

THE HEBREW NOVELIST AND JEWISH HISTORY: HAYIM HAZAZ AND HIS LITERARY TRADITION

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The writing of Hayim Hazaz (1898—1972) may, at first glance, appear to be schizoid, or, at least of disparate materials. Its overt concerns are diaspora Jewry and settlement in Israel, the enclosed, traditional world of the Yemenites both in their original homeland and in the Holy Land, and the more sophisticated European communities. But a closer examination does after all reveal a single thread running through — the Jew and his history. Hazaz's stories, long and short, early and late, as well as his play and his speeches (some of which were collected and published posthumously)¹ revolve around the meaning of Jewish history. The word "meaning" is used advisely. The Jewish situation is often grasped by the Hazaz character or "hero" not as a static subject beyond normal processes, but rather as something which is both capable of change, and which might indeed, in a sense, have already been radically altered. The most powerful agent of such change is the Messiah, who will bring redemption. So many of the author's Oriental Jews await the imminent arrival of this figure who is to transform the world in general and the Jewish community in particular. And, on the other hand, the Hazaz figure (here, more typically, the Ashkenazi) has seen in the post-1948 era an actual transformation of Jewish existence in the emergence of a Jewish State. Jewish history in exile was the passive creation of external forces, not a self-authenticating factor. But with sovereign statehood, Israel can again become the subject of history and not just an object. Does this transformation also imply an opposite and so non-Jewish role (in the diaspora sense)? Or, will the Messiah negate previous Jewish history? Is this the "end of days" (title of Hazaz's play set during the time of Sabbatai Zvi)? Or is redemption, in its sacred or its secular form, only a constant *possibility*, a mental image which can never be actualized, but which must always be projected to make life in the present bearable and liveable? Is redemption a figment

1. See *Mishpath ha-geulah* (Tel-Aviv, 1977), where the motto commands "this generation to stand by for redemption". Both the motto and the title given to the collection ("Sentence of Redemption") testify to the author's recurrent concern in these pieces.

of the imagination, an internal rather than an external state? Perhaps history too is a product of the people's psychology.

These are the questions raised by our author in a literary career which began in 1918, but whose major products spanned the forties, fifties and sixties. Hazaz's life pattern was very typical of the Hebrew writer of the twentieth century. Born in the Ukraine, he moved to Paris in 1921, and then settled in Palestine in 1931. Like so many other Hebrew writers, he was witness to the very special Jewish fate with its varying fortunes over the century, both in Israel and in the diaspora. Perhaps untypically, he also took it upon himself to etch a community not so well-known to the world of Hebrew literature, the Yemenite community and, in the broader sense, to record a view or views (not necessarily the author's own) of Jewish history as a whole. His tool was a rich, multi-tiered Hebrew, rooted in the ancient sources and much influenced by the literary renaissance of Yiddish and Hebrew literature of the nineteenth century. Particularly was he influenced by the bilingual writer Mendeli (1836—1917) and his synthetic Hebrew, but, he would also pepper his text where necessary with representations of the lexical peculiarities of the Oriental communities, with Arabisms and idiomatic idiosyncracies in dialogue.

Such a preliminary outline of this major Hebrew storyteller should not lead us to a view of him as a fictional ideologue, a sort of philosopher manqué who merely selects an appropriate fictional garb for popular ideologies or a historical overview. In the Mendelaic tradition of the Hebrew Enlightenment, and in the East-European (particularly Russian) tradition of the writer as representative, responsible, and "intelligectual", Hazaz did make ideas central to the work. As a Hebrew writer too, he placed the Jewish obsession, the meaning of Jewish existence in history, at the centre of the stage. But whatever his faults (and Hazaz is not an easy writer for the current Hebrew reader who may find his language mannered and self-conscious and his conclusions contrived), our author does not forget that he is telling a story. The idea is there, but it is there to build the character and thus the drama. Hazaz is a writer in love with the language that he uses, selecting choice vocables and phrases redolent of a long life and varied application, but his ambition is to integrate that language into the tale. It is both his overt concern (the subject of his writing) and his tools (the language) that create the effect. And this effect is a monument to the Jewish past and to the current struggle, both spiritual and physical. These are stories that make an effort to understand.

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Hazaz, then, is a writer in the East-European tradition of Mendeli. He is aware of the linguistic baggage of the past, and he aspires to an interpretation of Jewish existence. He is aware too of the responsibilities of the writer in society (here, within the Jewish community), and he evidently sees himself not just as an entertainer, but as a recorder and messenger too. As a portraitist of the Jewish community, he often describes types rather than individuals. He consciously seeks out the typical, as though he were a chronicler of precious material on the way to extinction. As at the opening of the story "Dorot Rishonim" ("Earlier Generations" in *Rehayim Shevurim*, 1942): "Beloved by me are the hamlets of yesteryear, poor homes of the Jewish community, condemned by generations of writers and commentators, undermined by poetasters and rhymesters, mocked by fools and smartalecks, enslaved by governments and administrators, breached by bands of brigands and robbers, until they have finally disappeared." This is a single sentence, portentously composed as a ritual dirge lamenting an extinct but beloved phenomenon. And here we may note a new role assumed by the author. In spite of his appreciation of earlier and contemporary Hebrew writers, and in spite of the fact that he remains clearly and self-consciously within their literary tradition, he still feels that they have done scant justice to their subject matter, i.e. the community of Israel that they have sought to distil. Mendeli, Brenner (1881—1921) et al., following the educational line of the Haskalah and perhaps following too the honoured prophetic line, were castigators and reformers. There is sometimes very little love in their descriptions, Mendeli probing with gentle (and sometimes not so gentle) parody, Brenner blasting with frenzied, bitter spleen. But two or three decades later, with all gone in the wake of the First World War, the Russian revolution and the great migrations, Hazaz would seek rather to erect a monument to a dear departed. And he sees a different image of the shtetel. As he afterwards wrote in another context with reference to the limitations of earlier Hebrew writers: "... But this is not sufficient; the shtetel did not have just a dark or miserable appearance."² So if he had an educational function additional to those earlier heroes of Hebrew literature, it was to present a more favourable, perhaps more objective image of the Jewish life of yesteryear. Whilst Mendeli and even Brenner were writing about it, they were still involved in a living controversy for the reform of the community, and (at least in Brenner's case) for a radical revaluation of Jewish life. Not so Hazaz, who was from the thirties onwards more concerned

2. op. cit. p. 32.

rather to instil a greater appreciation of the Jewish past; and then to encourage Jewish efforts towards the concentration of the whole people in Israel. The dialectic of Jewish life was being worked out at this late stage within a different environment. Slavery and redemption were assuming concrete reality, and could be viewed through either a religious or a secular lens.

Mendeli had extracted the typical from the particularities of the world created. In *Sefer la-kabtzanim* (*Book of Beggars*, published in Hebrew from 1901 onwards),³ he asserts through his narrator: "All Jews are beggars", or rather the community is one big beggar. Which is to say that the essence of Jewish life is parasitism. Hazaz also seeks the characterizing generality. But he seeks it through the sort of nostalgia of "Earlier Generations". There are loving descriptions of food; Reb. Brishel is positively infatuated with the variety of dishes that his wife Perle can prepare for him. This to such a degree that his latter-day desire to go to the Holy Land is shelved when she offers to cook in the Oriental manner. He simply does not raise the subject again: "From then onwards, they did not return to the matter of the Holy Land, and Perle wasn't sure if he had been having her on, or if it was her potatoes that had done the trick." Of course, his wife was relieved that his eccentric notion was dropped so shortly after its original conception. But the portrait of these types and of the total atmosphere is imbued with an aura of love and devotion.

In other contexts too where Hazaz describes the past, he conveys a sense of regret at what no longer exists. *Dlatot nehoshet* (*Gates of Bronze*, 1957)⁴ is a novel about Mokri-Kut, a shtetel in the Ukraine, which, although it had known poverty and deprivation, had still been blessed with a vibrant Jewish life: "But if it had not been distinguished by property and wealth, there were still many study-houses, all sorts of hevrahs, such as: a Mishnah hevrah, a Psalms hevrah, a visiting hevrah, etc." Needless to say, now everything is different, because that world is gone. The very language used by the author indicates regret at the death of that old world. The new world was heralded by the Bolshevik revolution, greeted only by a residue of ignoramuses and poor muts. Descendants of Rabbis and great scholars were not revolutionaries. *Gates of Bronze* retails the revised situation.

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As we have assigned Hazaz a literary place in the tradition of Mendeli we should also localize some of Mendeli's techniques.

3. Previously published in Yiddish as *Fishke der Krumer* in 1869, but later recast in Hebrew.

4. The edition cited here throughout is the *Collected Works*, 1970.

so that we can then identify the Hazaz debt and view its adaptation. Mendeli, through his narrator Mendeli the bookseller (an adopted literary pseudonym), aspires, as it were, to a photographic representation of the contemporary Jewish scene. Some critics such as David Frishman⁵ even granted this assumption and asserted that Mendeli's writings were such a faithful reproduction, and that the Jewish shtetel of his time could be precisely reconstructed on the basis of his literary model. An examination of the Mendelaic technique would not allow this on literary grounds. The author works in a convention of parody and allegory. The bookseller is the ironic observer. The places observed are ascribed symbolic names, e.g. Kisalon (Fooltown), Batalon (Idletown), supposedly embodying the most distinctive qualities of those places. The narrator's function as bookseller enables him to travel from place to place, and draw appropriate conclusions as to the characteristic and the typical. But of course that typical is caricatured. This is a perfectly legitimate technique: caricature is the most potent weapon in the satirist's armoury. But we must not mistake this technique for neutral, naturalistic representation. All Mendeli's constructs in this vein lead to such an unavoidable conclusion. Parody emerges from the substitution of the grotesque for the dignified or the sacral, where the reader would more naturally expect the latter in a weighty passage. In *Masot Binyamin hashlishi* (*Travels of Benjamin the Third*, 1878), the very title involves daring and achievement. But the actuality there rendered is ludicrous. This Jewish Don Quixote, setting out on his voyage of discovery, is, in fact, an absurd, helpless character, suitably paired with Sendril his loyal Sancho Panza. They in fact, hardly move from their starting point. One weak factor in the story (and there are many) is the inconsistency of narrative viewpoint. It is not quite clear whether we are being told the story from within, (for then we should have it told in good faith without criticism), or from without.

Hazaz writes, like Mendeli, in the awareness of recording the typical. But the satirical intent is considerably reduced. The overtly parodic components, the symbolic names, the allegory are not so prevalent. And the tone is warm, nostalgic. One short story of his is called simply "Adam m'yisrael" ("The typical Jew" in the volume *Rehayim Shevurim*). Here is a story within a story related by a pioneer in Palestine, about his father. But even the most specific action of this father is recorded as representative. As when he left his family: "It sometimes happens to a Jew that

5. See his essay, "Mendele Mocher Sforim" (Warsaw, 1910) in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 6, (Warsaw, 1930).

he has a surfeit of the world's vanities, and cleaves to the Creator in holiness, enthusiasm and devotion". Perhaps this sort of action would most typically have been ridiculed by Mendeli, with his demonstrated contempt for unworldliness and for neglect of proper human and social responsibilities. Hazaz interprets the man's action generously and tells his story with warmth. In spite of his extreme poverty, he is known to distribute charity, in fact, all the money in his possession. Contempt for worldly goods is advocated by many of Hazaz's characters, who are concerned with lasting values and eternal life over and above transient trivia. This man truly seems to exemplify the Jewish spirit. Unlike the pious figure in Mendeli, he is profoundly joyful in the execution of God's will. The story that the young pioneer tells of his father is really a non-story, or rather a story without a plot. It simply ends with the man's death. After one of his lengthy excursions in the course of the bloody war which particularly hit the Ukrainian Jewish communities, he is slaughtered. They find him with his head chopped off. The author concludes, not with the story within the story, but with his own narrative comment: "But there is no tale of a Jew these days which does not end in that sort of disaster. And the more you try to conceal such things. The more they emerge". Which, in sum, means that the author wants here not to relate a peculiar or piquant incident, but rather to grasp the characteristic. This Jew was like so many saintly people. And like so many too in this generation, he was pointlessly murdered. He is a typical Jew, and this was a typical event. For this reason the name of the story indicates its typicality. Just as Mendeli did in his day so Hazaz, not just here but throughout, points to the generality before arriving at the specific subject of the story. And he might remind the reader at intervals of the story's representative quality. The Yemenites, for example, are selected for treatment in the Oriental stories as one possible community amongst many as in, for example, the introduction to *Hayoshevet Ba-ganim* ("You who sit in the Garden," 1944), where a brief survey of the communities is conducted before the narrator's attention alights on this specific group, and then Mori Said is selected as one possible person (though a very outstanding one) of various such. But the reader is repeatedly reminded of the larger framework.

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History implies plot. If it is a story, it must have a direction and a process of unfolding. There must be movement, perhaps progress. So if there is history, man cannot be living within an indifferentiated vacuum. For Hazaz, the story that moves on is Jewish history. It takes its origin from the beginning of its peoplehood, has moved

through a certain course of events (mostly unhappy, involving exile and suffering), but it also concomitantly looks forward to a certain development. The object of history in traditional Jewish terms is redemption through the Messiah. The Messiah will mark a radical crux and reversal. Exile will come to an end, as too will Jewish and all human misery.

In religious terms some see the establishment of Israeli statehood as "the beginning of redemption". Hazaz's characters, in works written before statehood, sometimes view the process of the ingathering as a significant step on the way to the Messianic era. Because naturally there is no general agreement on how this era is to be achieved, what it will look like, what sort of backdrop it will have, what sort of person the Messiah will be, or, particularly in secular terms, if the Messiah will be simply a person, a lineal descendant of King David, as traditional Judaism has it. But well before the modern period, and particularly during times of travail, Messianic hopes have run high. Hazaz can find such times interesting because of a certain parallel sense with our own. After great suffering perhaps there will emerge the contrast. Are these the "pangs of the Messiah" so much projected in the sources?

And so his play *Be-ketz ha-yamim* ("At the End of Days", 1946) is set in such a historical period. Significantly, it was written after the holocaust of the Second World War and shortly before the declaration of Israeli independence. These two events may be perceived not only as temporally connected but also as causally inter-related. Perhaps if not for the destruction (hurban), there would have been no statehood. Religiously, this turn of events could have been seen as embodying God's action in history. Secularly, these developments could mark a reversal of Jewish history, perhaps a summation, perhaps a peak, perhaps even its termination in the form that it had been known for two thousand years. In either case, something of massive significance occurred for those involved with the Jewish situation.

Be-ketz ha-yamim is set in seventeenth-century Germany. The background is Sabbatai Zvi's rise to popularity throughout the Jewish world. Messianic expectations are rife in the wake of the Khmel'nitsky pogroms of 1648/9. The play's debate revolved around Zvi's claims to Messiahship. There are implications too for immediate conduct, because normative Jewish law is nullified after this crux is achieved. The Messiah changes history, and reverses traditional behaviour patterns. Such antinomian conclusions are drawn by Yuzpa who asserts that "the world is to be redeemed by sin". Yuzpa's wife quotes his view that "a new heaven and new earth will be created." This is the sort of eschatological terminology

of various Jewish and Christian apocalypses, from the Book of Daniel through the Book of Revelations and later mystical texts. All earlier norms are questioned, because History has radically changed direction. Even sin is to be recreated as non-sin: "Everything that exists is to be negated, each fence to be breached to pave the way for redemption! To descend to the abyss — that is the teaching of redemption. To love sin — that is the need of the hour." Of course, this is not the only view propagated. And, as we know from the actual events of the time, the Jewish world was divided precisely over the issue of whether redemption had come or not. One suggestion made in the play by a non-Jew was that even without redemption the Jews should still go off to the Holy Land and set up a State of their own. The Rabbi in the play asserts the validity of the halakhah (Jewish Law); he is sceptical of the Messianic claims.

So there are three views. One is the assertion of the Sabbatian claim, the second is a refutation of it, and the third offers a consequence of the claim (resettlement of the Jewish people in the Holy Land) without the supporting substance (coming of the Messiah). A debate takes place between Yuzpa and the Rabbi. The Rabbi indeed reaffirms the twelfth of the traditional thirteen principles (originally formulated by Maimonides) that the Messiah will come. Yuzpa asserts on the other hand that the Rabbi does not want to accept the actuality, and only stresses that "he tarry". Can the potential be actualized? Both seem to hold to the literal possibility. The question mark hangs over the present moment. Yuzpa then proceeds to a further point which would remove the decision from God's exclusive power: "Redemption depends on us". So he introduces a new dimension: redemption as a psychological state. It seems that the Jews do not want to be redeemed. As he says: "Exile is bone of our bones and spirit of our spirit, redemption is a nice dream that is alright for exile". Yuzpa's conclusion is that the Jews want to retain grasp of two things, one — the possibility of redemption, two — that it will never come about. Or, to formulate it as a single entity, they believe in the eternal possibility of redemption. The play ends in an orgy of destruction. The poor literally burn the exile, which is henceforth abolished by decree. So they fulfil Messianic expectations and satisfy their own need of revenge.



Much space has been devoted to Hazaz's apocalyptic understanding of Jewish history past and present. He portrayed Messianic yearnings and Jewish psychology in the seventeenth century, and transferred them to the contemporary scene in *Ha-yoshevet ba-*

ganim where the highly respected Mori Sa'id, in Jerusalem with the Second World War raging outside, pronounces and lives his conviction of imminent redemption. We are immediately aware that such conviction would not transfer easily to a more Europeanized environment of the same period. Hazaz is unusual amongst Hebrew writers in attempting to write at length and in depth about two very disparate kinds of people. The Ashkenazim and Yemenites in his contemporary Israel differ in background, in levels of expectation, in life style, and thus too in outlook and belief. And yet, in his portrayal of both communities he highlights his concern, i.e. the meaning of "redemption" in Jewish history. Some of Hazaz's most potent effects are obtained from a juxtaposition of two characters from these two different worlds, each expressing his own world view in his own language. The drama is then of course played out against the backdrop of current Jewish events. They might even come to similar theoretical conclusions, although they would give them expression in different ways. Such a story is "Rahamim", which, like so many of our author's stories, does not contain a developed plot so much as the germ of a situation and the expression of character contrasts. The story is simply a meeting of two individuals. One, Menashke, is thin, sickly, tired, and feels himself a failure in all respects. He is not at peace in the world, and feels not only personally frustrated but also generally resentful of various external forces. The other, who chances upon him walking along in Jerusalem, presents a very different picture, contented though impoverished as he rides slowly on his ass. They seem to come not only from different backgrounds, but also from different eras. Rahamim the Kurd (as he turns out to be) is very forthcoming, and in his primitive Hebrew he offers practical advice to the other. He must get married. As much as Rahamim reveals himself, so Menashke conceals himself (although the author does permit glimpses of an unhappy past). Each character, in fact, sees into the other's life. Rahamim tells how he got to Palestine. Menashke, through his demeanour and his limited conversation, hints at the source of his frustration. Rahamim goes his own way after repeating his advice about marriage, but then returns to offer consolation: "God will have mercy". Menashke's mood changes only through memory of Rahamim's smile. Perhaps the price of sophistication and high expectation is discontent.

Two people, likewise of disparate backgrounds, are brought together in a more sustained manner in the novel *Be-kolar ehad* ("In One Noose", 1963). This is set in Palestine during the last days of British mandatory rule, when the Jewish nationalist movements in their efforts to remove the British, wage war against them.

Two men under sentence of death await execution in the deathcell, Menahem Halperin, an Irgun man, and Eliyahu Mizrahi of Lehi. But however distinct their background, their object was identical. More specifically, they had the same vivid consciousness of the present vitality and relevance of Jewish history. It was still alive for them. "Those far-off things that happened thousands of years ago were nearer to them than things which happened within their parents' lifetime a generation earlier." Nevertheless, a similar difference of temperament is perceptible between the two here to the case in "Rahamim". Eliyahu the Oriental is at ease with himself and with his behaviour. Menahem is melancholy: "Jealousy of him (i.e. Eliyahu) stirred in his heart, that he was so strong, that he was so tranquil, that suffering was put aside, that his thoughts did not weary him, and that they allowed him to sleep." Here again, there appears the contrast between the two world views, the naive and the sentimental (Schiller's distinction). These are the two representative types of Jew, both, in the author's view, acting authentically and arriving at a single conclusion expressed in action. But the European sophisticate is uneasy, unhappy, full of dread of the future, in this case, of the death that is imminent. The other, the Oriental, is distinguished by a full acceptance of his role. What is the difference? Perhaps it is "that faith is still with him in its entirety, consciously and unconsciously, in all his two hundred and forty-eight limbs, as with all his community." But Menahem has lost all that. He is estranged from his community. And the implication here is that just as Eliyahu is typical of his community so Menahem is the type of the western emancipated Jew, alienated, embittered and removed from the social and communal context.

This is a secular novel set in modern times, but the recurrence of motifs sets Hazaz's central concerns before us. Just as Yuzpa in *Be-ketz ha-yamim* accused the Jewish world of being unwilling to accept redemption, so Menahem berates Jewry. It does not want redemption. Here, redemption is not to come in the guise of a seventeenth-century Messiah, but it still can only come if it is wanted. Unfortunately, the Jews, argues Menahem, want "the dream to continue, to remain unsolved. The solution is . . . fear, despair . . ." Jewish history is seen by Menahem as a psychological phenomenon. The Jews have invited their fate. Redemption will not be theirs, because unconsciously they reject it. The typical position of Jewish history is that of the *akedah*, the sacrifice (which could have taken place) by Abraham of Isaac. Menahem recalls an episode to Eliyahu when his father was beating him, and he invited him to "slaughter me as Abraham slaughtered Isaac". But the father argued that Abraham was stopped by the angel: "It would have been better if

he had slaughtered him", said Menahem, "better than always living with the memory of his father over him with a knife." And since then, the Jews have been like Isaac going to the slaughter. Even now that God does not exist (in the heart of man), they still go to the slaughter without knowing why. The unresolved question is whether this characteristic posture on the part of Isaac will remain unchanged in the wake of the new national development. Eliyahu believes in the possibility of change. That possibility is in the Jews own hands. "When someone moves decisively in the direction that he has set for himself — then he is a free man." One defines one's freedom existentially: fate has the shape of the will. And so in a sense does the fate of these two prisoners who refuse to accept foreign (i.e. British) authority, who even refuse them the possibility of execution. They blow themselves up in their cell after Eliyahu has devised a plan to get bombs into their possession. Characteristically; the author notes that even in death, Eliyahu's countenance bears the marks of repose and Menahem's of discontent. Their own shapes are fixed through the very moment of extinction. There are psychological differences between them throughout, marking the same action with a different accent.



A fiction writer whose subject is ideologies or history is not thereby a philosopher or a historian. Though his subject may be of theoretical interest and may be too his consuming passion, he still has to shape his material suitably and integrate it into his fiction. We have seen some of Hazaz's concerns and the way that he treats them. But he is not to be simplistically identified with any specific protagonist, statement or ideology presented in the work.

One of Hazaz's stories has become so well-known that it is easy to make a casual substitution of the author for the point of view presented. "Hadrashah" ("The Sermon" in *Avanim Rotehot*, 1946), like so many of Hazaz's stories, does not have very much external action or plot development outside of the "sermon" itself. Yudka, not normally given to public statement, makes a speech to the Haganah⁶ committee. It is what he says that constitutes the major content of the story. But we must not forget that it is (within the literary convention) Yudka's statement not the author's, and for all the paucity of plot, it remains inside the story. The burden of Yudka's "sermon", broken as it is by interruption and hesitation, is highly reminiscent of the views quoted by Hazaz elsewhere. What he brings to the committee (as they think,

6. The word "havurah" (group) is changed to "haganah" (Defence Forces) in the revised collected edition of Hazaz's writings 1968/1970.

irrelevantly) is a view of Jewish history. The committee awaits some sort of announcement, but Yudka starts off by saying that he does not understand what "we" i.e. the Jews, are doing in Palestine. He later amplifies the point by saying that he is "opposed to Jewish history", that he does not "respect" it. When he is called to order and requested to keep to the issue. Yudka argues that without history we cannot manage the present. He opposes Jewish history because it is not authentically Jewish, i.e. created by Jews. Others have been responsible for the Jewish Fate in Exile. The pattern has been entirely negative, suffering determined by the world outside. It is not even a story of heroism, because such a role has been externally imposed. And the Jews have not even rejected suffering: they seem to have welcomed it (Menahem argues a similar case in *Be-kolar ehad*). So existence has become for Jews an otherworldly dream, and a "nocturnal psychology" has been created, differing from the normal, healthy, day-time psychology of other groups of people. Belief in redemption, in the Messiah is tolerable and required, as long as such redemption does not come.

If this argument is valid, argues Yudka, what we know as Jewish existence is the product of this Jewish psychology, and is an Exile existence. And our homeland, Eretz-Yisrael, presents its opposite. Zionism, then, is not the fulfilment of Judaism, but rather its very opposite: "When a man can't be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist." The return to Israel is the very negation of Judaism, Hebrew the negation of Yiddish, traditional Jewish names and means of expression are rejected. Yudka reiterates the familiar argument that Zionism and Hebraism are intended to reverse the traditional Jewish role.

The hero of the story does not offer a solution to his dilemma. His speech ends as abruptly and unexpectedly as it starts. He himself feels that he has not said what he intended. And he requests the chairman's permission to start again. But meanwhile the tension is broken, and the audience is prepared to listen. The chairman lets him go ahead, although, as he instructs, "without philosophy". There the story ends, and we will never know what he was going to say. But the relief of the audience perhaps indicates a forthcoming retraction. What was said aroused great unease, but now a number of uncomfortable revelations can be reburied.

"The Sermon" is a story, and is created with the tension of a story. The familiar notions are like currants, in a cake, certainly vital, but not isolated. Hazaz has used notions of Jewish history and Jewish existence, which clearly give rise to general concern and particular unease on the part of his heroes and narrators. Facile resolution is not offered, nor are the logical conclusions drawn from

the views of such as Yudka, Yuzpa and Menahem. Perhaps an implication would be the rejection of Jewish existence, so negative, so unpleasant, so "nocturnal". Perhaps the people should come to an end. Perhaps Zionism constitutes a respectful burial, one which could be more discreetly carried out by assimilation. Such possibilities peep out of the statements made by the author's protagonists. But the overall framework of the individual play, story, novel or speech of Hazaz suggests otherwise. There is a problematic dialectic in this oeuvre, but its existence must testify to a stand contrary to its own negation. Nothing is simple. Literature is not philosophy; it is something which creates its own dynamic. The work of Hazaz refutes the material that it has produced.