

**AN EPIC OF BIRTH, SURVIVAL, AND GROWTH:
PRELIMINARIES, BY S. YIZHAR**

Nitza Ben-Dov
University of Haifa

The article traces the shared development of an individual, a people, and a universe as expressed in the eighteen episodes of *Preliminaries*. Each episode is a work in itself, yet at the same time, it is provisionally part of the architectural structure of the novel, which has a preface and five chapters. Each chapter (including the preface) has three episodes, a kind of triptych. The publication of the novel in 1992 came as a surprise to the Israeli reader: Yizhar had gone back to writing after thirty years of silence. The article uncovers the mode of writing and the pattern of the novel.

Each of the works of S. Yizhar, who is considered the greatest among the writers of the generation of 1948, tells in one way or another about his childhood and youth in the land of Israel, but the novel *Preliminaries*, the first in a trilogy of declared autobiographical novels, is molded entirely on the impressions from Yizhar's childhood. The novel is the start of a poetic documentation that merges the beginning of the writer's life with the beginning of the life of the Israeli nation, a record that will continue into the following two novels, which describe two more periods in the author's life. *Preliminaries* is replete with biblical allusions, intended to impart a quality of firstness to the genesis of a child's life—Yizhar's—in an ancient land that is being reborn. In fact, the novel conjoins the dawn of the child's life (born 1916) with the dawn of Zionism, and both the newborn child and the start of the Zionist enterprise aspire to be a synecdoche of all creation, from a time that precedes human life on earth to a time when humans' earthly citizenship is threatened.

"Threatened" is indeed the operative word, because at every stage in the development of the novel, a threat hangs over the child's head and over the heads of the Zionist pioneers who came to wrestle the intractable and harsh land, and to make life grow on it. The threat hangs over the land that has begun finally to yield to human determination and yet is liable at any moment to slide back into chaos, its natural primordial condition. A new child is created, and a new language is being born, a new human being begins to walk the primal land, and all are threatened but continue on, continue to grow and become strong, and continue to open up to the universe that is constantly changing.

1. LIMINARY: STARING AT A PLACE, THE SPINE OF THE HILLS, MOTION

“It is comical to mention him and the world in the same breath,” says the Yizharian narrator, in one of the very first pages of *Preliminaries*.¹ *Preliminaries*, by S. Yizhar, is the first of three books (to date) that announce the wondrous “comeback” of the renowned Israeli prose poet. The novel tells the history of one man and at the same time tells a history of the world: a Zionist Joycean epic. Pretentious, appealing, and humorous, it is written with a profound—even devout—conviction and seriousness, an epic that does not hesitate to wax poetic about the birth and adolescence of a people, a country, a child, and a language.

In this epic tale, the reference to the little boy, who is so thin and frail “that without paying any particular attention you might overlook his tiny being, his lack of space in this world,” alludes simultaneously to the “huge world, with the two poles, the equator, the five great continents.”² The opposite is also true. Any mention of the vast open world, “how very open it all is, totally and without any obstacle, open and totally untouched by base, troublesome human actions” is also an indirect reference to the child poet, of whom his friends complain: “you always stay on your own and never come along with the rest of us,” and on yet another occasion “they notice that a fine thread has snapped and he is no longer trailing behind them.”³ This “unlikely” analogy and other “irrational” ones form the foundation for *Preliminaries*.

The novel follows the child, the future artist, the burden of his childhood and development, the threat of death that hovers over him at every stage of his development, his struggle to survive, his awakening to the wonders of the creation and his ability to remain endlessly amazed by them (“like a desert dweller encountering rain for the first time, or like an inland dweller meeting the sea, stunned, surprised, delighted”), as well as his gradual sobering to the pain, toil, and anxieties of life, to love, and sexuality (“how from this moment he is no longer what he was before” “and the feeling that he is about to enter into knowledge that once he has it will change him forever”).⁴ Yet these events are not alone at the novel’s epicenter. The life-imbibing experiences that form the child’s spiritual and physical worlds are

¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries* (trans. N. de Lange; London: The Toby Press, 2007), p. 44.

² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 44, 43.

³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 232, 299, 243.

⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 195, 168, 183.

paralleled by the ancient challenge of man against space, god, and nature. A particular case of this terrifying, heroic, and total defiance, which—with all its human might—aims to shift the order of the universe and control history, is the story of the gallant pioneers in a tough desert land, whose confrontation, due to its audacity, daring, and insistence, is a symbol of all struggles: “if you just let them this hillside and the next rise will remain as they have been from time immemorial, if the whole man does not marshal all his resources against them, and all the more so the new Jew in the new Land.”⁵

Preliminaries, therefore, is a Genesis story about a prehistoric world and its antiquated ways, and about the new man, descendant of an ancient people, struggling against the old ways of the world, against a stable state, steadily existing since time immemorial, in an attempt to revive his life of old, in the land of yore, in hope of progress and renewal. Man’s first instincts urge him to conquer the universe, to cleanse the earth from which he himself has sprung. Such accomplishments are achieved in part by hard work and in part through language (“with beautiful words the choicest of beautiful words, about nature, the sunset, sadness and suchlike”⁶).

The story opens (in 1916) with a baby opening his eyes, looking ahead, and seeing nothing but a giant orange spot, “that total, perfect, universal orange,” and he knew that “there was the beginning of everything ... the beginning of heaven and earth the heat and the day and the breeze.”⁷ The baby’s first sight is not the product of clear vision, observation, or attention to detail. It is an initial sensory reception that reveals a large uniform expanse, or perhaps it is an enormous cloth, undefined and unconfined, and the perception of the spatial dimension is the perception of space as time, which is none other than all the time of the world. “Staring” (*Staring at a place*) is the name that Yizhar uses to refer to this initial—but perhaps involuntary—sensory reception of the first place, the orange, of that first ancient beginning of time. In the novel’s first sentence, onomatopoeic sounds of early language, preverbal babblings of isolated syllables emerge like the beat of the tom-tom drum: “was orange, all orange, wholly orange, very orange. Totally.”⁸ In the parallelism that develops, the child who awakens to the world to see only a silky rippling spread of orange is likened to the chaos that will become the world. Thus, his first “seeing” is reminiscent of the story of Genesis, during which, according to the version in *Preliminaries*,

⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 46.

⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 284.

⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 36.

⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 35.

“there would be just the earth.”⁹ This initially amorphous earth with its “wonderful red color,” “that red which is the foundation of the world, the same red soil from which man was created,”¹⁰ is also the arena where orange sunsets flare, as old as the ancient red earth.

This ancient story about the constant and eternal interaction between the elements of the world, foretold by the orderly, familiarly cyclical and reciprocal relationships among the forces of nature, is interrupted by human hand. Although it is itself made of earth, it wants desperately to create a change in Mother Earth, to etch its fingerprints onto her back. Due to this desire, although at a much later time and perhaps only as a fleeting vision, as if “granted a truce between times and who knows how long it will last,”¹¹ this sandy, loamy earth will eventually be covered in orange green groves created by human hands. Caring for the orange fruit in the packing room is compared to the Levites officiating at the Holy Temple¹²; in other words, the religion of the forefathers will be replaced with a belief in manual labor.

Thus, the red-brown loamy soil, that “immense terrain extending as it has done since time immemorial,” “the everlasting earth, totally clean, totally naked, warm and calm and beautiful, easy for the sun to come into and easy for it to surrender itself to the sun,”¹³ (which when the time comes will be colored by orange groves), all this is also part of the bright orange, to which the child awakens from within his shelter inside a vast army tent—this and the sunsets.

In *Preliminaries*, the sunsets are described as an act of lovemaking between a man and a woman, despite the fact that in actuality, they were here before man and his works came to earth, and they will continue existing here long after humans disappear (those humans, whose actions are no more than a scratch on the surface, an itch, a shadow passing over the land, despite their “heavy orange groves with their dark green and the fruit that conquers the market”¹⁴). These passionate, stirring sunsets also contribute to the endless orange, “the infinite extent of this dome, lit without the sun, which has long since set ... the dome of the infinite orange height without any connection to our presence as we watch it, or the tininess of our contemplation of it.”¹⁵

⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 191.

¹⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 262.

¹¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 271.

¹² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 273.

¹³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 189, 191.

¹⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 271.

¹⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 224.

The open and flat land will curve slightly. That is, later, the baby, who is now capable of more than just staring, will discover that the land is somewhat arched, as it “trac[es] rounded arcs, rising and falling ... like the contour of a horse’s back perhaps, or maybe that of a girl lying on her side”¹⁶ (ready to receive the twilight sun, that big red wheel that disappears between her curves). This then is yet another stage in the child’s introduction to the world:

It (the “big red wheel” of the sun) descended beautiful, light and naked into that hollow between two hills that seemed to have been prepared for it since time immemorial, gradually entering it, slowly and all the time more and more, gradually entering it, into that concavity that opened up to receive it to gather it into its prepared embrace, and a moment later the entire wheel was inside, in that depression between two hills which enfolded it entirely and it entered it entirely all red and hot and entirely entirely, and then there was a fullness than which nothing is fuller.¹⁷

Indeed, these hills, ready to receive the naked orange wheel that toward evening has “shamelessly stripped of all the pallor of its dazzling heat,” they are the second thing the child learns as he awakens to the world. Or so we are told in the second part of *Liminary*, titled “The Spine of the Hills” (which follows after “Staring at a Place,” which was completely and entirely and only an orange spot): “And then? Then there were the hills.”¹⁸ And the third part of this awakening, what will it be? Next comes the part of human pain, so necessary and inevitable as it flows naturally into the miracle of creation. Yizhar called this third part of *Liminary*: *Motion*.

Thus, in *Liminary* there are three stages which form the poetic introduction to the lyrical epic of *Preliminaries* (an introduction which, as becomes increasingly manifest, is only a prelude). The adult Yizhar breathes life into these episodes of his own early childhood, his early language, the dawn of his existence, which is also the dawn of Zionism and the dawning of the world. The poet, who seeks to conjoin this tripartite prelude (about a child, a people, a world) into a single placental fabric, likewise presents each of the following five chapters in three parts, so that each short part in *Liminary* foreshadows a parallel stage in each of the chapters. In all, Yizhar, the composer, has orchestrated a work in six movements, each a triptych. The finale is called *Since*.

¹⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 36–37.

¹⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 264–265.

¹⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 36.

Thus, the first part of each triptych in *Preliminaries* contains a threat of some kind. It may be visible and palpable, openly threatening, perceptible right from the very first words of the first part of the chapter (as in the opening part of the second chapter, titled “Iron bar,” “there is unease. On every side unease. You can feel it... A shadow over everything, it’s not clear what, just a shadow over everything. And unease.”¹⁹). Or, it may be a latent threat, impending and terrorizing, a hint of danger, specific, terrifying, and—for the time being—suppressed in the title of the first triptych of a chapter (“Wasp,” part one of chapter 1; “A Leg in the Dustbin,” part one of chapter 3).

2. FIRST TRIPTYCH: WASP, STING, DOCTOR

The first scene of the first triptych (set in the year 1918) describes a child playing in the shade of an old carob tree, while across the way the father attempts to plow this ancient and unyielding land while remaining attentive to the child, regularly turning to look upon him. Would this description suffice to alert us to that “single erased, even murmur spread all the time over everything above”²⁰ as it schemes its evil plot, were this first part not called *Wasp*? However, the word *wasp* is not mentioned at all in this part of the triptych, and without this brief and piercing title, we would be like the father, worried without knowing the precise cause. It is the title that guides the reader to notice “any fly flitting in the heat of the day, or a bee or a hornet,”²¹ as well as the carob tree, which here may be a symbol of desolation and destruction.²² As the father himself notes at a later point in the storyline, “[a]ren’t there always wasps near a carob tree[?]”²³ It is art at its best that appeals to the reader’s intuitions, heightens them, and then delivers confirmation of their accuracy through the sensation of aesthetic pleasure. That nest with the wasps that attack the young child, sting him, and place his life in danger has been lying in wait, preparing to erupt. The tension that leads to this sudden blow develops surreptitiously, subtly, from the very first part of this triptych, yet it is manifestly palpable to the sensitive reader of this great artist and writer.

¹⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 97.

²⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 46.

²¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 46.

²² In Hebrew, the word for *parched dry land* and the word for *destruction* share the same root as the word *carob*.

²³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 61.

The full horror of the wasps' nest is revealed simultaneously to both the father and the reader only in the second and central part of the triptych, titled *Sting*. Were it not too obvious, this section might as well have been called *The Binding*.²⁴ "They were laughing at us. And how come we did not all die?"²⁵ This observation, made towards the end of this section, while seemingly incidental, is clearly evocative of both the name *Isaac* (meaning *laughter*) and the threat of imminent death that was just barely avoided.

When no horse can be found to be tethered to the cart that will rush the child to the doctor, two mules—one male and one female—are harnessed to the task. The centerpiece of this triptych, the heart of the plot and the first sign of its unraveling is well represented by this pair of mules, each of which alludes to a different biblical scene. However, the two evoked scenes are not unrelated, and it is due to this link that the scene with the mules is endowed with a significance pertinent to one of the central themes of *Preliminaries*.

The male animal's indifference, its very "mulishness," was already noted in *Wasp*, when

Daddy is driving the mule ... [and the mule] plodding on as usual, neither faster nor slower ... it plods on indifferently, like the revolution of the earth, such indifference as no power on earth can change, and it could go on like this all day or all year.²⁶

The mule is clearly not the best choice for this rescue mission. As the father helplessly contends with the useless sluggish pace of the mules on the way to the doctor, as his son's life hangs in the balance, he utters the same words that King David used in his lament for his dead son Absalom: "would that I might take your place, my son."²⁷ Perhaps the father in *Preliminaries*, like King David, blames himself for the tragedy, as he mutters these prosaic words, which have been known to pierce the heart more than any other lament in the repertoire of biblical poetic verse. These words, in conjunction with the presence of the mules, "whose mulish ability"²⁸ we have already witnessed, imply an impending death, reminiscent of Absalom's death: "And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between

²⁴ In Hebrew, changing the name of this section as suggested would require no more than the alteration of a single letter.

²⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 81.

²⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 55.

²⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 67.

²⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 68.

the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away” (2 Sam 18:9).²⁹ In *Preliminaries*, as in the biblical scene, the mule is indifferent to the fate of its master.

However, as noted, there are two mules. The first part of this centerpiece features the male mule, whose stubbornness at the plow foreshadows its indifference to the plight of human suffering as it carries the child to the doctor. The second part of the centerpiece features the female mule that is unhitched from the *water cart* to be a “comparable helper” to the male mule. Another son of King David is also carried by a mule—a female mule—in a significant, life altering scene, on a path that leads to life and a monarchy. The allusion to this scene is reinforced by the fact that the mule was moved from the water cart to the rescue cart: “cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon” (2 Kings 1:33–34). How different are the words of King David here in reference to his chosen heir from those of his heart wrenching lament over the death of the son who tried to force his way to the throne. With this as the backdrop to the third part of the first triptych, the events in the final section, *Doctor*, constitute a sanctioning, as in the case of a son ordained to be king: “If he is not dead—the doctor says, to them and to all the crowd round about—then he will live,”³⁰ a pronouncement that echoes the anointing of the King of Israel: “and all the people said, God save king Solomon” (2 Kgs 8:39).

Thus, the first triptych in *Preliminaries* is a dedication or a crowning, the myth of the son who, with the help of his god, overcomes a life-threatening danger, only to re-emerge revitalized and empowered, because, clearly, he was destined for greatness. Like Isaac who was bound but whose life was spared (“They were laughing at us. And how come we did not all die?”³¹ wonders the father in *Sting*); like Joseph, who initially was thrown into a pit and abandoned because of the coat of many colors that he received as a gift from his father, but was actually sent as a harbinger of good fortune for his family (and the child in *Preliminaries*? He “sits there [in the field] ... dressed in white, with his cloth shirt, trousers and hat that his mother has made him, she has no one to show off to” and “makes smooth stripes on the

²⁹ All biblical quotes in this article are from the King James Version, retrieved from <http://www.biblegateway.com> under “passage search.”

³⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 94.

³¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 81.

warm clods of earth"³²); like Moses, saved from the basket on the Nile; like Samuel, whose mother "lent him to the Lord" (1 Sam 1:28); like Ishmael left without water in the desert while his mother sits "a bow-shot" away so as not to watch her son perish, before she is told by the angel, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation" (Gen 21:18; compare with the passages in *Preliminaries*, pp. 62–63 and 133–134); so too, the child in *Preliminaries*, after being stung and fatally poisoned, endangered by the father's obedient and faithful wielding of the plow, is finally spared.

Based on the first triptych, it would seem that only the life of the child is in danger. He alone was attacked by wasps, it was his body that suffered the severe stings, it was his blood that was poisoned by innumerable wasps, and it was by the sheer strength of his small and frail body that he managed to overcome the danger and live. But, of course, the metaphorical significance of this cycle in the child's life is evident because, as mentioned, *Preliminaries* refers to "him and the world in the same breath." The child who innocently drove a stick into a wasps' nest is an invader, not unlike he who invades "the earth vast beyond man's capacity,"³³ the earth, whose entire grandeur and beauty is grounded in its remaining eternally empty, open, void. The wasp and its sting serve as a warning to the invaders, because "[w]hen you begin to upset that sempiternal equilibrium, that has been preserved intact for thousands of years, you never know where you will end up."³⁴ The child who has upset the equilibrium of the wasps' nest, shaken it, is not merely a symbol of man in general as he approaches the land and tries to affect it; rather, he is a symbol of the Jew invading the ancient land, intent on turning the harsh and abandoned soil, this spacious, dry and barren desert into a fruit-bearing, agricultural terrain. But this desert that was barely restrained behind the fence is like the wasps' nest, unyielding: "all ready to come inside, soundlessly and self-evidently, as though returning to its own place."³⁵

The wasp too is a symbol in *Preliminaries*. It represents the resistance of the land at large, the land's desire to remain unravished, empty, unswept by winds since Genesis, as is its wont, and the wasp expresses the land's rejection of those people who try to force themselves upon it, the same people who had once abandoned it ("Maybe this land doesn't want us at all. Really.

³² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 45.

³³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 73.

³⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 87.

³⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 71.

Because we came here to make changes that it doesn't want"³⁶). The wasp is also a synecdoche of all the venomous, pestilent creatures, "the noxious demons of the desert,"³⁷ multiplying as they crawl the earth, be it the solitary earth that predates creation or the same earth that was forsaken two thousand years ago. This swarming loathsome vermin, their dangerous nests, snakes, scorpions, sand flies and mosquitoes, carriers of malaria and disease, all of these are cocooned in the wasps' nest. In the same manner, the *Sting* is a generalization that embodies the defensive maneuvers of all creatures when facing a foreign invasion; it is an attempt to ward off their most hated foe: the civilization that aims to conquer and destroy them.

The wasp represents not only the threatening fauna but also the dangerous flora: "prosopis, couch grass, thistles, and all the rest of those dusty weeds," which will eventually be supplanted by "[s]pecies of trees this place has never dreamed of knowing, but they are now going to paint the place with their colors, pine, cypress, acacia, weeping pepper and even eucalyptus."³⁸

The wasp that signals the resistance against the invaders is also a forewarning of all of the droughts, floods, and other obstacles yet to come.

[W]ith all kinds of resistance to the strangers come to change, with such insolence and arrogance, with the necessary stinging of anyone who tries to push in where he has no right to push in, be this stranger as little as he may, and free of all malice and totally innocent, and be it his father who is plowing full of faith, innocently sitting his child down on the quiet earth that tolerates its wound seemingly without protest, one innocent father and one innocent child dressed in white clothes that his mother made for him, a little too big.³⁹

Here it already becomes obvious that the text is alluding to the Arab-Jewish conflict, the heart of our political, social, and moral reality: those innocent Jewish invaders who tried to ignore the original inhabitants of this land, the Arabs, who like the wasps, the desert, the thistles, the floods, and the droughts, they too will eventually appear, all at once, to inundate, sting, sabotage, undermine, protest, and fight in every possible way, so that the land that has been theirs for generation upon generation will not be swept from under them. The queen wasp is also a mother, and the doctrine of survival and war is clear to her and to her busy offspring: "they, seething and

³⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 86.

³⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 73.

³⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 75.

³⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 88.

buzzing terrifying and girded with their magnificent golden waistbands, from the seventh section of their oval abdomen they unsheathe their sac of venom whole, and sting and sting again.”⁴⁰ Daddy, who writes at nights, expresses his honest belief, his unavoidable rationalization when he writes “that the Arabs are not a single nation, and only a few of them have lived here for generations ... and most of the Land is not settled, so that we do not displace anyone when we settle in the empty sectors.”⁴¹ Daddy, who takes with him “a rather stout stick because you can never tell what can happen when you have to cross that village.... A hidden question, the question of the Arabs,”⁴² proves that in his heart of hearts, he is very much aware of the harsh truth.

3. SECOND TRIPTYCH: IRON BAR, GLASS, MASKS

In the second chapter of *Preliminaries*, the “stout [wooden] stick” is replaced with an iron bar, and correspondingly the threat too becomes more pronounced and palpable. The narrative no longer relies on the wasps and their nest to serve as metaphor, metonym, synecdoche, allegory, and symbol of every disaster, obstacle, and protest that the existing land uses against the change-seeking invaders, but points explicitly to the Arabs, residents of this land, who openly charge against the new settlers in a rampage, wreaking havoc and destruction, a pogrom against the Jews. And that “hidden question,” which had created sufficient discomfort to be repressed, is now unambiguously formulated: “Wasn’t this our place? Wasn’t it their place? Were we intruders? Were they intruders?”⁴³ Yet just as in the first chapter, that terrible day in the life of a two-year-old infant in the summer of 1918 exceeded the boundaries of personal experience and all the suffering, the despair, and the anxiety and finally even the redeeming proclamation “[i]f he is not dead then he will live”⁴⁴ gained a broad “universal” and national significance; thus, in the second chapter, a public and historical day (that of Brenner’s murder in May of 1921) is condensed into a private and personal meaning in the lives of a five year old boy and his worried mother.

On that day, the mother and child find themselves in a small yard hiding from the riots in the neighborhood of Neve-Shalom (the neighborhood’s

⁴⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 85–86.

⁴¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 53.

⁴² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 77.

⁴³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 116.

⁴⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 94.

names, Neve-Tzedek meaning “abode of justice,” and Neve-Shalom meaning “abode of peace,” acquire an ironic significance), while the father dares to come and go through the wicket “clutching the milk pan in one hand and the iron bar in the other,” so as to fight the rioters and also bring back milk for the children (“for ours is the sickle and the sword, for ours is the sickle sword”). The “personal” threat on the child’s life in the first part of this second triptych is foreshadowed by a side story about a train trip to Jerusalem, *again* to seek medical attention. However, this time, it is not due to the child’s ailment (perhaps a bout of dysentery?) that his life is in danger (although the doctors are beyond despair: “you are still young, you can have more children, strong, healthy ones, while this weakling”⁴⁵); rather it is his disappearance. Enchanted by the marvels of the train, the child, who during one of the stops on the way wandered off on his own to see how they were watering the engine, caused his parents terrible worry and anxiety. The observation, “[a]nd the child was not there,”⁴⁶ made just before the boy is found by his father, reverberates back to the episode of a beloved biblical child who had disappeared for many years and was mourned by his father, who believed that his son had been devoured by wild animals.

In the central part of the triptych, the child’s disappearance becomes a concrete reality that is intensified given the political events that serve as the background in this chapter. Nevertheless, unlike the previous chapter, in which political innuendo was communicated through the metaphorical essence of the wasp, the sting, and the doctor, in this chapter the political character is not implicit. Thus, the central part of the second triptych, *Glass* is likewise a condensed expression that conveys a socio-political significance. The pieces of shattered glass that the child notices in his wanderings lead him to an awareness of “how vulnerable we all are here and how, not to mince words, foreign we really are, and how unwanted.”⁴⁷ However, within this general observation, the mother-child relationship is allotted its own special “aside,” which—although seemingly detached—is very much connected to the present events of the narrative’s real world. In yet another departure from current events (the surrounded yard is the home front, while the battle front is in the streets of Jaffa, just beyond the unstable wicket), the narrative tells the tale of the child who once upon a time walked out of the kindergarten alone and meandered through the alleyways between the yards, and saw with his own eyes the failure manifested in the pieces of shattered

⁴⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 110–111.

⁴⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 110.

⁴⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 124.

glass that remained from the windows of an abandoned factory: “[h]e would never be able to escape from those panes of glass, from the sight of those smashed things, the desolation that moaned from their fragments.”⁴⁸ Until his worried mother appeared in the lane,

wrapped in whatever she could hastily snatch up, full of reproaches and re-
criminations, Thank God mingled with outpoured wrath, but she did not hit
him, why should she, she just picked him up with his sandals and with his lit-
tle basket, and just kissed him noisily.⁴⁹

In the third part of the triptych, *Masks*, while still under siege in that yard, where the well is the last resort (“At the last minute, you can always jump into the well and hide in its depth”⁵⁰), the child once again disappears from his mother’s view. The mother is beside herself with worry, yet she knows that her wondrous child “was born wrapped in the caul, which is surely a sign and an exceptional omen, for good luck in life of course, and that no harm could befall him, of course.”⁵¹ And, in fact, he is soon found squeezed among those seated on the rim of the well. One man, perhaps a prophet, “takes Mummy’s hand, Here, he says to her, take him, take your son, something far far away maybe from the depths of the well and as though these very words have already been spoken before.”⁵²

The echo awakened by these words “take him, take your son,” as well as the fact that the child of *Preliminaries* was born covered in the caul, an obvious sign of good luck in life and a omen protecting him from all harm, evokes the cyclic pattern of the birth of the wondrous child, the threat of death which accompanies his adolescent years, and the unquestionable knowledge that the obstacles will be overcome and the child shall live on. The words “take him, take your son,” uttered to the mother in *Preliminaries* on the rim of the well are indeed an allusion to Ishmael (Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer [Gen 21:18–20]); however, it is a formula that hints to a biblical convention, a scene pattern, in which a yearned-for child is miraculously born to a barren woman, an elderly couple, after the child’s arrival has been announced by God (Isaac,

⁴⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 123.

⁵⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 90.

⁵¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 133.

⁵² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 134.

Joseph, Samuel), and yet his life is in constant danger. Thus, the prophet Elisha announced to the Shunammite woman with the “old husband” that “[a]bout this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son” (2 Kgs 4:14)—words reminiscent of those uttered by the three angels to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:10). Yet later the prophet had to return to the home of the Shunammite woman in order to revive her son. As in *Preliminaries*, so too the son of the Shunammite woman had gone out to the fields where his father worked, and there he was badly injured. After the revival, Elisha goes to the mother and tells her “take you son,” a phrase that symbolizes that the dead son is revived.

However, in contrast to the biblical scene, the Yizharian child is revived, not by an angel or a divine messenger. In the first chapter, the child’s life is saved, but not by the doctor, since by the time the child reached the doctor, the battle between life and death had been decided, and all that remained for the doctor to do was to announce the glorious outcome. A similar pattern of events develops in the second chapter. Three masked angels suddenly appear, out of nowhere, in the final part of the second triptych, *Masks*, and frighten the child to death. These three angels, a distant allusion to, or perhaps a parody of the three angels that appeared before Sarah and Abraham announcing that they will have a son, constitute the “sting” in this triptych. This then is the trauma of the second triptych, for after the appearance of the three *Masks*, the child “will never be able to go back to what he was before, will never be able to remember what he was before, but only from that suddenly and onwards.”⁵³ The deadly fright caused by the masks, as well as the child’s disappearances in the second triptych can hardly prepare him for the events of the third triptych.

4. THIRD TRIPTYCH: A LEG IN THE DUSTBIN, ALLENBY, TERESH

The third triptych of *Preliminaries*, preceded by two chapters and a *Liminary*, is followed by two chapters and an afterword, *Since*. Thus, it is in fact the center of the book, which in and of itself may be seen as a triptych. The central part of this third triptych is therefore the very heart of the work and shall be explored in detail. Prior to that, however, let us recall that the first part of each triptych contains a threat: an explicit threat, as in the second chapter (“There is unease”⁵⁴), or one that is suspended and implicit, as in the first and third chapters.

⁵³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 129.

⁵⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 97.

Not unlike the first chapter, whose first part is titled *Wasp* although no wasp is mentioned or seen, the first part of the third chapter is titled *A Leg in the Dustbin*, although neither a severed leg nor a dustbin is mentioned. On the contrary, this first part of the triptych is somewhat hedonistic in nature, as it tells of colored sodas and “decadent” music (jazz? the pop music of those days?), the entertainment through which the hearts of father and son are rejoined: “how it was for the two of them, Daddy and his boy, when they sat and sinned with the soda ... facing each other ... while over everything waved the catchy voice of the gramophone with its stubborn, inescapable insistence.”⁵⁵ But that horrific, ominous title, *A Leg in the Dustbin*, overshadows the “hedonistic” pleasurable atmosphere of the first part of the third triptych, averting our attention to the sick neighbor, who is mentioned almost incidentally, since there is no point in dwelling on her and the terrifying illness that besieges her. The threat of the severed leg, which rumor has it has been left in the dustbin, is thus present in the first part of the triptych, although only in the second part of the chapter will it acquire a significance—both concrete and metaphorical.

The changing times, as evidenced by the opening of the Café-kiosk, on the corner of Nahalat Binyamin Street, with its undertones of hedonism and amusement, an atmosphere of “obscene corruption that has entered [Mommy’s] clean house,”⁵⁶ provide a fitting background for the subject of the second part of the triptych, that is, the holiday of Purim.⁵⁷ Yet the fact that Allenby Street (*Allenby* is also the name of the second part of the triptych) has donned this festive garb only serves to terrify the child, as he is reminded *again* of the frightening masks (from the end of the previous chapter). Purim, the holiday that commands one to regale, is referred to by the child as “that rotten Purim.”⁵⁸ All “the masks and the gurgling, the balloons and the flags, the rattles and the Purim guns, all the pushing and shoving”⁵⁹ are not to his liking. The aversion of the individualist child to all things public is not unexpected: his experiences have all been felt in private, and any form of “togetherness” only cautions him to stay away. Nevertheless, this quality alone is not sufficient to explain the trauma of the central part of the central triptych in *Preliminaries*.

⁵⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 165.

⁵⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 166–167.

⁵⁷ This holiday, which is marked by costumes, parades, and general festivity and hilarity, suggests a carnivalesque quality.

⁵⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 169.

⁵⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 170.

The central part of this triptych is not based only on Purim. It is also rooted experientially, semantic-etymologically, and thematically in the notion of the *Leg in the Dustbin*. This connection explains the child's antagonism for a holiday that is "happy and jovial," in which masks, costumes, pretense, illusions, delusions, impersonations, and images are of essence. The sick neighbor, whose illness was repressed in the first and amusing part of the triptych, has had a leg amputated. This is revealed only in whispers, after which, a rumor is spread, claiming that the amputated leg was left in the dustbin, "and if you have the nerve, go lift the lid and see for yourself."⁶⁰ From this moment on, the soul of the six-year-old child is given to internal turmoil: the lonely leg, the leg without the woman, lies solitary in the covered dustbin, luring and tempting him, but he does not have the courage to lift the lid and reveal the sheer horror. God Almighty! The lid obscures the leg, just as the mask, be it a real Purim mask or the masks that people around him don most of the time, to which he is "well attuned" and by which he is also repulsed, conceals the truth. Hence, his hatred of Purim, the holiday that for the child demonstrates most tangibly the semblance and the lies in life ("and they are all just disguised as what we usually think they are, and they only talk like what we are used to hearing them say, but in reality it is not them, and that is not what they should be saying"⁶¹). And hence, the temptation to unveil the severed leg is enormous: to confirm or dismiss the rumor, to discover and gaze at the truth with his own eyes or to know that what he has heard is unfounded. In Hebrew, the words for *cover* and *mask* are related, as are the words for *disguise* and *search*: each pair shares a common root. In *Allenby*, these words play a game of opposites, of hide and seek: "this was the game they were all playing, *looking for each other* and *disguising themselves* as things they were not, and daddy wasn't Daddy, and the Arab wasn't an Arab, and the British policeman was not a British policeman"⁶² (emphasis added). This game of lies, which of course carries a socio-political meaning, is abhorrent to the sensitive child, who seeks the truth and, at the same time, his father, who has disappeared into the celebrating crowd.

It is worth noting that the leg in the dustbin arouses the child's disgust and pity more than does the woman whose leg was amputated: "What's it like, a leg without a woman. A leg on its own. The one that's in the dustbin. What's it like, a leg without a body. Like a doll lying in the sand or in the

⁶⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 169.

⁶¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 178.

⁶² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 171.

yard. Or on the seashore. It's intolerable. It's unbearable."⁶³ The child's empathy for the severed leg rather than for the body that lost the leg preempts the event that will take place during the frightening "costume party":

and suddenly, your hand wasn't in Daddy's hand, and you were surrounded by crowds of strangers, and they were separated from you and dragged forward and you were separated from them and dragged forward and a moment was occurring that at first seemed to be just almost a minor incident, a little moment that suddenly became an eternal moment, that sweeps you away like the sea sweeping away a drowning man.⁶⁴

This Purim holiday, when the child's hand seemingly accidentally became disconnected from his father's hand, thus signals the child's fatal separation from his father, from his parents, and he is left alone, abandoned, solitary, and mortified like a leg in the dustbin, "and he will never forgive this Daddy for giving up on his little boy."⁶⁵

If the first part of the third triptych suggested "brothers dwelling together in unity," the hearts of father and son rejoined, then in the central part, the child is left alone, frightened, and embittered ("it's a pity he went to drink soda with Daddy yesterday"⁶⁶), as he refuses to let go of his father, refuses to mature. However, separation from the parents and maturing into independence is an unavoidable stage, as is the feeling of unbearable pain that accompanies it. Thus, the third and final part of the middle triptych is called *Teresh*, the nickname the child has had since last Purim. This nickname, *Teresh*, bears testimony to the trail of sorrow, which began at that terrible Purim parade and has extended into life after the trauma of separation, the life that comes after being exposed to its fraudulence, that is, the life of the adolescent.

Yet in this same third part of the central triptych, which deals extensively with the cinema (a different kind of life costume) as an ingenious and wondrous invention, there is a certain expression of acquiescence to and acceptance of the mask and the artifice, the separation and maturation. In fact, out of what seemed like a malicious lie sprout the buds (white ones, like those of the squill) of truth, recovery, proportion, and young adulthood.

The beginning of the third part of the middle triptych "begins with two children [the protagonist and his brother] hand in hand walking"⁶⁷ and con-

⁶³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 168.

⁶⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 170.

⁶⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 173.

⁶⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 169.

⁶⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 181.

tinues with father and son “[a]s they walk both of them together.”⁶⁸ However, since the binding of the son and the inevitable severance have already occurred in the second part of the triptych, the pain of the revelation no longer stings, and if it all seems to be nothing more than a frivolous illusion, so it is, yet not entirely:

As though all that has taken place these last years in Tel-Aviv and all its glory is nothing more than a slight scratch or a little heap on the edge of this unchanging wholeness, a mere what-of-it beside the great unchanging, and all the exertions of the builders have melted away inoffensively on the face of the great open space all around, untouched and unaltered alike by the Arabs’ vineyards and the Jews’ houses. Only a little further to the east, right beneath the sun, you can see some cypresses and red roofed houses.⁶⁹

In other words, eventually the wilderness will be conquered and inhabited, and the emptiness in the soul of the child, who feels so slight as to be insignificant and forsaken, will be cast out, and his soul refilled:

one day he will stop when he suddenly reads things he has long known but couldn’t say because he was too small.... And as though a chrysalis of blind feeling suddenly opens and spreads wings that were prepared long since, after a long time, forty years or more, he suddenly comes across words that he could not say when he was little.... Our Father in heaven, so he found in a book one day late in his life, in a moment of silence when a man stands solitary and abandoned, he read in a book, when he does not receive Your voice and imagines that You have abandoned him and that he is abandoned, that moment, he read, is but an instance of silence in the midst of a conversation. Only an instance of silence in the midst of our conversation, he read later what he knew before, many years ago, and exactly so.⁷⁰

5. FOURTH TRIPTYCH: TIYYARA, TEL NORDAU, SYCAMORE

The harsh realization of the child’s separation from his parents, experienced by the child as a physical loss, an emotional amputation, heralded a longing for freedom, a desire and readiness to soar to new heights, beyond the adherence to individuality and the power and restraint such individuality entails. In typical Yizharian subtlety that carries a very personal tone, the fourth triptych deals with the well-known controversy regarding socialism and sharing on the one hand and the position of the individual within the

⁶⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 192.

⁶⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 192.

⁷⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 142.

greater public realm on the other. The kite (*tiyyara*) that flies out of its creators' hands, not unlike the creature that overcomes its maker or the magically endowed puppet that comes alive, is an allegory of the child (now ten years old, in the fifth grade; it is 1926), the individualist, who this time voluntarily pulls away, disconnecting from his old breeding ground in response to his own needs and character. The rising *tiyyara* that flies all the way up to god is an omen of the potential danger.

It would appear that the connection between "the *tiyyara* of the century," "the perfect accomplishment of an aerial revolution in the neighborhood of Tel Nordau," "a *Tiyyara* of invention and revolution, of conquest and breakthrough, of imagination and daring, of the triumph of the Jews and the triumph of progress"⁷¹ and the skinny child, no longer Teresh but nicknamed after Mikha'ela's thin greyhound Tsi, is—at best—a tenuous one. However, as will be demonstrated, the link is very strong indeed.

"This queen of *tiyyaras*," after being launched according to the strictest aeronautic rules, turned into a gigantic creature, stronger than its three creators who are now "strain[ing] to master it." But six hands are not enough to restrain the

mighty celestial serpent that is dragging them up into the sky, so high that the whole Silicate factory [which is the most splendid enterprise in the world⁷²] is a joke and all the houses of Tel Nordau must look like a child's building blocks from up there, as though there is no trace of human creation left here on the sand dunes.⁷³

They say Mikha'ela witnessed the disappearance of the *tiyyara*, "which may even have flown over the Temple, and onward over the Dead Sea, and further over the hills of Transjordan, and further over the deserts,"⁷⁴ and shed a tear. The *Tiyyara*, the first part of the fourth triptych, is therefore an unforeseeable demonstration of flight, independence, and strength.

In *Tel Nordau*, the second part of the fourth triptych, Tsi becomes a lurking shadow, eavesdropping unnoticed on the adults' ideological debate. On the one hand, "we are people with an idea, we are people who belong, without that we would not be here, people who belong to an idea, a goal, a mission, and if we are all for ourselves what are we? Thieves or exploiters," while on the other hand, "it would be better to let each individual find his

⁷¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 210, 200, 211–212.

⁷² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 203.

⁷³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 213.

⁷⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 227.

own way.”⁷⁵ Tsi’s view is not stated, yet it is implied, “[b]ecause even when they are all together there is always one who is left on his own.”⁷⁶

In the third part of this triptych, *Sycamore*, the implicit argument continues between the sense of power and safety rooted in the group and the ominous sense of adventure and danger that fascinate the individual: a single sycamore could not have created “the huge hemisphere,” the crowded masses of foliage,” that “single vaulted canopy.”⁷⁷ Only the joining together of the three sycamores creates power. And despite this, Tsi is like the solitary *tiyyara*, rather than the powerfully unified sycamores. He is “stricken with a wild urge”⁷⁸ that he cannot restrain; he climbs “up to the top, like a chirping bird” among the budding branches, “like a monkey except for the tail ... [he] flies from branch to branch right up to the top of the tree.... What is it like to stand there over the void at the top of all that swaying swinging height?”⁷⁹ It is only at the height of a soaring *tiyyara* that Tsi can dream of an enraptured wedding night, a blue and white dream about Mikha’ela: “he knows that he sees exactly that this is her white, her very white dress, a very smooth white, dotted with very blue coins...a little girl’s summer frock, very smooth with very blue sequins, very blue on very white.”⁸⁰

How similar is Mikha’ela’s pure summer dress of “light summer fabric” to the orange expanses that greeted the infant as he first opened his eyes to behold all Creation! Falling in love is like a rebirth (and perhaps like the proud raising of the national flag), and for its sake, Tsi takes a risk: he faces the one momentous trial-by-fire experience that can only be attempted by the individual. Thus, Tsi the climber flies up to the top of the tree outside Mikha’ela’s window, in order to watch her and listen to the rather pleasant sounds of her piano playing. Just like Yizhar’s *Preliminaries*, which is repeatedly divided into three parts, so too Mikha’ela’s sonata “has three separate movements.”⁸¹ The hiding place of Tsi the child is nearly revealed to all by Tsi the greyhound, but only “almost.” Our protagonist emerges intact from this individual soaring experience that carries him, like a free flying kite to unprecedented heights; after teetering over the abyss, he falls into childish love with a girl in a blue and white dress, and survives.

⁷⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 216, 217.

⁷⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 225.

⁷⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 228.

⁷⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 231.

⁷⁹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 231, 232.

⁸⁰ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 236.

⁸¹ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 245.

6. FIFTH TRIPTYCH: DAGON, SHE-ASS, SQUILL

The child is no longer called Tsi. In this last chapter of *Preliminaries*, he is a twelve-year-old youth (it is 1928) named *Dagon*, “once again because of a dog—strange, isn’t it” asks the mature voice of equilibrium.⁸² Of course this coincidence of naming is strange, and no less strange is the way the text hints, by way of exclusion, at two—albeit incorrect—interpretations for this name: “not in honour of the Philistine god,” a statement which evokes the image of this god and all we know of him, “nor after the diminutive fish known as *dagon*, which dart around in huge numbers among the green rocks near the shore.”⁸³ Nevertheless, there is a connection to the Philistine god.

During this period, the child and his family were living in “the Rabbi’s House”; however, “there is no Rabbi in this house ... maybe a Rabbi lived here once ... and his name remained attached inseparably to this house.”⁸⁴ Is not this house, with its historical namesake, reminiscent of the Dagon House, whose name remains forever associated with the tradition of casting out a foreign god and punishing its believers? “Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon’s house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day” (1 Sam 5:5). In the context of this fifth triptych, in which the child is exposed to cruel sexuality attached to neither love nor tenderness, a passion-driven, brutal, and emotionless act, the name *Dagon* connotes the sin of the flesh and the related fear of divine (Jewish, idolatrous or mythological) punishment. And what are the words that open the third part of this triptych? Words that in fact substantiate the vague feeling that was first evoked in *Dagon* and further established in the second part of the fifth triptych: “Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, in his innermost being.”⁸⁵ Seemingly, this is a reference to the book in Moka’s father’s library but, in fact, this is the knowledge that fills the adolescent with a jumble of temptations and contradictory feelings drawn from life itself:

Suddenly [after peeking and seeing what he saw] he was seized with the dread that they would see him, that they would *know* that he was here and that he *knew*, *knew* something that he didn’t want to *know* and that he was suddenly choked by a wild urge to know more and more, but also angry at the *knowledge* of the humiliation that was ahead of him, and shame at *knowing* something he was not supposed to *know*, and wished he didn’t, and how the

⁸² S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 251.

⁸³ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 251.

⁸⁴ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 249.

⁸⁵ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 282.

man had washed his privates at the frothy tap, and also the curiosity that it was shameful that he had such dark curiosity inside him, what had he done to her in there, and how he was inside her, and all the things that the bigger boys stopped talking about when he came near, because he was the way he was, and how could he put it all away as if it had never happened, if only he hadn't been here and hadn't seen and didn't know, and it wasn't like that, he shouldn't have, and what he had seen was so dirty that all the water in the tap could never wash it away.⁸⁶

It is early autumn, the days of Jewish repentance, Days of Awe: all of these time-related references allude to the formative experience and necessary revelation, a required element in any *bildungsroman*, just as it is a natural part in the life of every individual on earth. It is not surprising then, that in the last triptych, after having experienced this revelation, and on the brink of winter, Mikha'ela is no longer clad in a white summery dress: "and suddenly Mikha'ela was here with him too, in the night, apparently, presumably in a dream, and he doesn't remember except that it was she, and she was dressed as though for the winter, in a long grey warm coat."⁸⁷

Undoubtedly, the protagonist will emerge from this experience, as he has from previous ones, empowered. Indeed, this is the season of the squills, and it has already been noted that the white squill is a symbol of hope and new beginnings.

7. SINCE

"And one day before the festivals Daddy came home with fewer wrinkles and the wrinkles that were there had less darkness in them."⁸⁸ This is the opening of *Since*, which ends in anticipation of the child's Bar Mitzvah, a Jewish, Rabbinical initiation ceremony.

The repeating pattern that we attempted to identify, the narrative thread we traced, and the structural mold that was identified here as we proceeded from one chapter to the next in the poetic plot of *Preliminaries* is but one possible reading of the abundant Yizharian text, associative and expansive in spirit, with its multiple internal interpretations and designs, in which numerous and parallel plotlines develop and flow simultaneously. The "narrative" selected for this study sought to demonstrate that this is a masterpiece with strong autobiographic roots, which help it extend and become a biography of everyman, surpassing the personal story of this great author.

⁸⁶ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, pp. 283–284, emphasis added.

⁸⁷ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 285.

⁸⁸ S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, p. 303.