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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by
Eric Weiss

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

The Poetry of Haim Gouri

Eric Weiss's study of Haim Gouri has yielded some excellent close readings of selected poems by this insufficiently studied poet of the generation of 1948. Mr. Weiss's thesis is a welcome addition to an appraisal of Gouri. Working with him -- and indirectly with Dr. Stanley Chyet, our consultant on this project -- has opened some new literary vistas for me in my own study of this period.

Mr. Weiss's analysis of such Biblically based themes as the 'Aqedah, Esau, Jericho, the mother of Sisera and the "bad king," Ahab, presents the reader with some fascinating revisionist readings of Jewish cultural history. This type of tendentious writing was part and parcel of the Hasklah's Kulturkampf. It is intriguing to observe Gouri's continuation of a process inaugurated by such past giants as Y.L. Gordon and Saul Tchernichovsky. Gouri reads the Biblical text with an extremely sensitive ear for pathos. His rehabilitation of Esau and Ahab on the basis of ever so subtle hints as empathy on the part of the author(s) of the Bible are stunning examples of contemporary "Haskalah" thinking. That Jericho was an "ir gedolah lelohim," for example, elicits the association with Jonah's Nineveh; it raises a subtle protest against ancient Israelite "imperialism" of Bible days (and perhaps of this our own day as well).

Eric Weiss's section of the Travel Poems yielded some surprisingly rich information, and he and I are in Dr. Chyet's debt for recommending their inclusion. From the distance of his Scandinavian fantasy, Gouri comments on his own country and cultural baggage with the prophetic eye of the expatriate. His wistful comments on the idyllic Scandinavian landscapes and city scenes are never entirely free of ideological overtones. In particular, Gouri's extremely clever turns-of-phrase in Hebrew have not yet been fully appreciated and analyzed as pregnant with humanistic, philosophical and subtly polemical meaning. Eric Weiss has expounded on all of the above with success, and he has also added his artistic insights as to the structure and sound of the poems. His rather full annotation of Gouri's Biblical references should be of value to the average reader as well as to the specialist.

At first, it was my hope that Eric would include a larger sample

THE POETRY OF HAIM GOURI

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INTRODUCTION

Haim Gouri's birth in 1923 (1) precedes the rebirth of the Jewish Commonwealth in 1948. His life witnesses the transition from the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael to the modern state of Medinat Yisrael. As a poet, he is among the leading writers who belong to the formative stage of Israeli literature. (2) His Hebrew is the vernacular of a "population ...that speaks as well as reads and writes Hebrew." (3) Historically and linguistically he is among those artists whose struggle for the "modernization of Hebrew" brings the language from the Hebrew Literature of the Diaspora to the Israeli Literature of Eretz and then Medinat Yisrael. (4)

It is important to summarize briefly the distinction between the genres Hebrew Literature and Israeli Literature. Chyet and Bargad, in their Israeli Poetry, delineate the distinction. They observe, essentially, that Hebrew Literature is literature that finds itself produced from within the Diaspora. It is a literature whose Hebrew is that of religious concerns. (5) This impulse is challenged with the development of the reality of the Haskalah. The paradigm of rational thought is applied to Jewish life in general. Hebrew Literature is forced to expand its abilities. It must reflect the voices of struggle Jews develop as they face "European secular modernity." (6) Here, the Hebrew of the Diaspora, and therefore, Hebrew Literature, begin to be transformed themselves, via the Zionist Movement and the settlement of Palestine and later Israel, into a Hebrew of the Commonwealth, Israeli Hebrew, which in turn gives rise to Israeli Literature. (7)

The patriarchs of this paradigmatic shift are Bialik and Tchernichovsky. Though they are "markers of modernity in the Hebrew poetic tradition," (8) they are preceded by other modernists who maintained

Hebrew as a viable language. Among those guardians are 18th Century figures like Moses Mendelssohn, who translated the Hebrew Bible into German and Naftali Herz Wessely, an acknowledged leader of the "Hebrew literary movement." The first Hebrew Journal, "hame'asef", (from the verb, "to glean"), was founded in Prussia, in 1783. (9)

Gouri's poetic inheritance comes from the "stylistic molds of Schlonsky, Alterman and Lea Goldberg." (10) From them he learned to write poetry that "exhibited regular rhythm and rhyme, an archaic diction for lofty effect, a tendency toward plaintive nature lyrics, and a recurring female image representing an intimate other: the beloved companion, the sympathetic listener, the innocent victim, and often, the land and its people." (11) To this inheritance Gouri adds "a collective voice and a heroic tone" (12) that articulate "the fears, the courage, and the bereavement born of the situation he faced during World War II and Israel's War of Independence." (13) Additionally, his work displays "an affinity with French Literature." (14)

As an Israeli, he is among the Sabras who became citizens of the Modern State. It is a citizenship whose nascent Zionist vision requires him to "give of himself for the general cause which encompasses his entire personal existence, to give all his time, all his strength, his body and spirit, at times even his life, while nothing remains that is his own, not even a moment of time for his vibrant soul." (15)

His life may be seen as stereotypical of a Sabra of the pre-State years. (16) He was educated at a prestigious agricultural school called Kaduri, joined the Palmach in 1942, remaining until 1947. (17) After he fought in the War of Independence, he continued to serve the State as a reservist in the Israeli Armed Forces. (18) Like many of his generation, the

Holocaust had a profound and lasting effect on him. As a participant "In the European missions of the Haganah... (he) helped organize the flow of Jewish survivors into DP camps and to Palestine." (19) Additionally, his education included the study of French Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Sorbonne in Paris, France. (20) Like others of his generation, "(T)he Bible has played an important part even in his 'secular' education, and has stamped its mark on the Hebrew he speaks and on the geography and history that surround him." (21)

His professional work as a journalist found him writing regular columns in the daily newspapers La-Merchav and Davar (22). He wrote a number of prose and journalistic works, among them reportage of the Eichmann trial (23) and Jerusalem Papers, work that discusses the battle at Ammunition Hill in 1967, one of the grisliest battles in Jerusalem's history, and other pieces that "were written before the war." (24)

His poem "1923-1958" (see below) may be seen as a merger of the worlds of the Israeli poet and the pre-State Sabra. The poem is regarded as the quintessential statement of the Sabra who saw military conflict at an early age. He is a Sabra who gives his entire being to Eretz Israel for the sake of the Zionist dream. The poem is considered to be, in part, autobiographical. (25) He is, poetically, the Sabra. Alterman memorializes in "The Silver Platter". (26) It is interesting to note that in "The Silver Platter," line four of the first stanza reads "And a nation stands — torn-hearted but breathing." "Inheritance," (see below) Gouri's well known poem of the Akedah, tells us that Jews are "born with a knife in their hearts." Gouri's poem creates a poetic lineage from one generation's image of itself to the next. Their similarity displays a common use of imagery in their

common struggle for survival. It is a struggle that changes little from one generation to the next.

The first line of Gourl's poem "1923-1958" encapsulates the recognition the Sabra has of the consequences he has suffered: "And I did not have time." The poem speaks of a man who recognizes the speed with which his life has passed. Gourl himself was born in 1923. By 1958 he is thirty-five years old. Gourl's voice in the poem tells of someone who, as an adult man, realizes that time passed so quickly. "Now I know that I did not have time...Half my life...I can now stay silent. My shadow grows long...With the passage of the sun." Though the poem opens with the understanding of lost time and the hopeful attitude that he can now stop moving, the poem continues to lament the loss of time rather than to look forward to the growth the future years may bring. His resignation that he was unable to "grow slowly like a tree of thoughts," develops in the poem as a sealed fate for the rest of his life. It reads like a dirge.

Certainly any poet's repertoire of themes and stylistic tools forms itself at different points in his career. One's range of artistic ability at any one point in time includes both the refinement of previously executed tools as well as newly born ideas, never before expressed. Gourl's ability reflects this reality. "1923-1958" has some elements that are found in his later poetry. This poem expresses "the bereavement born of the situations he faced during World War II and Israel's War of Independence," that becomes one of the themes that appears in his later poetry. The realization of the loss of time develops into works that recognize that "like the prophet, the poet is acutely aware that most unhappy situations are beyond his (or any individual's) control. Both speak their words in the wind; both become self-doubting, vulnerable seers whose more lucid comprehension leads less to

elation than to despair." (27) His recognition of lost time develops into "an almost visionary attitude of historical destiny." (28)

We see in his "Travel Poems" an observer whose vision, in part, is that history and terrain influence the characteristics that define a people. The poems in the section titled "Reevaluation of Biblical and Classical Motifs" reflect the poet as a participant, in part, trying to make sense of what he perceives as a people's destiny. The poems are considered as thematic units rather than in the chronological order in which they were published.

INHERITANCE

The ram came last.

And Abraham did not know that he
appeared in response to the boy's inquiry (Gen 22:7)
which was the first display of his potency at the time his day became night.

The old man lifted his head.
When he saw that he was not dreaming
And the angel stood there
The knife fell from his hand

The boy released from his bonds,
saw his father's back.

Isaac, as the story is told, was not offered up as a sacrifice.
He lived for many years,
He saw good until the light in his eyes darkened.

But that hour he bequeathed to his descendents
They are born
with a knife in their hearts.

ירשה

האיל בא אחרון.
ולא ידע אברהם כי הוא
משיב לשאלת הילד.
ראשית-אוטו בעת יומו ערב.

נשא ראשו הטב.
בראותו כי לא חלם חלום
והמלאך נצב -
ושרה המאכלת מידו.

הילד שהתר כמסוריו
ראה את נב אביו.

יצחק, כמספר, לא העלה קרבן.
הוא חי ימים רבים,
ראה בטוב, עד אור עתיו כהה.

אכל את השעה ההיא הוריש לצאצאיו.
הם גלדים
ומאכלת בלבם.

- רושנת רוחות
(Compass Rose)

1923-1958

1

And I did not have time.

Now I know.

That I did not have time

Half of my life

I can now stay silent.

My shadow grows long

With the passage of the sun.

I am the man

Who did not have time.

2

And I did not have time

To grow slowly like a tree

Of thoughts.

Like something more understood,

Less casual and made up

Of shouts,

Of snacks eaten in standing.

My life has passed midst

newspapers,

My breath has been cut off,
A short distance run -
For God's sake!

3

And I did not have time
To be covered by moss
Or rust
And to experience
Birth-burial-birth.
To belong to memories
Or to grow yellow like
Pages and pages
of the heavy book.
To be understood.
Definite.
Lost.
Gaining a heritage.
Between me and my father -
the sea.

(Translated by Aharon Amir, OROT: Journal of Hebrew Literature, October,
1973.)

1958 - 1923

א

ולא יהיה לי זמן.
 כעת ברור
 שלא יהיה לי זמן.

מחצית חיי.

מחר כעת

להחריש.

צלי הולך ומתארך
 עם מסע החקירה.

אני האיש

שלא יהיה לו זמן.

ב

ולא יהיה לי זמן
 לצמח לאשי אילן
 של מחשבות לאט.
 דומה למשחט שכן
 יותר.

פוחת מקור המצוד

מפסקות.

מפסקות צרי במידות.

הי עברו בין שטחים לעתים.

ולשקד ויהיה קטנות

רדף למרחקים קטנים -

למזן חשבו

ג

ולא יהיה לי זמן

להתקפות אחז

או חלדית

הלילה

לדח-קבוצה-לדח-

להשגה לזכרונות

או לתקופה

דעים-צפים במסר חקירה.

לדח שכן.

היא.

אזכר.

חזק בדיש.

בד ובר אבי - חיה.

- נשית כחולת

(Compass Rose)

TRAVEL POEMS

This group of poems reflect the poet's vision of foreign countries. Because they manifest the experience of being a foreigner in these countries, I have designated them, here, as Travel Poems. "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." most likely describes the poet finding himself in front of an airline office of Scandinavian Airlines Service, and it describes the countries of Scandinavia. "Geneva 1947" is set in Switzerland. "The Romantic North" is about an un-named place "like Edinburgh." The descriptions and images of the city are the same as those found in the poems on Scandinavian and Swiss themes. The region being discussed in "Scandinavian Postcard" is self-evident.

All of these locales are part of Northern Europe. Their themes are in consonance with the editors' observation in Israeli Poetry: "Serene landscapes give rise to poignant memories and emotions. Sadness, tears, quietude, night, dawn, flowers, lovers, and death are recurrent motifs that indicate Gouri's aesthetic romanticism." (p 58)

In addition, two of the poems in this group, "Scandinavian Postcard" and "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." embody aspects of what Stanley Chyet and Warren Bargad have called Gouri's development of "a more personal emblem." They have said of Gouri that "borrowing personalities and locales of the ancient world...he blends antique and contemporary scenes to highlight a lingering sense of the heroic, a condition inevitably undermined by time and reality." (p. 58) Chyet and Bargad make this observation of those poems which discuss biblical and ancient Greek figures and locales; Odysseus, Jericho, etc. While these Travel Poems do not discuss specific persons,

they do discuss land and the people who are its indigenous inhabitants. As he does with the poems that Chyet and Bargad observe form a "personal emblem," Gouri, in his Travel Poems, links a people's characteristics to its land of origin. "Scandinavian Postcard," for instance, tells the reader that amid their wide open spaces the Scandinavians developed a penchant for "melancholy and alcohol."

In addition, Gouri infuses an awareness into these poems, that the people and the locales of which he speaks are so different from the world to which he himself is accustomed that it is difficult even to acknowledge that such places do exist. Sometimes this stance takes on a high degree of ethnocentricity. For instance, the last line of "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." asks: "What were they doing here all by themselves, without us.?"

There are two important comments to make with regard to the manner in which Gouri constructs his Travel Poems. The poet tends to use the poem's structure, punctuation, and presentation of images to mimic in some manner, the theme of the poem itself. First, for example, the poem "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." is written in one stanza. The greatest amount of punctuation can be found in the first two lines and the last two lines. The lines that comprise the remaining body of the poem contain a minimum of punctuation. It is as if the punctuation of the poem forms a window structurally. In addition, the poem mentions alcohol. After this word, the punctuation is sparse. If one were to read the poem aloud, one would notice that when reading from the position of the word "alcohol" in the poem, it would take a long breath to complete the sentence following, thus rendering a verbal imitation of intoxication. Other such stylistic tools are used with the other poems as well.

Second, Gouri, as he does with the poems in the grouping which comprises the second section, sees land as a definitive influence on people. The poet assumes the land of one's birth contains characteristics that take on a genetic counterpart in the human constitution. For example, in "Scandinavian Postcard" he provides a kind of historical lineage of the Scandinavian whose ability as a long-distance runner, penchant for melancholy, and alcohol all derive from the terrain and ancestors from which he is descended.

The poems have the sense of contrasting one locale with another. Gouri uses northern Europe not only to portray a place; he uses the locale as a backdrop against which he can understand, more thoroughly, his own homeland, its people, and his own life experience. In the poem "Geneva 1947", he sees not only the beauty of the city but the smoke of distant Nazi crematoria, and observes that the ravages of World War II did not touch its people. There we read that the city is quiet with gardens, music and cafes. Yet, at "distant miles, and not very far away dark smoke rises, hungry." In "Scandinavian Postcard", he observes that from their wars no Jeremiah who was shown to be correct, retroactively, emerged. They did not produce such a lament ridden and culturally repressive figure from their clerical world. The comparison of these places to Israel provides a backdrop against which the author struggles for a degree of self definition. As we read in the last line of "In a Shop Window of S.A.S.": "What were these forests doing here without us, all by themselves?"

The comparisons suggest a certain jealousy as well. There is the sense that Gouri would perhaps prefer a life free of the pains of the Middle East, a life filled with the quiet serenity of a place we see in both "The Romantic North" ("I have seen rusted cannons protecting an ancient ballad")

and in "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." ("...a gun that has forgotten when last it sounded at Polish fortifications.") These comparisons are most poignant when one recognizes that any war memorial in Israel can be explained to an observer by a living survivor of the battle which the memorial commemorates. The war memorials in Israel are representative of fresh wounds in the national consciousness of the current population.

It is important to note that, although Gouri seems to write with a bit of envy that such peaceful places exist on the earth, the poems reflect someone who looks at them from afar. He is an observer, rarely a participant. He sees peaceful places in a display window, and collects data on a place "like Edinburgh." Yet, he never really lives in these places. He always maintains the distance of an observer. As an observer he expresses awe. It may be that a combination of awe and uncertainty give rise to Gouri's defensive ethnocentricity. His judgemental attitude may come from an awareness that his own country has been, and continues to be, war-torn and traumatized by military conflict. This is one of the meanings one may understand from the last line of "Geneva 1947," : "Geneva, forgive me my bitter heart."

Finally, the region of Scandinavia overlooks much of Eastern Europe and thus the sites of concentration camps and pogroms. Geographically, the Scandinavians can be seen as observers over the region where these atrocities took place. Their very geographical location positions them well as a metaphor for observation. One may even wonder when reading the poems "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." and "Scandinavian Postcard" if the poet is ruminating about Scandinavia while in another country altogether.

IN A SHOP WINDOW OF S.A.S.

Evening on its way to darkening, darts of lights in their illumination

And a citadeled city on the shore of a grey lake, like an old picture.

One walks, until one leaves the land of the bruised,

The land of sad memories and sad Jews

And evening gradually descends over a great expanse of standing, bloodless,
bloodless.

And the svelte Swedish young women stroll by like life's transient hour of
blues and yellows

on the path to the horizon made of lilac. Darkening, chilly.

And the scent of alcohol and smoked fish next to a gun that has forgotten
when

Last it sounded at Polish fortifications.

And svelte Swedish young women like a promise included in the price of the
mist

Next to a citadelled city on the shore of a lake icy in its silence. When

Were we ever here? And what do these forests do without us, all by
themselves, alone?

בחלון-ראוה של S.A.S.

ערב בדרך להחשך. נחשני אורח בהדלקם
ועיר מגדלית על שפת אגם אסור. כמו תמונה ישנה.
הולכים. עד אשר עוזבים את ארץ הפצועים.
את ארץ הזכרונות והיחידים העצובים
וערב מחשך וחלף על מים רבים ועומדים ללא דם
ואחידות דקות עברות לתן כמו חר שעה כחלים וצהבים
בדרך אל האפק העשירי לילך. מחשך. קריר.
ורח כהל ודגים מעשנים ליד תחת אשר שכח מתי
הרעיש לאחורונה את מבצרי השללנים
ואחידות דקות כמו הבסחה הכלולה במחיר הערפל
ליד עיר מגדלית על שפת אגם קרש דומיה. מתי
היט כאן ומה עושים היעדרות האלה בלעדית. לבדם?

תנועה - טעם

(Movement to Touch)

The poem "In a Shop Window of S.A.S." first appeared in the collection T'nuah L'maga, published in 1968. The poem consists of twelve lines in an unbroken stanza. The format of the poem itself is interesting. There is a distinct symmetry that evolves. The symmetry presents a format that acts as a kind of frame, or window, through which the poem emerges as a series of images or pictures. This becomes especially apparent when one reads the poem aloud. Lines four through seven and lines eight through eleven are without any punctuation. The second line and the eleventh line (the penultimate of the poem), both contain the phrase: "citadeled city on the shore of a lake" (lyr migdalit al s'fat agam). It is unclear whether the poem reflects his imagination or a description of a travel poster that the author sees in a shop window. Typically, a travel poster, like one's imagination, is most often an idealistic depiction of reality. This lack of clarity is common to the Travel Poems. It mimics Gouri's sense that the existence of a locale untouched and untraumatized by war is unreal. It is a way of comparing Israel to another land. When one compares one thing to another, one gains a greater understanding of both. The comparison can have many effects. One is that one can become flabbergasted that one's reality is so different from others. It can have a dizzying effect. To realize that life is so different means that one must question the health or goodness of one's own life situation/reality.

It is important to comment on some elements in the translation. The title of the poem in the Hebrew reads: "B'chalon Ra'avah Shel S.A.S.". The word pair "chalon ra'avah" is found in the Alcalay Hebrew-English Dictionary as shop window. The preposition "b'" leads the title of the poem to be translated with technical accuracy as "In a Shop Window of S.A.S.". Chyet and Bargad, in their Israeli Poetry, have translated this title as "Window-

Dreaming with S.A.S." (p. 69) The Even Shoshan Dictionary defines the phrase "chalon raavah" as a big window in a place of business that displays in it examples of its various products, to arouse interest in purchasing them. (p.394) The translation that they give lends an ambiguity to the poem that does not exist in the Hebrew. With their translation one could ask where is the speaker of the poem? Is he in a plane? Is he on the street at an airline office? The Hebrew clearly states that he is at a window of the airline business office; therefore the translation here is "In the Shop Window of S.A.S."

In line five, we read "v'erev machsheech v'holech". The root "hay, lamed, chaf" when followed by a verb takes on adverbial status. Thus the phrase: "v'erev machsheech v'holech" is translated as "and evening gradually descends". This differs from the translation that appears in Israeli Poetry, which reads: "And dusk thickens." (p.69)

Line five reads: "And evening gradually descends on a great expanse of water standing bloodless". The image provokes a question. What is the significance of describing waters as bloodless? During pogroms and the two World Wars it was a common practice for Jews to be shot at the side of rivers. Their bodies would be thrown into the the water where their blood would color it. (Scandinavia is close to Poland and the area of Eastern Europe and the site of the pogroms and Nazi occupation.) The image is one that provokes a comparison of the Jews' trauma of waters bloodied by the blood of our brethren to waters of a region untouched by such a history. The image is also a comparison of world views. Here is a people who do not recall the same associations as we do when we see water. This is another example of how Gouri, describing a different place uses it as a backdrop against which to understand how his world differs from others.

The phrase: "chayei shaah" found in line six is difficult to translate into an English word that conveys the depth of ideas that one can understand from the Hebrew. The phrase, translated with technical accuracy is "life of the hour". It embodies the idea that it is important to stop and enjoy the moment and its events. The notion suggests a sense of hedonism, the enjoyment of earthly pleasures and what we would call today instant gratification. Gouri sees the young Swedish women enjoying the moment. They walk with a conscious enjoyment, while on their way, of the blue and golden moments of the lilac horizon. It is interesting to note that Gouri perceives the women enjoying the moment. He is an observer, not a participant. The phrase "blue and yellow moments" is also difficult to translate. I think that there are two possibilities. The words blues and yellows are in the plural and are placed after the phrase "chayei shaah". The first possibility is that the words refer to the coloring of the horizon as the aforementioned comment states. The second possibility is to note that Chyet and Bargad translate these words as a parenthetical phrase, "blue-yellow evanescence". Swedes are stereotypically thought of as blue eyed blonds. It is important to note, as well, that blue and yellow are the national colors of Sweden, appearing in its national flag. Their translation suggests that while Gouri's line contains no punctuation, the words blues and yellows refer to the young Swedish women. Because the words appear after the plural "chayei shaah" there is a degree of grammatical ambiguity, that might be seen as poetic license. I have chosen here to translate the words as adjectives that define the phrase "chayei shaah", for two reasons. First, it gives an English rendering closer to the allusive Hebrew. Second, it offers an alternative to the translation that appears in Israeli Poetry, and it is

important that when a difficult Hebrew phrase exists alternative translations be available.

As Gouri does with the image of water, the phrase "chayei shaah" suggests a juxtaposition to the rabbinic notion of "chayei olam"; eternal life in the world to come as a reward for delayed gratification in this world. This rabbinic notion is part of the Zionist world view that one endures one's own momentary or prolonged traumas for a better world to come. The rabbinic notion conveys an altruistic world view and suggests that there is value when one tolerates one's own life's difficulties for the sake of the group's welfare. In this context the use of "chayei shaah" suggests a comparison of Israel with a place so different from her that it lives by a different world view. The Hebrew phrase then suggests a rich juxtaposition that is impossible to convey in an English translation except by translation notes.

This juxtaposition also evokes a recollection to two other Gouri poems. They are "Inheritance" and "We had no Time". In both of these poems Gouri conveys the sense that fate has pushed one's life so quickly by that one is unable to benefit from a life unharried by threats to one's survival.

It is interesting to note that Gouri anthropomorphizes the military images he portrays. In lines eight and nine, he writes that the guns have forgotten when last they sounded at the Polish fortifications. He gives the guns themselves memory. Again, it is the opposite of the reality of the guns of Israel. Moreover, the guns of Israel would not need memory. The people themselves have it. The image that the guns of Scandinavia possess memory also heightens the lack of such a memory in its people. It underscores the absence of recent military conflict.

Finally, the poem reads as if the poet sees a poster that offers a vacation package to Scandinavia. Yet Gouri's work has a sarcastic edge. The tenth line tells us that a promise is included in the price of the fog for which Scandinavia is famous. With the fog settling over a citadeled city with icy lakes, one gets to see slender Swedish women as well. The lure to a place of fog and coldness is to see attractive women. They are the added bonus for the price of fog. The irony somehow diminishes the vacation package. One may also consider this aspect to be simply humorous rather than specifically sarcastic.

The poem ends with two questions. "When were we ever here? And what do these forests do without us, all by themselves?" The questions show an ethnocentricity. Yet, there is a sense of perplexity. The author is not sure that such a place could exist without Jews, and is perplexed that it does. The question forces the author and reader to acknowledge that there are locales in the world that exist without the scars of recent trauma. It is a comparison that forces the realization that modern day Israel is formed in great part by her experiences of military conflict. Obviously, the answer to the questions is that the area in northern Europe existed in a peaceful manner without "us". It is a perplexing notion because it forces the author and reader to hold up a kind of mirror and look at the reality of Israel and the costs of military conflict to the national consciousness. It provokes the questions. If peaceful places exist without "us", can we exist without peace? Can Israel exist and form a national consciousness that allows military conflict to recede into the memory of guns rather than people? Obviously the answer is yes.

It is important to note that, certainly, one may consider that the poet is also asking whether or not any place so unbloodied and so peaceful can

really exist outside the idealized portrayal of a travel poster. While Scandinavia is without recent memory of military trauma her history is not devoid of wars. Nevertheless, the poem suggests to us how good life can be without the realities of military conflict. Yet, we both question such a possibility and understand how long and hard such a road can become.

GENEVA 1947

A quiet and pensive foreign land
A great quiet of twilight.
Gardens, and ancient, ancient time.
In the distance the peak of Mount Blanc.
On the (Lake) Leiman rowboats pass by in a rustle.
Quiet day drags on ever so slowly.
Flowers, an orchestra, a cafe,
And a great hush passes by.
A gendarme in uniform smiles sweetly "merci monsieur".
A Woman and on her head the (expected) flower.

Here my blood did not flow even once,
And the Rhone river did not ever carry dead bodies.
Here storm troopers did not slam my suckling infants to the pavement.
Here the city's houses did not collapse from indiscriminate (bomb's) thunder
And the gust of whirlwinds did not shake the tattered flags in jubilation.

You were just silent, innocent dove.
At distant miles, and not very far away
Dark smoke rose in columns, hungry.

Forgive me for my bitter heart.
You'll never know, graceful doe,
You did not see Geneve, Geneve.

Now I'm striding, striding.
Lights are extinguished on the lake,
Mountain ridges in the dark;
And you rise up before me at this moment
with hardened face,
My land, my degraded, diminished land.

ז'נבה 1947

נָכַר שָׁקֵט וּמַהֲרָה.
דְּמָמָה גְּדוּלָּה שֶׁל טֶרֶם-עֶרֶב.
גָּנִים, חֲמוֹץ יָשׁוּ, יָשׁוּ.
מִרְחוֹק מוֹנְכֵלֵן הָהָר.
עַל הַלְמֵן חוֹלְפוֹת
סִירוֹת הַשֵּׁיט בְּאִנְשָׁה.
יוֹם שָׁקֵט נָגַר אֶס-אֶס.
פְּרָחִים, חוֹמֶרֶת, בֵּית-קֶמֶה,
דוֹמִיָּה רֶכֶה עוֹבֶרֶת.
וְנֶגְרָם בְּמִדֵּי הַשָּׂדֶה
מְנַעִים חִיּוֹד 'מֶרְסִי, מִסִּיה'.
אִשָּׁה וּלְרֹאשָׁה הַפֶּרֶח.

פֹּה לֹא נָגַר דְּמִי אֶף פֶּעַם,
וְלֹא נִשָּׂא גּוֹיּוֹת הָרוֹן.
פֹּה לֹא הִכּוּ הַגִּיסוֹת
אֶת עוֹלְלֵי אֵל מִרְעָפוֹת.
פֹּה לֹא צָנְחוּ מִכִּים בְּרַעַם
בְּחֵי הַעִיר בַּעֲנָרוֹן.
וְלֹא הִרְעִיד קִרְעֵי דָגָלִים
בְּצִהָלָה מִשֵּׁב סוּפוֹת.

אֶת רֶם שֶׁחֲסֵת, יוֹנָה חֲסֵה.
מִרְחָק מִלִּיּוֹ, וְלֹא הִרְחָק
חֲסִיר עֶשֶׂן אֶמֶל, רֶעִב.

סִלְחֵי לִי עַל לְבִי הַמֶּר.
אֶת לֹא חֲדָעִי, אֵילֶח-חֹן.
אֶת לֹא רֹאִית זִנְבִי, זִנְבִי.

עֲתָה אֲנִי צוֹעֵד, צוֹעֵד.
אוֹרוֹת קְבִים עַל הָאֵגֶם,
רֶכְסֵי הָרִים בְּאִמְלָה:
וְאֵת עוֹלָה אֵלֵי כַּעַת
נִמְשַׁח-פָּנִים.
אֶרְצִי, אֶרְצִי הַמִּשְׁפָּלָה.

- פֶּרֶחַ אֶל

(Flowers & Fire)

Geneva and the Jews have a history of strained relations.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica, volume 7, columns 402-404, reports that the first Jews settled around the area of Geneva in 1182. Their relationship with the local population was never fully normalized. In 1490 Jews were expelled and did not live in Geneva or its surrounding area again for 300 years. Jews did not enjoy full rights until France annexed the area after the French Revolution. Relations again began to deteriorate in 1815 when Geneva became a canton within the Swiss confederation. In 1841 Jews were granted full rights followed by official recognition on many fronts throughout the following years.

It is a bit ironic then that Geneva became the site of important events to the Jews. The Encyclopaedia Judaica continues to record that The World Jewish Congress was founded there in 1936. The Zionist Congress held just prior to World War II was held there in August of 1939. The city served, during that war as a major information center for the fate of Europe's Jewish population. The League of Nations was first based there and was therefore the center for the agency that offered protection to the Jewish minority. As the first locale of the United Nations, it became the center for a number of world-wide Jewish organizations as well. Among them were the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Today, Israel maintains its European office to the United Nations in Geneva.

The poem "Geneva 1947" is comprised of five stanzas. The first describes the city of Geneva. The second uses military language, comparing the writer's experience of a city marked by war to Geneva, a city that seems to have escaped such a turbulent history. The third, fourth and fifth stanzas use the personal pronoun in the second person. It is unclear whether the "at"

is in reference to Geneva or to an unspecified female companion. Perhaps it is a dual reference to both the city and a female companion. The "at" of the third stanza seems to be Geneva. The "at" of the fourth and fifth stanzas seems to be Israel. This lack of clarity is another example of Gouri's use of language to imitate, in the poem's structure, the message he tries to convey. The city of Geneva has a unreal quality to it. It is foreign. It is so different from the world of the poet that he can only understand it when he considers it side by side to his own land. At the point in history in which the poem takes place the poet's land is the Palestine of the British occupation. When compared to the harsh reality of Gouri's land, Geneva is an unreal place. How can such a peaceful place exist on earth? The fourth and fifth stanzas continue with this usage of the non-specific female companion who remains outside the author's experience and is therefore inexperienced and naive. The poem ends with a sense of resignation to an undesirable reality. The author's land is demeaned. It is unclear by what the land is demeaned. One can speculate that this refers to the period of the Mandate and to the humiliation of occupation.

The poem begins with the word "nechar", "foreignness." The next two words which comprise the first line are: quiet and pensive. If the reader did not read the title of the poem one might not know that the adjectives apply to a city. In fact, such adjectives could be applied to a person as well. This lack of grammatical clarity evokes a vague and surrealistic quality in the first stanza of the poem. The images that are put forth paint the picture of a city in an all-encompassing quiet, at dusk with lovely gardens and a sense of ancient history. Perhaps this is a reference to a lost or untouchable Eden. This city is as unreal as Eden would be today.

The word "nechar" suggests a myriad of meanings that the word "foreign," although technically correct, cannot convey to the English reader. It is used, biblically, according to Even Shoshan in reference to foreign gods and people. It can also refer to a foreign land. For example, Psalm 137:4, reads: "On the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and loudly wept in our recall of Zion...How can we sing God's song in a foreign land.?" ; "Ech nashir et shir Adonai al adamat nechar?" The word "nechar" here appears with reference to the Children of Israel in a state of exile. For Gouri to begin the poem with this word is to alert the reader to the nuance of exile: not belonging, being in a place that functions according to a different world view; being banished for doing something wrong. It sets the poem off to a very disconcerting start that has the reader from the very beginning of the poem in a state of discomfort. This is heightened by the use of the words "quiet" and "pensive". It gives an eerie quality to the tone that is set.

Another meaning to the word "nechar" is its use in Zionist literature as a term for rootlessness. The term then also harks back to the pre-State era and the urgency of reestablishing the Commonwealth. It again emphasizes the continual sense, throughout history, of being without a country and therefore without an identity.

Yet another subtlety to the use of the word "nechar" may be that one knows in the modern world that Switzerland is linked in the modern political and secular mind with neutrality. This neutrality has kept Switzerland out of military conflict. In fact, it has oftentimes allowed her to gain economic and political status from and during military actions. The world of Gouri and the Middle East is at the opposite end of the spectrum. Its world-view is filled with military conflict and its consequences. It may therefore be foreign to the author that such a drastically different world

view has, in part, ensured the success of the country on the world stage. This recognition also recognizes that such neutrality oftentimes hurt the Jews, most notably and recently, in World War II. This is perhaps the meaning of Gouri's statement in the poem "forgive me my bitter heart."

The poem continues to define this foreign land as an ancient land, and is placed in a reference point: Mt. Blanc is in the distance: "Foreign quiet and meditative. A great quiet of twilight. Gardens and ancient time, ancient. In the distance (is) the peak of Mt. Blanc." Perhaps the notion of gardens and ancient time recalls Eden; a time of the dawning of the Garden of Eden and the beginning of human life. There is no comma between the word foreign and quiet in the first line. It could be that "quiet" is functioning here as an adjective and that the line ought to read: "(A) quiet foreignness..." Mount Blanc is the highest mountain peak in Europe. It is in France. From its peak one could observe, metaphorically, all of Europe. Perhaps then, it serves as nature's memorial, of Nazi occupied France, and by extension, Europe.

It is not until the fifth line that we read of any motion. It is the movement of rowboats on the lake. They make a rustling sound. This is also the first we read in the poem of a noise. The movement and the noise are of inanimate objects. We do not know by what power the rowboats move. Is it because people are in them or because they are simply docked and tossing about? The movement is surrounded by quiet again. Line six repeats the mood of the first four lines with an addition. It is quiet. The quiet "drags on ever so slowly." It is as if there is an impatience we feel from the writer. What seems to be a tranquil scene causes impatience in the writer. Again the scene is recalled; there are flowers, music and a cafe. Again the producer of the noise is not described or even labelled. Is it a band, or a

record, or singing? And once again the next line negates or eradicates the noise: "A great quiet passes over."

Thus far, we have the scene of quietness used three times: lines one and two, line seven, and line nine. In the first case the notion of quiet is brought in after we know that it is a strange quiet. The next two times the image is imposed upon a scene that has movement and noise. It is as if the writer is describing the scene but not fully aware of it. He acknowledges that there is the rustle of boats and music; yet he is not aware of it, or he negates it.

There are only two more lines remaining in the stanza. Both refer to people. This is the first time in the stanza and then also in the poem that human beings appear. The policeman "smiles sweetly 'thank you sir,'" in French. To what is he responding? To whom is the policeman saying "Thank you"? Gouri's use of the French in transliterated Hebrew adds to the mood of foreignness in the poem. Has the person being thanked paid the policeman a compliment? Has the person being thanked rectified some kind of error? It is unclear. Yet this does add to a kind of alertness in the reader. Is Gouri trying to instill in the reader a kind of alertness, and impatience that he is describing for himself or for the anonymous main character in the poem itself? In fact, it seems provocative that one foreign language can be so easily incorporated into another. The use of the French, again, heightens the awareness that we are not in a place that belongs to us. No matter how familiar we may be with the place, (recognizing the foreign language that is spoken), it is not our place. Gouri also uses French transliteration when he refers to Lake Geneva; Lac Leiman, and to the Rhone River; French for the Rhine River in Germany.

The next line is descriptive. It is much like the very first line. A woman has a flower in her hair. We see here that the image of nature used above finds its way into a human image. The flower is in the hair of a woman. It is curious that the "hey" is used with "perach". One might normally expect the line to read that there was a on her head. The line, however, reads: "(A) woman and upon her head the flower." It is as if Gouri identifies the emblem that renders the woman recognizable as a citizen of her city. The flower, the emblem, renders her proper within the context of her city. It is as if she is one who does belong there. The use of the definite article gives a sense of irony. This perfect scene would not lack the proverbial flower in the hair.

The second stanza finds us reading immediate comparisons of Geneva to another place. There is a change in the tone of voice. Whereas the first stanza has combined foreignness with pleasant images to give the reader a subtle sense of alertness, the second stanza portrays military actions against civilians. It is as if the alertness is confirmed as a justified paranoia or distrust of the pleasantness of the poem's opening.

This stanza consists of eleven lines; one less than the previous stanza of twelve lines. The language and images are military in nature. The first two words are a partial refrain throughout the stanza. They are "Po lo", and verbally imitate the firing of ammunition. This forms an anaphora; the successive repetition of a word or phrase in a poem. Of the eleven lines, lines one through eight have a similar consistency to them. They can be read in a rapid cadence. The lines build up in the number of syllables used and then decrease at the end. Line one has eight syllables until the comma; line two has nine syllables until the period; lines three and four have fifteen syllables until the period. These lines form one sentence without

punctuation. Lines five and six end with a comma at the end of line six, and contains seventeen syllables. Lines seven and eight, the continuation of the sentence that begins with line five, have a total of twelve syllables. The word pair "po lo" begins lines one, three and five, the sentences that employ the military language and imagery. This anaphora immediately alters the cadence that has begun the poem and intersperses a kind of subliminal awareness of the drums of war.

The first stanza has the introduction of the policeman in line ten. By contrast, the personal pronoun "at" is introduced in the first line of the third stanza. (The use of the pronoun, however, may be in reference to the city of Geneva as well as to a young person. In either case, however, the poet is making use of a singular and individual person in the image.) It continues throughout the remainder of the poem. Perhaps this is a form of internalized dialogue Gouri has between himself and his surroundings. The use of "at"; an anonymous female companion, is part of a fluid internal dialogue that Gouri has with both Geneva and Israel. While we find this technique used here with his poetry, it is reported in the Encyclopedia Judaica volume 7, column 833, in its discussion of his novel The Chocolate Deal.

The military references begin with a reference to the consequence of war: "My blood did not flow" and the "Rhone did not carry corpses." Officers did not slam suckling infants to the pavement, the city's homes did not collapse from the indiscriminate bomb's thunder, and gusts of whirlwind did not shake the tattered flags in jubilation. The image of the officers hurting children may seem to stand in contrast to the policeman who in the first stanza thanks the anonymous person.

Gouri then takes the reader to a distant place. It is a place foreign to Geneva. "Miles away, ...dark smoke rises, hungry." It seems to be a recalling of the Holocaust; the smoke is of the ovens and gas chambers. The last word: "raev", is the first time that the poem reflects any kind of human need or condition, although the reference can be to the hunger of the crematoria, as well. This then provokes Gouri's reaction to the reality of the Holocaust and perhaps his emotional response to Swiss neutrality. The fourth stanza begins with a command to the anonymous person: "forgive me my bitter heart." It is also the second time there is reference to a human feeling. It is important to note that these references occur one right after the other, albeit in separate stanzas.

Gouri continues with the use of "at". He employs it three times. This gives a symmetry to the use of "po lo" three times in the previous stanza. In addition, the format recalls the first stanza. Lines one through four of this stanza are single sentences. So too, lines one through four in the first stanza are single sentences. Lines five through nine of the third stanza comprise a single sentence.

The dusk of the first stanza becomes night by the last. The lights on the lake extinguish and the mountain ranges darken. The impatience we encounter in the first stanza, "The quiet day drags on ever so slowly," repeats here, "Now I pace, pace." At the end of the fourth stanza he recalls as well the notion of foreignness by using the French for the name of the city: Geneve. This spelling, however, is the accurate spelling of the Hebrew and underscores even more strongly the sense of discomfort, and perhaps confusion, of being not belonging and being rootless.

The "at" of the last stanza addresses "artzi"; my land, the Land of Israel. The word phrase "nukshat panim" is translated as hard-faced or

stubborn faced. I think that here it may mean determined or resolute to accomplish something. It may be an expressed contrast of Switzerland's graceful landscape to Israel's rugged and stark beauty. Again, Gouri is having an internal dialogue with a place, here Eretz Yisrael. It ends with a note of resignation. "...my diminished land." It is a logical conclusion from the original image of the poem. What else would or could happen if one is in a foreign place but the eventual discovery that one cannot live to one's full capacities and therefore must feel diminished? As the lights surrounding the city go out, the image of the Land of Israel rises with a resolute determination. Though diminished in a land of foreignness, she has the tone of determination. As the image that rises in him, within his internal dialogue, the image calls for an upsurge of determination within the author to bring his land out of the state of being diminished. Perhaps then this also resonates with the resolute determination of the Zionist dream to end the uprootedness of the Jewish people and reestablish the Commonwealth.

THE ROMANTIC NORTH

I've collected further particulars on a citadeled city
similar to Edinburgh.

About basalt citadels
And the scent of burning charcoal.

I've heard about a gentle light and twilights as long lasting
As my yearning for her (the city).

I've seen a plaster moon harden
In the reflected skies of frozen lakes.

I've seen rusted cannons
Protecting an ancient ballad
And a fog drawing near
Silently lopping off the towers,
Plucking from the gardens
Their extended growth.

And radiant young women who are waiting in a dark city.
Purple dresses and hair of gold.

רומנסיקה צפונית

אספתי פרסים נספים על עיר מגדליה
דומה לאדיתבורא.

על מבצרי בגלת
ורח פחם שרונה.

שמעתי על אור רח ומדומים ארכים
כעטעי אליה.

ראיתי ירח נבס קוסא
בשמי אנמים קרשם.

ראיתי תותחים חלודים
השומרים על בלדה עתיקה
וערסל קרב
עוד חרש את המגדלים.
ניסל מן הנשים
את המשכס

ועלמות צחות הממתחות בעיר כהת.
שכלות מנלות ושערות זהב.

- תנועה אל שם

(Movement to Touch)

"The Romantic North" is composed of six stanzas. With the exception of the fifth stanza, each consists of two lines. The fifth contains six lines. The two line stanzas, with the exception of the last, are written in one sentence. The last stanza's two lines are two sentences as well. The fifth stanza's sentence does not end until the first line of the sixth and final stanza.

The information that is gathered is done primarily through the senses. The poet smells the scent of charcoal burning, hears of light that is soft, and sees a moon and rusted guns. Interestingly, he smells and sees elements that are removed from their locus of activity. He smells burning charcoal. He does not know the purpose of its burning, nor does he state that he smells the charcoal. He only states that there is the scent. The scent is part of the particulars he's gathered.

He hears of gentle light. He does not say that he sees it. The emotional quality that he attaches to the light is that it is as long as his longings for it. This mixture of senses achieves a level of vagueness when we read that he sees a moon reflected in a lake. The moon he sees is described with an image of artificiality. The moon is reflected in a frozen lake. The reflection, in the poet's eyes, makes the moon plaster. There is thus a dual artificiality to this image. First, the poet does not see the moon itself, nor does he see it in its proper locale in the cosmos. He sees it in a frozen lake. His sight is not upward, to where the moon resides. It is down, to the frozen lakes. He sees one aspect of nature placed upon another -- the image is of the moon reflected in the frozen lakes.

It is important to note that the word "reflection" does not appear in the Hebrew. The lack of a word that would indicate, with complete clarity, that the moon is reflected in the frozen lakes adds to the vagueness of the

image that gives it a surrealistic quality. Secondly, the moon he sees is a plaster one. The word "plaster" adds artificiality to the image. The reader is forced to wonder what this image is trying to convey. The poet sees the moon out of its cosmic locale. He sees the moon in a frozen lake. One can only assume that the poet sees the reflection of the moon even though the poet does not state so clearly. He sees a plaster moon. One might ask if in fact he sees the moon at all. Is the plaster moon an image itself of something else? Is it a metaphor in and of itself? Perhaps Gouri sees a whiteness that he describes as a plaster moon. The precision of Gouri's language evokes this vagueness. One can only assume that, because he is gathering more particulars on a city, the image of the plaster moon is a reflection, and that he uses this image to project the artificiality of the city he observes. It is important however, to state that the image is not as clear as a reader might desire. Gouri's use of language has forced a surrealistic quality onto the poem. He evokes in the reader a sense of vagueness to match the artificiality that is described. (It is similar to the manner in which he structures his poem "In a Shop Window of S.A.S.", in which the structure of the poem reflects a window.)

He sees rusted cannons. The rust connotes their long inactivity. He does not see them as operational. The images of the information he gathers has a removed quality to it. He only hears "of soft light and twilight that lasts as long as my yearnings for it." He never sees the twilight he longs for. It is as if all the information he garners is second hand. Additionally, he tells us he has gathered more information on these elements, but does not tell the reader the specifics. What about the smell of charcoal, the soft light, the moon reflected in the lake, and the rusted guns? We are not informed. We just take on faith the writer's statement that information has

been gathered. What is romantic about this? Is this what the writer considers to be romantic? To what and/or to whom is he directing romance?

The last line tells us that he's "gathered more particulars on a citadeled city one like Edinburgh ... And radiant young women (the Hebrew here is the word that biblically refers to a sexually mature, unmarried young woman) waiting in a dark city. Purple dresses and hair of gold." It is not until the last line that we encounter people and anything that might usually be considered romantic. The women are sexually mature. Again the poet is gathering information but with a removed quality to it. But how does the poet know that women waiting in a dark city are sexually mature and unmarried? They wait in a dark city. They have purple dresses and hair of gold. How does he know they are waiting? And for what or whom are they waiting? Perhaps he perceives them to, or wishes they were, waiting for him.

In addition, it is interesting to note the use of a possible pun here. The poet tells us that he has gathered more particulars about a citadeled city. The word for "about" or "on" is "al". He uses the word twice more: in stanzas two and three. Tonally, the noun "alamot" recalls the preposition "al" used previously in the poem. It gives an aural/verbal recall to the beginning of the poem. It is as if he has also gathered further particulars on young women as well. This notion may find support in the observation that this last line is the only line in the poem that has no physical sense attached to it. We do not read that he has seen them, smelled their perfumed scent, or heard of them. We simply read the line and have the image.

Comments regarding the translation of the Hebrew into the English are necessary. The title of the poem in the Hebrew is "Ha-romantica Ha-tzfonit". It translates, with technical precision, into Northern Romance. This is the translation that is used by Chyet and Bargad in their Israeli Poetry, (p.68-69). The word "romantica" however, in the Hebrew, can mean both romance and romanticism. The Hebrew then gives a nuance of meaning that is imprecise. It can refer to both human romantic activity and a romanticized, idealistic, unreal portrayal of something. The imprecise meaning that one can gain from the Hebrew thus adds to the vagueness and the surrealist quality that Gouri develops throughout the poem. In the English, the phrase Northern Romance has a precise meaning. It has the quality of alluding to two people involved in romantic activity. The poem however, is filled with the poet's observations of the city. It is difficult to extract the ideas of romance exclusively from the poem and so the title Northern Romance can be misleading. One can see that the poet is offering a vision of a place that is idealized and thus may not be completely real or true. The vision suggests that the place he describes may not exist. One would anticipate ambivalence and ambiguity. The title in the Hebrew would alert the reader to this possibility and thus position him or her to be sensitive to the nuance. The translation Northern Romance does not allow the English reader to gain the same clue as the Hebrew reader. The phrase The Romantic North has in the English the same imprecision as does the Hebrew. It can refer to human romantic activity and it can refer to one person's romanticized observation of a particular locale. It contains the nuance of romanticism. For this reason and to maintain the poetic vagueness that one has in the Hebrew, I chose to translate the title "Ha-romantica Ha-tzfonit" as "The Romantic North".

The word "k'rushim" is translated by Chyet and Bargad as gelid. The word in the Hebrew is defined in the Alcala Hebrew-English Dictionary as frozen, jellied, coagulated. The Even Shoshan Hebrew Dictionary defines "karush" as "kafo". The Alcala Hebrew-English Dictionary defines "kafo" as frozen, chilled, iced, congealed, gelid. The word gelid is found not in the primary translation of the word "karush", but rather in the English translation of the Hebrew word that defines it in the Even Shoshan Hebrew Dictionary.

In the text of the poem, the phrase that appears in the fourth stanza is "heshmay agamim k'rushim". It translates with technical correctness as "In the sky of frozen lakes". Chyet and Bargad have chosen the word "gelid" rather than the word frozen. The word gelid, defined in the American Heritage Dictionary, is very cold, icy. The root of the word is cold or frost. There is a subtle difference between the words frozen and very cold or icy. Frozen defines water in a solid form. Very cold or icy defines a temperature level of water in its liquid form. It can be a temperature that is in a transition from liquid to solid. It is therefore a word that gives a range of temperature that is defined as very cold or icy within a liquid form.

Given that Gouri's use of language portrays images that evoke a degree of vagueness and surreal quality, the word gelid may be more precise to the poetic inference of the image while frozen is just as technically correct a translation. Clearly, the poet is attempting to portray an image of a lake that corresponds to ambiguity. The lake is in a state of being between completely solid and completely fluid.

The challenge to the translation of the word "karush" is that it is not a commonly used word nor is it usually used in this manner. When one hears the word "karush" one thinks of plaster of paris. Plaster of paris is a

substance that cools as it dries and hardens. Perhaps the poet is using the word to underscore his vision of this place as artificial and not quite real. His surrealistic images lend a fluidity to both the real and the artificial. The use of a word that conjures artificiality to describe aspects from the natural world; the moon and water, provokes, once again, provokes the observation that Gouri's poetic vision is, in part, a fluctuation between reality and artificiality. This fluctuation is, in part, molded by how he sees. He creates the ambiguity by describing how he sees parts of the natural word.

Gouri's use of the words "romantica" and "karush" show his fluidity between reality and fantasy or imagination. Because contrasts between Israel and Scandinavia emerge on many different levels throughout the Travel Poems, one may come to the understanding that part of Gouri's vision here is to state that life outside of Israel is not real life. Ambiguity exists everywhere except in the Land of Israel. In this way, his vision is markedly Zionist. But the stark reality of life in Israel can be stifling for Gouri.

SCANDINAVIAN POSTCARD

Majesty of the rivers flowing toward the sea of mist through the forests of darkness.

Rains of summer continue. Twilight and dawn were long and patient.

It is known that these indigineous inhabitants relieved Elohim from others.

A distant import.

And after considerable delay.

He was by then then more stylized, after the terrible periods of running around

In the desert, of the Holy Land.

Their wars, hard as any there were, did not leave them any Jeremiah who was vindicated ex post facto.

There were metal statues, Kings' Images in the hard stone.

Savage tribes, that came from the east, from desolate tundras and salty lagoons.

They inter-mingled with them, after seasons of the sword, like the distinct that is in the similar.

Many of their golden daughters gave birth to a hybrid species of unruly courageousness

And of stunning beauty! From these women were delivered the long distance runners, pirates too.

The harsh cold made them hardy and strong.

Along with the intoxication of the wide open spaces there grew in them an inclination for melancholy and alcohol.

Generally, they were well built, without an ache which is passed on from generation to generation ---

In this were they different from my ancestors, the Semites, who related to Adonai with exaggerated seriousness

And who pay for this always with heavy losses ---

גלויה סגודינבית

גאון הנקרות אל ים הערפל בין יצרות האסלה.
 גשמי הפין נמשכו. הדקדוקים היו סבלניים וארצים.
 ידוע שהקוסמים האלה קבלו את אלהים מאתרים. יבוא רחוק
 וכאחד נקר.
 הוא היה אז סגנון יותר, לאמר תקופות ההרצה הנקראות
 של הכדור, של הארץ הקדושה.
 סלקותיהם, קשות ככל שהיו, לא השאירו שום ירמיהו שדס בריצב.
 היו עוד אנדרטות מתכת, דיוקנות סלכים כאבן הקשה.
 שבי פרא, שכאן ממורת, מטוקדחת שוממות ומלגונות מלת,
 התערכו בהם, אתר עונות התרב, כמו השונה שבדומה.
 רכות מבטחיהם הזהבות, ילדו כלאים של אמן לב פריז
 ושל יפי קהממו מהן נולדו רצי המרחקים הארצים, גם שודדי הים.
 הכר היו עשה אותם לתרועים וחוקים.
 ליד שקרון המרחקים נבנה בהם הנטיה לעצב ולאלטוול.
 בדרך קלל, היו כתיים היטב, ללא כאב עובר מחד לחד - - -
 ככה היו שונים מאבותי, השמיים, המתחמים לאוזני כרצינות מנסת
 והשלימים של כך תמיד באבדות נבדות - - -

מחברות א.א.א.

(Elul Notebook)

"Scandinavian Postcard" consists of seventeen lines in one stanza. Unlike "In a Shop Window of S.A.S.," in which the poet is looking from above in observation, and unlike "The Romantic North," in which he "gathers more data", here he begins to draw some conclusions about the Scandinavian personality.

Most notably, the Scandinavian has a tendency for melancholy and alcohol. He is "well built without an ache that is passed on from generation to generation." This observation is noteworthy. It is most likely a reference to the theme of "Inheritance", another of Gouri's poems. The reference in Gouri's Akedah poem is specifically to the notion that all Jews are born with "a knife in the heart," with a hereditary burden of "seriousness" and pain.

He begins by setting the scene, like a postcard picture: "Majesty of the rivers flowing toward the sea of mist through the forests of darkness. The rains of Summer continued. Twilight and dawn were long and patient." (It is interesting to note that he ends the S.A.S. poem with the image of the forests and the question what did they do by themselves, without us?, and here he begins the poem with the same image. Perhaps he is about to answer his own poetic question. He frames the answer in the context of military aggression, not unlike the way he makes meaning out of events in his own land and warrior poems.) The next line has the tone of a line that one might find on a postcard from a traveller: "It is known that the inhabitants received Elohim from others, Brought from afar and in delayed recognition." Contrasts are immediately made with the traveller's own country. God was too stylized after the experience of "ha-midbar". "Their wars, while as hard as any ever fought, did not leave behind a Jeremiah." "There were more metal statues and Kings' Images that were carved in

stone." It can only be assumed that he is comparing such elements to his own country which, while it has fewer homages to military engagements, has the tradition of a prophet like Jeremiah.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica records that Jeremiah came from priestly lineage. His name means "May the Lord lift up." He lived through some of the most dramatic and tragic events of our tradition, the "dissolution of the Assyrian Empire to the fall of the Judahite Kingdom in 587 B.C.E." His life and prophecy is marked by personal struggle with God and admonitions against apostasy and turning away from God. A prophet in the tradition of the Northern Kingdom and Hosea, he saw an inextricable link between God and the people based solely upon God's conditions. The entire existence of the people depended upon God's love of them. "The only worthy response" from the people "to this free grace was a love involving submission and loyalty." His prophecy guides them through repentance as well. Jeremiah's lamentations and continual efforts to keep the people in relationship with God enables them to maintain themselves, in tact, as a community whose mere existence is challenged by devastating events.

Gouri's comment that the Scandinavians left no Jeremiah alludes to a lack of such "serious" commitment to the Jewish God. His comment is not so much Scandinavian centered as it is self-congratulatory. Again, it is ethnocentric. He uses the Scandinavians as a backdrop against which to understand the true reality of his own life, his own people, and his own land. There is a sarcastic or humorous tone to his comment. It is as if to say, well they may have fought as hard as anyone but that is not the only important thing, they didn't even get a Jeremiah out of it, but we did.

There is, however, another possibility. Gouri's comment that there was no Jeremiah "who was vindicated ex post facto," may be seen as a

sarcastic remark. Jeremiah can reflect the kind of evil person that is discussed in "Crown," and "Bad King." Gouri may feel that the Scandinavians are better off without a Jeremiah, and all he represents. In this case, the comment would not be chauvanistic.

The poet explains his view of Scandinavian history in just a few lines. They are powerful and convincing. Yet, it seems problematic that a people's history would be reduced to a few lines that discuss historic genealogy: "Tribes of untamed, that came from the east, from ruinous tundras and salty lagoons, Intermixing with them, after periods of the sword, like the different that is in the same. Many from among their golden daughters gave birth to hybrid species of unruly courageous of heart, and of stunning beauty! From them were born runners of long distance, and also thieves of the sea. The harsh cold made them strong and hearty. Next to the intoxication of the expanse was a tendency toward melancholy and alcohol." This kind of lineage is short. It incorporates the origins of a people with their geography and then gives some hint of their stereotypical behavior. It is interesting to note that the woman is the figure he uses as the primary character of the lineage while the primary character he uses to characterize the people is a male.

Some comments on the use of language and translation are necessary. I chose to leave the Hebrew words used for God rather than translate them into the English. Gouri uses the non-acceptance of the Jewish God as part of the contrast that he makes between the Semites and the Scandinavians. The God that Gouri writes of is the Jewish God. The word "God," would not convey this sense in the English. The Hebrew would convey the specificity of the Jewish God. I therefore decided to use the transliterations "Elohim" and "Adonai".

Gouri uses a number of words and phrases that come from the world of commerce and business. The phrase "yvu rachok", found in line three is a business term used when referring to a product that is imported from a foreign country. The phrase that is linked to it, found in line three is "U'vechur nizar" is also a business term that is used when there will be a considerable delay in the delivery of a product. Gouri's use of this business language linked to the notion of God (Elohim) evokes an ironic sense of the commercialized or overly casual idea God in the contemporary world.

The comment that God --the God concept-- was too stylized by the time it reached Scandinavia is curious. Another poem that alludes to the molding of God to people's needs is found in Tchernikovsky's poem "Before the Statue of Apollo". The view in that poem is that "the rotten seed of man" rebelled "against the life bestowed by God, the Almighty - the God of mysterious wildernesses, the God of men who conquered Canaan in a whirlwind - then bound Him with the straps of their phylacteries...". In the "Statue of Apollo," Jews are depicted as having restricted God. This "stylized" God is not a God the Scandinavian could relate to. Their pagan religion was thus able to maintain itself in its pristine, pre-Judaic form.

Gouri is making sense of a foreign place through the eyes of his own experience. It is an experience that is shaped by military engagement and its various consequences. This raises a question about the poet's vision. Does he "see" the world from the singular perspective of his own experience? Is he able to "see" others' experience as different from his own? Is he empathic? Or does he frame what he encounters solely within the boundaries of his own experience of military aggression? Or does he believe that no life is conceivable without military aggression and that it is

determinative of the very constitution of a people? All in all, he seems to be unconcerned about the Swedes for their own sake. Perhaps he uses them functionally. They are solely a backdrop against which to validate not only the realness of his own experience but to make the statement that his is the only true reality.

He ends the poem with another comparison to God. This gives a kind of symmetry to the poem that is found in the others as well. They got their God from others. "They were built sufficiently, without the aches that transfer/are handed down from generation to generation." This is different than "my fathers, the Semites, who put themselves into relationship to God with exaggerated seriousness and the debtors for this always pay with weighty casualties."

He links God to the notion that aches are passed down from generation to generation and that there is a price that is paid by each successive generation. Such is not the case with the Scandinavians who got their God from others. What their God is remains unclear. Gouri only traces the lineage to the land, the seasons, and military engagement.

As he has done with the other "Travel Poems," Gouri, in *Scandinavian Postcard*, has a backdrop against which to contrast and hence understand himself, the Jews, and the Israelis.

REEVALUATION OF BIBLICAL AND CLASSICAL MOTIFS

The poems of this section represent Haim Gouri's development of poetic statements that begin to form what Chyet and Bargad in their Israeli Poetry, term a "personal emblem" in the form of "the historical poem." (p.58) They observe that the characteristics of this distinctive style are the use of "personalities and locales of the ancient world" with which "Gouri blends antique and contemporary scenes to highlight a lingering sense of the heroic, a condition undermined by reality and time." (p.58)

Gouri often attempts to cause the reader to experience in him or herself the issues that he addresses in his works. His works represent, in part, an effort to articulate his own identity as a Jew, an Israeli, and as an inheritor of the Jewish tradition. Provoking the reader to engage the biblical text in order to better understand the poetic statements mimics in the reader Gouri's process of understanding himself as a Jew.

The poems of this section often respond to the biblical text, creating a textual conversation. Gouri speaks of the biblical events in the first and second persons. This personal presence on the biblical landscape and at the biblical scene alludes to his vision that the biblical text is not determinative but rather informative. His poetic recollection of biblical textual events, often adding to the biblical text or offering alternative recollections, forces the reader to question the accuracy of the Bible itself. In this manner Gouri's poems are modern midrashic statements. This provokes the reader to return to the biblical text, not only to better understand the poem but, to contemplate the different views presented by Gouri's vision and the biblical recollection. The reader's engagement of the

biblical text then provokes the reader to enter into the realm of relationship to God, the history of Jewish tradition, and all of its antecedents; prophecy, kingship, military activity, and human relationships. In this manner, the poetry acts as tool that speaks to the individual identity of the reader as a Jew

The poems incorporate elements that have marked Gouri's other works as well. The poem "His Mother," a reflection of The Song of Deborah, recalls the biblical scenario with a marked sympathy for Sisera's mother. "Crown," a poetic statement on King Saul, records the same sympathy for Agag's mother. In each poem, Gouri's sympathy is directed toward the mother of the dead warrior who is slain within the context of military aggression. In each poem, the mother is not present at the scene of her son's demise. This sympathy has been observed by Chyet and Bargad as a "recurring female image representing an intimate other...the innocent victim." (p.57) This may have some modern day resonance to the mothers of Israeli soldiers who often live to bury their own sons as the consequence of military aggression.

The poem, "Bad King," recounts King Ahab's sovereignty. Written in the collective voice in the form of a soldier under Ahab's command at his final battle, it offers a commentary on his kingship. The voice also recalls a poem, "Mayor," written by Yehuda Amichai, in the current century. Gouri's poetic voice is one of a participant that is not bound by body or time, it speaks as confidently of biblical times as it does of the present. One might say that it is the voice of an eternal participant. The use of a collective voice is one of the many distinctive marks of Gouri's poetry and is observed as such by Chyet and Bargad.

"Jericho" discusses the fall of the biblical city. "Fragrance of the Field" offers a vision of Esau. "Odysseus" comments on that character's

return to his home town. All of these poems, as do the others, incorporate Gouri's use of many of the aforementioned techniques that seek to reconcile land and people to their destiny. In so doing, he gives voice, as Chyet and Bargad have observed, to his people's "fears...courage...and bereavement."
(p.57)

JERICO
(Joshua 2 - 7)

Jericho unknowing.

Long days before they saw her (Jericho) in the light of the setting sun

She flickered, dreamlike, in their sleep.

Her wall was their wall.

In the writings and in the stone there is no omen for the prophets of doom,
who passed among palmtrees

And flowers of bougainvillea, and lilac and crimson, and told her something.

It sounds strange.

Calamities such as these do not begin without initial omens.

Rumors were spread about foreigners and satyrs with crimsoned
garments from Edom (Isaiah 63:1)

That arrived to her (Jericho), washing their legs in the chilly rivulets

(A) Great city of God is not impressed by such things. (Jonah 3:3)

Only young whores, who were spied upon, until the dawn rose in the Moav,
in the iron of their doorpost (Joshua 2:2)

Knew to tell, contradictorily and wearily, about a godawful hunger.

They left there a mark as strong as the desert.

Jericho, Jericho the beautiful.

Jericho unknowing. There wasn't a man who put together all the details

for a (proper) espionage report,

None predicted the T'ruah of the Shofars. (Joshua 6:1 +)

No standing urinals and no wall,

Only dust.

יריחו

יריחו שחינה ידעת.
מים מרבים לפני שראית באור הנקה השוקעת
הבהבה חלוקה בשנתם.
היתה חוקתה חוקתם.

בנתונים ובאבן אין ספק לרואי השחרות, ששכרו בין האלים
הפרטי במגדליות, לילד ושני, ואשר לא וברמה.
זה נשקע משנה.
אסונות באלה אינם מתחילים ללא סימנים ראשונים.

נמצו שמעו על ארץ ופעירים, נמצו בגדים מאוים,
שהגיעו אליה, רחמים רגליהם בשלגים הקרירים.

עיר גדולה לאלהים אינה מתרשמת סגור.

רק זוגות צעירות, שקי חסרות, זו ששאר שלה במאבק,
בכחל אשקם.
היו לספר, המכוח ולאח, על רצב נוצרי.
הם השאירו שם רשם חזק כמו מדבר.

יריחו, יריחו הקשה.
יריחו שחינה ידעת, שום איש שארף בה פרטים לקרשים
לחממת מדיניות.
שנחש בה תרופת שוקרות.
לא שחזר לא קיר,
רק קשר.

2 N 1/2 -
(Terrible)

The poem "Jericho" has a sensual quality to it. Much of this is heard when the poem is read aloud. When the first stanza is read aloud one notices the number of times one is open mouthed, with breath passing through one's lips. The images that are presented by the words are of a dreamy and hot place. Jericho is portrayed as naive: "aynenah yoda'at". The last line of the first stanza reads: "Her wall was their wall." Biblically, this refers to the descent of Joshua's spies from the home of the harlot Rachab.

The poem has a number of biblical references. Joshua 2 - 7 refers to the episode in which Joshua sends out two men to Jericho to ascertain the city for the purpose of conquering it. The text finds the spies in the home of a harlot, Rachab. When the King of Jericho, having heard of the presence of the spies, sends men to inspect the home of the harlot, Rachab, she denies they are with her. Instead she tells the men that they have already left and, if pursued immediately, could be caught. The King's soldiers on their way, Rachab goes back to the two spies, now hidden on the roof, and aids them in their escape. She lets them down from the roof of her home with crimson/scarlet twine against the side of her house wall. She relates to them as they go that she has heard of all the wonders that their God has brought them. Most notably she relates having heard of the parting of the Red Sea. She lets them know that she believes that their God is the God to be taken seriously and exacts a bargain with them that once they take Jericho she and her family will be saved from any calamity that might befall the city and its inhabitants at the hands of these future invaders. They agree under the condition that the harlot and her family remain inside the house for the duration. (Joshua 2: 19) They then go off into the night.

This episode is part of the reference found in the first and second stanzas of the poem. The word "shani" refers to the crimson twine that the spies used to descend from the roof. The phrase at the end of the first stanza; "chomatah chomatam" refers to the wall of the harlot from which the spies descended. The "curious message" and the "devar mah" found in the second stanza seem to refer to the bargain that is struck between the harlot and the spies. The harlot hangs the crimson thread from her window as a sign to the impending conquerors that her house and its inhabitants are to be saved. (It is interesting to note that the sign may be an echo of the blood that is splashed on the homes of Jews in Egypt to let the angel of death know that Jews were inside and therefore should be spared the angel's action.) The word "shmuot", "rumors" may refer to the recounting of Israelite conquests and the crossing of the Red Sea. (2:10-11)

In the biblical text, and in the poem, the spies stayed with the harlot. This is a curious episode when one considers that their mission was to spy out the land for the purpose of conquering it. One would expect that, if a place was surveyed for the purpose of military action, there would be a description of the terrain one intended to assault. No such description occurs. The men, according to the biblical text, never see Jericho in the daylight. Thus the reference in the first stanza of the poem that "Long before they saw her in the light..." The next time the spies see Jericho is in the daylight when she is conquered by Joshua and his army.

The biblical text, chapters three through seven, tells us that Joshua guides the nation across the Jordan by instructing the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant on their backs. When the "feet of the priests" (3:15) came to the water at the shore of the Jordan the water began to part. The priests stood in the center of the Jordan. It remained dry until the entire

nation of the Children of Israel had crossed. (3:16-17) After they crossed the Jordan, Joshua instructed them to erect two memorials of twelve stones each. The number twelve corresponds to the twelve tribes. The site of one memorial was at the place of their crossing and the second at the location of their encampment. Their purpose was to serve as reminders of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan. (4:4-9) The biblical account tells us that "the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, so that they revered him all his days as they had Moses" (4:14) after he brought the nation across the Jordan. The people then encamped "at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho." (4:19) This was the sight of the second memorial

It was at Gilgal that Joshua ordered the circumcision of the men of the nation. These men were born after the exodus from Egypt and therefore had not been circumcised. (5:5) They remained there until they healed. (5:8) The biblical text tells us that God said to Joshua "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt", so that place was called Gilgal, as it still is." (5:9)

At Gilgal the Israelites offered "the passover sacrifice on the fourteenth day of the month, toward evening." (5:10) The day following the people ate from "the produce of the country" (5:11) From that time manna was no longer provided to them.

There is what seems to be an incidental scene at the end of chapter five. It is that Joshua encountered a person who he thought might be a soldier of the enemy. Upon inquiry Joshua discovered that he was a "...captain of the Lord's host." (5:14) Joshua asked what the captain wanted of him. He commanded Joshua to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground.

Jericho had, in the meantime, sealed itself so that no one could "enter or leave" (6:1) God then told Joshua how to conquer the city. Joshua then instructed the Israelites. They marched around the city for "six days, with seven priests carrying seven ram's horns preceeding the Ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. And when a long blast is sounded on the horn - as soon as you hear that sound of the horn - all the people shall give a mighty shout. Thereupon the city wall will collapse, and the pople shall advance, every man straight ahead." (6:3-5)

The city was captured, but the harlot and all of her household were saved as the spies had promised. The entire city was razed with the exception of precious metals that were placed in the treasury of the House of the Lord.

Joshua then proclaimed an oath: "Cursed of the Lord be the man who shall undertake to fortify this city of Jericho: he shall lay its foundations at the cost of his first-born, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest." The First Book of Kings reports that with King Ahab's help, Hiel the Bethlite does fortify Jericho at the cost of his sons Abiram and Segub. (I Kings 17:34)

At the end of the poem we read once again that Jericho remained naive: "enenah yoda'at". Of what has Jericho remained ignorant? It seems that she has been naive about her impending doom, about the possibility of being conquered. It is curious that the poet personalizes the city in this manner. The city, the land, takes on an anthropomorphic quality. If she is naive, who was supposed to educate her, or protect her? Who betrayed her innocence? Perhaps this is part of the poet's message. However, Gouri has here a quality that is present in many of his other works. There is an

element of what Chyet and Bargad see as an innocent victim motif. Jericho is unaware, for whatever reason, of the forces that are about to transform her. Resistant counter-forces are unable to successfully intervene and prevent the God-guided calamity. Jericho is conquered. A toll is taken on the land. The blasts of the shofarot cause the collapse of the city walls and Jericho is no longer the same either architecturally or sociologically. Jericho remained naive: "enenah yoda'at". Her naivete rendered her inactive. Being naive implies that she remained unaware and therefore unprepared for the onslaught that was to come. But, the onslaught did come. She was victimized despite her naiveness or, perhaps, because of it.

We see in Gouri's poemss "His Mother" and "Crown," that he has sympathy for the mother of a soldier whose death comes from military aggression. It is interesting that here the poet uses this innocent victim motif with an entire city. He has personalized Jericho as a woman, another of Gouri's motifs, and given her the role of an innocent victim. The motif that is usually used for the mother who is not present at her son's demise is expanded here and used with a city that is personalized into a female figure.

The third stanza tells us that "rumors were spread about foreigners and satyrs with crimsoned garments from Edom that arrived to her (Jericho) washing their legs in the chilly rivulets." This echoes Isaiah 63:1, which states: "Mi'zeh bah mey'edom chamutz b'gadim m'bozrah..?" The English translation is "Who is this coming from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah..?" The poem's text reads: "...chamuzel b'gadim mey'edom." The English translation is "crimsoned garments from Edom." As Gouri does in his work, "Crown", he takes the biblical text and places it into a reverse of word order. (In "Crown" we see it with the reversal of the biblical phrase: "Sar ha-mavet mar") Perhaps the simple reversal of words of the biblical

text in the modern poetic work illustrates that Gouri sees the Bible as informative but not definitive. It is a device that underscores the re-writing of the biblical text that his poems display. Again, the reversal places the reader in a position to engage the biblical text as well as the poem. It is as if he places the reader into the position of judge. Is the biblical account correct or is Gouri's collective voice?

That stanza also echoes a similar image and line that are found at the end of "Odysseus." There we read that water bathed his leg. Here, we read that "rumors were spread about the people from Edom ...that arrived to her washing their legs in chilly rivulets." It is common for Gouri to use elements of the natural world in his poetry. He seems to favor water, although it is unclear why. Perhaps it is the embryonic stage of a motif that will be developed in his later works.

The phrase: "Nafotzu sh'muot", "rumors were spread", can also refer to the biblical text in which the harlot, Rachab, tells the spies that "we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds for you...", "...shamnu et asher hovish Adonai et mai yam suf..." (Joshua 2:10)

The fourth stanza is comprised of one line: "(A) great city of God is not impressed by such things." This is a reference to the city of Nineveh referred to in Jonah 3:3. It is curious that Gouri juxtaposes Jericho to Nineveh, and that he does so by using the biblical reference to Nineveh rather than its proper name. The biblical reference is to God's order to Jonah to "go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it what I tell you." (3:1) Jonah does so. We then read in the third verse a narrative: "...v'nineveh haytah ir g'dolah leylohim..." (3:3) "...And Nineveh was an enormously large city..." The translation of this text that appears in the most recent Bible translation of the Jewish Publication Society renders the

Hebrew of "Ir g'dolah leylohim" as "an enormously large city". The note to the translation comments that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. It offers no alternative translations. The words translate literally, when removed from their Biblical context, as "(a) great city of God." However, within the Biblical context they comprise an idiomatic phrase that translates as "an enormously large city." (The Koren Publishers of Jerusalem translation reads "...an exceedingly great city...".) The Chyet and Bargad translation is true to the biblical text. Their translation reads "...A mighty city..." Because the Jewish Publication Society translation notes that the phrase is of uncertain meaning in Hebrew, the translation here reads "(a) great city of God," not to challenge the other translations, but to offer a literal, and therefore alternative, translation of the Hebrew words that the English reader would not have from the idiomatic translation. The words "Ir g'dolah leylohim" as they appear in the biblical text are in exactly the same order in Gouri's poem. This may seem unimportant. Yet, precisely because Gouri most often uses biblical Hebrew words in a different order than they appear in the biblical text, is reason to note when he does not do so. It also underscores and stands in contrast to the break up of the phrase "mashtin b'kir" at the conclusion of the poem.

In the biblical story Jonah's warning to the people of Nineveh is that the city will be overthrown by God. This is the first time that a Jewish prophet is told to prophesy to a non-Jewish city. The biblical text relates that "The people of Nineveh believed God." (3:5) They proclaimed a fast, dressed in sackcloth, and cried "mightily to God". (3:8) "God saw what they did...and renounced the punishment He had planned." (3:10) The juxtaposition of the two cities is glaring because Nineveh, was also both an enemy city to the Hebrews and a non-Jewish one. Yet, God saves it from his previously

expressed intent to destroy it. This is in contrast to Jericho, also a non-Jewish and equally large city, which is destroyed by God's instructions to the invading army. Jericho's destruction is paradigmatic of complete and total military destruction, while Nineveh, also a non-Jewish city though younger than Jericho, and one that represents the introduction of Jewish morality and consciousness, is saved. Here, then, Gouri places opposites into contrast. This may be another example of how Gouri's collective voice questions the biblical text. Why would one non-Jewish city be saved from God's judgement and another not? We see in the biblical text that while Nineveh is given a chance to repent, Jericho is not. Perhaps Gouri's juxtaposition is a comment on the arbitrariness of "din"; judgement.

Jericho is also, according to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, regarded as the "city of Palms." (Judges 3:13) This may then be Gouri's reference to the palmtrees of line one of the second stanza.

The fifth stanza begins: "Only young whores who were spied upon until the dawn rose in the Moab in the iron of their doorposts knew to tell..." The Hebrew reads: "rak zonot tz'irot. sh'hayu chafurot. ad alah b'moab. b'varzel amatam." Chyet and Bargad translate these two lines as: "Only young whores, gouged by their virile iron till dawn rose in Moab..." (Their translation does not translate the phrase "sh'hayu chafurot"; "that were spied upon.") Their translation establishes a decidedly sexual overtone between the spies and the whores. The phrase "b'varzel amatam." is difficult to translate and understand. In modern Hebrew, "amah," can mean both penis and doorpost or doorframe. Chyet and Bargad have chosen the sexual possibility, yet one can use the term doorposts as well. In that case, the phrase could be rendered: "in the iron of their doorposts", referring to the doorframe of the harlot's house. The stanza, in either case, refers to the

order that the spies gave to Rachab that she remain in the house with her family until they returned to conquer Jericho. This was a condition, along with the hanging of the crimson twine.

In the final stanza, the last and penultimate lines read: "lo mashtin v'lo kir, rak afar." "No urinators and no wall, only dust." The words "mashtin" and "kir" are usually spoken together as a slang that refers to urinating against a wall. Biblically, the phrase "mashtin b'kir", is used as a term, translated in the Jewish Publication Society, for "a single male". (I Samuel 25:22, I Samuel 25:34, I Kings 16:11) It is sometimes rendered as "every male." (I Kings 14:10, I Kings 21:21, 2 Kings 9:8) It usually refers to a soldier. Gouri's separation of the words underscores the devastation that befell Jericho. This is one example of Gouri's manipulation of language to not only portray an image but to mimic syntactically the mood and image he attempts to project. Breaking the phrase into its component words, thus rendering a different meaning, may be understood to mimic the reduction of the walls of Jericho into pieces of stone.

It is important to note that the word used for "wall" at the beginning of the poem is "chomah", from the biblical text. The word used for "wall"; "kir", at the end of the poem, is not only from the biblical world, but from the world of contemporary street Hebrew as well. This is an example of what Chyet and Bargad have observed as Gouri's intermingling of both modern and biblical Hebrew into his poetic statements. "The ancient hero theme (is) often offset by Gouri's mocking jargon from the realms of business and journalism." (p.58) Another example of this can be found in line three of the fifth stanza. The word, "nora'i", is contemporary slang for "terrible", "godawful". And in line three of the final stanza the phrase, "litmunat modi'in", contemporary Hebrew for an espionage report.

It is fitting that the poem that follows "Jericho" in this work is a poem that discusses the King who helps to rebuild her, despite the curse placed upon the potential builder to discourage her reconstruction.

Bad King
(1 Kings 16-22)

We saw you in the chariot. Propped up in accordance with
your request, facing Aram. So that the hearts of your men would not
fall in discouragement in that battle on the heights of Gilead. (22:35)
We were very tired. We thought you were continuing with us.
From afar you were life-like.
Perhaps you were not so righteous and you also often did that which was
bad in the eyes of Adonai. (17:30, 33 and 22:25)
But all in all you were a good King. It is a
pity that those more upstanding than you wrote about you.
And this is holy. And this is what remains for eternity. It's a lost cause
(for you to be vindicated).

If it is difficult to be the mayor of Jerusalem, it is harder still to be
King of Shomron,
Especially in that time, among those who were excessively good
and those who were excessively bad.

When you took from Sidon, for the sake of the good of the kingdom,

a beautiful and cruel woman, daughter of Ethba'al, (16:31)

Things gradually became entangled. Slowly, slowly, the other gods were
there as well.

And this was written (as a blot) on your record.

But, the regrets were as heavy as your transgressions. And at night you
walked alone slowly.

The ends of these silences became a sigh.

It was hard for you with Elijah. (21:19-24) He was your shadow.

But he was not with you in the battle of Karkar, which is not recorded --
not even hinted at in Kings (The Book of Kings),
Perhaps because you were victorious there. It is recorded
only in Assyrian chronicles.

(This is) A sign that you were not so bad. Otherwise, how?

But why did you return to rebuild Jericho with the hand (help) of the House
of Hiel? (16:34) Why did it rise opposite Moab?

Why didn't you remember that ancient curse? (16:34, and Joshua 6:26)

Why do these return, always return to us from the stones and from the faces
of Se'gov and Aviram. (16:34)

And the wars continued and the years were very hard. For the heroes as
well.

And when there was doubt you battled in the plains and Ben-Haddad knew
that Yahweh

Was not only the God of the hills. (Ch. 20)

You merited the alleys in the heart of the capital Damascus. (20:34)

However you made no explanation. No.

So Naboth's blood spurted from you as in the promise of the Gileadite.
(ch.21)

There you feigned life in the light of the descending night. (22:35)

Ahab. My dead king.



מלך רע

ראינו אותך במרכבה. מעמד, לפי בקשתך, נכת ארם. לכל יפל
לב אנשיך

בקרב ההוא על פני רמות גלעד.
היינו עיפים מאד. חשבנו שאתה ממשיך אתנו. מרחוק היית כמו חי.
אולי לא היית צדיק גדול וגם עשית רבות את הרע בעיני אנכי.
אך בסוף הכל היית מלך טוב. חבל שהגונים ממך כתבו עליך
וזה קדוש. וזה נשאר לעולמים. אבד.

אם קשה להיות ראש עיר בירושלים, קשה יותר להיות מלך כשומרון.
בעקר בזמן ההוא, בין הסוכים מדי והרעים מדי.

כאשר לקחת מצידון, למען טובת הממלכה, אשה יפה ואכזרית,
כתו של אתכעל,
הלכו הענינים והסתבכו. לאט לאט היו שם גם האלהים האחרים.
וזה נרשם על חשבונך.

אך התרסות היו כבודות כחטאיד. וכלילה לבדך הלכת אט.
סופי הדומיות ההן היו לאנחה.
קשה היה לך עם אליהו. הוא היה צלך.

אך הוא לא היה אתך בקרב קרקר, שאינו כתוב ולו כרמז במלכים.
אולי משום ששם נצחת. הוא רק בתעודות אשוריות נזכר.
סימן שלא היית רע כל כך. אחרת, איך

אך מדוע שבת וקנית את יריחו ביד בית האלוי מדוע קמה מול מואב
מדוע לא נכחת את הקללה העתיקה ההיא

מדוע זה שבית, תמיד שבות אלינו, מן האכנים ומן החושות
פני שגוב ואבירם.

והמלחמות נמשכו והשנים היו קשות מאד. גם לגבורים.
וכאשר היה ספק נלחמת במישור וכן הדד ידע כי יהיה
אינו רק אלהי הרים.
וכית לחוצות בלב דמשק הבירה. אך לא כפרת. לא.

אז דם נבות שתת ממך כמו בהבסתת הגלעדי.
שם העמדת פני חי לאור הערב היורד.

אחאב, מלכי המל.

- מחברות אלול
(Machbrot Elul)

This poem recalls the reign of King Ahab. The biblical account is found in the First Book of Kings chapters sixteen through twenty-two. The chapter begins with the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, declaring that Baasha, King of Israel, will be destroyed because he has led the people in the ways of Jeroboam causing them to sin in the sight of the Lord. Line four states: "Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and anyone belonging to him who dies in the open country shall be devoured by birds of the sky."

As the biblical account continues we read that a series of kings have "displeased the Lord"; 16:1-4, 16:7, 16:25, and 16:30. Each king was worse than his predecessor. Each king's deeds are recounted. At the end of the biblical account of each king's sins, the biblical text ends with a kind of formula: all his actions and exploits "are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel." (for example, 16:5, 20, and 27)

King Ahab follows his father, King Omri; 16:30. He takes for his wife, Jezebel; 16:31. She is the daughter of Ethbaal, the King of Phoenicia whose people worship Baal. Chapter 16, verses 29-34 tell us that Ahab was discontent to follow the ways of Jeroboam and so took Jezebel for his wife. He erected an altar to Baal in Samaria and made it a sacred place, displeasing God more than any other king before him. It is during his reign that Hiel the Bethelite rebuild Jericho despite the warning of the ancient curse, spoken by Joshua the son of Nun, to refrain from such. As a result, the ancient curse was put into effect: his first born son, Abiram, died when the foundation is laid and the youngest, Segub, died when the gates were set in place.

Elijah tells Ahab to gather the prophets of Baal and Asherah at Mount Carmel. There Elijah makes a deal with the prophets. He says essentially:

I am one prophet of the Lord and you are eight hundred fifty. Let each of us take one bull, prepare it for sacrifice. Neither of us will apply our own fire but rather you bid your gods and I will bid my Lord to apply the fire. The one who does so is the real God." The other prophets agree.

The prophets of Baal and Ashera perform their incantations to no avail. Elijah mocks them to try harder and they do, again to no avail. Elijah, however, invokes the name of God and eventually fire is struck on the altar where he has placed the bull. All the people cried out, "The Lord alone is God, the Lord alone is God." Elijah then takes all the prophets of Baal, with the help of the assembled people, and slaughters them at the Wadi Kishon. Elijah through his prophetic abilities then brings on the much needed rain.

When Ahab reports to Jezebel all that has transpired she is angered and sends a messenger to tell Elijah that she will kill him as he has killed the prophets of her gods; Baal and Ashera. Elijah, frightened, flees to Beersheba. There he encounters God who tells him to go back and anoint Hazael as King of Aram, Jehu son of Nimshi as King of Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as his prophet successor. The plan from God is that every one who serves Baal will be killed by one of the three of the anointed ones.

The biblical story continues to tell us that King Ben-hadad of Aram laid siege to Samaria. King Ahab prevailed and beat back the forces of the King of Aram. A prophet told Ahab to expect and prepare for another attack from King Ben-hadad. Ben-hadad's ministers told him " Their God is a God of mountains; that is why they got the better of us. But if we fight them in the plain, we will surely get the better of them...He took their advice and acted accordingly." (20:23-25)

Ben-hadad again attacked Ahab. God spoke through one of the prophets and told Ahab "Thus said the Lord: because the Arameans have said, 'The Lord is a God of mountains, but He is not a God of lowlands,' I will deliver that great host into your hands; and you shall know that I am the Lord" (20:28) Ahab again prevailed against Ben-hadad. It is important to note that Ahab was prepared to fight in the plains to prove God's dominion over all. Perhaps this is one of the points Gouri wishes to make when he is empathic toward this warrior. Ahab is, in part maligned by the biblical text because he does what is "evil in the sight of the Lord."

When Ben-hadad saw that he had lost the battle he again took the advice of his ministers. "We have heard that the House of Israel are magnanimous kings. Let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and surrender to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." (20:31) When they approached Ahab an interesting manner of conversation occurs. The biblical account is that Ben-hadad and his ministers clothed in the sackcloth and ropes, "came to the king of Israel and said 'Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'I beg you, spare my life.' " He replied, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." The men divined his meaning and quickly caught the word from him saying, "Yes, Ben-hadad is your brother." "Go, bring him," he said. Ben-hadad came out to him, and he invited him into his chariot. Ben-hadad said to him, "I will give back the towns that my father took from your father, and you may set up bazaars for yourself in Damascus as my father did in Samaria." "And I, for my part (said Ahab,) will let you go under these terms." So he made a treaty with him and dismissed him." (20:32-34) However, a disguised prophet has an interchange with Ahab. The prophecy is that "Because you have set the man free whom I doomed, your life shall be forfeit for his life and your people for his people." (20:42) King Ahab

"dispirited and sullen" (20:43) goes home to Samaria. (Interestingly, we find a similar biblical account within the context of Saul's mercy toward Agag. See 1 Samuel, chapter 15.)

We read that after some time had passed, King Ahab wanted from Naboth the Jezreelite his vineyard which adjoined the King's palace. Naboth refused to give the King his vineyard because it was an inheritance and therefore had special meaning to him. Upset, King Ahab tells his wife Jezebel of his inability to convince Naboth to give the vineyard to him. Jezebel then concocts a scheme. She forges King Ahab's signature on documents and arranges for two men to frame Naboth in a fabricated story that carries the penalty of death by stoning. When Jezebel is told that her scheme has worked she goes to Ahab, tells him that Naboth is dead and encourages him to take possession of the vineyard. He does so.

Elijah is told by God to confront Ahab. Elijah goes to the vineyard and finds Ahab there. He tells Ahab what God has instructed him to say. It is the curse that is found at the beginning of chapter sixteen. "Because you have committed yourself to doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord, I will bring disaster upon you...And the Lord has also spoken concerning Jezebel: 'The dogs shall devour Jezebel in the field of Jezreel. All of Ahab's line who shall die in the town shall be devoured by dogs and all who die in the open field shall be devoured by the birds of the sky.'" (21:23-24) Elijah tells Ahab that "In the very place where the dogs lapped up Naboth's blood, the dogs will lap up your blood too." (21:19) Gouri makes reference to this in the last line of his poem: "So Naboth's blood spurted from you as in the promise of the Gileadite."

The biblical account records Ahab's response to Elijah as "Hamtzatani oyevi," (21:20) "So you have found me my enemy?" (the interrogative hay

is used) This is a crucial point in the biblical account. It records Ahab's resignation, with some sarcasm, to Elijah, and therefore to God. This is the point at which Ahab makes a kind of haunting surrender to God and Elijah. It is this scene which seals Ahab's fate. Ahab, the biblical account continues is humbled and upset. He dresses in sack-cloth and "walks subdued." Perhaps this is one of the biblical references Gouri had in mind when he wrote; "The ends of these silences were sighs."

The biblical narrative states that "there was never anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel. He acted most abominably, straying after the fetishes just like the Amorites, whom the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites." (21:25-26)

Ahab rent his clothes and dressed in sackcloth when he heard Elijah's pronouncement. "He fasted, lay in sackcloth, and walked about subdued." (21:27) God responds to these acts of humility by amending His decree. "...I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son's time." (21:29)

Peace remained between Aram and Israel for three years. Then King Ahab and King Jehoshaphat of Judah decided to go into battle together at Ramoth-gilead. The area belonged to them but was in the possession of the King of Aram. Before they went to battle the kings summoned the predictions of the prophets. All assured the kings that they would prevail.

However, King Jehoshaphat insisted that one more prophet, Micalah son of Imlah, be asked for his prophecy. King Ahab did not want to acquiesce to King Jehoshaphat because Micalah's prophecies for Ahab were always bad. Jehoshaphat insisted. Micalah was brought before the kings and predicted

doom for the men should they go to battle at Ramoth-gilead. Angered, Ahab ordered Micaiah to be imprisoned in Aram.

The kings then go into battle. During the fighting "A man drew a bow at random and he hit the king of Israel between the plates of armor." (22:34) Wounded, Ahab ordered his attendant to take him behind the lines of battle. There "...the king remained propped up in the chariot facing Aram; the blood from the wound ran down into the hollow of the chariot, and at dusk he died." (22:35) This scene opens Gouri's poem.

In the biblical account, Ahab's body was taken to Samaria where he was buried. "...they flushed out the chariot at the pool of Samaria. Thus the dogs lapped up his blood and the whores bathed (in it), in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken." (22:38) The chronicle of Ahab's life ends with the statement that "The other events of Ahab's reign, and all his actions - the ivory palace that he built and all the towns that he fortified - are all recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel." (22:39) This biblical statement stands in contrast to the line in Gouri's poem which he writes: "But he (Elijah) was not with you in the battle of Karkar, which is not recorded--not even hinted at in Kings (The Book of Kings)."

Gouri's poem is paradigmatic of Chyet and Bargad's observation about Gouri's "ancient hero" themed poems. They write: "In the Bible, prophets and kings are often at odds; in Gouri's metaphorical scheme, the patterns are similarly counterpoised. The prophet usually symbolizes the contemplative witness, whose visions come to an ambiguous end: they bespeak great insight but proclaim a frustrating powerlessness. Thus prophecy and poetry are parallel efforts. Like the prophet, the poet is acutely aware that most unhappy situations are beyond his (or any individual's) control. Both speak

their words in the wind; both become self-doubting, vulnerable seers whose more lucid comprehension leads less to elation than to despair." (p.58)

In addition, what seems most striking with this work is that Gouri's voice is one of loyalty to, and sympathy for, the king who from the biblical perspective is the most offensive. The biblical account records nothing but tension and disdain in the relationship between King Ahab and the prophet Elijah. The biblical account tends to side with Elijah. Gouri leans toward Ahab. This juxtaposition of perspectives, as we have seen, is a common motif in Gouri's poetry. The poet's perspective takes on the tone of personal address in the form of a collective voice: "We saw you in the chariot, propped up according to your request...so that your men would not fall in discouragement...we were very tired....we thought you were continuing with us..." He continues in this vein with great sympathy, admiration, and understanding. He even expresses a sympathy toward Ahab for the misfortunes that befell him at the hand of his wife's actions. This is in contrast to the sympathy Gouri usually displays toward women and the use of a female companion as a sympathetic character. This lack of sympathy for Jezebel tends to invoke an agreement with the biblical account. It is a break from his usual display of sympathy for female characters in the Bible. Gouri's sympathy for Ahab as a husband is in contrast with the biblical account which holds Ahab responsible for his wife's actions. Most glaring is the curse placed on Ahab that he will die as Naboth died, even though Naboth's death was orchestrated by Jezebel. This may underscore the disagreement Gouri maintains with the biblical view that holds Ahab accountable his wife's action.

The third stanza represents an objective and compassionate person from a different time period looking back: "If it is difficult to be mayor of

Jerusalem, it is harder still to be King of Shomron, especially in that time among those who were excessively good and those who were excessively bad." The reference to the mayor of Jerusalem is to Teddy Kolleck, the contemporary mayor of the city and to a poem by Yehuda Amichai, "Mayor," in which this phrase occurs. It is a curiosity that Gouri weaves into his work a reference to his contemporary fellow poet.

Gouri's personal address continues with four questions beginning with the seventh stanza. (Is it an echo to four questions of the Passover seder, which when answered, explain the events of the Exodus?) The questions refer to the same event; the rebuilding of Jericho after a curse warning against rebuilding it has been uttered. It is important to note that he uses the Hebrew "Maduah", rather than the less demanding "lamah" "But why did you return to rebuild Jericho...why did it rise opposite Moab...why didn't you remember the ancient curse...why do these return, always return to us from the stones and from the thickets these faces of Se'gov and Aviram?" The destruction of Jericho stands as the paradigmatic example of utter annihilation. Ahab stands as the paradigmatic example of the most wicked king. From the biblical perspective, his attempt to rebuild Jericho despite its curse is part of what makes him so offensive. And yet Gouri takes on the Bible with such sympathy for Ahab. He almost offers Ahab the opportunity to explain himself for the record. Gouri's poetic statement attempts to equal, in his sympathy and understanding, the Bible's utter contempt for Ahab and its lack of sympathy and understanding for him.)

This is another example of forcing the reader to engage and confront the biblical text. It is as if Gouri knows that, while he cannot change the biblical account, he can influence the believability of it in the mind of the reader. If he can force the reader to question the biblical account, he can,

by providing an alternative view, spur the reader to consider Ahab in a less condemnatory light. He can then influence the legacy of Ahab and in this manner change his historical destiny. Gouri underscores the question of the Bible's believability in the sixth stanza. There he questions the silence of the biblical account, about the battle of Karkar, which is recorded in Assyrian chronicles. This underscores the force with which Gouri disputes the reliability of the biblical account. It is in contrast to the force with which the biblical account treats Ahab.

The biblical account accuses Ahab of disregarding the power of God and God's word. Gouri's poetic statement questions the biblical account altogether, disregarding some of it. In this manner, Gouri mimics, in his poem, the very disrespect for which the Bible holds Ahab accountable. Gouri taunts the biblical account with a strength that almost dares the all powerful characters of the Bible (the prophet for example) to come forth. By stating that the biblical account is "kadosh," holy, he questions and challenges "kadosh." He questions the canon. From Gouri's perspective, what is designated as holy, by the tradition, is not only an incorrect account, but an incomplete one as well. He challenges the biblical account with what some may regard as a disrespect that verges on the heretical, which of course is how the Bible views Ahab. Gouri underscores his allegiance with the last line of the poem: "Ahab, my dead king." This also heightens the sense the poem has of a mourner's lament for a dear one who has died. Appropriately, the next poem in this section discusses another old warrior from the Bible, King Saul.

CROWN

The king who had mercy. (1 Sam 15:9) The bitterness of death passed by. (1 Sam 15:33)

Was it Nobility of Spirit? Perhaps only tiredness of blood, perhaps momentary weakness

His shoulder is above others in misery.

"He did not know that there is no fooling around. That whoever is not with us one hundred percent must be against us.

And that was an additional reason for which the Crown was taken away.

So the prophet took from him his sword to render the royal mother bereaved. (1 Sam. 15:32-33)

And God at the time of the event, was with him.

When he was done, he went off. He left there the too late remorse. (1 Sam. 15: 24-26)

Next to a cloth torn from his garment. (1 Sam. 15: 27)

And the troubles came in quick succession and the solitude continued.

And he was the first sad person, and did not have anyone.

Therefore, he galloped in the night to that woman, but the rumor preceded his horse

When he sat like one seeking visions -- opposite the flame and summoned
the prophet

She saw a kingdom that had been taken away. (I Sam 28:7-25)

Then the man of God lay on his bed, his eyes open (wide).

And his thoughts turned southward, about Bet-Lechem,

To the youngest of the sons of the family.

כתר

המלך שרחם. מר המות סר.
האצילות? אולי רק עיפות מדם, אולי חלשה רגעית.
אמלל גבה משכמו ומעלה.
הוא לא ידע שאין חכמות, שמי שלא אתנו כמאה אחר
מכרח להיות גדנו.
זו היתה סבה נוספת לכתר שהוסר.

אז הרואה נטל חרבו ממנו לשכל את הגבירה
ויהיה, בשעת מעשה, היה אתו!
כשגמר, הלך לו. השאיר שם את החרטה המאחרת
ליד פסת אריג מאדרתו.

והצרות רדפו אשה את רעותה והבדילות נמשכה.
והוא היה הנוגה הראשון, ולא היה לו מי.
לכן דהר כלילה אל האשה ההיא אף השמועה הקדימה את-סוסו.
כאשר ישב כמתחזה מול השלהבת ובקש את הנביא
היא ראתה מלכות שנלקחה.

אז איש האלהים שכב על מסתו, עיניו מקומות.
חשב ורומה על בית-לחם.
על הצעיר בבני המשפחה.

מחברות אלול

(Machib'rot Elul)

The poem "Crown" recalls an episode in the story of King Saul. It is written in the collective voice of one who attempts to explain the events of the biblical text, and in particular the pivotal event that led to King Saul's downfall. The biblical text to which the poem refers speaks of King Saul's decision to spare Agag's life -- in disobedience to what the Prophet Samuel represents as God's command. In fact, King Saul himself has the opportunity to do so and forgoes it. (1 Samuel 15:8 - 10). His act of mercy is against God's stated desire as expressed to Saul by Samuel. (1 Samuel 15:1-3). This act of human mercy, which is counter to God's wishes, opens the poem: "The King who had mercy". The consequence of sparing Agag is found at the end of the first stanza: "He did not know that there is no fooling around. That whoever is not with us one hundred percent must be against us. And that was an additional reason for which the Crown was taken away."

It is Samuel who eventually kills Agag. (1 Samuel 15:32- 33) This act is the second line in the poem: "The bitterness of death passed by." One word of the poem reads in a reversal of order from the biblical text. In the biblical text, we read: "Vayomer Agag acheyn sar mar-ha-mavet". (1 Samuel 15:32) These are Agag's words spoken as he realizes Samuel is about to kill him. The second sentence of the first line of the poem reads: "Mar ha-mavet sar." It is a simple reversal of the first word in the biblical text placed at the end of the poem's sentence. This change in the biblical text is indicative of Gouri's use of the Bible. It provokes the question: What is the Bible to Gouri? He seems to regard the Bible as a representation of events but not as the definitive version, nor as the complete version. In his poems he frequently seems to add information in the first person, as if he had been there but what he saw was not recorded. It is as if he is correcting the biblical record. Gouri's is a kind of modern midrash. While he does appear

interested in interpreting the meaning of the text, he is more absorbed in and concerned with actually rewriting the biblical text.

The biblical line that follows Agag's recognition that he is about to be killed by Samuel is a quote from Samuel himself. He addresses Agag: "Just as your sword has made women childless, so too shall your mother (by your death) be rendered childless among women." (1 Samuel 15:33) Samuel then kills Agag. The poem's reference to this event is found in line one of the second stanza: "So the prophet (Samuel) took his sword from us to wound the royal mother." The poet's sympathy is with Agag's mother. The meaning that the poet finds in Agag's death is that his mother is left mourning, without a son. The poet sees the biblical action as a wounding of the mother who, still alive, has lived to experience the death of her son. The poet sees Agag's mother as an innocent victim. (This theme echoes to the poet's "His Mother.") Gouri uses biblical material as a poetic tool for trying to understand and deal with the reality of modern day Israel in which mothers often outlive their slain sons. What seems to be of interest is that the poet does not tell the reader that the mother is informed of her child's death, nor how. Rather, the poet is on the battlefield at the scene of the Amalekite's execution. It is the poet's empathic response that has him thinking of and mentioning the mother who is about to hear of her son's demise. This is in contrast to Samuel who, though he has the mother in mind, thinks of her differently than does Gouri. Gouri's is a sensitivity and empathy for those innocent victims who are among the casualties of war. The sensitivity for the innocent victim is a theme observed by Chyet and Bargad that has become one of Gouri's identifying marks as a poet. In this way, Gouri imitates the biblical drama that is found in the Song of Deborah. There we read that the mother does not yet know of her son's death. In fact,

the text does not tell us about the mother being informed of her son's death. We know she is eventually informed because we read the poet's and the biblical text's empathic statement for her. Gouri displays the same empathy for the mother here in "Crown," and he does so with the same drama and style that we find in the biblical text.

It is important to note that Gouri's empathy is for the mother of an enemy who is regarded as the paradigmatic enemy of the Israelite people. Of all the enemies, one would not only feel a lack of empathy for his demise, but even feel he deserved it without question. However, Gouri's sensitivity to the enemy's mother transcends the boundaries of national allegiance. The poet's sensitivity stands in some contrast to the mercy King Saul showed Agag. King Saul's failure to heed God's command, although guided by human sensitivity, is a violation of national allegiance for which he is deposed. Where Gouri's empathy suggests no treason, King Saul's act of mercy is a violation of national allegiance. The remaining verses retell the biblical account of Saul's visit to the witch of En-dor, her vision, and Saul's contemplation of David. The next poem in this section is another reflection on the mother of an enemy.

HIS MOTHER
(Judges 5:1-31)

Years ago, at the end of the Song of Deborah,
I heard the silence of Sisera's chariot that tarried,
I view Sisera's mother looking out the window,
(A) Woman with a silver streak in her hair.
Basted (loosely stitched) embroidery colors.
The young maidens saw colors of doubled embroidery booty around the necks,
At the very same hour he lay in the tent as if asleep.
His hands were very empty.
On his chin were traces of milk, curd and blood.

The silence was not broken by the horses or the chariots.
Even the young maidens became silent one after the other.
My silence touched their silence.
After some time the sun set.
After some time the streaks of sunset were extinguished

The land was quiet for forty years, Forty years
Horses did not gallop and dead riders did not fix a gaze with glassy eyes.
However, she died, a short time after the death of her son.

אמו

לפני שנים, בסוף שירת דבורה,
שמעתי את דומית רכב סיסרא אשר בושש לבוא,
מביס באמו של סיסרא הנשקפת בחלון,
אשה שפס כסף בשערה.

שלל צבעים רקמה,
צבע רקמות לצוארי קלל, ראו הנערות.
אותה שעה שכב באהל כנרדם.
ידיו ריקות מאד.
על סנטרו עקבות חלב חמאה ודם.

הדומיה לא נשברה אל הטוסים ואל המרכבות,
גם הנערות שתקו אחת אחר אחת.
שתיקתי ננעה בשתיקתן.
אחר זמן מה שקעה השמש.
אחר זמן מה כבו הדמדומים.

ארבעים שנה שקטה הארץ. ארבעים שנה
לא דהרו סוסים ופרשים בתים לא נעצו עיני זכוכית.
אבל היא כתה, זמן קצר אחר כוח בנה.

— סוסית (חלל) —
(Compass Rose)

"His Mother" recalls the Song of Deborah, Judges 5:1-31. The poem begins with the same image that is found at the end of the biblical text.

The poem begins:

"Long ago at the end of Deborah's Song
I heard the silence of Sisera's chariots that tarried
I view Sisera's mother gazing through the window there
A woman with a streak of silver in her hair.

The Song of Deborah ends:

Through the window peered Sisera's mother,
Behind the lattice she whined.
"Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why so late the clatter of his wheels?"
The wisest of her ladies give answer;
She, too, replies to herself:
"They must be dividing the spoil they have found:
A damsel or two for each man
Spoil of dyed cloth for Sisera
Spoil of embroidered cloths,
A couple of embroidered cloths
Round every neck as spoil."

This invokes a scene order in Gouri's poem almost opposite from that appearing in the biblical Song itself. Again, Gouri takes liberties with the biblical text. Again, he uses a personal and collective voice to comment on the text and present another version. The speaker of the poem is a participant who recalls his own presence at the scene. The precise identity

of the speaker, however, is unclear. It is part of Gouri's recurring motif in which he uses an anonymous narrator's voice to present his vision. He uses the first person singular to recall today an event from past lifetimes. Even his poetic voice is vague. If he were present and returning to the scene, he would be a survivor of the events. Yet, even this is not completely certain. Gouri, then, has taken this historic event and gives it a shade of paradox that is difficult to reconcile. It is, however, consistent with his attempts to create surreality when he calls into question the accuracy of biblical texts. Perhaps he is suggesting that one must use the power of imagination when engaging what is the received biblical account.

There are different possibilities as to whom the speaker might be. Could the speaker be a member of Sisera's army? The text simply says that Sisera is killed. Ostensibly, his army entourage survives. Another possibility is that the voice is that of Barak, the other singer of the Song of Deborah. These are, however, suggestions that cannot be proven.

Characteristically, Gouri rewrites the biblical text. He says that "Forty years the land was stilled, forty years horses did not race, dead riders did not pierce with glassy eyes." The echo is to the end of the biblical text which records: "So may all your enemies perish, O Lord! But may His friends be as the sun rising in might! And the land was tranquil forty years." (5:31)

The end of the poem tells us that Sisera's mother died after her son. The line in the Hebrew reads: "Aval he metah, zman katzar achar mot b'nah." There is a maqif in the hey of the Hebrew "b'nah"; "her son." It gives a verbal imitation, when read aloud, to a last dying breath. It is important to note that the poem's title is "Imo"; "His Mother", written in the conjugated form.

The last word of the poem is "b'nah"; "her son", also written in the conjugated form. This gives a grammatical symmetry to the work.

It is equally important to mention that here, too, as has been noted in previous poems, especially in "Crown," Gouri expresses sympathy for the mother of an enemy who is rendered bereaved by her son's death at the hands of enemies. One may see this as an echo to a famous midrash. God rebukes the Children of Israel when they rejoice that God has inundated the path through the Red Sea over the pursuing Egyptians. God tells them not to be happy at the demise of their Egyptian enemies for they, too, are God's children. This sympathy may resonate to the situation of the Modern State and to Golda Meir's famous comment that the Israeli people may one day be able to forgive the Arabs for killing their Israeli sons, but that they will never be able to forgive the Arabs for forcing them to kill Arab sons. With "His Mother," the sympathy stands in contrast to the biblical rejoicing that the enemy has been destroyed. Again, it provokes the reader to enter the Biblical text in an engaged and independent way

Dan Pagis, in his reading of the work which appears in The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself, comments as well that Gouri takes a "reverse point of view... (and) takes the part of the defeated leader and of his bereaved mother." (p. 159) He continues to observe that the poem "conceives Sisera not as an enemy but as a lamented son, it suggests that Jael behaved treacherously, violating the elementary code of hospitality." (p. 159) He adds: "The biblical hymn does not describe the moment when the mother learns of her son's death, neither does the poem. The poet passes from the mournful scene of silence and of slowly fading light to the conclusion, carefully omitting all reference to the triumphant cry of the 'Song of Deborah' - 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord,' etc. The poem

reproduces only the last few words of the chapter that tells, in the dry tone of the chronicle, that after the victory there came forty years of peace and security. Note that the poet minimizes the outcome of that war. On the contrary, by changing the word order of the quotation ('And the land rested forty years, Judges 5:31) and by repeating the time phrase in the same line, he stresses 'forty years' - a long period of peace in a war-ridden country - and continues to praise peace in affirming the absence of horrors. But these positive results seem to be diminished as they lie enclosed in the mood of tragedy and human loss suffered by the aging woman who herself died soon after her son's death." (p.159)

"Although the poem is close to the Bible in vocabulary, the syntax and poetic forms are modern. The subdued tone avoids both sentimentality and rhetoric. It is almost an improvisation on a familiar theme, with utterly changed emphasis, in lines of varying length, which seem to be independent rhythmic segments." (p.159)

It is important to note Gourl's use of silence throughout the poem. There is the quiet of Sisera's chariots, which the poet hears. There is the silence of the maidens, which the poet touches. There is the silence of Sisera, who is as if asleep, but actually dead. There is the silence of the land, and ultimately the mother's permanent silence in her own death. It is equally important that the empathy the poet displays is entirely his own. He "touches" and "hears" the human emotion that seems present in the silence yet remains unexpressed. In the poem that follows another old warrior tries to return home.

Odysseus

And upon his return to the city of his birth he found water
fish and seaweed of a different kind floating on the slow waves
and sun weakening on the rim of the sky.

Error always recurs, said Odysseus with his tired heart
And (he) returned to the crossroads near the neighboring town

To find the way to the town of his birth that was not water.

(A) tired wanderer like one dreaming and yearning greatly
Among people who spoke a different Greek.
The words he had taken with him as provisions on the road
of the travels had died,
in the meantime

Momentarily (he) thought that (he) had fallen asleep for
many days and (had) returned to people who were not amazed at the sight of
him
and (they) did not stare wide-eyed.

He asked them with gestures and they tried to understand him
from beyond the distances
Purple gradually became violet on the rim of that same sky.

The adults got up and took the children that stood around him
in a circle
and took them away.
And light after light yellowed in house after house.

Dew came and fell on his head.
Wind came and kissed his lips.
Water came and bathed his feet like Euryclea of old
And they did not see the scar and they continued the descent
as is the nature of water.

אודיסס

ובשובו אל עיר מולדתו מצא ים
 ודרים לאנים ועשב צף על הנלים אסיים
 ושמש נחלשת בשולי שמים.

סעות לעולם חזרת, אמר אודיסס בלבו העיף
 וחזר עד פרשת הדרכים הסמוכה לעיר השכנה,
 למצא את הדרך אל עיר מולדתו שלא היתה מים.

הלך עיף כחולם ומתעצנע מאד
 בין אנשים שדברו יתות אחרת.
 המלים שנשל עמו כצידה לדרך המסעות, נעו בנתים.

רנע חשב כי נרדם לימים רבים
 וחזר אל אנשים שלא תמהו בראותם אותו
 ולא קרעו עינים.

הוא שאל אותם בתעוה והם נסו להבין אותו
 מתוך המרחקים.
 הארנמן הסגיל והלך בשולי אותם שמים.

קמו המבגרים תסלו את הילדים שעמדו סביבו במעגל
 ומשכו אותם.
 ואור אזור אור הצהיב בבית אחר בית.

בא של הדר של ראש.
 באה רוח השקת לשקת.
 בא שם ושקת רחלי באברקליה חזקת.
 לא ראש את השקת השקת בנדר הדר הדר.

The poem begins with a yay. This immediately gives the impression that something precedes the event and/or scene of the poem itself, but we do not know what. The poem itself then has the immediate quality of a continuation of a story to which we are not privy at its beginning. This provokes some questions. Where has Odysseus been? What has he been doing? Why did he leave? For what reason is he returning?

He arrives at sunset, "when the sun is weakening on the rim of the sky". He finds three things on the return to the "city of his birth," : water, fish of a different kind, and "seaweed floating on slow waves." This narration leads the reader to believe that Odysseus recognizes that his birth place has changed. After all, he recognizes changes in his city of birth.

This first sentence, however, sets up the poem and its development. There is a development in the use of water and light. Perhaps the "different fish and seaweed" is a metaphor for the different people that he encounters and who do not recognize him. The symmetry that Gouri develops here, in his use of the water and other of nature's elements, which progresses from the beginning to the end of the poem, is common to the symmetry he establishes by his use of images and word usage, that we have seen in previous poems. For example, the use of the preposition "al" and "alamot" in "The Romantic North."

In the next full sentence of the poem, we hear Odysseus speaking to himself, as the narrator tells us: "Error always recurs, said Odysseus in his tired heart". This line begins a form that we have seen seems to recur throughout much of Gouri's poetry. As we read that Odysseus is tired, the lines following are without punctuation. It is a syntactical manipulation that is most often seen in the "Travel Poems." If the reader were to read this part of the poem aloud, s/he would do so without taking a breath. When

read aloud, in one breath, the reader is led to imitate the state of mind that the poet portrays for Odysseus. This serves, in part, to create in the reader a level of identification with the poem's character. It may serve to duplicate in the reader, the vague disorientated state of mind the poet describes in Odysseus.

The comment we hear Odysseus make lets us know that he considers the scene he has found to be a mistake of some sort. From the first line the reader may assume that the mistake is the change he has found in the "city of his birth" since the first lines of the poem state clearly that "upon his return he found..." Yet the error, we learn immediately, is that Odysseus perceives that he is in the wrong town altogether. What does this mean? Is he in the wrong place? Has he misperceived that, despite the changes he has found, this is indeed his own home town? Has he resisted admitting that his home town has changed and that there are some elements in it that he simply does not recognize? We do not necessarily know. We do know only that he perceives that he is in the wrong place. He "returned to the crossroads that are in the neighboring town to locate the way to the town of his birth that was not water." Only now do we know that Odysseus' birthplace, as he knows it, "was not water."

There are a number of levels here. First, what is a home town that is not water? Is Odysseus' hometown a desert? This understanding develops into a glaring contrast when at the end of the poem he is kissed by dew and his leg is bathed in water.

The poem continues to tell us that Odysseus is "(A) Wanderer tired like a dreamer and very nostalgic among people who spoke a different Greek." It is important to take note of the manner in which Gould uses light and water. As the poem progresses, light extinguishes. The sun, at the

beginning of the poem "is weakening." Half way through the poem "purple gradually became violet on the rim of that same sky." Toward the end of the poem, the lights in the homes "yellowed in house after house." The use of light as a motif, and in particular light that extinguishes in one manner or another, is found in his "Travel Poems" as well. In "In a Shop Window of S.A.S.", the poem begins: "Evening on its way to darkening...", in "Geneva 1947," "lights are extinguished on the lake," in "The Romantic North," the poet has "heard about a gentle light and twillights as long lasting as my yearning for her (the city)," and, finally, in "Scandivavian Postcard," "twilight and dawn were long and patient."

The use of water underscores Oysseus' disorientation. He recognizes that he is not his birth place because he arrives to a place where there is water; "a sea", and goes back to locate his birth place "that is not water." Yet at the end of the poem water signals that he has not yet found home: "dew falls on his head" and "water ...bathed his feet." It is interesting that water bathes his feet, the primary part of the body that is his primary mode of transport. One is provoked to ask what the use of nature is all about, especially the water. Clearly, in the poem, it is the only reliable aspect to his life. The people do not recognize him, they retreat into their homes without offering him help, and he can't get back to his home town. This is even more provocative when we recall that his hometown "was not water." Yet, the reliability of water is simply that which is organic to its character. As an element of nature, it flows over surfaces by the force of gravity.

Dan Pagis, in his treatment of the work in The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself, (pp.154-156), comments that "the sense of estrangement, disillusion, and loneliness (which characterizes much of Gury's [sic] later poetry)

pervades 'Odysseus' and is not to be read allegorically." (p.154) He states that "classical Greek and traditional Hebrew elements merge into a pattern which is unmistakably modern." (p.154)

It is important to comment upon Pagis' interpretation. He states: "Homer's Odysseus was brought while asleep to his native island and on waking at first did not recognize it. But Gury's (sic) reference is to an old Hebrew legend about a famous sage, Honi the Circle-Maker. In pondering a well known verse on the Babylonian exile - 'When the Lord brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like them that dream' (Psalm 126) - Honi wondered: Is it possible for a man to dream for seventy years? Some time later Honi actually fell asleep only to wake seventy years later and to learn that his son had long since been dead. Encountering only strangers he told them: 'I am Honi.' They did not believe him and they scoffed at him. In his loneliness, he asked God for mercy and he died." (p.154-155) Pagis continues to observe that Gouri alludes to the Honi legend as early as lines seven and possibly sixteen. Pagis notes that the dispersal of the children is in contrast to Honi's circle. Other contrasts Pagis points out are that, for Gouri, Odysseus is a "tired wanderer" not the hero he is depicted in the Greek myth.

While Pagis seems to minimize the links between the poem and the Greek myth, it seems important to comment that there seems to be more commonality than he observes. The Encyclopaedia Britannica comments that the Greek Odysseus is destined to take the city of Troy. The alternative to taking of Troy is "forgetting his home." In addition, in Robert Fitzgerald's translation of The Odyssey, Book Two, lines 175-180, we read that a Greek character, Halitherses, says with regard to Odysseus: "My forecast was that after nineteen years, many blows weathered, all his shipmates lost, himself

unrecognized by anyone, he would come home. I see all this fulfilled." This seems to have a direct bearing on Gouri's Odysseus who is disoriented and returns home to a people who do not recognize him.

The Greek myth is synopsized in Masterplots, edited by Frank N. Magill. In the synopsis it is noted, as has been mentioned, that the story is of Odysseus' efforts to return home. (He does not mention the issue of forgetting.) Odysseus is the only warrior whose return home after the battle of Troy is delayed. When asked by King Alcinous and Queen Arete why he is so late in returning home, Odysseus himself offers this explanation. A one eyed monster, Polyphemus, tried to destroy Odysseus. Odysseus succeeds in rendering the giant drunk, blinding him with a pole, and thus fleeing to safety. However, before he flees, Oysseus tells the blinded Polyphemus his name. Angered he has lost, Polyphemus tells his father Poseidon. Poseidon attempts then to delay Odysseus in his return home. Odysseus then encounters a number of challenges at the hands of the gods of the sun, wind, and sea. Once Oysseus ends this story, Alcinous and Arete give him a ship to continue his voyage home. It seems then, that this echoes to the difficulty Gouri's Odysseus has in returning home. (p. 4275-4276)

Once he arrives to his hometown, the Odysseus of the Greek myth is concerned about being recognized. True to Halliheres prediction, in Book Nineteen, lines 70 and following of the Fitzgerald translation, Odysseus is not recognized by a number of people whom he knows. As the greek story continues we see Odysseus disguise himself and return home. No one recognizes him except his old nurse Euryclea. She recognizes him by the scar on his leg. It is a scar she knows from having bathed him as a child. (Fitzgerald translation, Book nineteen, lines 333 and following) Perhaps this the part of the Greek myth Gouri refers to in the last few lines of his poem:

"Dew came and fell on his head. Wind came and kissed his lips. Water came, and bathed his feet like old Euryclea." However, Gouri's Odysseus is different from the Greek myth. The last line of Gouri's work reads: "And didn't see the scar, and continued down the slope as water does." Where the Odysseus of the Greek myth is eventually recognized, Gouri's Odysseus is not. Again, we see Gouri re-writing at work. In addition, perhaps Gouri's use of the water and wind in this last part of his poem resonates to the actions of the wind and water gods who tried to prevent Odysseus of the Greek myth from returning home. While Pagis suggests that the scene in which Gouri's Odysseus is not recognized recalls the story of Honi, one may see a parallel to the Greek myth as well. An emphasis on the Greek myth rather than on the Honi story would be in consonance with the old warrior motif we have seen Gouri use in previous poems. We see this most clearly in "Crown," and "Bad King."

One may also wonder: what Gouri is doing in his use of the Greek myth material and his emphasis on Odysseus' disorientation and lack of recognition he experiences? Perhaps it can be explained by recalling some aspects of Gouri's life. He fought in the Palmach and has been a reservist in the Israeli army. His was a life paradigmatic of the Sabra of his era. He lived for strong ideals. The vision he had was of an Israel built on communal cooperation and the ideals of socialism. It was a life absent of the selfishness characterized by the bourgeoisie. In short, Gouri was part of a generation that was energized by a dream to create a new and successful society in Eretz Yisrael. Perhaps his portrayal of the disoriented Odysseus who is not recognized has a parallel to the sense that Gouri may feel. Does Gouri sense that in contemporary Israel he no longer recognizes the place he fought so hard to build? And that he is not

recognized by the society he has defended in so many military encounters? While it may be difficult to ascribe to a poem a specific parallel to the life of the author, this does seem to be a possible perspective to use when understanding his work.

With "Odysseus" we see Gouri attempt to join, as Pagis observes "classsical Greek and traditional Hebraic elements into a pattern which is unmistakeably modern." (p.154) Pagis, however, seems to deemphasize what appears to be distinct correlations to parts of the Greek myth. What is noteworthy is that Gouri's use of "traditional Hebraic elements," here, is the use of non-biblical material. Rather, the Honi story is part of the rabbinic tradition. Chyet and Bargad have observed that Gouri's work expanded in a poetic vision that displays a to develop a "personal emblem" with the use of ancient greek myth and biblical material. Perhaps "Odysseus" represents the poet's growth toward the use of rabbinic material as a motif to continue to refine his poetic vision. If he begins to utilize more rabbinic material in his future works, it would be an interesting comment on a poet who comes from the secular pre-State world.

FRAGRANCE OF THE FIELD

(Gen. 27:27)

Esau, Esau, more open and warm than is usual.

You descend by way of the basalt rocks toward the wide open fields.

And the fragrance of the field and the sweat and the smoke.

And not so very smart and not very holy

And a little bit delayed in understanding

And there is within you a certain sadness and great strength, Esau.

* Perhaps this derives from the dust and from the rocks and from the metals.

Oh but when they need you and they yell to you,

You are there.

I think about you and you and you don't know it now.

Afterward you return as you did yesterday.

And again the day is more open and warm than usual.

Someone like you will never rest. There is

"dirty work"

And someone is obligated to run and to return the stolen goods.

Always.

And to be less loved, strong and cheated -

And not worthy of mercy.

ריח השדה

עשו, עשו, פתוח וחם מהרגיל.
אתה יורד בדרך הכולת אל השדות הרחבים.
ורוח השדה והנעה והעשן.
ולא כל כך חכם ולא כל כך קדוש
ומאחר קצת להבין.

ויש כך עצבות מסימת וכח רב, עשו.
אולי זה כא מן העפר ומן האבנים ומן המתכות.
אך כאשר צריכים לה וצועקים אליה,
אתה שם.

אני חושב עליך ואתה אינך יודע עכשו.
אחר כך אתה חוזר כמו אתמול.

ושוב היום פתוח וחם מהרגיל.
אחד כמוך לא ינות לעולם. יש עבודות שחורות
ומישהו חייב לרוץ ולהשיב את הגולה. תמיד.
להיות פחות אהוב, חזק ומרמה
ולא ראוי לרחמים.

- מחבת אלול
(Machb'rot Elul)

It is appropriate to end this section with the poem "Fragrance of the Field" because it reveals with elegant simplicity many of the motifs and styles we have seen characterize Haim Gouri's poems. He speaks in the first person. He has a conversation, unbound by the constraints of time, with a biblical figure. He displays empathy for the maligned biblical figure. He offers a view which challenges the biblical text. He attempts to make a connection between the characteristics of a people and their land. (In this manner the poetic vision of "Scandinavian Postcard" is found here as well.) He takes a personal quality and personalizes it to a non-human element. The work has a seemingly simple quality, yet is vague and provocative, eliciting from the reader an interaction with the poem and the biblical character.

He offers a certain symmetry to the poem. The first and last stanzas each have five lines. The first line in each of these stanzas have words in common: "...patuach v'cham m'haragil," "more open and warm than usual." Each of these stanzas end with three words. Each line's first word is the preposition "and, beginning with a "vav." The last word begins with a "lamed." Read aloud, one finds a cadence that seems almost lyrical.

We see here another example of his notion that people function according to the land from which they come. There is a connection between land and the characteristics of a people. Esau functions according to the land from which he has come. He is "more warm and open than usual" because of the "dust and basalt rocks" from which he comes. Gouri then ends the poem by commenting that the "day is more open and warm than usual." He transfers human quality to the quality of the day, or perhaps the era. Then he turns Esau into a symbolic character: "someone like you will never rest...someone is obligated to return the stolen goods...be less loved...not worthy of mercy." Is he commenting on modern day Israel? In the second

stanza, line one and two, Gouri expresses his characteristic empathy for the underdog figure: "And there is within you a certain sadness and great strength, Esau. Perhaps this derives from the dust and from the rocks and from the metals." We have seen that Gouri concerns himself with the notion that people are formed by their Land, its topography and its history. Land provokes certain behaviors that in turn are passed on from generation to generation. In the last line of the second stanza we read of a behavior that the poet links to the character who has come from the "basalt rocks": "Oh but when they need you and they tell for you. You are there." Perhaps this forms an inextricable link between the personality of a person and the Land from which they come. It is as if Gouri sees in a person an entire history of the Land and all that occurred on it.

It is important to comment on biblical references. The title of the poem, Reach ha-sadeh, comes from Genesis 27:27. There, Isaac, who is now old and blind, feels Jacob's disguise, and thinking that he is touching Esau says: "R'ay reach b'ni k'reach sadeh asher baracho Adonai." "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that the Lord has blessed." At this point in the biblical account Isaac gives his blessing to Jacob. Gouri's use of the phrase reach ha-sadeh, alerts the reader to the tragedy that came to Esau. (We see in the biblical text that once Esau has discovered that the blessing has gone to Jacob he is distraught. In Genesis 27 lines 34-38, Esau emotionally asks his father for a blessing.) It displays Gouri's extraordinary sensitivity to this biblical account that he uses, as the title of his poem, the very words that Isaac speaks in deep love for his son Esau.

With the title of the poem, the reader enters the biblical scene at the precise point in which Isaac, expressing his great love for his son Esau, is about to offer his blessing to the disguised Jacob. It elicits a strong sense

of tragedy from the reader. When Gouri describes Esau's sadness as being from the "dust, rocks and metals," perhaps he is using the barren landscape to symbolize Esau's sense of abandonment and aloneness at having lost Isaac's blessing.

The tragedy of Esau is underscored when one realizes that he maintained a consistent attentiveness toward his father, Isaac. In fact, Esau was out on a hunt for food at his father's request when Jacob disguised himself and tricked Isaac into the blessing reserved for Esau. (Gen 27) The rabbis use the biblical Esau as the paradigmatic example of kivud av, honoring one's father. This underscores the tragedy as well. Perhaps the poem's phrase "more open and warm than usual" is Gouri's reference to Esau's willingness to continually please his father. (Later, the rabbis identify Esau with Edom and those forces that are against Judaism.)

The phrase "someone is obligated to return the stolen goods," may refer to a midrash that is found in the Silberman translation of Rashi's commentary to the Torah. The reference is to Genesis 29:11. Jacob has seen Rachel. He rolls a stone from the mouth of a well and gives water to Laban's flock. And "then Jacob kissed Rachel and broke into tears." (29:11) Rashi comments: "...another explanation is: he wept because he came with empty hands. He thought: Eliezar, my grandfather's servant, had with him rings, bracelets, and all good things, whilst I have nothing with me. This was because Eliphaz Esau's son pursued Jacob by his father's order to kill him, and overtook him. But because Eliphaz had been brought up on Jacob's lap - (Deut. R.2) he withheld his hand. He said to him (Jacob), 'But what shall I do as regards my father's order?' Jacob replied, 'Take all I have and you can say that I am dead for a poor man may be counted as dead.' " (pp.135-136)

Perhaps then Gouri echos to this commentary. Perhaps Gouri's line:

"U'mish'hu chayav larutz ul'hashiv et ha-g'zeilah" ; "And someone is obligated to run and to return the stolen goods", refers to Esau's son's pursuit of Jacob. Perhaps the act of Jacob giving Eliphaz his (Jacob's) goods to give to Esau refers to the "return of stolen goods." It may be a symbolic act in which Jacob returns to Esau the blessing he stole at Isaac's bedside.

We read at the end of the poem that Esau is "unworthy of mercy. We have seen that while he serves a purpose he remains un-rewarded. His actions are guided by a constitution derived from the land from which he comes. Yet his actions take place on a different kind of land. He has "descended ...toward the wide open fields" It as if the characteristics that would normally serve him well in the place from which he comes, may have a purpose in a new Land but that purpose renders him isolated. Is Gouri commenting on one's adjustment to a new land? Perhaps he is commenting on the adjustment of people to Israel, the adjustment of Israel to the acquisition of the territories, or the life of the rugged Sabra of the outdoors? The many possibilities that exist for this poem demonstrate once again how what seems to be a simple poem is rich in nuance and emotion.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a poem which appears in The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself. It is untitled but is called Nidmeh Li, "It Seems to Me," because this is the poem's first line. It underscores much of what we have seen in Gouri's poetic vision and the motifs he uses to express that view. In "It Seems to Me," Gouri expresses himself as the old warrior for whom he has so much empathy and sensitivity in his poems. We see lights that have gone out. We see him walk among that which "time has abandoned." Yet, these "things" come back to him. He walks "a great deal." He has a degree of resignation to the life he now has.

The poem shows Gouri an old warrior who has lived through the battles and has survived. He "guards the walls of the city that died years ago." The poem begins and ends with this phrase. Like other poems we have seen this symmetry is common to Gouri's poems. The lines at the beginning and at the end have both a sense of resignation and sarcasm. Like so many of his works there are many possibilities to consider. It is as if to say that he is not beaten. He may protect something that has long since died, but he does so because that is what an old warrior does. He protects and he guards. Perhaps Gouri sees himself as the guardian of an era of the establishment of the State of Israel that is past. As a man of the Palmach, perhaps he sees himself as the guardian of an era that is no longer present. Perhaps he sees himself as the one who guards the past, to make sure that it is remembered.

The poem has a striking similarity to the poem "1923-1958" in which Gouri tells us he "had no time." This work, like that one, is written in the first person and in a series of short stanzas of just a few lines each. Perhaps they can be seen as bookends.

It Seems to Me

It seems to me that I guard the walls of a city
That died a long time ago.

Lights which now illumine me
Are the (last will and) testaments of a light which went out years ago.

I walk between the things that time has abandoned,
Pass on.
And they live without time, which gradually disintegrates in clocks.

They come back to me, come back to me to live more slowly,
Next to ashtrays,
Next to cups of coffee growing cold.

I walk a great deal and guess (a great deal)
And enjoy the benefit of the doubt.

But I guard the walls of a city that died years ago.
(translated by Dan Pagis)

★

נדמה לי כי אני שומר תומות של עיר
אשר נרצה לפני וסו רב.

אורות הפאירים אחי בעת
הם צנאות של אור אשר נבה לפני שנים.

אני הולך בין הדברים אשר הסו עוב אוסם
עובר.
הם סיים בלי וסו הולך ומתפוצר בשעונים.

הם שבים אלי, שבים אלי לחיות יותר לשם.
לד ספירות.
לד ספלי קסה ספסונים.

אני מרצה ללכת ולנחש
והנה ספסות.

אכל אני שומר תומות של עיר אשר נרצה לפני שנים.

- חשבון / עובר, מבחר שירים
(Current Account, Anthology of poems)

Footnotes

1. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972 ed., s.v. "Gouri, Chalm." Also, Warren Bargad and Stanley Chyet, Israeli Poetry A Contemporary Anthology, Jewish Literature and Culture, Alvin H. Rosenfeld, series ed., (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 57.

Note that Abraham Birman, An Anthology of Modern Hebrew Poetry, London: Abelard-Shuman, 1968, and Stanley Burnshaw, T. Carmi, and Ezra Spicehandler, The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, misstate Gouri's birthdate as 1926.

2. Bargad and Chyet, Israeli Poetry, 4

3. Ibid., 3

4. Ibid., 2-3

5. Ibid., 1

6. Ibid., 2

7. Ibid., Introduction and 5

8. Ibid., 5

9. Ibid., 5-6

10. Bargad and Chyet, 57

11. Ibid., 57

12. Ibid., 57

13. Ibid., 57

14. Ibid., 57

15. Ada Zemach, "Twenty-five Years of Hebrew Literature," Orot, Journal of Hebrew Literature, Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Post Press, October, 1973, p. 9

In addition, A. B. Yehoshua cites this as an introduction to the third chapter of his book Between Right and Right.

16. Ada Zemach, 9

17. Bargad and Chyet, 57

18. Ibid., 57-58

19. Ibid., 58

20. Ibid., 57

21. Ada Zemach, 9

22. Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v., "Gouri, Chaim",
see also Bargad and Chyet, 57

23. Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v., "Gouri, Chaim",
see also, Bargad and Chyet, 58

24. Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v., "Gouri, Chaim"

25. Ada Zemach, 13

26. Ibid., 13

27. Ibid., 58

28. Ibid., 59

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