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SELECTED ABSTRACTS

THE WELLSPRINGS OF OUR LITERATURE

Moshe Shamir

Address given at the New York University, Irving and Bertha Neuman
Literary prize ceremonies, in Jerusalem

The relationship between Modern Hebrew Literature and the enlightened Jewish community in the United States is of a complex nature. There exists a kind of romance, a certain wonderment between these two entities, examining each other in parallel mirrors. This relationship is characterized by an ongoing dialogue, which attracts and repels concurrently. It is my contention that the importance of American Life as a central theme in contemporary Hebrew literature has not been properly documented. There is no doubt of Walt Whitman's decisive influence on Hebrew creativity. Uri Zvi Greenberg, the great Hebrew poet, expressed his admiration for Whitman's quest for freedom, his love of nature, and his earthiness.

I see the writers in Israel, as the "Isaac generation" rather than the commonly known "Palmach" one. Isaac was the only Patriarch who never left the land. Similarly the writers of my generation, did not seek their inspiration elsewhere, but drew it from the wellsprings of our own land.

There is a remarkable bond between Israeli authors and the land of their fathers. It is time for an anthology of prose and poetry to be produced which will become the poetic map of the Land of Israel - a body of literature which depicts every geographic and topographic region of Israel.

While there is a love-rejection affair between the two most important Jewries in the world, there is also a symbiotic relationship between them. The most difficult, but also the most important question for the Jewish people is: What will make American Jews come to us, to the wellsprings of our existence? The answer will decide the fate of our people in our time and for generations to come.

Some Comments on Shamir's story: HORSEBACK ON THE SABBATH

David Shachar

Moshe Shamir's *Horseback on the Sabbath* raises the issue of the individual's relationship to his society. The problem of Elisha Ben Avuyah, the story's historical protagonist, is how to continue his existence in a society whose fundamental values he had rejected.

Shamir's response, both as a writer and as a member of a social and national group, points to a profound sense of social responsibility. This story, as well as other works by the writer, convey the conviction that regardless of one's own truths and beliefs — which may be in conflict with views of the group whose life and destiny he shares — one is subject to the tenets which cement the solidarity of the group and forge its destiny. One is a part of a whole, a member of the group for whom one is responsible.

Shamir does not delve into theological problems, but is concerned with the life-style of the people, which has survived both inner conflict and rebellion.

ZEEV JABOTINSKY AND THE ZIONIST CONGRESS, 1931

Yosef Nedava

Haifa University

1931 was a turning-point in the political life of Zeev Jabotinsky, leader of the Revisionist movement. At the time, Zionism underwent a serious crisis. Many influential Zionists became wary of Dr. Chaim Weizmann's cooperation with the British government, which pursued a policy hostile to the development of Palestine as a Jewish homeland.

The Revisionists, under Jabotinsky's leadership, came to the 17th Zionist Congress in 1931 at Basle, as the third largest party. Jabotinsky lost faith in the World Zionist Organization after it failed to proclaim the aim of Zionism - a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan.

The 17th Zionist Congress, though opposed to the Revisionists, was dissatisfied with Weizmann's passivity and decided that it was time for a change in leadership. A broad coalition to include the Revisionists, was proposed.

Such a condition would undoubtedly have given Jabotinsky the opportunity to replace Weizmann as head of the Zionist movement. While Jabotinsky vacillated, the other parties reached a compromise and elected Nahum Sokolow, renowned Hebrew journalist, as head of the movement. Jabotinsky missed his chance. Disenchanted, Jabotinsky broke away from the WZO, to follow an independent course of action.

THE FIRST YEAR OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE AS REFLECTED
IN THE VERSE OF U.Z. GREENBERG

Noah H. Rosenbloom,

Yeshiva University

Paradoxically, Uri Zvi Greenberg, the most eloquent and militant Hebrew poet in his unyielding battle for Jewish statehood, fell silent at the moment his dream became a reality.

Greenberg's nationalistic poems, which had appeared regularly in HAARETZ, ceased suddenly. Except for some such poems in party periodicals — HERUT and SULAM, Greenberg returned to a genre he had long abandoned, that of the individualistic, contemplative motifs. He seemed to have divorced himself from the reality of his embattled land, escaping to the blue-crimson scenes of his youth in the carefree landscapes of Serbia.

According to the record, that was not Greenberg's first flight. In 1931, the poet, disillusioned with the leadership of the *Yishuv*, left the country and stayed for four years in Poland, a land seething with virulent anti-Semitism.

It seems that Greenberg became similarly disenchanted with the leadership of the new state soon after its establishment. Notwithstanding the zeal and sacrifices of the young defenders of the country, Greenberg viewed the old-new leaders as unable to overcome their *Galut* mentality and transcend their psychological defeatism, all of which would result in a new disaster.

The poems published in the party publication during the first year of Israel's independence express the thought that radical changes must take place, in order for the two-thousand-year-old dream to become a reality. Otherwise, doom is inevitable.

DIVINE EPITHETS IN JUDAISM

E. Shmueli

Professor emeritus, Western Reserve U., Cleveland, O.

Language is more than a vehicle of thought and speech, it is an instrument for understanding the world we live in and the rules governing it. Its relationship to the thought process is not one of cause and effect but that of an intimate bond. Names of God serve as codes which reveal the nature and meaning of a particular culture.

Generally, divine epithets reflect in each generation a particular conceptual view of the Supreme being and his relationship to man. In Judaism, God, an omnipresent and omnipotent being, has been defined by different names, always within the context of history and the current thought. As a result, God's names have been subject to continuous evolution.

Biblical society, for instance, viewed God as the creator, the healer, the warrior, the God who is at once intimate, merciful, and wrathful. During the Talmudic period, many new epithets evolved to convey a divinity distant, yet close to those who seek him, through prayers and deeds of righteousness. The idea of omnipotence was transferred to the supremacy of the Torah. The Biblical warrior dons, in Talmudic times, a prayer shawl, studies the Torah, and goes into exile with his people.

The names given to God evidence then, the changing perceptions of the people within the context of their time: they are an integral part of the culture, modes of thought, and philosophy of life at a given period.