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The Ambivalent Narrator as Hero

Eli Herscher

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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C O N T E N T S

D I G E S T

Agnon's תמול שלשום depicts the return of the narrator to his native town, Shibush, after having lived for a number of years in Israel. World War I and the passage of time have ravished the Shibush of the narrator's memory, thereby frustrating his desire to find in the town of his childhood a sense of security and meaning. He wavers between remaining in Shibush and returning to Israel, uprooted from and ambivalent toward both. His ambivalence, as expressed toward the novel's major characters and motifs, is the central theme of the novel.

The other major objects of the narrator's ambivalence are the Beit Midrash and its key, representing the well-ordered world of tradition. The narrator is never able to become a part of that world, because, in truth, it exists less in reality than in his imagination.

Secondary characters in the novel serve as vehicles for setting the novel's mood of irresolution and despair, and as foils to the narrator. It is through them that many of the narrator's inner needs and conflicts are expressed.

Most criticism on the novel reads its conclusion as optimistic. Yet any tone of optimism and resolution is forced. The narrator's inner tension between Israel

and Shibush (galut) is maintained through the novel's conclusion. There is evidence of growth in the narrator, but his condition of ambivalence and irresolution is not abated.

A. Introduction

To read שלושה ימים ויום אחד is to watch the unfolding of a complicated process of a journey through an interwoven past and present, a journey of self-analysis and self-discovery which often seems to have no end in sight--and actually concludes with a resolution that is fraught with ambiguity.

The novel, even though divided quite conventionally into titled chapters, takes a form similar to that of a diary. The story renders the recorded memory of the narrator's post-World War I return to his native city Shibush, after having lived for a number of years with his wife and two children in Israel. He comes to Shibush for a short visit and stays much longer than he had anticipated. His stay in Shibush, the people he meets there, his memories of the town as it was before the war, and his conflict over when to leave Shibush and return to Israel--these thematic components make up the framework of the novel.

The central character of שלושה ימים ויום אחד is the narrator himself, the guest who comes to lodge only for the night. He arrives in Shibush on the eve of Yom Kippur, a time most significant in setting the novel's tone.[1] Even though he stays longer than the title of the

novel denotes, his many days in Shibush do seem to amount to a protracted time of doing what one does on Yom Kippur: reviewing and examining one's spiritual life.

Much of what happens in the novel is important only in this context of teshuvah, of spiritual return. Because the narrative voice is in the first person, the characters in the novel are important primarily in their interaction with the narrator-hero; and the narrator's perceptions of these interactions supplies the novel with its central action.[2] The same is true of the Beit Midrash and its key, which, although they are central images in the novel, have significance mainly in the meanings attributed them by the narrator. The town of Shibush itself, the stage for all the events in the novel, exists for the narrator's projections, and it will be discussed in that light.

B. Structure, Setting, and Narrative Reliability

The structure of שלושה ימים ואדם אחד is largely episodic in nature. The narrator meets people and tells the reader about the meeting, about the people and their stories, and about the effect they have on him.[3] Between these encounters, the narrator describes the town, the houses in it, the Beit Midrash, the hotel, the river, the forest, the cemetery, etc.; and the descriptions combine with the narrator's responses to these various settings. In other instances, the reader is told of the changes of seasons--a device which provides somewhat of an inner structure--and of the effects of the seasons on the town, its people, and the narrator. A series of episodes, then, and the narrator's responses to them, form the structure of the novel.

Because the narrator is the central character of the novel, because all the action is filtered through his eyes, it is important to deal with the question of his reliability. A glimpse at the first few pages of the book will point out some of the problems to be dealt with in relation to the narrator.

The first sound the narrator hears upon his return comes from the mouth of Gumovitch, the rubber-armed train conductor, who clearly pronounces every letter of the name Shibush as only a native of the town could.[4] The narrator is pleased, and even though much seems to have changed here since he was a child, the sweet smell

of Shibush, the odor of millet boiled in honey (a recurring image), has remained. Although the narrator seems pleased, the reader, it seems, is led to perceive more than the narrator himself. Beyond the pleasant sound of "Shibush" and its sweet odor, the reader is also aware--in the sense of dramatic irony--of a man with one arm made of rubber, of an echo from the earth which speaks to the narrator but which he seems to ignore:

מלמד קול המוזמר שנתה על קול פרחתי
לא נשמע קול אחר, אפס שוע לא נאתי
לבי לקולם של המוזמה ...

(8)

The inner, unattended sound is that of the awesome eve of Yom Kippur, coupled, perhaps, with the actual meaning of the pleasant sounding but ominous name "Shibush" -- disorder, breakdown, confusion, error.

From the very beginning of the book, therefore, the reader senses that he must be wary, he must question what the narrator tells him. The narrator's perception of what he sees, his nostalgic first impressions, often do not coincide with what the reader perceives. The narrator will tell us much about Shibush, about Israel, about the people he meets, and, most importantly, about himself; but his perceptions often seem to be in conflict with other information he provides. His reliability, in other words, is often called into question.

An important aspect of this problem of reliability is the narrator's view of how much things have changed

in Shibush. As mentioned previously, the narrator arrives on the eve of Yom Kippur. He sees, hears, smells his town, and is pleased. Yet, even though the pleasant sound of "Shibush" remains, and the sweet smell of the town remains, much indeed has changed:

כל המקומות כולם נשתנו, ואופן הסיורים
שכן בית לבית נשתנו, לגמרי שרואים
אותם בקטנותי ולכן כמות שהרושם לי
(8) בהלוך סמוך לתפיסתי.

The narrator's ambivalence of perception, what he wants to see and imagined he would, as opposed to what he actually describes, calls his reliability into question.[5] He has dreamed that the town would be different, probably as it was in the past, when he was a young boy. What we see is a town that has been desolated by the effects of war and time, to the extent that the narrator notices even the spaces between the houses have changed. Almost simultaneously, the narrator both idealizes his town, and describes its desolation.

There are many more examples of this recurrent theme of change. Early in the novel, the narrator stands on the bridge over the river, as his father used to do on Yom Kippur nights. He looks down at the water flowing under the bridge, and notes that the water he sees now has not been there before.

מים כאלו שנראים לך עכשיו עד
(11) כן ... כי כאן קוצף לכן ולכן יהיו אומר כן

The water continues to flow, but it is always new water, never the same as before. In contrast to this observation, we read:

דומה שיוסף שמואלי כאן עף אובכן בכרונו
לברכה לשם נשארנה כאן כלום ולאן ישתנה
כאן כלום עד סוף כל הדורות. (11)

On the one hand, things are continually changing; on the other, nothing ever seems to change at all. Even the narrator's view of historical development is ambivalent.

Both narrator and reader perceive the obvious and mainly disheartening changes Shibush has undergone; yet the narrator continues to praise his town. He sees one of the streets as though it were a still life which is so artfully composed that disparate elements within it are harmoniously blended.

הרחוב הכה אופיני בגרוש שאין בקצ שוס
קישור וחיבור מאד עמוק מתארבגיש כה בכה
ולקשריש כה בכה ומפרטמיש אות מציאותש. (376)

Very often the narrator chooses to ignore the very changes he has described. Often he praises Shibush for its stability, for the <u>absence</u> of drastic changes:

כה כמה פף שקוש שמקלה אות התנשיש
ותוכרת לישנה . . . (182)

In contrast to such idealized images of Shibush, the narrator constantly reiterates the changes Shibush has undergone. The changes are so great, the desolation and breakdown so complete, that any note made to additional

changes makes very little difference. Reflecting the narrator's recurring imperviousness, Shibush itself seems to react to its on-going demise with apathy, even though numbers of people are leaving the town:

(24) שיבוש לא הרגיש בהיעלמות .

These are but a few of many examples of the narrator's perceptions of change, or lack thereof, in relation to Shibush. It is clear that Agnon purposely brings his reliability into question. As the novel progresses it becomes more and more evident that the narrator's unreliability cannot be separated from an important aspect of his character, his ambivalence.

It is the narrator's ambivalence toward his town, toward Israel, toward many of the characters in the novel, and, above all, toward himself, which creates the novel's sense of ambiguity, and thereby the suspicion of the narrator's reliability. Ambivalence becomes a major aspect of the novel, and is, therefore, an important focus of my examination of תמול שלשום.

C. The Beit Midrash and its Key as Objects of the Narrator's Ambivalence

Ambivalence is expressed toward a number of symbols and themes, which, in turn, weave a thread throughout the novel, helping to impose order on many seemingly disparate elements.[6] Dealing with these first should contribute to a better understanding of the novel as a whole. In the Beit Midrash and its key, and in the town itself, is embodied what the narrator tells us he longs for: Torah study, living by the commandments of God, life as it was in the past--or, at least, the narrator's idealization of that life through memory, sentimentality, and nostalgia.

Due to the narrator's ambivalence, for much of the book it remains unclear as to what exactly brought him to Shibush in the first place. He expresses a longing for the past which often reflects a sadness about his present condition:

כשהייתי צעיר היתי לומד שם בעמ"ד
וכותב שם שירים, פעמים הרבה הייתי
מניף מאחר לתוך ומלחד את הקדוש ברוך
הוא כשיכול את איש לא לעשות אתי להבאי.
תבלן על אותו אוצר שלא הניח לבוראו
ותבוך לעשות את שביקש לעשות אתו,
שהרי תלמודי לא עלה לי וכה. (16)

Once he arrives in Shibush, it does not take long for his longing for and praise of the past to be joined by

ambiguity, doubt, and confusion. For example, although he is a returnee to his home town, he is clearly not a part of the life of the town. At one and the same time he refers to the all-important Beit Midrash as "ours" and removes himself from any sense of belonging:

הפסקתי את שיחתי ואמרתי לפני בית
מדרשנו הישן ואמרתי, מקום נאה יש לכם. (17)

Elimelekh Kaiser, one of those about to leave Shibush, mocks the narrator and tells him to live in Shibush and wait for the Messiah. He offers him the key to the Beit Midrash, which the narrator accepts, not so much because he wants to stay in Shibush, but because of the nostalgic feelings the key inspires in him:

כך כמפתח הזכרון שמיתי פותח בו את
בית מדרשנו הישן בצמן שמיתי לצד ופיתי
משכיח ומעירים בתורה, כך כמה שנים אין
רשותין אופין בתוכו, ופתאום נזדן לי לסלסין
בברכסיון נבות המדבש ניוע הכי פוריס,
נעלתי את המפתח בידי וטמנתיו בבגדי. (20)

Yet the very sentimentalism expressed in these words is itself an object of the narrator's ambivalence. For as soon as the key is given to him, he begins to wonder if perhaps he might not be asked to return it. He is, in fact, ready to return it even before he is asked. Once again his ambivalence comes to the fore. He fails to comprehend either the breakdown of Shibush, told to him by those who are leaving the town or their lack of concern

over the Beit Midrash and its key. He thinks to himself: how can they leave the place in which their fathers dwelt? Worse, how can they leave the place in which their fathers prayed (18)? The same man who is ready to return the key, cannot understand how easily the men of Shibush have given it up.[7]

Already quite early in the novel the narrator expresses subtle doubts about the very desirability of staying in Shibush at all. Even though it is not his immediate intention to return to Israel, the narrator tells us it would be less expensive to do so now rather than wait for the higher prices of summer travel (24).

The reader clearly confronts constant contradictions in what the narrator says and does throughout the novel, all due to this figure's ambivalence. The title of the novel itself points to this. Shibush is no longer his town; he is, after all, only a guest. When he meets Rahel, the innkeeper's daughter, and is a victim of her mockery, he tells us that she does not hate him precisely because she sees him as an אורח נכה שלום. He is here today and gone tomorrow. As a guest, he may stay as long as he wants without ever becoming a permanent resident, and he may leave whenever he wants. There is, then, a certain safety in being a guest which the narrator is happy to maintain (34).

In many ways, the narrator is also a guest in the Beit Midrash, and maintains an ambivalent relationship

to it throughout the novel. Baruch Hochman points out that what the narrator seeks in the Beit Midrash is "the generic sense of security of the old study-house world."[8] This view is corroborated by the narrator's contrast of the Beit Midrash to the outside world of decay:

כל מקום שאתה נותן עיניך בו אין פורענות
או צרה, אבל מקום אחד יש בעיר שיהין
קרה מצויה בו. בית המדרש הישן
שמפתחו בידי.
(31-32)

Yet despite these words of praise, it soon becomes clear that a great deal of ambivalence is inherent in the description of the Beit Midrash. It is, on the one hand, the only place in Shibush free of sorrow. On the other hand, it is a place which is generally avoided. People are found there only in the winter, and even then only because it is one of the few places in town which is kept warm. Early in the book even the narrator calls into question the use of the key to the Beit Midrash. While on his way there, he meets Daniel Bach, passes the day with him and remarks:

וחצרתי על מלוני כאילו אין מפתח בית
(29) המדרש הישן משמש בלום.

Moreover, the Beit Midrash does not seem to exist even as a place of study for the narrator, a place where he may increase his knowledge. Rather, it is like a Succah which protects from the sun. It is a place to which

one goes after experiencing a nightmare (41-42); it is warm when the world is cold (202). The Beit Midrash is a place to which one flees, a place of refuge.

Only with the key, however, may one enter the Beit Midrash; and our narrator loses the key--an event certainly not totally accidental and obviously related to the narrator's feelings of ambivalence. He searches everywhere for it, even in the place he used to hide it as a child (78), supporting Arnold Band's view that the narrator has come to Shibush to find "the innocence and security of his childhood."[9] Not finding the key, he looks for a breach in the structure of the Beit Midrash, but he discovers that his ancestors took great care when they built houses for the Torah (78). Ironically, the structure of the Beit Midrash is so solid that the narrator is unable to enter, a detail which foreshadows the conclusion that the narrator will not find his sought-after security in the Beit Midrash world.[10]

The narrator's ambivalence toward the Beit Midrash continues throughout the novel. While he cannot understand how the men of the Beit Midrash would leave it and Shibush, he observes that it is good that they left because of the lack of room in the cemetery (82). The Beit Midrash and the Torah it represents are often described in glorious terms; but at times questions concerning the heavy yoke of Torah are raised.

The mose heroic description of the Beit Midrash comes

late in the book when, after the pious Reb Hayim's death, the narrator goes to the Beit Midrash to study Mishnah and say Kaddish for him. At that time, the light of the Beit Midrash seems cut off from the light of the world and shines by itself. And yet, laments the narrator, how many months it has been that the books and Torah have lain still, unused. The narrator studies Gemara, and when the church bell rings at noon, he raises his voice (411) . אשבר קול התורה עד קול הפעמון

The narrator will make the Torah eternal. When he prays <u>mincha</u> he does it quickly in order to return to his studies. But he lengthens the <u>ashrei</u> because it praises those who sit in the Beit Midrash. The narrator studies all day out of love, and realizes that he is the only man studying, thereby preserving the world (412). He studies again the following day, and feels renewed. He feels as if the entire world has been renewed (413). When he studies, he tells us, he is happy. When he stops, he is sad and grieves over the past and what he did not do in the past (i.e., study). The Beit Midrash has, one would think, provided the narrator with the security and sense of inner worth that he has come to Shibush to find.

Perhaps tha Beit Midrash and its key are actually most important as they relate to what the narrator seeks. The sense of security Hochman notes is important, but the narrator himself provides much more detailed information. The nature of his ambivalent feelings

toward himself becomes clearer through an examination of his ambivalence to the Beit Midrash and its key. It is through those symbols that the narrator often shares aspects of himself with the reader. Early in the novel, for example, the narrator begins to reveal that, in many ways, he has no sure footing, no firm identity with the Beit Midrash (and Shibush) or with the Land of Israel. In some ways, he is only a guest in both.

... בעמן שהייתי מחוקשי בית המדרש קרא בית המדרש
שלי, שלי לאורך ושכול ברית הכורך שמע. (74)

Although the narrator shares this important realization early in the story, he never fully accepts it. He tells us later that he could spend the rest of his days in the "sweet solitude" (הבדידות המתוקה) of the Beit Midrash, were it not for the fact that he has a wife and children (259). He seeks this solitude, it seems, because outside of the Beit Midrash one finds the sordid reality of Shibush and of the world in general:

כל עמן שאדם יושב בבית המדרש אין לו שלטון
תורה ושכול והקדוש ברוך הוא, יובא לשוק
אין תורה, ושכול שפופים ונחוקים, ואוכל הזן ומקרב
כביכול ג'מג'ם שעמו אין ניכר בדוגמו. (338)

It is only late in the book that we discover that the narrator has come to Shibush and its Beit Midrash to escape another reality. The narrator tells us that he left Israel because, after his house was destroyed by Arabs, his wife and children went to stay with her family

in Germany, and he decided to visit his ancestors' graves in Shibush. As long as he lived in peace, he tells us, it was difficult for him to leave Israel.(391). He has left one scene of destruction for another.

But in Shibush lies his past, and in the past of his imagination may lie the redemption he tells us all men are seeking (145). Shibush and its Beit Midrash idealized represent all that he has lost and all that he never took advantage of, the reason that all has not gone well for him. Through the revival of this ideal world the narrator will become whole; he will no longer be a guest, uprooted from all worlds, but part of a repaired world. Having made his home in Israel, and even there seen his house destroyed, even there having been uprooted, the narrator's quest seems very much to be a search for rootedness.

Yet the ambivalence over Shibush, the Beit Midrash, and the key remains, and it is magnified by the narrator's constant references to the superiority of the land he has left.

D. Israel and Galut as Objects of the Narrator's Ambivalence

The narrator has idealized the Shibush of his memory, but he has not found the reality to be in accord with his idealization. He constantly turns his thoughts back to Israel--also, to be sure, not the Israel of reality, but to another idealized perception. Despite the reader's comprehension of this syndrome, he is continually told that nothing is more important to the narrator than Israel:

..., כוזף שבאותי שלמתו נתונה עד כורף ישראל,
וכל דבר אשון בו אשם כורף ישראל אינו שווה
אל ל מתרסק בו. (102)

If fact, only Israel is important. It is so important that a man who speaks of aliyah is precluded from speaking of any sadness (104). Israel is a warm land, while Shibush suffers the freezing winters of the exile (49). The sun does not shine on the lands of exile during the winter precisely because it is busy ripening oranges in Israel (111).

Beyond these hyperbolic aphorisms, the narrator speaks of Israel whenever he is given the opportunity. He tells the hotel guests about the Land (190); he attacks a man who did not go to Israel when he had the money because he did not need to go (191); and he tells us that even food is in greater abundance in Israel than in the galut (336). The narrator admits that few mitzvot are performed in Tel Aviv, but he mitigates the admission by declaring that there are also few sins committed there (265). Other negative aspects of the Land exist as well, but, the

narrator says, there is no need to speak of them (209), since they are so insignificant.

Throughout the novel the reader feels the narrator's inner tension between Israel and galut. It is the most strongly felt aspect of his ambivalence. He expresses his love for the Land, yet has knowingly gone into exile to find some sort of completion (השלמה) there. Yet while in exile he cannot get his mind off of the Land he has left. Often, when he begins to deal seriously with his dilemma over not being in Israel, he drifts off into nostalgia, remembering that this is the orange season, describing the beautiful orchards and the young, strong, and lovely pioneers who pick the oranges (196-197). He waxes sentimental toward Israel and sees himself as having been expelled, driven away from the Land:

(196) חבל שלא נולדתי שם, שנגרש משם.

Here full of self-pity, he seems to say that his not being in Israel is due to the actions of others. But when Mrs. Bach points out that he has actually run away from Israel, he concedes that anyone who leaves Israel may be said to have run away:

אומרה מרת ב"ח, והרי אדוני ברח משם,
נתאנחתי ואמרתי, אני ברחתי משם? וכפיר
שבאשת ברחתי, שכל היופי מאוכף ושנוף
(236) שאפלו שדה קרוי בורח.

At a point of great despair the narrator writes a will which emphasizes his guilt over having left Israel.

He wants to make it clear that he need not be returned there for burial:

דין לאותו גוף שיתגלגל לשם צף כל
(374) ישראל, אפי' שיבוא לתוכה לארץ.

Despite such statements, the narrator continuously establishes himself as rooted in Israel, and as only a guest in exile. Even though he wants, on the one hand, to reestablish the lost Beit Midrash world, he goes so far as to allow himself to travel on the second day of Shavuot because he is from Israel (267). Similarly, early in the novel, he does not lead prayers, because he is accustomed to מנהג ארץ ישראל (115). At the same time his roots in Israel do not seem to be in reality strong enough to draw him back very quickly. At the end of winter, when he considers leaving Shibush, he cannot think of any place to go:

כיתלתי לבבר עף אמי ואומרת,
שאני נלך מכאן. לאיפה? לכל מקום
שאתה מבקש ללך. כיון שפה אבואתי
(227) מקום ללך לשם הלכתי למלון.

Even though Daniel Bach sees the narrator as always dragging a strip of Israel behind him (353), the narrator tells us that in reality galut always follows at our heels (317). By offering this latter thought as an aside, enclosed in parentheses, the narrator emphasizes an important insight into the problem of the merits of Israel versus galut, and an even more significant insight into himself.

In many ways, galut and Eretz Yisrael are reflections of his inner state of unrest and dissatisfaction:

(מיום שחרבה ירושלים ונלינו מאורגן אלות כרובה בעקבין של עזים, ואכילן ככה לישב בארץ ישראל ויהיה רגלין מילכות אותו לחוצה לארץ, שארץ ישראל כולו מחינת בלב ושאר כל ארצות הן בחינת רגלים. בשלמו של עזים שהם סוחן את הרגלים, וכשהן לבן שהן רגלין סודנות אותו.) (317)

Related to this insight is another which helps put the entire Israel-galut problem into the perspective of the narrator's inner conflicts. Asked by Zippora (Reb Hayim's younger daughter) about Israel, the narrator responds by telling her how good a place it is. Why, then, she asks, since things are so bad in Shibush, is he not in Israel where it is good? What makes her think, he replies, that every man wants only that which is good (377)?

It becomes clear that the idealized Shibush, the Beit Midrash and its key, as well as the Land of Israel represent the narrator's desire to find roots in either place, and cease to be a guest. His praise of Shibush is a response to his failure in Israel. When asked what he did in Israel all his years there, he responds,

מה עשית שם? עדיין לא עשיתי כלום. (295)

His praise of Israel is a response to the reality of Shibush and galut. Together they represent what is in truth an inner struggle, and lead us to a deeper investigation of the narrator's character.

E. The Self-Conscious Narrator

One of the most striking aspects of the narrator's personality is also one of the most disturbing; he is self-conscious to the point of ludicrousness. Among his greatest concerns is how he appears to others, how they will judge him on his physical appearance and his behavior. Very often his sense of personal values is defined not actually by the values of others, but by what he feels the values of others might be. There are numerous references in this regard which may be categorized as a kind of disparity between what the narrator does and what he thinks is proper. He raises the question of approval even as to the least important of his actions. For example, Reb Hayim enters the Beit Midrash while the narrator is struggling to open a can of sardines. The narrator delivers a talk on the technology of sardine-can-opening in order to draw attention away from the fact that he is preparing a meal in the Beit Midrash. To add to the irony of the situation, Reb Hayim asks whether the narrator has a slice of bread, for certainly sardines must be eaten with bread (367).

Less humorous than this manifestation of the narrator's self-consciousness is an incident which portrays more clearly the seriousness of the narrator's apparent lack of self-confidence. Late in the book, when Hannah, Reb Hayim's older daughter, comes to visit her sick father, the narrator bespeaks what he considers to be her ambivalent

view of him:

עמדה חנה ונתנה לי שלוש לחמה אות
וגו' בבית והיתה מטיבה בי בחיבה ואומרת, עף
כשהיו מטיבה נשמתו פניה ונראה עליהן כעין
בקפוק, קרוב לוודאי שאתן בקי הפריט בשבתי
יותר מדי, ואכשיו שרואותה אומי לא מצאוה בי כלום. (397)

The reader is introduced to the theme of the narrator's self-image and self-awareness primarily through the many pages which deal with the narrator's purchase of a new coat. At first it seems rather self-evident that the narrator wishes to purchase a coat in order to keep warm through the winter. But in fact the process is much more complex, for the narrator goes through an array of pensive hesitations: he worries about how his wearing a new coat will look while the people of Shibush wear rags; he is unsure if that is the real reason for his hesistancy; perhaps people will judge only the coat, and not its wearer (43). Later, he expounds even further on the implications of wearing a new coat:

עוד אמת יש באומרת תלבוש בגי, שאוני דואה
עלי כאולן נתעטפתי בטוסקלריון, וכשאוני וולכו
לשוק טוסקלריון בגי מטלוות עיניהם אף בריות, (66)

His concern for people seeing only the coat and not the man has turned to the rather ironic assurance that people will indeed not see the man. The people in the town, he continues, wear torn clothing which exposes not only the body but also the soul. He, therefore, will conceal both (66).

What is most disturbing about the narrator's personality in these incidents is his seeming inconsistency. In the first instance he is concerned about what is so manifestly petty. In the second, although the question raised is still one of maintaining a particular image, the question points out much more seriously a deeply held doubt on the part of the narrator regarding his substance and inner worth. The episode of the new coat begins mainly with the narrator's concern for the reaction of others, but it ends with some significant revelations of his self-image and self-confidence. These concerns are certainly a far cry from the pettiness seen in the sardines episode, and Agnon projects far less a degree of humor and irony here.

Baruch Hochman tends to overlook some of the narrator's self-insights and emphasizes his pettiness. He is correct in observing that "the Guest is full of contradictions."

> He craves religious communion but seems incapable of the effort that makes it possible. He observes rituals but is not really pious; he has a plethora of sentiment, but no real commitment to principle or creeds. He celebrates certain virtues but knows that no one can really embody them any more.[11]

He is also correct when he says of the narrator that "he continually mouths his priggish pieties as though he affirmed them and in doing so loses credibility with us."[12] By concluding, however, that the narrator "is an essentially shallow man, full of whimsey and fancy but without the

capacity to crystallize his conflicts or to confront them,"[13] and by questioning "whether such a Guest was indeed essential to Agnon's scheme, and whether his obfuscations finally make for such clarity as the novel helps us achieve,"[14] Hochman misses much of what is important in the novel. First, Agnon has not merely created a character to be "a useful mirror of shtetl decay,"[15] and second, the very loss of the narrator's credibility is an essential part of Agnon's scheme. Hochman seems to be looking for a hero; the narrator of שירת העגנון cannot be defined as such. Or, Hochman is attempting to take a first person narrator out of the first person and define him in terms of a third person narrative. His analysis fails to consider fully that the narrator does not exist only as the vehicle for portraying the world of Shibush. He exists also as both part and product of that world, as well as the "modern" world generally. This narrator is not only a vehicle; in many ways, he is the novel. In looking for a hero who has already achieved a sense of inner security, completion (השלמה), and resolution, Hochman fails to recognize that שירת העגנון is a novel whose pervasive mood is irresolution; hence the narrator's inconsistency, insecurity, and ambivalence.

Although the narrator's self-consciousness and concern over his image is often rather aggravating, it is that very self-consciousness which often emphasizes

the narrator's depth.[16] The fact that the narrator is aware of the pain involved in self-examination, and that he can decide not to look too deeply into himself, is in itself some evidence that he is not shallow.

עומק מסוים של הסתכלות פנימה. העובדה שהמספר מודע לכאב שבחקירה עצמית, ושהוא יכול להחליט לא להסתכל יותר מדי פנימה, היא עדות מסוימת לכך שהוא לא שטחי.

The narrator is uprooted from the "homeland" of Israel, and ultimately from any sense of self. In a passage indicative of his profound self-awareness, the narrator summarizes his condition:

המספר נעקר מה"מולדת" ישראל, ובסופו של דבר מכל תחושה של עצמי. בקטע המלמד על מודעותו העצמית הרבה של המספר, הוא מסכם את מצבו:

Lacking "form" and still wanting it, the narrator is left only with the capacity to look around himself. He does so, and what he sees and feels causes him to go into a deep depression. He is helpless and hopeless, and wants only to sleep (173).

What becomes clear is that the narrator's moments of petty concerns and empty piety are both part of a search for some "form", or meaningful existence, and the result of not having found it.

In Chapter Forty-Nine, entitled "תכלית ומציאות", the need for meaning is described in terms of an "end" ("תכלית"). The narrator says that as a child, and later when he wrote poems, and also when he immigrated to Israel, the question "ומה תכלית מה" was always asked of him.

מאז כך עקרו רוח שנות ארבעים ואין
פיות לזדי תכלית. (276)

Now the narrator himself asks:

מה תכלית מציאות צו שכזה מצויים בכם. (226)

Not wanting to deal with the question, he goes to the forest, and admits "אותי הרג תכלית" (276). Nor, since the war, are the people of the town any longer "בעלי תכלית" (277). For the time being, the narrator rationalizes that there is a תכלית, an end, in one's very existence. Yet the theme of "ends" is <u>not</u> <u>resolved</u> and even Ginendel, the woman who nursed the narrator as a child, tells him later in the book that she always knew that he would come to no "תכלית" (310).

The sadness of having come to no תכלית, of having remained as an unformed stone, continues throughout the novel. When the narrator compares his handwriting to that of a beautiful manuscript, and realizes how much he might have improved his handwriting, he concludes rather sadly:

רוב שנותיו עם אותו אוזן כבד שבכל, וכוף
לתקן יש לו בבריף שאבקש איף תיקונף ותכ. (373)

He has left Israel because he is too tired to rebuild (193). Yet he has come to bring תיקון to, and find it in Shibush and the lost world of the Beit Midrash.[17] (We shall put off any judgment as to whether, by the end of the novel, the narrator ever finds his sought-after תיקון.) Half-way through the book, however, the narrator does share his perception of Krolka the hotel servant's judgment. In her eyes, he tells us, he is a man who cannot distinguish between that which can be repaired (דבר שניתן לתקן), and that which is irreparable (193). Once again the reader is confronted with the novel's tone of ambivalence and irresolution.

F. Secondary Characters

It is through the major secondary characters (and I view all of the major characters as secondary to the narrator) that we get a full view of the world of Shibush after the war. They are instrumental in setting mood for the novel, and, as Arnold Band notes, they help provide "an expansive realm of values and attitudes that give coherence to the entire novel."[18] Most importantly these characters present an array of varying individual types against which the narrator is set in apparently conflicting ways. They serve both as foils to the narrator, and yet they often actually seem to represent aspects of his character.

Through Daniel Bach and his father Shlomo, for example, the reader is given both a picture of the human misery of Shibush and is confronted with a question the narrator himself confronts throughout the novel: how to justify the ways of God amidst such human misery.[19] With the story of his ordeal during the war, Daniel Bach helps set the tone of the entire novel. With great emotion he recounts his experience of finding a dead soldier who was killed as he stood in prayer with his tefillin bound on his arm. He passionately cries out his anguish:

... וכול יוצק לצקוד על זכי מצבת ולמוכר את
לבא על קידוש השם ולהכוכך בכותב שלבא
לשמו. וכפל לויצק בכל יום ובכל את

ובכל זאת על שבדה מחשבתו ולישרף
מיום שבר ושאר שובר — דבר צה שיין
כל עוזך וכולל לאמיץ בו .
(37)

His pious father Shlomo, on the other hand, says that we have no business questioning the ways of the merciful God, an attitude which Daniel Bach cannot accept. The narrator sides with Shlomo, perhaps because, as Band points out, "moral worth seems to correspond to the generations, the older a man, the more imposing his moral stature."[20] Band's insight is worthy of attention; however, the narrator's agreement with Shlomo Bach here may be simply one aspect of his ambivalence. Daniel and Shlomo Bach have set the novel's mood, but the narrator's response to what they have said points out a secondary function: it may be that his aligning himself with the older pious Shlomo Bach, is simply part of the narrator's attempt to discover anew the old world of the Beit Midrash. Clearly, his attitude on the problem of theodicy is not at all consistent.[21] When he speaks with the rabbi of Shibush his attitude is much more similar to that of Daniel Bach.

,, כל ישראל בעונו , ויום לתשובה ,
כביכול ברוך הקדוש ברוך הוא ישוב ,,
(171)

Although quite often the narrator makes pious statements about God's mercy and lovingkindness, he also points out that if, for example, Spinoza is correct, and "understanding" is one of the great principles of

philosophy, why then does God not "understand" (381)?[22]

Bach is important, then, for creating a tone of conflict and despair, and by befriending and spending time with the narrator, for providing structure and continuity in the novel. Yet the novel is a first person narrative, and as usch Bach and the other characters are often important primarily for the response they elicit from the narrator.

The role of the Sommer family fits a pattern similar to that of Bach. The tragedy of the family's ordeal during the war is described (49, 126), the contrast is drawn between Sommer's life before and after the war, issues of God's wisdom and justice, and of man's suffering and merit are raised (73), and a marked difference between the generations is depicted. Most of the above is told in a manner which seems reliable. It is when the narrator begins to relate just what Sommer is thinking and feeling that his reliability might be questioned. Or perhaps the question is not one reliability at all. Rather, what the narrator sees strikes responsive chords in him, which he often projects onto the secondary characters.

This projection becomes rather obvious when he offers four different explanations for why Sommer often sits with his eyes closed. Each explanation deals with a major concern of the narrator (and the novel): the glory of the distant past, the tragedy of the more recent past

(the war), the despair of the present, and the look inward into the spirit. The first time he sees Sommer with his eyes half-closed, the narrator explains that this is so either because Sommer does not expect to see anything new, or because he wants to preserve the past (26). In the second instance, however, Sommer's eyes are half-closed not to preserve the past, but to see what is yet to happen (34). Later Sommer closes his bodily eyes so that he may see what has happened to him with the eyes of the spirit (48). And finally, Sommer closes his eyes so as to block out altogther what he has seen (49). Simply stated, Sommer closes his eyes for the same reasons the narrator might close his. As in the case of Bach, the Sommer family helps create the mood of despair in a world changed by time and war, and provides a vehicle of expression for the narrator. As filtered through the narrator, the Sommers become aspects of his own perspective.

Yeruham Hofshi is perhaps the narrator's strongest foil in the novel. The two are set apart by a conflict which Yeruham traces back many years. It centers on Yeruham's contention that the narrator's Zionist poetry and his example of aliyah were the main causes of Yeruham's going to Israel, only to be sorely disappointed and finally expelled for his leftist activities. Early in the novel Yeruham sees the narrator and Israel as one (87) and therefore expresses strong feelings of

animosity toward the narrator. Even as they come to know and like each other better, their differences on Israel are never reconciled. Yeruham's primary role becomes that of confronting the narrator with the less pleasant aspects of life in Israel, thereby emphasizing the narrator's strong ambivalence to the Land. When Rahel, Sommer's daughter, who has married Yeruham against her father's wishes, asks Yeruham to tell her and the narrator some stories about Israel, Yeruham is shocked:

מה זה פתאום? יאמרה רחל, כדי שאתה לבוז
אף עוררת, אומר ירוחם, תלשני שאכן סופכך
ולא ישאר. — למה לכן ישאר? — לא
(282) נותנה הכואבת ראשית בה.

The narrator's attitude toward Yeruham is most ambivalent not because of the latter's personality, but because he himself is conflicted over the quality of life in Israel or in Shibush. He bemoans the waste of Yeruham's labor in repairing the roads of Shibush. At least in Israel, he says,

עשויתין שלו אוזק יש בהן מעוז תבלות, וכוץ
לא לשיק אדמו, בכי לשחרוץ הקווץ סותרין. (345)

The use of the word תבלות, connected almost exclusively with the narrator, is significant here. The narrator is talking about his own labors in Shibush being in vain as much as he is of Yeruham's.

The figure of Yeruham is significant as well in

emphasizing the narrator's ambivalence about whether he should be in Shibush or Israel. Having made the decision to leave, he is glad, on the one hand, that Yeruham asks him to stay in Shibush until after Rahel gives birth, (418) שמא קץ שוב שקוד עזרא שעקור שעקור. (Note the use of שקוד, to uproot, to express the narrator's condition.) On the other hand, he is angry with Yeruham:

שלא כי אז שבוכו וכך אמר, כיצד שתרכב
(418) שוורי עגלתכי.

Yeruham, too, clearly serves as a vehicle by which aspects of the narrator and his central concerns are expressed. Yet his role is somewhat more elusive than that of the other characters: he remains in Shibush, happily married, the father of a son. We shall consider this further when we deal with the novel's conclusion.

Of all the characters in the novel, it is Reb Hayim who might qualify best as the incarnation of the old Beit Midrash world. Although he has fallen from his exalted reputation as a great rabbinic scholar (just as all that was once great in Shibush has declined), he remains the most saintly of the town's inhabitants. He is also a model for the narrator, in that he represents <u>true</u> piety in contradistinction to the narrator's pious mouthings. But for the narrator such an ideal is also a threat: he cannot hope to be the pious man that Reb Hayim is, nor is he able to live comfortably in Reb Hayim's

world. He envies Reb Hayim who teaches Torah to the few children in Shibush. He too, he imagines, will someday teach Torah to the town's children. Of course he never does; but contemplating teaching reminds him of his own children and the possibility of returning to Israel. Reb Hayim is thereby also used to reflect the narrator's inner conflict regarding Shibush versus Israel.

Reb Hayim is a threat in one other important aspect; he sees more clearly than do others, and thereby highlights some of the narrator's insecurities. While the narrator knows that most people can be easily impressed by externals, he fears visiting Reb Hayim because of what the latter may see in him (403).

Ultimately all the secondary characters raise questions which involve some insight into the narrator's conflicts. This novelistic structure strengthens the view that שורת לבה שלון is primarily a novel about the שורה. Aharon Schützling, the narrator's boyhood friend, even raises the possibility that perhaps Shibush itself does not really exist, that only its name has any firm existence:

ל ירלך שומרון ראשי ואמר כן וגו', שגנו שמינו
צה בפה, אנו אוני לך באמריקה, ואתם, יום
כיפור אנו שלנו מן כיאויים, יין יום ה יופק בקורף
ישרון, ולא זו בלבד, אלא כשאני שאתכם בנו
נדמה לו שאין בעולם זה אמריקה ולא אוף ושיבוש,

שלא שבוש בלבד, אלו אולי גוף כזה אינה
קיימת, אלא שאה בלבד קיים. ובכן מה אינו שוש ה
כאן? הניחני ואחשוב. — למה לך לחשוב?
מחשבות מיזרות, (291-292)

The idea that Shibush exists only in name (desolation, destruction, confusion) is intriguing. If the firm existence of Shibush is in question, then the major conflicts over the town and what it represents truly become conflicts over a Shibush that exists only in the narrator's mind, thus supporting the position that the אורח is the novel. Much of what happens in the book does, after all, take place in the narrator's thoughts (those same thoughts which Schützling correctly sees as enervating). As the narrator himself makes explicit, the novel is an inner journey:

ולבי אני שבדרוך שאני מספר אין לאוזך ענין
בהם, חוץ מאוזך אחד שהוא מספר עלי הף,
ולא משהוא מספר לאחרים מספר הוא לעצמו. (101)

It is a book of ruminations, a fact of which the narrator is only too well aware. במה נהכה עצמו, he asks on a number of occasions (211). The narrator is aware of his thought processes to the extent that he divulges to the reader his tendency to divide his statements into first and second parts (which he does consistently) (91); he shares his awareness of the seemingly disjointed nature of much of what he tells:

מחשבות על אוזך אינן סומאות במיקום אחד. (411)

He goes so far as to admit . . .

(308)

The irony is that the narrator himself is central to Schützling's suggestion that Shibush may not exist draws our attention to the fact that Shibush, its Beit Midrash, and all its inhabitants are at least as much a part of the narrator as he is of them.

F. The Novel's Conclusion

שירת הקצרים portrays the attempt of a man to return to the security of the world he knew as a child, or to that world as he remembers it. The pervasive moods of the novel are nostalgia, despair, and ambivalence. These moods are punctuated by the recurring motif of sighing:

(16) ... אנחתי עלה ועשׂי עירי

(17) ... נאנחתי ואומרת

אנחות שפכו בבכי לשוח בדמעה ולשון

(21) מתחלף עלות.

כל יושבי על הריות אומרה אולי אנחה.

(76) ואולם אנחה כל איש בכיך עצמו.

The narrator and townspeople sigh over the tragedy of the past and over the sadness of the present.

If the novel's conclusion is to be read as optimistic, one would assume that the sighing would stop. The narrator expresses such optimism when, on the ship returning to Israel he says:

... מתחת התפללות כלפי נסתק צרורי, כאיש ש

(435) שרואה שכל קיו"ו מתקיימים ובאים.

Arnold Band argues convincingly that שירת הקצרים is Agnon's "most affirmative novelistic statement of belief."[23] He sees the land of Israel in the novel as being "an expansive ideal that must supersede all that Shibush stands for." It is the "dream that gives meaning to life and nothing short of it will suffice."[24]

The most hopeful sign in the book, Band argues, is the birth of a son to Yeruham and Rahel (the first child born in Shibush in many years), and the fact that the narrator gives the key of the Beit Midrash to the child. "The child holds the key to the future."[25] Band concludes:

> But Ore'ah nata lalun, reaches a positive ending in spite of the mood of decay which pervades it. The narrator does rejoin his family in Jerusalem to live the life of the Tora there. Though he has had his childhood obliterated from his consciousness as a possible psychological refuge from reality, in his loss of innocence he gains a new childhood in the figure of the child of Rahel and Yeruham. Their child is given his name, a strange practice for Ashkenazic Jews who usually name the child after a dead person. I suggest that this strange act means that the narrator who entered the story has died as a personality: he has discovered his Shibush is no more, and he therefore undergoes a rebirth signified in the birth and circumcision of the child who will bear his name. And it is the child, who now has one of the keys to the old bet midrash (the narrator has the other key), who will someday settle in Erets Yisrael and study the Tora in the bet midrash of Shibush when it is transferred there.[26]

Part of the problem with Band's analysis is his assertion that the narrator identifies "categorically with the two enduring focal points that merge, by the end of the novel, to produce the bet midrash in Erets Yisrael."[27] An examination of the final chapters of the book shows that the conclusion of the novel, in consonance with the rest of the book, is much more ambivalent than Band's view would imply.

The narrator's process of deciding to return to

Israel is fraught with characteristic ambivalence. When it is already clear to the reader that the narrator is thinking seriously about his return to Israel, the narrator himself appears as not fully prepared to confront that reality. Although he counts out the money he will need for his journey, he tells the reader,

עכשיו הרגשתי שהיה לי קשה מאוד, שהרי
עדיין לא התאוששתי מהשמחה על כך שהפתח
נפתח שאשתי כבר שלחה כמה מעות וכו'... (370)

He also remains ambivalent when asked by Yeruham to remain until Rahel gives birth, both angry and thankful for the delay (418). The narrator's ambivalence is finally resolved not by his own action, but by his wife who sends him his ticket to Israel (420).

The narrator's final problem before he can leave Shibush is what to do with the key to the Beit Midrash. On the one hand, he states that since he left Israel his eyes have become weakened because of his studies in the Beit Midrash (416). On the other, he has a responsibility to dispose of the key properly. He has an imaginary conversation with his wife over what to do with the key. She suggests that he leave it in the ark and let the dead take it when they come to pray. The narrator puts the key in the ark, but now says that he must carry the ark. His wife questions him, and he answers that he would like to carry the entire Beit Midrash on his shoulders. The walls of the Beit Midrash tell him that they will

follow him to Israel (416-417). Clearly the narrator's ambivalent feelings toward Israel and galut are strongest as he contemplates leaving Shibush.

The problem seems solved when a son is born to Yeruham and Rahel. The narrator wants to give the child a gift by which he will be remembered and decides to give him the key. In this way, says the narrator, the child will be able to open the Beit Midrash, when the Messiah will transport it to Israel (431). This act seems to express great hopes for the child, and an optimistic view of the future. What seems strange, however, is the matter-of-fact manner in which the key is given, as well as the fact that the recipient is a child. The transfer of the key is reminiscent of the way in which the narrator received it, from men who were leaving Shibush and told the narrator to sit in the Beit Midrash and wait for the Messiah. The difference here is that the child cannot refuse the gift, whereas the narrator, although ambivalent, had accepted it.

In some ways what happens in the chapter entitled "הברית" seems to be a microcosm of the novel as a whole, or at least an outline of what the narrator has lived through. We are told--by the narrator--what the infant, who is about to be circumcised, is thinking. The child smiles because he remembers the days when his life was better, when he learned everything that is in the Torah. Now he has suddenly forgotten all that he

learned; he is shocked, and begins to cry.

עד שהוא בוכה ואת אוכף על ירכו קדף שיבאו
ולא ימצאו, לבסוף שבועה שבשבועו אותו כשעה
שיבאו לאויר הרוף שיהיה בדוק ולסו ויהיו רשע
ושישמר את נשמתו בטהרה. לבסף עליו
אומרה, אומר בלמן, אוני תינוק ואת
תהיו על'. (429)

The child is comforted when he imagines that the day of his death has arrived and he has nothing to fear, because he has not sinned and his soul remains pure (430). The ironic juxtaposition of thoughts about death at the occasion of a birth reflect the novel's ambivalent (usually despairing) attitude to life in Shibush after the war. The child is named after the narrator, then, not necessarily because he has been symbolically reborn in the new-born child. What has happened to the narrator is seen as cyclical--it is about to happen again in this child who has just inherited the Beit Midrash key. The expectation which Band speaks of that the child will go to Israel is not born out by the fact that, at the end of the novel, Yeruham and Rahel live peacefully in Shibush with their son who is growing and giving pleasure to his family (444). The tension between galut (the Beit Midrash and its key) and Israel is not resolved; it is symbolically passed to the next generation.

The narrator himself tells us that although it would be nice to have a happy ending for the story, since

our exile there is no good without bad. His reference is to the fate of Tsvi, the young Zionist who tries to enter Israel illegally and is sent back to Shibush (437). What is significant is that we are prepared for an ending which is at best ambiguous.

Once back in Israel, the narrator says that he has put his experience out of his mind and has found tranquility (439). His words are betrayed by the fact that he writes of that very experience as soon as he returns to Israel,[28] and by the very next paragraph of the novel in which his wife finds a key in one of his travel bags. The narrator immediately blames Yeruham Hofshi, שרשם עצמו חפשי מן המצוות, for having disposed of the key the narrator had given to his son. When he realizes that this is the very key he had lost, he wonders at the fact that now that he has no need for it, it returns to him (439). When he decides to keep the key until the day when the Beit Midrash comes to Israel, he puts it in a box, and hangs the key to the box over his heart. The key to the Beit Midrash itself,

(440) ... אין כלפי ובוא שהמפתח שמור בבוא.

The narrator waits for the Beit Midrash and realizes that although the key can wait,

(440) ... אולי אסור בשר ובדם לשמור כך.

One remembers Yeruham and Rahel's son as he is imagined saying:

(429) אולי תינוק ואפה תלכו שלי.

The key has become a burden. Giving it to the new-born child who could not refuse it was not a solution to the narrator's dilemma. Now he asks Shlomo Bach if he would like to take it back to Shibush, go to his granddaughter's wedding, and study in the Beit Midrash (443). Shlomo says he would prefer to stay in Israel and wait for the Messiah (444).

שואלני לו למפתח, וכך כן אולי משתייר שמי. שתוך
מפתח ולכן השיק לי בלוש. כלשית, מפני שכוון
דומץ וכוונו מזבלי. ושנית, שכיבר ביקרו וכך שי
בית המדרש בשולחן ענין בווף שעכרוהו לי, (444)

Even in Israel, the narrator cannot escape the key. That is, he cannot escape the Beit Midrash or Shibush itself. The fulfillment which Erets Yisrael represents is compromised by the continued presence of the key.

The narrator's ambivalence remains with him to the very end of the novel, creating the feeling that although there has certainly been growth as a result of his experience as an אורח, something still lacks completion. He ends his story with the key in his hand, and the words,

כאן לשלוח סיפורו של אותו אורח שבכה שלו
הדיבור בחיבור שלפנינו, מאותו שתכף למקומו
וזכא מכלל שורה. (444)

He is no longer a guest, and yet, he immediately continues to narrate a story supposedly complete (לשלוח).

מכל מקום נשכר מקבת משמו של ירמיה ורחל, (444)
מה נשכר אזך ולא סיפרנו. (444)
מה נשכר אזך, בכל יום בשוא של אוכלוסת משבוש. (445)

Those are the first sentences of the next three paragraphs. He even begins to talk about what happened to him in Israel, but he says with an air of finality, belied by his difficulty to stop writing,

תם מעשה הסורא ונשלמו עניינו שבשבוש. (445)

The feeling of finality is forced, as is the tone of optimism. The despair and sighing has abated somewhat, but never totally disappears from the story. A part of the narrator's experience in Shibush--a strong element of uprootedness--remains alive even in Israel.

The long Yom Kippur with which the novel began, the period of חשבון הנפש which the novel encompasses, is (somewhat grudgingly) over. But one of the important questions raised by the narrator is never resolved:

כמין משחק לכמה צמיחים, לשכר ולעונש ולמוות, כשיהיו לשמש כל הצמיחים שיירים בעיני, מה שהיה לשוא בשכר ובעונש ובמוות ולשוא לעתיד, ובכך כל מלקוח עלי חבלי שאומרים, מה שהיה לשוא בשכר ועונש הוסו בהווה כל שכן לעתיד. (373)

That all times are the same and that the past is a burden may both be correct. If it is literally true for the narrator that all times are the same, then in a way the end of the book is most appropriate. Shibush, its inhabitants, the Beit Midrash and its key cannot be forgotten. The problems of uprootedness, despair, and absence of meaning remain eternally unresolved.

N O T E S

1 cf. Arnold J. Band, Nostalgia and Nightmare, A Study in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 292.

2 cf. Band, p. 288.

3 cf. Gershon Shaked, שמעון בפיבור של עגנון (Tel Aviv, 1973), p. 230.

4 See Baruch Kurzweil, עמוס על סיפורי ש"י עגנון (Tel Aviv, 1970), pp. 51-52. He discusses the first three characters mentioned in the novel, Bach, Gumovitch, and Reb Hayim, and the idea that they and Shibush are half alive and half dead.

5 cf. Baruch Hochman, The Fiction of S. Y. Agnon (Ithaca and London, 1970), p. 119.

6 cf. Hochman, pp. 132-133.

7 cf. Band, p. 7.

8 Hochman, p. 119.

9 cf. Band, p. 292.

10 cf. Shaked, p. 231.

11 Hochman, p. 128.

12 Hochman, p. 129.

13 Hochman, p. 131.

14 Hochman, p. 133.

15 Hochman, p. 131.

16 cf. Band, p. 310.

17 cf. Shaked, p. 231-232.

18 Band, p. 291.

[19] cf. Band, p. 292.

[20] Band, p. 291.

[21] cf. Band, p. 292.

[22] cf. Band, p. 312-313.

[23] Band, p. 326.

[24] Band, p. 320.

[25] Band, p. 321.

[26] Band, p. 326-327.

[27] Band, p. 323.

[28] cf. Band, p. 310.

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