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JERUSALEM VIGNETTES:

A Translation and Critical Analysis
of Short Stories by Yitzchak Shenhar

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for Ordination

Referee, Professor Werner Weinberg

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati, Ohio

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For my parents

and

For all lovers of Jerusalem

DIGEST

JERUSALEM VIGNETTES: SHORT STORIES BY YITZCHAK SHENHAR

In this Rabbinic thesis, Charles D. Lippman translates and analyzes a group of short stories about Jerusalem by the author-editor-translator Yitzchak Shenhar (1907-1957). The stories treated had not been previously translated.

"Moon in the Valley of Ayalon" is the story of a traditional man who is traveling to Tel Aviv to perform the chalitzta ceremony for his sister-in-law whom he originally was to marry but who had spurned him for his brother.

"Spider Webs" tells of two sisters of very different temperament and philosophy of life, one of whom marries despite the objection of the other. The plot is followed by an allegory involving spiders.

"From the Legends of the Siege" is an account of four unrelated incidents which occurred during the siege of Jerusalem at the time of Israel's War for Independence.

"A Messiah in the Tombs" tells of a man who believed himself to be the Messiah, and of his companion, a beggar who took advantage of the Messiah's aberration.

After a glossary of terms, a critical analysis of the stories is presented. Themes, characterization, symbolism, and literary devices are explored.

These are stories of tension: the tension between Israel and the exile, between tradition and modernity, between the sacred and the secular. They tend to evoke within the reader a sense of hopelessness at the realization that the secular, although not necessarily superior, is virtually always victorious.

Each of the stories has its own peculiar message, while they are bound together by the theme of Jerusalem and her life, landscape, and history.

Yitzchak Shenhar's genius as a writer is found in his vivid symbolism, in his artful use of literary devices, and, most of all, in his talent at character portrayal. With a minimum of concrete information, the reader is made to know the very essence of the characters.

The thesis closes with the presentation of a selected bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

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INTRODUCTION

My Third Rabbinic Year at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1967 - 1968, was spent in study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Since earliest childhood, I had wanted to see the State of Israel, especially Jerusalem. I had always considered such a trip one of the major goals of my life.

In May, 1967, my proposed year of study appeared doomed, with war on the horizon. But then, suddenly, the Six-Day War cleared the air. The Old City was in our hands, and Jerusalem was united once more. Never had I dreamed that I would be able to walk in her streets and view her holy places. Never had I imagined that I would merit to pray at the Western Wall. I felt that Jerusalem had been united for my sake. My hopes had been more than answered.

Jerusalem did not disappoint me. I walked her streets for days, for weeks. I explored every possible corner, and I encircled her in a sixty-five mile march with forty thousand other lovers of Jerusalem. When the time drew near for me to leave Israel, I walked around the Old City from gate to gate collecting her ancient dust in a small bottle. I had to take a part of her along, for Jerusalem is my city. I always remember her, and she remains above my chiefest joy. I long for the day when

I may gaze upon her beauty again.

Jerusalem gave me herself, and she provided me with another love as well. I became enchanted with the Hebrew language, and obsessed by the desire to learn and speak and read as much Hebrew as possible. Modern Hebrew, which I hope will be my constant avocation, became the love of my academic life.

As my Senior Year approached, I found it necessary to choose a topic for my Rabbinic thesis, preferably a topic about which I would feel passionate. In my mind, the city of Jerusalem and the Hebrew language both had to be involved. I decided at that time that a translation and analysis of stories about Jerusalem would be, for me, the ideal topic.

I began a survey of various authors and their works. I wanted to find a contemporary author of repute, an author whose writings had not previously been translated. With the guidance of Dr. Werner Weinberg, my thesis referee, I finally decided to translate a group of stories about Jerusalem by the author-editor-translator Yitzchak Shenhar. His qualifications were excellent. Shenhar was a man of position and prominence. As to his writing, only one anthology containing four of his short stories had been translated (Under the Fig Tree, New York, 1948). I decided to

translate and analyze four of Shenhar's stories, or vignettes, of Jerusalem.

The translation was a formidable task indeed. I attempted to render a translation faithful to the original Hebrew and, at the same time, in the modern American idiom. It was a labor of many hours, and of much love. I attempted to discover how Shenhar made his stories come alive, and in the course of this analysis I realized Yitzchak Shenhar's genius -- an ability to make the reader enter the story and become an "honorary resident" of the Holy City. The themes and literary devices which Shenhar employed, his skill at characterization and in the use of symbolism, all led to this end. In this thesis, I attempt to present his stories and to report my conclusions.

The four stories which I have chosen to translate are Yareach Be'emek Avalon (Moon in the Valley of Ayalon), Mashi'ach Bakevarim (A Messiah in the Tombs), Me'aggadot Hamatzor (From the Legends of the Siege), and Kurim (Spider Webs). All four are found in the section Misippure' Yerushalayim (From the Stories of Jerusalem) of the three-volume edition of Shenhar stories published in 1960 by the Bialik Institute. This section of Jerusalem stories originally appeared as a part of the volume Yamim Yedaberu, for which Shenhar received the Ruppin Prize for the Book of the Year in 1946. In that edition, the latter two stories were not a part of this section. But, because they, too, were about Jerusalem, they were added to it by the Institute.

In addition to Yamim Yedaberu, Yitzchak Shenhar was the author of other major works: Basar Vadam; Me'eretZ el EretZ; Ben Kokhav Vedeshe; Echad Me'elef; Sippurim Me'eretZ Utz; Me'az Umikedem; and Beshiv'ah Derakhim.

Among his translations into Hebrew are books by Dostoevsky, Balzac, Malraux, Merimée, Schnitzler, Hesse, Rilke, Feuchtwanger, Lewisohn and Traven. He translated Dead Souls, by Gogol; Essays of the French Moralists; Amerika, by Kafka; and Grapes of Wrath, by Steinbeck. In 1948, Shenhar received the Tchernichovsky Prize for excellence in translation.

THE AUTHOR

Yitzchak Shenberg was born in Proskurov, Russia on February 21, 1907, the son of Yosef and Chaya Shenberg. He was a descendent of Levi Yitzchak of Berditshev.

Shenberg's parents provided him with private tutors and he began studying in a Russian-Jewish school. It was there that he first became interested in Russian literature. He moved on to the Gymnasium, and during the years 1917-1918 he was active in the "Hechalutz" movement. He then went on "hakhsharah," the preparatory training for immigration to Palestine. It was during this period that he began writing poetry. After being caught once trying to cross the border, he finally was successful in immigrating to

Palestine in 1924. This was during the "Fourth Aliyah," the fourth wave of immigration.

From 1924 to 1928, Shenberg was a laborer in Palestine acting as porter, camel driver, night watchman, and farm worker. It was in the latter capacity that he worked at Merchavia and was one of the founders of that kibbutz in the plains of Yezre'el. While at Merchavia, he published his first poem and began writing poems and stories for Hebrew journals. He soon returned to Tel Aviv and worked there in construction for two years. In Tel Aviv, he befriended a number of writers and spent time studying languages. He became particularly close to Arlozorov who urged him to further his studies in Brussels.

Shenberg then spent several years as a railroad clerk for the British Mandatory Government of Palestine. He worked at the Lod station of the Lod-Rehovot-Yavneh Railroad, and as a clerk he found it necessary to learn Arabic.

In 1932, Shenberg went to Brussels to study. He received a degree in literature at the Université Libre in 1934.

He served as the personal Hebrew secretary to Zalman Schocken, the head of Schocken Publishing Company, and as his secretary for Hebrew University affairs from 1937 until 1942. He also accompanied Schocken on his trips abroad. Shenberg became the editor of the Schocken Publishing Company in 1942 and the editor of the Haaretz Almanac in 1943. He served in both capacities until his death. It was during his later years that he Hebraized his surname,

changing it from Shenberg to Shenhar.

During the years 1950-51, and again in 1955, Shenhar went to South America as a fund-raiser for the United Jewish Appeal. A few short weeks before his death, Yitzchak Shenhar was appointed Consul for Israel in Bombay, India, but he did not live to begin his service in this position. Shenhar died a bachelor in Jerusalem at the age of fifty, on June 18, 1957, and was buried by his father in the Holy City.

NOTE: Immediately following the stories is a glossary containing those words and phrases with which the reader may not be familiar. Entries have been made for each story in the order of their appearance in the text.

SPIDER WEBS

Esther and Hanna are orphans, and their place of residence is in the very last house of the Bet-Aaron neighborhood. The house stands on the slope of the street and has two stories. The tree on the incline of the slope has grown strong and has extended its branches to the edge of the roof. The sisters live in a room with one window on the top floor. Strung from the window to a bough in the tree is a long rope upon which laundry dries in the sun. The mountains, at a distance, climb upon each other's backs like a group of curious bald men insatiably peering through that same single window.

Esther is short and swarthy and her limbs are clumsy, while Hanna is tall and thin with bright eyes. Esther is a servant in the home of some well-to-do people in the city, and she returns to her room at nightfall. Hanna sits at home and earns her livelihood by embroidery work: all day she painstakingly interweaves multicolored threads on the necks of blouses, on chest-fronts and cuffs of sleeves. For the most part she embroiders the form of the sun and its rays, the sun in its rising, the sun in its setting, and the sun in the center of the firmament. Her fingerwork is well-received in the store belonging to the women's society, and there is reward for her activity. In addition to this, she sweeps the room, chooses the meals, and arranges the daily schedule. Esther accepts her authority without protesting,

and when she returns from her work she eats dinner with her sister, and the two of them go out for a stroll. When they return, they draw the two halves of the curtain over the window and spread their beds.

Sometimes Ephraim the stonecutter comes at night, stands on the incline of the slope, and pulls the rope in the tree. The branches rustle and strike the sisters' window. Ephraim strikes once, twice, and on the third knock the window is opened and Hanna pokes her head out, elegantly crowned with blond locks.

She hisses like a serpent: "You again?"

"Yes, me."

"Go, leave. You'll be standing here for nothing."

"I didn't come to you, darling. I want to see Esther."

"But she doesn't want to see you!"

"Ask her, darling, Perhaps..."

Hanna shuts the window in anger. Esther is lying in her bed, listening without saying a thing. Hanna has no love lost for Ephraim. She dreams about beauty and pleasure, about politeness and about white hands. She and her sister are of good family, and what do they have in common with this youth of preying teeth, vulgar and heavy speech, and rough hands? Hanna knows that Esther meets Ephraim during the noon hour, and there are times when she goes out to sit with him in a cafe. Esther could do as she pleases; here, in their common room, this youth would not have the right of entry. Hanna lies in her bed and sees in her dream a wondrous

embroidery of suns and a group of high mountains.

Many days later, Esther found the courage to announce to Hanna that she had decided to marry Ephraim. Hanna left home and moved elsewhere, and after the wedding Ephraim came to live in the room with Esther. Ephraim kept on cutting stones, and Esther continued serving in the home of the rich people. When she became pregnant, she stopped her work and sat at home preparing diapers and white clothes. Before she gave birth, the war broke out in the Land. Jerusalem was besieged and bullets whistled in her streets. Artillery thundered from the Old City and from beyond the road to Bethlehem, and one of the shells reached that same last house on the slope of Bet-Aaron. The shell tore a hole in the wall of the upper story and wounded Ephraim mortally. Three weeks later, Esther was seized with labor pains and gave birth to a son whom she named Ephraim. When she had recuperated, she returned to her job, and her sister Hanna consented to come to live with her as in the beginning. And once again Hanna would sit and embroider multicolored suns for her customers on the edge of collars and chest-fronts and sleeves, and while on the job she would keep an eye on tiny Ephraim, laid in his cradle. At times, the baby would awake and scream aloud and Hanna would rock his cradle in anger. The baby would be stubborn and would not stop, so Hanna would get up and change his diapers and stick the baby bottle between his lips. The mountains afar off turned their eyes and were already peeking through another window.

The hole in the wall had not been closed up. It was summertime, and the opening served as a kind of extra lattice for the wind. A spider saw the hole and said: If no man closes it up, I'll go and settle in it; it's a pleasant place in which to spin webs. She rose up and spun a large web and joined it from all sides to the projections of the stones in the opening. The entire day, the spider was suspended there with her head down, delighting in the rays of the sun which were captured in the web. From so much contentment she became plump and her belly round, and all of her became gray like the surrounding stone.

One night, a withered and starved multi-legged creature came out from a hiding place in a crevice. This was a dark spider which moved his body carefully and earnestly as if anxious lest he would err in the calculation of the movement of his legs. He climbed up to the edge of the hole in the wall, tarried a little, and thought things over. Afterwards, he hurriedly emitted from his treasure-house one long thread, joined it to the spider web and began pulling on it, pulling and knocking. The female spider heard and shot forward from her place and began flinging her web about with wrathful anger until the male sprang back and disappeared. The following night he came again, and he was repenting and pulling on the thread and expressing honorable intentions. One night, the resolute female gave in to him and the male filled her belly with his delicacies. In the morning, his body was found hanging lifelessly between the webs. That anonymous creature had fulfilled his

mission, for the big-bellied spider had torn him to pieces, so that nothing remained of him save the empty sheath of his skin.

And again the spider dallies motionless in the net of her webs in the opening of the wall. Her legs spread and her head bent low, she occupies herself in hunting the rays of the sun. Sometimes plant seeds carried by the wind are tossed to her web. The spider hastens to them and handles them angrily, but since she is not able to remove them she stops and swaddles them in a covering of silver webs and they become her keepsake for the future.

The tree on the slope rustles with its branches as before, not knowing that the day is close when, to make room for the addition of a building, it will be cut down.

MOON IN THE VALLEY OF AYALON

At nightfall, we left Jerusalem for Tel Aviv. The automobile was old and worn-out and the driver, his sidelocks tucked away behind his ears, was manhandling the wheel and mumbling to himself. Next to the driver sat a short, Tarzan-like youth, his legs like thin clappers in the bells of his trousers, his black pompadour emitting the odor of hair tonic. Next to me, in the back seat, was stretched-out a bowlegged, big-bellied, elderly Jew. He was coughing and groaning and breathing with difficulty but, after he had secured the greater part of the seat, he dropped his head to the side and fell asleep. In his shadow was huddled-up a pale, sparsely bearded youth with a black "shtreimel" shading his eyes, his face blurred in the darkness. It was the time before moonrise. The automobile plodded along slowly between the mountains and was swaying and knocking and rattling, and when we descended into the valley it was shaken by bursts of explosions, breathed its last, and came to a standstill. The driver, under his breath, offered his opinion about that good-for-nothing wreck, took off his long jacket, and began poking around in the parts of the car. The elderly Jew even here was not awakened, and he continued in his carefree snoring. And we, the three remaining travelers, left the car and sat down on the stones at the side of the road.

An attentive stillness stood around, and crickets were sawing it, piercing and drilling it and nibbling at it flirtatiously. The mountains rose before us, lifting their heads as if expecting the dew of heaven. It was as though the night had collided with them in its journey, its pearls shaken-out over them, shadows falling into the depressions at the extremities of the slopes, and tatters of darkness resting between the sections of rocks. A small star settled on one of the peaks and was twinkling in haste from there out of great dismay at its loneliness.

Then the moon emerged from the cover of the terrace. At first it cast before it a molten rivulet. Afterwards it climbed upon the tops of the mountain ridges, rose, and set sail. The earthen plains welcomed it with a spray of the pleasant scent of burned herbs and warmed divots of earth. Cascades of light began spilling toward the Valley of Ayalon, the valley becoming a vessel which soon would overflow.

The pallid youth rose, took a few steps to the other side of the highway, and stood still. He removed his "shtreimel" from his head, and the black skullcap arched over his brow. He threw his head back toward the moon, and his pale face whitened even more. This was only because he had never seen a moon floating over the desolation of uninhabited plains.

"It looks as though he's counting the stars, that astronomer," grumbled the driver, shooting his chin out toward the young man. The driver pulled his hand from the engine and joined us to wait until a car would pass on the road and pick us up.

"He's afraid," answered the Tarzan with the pompadour.

"What's there to be afraid of here?" asked the driver complainingly.

The other smiled like one who had seen a new world. "This is the first time in his life that he's going to Tel Aviv, so he's afraid. You see, this is Chanina the Hungarian from the Old City. He's traveling to perform 'chalitza.'"

A night bird glided over our heads, but the rushing of its wings was not heard in the vastness of space. At that moment I remembered: A few years ago I had lived in the Old City in an out-of-the-way alley made up of partitions and curtains and lofts and patched with planks of board and metal. I would see Chanina the Hungarian daily when he went to the House of Study, stooped and lowering his eyes toward the ground. And whenever he would pass by my house he would quicken his steps and a smile would appear on his lips and would not go away. Red Baruch, a scribe who used to write Torah scrolls, phylacteries and mezuzot, lived on the second floor of that building, and Miriam his daughter had been betrothed to Chanina since her childhood. Miriam was a skinny girl with black eyes and blue veins glittering at her temples. Sometimes she would go out to the small veranda atop the house and look down to the alley, her fingers busy incessantly in her braid and her eyelids fluttering. As time went on, she took her eyes from Chanina and fixed them upon Menachem, his younger brother.

Menachem did not desire to engage in Torah and he likewise loathed his mother's little shop, a shop for various kinds of scrap-iron junk. He wore bluejeans and went to learn a trade outside the wall, and in the alley they began to gossip that Menachem met with Miriam evenings in a laborers' club in the city. For days all the neighborhood trembled and all the houses, connected to each other, shook: Miriam had run away from her father's house to Tel Aviv, and Menachem had followed after her and had married her. They told that Reb Baruch the scribe broke his writing pen because it was such a disgrace, for he did not see himself fit to engage in holy labor anymore. Chanina was shut-up in the House of Study and would not leave it except on Friday nights and holy days. A messenger was sent to Tel Aviv to let the runaways know that Chanina granted them a complete pardon if they would only return home, but the efforts of the messenger were in vain. He returned and reported that the couple had rented themselves a room in the remote regions of the city, in a new building upon which a "mezuzah" had not yet been affixed. Menachem was driving a large automobile and carrying loads to Haifa and to settlements, while Miriam was working in a cigarette factory, and on evenings a group of "trefa-eaters" and "Shabbat-desecrators" would get together at their place, and they would arrange a merry feast.

Time led me to move my apartment from the Old City, and I went to a settlement in the Galilee and forgot that whole episode. And only here at the crossroads, at this hour of night, I again remembered it, and, from fragments of speech which the man with

the pompadour uttered, I gathered that these mates had not seen much contentment in their lives and had not had a child. The money was there in their pocket, but they nevertheless refrained from ever going to Jerusalem, and they did not see their relatives again. But last year, when for the first time Menachem left to take a load of beams and iron bars to a suburb of Jerusalem, the sun set while he was en route, and when he reached the curves of the highway in the mountains the large automobile overturned and Menachem rolled down an incline, the beams falling on him and crushing his limbs. Travelers coming from Jerusalem happened upon the place, and they wanted to return and take the injured man with them. But that fellow was obstinate and requested that they take him to Tel Aviv. He lay in the hospital days, and weeks, until he died of his injuries. Many friends followed his coffin, while from among his relatives, the members of his family, no one came. After the death of her husband, Miriam moved away and her steps were unknown. But, a few weeks ago, she announced that she was about to be married to a good friend of hers, and Chanina was requested to come and perform "chalitza" for his sister-in-law, freeing her for another.

"Ah, a heartache," the driver remarked, spreading his hands out sideways.

"The relatives wrote her to come to Jerusalem for 'chalitza,'" continued the man with the pompadour, "but she refused. She sent

word announcing that unless Chanina comes to Tel Aviv she will join her new mate without a wedding canopy or rites."

"A kind of daughter of the devil's mother; God save us," whispered the driver.

"A few days ago, I came upon the house of the Hungarian woman and I advised Chanina to request a sum of money from Miriam in payment for the 'chalitza,' but he turned a deaf ear."

The fellow with the pompadour burst into laughter and swung the bells of his trousers in enjoyment. "sh, sh, sh," the driver waved to him with his hands, "he can hear you."

"So what," the fellow answered as he began stretching and yawning. "It's well known that Chanina is average: not an idiot, but not very sane either."

The two were silent for a short while and were immersed in thought. Tomorrow, Chanina would be standing in a gray House of Study before three judges, and he would look at that sandal not sown with flax, a sandal all black with white straps. And Miriam his sister-in-law, who had been designated for him since his childhood, would spit before his pallid face and answer, saying: This shall be done to the man who will not build his brother's house.

The fellow with the pompadour looked out on the road and, when he saw that no car was coming, he turned to me and began, like somebody enlightened and refined: "It's amazing that these customs persist and continue even in our day. Our generation strives towards..."

"Torah scholar, a ring into your cheeks!" the driver chided him severely. "You're no taller than the 'vav' in 'Vaizata,' and you come to investigate something beyond your understanding!"

Chanina was standing as at first, his head inclined upward and his hands placed on his sash, completely bathed in a light of dignity and shaken free of the gloomy matter, the moonbeams: tying his hair into bands of silver.

The moon continued floating until it settled in a light cloudlet blended with a reddish halo. And, for a while, it appeared as though the moon had established a resting place for itself in the luminous brocade, and had frozen and stopped over the Valley of Ayalon.

From the Legends of the Siege

Martha the daughter of Boethius was one of the richest women in Jerusalem...She had taken off her shoes, but she said, I will go out and see if I can find anything to eat. Some dung stuck to her foot and she died.

Gittin 56

I WILL GO OUT AND SEE

I saw Martha Nagler when I stood guard near the large barricade. She emerged from her pleasant home, slowly went down the steps and looked to all directions. There was a break between shellings, yet the street was empty of people. Hungry Jerusalem was immersed in silence. I knew that Martha's husband had left before the siege in connection with his business, and he remained stuck in one of the settlements while she was left alone in the city with the two children. I saw her, and she was attired in an ornamented dress with a light wrap over her shoulders, her hair done and a purse in her hand, and she walked jauntily with an air of assurance. She reached the desolate lot which is used as a dump for all sorts of rubbish, and she stopped walking. Wild weeds grew at the sides of the lot and, during the daylight hours, the cats of the quarter assembled here — a resting place for the carefree. Martha bent down and sat stooped, and she began rummaging among the weeds. At that moment, she resembled one of the pleasant images in those colorful pictures which portray a happy corner in Arcadia, one of

those feeding among the lilies with a tranquil face and modest eyes. She was rummaging with her hand among the weeds and when she found three or four stalks of okra she picked them carefully. I knew that this find was good for making salad and soup for herself and for her children. She arose from her stooped position, looked at the greens in her hand with a serious face, and she hurriedly returned to her home. When she saw me standing and staring at her she hesitated for a moment, then took the stalks of okra and stuck them into the lapel of her wrap, and she stepped very slowly like one going out to stroll in the breeze of the day.

THE SEER

That new hotel, flashing in its whiteness, served as a meeting place for all the foreign correspondents, secret service men of all organizations, idle walkers, and those pumping others for news. The small bar buzzed from the many men who followed each other, drank intermittently, and sent whispers from end to end. The proprietress of the hotel was walking around painted and glorious in her apparel among this crowd of guests ill-mannered and slovenly in dress, and she wrestled this hour of emergency with all her strength, with the abundance of her smiles and rustles of her dress and glittering of the earrings hanging down from her ears.

I sat with one of the foreign newspapermen and we drank in silence. The window of the bar overlooked the broad, deserted square behind which were spread the large Arab neighborhoods outfitted with snipers' nests.

"This thing doesn't look good to me," my neighbor finally said while turning his glass between his fingers. "I don't believe that this chapter will close with 'and it was good.' I don't believe it."

"Naturally! You're a newspaperman, and belief is outside of your job."

He narrowed his grey eyes at me and said: "Do you see this deserted square through the window? I don't believe that you'll hold out here. Already I see in my mind's eye a mass of bedouin with tresses of hair and desert eyes, and they band together here in the entrance of your neighborhoods, assembling into groups and shrieking and waving their curved swords. No, it's better that I pack my bags and get out of here while there's still time."

"So? You're a seer? But, it was already said long ago, O thou seer, go, flee thee away. Why do you sit here? Our war isn't your war, and you don't even have faith in us. Go flee."

I put up a laughing face while my heart was faltering greatly, and my eyes, against my will, were reflecting on that desolate square and the prophecy of that seer on my right.

When I entered the bar the next evening, I learned that my partner-in-conversation had kept his word and had left the country that morning.

Approximately three months passed. In the Land was the big change. The siege was ended and the Arab neighborhoods were in our hands. Remnants of the barricades were swept from the streets, and the city began licking her wounds. In that pleasant

hotel, flashing in its whiteness, the crowd was changed; all the whispering men and all those who perform deeds of the night had disappeared, and those who came to the place were a common mixed-multitude of secular citizens. And again the proprietress of the hotel was circulating among her guests and sprouting smiles of greeting and opposite her hanging earrings there glittered on her bosom a Star of David inlaid with precious stones.

To my surprise, I found my former partner-in-conversation sitting at the counter of the bar. I climbed onto the tall chair next to him, and again the two of us sat bent over and silently turning the glasses with our fingers. He peeked at me from the side and nodded his head, just as if we had parted only yesterday and not a thing had occurred in the meantime.

After a short while, he said: "I'm looking at all that's happened here, and things don't meet with my approval."

"What makes you say so?"

"The desire for conquests which has been kindled in you, this speed with which you have learned the art of the political lie, that whole cloak of righteousness in which you veil yourselves through deceit...You're just like the Japanese of East Asia!"

"If you mean to say: the Land of the Rising Sun --- I would answer... By the way, you're preparing to pack your bag while there's still time, aren't you?"

THE ENEMIES

I was walking around in the belt of fortifications around the city, and with me was a certain foreign newspaperman, a fair-haired and blue-eyed youth. Bent and cautious, we approached an outer post made from a hiding place in the rock and from pieces of rusty metal. In the shade of the awning, which consisted only of decaying sacks full of holes, we found a Jew with sidecurls and a beard lying behind a pile of stones. His jacket lay on the ground and upon it was a prayerbook, tattered and torn. From the folded sleeves of his shirt were extended two thin, pale arms, and his lean cheek was pressed very closely to the rifle.

When we approached, a shot was heard, a lone, honest shot, as if it had come from the bosom of the world.

"What's going on here?"

"An Arab sniper is hiding there," said this marksman while pointing his finger to the distant house-ruins, "and for three successive hours he's been shooting this way, may his name be wiped out. But it's nothing. Soon I'll find him."

I translated his words for my companion. He said to him: "Although he's been shooting here for three hours, I see that he hasn't hit you at all, praise the Creator."

"Don't be afraid," that one answered, turning toward us, one eye open and the other closed. "I shall not hit him either." And as he spoke he covered his smiling mouth with his palm like one attempting to take a smile in his fist.

When we left there, my companion remarked out of deep thoughts: "Ha, enemies! Don't you think that this whole war is duplicated in miniature here at this post?"

IN THE DARKNESS

In a break between bombardments, I was walking around in the street. When the guns raged again, I quickly went down into the nearby shelter, a spacious basement in the bottom of a mansion. After my eyes became accustomed to the dimness, I began differentiating among the faces of the people who had gathered there: mothers with babes in their arms, fathers with their heads in the palms of their hands, old people with bent backs near the wall. In the midst of all this, I paid attention to one face which was in a sense unusual in the basement, the face of a corpulent man with a quadruple chin, his forehead smooth and his eyes peaceful. I turned to him in Hebrew, but I received no reply; I attempted to talk with him in Yiddish, but I received no reply; I began with foreign languages, and it turned out that his language was German.

"Excuse me, sir. Who are you?"

"I am Swiss."

"Swiss? And how exactly did you wind up here at a time of siege and distress?"

"I'm a representative of a large international concern in the machine business, and I came here at the behest of the management."

"At a time like this?"

The man smiled at me. "Ah, the bombardment of the city is no hindrance. It isn't anything. One doesn't need an excessive injection of prophecy to see now that the State of Israel is going

to be born soon. And this is the main thing. And if so, there will be a great center for investment and business here."

"And what about the Jewish capital?"

"You Jews sustain yourselves in the world by legends. One of the most common legends is that of Jewish wealth. In essence there is no existing Jewish capitalism. There is a Jewish shopkeeper in the world, and this shopkeeper sometimes gets rich, of course. But even after he becomes rich he remains as he was, namely, his outlook in money matters is that of a shopkeeper. The great business that will be done here --- we shall do it."

The earth shook from the blows of shells and the heart felt terror, while that man sat opposite me with his speech flowing calmly and peacefully. The dream of the State had not as yet emerged from the diapers of prophecy, whereas with him it has already been entered in the register, weighed in the balance and described in the scale. International capital sat safe and secure in the darkness underground and waited for its chance.

When the bombardment had waned, I begged his pardon and invited him to walk with me. He smiled gently, got up, and walked after me without saying a word. I brought him to the "Hall of Secret Donations" and passed him on to the hand of the officer-in-charge, while I myself slipped away to the courtyard and sat down to smoke a cigarette butt which came my way unexpectedly. In a little while, the anonymous man reappeared outside with an honor guard after him. The men of the guard seated him in their car with great respect, and they took him to the largest hotel in the city.

A MESSIAH IN THE TOMBS

1.

In those days, a small light used to sparkle in the Tombs of the Sanhedrin. A fellah, when he would pass by chance into the vicinity of the place mounted on his ass, would clutch his legs to the empty saddlebags and goad his tired animal aloud, Allah achbar! Fear and terror in the graves of Judea! Youths from the adjoining neighborhood, stonecutters with bare arms and legs who went for a walk after a hard day of work, stopped their conversation, and their girls with their overflowing hair and cheerful mind suddenly broke away from them and shook themselves free from the spirit of warmth resting upon them. The light flickered in the entrance of the tombs and disappeared.

Inside---chambers of graves, crypts hewn in the rock one above the other. In the black cavity silence abides as though listening to itself, as though silencing itself. In one of the crypts is piled a bundle of rags for a bed, and in a remote corner the remains of candles lie about in disorder, junk and "geniza" parchments. Here is the resting place of the Messiah.

For some time he would walk around in the streets of Jerusalem, his jacket belted and his step measured, with a sadness in his eyes like that which the remembrance of the childhood of the world and the magnificance of creation always brings up in his heart. And some days he went and immersed himself in the

Tombs of Sanhedrin, entirely ready and prepared, as it were, for those who would come, as if he had counted and calculated a long, long time and yet some. Old women from the adjacent neighborhood would bring him leftovers in a red kerchief, setting them down at the entrance and going on their way with a pious sigh. He saw neither their coming nor their going, and it was for him as if ravens were bringing him bread and meat. He would lie in the crypt on the pile of rags and wait for the night which would be spread before him, as a king who waits for his servants to lay a rug for him that he might enter the parlor.

At midnight, the Messiah rises from his resting place and passes from grave to grave. He forces his withered body through the cavity of the entrances, raising the burning candle above his head and listening attentively. Shadows leap in a remote corner. In a very short while, the rushing of wings will be heard in the darkness, a dove flapping its wings. The gloom of a dirge quietly will rise.

Ah, my son, my son!

The Messiah falls, prostrating himself, stretching out motionless for a full hour, the depths of his heart having frozen and his ears tingling. It becomes overpowering and fills the graves until no place is left. The sound rolls in the bowels of the earth like suppressed thunder, and the soul overflows from the intensity of the pain. The Messiah flees outside and stands shaking and startled. A cool breeze comes in from the mountains

and spreads his robe. The Messiah places his hand on his belt and lifts his eyes to the heavens. A reddish moon promenades among the stars, and the tops of the peaks collect lights. Lo, the hinges squeak, the mountains turning aside like gates that have become covered with rust, and there appears at a distance the harbinger blowing a great shofar: Afflicted ones, the time of your redemption has arrived! And nations are in an uproar and are dismayed and the base kingdom perishes from the world. The redeemed gather from the ends of the earth to ascend to the mountain of God, and a voice goes forth majestically: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is revealed upon you. At that very moment, God summons the North Wind and the South Wind, saying to them: Come, give honor and sprinkle before my son all kinds of scents and goodly fragrances from the Garden of Eden! And the Messiah walks at the very front with humility, joy and purity, his Father dressing him in clothing the brilliance of which extends from one end of the world to the other, all the families of the earth bending before him, proclaiming and praising: Happy is the hour in which he was created! Happy is the generation to whom he has been revealed! His fragrance is sweetmeats, the opening of his lips is peace and blessing, and his heartbeat is trust and righteousness!

The Messiah clasps his fingers and smiles. He turns his head back and wails at the moon.

At the conclusion of the Sabbath, he would search in the pile of rags and bring out from there a broken yoke, placing his lean neck through it. He sinks onto his knees, going through the parchments and holy writings, and moaning:

"My Father, my Father, how long? You have burdened me with a heavy yoke; I bear all their sins. How long until you say to the people "they have blown the horn, and have made all ready!" For an end is come, the end is come, it awaketh against thee."

Come, O forces of defilement, come and bring girders of iron and place them on his neck! Bend his shoulders; he will not lose heart! Lower his head; he will raise up his spirit and escape.

The Messiah rises and finds for himself a hoard of sherds to scrape his flesh, scraping and scratching until blood flows, loosening his wounds and binding them together. He alone will absolve the sins of Israel, and when the days of their absolution will have been fulfilled the redemption will already be twittering and twinkling. Light and gladness will be in the Land and all the world will be blessed and will answer "amen and amen" for the redemption and for the change.

2.

One day, a new tenant came to settle in the Tombs of the Sanhedrin: Zalman Fetus. Thus his beggar neighbors called him for the reason that his height was particularly short.

What was this chap Fetus like? He was one of the rightful occupants of the alley leading to the Western Wall. Beggars stand here in a row in the shadow of the heavy walls extending a hand, old men and women, the deformed and those feigning sickness.

Arms were extended like parched twigs of dry trees, crooked arms, concave, enclawed and trembling. Year after year, the alley lies in darkness, and the column of beggars rustles upon the pavement of smooth stones. But, as time went on hierarchies of rank were set here, the basis of a rank being the degree of closeness to the Wall. As it is well known, when a Jew enters here to knock his tired head in sorrow against the great stones, he is penitent and opens his hand, and his heart is like a wide gate in an important place in the city. And any pauper who is first to greet and approach him would benefit from the charity of his liberal giving, since it is the opening moment for warmth and for the groaning of the spirit. To the extent that the philanthropist would move away from the Wall, so would his heart go with him and close its gates, the fingers again bending toward the palm of the hand. The poor who are last in line only collect crumbs of benevolence which have fallen from the table of the distinguished who are close to the Wall. Jealousy here is strong enough to start coals afire, but this is the law of the alleyway and none protest it. When a pauper dies or disappears --- his neighbor immediately takes his place and the entire row moves over one step. However, if a new beggar comes, he acquires a resting place for himself in the end of the line farthest from the Wall. Zalman Fetus is fifth in line. He watches over his place closely so that no one else will get ahead of him. His small eyes glare at one after the other of the four paupers who are in front of him. When will his time come to advance to first place? His short body

is wrapped in a coat turned green with age, his neck adorned with a red kerchief, and covering his face is his beard of yellow coils. He is an expert at vibrating his fingers when he begs and at bringing on a spasm in one of his cheeks whenever he likes. He knows to whistle and coo with his voice and to bathe his words in butter: "Merciful sons of merciful fathers! In the way of charity is life! Each one as his heart makes him willing! Jerusalem is only redeemed through charity. Mercy, m-er-cy! Charity outweighs all the commandments!" He bends and bows his knees, appearing as if crouching and stretching out upon the stones. Beneath his thick eyebrows he peeks into the eyes of the donor, still moist from the pouring forth of thought and from openheartedness.

It would occur that he winds around a rich tourist, entreating him with words and fragments of Biblical verses, until the tourist is persuaded and gives him alms over and above those first in the line. Then Zalman would smack his thick lips, his dripping eyes turned toward his neighbors, provoking them without speaking.

"Go to hell, fetus cut-out of a dead mother!" the beggars curse, hissing like snakes. "If only you would be blotted out and your name blotted out."

"Would that worms had dominion over you and ate you alive and I might inherit your place," Zalman answers from the sweetmeats of his mouth. And to dim their eyes with anger, he draws out the bag of coins which is hidden in his chest-pocket and counts the coins into it, one by one.

All the beggars hated Zalman, and they attributed to him

nonsense he never spoke. Mesuda, the old woman with one tooth in her mouth, a black tooth sticking out like one of the "primary causes of injury," and a nose crooked like a "vav conversive," leaned on her cane and argued in the ears of her neighbors: "By God, he has two houses in Kiryat-Moshe, I swear! He gets rent money and takes the shirt off their back, may his house be destroyed! And I'll tell you in addition, my friend, he has a wife in the old country and he left her lamenting. He went off and abandoned her, wretched unfortunate that she is! Money he doesn't send, and she's dying little by little. And what will he do with all this wealth; will he take it with him to the grave?"

Zalman Fetus is stingy -- he earns but doesn't spend. He sustains himself from the leftovers of the tables of the residents of the Old City, sufficient for relieving hunger, and from meals at religious ceremonies -- sufficient for satiation and fatness. He stuffs his old pipe with cigarettebutts which he collects in the street and with dry leaves which he pulls from the trees. His lodging-place is in the large flophouse. In that moldy dwelling there was allotted to him a worn-out mattress that for all its patches cannot cover the straw which protrudes in every direction and swarms with insects. When the rumor reached the ears of the residents of the flophouse that Zalman had fabulous wealth, they rose up one day and tore open his mattress, the length and width of it, searching and examining it to find the treasure. Their labor was in vain, and Zalman saw it and smiled into his beard.

But he had bad luck and a quarrel occurred between him and Big Reb Hirsch, the treasurer of the shelter for the poor. It was known by Zalman that a sum of money had been received from America for the treasury. He began instigating his neighbors to come, all of them as one man, and to demand new mattresses. And if words of persuasion won't help, all of them will go out in a great demonstration in front of the committee meeting-place, a demonstration of the deformed of Israel, and they will shout and wail until the entire city will be in a great panic. For why should the treasurers stuff themselves at the expense of the community, enlarging their double chin and filling their belly, while these paupers rot in the stench of mattresses, food for lice and fleas? The words of Zalman began to be accepted by those who heard them, except that Reb Dudi Meshishuta, the one who was caught picking the pockets of others, quickly brought his evil slander to Big Reb Hirsch. Reb Hirsch straightened up his noble bearing, and his face, flat like unbaked dough, reddened very much. He took the killer stick in his hand and stormily entered the flop-house.

"What's the matter?" He made a nasalized bass sound with his voice. "Rengvolution? Bastards who eat for nothing, I'll throw you into the dungeon-prison! And thou, O Bolshevngik," he turned to Zalman and waved his stick over him, "Lo, I am extending my hand over you and I'll break all your bones with it. Get out of here. You won't be remembered or borne in mind!"

He opened his scraping fingers, grabbed Fetus by the neck, and threw him out.

It did not occur to Zalman to rent himself a room. A man like him would not waste his beautiful coins on rent. He went from House of Study to House of Study and spend his night on a couch in a courtyard, in the courts of a House of God, as he himself would say. And after he had made the rounds of all the synagogues in the Old City, he went to the neighborhoods outside the wall, and finally he, too, happened upon the Tombs of the Sanhedrin.

3.

Zalman settled down in the entrance hall to the Tombs. His new dwelling delighted him completely. It was warm there, and he slept well in the great silence without the medley of snores and throat-clearings. The Messiah paid no attention to him, and went about his business as though he were completely alone in the world of the Holy One Blessed Be He.

In the evening, after prayer, the Fetus would return home from the city. He would sit on a large stone in the doorway and light his pipe which he had filled on the way. From Christian churches were slowly wafted the ringing of heavy bells, like the steps of monks walking in procession. In the nearby grove, trees trembled in the wind. At that moment, the Messiah emerged and stood in the entrance, standing upright and raising his palms toward the

crescent of the moon, and he was, one might say, sprinkling his body with sprays of pleasant light. Zalman set his small eyes on him and gorged his pipe. The smoke rings wound upwards into his beard, the moment tarrying with him in pleasantness. He looked at the behavior of the Messiah and said to himself: This fool is bathing himself in light as though the moon in the sky were merely a slice of soap in a tub of wash-water!

At times he needed the groceries which were brought in the red kerchief to nourish the Messiah, and, chewing throughout, he would turn his face to the Messiah and say:

"It would be preferable for you to taste of the refreshments which righteous women have brought here. Since I went this morning, food has not entered your mouth."

The Messiah would stare at him with tranquil eyes that seemed to return from afar. "The vineyard of Israel has sprouted thistle and thorn," he would say quietly, "and who will cut them down? Jerusalem is filled with stones which Gabriel has sprinkled upon her, but who will remove them?" He would immediately depart with light steps, stoop, and begin piling up the scatterings of stones in the yard with his lean hands. For a short while he would hastily make heaps, his body bent and with great urgency, but suddenly he would stop his work and begin howling: "How long, my Father, how long?"

Zalman grunted at him: "Ay, ay, such thoughts that can occur to a man! Such abracadabra rattlings in this box containing

a brain! God keep him! He'll clear Jerusalem of her stones and the whole of him will resemble a broken sherd!"

He descends to his domicile and lies down on his bedding. That miserable one, struck by God, certainly will go crazy in a little while, and even though he is not the best of company, at any rate it is good that he too spends time here; it is pleasant for a human being to have another creature trembling with him in the darkness of loneliness. All this is surely Divine punishment in part, but when the rainy season comes and cold prevails at night --- what will he do then? His dear neighbor certainly is not bidden to warm his flesh, for fire continually courses through his blood and consumes the moist together with the dry, but from where can he, Zalman, get a pile of fuel with which to warm himself? He might possibly have to wander about once again at the courtyards of the Houses of Study, or he might take bitter revenge against the one who in his rashness deprived him of his rancid corner in Big Reb Hirsch's flophouse.

4.

In the alleyway at the Wall the paupers teased Zalman because of his new dwelling and they vexed him because he had acquired a friend like himself. Zalman shielded himself against them by assuming self-importance and clothing himself in secrecy. "There are things on the inside," he would answer, wrinkling his forehead. "He is holy and he fasts and abstains inordinately.

It's possible that he's one of the Sect, do I know? At times, during the night, light bursts forth from his bed. You might say that it's Elijah the prophet who comes to him, do I know? He speaks only the Holy Tongue, and with my own eyes I once saw words which had come forth from his mouth become flames flying in the air. Extend your hand and you would catch them. Pangs and trembling seized me, and my soul failed me when he spoke, do I know?"

Those who heard shook their heads and smiled. Even so, the rumor circulated in the alleyways of the Old City, and by the time it had reached the ears of Mazal Mizrachi all the peels of ridicule and derision had been shed. Mazal was the second wife of Bechor-Nissim the goldsmith. She has been married two and a half years but still has no offspring. She is young and is seemingly heavily loaded with goodness. Her body is plump and is all one piece like those pieces of silver jewelry, pieces of art, which her husband makes. Even so, she dwells in barrenness and sees no sign of blessing. Her husband sits all day in his dim cavern in the alley of the smiths, pounding threads of silver with precision and striking with a small hammer, and when he returns home he is sullen and depressed. Silently he eats his meal, silently he sucks on the waterpipe which Mazal, with a sad smile, brings him, and silently he retires. His silence is more difficult for Mazal than a thousand harsh words and, because of this, her soul yearns and her mind is always confused. Every day she would think to herself and discuss with herself what else she could do to her

vineyard that she had not done in it. For she had already tried amulets and fertility potions and spell-casters. She had already shed many tears between the stones of the Western Wall, and she had slaughtered a black chicken at midnight of the New Moon, but it didn't help at all. Not only that, but in her distress she secretly went to the Ashkenazic doctor who had recently come to Jerusalem. She wasted a lot of money on him and with closed eyes she abandoned her body to his pawing fingers and to cold tubes, but what is the profit in all these if heaven holds back?

When the rumor about the holy man who had been revealed reached Mazal she at first hesitated, for her will was already like tired land. Nevertheless, she went to her friend Brachah and consulted her, and with the twilight of the day both of them wrapped themselves in shawls and left the house arm in arm and close together. They posed as people taking a stroll for enjoyment, until they approached the Tombs of the Sanhedrin. Brachah remained to wait in the rock-strewn yard, while Mazal walked to the side of Zalman Fetus. He was sitting, contentedly smoking his pipe, making something for himself from a crushed box of tin. Mazal stood at some distance from him and said with a heavy voice:

"I have come to the holy man. I am an unfortunate woman, for I have not had children. My lights have already grown dim and I am at a loss for children. So, I have come here. Perhaps he will have mercy."

"Give me a shilling, woman," answered Zalman instantly without engaging much in thought. "Give me a shilling for charity."

"That's too much, my friend, too much," Mazal entreated him. "I am already in great distress, and I am wholly plucked and quite skinned. God will give it to you, for I am an unfortunate woman without money."

Zalman didn't answer at all, but continued pressing the box. Mazal kept bargaining, but finally, with shaking fingers, she removed her kerchief. Zalman took the coin and scratched his forehead: If only that Messiah won't do something to ruin it! He approached the entrance of the cave and began flattering him and urging him with words: "Holy one of Israel, you know how abundant are the troubles in the world. A proper and modest woman has come to seek mercy. She is barren, having no offspring. And who will help her if not you?" And while he was still speaking he turned and nodded to Mazal and drew her by the hand to the entrance. The woman stood with knees knocking and looked with wide-open eyes in the dimness. She saw a hairy creature sitting in a crypt and quietly groaning, her thoughts became confused and she sprang back.

When the Messiah heard Zalman's voice he began swaying to and fro as if the words had entered his heart. He commenced and began reciting verses of praise: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail; For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife. Thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess

the nations. Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; But with everlasting kindness will I have compassion on thee, saith thy Redeemer." With each verse, Zalman would nod his head at him in approval and say: You have expounded beautifully! When the Messiah began croaking with his voice, his words became meaningless utterances. Zalman quickly pulled the woman from there, for she was stunned from so much fear, and he prodded her as she went: "One more piaster, woman, a piaster for making things all right. God willing, the blessing which the Holy One has imparted to you will be fulfilled. One more piaster, don't be stingy." When Mazal left there, running like one given to panic, Zalman began jingling the handful of coins which had unexpectedly fallen to his lot, and he said: "He Who created day created its sustenance." And into the hollow of the cave he said: "You're doing beautifully, for you've already begun bringing in a little income. May we yet merit, God willing, that it will be a livelihood flying high for us like a bird."

5.

One evening, passers-by on the main street of Tel Aviv were startled at the sight of two strange creatures standing in the large square, one a thick-bearded midget, fat and dirty, and the

second tall and thin, dressed in a white gown, with his dishevelled head raised proudly. The two stood for quite a while observing the heavy traffic of motor vehicles and pedestrians. Insolent-eyed and quick-tongued children gathered and stood near them, and peddlars and newspaper vendors soon joined them and they encircled the wondrous pair to see what would happen to them. Zalman waited patiently, but when he saw that also adults were tarrying by them he poked the Messiah in his side and said to him softly: "The people of this sinning city are coming to hear your words."

A smile of wonder hung on the lips of the Messiah and his eyes shone. He stretched his withered arms in their broad sleeves and proclaimed, a voice heard in Ramah: "Woe, Nineveh, that great city, thy wickedness has come before Me. Thy rich men are full of violence and thy inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. It shall be night unto you, that ye shall have no vision and there shall be no answer of God. Woe, land uncleansed, the great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly!" The audience kept growing, men and women crowding together and listening. And yet Zalman was waiting, and, with his small eyes, was testing those standing by him. The excitement put a flush on the pale cheeks of the Messiah. In his eyes, reddened by insomnia, he imagined seeing huge crowds flowing to him and thirstily drinking his words. His heart was touched and tears welled up in his eyes. Exaltation upon exaltation was augmented to his sick spirit, a canopy of the Kingdom of Heaven already spread over his head. And out of the fog of his sick

yearnings he shook his hands and his voice: "I have loved thee, saith the Lord, with an everlasting love I have loved thee! Upon the high hills is heard the suppliant weeping of the children of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears! There is hope for thy future and thy children shall return to their own border."

An elderly woman who had chanced to the place wrang her hands and shook her head: Woe to her who bore him! This lament served as a sign and a signal for Zalman. He immediately moved from his place and his cheek was shaken and produced spasms. He began circulating in the crowd and rattling his jar: "Alms, merciful ones, alms!"

The Messiah is one fiery furnace. He touches ground beneath him, and the Messianic era shines opposite him and redemption comes to the world, and he already recognizes his miracle. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God!" Meanwhile, Zalman moans like a voice from heaven behind him: "Charity, Jews; mercy on one stricken with sickness!"

When Zalman's jar began rattling to a climax, the crowd began dispersing. The sun set into the sea and a large pool of blood spread in the west. Advertising lights began their mocking play on the entrances of shops, and the automobile honking became strong. The square emptied and the Messiah, with his arm yet outstretched before him, fell silent. An empty space formed on the street, and an empty space formed in the vision of his mind. Where is the multitude of the redeemed? Where are those walking in song to the banner of salvation with palm branches in their hands? The Messiah stood still and reflected on his surroundings

until Zalman pulled him by the sleeve and turned with him toward a side alley.

After the evening prayer in a small House of Study, Zalman led the Messiah to one of the out-of-the-way shacks on the seashore. An old craftsman set aside a place for them in his dwelling for a night's lodging. The Fetus was satisfied and he ate dinner in contentment and he was exhaling through his nose. The Messiah didn't taste of the food but sat in a remote corner stupified and withered with dim eyes. When the hosts had gone to sleep across the partition of boards, the Fetus began reducing the flame of the lantern and he emptied the small coins from the jar. Many piasters, good hard cash. All that great hardship which he had endured until he had transported this unfortunate from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv was certainly worthwhile. Because his heart softened within him, he cleared and prepared a bed for the Messiah on the bench, and he brought the bread and the leftovers to the corner of the table in case he would reconsider and eat without an onlooker. He himself stretched out on the floor and a deep sleep fell upon him immediately. The moon peeked through the dirty window, and the expanses of the night were blue in their tranquility.

The Messiah lay with open eyes and a cloud drawn over his face. A fixed star stood in his mind, and he did not know where it was shining. The sea roared near the place, and from its rhythmic rumbling the Messiah imagined hearing a voice softly speaking to him. He turned his ear and listened-in for some time

in order to understand the words. All at once, he stirred and silently answered: Here I am! Zalman turned over on his resting place, jabbered for a moment with his lips, and returned to sleep. The Messiah emerged soundlessly from the shack and spread his arms: Draw me, we will run after thee. I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense!

Ships cast anchor in the heart of the sea, ships float on the surface of the water like arks of bulrushes from whose midst shines forth a glowing ember of life. They are those assembling from the distant islands; they have set sail from north and south, from east and west. All of them have wandered about like sheep and like stray young lambs they come to the bosom of the Messiah. His voice was truly not a voice calling in the wilderness, for from a distance they had seen his glorious might, from a distance they had smelled the fragrance of his nard, and on the surface of the great waters they hastened to him, distressed and sick, so that he would lead them to a world which is all good.

He slid down the hill of sand and descended to the beach. The sea covered its depths and was swooning as it were. The Messiah entered the water and trod on the heights of the sea to go to the festive lights of the distant shis.

"Here I am, here I am, My Son!"

A ship which had set sail at that moment from the port of Jaffa gave forth the sound of a wailing siren, but the world was silent, and Zalman Fetus lay as before, doubled-up on his bundle in the dark shack and snoring to his heart's content.

GLOSSARY

Moon in the Valley of Ayalon

- shtreimel - a broad-brimmed, black hat, trimmed with velvet or edged in fur, worn by religious Jewish men, formerly found predominantly in Galicia and Poland.
- chalitza - the ceremony of removing a brother-in-law's shoe by the childless widow of a brother. It is described in the Torah as follows: "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow must not marry a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall marry her...and her first son shall succeed to the name of the dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. If the man does not wish to marry his brother's wife... she must declare to the elders in the public assembly: My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel... Then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, and pull the sandal from his foot...protesting: So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house" (Deuteronomy 25:5-9). The levirate marriage disappeared with the abolition of polygamy, and chalitza has become the accepted custom among traditional Jews. The shoe used is made from the skin of a ritually clean animal and consists of two pieces which are sowed together with leather threads.
- phylactery - a small, sealed case, made of leather, holding pieces of parchment inscribed with scripture passages (see Deuteronomy 11:18). One is fastened with leather straps to the forehead and one to the left arm by Orthodox Jewish men during morning prayer. In Hebrew, phylacteries are known as tefillin.

- mezuzah - pl. mezuzot. A piece of parchment inscribed on one side with texts from Deuteronomy (6:4-9 and 11:13-21) and on the other side with the name of God (Shaddai), rolled and put into a case and attached to the doorpost of the house, as commanded in the biblical passages.
- trefa - any food which is not ritually fit (the opposite of kasher).
- the "vav" in "Vaizata" - the Hebrew letter vav found in the name Vaizata, Esther 9:9, is larger than the other letters in the word. Vaizata was the youngest son of the wicked Haman.

From the Legends of the Siege

IN THE DARKNESS

- Hall of Secret Donations - There were two Halls in the Holy Temple, one the Hall of Secret Donations and the other the Hall of Vessels. Those who were repentant secretly gave to the Hall of Secret Donations, and the poor sustained themselves secretly from it.

A Messiah in the Tombs

- Sanhedrin - the highest court and council of the Jewish nation. It had religious and civil functions, and was composed of seventy-one members. It was abolished with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The tombs of the members of the Sanhedrin are, according to tradition, in the three-story Cave of Sanhedrin. The "Tombs of the Sanhedrin" are known among Christians as the "Tombs of the Judges."

- Allah achbar - an Arabic oath meaning "mighty Allah."
- geniza - a Hebrew term meaning "hiding place," applied to a place in which discarded ancient works and fragments of manuscripts were deposited for the purpose of preservation. The geniza served as a storehouse for timeworn sacred writings, called shemot (divine names) because they contained references to God. The sanctity attached to these shemot forbade willful neglect.
- shofar - a ram's horn sounded at solemn religious occasions. According to tradition, a shofar will be sounded at the time of the appearance of the Messiah.
- primary causes of injury - according to the Rabbis, the chief categories of injuries or damages from which the subordinate ones are deduced (Mishnah Baba Kamma 1.1).
- vav conversive - a grammatical construction by which the Hebrew letter vav appears in such a form as to signify a reversal in the tense of the verb following the vav. The vav is hook-shaped.
- Ashkenazic - an adjective designating a descendent of Jews who settled in Central, Northern or Eastern Europe, as distinguished from Sephardic, designating the Spanish, North African and Oriental Jews.
- piaster - a small Turkish coin.

THEMES

Yitzchak Shenhar, like each of us, was a product of his times and experiences. Nurtured in the oppressive, anti-Jewish atmosphere of Eastern Europe, he made his way to Eretz Israel while still a young man. But, it was through the eyes of a seasoned resident of the Land that he wrote his stories, not only the stories of Jerusalem, but those about life in the Diaspora as well.

Yitzchak Shenhar was thus a transplant, his roots in Europe but his later blossoming in the Land. He must have personally experienced the difficulties of alienation common to the newcomer, for each of his stories presented here touches upon such matters.

The Land of Israel has been a melting pot for Jews of virtually every land and language group. The early immigrants were for the most part from Eastern and Central Europe, but they were soon joined by their brothers from North Africa and the Arab lands. Diverse cultures met, and each blended and changed, and together they have been forging a culture indigenous to the Land of Israel.

But, it was not only the clash of various Jewish cultures that produced an Israeli culture. The European immigrant to Israel stepped out of a centuries old cultural and religious tradition, a ghetto tradition, which the Jew had kept and nurtured under oppression. The immigrant to the Land of Israel was free psychologically as a Jew for the first time. He felt the need to develop a Jewish culture native to his new-old homeland. He also felt the need to reject that which symbolized the ghetto and the exile in general -- the Yiddish language, the clothing, the ancient religion.

There was thus established a tension between the past and the present, between the traditional Jewish way of life for which there still was, at times, some nostalgia, and a new Israeli way of life now, as previously, in the process of formation. This tension has not been an easy one to resolve. After twenty-two years of statehood, Israel is yet immersed in bitter debate over various aspects of life problems tinged with such tension. As long as there is an exile or a vestige of tradition, such problems will no doubt persist.

Such tensions are not limited to Israel. Throughout history, men both singly and in groups have wandered the earth, leaving one home for another. The movement to Israel is only one of innumerable contemporary movements of immigration. But, the story of Israel's resurrection is so wondrously extraordinary that the movement to the Land of Israel tends to be symbolic of immigration in general. Indeed, the eternal "wandering Jew" has been the immigrant par excellence for centuries.

These Jerusalem vignettes of Yitzchak Shenhar show the tensions between the old and the new in the life of the resident of the Land of Israel. But such tensions are universal and timeless. They are the tensions produced whenever a man stands between two cultures, or between yesterday and tomorrow. Shenhar's Jerusalem vignettes thus have meaning for every player in the drama of life, not only for the Israeli or the Jew. Each of us is ever standing at a crossroads. Each of us feels the pull of yesterday and the pull of tomorrow. Each of us feels a nostalgia for the past and the necessity for a future different from that past. Each of us, whether we live in the land of our birth or not, is an immigrant, a stranger to some aspects of the surrounding culture.

The tensions expressed in these stories are indeed universal tensions. The holy and the profane, the traditional and the radically modern, the religious and the secular -- such are the opposing pulls felt in every society. How much the more so then in a society in formation, in a society searching for a framework or guide?

In "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon," the tension between traditional religious Judaism and a modern Israeli secularism splits a family. Miriam, betrothed in the traditional Jewish manner to Chanina the Hungarian, runs away with his brother instead. The pair never returns to Jerusalem, shunning their families. Miriam's father, a scribe, feels that her action has made him unworthy to continue in his work. When her husband is killed in an accident, she demands that Chanina come to Tel Aviv, the secular metropolis, to perform the "chalitza" ceremony which will free her, according to Jewish tradition, to marry someone else. He goes to Tel Aviv out of a feeling of religious duty, as he does not want her to carry out her threat that, unless he comes to perform the ceremony, she will live with her new mate without a wedding ceremony. To her, tradition obviously means little if anything at all. To Chanina, it is so important that for its sake he will allow his sister-in-law to spit into his face, as the law prescribes, and to accuse him of being unwilling to marry her, a complete perversion of the truth.

In the story "Spider Webs," the tension is found between the sisters Esther and Hanna. Hanna lives in her own little world with her embroidery and her pure thoughts. Esther, on the other hand, works outside in the

real world, and she marries the vulgar stonecutter. Purity and tradition are juxtaposed with the profane world in the characters of Esther and Hanna.

The beggar, Zalman, and the Messiah in the story "A Messiah in the Tombs" are representative of two poles as well. The latter, even though the author states that he is mentally ill, is holy. Convinced of his Messiahship, he spouts forth biblical passages of healing and of warning, and he suffers that mankind might be saved. The totally despicable Zalman takes advantage of the Messiah's aberration for his own material gain, and he takes like advantage of any who would have any belief in the Messiah or hold any fondness for him. Zalman desecrates the traditional values for which the Messiah, in his own sick way, stands. He uses people by exploiting the naive beliefs to which they cling.

The reader of these short stories is struck by a general feeling of futility and hopelessness. This more than outweighs any positive emotional reaction. It is probably because the weak character, the hero of the story with whom the reader tends to identify, is not totally victorious. In an ironic way, the sufferer is victorious, but the victory attained does not help him make his way in the world. Chanina, completely victimized by Miriam, succeeds in doing what his tradition demands of him. Ephraim marries Esther and fathers a child, but he does not live to see that child. The Messiah, in his sick mind, saves the world, but in actuality he is subject to the whim of Zalman and dies in the very act of salvation.

Jerusalem is a thread common to these four stories. The Jerusalem presented is the United Jerusalem of pre-1948 days. Shenhar's descriptions of the Holy City are truly glorious and transmit to the reader the flavor of the place. "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon" contains a description of the "out-of-the-way alley made up of partitions and curtains and lofts and patched with planks of board and metal," a scene probably typical of the now-destroyed Jewish Quarter of the Old City. In "Spider Webs," Shenhar goes into more detail about the Jerusalem landscape. The house and its tree, the distant mountains "climbing upon each other's backs," the artillery fire "from beyond the road to Bethlehem," and the resultant hole torn in the wall of the house are vivid indeed. Yet, perhaps the most vivid is the Jerusalem of "A Messiah in the Tombs." The description of the cave containing the tombs is particularly detailed. The shadows, parchments, and flapping of wings tend to make the reader feel as though he were there. The grove of trees outside the cave, the rock-strewn yard, and the mountain breeze acquaint the reader with actual physical and natural characteristics of Jerusalem. The picture of the alley of beggars near the Western Wall is painted so meticulously that the reader can count himself among those poor creatures. We see the flophouse, the courtyards of the Houses of Study, and a cavern in the alley of the smiths. This is the old Jerusalem, a Jerusalem that died with the Jordanian occupation of 1948, never to be revived.

"From the Legends of the Siege" is also replete with sights of the Holy City. We see the barricades and other props of war, and the hotel with its bar, a meeting place for all those desiring news of the war. In the final "legend," we are provided with a description of a wartime shelter in the basement of a mansion.

"From the Legends of the Siege" thus provides us with a view of Jerusalem at war. There are allusions to other historical periods in Shenhar's stories as well. The first "legend" in the same story is compared to a remarkably similar situation reported in the Talmud. Ephraim in "Spider Webs" is killed by a shell fired in the same conflict which was described in the "Legends." But, perhaps the most history is found in "A Messiah in the Tombs." The very place of residence of the Messiah and of Zalman is the burial place of members of the pre-exilic Sanhedrin. The biblical quotations which flow from the Messiah's mouth bring to mind historical circumstances reported in scripture. His behavior, such as binding and loosening his wounds, is that traditionally said to belong to the as yet unrevealed Messiah. And, moreover, certain of his actions are definitely reminiscent of the legendary behavior of Jesus. The story, providing us with a picture of pre-1948 Jerusalem, therefore enlightens the reader with respect to several periods of Jewish history.

In these four vignettes of Jerusalem, Yitzchak Shenhar gives us an idea of what life was like in Jerusalem before and during 1948. In his stories of the war and siege, we see the hunger present which drove a woman out to the field to find weeds with which to feed her children. We see the soldiers and newspapermen, the foreign sceptic and the gentile investor. We enter the shelters, watch Jerusalem "licking her wounds," and see what happens to a family when a shell rips into the house and kills the father.

Shenhar's description of Holy City life in "A Messiah in the Tombs" is frighteningly realistic. The column of beggars and their system of

hierarchy of rank, the "rustles upon the pavement of smoothstones" caused by their feet, and the shoddy conditions in the flophouse are pictured in most vivid detail. Zalman's talent at begging is related as beautifully as is the jealousy among the beggars and, what might be termed, their general physical ugliness. We can actually hear the heavy bells of the churches "ringing...like the steps of monks walking in procession." We watch the old women bring the Messiah food, and poor, barren Mazal serving her husband the goldsmith who works so painstakingly in his cavern in the alley. She, like the tourist, like every Jew, wept at the Western Wall.

In "Spider Webs," we are made aware of the life of two sisters in Jerusalem. Esther is a servant in the home of some wealthy people, and Hanna stays at home embroidering. Her work is sold in the women's society store. Another view of life in Jerusalem is shown in "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon." We can picture Chanina, on his way to the House of Study, with his sidelocks swaying, his eyes looking to the ground as he passes the home of the scribe. Little does he know that his intended, the scribe's daughter, is looking down from the veranda not at him but at his brother. We can almost hear the gossip about them which was so vibrant that it caused the houses in the alley to shake, a scene not improbable in the crowded Old City.

This is the Jerusalem of Yitzchak Shenhar, a Jerusalem from the days of the Talmud to the days of the siege. It is a Jerusalem that he describes so well that the reader becomes an honorary resident.

Each of the "legends" in the story "From the Legends of the Siege" has its own basic theme or lesson. In "I Will Go Out and See," Martha Nagler, like Martha the daughter of Boethius of Gittin 56, is forced to gather weeds with which to feed herself and her children. We watch her hide them in her lapel in her desire to keep others from learning of what was to her a humiliating situation. In "The Seer," we see the foreigner who seems compelled to find something wrong with the Jewish State. At first, he predicts defeat at the hands of the Arabs, and he leaves "while there's still time." Upon his return, his prophecy disproved, he attacks the State and her defenders for "the desire for conquests...the art of the political lie...the ...whole cloak of righteousness." Israel, in the eyes of this stranger, is guilty of the crime of existence, a crime for which she is yet accused in 1970.

In "The Enemies," it is suggested that the entire war is symbolized be a confrontation between a Jew and an Arab who spend three hours shooting at each other without success. Israel and the Arabs constantly confront each other with their armed might, and they keep shooting, but neither will vanquish the other. Neither is the decisive victor. Apparently, by 1948, Shenhar saw that this was to be the case.

"In the Darkness" is a rather sad commentary on the economy of the infant state. A Swiss, in a Jewish shelter, tells that he has come to the Land of Israel as the representative of a non-Jewish company interested in investing in the state about to be born. He explains that gentiles will lead the Israeli economy because Jews have only a shopkeeper mentality. The fact that he is later accompanied by an honor guard demonstrates Shenhar's feeling that Israel is willing to accommodate such an arrangement.

Such were the principal themes of these four Shenhar stories, as the author of this thesis saw them. He does not pretend to have exhausted the list of themes. It is one of the beauties of Shenhar's writing ability that he created short masterpieces capable of speaking to every reader. And every one who does read these stories will undoubtedly find his own lessons and themes in their pages.

CHARACTERIZATION

Yitzchak Shenhar's adeptness at characterization distinguishes him as an author. The main characters of the stories, as well as the secondary ones, are outstanding in their vividness and clarity. It is not an exaggeration to say that each becomes a personal acquaintance of the reader.

It might be said that the Messiah in "A Messiah in the Tombs" is a prototype of the "Shenhar hero." A tragic hero to be sure, the Messiah has his counterpart in Chanina the Hungarian of "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon." Each of these is a Messiah in his own way; each succumbs, literally or figuratively, performing an act of salvation. Each is a "lamed-vavnik," one of the world's thirty-six righteous who carry all the troubles of mankind. The sick Messiah drowns while performing what was to him the redeeming act. Chanina willingly faces humiliation rather than see his wicked sister-in-law live in sin.

But this suffering hero, the Messiah figure, is more than an innocent laden with troubles. Both these characters, the Messiah and Chanina, are individuals out-of-step with the happenings of today's world. Each lives in his own world of purity and tradition, and each is found in opposition to the encroaching secular society. The ultimate humiliation of each testifies to the supremacy of secularism in modern life. Shenhar skillfully sketches for us these two characters. The Messiah "his jacket belted and his step measured, with a sadness in his eyes.... went and immersed himself in the Tombs of the Sanhedrin....He would lie in the crypt on the pile of rags and wait for the night which would be spread before him, as a king....At midnight, the Messiah rises from his resting place and passes from grave to grave. He forces his withered body through the cavity of the entrances, raising the burning candle above his head." Without reading any details about his physical characteristics, we know him. And we know Chanina from the description of one action: "The pallid youth....removed his 'shtreimel' from his head, and the black skullcap arched over his brow. He threw his head back toward the moon, and his pale face whitened even more. This was only because he had never seen a moon floating over the desolation of uninhabited plains." This concise description provides us with a feeling for the physical characteristics of Chanina, but more important it tells us of the person Chanina, the pale Chanina whose whole world has been tradition, and who had never seen this aspect of nature before.

Hanna, of "Spider Webs," is another major character with whom Shenhar acquaints us. "Hanna...tall and thin with bright eyes....sits at

home and earns her livelihood by embroidery work...she embroiders the form of the sun and its rays....She dreams about beauty and pleasure, about politeness and white hands....she....lies in her bed and sees in her dream a wondrous embroidery of suns and a group of high mountains." Hanna dreams of elegance and ideals, and the reader is led to sympathize with her through Shenhar's picture of her vision.

The villain, whom we might call the "anti-Messiah," also comes alive with just a few strokes of the writer's pen. Miriam, in "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon," who "took her eyes from Chanina and fixed them upon Menachem, his younger brother," is captured in one phrase by another character as "a kind of daughter of the devil's mother."

Zalman Fetus, the "anti-Messiah" of "A Messiah in the Tombs," is artfully described in two-sentences: "He is an expert at vibrating his fingers when he begs and at bringing on a spasm in one of his cheeks whenever he likes. He knows to whistle and coo with his voice and to bathe his words in butter." This is Zalman, the devious beggar par excellence.

We thus find that Shenhar introduces his readers to both the heroes and the villains not by the use of their own speech but by what others say about them or by narratives concerning an action on their part or even by the description of a dream. These short introductions give us more than a cursory view of the characters. They tell us of the very essence of the personality. Shenhar's talent at characterization is perhaps best illustrated by the case of Chanina. We empathize with him; we understand him; we know him. Yet, in this story filled with dialogue, he does not say a word. We know him completely through narrative description and the dialogue of others.

Supporting characters are no less artfully introduced. The driver in "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon" is a particularly vivid character. This man, "his sidelocks tucked away behind his ears, was manhandling the wheel and mumbling to himself...."Under his breath, (he) offered his opinion about that good-for-nothing wreck, took off his long jacket, and began poking around in the parts of the car." In a few phrases, we realize that he is a religious man, an earthy man, an inquisitive man. Mazal, a supporting character in "A Messiah in the Tombs," is used by the author to show the character of Zalman Fetus. Yet, she is outstanding in her own right. Mazal "has been married two-and-a-half years but still has no offspring. She is young and is seemingly heavily loaded with goodness.... She dwells in barrenness and sees no sign of blessing....She had already tried amulets and fertility potions....but what is the profit in all these if heaven holds back?...Her will was already like tired land." This poor, distressed creature has become a reality through Shenhar's selective description. Another supporting character who stands out in this story is Big Reb Hirsch. "The treasurer of the shelter for the poor....(he) straightened up his noble bearing, and his face, flat like unbaked dough, reddened.... He took the killer stick in his hand and stormily entered the flophouse."

Yitzchak Shenhar's ability to characterize with great economy is one of the wonders of his writing. Brief and to the point, Shenhar lays bare the very heart and soul of his characters.

SYMBOLISM

One of Yitzchak Shenhar's greatest strengths as an author lies in his outstandingly beautiful symbolism. The symbols of nature predominate in his stories. The moon is one of his favorite figures. The moon which "continued floating....established a resting place for itself,...and had frozen and stopped over the Valley of Ayalon." It "cast before it a molten rivulet....climbed upon the tops of the mountain ridges, rose, and set sail." "The Messiah places his hand on his belt and lifts his eyes to the heavens. A reddish moon promenades among the stars....He turns his head back and wails at the moon....The Messiah (was) raising his palms toward the crescent of the moon and...sprinkling his body with rays of pleasant light." Zalman "said to himself: This fool is bathing himself in light as though the moon in the sky were merely a slice of soap in a tub of wash-water!"

But the moon is only one of his symbols. Many other aspects of nature also enter his stories. Hanna "embroiders the form of the sun and its rays, the sun in its rising, the sun in its setting, and the sun in the center of the firmament." Shenhar mentions the cool Jerusalem breeze several times, and the mountains surrounding the Holy City come alive when seen climbing "upon each other's backs like a group of curious bald men insatiably peeking through that same single window." In "A Messiah in the Tombs," "the tops of the peaks collect lights. Lo, the hinges squeak, the mountains turning aside like gates that have become covered with rust."

Shenhar is also descriptive in his treatment of stars, shadows, and insects. He often attributes human-like actions to natural phenomena, as is evident in the above discussions concerning the use of the moon and

of mountains in the stories. The foremost case of anthropomorphism occurs in "Spider Webs." The story proper is followed by an extended allegory in which spiders virtually re-enact that which has taken place in the narration. The spiders become human in their actions and feelings, or, on second thought, perhaps the humans become spiderlike.

The moon, mountains, and spiders perform human activities. Shenhar also tells us of a "wall standing in its own darkness," and he relates how "in the black cavity silence abides as though listening to itself, as though silencing itself." He speaks of an "attentive stillness," and tells how "a small star settled on a peak and twinkled in haste from there out of great dismay at its loneliness." This use of anthropomorphism and Shenhar's artistry at portraying nature in general add immeasurably to the stories and rival only his magnificent characterization in making these stories the exceptional masterpieces which they are.

There is evident in the story "A Messiah in the Tombs" a special kind of symbolism. Besides attributing to the Messiah certain actions traditionally ascribed to that Messiah for whom the Jews have prayed, Shenhar has made definite allusions to the life of Jesus. "A fixed star emerged in his mind....The Messiah emerged...and spread his arms:...I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense!....The Messiah entered the water and trod on the heights of the sea." Apparently, there is no value judgement involved. This is simply a device which Shenhar uses to complete his portrayal of the Messiah, a portrayal which does not exclude the Christian Messiah.

LITERARY DEVICES

Yitzchak Shenhar uses certain literary devices to build his stories and to bring them to the desired conclusion. His use of dialogue is especially pertinent in this regard. Dialogue is employed most economically. It is vivid and to the point, and is usually found only after much narration. In this way it breaks up the narration and actually carries it forward. Sometimes it takes its place, as in "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon," where we learn of Chanina's past through an extended conversation between two onlookers. The language of the dialogue in the stories is simple when compared with the narrative portions, mirroring the difference between conversational Hebrew and the Hebrew of literature.

The plot of the Shenhar story is one of studied realism. Each is a "slice-of-life," without much of a beginning or end. An example is "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon," where the reader enters in what might be termed a neutral situation. By means of flashbacks, he is made aware of what has brought the tragic Chanina to make this journey from Jerusalem, and in the course of conversation he learns of what will probably become of him. The short short stories in "From the Legends of the Siege" are told in the first person singular, virtually in diary form. Each tells of a small incident, and there is a minimum of plot development. "Spider Webs" is a tale told twice, the story of the spiders in the image of the story of the humans. The greatest amount of plot development is found in "A Messiah in the Tombs." Yet the sick Messiah and his demise represent only an interval in the life of Zalman who appeared from nowhere and whose life continues after this encounter.

Shenhar's description of landscape is a great strength of his stories. The mountains, the field and rocky square, the Tombs and tree tied with a clothesline tell us of the physical appearance of Jerusalem. And his physical descriptions of individuals tell us of her inhabitants. "The stonecutters with bare arms and legs," the "pale, sparsely bearded youth with a black 'shtreimel' shading his eyes" -- these are Jerusalemites. And Shenhar's penetrating description of the beggars in the alley at the Western Wall provide us with a scene from pre-1948 Jerusalem which we probably shall not see again in Israel. With a few words, the author has succeeded in acquainting his readers with the city, her surroundings, and her people. Such a feat alone makes his stories worthwhile.

Shenhar's stories also seem to have a special gift for creating moods within the reader, moods of anger, sadness, joy, or solemnity. He accomplishes this through vivid description of natural beauty, celestial glory and physical ugliness, and through character development. The moon "setting sail," Zalman "twisting around" the tourist, the sick Messiah drowning in the water upon which he imagines he is walking, and Martha Nagler hiding her humiliation at picking weeds; each instills within the reader a specific feeling or mood, often quickly changed in these stories by another detail or development.

A rather special device used by the author is that of the "sudden jump." Zalman, a most important character, enters the story relatively late, and most abruptly. Mazal enters and departs like a "deus ex machina," used to develop the other characters and then discarded. Menachem, Miriam's husband, is suddenly killed in an accident, a fact which provides what little plot there is in "Moon in the Valley of Ayalon."

Each of the short episodes in "From the Legends of the Siege" is a story in itself, and the reader finds himself jumping from one to the other without any connection between them save the fact that each occurred during the siege of Jerusalem. The "sudden jump" is very important among those devices used by Shenhar in plot development and in creation of mood as well.

The special beauty inherent in these short stories is that, through skillful characterization, symbolism, and description, Yitzchak Shenhar has succeeded in reproducing on paper the unique spirit of Jerusalem. As Jerusalem binds these stories together, so is she once again bound together. The siege that lasted nineteen years is ended. No more do bullets whistle in her streets. The stones of the Western Wall once more await our tears. And we are again free to travel the road to Jerusalem which passes through the Valley of Ayalon.

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