

Choosing Yiddish

NEW FRONTIERS OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Edited by

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HEBREW REMEMBERS YIDDISH

Avot Yeshurun's Poetics of Translation

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A few days after his death, the *New York Times* published a short obituary in honor of the Israeli poet Avot Yeshurun (1904-1992).¹ The laconic headline “Poet in Unusual Idiom” accurately summed up a career that spanned most of twentieth century modern Hebrew and Israeli writing, one that encompassed and articulated the various subjects, themes, questions, and polemics that preoccupied modern Hebrew poetry throughout the twentieth century, particularly with regard to language politics.² Like many writers of his generation, Yeshurun was not a native Hebrew speaker, and his poetry, like theirs, maps not only the linguistic shifts and transformations that occurred within modern Hebrew itself but also the long-standing tension between a “revived” Hebrew vernacular and native, diasporic languages, Yiddish in particular. The *Times* characterization of Yeshurun as “an Israeli poet who wove Arabic and Yiddish idiom [*sic*] into a unique and influential form of Hebrew verse” understates the extent to which Yeshurun constantly challenged and subverted Israel’s ethos of monolingualism and rejection of the diaspora (*shlilat hagalat*) by developing a radically experimental and multilingual poetics.

Multilingualism was one of the more prominent features of Yeshurun’s earliest work.³ “Balada shel Miryam hamagdalit uvnah halavan” (“The Ballad of Mary Magdalene and Her White Son”), one of his first major Hebrew poems, featured Yiddish, Russian, and Polish words in Hebrew transliteration.⁴ A quotation from the Gospel of John, which Yeshurun included in Hebrew translation, added a layer of Greek. In this period, however, multilingual writing in modern Hebrew was hardly exceptional. Many of the canonical writers who emerged in the pre-state period and would later become major national poetic figures—poets like Avraham Shlonsky, Natan Alterman, and Leah Goldberg—

frequently incorporated foreign words, to varying degrees, in their own texts, which were discernibly influenced by their native (predominantly western European and Russian) literary cultures. In fact, the linguistic acrobatics that Yeshurun performed in his poems—e.g., multilingualism, neologism, formal hybridity—also characterized Yiddish modernism of the early twentieth century, so arguably a Yiddish poetics or poetic sensibility shaped his very approach to writing Hebrew.⁵ What distinguished Yeshurun was the extent to which he engaged in these practices, resulting in what some early critics regarded as a “deformation” (more pronounced over time) of the Hebrew language.⁶ Yeshurun was also one of the few poets who, to quote Michael Gluzman, “declined to participate in the systematic erasure of the past, making the return of the repressed past the leitmotif of his poetic oeuvre.”⁷ Indeed, Yeshurun sensed early on that Hebrew literature’s fixation on creating an autochthonous national literary culture in Hebrew risked cultural amnesia, and he sought to redress this danger through hybrid and multilingual writing practices, even when doing so increasingly put him at odds with Israeli readers and the Israeli literary establishment.⁸

Yeshurun’s early poems, including the 1942 collection *Al ḥakhmot drakhim* (*On the Wisdom of Roads*), were largely invested in acknowledging and articulating Palestine’s multilingual landscape, and in this context, Yiddish emerged as one of many languages that Yeshurun employed to challenge the hegemony of Hebrew.⁹ After the Holocaust and the emergence of the State of Israel, an intensified sense of loss, guilt, and betrayal shaped the poet’s use of Yiddish and motivated its increased visibility in his poems. His later work not only thematized the desire to recover, remember, and repair Yiddish but also enacted the tensions and ruptures that had come to characterize the Hebrew-Yiddish relation in his own broken, fragmented, and hybrid poetic language. To this end, Yeshurun not only employed his more overt multilingual strategies but also relied increasingly on translation, and specifically the translation of Yiddish into Hebrew. In the poet’s own words: “‘From my mother I brought a word into Hebrew,’ I wrote once. Everyone brings a word from his mother . . . to the world, to literature.”¹⁰ Although referring broadly to the influence of the past on present writing, Yeshurun’s comments implicate Israeli literature’s entangled relationship with its diasporic past, one further complicated by the fact that Hebrew was not the native language of many of its early writers. For writers like Yeshurun, bringing the mother tongue into Hebrew involved, and even required, an act of translation, and in many cases, the “mother’s word” was in Yiddish.

Following the work of scholars like Michael Gluzman, Lilach Lachman, and Yochai Oppenheimer, my reading of Yeshurun focuses on his translations of Yiddish words and phrases into Hebrew and interrogates how these instances of translation further inform the relation between memory and writing that preoccupied Yeshurun throughout his literary career.¹¹ Although breakage, or *shevirut*, became the cornerstone of Yeshurun’s poetics, Hebrew translations

of Yiddish (as well as other languages) in Yeshurun's work arguably served a prosthetic function. In several contexts, which my reading will explore, Yeshurun described modern Hebrew as a body disabled by hegemonic monolingualism and the rejection of the past, but to the extent that translation marked the absence of Yiddish in his work—and even could be construed as a form of replacement—it also served a constructive and reconstructive function. For Yeshurun, translation offered Yiddish a form of textual afterlife that also undermined the national desire for the normalization of Hebrew monolingualism.¹²

In *Prosthesis*, the literary theorist and translator David Wills observes that “the writing of prosthesis . . . is inevitably caught in a complex play of displacements; prosthesis being about nothing if not placement, displacement, replacement, standing, dislodging, substituting, setting, amputating, supplementing.”¹³ Likewise, the movements of Yiddish in Yeshurun's Hebrew, particularly in Hebrew translation, articulate a “complex play of displacements” that marks, as well as creates, sites of rupture and repair. In the process, Hebrew is resized in order to engage with and give space to Yiddish (as well as other languages), creating a new Hebrew “body” that better accommodates its immigrant “baggage.”¹⁴ In this respect, to quote Wills, “translation is precisely such a prosthetic economy, a matter of making things fit.”¹⁵ But precisely how (and how precisely) Hebrew translation “fits” Yiddish in Yeshurun's Hebrew poems, and what meanings and relations emerge when it attempts to do so, motivates my reading of his work, particularly the poems of the 1964 collection *Shloshim amud shel Avot Yeshurun* (*Thirty Pages of Avot Yeshurun*). In this cycle of thirty poems, Yeshurun incorporates Hebrew translations of private Yiddish letters in ways that alternately camouflage and reveal their presence. In these instances, as in many others in Yeshurun's work, the translation of Yiddish becomes “a catalyst for irrepressible transformations” in and of the Hebrew text.¹⁶

In an intimate 1982 interview with his daughter Helit Yeshurun, Yeshurun discussed the relation between his Hebrew writing and Yiddish, his native language, as a constant and complicated negotiation between absence and presence: “My Hebrew is a person who lives here, in the land, right now. . . . It's not Hebrew, it's Yiddish, Polish, and it's also Hebrew, everything that I accumulated on the way. The Yiddish element is missing for me. There is a hole in the soul because of the fact that I don't write in Yiddish, because I have no Yiddish. This is fulfilled in all sorts of bits of words and expressions, markings, signs, in order to relax that demand of the missing expression.”¹⁷

Although Yeshurun articulates in this passage a binary between “present” and “living” Hebrew and absent Yiddish, a closer reading of his comments suggests that the relationship between the two languages is less dichotomous and antagonistic. For Yeshurun, Hebrew—or rather, “his” Hebrew—is not a monolithic language, rather it is an amalgamation of other languages, notably Yiddish. At the same time, the poet acknowledges the absence of Yiddish as a

persistent “hole in the soul” of his Hebrew (and modern Hebrew in general) that the act of writing both addresses and attempts to repair. The “bits of words and expressions, markings, signs” that replace absent Yiddish in Yeshurun’s Hebrew poems account for their radical linguistic heterogeneity and experimentalism. Years of attempting to “relax that demand” of Yiddish, as well as other repressed and suppressed languages, resulted in a way of writing in Hebrew that ultimately made these tensions and fissures more visible, insistent, and extreme. This way of writing, on the other hand, was also prosthetic. The “bits” of language that Yeshurun employs attempt to impart a new integrity to Hebrew, but like a prosthetic limb that can be removed, replaced, and changed, they do not guarantee its stability, nor can they ameliorate the phantom pain that the absent element leaves behind. The demand may be relaxed but it is still missing.

Born Yechiel Perlmutter in 1904 and raised in a devoutly Hasidic home in Krasnystaw, Poland, Yeshurun emigrated in 1925 against his family’s wishes to Palestine, where he worked as a land laborer and night watchman for many years.¹⁸ The poems that he wrote in this period culminated in the 1942 collection *Al ḥakhmot drakhim*. Most of the Perlmutter family perished in the Holocaust, including Yeshurun’s mother, a loss that haunted the poet’s subsequent work. Following the death of his family, he did not resume publishing his work until the 1961 collection *Re’em*.¹⁹ During that period, he officially changed his name to Avot Yeshurun, which in Hebrew translates as “the fathers are watching us” or “the Fathers of Israel.”²⁰ Although he would later adopt an ostensibly masculine, paternalistic Hebraic name, Yeshurun was very attached to his mother, who came from a family of rabbinic scholars; it was primarily through her influence that he became interested in literature and languages at an early age. Indeed, a maternal, as well as Yiddish, association underlies the very name “Avot Yeshurun”:

I said to myself: remember your childhood: Maybe I could come up with something from my childhood. I remembered my mother singing beautiful lullabies to my brothers in her beautiful voice. Once, she bent over the cradle and sang to the youngest one in Yiddish and Ukrainian. But the children wouldn’t fall asleep, and my mother stopped singing and instead called out excitedly, “*tatelekh, tatelekh*.” And then the child understood that she wasn’t going to sing and he went to sleep himself. From this I took the name Avot.²¹

In a cogent reading of this anecdote, Naomi Seidman observes that “the disappearance of the diminutive in the move to Hebrew might signal the process of replacing a Yiddish childhood with a Hebrew adulthood, but it might also be a clever concealment of the continuing existence of the Yiddish boy.”²² Following Seidman’s observation, one could also claim that *tatelekh* (little fathers) functions as a metonym for the Yiddish language itself. Though concealed in

translation, the Yiddish mother tongue, or *mameloshn*, nevertheless remains present in the new, masculine national culture and language. Indeed, it is the translation of the Yiddish endearment into Hebrew that allows its survival. But in the story, as was the case of Yiddish in Israel, the mother's song is cut off and this severance or breakage also underlies the Hebrew name.

The loss and recovery of the mother tongue are the prevailing themes of Yeshurun's 1964 collection, *Shloshim amud shel Avot Yeshurun*, which comprises poems that attempt to reconstruct an epistolary exchange between the poet and his family, particularly his mother Rikl.²³ Yeshurun's letters from his family, and his failure to respond to many of them, are a major motif in his work, and in this collection Yeshurun's terse quotations, excerpts, and Hebrew translations of their Yiddish missives underscore the emotional, geographical, and temporal ruptures that underlie this correspondence. The poems—as letters—attempt to repair what is ultimately an irrevocably broken connection, but at the same time articulate its broken quality.

As Benjamin Harshav and Helit Yeshurun observe in their notes to the poems, the relation between mourning and writing is invoked in the very title: *shloshim* refers not only to the number of poems in the cycle but also to the thirty days of mourning that follow burial in Jewish tradition. The first poems describe this “burial” of the mother's letters in the poet's desk, mixed with other letters and papers and “put to the side” (Poem 5). Instead of writing letters home, the son writes poems (in Hebrew) on the very desk that contains these letters, in a sense, writing on the grave of Yiddish. These scenes conflate the abandonment of the family and the Yiddish mother tongue in favor of Hebrew writing, as well as the turn to poetry as a form of writing back to the past:

*Yom yavo ve'ish lo yikra mikhtavim shel imi.
Yesh li mehem ḥavilah.
Lo shel mi
velo milah.*

*Yom yavo ve'ish lo yikaḥ otam layad.
Yesh mehem tzror vehoter.
Yomru: neyar pisat
velo yoter.*

*Bayom hahu avi'em el me'arat bar-kokhva
leha'alotam ba'avak. Ha'olam hakodem
lo yaḥkor bah
sfat em.*

The day will come and no one will read my mother's letters.
I have a pack of them.

No one's
no one word.

The day will come and no one will take them by the hand.
There's a bundle of them and more.
They will say: paper scrap
and nothing more.

On that day I will take them to Bar Kokhva's cave
to send them into the dust. The ancient world
will not search there
mother tongue.

The line “The day will come and no one will read my mother’s letters,” which opens the first poem in the cycle, encapsulates the fundamental irony of these poems. For the mother’s letters, though unread in their native language—the Yiddish “mother tongue” (*sfat em*)—are being read, actually continuously re-read, through the Hebrew poems. As the cycle progresses, the mother’s voice is further uncovered, indeed exhumed, but the fragmentary and grammatically disjointed quotations that comprise her voice underscore the incompleteness and impossibility of repair. One could also draw an analogy between the image of the “paper scraps” that opens these poems and the Jewish practice of *keri’ah*, the rending of garments by mourners before burial. The tear not only marks the state of mourning but also serves as an open wound (usually located over the heart if the deceased is a parent). Repairing the torn garment is also prohibited. In Yeshurun’s cycle, the mother’s letters are broken apart but never returned to a state of wholeness. At the same time, quotation and translation work together to grant the “mother tongue” a degree of mobility that it does not have in its original, native state. Through quotation and translation, the language of the letters is both displaced and replaced in contexts that ultimately expand its range of meaning.

Bundles of letters from the Bar Kokhva period in 1960 and 1961 during an archaeological expedition led by the famed Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin,²⁴ an event that Yeshurun uses as a framework for the burial of the mother’s letters. The juxtaposition of the mother’s letters and the letters discovered in the Cave of Letters situates the burial of the mother tongue in the ongoing discourse of recovery and memory in Israeli culture, but it is one that privileges Hebrew over Yiddish. Whereas the Bar Kokhva letters further legitimized the territorial continuity of Hebrew, the Yiddish letters that the speaker plans to bury in the caves represent a deterritorialized history that “no one will search for.”

The rejection of Yiddish in Israel, in this regard, can be understood as a form of burial. As the Old World of the diaspora is increasingly cut off and communication between the family members breaks down, the letters grow

shorter, their exchange infrequent. As the cycle progresses, the letters slowly turn into postcards and then into telegrams, but the very shape of the poems also suggests this breakdown. Each stanza begins with a long line that begins to taper off—in most of the poems, each stanza consists of four lines with 5-4-3-2 words respectively—visually demonstrating the increasing compression and breakdown of language into “paper scraps.” The final lines of the first poem’s three stanzas—“no one word” (*velo milah*), “and nothing more” (*velo yoter*), and “mother tongue” (*sfat em*)—emphasize this move toward absence and silence in relation to Yiddish, the mother tongue that can only be recalled in a fragmented Hebrew.²⁵

Later, though the speaker professes a desire to forget the mother’s letters, he gathers up the pieces of paper and files them “one by one . . . even the stamps.” This attempt to put the letters in order sparks an ambivalent temptation to read them—“read or don’t read”—but ultimately the speaker determines that “there is interest even / in the letters of the dead” (Poem 5), a line that also refers back to the historical interest in the Bar Kokhva letters. The Hebrew *inyan* can also refer to the content of the letters, suggesting that “letters of the dead” have something to say. As the speaker bides his time, the voices of the dead begin to insist on a response. In Poem 7, this demand takes the form of a letter from home urging the son to write back:

*Kibalti mikhtavkhem uvo aneh aneh.
Ad nose hapost bigvurato
over hatal eynayim.
Aneh aneh.*

*Aniti bemikhtav uvo yafim lekane
utzei shitim va'azei shamuti.
Ani hayiti me'aneh.
Aneh aneh.*

*Eyn li babayt milah tovah.
Bemikhtavkha eyn zekher li.
Keha'et avar hashemesh.
Aneh aneh.*

I received your (*pl*) letter and in it Answer Answer
Until the postman in his glory
dew passes over eyes.
Answer Answer.

I replied with a letter and in it beautiful things to envy
acacia and shamouti orange trees.²⁶

I would torture.
Answer Answer.

I have no good word from home.
In your letter there's no mention (*memory*) of me.
Just now the sun passed over.
Answer Answer.²⁷

Yeshurun's biographer Eda Zoritte notes that many letters from Rikl Perlmutter included the exhortation "Write! Write!"²⁸ In this poem, the command to write becomes *aneh*, Hebrew for "reply," a verb that also shares a root with the verbs "to torture" and "to sing." In this case, the decision to translate a word that was most likely written in Yiddish into Hebrew creates a more expansive series of associations. In this poem, the son's failure to write back to the mother is perceived by the parent (or rather, imagined by the surviving child) as an affliction, but at the same time, the association with "singing" that the root *ayn-nun-he* carries further elaborates the idea of poetry as a form of response. The poem replies belatedly to these letters.

These associations continue to develop in the second stanza of Poem 18, which opens with the question *She'ei mizeh matayhu pa'am erekha?* (For where at what time will I see you again?). As Harshav and Helit Yeshurun point out, this is one of several lines from family letters that reappears in other poems.²⁹ The translation of this question into Hebrew also serves as a mode of transport that, unlike the direct quotations from the Yiddish that Yeshurun also practiced, allows the poet to vary the original language of the quotation to "make it fit," as Wills observes, in a variety of ways in the Hebrew text. The movement of this line from one poem to another creates a relation between these poems, generating a family tree of texts for which the original Yiddish material serves as an unstable, shifting root. The poem "Zikhronot hem bayt" ("Memories Are a House"), which appeared in the 1990 collection *Adon menuḥah* (*Master of Rest*), emerges, particularly in its final three stanzas, as a companion text to the poems of *Shloshim amud* through this kind of movement:

*Eyneni makhḥish, she'adam hamagi'a legil,
eyno yakhol lekavot
she'eleh shemehem yatza yisardu
od ḥayim imo, kefi shekatvah li*

*Imi pa'am be'aḥad mimikhtavey
hadimdumim shelah. Midimdumey mikhtaveyah
begoraliyot enosh: vekhi matayhu
yekholim hen. Halo eyn sikui lirot otkha.*

Ufa'am bemikhtav nidaḥ venishkaḥ:
 "Layla tov lekha, Yehiel alter leben. Naflah alai tardemah.
 Aḥazu bi ḥevlei shenah. Kh'bin
 shleyferik gevorn." Ne'emar bemikhtav shelo korim. Shelo karu.

I do not deny that a man who reaches a certain age
 can no longer hope
 that those from whom he came will remain
 still alive with him, as my mother once

Wrote to me in one of the letters
 of her twilight. From the fadings of her letters
 into the fatedness of man: but when can they.
 After all there's no chance of seeing you.

And once, in a discarded and forgotten letter:
 "Good night, Yehiel *alter lebn*. Slumber has descended upon me.
 I am caught in the throes of sleep. *Khbin*
shleyferik gevorn." Said in a letter that nobody reads, that nobody read.³⁰

The question in Poem 18 of *Shloshim amud* reappears in this poem in the last two lines of the second stanza of the above excerpt. In "Memories Are a House," the question "For where at what time will I see you again?" is broken apart and reconstructed as a statement of fact, "but when can they. / After all there's no chance of seeing you." It becomes its own reply. This is one example of how translation not only mediates between the past and present in Yeshurun's work but also creates new frames of reference in the process. A close reader of Yeshurun's work may recognize the origin of this line, but its placement, or rather "displacement," in this poem conflates the voices of son and mother.³¹

Whereas the poems of *Shloshim amud* do not quote Yiddish directly, the poem "Zikhronot hem bayt" juxtaposes translations of Yiddish and Yiddish quotation (directly or in Hebrew translation).³² Because Hebrew and Yiddish share an alphabet, the presence of Yiddish in this poem is perhaps less intrusive when compared to the appearance of other alphabets—Cyrillic, for example—in Yeshurun's work.³³ Nevertheless, the appearance of Yiddish in this line is not seamless. Although the Hebrew and Yiddish clauses balance each other metrically, creating a fluid line, a Hebrew reader would immediately grasp the linguistic shift. Closer scrutiny of the language Yeshurun employs reveals the significant word play and even translation occurring in the Yiddish. The phrase "Yehiel alter lebn" could be read as "Yehiel, dear eldest (son/brother)" or "Yehiel, long life (to you)," the latter also a translation of the name Yehiel (may G-d live).

Yeshurun's placement of the Yiddish *khbin shleyferik gevorn* (I've become sleepy) also involves elaborate maneuvers of quotation and translation. Two Hebrew translations of the line *khbin shleyferik gevorn* preface the Yiddish: *naflah alai tardemah* (deep sleep fell over me) and *ahazu bi hevlei shenah* (the cords of sleep grasped me), both idiomatic phrases for "going to sleep." In the translations into Hebrew, the relation between sleep and death is further intensified. In Hebrew, *tardemah*, meaning "deep sleep," also refers to the period of dormancy between fall and spring. In the second translation, the expression *hevlei shenah*—literally the "cords of sleep"—imagines sleep/death as an aggressor, locking the mother in its grip.³⁴

Hevlei shenah also recalls the expressions *hevlei ledah* (labor pains) and *hevlei lashon* (inarticulateness; literally, language pains), the latter also the title of a seminal essay by the Hebrew poet Hayyim Nachman Bialik. In "Language Pangs" (1905), Bialik argues in favor of a vital and dynamic approach to writing and speaking in Hebrew that resists the constraints of "normative rules," which strip language of its vitality, revealing "the dry bones of its philological skeleton."³⁵ The translation of *shleyferik* into *hevlei shenah* reveals a possible intertextual relation between this poem and Bialik's essay that further elaborates a relation between memory, language, and writing.

The very title of the poem also underscores these relations. In Hebrew, *bayt* is both "house" and "home," a crucial distinction in the context of Yeshurun's work, which resisted Zionism's demand to replace the home of the past with the Israeli national home. The speaker's memories encompass a personal and private space that "houses" him and his dead, but *bayt* also means stanza, highlighting the correlation between memory and writing that pervades Yeshurun's work. As in *Shloshim amud*, the speaker of "Zikhronot hem bayt" constructs the poem as a space of constant mourning and recollection, where the letter "that nobody read" is continuously recalled and even partially revived. Bringing, that is translating, the mother's Yiddish into the Hebrew poem offers the mother tongue "a better semblance of afterlife."³⁶ At the same time, as Yeshurun explained in the interview cited earlier, Hebrew is continuously made present and alive in his work by the other languages, particularly Yiddish, that shape its expression, by the memories to which these other languages are tethered.

Although the process of creating a modern Hebrew vernacular in the late nineteenth century required weeding out its Yiddish and diasporic influences, the vast corpus of Yiddish vernacular texts provided a vital foundation for Hebrew.³⁷ Indeed, the translation of Yiddish texts into Hebrew in the late nineteenth century proved instrumental in creating a modern Hebrew vernacular. For example, loan translations and adaptations of Yiddish words and phrases frequently crept into Hebrew writing of the early twentieth century.³⁸ Even when Hebrew successfully asserted its hegemony over Yiddish, Yiddish remained for many new immigrants a language inextricably tied to personal

histories and memories.³⁹ In his autobiography *Haḥalom veshivro* (*The Shattered Dream*), the Hebraicist Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), a major figure in the revival of vernacular Hebrew, describes the persistence of Yiddish and other diasporic languages as follows:

I must confess once more: sometimes, when my mind is submerged in thoughts, especially of days past, of childhood and youth, and it releases itself momentarily, without my sensing it, from the Hebrew yoke that I have mounted on it by force for so many years—I suddenly realize that for a moment I was thinking not in Hebrew; rather, from under my thinking in Hebrew words, a few foreign words, in Yiddish (*ashkenazit*) and also in Russian and French floated to the surface! And then I realize that Hebrew isn't a mother tongue even for me, for my first words were not in Hebrew. I didn't suckle the sounds of this language with my mother's breast milk, and my ears did not hear them when my mother rested me in my cradle, and so I feel that despite my love for the Hebrew language, I certainly can't claim that same predisposition for loving the language that someone who has heard it spoken from birth can, someone who spoke his first words in [that language].⁴⁰

That Ben-Yehuda is often credited with the revival of modern Hebrew as a spoken language makes this admission even more remarkable. In this passage, it is Hebrew, and not a diasporic language, that is characterized as a burden (“the Hebrew yoke”), forcibly submerging other languages. Ben-Yehuda's choice of words describes the speaker of Hebrew as a slave or servant to the language, and it is only during a respite from the effort of “thinking in Hebrew words” that these other languages surface like divers from a wreck. For Ben-Yehuda, as for Yeshurun, the native tongue not only carries strong maternal associations—in fact, the authors employ similar images of infancy in making this connection—but also represents a state of able-bodiedness that the Hebrew yoke compromises. The image of free-floating “foreign words” illustrates a state of fluency in these languages that contrasts sharply with the exertion of speaking in Hebrew.

Challenging Hebrew's hegemony and the way it actively suppressed personal memories, thereby creating fragmented identities, became a major preoccupation for Yeshurun. The rupture with the past results in and is articulated by linguistic breakages that are manifested in Yeshurun's work as an increasing disregard for conventional syntax, grammar, orthography, and monolingualism, thereby creating a poetic language that becomes even *more* unstable and idiosyncratic with time. The visibility and prominence that Yeshurun gave to Yiddish and other languages in his work resisted the decidedly pro-Hebrew, monolingual ethos that determined literary canonicity in the pre-state period. However, as Oppenheimer notes, not only would many of the Yiddish words

and expressions that Yeshurun employed have been intelligible to many of his readers, but also many of these words and expressions had already found their way, either verbatim or via translation, into modern Hebrew.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Yishuv's ambivalence toward Yiddish, a language that remained in daily use despite its erasure in official histories of the period, created and marked, to borrow terms from Homi Bhabha, a "liminal space" or "in-between" zone. In her study of Yiddish culture in the Yishuv, Yael Chaver refers to these sites as "the location of a vigorous, though unacknowledged Yiddish culture that expressed itself in a rich array of unique literary work."⁴² Although Chaver focuses her study on Yiddish writers in Palestine, she acknowledges Hebrew writers, such as Esther Raab and Yeshurun, who developed poetic languages arguably destabilized by the "continued presence" of earlier native languages, Yiddish among them.⁴³ In other words, sites of tension between Yiddish and Hebrew, and the subsequent marginalization and negation of the Yiddish language in the Yishuv, created a rupture that was ultimately productive, a wound from which new writing emerged.

In 1964, Aharon Megged, the editor of the journal *Massa*, invited a number of writers to submit recollections of their first creative work for publication in a special issue. Yeshurun's contribution, a poetic prose piece titled "Ad henah vesham nishar" ("Hither and There It Remained"), reveals that Yeshurun's first poem was, in fact, a Yiddish poem lost during the Second World War.⁴⁴

Yom ehad hibarti shir arokh beyidish: "Di nevue in gezang." Nevi'im mitnabim beshirah vezimrah. Naflah eynei al kufsat hakarton hamerushet vehasrat hamikhseh shel savi, bah netunim be'irbuviyah hozim shel ribit, shel mekhirah ushe'ar neyarot—vehashir nivla imahem. Hashir nishar sham.

One day I strung together a long poem in Yiddish: "Di nevue in gezang." Prophets prophecy in poetry and song. My eye fell on a ragged, lidless cardboard box belonging to my grandfather, inside of it a muddle of interest and sales receipts, and remainder of papers—and the poem was swallowed up with them. The poem remained there.⁴⁵

In the Hebrew original, Yeshurun first provides the name of the poem in Yiddish and follows it with a nonliteral Hebrew translation. The Yiddish line *di nevue in gezang* translates literally as "prophecy in singing," whereas Yeshurun's Hebrew translation, *nevi'im mitnabim beshirah vezimrah*, translates as "prophets prophecy in poetry and song." The poem, like the letters of *Shloshim amud*, is packed away with other scraps of paper, which are later left behind.⁴⁶ Although the poem highlights the displacement of the Yiddish poem, it also gestures to the relation between Hebrew and Yiddish in the poet's own upbringing. The poem "Tovland" ("Goodland," a pun on *Altneuland*), written in 1975,

makes reference to *Mikra'ei Zion* (*Readings of Zion*), a series of pamphlets of Hebrew poetry that were part of Yeshurun's Hebrew language instruction as a youth.⁴⁷

The poems in these pamphlets spanned a long tradition of Hebrew poetry, beginning with the poetry of Al-Andalus. According to Zoritte, the Yiddish translations that accompanied these poems revealed "the beauty of Yiddish" to the poet and inspired his own writing in the language.⁴⁸ "Before I returned to Hebrew, I returned to Yiddish," the poet writes in "Tovland." In this context, the poem "Di nevue in gezang" represents the poet's participation in and commemoration of Yiddish as a language of high culture.⁴⁹ Zoritte speculates that the grandfather's "cardboard box" may represent the disregard with which this writing is treated. "The [poet's] spiritual roots, connected to his mother's side of the family, were hidden in a kind of disorderly and impious material greenhouse that characterized his paternal grandfather's home," she observes.⁵⁰ The cardboard box, in this regard, corresponds to the cave, desk, and briefcases in *Shloshim amud* that bury the "scraps" of the mother tongue. It is only later, when the box is discovered and reopened, like the letters filed away in *Shloshim amud*, that a scrap of the poem resurfaces.

In the stanza that immediately follows this passage, Yeshurun recounts an incident concerning a Jewish National Fund stamp that he and his younger brother coveted, an event that he references in other poems.⁵¹ In his version, Yeshurun steals the stamp in the middle of the night and by doing so instigates a tug-of-war, each brother conspiring to steal the stamp from the other.⁵² For the poet, a relation emerges between this stamp and the Yiddish poem:

Yom ehad ahi hatza'ir hehezik bul keren kayemet leysisra'el. Baḥashai balaylah lekahtiv ani. Baboker heheziro elayv. Baḥashai balaylah lekahtiv ani. Velakaḥnu vehehezarnu velakaḥnu vehehezarnu pe'amim harbeh, velo amarnu davar.

*Yom ehad aliti le'erezt-yisra'el.
Habul nishar sham.*

*Katavti habayta shivhei ha'aretz.
Hashir nishar sham.*

One day my younger brother took hold of a Jewish National Fund stamp. At night I secretly took it. In the morning it returned to him. Secretly at night I took it. And we took and returned and took and returned many times, and didn't say a word.

One day I immigrated to the Land of Israel.
The stamp remained there.

I wrote homeward in praise of the land.
The poem remained there.⁵³

The episode with the stamp dramatizes the tension between native and adopted homelands, a tension that is played out over the lost Yiddish poem and the *keren kayemet leyisra'el*, Jewish National Fund, stamp that can only belong to one brother. But the tug-of-war between Yechiel and his brother represents not only the struggle between *sham*—the land over there, the diaspora—and Eretz Yisra'el, but also the vexed relation between Yiddish and Hebrew in the Yishuv. In fact, the conflation of the Yiddish poem and the Jewish National Fund stamp—which Yeshurun underscores in their mutual “remain[ing] there”—invites this comparison. Rather than share the riches of the stamp, the promises of renewal that it offers, the brothers instigate numerous betrayals on its behalf. We do not know who ultimately comes into full and final possession of the stamp, but we learn that the poet's immigration to Palestine renders the stamp useless in some way. For what need does he have of the bucolic images of the land featured on many of these stamps now that he is there, *ba'aretz*, in the land? But one could also read the stamp as a ticket or passage for the poet's literal and poetic *aliyah*, the price of translation. The Yiddish poem, like the stamp, is a loss that has to be incurred, the price that the poet must pay, in order to write Hebrew poems. Yet, although it appears to be irrevocably exchanged, the expression *nishar sham* leaves open the possibility of retrieval.

The movements of Yiddish in Yeshurun's Hebrew mimic the stealthy tug-of-war between the two brothers. The challenge of finding sites of concealment in a home they both know intimately creates dramatic ruptures, provoking a linguistic back-and-forth between Hebrew and Yiddish that often results in the increasing hybridity and heterogeneity of Yeshurun's Hebrew. The fissures and repairs that occur at their sites of contact continuously generate poetic language itself. Lachman has observed that “however urgent and all-encompassing breakage may have been for Yeshurun, retrospectively it can be reinterpreted as a struggle for construction.”⁵⁴ This is the paradox of breakage that the English words “hole” and “whole” cleverly articulate.

To the extent that breakage and reconstruction come to define the Hebrew and Yiddish relation in Yeshurun's work, they are also fundamental to the way Yeshurun thought about poetic language in general. In a 1974 essay titled “Shnei nofim” (“Two Landscapes”), Yeshurun explicitly describes the relation between writing and breakage as a productive one. “For a writer,” he writes, “language is like a child's toy. Language is in the hand of the creator—he doesn't feel it until he breaks it; when he throws it down—he hears the voice of language, the language that is his.”⁵⁵

In the prevailing discourse of the early twentieth-century language war (*milḥemet haleshonot*), Yiddish was often cast as a disease, a weakness, a burden holding back the possibility of a new, revolutionary national life.⁵⁶ However, as

far as Yeshurun was concerned, the absence of Yiddish also disabled Hebrew. Through the strategies of breakage—translation among them—by which Yeshurun paradoxically reconstructs the Hebrew poem, a visible or concealed Yiddish surfaces and attempts to reintegrate the Hebrew poetic text. In the process, translation also creates and marks sites of linguistic discomfort or phantom pain, as in the case of the grammatically convoluted line “for where at what time will I see you again?” and its permutations. But ultimately, translation serves for Yeshurun as a crucial mode of retrieval, albeit one that is fragmentary. In and through translation, the stamp and the lost Yiddish poem, as well as the mother’s letters “that no one will read,” reemerge in the space of the Hebrew poem—and in the highly personal Hebrew of scraps and remnants that the poet reconstructs, the Hebrew that is his, Yiddish is continuously remembered.

Notes

I would like to thank Alan Astro for organizing the Modern Language Association session *Foregrounding Yiddish*, in which an earlier version of this essay was presented (December 2006). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Yiddish and Hebrew are my own.

1. Obituary of Avot Yeshurun, *New York Times*, February 24, 1992, national edition.
2. Yeshurun began to publish his Hebrew poems in various journals in the early 1930s. His published collections include the following: *Al ḥakhmot drakhim* (*On the Wisdom of Roads*, 1942), *Re'em* (1961), *Shloshim amud shel Avot Yeshurun* (*Thirty Pages of Avot Yeshurun*, 1964), *Zeh shem hasefer* (*This Is the Name of the Book*, 1970), *Hashever hasuri afrikani* (*The Syrian-African Rift*, 1974), *Kapela kolot* (*A Cappella Voices*, 1977), *Sha'ar kenisah, sha'ar yetziyah* (*Entrance Gate, Exit Gate*, 1981), *Homograf* (*Homograph*, 1985), *Adon menuḥah* (*Master of Rest*, 1990), and the posthumous collection *Eyn li akhshav* (*I Have No Now*, 1992).
3. In many poems, for example, Yeshurun would graft foreign words into the Hebrew text with varying degrees of visibility, alternating between Hebrew transliteration and transcription in the foreign alphabet. Another common multilingual strategy in Yeshurun’s poetry was the creation of portmanteaus from the fusion of other languages (e.g., Yiddish, Polish, and Arabic) with Hebrew. Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Use of Foreign Words,” in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedmann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2:286–91.
4. Published in 1937 in the periodical *Davar*. Avot Yeshurun, *Kol shirav* [Collected Poems] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1995), 1:7–13.
5. Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 13. Benjamin Harshav cites the Yiddish and Hebrew poet Uri Zvi Greenberg as one of two major “evolutionary lines” in the development of Hebrew modernism in the 1920s: “When Grinberg suddenly left Europe for Erez Yisra’el in 1924 and resumed writing in Hebrew, he brought Whitmanesque rhythms, Futurist metaphors, Expressionist rhetoric, and the syntax of a spoken language saturated with political, journalistic, and ‘International’ diction from Yiddish to Hebrew poetry, which did not permit these elements before.” Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 145. Yael Chaver briefly addresses Greenberg’s “linguistic ambivalence” in later years in her study of Yiddish culture in Palestine. Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 111–13. Michael Gluzman also acknowledges the tense friendship between the poets in his reading of Yeshurun’s “Pesah al kukhim.”

- Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 164.
6. The 1942 collection *Al ḥakḥmot drakhim* was the most conventionally prosodic of Yeshurun's works. In a foreword to his translations of Yeshurun, the poet Harold Schimmel characterized Yeshurun's break with the conventions of early twentieth-century modern Hebrew prosody as a multilingual act: "The quatrain spills, opens, takes in prose, dialogue, grows asymmetrical—top-heavy, or sagging. It is undermined, extended. . . . As do the city's signs and billboards, newspapers and libraries and theaters, speak in all languages (the waiter speaks seven, the laundress speaks five), so does Yeshurun's quatrain." Schimmel, "Translator's Foreword," in *The Syrian-African and Other Poems* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980), xi–xxi, xv. In a review of *Adon menuḥah* (*Master of Rest*, 1990), the writer Batya Gur remarked with regard to Yeshurun's reception, "It had taken thirty years . . . to crack the wall that isolated [Yeshurun] from his generation." The critic Dan Miron responded that the marginal reception of Yeshurun was a "banal folktale." According to Miron, Yeshurun's contemporaries admired his "linguistic deformation" (*deformatzyah leshonit*), as evidenced by Yeshurun's publication history. Other critics weighed in with their own assessments of Yeshurun's reception. The critic and translator Shimon Sandbank, in particular, disagreed with Miron. For a full discussion of this episode, see Eda Zoritte, *Shirat hapere he'atzil: biografiyah shel hameshorer Avot Yeshurun* [The Song of the Noble Savage: A Biography of the Poet Avot Yeshurun] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1996), 254–55.
 7. Gluzman, *Politics of Canonicity*, 143.
 8. Yeshurun spoke very candidly about his relationship with his literary contemporaries, particularly Natan Alterman, in a 1982 interview with his daughter, the editor and translator Helit Yeshurun. Helit Yeshurun, "Ani holekh el hakol: re'ayon im Avot Yeshurun" [I Walk Toward Everything: Interview with Avot Yeshurun]. *Hadarim* 3 (1982): 92–109, 93–94.
 9. According to Benjamin Harshav, the Yiddish *hokḥmes*—"clever insights, anecdotes (of the roads)"—underlie the title of Yeshurun's first book *Al ḥakḥmot drakhim*. Some later editions of this work, as well as scholarly and bibliographic sources, substitute the more grammatical and Hebraic *ḥokḥmat* for *ḥakḥmot* (Benjamin Harshav, e-mail message to author, October 12, 2009).
 10. Yeshurun, "Ani holekh el hakol," 94.
 11. Michael Gluzman, "The Return of the Politically Repressed: Avot Yeshurun's 'Passover on Caves,'" in *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 141–72; Lilach Lachman, "I Manured the Land with My Mother's Letters: Avot Yeshurun and the Question of the Avant-Garde," *Poetics Today* 21, no. 1 (2000): 61–93; Yochai Oppenheimer, *Thu li ledaber kemo she'ani: Shirat Avot Yeshurun* [Let Me Speak As I Am: The Poetry of Avot Yeshurun] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1997).
 12. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913–1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 253–63.
 13. David Wills, *Prosthesis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 9.
 14. See the poem "Pekla'ot" [Packages, from the Yiddish *peklakh*, "bundle"], which appeared in the 1974 collection *Hashever hasuri afrikani* [The Syrian-African Rift]. Avot Yeshurun, *Kol shirav* [Collected Poems] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1997), 2:33–41.
 15. Wills, *Prosthesis*, 309.
 16. Johannes Göransson and Joyelle McSweeney, "Manifesto of the Disabled Text," <http://exoskeleton-johannes.blogspot.com/2008/06/manifesto-of-disabled-text.html>. A print version of this essay was also published in *New Ohio Review* 3 (2008): 94–98.
 17. Helit Yeshurun, "Ani holekh el hakol," 98–99.

18. For a full biography of the poet, see Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*.
19. The title *Re'em* is one of many portmanteaus in Yeshurun's poetic vocabulary. The title's possible associations and meanings include "wild ox," "look at them," and "thunder." Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:286.
20. Isaiah 44:1-2.
21. Translation by Naomi Seidman. Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 119. Seidman takes this account from Hayyim Nagid's 1974 interview with Yeshurun, published in *Yediyot Ahronot*. It was a story that Yeshurun often related, "one of the more vital images in his memory," according to his biographer Eda Zoritte. Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*, 16.
22. Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven*, 119.
23. According to Harshav and Helit Yeshurun, "The poems were written between March 1, 1962 (the month of Adar) and May 15, 1963. The number thirty, as in thirty days of mourning, was determined from the onset. Six poems open the cycle, twenty epistolary poems that are shaped by letters that [Yeshurun] received from his family, and four closing poems." Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:299.
24. In 1960-1961, the renowned Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin led an expedition around Wadi Murabba'at in the Judean desert that uncovered several letters written by Simon Bar Kokhva, most of which were related to orders addressed to his supporters. The letters were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Last Jewish Revolt against Imperial Rome* (New York: Random House, 1971); Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).
25. According to Harshav and Helit Yeshurun, Yeshurun devised this pattern before writing the poems. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:299.
26. The shamouti orange, more commonly known as the "Jaffa orange," is a sweet, almost seedless variety of orange that was cultivated in Jaffa, Palestine in the mid-nineteenth century and became a popular export. Cf. Carol Bardenstein, "Threads of Memory in Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and Prickly-Pear Cactus in Palestine/Israel," *Edebiyat: A Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 8 (1998): 1-36.
27. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:187. The third line of the second stanza—*Ani hayiti me'aneh*—translates literally as "I would torture" ("I would sing" is another possibility) but also may be a nonstandard conjugation for the verb "answer."
28. Zoritte, *Shirat hapere he'atzil*, 90.
29. See Avot Yeshurun, "Habalada shel Berl Shloser," in *Kol Shirav*, 2:152-54; Yeshurun, "Ma shenoge'a," *Kol Shirav*, 2:161-62; Yeshurun, "Zikhronot hem bayt," in *Kol Shirav* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001), 4:130-31.
30. Avot Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 4:130-31; Avot Yeshurun, "Memories Are a House," trans. Leon Wieseltier, *Poetry* 192, no. 1 (2008): 49. In Hebrew, the word *dimdum* can mean both "fading" and "twilight" (*dimdumim*).
31. See Lilach Lachman's reading of Yeshurun's "Poem on the Guilt" and her provocative analysis of the way Yeshurun overlaps personal and collective histories. "The frames unfold through displacements of memory rather than through chronological linking; space is organized through leaps from one frame to another, presenting time as an aberrant movement." Lachman, "I Manured the Land," 70.
32. In the English translation by Leon Wieseltier, which I have excerpted above, the Yiddish text is italicized. I have modified Wieseltier's transliteration of "sheyferik," which he renders as "shlayferig."
33. See the poem "Spasiba zyemlya" ("Thank You, Land"), which appeared in the 1985 collection *Homograf*. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001) 3:167.
34. The expression *hevlei shenah* appears in the opening of the "Bedtime Shema" ("Kri'at shema al hamitah").

35. Hayyim Nahman Bialik, "Hevlei lashon" [Language Pangs], in *Kol kitvei H. N. Bialik* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1953), 185–90. For a more extensive analysis of this essay see Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, 83–92.
36. Joseph Brodsky, "In a Room and a Half," in *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986), 447–501, 461.
37. When the writer Mendele Mokher Seforim wanted to use the plural "potatoes," he created *bulbusin*, a combination of the Latin *bulbus* and the Yiddish *bulbes* to which he gave an Aramaic plural ending. Later, this word was replaced with *tapuhei adamah*, literally "apple of the earth," which is currently in use in Israel. However, as Harshav notes, *tapuhei adamah* is in turn a calque of the French *pomme de terre*. But the advantage of *tapuhei adamah* over *bulbusin* is that it does not sound like Yiddish. For a full account of this transmission, see Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 83.
38. Chaver provides several examples of Yiddish loan translations in the works of Shmuel Yosef Agnon and Yosef Hayyim Brenner. Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten*, 29–31.
39. Cf. Rachel Katznelson, "Language Insomnia" [Nedudei lashon], trans. Barbara Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 183–94, 187.
40. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Haḥalom veshivro* [The Shattered Dream] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1978), <http://benyehuda.org/by/index.html>. In translating this quotation, I also would like to acknowledge T. Muroaka's translation of Ben-Yehuda's biography, *A Dream Come True*, ed. George Mandel (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).
41. Oppenheimer, *Tnu li ledaber kemo she'ani*, 139–40.
42. Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten*, 44. Though a number of scholars have turned their attention to the Yishuv's "language wars" and rejection of Yiddish, Chaver's research is deeply invested in exploring the ways Yiddish literary culture not only survived but even thrived in a national culture that, at least on the surface, repudiated multilingualism in general and Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism in particular.
43. Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten*, 28–29. For a fuller discussion of Raab's multilingualism and its relation to her poetry, see my article "Paris or Jerusalem? The Multilingualism of Esther Raab," *Prooftexts* 26 (2006): 6–28 (published as Adriana X. Tatum). The influence of Yiddish and Yiddish modernism on Yeshurun's work is also discussed at length in Gluzman, "The Return of the Politically Repressed" and Oppenheimer, *Tnu li ledaber kemo she'ani: Shirat Avot Yeshurun*.
44. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:213–16.
45. *Ibid.*, 215.
46. Zoritte suggests that they may have been recovered at some point. Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*, 28.
47. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 2:169; Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*, 28.
48. Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*, 28. For example, Poem 28 in *Shloshim amud shel Avot Yeshurun*, which arguably reflects on this past writing in Yiddish, contains an allusion to the poem "Dror yikra," a *piyyut* authored by the ninth-century Andalusian poet Dunash Ben Labrat. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:208.
49. The poem "Shnei netzahim" ("Two Eternities") in *Sha'ar kenisah sha'ar yetziah* also makes reference to this poem: "Studying *lataynish*, writing, [for] the first / time in my life, a song 'Di nevue in gezang' / in Yiddish." Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 3:72–73.
50. Zoritte, *Hapere he'atzil*, 28.
51. The brother in the poem may be Israel Mordechai Perlmutter, who was a year younger than Yechiel and also emigrated to Palestine. The two brothers were the only surviving members of their family. According to Yeshurun's niece Chaya Meroz, their political differences provoked an estrangement that lasted for many years. (See "Avot Yeshurun," *Shireshet*, accessed June 22, 2012, http://www.snunit.k12.il/shireshet/tel_avot.htm). The brothers later reconciled, an episode that Yeshurun recounted in his

- poem “Al eleh ani atuf,” which appeared in the posthumous *Eyn li akhshav*: “Many years my brother is here in this country / he didn’t come to me. Until I was lying in an isolation ward. / He came. I had the chance to say to him: / Didn’t we have once *imali, abali*” (Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 4:210). In the version that Yeshurun related to Zoritte, instead of the Hebrew *imali* (mommy) and *abali* (daddy)—words that employ the Yiddish-inspired, though old-fashioned, modern Hebrew diminutive suffix *-li*—Yeshurun uses the Yiddish *mameshi* and *tateshi* (Zoritte, *Hapere he’atzil*, 257).
52. This event is also the subject of the poem “Eynbul” (“Stampless”), which appeared in the same collection. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:219.
 53. Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 1:215.
 54. Lachman, “I Manured the Land,” 83–84.
 55. This essay appears in the collection *Hashever hasuri afrikani* (*The Syrian-African Rift*) in a section titled “Prozah devarim kolshehem.” Yeshurun, *Kol shirav*, 2:126–30.
 56. Rachel Katznelson also addresses the “revolutionary” aspect of Hebrew in her essay “Language Insomnia”: “The essential thing was that, even though Yiddish is a living language, the language of the people and of democracy, there is a trend of thought, which for us was revolutionary, that expresses itself in Hebrew; whereas Yiddish literature is ruled by narrow-mindedness, mostly inert and reactionary in our eyes and, at best—only a weak echo of what was revealed in Hebrew” (Katznelson, “Language Insomnia,” 185).