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THE LOVE-BEGGAR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN S.Y. AGNON'S "GIVAT HAHOL" AND OTHER LOVE STORIES

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
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DIGEST OF THE THESIS

Hemdat, the main character in S.Y. Agnon's "Givat haḤol", suffers from the same problem that plagues the heroes of other Agnon love stories: he is unable to develop a love relationship with a woman. Hemdat experiences erotic desires toward Yael Hiyot, but is psychologically incapable of acting upon them; erotic desires are sublimated and the object of those desires is fantasized in the mind of the hero. Hemdat's character is much like that of other Agnon male figures: he is passive in the presence of women, and ambivalent in his desires for them; he is an artist, but his artistic endeavors seem to him to be inconsistent with belonging to his surrounding society or relating to the members of that society.

Hemdat inhabits a world of his own making, one of loneliness and alienation; he sees that world, however, as preferable and tends to associate it with the "traditional Jewish world" he remembers from his childhood. He idealizes that world and, by doing so, distorts some of its values. In addition, Hemdat experiences, largely on a subconscious level, feelings of guilt at having left the "traditional home" behind in Galicia when he decided to come to Jaffa; in his mind, then, he associates his family home with the life one ought to lead, and thinks of the "secular" Jaffa society, and the women in it, as being improper, even "sinful". Such a perspective helps to undermine the possibility of a love relationship with any of those women.

There is, however, another underlying motif in "Givat haḤol" and the other Jaffa love stories that tends to frustrate the hero's erotic activity: he seems to have developed a neurotic fixation on his mother,

or on a sister-figure who serves as her substitute. Such Oedipal desires, as explained in the light of Erich Fromm's work, indicate a need to return to that environment which once provided a sense of belonging and security; this would be the home the hero knew as a child, one which he associates with the security-figure of that home, the mother. And it is this environment that is implied in the term "traditional world." It is a world that the hero envisions as providing the security and the stable value system that would divest him of the responsibility for determining his own values and behavior. Hemdat lacks the mature self-confidence required for entering into a love relationship with Yael, or with any other woman.

The main characters in the other Jaffa love tales considered in this thesis suffer from similar difficulties and exhibit similar character traits. This is true of Hemdat and Na'aman in the short tales "Lelot", and "Achot", and is particularly so in the case of the longer "Shevuat Emunim." Hemdat and Ya'akov Rechnitz are, psychologically, very much related.

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I sleep but my heart is awake.
Listen! My beloved is knocking
'Open to me, my sister, my dearest,
my dove, my perfect one...'

When I arose to open for my beloved,
my hands dripped with myrrh;
the liquid myrrh from my fingers
ran over the knobs of the bolt (Al Kapot haMan'ul)

With my own hands I opened to my love,
but my love had turned away and gone by;
my heart sank when he turned his back.
I sought him but I did not find him;
I called him but he did not answer.
(Song of Songs, 5:2-5:6)

It is hardly surprising that the third volume of the collected works of S. Y. Agnon should bear as its title a phrase from the Song of Songs, "Al Kapot haMan'ul". Indeed, what could be more appropriate than to select a title from the paradigm love story for a collection of works the author has chosen to subtitle, "Tales of Love." Yet these "Tales of Love" are, for the most part, tales of frustrated attempts at achieving a satisfying love relationship and of unfulfilled romantic desires; and therein lies the irony in the use of this particular quote from the love story, for it is taken from the context of a scene in which the desire for union with one's beloved is frustrated.

The story "Givat haḤol" is one of these "Tales of Love" and the ironic use of the title of the volume is applicable to it. Yet there seems to be a further parallel between the scene in the Song of Songs and this particular story; the biblical scene is a story told after the event when the narrator-lover realizes that it was her passivity that resulted in the frustration of her romantic desires. As revealed

in her dream, the Shulamite remains upon her bed, passive in the face of her lover's demands, the door to her room preventing the entry of her beloved. When she finally does act, the critical moment has passed, her lover has departed and her search for him in the city streets is in vain; the watchmen punish her and she admits to being "sick with love".

Many of these themes are reflected in "Givat haḤol" and it, too, might well be considered a paradigm in that its essential concern is the portrayal and exploration of a problem that is found in so much of Agnon's work: the seeming inability of the main character to develop a satisfying love relationship. It will be the object of this study to examine the nature of this problem as presented in "Givat haḤol" and to pursue its appearance in other 'love' stories by Agnon.

The original version of "Givat haḤol" appeared in 1911 under the title "Tishre" and was written while Agnon was resident in Jaffa. Thus the time and place setting of the story correspond rather closely with the actual experience of the author. The story was then subjected to extensive revision in 1921, while Agnon was in Berlin; and, while the basic story-line remained the same, the differences in structure, tone, language and style are great. The same story is told from a different perspective and might thus be compared with the event in the Song of Songs: the original experience of frustration parallels the tale as related in "Tishre". The later relating of the experience, with the Shulamite's realization of the causes that resulted in her frustration, finds its parallel in the revised "Givat haḤol." The earlier version of the story appears to be the product of the romantic poet who is

caught up in the beauty of his own romantic fantasies, so much so, suggests Arnold Band,[1] that he appears to find the fantasy more attractive than the flesh and blood girl before him. This is indicated in the poem that precedes the actual story and which contains aspects of the plot:

> I--am a cup of dreams
> and the tendrils of those dreams are lush.
> In solitude, I seek shelter between the walls,
> yet the angels will bring me a gift.
>
> And when the cup was filled to the brim
> I bent over before one of the maidens,
> my cup overflowing;
> Drink from my cup, my daughter!
>
> The girl laughed before me,
> and (though) flowing with warmth, my heart
> remained silent within me.
> Majestically she approached my cup
> and drank up all the dreams.
>
> Then the cup was completely shattered,
> her teeth going wild among the fragments,
> yet, miraculously, one piece remained intact,
> with the dregs at the bottom.
> ("Tishre" V/1)

The imagery of the poem is rich, and the ideas are fanciful. Love will come to the dreamer remaining within the shelter of his room, the angels will see to that. His beloved will fulfill his heart's desires and, though something will inadvertently go awry, his romantic vision will be salvaged. Both the language and the content of the poem seem to reflect the original experience of the Shulamite; not only doesn't the poet seem to be aware that the shattering of the cup was, to a large measure, a result of his behavior, but so caught up is he in his fantasy world that he doesn't seem to comprehend fully the reality of the frustration of his romantic longing.

Similar ideas are expressed in a passage from "Givat haḤol," but the style has changed considerably:

> (Who am)I? I am a sleeping prince whose
> love awakens him (but) to renewed slumber.
> I am a beggar of love whose sack has been
> torn and who (then) places love within that
> torn sack. (GH 371)

The blindness to reality is still present; Hemdat describes himself in fanciful terms, but the lyrical outpouring that so characterizes the work of Agnon's Jaffa period has been pared down to the minimum of words needed to express the same basic ideas. But not only has the structure been improved and language compressed, but the tone has been altered significantly in the writings and rewritings that characterize the author's Berlin period. The dominant tone of "Givat haḤol" might best be referred to as "ironic distancing":[2] the character and his behavior are viewed in a detached, almost objective fashion. Thus Ḥemdat's analysis of himself, his situation and surroundings are presented in such a way as to reveal his true character and real motivations. And, ironically, the 'reality' perceived by Ḥemdat is often quite different from the actual reality of the situation as presented by the author.

In relatively few words, Ḥemdat reveals much about his character: psychologically he views himself as both inferior and superior (beggar and prince), as being both passive (the sleeping prince) and active (the beggar who is constantly on the move).[3] Ḥemdat's ambivalence is further extended to the area of love: he wants to collect love, but is seemingly incapable of doing so. In addition, the statement is most ironic. In the first place, it is not the prince who ought to be asleep but, according to the fairy tale, the princess; the prince is rather to be the active

person whose love awakens the princess from her deep slumber. Here, she is the active party, and her love merely puts him to sleep and, by implication, drives him from the world of reality to the fantasy world created by his imagination. Secondly, there is the irony of placing love within a sack that is predetermined to be incapable of retaining possession of that love.

These ambivalent tendencies and ironic actions are revealed to the reader through the language employed by the narrator of the story. But who is this narrator who relates to the reader the words, actions and thoughts of the main character in such a way as to reveal the true nature of his character? In the first few paragraphs of the story alone, we find such phrases as "he said in his heart", and "he used to think", and are made aware that he feels that his is a divine mission to "make straight the crooked." And, whose point of view is expressed by the opening statement of the story: "How remarkable that Hemdat should accede to Yael Hiyot's request for tutoring in Hebrew literature" (GH 351)? One might say that it was the opinion of an outside observer, unaware of Hemdat's ambivalent feelings toward people in general and women in particular. However, if taken as a thought held by Hemdat himself, one sees the irony implicit in this opening sentence: Hemdat is apparently unaware of his desire to establish a satisfying relationship with a woman and offers such lame excuses for his sudden assumption of the tutoring burden as "another of life's unsolvable riddles" and, after all, "once you have made a promise, you are obligated to keep it." (ibid)

In regard to this issue, it seems reasonable to assume, with Band,[4] that Agnon identified with Na·aman in "Tishre" and that the narrator in

that tale was, in a way, speaking for Agnon. The same situation could be seen in regard to "Givat haḤol" with the exception that the author no longer seems to identify with the main character; and, no longer so subjectively involved with the fate of the character, this author is able to view the character from both a knowledgeable and yet distant vantage point. That is to say, the perceptions within the story are those of Hemdat as observed, analyzed and presented to the reader in ironic fashion by the narrator. Through this vehicle of "ironic distancing", the author is able to portray the complex character of Ḥemdat, both as it really is and as it is perceived by the character himself, for these two perceptions rarely seem to agree, and that is Ḥemdat's greatest problem.

As indicated at the beginning of the story and continued throughout, Hemdat appears to have set up a world for himself; a world of ideals, of fantasy and of distorted reality, both present and past. It is from the framework of this world that he views other people, places and events; it is into this world that he will attempt to bring Yael Ḥiyot so that she may be his beloved; and it is within this world that he is ultimately to remain--alone. The aspects of Ḥemdat's 'world' are often described by setting, and are basically involved with the motifs of Jewish religious and social tradition, marriage and family life, artistic creativity and sexual desires.

These themes are suggested at the outset of the story and are interwoven and given added depth as the tale progresses. His romantic vision distorts the reality before him. Yael is perceived, not as a possibly desirable, flesh and blood woman, but as "a princess, condemned

to work at the spindle" with Hemdat being the one God sent "to keep her alive." (GH 351) This refers, of course, to the tale of the princess who, having fallen into a deep sleep when her finger is pricked by the spinning wheel, is revived when her beloved, the prince, arrives with a kiss. The irony of such thoughts is borne out by the story line and even confirmed by the hero when he refers to himself as a prince; yet, as quoted above, instead of reviving the princess with his love and kisses, he restrains himself from any such sensual expression and is driven into a fantasy world of daydreams and romantic visions. Indeed, his vision of Yael as a sleeping princess is a projection on Hemdat's part; this would be the situation he desires, the kind of circumstance in which he might prove capable of initiating action instead of remaining his usually passive self. Perhaps in such a situation he could enter into a 'love' relationship with her.

Such a situation does occur when Yael suffers a recurrence of her illness and is confined to bed. She is then compelled to assume the passive role of a patient while Hemdat becomes a relatively active figure.

> Hemdat feared for her welfare, as for the welfare of a king. By himself he brought her milk and medicine, and stayed by her bedside the whole day long. Children in the area called him Yael's brother, a name which pleased Hemdat. "How compassionate he is," the neighbors would say, while Hemdat would lower his head, blushing. (GH 380)

Even here he tends toward a romanticizing of the reality before him: he cares for Yael as he would a king, an interesting reversal of sex which, one might conjecture, places Hemdat in the role of servant girl. This would certainly be consistent with the passivity of the male character

in the story in the face of feminine activity. In addition, one cannot help but compare this scene to that in which Hemdat recalls visiting his ill relative. She had become an almost completely passive figure; and Hemdat seems to prefer the same to be true of Yael. Indeed, the comparison of the two girls might have been in Hemdat's mind when he visited Yael which would then account for his pleasure in being referred to as her brother. As a relative to a passive girl, he would not be expected to display the sexual response that might be appropriate in the presence of a sexually desirous and desirable woman.

An indication of Hemdat's repression of erotic desires is given at the outset of the story when he attempts to 'seduce' Yael into having something to eat while she is in his apartment. Such an action, according to Shaked,[5] indicates that the sexual desires are "removed...from the natural realm to the realm of eating and drinking." Another such example of the sublimating of sexual desire, an admittedly serious problem for Hemdat, is presented by Agnon in a humorous vein.

> How much would Hemdat crave and desire that hour when the burning heater would stand in the innermost part of the room and the boiling somovar would stand on the table and Yael would drink a glass of hot tea. (GH 355)

This type of sublimation indicates a basic ambivalence in the character of Hemdat: an attraction to and a repulsion by sensuality. He has sensual desires, yet is unable to come to terms with those desires and thus represses them or rechannels that energy into another area, which in this case, is that of food and drink. Hemdat protests to himself that he has no desire to physically touch Yael, he merely wishes "to look

at her, to look at her and nothing more. Without the mediation of the senses he would observe her." (GH 362) Yet his very feelings as he does observe her seems to indicate his sensual interest in her:

> He's as far from her as east from west. He has yet to touch her, even with his little finger. Not that she isn't fair or pleasing; on the contrary, her erect posture, the freshness of her skin, the fullness of her body, and her easy-going manner always inspire within him a feeling of respect towards her. Observe! Before he was with her on a regular basis, he would say that she wasn't pretty; and not only that, but behind her back he used to call her a piece of flesh. (GH 355)

The very words used by the narrator to describe Hemdat's observation belie the hero's denial of sensual interest in Yael. To the contrary, he is particularly attracted to the physical aspects of the woman, an attraction that one might expect to lead to an expression of physical desire but, ironically, leads Hemdat to a feeling of respect, a rather humorous reaction, given its context. Further, it is important to note that his onetime admittedly physical perception of Yael ("a piece of meat") had to be, in a sense, 'spiritualized' now that they had entered into a relationship and he was compelled to confront his sensual feelings toward her. And, in this same paragraph, he is 'caught' admiring Yael's "delicate foot", only to claim that it was really her stocking that had caught his eye, with this rationalization (to himself as much as to Yael) resulting in the sublimated concern with food and drink as quoted above.

This ambivalence toward sensual contact results in Hemdat's passive behavior in the presence of women; indeed, the more sexually aggressive the woman, the greater the passive reaction on Hemdat's part, as is perhaps best expressed by his reaction to Ailonit's rather blatant

sexual advances:

> Ailonit took hold of Hemdat's arms and said, 'Do you know how to dance?' And she started dancing with him. Suddenly she stopped and picked up the slacks from the bed[6] and said, 'When I play the role of a man on the stage, I'll borrow these slacks from you.' Blessed is he who is a man. Men have the whole world in their hands. Would she dare do that which he is doing with her? Ailonit took him by the arm. Oh, how dark a night it is; she doesn't see a thing. Where is he? 'Come, let me lead you; how is it that you suddenly fell into my arms?' Hemdat was startled; he was repelled. (GH 362)

It is the woman who is depicted as the aggressor, as the initiator of sexual advance, as the 'man' who would "borrow these slacks" from Hemdat. The hero, on the other hand, seems to be playing the passive role usually associated with the female. In this regard, Hochman describes a certain type of Agnonian male character as having a "propensity to undergo life in a labile, feminine mode," with the result being a suppression of aggressive tendencies.[7]

Further suggestions of this "propensity" are found in the section of the text immediately following Hemdat's encounter with Ailonit in which Yael behaves somewhat aggressively with Shamai, though the latter is hardly to be cast in the passive-feminine role:

> Suddenly, Yael raised Shamai's hand and said, 'How hard your hands are, Shamai. Hemdat's hands are as delicate as those of a young girl. It occurs to me that this (Saturday) evening, Hemdat is going to lecture in the assembly hall. What will he say? That is, on what topic will he lecture?' Hemdat replied in a whisper, 'On the legends of Rabbi Nachman of Braslov.' 'Oh, how I'll clap for him. Shamai, your hands are so strong that you can applaud endlessly.' Yael slapped her hands together, clapping, and said, 'This is only the beginning; but at night, hey, hey, hey. Don't forget Shamai.' Oh, it's getting late. Hemdat was startled. He had almost forgotten that the Mushlams had returned from their trip and that he ought to visit them. (GH 363)

Again the female character is portrayed as being aggressive. She is the one who lifts up Shamai's hand, who asks the questions, claps, and makes the evening's plans. In addition, the language of the passage and some of its grammatical aspects help to create an atmosphere of sensuality: there is much talk about hands, with their textures suggesting character traits; there is a clapping and a touching of hands, with the implication that touching of an even more overtly sexual nature would be pursued later that evening,[8] perhaps, following the sequence of the passage, after the lecture. And it is at the point of this allusion that Hemdat must depart. Furthermore, Yael's addressing of Shamai in the second-person, with its implications of familiarity, is contrasted with her intentional third-person addressing of Hemdat, a more formal style that tends to emphasize the distance between the two people, as well as to indicate a degree of contempt. (It is interesting to note that Ailonit addressed Hemdat in the second-person, a factor that merely added to his discomfort in that situation.)

Thus the language, actions and sensual atmosphere of that encounter with Yael and Shamai resulted in Hemdat's discomfort: "he was startled," which is to say that he experienced the same negative reactions to this situation as he did to that involving Ailonit which left him "startled and repelled." Hemdat appears to be psychologically unable to cope with sexually suggestive situations, either as the object of a woman's desires or a less involved observer of such expression.

There is, however, another scene in which Hemdat, though remaining

passive, is receptive to Yael's advances:

> Behold! She was touching him; touching him, and not touching him. And again she touched him. And not only that, she held his head. And she even wanted to bite off a lock of his hair... She leaned over towards his head, clamped down on his hair with her teeth, and cut off a clump of hair. Did Hemdat laugh at that time. He had never laughed as much. She's a devil, not a woman...then he took her hand in his and squeezed it as one might shake a friend's hand... Yael looked at him and said, 'I know why he shook my hand...Did he think that I haven't read Forel's book? (i.e. The Sexual Question) There is a certain sexual satisfaction in such a (hand) shake.' Hemdat looked at her pleasingly innocent face and was quite happy. (GH 358)

Hemdat thus seems to indicate a pleasurable response to Yael's aggressive flirting; she remains, however, the active one, for though he is moved to an action of his own, a friendly handshake is not quite the normal male sexual response one would expect in such a situation. It merely reinforces his inability to respond sexually. Yael, however, voices the reality of the situation in her coquettish statement of the sexuality implicit in the handshake, and buttresses her contention with the introduction of the reference to Forel who, in The Sexual Question,[9] would consider such seemingly 'innocent' a touching as an expression of a conscious or a repressed sexual desire. Hemdat hardly seems to be expressing the depth of the sexual feelings that he possesses, whether those feelings exist on a conscious or subconscious level. And part of the problem is that he still refuses to come to terms with the reality of the situation before him: Yael is a woman, not a devil. She is also a sexually aware person whose words and actions, here and elsewhere in the story, seem to be inconsistent with the innocence he attributes to her:

"The kiss was a holy thing to her, for she had not yet profaned her face." (GH 375)

Hemdat sees Yael as a princess, a friend, a devil, an innocent young maiden or, on occasion, as a relative, either a daughter or a sister:

> Yael is unfortunate and he worries about her. His worries are the concerns of compassion, the type of compassion a father has. (GH 361)
>
> Hemdat was walking after (Yael and Shamai) and watching them affectionately. They were walking like little children. (GH 363)
>
> The children in the same housing area would call him Yael's brother, and Hemdat was happy with this name that he had been given. (GH 380)

These lines indicate the point of view of the author. Hemdat is not relating to Yael, at least on a conscious level, as a daughter or a sister. One could readily understand, however, the necessity for his use of such distancing techniques on an unconscious level: he could relate to a relative, for such a relationship would be free of any sexual expectations; he could be in her company and feel that the relationship was a 'safe' one.

In a sense, he is using his imagination to distort the reality of the woman before him so that he will not have to come to terms with his real feelings toward Yael, and other women as well. To escape from his inability to handle erotic desires, Hemdat escapes to the world of fantasy, as does Na'aman in "Tishre" where Agnon's Jaffa literary style allows for a fuller exploration of that fantasy world. And, while the tightly ironic style of "Givat haHol" might render that type of fantastic elaboration unnecessary, it is instructive to study one of those fantasies for the light that it

sheds on both Na·aman and Hemdat. Significantly, the scene follows the hero's portrayal of himself as a "sleeping prince whose love awakens him but to renewed slumber."

> 'Salsebila! Salsebila! Come and let me undo the knot of your hair so that I may breathe in its silken aroma.' But the lass refused to heed his plea, for her love for him was as strong as death. 'How can I, for I have seen what will happen to you. The door to my hair is fastened with an abundance of pins which lie about like serpents and the moment you attempt this, Hemdat, one of them will bite into your fingers.' ... 'Oh, oh, let me undo the knot of your hair and even if ten thousand thorns come into my fingers I will not fear evil. The wounds of love are faithful, Salsebila. Is there not balm in Gilead? ...' 'The daughters of Moab lie in wait there. Don't you know, o my fairest of young men, that their hair is upon their necks as black snakes?' (Hemdat, however, pays her no heed, unbinds her hair, is "bitten," and she cuts off her hair to bind his wound. He then entrusts his heart to her while he goes off to Gilead in search of a balm for his love-wound. His search takes many days, during which time Salsebila, having planted his heart in the "bosom of the earth" for safe keeping, pines away at home, awaiting his return. On the way back, however, a flock of "death birds" attack him, tearing his arms off, so that his reappearance before his beloved Salsebila produces a scene wrought with utter frustration. She, having literally cried her eyes out, is unable to determine who it is that has arrived, and asks to be embraced so that she might know if it is really Hemdat. He, of course, is unable to comply with her request and merely stands before her, consumed with tears and passion.) ("Tishre" V/2)

It is only in the world of his imagination that Na·aman can see himself as the aggressive lover; for he seems to project his repressed desires as well as his deep fears onto the screen of fantasy. Here, too, there is the preoccupation with the hair as a sexual symbol, with the fantasy being the reverse of the actual situation: he seeks to undo her

hair, while previously, the hero was the passive character whose own hair was bitten by the aggressive female. So different, in fact, is the sexually active hero of the Salsebila fantasy from the passive Na·aman, that he had to be called by another name. And the name Hemdat, meaning desire or longing, was most appropriate. They are not two distinct characters; Hemdat is that part of himself that Na·aman seeks to repress, a part that has sexual desires and very much wishes to act upon those desires, and a part that, at the same time, fears such an action. He, as revealed in the fantasy, fears that his aggressiveness will do him physical harm, as symbolized by the combs in Salsebila's hair that inflict the love-wound, and that he will, ultimately, prove incapable of consumating his relationship, as indicated by the attack on him by the "birds of death" which leave him impotent, the loss of limbs being taken in Freudian terms as the literary or imaginative equivalency of castration.[10] These conflicting forces, desire and the fear of acting on that desire, result in the passivity of the character at the end of the fantasy; and they seem to be one of the contributing causes of the ambivalent attitudes of both Na·aman in "Tishre" and Hemdat in "Givat haḤol" toward women in general and Yael in particular. Indeed, this 'hidden' conflict is voiced by Hemdat toward the end of "Givat haḤol" at a time when he seems to realize that Shamai and Yael are lovers and that he no longer faces the immediacy of a situation that would demand a sensual response on his part.

First, in the company of acquaintances, Hemdat declares: "when you visit a girl and you are in full possession of your senses, go in the company of an ordinary but muscular companion who will conquer the girl's heart and then you will be spared the conflicts of love." (GH 386) He is, it

appears, fearful that his inner self, his desire, will get the better of his normally non-responsive facade, and that the company of another person will somehow act as a restraining factor against such an emotional release. And the fact that he fears just such a release is further expressed by his silent address to any woman who would arouse such desires within him: "If you wish to live in peace, stay far away from me, for my spirit is such that it contains a kind of sickness." (GH 386) The ambivalent feelings he exhibits toward Yael would, therefore, seem to be but an expression of the sexual ambivalence Hemdat feels toward all women:

> And again carnal desires (hemdat basar) give him no peace...To bad he doesn't meet Ailonit. The summer is ending. Still the girls go outside lightly dressed; but in another week or two, when you approach a woman you will no longer experience lustful desires for her. Hemdat began thinking about women, but when he would meet a woman, he would feel depressed. (GH 387)

This is perhaps the clearest statement of the sexual ambivalence that had previously been revealed through Hemdat's passivity or flight from situations that invited sexual involvement with a woman. One feels that, even at this stage, he really doesn't wish to meet Ailonit; he would still be passive in her presence. One must note, however, that these ambivalent sexual feelings are those enunciated by the narrator and attributed to Hemdat. They indicate how the narrator perceives him in a passage that highlights the irony implicit in his desires: Hemdat himself still appears to be unaware of the full scope of his ambivalence.

There are situations that cause Hemdat discomfort and from which he must flee, but there are, as well, situations that seem to attract him and within which he seeks refuge from the 'storm' of sensuality. These 'shelters',

however, whether they are a secure family situation, artistic creativity, or the traditional Jewish world, result, ironically, in the ambivalences and passivity that he sought to escape. These shelters are aspects of what we might consider to be Hemdat's inner world, the characteristics of which aid in a formulation of the character of that world's sole inhabitant.

The basic elements in this 'world' and thus of Hemdat himself are associated with the motif of the 'house' which, in this case, is his room in one of the Jewish sections of Jaffa.

> If you haven't seen Hemdat, look at his room. His room stands in the midst of the sand dunes of Neve Tsedek and is filled with many windows: one window faces the sea, one the sandy wilderness upon which the large city of Tel Aviv is being built, one Emek R'faim through which the train passes, and two windows open out onto the street; but when Hemdat darkens them with the green curtains, he is removed from the whole world, even from the bustle of Jaffa. And in the room stands a table with four legs and green paper spread on the table, for the table is a writer's table upon which Hemdat writes his poems. And near the table stands a small cabinet filled with the delicacies of the world; if you want olives, bread, oranges, or wine, reach into that cabinet. But all of these things are but a dessert for the coffee which boils on the alcohol stove which is atop the cabinet... Inadvertently, Yael glanced at the picture that (hung on the wall) opposite the desk...it was by Rembrandt and was a picture of a bride and groom. Yael looked at the picture and, as she approached it, she saw her reflection within the picture... In Hemdat's room there is no mirror. The glass of the picture functions as a mirror for him. (GH 353)

With the opening line of this selection, the narrator is, in effect, inviting the reader to discover something about the character of Hemdat from the nature of the room he occupies, for the structure of the room and its contents indicate some of the occupations and preoccupations of Hemdat.

The first thing one notices about the room is its abundance of windows. Five in all, they face in all directions: seaward, toward the site of Tel Aviv, the train route to Jerusalem, and the streets and marketplaces of old Jaffa. The room is thus presented as a vantage point from which Hemdat can observe his surroundings, though the ironic presentation of the narrator serves to emphasize Hemdat's blindness to reality.

> Hemdat hears and evaluates each and every movement in the world. Hemdat is an observer, and nothing is hidden from his eyes... 'When I see a thing, I am immediately aware of its (true) nature.' (GH 359)

This irony is heightened by the sequence of events, as it follows an incident in which Hemdat is very much unaware of the 'true nature' of the woman in his presence and of his repressed sexual desire for her. His self-perception, as seen by the reader through the vehicle of 'ironic distancing', is perceived to be a self-deception. Similarly, the multitude of windows in his room merely emphasizes this deception: no matter how many windows he has, and no matter in what direction they face, he is unable to perceive the reality of his surroundings.

This lack of perceptive ability becomes doubly ironic when the question of Hemdat's occupation as a writer is considered, for his writing is intimately connected with his room, which contains his pen, paper, and writing table. He will 'observe' his surroundings from that room and then write about them. Furtherfore, his isolation from these surroundings is, he thinks, a physical necessity for his artistic creativity:

> The windows were open in every direction, but the door was closed tight. Good and blessed days had come to the world and <u>Hemdat knew their nature</u>. You won't find him in the streets of Jaffa, nor will you meet him by the seashore. He stays at home by his good table. With what does Hemdat celebrate the holiday of the days? With the sacrifice of his poetry. (GH 387)

Krojanker[11] is correct in noting the possible necessity for isolation from society as a precondition for artistic creation and the existence of a tension in Hemdat between his desire to remain isolated and write, and his longing to join the society outside his room and achieve a satisfying relationship with Yael. However, his determination of the basic problem in "Givat haHol" seems inconsistent with the evidence provided by the story itself. Hemdat basically uses his room as a refuge from a society he is unable to join. His claim that he is able to portray the true nature of that society from the isolation of his room seems inconsistent with his persistent inability to preceive the reality of those surroundings while he is outside that room.

This ironic portrayal of Hemdat's ability to observe events, to perceive their true nature, and to commit those observations to writing is enhanced by his seeming inability to progress in the literary endeavor that occupies his efforts during the course of the story: the translation of a story by the Scandinavian writer Jens Peter Jacobsen.[12] As a cure for Hemdat's spiritual malaise, Doctor Fichin suggests:

> 'Sit at home and work at your table with your tools. You wanted to translate Jacobsen's Neils Lyhne; sit and translate.' Hemdat arose and took out paper and nib. This nib that had been stuck into the pen was already rusty. For the time being, Hemdat didn't do anything. At any rate, it was a beginning. (GH 374)

The novel Neils Lyhne is, ironically, based on the theme of a dreamer who "through experience and disillusionment, becomes a realist".[13] One might thus conclude that Hemdat identified, to an extent, with the hero of the novel. But Hemdat never does become the realist that Jacobsen's hero becomes, and, as a result, the novel about the attainment of realism

remains untranslated.

Not only does Hemdat view the outside world with a distorted vision, but his view within the room itself is more illusion than observation. Significantly, there is no mirror in the room; and this lack of an image-reflector is symbolic of Hemdat's inability to see himself as he really is. His use of the picture-glass indicates that his image is bound to be distorted, as it is perceived along with the images of the bride and groom. In fact, the use of this picture allows him to retreat further into a world of fantasy: he identifies with the groom and sees Yael as the bride in this representation of romantic love.[14] Such a fantasy seems to indicate that Hemdat wanted to get married, a desire that is emphasized by his comment to Yael: "There are some men that get married suddenly, while there are others who are prepared for marriage all their lives and never merit it." (GH 354) The irony is, of course, that Hemdat is not prepared for a marital relationship having as he does a romantically distorted idea of what marriage ought to be like.

Hemdat's view of marriage is a picture on the wall of his room, a romantic view of a newly married couple. The irony implicit in identifying this couple with the Mushlam's is that their relationship seems to lack romantic content; in seeing Yael as the bride, Hemdat ignores the reality of her not being a part of a family. Indeed, no one seems to be part of a family in "Givat haHol." Hemdat appears to have left his entire family behind in Galicia.[15] Yael is visited by her mother who is soon to return to Europe; Shamai's father is in America while the rest of his family remained behind in Russia; Ailonit seems to have no family connections at all and the same is true of the other characters in the story. In a

family sense, these Jaffa Jews are incomplete, and Hemdat seems to feel this incompleteness most keenly. It is hardly surprising, then, that he is attracted to the only family he was acquainted with, a family suitably, yet ironically named "Mushlam", 'complete' or 'perfect'. For Hemdat, they represented the closest thing to the familial completeness for which he yearned. And he visited this family for the institution they represented, rather than for the individuals who comprised that institution, for "before they were married, he wasn't accustomed to visit either one of them." (GH 363) In addition, the context of Hemdat's bewilderment as to why he pursued the Mushlam household (GH 363) indicates that he saw it as a haven from the sensual talk and sexually suggestive situation involving Yael and Shamai.

Ironically, the completeness that Hemdat associates with the Mushlams is merely an imaginary construction that he imposes upon them. It was as if he, in his imperception, had given them their family name, for that family appears to be far from complete or perfect. The Mushlams are introduced to the reader as newlyweds:

> Shoshana and Mushlam returned from Petah Tikvah where a hupah had been set up for them, a hasty hupah. It happened that one of her relatives was marrying off his youngest son and, in order to increase the joyfulness of the occasion, he forced them into marriage. They weren't prepared for it. Mrs. Mushlam didn't even have a hinumah (a marriage veil). (GH 354)

The location of the wedding, Petah Tikvah (Gateway to Hope), indicates, perhaps, what a wedding ought to be; but the situation of the marriage seems to militate against that hope: they were married unexpectedly, hurredly; they weren't prepared for marriage, and even feel that it was

forced upon them, a feeling which is amplified by the phrase "hupah hatufah" ('hasty' hupah) which conjures up an association with the "shotgun wedding." Thus the very language with which the narrator presents the picture of the inception of the family seems to indicate that it is hardly the romantic union that Hemdat perceives it to be; it is not, in reality, a realization of Rembrandt's "Bride and Groom." Indeed, their departure from Hemdat and Yael "with love" makes the scene that much more ironic. The fact that Shoshana lacked the traditional hinumah seems also to indicate that the wedding was incomplete by traditional standards, while possibly hinting, in addition, at the general decline in religious observance and even at the abandoning of traditional Jewish guidelines for moral behavior.[16] (cf. Ketubot 15b)

The reality of the Mushlam family is quite different from Hemdat's idealized conception of it. Mushlam's knowledge is drawn from the encyclopedia; and Shoshana's concern is with the physical appearance of the house: everything is perfect and her house is a showplace for visitors: "The flowerpots are appropriate for the flowers, and the flowers are appropriate for the flowerpots." Furthermore, "the apples that she served him were thoroughly peeled; there would never be any of the skin left on them, nor any blackness from the knife." (GH 364) This attention to the physical appearance of the house might indicate, by extension, that the family that inhabits that house is also perfect or complete. Hemdat seems to believe this but the author's style indicates the irony of such a belief.

This contention is made clear with the symbolic and ironic use of the color gold. Upon hearing of the Mushlam wedding, Hemdat proclaims

that "the deed deserves to be inscribed in golden letters on badger skin"[17](GH 354) and that he will come to their "golden wedding anniversary." But the narrator indicates the irony implicit in the use of this color, when he reports Hemdat's experience in the Jaffa marketplace:

> A hunk of meat hung by the door of the butcher shop, decorated with simulated gold, with all the flies, wasps and mosquitoes hovering over it, for the simulated gold fascinates the eyes. (GH 372)

That is to say, one might be attracted to the external appearance of a thing whose actual contents might be far from attractive. Thus the use of the word 'gold' in connection with the Mushlam family is ironic. It seems to indicate that the external manifestations of a family Hemdat regards as "complete" belie its essential imperfections. In addition, the reference to a "hunk of meat...decorated with simulated gold" has application to Yael as well, for she is referred to by Hemdat as a "piece of flesh," the Hebrew being identical in both instances; that is, in spite of Hemdat's need to perceive her as a 'princess', the real Yael doesn't measure up to this perception.

Hemdat's perception of this 'princess', however, indicates that she is not fully the type of princess he would like her to be.

> (She is) a princess, condemned to work at the spindle. Alas, how suspect was this girl. Thank God that he had been given the opportunity to repair that which is crooked. And when she opened the door, he opened a humash. Torah he would teach her. Hebrew he would teach her. It's better that she should learn Hebrew and be a kindergarten teacher, rather than waste her life away with manual labor. God had sent him to give her renewed life. (GH 351)

This paragraph alone contains most of the motifs of "Givat haḤol" and, therefore, deserves particular attention; its stylistic and syntactical structure has much to do with the characterization of Ḥemdat and the 'world' that he has created for himself. Ḥemdat wishes to 'repair' Yael's way of life and bring her closer to his image of how she ought to be: better she should teach than be a manual laborer; better she should become more 'spiritual', both in a literary and religious sense, than remain her 'uncultured', secular self; she was now "dead" and God had sent him to revive her.

Ḥemdat was going to tutor Yael in Hebrew literature, but the emphasis here is on humash and Torah; and not only is Torah mentioned before Hebrew ("Torah he would teach her; Hebrew he would teach her,") but both nouns are positioned at the beginning of the sentence, a syntactical technique designed for emphasis of that word. In addition, the repeated use of the verb "opened" (And when she opened the door, he opened a humash"), serves to emphasize the contradiction between the two actions and, by extension, the difference between the two characters. The story seems to indicate that, not only is Yael more concerned with learning Hebrew than with studying the Torah, but that she is very possibly more interested in the teacher than in what he has to teach. She opens the door to a man's room. Ḥemdat, on the other hand, though he might subconsciously be most interested in Yael as a young woman, consciously seeks to keep the relationship more on a superficial student-teacher level than allow for the development of a deeper, man-woman relationship. Thus, his response to her arrival would

seem to be a psychologically defensive reaction to his own sensual desires. While books would bring them together, books would also keep them apart.[18]

It is significant, however, that the particular book that he would teach her, and which would form the barrier between the two of them was the humash; that book would mend her "crookedness" and would give her "renewed life"; and that would be the teaching that one could associate with Hemdat's room or 'world', a world into which he wished to bring Yael. The irony of such a desire is indicated in the language of the passage. One such indication is the portrayal of Hemdat's wanting to give life to Yael Hiyot whose very name connotes that she is already alive. Also, his determination to "repair that which is crooked" is seen in an ironic light when contrasted with the original formulation of the phrase in the book of Ecclesiastes: "What is crooked cannot be made straight."[19] That is, Hemdat will not be able to repair that which is crooked; indeed, given his inability to be fully aware of the reality of a situation, he has difficulty in determining just what is crooked and what is the nature of that defect. Here it seems to be her spiritual and financial impoverishment, though elsewhere it might be applied to her physical condition: her weak hand is a disability that periodically puts her in bed and even in the hospital. This physical and spiritual infirmity is reflected in the nature of her room and of the Jaffa Jewish community; Yael's entire world needs repair and Hemdat would be the savior who would reinvigorate her and the society she represents. He would raise her to the higher, more "spiritual" world of "Jewish tradition".

One must understand, however, the particular meaning attached to the

terms "traditional" and "secular" as they are employed by the author within the context of Hemdat's relationship with Yael. Hemdat is a secular Jew and his yearning for the "traditional" world seems to be more a longing for an established system of mores than a desire to return to a particular religious framework. The traditional home that he remembers from his childhood represents, for Hemdat, a social-psychological matrix within which is provided a sense of security. Unable to cope with the relatively unstructured social climate of Jaffa, Hemdat yearns for the protective and socially determined environment he knew as a child in Galicia.[20]

The "religious" aspect of Jewish tradition does, however, play a role in Hemdat's perception of the traditional world. He seems to experience feelings of guilt at having left his family and their world behind; he then equates the desertion of this world, and the values it stands for, with an act of "sin", a judgment he applies to others as well as to himself. Hemdat's problem is that, to a significant degree, he has developed a construct of that tradition within his mind that is, in effect, a distortion of the reality of that tradition; its nature seems to be dictated by his social and psychological needs.

In his attempt to bring Yael into his conception of the traditional world, Hemdat would teach her humash, and Hebrew, for God had commanded him to do so.[21] The following quotes illustrate the degree to which Hemdat perceived Yael and her world to be in need of "tikun," fixing:

> Her room wasn't orderly. Everything was strewn about. Chaotic and disorderly. It reflected dishonor upon the occupants... Yael's bed was fashioned of kerosene tins... the table was shaky...the alcohol burner was flimsy. (GH 359-61)

> What can we say about Hemdat? His world proceeded properly while Yael Hiyot's world wasn't proper. She was troubled anew. She had yet to fully recover from her illness when she suffered a relapse. (GH 379)
>
> Hemdat stuck his head among the flowers and said: 'When Yael's mother left the Land of Israel she gave me coins so that her daughter might purchase the material for a new dress'... Hemdat doesn't know what kind of material Yael will buy for her dress, but in his dreams he sees her in a new dress. (GH 381)
>
> In (her) room there is no air to breathe (or, 'for the soul.') (GH 385)

Yael and her world of secular Zionists need '<u>Tikun N'shamot</u>', spiritual improvement, and Hemdat fancies himself as the one capable of bringing about that improvement. He is concerned about Yael's 'illness', and provides money for her trip to the hospital in Jerusalem, as the impoverished institution in secular Jaffa is incapable of healing her. Although the illness discussed here is a physical one, there are spiritual overtones as well that can be applied to Yael and to her secular society: the Jaffa Jewish community is a spiritually impoverished one, and the cure for its illness is the spiritual return to Jewish tradition, here represented by the trip to Jerusalem.[22] In this regard, Hemdat envisions Yael in the new dress she would make out of the material he indirectly purchases for her.[23] The dress would then be a symbol for 'soul', 'purity' or even 'holiness' with Hemdat providing the means for the attainment of that new spiritual condition.[24]

For all his good intentions, however, Hemdat remains the dreamer, incapable of realizing his desires, as one of the most consistently

recurring refrains of the story indicates: "Hemdat did not do anything." He sleeps, dreams, plans, and attempts to write the 'great story' that will revitalize a spiritually dormant Jewish community, and winds up not doing anything:

> The next day Hemdat delayed coming to (visit Yael at) the hospital. The entire day passed by in sleep. He didn't do anything. He didn't repair anything. From the time that Pizmoni had left, until sunrise, he stood by the window... Hemdat stood by the hospital gate. He was late and, now, perhaps they wouldn't let him in. (GH 367)

Hemdat is obviously ambivalent about his desire to 'repair' the defect he finds in Yael. He spends the night by the window, an image frequently employed in Agnon's works that usually indicates a desire for union with one's beloved.[25] He longs for Yael, but during the day, when he could have visited her at the hospital, he sleeps, arriving at the hospital gates at so late an hour that he might not get to see her at all. Hemdat's characteristic ambivalence is directed toward his desire to visit Yael and toward his longing to "straighten her crookedness"; he is ambivalent even to the extent that he is not certain in his own mind that his world of "Jewish tradition" is preferable to her world of Zionist secularity. He is not fully a part of either world and it is his leaning in both directions at once that results in passivity:

> One moment he would get up (from his writing table) and open the window and the next he would close it. Hemdat loved the breeze of the day that blew in from the outside; but he also loved the restfulness of a closed room. One time it would seem to him that the breeze of the day was preferable and another time that the restfulness of

> of a closed room was preferable. Once he would do this and another time he would do that. Then he heard Yael's voice. Hemdat ran to the window; Yael stood below. 'I can't come up; I haven't the time.' Hemdat said to Yael, 'Come up, my lady, come up.' To which Yael responded. 'Let Hemdat come down.' But Hemdat repeated, 'Come up, my lady, come up.' Yael then replied, 'It is impossible for me to come up, I haven't the time.' Hemdat descended to Yael and on his way down he glanced at his room. Is this the beautiful room he had fixed up in her honor? A sort of widowhood overtook him. (GH 377)

In this passage there are distinct overtones of this ambivalence. The room, the protected environment that provides him with a feeling of restfulness, is alternately sought after and rejected. The same is true of the external surroundings of Jaffa: the outside, the place from which the "wind" (or "spirit" of the day) would blow, the modern, non-traditional life of the Jew. Into the context of Hemdat's ambivalent feelings comes Yael; she is a part of the 'outside' and, as such, Hemdat displays ambivalent feelings toward her.

At first, Hemdat attempts to bring Yael into his world: "Come up, my lady, come up," with the word "up" implying, for Hemdat, a higher, more spiritual world. At the same time, she seeks to bring him down from his protected loft to the world of Jaffa. Finally, he descends to meet her, feeling a certain 'widowhood' or incompleteness upon doing so. They meet and walk along the beach, ultimately arriving at the sand dune known to lovers as 'the hill of love.' As they are sitting on this dune, Yael complains of the discomfort caused by the house key in her

pocket:

> Yael took the key to her room and gave it to Hemdat. Hemdat hid it in his pocket. Suddenly she got up and said: home! Hemdat accompanied her to her home and returned the key to her. Yael entered and closed the door; Hemdat's pocket was empty. For a while he stood at her doorstep. He had expected that she would turn to him. Her firm steps rang in his ears for a long time. Hemdat smiled, ridiculing his hope, and returned to his home. (GH 378)

As Hemdat is reluctant to leave his own home, so too is he reluctant to enter Yael's home. She had given him the key[26] to her apartment which, having briefly held on to it, he returns to her upon their arrival at her door. Baruch Kurzweil correctly views this scene as an indication that Hemdat, ambivalently and with regret, rejects Yael and her way of life; for, accepting and keeping the key that she offers him, which would be tantamount to accepting her way of life, would "bind him to a home that in no way resembles the archetypical home that pleased him in his childhood."[27] This decision on the part of Hemdat to reject the modern "secular" world of Jaffa and retreat to the more "traditional" refuge that is represented by his room is indicated here by his return to his own home and is reinforced in the concluding chapter of the story: Hemdat draws the curtains over his windows, bolts the door, and returns to his writing. He elects, as Dov Sadan concludes, to drive away the "spirit of the day" and remain in the "closed circle, the circle of ancestral life."[28]

The identification of Hemdat's 'world' with traditional Judaism, an identification that is far from complete, as will be indicated, and

that of Yael with secularism is one that is maintained for the entire length of the story, with the 'sand dune' providing a central image within this pattern of identification. And this is indicated in the very title of the story, "Givat haḤol." The ḥol can be understood in two ways; indeed, the author uses both meanings simultaneously. The obvious use of the word applies to the "sand" that abounds in the Jaffa setting and literally surrounds Ḥemdat's room. When he goes outside, he walks by the seashore, occasionally finding himself on that particular sand dune which he comes to identify with Yael; from his window he can observe "the wilderness of sand upon which the great city of Tel Aviv is being built." (GH 352) And, the narrator notes that "all the houses are half-sunken into the sand." (GH 361) The ḥol is used here, however, with a secondary implication that adds a much greater depth to the story; this would involve an understanding of the word ḥol in the title and in the story itself as meaning 'secular.' Thus the sand of Jaffa would indicate that it was the world of 'secularity' and, by extension, that Ḥemdat's room, as isolated as it often seems to be from its environment, would be an island of 'traditional Judaism' within the sea of non-religious Jaffa.

The word ḥol can be, and in fact is, used to indicate the 'secularity' or 'profanity' of the six days of the week in contrast to the holiness that is ascribed to the seventh day, the Shabbat. So we find that the period of havdalah, the time of the separation between the Shabbat and the rest of the week, between the holy and the secular, is an important motif in "Givat haḤol". It is this separation that emphasizes the distance between Ḥemdat and Yael; indeed, Ḥemdat cannot develop a meaningful

relationship with Yael because to do so would, in his mind, be to perform a "profane" act.

Both the explicit and implicit uses of the word hol in connection with Hemdat, Yael, and their respective 'worlds', are combined in one of the central passages of the story. Yet, importantly, the passage goes beyond the simple dichotomy between holy and secular and portrays Hemdat as a man who is attracted to both worlds and a part of neither. He cannot relate to Yael and her friends because they form the secular society; nor can he find his place with the traditional world, either as he has idealized it from his childhood or as he encounters it in the reality of the old men of Jaffa:

> Jaffa was silent upon her sand dunes. Everyone had gone to the seashore. Hemdat walked among the dunes ('aramot haHol'); from two or three homes arose pleasing melodies. Two or three old men sat at the third meal[29] and sang Shabbat songs. Suddenly his heart shrank. From the window of the Chief Rabbi's house he heard the rabbi as he spoke words of Torah. But Hemdat uprooted himself from there and walked to the seashore. When he heard Yael's voice from where she sat with a group of young men and women, and when she laughed, he turned from them and sat by himself. (GH 381)

The scene presented here is a study in contrasts which functions as a means of characterization within the story; Jaffa and her Jews are by the seashore; they are a secular population, closely connected with the sand. The traditional remnant remains at home, faithful to the religious element of the Sabbath day. Jaffa is portrayed as being silent, while those who hold on to the "heritage of the fathers" sing pleasing Sabbath melodies. Yael is identified by her laugh, indicating

her concern with trivial matters, while the Chief Rabbi, also identified by vocal characteristics, arrests Hemdat's attention with the sweet voice that speaks words of Torah. First he's drawn toward this traditional world, then toward the young people at the seashore. Hemdat physically and psychologically uproots himself from the rabbi's house, but is unable to establish new roots in the non-traditional Jaffa society: he belongs to neither world and winds up sitting by himself, very much alone.

The motif of havdalah, the separation of the holy from the profane, is pursued at dinner that evening. Though Hemdat stands apart from both the traditional and secular worlds, Yael is clearly rooted in the latter; havdalah symbolizes the separation of Hemdat from that world and, particularly, Yael Hiyot.

The use of such a motif is an instance where a religious ritual is used in a figurative, rather than cognitive, sense, and it serves to dramatize the relationship between Hemdat and Yael on a symbolic level. It lends added emphasis to the separation that exists between them, a separation that Hemdat would see as being between a "holy" person and a "profane" one, Yael.

The atmosphere at Ya'akov Malkov's inn is pervaded with signs of the havdalah service: "The innkeeper's wife wiped the table clean of the havdalah wine"..."(Ya'akov) arose and began singing the melodies appropriate to the ending of the Shabbat." (GH 382,3) And the theme of havdalah is eventually reflected in a physical separation between Hemdat and Yael: she orders a meat dish and he a dairy meal, thus compelling the ritually observant innkeeper to remove the tablecloth and replace it with two separate table settings. Here, again, Agnon makes use of a religious

observance, this time that of Kashrut, with its separation of milk and meat products, to symbolize the separation that exists between the two characters. "Hemdat looked at the bare space between the two settings, at the body of hol (secularity), that had been thrust into the midst of the meal." (GH 383) Appropriately enough, this meeting is the last time Hemdat is alone with Yael for the duration of the story; havdalah marks their separation.[30]

Hemdat is unable to 'repair the defect' in Yael's life because that 'defect', as he projects it upon Yael and the society in which they both live, is their very way of life; to 'straighten' them out, he would have to bring them into his world, a world that he fancies to be one of traditional Jewish life but which, in fact, exists only in his mind. For Hemdat is as removed from the traditional mode of Jewish existence that he remembers from his childhood days in Galicia[31] as he is from the secular Jaffa community. He is alienated from both worlds and feels this isolation deeply: "Everyone was busy with the exception of Hemdat who was miserably cut off from life." (GH 373) This loneliness leads him into a state of depression; Hemdat, who sought to 'repair' others, acknowledges that he himself is ill and needs 'tikun';

> His mind was dim; he needed fixing. The dentist was passing up and back. The dentist would pull out his brain and he would be relieved. Hemdat lay on his bed and the fear of insanity fell upon him. Who knows what will become of him. Tomorrow he might awaken insane. His father's distinguished family was coming to the end of its strength, its time of death was rapidly approaching, and as for him, he was but a child who has yet to savour life. (GH 374)

Hemdat's state of depression and fear of approaching insanity is related to his past, to the family that represents the "traditional" mode of life. That tradition is coming to an end; it will no longer provide a source of psychological security for Hemdat. It is also apparent that Hemdat, by the very action of leaving his family behind in Europe is somehow speeding up the approach of that family's demise; by coming to Jaffa, and perhaps by choosing to be a writer, he feels that he has disregarded the heritage that was his as a birthright, and he feels guilty on account of it.

At this point, Hemdat is further characterized by the narrator's use of the vehicles of association and memory which have distinct parallels in the life of the hero. It seems proper to assume, with Shaked,[32] that this is a type of projection by the hero of his present situation into the world of the past and onto the actions of another person. This mechanism would then serve as a means of revealing to the reader certain aspects of Hemdat's unconscious:

> At that moment, the image of his beautiful relative appeared to him. She too struggled with the heritage of her ancestors. She had a lovely voice and wanted to study singing. But when her parents opposed her, she left for Vienna where she went about penniless. She studied much, ate little, and looked forward to the day when she would appear on the stage and realize a reward for her toil. But her hope was greater than her strength, and her strength began to weaken. Finally she earned the opportunity to appear on the stage, and many come to hear her voice. However, when she began, blood spurted from her mouth. Afterwards, her father and mother came and took her home, cared for her, and brought her doctors and medicines. Now she lies in her room, not going outside. The light of her mind is extinguished, her voice isn't heard, and she is wrapped in white; the

> whole room is white: the walls are white, and white carpets cover the floor. At times the doctor comes to visit her and brings her red roses, but she gets up and sprinkles white powder on them, so that in the large mirror, the whiteness of the room is reflected. But her gaze dissolves in the darkness. One time, at eventide, Hemdat entered the room; though her eyes were absorbed with his steps, she nevertheless didn't recognize him. Suddenly, she arose and stretched forth her cold fingers and began to touch his forehead, temples, and eyes; and she said, "Hemdat." Hemdat jumped up from his bed. It seemed to him that Yael Hiyot called him. (GH 374)

The outset of this passage indicates a connection between the relative and Hemdat: "she too" had struggled with her heritage, thus revealing to the reader that Hemdat "too" was involved in such a struggle and, furthermore, that the results of her struggle could be equated with Hemdat's situation: he too had left his family behind, thought of himself as bereft of vitality, indicated in the passage by the loss of blood and the whiteness of the relative's sickroom,[33] and felt that he was going insane. He, too, lay on his bed, not going outside (at least not during the daylight hours), and was basically a passive figure: this seems to be, at least in Hemdat's mind, the price that must be paid for the abandoning of one's home for a life of artistic endeavor. Hemdat's ambivalent attitude toward tradition is one cause of his passive behavior in the presence of women, for a full and happy relationship with a secular Jewish woman would, for Hemdat, indicate the final break with the security associated with the traditional world; and he feels he is not prepared to psychologically stand on his own two feet. For, in his fantasy world, the traditional home is the only place that is

secure enough to allow for the satisfying of erotic needs.[34] Thus Hemdat is between two worlds, and a part of neither; he is cut off from the life of Jewish tradition, and from that of his secular surrounding, represented most specifically by Yael Hiyot. And, it seems reasonable to hold with Hochman when he asserts that this was Agnon's view of the modern Jew: "He perceived in the soul of the individual Jew, in his struggle to be free of the limitations of the past, a tropism toward the very past he was trying to escape -- a tropism that doomed him to an inner fragmentation and outer alienation and yet linked him to a transcendent realm that gave meaning to life and the world."[35] In trying to move in two directions at once, Hemdat hardly moves at all; he tends toward a passive stance, and isolates himself from his society. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that this alienated state was anything but a source of discomfort and pain, however Hemdat might try to ignore or disguise this fact:

> When loneliness enveloped him, he would leave his room. But everywhere he went, the loneliness would follow, and the smell of the creatures would cast fear upon him. And again he would want to enter his own skin and be far away from everyone else, so that he would feel neither their presence nor his own... But when someone would put a hand on the back of his neck, Hemdat would tremble with hidden joy. (GH 387)

Hemdat very much wishes to escape from this isolated situation and establish a relationship with even a single human being within his surrounding, secular society. But this effort is doomed to fail; he cannot be a part of that society, a fact which Moshe Shamir sees implicit in the passage just quoted. In referring to the man who would approach

the alienated Hemdat "from behind", Shamir states:

> This man would arouse within Hemdat a trembling of hidden joy when he laid his hand on the back of his neck, from behind, before revealing himself in front of him. That small moment of illusion, that this time, this time the true friend, the real man, the genuine love would appear; that is a moment of trembling of hidden joy. Hemdat is not a man without desire, one who removes himself from the community out of protest. But the very opposite: a man who knocks on the doors of a society that is abhorrent to him, but is drawn after it at the same time, a society that he is compelled to ridicule and to observe with an ironic view for he senses and knows that he is rejected from it.[36]

By implication, then, the 'true friend' or 'genuine love' would, for Hemdat, have to be someone who, like himself, would be alienated from society so that a commitment to that person would not imply a commitment to a detestable society. That is to say that Hemdat could only establish a meaningful relationship with a woman who was similar to himself in personality and spirit: a person who was generally inactive, physically isolated and spiritually cut off from life within a society, whether that life was a traditional or modern one.

The only character mentioned in the story that might approach this description would be Hemdat's childhood relative, a person who persists in his memory alone, and with whom a relationship would be an impossibility. Significantly, the narrator reveals the association within Hemdat's mind between this relative and Yael: she touched him with her cold fingers[37] and when she called his name, it seemed to him that it was not his relative but Yael Hiyot who was calling him. Which is to say that if Yael had been the type of alienated figure that Hemdat perceived his relative as being,

then, and only then could he have satisfied his desire to develop a "relationship" with her.

It would seem, then, that Hemdat was still caught up in the "struggle with the heritage of his ancestors" (GH 374) and that, in some way, this struggle prevented the development of anything more than a superficial relationship between Hemdat and Yael. It has already been suggested that this is a cause of his rejection of the secular Jaffa society, a factor which ultimately limits the possibility of establishing a personal relationship with any particular member of that society, especially when that person, like Yael, seems to embody so many of the qualities that are typical of her surrounding social group.

This line of reasoning appears to be valid, yet it doesn't take into consideration the particular difficulty Hemdat seems to have in relating to women. Nor does it indicate the connection that might exist between the internal restraint that results in the strongly ambivalent feelings that Hemdat has toward women, and the "heritage of the ancestors." Shaked allows for such a relationship when he states that "one of the hidden forces ... that frustrates the self-realization of the hero is the force of tradition that internally prevents his erotic activity."[38] But this statement is hardly an explicit indication of the particular aspects of tradition that are involved in this erotic frustration. Judaism does, of course, stress that modest behavior should govern the relationship between a man and a woman, particularly if they are not man and wife. Is it to be assumed, however, that it is solely an internalization by Hemdat of the Jewish teachings in regard to modesty that prevents his 'erotic activity' and frustrates his attempts to develop satisfying relationships with women?

Such a conclusion doesn't adequately account for the deep sexual ambivalencies and the almost ascetic response to sexual desires that characterize Hemdat's relationships with women in general and Yael in particular. It would seem, then, that the "forces of tradition" conceived of by Hemdat are appreciably different from the actuality of that tradition which, in fact, opposes the concept of asceticism,[39] and that such "sexually prohibitive forces" are actually the result of the perversion of traditional Jewish values by a man who has idealized a world he is no longer a part of, a world he chose to leave behind.

It would be helpful at this point to consider another instance in which Agnon has created a situation in which the traditional Jewish values regarding sexual relationships have been carried to their ascetic extreme; such a comparison can serve as a helpful introduction to a similar situation in "Givat haHol."

In "Agadat haSofer", Miriam and Raphael carry their piety to a sexually ascetic extreme. For them, true religious commitment acts as a restraint against sexual desire; but such a view is, in fact, a perversion of traditional Jewish values,[40] as illustrated by one of the central scenes in the story:

> At that moment, the thought enters her mind to make herself beautiful for her husband. But then she sees reflected in the mirror the east-wall embroidery with its scenes and those two lions with their mouths open; immediately she is startled and shrinks back: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." And when Raphael returns home after the prayers and sees his wife in her true beauty reflected in the mirror, he is immediately attracted to her. He goes toward her to make some pleasing remark. But when he is near her, His name, may He be blessed, flashes before him out of the mirror. Immediately he stops and recites devoutly and

> in holiness: "I have set the Lord always before me."... Both turn away silently. He sits in one corner and studies the Zohar, and she sits in another corner reading the women's prayerbook, until sleep invades their eyes.[41] (Elu va'Elu, 137)

The 'pious restraint' that Miriam and Raphael exercise in the face of their sexual desires results in their childless situation. Thus the irony that, in not acquiescing to their longings for one another out of fear that to do so would be to commit a "sinful" act, they ultimately sin by transgressing the traditional command to have children.

In attempting to avoid the "sin", both characters sublimate their sexual energies by reading until "sleep invades their eyes." As has already been noted, Hemdat accomplishes the same thing by the references to food and drink when he is in a situation that activates his sexual desires.

Hemdat, as well, has distorted the "heritage of the fathers" in his mind and then struggles with this ascetic interpretation of traditional values governing relations between the sexes. His reaction to sensuality and sexual suggestiveness might be considered as within a strict interpretation of traditional mores; the equation of a love realtionship with sinful behavior seems to be a perversion of that tradition.

It is necessary, in this connection, to note Agnon's use of language as it applied to characterization. Both in reaction to Ailonit's aggressive sexuality and to Yael's sensuality and sexual allusions, "Hemdat is startled." The Hebrew phrase is the same as that indicating Miriam's reaction to the biblical verse that hung on the wall; that verse reminded her that, in her conception of Judaism, sexual desire was inconsistent with a completely devout existence. The identical language usage in these two stories seems

to indicate that Hemdat had reacted to his situation with the same interpretation of tradition that motivated Miriam's behavior. Hemdat had, in effect, internalized the east-wall embroidery; he too viewed sexual desire as a sinful feeling.

A more explicit indication of this type of thinking and its resultant behavior occurs in the concluding section of the story. Here, too, the theme of sin is interwoven with the motifs of Nazirut and Yom Kippur. Here, style and language combine in a terse but vivid indication of Hemdat's character:

> Unintentionally, he came to that very same dune.
>
> Around and around he walked, but didn't approach the dune.
>
> Suddenly, he stood on the dune. (GH 388)

Each of these sentences is significant enough to merit a separate paragraph, yet similar enough to be considered as a unit; each sentence indicates an action by Hemdat in relation to the sand dune. At first, he approaches the sand dune "unintentionally," as if he were motivated by an unconscious desire to be there. Then he encircles the dune, neither departing from it, nor coming closer; his ambivalent feelings about being in its proximity are obvious. The suddenness of the third action indicates that this ambivalence has not been resolved. One could almost imagine Hemdat wondering, "What am I doing here?"

A further understanding of the significance of these sentences comes with the symbolic importance of the sand dune itself, a place that Hemdat associates with Yael:

> A cold, green[42] moon lit up the dune. This was the place where he had first seen her. Here he would

> walk with her. They would call this dune the "hill of love." His heart trembled within him. (GH 388)

Thus the sand dune is seen as almost inextricably bound to the figure of Yael and Hemdat's desire to enter into a love relationship with her. As he is seemingly brought toward the dune by an unconscious motivation, so is he drawn toward Yael. And as he is ambivalent in his desire to approach the sand dune, so does he experience ambivalent feelings toward Yael when he is with her.

There is, however, implicit within the language of this scene, an allusion to a Talmudic text that reflects a significant aspect of Hemdat's character: "Around and around he walked, but didn't approach the dune." The Hebrew of this line, "Sachor, Sachor...v'lo karav", alludes to a rabbinic saying that appears in numerous places in the Babylonian Talmud, though its context in Shabbat 13a seems to indicate that it is the particular text being referred to:

> Ulla, on his return from the college, used to kiss his sisters on their bosoms; others say, on their hands. But he is self contradictory, for Ulla said, any form of intimacy is forbidden,[43] because we say: "Go round and round, O Nazirite, but do not approach the vineyard."

While the warning itself applies specifically to the case of the Nazirite who, having taken a vow not to drink wine, is urged not to put himself in a position where he might be tempted to violate that oath, the rabbis give it a more general usage: a man should stay far from anything that might lead him to commit a sinful act. It is important to note that in the particular context in Shabbat 13a, such a warning is related to the possible development of a sexual relationship between

Ulla and his sisters.[44]

Hemdat's circling of the sand dune seems to be an acting out of the rabbinic statement. Since that dune is associated with Yael, full application of that warning to "Givat haHol" implies that, within Hemdat's mind, Yael was a 'forbidden' object and therefore he ought to keep his distance from her so as to avoid the temptation to 'sin.' It would seem, though, that the 'sin' is connected to the particular location, "givat hahol," indicating that, for Hemdat, the nature of the 'sin' was a relationship with a woman who was a part of Jaffa's secular Jewish community.

The fact that a relationship with Yael is considered sinful from Hemdat's perspective is further supported by his conception of his ambivalent feelings for Yael as being a reflection of the struggle between the good and the evil inclinations that, according to the rabbinic view of man, would then be responsible for his righteous or sinful behavior. As he stands on the dune and contemplates the nature of a nearby shadow, Hemdat seems to be acting out a struggle between the two inclinations that he sees within himself:

> If it is the shadow of a tree, it is a sign that our love is permanent and enduring... But if it is the shadow of a passerby, it is a sign that our love is as transient as a passing shadow...If it is Yael Hiyot, I would take this to be a bad sign. Yael Hiyot passed by. (GH 388,9)

Here, Hemdat seems to consider the good and bad "signs" as manifestations of the good and evil inclinations of man, and identifies Yael with the latter. And, though the reader sees this scene as indicating Yael's rejection of Hemdat, he rationalizes that rejection: the fact that Yael

passed him by indicates the triumph of the good inclination over its evil counterpart which had, as its aim, his relationship with Yael.

Thus the choice by Agnon of the word "tam" as the concluding word of the story is no mere coincidence. Though this word is not infrequently employed in Hebrew literature[45] in place of "sof" at the conclusion of a story, here it seems to be an extension of the story itself in which case it is ironically employed: from Hemdat's perspective, he has avoided the "temptation" to enter into a 'sinful' relationship with Yael; thus he descends from the sand dune, the hill alluding to the ideas of love and secularity, in a state of perfection or innocence.[46] The reality presented by the story leads, however, to a far different conclusion: Hemdat, having lost a 'love' he never really had, returns to the loneliness of his room and to the fantasy world of the following story, "Lelot." In this case, the word "tam" would imply that his attempts to enter society and form a satisfying relationship with a woman had failed, and had come, in a sense, to a dead 'end.' It might also indicate that he was now as "tam" ("naive") as he had been previously.

A further example of the use of language to evoke this problem and to supply an additional dimension to Hemdat's character is the use of the motif of the Nazir. The allusion in "Givat haHol" to the warning in Shabbat 13a against the Nazir's approaching the vineyard indicates the association between Hemdat and the Nazir, an association that exists in the narrator's view of Hemdat. Further allusions to such an association take into account the nature of the Nazir's oath: he must not have his hair cut, nor is he to drink wine during his period of consecration to the Lord's service. Should he violate the terms of this oath, the Nazir

is required to present a sin offering before the Lord (Numbers 6). In a way, Hemdat sees himself as a person 'dedicated to the service of the Lord.' He thinks of himself as having committed two "sins", those very acts that the Nazir has sworn to avoid: in an effort to please Yael he has his hair cut (GH 379), and during their meal at Ya'akov Malkov's he drinks wine (GH 385), a departure from his usual beverage, black coffee. Having considered these acts to be "sinful", Hemdat seeks to make atonement. He removes himself from the world of Jaffa, and excludes himself from its celebration of the great holiday marking the dedication of Tel Aviv, a celebration involving the drinking of wine: "All of Jaffa celebrated this great holiday with wine and cakes, except for Hemdat who sat in his house drinking black coffee." (GH 388) As a further act of atonement, Hemdat, the "Nazir", offers the "sacrifice of his poetry" (GH 388) just as the Biblical Nazir would offer a sin offering before the Lord.

These allusions to sin and Nazirut are given further reinforcement with the references to the Day of Atonement. The story concludes at the time of the "festival of days," which seems to coincide here with the beginning of the month of Tishre, thus making this "festival" that of the Days of Awe, Rosh ha Shannah and Yom Kippur. Hemdat reviews the past year, particularly his relationship with Yael Hiyot, and, in keeping with that time of atonement, acknowledges to himself that his desire for her was "sinful", that part of the atonement process would involve his presentation of a 'sin offering', the "sacrifice of his poetry," and that he would turn from this 'sinful pursuit' in the future. Furthermore, in keeping with the spirit of the Day of Atonement, he would forgive Yael

her "sins": "Yael will come in. He will greet her warmly, making no mention of her prior sins." (GH 388) That is to say that Hemdat would still allow for her returning to the "proper" way of life, for her entering the world that he perceives as being sinless. An additional allusion to the desire for repentance is found in Hemdat's wondering about the nature of the shadow near the sand dune: "Is it possible that God had raised a shrub or a tree during the night?" The language of the question would lead the reader to the association with the section from the book of Jonah[47] that comprises the Haftarah portion for the afternoon service on Yom Kippur: God desires the return of the people of Ninevah from their sinful ways so that he might forgive them.

Hemdat's ambivalent attitude and unresponsiveness toward the women of Jaffa, Yael Hiyot and Ailonit in particular, has been amply illustrated. Various explanations have been suggested to account for Hemdat's inability to enter into a satisfactory heterosexual relationship, including the distinct possibility that Hemdat's rejection of the Jaffa women must be considered within the larger framework of his ambivalent desires to become a part of the Jaffa secular Jewish society and his ultimate rejection, at least from Hemdat's perspective, of that society. There is, however, another aspect of Hemdat's character, one that suggests an Oedipal fixation, that ought to be explored, and be brought to bear in regard to this problem; it is of some significance in "Givat haHol," but takes an even greater position of importance when discussed in connection with the same problem as applied to other Agnon heroes. The suggestion that such a neurosis is a part of Hemdat's character is indicated most explicitly in the story "Tishre", as Na'aman seeks in

the world of his fantasy the genesis of the depression that haunts his reality:

> O, merciful angels, tell me if you would, of that which happened to me when I was very young... The mother held the infant in her lap and was very happy on account of him. Seven times seven she bent her head towards his face, each time bestowing upon him seven kisses. The child rejoiced and each time his face shone with happiness. Then the princess descended and saw the child, that he was beautiful, and drew near in order to kiss him. Instantly, he burst into tears and didn't allow her to kiss his cheek. Later on, one of the girls, he didn't know who she was, paid attention to him, but the child raised a fearful cry, and wept as forlornly as before. Then the mother took the child and bestowed upon him the kisses of her mouth, and he was no longer upset. And the mother was very happy...until the angel of life descended in a dark and distressed flight, and in the shadow of his black wings which were arranged in a gloomy row, he would complain: 'Pitiful mother; why are you so happy, and why do you give thanks to God. Your child is to be miserable, for such will be always his behavior.'[48] ("Tishre", V/4)

The behavior that the angel prophesizes is a constant repetition of the childhood scene. The youth would reject the attention of the maidens, preferring instead, the kisses of his mother. It would seem, then, that the youth's feelings for his mother would keep him from developing any relationship with another woman; the psychologically natural stage of personality development would, in this case, become an undesirable adult neurosis.[49] That this would lead to much sadness seems implicit in the prophecy; the description of the angel, descending in "dark and distressed flight" and speaking in the "shadow of black wings which were arranged in

a gloomy row", is an additional indication of the depression that is bound to accompany the fulfillment of that prophecy.

This revealing fantasy is deleted in the rewritten version of "Tishre," (i.e. Givat haḤol) but the symptoms that would characterize such an Oedipal fixation seem to remain in the latter; Ḥemdat is passive in his relationships with women, and flees from any sexual advance on their part; he has a distinct sense of inferiority within a social group;[50] he is alienated from his social community. Each one of these characteristics might be seen as a sympton of a possible neurotic fixation on mother. Baruch Hochman, in commenting on the paradigmatic Agnon hero, notes, with justification, that, "In psychological terms, (Agnon's) characters are obsessed...with the mother, and the result is a propensity to undergo life in a labile, feminine mode. Aggression is deeply suppressed and the scope of erotic imaginings is limited."[51]

Freud[49] notes that the inability of the son to detach himself from the sexual desires for his mother leads to a situation in which not only is the son incapable of loving another woman, but is unable to become a member of his society. Kenneth Keniston,[52] in his study of youthful alienation, also concludes that this alienation from society owes its genesis, in part at least, to a childhood situation in which the mother was the dominant parent, at least in the mind of the child. And, while it is far from certain that such a situation applies to Hemdat's childhood home, the fantasy in "Tishre" seems to indicate this type of dominant and exclusive relationship. In this regard, Erik Erikson attributes a feeling of inferiority to such a mother dominated household in which the boy "can develop a sense of inadequacy because he learns at this

stage that while a boy can do well in work and play, he will never boss the house, the mother, and the older sisters."[53]

These references shed light on a possible psychological basis for Hemdat's problem in relating to women. Obviously, the understanding of the nature of the Oedipal complex is based on Freud's work and presumes a sexual desire for the mother on the part of the son who is then "unable to transfer his libido to an outside sexual object."[49] Erich Fromm, however, offers another possible interpretation of this neurosis that might be of significant help in understanding the problem of 'fixation' on the mother and inability to relate well to other women that seems to be so prevalent with Agnon's heroes.

According to Fromm,[54] one reason for the inability of a man to relate to "strangers" and develop a fulfilling love relationship with the women he encounters outside of the family structure, is his need to return to the kind of situation that provides him with a sense of basic security and belonging; the lack of confidence in oneself as an individual human being will tend to alienate a man from his surroundings while he longs to return to his familiar family group. This would then be implicit in a man's desire for his mother: a need to return to the secure situation he once experienced as her young child.

In "Givat haHol," Hemdat seems to experience similar difficulties in relating to "strangers", especially women, and his desire to return to the "tradition" that he knew as a child appears to be a significant factor in his inability to establish such relationships. This traditional world would, in Hemdat's mind, provide the feelings of security and belonging that he so very much wants and needs. In such a world he would

avoid the responsibility of having to determine for himself the type of life he wished to live, and the values that would govern his behavior, for the traditional world would provide him with a structure of beliefs and expectations. In short, Hemdat wishes, with much ambivalence, to return to the family situation he knew as a child in Galacia; this is represented by a desire to return to his mother. He remembers the security of his childhood and wishes to return to that situation in which he was free from the responsibility for making decisions.

The ambivalent desire for a relationship with mother, or a mother-like figure is more evident in stories like "Shevuat Emunim" and "Achot" than in "Givat haHol", but the nature of the main character and his basic problems seem to be quite similar; in fact, Hemdat might well be considered a paradigmatic Agnon hero. This is particularly true of his alienation from the surrounding society,[55] his feeling of rootlessness, and a desire to become an accepted part of his present, secular society, while, at the same time, longing to return to the experience of the traditional world he remembers from childhood, a world he has now idealized and some of whose values he has perverted.

Many of the themes and motifs presented in "Givat haHol" are found throughout the literature of S.Y. Agnon. This is particularly true of those works that, like "Givat haHol," are placed in the Jaffa milieu of the second aliyah period. The heroes of these stories have much in common with Hemdat in terms of their problems and character structures. Like Hemdat, they exhibit an inability to develop love relationships, ambivalent attitudes toward women, Oedipal fixation, and escape from reality to the world of romantic fantasy. These motifs reflect an

underlying tension between the traditional, religious world of the hero's childhood, and the modern, secular world of his immediate surroundings. Thus an understanding of "Givat haḤol" can shed much light on these other works, while they in turn can reinforce the themes and motifs found in "Givat haḤol." With this in mind, it is instructive to consider such stories as "Achot", "Lelot", and "Shevuat Emunim."

Like Ḥemdat, Na'aman, the hero of the short tale "Achot", is ambivalent in his attitude toward the women in the Jaffa society. He is also ambivalent in his feelings toward the family he left behind in Galicia, as is manifest in his behavior and attitude toward his sister. As was the case in "Givat haḤol," such a situation seems to indicate a tension between two worlds, the "religious" and the "secular", neither of which he fully belongs to.

Na'aman seems confused as he walks through the streets of Jaffa. He obviously finds his girl friends Ada and Tsila attractive; when he thinks of the latter, he recalls her "bare arms, full and wild, that encircle his neck like serpents, the serpents of love that seem to be guarding a treasure-house." (A. 405) Yet, in spite of these desires, he "finds himself" passing by their homes, and heading in the direction of his sister's apartment. His ambivalent feelings toward women are obvious: "Na'aman no longer thought about marriage, but none the less he was glad that he was such a desirable match." (A. 405) This ambivalence, however, does not seem to make sense to him and he seems to be drawn to his sister by unconscious motivation. The reason for this attraction, however, is made apparent to the reader by the narrator's description of Na'aman's

ambivalent feelings toward his family.

> It has been two years since he left his father's house. He had longed for his relatives like a child. But nevertheless he was happy that he was far away from them. He was completely free, without the yoke of a family. He will do what he considers to be right. Today Hannah, and tomorrow Penina. Then his sister came. He was uncomfortable, thinking that she would restrict his behavior. But her sadness caused him to forget everything else. In solitude she stayed in her room. Her words were few, and her reproofs didn't sadden him. She was the most beautiful of girls, whose eyes burned in silence and about whom her friend, the young poet, had written the song of the black roses. (A. 406)

Na'aman's ambivalent feelings about having left home result in a sense of guilt at having rejected the traditional way of life that his family represents (personified by his sister). He did not want the burden of a family and delighted in the freedom that his life in Jaffa allowed. Yet, though he was now "free" to pursue the girls, he was drawn to his sister instead; he was still a very dependent person and sought a sense of security in a member of his family, the irony being that her own psychological state hardly seemed to promise much support.

Such a personification would allow for an interpretation of "Achot" that parallels the analysis of "Givat haḤol" in which Yael Hiyot represents the secular society and, in the eyes of Ḥemdat, an attraction toward her is equated with the temptation to sin. In that story, Ḥemdat's "carnal desires" are restrained by a somewhat distorted interpretation of tradition that labels such desires as "sinful." This, in part, accounts for Ḥemdat's ambivalence toward women. Similarly, then, Na'aman's desires for the women of Jaffa would be restrained and even outweighed by a longing

to return to the world of tradition that he had known as a child. This world is represented by the sister, and a movement in her direction would be a moving toward that world.

The very language of the story seems to support such an understanding of "Achot," as in the case of Na'aman's passing in front of his sister's house, where he proclaims, "I will turn aside and see how she is." (A. 405) The Hebrew of the phrase alludes to the turning aside of Moses to see the burning bush[56] upon which follows the theophany and acceptance by Moses of the leadership of his people. Also, in searching for a conversation piece in his sister's presence, Na'aman "Looked this way and that," a phrase alluding to Moses' turning about to see if anyone else was present before slaying the Egyptian taskmaster; such an action indicated an internalization of Moses' religion from childhood and a return to it through the physical defense of one of his co-religionists.[57] On the other hand, Na'aman rejoices in the freedom that permits him to do "whatever <u>he</u> considers to be correct," an allusion to the biblical phrase describing the action of a people that followed the dictates of their own heart, rather than those of their God;[58] thus the "freedom" referred to in "Achot" seems to be a freedom from the yoke of tradition, in addition to being a liberation from the "yoke of family." The inference is that such a pursuit is a "sinful" activity.

Arnold Band correctly points out that, "The guilt felt because of the rejection of home focuses upon the figure of the mother and her surrogate, the sister."[59] Indeed, in Na'aman's mind, the two seem to merge into the same person.

> By the window she was sitting. In such a position his mother, peace be with her, used to sit. His small, good mother with a silken thread stretched on her left hand,

> who would lie on her sickbed reading novel after novel, but never finish reading one. Na'aman trembled. It was as the orphaned boy had dreamed of his mother. The same trembling shoulders; the same head bent over; that same sadness that enveloped everyone who approached her. (A. 406)

The figure of the mother and the hero's 'fixation' on her are related, in accordance with Fromm's interpretation of the essence of the Oedipal complex, to the longing that Hemdat (in "Givat haHol") feels toward the security offered by the traditional world of his childhood. The same explanation might well be suggested with regard to Na'aman's feelings toward his deceased mother. The particular image of her sitting at the window lends added support to this contention. Indeed, the sitting of a woman at a window is a frequently utilized motif in Agnon's stories,[60] with its occurrence in the story "haMitpachat" being of particular value in understanding its significance in "Achot." That scene is one in which the woman sits by the window, waiting for her husband to return from the annual trade fair:

> After a time, when I read in the Book of Lamentations, "She was like a widow," and Rashi's interpretation, "Like a woman whose husband had gone to the provinces, but he had intentions of returning to her," then I remembered mother when she sat by the window, her cheeks tearstained. (Elu va'Elu 257)

The final words of this passage are an allusion to Lamentations 1:2 in which the city of Jerusalem is personified as a 'widow' who weeps bitterly, with "tears on her cheeks," awaiting the return of her exiled population. Thus the image of the abandoned city echoes the motif of the "abandoned" mother in "haMitpachat"; she awaits the return of her husband,

out of her love for him, and her desire to see the family structure again intact. In "Achot," the sister-mother motif seems to indicate the same situation: the longing for the return of those who have abandoned the traditional home, so that it might be revitalized and made whole once again.

The final scene in "Achot" seems to indicate a movement on Na'aman's part to return to that home:

> Suddenly tears took hold of his eyes
> and love that he had not known until
> now shined forth through the tears.
> Na'aman took hold of his sister's hand
> and lifted it towards his mouth. And
> suddenly, he bent over and placed his
> mouth on it and gave it a long kiss.[61]
> (A. 407)

Na'aman turns toward the "familiar" person and rejects the "strangers", indicating his desire to return to the closed family structure from which he once derived a sense of belonging and security.

The story "Lelot" also contains many of the motifs included in "Givat haḤol", "Tishre", "Achot", and "Shevuat Emunim." Like Ḥemdat in "Givat haḤol" and Na'aman in "Tishre", the hero of "Lelot", Ḥemdat, is a dreamer who takes refuge in the world of fantasy in order to escape the erotic desires he experiences toward Ruḥama, his young neighbor. The language of the tale is the "lush, effusive style"[62] of "Tishre", replete with fantasy and dream sequences; the phrases and symbols of the Song of Songs echo throughout the length of "Lelot".

Ḥemdat, like his namesake in "Givat haḤol", has a tendency to remain isolated in his room, passively awaiting the arrival of his fantasy-woman, Salsebila. It is, however, his young neighbor, Ruḥama, who comes to visit him at night and toward whom Ḥemdat displays ambivalent feelings. On the

one hand he encourages her to return to her mother's home; on the other, he is attracted to her as a woman.

> I took the rose and gave it to Ruḥama. She took the rose and placed it near her heart. But the rose didn't rest, because Ruḥama's heart trembled. And I knew that the rose longed to return to the place of its origin. I passed my palm over her hair which was red and warm. And when I did this, Ruḥama came very close to me, trembling like a rose at harvest time. A hidden hand took the rose from a woman's dress and placed it upon the heart of a man. And I was that man. My arms hugged little Ruḥama and raised her until our mouths touched one another. From her warm lips flowed the dew of her kisses and my soul trembled to its very depths.
> (L. 393)

Ruḥama seems to be very much of a sister-image in Ḥemdat's eyes, a fact that would account for his attraction to her as well as for his ambivalent feelings. The scene is quite similar to the conclusion of "Achot" in which Na'aman picks up his sister's hand and kisses it; here, Ḥemdat picks up the "little Ruḥama" and expresses his erotic feelings. But undisguised expression of such feelings toward a woman, not to mention a "sister," is not something that Ḥemdat, nor any of the other main characters studied here, is capable of doing. Ḥemdat's love for Ruḥama is an expression of Oedipal desires, something he cannot tolerate psychologically; he must flee this reality and, in so doing, he fantasizes one image while embracing another: at the conclusion of "Lelot", Ḥemdat lifts up Salsebila "as a man would raise his wine glass," (L. 403) though it seems that he is again kissing Ruḥama.

Similarly, Ruḥama might be compared with the two girls in "Shevuat Emunim" toward whom Ya'akov Rechnitz displays ambivalent desire: Tamara

and Shoshana. In that story, both girls are seen by Rechnitz to be sister-images, which would account for his attraction to them. Tamara is, of course, the youngest of the Jaffa girls; she always has a flower over her heart, and it is with this girl alone that Ya'akov is able to express his sexual desires:

> Once Rechnitz had set his lips to her's; they had quivered slightly and just touched his in return. A touch that was hardly a touch at all. Heaven's above, if that was the shadow of a kiss, what would a true kiss be like? No girl in the world had lips such as hers and, besides this, every touch of her hand was like a kiss.[63] (SE 260)

Such an action, however, is not taken without ambivalent feelings on his part: "At times Rechnitz regretted the kiss; at other times he regretted not having made a second attempt." (SE 260)

Shoshana Ehrlich, a "neighbor", as were Tamara and Ruḥama, is presented as Ya'akov's childhood "sibling". And the description of Ruḥama as a "moist rose" (L. 392) and a girl who could easily be set atremble (L. 393) is quite similar to that scene in "Shevuat Emunim" in which Ya'akov remembers his visits to Mr. Ehrlich's office:

> The walls were covered in silk hangings to which were attached large portraits, one of his wife and the other of his daughter...Shoshana's dress, however, reached only to her knees and her legs seemed to tremble lightly... Beside these pictures on the wall, two more stood on the table, again of mother and daughter, and before them was set a moist rose in a glass of clear water.[63] (SE 222)

For Ya'akov, Shoshana represents the family he had left behind, and the psychological security that was, for him, provided by that world which might be labeled "traditional." In desiring Shoshana, Rechnitz

indicates a longing for that world. On the other hand, his being drawn toward the girls of Jaffa would indicate a desire to escape from that "traditional" world and to enter the modern world of Jaffa. In addition, Hemdat, in "Givat haHol", considered Yael Hiyot to represent this Jaffa world, a factor that ultimately led him to "reject" her. A similar dichotomy exists in "Lelot", so that Hemdat's desire for Ruhama seems to indicate, perhaps on an unconscious level, a movement toward the security of the "traditional" world, and a rejection of the insecurity he experiences in Jaffa's "secular" society.

> And I lifted up my eyes to thank my just God who had opened my eyes so that I might see. I will no longer err like I have up to now by chasing after many girls and after Yael Hiyot. (L. 394)

> I was joyful, for the Lord had given me the wisdom to reply to Ruhama. Now she will know and understand that I will no longer look at Yael Hiyot and at her green eyes that are behind me. (L. 398)

It is significant that this sister-image to whom Hemdat is attracted is named Ruhama. Such a name is derived from that portion of the book of Hosea in which God indicates that the Kingdom of Israel will be punished for her sins: "(Hosea's wife) conceived again and bore a daughter. And the Lord said to him, 'Call her name "Not Pitied" (Lo Ruhama), for I will no more have pity on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all." (Hosea 1:6) The name Ruhama then, in Hemdat's eyes, seems to indicate that she, like a kingdom about to be destroyed, needs compassion, and presents an image of desolation. Hemdat would then be the m'raham, the one who would bring her the comfort she needs, and satisfy the image of incompleteness she presents to him. Such a situation parallels that found in "haMitpachat"

where the mother is viewed in her child's eyes as being like the city of Jerusalem: abandoned, destroyed, and longing for the return of her inhabitants. The boy sees the longing of his mother for his absent father and perhaps thinks that he can be the one to satisfy these needs; while his father is gone, he thinks that he might realize his Oedipal desires. (He does, after all, sleep in his father's bed.) Furthermore, the use by Agnon of such references to Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Israel tends to evoke a feeling of the traditional world towards which the main character tends to gravitate; such a world is not necessarily a religious one, but rather one which represents the security that the character associates with his childhood experiences in his mother's house.

A similar tension between the "traditional" and modern worlds exists in "Shevuat Emunim", with the polarity represented by the six Jaffa girls and the visiting Shoshana. Ya'akov, unlike Na'aman in "Achot", has erected considerable psychological barriers between himself and the traditional world of his childhood, making the road to Shoshana, the representative of that world, a great deal more complex and difficult to travel than Na'aman's path to his sister's door.

Like the heroes of other Agnon love stories, Ya'akov displays a propensity for drifting off into fantasy and dreams, the contents of which reveal aspects of his character to the reader. This is particularly true of the dream-sequence[64] of the eighteenth chapter of "Shevuat Emunim" in which Ya'akov recalls having dinner in Shoshana's apartment.

> After a while he got up to leave and Shoshana went out to accompany him. When they had gone halfway, he wanted to turn back and see her home, but she would not allow this. She made her way home, while he waited for his streetcar. He bought a

> ticket and climbed in. The streetcar filled up and started to move. On its way it kept stopping to take on more and more passengers. Two young fellows got in and one sat down on the other's knees. He heard them talking to one another about Otto Weininger and his book, Sex and Character. The journey continued for an hour. And then, oddly enough, Ya'akov had found himself again sitting with Shoshana; and it was not yet eleven o'clock, although he had left Shoshana's house at ten, and she had accompanied him halfway, and had even travelled for an hour on the streetcar, and spent an hour at home. How could it be, then, that he was with Shoshana at nearly eleven o'clock? (SE 255)

The book Sex and Character provides a key to the understanding of the significance of this passage and of Shoshana and Ya'akov's relationship as well. Written by Weininger in 1903, it divides human characteristics into male and female components, with the male representing that which is positive, productive and moral, and the female representing the negative, unproductive and amoral aspects. According to this argument, the misery of mankind is accounted for by the mixing of the evil-feminine elements with the good-male elements within each human being. And, in man's relationship with woman, Weininger saw a humiliating and deteriorating experience which led him to advocate total sexual abstinence. Furthermore, in one chapter of his book, Weininger constructs an antithesis between Judaism, which he identified with the feminine element of amorality and unholiness, and Christianity, which he envisioned as the moral and holy male element.[65]

Thus the scene in the streetcar might be seen as an acting out of the philosophy implicit in Weininger's book, as well as being an indication of Ya'akov's struggle with his own sexuality: the boy sitting on his

friend's knees would represent the male element in its desirable isolation from femininity; also, this situation might indicate a life of 'Christian masculinity' as opposed to the more 'feminine Jewish tradition.' The remarkable and irrational appearance of Shoshana at Ya'akov's side might indicate the assertion by his subconscious of a longing for the female element or, in other terms, an attraction to the Jewish tradition from which Ya'akov is unable to totally free himself despite his conscious determination to become a scientist, the epitomy of the modern, rational man.

Shoshana and her father represent the traditional world of his family and childhood, a world he wished to reject, first by studying Greek and Latin at the secular gymnasium, then by becoming a scientist, and finally by leaving his native land and family behind and coming to Jaffa. His rejection of home is, therefore, equated with a rejection of Jewish religious expression; with few execptions, he speaks in terms of 'gods' and 'fates' as opposed to the One God of his tradition. And, when the Ehrlichs come to Palestine, Rechnitz reveals a sympathy for secular-Zionism by planning to show them the agricultural settlements of Rishon LeZion and Mikve Yisrael.[66] Mr. Ehrlich, on the other hand, expresses interest in visiting Sarona, a settlement of "good farmers and God-fearing people", and both he and Shoshana eventually go up to Jerusalem, with the Consul saying Kaddish at the Western Wall and making charitable contributions. Indeed, in his letter to Rechnitz, he had mentioned that they were returning by way of Egypt and want to see the Holy Land, and Jerusalem, the Holy City. And, as Sadan notes,[67] the only two places where Rechnitz calls upon the One God is in connection with the Consul ("My God, my God,

whispered Rechnitz; save me for the sake of your great mercy.") (SE 281) and Tamara, the rabbi's granddaughter who is the true rival of Shoshana for the affections of Ya'akov. The only other use of the word God is by the Consul himself.

There seems, then, to be a relationship between religious belief and the Ehrlichs, and that such a belief is not shared by Rechnitz, though it was a part of his childhood experience: the visit of Shoshana causes Rechnitz to confront anew the religious tradition he had rejected and left behind with his family. Such a dichotomy might also be implicit in the names of these three characters. According to Sadan,[67] the name of Gotthold Ehrlich indicates a person who "walks uprightly and within whom are concentrated the qualities of integrity, piety, and the fear of heaven." The name Shoshana suggests the Shulamit of the Song of Songs who is likened by her lover to a "rose among the thorns", and by rabbinic interpretation is considered a representation of the congregation of Israel. Moreover, in Kabbalistic terminology, Shoshana is one of the names for the Shechina, the indwelling presence of God.[68] Thus it seems reasonable to allow for an association of Jewish tradition with the Ehrlichs.

Ya'akov Rechnitz, on the other hand, could stand for the non-traditional aspect of this dichotomy. The name Ya'akov might well be associated with that of the patriarch who was later to receive the name Yisrael and thus be considered a personification of the people Israel. The last name, however, modifies this consideration, for Rechnitz in German is understood as "reckoning", which, in turn, could indicate a person who is rational, even scientific; a person who had surrendered

the traditional, "irrational" way of life in favor of the modernity represented by Jaffa.

In regard to this modern-traditional dichotomy, Sadan correctly comments that "Shoshana dwells in her past existence, while Ya'akov lives in the future,"[69] a conclusion that is based on the story itself, but also on the scene in which Ya'akov questions Shoshana's sadness: "You are - both of us are - young enough with all our life before...But that life before us (she responds) - do you think it's going to be any better than the life that lies behind?" (SE 270) And the life behind Shoshana is the traditional Jewish life, a source of sadness and ultimately of her illness due, one supposes, to the feeling on the part of the author that the traditional world is deteriorating and that this deterioration results, at least in part, from the desertion of that world by modern, secular Jews such as Rechnitz.

Sadan labels the worlds represented by Shoshana and Ya'akov as the cycles of "the oath" and "the seven", referring, of course, to the betrothal oath that Ya'akov swore to Shoshana in their childhood which remained the bond, tenuous though it might be, between them in Jaffa. "The seven" refers to Ya'akov and his six female companions who are known as "the seven planets", and, being representatives of the Jaffa, secular community, stand in apposition to Shoshana and "the oath". These maidens might reasonably be equated with the "Daughters of Jerusalem" in the Song of Songs whom the rabbis interpret as representing the non-Jewish peoples of the world, as opposed to the Shulamit, who represents Israel. And, when one considers the situation of Ya'akov and Shoshana's childhood, it was one in which:

> he used to play with Shoshana, Mr. Ehrlich's only daughter, a capricious girl who drew him closer to her than to any of the other children and refused to allow any other girl to play with him, for she would proclaim, 'Ya'akov is mine. When I grow up I will marry him.' And to reinforce this statement, she took one of her curls and a lock of his hair,[70] mixed them together, burned them, ate the ashes, and swore to be faithful to one another. (SE 221)

The undercurrent of this passage seems to be the entering of a covenant of faithfulness with the representative of tradition, an act which excluded a relationship with any of the other girls who might also be considered allusions to the "Daughters of Jerusalem." This childhood situation is very much reminiscent of that experienced by the child in one of Na'aman's fantasies in "Tishre". There, the mother rejoiced at the prospect of an exclusive relationship with her son, a situation which, in many ways, is similar to that found in "Shevuat Emunim", for Oedipal overtones are present in it as well.

The action of the story depends, as Hochman[71] notes, on the rejection by Rechnitz of his erotic desires, and a "commitment to rational disciplines in the face of deep irrational desires." He is able to 'relate' to Shoshana and the secure world of his childhood only through the process of intellectual distancing that his dedication to marine biology implies: the sea becomes the sublimated object of his affection for Shoshana, the Ehrlich family, and his childhood home. Ya'akov invests great energy in his investigation of the seaweed, and refers to the sea as "my orchard, my vineyard", terms of affection that remind one of the Shepherd's names for his beloved in the Song of Songs; he may feel some measure of affection

for the six maidens, but it is really the sea that has captured his heart, and it was his displaced affection for Shoshana that 'drove' him to the sea. He preserved this fact in his unconscious and, on a conscious level, transferred it to the romantic notion that it was his exposure to Homeric literature that led him to his study of the sea and its plants. He first recognizes the unconscious relationship between the sea and Shoshana in a conversation Ya'akov has with Mr. Ehrlich.

> Perhaps, after all, his heart had been drawn to these plants from those very days? Twenty years and more had passed since he had first gone down with Shoshana to the pond and drawn up the wet vegetation; the strange thing about it was that in all those years the thought had never come back into his mind. At that moment he saw before his eyes the same circular pond set in the garden among the shrubs and flowers, with Shoshana picking flowers and braiding garlands; now Shoshana jumped into the pool and disappeared; and now she rose again, covered with wet seaweed like a mermaid, the water streaming from her hair. (SE 277)

Rechnitz, like Hemdat and Na'aman, has difficulty perceiving the reality of the women before him; even in his childhood, he likened Shoshana to a "mermaid" and would later refer to her as a "sleeping princess" (SE 248). But Rechnitz goes beyond these other heroes in denying his erotic attraction to these women by creating a symbolic substitute for an authentic love relationship.[72] He devotes himself to the sea out of an inability to cope with his erotic desires. But these desires are not directed at Shoshana alone, for the sea comes to represent a displacement of affection for his mother, as well as for Mrs. Ehrlich.

As Rechnitz was making plans to travel to America, he thought about his parents, his mother in particular.

> Three years had gone by since he had seen them, for any holiday trips he had made were to the marine biology station in Naples, and not to his home. From the day he first hinted to his mother that he might be arriving, she had taken to sitting at her window reading his letters, one after another, or rereading the letter which the Consul had sent her from Jaffa. At this same time, Ya'akov in Jaffa was picturing himself as a child again with Shoshana. In her short frock, she chased butterflies, picked flowers, and made them into a crown for her head. (SE 282)

The image of the mother sitting by the window evokes the scenes in "Agunot", "Achot", and "haMitpachat" which have been interpreted above as an indication of longing for the return of a loved one, this longing being a projection by the hero of his own desires, for he pictures himself as the one his mother loves. In "B'dmi Yameha", the scene specifically involves the reading of love letters, as the dying mother recalls her true love, Akavia Mazel. The association in Ya'akov's mind between his mother, Shoshana, and childhood is significant as well, for then he might have had Oedipal desires which were transferred to a mother-substitute, the young girl next door, with whom he seems to have had a "sibling" relationship.[73] Indeed, at one point, Rechnitz compares Shoshana's hands to those of her mother.

> Shoshana laid her fine, delicate hands before her on the table. Ya'akov gazed at them, as he used to gaze at her mother's hands when she would place them on the table and his lips would long to touch them. (SE 268)

It is not surprising that Ya'akov alludes to his desire to kiss Mrs. Ehrlich's hands, for, psychologically, he viewed both the Consul and his wife as if they were his parents, an idea expressed in many places in the story, particularly in chapter eighteen. This would be due, of course, to the childhood situation in which Ya'akov and Shoshana played together as if they were siblings.[74]

At a critical point in the story, the climactic final scene in which the six maidens race along the Jaffa beach for the honor of bestowing the seaweed-crown upon Ya'akov's head, the three female objects of his repressed childhood affection merge with the sublimated symbol of that affection, the sea.

> At the sight and sound of the limitless sea, Rechnitz closed his eyes. He saw his mother kneeling before him, for he was a small boy and she was fixing his tie; that day was Shoshana's birthday and he had been invited to the Consul's house. There is no doubt, Rechnitz thought to himself, that she isn't mother, and it isn't necessary to say that she isn't Shoshana's mother, for one is far away and the other is dead; and if I were to open my eyes, I would see that it is nothing but an optical illusion; but so much so, that she appears to be both his mother and Shoshana's mother. But since one body cannot of necessity be two, so that neither his mother nor Shoshana's mother is here, who is she? Could she be Shoshana? Certainly not, for she is lying down sick. (SE 297)

This identification in Rechnitz' mind between the sea and Shoshana sets the stage for the victory by Shoshana over the six maidens in the footrace along the beach, and her crowning herself with the symbol of that victory, the seaweed-crown. This final action suggests the unification

of two basic symbols, the sea and its seaweed, and the repressed reality they represent, Shoshana.[75] This resolution seems to indicate a coming to terms, psychologically, with his desires for Shoshana and, by extension, for his mother and Mrs. Ehrlich. And, according to Fromm, realization of such Oedipal desires would indicate his recognition of his longing to return to the security of the traditional world of family and Jewish religious life. Hochman, as well, hints at such a desire on Ya'akov's part: "Rechnitz...turns out to be fixated first on his mother, then on his childhood girl friend; his scientific pursuits are a circuit way back to the womb."[76] Rechnitz' pursuits are a pathway back to the place of ultimate security, the tight circle of the family and the feeling of belonging that a child has in such a situation.

The final victory by Shoshana over the Jaffa maidens, and her being crowned with Rechnitz' own seaweed seem to symbolically indicate that the "traditional" world has won out over the modern world of Jaffa in the race for Ya'akov's allegiance. It would indicate that, in the end, Rechnitz remains psychologically tied to the world of his childhood. The other stories that have been discussed could be viewed in the same light. At the conclusion of "Achot", Na'aman kisses his sister's hand; at the end of "Lelot", Ḥemdat picks up Ruḥama, the sister-image, and kisses her. At the end of "Givat haḤol" as well, one might see a similar "resolution" when it becomes apparent that Ḥemdat will not develop a relationship with the girl he sees as the personification of the non-traditional world.

It seems more probable, however, to hold that the problems that plague the main characters in these stories remain unresolved. This seems particularly true where the main characters of "Givat haḤol" and "Shevuat

Emunim" are concerned: the final scenes of each story tend to emphasize the weakness of these characters. Rechnitz stands by passively as the women race for the honor of wearing his crown; when Shoshana wins, she takes the crown from his hands, and crowns herself: he exerts no influence on the outcome of the race, nor does he exercise any initiative in crowning the winner; he remains as indecisive and ambivalent as he has been throughout the length of the story. Rechnitz fails to develop a love relationship with either Shoshana, or any of the Jaffa girls due to his ambivalent states of mind which tend to be figuratively expressed or implied in the story as the "traditional" and "secular" worlds. Indeed, the narrator's mock-ambivalence at the conclusion of this tale should be taken as a reflection of the character's ambivalence: "We have called this whole account 'Betrothed', though at first we had though to call it 'The Seven Maidens.' "[77] (SE 298)

At the conclusion of "Givat haḤol", Ḥemdat can be characterized in very similar terms: he stands on the sand dune, as Rechnitz stood on the beach, and watches while the story, in a sense, "resolves" itself. Yael approaches the dune, yet Ḥemdat seems incapable of taking any initiative; his mind seems polarized and he remains his characteristically passive self: he wants Yael, yet he seems to believe that it's "wrong" to have her; and if her departure is an indication to Ḥemdat that the 'good inclination' has won a victory, then Ḥemdat's failure to actively pursue Yael can be taken by the reader as an indication that he shares the weakness exhibited by Ya'akov Rechnitz: he is unable to enter the non-traditional world where he would have both the freedom and the responsibility to make the decisions that would govern his behavior. Both Rechnitz and

Hemdat remain, in the end, in need of the secure environment of their childhood: both have yet to acquire the self-confidence and independence that would allow for the development of a genuine love relationship.

[1]Band, Nostalgia and Nightmare, page 72.

[2]Ibid, page 114.

[3]See: Shaked, Iyunim, page 39.

[4]Band, page 68.

[5]Shaked, Iyunim, page 62.

[6]In the earlier "Tishre", she actually puts the slacks on, an act which would lend even greater support to this understanding of the passage.

[7]Baruch Hochman: The Fiction of S. Y. Agnon, page 27.

[8]See: Shaked, Iyunim, page 61.

[9]Forel, The Sexual Question, Volume I, page 94.

[10]See Erikson, Personality, page 193.

[11]Gustave Krojanker, "haBe'aya haMerkazit bitsrot Agnon", pages 611-619.

[12]A writer who exerted literary influence on many second aliyah writers; he was particularly influential on the style of "Tishre" (from a lecture by G. Shaked, Hebrew University, Fall, 1970).

[13]Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 12.

[14]Though it is referred to in the story as "Bride and Groom", it seems most likely that it was the popular "Jewish Bride".

[15]This contention is mainly supported by Temol Shilshom which goes even further than "Givat haHol" in attributing to Hemdat many of the biographical characteristics of Agnon.

[16]Aside from being customary, the hinumah is also considered an indication that the bride is a virgin; thus, lack of the wedding veil might cast doubt on Shoshana's virginity at the time of her marriage and possibly indicate that her society did not adhere to the traditional strictness that governed heterosexual pre-marital relationships.

[17]A reference to the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness: "And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers skins." (Numbers 4:11) - perhaps another ironic indication of the non-traditional implication of the wedding.

[18]As Gideon Shunami puts it: "He explains his interest in her by the excuse of wanting to teach her Torah and Hebrew; but the books also spoil the direct relations...that might have developed between them and turned their literary association into a real love relationship." ("S'malim b'Givat haHol l'shai Agnon," LaMerchav, June 7, 1962)

[19]Ecclesiastes 1:15; G. Shaked points out other such instances of the ironic apposition of hidden and revealed ideas, where the "revealed is the new phrase, and the hidden (original quote) alludes to its ironic opposite" (Iyunim, page 53).

[20]It is significant that the political order of his homeland was the reign of Franz Joseph, which stood for stability and reason; "to the people of Buczacz, the throne in Vienna was the massive and rather mysterious metaphor of divine order." (Leiter, Judaism, Winter, 1970).

[21]As Dov Sadan notes: "Hemdat is writing a great story...(which) will seek to correct the defect of the emptiness (of the life) of the man of that generation by means of the life-content of the past generation." (page 15).

[22]See: Israel Asa'el: "Midrash Atsot", Keshet, 9/1.

[23]Note that he uses 'coins' to pay for the material, while the Jaffa community didn't supply the 'coins' needed to keep the local hospital open all year round.

[24]Zimmerman, Iyunim, page 34.

[25]As is later indicated by his keeping watch for the train from Jerusalem. This theme is discussed by Kurzweil and is illustrated in such stories as "Shevuat Emunim", "Agunot", "B'dmi Yameha", and many others.

[26]According to Kurzweil, the key is a widely used symbol in Agnon's stories indicating "the possibility of authority in the home, and over a wife or other woman." It figures as a major motif in Oreah Natah Lalun. (See: Kurzweil, page 63.)

[27]Ibid, page 67.

[28]Sadan, page 15.

[29]The "se'uda sh'lishit" that tradition requires before the end of the Sabbath day.

[30]A similar use of the havdalah motif occurs in the story "Panim Acherot" which, according to a study by Shmuel Leiter (Judaism, Winter, 1970) has its theme of divorce supported by symbolic references to the sections of Tractate Berachot dealing with havdalah.

[31]This biographical information comes from a description of the character Hemdat in Temol Shilshom.

[32]Shaked, Iyunim, page 37.

[33]As Shaked notes, the red flowers symbolize vitality and the white powder and room indicate passivity. (Iyunim, page 38) Asa'al sees flowers referring to the vitality of Jewish tradition; the white color might then indicate the decay and death of tradition, its values and way of life. (Keshet, page 23) Consideration should be given to

such stories as "B'dmi Yameha" (where the roses are equated with words in the Torah, and Miriam's white dress covers both the Torah and Raphael); "Agunot" (the white moonlight that covers Ben Uri's ark like a shroud) and "Shevuat Emunim" (See Asa'al's article; Shoshana is another of the many white-enshrouded female figures, often a sick and dying mother, which appear in Agnon's stories.)

[34]See: Baruch Hochman, page 173.

[35]Hochman, page 19.

[36]Moshe Shamir, page 87.

[37]See: GH 369, where reference to Yael's 'cold hand' is made upon her release from the hospital where she too had been covered with white.

[38]Shaked, Iyunim, page 38.

[39]See: Hillel Barzel.

[40]A strong statement of which is found in Yebamot 64a: "Any person who has not engaged in the propagation of the race...deserves the penalty of death." Perhaps the death of both characters in "Agadat haSofer" indicates that Agnon had this dictum in mind.

[41]This translation, by Isaac Franck, appears in S.Y. Agnon: 21 Stories.

[42]Regarding this color, Gideon Shunami notes: "The contrast between the force of life and enthusiasm of Yael, and Hemdat's feelings of alienation and being cut off from life, is expressed by the motif of the color green which passes through the entire story like a silken thread. With Hemdat, the color green appears when he is connected with his books and writing, that is, with all those things that cut him off from the fullness of life and isolate him to his room and writing table. In contrast to this, the color green appears in connection with Yael to signify the vitality of life that is within her." (LaMerchav, June 7, 1962)

[43]Here the Talmud speaks of the relations that are forbidden between consanguineous relatives.

[44]And, although the suggestion of an incestuous relationship is not to be made in the case of "Givat haHol" (even though there is a reference to their relationship being a "sibling" one) such a suggestion can be applied to other stories, especially "Achot".

[45]Though not used frequently by Agnon; in fact, he usually provides no word at the end of a story, almost never employing "tam", a factor which seems to strengthen the argument presented here.

[46]In "Tishre", the word "tam" is used to describe the boy who appears in Na'aman's fantasy about the king who lives in an ice-palace and has one of his maidservants turned into a statue of ice. The lad waits for this maid, his beloved, to come, but he waits in vain: "The maiden will not come. But he is "tam", ('innocent' or perhaps 'naive') and doesn't know."

[47]"And the Lord prepared a gourd and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." (Jonah 4:6)

[48]The wording of this final phrase, "mishpat hana'ar", alludes to the revelation by an angel to Samson's mother that her son must be a Nazir, an allusion which further supports the contention of Hemdat's self perception as a type of 'Nazir'. (See: Judges 13:12) Another allusion to the Samson story lies in the use of the number seven (seven kisses bestowed seven times); see: Judges 16 for the use of seven in relation to Samson.

[49]See: Sigmund Freud, in Personality: "From the time of puberty on, the human individual has to devote himself to the great task of detaching himself from his parents, and not until that task is achieved can he cease to be a child and become a member of the social community. For the son, this task consists of detaching his libidinal wishes from his mother and employing them for the choice of a real outside love object." (page 139)

[50]"It was hard for him to utter a word. He himself knew that he had nothing to say that would interest others, for he wasn't clever or sharp like his friends. But he really didn't want to be clever or sharp." (GH 361) The final line seems to be more an example of unconvincing (to the reader) rationalism, than an indication of ambivalence.

[51]Hochman, page 26.

[52]See: Keniston, The Uncommitted.

[53]Erik Erikson, Personality, page 192.

[54]Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, page 80.

[55]B. Hochman: "The Jewish dilemma serves...as a base for a more comprehensive vision of modernity. That vision involves the rootlessness, the passivity, and the unredeemed isolation of a world that has come to embody, objectively, the worst dreams of solitude and disjunction. That disjunction involves a severance from the center of human connectedness that Agnon envisions in the context of the ancestral faith. (page 163)

[56]"I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed by fire." (Exodus 3:3)

[57]"One day when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked upon their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and, seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand." (Exodus 2:11-12)

[58]"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6 and 21:25) The common biblical phrase is: "What was right in the eyes of God." (see Deuteronomy 6:18 and elsewhere)

[59]Nostalgia and Nightmare, page 73.

[60]See: "Agunot", "B'dmi Yameha", and "Shevuat Emunim".

[61]An action similar to that portrayed in the section from Shabbat 13a that Agnon employs in "Givat haHol": "When Ulla returned from college, he used to kiss his sisters...on their hands."

[62]This term is Band's.

[63]Translation by Walter Lever in Two Tales by S.Y. Agnon; the Hebrew text is found in Ad Hena.

[64]The fact that this is a dream is indicated by the confusion he experiences about the day, the illogical progression of the evening hours, the sudden appearance of Shoshana, and the mention of a street-car, a vehicle that Ya'akov undoubtedly remembers from his childhood in Europe.

[65]The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 10, 1943, Tel Aviv; An unpublished, private communication by Gershon Shaked is also of interest here: "Weininger's book is about the hatred of the sexes. He identifies the feminine with the Jew and hates both. This hatred was an expression of self-hatred, because he was a Jew and a very feminine type. Ya'akov's escape from Shoshana is an act of self-hatred. He tries to escape from his own soul and his own past."

[66]"The Hope of Israel." The name becomes ironic in this context, with the narrator attributing to Rechnitz the belief that Zionism is the hope of Israel, a position contrary to that of Mr. Ehrlich.

[67]Dov Sadan, page 82.

[68]See: Pirke Zohar, by Isaiah Tishbi; volume I, page 130.

[69]Sadan, page 83.

[70]This ritual suggests that which the de-consecrated Nazirite must follow: "And the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head...and put (the hair) on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering." (Numbers 6:18) This would, of course, remind one of Hemdat in "Givat haHol" and the allusions to Nazirut found there. In addition, the ritual bears some resemblance to that undergone by the Sotah in Numbers 5.

[71]Hochman, page 3.

[72]As suggested by Barry Kogan in an as yet unpublished paper.

[73]In accounting for such a transfer of feeling, Freud notes: "As these brothers and sisters grow up, the boy's attitude to them undergoes very significant transformations. He may take his sister as a love-object by way of substitute for his 'faithless' mother." (Freud, page 137)

[74]Arnold Band understands this relationship in the same light when he notes: "One cannot avoid the deliberate intimation that in his subconsciousness, Ya'akov regards the Ehrlichs as his own parents and that Shoshana must therefore be identified in a vague but unavoidable sense, as a sibling. (Band, 374)

[75]Again, as suggested in the paper by Kogan.

[76]Hochman, page 179.

[77]Translated by Walter Lever.

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