

BITZARON

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SELECTED ABSTRACTS

THE POET AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Yehuda Amichai
Jerusalem, New York University

The poet Yehuda Amichai, recipient of the 1982 Israel Prize, is spending the current academic year at New York University as a *Dorot* fellow.

On a recent visit to *Bitzaron*, the poet discussed his views on poetry, the creative process, the dynamics of Israeli reality and their impact on the poet.

Israeli reality, according to Amichai, is intense and highly focused, mirroring all that is happening in the world as a whole. Living there, one is constantly involved and needs to respond. Poetry is Amichai's primary means of expression, of taking a stand, hence, his first poems were of love and war. The Israel experience and Jerusalem, where he lives, are Amichai's internal poetic landscape. Distance, such as his New York stay, brings it into sharper focus. The sense of continuity one feels in Israel is reflected in its literature. A Hebrew writer, even when writing against the current, perpetuates, by his very existence and language the Jewish/Israeli culture and tradition. A writer who is faithful to himself writes that which he feels he must write, and being connected to time, place and history, he writes of all three.

Amichai's latest volume of poetry, *Great Tranquility, Questions and Answers*, was published last fall. The poet cooperated with his translators and discouraged the translation of poems he felt would not work in English, either because of rhythmic qualities or allusive elements unique to the Hebrew. Having written fiction and plays in the past, Amichai is now writing only poetry, which he views as "a profound human expression of life."

A SHADOW AND A WING A CONVERSATION WITH ARIELLA DEEM

Avner Trainin
Hebrew University, Jerusalem

On a summer day in Jerusalem I came upon a certain book, opening with the sentence: "An autumn day in Boston lost its mind and masqueraded as spring." Written by Ariella Deem, its title, *Jerusalem Plays Hide and Seek*, was taken from Yehuda Amichai's poem, "Jerusalem 1967," in which "The City plays hide and seek among her names." Could Jerusalem be masquerading as Boston now, hiding in "Hiram Alistair's box of slides?"

Masks, games and names are the elements the story is made of. And the words—names, as though by magic, create the objects after which they are named. Just like Adam, who, as legend has it, was so enchanted by the pronunciation of the names he called, that fell into a deep sleep and was divided in half.

Division, usually into male and female, is another element created by the magic power of the words. And the elements seem to whirl in the musical daze of a carousel whose horses and riders rise and fall, transform, never regaining their original form. Thus the future's memory is trailing in the prophecy of the past.

Ariella Deem's second novella, *After You, Benjamin*, appeared a few years later. The book is filled with twins issuing from a single trunk, each masquerading as his counterpart, and it seems that only when they reunite, true coupling takes place — the true, and the forbidden.

MORDECHAI TABIB — ON YEMENITE FICTION AND REALITY

Michael Masori Caspi
University, Santa Cruz

Mordechai Tabib's novel, *As the Grass of the Field*, was written in response to Hazaz's, *Mori Said*. Tabib objected to Hazaz's portrayal of the Yemenite as a unworldly being who yearns for the Messiah and is totally divorced from reality. The son of a Yeminite rabbi, Tabib was born and grew up in Rishon Le'Zion. He remembered the old men of his neighborhood rushing to work in the orchards and fields, lunch pails in their hands, immediately after their morning prayer. None of them was like Hazaz's naive and unreal Mori Alpakoa who succumbs to the tall tales of Zion, Mori Said's son, and lets himself be exploited by him.

Tabib views Hazaz's depiction of the rebelliousness of the second generation as exaggerated and inaccurate. In *Mori Yichia* he creates the antithesis of *Mori Said*.

Piety is blended with earthiness in the character of *Mori Yichia*. The young *Yichia* struggles to bridge the gap between his familiar values, — religious observance and scholarship, and those of the secular, pioneering society around him. Unlike *Zion*, he does not fall into corruption. Rather he appears as "the grass of the field;" a wild flower, always gravitating toward the sun.

The Messianic yearnings of the Yemenite, according to Tabib served to uplift him from the harsh realities of life in Yemen, but they were never a substitute for reality.

RABBI H.Z. SHNEURSON HARBIN-GER OF THE IDEA OF A JEWISH STATE Dr. Herman (Zvi) Carmel

A great-grandson of Rabbi Zalman Shneur of Liadi (the founder of the Lubavitch Hasidic dynasty), H.Z. Shneurson came to Eretz Israel in 1844, at the age of ten. He grew up in Jerusalem where he received a thorough rabbinical education. In addition, he acquired on his own extensive secular knowledge and was considered one of the early *maskilim* of Jerusalem. Shneurson was both a romantic dreamer of Jewish redemption as envisioned by the prophets, and a sober realist who preached its coming in a natural, gradual way, through human efforts.

At seventeen, Shneurson was sent on a mission to Spain and Egypt on behalf of Jerusalem Yeshivot. Two years later he traveled to Iran, India, China and other Asian countries, and then to Australia. His visits to these remote and isolated Jewish communities strengthened his conviction of ingathering of the Jews in Eretz Israel.

In 1861, Rabbi Shneurson traveled again to Australia on behalf of a project to establish "Houses of Shelter and Hospicities" on Mt. Zion. The great "Advanturer for Zion," turned this prosaic task into a lofty mission of propogating his idea of a Jewish Homeland not only among his brethren, but among Christians as well. He was the first to declare publicly that it was the moral duty of the Christian nations to help in the realization of the rebuilding of the Jewish state.

In 1868 he traveled to Roumania, France, England (where he was received by Queen Victoria), and then to the U.S.A. In this country he achieved even greater success and fame. The high point of his visit was his historical meeting with President Grant.

Rabbi Shneurson formulated his Zionist teachings in his brochures, "Yeshuat Yisrael" (Melburne: 1862), and "Palestine and Roumania" (New York: 1872). Shneurson was also first to suggest the creation of a Jewish army and the training for the defense of the Jewish state.

