that it is as Shemer stated: 'Yes, yes of gold!'

Naomi Shemer's Songs

Naomi Shemer has published four songbooks, the first in 1967 and the fourth in 1995. I shall be looking at a number of her songs from each book, trying to determine what has made her popular and relevant for so many decades and across all social, ethnic, economic and age boundaries. One of the major problems involved is that the songs are not dated. They appear in each book with a number. Each song will be referred to by that number. At times one has to make a guess as to when a song was written, at other times one can rely on information supplied by Shemer herself in one or another of her interviews. One does have the dates as to when a previous book was published and when the current one went to press. Those are the major guidelines. Shemer herself has told interviewers that she began writing children's songs when she returned from army service, in the early 1950's, and found that the children of her kibbutz, *Kvutzat Kinneret*, had no suitable songs to sing. So, Shemer wrote her first songs. I will try to relate the songs to what was going on in Israel during the relevant period of each book, in which the song is found, to see whether there is any social, political or other relevance.

Shemer has put other poet's poems to music and has also translated songs from English and French, and she is currently learning Italian. Since these are not her lyrics, I shall not be dealing with them. Shemer has not translated her songs into English, or any other language. She has said that she wants people to work a little at understanding her songs in the original Hebrew. However, she has translated the titles of her songs into English.

Shemer's first book is כל השירים⁴⁹ -- 'All My Songs,' published in 1967 after the Six Day War. Before that war, the economy was depressed, the standard of living was low. Israel, After the War of Independence, 1948-51, Israel was trying to build itself up,

49 נעמי שמר: כל השירים: מהדורת ידיעות אחרונות, 1967

was having to absorb hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees, פליטים -- *plitim*. Many of these refugees were survivors from the Holocaust, others had been thrown out of the Arab countries where their families had lived for millennia. A very few of the עולים,⁵⁰ *olim*, immigrants were idealistic Zionists who wanted to be part of, what was seen by many Jews, as the modern miracle of the emergence of Jewish independence after nearly two thousand years. The Jewish refugees came for practical reasons, with whatever they could carry and the clothes on their backs. The country was poor and everyone was poor together. The *plitim* were originally housed in whatever buildings had been abandoned by the fleeing Arabs, such as *Ein Kerem* on the outskirts of Jerusalem and other small villages in the Galilee etc., others were housed in tents for up to ten years. The fifties were years of deprivation, and the entire population was on food rationing. This period is known as צנע *tzenah*, austerity. One of the biggest 'industries' was teaching all these very diverse people Hebrew. Jews from numerous countries, speaking almost countless languages, having varying customs, were settled in the same villages and towns. No one had any experience in how to accommodate so many people at once, with little to no resources, either of the government or of the people. Times were very difficult.

Yet, at the same time, there was a certain amount of joy mingled with the harshness of the conditions. The survivors from the שואה, *shoah* - Holocaust, were glad to be alive and have where to live in safety. The refugees from the Arab countries also had a place to go after their expulsion. All were glad to have returned 'home.' All the laborers in the cities were Jews, the street cleaners, the bus drivers, the waiters and the construction workers. This was a situation that would dramatically change after the Six Day War, but

Naomi Shemer: *All My Songs*; Yediot Akhronot Publications, 1967

⁵⁰ עליה -- immigration to Israel, means ascending. In accordance with Jewish belief and tradition, Israel is the holiest land in the world; Jerusalem is the holiest city within Israel; the Temple Mount the holiest site in Jerusalem; the Holy of Holies is the holiest place of the Temple Mount. To each of these sites one 'ascends,' עליה - *aliyah*, is the term always used. Indeed in the synagogue it is to the בימה *bimah*, the pulpit platform from which the Torah is read, that one ascends to read the Torah.

that is a later story.

An institution, whose importance in socializing Jews from Yemen, Poland, Germany, Morocco, Bulgaria, Iraq, Hungary, Tunisia, Iran, Holland and so on, was the Israeli Defence Forces. In the army they learned the social mores of nascent Israel, they learned Hebrew and they learned to carry weapons. To this day, the Israeli army is the foremost institution in bringing together Jews, whether Sabras⁵¹ or foreign born, from whatever social or ethnic background. The I.D.F. is also considered by many to be the largest match-making institution in the country.

Shemer's songs, from this period, also portray pre-Independence Israel, life on kibbutz and moshav, the countryside is prominent as well the building of towns and the ever present 'security situation.' There is sort of idyllic romanticizing of that time, but they are the formative years of the State, and as in each country, these are part of the founding myths, which are still cherished, nurtured and passed on to the successive generations. In these myths (not meant in any derogatory way) are the ideals, the high moral standards and the self-image of the Israeli and the Israeli society.

Song #1: Tomorrow⁵² -- מחר

(1) מחר אולי נפליגה בספינות
מחוף אילת עד חוף שנהב
ועל המשחתות הישנות
יתעינו תפוחי-זהב

Tomorrow, perhaps we will sail in boats
From the shores of Eilat to the Ivory Coast

51 צבר - Sabra, is the fruit of the cactus, the prickly pear, that grows wild throughout Israel. The Israeli saying is 'prickly on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside,' like the native born Israeli Jew, and hence this is what Israeli born Jews are called.

52 The English translations of the titles of the songs that I shall be using are Shemer's.

And on the old destroyers
they will load oranges

כל זה אינו משל ולא חלום
זה נחון כאור בצהריים
כל זה יבוא מחר אם לא היום
ואם לא מחר אז מחרתיים

None of this is a parable or a dream
It is true like the noonday sunlight
All of this will come about tomorrow, if not today
And if not tomorrow then the day after

2) מחר אולי בכל המשעולים
ארי בעדר צאן ינהג
מחר יכו באלף ענבלים
המון פעמונים של חג

Tomorrow, perhaps on every path
A lion will lead a flock of sheep
Tomorrow a thousand gongs will sound
A multitude of festive bells

כל זה אינו משל ולא חלום.....

None of this is a parable or a dream.....

3) מחר יקומו אלף שכונים
ושיר יעוף במרפסות
ושלל כלניות וצבעונים
יעלו מתוך ההריסות

Tomorrow a thousand apartments blocks will arise
And song will fly between the balconies
And treasure-troves of anemones and tulips
Will sprout from the ruins

כל זה אינו משל ולא חלום

None of this is a parable or a dream.....

(4) מחר כשהצבא יפשוט מדי

לבנו יעבור לדום --

אחר כל איש יבנה בשתי ידיו

את מה שהוא חלם היום

Tomorrow when the army takes off its uniforms

Our heart will come to attention --

Afterwards each person will build with his two hands

What he dreamed of today

כל זה אינו משל ולא חלום

זה נכון כאור בצהריים

כל זה יבוא מחר אם לא היום

ואם לא מחר

ואם עוד לא מחר

ואם עוד לא מחר

אז

מחרותיים

None of this is a parable or a dream

It is true like the noonday sunlight

All of this will come about tomorrow, if not today

And if not tomorrow

And if not yet tomorrow

And if not yet tomorrow

Then

The day after.

It is unclear whether this song was written before the Six Day War or just after its conclusion. It was one of the most popular songs sung for a few of years after the War.

What made an even greater impression was that this song was song by one of the *Nahal*⁵³

entertainment corps. Clearly this is a song of peace that gives voice to the dreams of living in a Middle East where war is not known any more.

The first stanza deals with expanded agricultural trade, which is a peaceful occupation 'sailing from Eilat to the Ivory Coast' in Africa. Shemer has turned war ships into civilian cargo ships. If there is no more war, who needs destroyers? It is not clear, and totally irrelevant, whether the oranges, ('apples of gold' in Hebrew), are loaded in Eilat or in the Ivory Coast. This stanza also gives us bright colors, albeit unmentioned, the blues of the bright Eilat and African skies and of the sea, and the bright orange of the fruit all together portraying positive exuberance.

The refrain which is repeated after each stanza, tells of this peaceful situation not being a story or a dream but is as true as the noonday sunlight, that will happen tomorrow, if not today, or the day after tomorrow. It is imminent. The term נכון *nakhon*, used in modern Hebrew as 'correct/true' has the older meaning of 'established' as in the Channuka hymn מעוז צור, the second line states -- תכון בית תפילתי... 'establish My House of Prayer.' Thus this 'reality' which is imminent is as true and as established as the noonday sunlight. Something that is true and right is not always established, but here, this right situation is also here to stay. It makes that phrase much more powerful.

The second stanza tells of the possibility of a lion leading a flock of sheep. Isaiah's vision of the End of Days, in chapter 11:6 & 7, speaks of וגר זאב אם-כבש/ ונמר -- 'the wolf shall dwell with the sheep/ and the leopard shall lie down with the kid/ and the calf and the young lion will feed together and the lion, like cattle, will eat straw:' Even though the words are not identical, the imagery is. Everyone in Israel would immediately associate this with the ultimate peace. Ringing bells in Europe can be also associated with warnings of coming danger. This originated with the statement in Joel 2:1 --'תקעו שופר בציון/ והריעו בהר קדש'.

53 'Nahal' is the pioneer-farming active front-line battle brigades in the I.D.F. Most of its soldiers come

'Blow the shofar in Zion, sound an alarm in My holy mountain.' The shofar blew the warnings of danger from the south-western corner of the Temple Mount. Even if the Jewish Israelis of 1967 did not know the exact location from which the warnings were sounded, they knew that the shofar was the call to awaken to danger, as on Rosh HaShanah. As a result of the Six Day War, the Old City of Jerusalem was again open to Jews, and the Jewish Quarter again in Jewish hands. The excavations, that took place from 1968, in the south-western corner below the Temple Mount found the top cornerstone and on it was engraved 'ל בית התקיעה' -- 'to the place of blowing...' the rest was destroyed. However, Shemer has the bells as festive bells, not ringing out warnings but glad-tidings.

The third verse begins with of the construction of a thousand apartment buildings. Given that so many people had lived for so long in tents and some in abandoned buildings, but all in very cramped quarters -- families lived in one-bedroom apartments with the children sleeping in the bedroom and the parents in the living room. When the mass construction of apartment buildings took place in the 1950's and 1960's, the government's Housing Ministry had the responsibility of housing almost an entire population. Money was scarce and it was feasible to build only small apartments. It was the greater necessity to house everyone than to give them greater space, at greater cost. To this day one can wander around Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and immediately pick out which building were built at that time. Stating that thousands of new apartments would be built, immediately, gave voice to the hope of having a roof over one's head, and perhaps a little more space -- two bedrooms!

In Jerusalem, where Shemer lived as a student and after moving from her kibbutz home in 1956 until she moved to Tel Aviv sometime after 1957, one hears songs from the balconies during סוכות -- Succot, when people are eating in their *succah*/booth/hut,

from the ranks of the children of the kibbutz and moshav movements and their youth movements.

and festive songs are sung. Some *succot* are constructed on the roofs, some in the front 'gardens' of the buildings, and many on the roofless balconies. It was from those balconies that neighbors conversed with one another, told of happy events and the pain in their lives, called to their children playing in the courtyard or the street below. The balcony was a kind of telephone bearing all kinds of news. Those *succot* songs are always joyous, so too, in this verse as song flies from balcony to balcony, it is joy that is flying from neighbor to neighbor. In various parts of the country, and just on the western outskirts of Jerusalem were abandoned, destroyed buildings. It is from the ruins of destruction that new, colorful life would spring forth. The wild tulips are scarlet, the anemones are red, white, blue, orange and more, all are native to the soil of Israel. This verse speaks of renewed, wonderful life.

The climax of this scene of peace, and it is interesting that 'peace' שלום is not mentioned at all, is the army taking off its uniform which is no longer needed. What comes to attention, is not the rows of soldiers, but our hearts -- attentive to the new situation of peace and security, joy and harmony. Then each person can build his/her own dream. The dream of peace of today, tomorrow or the day after is a reality.

This song touched the longings and dreams of virtually everyone in Israel. Shemer articulated what every heart felt and prayed for, and articulated it in a manner that is so positive, so real one could 'taste' it. This song reached out to every person irrespective of age, ethnic group, socio-economic status -- who does not pray for and dream of peace? Jews pray for peace three times every day, all year long.

Song #3 My Soldier is Back -- חזיל שלי חזר

(1) שימו לב למזג

ותגידו איזה

איזה בקר נהדר

Pay attention to the weather

And say what

What a wonderful morning it is

(2) רוח מלחשת

ויש ענן וקשת

והחיל שלי חזר

A wind whispers

There's a cloud and a rainbow

My soldier is back.

(3) צפורים בשדה

מוזמרות בחשק

'איזה בקר נהדר!'

The birds in the fields

Willingly sing

'What a wonderful morning'

(4) ואם אני נרגשת

זה ודאי מפני ש -

החיל שלי חזר

If I am excited

That's certainly because

My soldier is back

(5) מישהו שומר בלילה על החילים

הוא ודאי ישגיח גם על החיל שלי

In the night Someone is watching over the soldiers

He will certainly care for my soldier

(6) שמור עליו בתוך

האפר והפיח

בענן-אבק אי-שם

Look after him in

Ashes and soot

In a cloud of dust, somewhere⁵⁴

(7) שומר עליו היטב

בין עזה לרפיח

ובירושלים גם

Look after him well

Between Gaza and Rafah

And in Jerusalem as well

(8) כל החילים

כבדי-התרמילים

ישונו לבסיס עם אור

All the soldiers

With heavy back-packs

With daybreak, will return to their base

(9) ואני עד חושך

אחכה לי פה ש -

החיל שלי יחזור

And until darkness, I

Will wait here should -

My soldier come back

מישהו שומר

In the night Someone

(10) כשיחזור אלי

אומר לו בודאי

'ראה זה בקר נהדר!'

When he returns to me

I will certainly say to him

'See, it is a wonderful morning!'

54 'somewhere,' אי-שם -- *ay-sham*, is what Israelis call the location of army bases, which for security reasons are not to be located publicly.

(11) רוח תלחש אז

אל ענן וקשת

שהחיל שלי חזר

The wind will whisper then
To the cloud and the rainbow
That my soldier is back

צפורים בשדה

Birds in the field

(12) ואני צוחקת

בטח אנשק את

החיל שלי

שחזר.

And I laugh
And certainly I will kiss
My soldier
Who has come back

There is the saying that 'there are no atheists in the trenches.' This holds true for anyone who has had a loved one, especially a child, serving in the army on active duty. This song, with two minor changes in verses 4 and 12 from the feminine verb to the masculine, could easily be sung by a man, the father of the soldier. The feminine forms in these verses means that the woman could be the mother, most likely, but also the wife or the girlfriend, or perhaps a sister. This wide range of possible singers shows how this touches everyone. Almost no one is unaffected by army duty, and the concomitant dangers to life and limb. This song is a prayer, albeit not in the usual 'spiritual' melody, it is bright and lively because in the last stanza the soldier has returned home unscathed. The prayer for his well being has been answered.

The first three stanzas speak about nature, the weather and the wonderful day, the whispering wind, the cloud and rainbow, the singing birds, all is wonderful in nature

because the soldier has returned. His return would certainly brighten any day, and any weather would be wonderful. The next verse tells of the emotional excitement because of his return.

The following four stanzas are the prayer, the acknowledgment that Someone is looking after and caring for the soldiers, including the loved one. The prayer asks for looking after the beloved soldier under all conditions, ash, soot, dust and specifically in regions of great physical danger. The Gaza Strip area is mentioned. During the years prior to the Six Day War the *fedayun* would cross that Egyptian border and lay land-mines in the farmers' fields, along roads and so on. Jerusalem was divided, and Jordanian soldiers were looking directly into the heart of Jewish West Jerusalem, occasionally shooting across the very narrow 'no man's land.' It was not only during training that soldiers carried heavy backpacks at night, but also during regular border-guarding duty.

Even in recent times, when soldiers would go out on missions, on their return the radio announcer would hopefully state כל החילים שבו לבסיסם בשלום -- 'all the soldiers returned safely to their base.' Everyone would be listening only for one word בשלום, *b'shalom* -- 'safely.' In Shemer's song this word is missing, but understood with עם אור *kol im... or*-- 'all with daybreak.'

In the ninth verse the mother/wife/girlfriend waits all night in case he should return. I think that no mother in Israel sleeps during the years that her son is in the army; worrying, praying, hoping that he will be all right, that she will be able to see him during his next, all too short, furlough. Verse ten contrasts the darkness of the wait with the light of the joy of his return. It was for this moment that she waited all night -- 'what a wonderful morning!'

The last three verses are the happiness of the soldier's return, and again nature takes part, as it did in the beginning. The wind whispering to the cloud and the rainbow,

the birds singing and the mother/wife/girlfriend laughing and kissing him with the joy of his return.

The majority of Israeli parents, whether Jew, Druze, Bedouin or Christian, can identify with every word of this song. Those fathers who were themselves in the army, now know the worry and the prayers of their parents. Not age, ethnic group, nor religious affiliation make one immune to these very deep emotions.

Song #11 My Flute -- חליל מקנה-סוף

(1) ידידי עשה חליל לי
מקנה ירוק של סוף
ואמר עכשו נגני לי
שיר שמח או עצוב

My friend made for me a flute
Out of green reed
Then he said play for me
A song whether happy or sad

(2) חלילי עשוי מסוף הוא
ועל-כן הוא מחלל
איך השמש והצל
נשקפים בראי-המים

My flute is made of reed
And therefore it plays
Of how the sun and the shade
Are reflected in the mirror of the sea

(3) חלילי עתים עצוב הוא
ועל-כן הוא מילל
כמו שועל קטן עזוב
שאבד בתוך הסוף

Sometimes my flute is sad

And therefore howls
Like a small abandoned fox
That was lost among the reeds

4 חלילי צותק בקיץ
חלילי בוכה בסתו
באביב הוא מתרונן לו
כציפור בראש ענף

My flute laughs in the summer
My flute cries in the fall
In the spring it sings with joy
Like a bird on a branch top

5 אך בחורף הוא שומע
איך הרוח בעלים
לבדו לשיר יודע
כאלף חלילים

But in winter it hears
How the wind in the leaves
Knows how to sing alone
Like a thousand flutes

6 מי יודע איזה פלא
אי הדרך נכנסו
כל המנגינות האלה
אל קנה ירוק של סוף

Who knows what miracle
By which manner they entered
All these melodies
Into a green reed

ידידי חליל עשה לי.....

My friend made for me a flute.....

My friend made a flute

For me

Reed flutes were quite popular in Israel. They are easy to make. In the north-eastern part of the country, where once there were swamps, along the *Kinneret* (Sea of Galilee), along the banks of the Jordan, reeds grow in abundance. After the Six Day War, even more places are reachable to cut down reeds, although most of those places today are nature reserves and the reeds protected.

Shemer uses the sound of the flute to imitate the voices of people. Sometimes people speak in joy and sometimes in sorrow. The seasons have a profound affect on how individuals feel and behave. When there is lots of sunshine, most people are even-tempered, smile and generally have a favorable outlook on life. Studies in the Scandinavian countries have shown that with the lack of sunshine over a long protracted period of time a lot of people become depressed and even suicidal.

The flute also echoes life, sometimes sad and sometimes happy. In the first verse, after the flute has been completed and handed over, the request is for a song -- that reflects emotions and life -- joyous or sad. It is interesting that the friend who made the reed flute is actually unimportant. That friend is the medium allowing Shemer to find her own voice -- whether happy or sad. The flute is like a child who wonders that the sun and the shade can be mirrored in the water. That is, instead of looking up one looks down, and sees them. The water can be the *Kinneret*, the Jordan, the fishing ponds, the Mediterranean or even puddles. One looks down to see what is in the heavens!

Verse three says that at times one is sad and hence one howls like a lost fox. That is such a forlorn sound one can easily identify and identify with when in the appropriate mood. Verse four skips into three of the seasons -- the laughter of summer, the long very sunny days with virtually perfect blue skies; the weeping of autumn, the still hot but

shrinking days, the season of the squib, חצב -- *khatzav*, that heralds the coming winter. Except for the fruit trees Israel has very few deciduous trees, and hence does not have a 'fall' as does the north-eastern U.S. So autumn is the farewell to summer without all the exuberant color that accompanies the 'changing' of the leaves, which can lift the spirit with its magnificence, and one cries as the days shorten and become colder and grayer. With spring the heart becomes lighter and one's spirits lift as brilliant colors flood the fields and the hills with a myriad of wild flowers, and the sounds of millions of migratory birds once again in the country.

Israel's forests, native and replanted, are mainly evergreens -- conifers, oaks, mastiks and eucalyptus. The countryside remains green throughout the cold, and in the mountains an often white, winter. Hence stanza five can speak of the 'wind in the leaves,' which allows the wind to 'sing as a thousand flutes.'

Shemer is utilizing the countryside and the seasons to express what a lot of people feel during the various times of the years. The flute can sing a happy song or a sad one, just as people can, it is the flute imitating the human voice. In the last verse, six, Shemer brings in child-like wonder -- how can so many melodies enter a green reed flute? Shemer has woven together adult emotions and child-like awe.

At the beginning of the 1950's, Shemer studied at the music conservatory in Jerusalem. On her return to Kvutzat Kinneret she discovered that there were no children's songs that reflected the life of the kibbutz children. She immediately set out to remedy that situation and wrote several songs for them. In fact, throughout her long career, Shemer has not neglected the children and continues to write songs for them.

Song #12 Twelve Months -- שנים-עשר ירחים

1) בתשרי נתן הדקל
פרי שחום נחמד

בחשון ירד יורה

ועל גני רקד

In Tishrei the date palm gave

Brown delightful fruit

In Kheshvan the first rains fell

And danced on my garden

(2) בכסלו נרקיס הופיע

בטבת ברד

ובשבט חמה הפציעה

ליום אחד

In Kislev a jonquil appeared

In Tevet it hailed

In Shvat the sun broke through

For one day

(3) באדר עלה ניתוח

מן הפרדסים

בניסן הונפו בכח

כל החרמשים

In Adar arose a scent

From the orange groves

In Nissan were powerfully lifted

All the sickles

(4) באייר הכל צמח

ובסיון הבכיר

בתמוז ואב שמחנו

אחר קציר

In Iyar everything sprouted

In Sivan it ripened

In Tamuz and Av we rejoiced

After the harvest

5) תשרי חשוון כסללו טבת
חלפו, חלפו ביעף
גם שבט אדר ניסן אייר
סיון תמוז ואב

Tishrei Kheshvan Kislev Tevet
Passed by in a flash
So too Shvat Adar Nissan Iyar
Sivan Tamuz and Av

6) ובבוא אלול אלינו
ריח סתו עלה
והתחלנו את שירנו
מהתחלה:

And when Elul comes to us
The scent of autumn rises up
And we started our song
From the beginning:

The most striking thing about this song is that there is no mention of any of the festivals. One would expect *Tishrei* to be associated with Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and Succot, *Adar* with Purim and *Nissan* with Pessach. However, there are songs about and for most of these festivals. This lovely children's song revolves around the agricultural year. Certain times of the year are associated with particular fruits, like *Tishrei* with dates. Fruits that are also associated with some of the festivals, like dates with Succot. Children in the cities are not acquainted with when plants begin the sprout or ripen. If they live close to orange groves they will smell the delicious and heady scent of the blossoms. These annual and seasonal occurrences are part and parcel of the life-cycle of the kibbutz child.

Song #13 A Short Walk -- הטיול הקטן

(1) לטיול יצאנו

כלנית מצאנו

על גבעת הדשא במערב

אל ההר עלינו

את הים ראינו

ומשם ירדנו בדהרה

We went out for a walk

An anemone we found

On the grassy hill to the west

Up the hill we climbed

The sea we saw

And down from there we galloped

(2) צב קטן פגשנו בדרך

בית ענקי החזיק על גב

בתהלוכה נהדרת

אלף נמלים נשאו חגב

We met a small tortoise on the way

A huge house he carried on his back

In a grand procession

A thousand ants carried a grasshopper

(3) בשלולית המים

שמנו ת'רגלים

על החוף ישבנו בתוך סירה

בחלקת אספסת

רצנו בתופסת

כל הלטאות נבהלו נורא

In puddles of water

We put our feet

On the shore we sat in a boat

In the lucerne field

We played 'catch'

All the lizards got a terrible fright

(4) באנו בשורה אל הכרם

רוח סערה ונשבר ענף

שמה בין תלי חפרפרת

אלף רקפות כל אחד אסף

In a line we went to the vineyard

The wind was stormy and broke a branch

There among the mole hills

Each one gathered a thousand cyclamen

(5) אז מאוד עיפנו

והביתה שבנו

שמש כבר יורדת

ומאוחר

רק בתוך הדשא

כלנית לוחשת

שובו בשלום

נפגש

מחר

Then we were very tired

And we returned home

The sun was already setting

And it was late

And in the field just

An anemone whispers

Come back safely

We will meet

Tomorrow

Shemer shows a 'day in the life' of a small kibbutz child. The outing to the fields, nature that was encountered, whether animate or inanimate, the fun of being outdoors -- climbing, running, picking flowers -- the one activity that is 'heard' but not mentioned is the laughter and the shouting of the children. It takes no imagination to fill in that missing part -- that's what healthy, happy children do. The portrait painted here by Shemer would not be familiar to a city child. However, the child does not have to live in a kibbutz to identify his life in this song. The children of a moshav, or of a development town⁵⁵ would be familiar with most of Shemer's description. This would be almost half of the child population of Israel in the 1950's.

Song #42 Lullaby for colors -- שיר ערש לצבעים

ירוק הוא הברוש ותכול הוא הים
 אדום הוא התות ואפור הענן
 חומה אדומה וזהוב הוא החול
 חדגל שלנו לבן וכחול
 ושחור הוא החושך אבי-החלום
 האומר לצבעים ליל מנוחה ושלו

Green is the cypress and blue is the sea
 Red is the berry and gray the cloud
 Brown red and gold is the sand⁵⁶
 Our flag is white and blue
 Black is the darkness, the father of dreams
 That says to the colors, have a restful night and shalom.

55 Development towns are small towns that were established by the Israeli government, in the 1950's, throughout the country, in unpopulated areas, according to the government's policy of [Jewish] 'population dispersion.' That is having Jews live in areas other than in the Tel Aviv- Jerusalem-Haifa triangle. Such towns were built mainly in the Galilee, Jordan Valley and the northern Negev.

56 Much of the sand in Israel is eroded limestone, the base rock of the country. It has large amounts of iron oxide in it, and this gives the colors to the rocks, to the terra-rosa soil, and the sand.

The majestic cypress is a native evergreen that grows on the hills and plains of Israel. The 'sea,' for Shemer's kibbutz children is the *Kinneret*, the Sea of Galilee, for other children the 'sea' might be the Mediterranean, and today even the Dead Sea. Since the *Kinneret* does not have sand, nor do the banks of the Jordan, this sand might be about sand which is brought in, from the coast, either for construction or for the children's play area. This is what gives the limestone the red, yellow, orange and gold hues. This is a delightful little song for every child, whether living in a rural or an urban environment.

I shall now be returning to Shemer's 'adult' songs.

Song # 29 The White Town -- העיר הלבנה

(1) מקצף גל ועננה
 בניתי עיר לי לבנה
 כמותם קוצפה, כמותם שוטפה
 כמותם יפה
 עם בקר צח חלון נפתח
 ואת ילדה צופה כך
 כמו יונה הנכונה
 למעופה
 כי בא השחר והאור
 וכל עירי תצא לסחור
 ועמוסה היא משא
 לעיפה
 הנה עירי גדולה כאור
 ואת גרגר אבק אפור
 גרגר אבק שדבק
 לצעיפה

From foam of waves and cloud
 I built myself a white town
 Like them she is foamy, like them she is flowing
 Like them she is beautiful

In the fresh morning a window we'll open
And you girl look out thus at it
Like a dove ready for
Flight
For dawn and light are coming
The whole town will go out to do business
She is burdened, with a load
To exhaustion
Here is a town large as light
And you are a speck of gray dust
A speck of dust that has clung
To her scarf

(2) מקצף גל ועננה
ביתי עיר לי לבנה
כמותם קוצפה, כמותם שוטפה
כמותם יפה
עם ערב רך חלון נפתח
ואת ילדה צופה בו כך
כמו מלכה המחכה
לאלופה
כי בא הלילה השחור
עירי מוארת סחור-סחור
ואורותיה רביד לך
על צואר

From foam of waves and cloud
I built myself a white town
Like them she is foamy, like them she is flowing
Like them she is beautiful
In the soft evening a window we'll open

And you girl look out thus at it
 Like a queen waiting
 For her knight
 For the black night is coming
 My town is lit up all around
 Her lights are a necklace
 On your neck

(3) הנה עירי גדולה כליל
 והיא ארמון ענק אפל
 וילדתי בו מולכת
 עד מחר

Here is my town as large as night
 And she is a great gloomy castle
 And my daughter reigns in it
 Until tomorrow

It sounds as if Shemer has 'her' town on the sea-shore. It could be Tel Aviv, but it is not named, and so it could be any one of several such towns. It could be *Netanya*, *Herzlia*, *Naharia*, *Acco*, *Ashkelon*, *Ashdod*, or even Eilat on the Red Sea. Israeli cities, other than Jerusalem, have a plaster stucco finish to their facades. Because of the long summer season, the asphalt roofs and the stucco walls are painted white, to reflect as much of the light and the heat as possible.

Shemer has built her white town out of the foam of waves and from the clouds. This description gives an airy lightness to the buildings. The theme of the first verse is light and freshness. The 'sea' the 'fresh' morning, the 'coming of the dawn' light, and saying that her 'town is as large as light' all invoke this lightness of being. In contrast to this lightness is the heaviness of the load, heavy 'to exhaustion,' as all in the town go out to do business. The daughter, the girl, is liken to a dove ready for flight, again lightness

and too, when the daughter is told that she is like a speck of dust clinging to the scarf of the town. All is light, so different from the hurly-burly heaviness and rowdiness of life.

The second verse is still with whiteness and lightness, and now brings in the softness of the evening. The daughter, who was a dove ready for flight in the previous verse is now the queen awaiting her champion, and this also gives the feeling of readiness of flight, or at least of the possibility of journeying. There is the transition from day to evening to night. The night is black, but the town is lit up like a jewel, like a necklace. As the town was as large as light it is now as large as night. Both descriptions are apt, for both light and darkness can seem endless. But in the last small stanza the darkness of the night is transformed into the gloominess of the castle. And it there that the waiting queen rules until morning, when once again light and lightness will rule. The gloominess can be that of a teenage girl waiting to start her own life, but is yet too young to leave her parents' home. Morning is coming, a new bright life awaits.

This is a period when Israelis were indeed building all the cities mentioned earlier. בניתי עיר לי -- I built myself a city, is certainly true. Jewish Israelis were the construction workers all over the country. They took great pride in 'their' buildings. Quite a number of years ago it was reported on *Kol Israel*, Israel public radio, that a man was taking his young grandson around several of the 'older' areas of Tel Aviv and pointing to a number of building he told the young lad 'I built this building,' 'I built that building.' During the pre-State era and during the early years of the State there was great status in being an educated laborer. In the 1930's a few communities were established by German Jews, refugees from the Nazis. Most of these Jews were professionals, doctors, lawyers, university professors and so on. The story goes that as they were carting away earth by the buckets-full, and passing back bricks or whatever else was being used, they would say: '*Bitter Herr Professor*,' '*Danke Herr Doktor*.' The Jewish workers of this period built cities wherever they were needed, and the style was Mediterranean, that is of

white stucco. The air and light of Israel were different from what they knew back in Europe, there seems to be some sort of ephemeral quality about the atmosphere. The city they were building, could even be Jerusalem, where the whiteness of the buildings is not from whitewash, but from the limestone facades.

The daughter, the next generation is forward looking, waiting to take off on their own adventure in life. The city, bright and airy, can have dim areas at night. She is waiting for her tomorrow. Tonight may be like a gloomy castle, keeping her locked in, but tomorrow.....

This song has so many elements, the joy of building a new land and a future for oneself and one's children; the lightness of optimism, the youth who are ready to take on their own futures, to build their own white towns. Everyone was a pioneer, everyone was building the country and the society.

Song #41 On Silvery Wings -- על כנפי הכסף

(1) על כנפי הכסף רכובים
אבירי הרוח בעבים
העזים והטובים
כבני-רשף יגביהו עוף

On silvery wings ride
The knights of the wind in the clouds
Courageous and good
Like sparks flying high

(2) ובתוך שמים נקיים
זוהרים שבעת הרקיעים
ואנחנו ממריאים
מגולך ועד ים-סוף

In clear skies
The seven heavens are shining

We are taking off
From the Golan to the Red Sea

(3) נס הים ויסוב אחור
והנהר -- חרבה
טס אחי ופניו לאור
וגדלו עלי אהבה

The sea fled and ran backwards
And the river -- was dry land
Fly my brother, his face to the light
And his banner over me is love

(4) הסולם רגליו באדמה
אך ראשו בשמי המלחמה
טס אחי אל מול חמה
כבני רשף יגביהו עוף

The ladder has its feet in the ground
But its head is in the skies of war
Fly my brother, towards the sun
Like sparks flying high

(5) הוא חולף כלהב-החרמש
הוא כחץ שלוח ולוחש
הוא כותב מכתב של אש
מגולן ועד ים סוף

He passes by like the flash of a sickle
He is like a loosed, whispering arrow
He writes a fiery letter
From the Golan to the Red Sea

נס הים ויסוב אחור

The sea fled and ran backwards.....

על כנפי הכסף רכובים
אבירי הרוח בעבים

העזים והטובים

כבני רשף

יגביהו

עוף

On silvery wings ride
The knights of the wind in the clouds
Courageous and good
Like sparks
Flying
High

Shemer wrote this song very soon after the end of the Six Day War. For weeks the Egyptian army was massed along its Sinai border with Israel. The Syrian army had been permanently stationed on the Golan overlooking the villages and towns of the Hula Valley, in the 'finger of the Galilee.' Israeli intelligence learned that the Egyptians were planning to attack at 9.00 am on June 6th. At 5.00 am on that same day, the Israeli air force struck at every Egyptian air base in Sinai destroying every warplane that the Egyptians owned. A couple of days later the Israeli air force would take part in the dislodging of the Syrian army from the Golan Heights. The Israeli pilots were heralded as heroes and saviours of Israel. Most military experts worldwide believed that Israel would perish in this war. This victory, over three Arab national armies (Jordan also took part) and brigades from several other Arab countries, was seen as nothing less than a miracle. This was how every Jew in Israel spoke of it, whether religious or not.

The opening words of the first verse recalls the words of Exodus 19:4 על-כנפי...
...נשרים 'al kanfei nesharim' -- '...on wings of eagles and brought you to Me.' There are many references to the seminal experience of the Jewish People, namely the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. The pilots are referred to, here, as 'knights of the wind,' 'high flying sparks,' 'courageous and good.' Yet the term 'pilot' is not used.

The second verse emphasizes the brightness and clarity of the skies -- the war occurred in summer, when there would be wide, open blue skies and very few clouds. The 'אנחנו ממריאים -- 'we are taking off,' is total identification with the pilots, for obviously 'we' could not be taking off, but they were, from the entire length of the country, from every air force base from the Golan to the Red Seas.

This third verse is wonderful. There are three biblical references in four lines. The first line brings one to Passover, which was celebrated a mere two or three months before the outbreak of the war, and Psalm 114:3: הים ראה וינוס/ הירדן יסוב לאחור -- 'the sea saw them and fled/ Jordan ran backwards.' This is the time of celebrating freedom from oppression, recalling the parting of the sea and the way to safety. The first line omits the reference to the Jordan, which the second line picks up חרבה -- והנהר -- *v'hanahar kharava*, the river -- was dry land. The 'river' is the Jordan and its reference is to Joshua 3:17: -- 'the priests who bore the Ark of the Eternal's Covenant stood on dry land in the middle of the Jordan.' This is the crossing into the Promised Land, to a place of hoped for national safety and freedom. The third line uses the word אחי -- 'my brother.' I wonder whether the masculine אחי, 'akhi' could be the complement to the feminine אחותי, 'akhoti' -- my sister, which is usually translated in the Song of Songs as 'beloved.' If it might be so, then this line fits well with the next. The fourth line is from Song of Songs 2:4 -- דגלו עלי אהבה -- 'his banner over me is love.' The beloved, in the Song of Songs, is feeding his love all manner of good things and is solicitous of her, and his banner of love is over her. Then we might have: 'fly my beloved, his face to the light/ and his banner over me is love.' This beautiful biblical love poem is taken over to express the love, admiration and gratitude to the men of the Israeli air force, who are performing the modern miracle of salvation.

Shemer continues with the biblical imagery in the fourth verse. She utilizes Jacob's dream of the ladder in Genesis 28:12: -- סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה: 'a

ladder was set on the ground and its head reached the sky.' The continuation of the story, as everyone knows, is that מלאכים -- *malakhim*, agents/messengers/angels, ascend and descend that ladder. Here the ladder reaches to the sky, but the sky is full of war. The lyrics imply that the pilots in their planes are the *malakhim*, the agents of God, and that their flight paths are the ladder reaching to the sun, to the sky, as they fly high as sparks.

The beginning of the fifth verse takes us back to earlier modern times, but certainly to the biblical period, of harvesting with sickles. The pilot in his plane is referred to as passing in a flash of a sickle. [In song #12 (see earlier in this chapter) written for the children of Shemer's kibbutz home, the third verse makes reference to the sickle during the harvest period. Thus from Shemer we learn that sickles were still used in the 1950's, otherwise it would not have made sense to the kids]. In keeping with the biblical imagery Shemer uses the 'loosed arrow.' The image is apt and it also recalls that it was a loosed arrow that enabled Jonathan to save David's life from the wrath of Saul, 1 Samuel 20:35-42.

The song's last two verses are the repetition of verse 3 and 1. The reminder of the miracle of the parted sea and the pilots riding on wings of silver [eagles].

Shemer has done a magnificent job of weaving the biblical with the modern. She uses imagery that every Jewish child and adult would know. Biblical narratives are taught in schools, not necessarily as religious stories, but as national/historical stories. In the *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael*, the Song of the Sea, שירת הים -- *shirat hayam*, is the epitome of all songs of Redemption until the Final Redemption at the End of Days. So too, here Shemer is using the theme of the miraculous deliverance from ancient Egypt to tell of the deliverance from modern Egypt that was also bent on the destruction of Israel. The wonder of the victory made this a very popular song after the Six Day War.

Shemer's songs of this, her early, period laid the foundations for her popularity for the ensuing decades.

Shemer's second book, *הספר השני*, The Second Book,⁵⁷ came out in 1975, some eight years after her first book. Many things took place in Israel, unprecedented economic growth as well as the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

Song #15 To Sing Like a Jordan -- לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן

(1) לשיר

זה כמו להיות ירדן:

אתה מתחיל למעלה בצפון

צעיר, צונן שוצף ומתחצף

אתה שומע ציפורים בסבך

וכל אחת מהן ציפור גן-עדן

כי

לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן

To sing

Is like being the Jordan:

You begin at the top in the north

Young, fresh swift and cheeky

You hear birds in the shrubbery

And each one of them

Is a bird of paradise

For

To sing

Is like being the Jordan

(2) ימיד

57 נעמי שמר: *הספר השני*: הוצאת לולב, ת"א 1975

Naomi Shemer: *The Second Book*; Published by "Lulav", T.A., 1975

שוטפים כמו ירדן
וכמותו זורם אתה דרומה
על החופים צומח עשב-פרה
אבל הלאה-הלאה-הלאה
גאון מימין
הלא ימין
שוטפים כמו ירדן

Your days
Swiftly flow like the Jordan
And like it you flow southward
On the shores grow wild weeds
But onward-onward-onward
The majesty of your waters
Don't your days
Swiftly flow like the Jordan

(3 סופך
לגווע כמו ירדן
להאסף לאט אל ים המות
במקום הנמוך ביותר בעולם
אבל
מראש הרי-השלג
בהמולה גדולה צוהלת
אחריו
שיריך מפכים להם
הלא
לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן

Your end is
To die like the Jordan
To be gathered slowly to the Sea of Death⁵⁸

58 One of the many names of this body of water, in English, is the Dead Sea. In Hebrew it is known by its

In the lowest place on earth

But

From the top of the snow-clad mountains

With a great exultant roar

Behind you

Your songs flow

Isn't it that

To sing is like being the Jordan

I would like to present the insights of Avia Yiftakhel's article⁵⁹ about this song.

Yiftakhel writes:

My choice fell on the song 'To Sing is Like Being the Jordan,' and I would like to share with you, briefly, the depth of experience in this song, even though it is taken from the sphere of song writing and light Hebrew songs, I take it to belong, without any hesitation, to the category of poetry. In my opinion, Naomi Shemer has created here a wonderful work that combines idea, lyrics, music and arrangement into one outstanding creation. A small, short song -- very simple lyrics, which envelopes within it an entire world, the face of the poet's whole life and experience, from the beginning until the end, in fact.

The analogy between being a poet and being the Jordan is at first quite startling (one will not be amazed how quickly she establishes and arranges various parodies), but we will immediately see how this analogy grabs one, and with Naomi Shemer, I will dare to say, that this is not just an analogy -- but in fact, her very being a poet. This analogy is expressly stated at the beginning and end of every verse, and so creates the framework for the song.

In the song itself are three verses that reflect three periods of life: youth, maturity and death. Let's concentrate first on the two opening verses and

biblical name of ים המלח, *Yam HaMelakh*, the Salt Sea, because its incredibly high mineral content. The Dead Sea is so named because nothing can live in it. In this song, Shemer has translated the English name, which is not one of its Hebrew names, which is more appropriate to the song's imagery. To emphasize that it is Shemer's imagery that is important, I translated it as 'the Sea of Death,' and did not use its English name.

59 אביה יפתחאל: 'לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן'; *Shadmot*, קיץ תשל"ה, גליון ס"ח, 1985
Avia Yiftakhel: 'To Sing is Like Being the Jordan,' *Shadmot*, Summer, 1985, No.68

see how each one of them characterizes, in all the possible artistic ways, the life period each reportedly portrays.

Let us visualize the first stretch of the Jordan, that leaps between the river stones and skips among the shrubbery, the multitude of tiny waterfalls; the uneven flow, having little bends, hesitating, looking for a way among the rocks and the vegetation. The water is still pure due its closeness to the snowy source. In contrast to this in the more southerly stretches the flow is quiet, even, defined, slow, very wide and festive. With regards to vegetation, in the northern section the shrubbery is beside-next to-over-and in the river. Various types of shrubs, some of them are pulled by the force of the current, some of them cover the river from the sun, and from within this shrubbery the waters hear the singing of the 'birds of paradise.' The poet awakens to new and sweet ideas, everything is still optimistic and sure, and to small and big hopes. In the stretch of even current the wild plants grow just on the sides of the river and the current ignores them and continues onward.

And so, we come to maturity, we have acquired sober judgment, that enables the ignoring of all manner of uncultured weeds on the banks. We have stated that the current is the life-line of the poet, and so the poet has carefully chosen the words that characterize the flow at every stage. In the youth-stage 'young, fresh, swift and cheeky' -- adjectives that accent the feeling of youth and freshness, and the dominance of the dental letters [in Hebrew --HBY], obviously, is not accidental, more than anything it expresses the effervescence, the protesting that characterizes this period of life. In the second verse the current is characterized by penultimate accented words, softer in sound 'but onward, onward, onward the majesty of your waters' [*aval halah, halah, halah ga'on maymekha*] -- also in their meaning, the feeling is more and more of conformity and coming to terms with reality. We pass by the wild shrubs, know of their existence but we continue.

Yiftakhel then continues about the music that Shemer wrote for this song, and how well it fits the lyrics. I shall not be dealing with the musical element, since it is outside the purview of this paper. I shall continue with her analysis of the lyrics.

Yiftakhel:

The third verse, in its first lines, continues the thought- and life-line of the beginning of the song. Youth has passed, adulthood is passing, and here you are dying slowly and very quietly, without anyone paying any attention to you, like the Jordan whose trickle is slowly gathered, almost imperceptibly into the Sea of Death, the burial pit of the Jordan. Until here, the description in fact, fits the life thread of every person, and here

comes the big 'but,' that puts the ordinary person and the poet (and with the poet, all artists) into two distinct categories.

Every living person, matures and then ends by dying and his life therefore, is not a river but a unified existence that moves from place to place, from period to period that leaves behind it memories that become dimmer and more obscure with time. Whereas the life of the artist is the Jordan, that includes within itself the three existences of youth, maturity and death all the time. Its various segments, that characterize the river, are present at every moment. The Jordan River is one integral whole, which includes within it, simultaneously, all the many natures of a person's life. Naomi Shemer has presented here three principle-stereotypical segments of life, but clearly there also exist between them nuances and hues of perception. The wide flow of the river is not absolute, here and there are waterfalls, bends and rapids. A person's period of maturity, despite the tendency toward permanence and stability, also has within it crises and doubts. Here, at the exact time, that the poet-artist dies 'is gathered to the Sea of Death,' still from his north, the songs that he wrote are new and pure, full of hope, as at the time when his youth ended.

Somewhere down there, at the bottom of consciousness, simplified and afar, at the end of the physical lifeline, the Sea of Death deep as the grave, calms him and the fresh songs, the poet's mirror, will continue eternally, to be sung, to flow full of the power of their audacity and freshness.

One of the most traumatic events in the short history of the modern State of Israel was the Yom Kippur War, that occurred in October, 1973. The whole country was in shock -- worse than that experienced by New Yorkers on September 11th, 2001. Israel was caught virtually unawares, and left the people feeling, not only vulnerable, but totally insecure. The victory against the Syrians and the Egyptians, did not alleviate the feeling of deep depression.

In response to this war, Shemer wrote *Lu yehi*, 'לו יהי' -- 'May it be.'

Song #6 All We Pray For -- לו יהי

(1) עוד יש מפרש לבן באופק

מול ענן שחור כבד

כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

ועם בחלונות הערב

אור נרות-החג רועד

כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

There is still a white sail on the horizon
Against a heavy black cloud
All that we pray for -- may it be
And if in the windows of the evening
The festive candles tremble
All that we pray for -- may it be

לו יהי -- לו יהי -- אנא לו יהי
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

May it be -- may it be -- please may it be
All that we pray for -- may it be

(2) מה קול ענות אני שומע
קול שופר וקול תופים
(כל שנבקש -- לו יהי)
לו תשמע בתוך כל אלא
גם תפילה אחת מפי
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

What is the sound of song I hear
The sound of the shofar and the sound of drums
(All that we pray for -- may it be)
If you hear within all these
Also a prayer from my mouth
All that we pray for -- may it be

לו יהי -- לו יהי

May it be -- may it be

(3) בתוך שכונה קטנה מוצלת
בית קט עם גג אדום
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי
זה סוף הציץ, סוף הדרך
תן להם לשוב הלום
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

In a small shady neighborhood
A small house with a red roof
All that we prayer for -- may it be
It's the end of summer, end of the road
Let them return here
All that we pray for -- may it be

לו יהי -- לו יהי

May it be -- may it be

4) ואם פתאום יזרח מאופל
על ראשנו אור כוכב
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי
אז תן שלווה ותן גם כח
לכל אלא שנוהב
כל שנבקש -- לו יהי

If from the darkness, suddenly, there will shine
Star light on our heads
All that we pray for -- may it be
Then give tranquility and also strength
To all those that we love
All that we pray for -- may it be

לו יהי -- לו -- יהי --אנא לו יהי
כל שנבקש לו יהי

May it be -- may it be -- please may it be
All that that we pray for, may it be

In the first verse Shemer manages to portray, with few words, impending danger.
The white sail represents quiet, serenity and normal life. However, it is set against, not
the setting sun, which would confirm to a picture of calmness, but against a heavy black

cloud. Black clouds that will cover the sun, dim the whiteness, are the bearers of the feeling of doom. Coupled with this is the trembling of the festive candles. If the scene of the festive candles were one of happiness and serenity the light of the candles would be flickering, מהבהב, *mehavhev*. Here Shemer uses רועד, *ro'ed* -- trembling or shaking from fear. The juxtaposition of 'festive' and 'tremble' increases the sense of unease, of fear. Twice in each verse Shemer includes the prayerful words (perhaps in a whisper) כל שנקש -- לו יהי *kol shenevakesh -- lu yehi*, 'all that we pray for -- may it be.' The setting is one of anxiety, the prayer is for a good outcome.

The refrain, which echoes the two lines of prayer in the verses, reinforces them, with the added 'please' -- אנא, *ana*, and the repetition of 'may it be.'

Shemer in a very simple and extremely effective way uses quotations from the Tanach -- Bible. The opening line of verse two 'what is the sound of song I hear' is taken from Exodus 32:18, with one minor change, the addition of מה - '*ma*,' 'what.' Joshua and Moses are descending Mt. Sinai, Moses is holding the Two Tablets, and Joshua says to Moses that he hears the sounds of battle in the camp. Moses answers that it is not the sound of defeat, nor the sound of victory, 'It is the sound of song I hear' -- קול ענות אנכי שומע, *kol anot anokhi shomeya*. Shemer has replaced the archaic '*anokhi*' with the modern '*ani*,' 'I.' Those acquainted with the biblical narrative will identify that this passage brings us to the Israelites dancing and singing around the golden calf. This is an episode that heralds great anger and destruction. So too, does Shemer utilize the biblical quotation, adding the sounds of the shofar and the drums to increase the sense of merriment, to heighten the sense of the impending killings and death. In ancient times, the shofar was used as an alarm of war, a call to arms, and a call to awaken -- to danger, both physical and spiritual. Here, the shofar does play double duty as an instrument of merriment and the possible instrument of the coming destruction. The shofar has been sounded, for millennia, in the Temple and in synagogues, to awaken the people to the

Day of Reckoning. It is believed that God hears the blast of the shofar. As God hears the tumult of the merriment, the singing, the trumpeting and the drumming, Shemer's prayer is that her prayer be also heard.

The third verse describes, what should be a serene, normal neighborhood, small and shady, and the roofs are red. It is almost pastoral. It is from these within homes that we hear the prayer 'let them return here,' return home. Shemer tells us that is the end of summer. We know that that was when the Yom Kippur War broke out, and lasted for many weeks. It is the end of the road, perhaps of patient waiting for the return of the men and women from the front lines. Perhaps the end of the road is for the soldiers, where they want to return to, and for which they, too, are praying.

The fourth and last verse is one of hope. 'If from the darkness star light will shine on our heads,' if the stars are shining then the dark clouds have gone. The heavy clouds are the danger, the war, and if they have lifted, then too, perhaps has the war. The added prayer in this verse is to give tranquility and strength. Shemer has paraphrased Psalm 29:11 which states: ה' עוז לעמו יתן/ ה' יברך את-עמו בשלום, '*Adonai oz l' amo yiten/ Adonai y'varekh et-amo vashalom,*' 'May Adonai grant strength to His people/ May Adonai bless His people with peace.' Shemer has reversed the 'strength' and the 'peace,' but the sentiment is identical. As the biblical prayer is to give peace and strength to all the people, so Shemer does not define to whom the peace and strength are to be given -- it is to be given to all; those on the front lines and those waiting anxiously at home.

Shemer's prayer 'Lu yehi' is still sung in synagogues in Israel and throughout the Jewish world.

Shemer's third book, ספר גימל,⁶⁰ was published in 1982. Israel was again a different place. In the interim, between the publishing of her two recent books, Israel and

60 נעמי שמר: ספר גימל: הוצאת "לולב", ת"א, 1982.
Naomi Shemer: *The Third Book*; Published by "Lulav", T.A., 1982.

Egypt had signed a peace agreement and Israel had pulled out of all of the Sinai Peninsular, had sold or dismantled all the farming villages and the towns. Shemer was among those who opposed the dismantling of the Jewish communities in Sinai.

Her third book of songs has proven to have been the most popular, most of the songs were not only hits, but are still being sung. Shemer received the 'Jabotinski' Prize for this book, and the Israel Prize for all her songs. I have chosen two songs, one for the general public and one for children.

Song #1 For All These Things -- על כל אלה

(1) על הדבש ועל העוקץ
על המר והמתוק
על בתנו התינוקת
שמור אלי הטוב

Over the honey and the sting
Over the bitter and the sweet
Over our baby daughter
My good God guard

(2) על האש המבוערת
על המים הזכים
על האיש השב הביתה
מן המרחקים

Over the burning fire
Over the pure water
Over the man who returns home
From a distance

על כל אלה, על כל אלה
שמור נא אלי הטוב
על הדבש ועל העוקץ

Over all of these, over all of these
Please guard for me my good God
Over the honey and over the sting
Over the bitter and the sweet

(3) אל נא תעקור נטוע
אל תשכח את התקוה
השיבני ואשובה
אל הארץ הטובה

Please don't uproot the planted
Don't forget the hope
Bring me back and I'll return
To the good land

(4) שמור אלי על זה הבית
על הגן -- על החומה
מיגון, מפחד-פתע
וממלחמה

My God guard over this home
Over the garden -- and over the wall
From sorrow, from sudden-fear
And from war

(5) שמור על המעת שיש לי
על האור ועל הטף
על הפרי שלא הבשיל עוד
ושנאסף

Guard over the little that I have
Over the light and the children
Over the fruit that hasn't ripened yet
And that which has been gathered

על כל אלה.....

Over all these.....

6) מרשרש אילן ברוח

מרחוק נושר כוכב

משאלות לבי בחושך

נרשמות עכשיו

A tree is rustling in the wind

From afar a star is twinkling

In the dark my heart's desires

Are being recorded now

7) אנא שמור לי על כל אלה

ועל אהוביי-נפשי

על השקט, על הבכי

ועל זה השיר

Please guard for me all of these

And over my loved ones

Over the silence, and the weeping

And over this song

על כל אלה.....

Over all of these.....

The words, as in many of Shemer's songs are simple, and the melody is catchy. One of Shemer's great attractions is that she speaks to people through their lives and what they feel. This song is a prayer, not a great liturgical prayer, but it is like one that many people pray during the course of their everyday lives about the things that are important to them, at that moment.

The opening line על הדבש ועל העוקץ *'al hadvash v'al ha'oketz'* -- 'over the honey and over the sting' is the way many people refer to this song. It is interesting that Shemer begins her song in this manner, with the honey and the sting, the bitter and the

sweet. One does not usually associate praying with the sentiment that God should preserve the sting and the bitter as well as the honey and the sweet. One would normally only ask for the preservation of the good, the honey and the sweet. However, without the bitter there could not be the sweet. It is also an acknowledgment of the human condition that includes good and bad, and that both somehow come from God. As Isaiah said in 45:6 & 7: 'אני ה' ואין עוד/ יוצר אור ובורא חושך/ עושה שלום ובורא רע: 'I am the Eternal, there is none else/ who makes light and creates darkness/ makes peace and creates evil.' Within Jewish tradition one acknowledges that bad things are part of life. When one has been in a situation that could have been dangerous, one *bentches gomel*, the blessing for deliverance from bodily harm and danger. The Mishnaic rabbis stated one must bless God for every situation in life: when eating, drinking, when one's body functions normally, upon seeing a thing of beauty and when seeing a thing of ugliness. One praises God for the bad as well as for the good. On hearing bad tidings, or the death of a loved one, the response is ברוך דיין האמת, *barukh dayan ha'amet* [Mishnah Brakhot 9:2], blessing God as the Judge of truth. In the same way Shemer is not living in some fantasy land, but in the real word, where terrible things happen, but where good things happen also. So in her opening, she is accepting the human condition. If the sun shone every day its wonder and beauty would disappear and it would become boring. If only good happened, human would not appreciate it much. If people did not die, life would become meaningless. Shemer is asking for the preservation of the bitter and the sting, so that the sweet will be sweeter. All this is juxtaposed to the infant daughter, for whose safety every parent prays.

Verse two mentions the burning fire -- probably in the hearth -- and the pure water. Warmth and water are some of the requirements for life. And that life is the one returning from afar, from overseas, from a journey to another city or from a battle front.

The refrain, which comes after every two verses is asking for the guarding and the

preserving of all these things in her life, or anyone else's. The refrain is where one hears the about the bitter and the sting. Nowhere are they enumerated. This is in keeping with what the rabbis of the Mishnaic period did, when writing the blessings and the prayers. When they wrote the *יִצְרָה*, *yotzer*, the prayer about God the Creator which is said before the *Shm'a*, the 'Hear O Israel,' they quoted Isaiah's words from 45:7, with one small change. Instead of writing 'who creates evil' they paraphrased it to 'who creates everything,' because everyone knew Isaiah's words and they did not feel it necessary to enumerate the woes in people's lives -- these were things that everyone knew and experienced. So too, with Shemer, she enumerates the good but not the bad.

The two opening lines of verse three have Shemer asking 'not to' do certain things, contrasting the way she has previously and will subsequently ask God 'to do.' Shemer is asking God not to uproot the planted. Dan Miron⁶¹ stated that Shemer, in this line, is going against what is written in Ecclesiastes 3:2: *עת לטעת ועת לעקור נטוע*, 'a time to plant and a time to uproot the planted.' At the time when Ecclesiastes was written, Israel was an agrarian society, and he spoke about fruit trees and vines, which have to be uprooted after a number of years if one wishes to grow sufficient fruit for market. Shemer was born and grew up in an agricultural society, on a kibbutz. Planting and uprooting trees and vines are as natural as breathing. Miron claims that in this line Shemer is referring to the Jewish settlements of Sinai which were uprooted as part of the peace agreement with Egypt. This is probably true. However, Ecclesiastes was talking about trees, and Shemer about towns and villages. The early pioneers had hoped that where they 'planted' their communities, the *moshavim* and *kibbutzim*, that that would delineate the future borders of the Jewish homeland.

This concept certainly couples well with the next line of *אל תשכח את התקוה* -- *al*

⁶¹ Dan Miron is Professor of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He wrote an article, which is critiqued in chapter 2 of this paper.

tishkakh et hatikvah, 'don't forget the hope.' On one level it is the hope that each person nourishes in his heart, for whatever he desires. On another level *hatikvah*, the hope, could be *HaTikvah*, Israel's national anthem. That Hope, that has not been lost even after two thousand years, to be a free people in our own land, The Land, Zion and Jerusalem: עוד לא אבדה תקותנו/ התקוה בת שנות אלפיים/ להיות עם חופשי בארצנו/ בארץ ציון וירושלים. These two lines are then intimately intertwined, the Hope of two thousand years and its final fruition in the Land of Israel which is being rebuilt, neither should be uprooted.

The second couplet speaks of being brought back to the Land, from exile, as expounded in Isaiah 43, throughout Jeremiah and Lamentations, and in Ezekiel 37. So too, Shemer combines these lines as a single unit asking God not to uproot the planted towns, to remember the two thousand year old hope of return to The Land, and asking God to help her in that returning. This is the only verse that could be seen as praying for the whole people, the nation.

The fourth verse again reverts to the individual, his home, garden and wall. It could be that *הגן*, *hagan*, if vocalized differently might become 'he protected,' and then 'wall' fits in nicely. However, even if not, it is the individual praying for the safety of his home and surroundings, and then from catastrophes like sorrow, sudden fear and war.

The next two verses are a mixture of private and public. The fifth is about the little that the person owns then about the general, the children, not just one's own, the light that belongs to all, and the unripened fruit that is the property of the farmers, but which at the appropriate time can belong to the individual. The sixth has the private prayer about one's heart's desires being guarded while the general is nature, the rustling of the trees, the shining star, like the light in the previous verse. Nature and agriculture are as important to Shemer, who grew up on a kibbutz, as her personal attachments.

In the final verse, all of these, that which already been mentioned should be guarded together with her loved ones. The last lines are a lovely mix of both personal

and communal, the silence, which can be restorative and rejuvenating, and the weeping which gives vent to the deepest feelings one has; and this song. Shemer has said that for as long as she is writing a song, it is hers, once it has been aired in public it has left her private domain and then belongs to the listeners and the performers.

Shemer has managed in simple terms, to touch upon subjects that each individual can resonate with, can identify with and own. Nothing here is related to age, ethnic group, socio-economic background, or even national groupings. The third verse can be easily understood in a way that is not parochially Jewish. The Arab citizens of Israel, for example, do not wish to be uprooted, they have hopes, and they have their family owned land which is their 'good land.'

Song #45 Children Everywhere -- אצלנו בחצר

1) אצלנו בחצר
בצל עצי-הזית
באים בדרך כלל
המון אורחים לקיץ
לכל אחד מהם
שפה משלו
ודרך משלו
להגיד שלום

In our courtyard
Under the shade of the olive trees
There usually come
Masses of guests for the summer
Each of them
Has his own language
And his own way

To say hello

(2) בן מאיטליה אומר בונג'ורנו
בת מצרפת אומרת בונג'ור
קן מיפן אומר אוהיו
כ- שהוא בא לבקר

A boy from Italy says bonjourno

A girl from France says bonjour

Kan from Japan says ohayo

When he comes to visit

(3) היי מהואי אומר אלוהה
טניה מבריטניה אומרת הלו
כל מי שבא אלינו הביתה
יש לו שלום משלו

Hai from Hawaii says aloha

Tania from Britain says hello

Everyone who comes to our home

Has his own way of saying 'shalom'

(4) צבענו את הגדר
קצרנו את הדשא
ילדי כל העולם
יוכלו עכשיו לגשת
לפתוח לרוחה
את השער הירוק
ולהביא ברכה
מרחוק-רחוק

We have painted the fence

We have mown the lawn

The children of the world

Can now come

To open wide

The green gate
And bring greetings
From afar-afar

(5) ג'וניה מקניה תאמר לי ג'מבו
יאן מיון קלימרה יאמר
צ'ין מסין יאמר ניכאומה
וישאר עד מחר

Junio from Kenya will tell me jambo
Yan from Greece kalimara will say
Chin from China will say nikha'oma
And will stay till tomorrow

(6) גיל מברזיל יאמר בום דיא
קוקו ממרוקו יאמר אהלן
והברכה שהוא יביא לי
היא היפה מכלן

Gil from Brazil will say bom dia
Koko from Morocco will say ahalan
The greeting that he will bring me
Is the best of all

(7) אצלנו בחצר
בצל אילן פורח
ילדי כל העולם
באים להתארח
אצלנו בחצר
ילדי העולם כולו
רוקדים במעגל
ואומרים שלום

In our courtyard
Under the shade of a blossoming tree
The children of the whole world

Come to stay as guests
In our courtyard
The children of the whole world
Dance in a circle
And they say shalom

This is a totally delightful children's song, that tells of children from around the world coming to 'our courtyard' to stay for a while and to bring greetings. In the Hebrew the names of the children rhyme with the names of their countries, and the appropriate 'hello' is given. Shemer is full of bounce and optimism, it is a time of peace in Israel and people coming in even greater numbers from all over to visit.

As much as Shemer loves the greetings that each child brings, the best is from Koko, who is an Arab child.

The last lines of the first verse say 'each has his own language/ and his own way/ of saying 'shalom.' In Hebrew there is no word for 'hello,' or for 'goodbye.' The word that is used is 'shalom,' peace. So one hears in Shemer's song that each child, through his 'hello' is saying 'peace.' This is repeated at the conclusion of the song reinforcing the idea of peace, and not just 'hello.'

Shemer's latest songbook published in 1995⁶² also says for which singers the songs were written. The names are among the most popular singers, including groups, from the entire Jewish ethnic spectrum. Some come from privileged homes, some from poor homes. The singers range across the political spectrum as well. During the previous thirteen years much has happened in Israel, including the assassination of Sadat (which happened in Egypt but had a great impact on Israel), the first *intifada*, and the

62 נעמי שמר: ספר ארבע: הוצאת לולב ת"א, 1995
Naomi Shemer: *The Fourth Book*; Published by "Lulav", T.A. 1995

signing of the Oslo Accords. Shemer remains above the political fray. Just as she was generally apolitical in her previous songs, so too in this book. Shemer has been asked how her relations with her children are, since they have opposing political views. Shemer answered that they have close and warm relations. They do not discuss politics, because there are so many other things to talk about. The songs in this book reflect that there are, in deed, many things to talk about without getting embroiled in controversial political topics. Her adult children can discuss all manner of things with her, and so her audience can identify with the things that Shemer writes.

Song #30 Swan Girl -- ילדת ברבור

(1) ילדה ברבור היא בת דקה או שתיים
היא ברוזון צורח ומכוער
צריך היטב היטב לפקוח עין
ולגונן מכל עופות המים
אשר על האגם המסוער

Swan girl is one or two minutes old
She is a screaming ugly duckling
You need to keep your eyes open very wide
And to protect her from all the water birds
That are on the stormy lake

(2) בגיל שנה דלקת פנים-העוזן
בגיל שלוש פריחה קלה בגב
לכבוד פורים
היא פו אן פן או פופינו
הכל לפי הגיל והמצב

At one year old, inner-ear infection
At three a light rash on her back
In honor of Purim
She is Pooh or Pan or Poppins

According to her age and the situation

3) ילדה ברבור גדלה
בבית חנוך צפון
חלצה כחולה, והיא עולה
עולה המון
שירים עם מאיר נוי
והאקורדיון
מן החווה חוזרת עם בצל וצנון
וצפורני-חתול בצרור קטון

Swan girl is growing up
In *bet-khinukh tzafon*⁶³
A blue blouse, that costs
That costs a lot
Songs with Me'ir Noy
And the accordion
From the farm she return with onions and radishes
And a small bunch of marigolds

4) ילדה ברבור עושה בגרות הומנית
ילדה ברבור הולכת לצבא
אוהבת רינה שנפלד, אריק איינשטיין
יותר מכל אוהבת אהבה

Swan girl studies humanities in her senior year
Swan girl goes to the army
Loves Rina Shenfeld, Arik Einstein⁶⁴
Above all she loves love

ילדה ברבור גדלה.....

63 *Bet-khinukh tzafon* is the name of a high school in northern Tel Aviv. It's name means "northern high school".

64 They are two very popular Israeli singers

Swan girl is growing up

(5) ילדה ברבור היא בת עשרים ושתיים
מוצאת לה עוד ברבור -- מוצאת לה קן
אל תוך הסוף מתרחקים השניים
והם שורטים משעול עדין במים
והאגם שלנו מתרוקן

Swan girl is twenty-two
Finds herself another swan -- finds her nest
Into the reeds they distance themselves
They leave a delicate wake in the water
And our lake becomes empty

This is not a complicated song. It is simplicity itself as Shemer, the mother tells of her daughter's life with her, from birth till she leaves home to make a home of her own. Shemer goes through the various stages of this growing up process, from rashes in infancy, to dressing up for Purim, singing and accordion lessons and finally after high school going off to the army. Shemer has said that Moshe Beker, who sang this song, felt that it was sad and performed it that way. However, Shemer herself feels that this song is not sad, it states the natural course of events. You have children love them, guide them and enjoy them as they grow up and then they leave.

The title is intriguing. Shemer calls her daughter 'swan girl,' but in the second line of the song, the daughter is called an 'ugly duckling.' This of course brings to mind Hans Christian Andersen's story of that name. The 'ugly duckling' is no duckling but a cygnet that finally emerges as a magnificent beautiful swan.

The background setting is a lake. Shemer was born and grew up next to Lake *Kinneret*, the Sea of Galilee, which is the site of numerous water birds including millions of migratory ones. For Shemer the geography of the Land is important, and so it natural for her to have chosen her beloved *Kinneret* for this setting.

Song #36 Gai -- גיא

1) גיא
אתה ואני
ודי
אני ואתה
על כל המיטה
הזוגית
זו שעה חגיגית
גיא
תינוק תנ"כי
בחי
עיניים של
שם חם ויפת
כשאימא שלך
מתעיפת
אז אני
לוקח פקוד
גיא
חמוד

Gai
You and I
That's enough
Me and you
On the entire
Double bed
This is a joyous time
Gai
A biblical baby
On my life
Eyes like

Shem Ham or Japheth

When your Mom

Gets tired

Then I

Take charge

Gai

My beauty

2) גיא

אתה פקדון

בידי

אני אותך

עוטר

כמו כסת

מכל סכנה

שנשקפת

אני מגן עליך

Gai

You are a pledge

In my hands

I will wrap

You

Like a pillow

From every danger

That lurks

I protect you

3) גיא

מאחות בית-הספר

ומלוח הכפל

מרופא השניים

תביט לי
ישר בעינייך
שלא תלך
לבד לים
גיא
כשחם מדיי

Gai
From the school nurse
From the multiplication tables
From the dentist
Look me
Straight in the eyes
That you won't go
by yourself to the beach
Gai
When it's too hot

(4) גיא
אתה תסתדר בלעדי
אבל בינתיים
אנחנו השניים
הולכים
לגינת אמסטרדם
ושם
גיא
ישנה נדנדה
ואתה ואני
ודיי

Gai
You will manage without me
But in the meanwhile

We two
Go to the Amsterdam garden
And there
Gai
There is a see-saw
And me and you
And you and me
And that's enough

This is a very sweet song about a father talking to his very young son. One feels the father's love. The man and his small son are on the double bed together, playing and this is a joyous time for Dad. He calls his son תינק תנ"כי *tinnok tanakhi*, a biblical baby, which reminds one of such prayed-for children as Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph, Samson and Samuel. Each was special, each a promised child. Shemer raises all this, the promise, the specialness, and the father's hopes for his son, with that two-word phrase. Continuing in the biblical vein Shemer has the father say that his son has the eyes of Shem, Ham or Japheth, the sons of Noah. According to the biblical story in Genesis 6 - 10, everyone is the descendent of one of Noah's sons, and so the child's eyes would be from one of them. The father takes over when Mom is too tired, and he relishes the role. He plays with him, and wants to protect Gai from real and imagined dangers, present and future, like the dentist and the nurse at school and even from the multiplication tables, and from getting sunburned. Shemer also puts in the thought that Dad knows that the kid will eventually manage without him, for that's life, but in the meantime the two are together, playing and Dad is having a great time, enjoying his son for as long as he can – because soon enough the nest (or the lake as in the previous song) will be empty.

The two songs from this last book show how Shemer has remained in touch with what is important in people's lives, what Miron disparagingly calls their 'gray' lives, in which he does not believe that they can find meaning. Shemer identifies with the people in Israel, she is one of them and accepts people as they are, and gives voice to what concerns and what is meaningful to her and to them.

Epilogue

Naomi Shemer has written hundreds of songs during her career that has spanned more than four decades. Her career began with writing songs for her young pupils at *Kvutzat Kinneret*. This is a public whom she has not forgotten, and she has continued to write for children songs that are happy, exuberant and colorful. Although the original songs were for kibbutz children and told of their life and experience, her children's songs are sung by children who live in villages, towns and cities.

Shemer, with very few exceptions, does not write political songs. Her lyrics depict everyday life, the happy, the sad, young lovers, unrequited love, certain aspects of being in the army, hopes, fears and tears. She has her listeners singing their way through the Israeli countryside. Her love for the land and its landscapes is an integral part of her songs and their charm. Shemer's love songs include a young man's love of the city of Tel Aviv (גג 'gag' – 'Roof,' Book Four, song #35). He is 'dying' for her and wants nothing more than to live in Tel Aviv, no matter what sort of apartment, no matter where as long as it is in Tel Aviv. The young man declares: גנוב על העיר הזאת/...אז למה היא לא נותנת לי גג, 'I'm crazy about this city/.... so why doesn't she give me a roof [a home]?' There is a beautiful and very moving love song of a father for his very young son (גיא -- Gai, Book Four, song # 36).⁶⁵ Shemer has captured the life of a parent's experience of a child being born and growing up and eventually leaving home (ילדה ברבור, *Yaldah Barbur* -- 'Swan Girl,' Book Four, song # 30).

Shemer has also written two very different songs about dying, both autobiographical, both very different. Her first one, אמצע-התמוז, *Emtza-haTamuz* -- 'Tamuz' (Book Three, song # 8) tells of how 'sad it is to die in the middle of summer/ when the peaches are plentiful/ and all the fruit laugh in the basket' עצוב למות באמצע

⁶⁵ Please see chapter 4 for a full explanation of this song.

...התמוז/ דוקא כשהאפרסקים בשפע/ וכל הפרי דוקא צוחק בסל... The tone is totally different in her other 'dying' song, פרלוד -- 'Prelude.' In this song she says that 'if it is her time to go/ she will not make a "big deal" of it/ long life is not such/ a bargain': אם זה תורה להסתלק/ היא לא תעשה מזה ענין/ אריכות ימים הלא איננה/ מציאה גדולה. In this song Shemer tells of the last things she will do, she will not make a will, will not make any special arrangements, she will answer a few letters, love another few lovers, read another page and perhaps play another prelude. No one lives forever. The first song is one of the not-yet-dead grieving for what will be left behind, the second shows no regrets at departing. Both reactions to one's own death are real, and therefore others can identify with, and make whichever song one's own.

Shemer's songs cover the entire human experience, from cradle to grave (almost). The lyrics are such that they do not reflect any particular socio-economic stratum, ethnic or age group. Shemer is expressing the human condition, which is why she speaks to everyone, child and adult, poor and rich, Ashkenazi⁶⁶ and *Eidot HaMizrakh*, Jew Moslem Christian or Druze. This is why she has retained such great popularity for over forty years.

Yankele Rotblit⁶⁷ wrote:

For more than forty years we hum, sing and sound out Naomi Shemer. In fact a second generation of hummers of Naomi Shemer is growing up, and the addiction begins at an early age. In grade one they begin with 'Shalom, Grade One' and then they learn 'Aleph-Bet' [a-b-c] of Naomi Shemer, at Succot 'Shlomit is Building a Succah of Peace' and later 'When Adar Enters'⁶⁸ we increase the joy with Naomi Shemer, and at Passover 'The Four Brothers' go out of the Hagaddah⁶⁹.

66 'Ashkenazi' is the term used for Central and Eastern European Jews; 'Sepharadim' for Spanish Jews and 'Eidot HaMizrakh' for Jews from the Arab countries.

67 יענקלה רוטבליט: 'נעמי שמר -- דוד המלך השפיע עלי: מוסף מעריב 6 בינוי, 1994

68 Adar is the month in which Purim is celebrated, and the whole month is considered to be one of joy and fun.

There are Naomi Shemer songs for the summer vacation, not to mention Memorial Day – 'We are Both from the Same Village' and Independence Day with 'Tomorrow,' and there is nothing to be done about it. As someone who is experienced in the field, big hits come and big hits go, but Naomi Shemer will be sung and hummed for as long as this tribe exists and for as long as communal singing is its house of prayer. What is the secret? Who knows? It seems that Naomi Shemer has it. The ability to touch some sensitive collective nerve, some shared tribal longing. She has the ability to float above reality, to raise it, according to her words, to a shared imaginative area, to the ideal.

Yanin Avisar⁷⁰ quoted what the panel of judges, who awarded Naomi Shemer the Israel Prize for Hebrew song and music, said about their decision:

The totality of Naomi Shemer's songs is outstanding for the quality of the lyrics and music. And this is due to the wonderful coupling of the lyrics and the melody, and the expressions that stir the heart of the nation. Her words and notes overflow with love for the clods of earth all over the country, and also for the sidewalks of Tel Aviv. She writes her songs simply and honestly and in personal tones, but tones that enable each one to feel that the words come out of his own heart. She writes songs like 'Tomorrow' that express our desire for peace. In times of mourning and loss she writes songs like 'We are Both from the Same Village' and the 'Sacrifice of Isaac.' Naomi Shemer continues to express the hidden desires of the nation, that for years have not been expressed. And so, for the music, the lyrics, the melody and the song -- על כל אלה -- for all these, the Israel Prize is awarded to Naomi Shemer.

Dan Miron has been one of Shemer's most vicious critics,⁷¹ especially because of her political views. Yet even he, unwillingly, praises Shemer, her talents and achievements.

69 The *Hagaddah* is the book that is read during the Passover Seder, that recounts the events of the Exodus from Egypt.

70 ינין אבישר: המוזות פרסות כנפיים -- הזמר העברי: נפיו המולדת, נעמי שמר -- זמר עברי מלים ולחנים (תשמ"ג -- 1983),

הארץ 24 באפריל 1998.

71 Please see chapter 2, which discusses Miron's attack on Shemer.

Miron says⁷²:

Shemer's songs are an interesting phenomenon. Their centrality in our cultural life is unique -- her work is both enduring and dynamic.

All other popular songwriters who began with her are forgotten. Of all of the heirs of the master Natan Alterman, only she survives ... whose influence has grown consistently over three decades....

Where Naomi Shemer does resemble Alterman is in her ability to respond to the sweeping currents of feeling in a volatile, ever-changing society.

[Shemer is] a product of the pioneer-labor elite of the pre-Independence days, she nevertheless speaks to all strata of the population....

She somehow speaks for people who are themselves incapable of forming a sentence in that kind of Hebrew. Her Jewish associations are distinctly Eastern European and the musical language of her songs is based almost entirely on European-American models, yet it speaks to the new middle-class of the Oriental communities. Her songs... bisect Israel's ethnic and cultural map.... she is not despised by the young. It seems that even Arab construction and sanitation workers.... sing her songs.....

Naomi Shemer's art would hardly have attained such a broad and enduring resonance were there not something embedded in its basic structures, in the musical language she actuates, in the range of images and concepts woven into her texts, through which she managed to 'touch' the heart of such a wide audience.....

Her tunes, diverse as they may be, nevertheless all sound like the works of a single composer. This is not something that just anyone can do, it demands true musical talent, which Naomi Shemer undoubtedly possesses. Only the presence of real talent can explain the spell that her tunes cast over so many listeners....

Naomi Shemer tends, naturally to 'universal' topics -- love, death, the poet as the "wandering minstrel" and all the rest -- but she infuses them with a contemporary dimension and a local background..... In her early songs this reality defined itself as the here-and-now of a young Israel -- in a double sense: Israeli society during the first years of the State finding expression in the experiences of young people -- military service, .. youth movement hikes, ... going to the movies in the rain swept city, mourning for a fallen comrade. The declared intention of the songs of this period was to represent the 'gray' daily continuum as if it contained the essence of the beauty and meaning of human existence, without 'slogans or flags.' Thus together with the songs of the boys and girls and the songs of the market and of the construction workers... express[ed] the gaiety and bustle of daily city life and village.

72 דן מירון: 'זמירות מארץ להד"ס: אגרא, אלמנך לדברי ספרות ואמנות, מס. 1 תשמ"ה 1984

Even though Miron's intentions were to 'demolish' Shemer, he praises her to the heavens.

In the Talmud (שבת: קיט ע"ב, Tractate Shabbat page 119b) the sages are discussing shabbat. R' Yossi bar Yehuda said that two serving angels accompany a man home from the synagogue on Shabbat eve, one is a good angel and the other is a bad angel. When they come to his home and find the shabbat candles lit, the table set and his bed made, the good angel says: 'May it be God's will that you will have next shabbat like this,' and the bad angel, against his will, answers 'amen' -- ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו.

So too, with Miron, he wants to bring Shemer low, but against his will he is forced to praise her work. ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו.

Naomi Shemer's singular success in cutting across all the boundaries in Israeli society has been her ability and talent to have people relate to, and identify with, her words and music. Unlike most serious poets, Shemer's words lie lightly on the tongue. Like most serious poets, there are many layers to her seemingly simple lyrics in many of her songs. She utilizes her own experiences and feelings when she writes, and this makes her accessible to others. Shemer 'meets' people where they are, whatever the situation is, in their lives. Like David the writer of the psalms, whose songs are still relevant because they speak to and mirror people's feelings, whether joyous, sad, depressed, angry or exultant. So too with Shemer, most Israelis can see and feel their feelings in her words and music.

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"Liturgical Aspects in the Poetry of Yehuda Amichai"

Rabbinical Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York

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One-Page Summary

This thesis addresses "Liturgical Aspects in the Poetry of Yehuda Amichai." The issue is examined from two primary angles: Amichai's intertextual use of traditional liturgy in his poetry, and; the utilization of Amichai's poetry in liturgical settings, that is- Amichai's poetry as liturgy. An additional issue was examined of necessity in order to provide a conceptual framework against which to discuss the liturgical use of Amichai's poetry. This section examines the more general issue of the liturgical use of modern poetry, placing it in historical context and positing a model in which to view that use.

The thesis is organized as follows:

- A brief **Introduction** is provided.
- **Chapter 1** examines the historical context of the use of poetry in liturgy, then examines the question with specific regard to modern poetry in contemporary Jewish liturgies. A full examination of available scholarship on the subject is made, and the author suggests several elements of a framework in which to view the utilization of modern poetry in liturgical contexts. Reference is made to the author's review of current Jewish liturgical collections to determine their use of modern poetry. The full results of this review are presented in Appendices A-C.
- **Chapter 2** presents a detailed analysis of Amichai's use of liturgical intertextuality in his poetry. Several models are presented for examining that usage from an academic approach, with extensive reference to all of the major scholarship responding to this topic. Then, original analysis of eight poems reflecting different tendencies in Amichai's use of liturgical intertextuality are presented. Full Hebrew text and English translation precedes each analysis, including three original translations. Brief conclusions to the chapter are offered.
- **Chapter 3** begins with a contextual introduction to the liturgical use of Amichai's poetry, including analysis of qualities in the poetry which would support this usage. Again, full reference to the range of scholarship is made. Two methodologies utilized for determining anecdotal use of Amichai's poetry are discussed. Their results are presented in Appendices D and E. Original analysis of an additional eight poems identified for potential liturgical usefulness concludes this chapter. Just as in chapter 2, each of the poems is preceded by full Hebrew text and English translation, including one original translation.
- **Conclusions** to the thesis are presented, along with specific indications for further research in each of the three major areas of this thesis.
- An extensive Hebrew and English **Bibliography** is included.

The full length of the thesis, including Appendices A through E and Bibliography is 166 pages. A Table of Contents precedes the Introduction.