

A LATE ENCOUNTER WITH THE HOLOCAUST:
Paradigms, Rhythm and Concepts
in *The Brigade* by Hanoach Bartov

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One may question whether Bartov's *The Brigade* could, and should, be considered as a Holocaust novel. If by "Holocaust literature" we mean imaginative writing about the experience of the Holocaust, it is apparent that this novel does not deal directly with the Holocaust experience. Indeed, the original title of the novel in Hebrew, *Pitz'ei Bagrut* (acnes, or wounds of maturity) will testify to that. The title refers to the process of maturing which the teenager-protagonist undergoes. The title in the English edition is *The Brigade*, referring to the Jewish Brigade formed towards the end of World War II as part of the British army.

While not purported to be a depiction of the Holocaust experience, the novel describes the experience of a young Palestinian Jew and his encounter with the *post*-Holocaust situation in Europe at the end of the war and immediately afterwards.

It is of significance to note that the author does not even place his protagonist at the scene of the Holocaust, but lets him come close to it. Thus the locales are Italy, Austria and Germany, but nowhere at the actual site of the atrocities. The Jewish soldiers come close to a concentration camp only once, passing by it in shock. Likewise, the time in which events occur in the novel is mostly after the war. In other words, the author has not undertaken to write a Holocaust novel, and he made sure that his intention would not be misinterpreted as such. He is true to his own experience, that of an Israeli (or Palestinian) born Sabra who did not have a direct contact with the Holocaust.¹

This tendency on the part of the Israeli writers of the 1948 generation to treat the Holocaust from some distance, as actually experienced by these writers, has already been noted by Prof. Shaked.² Yehuda Amichai's novel entitled *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* is one such attempt to search for one's own identity and one's lost childhood in relation to the attitude towards the Holocaust. Hayim Gouri's novel, *The Chocolate Deal*, is another attempt to deal with some aspects of post-Holocaust experience. These works by Amichai and Gouri should be distinguished from those of Aharon Appelfeld. Although of the same generation of these Israeli writers, Appelfeld is European born and a survivor.

The view of the Holocaust in Bartov's *The Brigade* is from the outside. The external treatment is thus one of attitude and reaction. The themes raised in this connection are those that are *related* to the Holocaust insofar as the outsiders are concerned. Some of the themes may be, in other contexts, related to the survivors as well. However, Bartov concentrates on the attitude of the onlookers as such. The themes in the novel are concerned with moral questions such as vengeance and rescue; other themes are related to causality topics such as religious antisemitism. There are also psychological themes like the guilt felt by the outsiders, and some general themes in con-

nection with the question of Jewish identity which are intensified as a result of the Holocaust. As a post-Holocaust novelist, the author is only marginally interested in the fate of the survivors as viewed by the Palestinian Jews.

It may be superfluous to state that the study of the literary expression of the Holocaust may leave room for this kind of literature which attempts authentically to present a view from the outside. Similarly, we should note that the further we move from the event itself, the more likely we are to get the post-Holocaust emphasis in the Holocaust literature. One may state the obvious by saying that the Holocaust left its marks on this century, and thus it has, and it should, become the concern of every sensitive human being as we are all affected by it in one way or another. As the years go by, there is a growing, subtle awareness of the Holocaust's implication to humanity *in toto* and especially to post-Holocaust world Jewry and to Israeli Jews. Thus the Holocaust has become directly or indirectly one of the major events related to human condition in this century. It may be asserted without exaggeration that to contemporary Jews, the catastrophe in Europe has become a major historical event in the annals of the Jewish people on par with other destructions and attempts to annihilate the Jewish people. Therefore, a view of the Holocaust from the outside is a task that must be taken by all conscientious Jews. A view of the Holocaust phenomenon, moreover, must be taken by all conscientious, intelligent people. In summary, a view from the outside now is the natural approach to the subject of the Holocaust.

This article concerns itself with the study of Bartov's novel as related to the Holocaust and to the imaginative literature on the *Sho'ah* (Holocaust).

An attempt to classify the novel in accordance with established literary genres, while a valuable task, may prove unrewarding. Its resemblance to a war-novel is only superficial as it lacks the fanfare, the "odor of gunpowder," so to speak, the smoke and the battle-cry usually associated with such genre. It seems that even descriptions of the military and military life in the novel are governed by other literary interests.

Similarly, there are some aspects of the travelogue in it, yet the novelist employs the "landscape" not so much for sightseeing as for guides leading, in a continuous movement, toward (but only close to) the site of the Holocaust, namely, from Italy to Germany.

The affinity with the Bildungsroman is perhaps stronger, as the Hebrew title implies. Nevertheless, the novel lacks the depth and width of, and the concentration on, its central protagonist to establish itself as such.

However, structurally one may find in the novel a basic pattern that distinguishes it from the other genres and forms. Significantly, this pattern is related to the author's overall concept of the Holocaust. In the study of the literary expression of the Holocaust experience, this pattern may shed light on the role of Holocaust literature in general.

The novel is structured as an encounter, both a physical and a metaphysical encounter. The various components of the story follow this fundamental structure of an encounter between the Palestinian Jews enlisted in the Jewish Brigade and the war; it is followed by an encounter with the Germans, with the survivors, and lead eventually to an encounter with the site of the Holocaust *after* the event. Concurrently, the protagonist, Elisha Kruk, is portrayed as experiencing an encounter of another kind — a metaphysical or spiritual encounter with himself, with his tradition and with his Jewish

identity.

Not only are ostensibly major occurrences in the novel patterned after the concept of an encounter, but also events of seemingly less significance or less relevance to the Holocaust. (These less important encounters may prove to be of greater significance upon an in-depth reading.) The protagonist is made to encounter a group of black American soldiers who deem him a messenger from the Holy Land. He also encounters a survivor who turns out to be a relative of his. The group encounters phenomena of antisemitism, and so on.

Through the employment of this structure the author could be true to himself and to his position as an outsider to the events of the *Sho'ah*. Thus this approach may have a universal literary appeal either to the Jewish or to the non-Jewish reader, for it may reflect his state of mind as an individual coming to terms with the experience of the Holocaust and with the very concepts of the Holocaust from a somewhat distant standpoint.

This extra-Holocaust, post-Holocaust treatment of the traumatic event by Bartov does draw its strength, tragically enough, from the fact that most of humanity, inclusive of world Jewry, came to realize the magnitude of the Holocaust and its lasting meaning rather belatedly. Thus the reader is made to experience the Holocaust in an authentic way: through the experience of others who, like himself, are outsiders; through a late encounter with concepts which are only remotely related to the actual atrocities, genocide and the annihilation of the human spirit. Unlike such Holocaust narratives as Ka-tzetnik's *Star Eternal* and Wiesel's *Night*, Bartov's *The Brigade* does not even attempt to place its reader, or its protagonist for that matter, as "temporarily an insider," to use Langer's expression.³ The reader is constantly and permanently an outsider as are all the Brigade's soldiers in the novel.

Another major concept is of utmost importance. The notion of belatedness which Bartov evokes throughout his book is a feeling shared by whoever has studied the Holocaust. It is indeed a tragic belatedness which betrays a sense of helplessness and guilt. The notion of a late realization, after the event, that the whole world watched in silence as the liquidation of the Jews took place in Europe, cannot but result in the pointing of an accusing finger at ourselves.

One may safely generalize that a major strength of a novel dealing with the Holocaust either from within or from the outside of its immediate experience must lie in the author's ability to impart a general concept of the Holocaust in its relevance to contemporary civilization.

From this perspective, I believe that Bartov is more than merely telling a story or relating an experience. Significantly, he is portraying a state of mind, a state of humanity. He makes a comment on the condition of man and adds a footnote to the status of contemporary Judaism. The implication of the European catastrophe as transcending the event itself, as far as human progress in western civilization and its morality are concerned, is Bartov's inherent message to the post-Holocaust world.

Bartov is aware of the fact that, to the outsider, the experience of the Holocaust is not isolated but is related to many other questions, and thus he addresses himself to these questions. Consequently, the Holocaust is conceptualized as an event that has ontological implications on the contemporary

state of western civilization.

The novel centers on the personality of Elisha Kruk. Emulating the much admired figure of his freethinking uncle Pinik, an antithesis of his father, Elisha rebels against the orthodoxy of the latter. An idealist, Elisha cannot stand the business-as-usual type of life in Palestine, where he was born, while the war is raging in Europe. He volunteers to the Jewish Brigade in order to fight the enemy.

Leaving behind him not only the mores and religious practices of his father but also his sweetheart Noga, Elisha is portrayed as being continuously tormented by the past and as being unable to cope with the present. Running away from his father's restrictive world of traditional Judaism, Elisha is nevertheless aware of the strong ties that hold him to it. He is described as being unable to engage in pleasures of the flesh, practiced unhesitatingly by his comrades-in-arms, as he struggles to maintain what he believes is his purity. He is lonely as ever in the midst of his fellow soldiers, having an overwhelming sense of uprootedness. Being a "Talush" (uprooted person, in Hebrew) and somewhat a rebelling "maskil" (an enlightened person), Elisha is characterized as undergoing similar maturing processes to the ones experienced by young Jews in previous generations. As depicted in Hebrew literature of the last century and the early part of this century, the processes evolve around the transition to the secular milieu.

Elisha's attitude toward post-Holocaust reality is expressed through his reactions to his friends, to the survivors of the calamity, and to the Germans and their collaborators. As questions of avenging the dead and rescuing the living survivors arise, he must face his most acute problem, namely, the essence and meaning of his Jewish identity. This confrontation crystallizes to him in the end. He is much closer to his father's rejected world than he had imagined.

In Elisha's activities Bartov externalizes his protagonist's spiritual yearnings. Thus Elisha's continuous quests and aimless running should be placed and may be more meaningful in a metaphysical context. Elisha's impotence does signify his mental and spiritual weakness. His desire to stay pure and clean⁴ is delineated as related to his impotence, yet significantly as externalizing his spiritual desires and his inherent position on the question of Jewish morality.

Moreover, the first-person narrator, Elisha, is so characterized by the author as to transcend the boundaries of his own experience. The careful reader must be aware of a marked correspondence between Elisha and the group.

Elisha is made to experience on his person some variation of what the group, the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade, does. Very cleverly, the author relates the problems of the individual with the problems of the group. By so structuring his novel, Bartov intensifies some of the major themes which the novel is concerned with.

Elisha's betrayal of his father's tradition foreshadows and reflects the attitude of the Jewish Brigade towards the Jewish concept of vengeance. While there appears to be some vacillation among the group as to what stand should be taken toward vengeance, it is nevertheless Elisha's act of non-vengeance that sets the dominant tone for the whole group.

Elisha's inability to act reflects the group's eventual failure in fulfilling

its desire to fight the Germans in the war or even to avenge the Jews killed in it. The tantalizing problem of his morality is but an echo of the overall question of Jewish morality and the question of vengeance. Similarly, his inner struggle with his heritage and his father's tradition mirrors the group's struggling with its Jewish identity and its practical application to post-Holocaust reality. This dual aspect of the novel is central to its understanding.

There is yet another role for Elisha in the structure of the novel. Elisha being a central figure in the story, his experiences are portrayed by the author as paradigmatic. Bartov does not employ this literary device as used by some other Hebrew writers. As practiced by another Holocaust author, Ka-tzetnik, this device enriches the structure by drawing paradigmatic parallels with biblical archetypal events.⁵ While occasionally referring to meaningful biblical allusions (see below), Bartov resorts to setting paradigms within the boundaries of his novel's sphere of reality.

The novel unfolds in the last day of the war, as the news of the Germans' surrender reaches the Jewish army before it had the opportunity to fire a single shot at the enemy. It is not only that it highlights a major concept of Jewish historiosophy, as asserted quite correctly by Hillel Weiss, namely, that the Jew is detached from the historical processes.⁶ More importantly, this episode intensifies the concept of the Jew generally being inactive, pensive, and reflective; he is an idealist rather than realist; his attitude, according to this concept, is not political but rather philosophical. The Jew seems to be portrayed as a bystander, observer and commentator, rather than an actor. He is conceptualized as writing history (embodied in the character of Tamari, pp. 7, 245) but not as making it. The Jewish attitude towards history is the central theme of another Hebrew writer, Hazaz.⁷

Paradigmatically, the only shot fired in the war was that of a fellow volunteer, Freedberg, inflicting it upon himself as he committed suicide. Contemplating on this symbolic event, as is oftentimes done through Elisha, the first-person protagonist, the general consensus is "that this peculiar coincidence did not signify what we thought it did at that first terrifying moment" (p. 13). Yet the characterization of Freedberg as an archetypal figure may certainly reveal the significance of his symbolic act. Freedberg is characterized as "one of the true volunteers," whose attitude towards their mission was such that he composed a poem entitled "The Army of Redeemers" and posted it on the battalion's bulletin board (p. 13). Freedberg is further typified as being a student of medieval history specializing in the history of the Roman Catholic Church (p. 14). Being a student of the relations between Jews and Christians, a motif that emerges in the novel, Freedberg's act indeed is of import. As is often the case with an unreliable, direct report by the narrator, the reader is given clear clues concerning the latter's true position about the suicide. Thus the narrator advises us, regardless of his initial ostensible position, that "surely these few superficial facts somehow had to contain some kind of explanation; why, in God's name, had it happened" (p. 14). Leaving the possibilities unresolved, the narrator concludes: "Accident, fate or omen — we could not escape the thought that this was the morning after the war" (p. 14). The significance of the suicide is thus revealed.

Depicted as lonely as the protagonist himself, Freedberg appears to foreshadow Elisha's impotence and also the inability of the Jewish group to act

in vengeance. The suicide becomes a symbol for the whole group.

The discovery of the suicide is concurrent with Elisha's self-revelation, in a flashback digression, of his own inherent inability to participate in the war. As portrayed paradigmatically by Bartov, Elisha contracts "a child's disease" (German measles), and at the outset is prevented from any possible action (p. 10). While this aspect of Elisha's process of maturity is being alluded to, a scene of physical defilement ("a baby who had made in his pants," p. 11) is portrayed so as to symbolize his own guilt feeling about his moral purity ("What a degrading experience, from which I would never purify myself," a vital sentence uttered by Elisha which is omitted in the English translation⁸). These occurrences foreshadow the group's inability to fight in the war and similarly its own state of defilement.

A third paradigm which sets the scene for the whole novel occurs in an Italian pizzeria. The protagonist is perceived by a group of black American soldiers as a Christ figure who was sent "from Bethlehem to us on a mission, that he might reveal to us something of great moment" (p. 29). Elisha's religious mission is delineated as a parodic satire on the mission undertaken by the Jewish Brigade to avenge the dead Jews and to save the survivors. The tone is ironic, the style is parodic, and the presentation by Elisha is unmistakably satiric. It is not so much the mission as perceived by the blacks as the conceptualization of Elisha of himself as such; namely, a take off on the image of a savior.

The preaching of the man of Nazareth lies in the backdrop as a model of Christianity which is not practiced by some Christians in Europe during the war. The Jews' attitude toward Christianity certainly plays an important role in the novel. In a long monologue, one of the Jewish soldiers, Zunenshein, asserts that they were not Christians and that they could not practice the Christian doctrine of the other cheek. Similarly, Elisha maintains that "We aren't Christians"; he would not adopt the other cheek doctrine of the New Testament but rather the vengeance preached and practiced in the Hebrew Bible (p. 226). However, in spite of his wishes, Elisha is unable to practice the ancient morality of the Hebrew Bible in the original interpretation of "an eye for an eye." While rejecting the other cheek solution, Elisha is portrayed as a messenger of his own inherent weakness. It is the result of his ambivalent relations to Judaism.

The parody on the preaching of the man of Nazareth conducted by the new messenger from the Holy Land is a reminder to a cynical Christian world, (albeit exceptions) of its religious responsibility for the European Holocaust. The Holocaust is thus conceptualized as the culmination of two millenia of Christian religious persecutions of the Jews (referred to in the novel by the well-known Passion Play at Oberammergau, p. 215).

Related to this is the notion that if anyone can be regarded as close to the preaching of the man of Nazareth, it is, ironically, Elisha himself. The phenomenon of the Holocaust is held as a blunt statement on the Christians' betrayal of Jesus' original teaching.

In addition to the structure of paradigms within the novel, there appear to exist some covert parallels tying together various segments of the story into meaningfully connected units. The table, his father's traditional table, from which Elisha seems to be running away, emerges in two variations. One is the table at the pizzeria, where another religious tradition, a Chris-

tian one, is being covertly criticized and rejected by Elisha. The second instance is the Sabbath table of the Hungarian Jews, consciously made analogous to his father's table (p. 92), leading the first-person narrator to a soul searching and bringing him back closer to his father's table. Realizing his orientation, he says: "How far I had traveled in the short time since I had fled my father's table" (p. 92). One is reminded of Agnon's protagonist, Joseph, in "The Lady and the Pedlar," which may have influenced Bartov. Joseph, going astray, finally realizes that he was doomed. He says: "God in Heaven. . .how far have I gone! If I do not return at once, I am lost."⁹

Other parallels do exist within the story between his uncle Pinik, whom Elisha first admires and then, upon discovering his corruption, detests, and his relative-survivor Krochmal. Both are illustrated as having some moral blemish or as being corrupt, and as directly or indirectly instrumental in Elisha's search for himself. A parallel may be found between the contemporary antisemitic phenomena, exemplified by the old Ukrainian women, and the classical antisemitism of the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

The three major paradigms discussed are intended to set the scene for the rest of the novel. They are to dictate the resulting events as acted or "unacted" upon by the protagonists.

One expects to find some meaningful basis for the author's structuring a supposedly open-ended story, in which all eventualities within the reasonable scope of a given reality may occur, in such a way as to abort the Brigade's mission from its very beginning. For otherwise their actions would seem arbitrarily and artificially planned by the author.

The basis for this is to be found in an inner rhythm within the story and equally within the characters. It takes the shape of discovery or revelation on the part of the protagonists. As events unfold before the reader, they reveal to the protagonists experiencing them, and to the reader as an observer, the nature of the inherent causes lying in the foundations of the protagonists' activities. Hidden truths are ruthlessly brought into focus; they may no longer be ignored. A facade of accepted norms tumbles down as the protagonists face themselves in this act of self-discovery.

There is a deceptive appearance in the novel of moving toward realization of a goal, be it national or personal, on the respective levels of presentation. However, this movement is actually an escape from reality, an attempt to run away from the truth. This is exemplified in Elisha's thoughts: "I had fled, fled, but had not escaped myself" (p. 22). Elisha is running away from the "hateful. . .world of [his] Father" (p. 24), from "those damn rules and regulations" (p. 35). At the same time, his fellow soldiers are immersing themselves in momentary pleasures of the flesh, in an attempt to compensate for their military and national frustrations.

The encounter with the experience of the Holocaust serves as a catalyst for Elisha, and for the Jewish Brigade, in helping him come to terms with his heritage. Bartov delineates the perennial problem of Jewish identity as related to the post-Holocaust generation of young Jews who are compelled to come to grips with existential problems related to their Jewishness. In spite of their flight from their Jewish identity, and in spite of the deceptive assumption of a new, non-diaspora kind of characteristic, the young Palestinian Jew is made to find his identity, which is paradoxically very much similar to the ostensibly rejected identity of the *Golah* [diaspora]-Jew.

The theme of identity is central in the novel. It appears in a variety of shapes and forms to supplement the paramount issue of Elisha's identity. It seems that many of the other characters as well are having some problem with their identity. The group of Jewish soldiers are not identified as Jews by the non-Jews (pp. 79, 82ff.). Some of them assume an identity which is not their own: Brodsky's real name is Kirschenbaum. The new Hebrew names, given to or assumed by individuals in order to signify some break with the past and an appearance of a new Israeli trait, would fit him, says Brodsky-Kirschenbaum, "like tight shoes" (p. 18). Commenting on the discovery of his comrade's new identity, the first-person narrator says: "a different name, a different geneology" (p. 18). And so is Esther. Having a false Aryan identity which helped her survive during the war, Esther continues to adhere to her false identity even after the war, hesitating to profess her own original identity now that it is safe for her to do so.

Not only are single individuals faced with the question of their identity but so also is the whole group of Jewish soldiers. Accused of an attempted rape and robbery — to them an act of revenge — the entire company is made to undergo a degrading identification parade as two German women, claimed to have been assaulted by the Jews, are attempting to *identify* their two assailants (pp. 129-132). Since the latter have been replaced by two other soldiers, assuming temporarily false identity, the attackers are not identified by the two women. Regardless of the results, this act has been done. Bartov portrays here a very meaningful act of identification whereby the non-Jews, and in this case Germans, are made to perform an act of identifying Jews. A sense of irony prevails throughout this act. For it is not only the historic echo that the author evokes here concerning the negative definition of a Jew (that is, he who the non-Jew defines as a Jew), but also we witness here a re-enactment of the war situation — after the war.

By reversing the roles of the accuser and the accused after the war, Bartov also recreates the distortion of post-Holocaust reality. Thus through this literary device of the distortion of reality the author continues the task undertaken by writers like Wiesel and Ka-tzetnik who depicted the Holocaust experience from within. The task is to shatter all accepted norms and values so as to vivify to the reader the experience of *l'univers concentrationnaire*.

The terrifying effect of Bartov's use lies in the transformation of the "other planet" experience into post-Holocaust reality.

Thus Bartov employs this major Jewish problem — Jewish identity — as exemplifying the post-Holocaust situation. Although the actual event of the catastrophe in Europe is not focused on, its aftermath is affecting everyone. Elisha's reaction to this episode reflects the author's attitude: "only over the years did that identification parade become what is now a searing shame within me." He even feels it physically as a "shame burning beneath my skin," its memory lasting for years (p. 128).

The question of Jewish identity is related in the novel to the question of vengeance. While the expressed mission of the Jewish Brigade was one of rescue, another aspect of it was to fight the Germans. Having been late for that, there is a substitute urge for vengeance. As portrayed by Bartov, the two aspects of the mission conflict, if not contradict, each other. Apart from this apparent dilemma, there is the deep-rooted question of the nature of the desired vengeance.

A great deal of emphasis is placed by Bartov on this question. Various personages are made to express different, and opposing, views as to whether the Jewish Brigade should devote itself after the war to rescue the remaining Jews or to avenge the dead. In addition to the two opposing views, that of rescue and that of vengeance, Bartov raises another one, which prevails. It is the notion that inherently Jews must exhibit their weakness and impotence by not being able to act like Russians or any other people in a war situation. Associated with their inability to act as a result of the historical processes is the Jewish moral code.

Portraying the apparent impotence to act in vengeance is so dominant in the novel that it must lead to some search for the reason why the Jews in the novel could not act in vengeance. While Bartov does not address himself directly to this question, the explanations are inscribed within the novel and within its characters. On the one hand, the lack of a zealous adherence to Judaism inhibits one from resorting to the biblical version of revenge. On the other hand, it is another version of Judaism, diaspora Judaism, rather vague in its essence, that is being proposed as having its impact on Elisha; it is some sort of Jewish morality being preached and practiced throughout two thousand years of mostly passive (in a political sense) Jewish existence.

One may detect some residue of the tension that existed in Hebrew literature earlier in this century between the Dionysian type of early Hebrew civilization (advocated by such writers as Berdichevsky and Tschernichovsky) and its sequential form of cerebral and moralistic Judaism (of which Bialik was a spokesman).

Yet there is also the painful notion of the meaninglessness of any vengeance in comparison with the atrocities. I believe that Bartov endeavors to promulgate this idea. He exemplifies this notion in a symbolic act of vengeance as the Palestinian Jewish soldiers are facing, for the first time, the defeated German army. The act, full of frustration, is of import: They throw "a cheap facsimile (statuette) of Moses" (p. 63) at the war prisoners. That is indeed a mockery of vengeance. This act signifies their discarding the biblical, Mosaic vengefulness for its cheap imitation.

Elisha realizes the meaninglessness of this type of revenge as he is confronted with an attempt by some of his comrades to rape two German women. He rescues the two women as he threatens to shoot his friends, firing his only shot at this occasion.

It is an act of frustration and desperation. It crystallizes the terrible predicament of the Jews: Having a desire and need to avenge the atrocities yet being unable to do so.

By creating a Holocaust-related reality of the post-war period, it is expected that an author should be evaluated not only by his narrative art and by his craftsmanship in characterization and composition of the story or by his style, but also by his unique conceptualization of the Holocaust. It is not the message of the Holocaust per se as presented by a given author; it is rather an all-engulfing, powerful concept that presents the truth of the event as perceived uniquely by the artist.

In his novel, Bartov highlights a major concept which is integrated within the fundamental structure and inner texture and fabric of the story. I refer to those features of detachment, belatedness, late encounters and self-revelation as discussed above. The author accentuates the inability of the out-

sider to fathom the Holocaust, its consequences and its historic meaning. To the outsider, the Holocaust is unbearable and its conceptualization is unattainable in the abstract. It appears to defy all known human experience. Thus the outsider expects, as did the Palestinian soldiers, to witness a European reality which will be synonymous with the image he has formed of the Holocaust. That image is essentially a concretization of the abstract.

Somehow, the outsider expects, nay yearns, to see Europe "covered with blood" (p. 80). This image may be regarded as metaphoric, having its roots in the Bible (and elsewhere). Covering the blood of a person (with earth) or exposing his blood will generally indicate an attempt to cover up or reveal, respectively, one's responsibility or guilt for the death of that person. Three biblical examples may suffice to explain the original use of the biblical idiom. Judah, trying to save Joseph, says to his brothers: "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal [Hebrew: "Vechisinu," meaning: cover] his blood" (*Genesis* 37:26). Job protests his unjust punishment (metaphoric death or bloodshed): "O earth, cover not thou my blood" (*Job* 16:18). And finally, upon God's mission of retribution, the prophet exclaims: "The Lord cometh forth out of His place to visit upon the inhabitants of the earth their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (*Isaiah* 26:21).

In all these examples the Hebrew verb *KiSaH* or its antonym *GiLaH* are associated with blood. The third verse exemplifies the connection between retribution and the earth's disclosure of the blood hidden in it.

While Bartov does not explicitly use the biblical idiom, he infers it in his use of modern Hebrew ("Eiropah mechusah dam"),¹⁰ thus evoking the original biblical image. It is here as elsewhere in the post-Holocaust reality of the novel that biblical concepts are proven incongruous to the modern setting. The personal or national subconscious desire to resort to archetypal biblical acts are not even manifested in the conscious, overt use of language, let alone adherence to original biblical concepts. Further discussion on this point will follow.

Expecting to witness Europe covered with blood, the outsider realizes much to his shock that "here all was a pastoral" (p. 80). A landscape that does not reflect the atrocities of the war welcomes the Jewish soldiers in Europe, and it overwhelms them in its beauty and its serenity. Bartov delineates this aspect of reality as a devastating force that inhibits the avengers from fulfilling the mission they took upon themselves. It is another discovery that enhances the movement of the novel toward the culmination of its internal truth.

More importantly, another aspect of uncovering what is behind a facade is related not to landscapes but to people. Much to his horror, the narrator discovers that the faces of German collaborators or sympathizers, and even of Nazis, "were no different than faces anywhere in the world; no matter how hard we tried we could not make out the features of the devil's henchmen in those townspeople" (p. 80).

There is an attempt to get to the roots of the Holocaust phenomenon; there is an attempt to unfold the hidden truth which lies behind the facade. It is not an easy task, as we have seen. Europe is not covered with blood as they thought and wished it to be; and its people look quite normal to the naked eye. This must have been a shocking revelation for the Jewish soldiers.

Elisha is made to experience a more traumatic discovery as he looks at a book with the *Führer*'s picture in it. The narrator reports his reactions: "He [Hitler] seemed just like the rest of the book — very civil. . . Already he, too, seemed human to me. . . there was no 'murder in the eye.'" The narrator painfully concludes: "The truth did not float like oil on water" (p. 68). It appears that the outsiders may have expected the proverbial biblical enactment of "Truth springeth out of the earth" (*Psalms* 85:12), a concept related to that of earth disclosing her blood. However, as biblical vengefulness is foreign to modern-day, secular reality, in the post-Holocaust context, so is biblical truth.

The post-Holocaust realization that on surface everything looked the same as before is attested to here as in other creative and documentary writings on the Holocaust. Ka-tzetnik capitalized on this concept in his *Star Eternal*. His angle, of course, was that of a survivor, which makes the "business as usual" type of attitude hard to accept. Bartov is struggling with outsiders' attitudes, and he attempts to give these attitudes a literary reality of their own. Obviously, the author addresses himself to the weakness of the outsider. It stems from the detached, noncommittal stand which an outsider such as Elisha appears to have taken. It also stems from his attitude toward diaspora Jews. Bartov portrays his protagonist as being unable to relate to his fellow Jews, those survivors of the Holocaust.

Psychological problems of guilt as well as practical limitations actually to come to the rescue of individual survivors and groups of survivors inhibit the lofty mission of the Jewish Brigade. A messianic, euphoric feeling on the part of a group of Hungarian Jewish survivors is thus shattered as reality overshadows the religious dreams and hopes replaced by mundane facts of life. The Brigade was ill-prepared for the mission, as indeed the paradigmatic events that took place throughout the novel clearly show. It is not only the limitation of the soldiers but also the unpreparedness of the survivors. Esther, surviving by using false *Volksdeutsche* papers, is unwilling to give up her security, and prefers her current status to the one offered by the Palestinian Jews (p. 88). Bartov illustrates the mutual unpreparedness of both rescuers and survivors, and thus the great tragedy of the post-Holocaust effects on the Jewish people. It is the inability to adjust to the new reality that overcame the survivors, a motif emphasized in the Holocaust literature. It is also the inability of the redeemers to transmit the message loud and clear to the survivors.

It is further the inability of the outsiders to identify with the fate of the survivors and perhaps to fully understand the horrors of the catastrophe. They are forever to remain as outsiders because deep in their heart they wish it. Elisha's attitude toward his relative, Krochmal, a former inmate who managed to survive by working in the crematorium, is one of "revulsion" (p. 161), and an ambiguous shame (p. 162). It is through an encounter such as this that Bartov recreates the post-Holocaust reality. The closeness of Elisha to Krochmal through his family ties does bring to bear a more acute relationship between the two. Elisha's apparent critical attitude toward the survivor reflects his subconscious realization of the nature of his own survival. While Elisha epitomizes the volunteer who could not stand the attitude of passivity in Palestine during the war, he nevertheless represents the Jews and the world *in toto* whose survival may be said to be comparable to that

of Krochmal.

If we accept the notion that we are all survivors, as asserted by Steiner,¹¹ we must also accept the tragic consequence that in the post-Holocaust reality we all are also Krochmals. The subtlety of Elisha's guilt would testify to this effect.

Unlike the writings of Wiesel and Ka-tzetnik on the Holocaust experience, and Gouri's and Amichai's on the post-Holocaust consequences, Bartov's style is less intense, less condensed and less poetic. Amichai and Gouri being both poets and prose writers, their poetic inclinations are outstanding even in their prose. Bartov is more of a prose writer. His Hebrew style is standard, employed to represent authentically the experience of the Palestinian Jews through their language of expression. Nothing in his style makes his writing in any inherent way related to the Holocaust experience, as indeed is the case with some of the other writers cited above.

However, use of the language of the Bible, namely Hebrew, cannot but evoke, at times, images from the Bible, as I have pointed out before. References are made to a contemporary analogy of the biblical flood upon arriving in Germany close to the end of their cavalcade ("We lifted the flap of our tent, like Noah on Ararat," p. 210). However, these images are rather weak as they are not enhanced elsewhere to become internal, dominant motifs in the novel. The lack of sophistication in their presentation precludes an artistic discovery by the reader.

A similar reference in the end barely alludes to the overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah ("my thoughts turned to pillars of salt," p. 246). The use of the cheap imitation of the figure of Moses, which was cited before, is perhaps more meaningful. Another reference, to the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (p. 202), contributes but little to the story. Yet a related reference in that immediate context to Jonathan's tasting of the honey (p. 202) is more meaningful. An attempt to intensify the biblical expression "worm of Jacob" (p. 157) as related to the experience of the brigade's convoy is not too successful as it lacks the spontaneity of the text.

One should then conclude that biblical language and biblical images do not constitute a significant part of Bartov's art as they are not central to his protagonists' milieu. More essential to the overall message of the novel are the references from the New Testament or the Hebrew prayerbook.

Using reference to events in Jewish history is more convincing; however, this, too, appears to be a minor phenomenon in Bartov's writing. Before the scene of the attempted rape of the two German women as an act of vengeance, Elisha is made to dream of a pogrom in which he is persecuted among other Jews (pp. 227-228). His subconscious association with his Jewish past helps explain the nature of his act against the Jewish soldiers' attempt to rape the women. Elisha's discovery of himself is now complete. He still wishes to flee (p. 233) as before, except that now Elisha is aware of his problem, having faced it, and he has arrived at a decision: "I would. . . do anything to escape that continent where I could not live either with our dead or with their living" (p. 233).

Aware of his persistent weakness, Elisha is nevertheless thankful for it, uttering in the end: "Thank God I did not destroy myself in Germany, thank God that was beyond me. I am what I am" (p. 246). By evoking the biblical expression of God referring to his own name as "Eheyeh 'asher eheyeh"

(*Exodus* 3:14), Bartov seems to integrate the sacred identity of the divine with his own secular, modern concept of Elisha's identity. Elisha is portrayed as he is, forever bound to his heritage. He realizes that in spite of everything, he must be Jewish. As expressed so eloquently by another Hebrew writer, Aharon Appelfeld, a survivor: "'Al korhacha yehudi 'atah" (Against your will, you are Jewish). . .¹²

NOTES

¹cf Robert Alter, *After the Tradition* (New York, 1969), p. 179.

²Gershon Shaked, *Gal Ḥadash Basiporet Ha'ivrit* (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 71-72.

³Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1977), p. 3.

⁴Hanoch Bartov, *The Brigade* (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 18.

⁵In another article, to be published in *Midstream*, I discuss Ka-tzetnik's artistic use of this device.

⁶Hillel Weiss, *Dyoqan Haloḥem* (Ramat Gan, 1975), p. 165.

⁷See, for example, "Adam Mevisrael" and "Haderashah."

⁸Hanoch Bartov, *Pitz'ei Bagrut* (Tel Aviv, 1965), p. 15.

⁹S.Y. Agnon, *Twenty One Stories* (New York, 1971), pp. 179-180. Hillel Weiss, too, sees this parallel in *Dyoqan Haloḥem*, p. 186.

¹⁰*Pitz'ei Bagrut*, p. 76.

¹¹George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (New York, 1967), p. 145.

¹²In an article published in *Ma'ariv*, August 8, 1975, and in *Masot Beguf Rishan* (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 24.