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## Crossing the Spectrum of Solitudes: Lea Goldberg's Lyrical Conversation with Avraham Sonne

**Abstract:** This essay explores the as yet undiscovered lyrical conversation conducted by Lea Goldberg with Avraham Sonne. It traces the different stages in Goldberg's writing on him, through a close reading of all poems in which she addressed Sonne over many years. The first section of the essay concentrates on the construction of Sonne as a poet figure. The second section discusses the internalization of Avraham Ben Yitzhak as a superaddressee within the cycle "Al Ha-Priha." The final section reflects Goldberg's attempt to address Sonne not as a poet but as a private individual.

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Eleven years separate the first reference to Avraham Sonne in Lea Goldberg's diary and the note she wrote on June 10, 1950 in her diary: "On my birthday, on May 29, Sonne died. Since then, there is actually no importance to anything else apart from this fact."<sup>1</sup> Goldberg had met Sonne, one of the most enigmatic modern Hebrew poets, in 1938, shortly after his arrival to Mandatory Palestine. In the first months after Sonne's death, Goldberg wrote only a few short notes in her diary, did not write poems, as she herself testifies, and barely saw people. It was during these months that she finished her monumental project of translating *War and Peace*. Goldberg's diaries do not tell us when exactly in this early stage of mourning she decided to dedicate a memoir to Sonne, but an entry from the beginning of August reveals her determination to start writing about him: "I am still not able to approach writing about him [A. S.]. I never thought it would be so difficult".<sup>2</sup> However, her writing about Sonne did not begin with the death of the poet. It also did not merely remain on the pages of her diary – for as it is well known, Lea Goldberg dedicated to Avraham Ben-Yitzhak one of her most beautiful and most decisive for her poetic oeuvre lyrical cycle entitled

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1 Rachel and Arie Aharoni (eds.), *Yomaney Lea Goldberg* [Lea Goldberg's Diaries] (Bney Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 2005), 289, unless otherwise indicated all translations are mine.

2 *Yomaney Lea Goldberg*, 291.

“Al ha-priha” (On the blooming), on which she was working throughout the year of 1940.

This was not, however, the only time that she addressed Sonne in her poems during the last decade of his life, even though it was indeed the only occasion that Goldberg mentioned her addressee explicitly. The rest of the poems, altogether five, or perhaps six, as we will see later, written mostly between the years 1939 and 1945, did not have any explicit dedication. This is probably the reason for the fact that these poetical texts remained unnoticed until today in the studies on Goldberg’s poetry. This essay argues that being placed side by side and read chronologically, these poems constitute a unique lyrical conversation between Lea Goldberg and Avraham Sonne that lasted for many years and that went through dramatic changes. In order to explore Goldberg’s representation of Sonne, or rather of Avraham Ben Yitzhak, I will offer a close reading of all of the poems related to him. The essay traces different stages in Goldberg’s lyrical writing on Sonne. It starts with her description of the encounter with the poet and moves then to an examination of the construction of Ben Yitzhak as the figure of a poet in Goldberg’s poems. In the second part, it discusses the internalization of Avraham Ben Yitzhak as a lyrical and moral authority, or its *superaddressee* of the cycle “Al ha-priha”. The third part of the essay reflects on Goldberg’s attempt to address the other poet for the first time not as a poet, but as Avraham Sonne. The essay ends with the reading of Sonne’s belated response to Goldberg.

## First encounters

Goldberg had written a poem about Avraham Sonne even before she mentioned him in her diary in July 1939. The first lyrical text addressed to him was published a few months earlier that year, in March, in the journal *Turim*. “Ki avarta”<sup>3</sup> (When you crossed) is a short cycle composed of three poems, each of them seeking to capture different aspects of Goldberg’s encounter with Sonne. At the beginning, however, Goldberg does not open the cycle with the description of the intensity of her meeting with a poet. Instead, she chooses to imagine the mythical dimensions of Sonne’s encounter with Jerusalem as the ancient city of Hebrew poetry. At the same time, she creates a hermeneutic ambiguity in the poem that enables an interpretation of the city as a metaphor for a woman,

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<sup>3</sup> Lea Goldberg, *Shirim* [Poems] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), in the following all the poems will be quoted from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

suggesting thus the possibility of understanding the text as an erotically charged encounter between the lyrical speaker and the addressee.

The poem is addressed to a lyrical subject, who is crossing the city and touching the “silence of her stones” (I, 171). Jerusalem, the beloved lieu that was abandoned for a long time by the mysterious “you”, responds to his “proud loneliness” (ibid.) with prayers. Without expecting it, she (the city) finds in him the last of her last kings, recognizing the silence in his gaze as the ultimate answer to her quest. In the second stanza, the spiritual strength of the lyrical subject becomes even more visible, as if to stress the intensity of the rejection that the city experiences at the end, once realizing that he was merely a guest passing by. Right at the beginning, Goldberg describes an elevated dimension in the moral power of the poet – “If you were imagined – she would not forgive you: so high is your forgiving head” (ibid.). The poem introduces the idea of the fictive aspect in Ben Yitzhak’s existence in order to be immediately rejected – for Jerusalem, just like for the lyrical speaker, it would be simply unbearable to be deprived of Ben Yitzhak’s moral power. Thus the city counts his footsteps, just as before she was counting the years of his absence while waiting for him, and opens her sealed gates. At this point in the poem, Goldberg uses a Hebrew verb “tidom” that is connoted with the terms to quieten and to stand still, depending on the context of the word. Furthermore, the Hebrew grammatical form of the verb can be related to the city or, alternatively, to the addressee. Accordingly, it might be the city that becomes quiet after it opens its gates, or it is the poet who stands still/silences after the city welcomes him. In both cases, the picture is equally puzzling, for the poet remains nonresponsive to the tribute of the city-woman. He is just a guest, who passes by and leaves the abounded city.

In order to create this unprecedented image for her poetry, Goldberg evokes the biblical language, mainly through the usage of the anaphora ‘when’ and the repetition of grammatical structures resembling biblical forms of narration. But even more importantly, Goldberg employs some of the key-tropes in Ben Yitzhak’s poems, leaving thus no doubts to us about the addressee of her lyrical utterance. The title she uses already evokes the verb of the opening line of Ben Yitzhak’s poem “A storm will pass over the blackness of your land tonight”.<sup>4</sup> Goldberg’s usage of this verb is not accidental, notwithstanding the essential difference between the two poems; it stands for a radical passivity of the lyrical addressee. If in the case of Ben Yitzhak’s poem, he is swept away by the forces of spring, in Goldberg’s poem, despite of the fact that the addressee is the one who crosses the city and brings about, perhaps on a similar scale, the sensual

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<sup>4</sup> Avraham Ben Yitzhak, *Collected Poems*, (Jerusalem: Ibis, 2003, edited by Hannan Hever, translated by Peter Cole), 21.

awakening, he remains utterly untouched by it. Moreover, the poem reenacts some of the main poetological tropes in Ben Yitzhak's lyrical poetry: the proud loneliness of the poet,<sup>5</sup> his image of a king<sup>6</sup> and – a crucial element to his poetry – the silence as the highest metaphysical achievement of a poet.<sup>7</sup> It seems incorporated into her own poem, these tropes assist Goldberg in the representation of her lyrical addressee, in the creation of his portrait. At the same time, in spite of the unresponsiveness of the lyrical "you" in the poem, and through lyrical intertextuality, Goldberg seeks to start a poetic dialogue with Ben Yitzhak.

## The spiritual counterpart

If the first poem touches the lofty sphere of the interaction with the poet, the second one switches to a very different emotional range – to the experience of everyday encounter. Written in a more typical tone for Goldberg, it moves from pathos to urban mode. Unlike the opening poem, it is written in the first person plural, thus suggesting the existence of an interaction between the lyrical speaker and her addressee. This is, however, not a romantic "we" of two lovers, but of acquaintances or friends, who are caught in the rain and are trying to find shelter under a cloth roof of one of the shops. While waiting for the rain to stop, the lyrical "we" overhears a young couple who is also hiding from the rain on the stairs of the house in front of the shops. The poet and her interlocutor do not share this intimate moment. In their eyes, she detects, on the contrary a "sting", the reason for which remains unclear to her. Nevertheless, Goldberg presents a momentary albeit non-erotic intimacy – "We will continue walking, so good/is one drop of the last rain/which touches a part of the hand." (I, 172). Their hands are not touching, and yet they share a moment of closeness on a rainy day.

The third poem is not only the shortest among the three but also the most direct one. There is no ambiguity in it – it is an unveiled love poem, which I would like to cite fully – "Because you are the last, and your face is without a shivering/because you are mature, and your hand is wise,/because the children's innocence bows down to you/because in the heaviness of your lips the

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5 See "Blessed are those who sow and do not reap", 43

6 See "Royalty", 33

7 See especially in "Blessed are those who sow and do not reap" (43), but also in "When nights grow white" (35), "A few say" (41).

silence is light/Because I became smaller in the shade of your high gaze/Because I was silent in the light of your serene greatness –/and there will be others (they for sure will come)/and yet you were – you.” Goldberg constructs her lyrical addressee through a series of synecdoches: his face, the hands, the lips, which culminates in her self-representation, metaphorically read, in a synecdochic relationship with the poet – becoming smaller in the shade of his greatness. Apart from the representation of her addressee, supported by the anaphoric “because” as if to stress the necessity to supply more and more reasons for the enormous admiration of Ben Yitzhak as unattainable in his human yet exalted greatness, there is another poetic aspect to this poem. Goldberg is seeking here for the first time to represent Sonne as the embodiment of the spiritual; this is why the representation of the body cannot be erotic, for the poem seeks to transcend the physical. Even though for a moment, in the closing lines, there is an attempt to bring the poem back to the erotic sphere – “and there will be others”, the poem asserts at the end the singularity of the lyrical “you”.

Goldberg takes her attempt to represent Sonne as a lyrical addressee who is embodying the spiritual one step further in another poem written around the same time.

Your lit up window lost to the blue nights  
 Opens to my dream-prayer like the Holy Ark.  
 The rivers washed white the doorway of your house,  
 And the path to it is pure.

Because you crossed a spectrum of solitudes and your poem fell silent  
 And you will carry your wise heart into the blaze of your death –  
 please, let me live in this world  
 lonely like you.<sup>8</sup>

There are no doubts about the intra-textual relation between the two poems, since in the short poem published first in “Shibolet yerukat ha-ayin”, Goldberg repeats the same expression “ki avarta” (because you crossed) which became one of the central tropes in the short lyrical cycle addressed to Sonne. But unlike the previous poem, the action of crossing is spiritual and not physical and it is deliberately ascribed to the “you” of a poet. The different meaning of the same expression signals the essential change in Goldberg’s representation of Sonne as a poet.

It is her first poem addressed to Ben Yitzhak, written from the standpoint of a poet. All the bodily, even in its secondary form, all the explicitly erotic, is

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<sup>8</sup> Lea Goldberg, *Selected Poetry and Drama*, (The Toby Press: New Milford, CT 2005, translated by Rachel Tzvia Back), 45. For the original see in Goldberg, *Shirim*, VI. I, 149.

absent from this text. Every metaphor, every simile in it serves Goldberg to engender the poetic universe that transcends the physical reality. In order to describe the interaction between the two poets, in a way untypical for her poetry, she turns to Jewish tradition. Goldberg likens the act of revealing the poet's world to another poet to one of the most central and sacred moments in Jewish liturgy: the opening of the Torah ark. No dialogue is taking place yet within the poetic space, but rather an act of communication between the two, since there is a response to Goldberg's dream prayer, which she perceives as a spiritual poetic event. Goldberg's poem calls to mind once again Ben Yitzhak's lyric language, but this time in order to keep it within the space of her own lyrical utterance. That is to say, she does not merely create an inter-textual affinity to Ben Yitzhak's poetry, but applies instead its fundamental elements in order to reenact his lyrical world. The whiteness and the purity of the world from Ben Yitzhak's first ever published poem "Horef bahir" (Bright Winter)<sup>9</sup> becomes in Goldberg's poem an inherent part of his own poetic world – "The rivers washed white the doorway of your house,/And the path to it is pure." (45). The second strophe evokes in a condensed form two of Ben Yitzhak's poems – "Bodedim omrim" (A few say) and his final one, "Ashrey ha-zor'im ve-lo yikzoru" (Blessed are they who sow and do not reap) and envisions him as one of those few who "shall wander in extremity", in their solitude and whose poetry "comes to a pause on the lips" (41) about whom the poet wrote in his programmatic texts.

The world of Ben Yitzhak's poetry, kept alive in Goldberg's poem, exists on the threshold of the metaphysical. It is only logical that within the knowledge about the end of life "And you will carry your wise heart into the blaze of your death" marks in the poem this borderline zone that will be crossed one day. The figure of the poet accepting his own death as a transcendental process in Goldberg's work is reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's insight on the role of the dying person in Rilke's Duino Elegies in the essay she wrote together with Guenter Stern.<sup>10</sup> "It is from the impossibility of experiencing transcendence immediately," argue Arendt and Stern, "that the dying person, in his transcending of one existence toward another, acquires a fundamentally religious meaning."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ben Yitzhak, *Collected Poems*, 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt and Guenter Stern, "Rilke's Duino Elegies." in: Susanna Young-Ah Gottlieb (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1–24.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt and Stern, "Rilke's Duino Elegies", 5.

Goldberg's lyrical speaker is neither asking Ben Yitzhak for love nor for another form of reciprocity but for permission to be as lonely as he is in the world. But why does she seek Ben Yitzhak's permission to be lonely, or even more importantly, permission "to be in the world," once one acknowledges the enjambment in the closing stanza? If being lonely in the world is a virtue that can be acquired, why would she need Ben Yitzhak as a supreme moral instance? But the real permission that Goldberg asks for is obscured by the rhetoric of pathos. Goldberg views the ability to be lonely in the world as a radical form of freedom, but at the same time, in the case of Ben Yitzhak, she sees in it the dangerous realization of a metaphor on the existential level, or to put it differently – the main cause for the end of his poetry. For Goldberg, being in the world means to be a poet whose poem did not "fall silent", and this is the permission she asks from Ben Yitzhak as a poet, to allow her to master solitude without having to give up her lyrical voice.

## The impossible dialogue

Two years after the publication of these poems, Lea Goldberg dedicated the lyrical cycle "Al ha-priha" (On the blooming), which she regarded throughout her life as one of her highest poetic achievements to Avraham Ben-Yitzhak. The cycle was published in a volume *Shisha Prakim le-Shira* (Six chapters of poetry), to which six modernist poets, among them Natan Alterman, Avraham Shlonsky and three other poets had contributed with their poems. At the beginning of 1941, a few weeks after the publication of *Shisha Prakim le-Shira*, Goldberg wrote in her diary, actually for the first time after almost a year and a half, about the fact that Sonne did not react to her poems – "And about the poems there is no answer. Very painful. Although, it might be that there is some justice in his silence. And I, nevertheless, think that the poems are excellent. I am thinking so in the moments when I am not full of doubts regarding this whole thing. I was even thinking that once I would have somebody to write for, for a single person for whom I was ready to give up the readership altogether. And this person did not express his opinion even in one sentence" (*Yomaney Lea Goldberg*, 268). Instead of hearing from Sonne, she was criticized by the literary critique Emanuel Ben Gurion, whose words she found very painful, and "yet", she adds, "if Sonne had said one good word, all this would not be important. A very serious feeling that these are my last poems" (*ibid.*).

Six days later, a period of time that felt like an eternity to Goldberg, she met Sonne in a café and heard his opinion about the entire volume. Finally her

turn came. Sonne was short, he told her that the poems were very beautiful, especially the eighth one, “the last line” (ibid.) “And that you dedicated them to me” he added and laughed apologetically, “or perhaps contently” – writes Goldberg. “He said,” she continues, that “only in these poems there is a sense of time and that he cannot read right now other things” (ibid.). “Apparently, it should be absolutely enough” – she concludes in a moment of self-reflection typical for her. But in spite of what Sonne told her, including him saying “almost clearly” that her poems were the best in the volume, this was not enough for Goldberg, and his reaction did not make her happy. She was expecting something else, even though she could not tell what exactly. Despite its private nature, this episode might reveal indirectly two crucial aspects in Goldberg’s decision to dedicate “Al ha-priha” to Avraham Ben Yitzhak. On the one hand, it enables us to comprehend her strive to constitute Ben Yitzhak an addressee of her lyrical utterance or even more so, as we will see, as its “super-addressee”, to use Bakhtin’s concept. On the other hand, it makes us contemplate on Goldberg’s attempt to bestow on Sonne the lyrical cycle as a poetic gift. These two aspects are two sides of the phenomenon of lyrical striving for dialogue. But in order to reflect on the limitations of dialogue that Goldberg sought to constitute in “Al ha-priha”, we should grasp first the poetic dynamic between the lyrical “I” and the lyrical “you” within the cycle.

Lea Goldberg worked on the poems of “Al ha-priha” during the first year after the beginning of World War II. In these nine poems, Goldberg masters the rhyming verse stanza used by Dante in *Divina Comedia* – the terza rima, a form that also found its way to the poetry of some other modernist poets to whom she felt particularly close, such as Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, but also W. H. Auden and T. S. Elliot. This was also for the first time that she touched in her poems upon the question of transition from human reality to the spiritual one so explicitly and intensively. The metaphor of blooming in Goldberg’s lyrical cycle allows the reader to reflect on the presence of death in life, but also of life in death. Concentrating then on its duality, she explores the different facets of blooming, constantly pointing to its transient and to its overwhelming vitality. More than in any other of her poems written previously or afterwards, Goldberg contemplated and even struggled in “Al ha-priha” with a poetic urge forced by the outbreak of the war to represent a beauty that is permanently threatened to be destroyed by approaching decay, death, and destruction. If in the first two poems Goldberg contemplates on the appearances of the dual nature of blooming – such as the “overnight flowering of the castor-oil tree” (II, 61; Back’s English translation. p. 62) and the secret magic in the hands of an old woman. In the third poem she addresses the core of the subject of the poetic cycle:



That the death would rise up in his window  
 we knew: his even gaze  
 clear and cold as a grape skin.

And through the skin a congested world  
 Approached, flickering, yellow as a sated day,  
 Cities, streams, also a multitude

Of springs and a host of blossoming bursting forth  
 And he walked burdened to the border's edge.  
 So weary bull in the setting day

brings the harvest to the barn.

The opening stanza of the poem acquaints the reader with a lyrical speaker of the poem, who immediately asserts his authority – “that the death would rise up in his window/*we knew*” (italics are mine). The knowledge that this “we” has in its command is not a form of common knowledge about life, which also includes death. It is a knowledge based on the historical experience of a whole generation that grew up in the interwar period and could foresee the outbreak of another war. Even though the political context of the whole cycle becomes clear only later, in the fifth poem, it was evident for Goldberg’s contemporaries. In this poem, however, she avoids mentioning explicitly the historical context in order to underline the universal aspect in her poetic endeavor to comprehend life endangered by death. Goldberg personifies death in order to represent its oncoming encounter with the world. On the surface it is not even a violent encounter, since unlike the “congested world” bursting with vitality, Goldberg describes death as a calm and self-restrained wayfarer. It is not death, therefore, but the world that is approaching it with an overwhelming intensity and threatening to flood into it. Goldberg does not create an apocalyptic image in this poem; instead, she evokes the tragic side of any blooming, by reversing the power relationship between life and death through a highly aestheticized form. It seems also that this poem makes it explicit why writing in *terza rima* was so important for her, precisely because of its being a strict and inflexible stanza. Using it meant for Goldberg to be able to articulate on a meta-poetical level the urge to contain and to protect the transient beauty from total destruction and to guarantee its timelessness, at least within the poetic space.

The lyrical “I” is absent from the cycle, as well as the lyrical addressee who does not return until the sixth poem. This fact is particularly important because, as we recall, the whole cycle is dedicated to another poet and one could assume that it would contain a sort of invitation for dialogue in one way or another. In the first five poems, the poetic utterance is constituted through the voice of an omnipresent speaker that employs the first person plural form of “we” in only one poem, namely in the third poem cited above. It is a general, a collective

“we” that marks the existential axis of the whole cycle and asserts its knowledge of the overwhelming presence of death threatening to flood into the world.

The turning point of the “Al ha-priha” takes place in the sixth poem, as already argued above, once the lyrical “you” suddenly appears. Goldberg, however, is cautiously testing the ground for the appearance of the lyrical addressee already in the previous poem. It is perhaps the most concrete and non-metaphorical poem in the cycle that is at the same time its sore spot, for it touches upon the immediate impact of war on the lives of millions of people – their forced exile and loss of homeland. Goldberg depicts in this poem refugees in the train “being carried off somewhere” (II, 64), who had to flee and leave everything behind them and now long for past. She sketches almost stenographically the fragments of their conversation, as if she were herself on that train: “and someone in a listening telling/of a son, a house facing the garden” (ibid.). Even though this poem does not address explicitly Avraham Ben Yitzhak, his biographical experience is echoed in it. He is one of those who lost their homeland, and in writing about the existential condition of millions of people, Goldberg seeks to create a moment of shared intimacy enabled by her deep understanding of Ben Yitzhak’s immeasurable loss. Since this poem bears the potential of emphatic understanding, it paves the way for the opening of the poetic space towards Goldberg’s first attempt to constitute an inter-subjective encounter in the next poem. This poetic space is defined by an irresolvable tension between blooming and withering that are intertwined in the perception of the lyrical subject of the world.

And indeed, the sixth poem transforms the relation between life and death as depicted in the third poem: the death is no longer to intrude into the world, because it is already there. Now life itself announces with an intensified vitality the presence of death – “A restless blossoming in the darkness of our garden./ As on a death-night he craves: To live!” (27). However, the previous poem makes it clear that this condition should be understood in historical and not in transcendental terms. It is the war and not a metaphysical force that intensifies the opposition of life and death and at the same time unites them even more visibly. The phenomena of an intrinsic tension between two opposite driving forces in nature and in human life as it is perceived by the lyrical subject becomes particularly visible in the following lines: “*terror* and *passion* in the breathing of beasts” and “Night lives in the blood and in the scent,/in *this* death and *this* desire” (ibid., italics are mine). The poem gives a name to this: double-imaged things. It is striking to see that once named, it also opens a space for another kind of duplication – a lyrical “I” and lyrical “you”.

The whole world, in its blossoming and dying flows into one single moment – “And all the stars come down to bloom/in the stillness of your visionary

hands.” (ibid.) and this is also the moment in which the lyrical addressee of the cycle is born. Or to put it differently: the two closings stanzas are marking and at the same time constituting the transformation of Abraham Ben Yitzhak from a person to whom the cycle is dedicated to its addressee. The metaphors of Ben Yitzhak as a spiritual figure are known to us already from Goldberg’s previous poems. What becomes even more radical in this poem is not only the extent of the representation of Ben Yitzhak as an elevated authority, or as a silent prophet but also his role in the poem itself. Goldberg imagines Ben Yitzhak as a vessel that can contain “all the stars” that “come down to bloom”. This role of a unifying principle of the poem or its gravity force that Goldberg ascribes to him, is being even intensified in the next poem –

You are one who wanders the paths.  
 You are upright before the splendor and summit.  
 You are mute in the rustling of the leaves.

The constellations turn in a convoy  
 In the hiding-places of heaven, and among them  
 your loneliness treads, adorned  
 with virtue and compassion and grace

In this poem, Goldberg accomplishes the process of the representation of Ben Yitzhak’s figure as the embodiment of the human form of sacrality, human because of its moral (even though God-like) capacities. This effect of the “final word” is also strengthened by Goldberg’s extensive usage of Ben Yitzhak’s poetic vocabulary here and in the two closing poems<sup>12</sup> in order to provide more of a textual authority to Goldberg’s own lyrical discourse. But by granting him such a status, Goldberg pursues also another goal, namely – to constitute Ben Yitzhak as a superaddressee of the cycle, to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s term.

Bakhtin argues that in any literary text there are always three and not two parties involved that together constitute a dialogical situation. Whereas the two immediate participants of a dialogue are the speaker and the addressee that exist in every text in different way, the third party has a special function.<sup>13</sup> The author of the utterance, suggests Bakhtin, “with a greater or lesser awareness,

<sup>12</sup> For the detailed list of the quotations from Ben Yitzhak’s poems in “Al ha-priha” see: Hamutal Bar Yosef, “‘Al ha-priha’: Lea Goldberg ve-hasimbolism” [‘On the blooming’: Lea Goldberg and symbolism] in Ruth Karton-Blum and Anat Weisman, *Pgishot im meshoreret*, [Meetings with a poet], (Tel-Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 2001), footnote 25, 112.

<sup>13</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analyses” in: Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (eds.), *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, (Austin: University of Texas Press 1986), 126, translated by Vern. W. Mcgeee.

presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time.”<sup>14</sup> This responsive understanding of a superaddressee is the reason for his divergent status in a literary text. The third party, Bakhtin elucidates, “is not any mystical or metaphysical being”, but a “constitutive aspect of the whole utterance, that can be revealed in the text through a deep analysis.<sup>15</sup> For our reading of “Al ha-priha” the question about the third party appears to be necessary precisely because Goldberg is explicitly seeking to create a dialogical situation in the cycle. Furthermore, her aspiration to be understood in these poems was intensified by the threat of the war that endangered the existence of the world about which she wrote in “Al ha-priha”.

Goldberg reveals her attempt to relate Ben Yitzhak to the lyrical addresses in a way that seeks to internalize him as the “superaddressee” of the cycle in the seventh poem in the cycle that is already cited above. She discloses this radical step on a performative level by asserting the unquestionable moral wholeness of her addressee<sup>16</sup> – “your loneliness treads, adorned/with virtue and compassion and grace.” (66). Through his compassion and grace, the poet also bears a potential for the ultimate understanding, or in Bakhtin’s own words, the “responsive understanding”, the shaping of Ben Yitzhak as a higher instancing of the lyrical utterance, that is essential for Goldberg in order to constitute the ethical core of the cycle and at the same to guarantee the spiritual value of “Al ha-priha”. For by addressing Ben Yitzhak as the human embodiment of the poetic-spiritual world, she in a way sought to address poetry itself.

After the moral authority of the cycle has been established in the previous poem, the next poem opens with an existential question – “How we can bring our dying heart/at dawn to the new day?” and ends with the testimony of the generation facing the war, that should also be understood as an answer to the question posed at the beginning: “and only we, fear-struck,/dream-bereft, witness of the blaze,/carry our blossoming land/like a mourning wreath toward the grave.” The moral and the aesthetical duty is articulated in this poem in the first-person plural – to bear witness to the beauty of the world and to remember it the moment before its destruction, is a result of the lyrical contemplation that took place in “Al ha-priha”. One can view it as the poetic credo of the whole

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text”, *ibid.*, italics are in original.

<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text”, 126.

<sup>16</sup> In her reading of Goldberg’s memoir “Pgisha im meshorer” Anat Weisman suggests that in this text also at least on the surface, the figure of Ben Yitzhak “represents absolute values, preferable and whole.” See Anat Weissman, “Hommage mit doppeltem Boden. Die Gestalt Lea Goldbergs in ‚Begegnung mit einem Dichter‘“, in *Naharaim*, 2013, Vol. 7 II, Number 1–2, 51–74.

cycle. What becomes clear however is that the lyrical addressee of the cycle is not included in this collective “we”, because he belongs to a higher moral sphere. For if Ben Yitzhak as a poet is to be imagined as a superaddressee of and as functioning as such in Goldberg’s text, he cannot be involved in immediate dialogue with her at the same time. He has to be above such a dialogue, since he inhabits a unique, poetic-spiritual place, he cannot additionally inhabit the historical space of Goldberg’s poems. Thus he cannot be charged with the same moral and aesthetical task as the speaker in the poem – because he moved beyond everyday existence or even altogether beyond additionally inhabit human world.

And indeed, the last poem in the cycle evokes such a world, a world devoid of human presence – “One abandoned star in the wild dark,/and the sound of the sea. Waves rise – despair.” (68). There is only one star in that world, the abandoned star, the remnant of the world of blossoming, that can perhaps bear evidence to the existence of metaphysical sphere, “somewhere higher than all heights” in which the “eternal spring has bloomed.” (ibid.). Goldberg’s lyrical cycle starts with the universal aspect of transience and moves then to the politically conditioned destruction of blossoming, where love is only one of its manifestations. The last poem in the cycles suggests perceiving the blooming entirely in spiritual and even metaphysical terms in order to ensure its existence in times of war.

The constitution of Avraham Ben Yitzhak as the superaddressee of “Al ha-priha” assisted Goldberg in her poetic quest, for she constructed him in the cycle as a guarantee for the sustainability of the spiritual world. It also implied that the lyrical addressee had to merge with the superaddressee of the cycle and to become one. However precisely for that reason it also meant for Goldberg at the same time to forgo the creation of a dialogical space, since the cycle did not assume the necessity of an immediate, non-ideal interlocutor anymore.

Perhaps the only way Goldberg could have regained the dialogic dimension of the cycle would have been if Avraham Ben Yitzhak had replied to it in a poem of his own. But this, as Goldberg knew, was impossible. One could think though that this very precondition would make the “Al ha-priha” a perfect gift for Avraham Sonne, precisely because she could not expect him to answer her. But the note in her diary mentioned above testifies to her own discontent with herself for expecting some sort of an answer. Thus, the episode in the diary seems to be so relevant because it helps to grasp Goldberg’s awareness of the impossibility of giving Avraham Sonne her poetic cycle as a gift and at the same time to acknowledge her deep intention to do so. She was ready, as she notes in the diary, to give up all of her audience and to make him her only reader, but in exchange for that she hoped to hear from him his opinion about her poetry. But what would it mean to make your only reader a poet who has fallen silent?

It would mean giving up on the possibility of dialogue and all the rest of the readers, while still waiting for his acknowledgement.

## The unity of images

Among all the poems that Lea Goldberg wrote to Avraham Ben Yitzhak, there was only a single poem addressed to Sonne. This was a poem in which she did not seek to present him as a figure, but rather to address him as a beloved human being insted. This is perhaps her only truly dialogic poem that relates to him. “Beautiful are the branches of the trees” was published in “Al ha-Mishmar” in September 1945 and it was one of the few poems she wrote shortly after the war. For some reason, this beautiful and very intimate poem is scarcely known by Goldberg’s readers and literary critics, even though it doubtlessly belongs to one of the most subtle poems in Goldberg’s love poetry. In this poem she manages to create an inter-subjective space, a space in which there is enough place for both of them. And even though she uses Ben Yitzhak’s figurative language, this time she does not strive to internalize his lyrical discourse and to constitute through it Ben Yitzhak as a super-addressee of her poem. Rather, this time Goldberg echoes his poetic voice, mainly in the form of metaphorical language in order to open the poem for a dialogue on equal terms. It seems that at this stage Goldberg had fully given up her hope that Ben Yitzhak would ever reply to her. Thus, she knew that the dialogue could take place only within the poetic space of her poem, imagined and constituted by her. And yet, being on equal terms meant for her first of all to situate the lyrical subject in the space that is more intact with her poetic universe and not within the metaphysical sphere so immanent to Ben Yitzhak’s world, but so alien to her after all.

Goldberg carefully chooses a place in which her lyrical “I” and her lyrical addressee can meet – in the forests of their childhoods: “The branches of the trees are beautiful on the surface of a flowing gold/of the day inclining to die, magic tapestry, souvenir –/from the forest of my childhood burst out the horns of Oryx/from a light but a happy neighing of spring.//But how wonderful is the confidence of a black trunk/standing in its calmness that won’t be terrified of the wind./Like him I want to hoard my images/to keep them for you as a gift once you will come to rest.//Then I will sit in front of you, will see how the blue in your gaze shadows/even becomes warmer, non-stop/the sparks of a smile move past, the noble forehead/is wearing slowly the splendor of evening rest./I am the black trunk for you/to carry your fatigue towards the insured joy./until the old game of shadow and light will wake up,/until in your heart the anxiety

of blooming opens.//Beautiful are the branches of the tree and you will see them in my eyes/and also to you they will be as magic, as a souvenir:/from the forest of your childhood burst out the horns of Oryx/their tapestry is to be seen on the surface of flowing gold –/the happy unity of images.” II, 85)

For the first time, worlds do not separate between Lea Goldberg and Avraham Sonne in her poem. There is not a single touch of the transcendental in it. Here she is the one who is welcoming him in the poetic world in which she feels at home and offers him a gift, a very human gift. The time of the poem is set shortly before sunset, and the lyrical speaker is observing how the declining golden light illuminates the tree branches. Being perceived in the present, this beautiful moment becomes also a souvenir from the past, for it brings with it the snapshot of other times – of an antelope coming out of the forest she saw once in her childhood. This is not just any forest; it is the forest of her childhood, full of joyful visions and sounds – a whole intimate space of memory that Goldberg masterfully recalls in the few lines of the first stanza. The rest of the poem is written in the future tense, which contains the meeting between the two subjects.

Feeling safe in the space of memory that Goldberg can share with the lyrical addressee, she is moving towards him and offering a gift. But this time it is different from the one in “Al ha-priha”, the gift is not a poem, the act of giving a gift is taking place within the poetical sphere. Just as the tree is a calm vessel that holds the treasury of images, Goldberg seeks to collect her own images to give them to Sonne as a gift once he comes to rest. Looking at these collected images, so she hopes, would have a similar effect on him it as on her, when she had looked at the tree: it will create a safe space for him and will remind him of his own memories. Goldberg’s gift in this poem is personal, even therapeutic, and poetic at the same time.

The healing effect of the gift will reverberate firstly in his face as evidence of the gradual change in his emotional state. The prominent features of Sonne’s face, which Goldberg had described in her memoir – his blue eyes and his noble big forehead, are mentioned also in the poem, leaving no doubt about the identity of its addressee. Whereas in the early poems about Sonne, his bodily presence was described as a non-personal, almost an abstract one, to intensify his unique spiritual image here for the first time his face is represented in its humanness. The gift that hoards in its radiant fragments of the past that can be intimately shared between them, opens a space in the future in which a conversation between lovers can become possible. Nothing has happened yet in this subtle and private space. There is only an indirect promise, a promise that is frightening for Goldberg’s addressee. “Anxiety of blooming” is the name that Goldberg gives to the emotional stage of the lyrical “you” for which she is long-

ing and it is perhaps also the name for the poetic force that bears the potential of causing the radical change that happens in the last stanza of the poem.

The space in which blooming begins will invoke the forest of Sonne's childhood for it will inspire him to see the beautiful image twice: once in the eyes of his interlocutor and for the second time in the eyes of his memory. In this space of memory reflected in the present moment, they can both behold the same image applying it to their own worlds, but at the same time create a poetic symmetry – the happy unity of images, which in Hebrew can also be the happy unity of figures, referring to the unification of the lyrical "I" and her addressee. Rarely in her life did Lea Goldberg write poems with such an emotional symmetry and it would be difficult to find a more perfect ending to her lyrical conversation with Avraham Sonne. But the story does not end here.

## Belated response

Nine years passed since Lea Goldberg had addressed Avraham Sonne in her poetry for the first time. He had never replied to her, and his poetic silence remained a lyrical and even an existential constant not only in his life but also in hers. But then, after many years, probably on the least expected occasion, Sonne suddenly unsealed his pact of silence for a moment and wrote a note to Goldberg which he sent her along with flowers. This was not just an ordinary note; it was a fragment of a poem signed by Avraham Ben Yitzhak. One cannot fully grasp the meaning of this event for Goldberg both as a person and as a poet. It was probably too late. She related to this event publically only after Sonne's death, in her memoir. It seems that the only reason we came to know about it is because Goldberg did not feel that she had a right to keep this note to herself. After all, it was the only lyrical fragment Ben Yitzhak ever wrote after his immigration to Palestine. And so, even though it was addressed only to her, Goldberg made the note accessible to the readers because of its poetic value.

The story around this note is told in the memoir "Encounter with a poet". During one of their meetings in a café, Sonne touched on Goldberg's recently published poem. What appeared at the beginning to be a part of their everyday conversation, developed quickly into an agitated discussion or even an attack by Sonne on Goldberg's poem. He criticized it for her somewhat naïve perception of nature, so the memoir tells us. According to Sonne, Goldberg concentrates only on the vital and joyful side of nature without seeing the tragic side – "He talked about the uniqueness of each flower, about the withering, about the tragic part in this beauty of the flowers, which does not have any means to



know itself.” Acknowledging his own harshness Sonne seeks to apologize and even leaves room for doubt about how justified his criticism is. He tells Goldberg that he had never caused damage to “great books” and this is why he was worried that she would “take revenge on him later by not sending him her book, once it is out.” Goldberg responds jokingly that the only revenge she could think of would be to decide to print the poem in her future volume. But right after this sentence, she tells the reader in parentheses that the poem was left out when Goldberg’s next lyrical volume was published. The next thing the reader gets to know about this story is that on the following day, Sonne sent Goldberg a beautiful bouquet of flowers, with a note attached to it: “In the hallow of the raised air/they won’t recognize their shape/And sorry and thank you for my wrath. Avraham Ben Yitzhak.”<sup>17</sup> The very poem of Goldberg, which unleashed Sonne’s criticism, remains unknown to the reader of the memoir, however.

In her insightful reading of “Encounter with a poet” Anat Weisman offers a detailed account of this milestone event, concentrating on the interpretation of Ben Yitzhak’s enigmatic note as a “dramatic dialogical gesture”.<sup>18</sup> Weisman interprets the fact that Goldberg does not mention the poem as serving Goldberg’s intention to stress the general character of the discussion on the poetic matters between the two poets.<sup>19</sup>

There was, however, still a concrete poem that triggered, at least in the early stage, this discussion. That is why it seems to be important to trace back the poem that Goldberg censored both in the memoir and later in her book, if one is to follow Weisman’s argument on the dialogic nature of Ben Yitzhak’s lyrical fragment. For precisely this poem might provide a missing hermeneutic link to the genesis of his sudden urge to break, and if only for a moment, his poetic silence.

In the late 1940s, Lea Goldberg found only a few poems unworthy of being republished, for most of her poems that originally had been published in newspapers and journals were included in her poetic volumes. Among those poems she wanted to be forgotten, which number altogether not more than twenty, surprisingly, there is actually only one poem which relates in one way or another to nature – the one, titled “On simple things”. It seems that Ben Yitzhak was right in one thing, namely in his aesthetical judgment, for the poem was not one of Goldberg’s best ones. However, this is not just a simple poem about the beauty of the nature but rather a poem on existential matters, one whose

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<sup>17</sup> Lea Goldberg, “Begegnung mit einem Dichter”, *Naharaim*, 7 (2013): 49.

<sup>18</sup> Anat Weissman, “Hommage mit doppeltem Boden”, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Compare with Anat Weissman, “Hommage mit doppeltem Boden”, *ibid.*

lyrical addressee might have been Avraham Sonne. Or at least he could have read this poem as one that was addressed to him. This might also have been a reason for Goldberg not to mention the poem in the memoir: she did not want to include the intimate layer of this episode into her story.

The poem was published in the daily newspaper “Al ha-mishmar” in November 1948 and consisted of two parts, both of which ponder, rather schematically, the necessity to acknowledge and to celebrate the existence of everyday life in spite of the burdening past. In the first poem, the speaker pleads with the addressee not to look back because it is full of “years and dead” and to concentrate instead on the “simple things” that are reappearing every morning “pure and lucid in the necessity of their existence.” (III, 195). Those things, the poem suggests, live along with grief and fear without being threatened by them. If the first poem reflects the co-existence of the simple presence (or present simple) with the traumatic past that returns in nightmarish nights, the second poem articulates a moral incapability of a collective “we” to sustain happiness. Such an emotional deficiency is the result of the existential burden of the generation to which the speaker belongs. The last two stanzas of the poem employ the pathos of the first two in order to formulate a poetic imperative of a life in a shadow of the past – “Just this we will not cease to caress with the gaze/the life that starts growing/: the branch of an almond blooming in Shvat, the childish yellowness of a chicken.” (III, 196). In the closing stanza, the poem switches from speaking in plural form to addressing again the lyrical “you”, suggesting to him to behold “the wind embracing the tree” and to find a solace in the knowledge that even “if all the roads are leading to an end/not all the ends were completed yet.”

Thus only the two last strophes of the second poem clarify the meaning of the general expression “simple things” or fill it with content to be more precise. Those simple things are manifestations of growth and blooming in nature that exists regardless of its beholder. By suggesting to dwell on the beauty of nature, Goldberg reproduces in this poem a dichotomy between the timespan of a human life, full of pain and knowledge about death and the cyclic time of nature, in which blooming is not preconditioned by the knowledge of its end. The simple things are so precious because they might bring consolation for the permanent loss in human life. They also remind us of another form of existence that is pure, argues Goldberg, because of its being non-reflective. It is precisely this central thought of the poem that made Sonne so critical of it. This very inability of nature to know itself is tragic, more than anything else – Sonne admonishes Goldberg, as she testifies in the memoir. Goldberg does not reveal much from this conversation – only this one idea of Sonne about the other, the tragic side of blooming. But it would be logical to assume that what was also at stake in

that charged conversation is the first part of Goldberg's poem, the existential one. By undermining Goldberg's dichotomy between human life and nature, he also resisted Goldberg's idea of the possibility to find a solace in "simple things". And this is probably what caused Sonne's wrath, to use his own language in the note that he attached to the bouquet of white gypsophila he sent her the next morning.

What is still surprising about Sonne's strong reaction to the poem is the fact that he does not seem to have realized that Goldberg had started their conversation about the meaning of blooming a long time ago, namely when she dedicated the lyrical cycle "Al ha-priha" to him. In a way, blooming as a concept became for her one of the keys to understanding and to describing their relationship. Did he maybe react not only to this specific poem but also to the poems which Goldberg had addressed to him during all those years? Was his response a belated attempt to enter into a dialogical space? We will never be able to give a final answer to these questions, for Avraham Sonne did not leave any diary notes behind. But his note, which he signed for the second time after he published his last poem with the name Avraham Ben Yitzhak, might shed some light on the last chapter of this long unilateral lyrical conversation.

Anat Weisman provides in her essay an important insight into the spectrum of possible interpretations of Ben Yitzhak's enigmatic note. She proposes to divide them between two poles: as the affirmation of his critique of Goldberg's view of blooming on the one hand, ("In the hallow of the raised air/they won't recognize their shape") and on the other hand, as the "expression of his appeasement and completion with the difference in their perception of nature."<sup>20</sup> At any rate, in the case of both possible interpretations of the poem, Sonne for the first and last time engaged into a lyrical conversation with Goldberg in written form. His belated response to her poetry was not a public one, but yet a poetic one. His enigmatic poem did not create a "unity of images" with Goldberg's poetic world and yet it took up the dialogue they had outside the text, in real life.

But Sonne's note included a second part that seems to be just a polite phrase with which one would end a personal note, sent on such occasion: "And sorry and thank you for my wrath. Avraham Ben Yitzhak." Why would he, however, thank Goldberg for his wrath? One could argue of course that it was simply a matter of grammar and that only the word "sorry" relates to Sonne's wrath. But it would be very unlikely for a poet who strove for ultimate precision in the Hebrew language not to notice the ambiguity of the last sentence in his

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<sup>20</sup> Anat Weisman, "Hommage mit doppeltem Boden", 72.

note. It seems rather that he wanted to leave it open to interpretation. Because after all, he had a very good reason to thank her for his wrath – it caused him to break his silence, for the first and for the last time. The act of sending a white gypsophila with an attached letter to it, half a poem, half a personal note was perhaps like a message in a bottle for Lea Goldberg: it brought with it so many memories and echoes from her own lyrical past with Avraham Sonne: the blooming, the hallow of the air in which she sought to represent him in her poems for many years, but also his human side, his anger and yet, his “virtue and compassion and grace”.

ב

שְׁמֵי-יּוֹם עַל רֵאשֵׁנוּ כְּכֶתֶר כָּחַל.  
אָכֵן לְשֵׁאתָם קָטָנוּ.  
כְּתַפְּיֵנוּ צְרוֹת וּכְפּוֹפוֹת מִן הָעַל.  
רַבִּים כְּבָר כְּרָעוּ כְּמוֹנוּ.

לֹא מְלֶךְ אָבִינוּ, וְלֹא לְמַלְכוֹת  
נִקְרָאנוּ הַלּוֹם אֲנַחְנוּ.  
לֹא פָעַם דְּחִינוּ כָּל חֹסֵד וְזָכוֹת  
וְאִשֶׁר גָּדוֹל קִפְחָנוּ.

רַק זֹאת לֹא נִחַדְּל – לְלִשְׁתִּי בְּמִבְּט  
חַיִּים הָעוֹלָיִם לְצַמַּח:  
עֲנֵף הַשָּׂקֵד בְּתַפְּרִיחַת שֶׁל שֶׁבֶט,  
צִהְבוֹת יְלִדוּתִית שֶׁל אֶפְרוֹחַ –

הַבֵּט, אֵיךְ הָרִיחַ חוֹבֵק אֶת הָעֵץ,  
מֵה טוֹב מְנַעוּ, מֵה קָל הוּא.  
אִם כָּל הַדְּרָכִים מוֹלִיכִים אֵלַי קֵץ,  
לֹא כָּל הַקְּצִים עוֹד כְּלוּ.

5. "על הדברים הפשוטים", א-ב, בתוך: לאה גולדברג: שירים, ערך: טוביה ריבנר, מהדורה חדשה ומתוקנת, 1986 [1973], כרך ג, עמ' 195–196. נדפס לראשונה בעל המשמר, "דף לספרות", 19.11.1948, עמ' 4.  
Lea Goldberg, *Shirim* [Poems] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), Vol. III, 195–196.  
Al ha-dvarim ha-pshutim – "On simple things"

## עַל הַדְּבָרִים הַפְּשׁוּטִים

א

חלומנו בהול, ערוּתנו נכנעת,  
 אל תביט לאחור: שם שנים ומיתים.  
 אך כל בָּקָר ובָּקָר עולים בבלי דעת  
 מתהומו של הליל הדברים הפשוטים.

הם שבים בקר-בקר, כעין נפקחת,  
 טהורים וצוללים בהכרח קיומם,  
 וסמוכים וצמודים ליגון ולפחד,  
 הם חיים וגושמים לתמם.

אל תביט בצלה של דמותי הכושלת,  
 בוא, עצם את עיניך לרגע וזכר  
 שקתיב, בין היתר, בספר קהלת,  
 כי מתוק האור.

## יָפִים עֲנָפֵי הָעֵץ

יָפִים עֲנָפֵי הָעֵץ עַל פְּנֵי זֶהָב זֹרֶם  
 שֶׁל יוֹם נוֹטָה לְמוֹת. רִקְמַת־קִסְמִים, מְזֻכֶּרֶת –  
 מִיַּעַר יַלְדוּתִי גַחִים קִרְנֵי רֵאֵם,  
 מִצְהֶלֶת מַעֲזָן קִלְה אֶף מְאַשְׁרֶת.

אֶף מֵה גִפְלָא בְטָחוֹן הַגּוֹעַ הַשְּׁחָר:  
 עוֹמֵד בְּשִׁלְוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יַחַת מְרוּחַ.  
 כְּמוֹתוֹ דְּמִיּוּתִי בְקִשְׁתִּי לְאַגֵּר,  
 לְנִצֵּר תְּשׁוּרָה לְךָ עַת כִּי תְבוֹא לְנוּחַ.

אֹזִי אֲשֶׁב מוֹלֶךְ, אֶרְאֶה כִּי־צַד מִצְלִיל  
 אֶף מִתְחַמֵּם הַכְּחוּל בְּמִבְטָךְ. בְּלִי הֶרֶף  
 חוֹלְפִים גְּצִי חַיִּיד, הַמְצַח הַאֲצִיל  
 לוֹבֵשׁ לְאֵט הַדְּרַת מְנוּחַת הָעָרֵב.

אֲנִי, אֲנִי לְךָ הַגּוֹעַ הַשְּׁחָר  
 לְשֵׁאת אֶת לְאוֹתֶךָ לְקִרְאֵת חֲדוּהַ בּוֹטְחַת,  
 עַד יִתְעוֹרֵר מִשְׁחַק נוֹשֵׁן שֶׁל צֶל נְאוּר,  
 עַד בְּלִבְךָ חֲרָדַת פְּרִיחָה נִפְתַּחַת.

יָפִים עֲנָפֵי הָעֵץ וּבְעֵינֵי תְרֵאֵם,  
 וְגַם לְךָ יִהְיוּ כְקִסְם, כְּמִזְכֶּרֶת:  
 מִיַּעַר יַלְדוּתֶךָ גַחִים קִרְנֵי רֵאֵם,  
 נִשְׁקַפֶּת רִקְמַתָּם עַל פְּנֵי זֶהָב זֹרֶם –  
 אַחַדוֹת הַדְּמִיּוֹת הַמְאַשְׁרֶת.

4. "יפים ענפי העץ", שירים, כרך ב, עמ' 85. נדפס לראשונה במשמר, "דף לספרות", כ"ט באלול תש"ה, 7.9.1945, עמ' 8.

ט

כּוֹכֵב נְטוּשׁ אֶחָד בְּשָׁחֹר פְּרוּעַ,  
 וְקוֹל הַיָּם. גְּלִים גּוֹאִים – יֵאוּשׁ.  
 מִדְּבַר שָׁחַר מוֹל מְשַׁבְּרִים וְרוּחַ.

הָאֵפְלוֹת הַגִּיחוּ – גּוּשׁ אֶל גּוּשׁ.  
 וְלֵיל שְׁחָקִים יִנַּע בֵּילֵל הַמַּיִם,  
 וְרַק כּוֹכֵב אֶחָד, כּוֹכֵב נְטוּשׁ.

נִצָּן יֶרֶק וְרֵף שְׁלִשְׁמִים,  
 נִיצוּץ-לְבָלוֹב, כְּרוֹז שֶׁל חִלּוּמוֹת:  
 אוֹלֵי מַעַל לַגִּבְהָ, בְּאֶפְסִים

הַנִּץ, הַנִּץ אֲבִיב הַעוֹלָמוֹת.



ח

אֵיךְ אֶת לְבִנּוּ הַגּוֹסֶס נְבִיאָה  
 אֶל יוֹם חֲדָשׁ בְּהַעֲלוֹת הָאוֹר?  
 כָּאוֹ תוֹסֵס הַיּוֹן בְּגָבִיעַ,

כָּאוֹ רָקִיעַ אֶת קֶשְׁתוֹ יַחְזֹר,  
 כָּאוֹ הַבֶּקֶר מְפִיז בַּשַּׁחַת  
 וּלְחֵי־שְׁקִיעוֹת נִצְמַד לְלַחֵי הַיָּאוֹר.

וְרַק אֲנַחְנוּ, הַלּוּמֵי הַפֶּחַד,  
 גּוֹזְלֵי־חַלּוֹם, עֵדֵי הַמְבַעֲרָה,  
 נִשְׂא אֶת אֲדַמְתֵּנוּ הַפּוֹרְחַת

כְּנוֹר אֲבֵלוֹת אֵלֵי קְבוּרָה.

ז

לְגַלְמוּדִים הַלֵּיל. מֵת הַסֵּעַר.  
פְּרִזּוֹן-לֵבָב מוֹל כּוֹכָבִים נוֹפְלִים.  
שְׁלוֹת יְחִוּד עַל אֵילָנוֹת הַיַּעַר.

אַתָּה אֶחָד הַנֶּעַ בְּמִשְׁעוּלִים.  
אַתָּה זְקוּף מוֹל נְגִה וְצִמְרֵת.  
אַתָּה אֵלִם בְּרַחֵשׁ הָעֵלִים.

הַמְזֻלוֹת יִסְבוּ בְּשִׁירַת  
בְּחִבּוּי־מְרוֹם, וּבִינְיָהֵם  
פּוֹסְעַת בְּדִידוּתָהּ הַמְעַטָּרַת

בְּגִמּוּל וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֵם.

ו

לְבִלּוֹב רוֹגֵשׁ בְּאַפְלַת גִּנּוּ.  
 כְּלִיל-מִיָּתֶה הוּא מְתַאָּוֶה: לְחַיּוֹת!  
 דְּמִים וְצַחֲוֹר שׁוֹקְעִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵינֵינוּ.

אִמָּה וְלֶהֱט בְּנִשְׁמַת חַיּוֹת.  
 צוֹנֵן וְקַל הַסְּתֵר הַזְּחוּחַ.  
 וְהַדְּבָרִים עֲרִים כְּפּוֹלֵי-דְמִיּוֹת.

וְחֵי הַלֵּיל בְּדָם וּבְנִיחוּחַ  
 בְּמֹת זֶה וּבְתִשׁוּקָה הַזֹּאת.  
 וְכָל הַכּוֹכָבִים יוֹרְדִים לְפָרֶחַ

בְּדוֹמִיַּת יְדִיךָ הַהוֹזוֹת.

ה

אֵיךְ רַכְבוֹת הִלְכוּ! זְמוּם בְּלִי הֶרֶף  
כְּסוּף־פְּסִים בְּזִכַּר מוֹלְדוֹת,  
שְׂכֵשׁוּף שֶׁל מִים וּמִשְׁק שֶׁל חֶרֶב.

נָנְעוּ בְּלִיל עֵינַיִם בּוֹדְדוֹת  
שֶׁל הַנּוֹסְעִים הַמּוֹבִילִים אֵי־אָנָּה.  
צֵל עֲנָפִים, חֲשֵׁמֶל וַחֲרָדוֹת,

וְאַצְבָּעוֹת חוֹרוֹת בְּשַׁחֲוֹר תַּנְעָנָה,  
וּמִיֶּשֶׁהוּ סֵפֶר בְּקוֹל קָשׁוּב  
עַל בֶּן, עַל בֵּית הַצּוֹפֵה הַנֶּנָּה...

אֵיךְ רַכְבוֹת הִפְלִיגוּ לְבְּלִי שׁוֹב.

ד

רְקִיעַ זֶה – יִשְׂרָאֵל וְרַחֲבֵי שָׁמַיִם.  
צְחִיחַ, אֵין-כְּנֶגֶד אֵין-לְבָבוֹ,  
מוֹל אֲבֹתָיךָ שְׁלֵף, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם!

צָלְלִים כְּצַפְרִים גְּדוֹלוֹת בְּכָלוֹב  
בֵּין הַחֹמוֹת. הַמְנַרְרִים הַסְגִירוּ  
לְלֶהֱטֵה הַסְלָעִים אֶת הַצָּלוֹב.

אֵיכָה עָלוּ, אֵיכָה חָזְרוּ הָעִירָה  
כְּבָשִׁים מִבְּהֵלוֹת חֲכָלִילוֹת-גָּב –  
וְאֵת רֵאשֵׁי הַכְּנִסְיֹת הָעִירָה

תְּסַלֶּה פּוֹעָה מֵעֵמֶק מְרֻגָב.

ג

כי מות יעלה בחלוניו  
 ידענו: מבטו המשתמע  
 היה שקוף וקר כזוג ענב.

ובעד הזג הבליח וקרר  
 עולם גדוש, צהב כיום שבע,  
 ערים, גם נהרות, גם ערב־רב

של אביבים ושלל פריחה בוקע.  
 והוא הלך עמוס עד קצה הגבול.  
 כך שור עיף עם יום שוקע

יוביל הגרנה את היבול.

ב

זְקֵנָה, כְּחֵלֶת-עֵינַיִם וְנִשְׁזָפָת.  
עֲטָרַת קוֹמָתָהּ – שִׁיבָה וְסִבֵּל.  
מִכְסֵיף הַדָּדִי. מִשְׁעָרֵי הָרֶפֶת

דָּשֵׁן וְרַעֲנָן עוֹלָה הַהֶבֶל.  
דִּין שֶׁל חַיִּים – יְדִיָּהּ הַחֹלְבוֹת.  
כָּף סַפְּנִים שְׁקֵטִים יֵאָחֲזוּ בַּחֶבֶל.

כְּנִיעַת פְּרוֹת. וּבְקָר לֹא-עֲבוֹת.  
אֲשֶׁה מֵעַל לְלֶבֶן הַשׁוֹפֵעַ.  
וְאוֹר-חֲלִין וְסוֹד קְדָמוֹת עֲבַת

וּבְעֵלֶת-הָאוֹב עָלֵי כְּשָׁפִיָּה.

## עַל הַפְּרִיחָה

לאברהם בן יצחק

א

פְּרִיחַת הַקִּיקִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה בְּנֵי-לַיִל  
שָׁנִי כְּבֹד וְחֵם בְּשָׁחוֹר עָלֵי קִטְיָפָה.  
שְׂדֵרָה נִשְׁעָנֶת אֶל גֶּדֶר שֶׁל תֵּיל.

הַצֵּאן אֲשֶׁר רָנְעוּ לְעִיפָה  
חֹזְרוֹת אֶל הַדִּירִים. הַתְּכַלֵּת הַרוֹגֶשֶׁת  
הַצְּנִיחָה עֵב צְחָרָה מֵעַל כְּתִפָּה.

כָּל זֶה יֵאבֵד אִי-אֶז כְּאוֹר נִשְׁבֵּר בְּאֶשֶׁד,  
כָּל זֶה יִקּוּם לְעַד בְּרִיחַ בֵּר וּדְמִי.  
וּבִשְׁקִיעָה אָדָם וְרַף הַדָּשָׂא

כְּאֵלוֹ הוּא צִמַח מְשֻׁקֵט שֶׁל דְּמִי.

3. "על הפריחה", א-ט, שירים, כרך ב, עמ' 22-29. נדפס לראשונה בקובץ 6 פרקי שירה בעריכת אברהם שלונסקי, ספרית פועלים, הקיבוץ הארצי – השומר הצעיר, [1940], עמ' 59-67.  
Lea Goldberg, *Shirim* [Poems] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), Vol. II, 22–30.  
"Al ha-priha" – "On the blooming"



\*

חַלוֹנֶךָ הַמּוֹאֵר שְׁאֵבֵד בְּלֵילוֹת הַכְּחָלִים  
 נִפְתָּח לְתַפְלַת-חִלּוּמֵי כְּאֶרֶץ-תּוֹרָה.  
 אֵת מִפְתָּן בֵּיתְךָ הַלְבֵן רָחֲצוּ הַנְּחָלִים,  
 וְהִדְרֶךְ אֵלָיו טְהוֹרָה.

כִּי עִבְרַתְּ בְּשִׁלְל בְּדִידוֹת וְשִׁירָךְ נֶאֱלַם  
 וְתִשָּׂא אֶת לְבָבְךָ הַחֲכָם אֶל שְׁלֵהֶבֶת מוֹתֶךָ –  
 אָנָּה, הַרְשֵׁנִי הָיִת בְּעוֹלָם  
 בּוֹדְדָה כְּמוֹתֶךָ.

2. "חלונך המואר", שירים, כרך א, עמ' 149. נדפס לראשונה בספרה שיבולת ירוקת העין, דפוס הנקדן, ת"ש [אוקטובר 1939].

Lea Goldberg, *Shirim* [Poems] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), Vol. I, 149.  
 Halonkha ha-muar – "You lit up window..."

ג

כִּי אִתָּהּ הָאֲחֵרוֹן, וּפְנִיָּהּ, בְּלִי רֵעַד,  
 כִּי אִתָּהּ מְבֹרָךְ, וַיְדַךְ חֲכָמָה,  
 כִּי תַמְיִמוֹת תַּיְעוּקִית לְרַגְלֶיהָ כּוֹרֵעַת,  
 כִּי בְכַבֵּד שָׁפְטֶיהָ קָלָה הַדְּמָמָה.

כִּי קִטְנִיתִי בְּצֵל מִבְּטָךְ הַגְּבוּהָ,  
 כִּי שִׁתְּקַתִּי לְאוֹר גְּדֻלַּתְךָ הַשְּׁקֵטָה –  
 וַיְהִי אֲחֵרִים (וְדַאי הֵם יְבוֹאוּ)  
 וּבְכֹל זֹאת הָיִיתְ – אִתָּהּ.

ב

הֶרְחֹב יִשְׁקַע, יִכְבֵּד.  
 אֶפֶר מָאֵד. וּבְאֵיר עוֹפְרָת.  
 טְפוֹת הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל מְכֻסֵּה הַבַּד.  
 פֶּה נֶעֱמַד וּנְחַכֶּה מֵעַט.  
 דָּקָה אַחַת –  
 כָּל כֶּף רְגֵעִית, כָּל כֶּף צְרוּפָה, כֹּה מִיִּתְרָת.

הִנֵּה הָעָרֵב.

מֵאֲחֹרֵיגוֹ שְׁחֹר חֲלוֹן-הַתְּרָאוֹה.  
 זוּג צְעִירִים נֶחְבֵּא אֶל מְדִרְגוֹת הַבַּיִת,  
 אֲזוּנֵי קוֹלְטֵת לְחֶשֶׁם שֶׁל שָׁנִים.  
 וּבִידֵךְ סִיגְרָה מְזוּתִיבָה.  
 וְעֵקֶץ (לֹא בְרוּר לִי) בְּעֵינַיִם.

הִנֵּה הַגֶּשֶׁם בִּפְנוֹס כָּבֵה.  
 שְׁלֵף הָרוּחַ פְּגִיזוֹ הַחַד.  
 הֶרְחֹב יִשְׁקַע, יִכְבֵּד...  
 נִמְשֵׁיךְ דְּרַכְנוֹ, כֹּה טוֹבָה  
 טַפַּת מְלֻקוֹשׁ אַחַת  
 אֲשֶׁר נוֹגַעַת בְּפֶסֶת הַיָּד.

## כִּי עֲבַרְתָּ

א

כִּי עֲבַרְתָּ בְּעִיר אֲהוּבָה, כִּי נָעַתָּ בְּדַמִּי אֲבִיָּה,  
 כִּי לְרוֹם בְּדִידוּתְךָ הִגָּאָה חוּצוֹתֶיךָ פָּעוּ בְּתַפְלָה,  
 בֵּין מְלָכִיָּה אוֹתְךָ לֹא בִקְשָׁה, וְתִמְצָא אֶת אַחֲרוֹן אַחְרוּזֶיךָ,  
 וְתִמְצָא אֶת פְּתָרוֹן פְּתָרוֹנָה בְּשִׁתִּיקַת מִבְּטָךְ מִמוּלָּה.

לוֹ הָיִיתָ בְּדוּי – לֹא סָלַחַה: כֹּה גִבָּה רֵאשֶׁךְ הַסּוֹלַח.  
 אֶת מְסַפֵּר מְצַעֲדֶיךָ מְנַתֵּה כְּמִסְפֵּר הַשָּׁנִים שֶׁחִכְתָּה,  
 וְתַפְתַּח שְׁעָרִים אֲטוּמִים. וְתִדַּם. וְהָיִיתָ אוֹרַח.  
 כִּי עֲבַרְתָּ בְּעִיר עֲזוּבָה. אֲתָה.

1. "כי עברת", א-ג, שירים, כרך א, עמ' 171-173. נדפס לראשונה בטורים, שנה ב, גיליון מט-נ, י' בניסן תרצ"ט, 30.3.1939, עמ' 3.

Lea Goldberg, *Shirim* [Poems] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), Vol. I, 171–173.  
 "ki avarta" – "When you crossed"

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