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1941-1951"

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This thesis is divided into three parts: an introduction, a biographical sketch of Zalman Shneur and translations of his poems from his American period with introductions and annotations.

The American period refers principally to the time of composition and not to the contents of the poems. Had Shneur not been forced to escape France because of the Nazis, he probably would never have come to live in the United States.

Zalman Shneur (1887-1959) was a younger contemporary of Chayim Bialik. Shneur met him in Odessa in 1900 and was ever afterward appreciative of the encouragement Bialik gave him in his formative years. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1905 Shneur left Eastern Europe. In 1907 he reached Paris, where he studied intermittently at the Sorbonne. In 1913, in reaction to the ritual murder accusation against Mendel Beilis, Shneur wrote "The Middle Ages Draw Near," in which he foresaw the return of virulent anti-Semitism. After having lived in Berlin from 1914-1923, he left because of his feeling that something "unclean" was going to happen in Germany. Shneur returned to Paris and lived there until 1941.

Escaping Nazi-occupied France in that year, Shneur came to the United States and remained for ten years. In 1951 he immigrated to Israel in fulfillment of an old dream.

The main themes in the poetry are pride in the rebuilding of the Land of Israel, loss of faith in a redeeming God, wrath against the nations of the world for their hatred and persecution of Jews and joy in the establishment of the State of Israel. Although Shneur did not identify with the Jewish nationalist movement until the 1940's, his thinking had always been close to some points in Zionist ideology. The deep feelings and strong expressions in this poetry are indicative of the monumental events in Jewish history in this period.

The American Period in the Poetry of Zalman Shneur

1941-1951

Fred V. Davidow

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts in Hebrew
and Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee, Prof. Werner Weinberg

FOREWORD

Zalman Shneur once wrote that a person must experience creativity before he could have a Sabbath. I am writing these words now on a Friday afternoon and looking forward to the sweetest Sabbath in my life, when I will celebrate the completion of my thesis.

Not alone could I have reached this Sabbath. My wife and parents, whose love and concern have always encouraged me, are as pleased as I on this day.

I would like to thank Mrs. Marion Schild, Mrs. Miriam Robinson, Leon Alex and Rabbi Amos Schauss of the Hebrew Union College Library staff, who always willingly helped me. They made me feel as if I were the only one using the library.

There is a professor on the faculty of Hebrew Union College whose nickname among the students is "the prince." This is my teacher and thesis referee, Dr. Werner Weinberg. Only with his conscientious guidance could this thesis have been written.

April 27, 1973

Fred V. Davidow

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INTRODUCTION

Though Jews have used the language of whatever country they lived in, Hebrew has always been a bond among them across time and space. Thus I became interested in the topic of Hebrew literature written in America. There have been numerous American men of Hebrew letters but none achieved greatness. Dr. Werner Weinberg, my thesis referee, suggested to me that Zalman Shneur, who once lived in the United States, could be a subject for inquiry into the relationship between the poet's works and the American environment.

Shneur was quite active literarily during the decade of his residence in the United States (1941-1951) but the poems treated in this thesis, which reflected the contemporaneous concerns of world Jewry, were largely unrelated to the poet's feelings about America. Three poems, "Nostalgia," "Livelihood" and "The Miracle," dealing with the themes of urban, industrial America, were written in 1939. Only one poem written in the 1940's, "Hour of Ascent," had an American setting. Shneur had a low opinion of American Jewry. Had he not been forced to escape France because of the Nazis, he probably would never have come to live in the United States, and a few years after the establishment of the State of Israel Shneur made aliyah. The American period in the poetry of Zalman Shneur therefore refers principally to the time of composition and not to the contents of the poems themselves.

An ineffable catastrophe and a miraculous restoration mark off the decade of the 1940's as one of the most significant periods in the entire course of Jewish history. Shneur, who had written only a few poems of Jewish content up to this time, turned his attention more closely to Jewish matters. In a group of poems known collectively as "Songs of Israel"

("On Mount Scopus," "The Port," "Kefar Gil'adi," "On Guard" and "Hymn to Tel Chai"), Shneur described the rebuilding of the Land of Israel. The themes of these poems were in accord with Zionist ideology. It was a new type of Jew who left the lands of exile to fashion his own destiny in the land of his Biblical inheritance. Having given up hope in redemption by divine action, the new Jew would rely upon his own strength and rally to the task of rebuilding a devastated land. Even though he was in his homeland, he still had enemies but he was no longer afraid to fight back. He was willing to use the rifle as well as the plow to recover his birthright. Physical courage, considered to be absent in the galut Jew, was a redeeming virtue in the new Jew. Shneur compared the rejuvenation of the Jewish people to a Hebrew girl who like Sarah was able to bear children in old age ("Praise for the Hebrew Girl").

The shock of the Holocaust and later the cruel treatment of the refugees by the British vibrated in the poetry of Shneur. The two themes that stood out were loss of faith in a redeeming God and wrath against the nations of the world. In "A New Lawsuit by Rabbi Yitschak of Berditchev" Shneur pictured the resurrected Chasidic rebbe putting God on trial for failing to protect Israel. In the course of the trial Rabbi Levi Yitschak showed God evidence that He had no power to redeem: at the edge of heaven there was a refuse heap of unsuccessful Messiahs. Faith in God could be restored only after the Jews had redeemed themselves in the Land of Israel and forgotten God's humiliation. In "Albion's Burden" it was a "cruel miracle" that those who escaped death at the hands of the Nazis were mercilessly treated by the British, who tried to prevent the immigration of Jewish refugees into Palestine. If the actions of the English were unforgivable, they were at least understandable. The English were

the descendants of William the Conqueror, whom Shneur described as a bloodthirsty, greedy pirate. A trace of his blood still flowed in the veins of the English and incited them to barbarous deeds. At the conclusion of the poem revenge was uppermost in the mind of the poet. Just as England sank ships carrying refugees, the day of judgment was drawing near when the island kingdom would itself fall into the depths of the sea, where she would be buried with her crimes.

Upon the proclamation of the State of Israel Shneur composed "Philistines." The Philistines were the western powers that were "conspiring" to obstruct the establishment of a Jewish state. This action deepened the wound (the Holocaust) already inflicted on the Jews. To Shneur David Ben Gurion appeared as a latter-day Samson who was willing to risk his life to avenge the wrongs against his people. In "A State" Shneur celebrated the success of the War of Liberation. The Jewish State could now shield all the exiles who wanted to come to the Land of Israel.

The American period in the poetry of Zalman Shneur was a distinct part of his work. His earlier poems of Jewish content contained the themes of the negation of the Diaspora and indignation at the nations of the world. These themes reappeared in the 1940's. What was new about this poetry was Shneur's identification with the Jewish nationalist movement. Although he had always had certain ideas in common with Zionists, his dream of a Jewish state was not reflected in his poetry until the 1940's. Most of Shneur's poems from this period were a response to the historic events of the time, which brought an outpouring of deep feelings from the poet.

Chapter 1 of this thesis is a biographical sketch of Zalman Shneur. In Chapter 2 I have tried to render his poems from the 1940's into English

translations as literary as possible. The poems are arranged chronologically and before each one is an introduction, which highlights the main features of the poem. Critical remarks are also included here. If necessary, after a poem are the annotations, ranging from Biblical to topical references. Since I did not want to mar the appearance of the poem nor distract the reader, I decided against placing the annotations as footnotes. Therefore matters that needed explanation were collected and put after the poem.

CHAPTER I

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ZALMAN SHNEUR

Zalman Shneur, born in 1887, belonged on his father's side to a branch of the Schneerson family, made famous by Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Chabad Chasidism. The original given name of the poet was Zalkind. Perhaps because of his well-known ancestor he used Zalman as his literary name, which he also had registered on American documents.¹

Shneur's home was the shtetl Shklov on the Dnieper, immortalized by him in the novel Anshe Shklov. Actually Shneur spent little of his life there. His memories of childhood were filled with bitterness; he always considered his parents' home an oppressive yoke.² To him his parents and teachers were inordinately harsh.

At six I began studying Hebrew, at seven or eight with Rashi. In the ninth year - Gemara. ...At twelve I studied a half day at the municipal school in Shklov and the other half - Gemara at a local yeshivah. I got sick from too much studying. This was not suited to my abilities. ...I chose a life of poverty (in Odessa) so as not to bear the burden of parents and teachers ... who seemed to me excessively strict in those days.³

Shneur began writing poems and prose at the age of nine.⁴ In 1898 he traveled with his father to Warsaw, carrying with him a packet of poems, "but returned from there in disappointment to continue with his studies."⁵ Shortly after his Bar Mitzvah he left for Odessa with an older brother. He was to return home only to regain his health after suffering hardships in Odessa.⁶

In this city, at the time a Jewish intellectual center, Shneur met the "Chachme Odessa": Mendele Mocher Seforim, Moses Leib Lilienblum, Simon Dubnow, Joshua Chanah Ravnitzky and Chayim Nachman Bialik.⁷ The last especially befriended Shneur, who, despite future strains on their relationship, never forgot the warmth with which Bialik received him. Shneur resumed his study of Tanach under the tutelage of

Bialik, who also encouraged the young poet's creativity. Because of his unhappy home life and tender age, Shneur looked upon Bialik as a substitute for his parents.⁸ However, living in Odessa was difficult. He was confused and lacked self-assurance⁹ and because of poverty and hunger he was distracted from his studying. Bialik gave him spiritual support but being poor himself, he could not provide Shneur any funds on which to live. Near the end of 1901 Shneur went back to Shklov despondently.¹⁰

Once recuperated physically and emotionally, Shneur went to Warsaw in 1902.¹¹ With a recommendation from Bialik he received employment from Ben-Avigdor and Shmuel Leib Gordon on the editorial staff of Tushiyah, a large publishing firm.¹² Gordon was the editor of Olam Katan, a children's newspaper, in which Shneur's poems were first published. Shneur always remembered Gordon's kind treatment of him. His poems also appeared in Hashiloach, under the editorship of Joseph Klausner, for whose kindness Shneur was likewise grateful.¹³ In spite of the good relationships with these two men, Shneur did not like being in Warsaw. As in Odessa he suffered poverty; he also became disgusted with the jealousies rampant among the group of writers assembled there.¹⁴ When Olam Katan ceased publication by the middle of 1903, Shneur lost his job. He returned to Shklov in the summer of that year and stayed there until the following summer.¹⁵

When Hazman, a Hebrew daily, was founded in Vilna in 1904, Shneur went there on the advice of Isaac D. Berkowitz and joined the editorial staff of the newspaper.¹⁶ David Frishman, who had become his loyal friend in Warsaw,¹⁷ gave him the opportunity to publish his poems in Hazman and Hador.¹⁸ Shneur for the first time in his life found a

place thoroughly agreeable to him. In Vilna he reached emotional and literary maturity and the love he had for this city was reflected in his poem Vilna (1920). "Not without cause did he after many years sing from the fullness of his heart his great beautiful song to Vilna; as a man would sing to his mother or to his birthplace, he sang of its Jewish beauty and lamented its destruction, whose sound reached him from afar."¹⁹ His best poems from the Vilna period were gathered into two volumes and published under the title Im Sheki'at Hachamah (1906). This book aroused the admiration of Bialik, who wrote in his essay "Shiratenu Hatse'irah" that Shneur was "a young Samson whose seven locks all grew up overnight."²⁰ A collection of Shneur's stories Min Hachayim Vehamavet was also published during this period.

Hazman ceased publication in late 1905 and the writers scattered from Vilna. In addition to losing his job, Shneur was upset by the horrors of Russia's first revolution. In early 1906 he went to Switzerland and lived successively in Geneva and Bern.²¹ The natural beauty of this country inspired him to write the cycle of poems Beharim (1908), wherein he contrasted the freshness of nature with the artificialities of civilization.²² Shneur lived in Switzerland for less than two years. He longed to go to Paris and there he went in 1907.²³

Shneur entered the Sorbonne and studied literature, philosophy and natural science. However, his studies were not constant, because for a period of five years (1908-1913) he would make frequent trips, touring Europe (including Russia and Poland each time) and North Africa. He supported himself during this time by working for Yiddish newspapers.²⁴ In 1913 he wrote "Yeme Habenavim Mitkarevim" ("The Middle Ages Draw Near") in reaction to the case of Mendel Beilis, who had been accused

with a banquet in New York City arranged by the Hebrew Writers of America and among those who spoke in his honor were Yehoash, Abraham Raisin and Professor Israel Friedlander.²⁹ The practical benefit of this trip was the connections he made with Yiddish newspapers.³⁰ Returning to Berlin after this brief visit to the United States, Shneur re-entered medical school at the university but again was unable to finish the curriculum. His mind was distracted from studying by melancholia over the destruction wreaked on Russian Jewry. Together with Solomon Salzmänn he founded the publishing house Hasefer, which produced de luxe editions of Hebrew books. Shneur was proud of the quality of these publications and several of his own works were reprinted in this way. By 1922 Shneur felt that Germany smelled of brimstone, a word he had used in "Yeme Habenayim Mitkarevim" to symbolize approaching danger to Jews. A year later he was telling his friends of his "heavy feeling that something unclean was going to happen in Germany. Let them be on their guard! But better than this - leave the country." Shneur took his own advice; he disengaged himself from all his literary involvements in Berlin, went to Danzig to marry his fiancée and left Germany for good in 1923.³¹

The Shneurs settled in Paris, where their two children were born. In 1925 Shneur made his first trip to Eretz Israel for the opening of Hebrew University. Had there been any opportunity for him to make a living in Eretz Israel at the time, he would have remained. He returned to France disappointed. In 1926 Shneur established a permanent bond with the Jewish Daily Forward in New York City to which he was a regular contributor for well over a quarter of a century.³² During the twenties Shneur wrote very little in Hebrew. The market for Hebrew books was low

in that decade because the Jewish masses in Russia were being rocked by the political and economic upheavals following World War I and the Russian Revolution. A Hebrew writer could not have made enough to meet the basic necessities of life. Thus "Yiddish journalism was (Shneur's) salvation."³³ Shneur was gratified with the large Yiddish-reading public; he wrote, "I stand now before a million readers at least. At the present time I would be satisfied with one fourth that number in the holy tongue." The novels Anshe Shklov and Pandre Hagibor first appeared in the pages of the Jewish Daily Forward in serial form.³⁴ In the thirties Shneur received several literary honors, including honorary memberships in the French P.E.N. Club and the American Society of Writers. In 1936 he made his second visit to Eretz Israel to receive the first Bialik prize for Pirke Ya'ar.³⁵ It was during this trip that he saw the scenes that inspired his "Songs of Israel," a number of which later appeared in Hadoar.

With the Nazi invasion of France in 1940, the Shneurs went into hiding for a year and a half. Escaping from Europe through Spain, they reached New York City in September 1941. Shneur managed to save his manuscripts. However, his correspondence with literati, his library and the essays written about his works which he had collected were completely lost. During the decade of his residence in the United States he gradually regained financial security.³⁶ He translated Anshe Shklov and Pandre Hagibor into Hebrew and many installments of them appeared in Hadoar. Shneur completed the writing of Luchot Genuzim and started work on Ba'al Haparvah, which he finished in Israel in the early fifties. His shorter poetical works from this period reflected the major concerns of Jewry: the settlement in Palestine, the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Shneur was not enchanted with

American Jewry. He disliked the assimilation and believed that American Jews misused their "fabulous wealth for all kinds of doubtful goals and pleasures." The proper use of Jewish resources would be for the up-building of Eretz Israel.³⁷

In 1951 the family immigrated to Israel. This move was the fulfillment of an old dream. Shneur hoped to find peace for himself and his family there. "The sun of the Land of Israel perhaps will bring health to my soul and also to theirs, after all that has happened to us."³⁸ The poet also wanted to be in the midst of creativity and to him Israel was the symbol and reality of it. The virtue of Israel was that "she sprouts wings for a writer who dwells in her midst. The feverish tempo of creativity in all areas of life in the State of Israel influences also the writer, arousing his powers and bringing them to the surface." Shneur was in his middle sixties at the time of aliyah but he had no intention of slowing down his pace of writing. Until his very last years Shneur "appeared strong of stature and bright-eyed and all of him emanated a preserved strength of creativity...." At the age of seventy he was still planning new works.³⁹ Two years later he had to go to Europe "for reasons of health." From there he went to the United States, where he died in New York City on February 20, 1959.⁴⁰ In observance of sheloshim the Histadrut Ivrit of America in conjunction with Hadoar, the Jewish Daily Forward and several other organizations held a memorial service at the Free Synagogue, attended by 500 admirers of Shneur.⁴¹ In 1960 his remains were taken to Israel and reinterred in the Old Cemetery of Tel Aviv.⁴²

Shneur was a hard worker all his life. Although he did not have the tenacity to complete any organized course of study, he spent

prodigious amounts of time in creating his literature. From early morning to evening he would seclude himself in his room and sit working at his desk for hours.⁴³ A recurrent theme in his poetry was the oppression he felt when he lived in his parents' home in Shklov. He assiduously applied his creative powers to sing joyous hymns about youth in compensation for his own bitter childhood.⁴⁴

Shneur's rebellious act of leaving home at thirteen was not an uncommon occurrence among Eastern European Jewish boys in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many Zionist pioneers went to Palestine over their parents' objections. The similarity between Shneur and the pioneers did not stop here. The attractiveness of heresy and the negation of the Diaspora were two other important points in common. The major work in which Shneur dealt with heretical ideas was Luchot Genuzim (Hidden Tablets, 1951). It was published late in his life because he took twenty years to write it. The idea itself for this cycle of poems originated when he was a boy. Shneur wondered what had happened to the books that recorded the visions of the false prophets and the oracles of idolatrous priests. He believed that many scrolls of this type had been lost because of the interdiction of the rabbis. It was Shneur's intention to create a work that would reflect this grand but lost past.⁴⁵ He was accused of identifying with the ideas of Luchot Genuzim and the work itself was criticized as an artistic failure.⁴⁶

Shneur's personal view, which he conveyed in much of his poetry, was the desire to blend the prophetic traditions of Biblical Israel with the universal humanism of the modern West. In the same way as others negated the Diaspora, Shneur looked upon it as a debasement of the Jewish soul.⁴⁷ Jewish character had been corrupted by the walls of

the ghetto. Here there were no Jewish heroes like the ones who had conquered Canaan or rebelled against the Romans with Bar Kochba. Shneur rejected the galut value of kidush hashem, martyrdom, or submissiveness according to Zionist ideology. He concluded his poem "Yeme Habenavim Mitkarevim" with this line:

Cease to be among the martyrs, learn to be heroes...⁴⁸

The new type of Jewish hero Shneur had in mind was Noah Pandre. This character was not a yeshivah bachur but a worker. Pandre performed "deeds of bravery" that earned "him the respect even of gentiles for whom the Jew had been synonymous with a coward...."⁴⁹ The other side of Shneur's negation of the Diaspora was the pride felt for the "spiritual brilliance of ancient times." When Shneur left Eastern Europe to live in the enlightened cities of the West, he did not leave behind his feeling for being Jewish.⁵⁰ Whenever a crisis affected his people, he always responded "in thundering language."⁵¹

CHAPTER II

THE POEMS OF ZALMAN SHNEUR 1941-1951

Nostalgia, Livelihood and The Miracle

"Nostalgia," "Livelihood" and "The Miracle" were three poems about America written by Shneur before he lived in the United States. They have been included in this collection to give a view of the poet's attitudes on life in America.

The themes of these poems deal with urban, industrial America. In "Nostalgia" Shneur contrasts the quiet beauty of the countryside with the ugly congestion of the city. The numerous skyscrapers, "nets of stone," have trapped the city dwellers, who do not know how to escape. As time quickly goes by, they can only dream about pleasant rural scenes of long ago. Life in the city seems attractive but it actually eats away at a man's soul: "The shell is glossy but the soul, / Like a wormy nut, is desolate" (ll. 11-12).

In "Livelihood" Shneur describes the city as an unhealthy environment. Fumes coming from speeding automobiles are a noxious smoke in which it seems that human beings should not be able to live. Within this setting people are in a rush; they hasten to the subway to go to their jobs, where they pursue money. The contrast in earning a living between town and country is depicted in ll. 5-6: "...How will we bring forth / Our bread from the hard pavement?" In the blessing recited before a meal one is reminded that bread is brought forth from the earth. The farmer makes his living by working the soil but the person in the city must find a way to earn his living from bringing forth his bread "from the hard pavement."

Shneur takes a more favorable view of industrialization in "The Miracle" than of urban life in the two preceding poems. What modern technology is capable of doing is nothing short of a miracle. There is

a rabbinic legend that in the days of the Messiah man will be freed from labor. The earth will produce bread rolls ready to eat.¹ In America this miracle has already been accomplished by industrialization, symbolized by iron in the poem: "... upon twigs of iron are swaying / Bread rolls, as in the days of the Messiah" (ll. 3-4). In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve ate bread directly from a wheat-tree.² America is likewise a paradise because people can do virtually the same. In l. 5 a riddle is posed (cf. Judges 14:14). Just as one would not expect something sweet to come from something strong, one does not expect wine to come from oil. But the marvels of technology can accomplish this and can also generate power and devise means to cause water to flow in pipes and electricity in wires (ll. 5-9). Another wonder of America is the transformation of idlers into enterprising individuals (l. 9).

Gagu'im

Nostalgia

Lost among the giants of stone,
 Friends of mine, contemporaries, sigh:
 They dream about youth in the fields
 And in far-off green gardens.

Automobiles close off every exit,
 Towers scrape the clouds ...
 How will we tear the nets of stone?
 How will we stop the racing years?

5

Alas, cottages at sunset
 And the majestic quiet of the river!
 The shell is glossy but the soul,
 Like a wormy nut, is desolate.

10

Parnasah

Livelihood

We hasten to the subway,
 The body in a rush, the heart all in a quiver!
 A dollar tossed about in a storm ...
 Let's chase it, lest we miss our chance!

How dark every face! How will we bring forth

5

Our bread from the hard pavement?
 Just like the fly we descend upon a crumb
 And the foot is caught in the tar.

The oil bubbles and gives off vapor
 And wheels pass by in a storm; 10
 How do forget-me-nots blossom in the smoke?
 And in this tumult, how the townspeople?

Hanes

The Miracle

The miracle is already accomplished. Here flourishes
 Golden fruit in completely dry crevices;
 And upon twigs of iron are swaying
 Bread rolls, as in the days of the Messiah.

From the strong came forth the sweet. From oil - 5
 Wine for Kiddush and Havdalah.
 Abundance flows in every faucet
 And sunlight in electrified glass.

In a furnace of toil every idler is here refined;
 In the language of Shakespeare and mine - expressions: 10
 Enterprises blossom from flame
 And acts of charity from the smoke of iniquities.

On Mount Scopus

On Mount Scopus Shneur had a panoramic view of Jerusalem and he was awed by the sight of the building of new Jerusalem. The wall of the old city encloses "a profusion of buildings and holy places" (1. 3) and there is no room left in which to expand. The building of the new city is compared to the overflow of a river of stone which has been turned into foam by the pressure of so many buildings inside the wall. "The dense foam of stone" flows in all directions; on the north it reaches Mea Shearim, on the south Talpiot and on the west Bet Hakerem (11. 11-14).

The personified Mosque of Omar is surprised by the expansion of the city and looks with disapproval upon it. It is as if the Jews were impious toward "the holy city (that) has long been completed / In her somber beauty for all times" (11. 42-43). But the new Jew refuses to be locked in by the old wall; not satisfied with old holy things, he is determined to break out of the enclosure. He wants freedom to create and the hands he once carefully washed before putting on the tefilin straps he now dirties with clay. His goal is to see the rebuilding of the Land of Israel with the new Jerusalem as the inspiration. (11. 44-54).

Behar Hatsofim

On Mount Scopus

Jerusalem like a cup was filled

- Her old wall was filled -

With a profusion of buildings and holy places

Square-shaped and swollen with domes.

The dense foam of stone

5

Under pressure poured outside it

In the form of houses of hewn stone and streets

Like rivers that have congealed while flooding.

This foam of stone was swollen,

Pink and gray with white.

10

It covered Mea Shearim,

It rose to the heights of Talpiot;

It overflowed, branching out into Rechavia

And reaching all the way to Bet Hakerem.

This tempestuous energy of building

15

Knows no rest even now;

Calm and frozen at its center,

At all of its edges and sides it is seething;

And with it mounting up toward heaven

Ground lime, fumes of molten tar.

20

Gravel was poured out like gold;

Smooth pebbles rattled

While being crushed with mortar in the machines.

On the pavement of straight streets

Cars as red as blood scurry

25

Along the veins of stone.
 Camels and donkeys with burdens
 Flow from morning to night
 Through the meandering sloped lanes,
 Carrying the building materials 30
 To the throat of the creating power.
 Very soon even the green Valley of Jehoshaphat,
 Which separates life and death,
 Will be taken by storm
 And the leprosy of graves will be healed 35
 On all of the slope of the Mount of Olives,
 Which is proud of its dead holiness.

I saw you, Jerusalem, the old
 And new, from the summit of Mount Scopus:
 Standing within the enclosure of the wall 40
 Is the Mosque of Omar, saying
 In amazement: The holy city has long been completed
 In her somber beauty for all times
 But the Jew locked in jumped
 From the top of the roof of the cracked Churva Synagogue; 45
 He jumped with the cry of freedom
 And creation into the desolate valley.
 He dirtied his hands, which had been bound
 With tefilin straps, in clay,
 And his weak arm bent, 50
 Like bows, steel bars.

On his lips an eternal song renewed:

"Jerusalem rebuilt

Will spread throughout the Land of Israel."

Annotation to On Mount Scopus

32-33: " the green Valley of Jehoshaphat / Which separates life and death." In Joel 4:2, 12 the Valley of Jehoshaphat will be the place where God will judge the nations that dispersed His people Israel and divided the land among themselves. The Valley of Jehoshaphat separates the Mount of Olives from Mount Moriah. According to legend the resurrection of Jews and gentiles will occur on the Mount of Olives. God will judge them on Mount Moriah. The gentiles will cross over the Valley on a strong bridge that will collapse. The Jews will cross over on a weak bridge in safety and live eternal life.³

45. The site of the Churva Synagogue is in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. This handsome synagogue, which dated from the nineteenth century, was destroyed by the Arabs in 1948. The name, meaning a "ruin," quite inappropriately remained over from the previous synagogue on the site, which was left unfinished and abandoned in the eighteenth century.

The Port

The poet describes a scene of Jewish immigrants entering Palestine through the Jaffa Port. These immigrants, already weary from traveling, have another ordeal to go through. They have to be transferred from the ship to small boats. The Arab workers treat them like baggage.

(The immigrants) fell into the hands of boors
And vulgar carriers at the port.

...

Like pirates who drown
Their captives, they threw into the boats
Men and packs all together.
Youngsters flew down,
Women screamed bitterly, and old folks,
When they fell to the ground in one piece,
Counted all of their bones to see
That none of them had been broken.
Bags burst open, like eggs,
And their insides came out ... scarves,
Housewares with talit and tefilin
And all the various sorts of men's clothing.

(ll. 8-9, 12-23)

The immigrants are anxious to set foot on the holy soil but as soon as they do, they are importuned by Arab beggars, who insult them if they give too little or nothing. (ll. 31-37).

In contrast to the noisy and dirty port at Jaffa the new modern facility at Tel Aviv receives the immigrants in a calm, orderly fashion.

To Shneur the sight of the immigrants here evokes the image of pilgrims in ancient times.

Immigrants amble quietly
 Like pilgrims in former times.
 Their brothers meet them - carriers
 And clerks with "Peace be upon you,"
 Like priests wearing the ephod
 At the gates in the days of the Second Temple.

(ll. 45-50)

As placid as the scene seems, all is not well with the immigrants. They are the Jews who have given up hope in redemption by divine intervention. (ll. 56-57). In the Land of Israel, free from the hardships and humiliation of galut and inspired by the ancient glory of the Hebrews, they will be able to regain their strength and then rise to the task of "creating their own fate ... in a devastated land" (ll. 70-75).

Hanamel

The Port

I remember you, Jaffa Port, and I laugh;
 I laugh and cry over the memory of you:
 When immigrants fanned out
 From your gate that was full of commotion;
 When those who were stuffed with wanderings and hardship 5
 Tried to plant the soles of their feet
 Upon the rocks of your land, O daughter of Jaffa,
 They fell into the hands of boors
 And vulgar carriers at the port.
 The riffraff seethed frighteningly 10
 With dreadful husky voices.
 Like pirates who drown
 Their captives, they threw into the boats
 Men and packs all together.
 Youngsters flew down, 15
 Women screamed bitterly, and old folks,
 When they fell to the ground in one piece,
 Counted all of their bones to see
 That none of them had been broken.
 Bags burst open, like eggs, 20
 And their insides came out scarves,
 Housewares with talit and tefilin
 And all the various sorts of men's clothing.
 In the whirl of waves and voices,
 Squirted spittle and salty foam 25

The boats were thus brought to the port,
 Filled and packed with a human drove.
 Pillows and cushions and heads,
 Like globes of cabbage at summer's end,
 Hung over the sides of the boats. 30
 Hardly had uprooted and driven immigrants
 Planted the soles of their feet firmly
 On the holy soil when sweaty rough hands
 Grabbed them to beg for bakshish ... and if they gave -
 Insults, because they had given too little; 35
 And if not - then double insults:
 "Jew, God curse your religion, Jew!"

Now when anchors drop
 Into the bay of newly built Tel Aviv,
 A strong and clean Hebrew port, 40
 All iron and steel and cement,
 Stands to receive the displaced.
 There is no mud **nor** flying dust;
 But there is law and order and no tumult.
 Immigrants amble quietly 45
 Like pilgrims in former times.
 Their brothers meet them - carriers
 And clerks with "Peace be upon you,"
 Like priests wearing the ephod
 At the gates in the days of the Second Temple. 50
 Eyes recognize eyes,

Dresses of the daughters of Jacob flutter:

Curious girls come to make pleasant

The first impressions of the homeland

And to encourage with a smile on their lips

55

Hearts wrapped up in their misery;

No longer believing in redemption.

Whither did the husky voices go,

The commotion with the bursting of bags?

They have all been swallowed in the blue of the water,

60

Evaporated in the brightness of a new day.

Rahav the ruler of the sea was also humbled

When the trident was forcibly stolen

From his salty hand in the depths

And thrust into his ear. He has thus been pierced

65

To the rocks of the Hebrew settlement

And to the stony hooks of the shore

So that he will not move nor

Harm the weary pilgrims,

Until exiles shall have passed over and found rest

70

Like children in the bed of their mother;

Until they shall have gained new strength, and with a renewal

Of Hebrew might shall have rallied and risen

To the work of those creating their own fate -

A legend in a devastated land.

75

Annotation to The Port

62. Rahav was a mythical sea monster. In Psalm 89:11 and Job 26:12 the mangling of Rahav is in the context of stilling the waters of a raging sea. In Isaiah 51:9 Rahav is cut into pieces and in the following verse the waters of the sea are dried up to make a way for the redeemed to pass over.

Kefar Gil'adi

On reading "Kefar Gil'adi," one has the feeling of reliving with the poet his visit to this collective settlement in the northern tip of Israel. The village is in a fertile area and the description of the agricultural products stimulates the senses of sight, smell and taste (ll. 32-35, 42-52). The pioneers are both farmers and soldiers, engaged in the reconquest of their ancestral land through the peaceful pursuit of agriculture but forced to defend themselves against Arab enemies (ll. 5-12).

In awe of the mountain scenery and the pioneers' achievements the poet compares the resettlement of the Land of Israel to the original possession of the Land by the Israelites.

When leaves move stealthily,
 You hear, in the quiet of the morning,
 Like the tapping of bare feet
 And scarves inflated by the wind,
 The step of priests carrying the ark,
 As in the days of Joshua, when he went out
 To give the Hebrews the land of their inheritance.

(ll. 74-80)

Kefar Gil'adi

A village lies between Abel-Beth-Ma'acha

And Tel Chai - where heroes fell.

There a kevutsa struck roots, imbibing

Red soil, preserved like wine,

A community of young Robinsons

5

Who were moved to the edge of the Land of Canaan,

Defending their lair and fashioning

A new generation on ancestral ground.

There the crops are plentiful and well-watered

But life is beset with dangers:

10

A scheming enemy in nearby Syria,

A lurking savage across the Jordan.

Yet no complaint passes the lips

Of the youths of Kefar Gil'adi:

They are all strong-willed pioneers,

15

Experienced with the plow as well as the rifle.

All day they toil in the blistering heat

And armed, they guard the sleep of their women

In the cold because of fear at night.

The children sleep on feathers

20

Like tender chicks in their nest

But their parents upon mats.

There the cowsheds are built first,

The coops for the fowl second

And last the cabins for men.

25

A beekeeper is there, fond of

Hives. After her husband, the keeper,
 Was slain in a fatal ambush,
 She gave her heart to the bees,
 Aware of their joy and their anxiety, 30
 And they too know her ways.
 Out of the strength of her love, with the thanks of
 Busy little hummers,
 Fragrant honey flows
 And floods the Galilee with its sweetness. 35
 There maidens in linen breeches,
 Vestured like ancient priestesses,
 Sacrifice to the god of labor
 Youthful vigor with pure hands.
 A holy fire will not go out in their eyes 40
 And sun-tanned beauty will not fade from their faces.
 There Bryndza cheese is pungent,
 Bread has the flavor of the field,
 Tomatoes the taste of grapes
 And lettuce like early almonds. 45
 Golden butter and eggs,
 Like silver balls stacked
 In jars at dawn for the guests.
 Fish from the Waters of Merom
 Have sharp fins but a tender taste. 50
 The milk there flows and the grape juice,
 As it is and is not written in the Torah.
 Yet the spacious pockets in the linen breeches

Are empty - hollow.

Rich paupers are all the inhabitants 55

Of Kefar Gil'adi, as lonely as

A mast in the Arab sea.

The barns are full of all good things

But there's not a penny to split and buy

A child's toy, a kerchief 60

To adorn a woman's head on the Sabbath.

In this village I slept. My sleep

Was sweet to me, like the sleep of the long-lost son

When he returns to his mother's pillow.

One night I'll remember forever. 65

I arose at daybreak and saw

The mountains smoking like altars;

Gardens and cabins were burgeoning

Like lines of a bride's face in her veil.

The world round about was so guileless 70

And so mysterious; it had an awesome beauty,

Shaking the knees, till one bows

To give thanks to God coming from Paran.

When leaves move stealthily,

You hear, in the quiet of the morning, 75

Like the tapping of bare feet

And scarves inflated by the wind,

The step of priests carrying the ark,

As in the days of Joshua, when he went out

To give the Hebrews the land of their inheritance. 80

Annotations to Kefar Gil'adi

Kefar Gil'adi was founded in 1917 and named for a member Israel Gil'adi.

1. Abel-Beth-Ma'acha was a Biblical City.
2. Tel Chai, founded in 1917 as a shepherds' camp, was destroyed in 1920 by Arabs. The eight Jews killed in the attack became models of courage for the Israelis.⁴
3. A kevutza is a collective settlement.
42. Bryndza cheese is made from sheep's milk.
49. The "Waters of Merom" was the site of the last battle of the Canaanites to defend the Upper Galilee against the Israelites, led by Joshua (Joshua 11:1-15). This site is "identified ... with a brook which flows from Merom (modern Meiron) into the Sea of Galilee on the northwest."⁵ However, the poet probably has in mind Lake Chula, the highest body of water in the Jordan rift. According to a medieval legend Lake Chula was believed to be the Waters of Merom.⁶
58. "Full of all good things" is a Biblical phrase for abundance. See Deuteronomy 6:11.

On Guard

At night while he stands watch, a guard thinks about his duty to protect the women in a settlement in the Galilee. He complains that even in the mountainous Galilee (historically a place of refuge for persecuted groups) these Jews have not found safety from enemies. He looks forward to the day when a new generation "does not know / ... fear at nights in the homeland" (ll. 47-48). Until that time he is ready to lay down his life to guard the settlement (l. 1). Lest he make any noise to give away his position to possible attackers, he vows silently to protect the women "this night and many nights more" (ll. 40-41, 46).

Al Hamishmar

On Guard

Daughters of Jacob, I am your ransom!
 Like doves being pursued, you hurried
 Away from the lands of the Exile, to hide
 In the settlement among the rocks of Galilee.
 Golden as wheat, brown 5
 As the palms of Jericho when they are ripe,
 And black as the nights in the Negev.
 Your eyes, a string of eyes, are
 Like the blue of heaven for clearness
 And dark like the sea at sunset. 10
 Sad like the eyes of mothers
 Worrying about their children in a strange land,
 And joyful like plums in the sun.
 I on guard here stand,
 A pioneer among fellow pioneers, 15
 To protect you, mothers, sisters
 And sweethearts, in the prime of your spring,
 From the fear of savage ambushers.
 With hoe and rifle on the shoulder
 And a pitchfork, since swords are lacking, 20
 We thus guard your fitful sleep
 After a day of toil in the fields.
 We thus guard the fruit of your love
 And the fruit of our love, which is nestled
 Under your fearful hearts. 25

The dew falls, cold

And bitter too, like restless sleep.

A nocturnal bird screeches in a crevice,

A lizard rustles in the vegetable patch.

With them, from the cabins, comes

30

Your sigh, burdened with dreams,

In front of your closed eyes

Still move the talons of predators;

Still fears go on pecking

At your heads, up under your tresses.

35

"Save now!" you thus beg urgently,

In mumbling, from the depth of heavy sleep,

To rescue yourselves from the hands of violators

Who come to pursue you all the way here.

We your guardians vow,

40

Without a sound, in the darkness of the mountains:

With this dew-laden wind as witness and Great Bear

With her seven stars our witnesses,

With this howl of a distant fox as witness,

To protect you we vow,

45

This night and many nights more!

Until a new generation arises that does not know

This fear at nights in the homeland.

This is the hatred our enemies

Have brought, from the lands of the Exile,

50

To implant in the hearts of Arabs.

Until a new generation arises, an ideal generation,

In body and soul a new generation,
Hewn stones for future building,
A monument to the generation of pioneers.

Hymn to Tel Chai

Shneur composed this poem for Tel Chai's Memorial Day, the eleventh of Adar. On this day Israelis make a pilgrimage to the cemetery at Tel Chai to honor the eight heroes who died in the defense of Tel Chai in 1920. In that year "multitudes of Arabs" attacked this shepherd's camp, established only three years before. The defense of Tel Chai is a symbol of the Israelis' determination to fight to the last to hold onto their ancient homeland against great odds.⁷ To the poet these eight heroes, poorly fed, clothed and equipped, braved the onslaught of savage attackers.

Exhausted, frantic, starving,
Dressed in patches botched together,
From the plow to the rifle,
Thus they defended Tel Chai.

A hundred enemies against ten
Roared and gnashed their teeth;
Bombs against faulty rifles,
That's how they demolished Tel Chai. (ll. 5-12)

The death of these heroes was not in vain (ll. 1-2). The example of their courage will shine like a redeeming light at their gravesite (ll. 19-20).

Himnon Letel Chai

Hymn to Tel Chai

Not in vain did they fight in the mountains,
 Not for naught was blood shed in the valley.
 O daughters of Galilee, sing unto the heroes
 Who fell at Tel Chai!

Exhausted, frantic, starving,
 Dressed in patches botched together,
 From the plow to the rifle,
 Thus they defended Tel Chai.

5

A hundred enemies against ten
 Roared and gnashed their teeth;
 Bombs against faulty rifles,
 That's how they demolished Tel Chai.

10

With every roar, with every explosion
 A hailstorm of lead a gift they received.
 That's how they fought, how they fell,
 Youths and maidens at Tel Chai.

15

Alas for frightened cowards,
 For all the hopeless: "That's enough for me, enough!"
 From the graves redemption will spring up,
 Light - from the firebrands at Tel Chai.

20

Saadia's Vision

Rav Saadia (882-942) is the best known of the geonim, the heads of the Talmudic academies in Babylonia between the sixth and thirteenth centuries. Saadia, who became the gaon of the academy at Sura in 928, was the "arch enemy" of the Karaites.⁸ The Karaites were a Jewish sect who rejected the Oral Law of the rabbis.

At first glance the reader thinks that this poem is going to be a dialogue between a Karaite and Rav Saadia. Actually there is no debate between them. Each man makes a pronouncement about his position and the exchange of views stops there.

The Karaite, speaking first, gives his objections to the rabbinic ordinances that have added numerous rules on top of the simple law of the Torah. There are so many of them to follow that fruit withers on the ground while a person is involved in observing the details prescribing the manner of gathering fruit (ll. 10-12). There is no end in sight for the cessation of rabbinic lawmaking because every disciple who aspires to become a rabbi must prove himself by creating new laws (ll. 13-15). The result of all these rabbinic rules is that the Jews are fated to be sinners because of the impossibility of carrying out so many of them (ll. 16-20).

The Karaite says that the rabbinic ordinances are "dry" (l. 1). Rav Saadia's defense of rabbinic interpretations is based on a metaphor comparing the development of the oral law to the cool, life-giving waters of a brook. This watercourse began at Sinai and as it flows downward, it continually enlarges (with rabbinic ordinances) until becoming a river of redemption (ll. 27-35). As for the Karaites who try to preserve the letter of the law, their situation is comparable to

"salt(ing) away statutes / In a confining jar, namely / The first five books" (ll. 41-43). No one will be able to live off this brine (ll. 44-46).

Because the Karaites have separated themselves from the community of Rabbinic Jews, they have doomed themselves and their descendants. Not only will they lose their present adherents but they will also not be able to beget any new followers.

Your descendants will be like the branch

That is cut off ...

One by one it leaves will fall off

You will see your life come to an end

Among the gentiles, in bereavement and barrenness.

(ll. 53-54, 56, 64-65)

The fortune of Rabbinic Jews will be exactly the opposite. They will be an everlasting community, always verdant and fruitful.

But the people Israel is a tree planted

Beside the streams of Torah and Talmud;

When a leaf withers, there sprout up

One-hundred green ones in its place. (ll. 60-63)

Chazon Rav Se'adyah

Saadia's Vision

The Karaite:

We've had our fill of dry halachot!
 The details of the rabbis have drawn
 Fences around every fence until we are
 Like prisoners within the garden of the Torah,
 Slaves of commands that were not given 5
 At Sinai and that Moses did not inscribe.
 Seven issue commandments for every slave.
 Seven jumps we must make
 Before drinking a spoonful of water thirstily;
 Seven times we must clang with the chains, 10
 The chains of the law, before we can gather
 Withered fruit on the ground for food.
 And the disciples of the sages add
 A new burden daily
 So they can also become sages. 15
 Our bent back breaks loose
 From under the load of the commandments;
 The rabbis knock and blow
 And the whole people of Israel are sinners:
 They can never fulfill their duty. 20

Rav Saadia:

A man does not draw water from his well
 When it is dug in the desert;

The water was dirty and bitter

In those former days.

Water when it is purified can be drunk

25

And wine, when it has settled on its lees.

The brook of ancient times was the Torah:

Its beginning was at Sinai in the wilderness,

Gushing forth from broken tablets;

Its streams were statutes and ordinances,

30

Its rapids the Great Assembly

And its rivers will be the days of the Messiah.

We are fish in the brook,

Hastening with its chilling current

Toward the distant redemption of the world.

35

Anyone who separates himself from it, my misguided son,

Is like one separating himself from eternal life.

You and your brothers, the separatists,

Both you and your children who come after you

Will wither.

40

Your teachers salt away statutes

In a confining jar, namely

The first five books.

The one who partakes of them will not be satisfied,

The one who thirsts will remain thirsty his whole life;

45

He can not contain the salt without water.

You will hang the tsitsit on your wall,

Turn your Sabbath into darkness

And the palace of the Torah into suffocation.

You will become sterile ostriches 50
Hatching stones in the desert
And will not hear the chirp of disciples.
Your descendants will be like the branch
That is cut off and hangs for show
In your house and in the house of your God. 55
One by one its leaves will fall off.
Until it becomes bereft and bare:
Holy by virtue of the poverty of its knowledge,
Arrogant about the leanness of its naked limbs.
But the people Israel is a tree planted 60
Beside the streams of Torah and Talmud;
When a leaf withers, there sprout up
One-hundred green ones in its place.
You will see your life come to an end
Among the gentiles, in bereavement and barrenness. 65

Annotation to Saadia's Vision

60-63. Cf. Psalm 1:3; "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."

A New Lawsuit by Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berditchev

Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berditchev (ca. 1740-1809) was a Chasidic rebbe known for his sayings challenging God to alleviate the sufferings of the Jews.⁹ The Kaddish of Rabbi Levi Yitschak to which Shneur refers (l. 28) carries this theme.

Good morning to you, Lord of the world!
I, Levi Isaac, son of Sarah of Berditchev, am coming to
you in a legal matter concerning your people of Israel.
What do you want of Israel?

...
I shall not go hence, nor budge from my place
until there be a finish
until there be an end of exile -
"Glorified and sanctified be His great name!"¹⁰

"A New Lawsuit ..." was written in 1942 in the midst of the Holocaust, "the Third Destruction." The poet raises Rabbi Levi Yitschak from the grave to persuade him to finish his case against the Master of the Universe. (ll. 5-7, 12-13).

Rabbi Levi first says that he is not able to speak because he is dead. The poet tells him that he is alive and "your suit against the Supreme God / On that Rosh Hashanah in the year 5550 (1790) / Is also living indelibly in our hearts" (ll. 19-21). However, what really convinces Rabbi Levi to renew his case is the tale of destruction.

By the light of the memorial candles that burn
For the martyrs of the "Third Destruction,"
Who were strangled, drowned and slaughtered,
The young in the bosoms of their mothers
And the old in the arms of their children,
Or were buried alive ... Renew
Your pleas, Rabbi Levi,
Your case against the Master of the Universe,

Which you did not finish at that time

One hundred and fifty years ago. (ll. 31-40)

Rabbi Levi's voice begins to rise into a chant and he addresses God, telling Him that he will now complete his case.

I desire a lawsuit,

A lawsuit not completed up to now

Because of my fear of You in my lifetime

And at my death, for lack of an heir.

Once a man dies and not twice.

Now I no longer fear,

I will not spare Your great name.

The Scroll of Your Torah will be open,

Chasidim will sit in judgment

And the whole house of Israel will be witnesses.

(ll. 52-61)

The Jews, Rabbi Levi continues, for hundreds of years obeyed every detail of the 613 commandments in this world but they were never given the rewards for performing them, which God had promised but always removed to the next world. After suffering martyrdom "From the time of the destruction of the Temple / To the persecutions of 5703 (1942)" the Jews want the rewards now in this world (ll. 62-94).

The Torah is compared to a promissory note whose terms God has failed to fulfill. The Jews had many opportunities to demand collateral from God but they patiently waited for Him to honor His original debt.

For a thousand years we lent trust

To You and to Your prophets

On notes of honor, which are nothing other than

The Five Books of the Torah.

Whenever a term for payment had passed,

We did not take anything as a pledge;

But transfer them we did, each time,

Onto new papers:

Onto the Talmud and the Codes

And onto the Mishneh Torah

Of Rabbi Moses Maimonides.

We waited a long time.

We forwent payment countless times. (11. 100-112)

Now the Jews can not wait any longer. God must either repay at once or admit that He is bankrupt. If He acknowledges that He is unable to meet His debt, Rabbi Levi and each member of the congregation in Berditchev will give over their most valuable possessions to save His honor,

Just so that a shadow of doubt should not fall,

Far be it, upon Your name, which is sealed

On Your Torah five times. (11. 142-143)

Alas, God's honor has been sullied and He has no means of righting the situation. The Lord has no power to redeem His people; therefore, His promises are invalid and His debts are canceled by default. If He had the power to redeem, Rabbi Levi would not be able to show Him

... the poor-house at the edge of heaven,

Where all of the 'ends of days' that have passed by

And all of the Messiahs who were crushed are discarded,

From the time of Bar Kochba to this day. (11. 158-161)

The meaning of Numbers 10:35 is reversed in 11. 162-167. In the Biblical

verse Moses summons the Lord to arise from the ark to scatter His enemies. After showing the Lord the refuse heap of Messiahs, Rabbi Levi summons Him to rest in the ark, this position, in the light of the Biblical verse, indicating a lack of power. What is scattered are not God's enemies but His invalid promises; what flies away from God are not those who hate Him but His debts.

When the ark sets out
 With Your glory descending into it,
 Your servant, Rabbi Levi, will call out and say:
 'Come to rest, O Lord, and all of Your promises for
 the future
 Will scatter,

A wind will carry away Your debts!' (11. 162-167).

The power of redemption now lies with the people of Israel. They have given up hope in a redeemer sent by God and take into their own hands the task of rebuilding their lives in the Land of Israel, which God abandoned and no longer remembers. When their task is completed and they rebuild a sanctuary, they will again accept God's kingship after everyone shall have forgotten God's humiliation. (11. 168-186).

Then they will return to serve You in love.
 Then they will again give thanks, as I do,
 Rabbi Levi Yitschak son of Sarah, Your servant:
 'May His great name
 Be magnified and sanctified.'" (11. 187-191)

Din Torah Chadash Lerav Levi Yitschak Mibarditshuv
A New Lawsuit by Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berditchev

1

On the eve of this fast, a public fast,
When the memorial candles had been kindled
For the martyrs of Poland and Reisen,
In the synagogue of the Chabad Chasidim,
I raised, with the holy spirit, 5
Rabbi Levi Yitschak son of Sarah,
Up from the holy congregation of Berditchev,
Which was also destroyed and is no more,
And said to him: "Speak, do not be afraid!
The holy spirit has raised you up; 10
It will also protect you.
Finish your case, Rabbi Levi,
Versus the Master of the Universe."

2

He whispered: "I'm not able to speak, my son;
Look, I'm dead to this world 15
And live only in the world to come ..."
"Don't say you've died, Rabbi Levi!
You are alive to us even now
And your suit against the Supreme God
On that Rosh Hashanah in the year 5550 20
Is also living indelibly in our hearts.
Its melody still rings in our ears.
But you, the precentor

And the poet of the generation - a generation of Chasidim -
 And a relative of the author of the "Tanya," 25
 You were frightened and stopped your arguing
 At the time of the great lawsuit
 And broke off within the great Kaddish.
 But on this day, the day the world was born,
 A day of much zeal and of shame, 30
 By the light of the memorial candles that burn
 For the martyrs of the Third Destruction,
 Who were strangled, drowned and slaughtered,
 The young in the bosoms of their mothers
 And the old in the arms of their children, 35
 Or were buried alive ... Renew
 Your pleas, Rabbi Levi,
 Your case against the Master of the Universe,
 Which you did not finish at that time
 One hundred and fifty years ago, 40
 In your great humility
 And in your love - God has no limit."

3

Then Rabbi Levi Yitschak son of Sarah
 Removed his shroud from his face
 And his black lips trembled. 45
 His voice was a ghostly voice from the grave,
 Steadily rising into a joyful song, until becoming
 The voice of the precentor, who chants
 At the close of the fast on Yom Kippur:

"I, who am poor in deed, have returned 50
 To you, Master of the Universe!
 I desire a lawsuit,
 A lawsuit not completed up to now
 Because of my fear of You in my lifetime
 And at my death, for lack of an heir. 55
 Once a man dies and not twice.
 Now I no longer fear,
 I will not spare Your great name.
 The Scroll of Your Torah will be open,
 Chasidim will sit in judgment 60
 And the whole house of Israel will be witnesses.

4

Six hundred and thirteen commandments You commanded us,
 One hundred details for every commandment.
 We nourished them, we preserved them, every last one,
 In Your beautiful entrance hall 65
 Under the blue of Your sky
 In this world ...
 Always, always in this world.
 As for You, Almighty,
 Only a promise did You make. 70
 You postponed the rewards of the commandments
 All the way to a parlor flying in the air
 In the midst of the Clouds of Glory,
 All the way to the next world ...
 Always, always to the next world. 75

This world is promised too.

Its gate is an open grave.

They go through it on a pock-marked road

With the rattle of dry bones

And the shrieking of martyrs over fires:

80

Hear, O Israel ...!

That's enough for us, Merciful Father,

With the scores of worlds we acquired

Through our self-sacrifice for You

From the time of the destruction of the Temple

85

To the persecutions of 5703 (1942).

We want this world,

A world with blooms and light;

With ground under our feet,

With bread of prosperity in the basket

90

And with wine for the embittered

Chilled in the vat of Your mountains

And served on the table of nobles

In the midst of all the nations of the world.

5

You were faithful to us

95

At the Exodus from Egypt,

With the building of the Temple twice;

We worshiped the seal of Your hands

On Your holy Torah.

For a thousand years we lent trust

100

To You and to Your prophets

On notes of honor, which are nothing other than
The Five Books of the Torah.

Whenever a term for payment had passed,
We did not take anything as a pledge; 105
But transfer them we did, each time,
Onto new papers:

Onto the Talmud and the Codes
And onto the Mishneh Torah
Of Rabbi Moses Maimonides. 110

We waited a long time,
We forwent payment countless times.
Now we can't wait any longer.

Repay Your children at once!
Or acknowledge publicly 115

Before the entire holy assembly
That You have fallen, so to speak,
From Your great wealth;

Have gone into heavy bankruptcy
And hidden Yourself in the cloud. 120

Acknowledge it on this evening
By the light of the numerous memorial candles.

Tell the truth! ... Then we
Will pay off Your debts.

I, Levi Yitschak son of Sarah, 125
Of the holy congregation of Berditchev,
Will pay them off first.

The crown of my worn out talit

- silver cords with faded gold -

I will tear from me and pay. 130

And all of the holy congregation,
Which is standing in dread behind me,
Will do, as one man, as I do.

If it seems a trifle thing to you,
We will arise and add 135

Many times as much:
Almond-shaped engagement rings,
Antique Havdalah cups,
Life-blood from the heart ...

Because we have dearly loved you, 140
As it is written: "and with all of your might."
Just so that a shadow of doubt should not fall,
Far be it, upon Your name, which is sealed
On Your Torah five times.

6

Immediately after this fast, 145
At the conclusion of the blessing of the moon,
I will shout: "Merciful Jews!

Please help me save
The honor of the great Merciful,
Who is hidden in the cloud and weeps ... 150

With my thread bare talit I will wipe away
The hot tears from Your eyes;
I will set You in the Holy Ark,
Which was broken by the blow of those who ravaged us;

On my free shoulder I will bear You 155
 And behind me, the whole house of Israel.
 To a temporary abode we will carry You,
 To the poor-house at the edge of heaven,
 Where all of the 'ends of days' that have passed by
 And all of the Messiahs who were crushed are discarded, 160
 From the time of Bar Kochba to this day.
 When the ark sets out
 With Your glory descending into it,
 Your servant Rabbi Levi will call out and say:
 'Come to rest, O Lord, and all of Your promises for the future 165
 Will scatter.
 A wind will carry away Your debts!"
 We will no longer wait for the Redeemer.
 We ourselves will be the redeemers
 Who bring consolation to ourselves 170
 And good tidings to the whole world.
 We will sell ourselves as slaves to the peoples
 Who dwell in safety and see
 This last scene.
 We will serve them ... and they will afflict us ... 175
 Day and night we will not desist
 Until the ploughshare sticks to our hands
 And the hammer to the palm of those who wield it;
 Until our land is redeemed,
 Which You abandoned and no longer remember; 180
 Until the third Temple is built

With Your golden sanctuary in its midst.

There we will crown You with honor.

You will again reign over us.

And our children who are to come will forget

185

All of Your humiliation, O God!

Then they will return to serve You in love,

They will again give thanks, as I do,

Rabbi Levi Yitschak son of Sarah, Your servant:

"May His great name

190

Be magnified and sanctified."

Annotations to A New Lawsuit by Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berditchev

3. Reisen is an area in Byelorussia.
4. Chabad, a sect of the Chasidic movement stressing intellectuality, was founded by Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745-1813). Chabad is an acronym for chochmah (wisdom), binah (understanding) and da'at (knowledge).
7. Berditchev was a shtetl in the western part of the district of Kiev near the border of Volhynia.
25. The author of the Tanya was Shneur Zalman; in this work, published in 1796, he formulated the doctrines underlying Chabad Chasidism.
50. "Who am poor in deed" is a clause taken from the precentor's prayer Hineni, recited by him before the repetition of the Musaf Amidah of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Of course on the Days of Awe God sits in judgment of Israel; here Israel will be sitting in judgment of God. The precentor is "trembling and terrified"; Rabbi Levi Yitschak is no longer afraid.
- 65, 72. The idea of performing the commandments in this world, the "entrance hall," and receiving the rewards in the next world, the "parlor," is based on Avot 4:16; "This world is like a vestibule (entrance hall) before the world to come; prepare thyself in the vestibule that thou mayest enter into the banquet hall (parlor)."
73. The "Clouds of Glory" according to legend surround the Divine Throne.
141. "And with all of your might" is taken from Deuteronomy 6:5.
- 162-167. Cf. Numbers 10:35; "And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, 'Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.'"

To Those Who Forgive

Since this poem was published in 1943, Shneur's vindictiveness should be seen in the perspective of Hitler's Final Solution. Following the rule of "do to them as they have done to us," the poet imagines some quite hideous acts of retaliation (ll. 5-11). He overworks the image of the murderers' attempt "to weigh the fruits of their labor" in a balance whose other scale is loaded with the hearts of Jews (ll. 12-17).

Lasolchim

To Those Who Forgive

Lo! The refuge of every scoundrel is forgiveness.

Don't smile at the swine

Who gnawed your children, defiled your women and drove nails
Into your heads that nurtured the Talmud!

With self-restraint walk about watchfully,
Like disasters and prophecies that did not come,
like the barren symbols of breavement.

Poison the wells of their redemption and at the start

5

of their holidays let loose

The shadows of your martyrs, arms cut off, throats slashed,

To their brides send skulls and to the spinsters

your plucked old men;

The skeletons of your battered children set down in their cribs.

The tresses of your violated daughters plait with

their works of linen,

Hang the gouged out eyes of your youths among their cherries,

10

And all your heavy hearts throw upon the scales in their shops.

The murderers foolishly take them to weigh the fruits

of their labor by them.

But they will not ever be outweighed in the balance. No load

at all will equal their weight.

Between heaven and earth will be placed the fruit of their land,
their cattle and their merit.

Their priests slaughter on the scales of fear 15
and break into pieces their savior.
They throw on swords and crosses to weigh down their hollow
labors;
But the scale of the balance does not go down; rather it
darkens the morning of their freedom.

Praise for the Hebrew Girl

After many years of wandering in faraway lands the Hebrew girl, standing for the Jewish people, is welcomed back to her ancient homeland with this hymn. By reference to prominent figures from several eras the course of Jewish history is outlined from Abraham to the Golden Age in Spain. After this last period the decline of Jewry follows. (Shneur virtually ignores Ashkenazic Jewry, mentioning only Rav Solomon Yitschaki, Rashi, as a representative of this group.)

You dwelled in the palaces of Spain but fled in distress

And withered in the clay houses of Morocco and Algeria. (ll. 23-24)
However, just as Sarai, the name of Abraham's wife before she conceived Isaac, was able to bear a child in old age, the Hebrew girl will recover from her exhaustion and be rejuvenated. From her will come forth a multitude of sons to continue the story of the Jews (ll. 25-26).

The title of the poem alludes to Psalm 33:1, "Praise is comely for the upright."

La'ivriyah Tehilah

Praise for the Hebrew Girl

Together we welcome your return from faraway lands of wandering,
 From across dark mountains, uncharted and flowing with blood.
 Like the seven branches of the menorah our joyous song holds up
 Seven stanzas of hymn to this your high honor:

You left with the bells of the flock the city of grandfather
 Abraham,

5

The ruins of Hammurabi and the tablets of Gilgamesh;
 You wandered for thousands of years but still you are perfectly
 desirable,
 In your eyes - the blue of the east, yearning and fiery youth.

You fought against the gods of Philistia, made sacrifices to
 Baal on the high places

And sparkled in the sanctuary of Solomon in the shadow of the
 wings of the cherub;

10

You went up with the exiles to Babylon and tore with the
 Maccabees

The rag of the Samaritans, the border of Yemen and the sands
 of Libya.

Rav Judah the Patriarch of the Exile built for you the palace of
 the law

With the hammer of halachah and set you on an ivory throne.

Skillful pointers clothed you with flowering points of life; 15
Then your footsteps were swift and you became a charming woman.

Rav Saadia cleared the stones from your way. With his code of
law

Maimonides among the Arabs established for you a strong fortress;
Rav Solomon Yitschaki brought the heart of the masses to you
By solving for their children, the confused among you, every
mystery. 20

Then you stepped like a queen. Revered groomsman,
Ibn Gabirol with Halevi, raised you to the heights of poetry;
You dwelled in the palaces of Spain but fled in distress
And withered in the clay houses of Morocco and Algeria.

But now, after your withering, there is again for you
rejuvenation, 25

Like Sarai the mother of the Hebrews, even though your lord is
an old man.

You have borne in the time of his old age not one Issac of joy,
But poets and writers and prophets - a populous assembly.

Therefore to you we lift up a joyous song in the Land and in the
Exile

And a blessing for revival we bring to you at this time; 30
Young school children will sing in unison
And weanlings will respond in wholehearted chatter.

Hour of Ascent

New York, city of skyscrapers, is compared to ancient Babylon, where "a tower with its top in the heavens" was built (Genesis 11:4). In the Biblical story the building of the Tower of Babel, symbol of man's presumption, is not completed. Work on it stops when God confounds the language of man; He has been affronted by what they are doing: "... this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Genesis 11:6).

The "impossible" has been accomplished in New York City; the skyscrapers are "like rebellious arms beyond counting" (l. 6). Modern men are rebels who dare to say that they are like gods (ll. 9-10). They are compared to Nimrod, the founder of Babylon (Genesis 10:10), whose name contains by coincidence the Hebrew root marad, "rebel." The man-made wonders outshine natural creations. At night the thousands of lights, "electric moons," casting their beams from the skyscrapers make the moon, the "thin copper disk" created by God, pale into insignificance (ll. 15-19).

The poet ponders the meaning of man's creative power. Though the lights made by man are "mute," the poet says that they have a laugh. They laugh because "We have grasped the space of empty heaven" (l. 27). In other words, the skyscraper with its lights has "its top in the heavens." Man's imagination, "evil from his youth and prevailing over all" (l. 38), is able to create anything. The phrase "evil from his youth" is from Genesis 8:21. It appears in the context of God's promise to Noah that He will never again destroy the world because of man. Man's activities show his creative might ("When he whispers a command, an echo thunders" l. 42). The gods are provoked but are powerless to act; their being depicted as dressed in rags shows this (ll. 43-44). Man will go about

doing as he likes and his work will not be threatened with destruction
by God.

She'at Aliyah

Hour of Ascent

Hymn to New York

At the close of day at the southern end of the park
 There's an hour ... the hour of ascent:
 In the smoke of buildings a city rises,
 Towers of Babylon in a field of fire.

Against the reddened west they are outstretched
 Like countless arms in rebellion;
 Not just one Nimrod raised them
 And crowned their fists with light.

5

From all lands rebels came
 And said: "We will be like gods!
 We will raise ourselves above all earthly inhabitants;
 Facing the sun we will set a city and people."

10

As skies grow dimmer,
 The eyes of giants are kindled
 And look with a thousand rows of lights
 At the moon - a thin copper disk.

15

Against the electric moons of the towers
 How sad the moon that God created!
 Like comets are their beams -
 A crest of splendor on the night's crown.

20

Among bouquets, wreaths and festoons
 There each blossom of light competes and swallows another,
 This is the adversary of creativity; man's drive
 Summons worn out laws into conflict.

To the laughter of these mute lights 25
 I give much attention during the nights:
 We have grasped the space of empty heaven;
 A new people we will beget in a cloudy secret.

With us they will climb seventy floors;
 Every house a market, every tower a city. 30
 From veins of copper light will flow
 And a wall will make river waters gush.

To us they will bring up the blessings of earth,
 Milk from herds, fruits from the garden,
 From ivory boxes glass pears; 35
 A generation of visionaries and artists sing for joy.

All of them the will of man created,
 Evil from his youth and prevailing over all.
 He turned all profane things into holiness
 And the Sabbaths he made profane. 40

The smoke of his desires tickles the heavens.
 When he whispers a command, an echo thunders

To enrage the sleep of the last of the gods
In tattered garments of blue and rags of mist.

A Psalm of Lilit

In medieval Jewish folklore Lilit is Adam's wife before the creation of Eve. She represents the glamorous woman about whom every man dreams in his sexual fantasies.¹¹ Thus she arises "from the desires of man, / As Venus from the foam of the sea" (ll. 1-2). Her charm and beauty can enchant any man into her power.

Like Delilah with a head full of witchcraft

I bind Samsons with beautiful locks of hair. (ll. 19-20)

These lines are an allusion to the warning given to Faust:

Beware of her fair hair! for she excels

All women in the magic of her locks;

And when she winds them round a young man's neck,

She will not ever set him free again.¹²

Since a man oversteps the bounds of reality when he dreams of sexual play with a voluptuous woman, Lilit is the symbolic figure of any of man's desires to overreach himself.

Mizmor Lelilit

A Psalm of Lilit

I arose from the desires of man,
 As Venus from the foam of the sea.
 They were the dim lights of a new world,
 Sorrow with blood boiling.

Adam lived then without woman,
 As a confused wanderer in the garden.
 I accompanied him like a strange shadow and showed him,
 A lustful young lion, the songbird's yearning.

Then, as a sinful thought, I would ridicule his fear
 Of eating some of the fruit from the tree of good and evil. 10
 First he would raise his head and ask:
 "Why is it forbidden? For what reason?"

From the time that I learned the ways of man,
 The fast of the Nazirite, the will of the pure in heart,
 I intoxicated their righteousness, but not with wine; 15
 I caused them pain ... and it was good for them.

I have many breasts like a she-wolf to suckle
 All the cubs of man with a secret milk.
 Like Delilah with a head full of witchcraft
 I bind Samsons with beautiful locks of hair. 20

Satan was born when man
 Began denying the gods on high.
 In the entire world which they created
 This is my master, whom I worship to this day.

In love we beget spirits of falsehood 25
 That God is not able to subjugate.
 The charm of the souls of all man's creations:
 The flesh dies, the imagination lives.

"The flesh is mine," boasts the Creator,
 "To me this will return when the time comes." 30
 My Satan laughs: "But the spirit is mine
 That changes the world and does not die."

Man is tossed about between the mighty
 And he will never have rest,
 Until the day comes, perish the thought, 35
 When the mighty carry on one against one.

Albion's Burden

This diatribe against England has a title reminiscent of Isaiah's prophecies of doom and in the last section of the poem Shneur hopes that a disaster will befall England. In 1947, when Shneur wrote this poem, Jewish antipathy toward England was very strong. In her efforts to appease the Arabs she was restricting the immigration of Jewish refugees to Palestine and at times sinking the ships that carried these passengers. The poem reminds one of the saying that "England has no permanent friends, only permanent interests." During World War II the Arab states had collaborated with the Nazis, while the Jewish Brigade, formed by Palestinian Jews, had served with the British army in Italy, North Africa and the Middle East. But the British government forgot the loyal participation of the Jews and enforced the restrictive immigration policy.¹³

In the poem the ultimate cause of England's wickedness is that her people are the descendants of "William the Robber" (William the Conqueror), who, according to the poet, "was from Germany, the mother of all impurity" (l. 67). Tainted by this "Saxon blood," the English throughout the subsequent course of their history are fated to be plunderers and murderers. The bulk of the poem is like a compendium of England's "crimes" against the other nations of the world. However, England will not forever have impunity. Her history will end where it began. "From fog, Albion, you emerged / Into the light ... / And to the fog you thus shall return" (ll. 568-569). Justice will be done when this island falls into the sea where she "cast those weary unto death / Into the swirl of storms" (ll. 588-589).

Masa Albion

Albion's Burden

1

Between sea and sea a large island is stuck in,
 Which Sandalphon drove down like an anchor of limestone and sand;
 Crimes of generations and fog are his swaddling clothes.
 Ruling nations by his cunning schemes,
 He breaks his way into closed ports 5
 With his armored ships.
 States he swallows and reward he seeks
 From those who descend into the depths of his belly.
 Legends about the tribes of Shem and Ever,
 Which were lost and are gone forever, 10
 Over the island hover.
 But a gentile he is with a heart too uncircumcized
 To be a descendant of these lost tribes.
 From the days of William the Robber
 This large island holds 15
 With a tight chain of dominion
 The Irish isles,
 Like a dog tied to it generations ago.
 The chain has been torn away,
 Challenge has cracked. 20
 Now he claims by force
 His decaying dominion
 Over a people not his, in an eastern land,
 Who are hiding there from the fury of peoples.

| | |
|--|----|
| Everyone slaughters: | 25 |
| Wicked Germany, | |
| Plundered and plundering Poland, | |
| Rumania - land of thieves. | |
| Now he too comes to slaughter, | |
| In white gloves | 30 |
| With a polished stovepipe on his head, | |
| The son of Albion. | |
| Without a judge to judge anymore in the land, | |
| He is the judge and the executioner. | |
| No man protests. | 35 |
| No people is enraged. | |
| Scarlet are the nails of all nations | |
| From Jewish blood: | |
| The bear, the panther, the hyena, | |
| Even the stinking marten. | 40 |
| In the beaks of them all is stuck a tender feather | |
| From the pillows of the ravaged people, | |
| From the tresses of their daughters. | |
| Now they too come, | |
| The enlightened people, | 45 |
| Dressed in military uniforms: | |
| In their pocket the peace treaty | |
| But in their hand a sword. | |
| A sword for flourishing settlements, | |
| A sword for those who escaped the oven | 50 |

Sleeping on their packs.

Shooting children,

Pushing pregnant women,

Everything is permitted

With no cock to crow

55

"Violence!"

3

Here they go marching;

Warriors armed with iron . are

Conquerors of chicken-coops,

Riders of milch cows!

60

The fine youth of Albion,

Whose jawbones are the jawbone of an ass,

Whose teeth are patched with gold,

Stamp their boots into vegetable gardens.

All of them have a long pedigree,

65

Descendants of William the Robber,

Who was from Germany, the mother of all impurity.

With his army of evildoers he came

In painted boats

And conquered the large island;

70

Who ruled with a hand dripping blood

And gave command to bury his corpse

In his pirate ship

With outlandish necklaces on his neck,

Every necklace - a pound of gold.

75

Alas, descendants who have become tainted,
A mixture of robbers and cultured men!
The trace of Saxon blood
Still boils in their veins
And to things better left undone it incites them: 80
To shackle villages with iron thorns,
To uproot fathers from their homes,
Food trees from groves,
And to sneer at crying infants
With yellowed mule's teeth. 85
We know this laugh. We're not that old!
Our memory brings up pictures,
Causing colors to fly,
And the hand writes by memory:
With this smile the Boers were robbed. 90
An insurgent father
And his sons were wiped out.
Blood and diamonds
Were boiled in one war pot.
Lord Kitchener, with ladle-gun, 95
Stirred the porridge.
From this abominable porridge
The conqueror from the land of Albion
Is still fed to this day
And not ashamed. 100

No! We're not that old.

Our memory inscribes on the wall,

Like that hand in the days of Belshazzar,

One line, two lines

From the book of your history, Albion!

105

For us it's been only a few dozen years

That you traded on wild islands

With cannibals;

Iron spits, made in England,

You sold to them to roast

110

And turn above flames

Long pig.

From money belts, sewn from human skin,

These savages sent gold flowing to you.

This material each bastard cleaned,

115

Every sin he wiped off,

Your heart he fattened, your gaze he averted,

And he raised every vulgar trader

To noble rank.

From this gold, the price of human flesh,

120

Crowns you cast for yourself, Albion,

A crown for every blockhead,

A crown for every wig

On the head of a lord,

On the pate of the chief pirate,

125

With white ermine

On the lapels of his cloak.
 So all of them were elevated to reign
 Over the world's goods,
 Over the products of all peoples. 130
 Everything was bought: patience,
 The retaliation of avengers,
 The anger of nations, whose freedom was stolen,
 The possession of royal thrones.

6

Then sent out from your well-fortified 135
 Ports for many scores were
 Merchant ships with armored ships
 To gather every prize:
 Mountains with riches
 In cold Slavic countries, 140
 The birthplace of all the world's swine.
 Skins, frozen meat
 In the Argentine.
 Multi-colored shawls in Kashmir,
 Cotton in Brazil; 145
 Sugar in Russia, flax, grain ...
 Incense leaves in Turkey,
 Rice in China
 With bundles of raw silk.
 Like Tyre in olden times 150
 You grew in our time, Albion!
 You swallowed without becoming sated,

You chewed and filled your belly
 With rubber in the Indies;
 With oil you quenched your thirst 155
 In Persia and Iraq.
 You desired sparkling sapphires
 With scented tea
 In Ceylon, a fabulous isle,
 And you took them with your busy hands. 160
 In the Scandinavian lands
 You saw virgin forests and cut them down.
 You ground their wood very fine,
 Kneaded dough and rolled out paper
 By which to feed lying newspapers. 165
 Rose oil, sap from aromatic wood
 You removed from the groves of Bulgaria
 To perfume your aged virgins.
 You drew spiced wine, luxurious dresses
 From France, your neighbor. 170
 From Belgium muslin,
 Cocoa from the Netherlands;
 Burnished brass
 From ancient Sweden.
 Like Bel in Babylon you gorge yourself 175
 With every object, good or bad;
 Bristles for brushes,
 Resin for violins,
 And your belly - it does not ache,

Nor do you groan from satiety. 180

7

Like a preying sea-spider
Your rule has so spread;
In every direction strangling legs are sent out.
Thus you suck out the juice of nations
And hold on to your island. 185

You did wax, you did become gross, you did kick
At all the world's aristocrats.
You turned the natives of great states
Into miserable strangers.
Your own strangers, whom you sent into them, 190
Are their citizens.

Tanned youths are harnessed there
To pull, like beasts of burden, your subjects;
They became your rickshaws,
Half-mule, 195
Half-human.

All the inhabitants of the world,
From the east to the west,
Grind, bake, mix
For your uninvited guests 200
At this feast, which is as long
As the history of your foggy land.

8

To appease the robbed,
You cunningly made, Albion,

Crowns from gilded paper 205
 With pearls of blown glass.
 You set them on the heads
 Of island chieftains of humiliated peoples.
 Like this you made kings
 And dealt out official positions. 210
 But you, above them all,
 With a mighty scepter, issued the orders.
 Alas for you, grown-up kids
 With imaginary kingdoms!
 While you boast 215
 About the toys of a deceitful rule,
 Albion has been drying up
 The founts of all your lives.

9

So and not so and thus
 The miracle was performed 220
 That a small land, under a blanket of fog,
 With a few millions,
 With the thorn of Ireland
 Sticking into her fatty flesh,
 Conquered two-thirds 225
 Of the whole world
 And still has not said enough.
 Therefore with the hand of shopkeepers
 She has drawn lines up and down
 On Africa and Australia. 230

The Far East

She has cut up into pieces

And uttered the word of robbery this way:

This part is mine, of course,

As we agreed.

235

And that piece is mine,

For I'm the Queen of the Seas.

That third section

Was also formed for me,

Since I've got the silver and gold.

240

And the fourth, if any people

So much as touch it with a little finger

I will bring destruction down on them.

10

But alas! In the armored heart

There is no trust;

245

In the soul that is sold

Three times in one day

There is no repose

And no faith in the morrow.

Worry spoils her liver

250

And jealousy eats away her flesh.

The aging lioness of the seas

Fears near as well as far,

The good with the bad.

The rectitude of their deeds makes her afraid.

255

Thus she plots,

Like the queen bee in the hive,
 Against every competitor,
 Against every passing shadow.
 Therefore in Germany she gave a hand 260
 To a baseborn foreigner
 Who was elevated to rulership,
 To weaken her rival,
 France her neighbor,
 So that she would not lift her head 265
 Against the pillars of society on the Continent.
 Day and night
 They urgently warned her:
 War!
 But shutting her ears, 270
 She carried out her plot.
 To this very day
 She has no regrets nor remorse
 Over the ruins of nations.
 Her heart is a bulging purse; 275
 Her conscience, accounts.

11

Out of this comes the cruel miracle
 That those who escaped starvation
 And cremation
 Scamper like rabbits 280
 And on desolate seashores
 Call out for help crying.

There are no ships of salvation
 While the daughter of Albion with all her islands,
 Her colonies and ports 285
 Is tightly closed.
 Canada is empty of men,
 Her prairies howl despondently,
 Her mountains call in demand:
 "Working hands!" 290
 But all hands are fettered.
 In Australia
 Kangaroos leap about
 In the unexplored bowl of her land
 But for banished men 295
 There is no place to tread
 Nor a cup of water to drink.
 The descendants of cannibals -
 The people of New Zealand -
 Bathe in honey and milk, 300
 But the People of the Book,
 Swollen from hunger, are tossed about.
 Does with no place to graze
 Wander in the mountains of Judah;
 In the Negev dust storms 305
 Chase nomadic Bedouins,
 Erasing the tracks of their flocks;
 But no refuge is even there
 For those who, having escaped fire and sword,

Seek the paths of their homeland, 310
 Lest they revive the desert
 And dress the bare lime mountains
 With sylvan mantles,
 Lest their rights -
 The rights of builders - increase, 315
 The children of the patriarchs of the "Holy Bible"
 Albion receives in this way,
 Whose hypocritical priests disseminate
 Thousands upon thousands of their holy books
 In the tents of savages 320
 And fill desk drawers
 In all of her luxurious hotels.

12

Such is the way Albion fulfills her vow
 And defends
 The younger brothers 325
 Of Beaconsfield the Jew,
 Whose colorful cravats clashed
 In the palace of Queen Victoria;
 Whose stories were read, with a thin aristocratic smile,
 In the halls of lords; 330
 Whose advice, the advice of a seer,
 Effete statesmen mocked,
 Until his turn came,
 Until the great day came to build

In mighty waters the route 335
 To fabulous India.
 Then he dispossessed France
 Of the canal that links
 Occident and Orient.
 He alone, and no other, 340
 Gave you a gift, Albion!

13

They, the kinsmen of this your counselor, moreover begot
 The savior of your workers,
 The Solon of labor,
 Carolus Marcus was his name 345
 With a lion's mane.
 The eggs of your vipers he hatched
 In your foggy clime, O London,
 The vipers of your capital and commerce,
 But eagles flew out of them. 350
 Descending, they put into flight,
 With clacking beaks of prey,
 The young slaves,
 The pitiful children,
 From the smoke of your factories 355
 And to bright schools they sent them.
 Your old slaves, who had been hardened
 In coal mines,
 In weavers' basements,

In sweaty workshops, 360
 In your foundries burning up body and soul,
 In the name of this savior,
 They brought out to the air of the world,
 Planting them in the center of your land.
 To be workers and creators they thus elevated them. 365

14

From this Hebrew stock,
 The progenitor of peoples' saviors,
 Has also come forth the new man,
 Splitting atoms,
 Liberating the world's powers; 370
 Who has fashioned a new weapon for you,
 The ultimate weapon,
 A shock wave in one handful,
 In a pot the destruction of earth.
 He is the one who gives high hopes 375
 To all your declining mines,
 To all the drying up sources of your oil,
 That they will never ever end.

15

On the sands of El Alamein
 The brothers of this Jew, 380
 Bare-chested, took a stand
 And by bloody deeds presented a gift
 To Field Marshall Montgomery.
 Airmen of this Jew and his paratroopers

During the world-wide flood flew 385
 Out of your broken ark, Albion,
 Like doves of peace and war
 To explore the first dry land
 In the Levant and the Orient
 For your honor, which was sullied there, 390
 For a base for your foot, aching
 From arthritis in old age.

16

Did you forget all this?
 You forgot.
 Albion knows how to forget. 395
 She who knows how to exchange iron bars
 For gold nuggets with roasters of men
 Also knows how to change
 The blood of Israel into oil;
 She knows how to put off their refugees 400
 With a dirty White Paper
 To the Foreign Office, where they cook up
 Foul schemes,
 There to boil these refugees
 With their sobbing wives and children 405
 And feed them to human dogs,
 To the villagers of Beth Shean and Shechem,
 Of Lebanon and Damascus;
 To Iraq and her double-dealers
 And to her mortal enemies in Egypt. 410

She knows how to place in rule
 A contemptible illiterate peasant
 Over the wastelands of Trans-Jordan.

But the leftovers of this feast,

Tired wanderers,

415

Confused in sinking ships

And dispersed to islands,

She drives way outside,

Into a nameless outside.

17

No, you've not yet gotten your fill, Albion,

420

Of this steaming pot of schemes!

You've sent swift messengers

To fetch the filth of mankind,

The poisoner of all wells

From Bethlehem to Kir-Moab,

425

To the borders of Syria and Egypt,

The wicked Mufti.

Like a priceless treasure

You stole him in France,

Uprooting him from his concubines

430

And flying him on an eagle's wings.

The chains of a perfidious criminal

You removed from his delicate legs

So that he would again go his crooked way

And poison the springs of life

435

That we had dug by the sweat of our brow;

So that he would incite Semite against Semite
 And a brotherly covenant would not be made
 To sustain the awakening East;
 So that they will not make common cause 440
 Against your machines and manufacture, Albion,
 Divide and rule you call it
 And during the brawl among brothers,
 The dust of a needless war,
 To destroy all harbors, 445
 To station an army in Suez,
 To forge iron veins.
 To tap oil from Iraq,
 To put the locks into motion
 To rush a slew of ships 450
 To snatch booty at the right time.

18

You have an island, Albion,
 But woe to the cream of your youth!
 They are all emissaries of deceit
 To all your coal and iron workers. 455
 This is the head of your agents:
 His brow is brazen
 And his face a goring ox.
 Orphans he tramples with his hooves.
 His friend, who was raised aloft, 460
 How poor, how completely miserable!
 The office on the lean body

And the lean soul
 Is like a borrowed beggar's cloak
 Over his drooping shoulder. 465
 Under one roof the two of them deal
 With upper-class people,
 Their mortal enemies
 In matters of state
 But faithful lovers 470
 On questions of the Jewish people.
 With these they devise evil
 Against the remnant of our beloved,
 With all who falsify the record
 In your colonial offices, 475
 Where all narrow-minded people
 Want to settle,
 Some to stir up strife among brothers
 And all to hatch vipers
 On the sands of Haifa and Jaffa, 480
 All to make house guests
 "Natives," which means:
 Enslaved home-born,
 Who will run before them
 And like dogs ready to bite 485
 Will lap up the dust of their feet.
 They, scions of a superior stock,
 Not of this world
 With the rider's whip

In a white-gloved hand, 490
Will clear a way through their crowd.

As they do in Kenya,

In India,

And on islands of uncivilized men,

So have they spurred us. 500

But you shall not be!

To Mordecai was revealed a secret.

Mordecai the Jew

Does not ever bow

To these little sons of Haman. 505

19

Arise, Albion, at midnight,

Stand watch!

With rising eyes ascending then

From the depth of the Great Sea

And cursing your crafty government 510

Are those who went down with the Patria and Struma.

From the depths of the Channel at the morning watch

Toward your shore, white like the sand

A dead clump rises,

All bloated, with four hands 515

And four feet.

It is two dead bodies,

Which are united in their death

As in their lives,

A mother and small child. 520

Out of the wreckage of the Struma they came,

Reaching your shores,

A crab asks his mate:

To chew or to abstain?

The she-crab answers the he-crab,

525

As she rattles her sharp pincers:

Abstain!

They are daughters of the People of the Book.

The German nation, a wicked nation,

Has already eaten their heart for his pains;

530

One heart can not be eaten twice.

Leave them alone!

Bodies will float away,

Their bones will scatter

From their decomposing flesh

535

Like pearls from a torn net.

They will sink to the bottom of the Channel,

Which has long been sown

With crimes of generations and bones.

20

O daughter of Albion, you devastator!

540

Happy he who repays you

With what you did to us.

Happy he who seizes your refugees

And expels them to a desolate island.

Happy he who terrifies your children

545

In the middle of a rainy night

To drive them with their mothers
 To an unsown land.
 The bones of Israel, cremated
 In the ovens of Poland and Reisen, 550
 Still send up branches of flame,
 Last fiery tongues
 That lick into the spaces,
 Whistling and prophesying for you
 An evil end: 555
 India will rebel against you. You,
 Like a large parasite with many feet,
 Whose strength to suck has worn out,
 Will fall into the depths of the sea,
 All your commerce and ships 560
 Together with you.
 Around and around the wheel turns,
 Going back to the place where it started.
 Where the slaughter with its first movement
 Began, 565
 To there it returns;
 It is a law that never passes.
 From fog, Albion, you emerged
 Into the light by the light of the East
 To bathe in waters of liquid sapphire, 570
 The Mediterranean Sea,
 And to the fog you thus shall return.
 Sunny lands are becoming

More remote from you!

With the fogs of your crafty schemes

575

You darkened the gold of their summers,

Changing it into the lead of your bullets.

The gates the energetic Cromwell

Opened

For others' freedom as well as yours

580

You closed tightly,

Sealing them with blood.

Spots covered your sun,

Blemished by your crimes,

As the moon is filled with patches.

585

But the day of judgment is drawing near,

The day of your falling into the heart of the sea.

You cast those weary unto death

Into the swirl of storms;

A storm will devour your might.

590

The waves of the Channel are billowing,

The Thames is weeping bitterly.

She weeps for your coming collapse.

Annotations to Albion's Burden

2. Sandalphon, mentioned in Chagigah 13b and Pesikta Rabbati 20, was an angel of immense height and of intense fire.
9. Shem, one of the three sons of Noah, was the progenitor of the peoples of Mesopotamia and Arabia (Genesis 10:21ff.). According to the Biblical genealogy Ever was the great-grandson of Shem (Genesis 10:21-24). Ever was considered to be the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews. The poet perhaps alludes to the legend that the English could be the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.
14. William the Robber is William, Duke of Normandy, who successfully invaded England in 1066. He ascended the English throne as William I.
90. The Boers were the descendants of Dutch colonists in South Africa. They revolted against British rule in the Boer War (1899-1902). The British organized concentration camps, where 20,000 died, and ruthlessly destroyed Boer farms.¹⁴
- 95-97. Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916) became commander-in-chief of the British troops in South Africa in 1900. It was under his direction that the concentration camps were set up.¹⁵ In the English language his surname is also a common noun, meaning a person who works in or has charge of a kitchen. The picture of him stirring porridge with a "ladle-gun" fits with his name.
- 102-104. Belshazzar was the Babylonian king who was warned of his downfall by the handwriting on the wall. See Daniel 5:5-28.
112. Long pig, from the Polynesian term, is human flesh used as food by cannibals.
175. Bel was the supreme god of the Babylonian pantheon.

186. Cf. Deuteronomy 32:15; "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; you waxed fat, you grew thick, you became sleek...."
261. The "baseborn foreigner" was Adolf Hitler. "Baseborn foreigner" is the translation of ben bli shem, velid chuts. For ben bli shem cf. Job 30:8; bene bli shem, "a disreputable brood" (Oxford Annotated Bible) or "children of ignoble men" (Jewish Publication Society).
- 277-282. The paradoxical phrase "the cruel miracle" is poignant. After having miraculously escaped death in a concentration camp, the refugees had to face the cruelty of the British, who obstructed their immigration to Palestine.
- 298-302. The Land of Israel is described as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). Here the cannibals of New Zealand have the luxury of bathing in milk and honey, while the children of Israel are starving.
326. The Earl of Beaconsfield was Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1868, 1874-1880.
- 334-339. "The route to fabulous India" went through the Suez Canal, built under the direction of a Frenchman. In 1875 Disraeli in a masterly move acquired for the British government almost half of the shares in the international company under whose auspices the canal had been built.¹⁶
345. Carolus Marcus is of course Karl Marx, born in Germany. He did the research and writing of Das Kapital in the library of the British Museum in London.
- 368-374. The research in nuclear physics leading to the theory and development of the atomic bomb was done largely by Jewish scientists.¹⁷

379. At El Alamein in the spring of 1942 the advance of the Axis troops under Erwin Rommel toward Alexandria, Egypt, was stopped.
380. "The brothers" were the Palestinian Jews serving in the British Eighth Army that expelled Rommel's troops from Egypt.
383. Bernard L. Montgomery was the commander of the British Eighth Army.
401. The British White Paper of 1939 "set a maximum of 75,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine over the next five years, and then decreed that further Jewish immigration would be stopped altogether."¹⁸
412. The "contemptible illiterate peasant" was Abdullah ibn Hussein.
427. "The wicked Mufti" was Haj Amin el Husseini. During World War II, after the revolt he led in Iraq against British military installations failed, he went to Berlin and "became a paid propaganda agent for the Nazis."¹⁹
511. The Patria and Struma, ships carrying Jewish refugees to Palestine, were sunk by the British to prevent their entry.
- 540-548. Cf. Psalm 137:8-9; "O daughter of Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall he be who requites you with what you have done to us!
Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!"
578. Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth 1653-1658, overriding strong opposition in his council, decided in 1657 to allow Jewish immigration to England.²⁰

Philistines

Shneur wrote "Philistines" around the time of the proclamation of the State of Israel. The poem is dedicated to David Ben Gurion. In a world where "civilized barbarians" have run amuck Ben Gurion is prepared "To die the death of Samson with Philistines / Who dance around the shameful vision / Of a few rising up against the many" (ll. 107-109). The Philistines - Germans, English, French, Americans - are abusing the survivors of the Holocaust and trying to bring doom upon the Yishuv.

... strange wild boars are snorting
At the remnant of Israel,
And the hyenas ... are barking
And desecrating those who died for redemption;
... statesmen are conspiring
To pluck out every bud that has bloomed
On the sands of Tel Aviv and on the slope of Mount Carmel.

(ll. 74-80)

Their actions aggravate the wound already inflicted on the Jews by the Holocaust.

At such a time the gash is deepened and burns,
When nothing was burning in the valley of slaughter.

(ll. 97-98)

In pain and in rage Ben Gurion must act like the Samson of old.

Stricken with blindness out of anger, he knows
That all of them are of one heart and few words,
Whether good or bad,
When they come to the fate of Israel.

Nothing remains for this remnant
 But to dig under and grasp the pillars of the world
 ...
 So that there will be one funeral for the peoples,
 ...
 So that a great fire will come out of the ruin of the
 conquered
 And consume the conquerors.... (ll. 110-115, 118,
 121-122).

Ben Gurion, we know, did not die death of Samson but the poet's intention is to show that Ben Gurion's frame of mind in the poem is like that of the Biblical hero: to avenge the wrongs perpetrated against the Jews at the risk of his own life.

In the first four sections of this poem Shneur reveals his personal doubts about the propriety of writing on the Holocaust. In the face of this enormous crime "the prudent man is silent" (l. 13) and tears are of no avail unless one sheds enough "to bring a flood / To wash (the filthy world) out completely in a storm" (ll. 16-17). Shneur is contemptuous of the writers who have found that there is a good market for words about the six million (ll. 33-39). These exploiters of people's feelings, these "heroes with words," mix "every drop of the martyrs' blood / ... with one or two measures of water, / ... To increase the trade in suffering / And to enlarge the income from horrors" (ll. 41-42, 46-47). Shneur does not want to be put in the same class of writers whom he has criticized; the sincerity of his feelings is vouched for by his leaving "with empty hands / And with a heart full of worry about the morrow / The market of these competitors" (ll. 70-72).

In the final section Shneur repeats the theme seen in "A New Lawsuit by Rabbi Levi Yitschak of Berditchev" and "The Port" that Jews have lost hope in redemption by divine action.

Pelishtim

Philistines

To Ben Gurion and his colleagues

1

Days and years I was afraid to go near
 To the mound of bones, a frightening heap,
 To the valley of slaughter, where a whole people perished
 With its women and children and its Torah Scrolls,
 To the crematoria of the Civilized barbarians 5
 Who slew children bound in prison
 To glorify their imaginary victory
 Before they defeated armed men on the battlefield.
 Only reverence stopped me
 From going down and profaning the holy silence 10
 In this valley with its six million.
 "Keep quiet!" Thus I said to myself.
 "The prudent man is silent at a time like this.
 Don't let your scanty tear fall
 Upon the filth of the world, upon the filth of its conscience, 15
 If you are not able to bring a flood
 To wash it out completely in a storm.
 You poet, stop with the verses!
 Lest they tap, like coins for a dance fee,
 On the cracked drum of the band, 20
 A wandering band of beggars."

2

After a few years, when I did go near

To the quenched valley of the holocaust, I saw
 That reckless bards had already dragged away
 Every bone with marrow from the mound of bones 25
 With dried human flesh clinging to it.
 Every heart, which had been roasted in the ashes, they drew out
 To arouse compassion, to shed crocodile tears
 And to line their pockets by these exploiting means.
 I saw too that the skulls of children, 30
 Shreds of ark curtains and scorched parchment sheets
 Had been sold for the money of every state.
 The market is large, it's still continuing to grow
 In the Land and across the seas
 Among writers of compassion 35
 And poets of "the holy wrath,"
 Whose eyes have not perceived, nor whose ears comprehended
 Even one of all the fears
 That are written in the scrolls of their lies.

3

When I went near, I found that 40
 Every drop of the martyrs' blood
 Was mixed with one or two measures of water,
 Morning and evening, in the papers.
 Abandoned, like the black locust, and consumed were
 Six hundred thousand pages of print 45
 To increase the trade in suffering
 And to enlarge the income from horrors.
 Anywhere the deep red was fading,

There a little reddish ink was added
 To pierce the eyes of the innocent. 50
 The exquisite pain of the individual
 Has already been changed into coins;
 Decorations of tin and copper
 By the thousands have been acquired by it
 And hang on the chests of heroes with words 55
 Who were not in the valley of the hopeless and did not see
 The war of the shovels against the flamethrowers
 And rusty plowshares against giant cannons.

4

Then I was ashamed again to cry out
 Because of soul-searing disgust, 60
 So as not to become even at this time,
 In the eyes of the public and in the proverbs of fools,
 A customer who was too late in coming to the butcher shop
 On the day of destruction and turmoil, when
 Weighing and evaluating payments had stopped. 65
 Only the one who is quick, impulsive and armed
 With pointed elbows and pinching fingers
 Grabs, wins and carries away.
 But I, a good-for-nothing who was late,
 Leave with empty hands 70
 And with a heart full of worry about the morrow
 The market of these competitors.

5

But now, when a new world is being created,
 When strange wild boars are snorting
 At the remnant of Israel, 75
 And the hyenas - the gravediggers - are barking
 And desecrating those who died for redemption;
 When statesmen are conspiring
 To pluck out every bud that has bloomed
 On the sands of Tel Aviv and on the slope of Mount Carmel; 80
 When Germany returns to her vomit
 Like a wild dog at a slaughterhouse
 And laps up her hate that is mixed with her blood
 And with the ashes of her burnt cities;
 When the daughter of Albion - the daughter of pirates - 85
 Gives aid to her, with the mask of
 An alms-collector over the face of thieves.
 When France hides her wrinkles with cosmetics
 And conceals the odor of her old age with perfumes,
 She will not venture to turn either to the right or to the left. 90
 And the land of "the good guys,"
 Heavy with machines but light in culture,
 Will not distinguish between righteousness and wickedness
 Of all those who whisper to her morning and evening:
 "Be careful, now, there is death in your pot! Wild gourds 95
 The State of Israel has put on the fire for you!"
 At such a time the gash is deepened and burns,
 When nothing was burning in the valley of slaughter.

A toothache in the heart! No strength to hold behind
 The wall of silence his cry. 100
 Of his own he became the leader
 And his voice, like the voice of a people stoned
 With rocks and loose bricks,
 Has forever been breaking away from the culture
 Of sinners judged of seething defilement. 105
 In this way the pain erupted in one hopeless wail:
 To die the death of Samson with Philistines,
 Who dance around the shameful vision
 Of a few rising up against the many.
 Stricken with blindness out of anger, he knows 110
 That all of them are of one heart and few words,
 Whether good or bad,
 When they come to the fate of Israel.
 Nothing remains for this remnant
 But to dig under and grasp the pillars of the world 115
 And shake them with breaking fingers,
 With dropping fingernails and falling teeth,
 So that there will be one funeral for the peoples,
 For cattle of thousands and for the spirit
 That has not known destruction until now, 120
 So that a great fire will come out of the ruin of the conquered
 And consume the conquerors. They will be destroyed
 And a storm will scatter their ashes.

We can no longer wait for the Redeemer!

While by paces ascending, ascending by paces 125
With hand raised against things to come;
Like the host of the sons of Ephraim who preceded us,
As told in the legends of redemption,
As sung by "The Dead of the Desert,"
We shall not wait for the tarrying Redeemer, because 130
The bones of his white ass are rolling
Among the ruins of the ghetto in the capital of Poland,
Melting in the snow on the fields of Reisen
And crying: Vengeance and Retaliation!
We also shall not wait for the victory of those who pursue peace, 135
Because it is locked securely
In the dungeon of the British Foreign Office
And hidden in an Arab turban.

Annotations to Philistines

81-82. Cf. Proverbs 26:11; "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool that repeats his folly."

91. "The land of 'the good guys'" is the United States of America.

95-96. See 2 Kings 4:38-39.

127. In Pesikta Rabbati 36 and 37 the Messiah is designated as Ephraim.

This designation does not occur in any other rabbinic literature.²¹

129. "The Dead of the Desert" were the Israelites who died in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land.

A State

This short poem celebrates the founding of the State of Israel and the victories of her army in the War for Independence. "The defeated in the East" are the Arabs and "the instigators in the West" are the British (ll. 17-18).

Medinah

Shir Lechet Mukdash Litsva Yisrael

A State

Marching Song Dedicated to the Army of Israel

Justice the wrongdoer
 Does not know, nor shame,
 But fate like a sledgehammer
 Struck on brass;
 An assembly roared
 And reached it's decision:

5

A State!

Then hearts rejoiced,
 Then muscles were tensed
 For more victories,
 For mighty acts.
 From Dan to Beersheba
 The joyous song traveled:

10

A State!

When Israel's oppressors
 Sprang from ambush,
 The defeated in the East,
 The instigators in the West,
 Against the rocks of determination
 The hatred was smashed ...

15

20

A State!

When exiles came
With their packs on their shoulders,
Yearning for action,
Hungering for bread,
With an arm outstretched
Shielding them all was
The State!

25

NOTES

I

¹Zalman Shneur, "Eleh Toldot," in Joseph Klausner, Z. Shneur: Hamshorer Vehamsaper (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Yavneh, 1947), p. vii.

²Ibid., p. viii and Chayim Orlan, "Ne'ure Hanesher," Hadoar, XXXIX: 21 (April 3, 1959). 377.

³Shneur, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.

⁴Ibid., p. vii.

⁵G. Kressel, Leksikon Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Badorot Ha'acharonim (Merchavia, Israel: Hotsa'at Hakibuts Ha'artsi Hashomer Hatsa'ir, 1965), II, 957.

⁶Shneur, op. cit., p. viii.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Kressel, loc. cit. and Orlan, loc. cit.

⁹Jacob Fichman, "Z. Shneur: Rashe Tavim," Kitve Zalman Shneur (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Dvir, 1965), I, i.

¹⁰Shneur, loc. cit.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Kressel, loc. cit.

¹³Shneur, op. cit., p. ix.

¹⁴Kressel, loc. cit. and Fichman, loc. cit.

¹⁵Shneur, loc. cit. and Kressel, loc. cit.

¹⁶Shneur, loc. cit.

¹⁷Fichman, op. cit., p. ii.

¹⁸Shneur, op. cit., p. x and Kressel, loc. cit.

¹⁹Fichman, loc. cit.

²⁰Chayim Nachman Bialik, "Shiratenu Hatse'irah," Hashiloach, XVI: 91 (January 1907), 66.

²¹Shneur, loc. cit. and Kressel, op. cit., 958.

²²A.Z. Ben-Yishai, "Shneur," Encyclopaedia Judaica, XIV, 1429.

²³Shneur, loc. cit.

²⁴Kressel, loc. cit.

²⁵Ruth Finer Mintz (ed. and trans.), Modern Hebrew Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 90.

²⁶Shneur, op. cit., p. xi.

²⁷Menachem Ribalow, "Leyovel Shneur," Hadoar, XVIII:7 (December 17, 1937), 97.

²⁸Shneur, op. cit., p. x.

²⁹Daniel Persky, "Shneur Hu Shneur," Hadoar, XVIII: 7 (December 17, 1937), 103.

³⁰Kressel, loc. cit.

³¹Shneur, op. cit., pp. xi-xii.

³²Shneur, op. cit., p. xii.

³³Chayim Lif, "Pegishot Im Z. Shneur," Hadoar, XXXIX: 21 (April 3, 1959), 378.

³⁴Shneur, loc. cit. and Kressel, op. cit., 959.

³⁵Shneur, loc. cit.

³⁶Shneur, op. cit., p. xiii.

³⁷Lif, op. cit., 379.

³⁸Shneur, op. cit., p. xiv.

³⁹Lif, loc. cit., 379.

⁴⁰Kressel, op. cit., 960.

⁴¹Hillel Bavli, "Neshef Azkarah Lishneur," Hadoar, XXXIX: 21 (April 3, 1959), 385.

⁴²Kressel, loc. cit.

⁴³Lif, op. cit., 378.

⁴⁴Kressel, op. cit., 958 and Orlan, loc. cit.

⁴⁵Zalman Shneur, "He'arot Lesifri Luchot Genuzim: Me'at Historyah," in his Luchot Genuzim (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Am Oved, 1951), pp. 195-196.

⁴⁶Ben-Yishai, op. cit., 1431.

⁴⁷Yeshurun Keshet, "Kav Yesod Beshirat Shneur," Hadoar,
XXXIX: 21 (April 3, 1959), 376.

⁴⁸Mintz, op. cit., p. 94.

⁴⁹Ben-Yishai, op. cit., 1430.

⁵⁰Keshet, loc. cit.

⁵¹Hillel Bavli, "Demuto Shel Zalman Shneur," Hadoar,
XXXIX: 21 (April 3, 1959), 374.

II

- ¹Chayim Nachman Bialik and Joshua Chanah Ravnitzky (eds.), Sefer Ha'agadah (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Dvir, 5727), p. 312.
- ²Bereshit Rabbah 15:7.
- ³Zev Vilnay, The Guide to Israel, 14th ed. (Jerusalem: Ahiever, 1971), p. 160.
- ⁴Ibid., pp. 517-518.
- ⁵Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (eds.), The Oxford Annotated Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), n., p. 277.
- ⁶Vilnay, op. cit., p. 512.
- ⁷Ibid., pp. 517-518.
- ⁸Abraham S. Halkin, "The Judeo-Islamic Age," in Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People, ed. Leo W. Schwarz, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1956), p. 243.
- ⁹Louis I. Newman (ed.), The Hasidic Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 228, 398.
- ¹⁰Nahum N. Glatzer (ed.), A Jewish Reader, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 94-95.
- ¹¹Theodor H. Gaster, Customs and Folkways of Jewish Life (New York: William Sloane Associates Publishers, 1955), p. 19.
- ¹²Ibid., pp. 19-20.
- ¹³Howard M. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 460-462.
- ¹⁴William L. Langer (comp. and ed.), An Encyclopedia of World History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 857.
- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 615.
- ¹⁷Sachar, op. cit., p. 398.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 392.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 461.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 44.
- ²¹William G. Braude (trans.), Pesikta Rabbati (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), II, p. 678.

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