From Crying Comes Light: The Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress on the Poetry of Amir Gilboa

by

Yona Katz

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Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The research starts by explaining the theoretical basis for the impact of post-traumatic stress on the poetry of Amir Gilboa, as well as on individual who have been traumatized by extreme events. The first chapter focuses on Gilboa’s reconstruction of Holocaust testimonials as expressed in his poetry. This includes referring to the question of whether artistic expression is possible after Auschwitz.

Chapter Two focuses on post-traumatic stress as it is reflected in Gilboa’s final posthumously published book of poems entitled *Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming; Poems 1942-1946* (edited and introduced by Hagit Halperin). This book was written during the war and the Holocaust but only published in 2007. The importance of this collection of poems is that they are conducive to a fresh understanding of the poet and his *oeuvre*. The poems present the poet's inner-struggle regarding writing poetry during war time, and the guilt of not being able to save his family.
Chapter Three delineates Gilboa's response and relationship to Jewish-national destruction. Since the descriptions of destruction in Gilboa's poetry draw upon his personal feelings of trauma, there is a convergence of the individual and the national collective in his poetry.

Chapter Four deals with: The "Binding" Motif (haAkedah) as an expression of the victim and the (Holocaust) survivor’s feelings, including those of second generation survivors.

Chapter Five presents research regarding the revival that arises from the destruction in Gilboa’s poetry. The underlying assumption is that there is a direct connection between destruction and lamentation and renewal and redemption.

Chapters Six and Seven connect Gilboa to early Agnon, both in Yiddish and in Hebrew, as well as to Bialik’s poetry, and as an innovative "young" poet alongside Amichai and Ravikovich. I demonstrate that in addition to the continuity between Bialik's poetry and Gilboa's poetry there is a strong innovative streak in his oeuvre, apparent in the development of modern structures. This comparison places Gilboa as a poet who stands between two generations.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation reflects my appreciation of Hebrew language and literature, including its Judaic sources. Even though I am submitting it in English I would like to note that I wrote it first in Hebrew, the original language of Gilboa's poems.

Under the supervision of Professor Harry Fox, I researched the biblical, talmudic and midrashic sources of Amir Gilboa’s poems. Through the years, Professor Fox directed my attention to the many references that contributed to the final thesis. I would like to thank Professor Harry Fox for six years of teaching, care and help.

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Abbreviations

Babylonian Talmud ---- b

Jerusalem Talmud ------ y

Mishna ------------------ m
Introduction

From Crying Comes Light: The Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress on the Poetry of Amir Gilboa

My thesis deals with the themes of destruction and revival, the motif of the akedah (the binding of Isaac), the image of biblical heroes like Joshua, as well as death, crying, and hope in the poetry of Amir Gilboa, 1917-1984. Most of these motifs are drawn from Gilboa’s tragic experiences. In his poetry Gilboa reconstructed the deaths of his father and brothers in his imagination, either by enhaloing them in heroism or by presenting them as innocent victims. He also dealt with other war experiences, including the deaths of his soldier friends. His poems express both fear and symptoms of trauma in a mix of dream and reality.

Amir Gilboa was born in a town in the Ukraine, which belonged to Poland at that time. Born Beryl Feldman, in 1917 to a Jewish family his first poems were in Yiddish. In 1937, after he moved to Israel, he very quickly became proficient in Hebrew. His poetry has generally been regarded as part of the Modern Hebrew literary canon and selections are studied in Israeli high school curricula to this day. Some of his poetry has been translated into English and several other languages. During the Second World War, while serving in the British army, he lost most of his family in Auschwitz. He expressed his trauma and feelings of guilt by writing poetry about the Holocaust. He wrote in the first person as though providing a personal testimony often as seen through the eyes of a child or a young man and was quite adept at transmitting his emotions, striking a strong chord with his readers, reviewers and critics.
I Amir Gilboa’s Place in the Canon of Modern Hebrew Poetry

Amir Gilboa received eight prizes and other honors for his oeuvre, culminating in the Israel Prize, which he shared in 1982 with Yehuda Amichai. Posthumously, in 1984, he was awarded the New York University prize for literary achievement. Gilboa’s status and contribution to the developing canon of Israeli poetry were especially apparent after the publication of his third collection of poetry, “Poems in Early Morning,” in 1955, in which his uniqueness relative to his generation became quite clear.

In his book A Chain of Poetry Aharon Komem notes that

Gilboa was perhaps the last poet who lived the dilemma of the duty to express the pain of an entire nation. In Gilboa’s poetry there is a strong connection to the “other place,” meaning the Diaspora, to a childhood of degradation and the experience of pogrom-like events (“With the Kin of my Blood,” ”Seeds of Lead,” 74:207). The biographical connection is like a permanent badge of guilt.\(^1\)

The connection to the "other place" adds power to the rootedness, to the richness and to the variety of his poetry, in which biblical idiom and colloquial Israeli speech appear intertwined.

Gilboa uses colloquial syntax, but employs a rich vocabulary of Hebrew drawn from the Bible and a stanza-structure with modern characteristics such as a creative use of gaps.

In an interview with Haim Gouri, Gilboa answered the question regarding the personal and national facets of his poetry: "First and foremost, I see myself as part of my generation, perhaps part of many generations."\(^2\) With this statement, Gilboa acknowledges the national-historic facet of his poetry. A clear example of the identification between the personal and the national is found in the poem "Poem of the Early Morning": "Suddenly a person gets up in

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\(^1\) Aharon Komem, A Chain of Poetry; on Poetry and Poets (Hebrew),(Be’er Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2004), 285.

the morning, and feels that he's a nation and begins to walk.\(^3\) The poem describes the moment he came to this realization and identified with his national group. Inherent in this moment is the power of two thousand years and the optimism of the nation's continued march forward. The significance of the march is magnified by the intertextual dialogue with Abraham's journey to Canaan in Genesis 12:1: "Go forth" it says, and the promise that the land would be his is accompanied by the demand that he "Arise and walk the length and breadth of the land, for I shall give it to you" (\textit{Genesis} 13:17).

Ortzion Bartana in his article "Amir Gilboa and Two Volumes of his Poetry" raises the following claim:

Gilboa's poetry, at least the poetry of the last thirty years, is foreign and hard to include in the canon of modern Israeli poetry, even when it changed and became a more truncated-pessimistic-skeptical poetry, in a way that resembled true Israeli poetry, in his book \textit{I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers} (1968) and in later volumes.\(^4\)

Bartana sees Gilboa's poetry as being characterized by Jewish religious, and Kabbalistic themes. Gilboa was a non-conformist, he was "a foreigner" from Europe and had a hard time integrating into native Israeli society. In his poem "I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers", he expresses his alienation from other poets: "I do not belong among them, sometimes/ they include me…/…/because of their self-righteousness."\(^5\) And later in the poem he writes: "All in all I am part of the collective / But this collective is not my unit."\(^6\)

\(^3\) Amir Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I} (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv, Israel: haKibbutz haMeuhad Press, 2003, 1987 (Published earlier under the title \textit{Kechulim Va'adumim 1963, 1971}), 281.
\(^5\) Amir Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems II} (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv, Israel: haKibbutz haMeuhad Press, 2003), 43.
\(^6\) Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems II}, 43.
Bartana acknowledged that Gilboa was a superb poet, but did not subscribe to the generally accepted view that Gilboa was a bridge between two periods of Hebrew poetry, a bridge between the past and modern poetry. The reason for this is that Bartana identified national-religious characteristics in Gilboa's poetry, which in his opinion had no place in modern Israeli poetry. One may dispute his claim in a number of ways. First, the national-religious ideas found in Gilboa's poems are also part of the infrastructure of Bialik's poetry and Gilboa used the latter's poetry as a starting point for his compositions, which include many modern features (versefication, rhyme etc.). Second, Gilboa's poems include many personal compositions with no national dimension whatsoever. Examples include the series of poems in "Everything Goes" as well as The Days are Coming. Third, one easily finds divergent summations by poets of Gilboa's generation such as Moshe Shamir. Moshe Shamir reports that already in his poems published in the communal journal Yalqut haRe'im (1943-1946) "many of his [Gilboa's] images bear a distinct Israeli flavor -... they draw upon vistas of mountains, valleys, hewn stone, as well as similes of sunlight and luminescence, and employ the language of journeys and so on."7 Since Gilboa meets the above criteria, it is clear that he is first and foremost an Israeli poet.

Jacob Abarbanel, in a Master's Thesis written at Bar-Ilan University, relates to the fact that in Gilboa's early poetry he adopted the "livingdead" point of view, which was typical to the

7 Moshe Shamir, Shlomo Tanai, editors. Yalqut haRe'im, New Edition with essays and Bio-bibliographic Notes by the editors (Hebrew), (Israel: Bialik Institute Publication, 1992 (1943-1946).)
Palmach (פלמ"ח) Generation beginning with Alterman. Abarbanel makes the following distinction:

This is true for the poems which focus on his family members who perished in the Holocaust, but in poems where the dead are his comrades-at-arms who fell in battle, Gilboa's poetry shies away from the mythical "livingdead" apposition which was common and was nurtured by poets of that time during the War of Independence."

When one examines this claim with regard to the poems in The Days are Coming, the "livingdead" family member appears or whispers ("Silence's Corners,"47 and "With Kin of my Blood," 100). When it comes to the soldiers, however, the poem "Morning Sela," which was also published in All the Poems I, the "livingdead" myth is perpetuated. For example, his dead comrades-at-arms who come, are presented as: "My comrades shall come with insignia of salvation / and their spilt blood bubbles.../and the valley glows from the holiness of the wrappings..." Gilboa does not employ this motif very often when it comes to the death of soldiers on the field of battle, but the poem "Morning Sela," written in 1944, may be counted among his early poems. Abarbanel's distinction is based on a theory offered by Hanan Hever. In his article, "The live one lives, and the dead one is dead," Hever analyzes the way myth was used by Gilboa in poems of "Ancient War" written in the fifties, and especially the poem "And my Brother is Silent," in order to prove that Gilboa developed a distinctively different approach than other members of his generation when it came to the "dead-live" myth. Mythical rumination is presented through the eyes of a boy, and the dead person is, upon

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8 Gilboa's generation, especially the poets Alterman and Gouri, used to describe fallen- soldiers who appeared and talked as if they were alive. Two famous poems which demonstrated it are: Alterman's "The Silver Platter" and Gouri's "Here our Bodies are Lined"; the dead soldiers promised to return.

9 Yaakov Abarbanel, "Knowing from Where and to Where; Study in the collection ha-kol Holech by Amir Gilboa" (Hebrew), (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 2001), 62.


In the course of this thesis I refer to Gilboa's work as "Gilboa, The Days are Coming."

11 Hanan Hever, "The live one lives, and the dead one is dead" (Hebrew), Siman Kriah 19, March 1968: 191.
further consideration, devoid of any life. According to Hever, in the period following the war "Gilboa became more critical of the 'livingdead' dimension"12, and in effect took apart this oxymoron in his poems. Ḥanan Ḥever surmised that with this rejection of the 'livingdead' myth, Gilboa's poetry marked a transition between poems of the Israeli War of Independence and the poetry of the State Generation beginning in the fifties and thus functioned as mediating inter-generational poetry.

Dan Miron, in his book *Facing the Silent Brother*, is opposed to the claim that the 'livingdead' myth was a feature which distinguished Gilboa as an inter-generational mediator. According to Miron "the purposeful deconstruction of the livingdead stratagem was dependent upon the time of composition rather than the 'transitional status' of a single poet [Gilboa] who bridged the gap between different generations of poetry."13 In his opinion it was the experiences of historical events which led to the difference in poetry. This being said, Miron is generally laudatory of Gilboa's poetry which according to him was "the epitome of the poetry of the War Generation and the complete opposite of what the State Generation brought to Hebrew poetry of the fifties and the sixties."14 Miron expands the oxymoronic repertoire characteristic of the State Generation: livingdead, quiet- noise, silent- scream. One who reads Gilboa's poetry will find all these oxymorons in his poetry in simple and in more complex structures, such as: "And my brother was silent / and his blood screams from the ground."15

13 Dan Miron, *Facing the Silent Brother; Essays on the Poetry of the War of Independence* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd. and The Open University of Israel, 1992), 335.
14 Miron, *Facing the Silent Brother*, 335.
15 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 212.
I would like to add an element which was not considered in the above debates and that is the different reasons for the employment of the livingdead myth. Eda Zorrite explains: "The livingdead myth, which is such a central part of his [Alterman's] poetry, is often tied to the need to justify the loss of life on behalf of the nation."¹⁶ I claim that the main reason that Gilboa brought the dead back to life was his pain and yearning for family members who were murdered during the Holocaust. There is no way to justify this personal and communal loss of life as sacrifice for a national ideology. Gilboa is a stranger in a strange land when compared to these of his generation in Israel, since his soul is still anchored in the city of his birth and to his family who perished.

Gilboa does indeed represent an important link in the chain which connects the Jews who lived "there" in the Diaspora and the poetry of the War of Independence, in which he took part, and according to some he is also a link to the poets of the fifties. In an excursus to this thesis I compare Gilboa's first poems, in Yiddish and in Hebrew, to Agnon's early poems, as representative of poetic composition in the Diaspora. In the thematic analysis of the following chapters I relate to Gilboa as an heir to Bialik on the one hand, and on the other hand as an innovator of new poetry together with Amichai, who wrote at the same time, and Dalia Ravikovitch who represented a new generation of poetry. An analysis of their poetry will be undertaken in chapters six and seven.

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II Gilboa's Position as a Poet who Describes the Holocaust Experience

Nurit Govrin, in her book: *Reading the Generations: Contextual studies in Hebrew Literature*, classifies the writers and the poets who wrote about the Holocaust into five groups, which I consider as four: Holocaust survivors in the flesh, second and third generation composers, writers who were born and educated in Israel, and "of their flesh from afar" (מבשרם מרחוק). Nurit Govrin classifies Gilboa as someone who was "educated" in Israel, probably because he was in the Jewish Brigade, and in this she is mistaken. Gilboa is, without a doubt, one of the "of their flesh from afar" ממבשרם מרחוק, one who was born in the Diaspora, but was in Israel during the war, while his family suffered and perished in the Holocaust. Govrin characterizes the literary contribution of those she classifies as "of their flesh from afar" as:

They were the ones who first attempted to deal with this horrifying subject which could not be artistically rendered, and they created the first tools and techniques with which to deal with the subject-matter in literature…as the news of the magnitude of the horror and details of the atrocities began to spread, many of the poets who dwelt in Israel shied away from the subject.  

Govrin focuses mostly on "the first spontaneous response, without the perspective of time, before the truth was known and the magnitude of the horrors became apparent, before some of them enshrouded themselves in a mantle of silence, in muteness." All the features Govrin speaks of as she relates to the group of poets referred to as "of their flesh from afar" accord exactly with Gilboa's *oeuvre*, as shall be proven in this work. Govrin did not dedicate a chapter to Gilboa's poetry and its characteristics. In this thesis I shall employ her distinctions as I analyze Gilboa's poetry.

17 Nurit Govrin, *Reading the Generations; Contextual studies in Hebrew Literature, v. 1* (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: University of Tel-Aviv, Gvanim Press, 2002), 307.
18 Govrin, *Reading the Generations*, 308.
Gilboa pondered concerns over matters often part of survivors' literary oeuvres, such as the tension between forgetting and remembering, the imperative to recount the horrors with words, and the inner-debate regarding the basic question, of whether there can be literature after Auschwitz. Gilboa expressed his emotional wounds and inner struggle in his poems and letters to other poet-friends regarding whether it was ethical to write poems about the Holocaust as a response to it during the war itself. In a letter to Natan Alterman he wrote: "Everything that was written, poetry or prose, has no value any more." In spite of this, he continued to write, but hid how prolific he was. In the following chapter I relate to this debate, referring to Theodor Adorno.

Govrin concludes that the "of their flesh from afar" poets developed feelings of guilt for leaving their families, and for surviving, unable to save their families. They became orphans twice over: Once when they immigrated to Israel and then a second time when their families perished. They debated what the proper literary form was, and if there was any possibility of expressing what happened "there" when they were not "there." The style of writing includes screaming at the murderers and at those who remained silent, and sometimes makes general call for revenge. The anguished cry is expressed with many exclamation marks and question marks, with lofty words, with rhetoric, and with pathos, until the moment that silence took the place of the scream. This is also true in Gilboa's poetry. In the poems Gilboa wrote during the war one notes the proliferation of dashes, which were sometimes erased when the poem was edited. One may say that Gilboa's poetry begins with "For then I will Scream" (All the Poems

19 Letter, 3.12.1942 in Halperin, Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming, 19. The letters are kept in Gilboa’s Archive, Kip Centre, University of Tel-Aviv.
I, 10) and then continues with the lips of the sleepers who cannot be induced to speak, in other words he turns to silence and reticence.

### III Trends in Research on Gilboa's Poetry

The first chapter explains the theoretical basis for the impact of post-traumatic stress on the poetry of Amir Gilboa. It focuses on Gilboa’s reconstruction of Holocaust testimonials as expressed in his poetry. This includes relating to the question of whether artistic expression is possible after Auschwitz. In this chapter I explore Gilboa’s unique method of writing about wars and about the Holocaust, relating it to ways of coping with memories of traumatic experiences as documented by psychoanalytic research. A basic collection of essays relating to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is found in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth. An additional theory which I found helpful in the course of my research is featured in Dori Laub’s essay: "An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival." If one applies Laub’s theory to Gilboa's family situation, one finds a rationale for poetry such as Gilboa's, whose perspective was one of a witness testifying to events he had not actually undergone. The above authors, as well as the psychological analysis of Sigmund Freud, Robert Jay Lifton, and Viktor E. Frankl offer psychological and sociological perspectives which help one understand more fully the situations described in the poems. I present these theories and others regarding trauma and memory as translated into literary form through the lens of Gilboa’s poems. These theories provide meaningful and informed tools for analyzing Gilboa’s poetry and are instrumental in helping one appreciate his

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contribution to Hebrew literature. This theoretical framework will also enable me to ask relevant and insightful questions regarding the appearance of post-traumatic stress in Amir Gilboa's poems.

The second chapter focuses on post-traumatic stress as it is reflected in Gilboa’s final posthumously published book of poems entitled *Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming; Poems 1942-1946*. This book was edited in 2007 by Hagit Halperin, who added an introduction and valuable explanations. The poems in this book were written while Gilboa was undergoing serious trauma and for this reason preferred not to publish them as a book in his lifetime. The importance of this collection of poems is that they are conducive to a fresh understanding of the poet and his oeuvre. In 1949 Amir Gilboa published a series of poems entitled "Seven Domains" (*Sheva Reshuyot*), which included poems about the Holocaust and the war, written after the war. In 1953 Gilboa published "Ancient War" as part of "Early Morning Poems," (*Shirim Ba’boqer Ba’boqer*), which describes the reactions of young people to the trauma of war and the Holocaust. Most of the poems published in 1953 were not written under the same wartime conditions as the earlier volume. The discovery of a series of poems that include the time and place of composition, dated between 1942 and 1946 proves that Gilboa had been actively writing throughout the war. The second chapter focuses on the question of why Gilboa chose some poems written during the war for publication in 1949 and 1953, while others remained unpublished until his death and only appear in *The Days are Coming* after his death. In addition, if one compares the manuscripts from 1946 to the same poems

published in 1949 and 1953, one observes significant changes in the order of the poems as well as in the content.

An analysis of the poems in *The Days Are Coming* helps one understand later poems that Gilboa wrote about the Holocaust and war. The poems written during the war highlight rawer feelings and spontaneous responses to traumatic events, including the loss of almost all his family. It is important that the title of this book is an expression used by biblical prophets. *The Days are Coming (Hine Yamim Ba’aim)*, relates to destruction and future revival. This title provides us a key to understanding Gilboa's latter work in general, as well as this particular series.

Chapter Three researches the responses to Jewish national destructions within Gilboa’s Poetry. This includes biblical episodes and historical events as well as Holocaust events. Chapter three delineates Gilboa's response and relationship to Jewish-national destruction in his poetry. Since the descriptions of destruction in Gilboa's poetry draw upon his personal feelings of trauma, there is a convergence of the individual and the national collective in his poetry. For example, in one of the poems from the "I wanted to write the lips of sleepers" Collection, one is struck by the sentence, "On that day I saw, or in other words, we saw." Descriptions of the destruction are reflected through the prism of a wide historical arc: events from the biblical period are featured explicitly, as are pogroms against the Jews, and the Holocaust, rather than merely to allusions that a reader would need to figure out on his own. The inclusion of children from our own era in poems which deal with historical instances of destruction allows one to contrast various attitudes towards difficult situations. The poet's

24 Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 67.
horror concerning destruction and murder of war led him to write some poems about opposing the use of force, as well as other poems where he calls for revenge.

In the course of the analysis of these poems special attention will be given to linguistic sculpting and to Gilboa's dependence upon intertextuality and classical Jewish sources. Gilboa employs a number of language registers and switches between children's speech, colloquial speech, and a high pathetic style.

A further goal: In the course of examining the reactions to national destruction in his poems I will compare elements in Gilboa's poetry to the poetry of Gilboa's predecessor, Bialik, and thus give further credence to Bargad and other scholars' assumption that Gilboa's poetry is dependent upon Bialik's poetry. In many of the poems presented in this chapter Gilboa employs key words such as blood, ashes, smoke, silence, scrolls, crying, and light. The repetition of these key words emphasizes the connection between Gilboa and Bialik's poetry, which Gilboa admired greatly. They both express the pain of the individual and the nation as the same pain. Gilboa innovates in the way he uses Jewish sources. Like Bialik, Gilboa takes apart concepts and removes them from their original religious contexts: Thus the plea for God's help drawn from the Ana beKoah (Please, Strongly) prayer turns into a protest against violence in Gilboa's poem.

The fourth chapter deals with: The "Binding" Motif (haAkedah) as an expression of the victim and the (Holocaust) survivor’s feelings. Chapter Four follows a line of argument drawn from Yael Feldman's work. Feldman, in her article "From ‘Martyrdom’ to a 'Happy

Binding' or the 'Invention' of the Binding as a Heroic Figure in Zionist Rhetoric,"26 distinguishes between sanctifying God's name through sacrifice coupled with the preservation of the religious values of the nation, and the binding of Isaac as a secular concept. She traces the process of the secularization of the binding of Isaac as a foundational heroic figure in the ethos of Zionist rhetoric. In Israel, the victims of the European pogroms were seen as sheep going to the slaughter, a negative symbol, whereas the soldiers who died in Israel's wars were honored. I show that in a number of poems, Gilboa relates to those "bound" in Europe as secular heroes. He elevates them to the same status as the soldiers.

My survey of sources relating to the binding begins with the biblical binding of Isaac then turns to the midrashic and talmudic expansions of this tale, including late liturgical poems, and ends with modern poetry. Gilboa employs concepts from the binding and from religious martyrdom without relating them to belief in God, and even when the burning bush is alluded to, it is when God does not help. A distinction will be made between a realized binding, a binding in which the intended victim is killed as in the case of the anonymous mother later named Miriam / Hannah and her seven sons and the victims of the pogroms in Bialik and Gilboa's poetry, and an unrealized binding, which is connected to the Biblical story of Isaac. This subject is presented by means of a comparison to poets such as S. Shalom, Natan Alterman, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Zalman Shneur, Haim Nachman Bialik, Itzik Manger, and Haim Gouri.

Special attention is given to the binding motif as bringing to mind the guilt of the one who was bound and of the Holocaust survivor in Gilboa's poetry. In Gilboa's "Isaac," the binding of the father is presented as the son's dream, but persists as a nightmare, making the son a victim of psychological suffering, a binding-like experience. In contrast, the poem "In the Trial" relates to the subject of guilt from a cognitive perspective and directs a barrage of difficult questions towards God, seeking to clarify why he (the speaker) is guilty and why he is being punished. Additional poems and compositions of other poets are brought in order to facilitate a deeper inquiry.

The use of the Hebrew word מַכָּל for knife is unique to the binding of Isaac in the Pentateuch and became a literary metaphor for a sacrifice that takes place (as opposed to the biblical binding of Isaac). This chapter cites examples from Alterman's poems, as well as from Haim Gouri and Leah Aini, and compares this motif in their poetry in contrast with Gilboa's poems, especially the poems of *The Days are Coming*.

Towards the end of the fourth chapter I discuss the binding as a tool used to critique the reality of war in Israel. Uri Zvi Greenberg lays the blame on the shoulders of the generation which disconnected itself from God. Contemporary Israeli poets such as Aliza Shenhar employ the binding motif as a tool to critique sending sons as soldiers into combat. Gilboa is not part of this dialogue.

Chapter Five describes the revival that arises from the destruction and the crying in Gilboa’s poetry. The underlying assumption is that there is a direct connection between destruction and lamentation and renewal and redemption. The previous chapter discussed "bindings" as representing destruction and devastation. The fifth chapter opens with a presentation of
*midrashim* which emphasize the importance of the binding as a symbol of devastation which leads to national redemption. Hope for revival and renewal in the Land of Israel arises anew from poetic laments.

This chapter shows how the belief in the coming of the Messiah in Gilboa's poems is a leading catalyst for the revival of the people in the land. It analyzes Gilboa's descriptions of the Messiah revealing his frequent use of Biblical prophecy, of Hassidism and of Kabbalah, as well as his allusions to Agnon and Bialik. Gilboa emphasizes the importance of yearning for redemption as a means of realizing it.

Symbols of renewal are presented in a concentrated form in the poem "Poem of the Early Morning," including the morning walk, the dew, and the identification with the nation. This poem was chiseled in its entirety on a stela on Kugel Boulevard in the city of Holon, in central Israel. The poem expresses optimism and hails the "thousand years of youth in its [Israel's] future." Walking is part of the peripatetic nature of the Jews, beginning with Abraham's journey to Canaan, and culminating in the return to the land after the Holocaust.

The contention that dew is a symbol of blessing and renewal is based upon an expression from the book of *Psalms*, intertextual references to the poems of Yehuda haLevi and Bialik, and even current research undertaken in Israel proving the importance of dew to desert agriculture. Dew features prominently in Gilboa's poetry, as in the lines: "My windows are

27 The music to this poem was composed by Gidi Koren from Toronto and by the Israeli singer Shlomo Artzi, who also sings it.
open / and upon my window sill there are shards of dew / which write the morning songs."  

The dew represents poetic inspiration and renewal in Gilboa's poems.

Revival and renewal in Israel are inspired by biblical prophecies of salvation, such as 'the days are coming', the valley of dry bones, the crooked paths that become straight, and others. For example, Barzel writes that "the poem ["The Nation's Night"] combines the themes of Holocaust and renewal, sadness becoming joy, and a day of mourning becoming a holiday. In the spirit of the prophecy of consolation, that has also become part of the retelling at Passover: 'In your blood you shall live.'" Gilboa alludes to the prophecy of consolation in Isaiah: "To give the mourners of Zion glory (פאר) in place of ashes (אפר)" (Isaiah 61:3), and writes: "From the ashes it shall burn with all its lights / – the glory." From the devastation and the ashes of war, the glory of the revival shines bright.

Light as a symbol for revival (as well as a representation of the future) also appears in many of Gilboa's poems. In the poem "A Memorial Prayer," the morning light is born from a lament over the destruction: "From the crying after it all ended / Light shall be born." In this, Gilboa follows Bialik, who connected destruction to consolation in "The Scroll of Fire."

An examination of The Days are Coming will help us better understand how, despite the centrality of the destruction motif, Gilboa did not give in to despair and retained the idea of hope evident in his later poetry such as "Poem of the Early Morning."

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28 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 338.
30 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 286.
31 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 72.
IV Excursus: Comparative Studies

Chapter Six deals with common motifs found in Gilboa's poetry and Agnon's early poetry, both in Yiddish and in Hebrew. My comparison will focus on Agnon's early poems as compared to Gilboa's early poetry. Both poets began writing in Yiddish, but then switched to Hebrew. The Yiddish poems include characteristics and forms which one finds in their later writing in Hebrew. Agnon wrote these poems with inimitable style (quoted here in their entirety) in the Diaspora. In a number of instances I will also refer to Bialik's poems. Examples of motifs found in both oeuvres are: A memorial candle commemorating both the personal and collective dripping / bubbling blood, fire and light, a tear, the sun, the figure of a small child seeking to save his nation, abstention from playing the lyrea call to the God of Justice to render judgment.

Chapter Seven examines Gilboa’s poetry as an extension of Bialik’s poetry, and as an innovative "young" poetry alongside Amichai and Ravikovich's compositions. In earlier chapters, alongside the thematic and linguistic analysis, I demonstrate the continuity between Gilboa's poetry and Bialik's poetry. Gilboa employed words and expressions typical to Bialik's poetry, such as: parchment (גרלים) and the light of day. On occasion Gilboa incorporated words commonly found in Bialik's poems as an intertextual reference to Bialik's poetry, but employs them in a different context and creates his own unique tableaus, such as "In the eye the pearl of light shall shed a tear."32 Readers familiar with Bialik, may think that this line is drawn from the latter's poetry, but it is not. The final chapter summarizes Gilboa's use of motifs commonly found in Bialik's poems, which were discussed in earlier chapters. I

32 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 10.
conclude that in addition to the continuity between Bialik's poetry and Gilboa's poetry there is a strong innovative streak in his oeuvre, apparent in the development of modern structures and the deconstruction of theological expressions and the reversal of their meaning. Amichai mastered the process Gilboa began.

Gilboa is considered an innovator of modern Israeli poetry. His writing style reflects a stylistic dichotomy. On the one hand he used a modern colloquial Hebrew syntax, and on the other hand he laced his poetry with biblical expressions uncommon in everyday speech. Gilboa’s style, with its modern rhythm and sentence structure, was considered new in its time and was emulated by younger contemporary poets. Writing at the same time as him, though somewhat younger was Yehuda Amichai who developed original imagery and Dalia Ravikovitch who was part of the ‘next generation’ of poets. At the end of chapter seven I link three poets together through their poems of similar motif.

The methodology I use to analyze the poems is based in part on recognizing the various layers and facets of the Hebrew language in each poem, and at the same time relating to the classical Hebrew sources such as the Bible, Kabbalah, Targum, Midrashim, and the Talmud which Gilboa used. Methods of intertextuality are applied in my examination of allusions to these classical sources. In addition, I compare motifs that appear in Gilboa’s poetry to the same motifs in the Medieval Hebrew poetry of Spain, and in Modern Hebrew poetry.
V Review of Previous Scholarship

Abraham Balaban edited a book of essays entitled: *Amir Gilboa: A Selection of Critical Essays on his Writing*. In his contribution Balaban summarizes the development of Gilboa’s writing, his personal relationships, and the process by which he became one of the most appreciated poets of his time in Israel. He presents the criticism towards Gilboa’s poems and shows how, after some of his best poems were scrutinized, the public’s regard for him grew. The other essays in the book analyze some of the themes found in a number of Gilboa's poem series, and some pieces relate to his poetic individualism. Moshe Shamir demonstrates how form and content influence each other using Gilboa's poems as an example; Gavriel Moked focuses on Gilboa’s first collection *Kehulim Va’Adumim* (Blues and Reds) as original poetry, and relates to Gilboa's distinctive use of language; Dan Miron relates to the extent of Gilboa's success in translating his inner prophecies into homogeneous and coherent poems as reflected in the language, the tone, and the imagery that open up a window into his most inner thoughts. He demonstrates this by analyzing several poems.

Hillel Barzel includes in his *Amir Gilboa: Monograph*, an examination of Gilboa's poetics and his (Barzel's) commentary. He offers definitions with relevant examples from Gilboa’s poems. Barzel claims and proves that Gilboa protested against silence as an acceptable reaction to problematic situations, by employing a shrill tone beginning with his first published poem. This trend persists through different stages of his poetic composition, which

were interspersed with periods when he did not publish. His poems often seem at first to have burst into the world, and are then contained and confined by the poet. Barzel writes that "The basic pattern in his poetry comprises a journey from the general towards the private, from scattered sources of strength towards concentrated force, which includes the quality of a word that meanders from multivalence to bivalence and from there to one single meaning." In my work I intend to implement this theory regarding the quality of the words in Gilboa’s poetry. Barzel summarizes Gilboa’s poetry with a metaphor, he relates to the ‘echo’ and the ‘voice’ as found in some of Gilboa’s poems, where the abstract echo precedes the actual voice.

Eda Zoritte, in *Spheres of Life and Emanation*, reveals through her research that Gilboa’s education was Zionist-socialist-secular, which contrasts with the heavy usage of Hasidic images and Kabbalistic elements in his poetry. Her explanation of this is that it was his family’s difficult life which drew him closer to the Hasidic belief in "the upper world" with its ideas that highlight hope and relief. In addition, growing up in a Yiddish speaking milieu might have helped him connect to Hasidic themes. Eda Zoritte analyzed a number of his poems based on her understanding of the Hasidic imagery and Kabbalistic elements therein. In the last part of her book, she speaks of important motifs in Gilboa’s poems, such as the motif of ‘light’.

35 Barzel, *Amir Gilboa; Monograph*, 82.
Warren Bargad, in *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, describes and interprets Gilboa's works at the various stages of his writing and attempts to place him among his contemporaries. Bargad surveys the variety of forms in which Gilboa wrote, beginning with traditional romantic poems, and then shifting to contemporary forms.

When discussing the place of Gilboa’s poetry in the canon of Modern Hebrew literature, Bargad asks: "Did Gilboa represent the denouement of an extended ‘Age of Bialik’ or was he part of the new modernistic trend?" I intend to consider this question throughout Gilboa's entire oeuvre, and especially in the poet’s latest compositions (that is not discussed by Bargad). I intend to prove through Gilboa’s usage of the Hebrew language that he is in many ways Bialik's heir. I also intend to demonstrate his ties to Agnon’s early poetry.

Malka Shaked, in her book entitled *I’ll Play You Forever: The Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry – Readings* offers comparative analyses and examines poems intertextuality from a variety of writers, including Gilboa. She examines many of his poems that include biblical allusions expressed thematically, figuratively, through motifs, and through literary citations. Shaked asks number of questions regarding the meaning of the relationship between modern poems and the Bible. She wonders why poets relate to and focus on some texts and not on others. On the one hand, what is the influence of the poet’s reality on the way he sees the biblical text, and on the other hand, what effect does the biblical text have on the way he sees his real life? What is the meaning of the affinity between poetry and the Bible, and how does

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38 Bargad, *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, xi.
it clarify the meaning of the Bible on the one hand, and poetry on the other? What is the contribution of biblical allusion to the poetry? Shaked distinguishes between poetry that adds commentary or fills in a lacuna in the bible, and poetry that is driven by criticism, parody or humour. When a modern secular text gets involved with an ancient biblical text, it tends towards de-mythization, re-mythification, or secularification, each of which contributes in different ways to the composition of the poetry.

According to Shaked, one needs to examine the relationship between the poem and the biblical text in order to locate the biblical contribution to a given poem and to understand the poems' deeper significance. She distinguishes between a biblical text inserted into the poem, and biblical allusions. Allusion can appear in a variety of forms: in the content, in the language or through a citation. After identifying the source of the allusion, one must identify its role in the poem and the intertextual relationship between the allusion and the text of the poem from the perspective of the poem. This element of intertextuality has also been discussed by Harry Fox in his Introduction to Introducing Tosefta.40

Hillel Barzel also analyzes Gilboa’s poetry in the series A History of Hebrew Poetry vol. VIII entitled: Revolutionary Forms41 His essays seek to demonstrate the tendency of the poems to move from "openness to flowing."42 He demonstrates this tendency through a thematic analysis, as well as through Gilboa’s complicated usage of language, consonants and vowels.

Hagit Halperin, in her introduction to the posthumous edition *Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming – Poems 1942-1946*, analyzes the main themes of those poems in relation to Gilboa’s biography. Halperin recounts Gilboa’s life-story along with citations from his poetry, and references to his letters and diary. Halperin raises the question of the relationship between the poems and the notes at the end of the poems, where Gilboa commented on the event and mentioned where and when he wrote it. In her analysis of the poetry, she draws on the biographical data, since they help one understand the events that catalyzed the abstract poems. Halperin was the first scholar to relate to the entire manuscript of *The Days are Coming* which she received from Gilboa’s widow.

Halperin explains the biblical origin of the title *The Days are Coming* and how it relates to the poems’ themes. The phrase "The Days are Coming" is drawn both from introductions to apocalyptic prophecies and from introductions to prophecies of consolation, which hints at the ambivalence in Gilboa’s poetry. On the one hand the poetry directs apocalyptic rage toward the Nazis and the nations that stood by, and on the other hand it delivers a message of hope for the survivors. The importance of these poems is in the poet’s expressions of pain and rage as he reacts to the murder of his family in the Holocaust. In my work I will refer to this poetic suffering through the framework of scholarship on post traumatic reactions. I shall also demonstrate that some of his poems about suffering are followed by an articulated hope for renewal.

Most of the published research on Amir Gilboa was written prior to the publication of *The Days are Coming*, and therefore there are occasional lacunae in their conclusions, and / or

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43 Halperin ed. *Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming.*
their insights require further elucidation. I hope to provide that elucidation and fill those lacunae by attending to The Days are Coming, and introducing it to the scholarly discourse on Amir Gilboa's poetic corpus.

Haviva Yonai wrote her Masters' thesis (1974, Tel Aviv) on the Holocaust in Amir Gilboa's poetry.\textsuperscript{44} Yonai's premise is that Gilboa's poetry began optimistically and then eventually gravitated to his experience of the Holocaust. In my opinion, the premise of optimism is at odds with the first poem he published "For then I will Scream." Yonai attests that Gilboa himself told her to read the poem that starts in "To come as a free man to a besieged city"\textsuperscript{45} (from the "Ayalah, I will Send You" collection) as a Holocaust poem. Based on this, she examines the subject of the Holocaust in Gilboa's poems through allusion including metaphor and other literary devices, or finally when it is part of general existential problems such as in the opening line "I wanted to write the lips of sleepers."\textsuperscript{46} Yonai notes that Gilboa introduced descriptions of the Holocaust in a gradual way in "Seven Domains," and that when there are, their character is impressionistic and symbolic. She also refers to the Holocaust in connection with memory, national and personal disaster, revenge, disaster and redemption.

Yonai's thesis was written before the publication of "Everything Goes" and The Days are Coming. The Days are Coming contains more powerful poems and clear statements reflecting feelings of guilt, and an attitude towards the Holocaust, to which Yonai did not have access at the time of her research.

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\textsuperscript{44} Haviva Yonai, "The Theme of the Holocaust, as Revealed in Amir Gilboa's Poetry," Master's thesis (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv University, 1974).
\textsuperscript{45} Gilboa, All the Poems II, 117.
\textsuperscript{46} Gilboa, All the Poems II, 51.
\end{flushright}
Shlomo Hertzig wrote his Masters' thesis (1987, Tel Aviv) on the dream as a poetic and interpretive axis in Gilboa's oeuvre. His thesis focuses on the dream as a basic building block in understanding the development of the speaker's experiences in Amir Gilboa's poems, and as a regulative basis for the sculpting of rhetorical structures and figurative language throughout Gilboa's composition. He refers to the dream in the general sense, as well as to its connection to delusion and memory. The centrality of the dream in Gilboa's poems is presented mostly through the lens of the "Poems in Early Morning" Collection, and to a much lesser extent through the poems in "Seven Domains." He analyzes the poems' dreams, which come from a childhood memories, nightmares and awakening from a vision (which in some instances completely reverses the meaning of the poem). The visitation of dead acquaintances is seen as surrealistic. The dream is in effect a "transport vehicle" to the depths of the soul, and to distant places and times. It is the meeting point between the personal and the national, the human collective and the divine. Hertzig surmises that the dominance of the dream experience influenced the syntactical structure and the semantics of the poems as they appear in Gilboa's collection "Everything Goes" (haKol Holech).

I agree with his approach to the dream in Gilboa's poetry, but in my thesis I examine the dream in Gilboa's poems from a post-traumatic perspective. I relate to a small number of poems in which the dream or the vision is a product of post-trauma where the war and the Holocaust constitute the traumas.

47 Shlomo Hertzig, "The Concept of Dream in Amir Gilboa's Poetry" (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv University, 1987).
Ilana Tzimchony wrote her Master's thesis (1987) on the connection between Gilboa's poetry and the biblical Psalms.\footnote{Ilana Tzimchony, "Affinities in Amir Gilboa's Poetry to the Hymn in the Book of Psalms" (Hebrew), (University of Haifa, 1987).} Her basic premise is that Gilboa's is religiosity ambivalent. On the one hand, God is directly addressed and He is praised, and on the other hand Gilboa evinces irony and heresy vis-à-vis the divine. Tzimchony demonstrates Gilboa's connection to the book of Psalms in his poems about nature and his paeans, and his emphasis upon water and light which express spontaneity and exuberance, at least in his earlier writing. My research, which focuses on poems from The Days are Coming, shows how allusions to going towards the light and towards hope derive from a personal sense of sadness and desperation regarding the destruction. The premise of Tzimchony's thesis is that Gilboa's uniqueness was in part due to his connection to the book of Psalms. I show this to be inaccurate and further more, that The Days are Coming demonstrates an anxiety different for the Hebrew Bible, for in that book one finds a greater emphasis upon prophets of destruction and consolation, especially Jeremiah.

Yaakov Abarbanel focused his Masters' thesis (2001, Bar Ilan University) on Gilboa's Collection "Everything Goes" (haKol Holech). This was the last collection Gilboa edited before he died, and many of the poems deal with the thoughts of a person facing imminent death. Abarbanel examines how the idea of death is crafted in Gilboa's poetry including from the dead-living, to the living-dead, the poetics of death, and intertextual references to earlier collections. Abarbanel claims that in the poems of "Everything Goes" there is an integration of two attitudes towards death: death as final, and death after which there is life and in which the dead person can speak, implying a hope for eternal life. In Abarbanel's words: "The
inclusion of both these attitudes in the final volume ["Everything Goes"] is in effect a summary statement regarding Gilboa's entire oeuvre, which on the one hand stands in contradiction to the earlier poems, and on the other hand completes a process which began to manifest itself in later volumes."\footnote{Ya'akov Abarbanel, "Knowing from Where and to Where; Study in the Collection ha-Kol Holech" (Hebrew), (2001), 5.} The publication of the hidden volume shows that this contrast is in valid, since the poems in *The Days are Coming: Poems of 1942-1946* are part of Gilboa's early writing, and evince desperation regarding destruction in juxtaposition with the hope for revival. A number of scholars have pointed this out, Halperin the first among them (2007).

One should also note two doctoral dissertations which focused on prosody in Hebrew poetry. Lev Chakak (1974, California), examined organizational strategies in free rhyme in modernist Hebrew poetry,\footnote{Lev Chakak, "Modes of Organization in Modern Hebrew Verse" (Hebrew), Ph.D (Los Angeles: University of California, 1974).} and in this context analyzed Gilboa's "The Kingdom of Silence." Devora Harpaz (2003, Bar-Ilan University) examined stylistic markers in Gilboa's poetry.\footnote{Dvora Harpaz, "Some stylistic Marks in the Poetry of Amir Gilboa" (Hebrew), Ph.D (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 2003).}

In summary, most of the analyses of Gilboa's poetry were written before *The Days are Coming* was discovered. The editors Hagit Halperin and her assistant Ilan Berkovitz, who work in the Archives of the Kip Centre in Tel Aviv University, were given the manuscripts by the widow, Gabriella Gilboa. The book was not published until 2007 and with a long introduction by Halperin, who compares it to other manuscripts in Gilboa's archives. Halperin, Hillel Barzel and Hanan Hever responded in a number of essays to the hidden
poems at an early stage of the editorial process, but no comprehensive analysis of this volume has been published.

My contribution to research includes an analysis of the poems which first appeared in *The Days are Coming* and an attempt to understand why Gilboa preferred to shelve them, while at the same time publishing other poems from this volume in "Seven Domains" in a seemingly haphazard manner. The publication of the latter poems did not prevent their inclusion as an integral part of his shelved volume. In this thesis I shall examine the differences between the poems as they appear when first published and the manuscript version of the poems in *The Days are Coming*. I shall also relate to the different order of the poems in the two volumes.

An additional contribution to research is my examination of Gilboa's method of coping with the trauma of the Holocaust in light of theories of post-traumatic expression. Gilboa's experience of the Holocaust is defined as "of their flesh from afar" (מבשרם מרחוק), or in other words he must reconstruct the events of the Holocaust through his imagination. His descriptions of the Holocaust are both surrealistic and metaphysical. All of the above is written in a lofty style, which present a challenge to researchers attempting to define his place in the canon of Israeli literature and poetry.

**Notes for the readers:**

All the poems of Gilboa and other Israeli poets are written originally in Hebrew with the exception of a few poems in Yiddish by Gilboa and Agnon. Unless otherwise indicated all the translations to English are mine (I have consulted with Tzemah Yoreh). It should be noted
that Gilboa's vocabulary is exceptionally rich and often unusual. Moreover, he frequently invents new usages and word combinations.

Gilboa published privately his first collections of poems in small booklets, newspaper, literary sheets and the like. A larger Collection *Seven Domain* and *Poems in Early Morning* were published separately as small books. Subsequently, these were collected into a volume *Khulim Va'adumim* (1963, 1971), *Khulim Va'adumim* became Volume I of *All the Poems I* (1987). Gilboa's poems written in 1968-1985 were also published first in small books and then collected into *All the Poems II* (1987). The *All the Poems* books were published posthumously. The hidden manuscript of *The Days are Coming: Poems 1942-1946* was published in 2007, and it included the early versions of some of the poems published in all the other books. For the readers' convenience I quote from the *All the Poems I* and II, and *The Days are Coming* unless otherwise noted. "Seven Domain" and "Poems in Early Morning" are now part of the book *All the Poems I*. 
Chapter 1

Gilboa’s Reconstruction of Holocaust Testimonials

1.1 Preface: Amir Gilboa

Amir Gilboa started writing poetry in the Ukraine in Yiddish, and when he immigrated to Israel in 1937 he began writing in Hebrew. During the Second World War, he served in the British army. He did not know what happened to his family until 1943 when he found out that most of his family members were murdered in Auschwitz. He did not know what really happened, and he expressed his trauma and feelings of guilt through poems about the war. In a speech in 1982, while getting an Israeli award, he recounted that in September 1942 during a Jewish holiday (Simhat Torah) he felt that his father was calling him from far away, and he described this in a poem beginning with the words "Here, no Iron Gates."\(^1\) Some years later, he participated in a memorial service in the town he had grown up in the Ukraine, and was told that it was during this holiday that his parents had been murdered.\(^2\)

Gilboa reconstructs the death of his father and brothers in his imagination, enveloping them in a halo of heroism, or presenting them as innocent victims. To this end, he employs the biblical motif of *akeda* (the binding of Isaac), which reflects his feelings of guilt and shame that he was not able to protect his family. His poems express both fear and symptoms of trauma, in a mélange of dream and reality, as when dead visitors come to him.

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\(^1\) Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 55.

These poems, which function as fictional testimonies, will be the primary focus of this chapter. Gilboa wrote many of his poems in the first person as though he were testifying, even though he had no record of the events. Aristotle, in his Poetics, wrote: "The job of any author of fiction is to write not about what actually happened but about what might or should happen in a given set of circumstances."\(^3\) Gilboa described what might have happened to his kin during the war, which can also be interpreted as a kind of mimesis, as in Lubomir Doležel's theory. Doležel writes in Heterocosmica: "Treating fictional narratives as possible worlds links literary theory to a dynamic interdisciplinary network and provides it with the model of poiesis we could not find in ‘classical’ narratology."\(^4\)

In this chapter, I present the regnant theories about trauma and memory as they affect literary analysis. They provide a meaningful analytic tool in approaching Gilboa’s poems. With regard to the reconstructed and fictional testimonies, I ask two questions. First, is it legitimate to describe the horror of the Holocaust in an art form such as poetry, and can it be achieved without disrespecting the dead? Second, does Gilboa have the moral right to create fictional testimonies of the Holocaust in his poems? And if so, what authority grants him this right?

### 1.2 Writing Artistically about the Holocaust

Theodor W. Adorno, who found it immoral and inappropriate that poets continue writing poems after Auschwitz due to the failure of human culture, ultimately changed his mind. In his book Negative Dialectics he says that suffering has the right to be heard. Adorno wrote, "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream, hence it

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may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems."\textsuperscript{5} Rolf Tiedemann relates to Adorno’s statement in his introduction to the 2003 collection of his works,

However, if poems are still possible after Auschwitz the only ones that are conceivable are those that do not have the suffering in the death camps as their subject, since the opposite would be impossible. The only poems possible are those that are concerned with commemorating that suffering have absorbed it and have thereby transcended the aesthetic.\textsuperscript{6}

We can see that this citation limits the representation of the death camp as the symbol for evil that cannot be described in art. If art is performed or written, it is supposed to be only in order to keep the memory of the suffering in a respected, aesthetic form.

Saul Friedlander edited a book called \textit{Probing the Limits of Representation}. In it he argues that in postmodernism it is important to "establish historical and artistic categories of representation …concerning ‘reality’ and ‘truth.’"\textsuperscript{7} According to Friedlander, art about the Holocaust must fall into specific categories, and must be close to the testimony genre. Therefore, he suggests that comics and comedy are not a respectful art form and cannot represent the trauma of the Holocaust.

The focus of the argument in the twenty-first century is not on the writing itself but on the different kinds of art that are used to represent Holocaust events. Andreas Huyssen in his essay "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno," focused on "if, how, and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\end{thebibliography}
when to represent historical trauma."\(^8\) Discussing the mimetic dimension of Spiegelman’s Maus may enable us to approach the memory of the Holocaust and its modern representations in new ways. In Spiegelman’s graphic novel, Art, who interviewed his father, an Auschwitz survivor, and created mimesis in the form of a graphic novel, using animals in lieu of people. Huyssen evaluated Spiegelman’s work: "As a work by a member of the ‘second generation,’ Maus may indeed mark a shift in the ways in which the Holocaust and its remembrance are now represented." \(^9\) Using the graphic genre, he achieved a powerful authenticity. This kind of graphic novel became a vehicle for intergenerational transmission of the Holocaust experience of the fathers.

Spiegelman waited some years before drawing-writing and publishing his artistic testimonials. Gilboa expressed himself in writing during the Holocaust, but denied doing so much, feeling that it was not the right time to publish. The next chapter will examine his situation in this regard. Even the Babylonian Talmud bMegila 10b, offers a Midrash about God who prevents the angels from singing when the Egyptians drown in the Red sea in Exodus 15, by saying: 'My creations drown and you are singing?' In contrast, Gilboa feels that writing poems in times of war and death is wrong: but he could not stop the flow of expressing his emotion in melancholy and lament poems unlike the angels' songs of praise.

Gilboa’s father and his entire family died in Auschwitz, so he was only able to reconstruct their death through his poetry. Poems by their nature more often depict a fictional situation, or fiction built around an historical event. Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi, in *By Words Alone: The

\(^8\) Andreas Huyssen, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno." *New German Critique* 81 (Fall 2000): 67.

\(^9\) Huyssen, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno," 81.
Holocaust in Literature, stated that "It is not the event, then, that is being communicated, but the acquisition of the event by the creative mind."[^10] The truth of the traumatic events of the Holocaust may be exposed more deeply by using devices of the imagination. Historical memory of the Holocaust contains not only facts, but also emotions; therefore, fictional art can focus on this traumatic emotional experience.[^11]

1.3 Gilboa’s Moral Right to Write Fictional Testimony

Speaking in the first person, as though giving testimony, Gilboa writes not only about his own trauma, but also about the Holocaust experiences of his family. This situation demands thorough investigation: is it legitimate for a person, such as Gilboa, who did not go through the Holocaust, to give his own testimony about what happened to his family members who were victims? There are several reasons that justify writing fictional testimony. This work will examine the justification Gilboa provides for himself, for his family and others.

First and foremost, Gilboa dedicates the book to his family as though they were partners in the writing: "With me my father and my mother …and my brothers and sisters…”[^12] The fact that Gilboa chooses to use, in some of his poems, the real names of his siblings, such as Joshua, Moses, Bronia and little Ester, demonstrates his intention to write a testimony in a

[^11]: This dissertation focuses on artistic and poetic responses to historical traumas as the Holocaust, by poets like Gilboa who did not personally witness its horror. Anna Shternshis pointed out the reference to the book The Literature of Destruction edited by David G. Roskies, which includes poems written during the Holocaust and after by poets who did bear witness. For example, Abraham Sutzkever who began writing Yiddish poems before the war, and continued in the Vilna ghetto. He also fought with the partisans, and then continued writing about his war experience in Israel. In my research I do not refer to poems written as personal experience in the ghettos. They reflect authentic testimonies, whereas Gilboa's situation was different. This is a possible subject for future research. I am grateful to Anna Shternshis for alerting me to Roskies' work.
[^12]: Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew). The dedication to the book "עמי אבי ואמי ... אנחנו אחרים..."
manner of speaking about his family who had perished in Auschwitz. In one of his untitled poems, Gilboa describes the fear of being in a cemetery; the dead hearing the same shots that killed them at midday, and then a chariot without horses passes by. The poet writes: "Joshua and Moses, both my brothers whispered./ Beryl, the earth is burning." The brothers even call him by his childhood name, Beryl, which unite the poet (and the writer) with them in their fear and death. Gilboa as a poet feels that he is duty-bound to act as the voice of those siblings who did not survive to tell their own stories. In many other poems he writes about one of his brothers without identifying him by name. He composes a fictional testimony about his brother, a reconstruction of what could have happened in the Holocaust. Gilboa uses his siblings' real names in his poetry to justify his writing, both for himself and his family.

Second, the Nazi oppressors left no qualified witnesses who could give true testimonies. Dori Laub, in his article "An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," shows how (from a theoretical perspective) the Holocaust produced no witnesses. The Holocaust created a world in which one could not bear witness to oneself. She submits that:

The Nazi system turned out therefore to be foolproof, not only in the sense that there were in theory no outside witnesses but also in the sense that it convinced its victims, the potential witnesses from the inside, that what was affirmed about their ‘otherness’ and their inhumanity was correct and that their experiences were no longer communicable even to themselves, and therefore, perhaps never took place. Laub’s analysis is corroborated by Victor E. Frankl's report in Man’s Search for Meaning, where he writes about the preference of the survivor to stay silent:

...the experiences of that only too small percentage of prisoners who survived and who now find life very difficult. These former prisoners often say, "We dislike talking

13 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, (Hebrew), 100.
about our experiences. No explanations are needed for those who have been inside, and the others will understand neither how we felt then nor how we feel now.”

Jones Tamsin brings Jean-Luc Marion's description regarding the excessive experiences of suffering visited on the flesh of the survivor of the extermination camps. When such survivors returned

they immediately saw that the phenomenon that had saturated them in their flesh-evil and suffering- could not be said, understood, or therefore appear in our world, that our world could not do justice to theirs- that it was not necessary to try and superimpose these two worlds separated by an abyss.

Tamsin clarifies Marion's claim that this inability to bridge two utterly different realities results in denial, both from the survivor himself and from the spectators who saw the crime happen.

I state these opinions to strengthen my claim that the survivors themselves were unable to provide testimonies. This silence justifies the testimony of external witnesses like Amir Gilboa. His poems provide such testimony.

Primo Levi, as a survivor, reports a conversation with his friend, after the war. His friend expresses the possibility that Levi survived in order "to write, and by writing bear witness." He did, and emphasizes that his testimony included "reading the memories of others and reading mine at a distance of years." He provided testimony on behalf of the people who

did not survive. Because the dead do not have the ability to talk, Levi declared: "We speak in their stead, by proxy." 20

Victor E. Frankl presents the key to survivability as:

The will to meaning has "survival value." This was the lesson I had to learn in three years spent in Auschwitz and Dachau: ceteris paribus (other things being equal), those most apt to survive the camps were those oriented toward the future – toward a task, or a person, waiting for them in the future, toward a meaning to be fulfilled by them in the future. 21

Having a meaningful goal helps the human being survive his/her suffering. Frankl survived in order to continue developing his research into Logotherapy, which is "therapy through meaning." Those who succeeded in surviving, and are still able to give testimony, have achieved this.

Levi and Frankl represent the survivors who developed meaningful goals for their future survival, mainly to recount and analyze what happened during the Holocaust. Levi and Frankl's descriptions complete Laub and Marion's research regarding the inability or refusal of the survivors to provide testimonies. Therefore, taking into account the limited number of survivors who are able to testify, there is a place for outside poets like Gilboa to describe the events of the Holocaust.

A third reason is that post-traumatic symptoms are also manifested among the second generation, and Gilboa's personal situation is comparable. Laura S. Brown, a psychotherapist specializing in feminist psychic trauma, writes, "Mainstream trauma theory has begun to recognize that post-traumatic symptoms can be intergenerational, as in the case of children of

survivors of the Nazi Holocaust."\textsuperscript{22} Gilboa is a special kind of a survivor, because he was not in his parents’ home at the time they were taken to Auschwitz. Therefore, he is closer to the category of the second generation, children of Holocaust victims, except that in his case no other family members survived.

Andreas Huyssen, in his essay "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno" writes about "a kind of survivor guilt of second degree, once removed from the original trauma of his parents."\textsuperscript{23} The memory of Auschwitz envelops the son born after the war. Therefore, he draws himself wearing the striped prisoner garb. He lays claim to the memories of his parents as his own traumatic memories. Amir Gilboa, as I will show from his poems, also suffered from secondary Holocaust trauma. Despite not having been in Auschwitz, he used his imagination in order to feel what his family felt as they were experiencing the Holocaust. He suffered from a serious case of survivor's guilt as though he were part of both the victims’ and the survivors’ generation. Nurit Govrin in Reading the Generations defines these survivors as "of their flesh from afar" (מבשרם מרחוק).\textsuperscript{24} The poet's suffering justifies his writing about this painful subject.

A fourth reason is that writing is a strategy to gain relief from trauma. Primo Levi writes, "I could not say whether we did or do so out of a kind of moral obligation toward those who were silenced or in order to free ourselves of their memory; certainly we do it because of a


\textsuperscript{23} Huyssen, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno." 73.

\textsuperscript{24} Nurit Govrin, Reading the Generation v. 1 (Hebrew), 307.
strong and durable impulse." Frankl, as a survivor, relates to 'the book as therapy,’ and talks about ‘healing through reading,’ which highlights the social responsibility of the author. He describes in his book, Man’s Search for Meaning, the importance of having some reading material and maintaining some spirituality even during imprisonment. After the war he gave testimony and analysis through books and lectures. Dori Laub who listened to and taped survivors’ testimonies, reported on the "imperative to tell" that motivated many of the survivors, either for their past or for their present survival, in spite of the impossibility for them to relate their story.

To summarize we can say that Gilboa’s right to write fictional testimony accords with Elie Wiesel’s recommendations. Wiesel begins his essay entitled "Trivializing Memory" with the words: "Wittgenstein said it: Whereof one cannot speak, one must not speak. The unspeakable draws its force and its mystery from its own silence. A nineteenth-century Hasidic teacher put it his own way: "The unuttered cry is the loudest cry." Amir Gilboa’s answers this in his poems, where he aspires "to write the lips of sleepers." He wanted to serve as the mouthpiece of those who could no longer speak.

If Elie Wiesel ever read Gilboa’s Holocaust poems, he would content with the honesty and respect Gilboa accorded the victims throughout the poems. Gilboa fulfilled Wiesel’s recommendation: "Listen to the survivors and respect their wounded sensibility. Open

26 Frankl, The Unheard Cry for Meaning, 91-92.
28 Elie Wiesel, "Trivializing Memory" From The Kingdom of Memory: Reminiscences (New York: 1995), 165.
29 Amir Gilboa, Amir Gilboa: All the Poems II, (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv, Israel: Chidekel Print, 1994 (1987), 51. The Hebrew original: "רציתי לכתוב שפתי ישנים"
yourselves to their scarred memories, and mingle your tears with theirs.”

Gilboa, however, could listen to and feel these emotions only in his heart, since all the members of his family had perished.

Thus, Gilboa has the moral right to write fictional testimony of Holocaust events. First, his poems express his duty to act as the voice of his family members who did not survive to recount their stories. This justification is for himself and his family. Second, he explains the survivors' inability to testify due to their loss of their identity. In this way it is as if these events have not happened to them, but to others. They consciously refused to witness their suffering, or they unconsciously denied it. Therefore, others need to step in to describe these events, so their readers will know what happened. This reason justifies his writing as a universal poet, and more specifically, for the Israeli discourse which was not in favor of writing about the Holocaust during the decade following the end of the war. Third, the trauma of the Holocaust is acknowledged as inter-generational. Gilboa suffers from a survivor's guilt. Therefore, he has the moral justification to express his feelings regarding what might have happened to his family. Fourth, writing relieves trauma. Gilboa expresses in a letter his uncontrolled urge to write during the duration of the war and his guilty feelings regarding whether it is ethical to do so.

Gilboa expresses in his poetry the importance of keeping the memory of the past in order to make it known throughout the city what happened, as in "A Locked Garden is Burning," and around the world, as in "Lights to Haven". The poet encourages people to take action against

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30 Wiesel, "Trivializing Memory," 172.
evil which is a goal for better humanity and justifies the writing. Additional justification of Gilboa's writing points towards the Jewish people. The poet carries the responsibility of warning about future dangers. According to the content of Gilboa's writings, as well as his usage of the biblical prophets' phrases, for example: 'The days are coming,' it seems as if he regards himself "as a prophet at the gate." In this way he justifies his own writing about the Holocaust.

1.4 Post-Traumatic Symptoms

Sigmund Freud, in lectures which are included in A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis (1920) initiates the discussion regarding traumatic situations. In his Eighteenth Lecture, entitled "Fixation upon Traumas: The Unconscious," Freud describes traumatic symptoms, which result in people's inability to release themselves from a particular point in their past, "and are consequently alienated from both present and future." Freud concludes that "a fixation to the moment of the traumatic occurrence lies at their root." He found that those persons tend to recreate the traumatic situation in their dreams.

Freud defines the term traumatic as follows: "An experience which we call traumatic is one which within a very short space of time, assimilation or elaboration of it can no longer be affected by normal means, so that lasting disturbances must result in the distribution of the available energy in the mind." Freud uses grief in the case of death in the family as a

prototype of the above. The survivor feels alienated and incapable of dealing with an overpowering affective experience.\textsuperscript{35}

Cathy Caruth in her introduction to \textit{Trauma}, reports a new definition of trauma, which was developed by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, following the Vietnam War, and the identification of a psychological disorder caused by experiences of trauma. We find the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

The overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them... Yet what is particularly striking in this singular experience is that its insistent re-enactments of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also, paradoxically enough, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma, that is, does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned.\textsuperscript{36}

Unfortunately, victims who were killed cannot process the past which they did not experience fully as it occurred. The living, therefore, have to bear witness and be their voices.

Tamsin referred to Bessel van der Kolk research (1994) stating that psychobiological factors should be added to the definition of Post-trauma. Tamsin writes:

A second, crucial element of trauma is that it leads to a crisis of language as well as an epistemological crisis, or crisis in “truth.” In the aftermath of a traumatic experience, silence surrounding the event and its impact may not be encouraged, yet remains, nevertheless, hard to avoid. Quite apart from a number of sociological reasons that we might identify, this has a specific neurobiological reason.\textsuperscript{37}

Tamsin relies on Bessel van der Kolk research who explores the way in which

\textsuperscript{35} Freud's research and conclusions were in dispute in its early stage.
\textsuperscript{36} Cathy Caruth, "Introduction" in \textit{Trauma: Explorations in memory}, 151.
traumatic experience so overwhelms the brain’s normal circuitry as to get “stuck” in the brain’s nonverbal “nether regions.” [...] This interferes with “the capacity to capture the experience in words or symbols.”

In light of this psychobiological information, we have to be aware of the neurobiological situation of the person who shows post-traumatic symptoms. Example of symptoms includes difficulties in understanding sentences or other language problems, which help us understand the known symptom as "goes numb."

Some traumatic memories are inaccessible to conscious recall and control. Cathy Caruth relies on Freud when she lists the symptoms of trauma as thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks. Sometimes it seems like a waking memory, yet comes back in the form of a dream. Survivors might suffer from later repression or amnesia of part or the entire traumatic event; they are not able to integrate the event into their consciousness.

In 1945, while serving in the British army in Italy, Gilboa was traumatized by the information about the murder of his family. He expressed his dreams, thoughts and nightmares in many poems, some of which were not published during his lifetime. One of these poems published during his life is called "Silence’s Corners" (אלם פינות). The poet describes the long wait for visitors until a door opens:

את ראשי ארכין אל הפינות
וקח תשחקנה.
וקח לא תגלה פנים.

"I lowered my head into the corners and they were silent. They said nothing." And then the poet asks, "How long can you stand quietly in the doorway / wishing to welcome your beloved?"  

He felt disappointed: no one stood in those corners; it was a vision from a dream, a nightmare.

In contrast to the disappointment in "Silence’s Corners," there is pride and luminescence in the description of the dead soldiers' arrival in the poem "Morning- Selah"(בכר-סלה): "My friends will come with ranks on their shoulders, and redemption/ Their spilled blood …" Gilboa does not identify the friends as soldiers, but lets the readers pick this up from the allusion to the uniforms. When it comes to the fallen soldiers, the poet is confident that they will come back.

The poem "The Soul of Yossi the Son of My Sister Bronia" combines romanticized nature, a child’s point of view, and the emotions regarding the murder of an innocent child. Yossi was the only grandchild of Gilboa's parents, dearly loved by the families. The gap between the description of a serene natural environment and the fact that Yossi was murdered creates irony.

39 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 72.  
40 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 72.  
41 Gilboa, The Days are Coming,107 ; also in All the poems I, 83.
Then I opened my eyes to the dream. Then came little Yossi and rescued the poem. And he hovered and sang.

I hear all your songs, Yossi. Little Yossi, radiant. Yossi truly murdered. Your roes wandering on every path capture the echo of your laughing voice.

Oh Yossi, oh Yossi! …

But with the rising sun I too rise altogether … and burn with the fire of desire to kiss the earth of the most favored of loves.

Warren Bargad, in his book *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, points to the direct linkage between Gilboa and his murdered nephew as a powerful reading experience. He writes, "Presented as an autobiographical dream encounter in which the speaker addresses Yossi’s ghost, the dramatic situation shapes this linkage into a fervid lament on the boy’s tragic premature death." The poem reflects the ambiguous psychological state caused by the flashback to happy memories and his knowledge regarding his nephew’s death. The Hebrew of the last two lines supports an additional layer of meaning:

The above Hebrew expression translates literally to "I, too, ascend completely … and burn," which, in Jewish tradition, has the implication of sacrifice, and relates to the motif of *akeda* (the binding of Isaac). The speaker’s strong identification with the victim causes him to feel that he is the one who burned with longing for Yossi, which is similar to being sacrificed.

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42 Gilboa, *All the poems I*, 131. "נשמת יוסי בן אחותי ברניה"
44 Bargad, *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, 97.
45 This is part of the quotation in note 92.
The poem, "The Soul of Yossi," opens with happiness and laughter, until the poet ‘opens his eyes to the dream’, and notices little Yossi flying like an angel. The whole poem turns out to be a dream, which fulfills the poet’s wish to visualize his dead nephew. Freud, when referring to dreams of young people, explains how the dream is a means to wish-fulfillment. This conclusion also applies to his theory in a more general sense. Freud explains:

That dreams are brought about by a wish and that the content of the dream expresses this wish is one main characteristic of dreams. The other equally constant feature is that the dream does not merely give expression to a thought, but represents this wish as fulfilled, in the form of a hallucinatory experience.46

Freud also mentions that in a day-dream, the wish is made more consciously by the dreamer as compared to the unconscious act of wishing which occurs during a real dream. The poet uses both kinds of dreams as poetic devices.47

Writing a poem that visually expresses the traumatic symptoms is parallel to Freud’s recommendations of curing the sufferer by using speech while employing free associations. Freud analyses:

Symptoms are not produced by conscious processes; as soon as the unconscious processes involved are made conscious the symptom must vanish. You will perceive at once that here is an opening for therapy, a way by which symptoms can be made to disappear.48

The goal of the psychoanalysis is to help the person fill in the memory gaps or amnesias, to gain awareness of the event that has been stored and repressed.

Ruth Leys, in her article "The Pathos of the Literal: Trauma and the Crisis of Representation" brings a discussion between Caruth and Laub about the challenge of the therapeutic listener;
how to help a survivor depart from a traumatic experience. Leys is in favor of the interview model (Laub's point of view) of "working through": "In the process, the survivor is encouraged to remember and narrate the past in a procedure that bears some resemblance to the analytic process of working through." In this model, the interviewer has the objectivity and detachment to distance himself from the trauma, but Gilboa presents, through his poems, a more complicated case to the hypothetical interviewer.

Gilboa’s meetings and dialogues with his dead family members, such as Yossi, are an attempt to reconstruct the traumatic events and reimagine them in a positive light, as well as owning them through the dialogues, in order to moderate his feelings. It is akin to "working through," but the interviewer also underwent the traumatic experience of losing his family, while the interviewees are those who actually experienced the trauma of death.

The process of "working through" is the focus of the poem "Ashkava" (A Prayer for the Dead). The poet asks his beloved to leave him all the heavy loads, such as the dreams and emotions, which they could not carry out due to their deaths. He is their heir, and because of this the dead gained control of his life. The heavy visions come to him when he is awake and asleep:

From room to room [they] are coming to my eyes as I sleep.
The controllers of my sleep!
In their chariot I run, I’m the heir,

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50 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 222.
In order to see what exists.

After being controlled by this traumatic experience that he inherited, the poet concludes the poem with a blessing of forgetfulness. In the end he demonstrates how to gain some relief from weighty thoughts using the process of "working through," in this case without an external interviewer. The poet experiences this through his dialogue with the dead who come to him.

Some pessimistic poems from the collection of *The Days are Coming* describe a deep helplessness. The poet experiences a constant barrage of memories and nightmares, which surround him "every day" and "every moment." He is constantly being forced to go back, and to re-experience the traumatic events, with the knowledge that the moment of the death of his family "is my life in the past as well as in the future."

### 1.5 Reconstructing Events through a Child’s Eyes

In some of his poems, Amir Gilboa describes war scenes and death both as they are seen through the eyes of a child, as well as through the vantage point of the adult. Dori Laub, a child survivor himself, described how as an adult his childhood memories of trauma seemed like they belonged to someone else. He reports, "It is as though this process of witnessing is of an event that happened on another level, and was not part of the mainstream conscious life of a little boy." For adults who experienced trauma in their youth, the process of giving testimony may involve laying claim to their own life stories, because they have to recollect their point of view as children.

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51 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 85.
52 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 125.
The poem "Seeds of Lead" (זרעים של עופרת) begins with re-enacting fear. Gilboa uses the point of view of a child, who misunderstands the war around him. The child imagines that the bullets which rolled down the roof are beans, such as are found in a traditional Jewish dish. The illusion of being protected by his father and brother enables the child-speaker to negate their real fear of the battle, by simple lack of awareness. This tableau of fear is described in a stanza with a rhythm which mimics shortness of breath:

Close against the wall
lay Father and Joshua my brother protecting me –
walls of defense...

Later in the poem, the poet transforms the bullets into metaphors of seeds and then silver stars, which represent his inner thoughts. In the child’s imagination, the well gathers the seeds and gives birth to silver stars. His naive perception of the nature and the hazards of war blur the meaning of fear of death. Towards the end of the poem, the poet remarks fearfully that the faces of his father and Joshua are frozen like ancient statues. Only as an adult, having visited museums, does he understand the trauma they experienced.

54 The Hebrew is from Gilboa, All the Poems I, 207. "זרעים של עופרת"
55 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 208.
56 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleeper, 134.
57 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 208.
And the faces of Father and my brother Joshua
[were] like the distance –
statues a thousand years old or more.

Many years later it all came clear to me
in the parks of large cities
and in the museums.58

The many years that passed did not cure the poet of his childhood trauma. Bargad writes that:
"Gilboa’s sense of distance and time turn the poem mournful, leaving the reader with an
impression of both the forcefulness of his imagination and the tragedy of his loss."59  This
reader impression is based on the assumption that when an adult gives testimony about a
trauma which he experienced as a child, it cannot be a true testimony. In this poem, Gilboa
reconstructs the situation in which his father and brother died in his imagination, presenting
them as innocent victims and heroes who protect the speaker.

The situation described in the poem "And My Brother Is Silent" (ואחי שותק)60 is that of an
older brother who returns from the battlefield, seriously wounded and covered in blood. The
child does not understand his death and imagines how heroic his brother is. In the third stanza
the child takes apart his brother’s bag, pulling out "memory after memory" (זכר אחר זכר). The
word zecher in Hebrew can connote remembering the dead. The repetition of this word
makes it clear that the brother is dead, although the child does not understand this. Thus, he
still calls out in joy,

58 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 135. Bargad translated the poems and offered criticism.
59 Bargad, To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 136.
60 The Hebrew is from Gilboa, All the Poems I, 2003, (1987), 212. The name of the poem: "ואחי שותק"
Hurrah, my brother, my brother the hero,  
here I have found your signs!  
Hurrah, my brother, my brother the hero,  
I will sing praises to your name!  
And my brother is silent.  

This final phrase is repeated five times throughout the poem, always at the end of a stanza. This highlights the brother's silence but screams at the reader. The concluding line, which stands by itself, explains the reason for his silence:

"And his blood cries out from the ground"  

This sentence is an allusion to Cain's murder of Abel in Genesis, when the Lord says: "Your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground!" (Genesis 4:10) In Genesis the description of the crying blood is in the plural, which is explained by Rashi as relating to Abel’s future generations, but in Gilboa’s poem the crying is in the singular because he focuses only on his murdered brother. It seems that the final sentence is formed by an adult who understands and accepts that his brother has died. In this poem, Gilboa reconstructs the scene of his brother's death in his imagination, and dresses him in a mantle of heroism.

Another way of looking at this is the contradiction between shame and heroism. Primo Levi in his article "Shame" describes the feeling of the survivor: "That many (including me) experienced shame that is a feeling of guilt during the imprisonment and afterward, is an
ascertained fact confirmed by numerous testimonies."\(^{66}\) They felt ashamed that they lived like lowly animals without rebelling. According to Levi, the survivors are unable to block out the unstoppable reel of their memories, such as: "Are you ashamed because you are alive in place of another?" \(^{67}\) Levi continues, "I felt innocent, yet, but enrolled among the saved and therefore in permanent search of a justification in my own eyes and those of others. The worst survived, that is, the fittest: the best all died."\(^{68}\) Gilboa’s family was not among the survivors. Therefore, according to Levi, they were among the best. Gilboa granted his dead kin their honor and respect, by relating to them as heroes. Presenting them as heroes may also relate to Gilboa’s emotions while he served in the British army, just as soldiers are honoured in their death.

1.6 Flashback and Guilt

The poem "Isaac" describes the nightmare of a child-speaker. It starts with a flashback to childhood, when the child's beloved father was alive, and concludes with feelings of guilt after realizing that the father is the one who died. Sigmund Freud analyzed the subject of dreams in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1954). Freud explains:

It is true that dreams of dead people whom the dreamer has loved raise difficult problems in dream-interpretation. […] The reason for this is to be found in the particularly strongly marked emotional ambivalence which dominates the dreamer’s relation to the dead person. It very commonly happens that in dreams of this kind the dead person is treated to begin with as though he were alive, that he then suddenly turns out to be dead and that in a subsequent part of the dream he is alive once more.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{67}\) Levi, "Shame," 81.
\(^{68}\) Levi, "Shame," 82.
Freud explains this alternation between death and life and the dreamer's pretense of indifference. According to Freud, this indifference is "intended to help the dreamer to repudiate his very intense and often contradictory emotional attitudes and it thus becomes a dream-representation of his ambivalence."70

Regarding the substance (reality) of feeling during dreams, Freud concludes that the fear and the anxiety in the dream are real. Anxiety-dreams also serve as wish-fulfillment. He defines: "Distressing moods during sleep can become the motive force of a dream by arousing energetic wishes which the dream is supposed to fulfill."71 Repressed wish-fulfillment might be painful and embarrassing for the dreamer.

In the poem "Isaac," "יצחק" Gilboa is constructing a narrative about the father and his son, Isaac, who are walking through the forest in harmony with nature. But the tone changes quickly with the sudden appearance of a knife and a vision of blood. Isaac fears for his life, but the father confesses that he is the one who was murdered. This kind of anxiety-dream attempts to explain the father’s death, upon the backdrop of Isaac’s emotionally ambivalent thoughts regarding who is expected to die.

Below is an excerpt from the first stanza of the poem:

לאפנות בקער טילה שמש בתוך היער
יחד עמי ועם אבא
וימני בשמאלו.

Towards morning the sun walked through the forest together with me and my father,
My right hand in his left. 73

70 Freud, The Interpretation of Dream, 431.
71 Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, 487.
72 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 213.
73 A.C. Jacobs, translator of the poem "Isaac," in Silk Dennis, ed. and trans. Fourteen Israeli Poets (London,
The starting point is a flashback to the poet’s childhood memory, when the father and his son Isaac went "together," but it contains an allusion to the biblical Abraham walking with Isaac prior to binding him: "the two walked on together" (Genesis 22: 6, 8). Genesis Rabba describes it: "one to bind and the other to be bound, one to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered." In Gilboa’s poem it is not clear who is going to be the victim. So the comparison to the biblical scenario of danger is obfuscated right from the beginning. The second stanza describes the murder:

כברק להבה מאכלת בין העצים
ואני ירא כל־כן את פחד עיני מול דם על העלים.  

Like lightning a knife flashed between the trees,
I was afraid for my eyes seeing the blood on the leaves.  

The knife appears suddenly and leaves blood on the leaves, as in a surreal dream. Gilboa uses a very unique word in the original Hebrew: ma’akhe’let (מאכלה; slaughter's knife), instead of sakin (סכין) "knife." This word is used in the Pentateuch only twice, in Genesis 22:6 and 10 as the knife for Isaac's sacrifice, so the allusion is clear. Gilboa reconstructs the child’s fear of witnessing a murder, while at the same time thinking that he is the target. In the third stanza, Isaac calls upon his father to help him, employing very childish reasoning:

אבא אבא מהר והצילה את יצחק
ולא יחסר איש בסעדת הצהרים.

Father, father, come quickly, deliver Isaac

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75 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 213.
76 Jacobs, trans. in Silk, ed. and trans. Fourteen Israeli Poets, 33. The Hebrew text is from Gilboa, All the Poems I, 213.
77 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 213.
That no one be missing at the midday meal. 

In the fourth stanza, the father confesses that he is the one who was murdered, not Isaac. This is in contrast to the biblical story, in which Abraham is told to sacrifice Isaac. Here is the description of the father in his final moments, through the eyes of a fearful child, who reconstructs the fictional scene of his father’s death:

זה אני הנשחט, בני,
וכבר דמי על העלים.
ואבא נסתם קול.
ופניו חורים.

I am the slain one, my son,
My blood is already on the leaves.
And my father held back his voice
And his face was pale.

In an earlier manuscript, in the middle of the above four lines, there is an added phrase relating to his father’s eyes, describing them as “too dim to see” - a reference to the biblical Isaac in Genesis 27:1. This allusion relates to the child’s confusion that his father is the one who represents Isaac.

In the fifth stanza, the child finds it hard to believe that his father died instead of him and he feels guilty that he has survived. It is at this point that he wakes up from his nightmare:

ורצית י לעצק, מפרפר לא להאמן
וק.databind העינים.

And I wanted to cry out, struggling in unbelief,
Tearing at my eyes,

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79 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 213.
81 Gilboa’s manuscript dated February 13, 1950 (14.2), shelf number 14:1-743-אָמֵר- in Amir Gilboa Archives, University of Tel-Aviv.
82 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 213.
and I woke.\textsuperscript{83}

Isaac’s awakening seems to occur in the ‘pre-conscious’ if one accepts Freud's theory. Freud presents two options: "A train of thought that has been set going like this in the preconscious may either cease spontaneously or persist."\textsuperscript{84} The anxiety-dream still persists in Isaac’s thoughts; it therefore affects his right hand. The poem concludes with a feeling of deep numbness in the speaker's right hand, as a symptom of the trauma he went through:

\begin{quote}
ואזלת-דם היה יד ימין \textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

And there was no blood [power] in my right hand \textsuperscript{86}

In lieu of the confidence he was granted in his childhood, when his right hand was holding his father’s hand, he loses the use of his own right hand. The right hand is considered the stronger hand, which in the Bible symbolizes the power of God.\textsuperscript{87} After the dream is over, the child still feels helpless, and suffers from guilt that he survived instead of his father. The poem ends without a period because this nightmare will accompany the poet for the rest of his life. This same is true regarding Amir Gilboa who felt guilt because he was not able to save his father.

Robert Jay Lifton, in his book \textit{Death in Life} explains ‘psychic numbing’ with regard to survivors of Hiroshima and survivors of the Holocaust:

\textsuperscript{83} Jacobs, trans. in Silk, ed. and trans. \textit{Fourteen Israeli Poets}, 34. Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I}, 213.
\textsuperscript{84} Freud, \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}, 594.
\textsuperscript{85} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I}, 213.
\textsuperscript{86} Jacobs, trans. in Silk, ed. and trans. \textit{Fourteen Israeli Poets}, 34.
\textsuperscript{87} For example: Moses and the Israelites sang the following song to God, thanking him for saving them from the Egyptians: "Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the foe." (\textit{Exodus} 15:6).
The survivor’s major defense against death anxiety and death guilt is the cessation of feeling. In our observations on Hiroshima we spoke of this process, in its acute form, as psychic closing-off, and in its more chronic form as psychic numbing. I would suggest now that psychic numbing comes to characterize the entire life style of the survivor.  

Lifton explains how psychic closing-off can serve as a process of denial; for instance by saying that ‘if I feel nothing, the death is not taking place.’

He continues: "Further, it protects the survivors from a sense of complete helplessness, from feeling himself totally inactivated by the force invading his environment." The poet, Gilboa, does not identify the force of the murderers, as only the knife appears between the trees, followed by blood. Therefore, the experience of attending the murder of the father keeps the poem on the level of generalization.

In *History and Human survival*, Lifton concludes the following regarding the psychic numbing of "denial": "It can be a highly useful defense against death anxiety, the terror of contemplating one’s own annihilation; and against death guilt, or self-condemnation for remaining alive while other dies." Gilboa, like Isaac in the poem, contemplated his family’s annihilation reliving it through the poems. The guilt that he survived, while his father and most of his family died, accompanies him persistently, as in the case of Isaac and his father. I shall present in chapter four additional poems which deal with the poet's feelings of guilt.

Another example of feelings of guilt and of sensory numbness, during the Holocaust, is found in Sara Ginaite-Rubinson *Pro Memoria – Moments in Time, 1911-2012*. In 1943 Ginaite

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89 Lifton, *Death in Life*, 500.
fled the Kaunas ghetto, and joined the underground resistance movement. She survived, and recorded her testimony, which includes strong feelings of guilt regarding the abandonment of her sister to care for their mother on her own. Coming back in 1944, she found their burned house, which led to a dimming of the senses. Ginaite-Rubinson writes: "I remember feeling guilty that I survived, and I could not overcome my trauma." As in Isaac from the poem, Gilboa’s life, and Ginaite-Rubinson’s memoria – the trauma of a parent's death leads to feelings of guilt which stay with the survivors as long as they live.

1.7 Memories and Acts of Remembrance

Susan A. Crane relates to this phenomenon in her article "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory."

Yerushalmi, Nora, and Halbwachs all acknowledge that historical memory is present in the present, that it shapes collective memory and is shaped by it … Collective memory maintains the lived experience of individuals within groups, according to Halbwachs, because that individual experience is never remembered without reference to a shared context.

This is applicable to Jewish memory. Jewish holidays are based on the religious imperative to impart the collective memory to the next generation. The same principle was applied to Jewish history until this very day, including the Holocaust. Throughout the generations, Jewish people related to the life experiences of individuals within groups, (which becomes harder in our era). An example of this is the prayer for the souls of the dead entitled Yizkor which is recited in synagogues, but which also includes a private section where every individual mentions his own family members’ names.

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Gilboa wrote a poem entitled "A Prayer for Forgetting" (in Hebrew: Hashkacha). After some months, he changed three lines and the title was changed to "A Memorial Prayer" (Azkarah),

which demonstrates the strong connection between forgetting and remembering. The conclusion of the poem is that memory is important for the future; the light will come from remembering the past.

Kerwin Lee Klein in her article "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse" shows how the discussion about memory emerged during the 1980s from the primitive or sacred form as contrasted with modern historical consciousness and crystallized into a self-conscious memory discourse. According to Klein, Yerushalmi and Nora had been mistaken in opposing memory and history. She agrees with M. Roth that in modernity, memory is the key to personal and collective identity. Klein brings examples showing that memory is connected to the soul, to the core of one's being.

In some poems, Gilboa mentions the soul Neshamah, such as in "The Soul of Yossi the Son of My Sister Bronia" and "Behold, I Extinguish It." The usage of "Nishmat Yossi, the son of..." sounds in Hebrew as though it were part of the prayer for the soul of the departed, when one beseeches God to have mercy on the soul of the dead. In the memorial service, called "Yizkor" (or Hazkarat Neshamot) there is the repeated formula which starts: "May God remember the soul of my..."  

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93 In Hebrew: " المناسبת השכחה" Halperin, ed. Amir Gilboa: The Days are Coming, 71-72, Also in Gilboa, All the Poems I, 52-53.
95 The Hebrew term: "נשמת" נשמת יוסי בן אחותי ברוניה.
Memorial candles are usually lit in memory of dead family members, on specific dates, especially on days when the *Yizkor* prayer is recited at the synagogues. The untitled poem quoted below starts with the speaker and his burning candle: "Here I extinguish it/ the candle."

In this poem the poet debates with himself: Should he extinguish the flame of memory and try to forget, or should he keep the flame alive, as a reminder of his loved ones? The Jewish tradition is to let the candle burn until its end; that makes this debate hypothetical.

The first stanza of the poem describes the twisted body of the candle as representing the bodies of his parents and his little sister Ester, in the process of dying.

> הנה ואכבהו
> את הנר.
> לא רק נר נשמה הוא
> הוא נר הגוף המתעות
> של אבא,
> של אמא,
> של אחותי הקטנה של אסתר -

Here I extinguish it
the candle.
Not merely a memorial [soul] candle
It is the candle of the twisted body
of my father,
of my mother,
of my little sister
of Esther.

Later in the poem, the melted wax becomes tears and blood, and the poet asks the rhetorical question regarding the preservation of the memory. The burning candle is a symbol of memory.

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97 Bargad, trans. *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, 59.
98 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 65.
Gilboa concludes the poem "Joshua’s Face" by citing some words from the mourner’s Kaddish, a Jewish prayer for the soul of the dead. He writes, "… Over many lives / he shall be raised and glorified." In Hebrew, "על פני חיים רבים המנומך ויתרומם ויתגדל." In this prayer Jews praise God, in spite of their loss, and ask for a peaceful life.

1.8 From Individual to Collective Trauma

In the introduction to the book Narrating Trauma, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elizabeth Butler Breese outline the narratives of social suffering, including traumas that occurred around the world. They state that the construction of collective trauma starts with the suffering of the individual. Alexander and Breese explain how society develops a new collective identity: "To transform individual suffering into collective trauma is cultural work. It requires speeches, rituals, marches, meetings, plays, movies, and storytelling of all kinds." People can create cultural traumatic meaning through a variety of writings, as well as different media including radio, movies and television. These are some of the ways in which the Israelis keep the memory of the Holocaust, especially on the day they call Yom Hashoah.

Gilboa’s poetry went through a similar process: the urge for writing derives from his personal and family trauma but he edits his poems to represent the collective, either that of the nation or a call to the world. I will give examples of his poems that refer both to the individual and to the collective in the following chapters.

101 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 344. "Joshua’s Face" - "פני יהושע"
102 Alexander and Breese expand this idea of the differences between individual-psychological trauma on the one hand, and cultural traumas of the collective, on the other hand. While in the individual trauma we speak about repression of memories and experiences, in the collective trauma we speak about symbolic representation of collective memory.
Alexander details the horrors of World War II, specifically for the Jews, while decrying the horrors for the world in general.

as perhaps the most brutal but still representative incident of that worldwide midcentury war. Over time, symbolization began shifting from a war crime rooted in a particular time and space to a universal event of such singular evil that it moved beyond history and territory to become a moral lesson 'for all mankind.'\textsuperscript{104}

Gilboa writes about a strong violent power but never identifies who acts violently, so it stays universal. He writes in "Please, strongly": "Strike, beat, pity not,"\textsuperscript{105} but he does not say who are the subjects who carry out this violent act. In the poem "Lights to Heaven" Gilboa writes: "Let the world see its battlefield"\textsuperscript{106} The poet asks the world to listen to the murderous acts, for moral study.

Some years after the realization of the Jewish genocide, the event became known in Israel as "Holocaust" and later as "Holocaust and Heroism". This leads to a direct link from the heroism during the Holocaust to the importance of having a strong Israeli army in order to defend the existence of the Jewish nation.

The lengthy suffering of the Jewish people created an historical memory of persecution, a cultural trauma. Therefore, Gilboa expresses in some poems his fear for the existence of the State of Israel. In "Here Gentiles" he describes how the enemies surround the State of Israel, ready for war. He writes: "here Gentiles gather/ on your threshold/ plotting destruction"\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{105} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I} (Hebrew), 350.
\textsuperscript{106} Gilboa, \textit{The Days are Coming} (Hebrew), 50.
\textsuperscript{107} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems II} (Hebrew), 262.
\end{flushright}
and their target is to kill Israelis or, in another poem: to drive them out of Israel.

1.9 Paul Celan and Gilboa

Shoshana Felman, in her article "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," sees testimony as the literature of our times, which in my opinion resembles mimesis. In the chapter entitled "Poetry and Testimony: Paul Celan, or The Accidenting of Esthetics," she deals with actual testimony:

…the poetry of Paul Celan gives testimony, in effect, no longer simply to Mallarmé refers to as an undefined, generic ‘accident,’ but to a more specific, more particularly crushing and more recent, cultural and historical breakdown, to the individual and the communal, massive trauma of a catastrophic loss and a disastrous fate in which nothing any more can be construed as accident except, perhaps, for the poet’s own survival.\(^{108}\)

In 1942 Paul Celan’s parents were deported to Transnistria, a camp in Romania. While Celan was in a forced labor camp, he received reports of his parents' deaths. Friends from this period\(^{109}\) recall Celan expressing extreme guilt over his separation from his parents, whom he had tried to convince to go into hiding prior to the deportations, shortly before their death. Both Celan and Gilboa missed the opportunity for a proper farewell from their parents and felt guilty for not being beside them and not being able to save them.

In spite of the traumatic experience the Germans had perpetrated, Celan continued writing in German, because he felt that he could best express the truth in his mother tongue. But in his poetic writing he struggles with German:

\(^{108}\) Felman Shoshana,"Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in Cathy Caruth, ed. Trauma, 32.
Working through of language and of memory at once, take place through a
desperate poetic and linguistic struggle to, precisely, reappropriate the very language of
one’s own expropriation, to reclaim the German from its Nazi past and to retrieve the
mother tongue – the sole possession of the dispossessed – from the Holocaust it has
inflicted. ¹¹⁰

Shoshana Felman analyzed Celan’s first published poem "Todesfuge"("Death Fugue"), as an
example of the relationship between a highly aesthetic language and violent events. "Death
Fugue" opens with the oxymoron "black milk," which transforms the every-day event of
drinking milk into an ironic situation and an expression of oppression:

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown
[…] at noon in the morning […]
we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies
unconfined
[…] ¹¹¹
He writes when dusk falls to Germany your gold
hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the
breezes there one lies unconfined

In the poem, the German orders the camp orchestra to play and celebrate while other inmates
are digging their graves. The aestheticizing of the murder facilitates the process of
dehumanization of the victims. The poet sharply contrasts between the beloved Margarete,
the Aryan ideal, and Shulaamith, the biblical beloved, whose beauty is reduced to ashes. The
ashes motif also appears in Gilboa's poems as in the poem "Our Eyes which are being
Closed"

¹¹⁰ Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," 33.
¹¹¹ Paul Celan, "Death Fugue," in Paul Celan, Selected. translated and Introduced Michael Hamburger
¹¹² Gilboa, All the Poems I, 242.
And to be silent. And to hear the stories of the wind
[...] Only the ashes, only the ases that were scattered into our eyes
[...] It's not here. It's gone.
The poet wishes to find repose on a simple bench in a neglected park. The description of the ashes being thrown into eyes is an allusion to death, as in the ancient Jewish custom of putting soil on the eyes of the dead. Moreover, the title "Our Eyes which are being Closed" is bivalent: closing eyes for resting or dreaming, and the traditional description of death.

Hillel Barzel explains the ashes as a metonymy: "This is one way of escaping from the ashes, by employing a metonymy for the Holocaust and wars." The ashes, as well as Auschwitz, function as a metonymy for the Holocaust.

When Gilboa describes the face of Joshua in the poem "Joshua's Face", he gives a description from an atmospheric vantage point and opens possibilities of interpretation. It is clear that the poem is about his brother, but at the same time Joshua embodies the character of the biblical Joshua. The poem "Joshua’s Face" (" myfiley yehoshua") begins with a powerful poetic metaphor:

ויהושע מעל אל פני מביט
ופניו זהב שוחט
חלום קר
חלום חנוט
And Joshua looks down on my face. And his face
Is hammered gold. A dream embalmed. And cold.

Joshua’s face is "hammered," (shachut שוחט), gold. The word shachut has two meanings in Hebrew: the first is "slaughtered" and the second is "high quality of gold." Gilboa uses a
highly aesthetic word for describing, in a metaphorical way, the face of the deceased Joshua.

The poem continues:

And at my feet the sea strikes endlessly.
I’m sick of its wailing. Perhaps, I am about to die.
But I am forced, forced to stay alive
forever.
My brother’s face rises in a cloud
To read my footsteps in the sea-washed sand.

[...] Myself in the wind. Different. Running far. 117

Joshua’s face is like a ghost, painted in ancient gold, and Gilboa follows his brother in the sky. The poet feels that his brother’s gaze continues to follow his steps on the sea-washed sand. The seashore and the sound of waves reverberate through the whole poem, which transports us to a Mediterranean landscape. This paranoia is motivated by his guilt, because he acted "Different. Running far," by leaving his family and going to Israel. The poet must stay alive in order to preserve the memory of the brother who is a failure compared to the biblical Joshua. These feelings of guilt are shared by Gilboa and Celan.

116 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 344.
117 Kaufman, ed. and trans. The Light of Lost Sun, 38.
1.10 Conclusions

By dedicating his poems to his deceased family members, as though they were still with him, and by mentioning them by name in his poems, Gilboa makes it obvious that his poems relate to his beloved relatives. But as the only survivor of his family and the one absent at their deaths, he was left with no testimony or description of their Holocaust experience. Therefore, he reconstructs events and emotions in a way that could have happened as a fictional testimony. Gilboa dresses the victims of the Holocaust in a mantle of heroism, as if clothing them as soldiers in a war different from the one he was engaged in the British army. Therefore this writer sees its roots as a reflection upon his outlook on life and his experience as a British soldier.

Thus, I conclude that Gilboa’s fictional testimony morally justifies himself, his family and other people for several reasons. First, Gilboa acts as the voice of those who did not survive and in this way is recounts their traumatic experience. As Primo Levi declared, "We speak in their stead, by proxy." This includes those who survived physically, but who could not bear witness themselves, as Dori Laub describes in his essay "An Event without a Witness." Second, even though Gilboa was not an inmate in a Nazi camp, he was indeed a victim inasmuch as he did suffer survivor guilt, when all his siblings perished in Auschwitz. His poetry reflects post-traumatic symptoms as they appear in first and second generation survivors. This gives him the moral right to use his imagination to reconstruct what happened in the Holocaust. Writing serves as a tool for working through the trauma and achieving psychological relief. Gilboa tries to relieve his post-traumatic pain through writing about it,

and the fact that many of the Holocaust and war poems were never brought to the public eye during his life strengthens this argument. Gilboa’s poetry is a notable contribution to the aesthetic memory of Holocaust trauma.
Chapter 2

Post-Traumatic Stress in *The Days are Coming: Poems 1942-1946* (*Hineh Yamim Ba’im*)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on poems written during World War II, which express the horrors of the war and the Holocaust as formative events. Gilboa's decision to shelve (hide) some of the poems points to the post-traumatic response of suppression in order to cope with the traumatic events. Suppression did not help him heal but left him with hurt feelings throughout his life, since he did not process the trauma. As attested to by his widow, Gabrielle Gilboa, (oral communication): "The psychological stress was huge, and whenever this subject was mentioned in our home, you could cut the air with a knife!" (Tiberias, August 04, 2011). Analysis of the post-traumatic stress, which is expressed in the poems, will be undertaken on the basis of the articles and theories presented in the previous chapter. While the poems of Amir Gilboa have been analyzed based on the understanding that he experienced ‘trauma’, an analysis of his work from a perspective of ‘post’ trauma offers a new approach to the criticism of his poetry.

Hagit Halperin writes about Amir Gilboa:

The poems in the *The Days Are Coming* collection reveal the open wound left in his after the death of his family in the Holocaust. The poems, which were written heart during the actual war, are important and fascinating evidence of Gilboa’s complicated response to the terrible reality, and the disclosure of them changes how scholars

1 An explanation of the repression of trauma is presented in the previous chapter.
generally think of him; namely that Gilboa rarely wrote and published during the Holocaust and World War II, and that most of the poems related to that period were written after the war. ²

The fact that Gilboa hid the manuscript of *The Days Are Coming*, and the fact that he included a selection of poems from this manuscript in a small book called "Seven Domains" (1949), raises the following questions: What is or is not in these poems that made Gilboa hide them? Do they have a common denominator which can explain why they were not selected for publication in 1949 and afterwards? Could it be that Gilboa doubted their literary and artistic quality? According to Halperin, these poems are aesthetically comparable to the others. This claim must be examined by analyzing the poems and retracing the writing process beginning with earlier publications. Specifically, a comparison between the poems of "Seven Domains" that Gilboa published in 1949, which also included poems from the manuscript of *The Days are Coming*, and poems that were seen by the public for the first time only with the posthumous publication of *The Days Are Coming* in 2007 will be undertaken.

The poems of *The Days are Coming* include notes in the margins. These notes indicate the time and place in which the poems allegedly were composed, and sometimes, the actual event that served as the catalyst for writing the poem, and thus it would seem they shine new light on the early writings of Gilboa and his immediate response to the trauma he experienced.

### 2.2 Hidden Manuscript: *The Days are Coming*

The hidden manuscript of Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, contains poems written between the years 1942 and 1946 during his service in the British Army and the Jewish Brigade. About half of these poems were not included in any book published during his lifetime, and only a

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handful were published in the journal *laHayal* (*The Soldier*) 1944-1946 or in *Yalqut haReim*. Gabrielle, Amir Gilboa's widow, found the manuscript in the attic of their home in Tel-Aviv (around 1994), and she gave it to Kip Centre of the University of Tel-Aviv. The manuscript dated the final edits to February 15, 1946. The occasional publications of half these poems close to the time of their composition serves to authenticate the time frame claimed for them for the whole. In 2007, the book was published edited by Hagit Halperin, and it included biographical and geographical explanations and information on parallel manuscripts of the poems when those existed.³

The title *The Days are Coming* is drawn from the opening phrase of the biblical prophecies, and is found especially in the prophecies of Jeremiah. A minority of Jeremiah’s prophecies describes destruction, but most of them concern future salvation.⁴ The use of this biblical idiom focuses the theme of these poems to destruction that ends with hope for revival. Halperin, in her introduction to the book, recognizes that these poems contain apocalyptic prophecies of admonition, directed both against the Nazis and the other nations who stood by and did nothing to protect the Jews, as well as prophecies of comfort for the survivors.

Hannan Hever, in his article "On the Blood and the Light," responds to Halperin:

A major underlying tension at the basis of this book is the tension between lamentation and redemption, not only as it relates to the individual, but also in the collective national realm. Halperin rightly interprets the title *The Days are Coming* as a double entendre based on its relationship with Biblical prophecy: On the one hand it is a prophecy of rage, the result of deep lamentation and with arrows directed against

³ It is important to note: Halperin was the first editor of *The Days are Coming*, together with Ilan Berkovich. Therefore, a majority of the details regarding earlier versions of the poems rely on her introduction and biographical notes, other than in cases in which I have been able to consult the archives' manuscripts.

Nazism, on the other hand, it is also a prophecy of consolation, marking the coming redemption after the Holocaust.\(^5\)

Hever concludes: "The outcome does not satisfy Gilboa’s desires. The tension between elegy and comfort was so sharp and horrifying, that it seems that Gilboa could not endure the publication of such emotional strain."\(^6\)

This chapter develops the idea a step further: the great tension between lamentation and redemption, as symbolized by light, were it expressed in a single poem, would have been acceptable to Gilboa. However, the cumulative power of this tension in a sequence of poems in a single volume, was probably too concentrated an emotional burden for Gilboa to bear. Therefore, he preferred to hide approximately half of these poems, and he printed the rest in other collections, chiefly under the subtitle ‘The Book of Eternal Life" in the collection entitled "Seven Domains".

Gilboa’s solution was psychological repression which caused him to lock this edited manuscript in a suitcase hidden in the attic. This decision shows that he both ignored and avoided dealing with these poems, acts indicative of post-traumatic stress. When they were composed, the poems offered a temporary solution that helped him survive a calamitous period in his life. Unlike Kafka, Gilboa did not order the destruction of his writings, nor did he throw them away which proves that he ultimately wished the manuscript to survive, despite his apprehensions regarding the powerful tension expressed in his poems. In Gilboa’s letters to his friends there is evidence of his internal struggle regarding the morality of writing poems, or expressing himself artistically, during the war. In Gilboa’s letters to Tanai the

\(^5\) Hannan Hever, "On the Blood and on the Light", in ha\(\text{aretz}\) Newspaper, \textit{Musaf Sfarim} 747 June 20, 2007, p.1 found in the web: http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/poetry/1.1419168

\(^6\) Hever, ibid.
editor of Yalkut haReim, he denies that he has written prolifically during the war. In one of Gilboa’s letters to Tanai, dated February 11, 1943, Gilboa claims that he has no new poems for publication in Yalqut haReim: "I will tell you the truth: I don't see anything, and can find nothing. I simply do not have anything." On the other hand, in the following paragraph, Gilboa admits that he has composed poems:

But when the news about the Holocaust of our brothers in Europe [arrived], sometimes in times of leisure, for a few moments, over the course of a week or more, sometimes [I write] a few lines. A few of these short poems – I don’t know how they occurred to me - were sent a week or more ago to the newspaper Davar, perhaps because I didn’t want them to get lost.

Gilboa felt the need to keep the poems, so they would not be lost. He confesses: "Clusters of poems have come to me frequently of late, asking to be formed: ‘Sculpt me’!" they demand.

One of Gilboa's six poems which first appeared in Yalqut haReim, published in 1943, was not included in any of his collections. This poem's motto, which starts with the line "To tell the heart", is: "They rose up from one grave, - / the brothers and the dream." It is difficult to understand the reason for the exclusion of this poem. Was this poem forgotten by accident, or did Gilboa feel that it was not sculpted enough in order to be included in The Days are Coming? Perhaps the pain of waiting for the resurrection of the brothers made Gilboa leave the poem out? Its existence, however, proves that there was a process of selection to determine which poems would be included in the book.

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10 Tanai, Shamir, ed. Yalqut haReim, 88-89.
11 Harry Fox suggest that the poem was excluded due to the naivete' it expresses in such ideas as literal Resurrection, and Gilboa's embarrassment with it.
Gilboa’s denial that he wrote poetry during the war has a parallel in the case of the Soviet-Jewish photographer, David Shneer, who took gruesome images during the Second World War. His book *Through the Soviet Jewish Eye*, presents shifting interpretations of an image, entitled “Grief”, depicting a woman who represents the grief of the human collective. In the 1942 image, the focus is on the suffering of the woman who searches for her dead husband on the battle field. Baltermants, the photographer remarks: "During the war I photographed and published a lot, but here is what’s surprising. The fifteen photographs that I’m most proud of and that made my name as a photographer - ... [these photographs including] 'Grief’, were never published during the war."¹² In a 1980 interview with *Time* magazine, he explained that it was: "...because the editors thought they were too gruesome."¹³ This statement is suspicious; perhaps he is expressing his own feelings about the photos he took. Shneer writes: "We know that Baltermants’s photos from Kerch were in fact published during the war and that the images circulated widely in TASS Windows posters."¹⁴ Shneer sums up that today everyone deny it and accept Baltermants claim.

Hagit Halperin, in her introduction to *The Days are Coming* refers to the role of the poems' marginal notes and she finds that they are more substantive than they first appear. They expose Gilboa’s conflict between the abstraction in the poems and the events about which they were written. Halperin explains:

Gilboa needed to find immediate spontaneous relief and yet his inability and unwillingness to document the events in a simple way, caused him to seek a solution appropriate to his temperament: Gilboa created an interesting contrast between the

¹³ Interview with Baltermants by Drapkin. Transcript of the interview provided to Shneer by Arnold Drapkin, (note 44 in Shneer, 267).
detailed record of time and place which can be read in the margins of the poems, and in the poems themselves, which are written in abstract, generalized language from which it is difficult to retrace the experience that inspired them.\textsuperscript{15}

Halperin's impression is that it is a sort of travelogue, and she explains that Gilboa rallies against this by mixing up the poems and organizing them by subject matter. Halperin defines the relationship between the marginalia and the poem: "The poem describes a journey of the mind, while the concrete notes "weigh down" the poem, and anchor it in real life. The geographical locale is only the starting point of the mental experience."\textsuperscript{16} Halperin supports this by quoting Gilboa himself, who acknowledges the value of the dated and the note next to it in understanding the poem.

It may be concluded that the contrast between the abstract, generalized language of the poem, and the accuracy that characterizes the notes fills in the gaps related to the poet's psychological upheaval. This emotional storm is also expressed in poems that have "storm" (in Hebrew \textit{sa\'ar}) as a keyword. A gap existed between the serious trauma and his perception that he was a sinner for writing artful poems in the midst of war, in the midst of fear, and with the cognizance that communities and cities were destroyed and lives were lost.

Yitzhak Laor, in his article in ha\textit{Aretz}, adds that the ideological environment in the fifties in Israel contributed to the emotional difficulties with which Gilboa contended. He claims that "Israeli ideology does not accept ownership of the events of the Holocaust. Writing about the Holocaust was not the focus of the younger generation."\textsuperscript{17} Laor indicates that Gilboa was an individualist, who did not bow down to the dictates of public discourse, but, in spite of this, it

\textsuperscript{15} Halperin, Introduction, in \textit{The Days are Coming}, 22.
\textsuperscript{16} Halperin, 23.
\textsuperscript{17} Yitzhak Laor, "From the Private Geniza," in \textit{haAretz}, Culture and Literature, June 8, 2007, p. 4.  
\url{http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/poetry/1.1416157}
seems to have been a factor in his inner struggle regarding the publication of selected poems about the Holocaust.

2.3 The Motto of The Days Are Coming Collection

The motto begins with a paraphrasing of the book's title, which clarifies that this is a prophecy of the future. In the future, those responsible for the Holocaust and those who stood silent while millions were being murdered shall be vilified, and they shall be taken to task over the blood that was shed and the fire that burnt. The motto-poem includes midrashic terms as a badge of shame (kalon) and the biblical term of le-hokhiak. The readers cannot fully understand these lines without noting their sources. The motto states that an evil generation shall bear its badge of shame, like Cain the murderer, about whom it says: "The Lord made a sign for Cain so that whoever encounters him would not kill him" (Genesis 4:15). In Bereshit Rabba, a number of explanations for the word את (ot) are offered, and one of them is:

Rav said: "He made him a sign for murderers." In Cain's case the sign protected him because he was not cognizant of the results (since it was the first murder). Rabbi Nehemiah said: "One shouldn't judge Cain by the same standards as other murderers. Cain murdered, but he had no one to teach him; from Cain onwards anybody who murders shall be murdered in turn.¹⁸

Cain's sign, though it affords him protection, is still a badge of shame marking him as a murderer: It is an embarrassment and a warning.¹⁹

In Midrash Tanhuma the Lord fashions a badge of shame (אות קלון) for cheaters and for those who kill Israelites: "Rabbi Shmuel said: "The portion of wise men shall be wealth…and fools

¹⁸ Bereshit Rabba (Theodor-Albeck), Bereshit, 22, 15.
¹⁹ A badge of shame (Ot Kalon) was used during history to identify groups (like the Jews), but Gilboa's poem is connected with the Jewish classic's sources.
shall be ashamed because they rebelled" (*Proverbs* 3:35). These are the nations of the world, who destroyed the world, and because of this The Holy One Blessed Be shames them."  

God punishes those who destroy Israel.

And in yet another Midrash found in Tanhuma:

Rabbi Banah opened with the following verse: "Deceitful scales are abhorrent to God, etc…" (*Proverbs* 11:1). If you see a generation that suffers from moral turpitude, know that the heavenly kingdom is ridiculing these people, for it says: "Deceitful scales are abhorrent to God, etc…” and afterwards it says: "And with dishonor comes disgrace (*Proverbs* 11:2).

According to this Midrash the cheaters shall be given a badge of shame, as a punishment and to embarrass them. In *Midrash Tehillim* it speaks of ten nations, among them Edom, who David predicted would destroy the temple, and thus he cursed them. David asks the Lord: "Fill their countenance with shame, like one who is embarrassed by all the sins he has committed with his hands."  

In *Eikha Rabba* (Vilna), Petihtot, Siman 15, Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa begins with the following:

He who disciplines a scoffer, shames himself (*Proverbs* 9:7)… Another way of looking at it: "He who disciplines" that was Jeremiah; "Scoffer" that was his generation who scoffed; "Shames himself," since his fellows cursed him as it says (*Jeremiah* 15:10): "I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet they curse me." “And he chastised the evildoer for his sins” – he (Jeremiah) would chastise Israel and chant (*The Book of Lamentations*) at them.

The full verse in *Proverbs* is: "He who disciplines a scoffer shames himself, he who rebukes the wicked gets hurt" (*Proverbs* 9:7). According to this Midrash, Jeremiah is subjected to

20 Midrash *Tanhuma* (Buber), Tetzaveh, 7.

21 Midrash *Tanhuma* (Buber), Ki Tetze, 7.

22 *Midrash Tehillim* (Buber), 83.

ridicule by his generation, and the reason for this is that he castigates them for sinning. A fitting verse for Gilboa's poem-motto, which will appear below, is *Proverbs* 18:3: "When wickedness comes contempt comes also, and with dishonor comes disgrace." According to this verse, evildoers shall be vilified and ridiculed.

The Motto:

ימִּים עוד יבואו בטלטלה העתיד להוקיע את
קלונו של דור
והוכיח על הדם ועל האור
שנגר וنزل וקפא בשאון הדו
24/ שנר ונזל וקפא בשאן הדור.

Days shall yet come reverberating in the future to vilify
The shame of the generation
And to bring them to task for the blood and the fire
Which flowed down and froze in the great sound of its echo

The expression in Hebrew להוכיח means "to bring to task." In the future those who lived through the Holocaust shall be vilified with and the guilt of shedding blood and burning fire shall be placed squarely on their shoulders. In the final line there is a macabre description of the blood freezing, as well as the contrast between the noise of flowing and the silence of freezing, which is death. In another poem in this collection, the poet wishes the world to hear: "The waterfall of blood falling with painful noise."25 The metaphorical images: "the waterfall of blood" and "painful noise" describe the innumerable murders, the product of which is noise and pain.

In Uri Zvi Greenberg's poetry, which was written before the Holocaust, the poet expresses an apocalyptic / prophetic attitude more intense than Gilboa's. In his book *The Paths of the* 24

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24 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 41.
25 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 50.
River: The Book of Lament and Strength, the opening poem: "A board in the first introduction" is a sort of parallel to the motto above. "It happened to us yesterday… but as [it happened] in previous generations /…// There was a flood of Jewish blood and fear and extermination of Diaspora's Jews./ and no angel put-his-wings-in-the-blood-and-humming-No [one] survived."26 Here the flow of blood is a flood and is accompanied by fear for the life of the Jews in Diaspora. "The great sound of the echo" of blood in Gilboa's poem appears here as the groan of an angel or of blood that is no longer animated, blood that died. On "A board in the third introduction," Greenberg identifies the murderers as German: "Until people arrive with armaments of the throat: A German fire, of great kindling."27 In his poetry, which deals mostly with predictions of the Holocaust, there is much blood, light, and the fire of immolation.

Gilboa's descriptions follow the trail of blood left by Greenberg in the poems of The Days are Coming collection. There are many descriptions of the flowing of red blood. The poet sees in his imagination a "wall of red liquid / rising up and raising up. And it is translucent / from within / an axe / spreads bright sparks / my brothers."28 This is a description of his brothers' murder. In the poem "Elul 5703", written in 1943 he writes about the "Wells of blood of generations of young / which fell deep into the chasm without a sound -/ whose eternity shall be trumpeted with horns of war –."29 When faced with the mass-murder of children, one should wage war. At the basis of this motto is the premise that the human race shall survive.

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28 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 61.
29 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 59.
Despite the aura of doom, expressed in this short poem, there is the consolation that future
generations shall repudiate the cruelty of the past.

### 2.4 Poems Found in the Manuscript Published in 2007

The poems of *The Days are Coming* contain a tension between lamentation and a sense of
loss on one hand, and faith in hope and future salvation on the other. But these two poles are
not equal, since laments dominate this collection. Often, the faith and hope of future
redemption is only hinted to at the end of the poem. The book which begins with the poem "A
Last Meal" (שעודה אחרונה), refers to Jesus as a sacrificial offering, before his death. This poem
has two poles: Each stanza is divided symmetrically between the last supper and the hope that
will come at dawn, in the morning, or during the day. The poem, which was written on the
eve of *Rosh Hashanah*, 1944, ends with the cheerful symbol of the ram’s horn (*shofar*). That
symbolism however, comes with a question mark: "- - - but why does the *shofar* blow?"  
This raises the rhetorical question: Is redemption even possible following the end of the war
and the death toll of the Holocaust? The second poem in the book, "Voices Call" (קולות קוראים)
also has two poles; lamentation dominates, and hope is only hinted at. In contrast to
this particular group of poems, lamentation totally dominates most of the poems. Even the
series of poems entitled "The Spring" deal with death, contrasting death and the spring
blossoms. For instance, in the poem "Spring of 1945" (אביב תש"ה), which features red
blossoms, the wine-colored redness is ultimately compares to blood and is eucharistic. The
noise bothers the poet since it avokes memories and feelings of his father's death: "For this is
the father's sob / when he recites the blessing over the blood, as he recites *kiddush* on wine in

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30 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 42.
the goblet."\(^{31}\) The poem, "Spring of 1945," even ends with the father's voice reciting \textit{Shema} as he keels over (dying). The book that opens with "Last Meal" concludes with the signature poem, "I am an orphan" (אני יתום), where the poet vents his anger about his inability to be happy and to enjoy life because he is an orphan.

The poems selected for analysis in this chapter were written during the years 1942 to 1946, but were not published until 2007. The purpose of reviewing these poems is to demonstrate their artistry, and their favourable comparison with those Gilboa chose to publish in "Seven Domains" (שבוע רषיות) in 1949. All these poems deal with the response of the artist to the trauma of the Holocaust and the war, including some post-traumatic responses. The analysis will focus on the following poems: "Voices Call" (קולות קראים), "Lights to Heaven" (אוריה), "To Grace from Afar and Cry for the Blood" (לוהטת מרוחק הלבשה על הדם), "To the Winds with Melody" (אל רוחות בינונינו), "Like that Once More to Amass Power" (ככה בעבר פנסcellent_20110722_059578), and "Every Time Returning to the Days which were Lost " (כל פעם לחזור אל יהוד שלך).

\textbf{a. "Voice Call" (The Days are Coming, 43)}

"קולות קראים"

\begin{quote}
קול בערבה יקרא:
אחי, איכה?
והדם משממון חולות לו יען:
אחא!
א מנוקד בסגול
ויצא הקורא לפגש את אחיו
ויבך באידו על הדו המכזיב.
אשה מדלתה תשקף חוצה,
הרחק –
ולחנה על שפתים:
- אהובי, כתרי
- ואדמת זרים שאספתו אל-
בלחש תהדהד לה:
- הוה שובי,
כתרי
- -
\end{quote}

\(^{31}\) Gilboa, \textit{The Days are Coming}, 96.
A voice in the wilderness calls:- My brother, where are you!?  
an echo from the wasteland-sands answers him: - Echa!  
And the caller goes out to meet his brother  
And weeps in his distress for the failing echo.  

A woman from her door looks out, afar -  
with her melody on her lips: - My love, my crown-  
Foreign soil has gathered him to her bosom  
In whispers, will echo her: - O return, encircle me [crown] ---  

The boys’ mother then emerges from among the ruins  
And quiets the mountains in their cry - the echo,  
Chanting through horror, dread and fear in responsive voice  
Return, my children, both, the living and the dead!  

The title of this poem, "Voices Call," suggests that a variety of voices will manifest  
themselves. Indeed, each stanza focuses on a different figure: a brother, a wife, and a mother.  
These figures share the desperate cry, the hollow sound, and the disappointment.  

The first stanza opens with a brother’s call to his lost brother, evoking God’s question to  
Adam "Ayekah" (Where are you?) (Genesis 3:9). This biblical allusion expands the possible  
identification of the lost brother so as to include all of humanity, and not just members of his own family. Other options include seeing the Ayekah question as the question the reader addresses to the missing God, or a question addressed to his brothers who were murdered during the Holocaust. The first location identified in the poem, places the reader in an  

32 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 43.
ambiguous situation: "A voice in the wilderness calls:- My brother, where are you!?” The wilderness by its nature is vast and empty, and hence the chance of finding his brother alive is unlikely, thus invoking a feeling of loss. On the one hand the backdrop of the poem is the prairie, the sands, and the wilderness, which relates to those who died in the desert who cover the wilderness in Bialik’s poem "The Dead of the Wilderness.”33 This comparison heightens the feelings of death and loss. On the other hand, the words " A voice in the wilderness calls" brings to mind Isaiah’s prophecy of consolation: "A voice rings out: ‘clear in the desert/ a road for the Lord!/ Level in the wilderness [prairies] a highway for our God!’ "(Isaiah 40:3). The voice in Isaiah’s prophecy has been transformed into many voices in Gilboa’s poem, because it is not God asking Ayekah; rather, the brother’s question represents all human voices and situations. The verbs throughout the poem are in the future tense, which supports the allusion to Isaiah’s prophecy.

The echo, which responds to the brother, answers "from the sands of the wasteland," from the vast sands of the wilderness, which is parallel to the call in the wilderness of Isaiah's prophecy. The answer to the call for his "brother," in Hebrew "Achi," is "Echa," which means "brother" in Aramaic, adding a flavor of antiquity. When the brother steps forward after hearing the echo, he is disappointed, "and weeps in his distress for the failing echo." The brother’s disappointed cries and his sorrow emphasize the centrality of the echo through Hebrew wordplays: be’e’do באrido –al hedo על הידו. The stanza ends with recognition of the disappointment and despair at the impossibility of finding the individual brother, as well as the collective brothers that this brother represents. Faced with this disappointing reality, 33 Bialik, The Poems, 219.
Isaiah’s prophecy of consolation to the people of Israel alluded to at the opening of the poem and indicating that the poet hopes for God's involvement in the search, is rendered moot.

In the poem "The Echo" the poet Rachel Bluvshtain remembers the echo of the mountains which answered her in her youth. The poet concludes: "Blessed is the heart which saved / For a day of anger and disaster - /... / if only an echo." It is good that the memory of the echo is preserved for dark and difficult days. Rachel dedicated this poem to Zalman (Shazar), whom she loved, and the good memories of this love helped her in times of difficulty.

The second stanza describes a woman waiting expectantly for her partner, "A woman from her door looks out, into the distance - / with her melody on her lips: -." The description is reminiscent of the description of Sisera’s mother in the Song of Deborah: "Through the window peered Sisera’s mother / Behind the lattice she whined" (Judges 5:28). They both look out into the distance, waiting for the arrival of the beloved male family member. While Sisera’s mother weeps quietly, because she knows her son went to war as a commander in the army of Jabin, King of Hazor, the woman in the poem has a melody on her lips, perhaps a favorite song, a song she is wont to sing when her lover returns.

The words which remain unsaid upon the woman's lips can be silent as well, voiceless. This is similar to Hannah who "was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard" (I Samuel 1:13). The comparison to Hannah brings to mind a heartfelt pain emanating from a deep sense of despair and worry for the future of the family unit.

34 Rachel Bluvshtain, Rachel’s Poetry (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: Davar publisher, 1971), 31.
The woman in the poem: "Voices Call" is waiting for her family member, whom she refers to as: "my love, my crown." In her eyes, he is both a lover and a king. Her epithet elevates him to a higher status. She is anticipating his arrival with hope in her heart. The epithet: "My crown", may also be understood as "My God." According to the Kabbalah, "Crown (Keter)" is the tenth sphere, which is identified with God, or with the greatest proximity to God.

Ricanati on *Genesis* 17:1, beginning with words "The Book of the Zohar" explains the following about the 613 commandments:

> And this calculation ascends to the number of keter, which is the first sphere. And thus says Rabbi Nechuniya ben Haqanah may he rest in peace says, I shall make you splendid in the first sphere, which is the uppermost crown of your magnificence and your splendid greatness, the one and only, the unique one…and this vitality shall flow to all the spheres.

The companion in the Kuzari describes: "The derivative of God's will is God's wisdom, for it causes the uppermost wheel to rotate, which then, in turn, causes the other wheels to rotate."

In "The Crown of Kingship" Shlomo ibn Gabirol describes the tenth wheel which is "holy to God, and it is the wheel that is above everything else." According to this the *Keter* sphere governs all other spheres. Since human actions can influence God, one may ask of the poem "Voices Call": Does the woman truly expect a miracle which will bring back her companion? Can a Bialik-like reunion be recreated as in "Take me in under your wing/ and be unto me mother and sister/ and let your breast be my head's rest,/ home of my forlorn prayers." The woman's disappointment in Gilboa's poem will be even more difficult, and the loss will be physical as well as spiritual when love is not realized.

In the second half of the stanza, the woman is horrified to find out that her partner has died and was buried in a foreign land: "foreign soil has gathered him to her bosom / In whispers, an echo: - O return, encircle me [crown] -." The Hebrew expression gathered to his/her bosom alludes to the customary warm embrace of a parent, though the poem's embrace is ironic: foreign soil has gathered the dead to her bosom, and since he was likely killed during the war, the land physically received him. Parallel to the woman's melody, the last line of the poem mentions the whisper of the land, which echoes and calls her to circle his grave. The echo motif appears only at the end of this stanza with the repetition of the sounds Kitri:

The noun Kitri is transformed into the act of encircling Katri, as in a siege surrounding the grave. The whisper of the earth is an echo and an allusion to the call of the earth in Genesis: "Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). This hints that the poem is also describing a murder. The echo of the earth provides the woman with information and advises her to come back and walk around the grave.

A further layer of meaning is inherent in the word "Return" (שובי), which is reminiscent of the request in the Song of Songs: "Return, o return Shulamith, return, return, so that we may admire you" (Song of Songs 7:1). Shulamith represents the female aspect of the divine, the Shekhinah, as does the request to return in the poem. One should note that the poet first used the term Crown Keter, which is identified as the male aspect of the divinity. Thus, the calling out to the Shekhinah transforms the poem into a desperate cry to save lives, while employing the dual meaning of divine sobriquets. The dashes at the end of the second stanza add to the feeling of waiting. The Talmud bBabba Batra15b adds the element of prophecy to this verse from the Song of Songs: "Return…it could be that was a prophecy as it says (Isaiah 1:1):
"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amotz…" But in the poem the prophecy shifts from hope that the lover will return to the prediction of his death.

In the third and final stanza, hope is expressed with great restraint. The children's mother emerges from among the ruins and shushes the mountains as they cry about the horror and the sounds of the war. Gilboa creates a verb from the noun רעש (horror), the woman scatters "song and fear" רון ואימה in a sufferer's voice. In God's answer to Job regarding his supremacy as the creator of the world, the angels' and the stars' song is described: "When the morning stars sang together and all the divine beings shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), expressed in Hebrew "ברון...ויריעו". Just as this song is a prayer to God, so too the mother's call is a prayer to God. One may identify the sound of lament in the mother's voice which comes from fear and suffering and the lack of knowledge concerning the fate of her sons. In Hebrew her voice is described as kol enut one of suffering. The expression kol enut alludes to the dialogue between Moses and Joshua regarding the sound that comes from the Israelite camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. They talk about the kol anot that does not sound like war, and perhaps is a sinful celebration (Exodus 32:18). The unclear sound turns out to be that of a sin that leads to the Israelites' punishment and then to their repentance.

In the poem, the mother's call: "Return, my children, both, the living and the dead!" gives her a blurry aura, between reality and dream. By raising the possibility that even the dead might return, Gilboa participates in the dialogue regarding the 'living dead' who return to his home, which was a common symbolic motif in Israeli poetry at that time. The mother's ambition

38 I am grateful to Libby Garshowitz for pointing out the reference to beron ברון.
may be compared to the biblical ‘Trial of King Solomon’ in *I Kings*, where there is a dilemma regarding two children: one alive and the other dead. The real mother pleads to the king to show compassion for her son: "Please, my Lord, give her the live child; only don’t kill it!" (*I Kings*, 3:2). The woman in Gilboa’s poem faces a difficult situation, her two children are in trouble and she wants both of them, the living and the dead.

The usage of the Hebrew idiom "the children’s mother" is drawn from a positive context, as in *Psalms*: "He sets the childless woman among her household, as a happy mother of children." (*Psalms* 113:9). But this allusion is not realized. Gilboa notes that the poem was written on the eve of Rosh Hashannah, while in Italy. Therefore, the call for the returning of the boys may also allude to repentance like the "rebellious children" in *Jeremiah* (3:14, 22), or alternatively to a return to Israel.

The description of the woman in this poem alludes to the Biblical character of Rachel: "A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Lord: ... They shall return from the enemy’s land. And there is hope for your future" (*Jeremiah* 31: 15-17). The mother in the poem who acts to regain her children is reminiscent of Rachel. The comparison to Rachel elevates the description in the poem to one of hope as in the prophecy.

In *Moby Dick* Herman Melville refers to the ship as "Children- Seeking Rachel". Melville quotes a voice which paraphrases *Jeremiah* 31:14: "...you plainly saw that this ship that so
wept with spray, still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because they were not." 39

Ilana Pardes in her article about Rachel who cries and refuses to be consoled describes the power of tears when crying for lost children as an echo which can shatter the border between life and death: "It is an unyielding maternal cry that has the power to cross the insurmountable boundaries between life and death, going beyond grief and mourning to call out for mercy and compassion, to demand a redeeming change." 40

In the epilogue, in the final sentence of Melville's book, when Ishmael is picked up into the rescue boat, he writes:

"It was the devious-cruising Rachel that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan."41

The biblical Rachel, who is concerned about her exiled children, finds only one orphan here, and ironically, that orphan is not Isaac but Ishmael. According to Midrash Eikha Rabba,42 God promises her that for her sake, the children will return from exile to the Land of Israel. In the Book of Jeremiah, her requests are confined to cries and emotion, but in the Midrash she is revealed as demanding, and argues with God. In Moby Dick there is a new development: Rachel actively searches for her children who are lost in the sea. Melville attributes the saving of Ishmael to Rachel, though if we connect Melville to the Midrash she should have saved other children from the shipwreck as well.

41 Melville, Moby-Dick, 566.
42 Midrash Eikha Rabba (Buber), ptichata 24.
The echo which was first a response, then a giver of advice, develops in the third stanza into an independent entity. The mother of the children tells the echo to be silent, and from this one may surmise that the echo in the mountains actually preceded her own voice. Barzel recognizes the importance and the uniqueness of the echo and the voice in Gilboa's poetry as an abstraction that precedes reality. Barzel explains: "If one wished to describe the poetic essence of Amir Gilboa's poetry in a graphic way, one could perhaps do this by employing the combination of the echo and the voice. The echo – in the beginning, and the voice – afterwards, since this a part of the deeper structure and a *leitmotiv* [of his poems.]

The poem "Voices Call" reveals the dilemma of the poet standing between feelings of loss and ruin, and the belief in the existence of hope for the future. This poem describes a person's responses to the traumatic situation of fear for losing a family member. This is achieved through images of people who have experienced horror, and mixing up dreams and reality, the living and the dead. The usage of the Hebrew conjunction vav⁴⁴ and biblical idioms, lends the poem an aura of antiquity and depth, and helps with the universalism aimed at by the poet. If one considers the hyphens found in the poem, it is possible that Gilboa felt that this poem still needed work, and that this was the reason he did not include it in any book, even though, as I demonstrate, the message is valuable.

Another layer of interpretation may be gleaned by comparing some of the biblical allusions which appear in the poem, to similar quotations in *The New Testament*. A comparison with

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⁴⁴ Some of the declined verbs may be understood as verbs transformed into the past tense through the vav consecutive. I have chosen not to understand the verbs in this way, since the first verb is clearly in the future tense. I thus surmise that the poem is in the future tense and that the vav is a simple vav conjunction, used to archaize the language.
the latter texts leads to the idea that the voices in the poem are calling for God’s help, rather that of the Jewish God, or of the Christian God.

In *Matthew* 3: 1-3 we find written: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' (*Isaiah* 40:3)." The verse from Isaiah is quoted in Matthew with adaption; "for our God" is omitted, as well as God’s commitment to the people of Israel. This verse is repeated in *Mark* 1:1-3: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’ (*Isaiah* 40:3)."

Later on John baptized people in the desert, and called them to repent and to be baptized and cleansed of their sins. Gilboa’s poem is a universal, there is no mention of Judaism, just the human condition.

*Matthew* 2: 17-18 offers a different explanation for Rachel's weeping. Herod, king of Judah, wanted to kill the child Jesus, but his parents fled to Egypt with him. So King Herod killed all the children younger than two years in the environs of Bethlehem. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘In Rama was there a voice heard,

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lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not (Jeremiah 31:15)."

In the second stanza of Gilboa’s poem, the woman crowns her husband as though he were her king and calls him "my love, my crown," while in her heart she is afraid that he is already dead. This imagery is in conversation with the "crown of thorns" in Mark 15: 17-18, which was placed on Jesus' head, while he was mocked regarding his claim that he was the king of the Jews; as he was crucified and killed. The husband in the poem is ‘crowned,’ though he is supposedly already dead.

**b. The poem beginning "Lights to Heaven"** *(The Days are Coming, 50)*

"Lights to Heaven"

Lights to Heaven and screams far beyond -
Let the world stand, if only for a moment
its ongoing life to enjoy -

Let the world see its battlefield

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46 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 50.
And let it hear again if only for a second
the bloody fall in the painful din.

Let the world know to discern between choking throats
the lightning slaughtering knife, if for one whisper
As it continues this way himself to deceive.

The poem was written in Italy on the day that Nazi Germany admitted defeat, dated May 7, 1945. That night the end of the war was celebrated. Halperin (Introduction 171) brings Gilboa's comments on the victory celebration. Gilboa recounts that the Italian soldiers lit bonfires – barrels of kerosene – in hope of lasting peace and the future of the world. In another source Hanoch Bartov testifies that the Italians threw balls of phosphorous into the sky, and that the sky was illuminated with white, green, and red lights. The poem Gilboa composes does not mention the real-life event that led him to write, except for a hint at the beginning of the poem. It seems that in the midst of celebration, the poet feels alienated from the revelers, focusing inwards on his pain. He expresses his ruminations in his poem. In this generalized and abstract poem he contends pessimistically with the situation in the world. The beginning of the poem which describes the bonfires – which rise to the heavens – and the screams, can be understood as a celebration, but also as reflecting the atrocities, which were characterized by fire and by the anguished screams of the dying victims. This is the nightmare that the poet experienced despite never having been at a death camp during the Holocaust. The poet experiences post-traumatic stress and cannot share in the victory celebrations. For this reason he is pessimistic regarding his hopes for the future of humanity.

The poem begins with the word אורים, vocalized with a shuruq (u), the singular of which is אור (also with a shuruq). Ur is a furnace, or an oven. The word Ur appears in the name of Abraham's birthplace, Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:28). According to Bereshit Rabba,
Nimrod threw Abraham into the fiery furnace and God saved him (*Bereshit Rabba*, Theodor-Albeek, Noah, 38). Isaiah prophesizes the downfall of Assyria at the hands of God: "Declares the Lord, who has a fire in Zion, who has a furnace in Jerusalem"(*Isaiah* 31:9). Isaiah also predicts the degradation of the Daughter of Babylon / Chaldea as a punishment for the extreme cruelty with which they punished the Israelites: "See, they are become like straw, fire consumes them; They cannot save themselves from the power of the flame; This is no coal for warming oneself, no fire to sit by" (*Isaiah* 47:14).

The situation of those immolated in the Holocaust is similar to what is described in the verse, they too had no one to save them from the fire. This comparison is made without the use of the *kaf* (as), which precedes similes. The lights which inspired the poet to write are not the positive firmaments described by the author of Psalms: "Who made the great lights [*orim* אורים], his steadfast love is eternal" (*Psalms* 136:7). The comparison between praising God for his munificence is disturbingly ironical, since the whole poem emphasizes the pessimism and the deep agitation regarding the situation in the world.

The breastplate [*אפוד* אפוד], which the priest wore is also referred to as "Urim and Tumim" [*אורים ותומים*] (Rashi on *I Samuel* 14:3, on the expression "he bore"). Ibn Ezra in his longer commentary on *Exodus* 28, 6 beginning with the word "And the reason for" explains: "and the word *Urim* is from 'I warmed, I saw an Ur [*אור* *עֲרוֹ] (Isaiah 44:16), and *Tumim* are innocents, and the *Urim*, not the *Tumim*, were from gold and silver." The *Urim* which appear here are metallic and hot. The Talmuds (both the Babylonian and the Palestinian) speak of the

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47 Gilboa only uses the word "*or*" (light) and sometimes the images of a burning fire. Bialik, however, in his poem "My song" incorporates the word combination [*לחמם אין גחלת* (no ember to warm them)] (Bialik, 191).
disappearance of the *Urim* and *Tumim*. In the *Talmud* bSotah 48a it states: "When the first prophets died – the *Urim* and *Tumim* no longer worked." In the Palestinian *Talmud* yMakkot, Chapter 2:6, 32a it states: "The second temple was missing [the following elements which were present in the first temple]: the fire, the ark, the *Urim* and *Tumim*, the oil of anointment, and the Holy Spirit." If that is the case, the *Urim* upon the breastplate of the priest no longer exist and cannot save the world. One may surmise that the Urim's ascent to heaven in the poem takes the possibility of supplication to God into consideration, but in the continuation of the poem it is absent, and instead there is a call to the world as a material entity with which one may attempt to communicate.

Later in the poem the poet repeats the same wish three times, with various and diverse imagery. His request from the world was to stop the cycle of life for a moment and contemplate the atrocities which were committed, to internalize the horrendous noise and images of the murder and to comprehend the dimensions of the tragedy. His wish is quite modest: only a moment, a blink of an eye, a downward motion of a sword. These expressions occur in the middle of each stanza. This demand is formulated with many verbs: standing [stopping], seeing, hearing, and knowing. The demand is to actively contemplate and internalize for a short moment.

Every stanza is ringed by means of an a-b-a rhyming scheme and relates to a different horrible event, and in every stanza the horror is described through a metonymy, employing both the visual and the auditory: in the first stanza – the *Urim*, the fiery furnaces, and the screams; in the second stanza the tableau of the battlefield and the sounds of "the waterfall of blood in hurtful noise." The "waterfall of blood" metaphor is followed by the "hurtful noise" metaphor. Together they create a complex metaphorical structure, which expresses through
the senses the great pain and the vast amount of blood that was shed during the war and the Holocaust. The level of noise from the waterfall of blood is painful to the ear. The noise the blood makes is reminiscent of Abel's blood, of "the sound of the blood of your brother screaming from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). The third stanza details the horrific visual and auditory elements of butchery: so that the world shall know how to distinguish between the sound of "choking throats" and the visual image of the "lightning slaughtering knife," which kills with one arc. After the world recognizes the cruelty perpetrated in its environs, it can continue to delude itself and ignore events it would prefer to forget. The final stanza is horribly powerful, and perhaps this is why the poet was reluctant to publish it.

Addressing "the world" in general and not the people in it implies that the poet is expressing an opinion. The poet doubts the ability of the people in the world and the political machine to internalize the extent of the disaster so as to prevent the repetition of such a series of events. To our deep chagrin, Gilboa's stance is proven over and over again, as we witness the more recent genocides in Africa and elsewhere.

c. The poem beginning "To Grace from afar and to Cry for the Blood"

(The Days are Coming, 77)

The lament is composed of two sections, five lines longs, which are combined into one stanza through a "bottle neck" of two lines, each with one word. The first section is lamentive and develops from an evocation of mercy to a call for revenge. The rhyme scheme that accentuates the revenge is: דם – נקם (Blood – revenge), which is present in the first seven lines, but then changes in the second half of the poem.

The opening of the poem expresses pain and restrained tears:
To Grace from afar and to Cry for the Blood:
To redeem the silenced pain with a dirge,

The poet loved his family who perished, and sheds tears for their murder. The dirge redeems him from the paralysis of deep pain. In Bialik’s "On the Slaughter," the speaker begs for divine mercy, since his heart has died within him, and he no longer has any prayer upon his lips. Similar to the paralysis in Gilboa's poem, Bialik describes helplessness and hopelessness. In "On the Slaughter" the victims of the pogroms are butchered "and the blood of their murder leaps up…and is never erased." Gilboa adds the active images of the "leaping scream" and the roar of the fallen to Bialik's leaping blood. In "On the Slaughter" there is no form of revenge that can make up for the loss of a young child's life, in contrast with the roar of the fallen in Gilboa's poem who demands revenge. The poet offers two possibilities: God's revenge, or human revenge, since the crime was perpetrated by human beings. One can identify the undermining of the belief in God's revenge, just like Bialik could not find God or justice in "On the Slaughter".

The gentle beginning is transformed in the fourth line into the roar of the fallen who open their mouths and demand revenge:

48 Bialik, The Poems, 249.
In the oxymoronic combination of the "Roar of the fallen" (שאנאט הלוויים) the dead cry out just like Abel's blood cried out when he died as it says in Genesis 4, 10: "The blood of your brother cries out from the ground." The roar / cry in this line is in marked contrast to the restrained opening line: The murder victims cry out to God for revenge, since the murders were perpetrated by human beings and deserve to be avenged! The singling out of the words "Man" and "Revenge" in separate lines accentuates the call for revenge, and marks the powerful climax of the poem.

In the final section the poet returns to his daily routine, in which he is cognizant of the following horrible fact:

ולראות הברור, מהרר הים
שהאה כל זָאָה, אתה יחידך
שהאתי حصלי.

And to see what is clear, what is clear and horrible
That you are, after all, the only one
Whose life he saved.

The realization here is direct and painful, יחידך alluding to the Akeda motif of the saved Isaac to be discussed future below, the statement reflects the feelings of guilt and helplessness of the survivor who saved only himself and was unable to help his family. The poem that follows "To Grace" in The Days are Coming appears in Gilboa's manuscript on the same page as "To Grace." It may be seen as a continuation of the poet's sentiments at the end of "To Grace": "Because of the great pain and calamities /.../ helpless."49

Ethiopian immigrants to Israel report similar feelings of guilt: In a memorial service for Ethiopian Jews, who died on the way to Israel, which took place on May 20, 2012 on Mount

49 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 78. The manuscript 14:1-77 p. 25 is in Gilboa's Archive, Kip Centre, University of Tel-Aviv.
Herzl (Hertzel) in Jerusalem, a representative of the families, Shai Dambel Vassa talks about his personal journey to Israel, during which he lost his mother and six siblings. In the course of his story, Vassa addresses his mother in Amharic and says: "I am sorry that I left you behind and did not die with you."\(^{50}\)

Gilboa debated whether to include this poem in "Seven Domains" and in the end did not. The poem was not published in any journal and one may surmise that the reason for this was his discomfort in explaining why he survived whereas all his family perished. This feeling of the poet's survivor guilt is part of a post trauma repression.

d. The Poem which beginning "To the Wind Playing a Melody"

(\textit{The Days are Coming}, 76)

The poem was published in \textit{haAretz} in October 8, 1948, with the title "Playing Music in the Wind", whereas in the shelved collection it has no title. Halperin reports that there were three manuscripts of this poem: In version 14:1-763, the poem appears together with four other poems (one of which is "To Grace") on a page entitled "From the schoolbag on a far-away road." Regarding version 14:1-898, Halperin writes that it belongs to a group of poems which Gilboa marked: "Excised from "Seven Domains." To the left of the poem, he writes: "From Eternal Life" (מתוך חיי עולם), and to its right there is a question mark, evidence of Gilboa's hesitation of whether it should be included in the book (Halperin 137). Despite all the hesitations listed above, the poem was not included in any volume of poetry, until it was published in the posthumous \textit{The Days are Coming}.

\(^{50}\) Kobi Nhshoni, web-newspaper reporter. "Hug from the Prim Minister" (Hebrew), Israel: May 20, 2012. Last entry: 28/04/2014 http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4231576,00.html
The poem is composed of two stanzas of four lines, with a shorter fourth line, as is normal in laments. The poem opens in this way:

אל רוחות בניגון,
המעמר מן העצב
לחפון מן הסער
את גלי הכחול-

To the winds with melody, which reaps from sorrow
To gather from the storm the waves of blue-

In the opening of the poem there is a description of boats upon a stormy frothy sea. The winds push the waves, gathering sheaves of grain, in a time of horror: "As horror cleaves the voice – ." Chaotic noisy nature does not prevent a scream from being heard all the way across the great expanses of the sea. The identity of "He who borrowed them is satiated from the froth" could be God. This brings the reader back to the beginning of the poem, where one may identify "To the winds with melody," as the God of the winds, the God of souls, as in Hassidic melodies and their quest to draw closer to the divine.

Gilboa is also in conversation with the Melody in Alterman's poem, as in:

עוד חוזר הניגון שזנחת לשוא
והדרך עודנה נפקחת לאורך
והרוח תקום

The melody you neglected shall return once more
And the path is still completely open
And the wind shall arise [...]

In Alterman's poem, the passerby has abandoned the melody of walking. One who walks, like a poet, cannot ignore poetry and song. Similarly, in Gilboa's poem – the melody may be understood as a song, or as the composition of a song which describes a sea voyage. The soft

sounding words (ע, מ, ניגון) and the flow of the description are a feature found in both Alterman and Gilboa's poems: The sad melody facilitates the walking and the rolling of the waves. The rhyming scheme in Gilboa's poem is a-b-a-b: etzef – ketzef (sadness – froth), krav – lashav (battle – for naught), zohev – haLev (golden – the heart).

The characters in the second stanza who "Carry the cry (blast) on the days of battle" (הם נושאים התרועה במועדי קרב) are not identified explicitly: One may understand that these are soldiers of the Jewish Brigade which served with Gilboa in the North Africa and Europe. The soldiers cry out before the battle, in a reenactment of a biblical tradition, in which God commands one to blow horns before going out to war. The instruction that God gives Israel in the Book of Numbers is: "when you are at war in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be delivered from your enemies" (Numbers 10:9). The Book of Joshua, includes the description of the conquest of Jericho: "The priests carried five horns" (Joshua 6:13), and towards the end of that chapter: "The people cried with a mighty cry" (Joshua 6:20). Both these sources contribute to the expression that is found in Gilboa's poem "Carrying the cry/ blast" by elevating the preparations for war, making it seem that they prepare for victory.

This poem, just like "To Grace." preserves Gilboa's universality which is open to a variety of interpretations. Gilboa's inclination towards universalizing his compositions is the reason he does not give a time or a place for the composition of this poem. If one looks into Gilboa's biography, one may surmise that the goal of the sea voyage was to arrive in close proximity to the ripe and golden fields of Italy. The poem ends with a storm at sea and in the heart:
A storm hits heads not for naught
A storm calls out to the heart --.

The storm exists on two planes: There is a physical storm, which is expressed through the rolling waves and the headache after hearing of the horrors that took place in Europe, and there is a metaphorical storm in the heart, an emotional storm. The poet chose the masculine form סער for storm, rather than the feminine form סערה, since it creates a more dissonant and difficult sound than its feminine synonym, and is thus more appropriate when describing difficult emotions.

Descriptions of the ocean in the Medieval Hebrew poetry of Yehudah haLevi's poems often speak of the motion of the wind which moves the waves and the heart of the poet which is parallel to the sea's heart (לב הים). In the poem "Will you Pursue Maidens (Youth)," Yehudah haLevi describes the wind's movement:

And the hand of the wind playeth [laughs] with the waters,
Like men lifting sheaves in the threshing;
And now it maketh of them threshing-floors,
And anon it maketh of them stacks of sheaves.  

In this poem Yehudah haLevi imagines a sea voyage in the direction to the land of Israel. The wind laughs in the water in the same way the Bible describes Isaac when he frolics with his

wife: "Isaac fondling [laugh כמצחק] his wife Rebekah" (Genesis 26:8). Rashi explains that Abimelech saw that Isaac was engaged in sexual relations, and Ikar Siftei Chakhamim reiterates that he was in flagrante delicto. The allusion to Isaac in the poem adds to the anthropomorphization of the intimate activity of the wind which is parallel to the gentleness of the beginning of the poem. The wind in Gilboa's poem gathers the water as though it were sheaves of wheat: "To the winds with melody, which reaps from sorrow/ to gather from the storm the waves of blue," the process is slow and sad, with small gestures, handfuls are gathered.

Later in haLevi's poem, people are described as coming back from the storm and praying to their God for help. The poet reassures himself while on the ship: "And let not thine heart be shaken in the heart of the sea, / When thou beholdest mountains move and totter…"54 The waves will not prevent him from arriving at his destination of the land of Israel. This is parallel to Gilboa's poem, and specifically to the hope of the soldiers that they emerge victorious.

The inclusion of this poem in the collection in close proximity to "To Grace" cannot but make one wonder about a possible agenda in their juxtaposition: Why did Gilboa place this poem next to "To Grace"? Can it be that his goal is apologetic, to tell the readers where he was when his family was murdered? He was on a sea voyage on his way to Europe in order to help fight the Nazis. The echoes of Europe crossed the sea: The horrors cleaved through the sound, the rumor of the atrocities reached them. This description is reminiscent of

Ecclesiastes 10:20: "for a bird of the air may carry the utterance" and their response is one of stormy emotions: A psychological storm calls out to the heart.

Gilboa juxtaposed the poem describing the sea voyage of the soldiers, "To the Winds with Melody" (p. 76) and the feelings of guilt "That you are, after all, the only one / Whose life he saved" (p. 77, the end of the poem "To Grace"). This juxtaposition which can actually be seen in one glance creates an apology coupled with evidence that he acted morally. The two poems are left without a dated, or any biographical data, which is the exception rather than the rule in this collection, and thus Gilboa wished to leave these poems as generalizations and abstractions.

e. The Poem beginning "Like this Once Again to Gather Strength"
(The Days are Coming, 117)

The first line functions as a proclamation: The poet is required to gather great amounts of strength again and again, so as to be able to cope with the situation described in the poem. Later in the poem it becomes apparent that the situation with which he is asked to cope is memory and the command to recount! The past, the yesteryear is described as a humanlike figure; the past is tangible, it is present. The need to remember is described as sounds bursting from his blood, the sounds pound upon his eyes, forcing him to witness the horror inherent in them, and commanding him not to be silent: "No silence" (אל דמי). The expression אל דמי originates in the Book of Psalms 83:2: "God do not be still, do not be silent, do not be quiet God." The Psalm is addressed to God, who is commanded not to remain silent in times of trouble. In Isaiah this request is addressed to those who pray for the virtue of the fathers to
protect Jerusalem: "Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth." (Isaiah 62:6-7).

The command in Isaiah is not to be silent but to pray for Jerusalem's rescue and for God's help. In Gilboa's poem the command is more secular: Do not be silent, report the atrocities, for they are of his blood!

The inconsistent rhyming scheme serves to accentuate the meaning, such as the soft onomatopoeic yearning in the rhymes: *tmol – hakol* (yesterday – everything), *bedami* (in my blood), *midami* (from my blood), *al domi* (do not be silent). The delineation of the process is reminiscent of the way in which Bialik wrote the poem, "I Was Not Given Light": The spark in his heart burst into his eye (into sight) and then he wrote it down.

Gilboa's poem is written in short lines, broken by enjambments. It is written mostly in spoken Hebrew, and the clauses are frequently connected by the conjunctive vav. No any periods along the poem, as an endless situation.

The experience that led to the composition of the poem was Gilboa's stay in the hospital in Florence (with a lung infection) on November 6, 1944. Gilboa, however, steered his writing to a more general and abstract idea, that is the command not to be silent.
f. The poem beginning "Every Time to Return to Those Days which Ended"

(The Days are coming, 125)

This poem is replete with strong feelings and with disappointment that God did not defend his nation during the Holocaust. The recollection of the days of horror are described in an anthropomorphistic metaphor, which begins with an anaphora of recurring memories and difficult emotions:

Every time to go back to those days which ended
Every time to wear a mantle of paleness that ebbs away
And to float upon the frothy waves of distant yesteryear--?

The image is of a metaphorical piece of pale clothing upon the poet and of a sea voyage to the past. Using question marks the poet is doubtful regarding the efficacy of such a voyage. He has been there already: "And my eyes which saw that all the gates were locked," a line which is bivalent. On the one hand the Jews were locked behind the bars of the camps, and on the other hand the gates of heaven were locked, signifying a loss of belief in God. The speaker of the poem identifies with Moses' feeling that there is no point in giving the people the tablets of the covenant. But in contrast with Moses, the dropping of the tablets is for a different reason: "And the tablets, I let go of them, they fell to the ground / they fell and were broken."

There is no need of tablets because God never proved himself as a savior of his people, and the proof of this is detailed in the following stanza.

The second explanation:
For the God of all flesh has commanded life
and the God of all spirits has commanded us concerning the soul
so that we will live longer […]

The speaker distinguishes between the God who is responsible for material, who gave us life, and the God who is responsible for the spirits, who gave us our souls. Thus he separates between body and soul, between materialism and spirituality. The goal is an extension of our lives upon the earth – in the body, and bearing the vision of the heavens – spirituality. But the line: "So we can carry upon our wings the vision of the heavens – " is ironic. It is opposite to the biblical scene in which God protects his people like an eagle protecting its young. *Deuteronomy* (32:11) states: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions." *Psalms* (91:4) states: "He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler". In the poem "Every Time to Return," we are asked to protect ourselves; we must bear the vision of heaven, the spiritual promise of protection, ourselves. It is at this point that there is a fall: "And they dirtied our faces with filth / and our spirit was bound with ropes," in the fall from the loftiness of spirituality the face of materialism is dirtied with filth and the spirit is injured and tied up with strong rope. Delilah ties up Samson with ropes: "With new ropes" (*Judges* 15:13). This binding is part of her betrayal of Samson. Perhaps Gilboa uses the feminine ending בעבותות in order to bind the poem together by rhyming בעבותות with the far away אדמות (Lands). In the reality of the poem, God has abandoned his people. The familiar idiom in Hebrew is ropes of love (בעבותות אהבה). An example of the ropes of love is found in Solomon ibn Gabirol’s poem: "With your Lives of Ruby Lips / which pulled my heart with ropes / they addressed me and remembered my
love…” In the same vein one may understand the phrase: "And our spirit was bound with ropes" as the disappointment of the spirit of the speaker in his inability to accept God's lack of action.

In the final stanza, the following conclusion is reached: "Therefore…I shall stand eyes uncovered and cruel in this the garbage dump of the present" – the speaker is cognizant of the pathetic and difficult reality of the present. The expression "eyes uncovered" – cognizant – transports us to the prophecy of Balaam who wishes to curse the Israelites but instead ends up blessing them, but here there is no blessing. Balaam said: "The speech of one who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of Shaddai, prone and eyes uncovered" (Numbers 24:4), but in this poem there is no "vision of Shaddai," just a "vision from heaven," which the nation is required to bear by itself. This implies the negation of divine revelation.

As he descends to materiality the poet employs a series of verbs in the future tense (or perhaps the vav consecutive transforms these verbs into the past tense): "And I will remember and I will hear in my ears the noise of the hater as he howls over his prey, and shouts / and I shall know…". The speaker will remember the murder of his family and will hear the animal-like howling of the murderer and will know that this moment, which he reconstructs in his memory, will fill him forevermore. This is the nightmare of post-trauma from which the speaker of the poem will suffer his entire life. That moment is the seminal moment of the past which defines his future: And at the end:

רגע עמדי לפני כס-כבודו שאהב הזיכרון
ונתנ נשמת בנדבה –

The moment when I stood before the mighty throne of him who commands life
and gave death as a boon –
Is the decisive moment.

The disappointment in God, who did not allow the fulfillment of the command to live, is
expressed in the above ironic word-combination: Death is granted in abundance. The
moment of decision in which God did not fulfill what he had promised and preferred death
over life, shall be remembered forever.

The command to live appears in the second stanza "For the God of all flesh commanded us
life," and once again in the final sentence, where the speaker stands before God's throne (after
his death perhaps) "who commanded life / and gave death as a boon." This statement is a
protest against God whose actions in this world are unjust. When we say the memorial prayer
for the fallen in Israel's wars and the state that "they commanded us life." we mean that they
died for an ideal, for the defense of the state, whereas the death of Jews during the Holocaust
was without any positive purpose.

The prophet Jeremiah claims on behalf of the omnipotent God: "Behold I am the God of all
flesh, is anything beyond my power" (Jeremiah 32:20), but in the poem this God of all flesh,
who commands us to live, disappoints.

Most likely Gilboa is familiar with the midrashic narrative about God of all spirits and souls
from Bialik The Book of the Aggadah56, or other sources when using these terms in his poem.
In Midrash Yalkut Shimoni after the material concerns and preparations for Moses' death, the
spirit must be prepared as well:

56 Hayim Nachman Bialik, Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, The Book of the Aggadah (Hebrew), vol. 1 (Tel-Aviv:
Dvir Press, (1948) 1957), 79.
In that moment the Holy One Blessed Be He called to the soul within the flesh and said to her: "My daughter, one-hundred and twenty years was your allotted time in Moses’ body, and now it is time to come out. Come out and do not tarry." She said to him: "Lord of the Universe, I know that you are the God of all spirits and the master of all souls, the dead and the living are in your keep and you created me and fashioned me and put me into Moses' body…and I do not want to leave him…"57

The argument in the Midrash ends with Moses' death, and God's promise to his soul that she would ascend with honor: She would sit in an honored place under his seat. During the Holocaust pure souls were put to death, without deserving it, and without receiving their promised due. The analogy to Moses accentuates God's responsibility for the death of the Jews. There is an ironical attitude vis-à-vis God who did not save lives and souls.

The poem is organized in a free-flowing structure: The number of lines in each stanza is different. Nowhere in the poem are there any periods marking the ends of sentences. It is as though the poet wanted to emphasize the recurrence of the memories. The conjunction vav is used often, and the syntax is one of every-day speech, incorporating words from a higher register and biblical excerpts. The poem was written in Florence, Italy on December 10, 1944. Gilboa who apparently knew of the destruction of European Jewry, hence he feared that his family had been killed in the war.

2.5 A Comparison Between the Hidden Manuscript of The Days are Coming, published in 2007, and the 1949 "Seven Domains" Collection, which Became Part of All the Poems I

About half the poems in the shelved collection The Days are Coming were included in the poems in the "Seven Domains" collection (שבע רשויות). Most of them appeared under the title: "The Book of Eternal Life" ספר חיי עולם, a section which included poems about the Holocaust.

57 Yalkut Shimoni, Vayelech, the opening words "Your life come to the end," 247.
and about war. The poems that Gilboa chose to publish in 1949 underwent a final editorial process by Gilboa. This included: Changing a small number of words for the sake of emphasis or clarity, the excision of many of the dashes which characterized the manuscript of *The Days are Coming*, the addition of periods at the ends of sentences, and sometimes giving poems a title. The poems were also reordered, as was the stanza structure, and the visual form of the poem was changed. In *The Days are Coming* the poems are dated and the place of composition is recorded, while in "Seven Domains" all dateds are excised as well as most of the place names. One should note that the form the poem took in 1949 was the one that was preserved in later publications of his poems, such as *All the Poems of Amir Gilboa I*.

In what follows, the term "later editions" will include the versions found in *Blues and Reds*, as well as in *All the Poems v. I and v. II*, when they are identical. The references to these works, as recorded in this section, will be included in the body of the thesis, not in the footnotes.

The poem "The End of the Battle" contains an example of abstraction and clarification of complex phrases within the poem. The sixth line of the shelved version reads: "And their noise was akin to the collapse of the foundations of the universe" (ושאנה נפשות תבל במיט) (*The Days are Coming*, 44),\(^\text{58}\) which indicates that the foundations of the world were

\(^{58}\) The word מיט according to the Even Shoshan Dictionary, Volume 2, p. 774 means: collapse, failure, fall. From the Persian "Shach Mat" which denotes the fall of the king. The word מיט (from the root מטס) appears only once in the Bible, in Proverbs 25, 26: "A righteous man falls before an evildoer." The righteous person collapses before the evil person, like a stream, the source of which was blocked, polluting the water. The form ימוט is more common as in "A righteous man shall not falter [ימוט]" (*Proverbs* 10, 30).
crumbling in an avalanche, from the force of the rolling thunder in the trenches. This is connected to the spiritual strength of the water. In the published versions, beginning with the poem as it appears in "Seven Domains," the line reads "With the loud sounds of afternoon" (בקולות גדולים של צהרים). This version is less abstract and makes the poem more comprehensible to the reader, who is still required to identify the origin of the sounds. This shows the reader how the above change proves the transformation of the poet's emotions from pessimism to seeing the light at noon.

In the process of editing the poem "Silence’s Corners," a word which indicates generalization and the broadening of horizons was emended. A difficult interval is described in which the speaker waits for a visitation from his dead family members. In the tenth line it says: "How long can one stand at the door quietly" (The Days are Coming, 47), whereas in the published versions Gilboa changed this to: "How long can you stand in the entrance quietly" ("Seven Domains", 67, All the Poems I, 72). The use of the term "entrance" adds more possibilities both physical and metaphorical. Another change is found in the shelved version. Instead of the path "hailing [희] good-day blessings," Gilboa employs the verb "alight" (נויר), a verb which adds a sense of continued movement in addition to light. In the printed versions there are also fewer dashes. The poet of "Silence's Corners" is suffering from a post-traumatic response, blurring the borders between reality and imagination, life and death. The reader notices through the changes how Gilboa draws a background of hope.

Some poems which lack titles in earlier versions have them in the published version. As in the example from "With Kin of my Blood" changes were made to those poems whose purpose was generalization and universalization of the subject matter. The poem "With Kin of my Blood" appears without a title in the shelved version and begins with the phrase "My eye was
torn with fear" (99-100). In the published version of this poem it appears with a title ("Seven Domains" 69-70, All the Poems 1, 74-75). In The Days are Coming there is a note of the time and place where the poem was composed, whereas in the later published version, there is only a note regarding the place where the poem was composed. In the fifth and sixth stanzas there are changes to a number of words, which do not affect the meaning. The scene in the seventh stanza still takes place in the cemetery, a carriage without horses passes and then "Joshua and Moses whisper, both of them my brothers, / Beryl the earth is burning." (The Days are Coming, 100). Gilboa makes a few significant changes in these lines. In the other versions it says: "Moses and Joshua", perhaps in order to conform to the order in the Bible, or perhaps for rhythmic reasons. A more significant change is switching the poet's original name "Beryl" with the more general "Our brother, the earth is burning!" ("Seven Domains" 70, All the Poems 1, 75). The reason for this change is the universalism typical to Gilboa, which makes him reluctant to identify as the speaker despite the personal material as the basis of his writing.

The elimination of the spaces and the consolidation into one stanza is also apparent in the different versions of "I am an Orphan." The version in The Days are Coming begins with three questions that the poet answers. Each question and answer appears in a separate stanza: "What is heavy and applies pressure upon the heart and the light? - / It is the joy…// What is the weight of a breath…? // And who hit me in the eyes with what is written in the heavens above?// - it is today –" (The Days are Coming, 127). In the version in "Seven Domains" (66), and All the Poems 1 (70), these three questions and the answers to them were consolidated into the first stanza which resulted in a more streamlined structure. It concludes with the very focused: "It is today" (זה היום), which rhymes and connects to the final phrase of the poem "I
am an orphan" (אני יתום). This is the day in which the speaker feels himself orphaned. In the version in "Seven Domains" (77) and in All the Poems (70), the title was changed to "Orphan" in order to generalize the sentiments in the poem, by making the poem less narrow and less personal. An additional phenomenon here is the omission of the dashes which in the manuscript version in The Days are Coming are very common. This reader notices how the earlier version casts light on the poet's emotions, while the immediate response leaves the question fragmented.

The poem beginning "Here I extinguish it, the Candle" was written in The Days are Coming with a line break between the following phrases "/My father's / My mother's/" (65), whereas in the published version in "Seven Domains" the mother and the father appear in the same line. The result is more emphasis upon the sister Esther, who is mentioned in two lines: "of my little sister / of Esther – " (in all versions). The pain of her passing is now accentuated further. Another correction in this poem is the switch from: "the [God] (el גֵּד) of tears" (The Days are Coming, 65) to "these (גָּדְת) tears" ("Seven Domains," 55, All the Poems I, 60). This correction clarifies that God is not being mentioned here and the reference is only to tears.

One may ask the question: Was this poem emended in order to offer a clearer version or was there a shift in the poet's theological stance? The first spontaneous burst of writing of the poem offers a scene of sanctifying God's name: "If in the horror, there is holiness till the end / the God of tears / that blood!?" (The Days are Coming, 65). The question whether one should sanctify God's name and accept God's judgment, was switched to wondering whether one should accept the reality of blood and tears.

Another instance of the combination of two lines into one is in the poem "Mornings in My Lair", in which the spear in one "whose bright sharpness blinds / the parchments of rage"
(The Days are Coming 68). The second part of the sentence was written in the line below and afterwards there is an empty smear, a phenomenon which may emphasize the speaker's anger. In later versions these two lines were combined into one ("Seven Domains" 52, All the Poems 1, 56). It seems that in this case the original was more expressive than the later versions. The earlier version, written during the war, emphasizes the poet's anger which becomes calmer as time passes.

Another change is evident at the end of the poem "A Memorial Prayer." In The Days are Coming we find "For from the cries (בכי) after the end / the light shall be born." (72) In the later version we find the rare form 벼카 (vocalized bekheh) ("Seven Domains" 48, All the Poems 1, 53) which, according to the Even Shoshan dictionary, means "a yowling cry," as is found in the Book of Ezra 10, 1: "The people cried with yowling (בכה)." The change from 벼까 to 벼카 intensifies the heightened crying and from the force of these cries light shall be born as well as hope for salvation.

In the poem beginning "This is my shadow, I saw it as an old man now," the young woman pines for a twenty year old man, whereas the speaker wishes to die as a twenty year old young man with his sisters. This poem expresses a survivor's guilt. In the version in The Days are Coming (62) two stanzas conclude without a period at the end of the sentence / stanza. In the process of bringing this poem to press, Gilboa added periods to the ends of sentences and stanzas ("Seven Domains" 59, All the Poems 1, 69). Concluding sentences with a period closes a subject, rather than leaving it as an open psychological wound. In this poem brackets

were erased, and הבלי דעת (without knowledge) was changed to Webbלי דעת (without knowledge), but these prepositional changes are not significant.

In the poem beginning "Here, no Iron Gates," the speaker feels constricted and the voice of his father penetrates the metaphysical iron gates. The version in *The Days are Coming* (70) is grammatically correct, but in later versions ("Seven Domains" 50, *All the Poems* 1, 55) Gilboa adds a period to the end of an incomplete sentence as well as before a compound sentence, and this is unusual. But in poetry everything is possible and he may have wished to emphasize the pause in reading. Hagit Halperin in her addition to *The Days are Coming* (p. 136) reports about an additional manuscript to which the poet added the title: "Amir Gilboa, lines detailing the tearing apart and the consolation." This title brings the poem back to Gilboa's personal life, his separation from his father and the consolation in hearing his father's voice. This imaginary situation of hearing voices from far away is one of the symptoms of post-trauma which he underwent.

The poem "Morning Sela," appears under this title in *The Days are Coming* (107) as well as in later versions, but it is difficult to ignore an earlier version of this manuscript, which has the first words of the poem as the title of the poem: "My fallen brothers." The process of composition of this poem clarifies that the poem is describing his brothers at arms who fell during the war. Gilboa's choice of "Morning Sela" as the name of the poem reflects an acceptance of fate, as in "Amen Sela" (אמן סלה) in the morning liturgy. In *The Days are Coming* the poem begins with "the comrades at arms" (and not the fallen brothers): "My

60 Halperin p. 144 reports on an earlier manuscript, version 14:1-1036 in Gilboa's Archive, where Gilboa wrote and erased the first name of the poem "My fallen brothers" (אחי הנופלים).
friends shall come with their shoulders marked with salvation / and their blood which was
shed shall bubble…”(107)\textsuperscript{61} The description of the comrades in uniform and military
insignia on their shoulders clarifies that they are soldiers, but as they die their insignia
become marks of salvation. The connection between dead soldiers and salvation is ironic,
because afterwards their blood is described as bubbling with life and there are stormy hearts
filled with revelations of the secret of life. In the second stanza: Even the morning comes out
to greet them. Just before the poem was included in "Seven Domains," Gilboa revised the first
stanza and separated two lines so as to emphasize them and to slow down the reading. He
added the word all as in "all my friends" ("Seven Domains" 79, All the Poems 1, 63). The
time and place of composition (Florence) are mentioned only in The Days are Coming. This
writer can imagine the intense pain of the speaker from the death of his friends and his post-
traumatic response of believing that they will come back to him.

Gilboa incorporated "Morning-Sela" as the opening poem in the series: "Of the very blue
nights of Florence" in the "Book of Eternal Life". After these, he places a chain of poems
sections without titles, which he chose from the poems of The Days are Coming, which in
the latter collection appear after "Morning-Sela." As is noted in the margins of the poems in
The Days are Coming all these poems were written in Florence, Italy, and in them Gilboa
expresses his pain and suffering of the trauma he experienced during the Holocaust. In some,
one can hear a lamentive voice: "How did things disappear?" (116), "How did stars travel on
their appointed paths and I did not lift my eyes to see?" (111).

\textsuperscript{61} The bubbled blood that calls for revenge alludes to the Midrash about Zechariah. See chapter 3.
The order of the poems is very different from the random order in *The Days are Coming*, and they are alphabetically ordered from *aleph* – *chet* (a-h). Gilboa opens the series with a poem, which is marked *aleph* (a), and begins it with a description of a father who is dedicated to his sons in holiness: "Like the song of my father's deeds / which he offered as incense to his children…" (*The Days are Coming*, 122), and the poet compares the father's song to the son's poetry. In later published editions Gilboa deletes the period at the end of the first stanza, since the second stanza is a continuation of the sentence from the first stanza ("Seven Domains," 80; *All the Poems 1*, 84). In the poem marked *bet* (b the second poem), the poet stands at the threshold of his father's house as the world burns, and does not understand how he did not witness the stars which traveled on their appointed paths. The allusion to the Song of Deborah is an expression of hope that salvation is possible as it says in the Book of Judges: "The stars fought from heaven, from their courses they fought against Sisera" (*Judges* 5, 20). "And all eyes see the fire/…/and there is no one in the thicket to send the fire/ like the bush, which sent him –" (all versions, *The Days are Coming*, 111) – there is no one who will save, not even God, who is hinted at through the allusion to the bush in which the ram of the binding is trapped, and to the burning bush, in which God revealed himself and sent him back to Egypt to save his people. In poem *gimmel* (c), there in an allusion to the angel of the binding who came down to earth and was killed, just like the first-person speaker of the poem who dies (*The Days are Coming*, 112, "Seven Domains" 81, *All the Poems 1*, 85). Poem *dalet* (d) deals with the closing of the gates of mercy (*The Days are Coming*, 115, "Seven Domains" 81-2, *All the Poems 1*, 85). In poem *heh* (e) the strings of the lyre end the playing of music with a silent wailing, a kind of lament (*The Days are Coming*, 110, "Seven Domains" 82, *All the Poems 1*, 65). Poem *vav* (f) alludes to the prophecies of retribution, to which the nation is not
responsive, for they are asleep, and there is no one who is aware of the danger (The Days are Coming, 109, "Seven Domains" 82, All the Poems 1, 86). In poem zayin (g) it mentions all the mantles which obfuscate the prophecy in the divide between life and death (The Days are Coming, 116, "Seven Domains" 83, All the Poems 1, 87). Poem chet (h) continues a previously expressed idea and ends the cycle with a lament: "How is it that things disappeared and went away. And my eyes saw./…/The house, however, is destroyed before my eyes, and my skin burns upon me" (The Days are Coming, 116, "Seven Domains" 83, All the Poems 1, 87). The conclusion one may draw from the order of the poems in the poem cycle: "Of the very blue nights of Florence" is that these poems reflect a complex and continuous chain of subjects.

The poem "Dew of Revenge," the final poem in the "Of the very blue nights of Florence" cycle, closes the circle with the first poem of the series. The poet, who is commanded to avenge the death of his family members, is guided by the holiness of his parents. He says: "Afterwards I shall be sanctified in the holiness of my procreators (몰ידי)" (The Days are Coming, 119, "Seven Domains" 84, All the Poems 1, 88). At the end of the poem, his voice is a choked scream; it is not redeemed, and it is still orphaned. In the same way The Days are Coming volume ends with the poem,"I am an orphan."

In conclusion: The re-composition of the poems in "Of the very blue nights of Florence" gave added meaning to the poems scattered in The Days are Coming. The editing, in this case, may be seen as a work of art in and of itself.
2.6 Conclusions

The collection of shelved poems *The Days are Coming* constitutes a discrete and closed unit. It begins with the prophetic motto, and the names of the poems at the beginning of the collection present a tragic end to the war: A last supper, voices calling out, the end of the battle, a city remembering, Silence’s Corners, and finally the last poem: "I am an Orphan." The poems which were first published in this shelved volume are very powerful and occasionally deeply disturbing and are of similar artistic quality to the poems which were first published with slight changes in "Seven Domains" and *All the Poems I*. Gilboa was forced to choose between his many poems, and these were scattered in other collections. An exception is the poem cycle "Of the very blue nights of Florence", the re-composition of which gave additional meaning to the poems scattered in *The Days are Coming*. The editing in this case was an artistic act in and of itself.

The advantage of *The Days are Coming* collection is that it was a spontaneous and immediate reaction to the trauma of the war and the Holocaust. One may see it as a seminal volume in the development of Gilboa’s poetry, and evidence of his steady stream of composition during the war. Gilboa could have updated the manuscript by adding the corrections found in the published version of the poems three years later, but did not do so. One may therefore conclude that it was important for him to preserve the original version of *The Days are Coming* manuscript as a spontaneous testimonial of the feelings of dread and the traumatic experience he underwent during the war. This is proof that shelving this volume was a post-traumatic response of repression coupled nonetheless, with a desire to preserve the past.

If one compares Bialik's "On the Slaughter" and Gilboa's "To Grace," it is evident that there is a basic difference in their response to the subject. Bialik describes the pain of the pogroms
and cries out that there is nothing in this world which can atone for the murder of a young child, not even revenge. In contrast, Gilboa calls for revenge, as in the poem "Dew of Revenge." As opposed to Bialik, Gilboa's response in *The Days are Coming* is post-traumatic, as in the appearance of the dead brothers in "With Kin of my Blood," and the expectation of an encounter with the dead in "Silence’s Corners." In the poem that begins "Here, no Iron Gates," Gilboa feels as though he hears the voice of his father crossing gates and continents and resounding in his ears. Many years later, Gilboa would discover that it was on this day his father was murdered. It is thus apparent that the poems in *The Days are Coming* reflect emotional spontaneity, and move the reader.

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62 Harry Fox claims that Bialik's esoteric message is also a call for revenge.
Chapter 3

Responses to National Destruction

3.1 Introduction: Amir Gilboa’s Response to Jewish National Destruction

The exposure to the horrors of war is embedded in the infrastructure of Amir Gilboa’s poetry, and its echoes are audible in its content. Gilboa’s service in the British army at the time of the murder of his family in the Holocaust influenced the personal and Jewish-national motifs present in his poems. The descriptions of national destruction in his poetry are occasionally artistic reconstructions of events from Jewish history, and sometimes depictions of events which took place or could have taken place during the war and Holocaust, but both are expressed through the prism of the twentieth century. In Gilboa’s poetry, Jewish history is repeated; instances of national destruction are described, such as the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem, the pogroms, and the genocide in the Diaspora. Knowledge of this bloody history honed Gilboa’s sensitivity as a poet, influenced his understanding of the events and memory of the Holocaust, and heightened his resolve to prevent it from happening again.

Gilboa describes this cycle of repetitive destruction in his poem, the title of which is also a didactic imperative: "Remember!" (זכור) He writes:

אבה אמר: בנות ת"ח ות"ט
שחט פה חלילים קהלת יהודים
ובשת חלילים, ידל
-counterparts מוסר חלילים מבפקות
כד תוש בדיא
ווגל חלילים"מ.

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Father said: in the years Ta"h and Ta"t Chemil slaughtered Jewish communities here and in the year Tarpa"h, my child, Levites will sing hymns in the temple. so Daniel foresaw and the Malbim discovered. [...] and the good father did not know that along with many, [...he] would be transported to the slaughter [...]

- - and [it] happened in the year Tav-Shin-Bet [1942] that my father was lost (dead).¹

The cycle of killing and the destruction of Jewish communities continued, while the hope for redemption, which would be realized when the Levites would sing their hymns in the third temple, is seen as wishful thinking. The poet is left with the imperative: "Remember what he did!"² This voice in the poem echoes God’s command in Deuteronomy: "Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt" (Deuteronomy 25:17). The analogy between Amalek and the subsequent killing of the Jews emphasizes the innocence of the victims. The poet compares the murderers throughout history, including the Nazis, with the Amalekites against whom the Israelis are required to take their revenge. In his explanation of the biblical verse, Midrash Tana‘aim states that rather than remember in the heart, one

¹ Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 311.
² Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 311.
must remember through words,\(^3\) which in modern era can be interpreted more generally as writing.

The use of the words "My father is lost (dead)," in Hebrew "avi oved"(אבי אובד) creates an historical connection between the poet’s father and Laban the Aramean (Genesis 31:29), who made Jacob’s life difficult. According to the legend of  \textit{Aa’gadat Bereshit}, "While Jacob was fleeing ... and Laban heard it and overtook him, ... Laban wanted to go and kill Jacob,"\(^4\) but God forbade him to do so. In Genesis Laban claims that he could have harmed Jacob and his family, but that God warned him not to say or do anything bad to them. The Midrash fills in the narrative gap by revealing Laban’s intention to kill Jacob. The biblical word \textit{oved} can denote death, as it does in Gilboa’s poem, when the death becomes real.

The problematic biblical Hebrew phrase "\textit{Arami oved avi}" (Deuteronomy 26:5), is sometimes translated as "The Aramean wished to destroy my father," which is how it is understood in the \textit{Passover Haggadah}. The Pentateuchal origin of this verse is in the confession of the Israelites when they bring first fruits to the temple, where they recall the troubles experienced by their forefathers until they came to their land. Beginning in biblical times, the Israelite nation experienced destruction of the first and second temples, and later pogroms, violence and murder and the destruction of the Holocaust. Before the poet’s father and his family were lost forever in the year 1943, the poet prophesized it in his heart, and he expressed these fears in his poems in 1942.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Midrash Tana'im} on Deuteronomy 25:17. \\
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Aa’gadat Bereshit} (Buber), Genesis 54, \textit{Shir Lama’alot}.
\end{flushleft}
The purpose of this chapter is to show how Gilboa’s poetry relates to the theme of Jewish national destruction. The focus of this chapter will be an analysis of Gilboa’s Hebrew form and his reliance on ancient Jewish sources. As part of this analysis, I will compare Gilboa’s poetry to Bialik, and attempt to support Bargad’s approach regarding Gilboa’s reliance on Bialik’s poetry, specifically in his treatment of the theme of Jewish national destruction.5

3.2 A Poetic Response to the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile

Amir Gilboa’s poem "Besiege" במצור starts off with a description of the destruction of Jerusalem and pointing to the underlying cause: "Man’s hand on another / and wall after wall collapses."6 Irresponsible behaviour of one human being to another caused the city’s tragic destruction. The Babylonian Talmud brings the legend (ag gadah) of what brought on the calamity: "[due to] Kamtzah and Bar Kamtzah, Jerusalem was destroyed."7 Bar Kamtzah was mistakenly invited to a feast which took place at his enemy’s house; the invitation was intended for Kamtzah. When Bar Kamtzah came to the feast, he was driven out in an insulting way in front of other diners, and even the scholars (sages) who witnessed it did not protest against this behaviour. Bar Kamtzah took his revenge by informing the Caesar, and presenting the people of Jerusalem as rebellious. This triggered a crackdown, which resulted in the destruction of the city as well as the exile of the nation from Israel.

Zechariah, who prophesied during the reign of Darius and encouraged the Israelites to build the second temple in Jerusalem, describes the difficult times their forefathers experienced

5 Bargad, To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 6-8.
6 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 217.
7 bGittin 55a.
during the last days of the first temple: "It was not safe to go about one’s business on account of enemies; and I set all men against one another" (Zechariah 8:10). During the siege of Jerusalem, God caused the Israelites to argue and act against their friends. The prophet emphasizes his point of view that everything in the world is controlled by God. The Israelites must, therefore, improve their behaviour prior to the building of the second temple. The siege prevented mobility, resulting in claustrophobia, and people getting angry at each other. *Keli Yakar*, in his commentary on the Tower of Babel, describes the arguments among the people in the city: "and now all men will be against one another due to arguments over appointments and rights and regulations (rules) that the residents of a big city expect." The quarrels regarding assignment to powerful roles in society disturbed the peace among the residents of the city.

In his poem "Besieged," Gilboa describes the breaking down of the wall surrounding Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar’s army, as seen through the eyes of a girl living in our times. Little Daliyah, who runs around alone during the messy war, identifies the prophet Jeremiah and gives him a pistol with a small bullet in order to kill Nebuchadnezzar. She wants to change history, as in ‘time machine’ movies, so that the destruction of Jerusalem might be averted. The prophet Jeremiah used to stand beside the gate of the city and warn the Israelites of the results of their behaviour. Now he faces a new challenge:

8 Zechariah uses the terms describing the siege around Jericho: "No one could leave or enter" (Joshuah 6:1).
9 *Keli Yakar* commentary on Genesis 11:1,"he thus said."
Who-is [standing] in front of the sun
That screaming.
Aahou, you [have] no eyes already
In his eye-socket a fever pulsates.
Jeremiah, Jeremiah
Take what is being kept with me
The pistol
And small bullet
In the heart of Nebuchadrezzar
In our God [you will] be praised.

"Who-is" is a translation of the Hebrew Mi-hu-ze (מי-הוא-זז), three words joined together and meant to bring to mind a child’s style of talking: jumbling words together in fast talking, also changing the letters n-r in Nebuchadnezzar's name, or alternatively as in the above quotation, by repetitively saying the name of the prophet. Hillel Barzel interprets this in his book A History of Hebrew Poetry as compound speech. The older speaker in the poem, together with the girl, "submit a request to the prophet of the destruction (Jeremiah) pleading that he must cast words aside and act as a saviour."11 Another reading of Mi-hu-ze is an allusion to zeh eli ve-anvehu "This is my God and I will praise Him" (Exodus 15:2).12 This inflects one reading of the poem to view Daliyah as a believer in getting God's help. On the other hand, the question Mi-hu-ze can challenge negatively: Who is the God that will help?!

10 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 217.
12 I thank Miryam Segal for bringing this to my attention.
In addition to using a child's point of view, Gilboa employs biblical vocabulary, and liturgical words such as *Yishtabach.* The quotation from the prayer book does not necessarily evoke the traditional meaning of praising God. Instead, the term *yishtabach* had been divorced from its original context and used in a twentieth century setting, with God's approbation ‘God will agree with your deed and bless you’. It is also important to preserve the religious meaning of this exchange, since Daliyah orders Jeremiah to kill Nebuchadnezzar in the name of God.

Although it seems that Daliyah has some knowledge of biblical stories, we notice upon deeper reflection that she confuses the people involved in the destruction. Jeremiah was depicted in Daliyah’s mind as a blind man with no eyes, but according to the Bible, it was Zedekiah who was blind. Jeremiah describes Zedekiah's blinding in his book: "The king of Babylon had Zedekiah’s children slaughtered at Riblah before his eyes; the king of Babylon had all the nobles of Judah slaughtered. Then the eyes of Zedekiah were put out..." (*Jeremiah* 39:6-7). To the child, Jeremiah, the prophet of destruction, represents two different characters simultaneously, and he has the power to act because of his close contact with the blessed God.

Gilboa’s poem "By the rivers of Babylon" (על נהרות בבל) describes the mourning of the Israelites who were exiled to Babylon as found in the book of *Psalms*: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion. There on the poplars we hung up our lyres" (*Psalms* 137:1-2). But already in the first lines of the poem, following the title, the

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13 A prayer recited in the morning, (תפילה שחרית) after the song on the sea: ישתבח שםך (Siddur *Sim Shalom*, 94).
focus of the poem shifts away from the Biblical verse: "There on the poplars we hung up our lyres. That meant the elders./ I had a small lyre..."\(^{14}\) The exiled people and the enemy who capture them are presented through the eyes of a naughty boy.

One of Bialik's first poems, "Regarding the Legend" (אל האגדה), reads: "I also had a lyre and I hung it on the /poplars where I sat,"\(^ {15}\) but because he cried so much he abandoned his lyre. Gilboa uses modern reworkings of biblical images more than Bialik. His young boy is an independent thinker and does not mourn the exile of his nation.

The exiles, who were mourning the destruction of the temple, were unable to follow their captors’ wishes and play their lyres. Unlike his elders, who are not able to play music due to the traumatic experience they went through, the young boy is able to express himself through music. He says: "For there is none like our language in color and tone, in depth and breadth."\(^ {16}\) This quote is reminiscent of a debate concerning the Holocaust: Is it legitimate to write poems after Auschwitz? Adorno, who answered negatively in *Negative Dialectics*, changed his mind and later agreed that even pain had the right to be expressed.\(^ {17}\) Friedlander, in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, suggests limits on the kind of writing appropriate for expressing pain and testimony.\(^ {18}\) In the last decades the flood-gates have opened and artists use a variety of techniques, including comics and graphic novels which do not always respect the dead or the traumatic events of the genocide properly according to the standards of the scholars mentioned above. Gilboa shows us that the younger generation has

\(^{14}\) Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 218.
\(^{15}\) Bialik, *The Poems*, 19.
\(^{16}\) Bargad, trans. *To write the Lips of Sleepers*, 144. (The Hebrew in Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 218.)
\(^{17}\) Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 362.
\(^{18}\) Saul Friedlander, ed. *Probing the Limits of Representation*, In the Introduction.
the ability to write poems and express themselves in a variety of artistic forms when it comes to traumatic events.

Midrash *Eikhah Rabba* broadens the meaning of playing the lyres contending that it also served as a call to waken for Torah study. In a midrash on David’s song from the book of *Psalms*: "Awake, O my soul!/ Awake, O harp and lyre!/ I will wake the dawn" (*Psalms* 57:9), Rabbi Levi explains that the lyre was hanging above David's bed in a way that whenever the north wind was blowing it started playing by itself. Thus it is written in the book of *Kings* – "As the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him" (*II Kings* 3:15). Rabbi Levi offers the following interpretation in *Eikhah Rabba*: "The lyre start playing by itself, and when David heard its music, he started studying Torah. The Israelites, when they heard the voice of David studying Torah, used to say: if David King of Israel studies Torah, of course we have to do so as well, and they also started studying Torah immediately."19 The Midrash suggests that the mere act of hanging the lyres does not mean the cessation of music; after all, the wind can blow and play the lyres hanging on the willow’s branches. The reluctance of the exiled people to sing songs to God is not only temporary, it raises a basic problem regarding the possibility of studying Torah in exile, and preserving the spiritual values of the nation outside the land of Israel.

In a talmudic Midrash, in *bGittin*, we find:

> Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: ‘What is [the meaning of] that which was written (*Psalms* 137:1) "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and also wept when we remembered Zion?" This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be, showed David the destruction of the First Temple and the destruction of the Second Temple; the destruction of the first temple, as it is said (*Psalms* 137) "By the rivers of Babylon,

19 Midrash *Eikhah Rabba* (Vilna), chapter 2, 22.
there we sat and also wept; the second temple, as it is written "Remember, O Lord, the day of Jerusalem for the destructions of Edom, for those who would say ‘Destroy! Destroy to its foundation."  

This Midrash on the verse from Psalms suggests that the psalm may be employed as a lament of the destruction of the first and second temples and beyond. The Babylonian exile took place following the destruction of the first temple, but the problem presented by the exiled Israelites and other poems is a perennial problem applicable to many times and places. Similarly, the reader of Gilboa's "By the rivers of Babylon" can apply the ideas of the Midrash and understand the poem as it represents the Diaspora's problems in general.

3.3 The Silence of Extinction

The title of Amir Gilboa’s poem "The Kingdom of Silence" (מלכות הדממה) assumes the silence of extinction as it appears in Bialik’s poem "The Dead of the Wilderness" (מתים מדבר), which concludes with the repetitive sentence "The stillness returns as heretofore." The term stillness or silence alludes to cessation and death. "The Kingdom of Silence" is also the kingdom of God, who mourns the destruction of the temple, as described in Bialik’s poem "The scroll of Fire" (מגילת האש), when the ministering angels see him...and in his eyes frozen the great silence." Gilboa’s poem "The Kingdom of Silence" starts with the description of the end of the war:

עוד אנקות תועות בשדה
והכהן הגדול מודה על הנצחון
תלי אפר

Cries still stray in the field
and the high priest gives thanks
for the victory. Heaps of ashes
announce: a summer of blood has burned out.
Its embers already smoke in the book.\textsuperscript{24}

The poem starts with an anthropomorphization of the cries, which in a literal translation from the Hebrew original denotes \textit{moans}. The Hebrew uses the word \textit{anakot} אנקות similar to \textit{anahot אנחות} which means deep sighs. For example: the \textit{anakot} who stray in the field, as though they were live creatures, become, through the transposition of the letters \textit{a-n}, \textit{na’akot נאקות} which are female camels. Thus, the cries might be the moans of female camels, lost in the desert. The definition of \textit{anaka} as well as \textit{na’aka} is "a deep sigh or scream from pain or sorrow."\textsuperscript{25} The book of \textit{Exodus} connects the two: "A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning (ויאנחו) under the bondage and cried out ... God heard their moaning (נאקתם), and God remembered His covenant..."(\textit{Exodus} 2:23-24). According to \textit{Midrash Exodus Rabba} (Vilna): "God heard their groans, the groans of the dead, as it says: ‘with the groans of one struck down’(\textit{Ezekiel} 30:24), and as it says: ‘Men groan in the city’ (\textit{Job} 24:12)."\textsuperscript{26} In \textit{Midrash Eikhah Rabba} (Buber), Rav Huna of Sephoris brings the second part of the verse from Job: "The souls of the dying cry out" (\textit{Job} 24:12), and he interprets the word \textit{na’katam} (in the English – cry) as the scream of death throes.\textsuperscript{27} Ramban\textsuperscript{28} brings the account from \textit{Midrash Exodus Rabba} of king Pharaoh, who slaughtered many Israelite
babies. The Midrash explains the reasons for their screams (*na'akatam*): the Israelites sighed and cried because of the dead babies, as in *Ezekiel* 30: 24: "with the groans of one struck down." A tableau of the dead and the cries of the dying is achieved by the combination of the expressions above.

*Midrash Tanaim* on *Deuteronomy* 3 counts *anaka* as one of the ten languages of prayer. This allusion to prayer hints to the possibility of hope and assistance when it is juxtaposed with the appearance of the High Priest in the second line of the poem.

According to the Torah, the priest would give the people instruction before battle, and dealt with problems of impurity which occurred as a result of the war. In Gilboa’s poem, the High Priest acts as a leader but declares victory early, when the survivors are still scattered on the battlefield and groaning. This scene describes the difficulties faced by the survivors who were scattered at the end of the war. The breaking up of the sentence following "Heaps of ashes" is an enjambment that emphasizes the heaviness and the grief of the people at the end of the war. The fourth line, which states that "a summer of blood has extinguished itself" may be understood first as a metaphor for the end of the bloodshed, and second as reflecting the actual time of year in which the war ended. In the original Hebrew, the idiom *kets ha’damim* קץ זמנה זרים is used, which means the end of the killing. The word *kets* קץ denotes *end*, but Gilboa adds a *yod* יד which means *summer*. The burning of the blood is an allusion to the High Priest’s sacrifice of animals to God in Jerusalem’s temple. In addition, it ironically highlights the human sacrifices of the Holocaust which the priest did nothing to stop. It is unclear whether the High Priest represents God or other Jewish leaders, whose calls for help came only at the final stages of the war. The embers in the fifth line are the
remnants of the burning books. The poem continues with the seasons autumn, winter and summer to show that the cycle of life carries on.

When describing the destruction and burning of the temple in Jerusalem Bialik writes; "And the Temple Mountain still all smoke. Heaps of ashes, mounds of cinder and smoking embers together piled..." Bialik describes heaps of ashes and mounds of cinder (remets), but Gilboa chooses only heaps of ashes, which remain after the war. Bialik employs richer vocabulary, such as the word remets (cinder) which according to the Even-Shoshan dictionary means "hot ashes that contain sparks, and the remnant of glowing coals." The expression remets evokes a feeling of burning. While Bialik focuses on the final stages of the burning temple, Gilboa focuses on the end of the bloodshed and the burning - "Its embers already smoke in the book." The heaps of ashes in Gilboa’s poem announce the end of the fire, but this word – in Hebrew mevasrim - also has the meaning of communication, as in the imperative to tell what happened. The importance of reporting is also found in Bialik’s "The Scroll of Fire," when the enraged miracle man asks: "From the depth of oblivion raise for me the song of devastation / black as the brands of your hearts," and he demands that they distribute it among the nations.

Gilboa describes: "A fire / will flicker. Sending tongues of flame. Flicker / tongues licking dust. A fire will / turn to ashes. Parchment scrolls (גילי ספר) / among smoking pages / will sing praises to the kingdom of silence. The sleepers / will sing praises to the kingdom of

29 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 147. (Hebrew in Bialik, The Poems, 310).
30 Even Shoshan, Dictionary. 1587.
31 Hadari, trans. Song from Bialik, 153.
The tongues of fire are still licking the fresh dust that covers the dead. The term "Parchment scrolls [in Hebrew geviley ] among smoking pages" is an extension of the biblical and Talmudic b Gevilm as found in Bialik's poetry. For example, in "My Father," the father is described as "wrapped in a worn prayer shawl yellow as the leaves of his scrolls." The prayer shawl is yellow as the pages (gevily) of his books. In "Before the Book closet" there is description of "an old book with tattered leaves [gevilim גוילים]." and in "In the city of Slaughter" he writes: "and ruins of books and parchments [gevilim]." Gilboa continues to employ Bialik's term for ancient books' pages ('gevilim'), but Gilboa places these parchments in scenes from the Second World War, which includes the Holocaust, and they are not limited to burned synagogues.

Gilboa continues his poem: "The Kingdom of Silence" with a prediction: "Everything /bound up in books will rest. Selah. Embers / part blind / are silent / silent / the legions." The prediction is that everyone will rest which implies dying in battle. The use of the expression "bound up" (نزلרו) alludes to the Yizkor (memorial) prayer for the dead. The words "Embers/ part blind" reflect the fear of the atomic bomb, which upon detonation destroys everything and turns it into vapor. The poem concludes in a pessimistic way, through short sentences that allude to the siege of Jericho in the book of Joshua: "Now Jericho was shut up tight because of the Israelites; no one could leave or enter" (Joshua 6:1). Similarly in "The Kingdom of Silence":

ואין עוד איש לבוא. ואין עוד

32 Bargad, trans. To write the Lips of Sleepers, 194. (The Hebrew is from: Gilboa, All the Poems I, 317).
33 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 22. (The Hebrew in Bialik, 466).
34 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 26. (The Hebrew in Bialik, 375).
35 Jacobs, translator. Shirot Bialik, 126.
36 Shirly Kaufman, trans. The Light of Lost Suns, 37. (Hebrew in Gilboa, All the Poems I, 317).
And there’s no one else to come. No one
Else to flee. No voice for the
dead to bequeath their will, and one alone is left, standing still.  

This stanza is based on a play on words: ‘no one’ which in the Hebrew is also ‘no more’ od.

It seems that the function of the only one who survived is to publicly testify, and to be the voice for the people who were murdered. This voice can be identified with either the poet himself, or the speaker of the poem. The destruction is total as it is in the war against Jericho, in which only Rahav and her family were saved, as promised by the spices.

The goal of Gilboa’s personal writing in the collection of "I wanted to write the lips of sleepers"(רצייה לכתב שפת ישנים), which contains poems without titles, is to draw upon the collective experience, as well as upon the war and death that followed him throughout his life.

All those within me – silent coffins. A long convoy that was frozen still. From conception. From birth. Field of precious of corpses that never blooms. That does not sprout. That neither screams nor whispers.

Silent stones that stopped growing.

Gilboa uses motifs from Bialik’s poem "The Dead of the Wilderness" (موت מדבר) for his description of convoy of dead people during the war. Bialik employed expressions

37 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 317.
38 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 195.
39 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 62.
conveying silence and called the dead of the wilderness —"camp of corpses" (מחנה פגרים),
while Gilboa describes them as a "field of corpses" (שדה פגרים). The memory of the dead is different in both. In Gilboa’s poem the dead are silent in their coffins, while in Bialik’s poem the dead were buried in the desert’s sand and on the deserts' hills. It is possible that Gilboa wrote the poem about soldiers who died during the Second World War; and thus he talks of a long line of frozen coffins. The wilderness can be very cold at night, but the intertext may also be Bialik’s "The Dead of the Wilderness," in which they are "congealing their glory in the wilderness." The Hebrew word is tziya which is akin to tsina meaning cold.

Bialik describes the dead as giants who lie down mightily while Gilboa sees the dead as silent stones. The poem "The Dead of the Wilderness" concludes with the sentence: "The stillness returns as heretofore and the desert stands forsaken." The forsakenness (loneliness) of the desert is duplicated in Gilboa's poems with three negative expressions: The field of the dead is not blooming, is not growing, and is not screaming or whispering. Death, like the silence of the stones, is forever. Galit Hasan-Rokem, in her book, *The Web of Life*, presents a Talmudic source b (Baba Batra 73b) that tells the story of an Arab called Teeah, who showed Rabba Bar Hanna the dead of the wilderness. Hasan-Rokem writes: "The Arab appears as the bearer of mythical knowledge, linked to the era when the Israelite nation was created in the desert, the place of nature, and of which the Arab is now (at the time of Rabbah bar bar Hana) the optimal interpreter." If one skips ahead in b Baba Batra,

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41 Steven L. Jacobs, *Shirot Bialik*, 90. (Hebrew in Bialik, 220).
one finds out that the Arabs do not dare touch the dead of the wilderness due to the ancient warning that touching their ‘silence’ will be followed by punishment. In many of the sources and the poems that have been presented in this chapter, there are enigmatic elements and symbolism, similar to what Hasan-Rokem describes.

### 3.4 Recommendations for Avoiding War and Denunciation of the Use of Power

In the poem "I will call you" (אני אקרא לך), Gilboa reports that despite the protest of many people, who stood and railed against the war, it started any way and many people died. After the war, both in Europe and in Israel, the poet requests his readers to pay homage to brotherhood and peace.

באתי剌ך כי רוצה אני לחרז היום עם להיות.
אמר כ תום, תום, תום ב-31 דצמבר 1951
שריר וקיים ו─ 73 באתי לחך כי רוצה אני לחרז.
悢 radically expresses the wish that agreements between people will endure forever and appears in both divorce and marriage documents (*get, ketuba*) formulated by the Rabbis.

I came to call you because I want to rhyme *today* with *to be*.  
Say that today, today, today on December 31, 1951  
Brotherhood’s covenant is firm and abides forever.

On the last day of the secular calendar the poet expresses his longing for peace in the world and the perpetuation of the life cycle of days and years. The legalistic "is firm and abides" expresses the wish that agreements between people will endure forever and appears in both divorce and marriage documents (*get, ketuba*) formulated by the Rabbis.  

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44 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 320.  
45 See bBB:160b.
Hillel Barzel connects the lines "I want to rhyme today with to be. / Say that today..." 46, and Hamlet’s question: "To be, or not to be." 47 In both statements ‘to be’ has the meaning of to stay alive 48. Hamlet’s debate is existential: Is it nobler to patiently suffer cruel fate, or should one rebel against it and put an end to the suffering? The anxiety for the continued existence of the world’s nations that underwent the Second World War is at the basis of Gilboa’s poem. The poet urgently calls out to strengthen the accords between them in order to prevent additional wars in the future.

In an untitled poem from the collection The Days are Coming which was written in Italy in 1945, the poet asks the world to stop its activity for just one moment, and to notice the fire, and to listen to the shrieks (screams) from far away, and " the bloody fall in the painful din.// Let it know to discern between choking throats / the lightning slaughtering knife, if for one whisper / As it continues this way himself to deceive." 49 The poet assumes that the people in the world are cheating themselves by not being aware of their actions; therefore, if they stop for a moment, they might understand the evil in the murderous acts they commit.

The pacifist poem "Please, Strongly" (Ana Bekoah אנא בכח) repeats the key words in the title seven times. These are taken from a liturgical poem (Piyyut), which begins with "Please, strongly, with your mighty right [hand], release the bound one." 50 During the morning service (Shaharit) and the Shabbat evening services, Jews ask God to take away their

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46 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 320. In Hebrew: "רוצה אני לחרז היום עם być. / אמר כי היום..."
47 William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Act 3, scene 1 (Pearson - Longman Cultural Edition: US, Canada, Europe: 2005), 63. ["to be, or not to be, that is the question: / Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer /.../ or to take arms against a sea of troubles" (p.63). ]
49 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 50.
50 The piyyut is found in the Siddur. Tradition relates this piyyut to the sage Rabbi Nehunyah son of the Kana.
multitude of sins which separate them from God, and at the national level they ask God to remove them from the chains of exile. God’s right hand symbolizes his positive power, which redeems the Israelites and does battle against their enemies. Gilboa disconnects the idiom *Ana Bekoah* from its positive religious context, and harnesses it to the cruelty of violent war, since his purpose is the rejection of force.

The opening of the poem "Please, strongly"("*Ana Bekoah*”):

Strike, beat, pity not  
In the houses no one sleeps, no one sleeps in them.  
Please, strongly, with power release  
The sling’s volley  
And it’s a stone that you must shoot at their houses.

The poem, in general, describes a battle against a village, which includes burning houses, and the inhabitants chased out and slaughtered. The absence of identification of the murderers or the victims turns it into a general statement against the destruction and killing of wars. Historically, there were innumerable such events during the Second World War.

Barzel evaluates the poem:

The speaker’s voice in the poem is ironical and macabre. ...The sling and the stone, resemble the [weapons that] served David in his fight against Goliath: "Thus, David bested the Philistine with sling and stone" (*I Samuel*, 17:50). The use of the word *shoot* can allude to the armaments of modern war; the machine-guns and guns which shot bullets straight, and to mortars, which resemble the stones of old, which arced as they were shot at the fortifying walls [of a city]. Straight shooting is combined with steeply arcing stones.\footnote{Barzel, *A History of Hebrew Poetry*, 392.}

\footnote{Barzel, *A History of Hebrew Poetry*, 392.}

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\footnote{Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 350.}
The powerful release of "the volley of the sling" in the Bible, is transformed in the poem into a shooting in a modern weapon.

Gilboa creates the biblical sounding combination — "and they shot stones into their house." This mo (מו) ending considers archaic even in classical Hebrew. The more of common biblical usage would have been לאשתם. It is possible that this combination hints to the word לзавה – "to our houses," which may hint to the poet being shot at. The shooting of rocks is an allusion to God's strength about which is written in the Song on the Sea: "He threw Pharaoh's chariots into the sea…they descended into the deeps like a rock…your right hand is glorious in strength, O God, your right hand shatters the enemy" (Exodus 15:4-6). Gilboa's poem draws the element of great power from the Song on the Sea but not other elements of this song, this power is used negatively in an outburst of violence and destruction. Gilboa transforms the original meaning of God's right hand which saves into a destructive force.

The two stanzas of the poem conclude with the expression "with the power of our great right hand" (Bekoah gedulat yeminenu בתה מואלה ימיננו), which is in contrast to the motif of the power of God’s right hand, as it is often found in the Bible, as in "The right hand of the Lord is triumphant" (Psalms 118:15-16). The allusion to the biblical idiom shifts the focus by adding a new context. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses warned the Israelites not to say in their hearts: "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me" (Deuteronomy 8:17), but to believe that their success came with God’s help. The poet uses the biblical expression in order to emphasize the power of wild fighters, who trust only themselves, in contrast to the command in the Bible. The fighters are described as destroyers and killers without mercy, until the sky became red. The usage of the Hebrew
expression Anna as a request and plea is ironic here, and the contrast emphasizes the poet’s view against the violent use of force.

3.5 The Legend in Gilboa’s "Memorial Prayer" and its ties to Bialik’s "The Scroll of Fire"  
[in Hebrew: Tefilat Azkarah, Megillat haEsh ]

"Memorial Prayer" (Tefilat Azkarah) was originally entitled "A Prayer for Forgetting" (Tefilat Hashkahah), but its purpose was changed when three lines were replaced. (There are some differences between the original version of the poem, i.e. the poem as it appears in his "hidden" volume and the version that Gilboa approved for publication in Blues and Reds, and later in All the Poems.) In the final version, the poet escapes from cursed saturation (revayah hamekulelet) into the world of legend, which in Gilboa’s poetry is symbolized by the color blue.  

The poet is aware of the importance of preserving the memory of the past in order to create the seeds and the light of the future. With this sensitivity comes his fear of losing his sense of time, which has escaped.

53 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 52. In the earlier version of The Days are coming p. 71 one finds metulelet a derivative of tal (dew), which alludes to blessing. By changing it tomekulelet, Gilboa accentuates the difficulty in the poem.

54 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 52-53.

للמה ברובה עליהם אל כל קצה כחול
[בנוסח ישן: עגול (עגול), השנוי מחזק אגדיות]
רנא רגלים ההולמות לא מעברות אושר
אשר קול. עוד בכותות לא-משגנה.
אשר ראות, עיניה בלפות לא אוחזת.
אשר הלוך, צעדו אל עמק המרחקים
[54 ימות לעמה]

To walk with thousands of feet to every blue edge  
Thousands of feet walking toward the waterfalls
that voice, its echo in unattainable heights.
Whose sight, whose eye can not grasp.
Whose amble, whose step to the farthest deep vale
will force him to retreat

[54 ימות לעמה]
The poet imagines a ribo (=ten thousand) of people walking toward a mighty waterfall, in a robotic march, while the echo of the "voice" is unattainably high, mythical (legendary), a place which the eye cannot see. But just before falling, into the "deep vale," the order to withdraw comes in the singular, which giving the impression that only the speaker was saved from drowning. This atmospheric scene is reminiscent of the description in "The Scroll of Fire" (Megillat haEsh (מגילת האש) by Bialik.

In "The Scroll of Fire: Legends of Destruction," Bialik describes a journey of two hundred boys and two hundred girls, who were exiled from Israel to an isolated island. The boys watch the tender white maidens, who walk in uniform rows as though they were sleepwalking:

...for they saw the girls, and here they were coming nearer and walking with eyes shut to the cliff’s edge that overhung the river, and in another moment there would be but one step between them and the abyss below ... and they [...] shouted to them with a great voice, and waved their hands; but the girls were as ones who did not hear and did not see, [...] And here was the last step ... a long string of eyes opened at once, [...] and they flew like a flock of white storks into the waters black [...] And the boys jumped with a roar of fear and fell upon the water.55

But then the mountain is split open and is transformed into a great dark valley and the boys jump into the river to save the girls. But the heads of the boys and the girls meet only in death, as they float in the water at the bottom of She'ol (the netherworld). Only the gentle and bright eyed youth, who did not jump into the water, was saved.

Bialik’s legend of destruction is based on the description in the book of Lamentations (Eikah): "My maidens and my youths have gone into captivity" (Eikah 1:18), which was developed into a legend as recounted in a Baraita in bGittin 57b:

A tanna taught in a Baraita: There was an incident in which four hundred boys and girls were captured [and taken by ship to Rome] to [engage in] shameful activity. They sensed what they were wanted for. They asked: ‘If we drown ourselves in the sea, will we enter the life of the World to Come?’ The oldest one of them expounded ... When the girls heard this, they all jumped and fell into the midst of the sea. The boys raised a kal vachomer [argument] in reference to themselves, and they said: ‘If these [girls] whose fate is natural [performed] this, we, whose fate is unnatural, how much more so! They also jumped into the sea. In reference to [people such as] them, Scripture states: ‘It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered,’(Psalms 44:23).  

In the Talmud the legend is about children who were not killed by the occupying force, in order to be used afterward for sodomy and as concubines, which is degrading. In Bialik’s version of the legend, he emphasizes the erotic element by describing the youths as naked. The boys and the girls march in two separate groups and see each other from a distance. The Talmud sees the death of the youths as an act of purposeful martyrdom, whereas in Bialik's legend the girls are not aware of the danger, and the boys attempt to save them, but end up drowning too. The Talmudic legend concludes with a quotation of a verse from Psalms, which compares martyrdom to sheep walking to the slaughter. This image is frequently used as an allusion to the Holocaust.

Reading the talmudic Midrash assists the reader to understand Bialik's description which otherwise would be blurred and missing the reason for the act of the youths. Bialik made the midrashic narrative more dramatic by adding the walking and falling from the high cliff down into the river. It is clear that Gilboa builds his narrative in relation to Bialik and not directly from the Midrash because he continues the description of walking and falling. This reader

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56 This Talmudic legend is also mentioned in Midrash Zuta Eikah (Buber), 1, starting with the words "Rabbi said": it states that Jeremiah lamented over those children.
grasps the deeper meaning of Gilboa’s description about the dangers of life from the sources which feeds Gilboa's poem.

"Memorial Prayer" concludes with hope for the future: "Scatter the seeds of tomorrow / ... // shake-up the heads of the nation in darkness / because from the crying after it ends / they will beget light." Gilboa claims that in the future, light will be born from the tears. The light stands for hope and salvation. In Bialik’s "The Scroll of Fire," when the youth was left alone as the sole survivor, he fell to the ground and "he buried his face in his palms and cried, and cried." The repetition of the cry is parallel to the cries of Jerusalem as described in the Book of Lamentations (Megilath Eikah): "Bitterly she weeps in the night, her cheeks wet with tears" (Eikah 1:2). The crying in Gilboa’s poem seems to coincide with the night, since the light was born from it, both materially and spiritually.

When the youth (lad) rose from his crouch, "he raised his eyes – to the sky as was his way. And he saw there in the heights of the cliff before him, innocent and pure as an angel of modesty, standing before him one maiden [...] and on her head shining the morning star...." The light of the morning-star is connected to the long sought after beloved, and it symbolizes a dream of redemption. The dream of the pure beloved and redemption is revealed in "The Scroll of Fire," as emerging from the catastrophe and the tears. The same sequence of ideas is present in Gilboa’s poetry, and he too concludes that light and hope will spring forth from forlorn cries.

57 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 53.
58 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 155.
59 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 156.
3.6  "A Locked Garden is Burning," including the Hidden Stanzas

The published poem "The Locked Garden is Burning" (Gan Na'ul Boer (גַּן נַעֲלָ בּוּר) describes a night walk in a nice garden, and then the next day the speaker watching the garden’s trees go up in flames like birthday candles. There is an erotic symbolism in Gilboa's biblical allusion to the verse, "A garden locked / is my own [sister], my bride"(Song of Songs 4, 12). This eroticism clashes with reality. Since the speaker watches helplessly as the trees burn, he feels isolated and hopeless.

The poem was first published in Yalqut HaReim, in the summer of 1945, as part of the collection "Eternal Life" (Hayee Olam). At that time Gilboa already knew that his family had perished in the Holocaust. Hillel Barzel explains the title of the poem: "On one hand, the title alludes to the requirement that the poem be planned, like a locked garden, but on the other hand, it demands to be broken up, for kindling." The two last stanzas were apparently omitted from the collection of Blues and Reds, to avoid congestion in the poem. Barzel cites the latter two stanzas drawing from Yalqut HaReim. Some of the lines from the missing stanzas are quoted here in order to compare the motif of youthful narration (the speaker is described as pure and bright eyed) to Bialik's poems. Gilboa writes:

AESHOB BHIMIR UTINIM LEBOH MEMKOR HAFHIVOTH HEMMEIM.
YIRYEH LEFISH HAFHIVOTH AI RIFOTE HAFHER HEMMEIM ORIHTH.

[...]

AESHOB SHEHR-RESHSIM LEASHOT HAFHER VENEMKOT.
AL URIR BESF ק<constuent value> UTINIM YAHOE HAFHERIM MEFITRAT.

Let me return clear eyed to come through the maze of the standing streets
And my charred cloth will dispel the smell of the boiling-smoking resin

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60 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 95.
61 Barzel, Poetry and Poetics (Hebrew), 105.
62 Gilboa's poem was published in Yalqut haReim, (Barzel presented it in his Poetry and Poetics p. 105-106). Moshe Shamir, Shlomo Tanai, editors. Yalqut HaReim, 139-140.
Let me come cleansed of whispers after the vengeful decree
To my town, in procession of melodies, which are risen like crowns from the burning.

The speaker in Gilboa’s poem is described as bright-eyed, and pure sounding, and after he returns to the burning garden he spreads the smells of burning throughout the town. Bialik’s "The Scroll of Fire" describes two hundred boys, who were exiled from Jerusalem. They were "all pure and born of pure [people]," yet one was a soft and fair-eyed youth, and he looked to the sky, as if seeking there the star of his life. The bright-eyed youth belongs to the group of boys who were exiled from Jerusalem, but he is different from them because of his quest to find out the purpose of his life. This youth was added by Bialik to the midrashic legends of the destruction of the temple. The bright eyed young man succeeds in taking from the altar’s fire and preserving it for the future of the Israelites. In Gilboa’s poem the fire motif is earthier than in Bialik’s poem, and Gilboa's speaker spreads the smell in the town, in order to let people know about the fire. This act may be seen as a metonymy for letting the people know of the horror of the furnaces of the Holocaust. The scene in Gilboa’s poem is parallel to the preservation of the remainder of the temple’s fire in "The Scroll of Fire." The speaker in the poem takes on the obligation of preserving the memory of the Holocaust fire and ensuring the continuity of the Israelites in their land.

63 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 149. (Hebrew in Bialik 311).
64 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 150.
65 According to the account in I Maccabees, Chapters 1-2, Jeremiah commands the Jews going into exile to take the fire and to bury it in the ground. In the days of Nehemiah they found that the fire had transformed into frozen water, but when they placed it upon the altar it once again turned into the Lord's fire. http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/hasfarim/hashmonaim-b-2.htm, translated to Hebrew by Isaac Zekil Frenkl. Also in Daniel R. Schwartz, The Second Book of Maccabees (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press,2004), 84. English in The Books of the Maccabees (London: Mcmxlix, East and West Library, The Horovitz Publishing, 1949), p. 71-72.
Therefore, as a ramification of these descriptions, we see how Gilboa relates to Bialik's narrative regarding the destruction that follows hope. While Bialik settles for keeping the fire, Gilboa's speaker calls for action, through making public the event and the danger involved.

3.7 "I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers"

The opening poem of Gilboa's collection, "I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers" (רציתי לכתב שפתי ישנים), describes a dream about Jerusalem, which reveals the poet's fear for the future of Israel. In earlier manuscripts of this poem Gilboa opened with the word "Memory" (זכרון), which was changed to the current first line "I'll grab hold of a butt of dream" (bekoach). In a version from June 6, 1966 he explains the first line better, he wrote (in Hebrew): "I'll grab hold of the memory as a butt of dream."66 The memory of the past would have been better kept in silence:

בеньк אתו בדל חלום.
ואמר להעלותו דל שפתי.
[...]
וה, בת ירושלים.
שכחת נצוה מ א לא יشكر
[...]
עד שכםתי 잉 כללהור שבעים שנה.

I'll grab hold of a butt of dream.
I mustn't let it touch my lips.
[...]
Alas, daughter of Jerusalem.

I've forgotten whose glory would not fail
[...]
Until one day I revived as if after seventy years.68

67 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 7.
68 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 224.
The usage of the "daughter of Jerusalem" is interpreted in the book of *Lamentations (Eikha)* as the people of Jerusalem, or as in Onkelos’ Aramaic translation "cnis’ta de-Y’rushalem,"Jerusalem’s *Knesset* (gathering) in the feminine form, in other words the nation. The book of *Lamentations* describes that "All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their head at fair Jerusalem: Is this the city that was called perfect in beauty...?!

(*Lamentations* 2:15). People who see Jerusalem in ruins are sad and wonder: is this the city that was known for its beauty? (This is similar to the response of the people of Bethlehem regarding Naomi when she returns: "Can this be Naomi?" (*Ruth* 1:19). In Isaiah’s prophecy of encouragement to Hezekiah in the book of *II Kings*, before the destruction, Isaiah claims that the people of Jerusalem, referred to as "daughter of Jerusalem," derided Sennacherib, king of Assyria (*II Kings* 19:20). In the prophecy of consolation in the book of *Zechariah*, the prophet uses this phrase to announce the arrival of the Messiah: "Rejoice greatly, Fair Zion; Raise your voice (shout), Fair Jerusalem! Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass,"

(*Zechariah* 9:9). The conclusion is that the idiom "daughter of Jerusalem" (*bat Yerushalaim*) is always connected to the destruction of the city. It is used before the distruction to warn of impending doom and after to offer comfort and salvation after the destruction. This, therefore, begs the question of why Gilboa used this epithet in his poem. Is this "the butt of a dream," that the poet must not let touch his lips. In other words, is this an allusion to Messianism?

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69 This translation of the words from Lamentations 2:15, is found in *Yalqut Shimoni: Ruth and Eihka*, Friedman edition, Refael Haim, ed. (Jerusalem: The Institute of the Written Torah, 1965).
The two stanzas, "daughter of Jerusalem // I’ve forgotten," stand side by side, and the well-known verse from Psalms "If I forget you, O Jerusalem ..." (Psalms 137:5) is divided between them. The speaker was dreaming and forgot the verse in which Samuel declares to Saul: "The Glory of Israel does not deceive or change his mind" (I Samuel, 15:29). In his dream, the speaker substitutes the verse for "the Glory of whom [mi]," which might be a reference to the Nili underground70, or a shortening of his first name – Amir- mi. It is possible that the poet is providing an encrypted clue regarding his attitude vis-à-vis God; a God who forgets and disappoints, who did not help his people until the revival in Israel. Another possible conclusion has to do with Messianism: the dream, which cannot be spoken, is not a tool in the service of religious Messianism. The reason is that in a world which is self-reliant instead of dependent on God the revival of the people in Israel will not be a religious one.

"Until one day I arose," ad shaqamti (note the anomalous vocalization) found in the Song of Deborah, who comes to save the Israelites (Judges 5:7). The "seventy years" of the poem does not reflect the years of security after Deborah's victory, because Israel had peace for only forty years. For this reason, commentators suggest the seventy years may be alluding to another salvation. Midrash Tehillim (Buber) states that God told Habakkuk:

When I told you in the first exile ‘When Babylon’s seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor – to bring you back to this place’ (Jeremiah 29:10), and they did not believe ... and when the seventy years had passed, as I foretold ‘Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord ... has charged me with building him a house in Jerusalem’ (Ezra 1:2 and II Chronicles, 36:23), and even now, when the end is coming, I will redeem them immediately (Midrash Psalms (Buber), 7).

70 Nili was an Israeli espionage network which assisted the United Kingdom in its effort to conquer Palestine from the Ottoman empire during World War I.
Gilboa’s poem suggests that just as the rebuilding of the second temple occurred seventy years after the first destruction, there is also hope for revival in the modern era.

The opening sentence of the last stanza reverses the optimism of a verse from the *Song of Songs* by adding a negative word: "And no more may one gently move the sleepers’ lips". The biblical text presents the female lover (Israel) as having a mouth like good wine, which goes to her lover and "glides over the lips of sleepers" (*Song of Songs* 7:10). The Hebrew verb *dovev* means to induce someone to speak. Rashi interprets *dovev* as spoken language; the female lover says that just as the wine induces or moves sleepers’ lips, the patriarchs will be pleased and offer thanks from their grave. The commentary *Da’at Mikra* adds that "*dovev*" also denotes movement from the Arabic. According to this, the wine caused the lips of sleepers to move or to speak. Bargad sees the linguistic connection as an expression of Gilboa’s wish to bring back his loved ones who died in the Holocaust. 71 These meanings create both anticipation and disappointment because Gilboa’s poem dashes any hope of inducing the sleepers to speak. The silence and muteness of the sleepers’ lips implies death, as in Freud’s theory of the dream. 72 So, it seems that it is too late for the speaker in Gilboa’s poem; he is surrounded by death and enshrouded in pessimism. Therefore, he concludes:

אֲנִי לָדוֹבֵב צוּד שְׁפֵתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
שֶׁנִּמְעַרְתָּ אֲלֵפָּת תַּמְלָאָה.
עֵל שְׁלַחְתָּ בִּכְסָה תְולַמוֹת עַשְׁנִים.
עֲצֵד מַעֲשָׂה יַעֲנֵי לָא.
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71 Bargad, *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, 245.
72 Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.
73 Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 7.
And no more may one gently move the sleepers’ lips.  
The years fill each doorstep with malediction.  
On the table a glass of smoking dreams  
just a bit longer my poor eyes I’ll not see it.  

Gilboa describes a situation in which the malediction and curse will remain potent for years to come. Similarly Bialik writes, in his poem "In the City of Slaughter," (בעיר ההרגה) which relates to the horror of the pogrom in Kishinev:

והתיחדות עם-
הצער
ומלאת בו כל יום חייך,  
והיה הוא לך לפליטה ולמעין תרעלה,  
וכדיück חלום זועה
ויבעתך כרוח רעה,  
ורבץ בך כמארה  
ובקשת ולא תמצא לו ניב שפתים.  

 [...] and become one with the sorrow  
and fill your heart with it for all the days of your life, [...]  
it will be an escape for you and a poison fount,  
crouched in you like a curse, waiting to destroy you like an evil spirit.  
 [...] like the oppression of a nightmare; [...]  
and you will seek but not find for it an expression.  

Bialik places the sorrow as a personified subject; it fills his heart and poisons him, it is inside him as a curse and nightmare. He also alludes to the suffering to the evil spirit that destroyed King Saul's soul (Samuel 16:14). Even though Bialik usually emphasizes the sorrow and pain, in this poem he presents post-traumatic symptoms as the event of the pogrom remains in his heart forever and disturbs him from living a normal life due to nightmares. Gilboa also describes a life controlled by malediction and dreams which are symptomatic of post trauma.

74 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 224.  
75 Bialik, The Poems, 258.  
76 Steven Jacobs, trans. Shirot Bialik, 142-144.
Bialik writes about the failure of the hunt for words to express the horror, while Gilboa tries to induce the dead to speak, without much success, so he concludes: "And no more may one gently move the sleepers’ lips."

The complex metaphor "a glass of smoking dreams" in Gilboa’s poem is parallel to the loss and mourning in Bialik’s "The Scroll of Fire," as in: "the hidden tear in the cup of silent pain." The liquid of the tear in the cup of grief is a simpler metaphor than the glass of smoking dreams, dreams that went up in smoke, and will never be fulfilled. In summary, both poets express hopeless suffering with no chance of talking about it or giving testimony which is symptomatic of post-trauma as I explain in Chapter One. Reading Bialik enriches the way we read Gilboa.

In another poem from the collection "I wanted to write the lips of sleepers," Gilboa repeats this sentence: "That day I saw, that is to say; we saw ... the end of wars ... the fire of joy." By repeating it, the poet emphasizes the identity between the individual and the collective, demonstrating how his personal poetry was nourished and sustained by the collective experience. After the wars, the fire of joy drives away the darkness that scared "all the legends that still remained after their audiences were murdered. Where are they. Where are they." The repetition on the Hebrew, Aey hen. Aey hen. אי הן. אי הן, sounds like an echo.

In the poem that begins "I pray" (אני מתפלל), the speaker prays from a torn prayer book (Hebrew: Siddur), "and all the missing words I / see them flying, flying for a long time / and

77 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 149. (Hebrew from Bialik, 311)
78 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 67.
79 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 67.
they seek to rest to their feet."\textsuperscript{80} Hayim Be’er, in his article about this poem,\textsuperscript{81} notes the aura of global catastrophe, like in the flood in Genesis, where "...the dove could not find a resting place for its foot" (Genesis 8:9). Be’er points out that the flying words and letters are reminiscent of the last words of Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradion, who was one of the Ten Martyrs. He was who were burnt at the stake with a Torah scroll wrapped around his body. According to the Babylonian Talmud, bAvoda Zarah 18a he said: ‘Gevilim are burning, and letters are flying in the air." Be’er’s analysis is a little inconsistent, because in Gilboa’s poem it is not clear whether the edges of the prayer book are torn deliberately, or charred from fire, as in the case of the gevilim that enveloped Rabbi Hananiah. Torah parchments (gevilim גוילים) were, however, burned many times in the Holocaust and during pogroms against the Jewish communities in eastern Europe. Therefore, Be’er’s interpretation is accepted. Another significant aspect of the poem is the poet’s inability to help those in need, because, at least metaphorically, his prayer book was damaged. The damaged prayer book symbolizes forgetting God, as was shown in the poem starts "I’ll grab hold": "I’ve forgotten whose [mi] glory would not fail." It seems that the poet forgets that his God is a true authority. The damaged prayer book is a metonymical representation of his doubts regarding God’s existence or effectiveness.

Gilboa's theological uncertainty contrasts with Bialik as it is expressed in Bialik's poem: "How shall he Fear the Fire?" The nation has much experience when it comes to fire and furnaces and thus Bialik writes: "She shall not control you. The scrolls burn and letters / fly

\textsuperscript{80} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems II}, 13.
\textsuperscript{81} Hayim Be’er, "Something about Amir Gilboa", in Balaban, ed. \textit{Amir Gilboa, Selection of Critical Essays of his Writing} (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1972), 148.
away like birds of fire…/…and to all four corners of the land, they fly / your letters and they transmit the holy fire,…/…and the fire shall not burn out.”82 The words, which fly away according to Bialik, preserve the holy fire, as in "The Scroll of Fire." Here, Bialik is closer to the classical Jewish sources and to conventional belief than Gilboa.

In the last poem of the collection "I wanted to write the lips of sleepers," the poet wants to induce the dead to speak:

I thought, sleepers’ lips in life at a no name grave I’ll induce
I knew, but with no sound, I’ll induce the lives in the grave
and my voice won’t be heard.

These lines clearly allude to the Nazi atrocities, such as burying people alive, and burying them in obscurity with no name. The poet aims to induce their lips to speak, and emphasizes this by enjambment after "induce", but his voice will not be heard. Be’er draws our attention to the source in the Babylonian Talmud bYevamot 97a: "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: ‘Any [deceased] Torah scholar in whose name a teaching is quoted in this world, his lips move in the grave." The Rabbi believed that it was possible to induce (le-dovev) the lips of scholars after their deaths. The speaker in Gilboa’s poem seeks to talk with the dead, who were buried in unknown mass graves during the war and the Holocaust. But his voice is unheard; he is not able to communicate with them. Dov Sadan84

82 Bialik, The Poems, the poem "How shall he fear the fire?" p. 484.
83 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 91.
brings an excerpt from the poem "If I shall forget you" by Menachem Mendl Dolitski, which describes the poet's yearning for Zion. The poet expresses his obligation to remember Jerusalem not only in his life but also in his death. His lips which move in the grave are an instance of the Rabbi's statement from tractate Yevamot. Menachem Mendl Dolitski writes:

ועת כי אמותה
בך תמיד
יפתי
תהיה שפתי דובבות בקברי.

85 долיץקי's poem is found on the Ben-Yehudah Project on the web: http://benyehuda.org/dolitsky/dolizki03.html
86 Zoritte, Spheres of Life and Emanation, 129.
87 Ya'akov Abarbanel, "Knowing from Where and to Where," 62.

And when I die, you are always within me, my beautiful one
My lips will move in the grave.

[...] Zion, you shall be upon my resting place!

Zoritite claims that Gilboa saw his writing as a holy mission: "It [the poetry] was for him as ‘dew’ is for the thirsty soil of graves, and it could induce the lips of his sleeping loved ones to speak – and cause them to be alive”86. Ya’akov Abarbanel interprets this as the resurrection of the dead, and comments: "The resurrection of the dead in the poems enables the speaker to overcome the loss of family.”87 Abarbanel’s sentence requires some psychological elucidation: The speaker imagines or dreams of the idea of visual and verbal contact with his dead loved ones as a way to fill in the unknown circumstances surrounding their deaths, but this does not indicate that he has overcome his loss in any way. He remains in shock, as though he had experienced the trauma. Presenting the traumatic experience in the form of a poem may be seen as a post-traumatic response. Indeed, the reconstruction of...
these events can begin a process of reassurance, but in Gilboa’s poetry there is no great success in inducing the lips of sleepers.

3.8 Communicating the National Mission: Warning of the Destruction

The final three poems in "Everything goes" (הכל הולך), which closes the collection of *All the Poems II*, describes national catastrophes in strong terms. These poems were published under the joint title "From: Like a Recognized Blister (burn)" (*Mitokh: Ke-Michvat Heker* מותך: כמכות הכר), which alludes to identification by a burn mark. The word *michvat* appears in the book of *Leviticus*, where the priest determines whether the mark is due to fire or leprosy:

"When the skin of one’s body sustains a burn by fire, and the patch from the burn is discoloration, either white streaked with red, or white, the priest shall examine it" (*Leviticus* 13:24). The poet feels responsible for his people, and like the priest, he is on a national mission: he must identify the coming war, and warn of the suffering and exile. Bialik uses *מכות* to indicate a psychological injury. In "The Scroll of Fire," the serenity of the morning provides calm and offers the youth healing for his "soul burn" (על מכות נפשו, וינח). The three poems were first published in *Moznayim* in July 1974, and may be seen as a reflection of the fear prior to and following the Yom Kippur War, when the armies of Syria and Egypt attacked the state of Israel simultaneously. No nationalism, however, is mentioned explicitly in the poems, and the poems remain universalist.

The first poem "Here Gentiles" (הנה גוים) starts with non-Jews making ready for war against Israel. There are some allusions to Christians like the Hebrew words *mi-gilyon avonam* (from their sin) that sound like 'evangelion'. The gentiles are presented with the stereotypical

88 Bialik, *The Poems*, 323.
characteristics of German precision, without specifying their nationality. Gilboa describes their plot in precise words: "Here Gentiles gather / on your threshold / plots in their mind, time for accurate thought / dividing each moment 'til the / hour has passed, their soul departs to see / your divided soul flies away. In the air." Gilboa plays with combinations of the word neshamah (soul): on one hand "their soul will depart to see" in eager anticipation, on the other hand "your divided soul flies away" which means you will die. The poem continues with the ironic use of the term "blood": "Their blood-brothers’ pact will demand your blood," in order to realize their German Aryan blood destiny they have to eliminate the other. This alludes to the infamous "blood libels" and to the Holocaust. The victims’ blood is like blessed rain to the gentiles. The poet expresses a wish that this rain will instead be a curse upon them. The poem ends with a wordplay using the word "life" (חי):

Thus is their life. For their life is the enemy of your life. Guard your soul, keep it from the cursed hour.

The latter lines can be read in two ways: according syntax, and through the enjambment, or in other words passing over the sentence clause to the next line. The animal in their human soul is inimical to the soul of the Jewish nation. Skipping to the word nishmat (soul – at the end of the first line) emphasizes the connection to the prayer of "The Soul of all living" (נשמת כל חי), in which the person thanks God for his soul, but here the attitude is bitterly ironic. The poet warns the nation (in the feminine) using imperative verb forms: guard your

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89 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 262.
90 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 262.
91 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 262.
92 The Piyut Nishmat is found in the Siddur, in the Morning Prayers (Shaharit) of Shabbat and Holidays.
soul, keep it – doubling and shuffling for emphasis – from the cursed hour. The word cursed, in Hebrew *meereret*, connects one to "the water of bitterness that induces the spell" (*Numbers* 5:18) which the priest gives the accused adulteress to drink. According to the Torah, this is in order to test her innocence, but in the poem there is no sin, only hatred of the gentiles toward the Jews.

The second poem "If you get up, you go" (בראשך ת-navigation) expresses in sharp terms the punishment of those who leave the land of Israel. The extreme language might be the reason the poems were not published during the poet’s life.

The third poem entitled "He’ll take you with him" (אני אסף אותך עמו) describes how the enemy will take the nation away (to Babylon), where she will cry under the willow tree, "and from the persistent crying, up and down, like the verses of Lamentations / your dear son Ephraim will be born..."93 From the weeping and lamentation, a redeemer will be born to the Israeliite tribe of Ephraim." The biblical prophet Jeremiah already prophesied this: "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he my favorite child. Whenever I talk about him, I remember him more, because I miss him, I shall have mercy on him, God said" (*Jeremiah* 31:19).

The poet advises the Jewish nation to go back to the land of Israel – to "the edges [pa’atey] of the sun, where it rises in the east."94 This expression alludes to the poem "Behold the sun" (*Re’e Shemesh* ראו שמש), by Solomon ibn Gabirol, who speaks of "the edges of the north (pa’atey tzaphon)."95 In both cases, hearts are pining for a far-away land, personally

93 Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 264.
94 Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 264.
and nationally. In Gilboa’s poem, the light from the east will cause the nation’s heart to beat and give them light as it was before the two-thousand year exile: "And its light will strike the face until tears / of joy at the sight of your sins which will be again like snow white / and live long.”96 Gilboa presents a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of consolation: "If your sins are like crimson [worms], they will turn snow-white" (*Isaiah* 1:18).

Even sins the color of crimson-worms will turn snow-white. The whitening of the sins appears as a symbol of purity and God's forgiveness for the sins. Most of the ancient sources, like the *Palestinian Talmud* yShabbat 9, 12c and *Genesis Rabba* (Theodor Albeck) 100b keep the plural "like crimson [worms]" [or: scarlet] כשקנים, and only in yYoma 6, 43d it is written in the singular, "like crimson ( כשני)." Isaiah continues: "Be they red as dyed wool, they can become like fleece." (*Isaiah* 1:18). Isaiah's words strengthen the connection to the medieval poet, Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol, who wrote: "Behold the bloody red sun at evening tide / as though clad in a scarlet hood."97 Gabirol's lament for the death of Yekutiel employs a parallel image describing the redness of sunset. Gilboa uses motifs from biblical and medieval poetry in order to describe the lament of the exiles, and recommends going east to the land of Israel, where sins will be forgiven and the Israelite nation will be revived. But the poem concludes with a line that brings the reader back to the reality of a bad dream, and expresses the wish that the bad dream will be the lot of the haters. It seems that Gilboa was reluctant to include these poems in the second volume of his book, due to the strongly expressed negative sentiments. Nevertheless, the reader can discover hope for revival

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96 Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 264.
juxtaposed with the lament regarding the exile, two motifs which characterise Gilboa’s poetry.

3.9 Objection to Receiving Reparations from Germany

Bargad writes about Gilboa’s political and moral world-view. In "Let’s Do an Accounting Poem" (שיר נבוא חשבון), Gilboa pointedly protests his government’s policy regarding reparations; his redolent memories cannot abide the idea of making a deal with Germany."98 In "Let’s Do an Accounting Poem" Gilboa expresses his feelings of personal moral guilt for not rescuing his family from destruction as a collective guilt. Because he cannot grant the dead their pre-Holocaust life, he feels it would be a lie to take reparations. The poem opens by presenting a question: "How can we do an accounting with them / if they hand out thirty shekels to us."99 The allusion is to Matthew 26, in which Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.100 The poem continues with an imaginary scene in which his dead family members are still alive and sitting next to him, and an echo calls out their names. At this point in the poem, Gilboa asks some pointed questions:

98 Bargad, To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 186.
99 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 186.
How did we not come to redeem them from death.
How did we not know (the most terrible horrors!)
And if there be someone who knew and kept silent –
On the face of the earth, like on the grave let him kick.
And If he is dead –
Let dust and honour roll away from him.

We did not remove them from death
Let us not seek death’s ransom.
Let us keep hate ‘til the day will come
and we’ll accept the accounting.

The account will remain open; the hatred will be maintained as part of preserving the memory. The poet justifies accusing those who knew and said nothing, and hopes for their suffering.

Barzel in his book *Poetry and Poetics* presents an additional poem by Gilboa about the reparations from Germany, which was published in *Masah* (December 27, 1951)\textsuperscript{102}, and was not included in any other collection of Gilboa’s poetry. Gilboa shelved this poem, most likely because of its harsh rebuke, and probably because he feared the extremity of his statement, which was appropriate when the subject was being debated in Israeli society. At that time, the Jewish community in Israel was divided about whether to receive reparations or refuse the money. The title of the poem, "Poem of Compensation" (שיר שילם), can be interpreted in two different ways: one is of paying money, and the other is of taking revenge. The language of revenge is taken from *Deuteronomy*: "To be my vengeance and recompense, at the time that their foot falters. Yea, their day of disaster is near," (*Deuteronomy* 32:35).

\textsuperscript{101} Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 306.
\textsuperscript{102} Aharon Meged, ed. *Masah*; a Literature magazine of the labour party, 1951.
This verse states that God will mete out revenge upon the people of Israel, and bring
destruction upon them because of their iniquities, or according to Rashi, when the patriarchs’
virtue will no longer aid them. A disastrous day will come soon.

Barzel explains:

_Shilem_ (paid), as derived from the word ‘vengeance’ is the most extreme terminology
available to introduce the idea of reparation. The word "vayishlak" comes from the
English "Shylock" that [Gilboa] turn into a Hebrew verb. In English as well, the word
_Jew_ also appears as a verb, meaning to deceive, as a pejorative implying cheating, and
unrestrained avarice. Gilboa, in a parallel move does the same with the name
_Shylock._"103 The poem "Shir Shilem" opens with the earth-shaking request: "Beyond
that, a hand stretches out / (whose [hand]?)/ and expects "reparations."104

Stretching out a hand evokes the beggar’s hand when begging for coins. Any amount that
will be given will bear no relation to the actual suffering and destruction of millions in the
Holocaust. In brackets is an ironic question: whose hand is requesting the money? Is this the
hand of the politicians in Israel? Or the hand of the survivors from the camps? Or maybe,
the hands of those who perished, or in their name?! Here is the German response to the
request for reparations, according to Gilboa's poem:

וְתִמְנַח הָעֵד הַדָּו אִירָּק וּרְתִּשְׁפַּךְ יְשִלְּכֵל בַּפְּרַהָמִי מִפְּרוֹתָהּ נָפֹתֵּנָה גַּדְלוּ מֵעַל מְלֻבָּשׁ נַעֲמֹת לַשִּׁכְלוֹל אַתּוֹ הָטֲלָבָן. הַקוּרְס מַה אֲחַת הָדָם שְׁפִּיתֹתוֹת מַהְרָם מַהְּוָּה.105

And from the other side
will spit, and calculate, and yeshilek publicly.
Scales large as a furnace
stands to weigh
the cross, that collapses here
and the blood, from the abyss the blood destroys, there.

103 Barzel, _Poetry and Poetics_, 102.
104 Gilboa, in Barzel, _Poetry and Poetics_, 102.
105 Gilboa, in Barzel, _Poetry and Poetics_, 102.
The large scales are like a furnace, which do not allow objective measurement. Hence the use of three passive verbs: will be spit out, calculated and be negotiated. The death machine will decide for itself the extent of the damage and the compensation. Gilboa generalizes and refers not only to the Germans of the Holocaust. The cross is placed on one side of the scale, representing the Christian world which massacred Jews throughout the generations, while on the other side of the scale lies the blood which continues to bubble from the depths and destroys the lives of the survivors who experienced trauma and lost their families. The continual flow of blood is a kind of revenge against the killers. The motif of the blood which goes down to the abyss and comes back up to destroy the land appeared in Bialik’s poem "On the Slaughter" (על השחיטה) written in 1903:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ויקב הדם את ההוהים!} \\
\text{ויקב הדם דע החומת חחושרים,} \\
\text{ואבל משחר חודה שם} \\
\text{כלה-_OPCODE_59[ul_e]-הארץ הנמקים.}
\end{align*}
\]

And blood would fill all space! [punch the abyss]
Blood will fill the dark abyss
and eat away in darkesses and rot
all the dark foundations of the earth.

The blood of those who were killed will punch through the abyss, and will consume the rotten foundations of the land. A world that has lost its humanitarian values is built on rotten foundations. In Genesis, regarding the first murder, God said to Cain: "Hark, your brother’s

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106 At the center of Amsterdam, Holland, there are scales. On one side of the scales there is a witch and on the other side a sheep. The witch is heavier. People were weighed in order to determine whether they were guilty. The weighing was skewed.
107 Gilboa expresses his fear of this type of situation: "From a nightmare of knives which slaughtered and slaughtered/with dreams/beyond the pillars of knowledge." (The Days are Coming, 68).
108 Bialik, The Poems, 249.
109 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 11.
blood cries out to me from the ground!" (*Genesis* 4:10). The Hebrew original can also mean "screams"; the blood screams from the earth, and demands justice or revenge.

The source of the motif of destructive blood that calls for revenge appeared much earlier in Midrash *Eikha Rabba* as an explanation of the verse from the Book of *Lamentations*: "It was for the sins of her prophets’ the iniquities of her priests, who had shed in her midst the blood of the just" (*Lamentations* 4:14).110 Midrash *Eikha* describes the event that follows the murder of the prophet Zechariah, who was killed by Israelites who objected to his prophecy. Zechariah was murdered on a rock and his blood was not covered with soil as befits the dead. The Midrash quotes a parallel case from the prophet Ezekiel: "She set her blood upon the bare rock, so that it was not covered, so that it may stir up [My] fury to take vengeance." (*Ezekiel* 24:8). Indeed, the blood of Zechariah continued to bubble and boil, to cry for revenge. Nebozardan tried to quell the rage of the blood by sacrificing many Israelites, but the blood would not relent until he was scolded for excessive revenge, and then the blood rested. According to the *Babylonian Talmud* b*Gittin* 57b, Zechariah’s revenge was achieved when the blood of the Israelite victims touched the blood of Zechariah. Blood for blood. This reader appreciates the contribution of classic sources (introduced here) for widely understanding the role of the bubbling blood which cries out for revenge.

Aryeh Ludwig Strauss in his essay "On the Slaughter" showed how the sentence "And blood would punch the abyss" is a merging of two Talmudic sources. One is from b*Yevamot* 90a, "The law will strike the mountain," and the second is from b*Sanhedrin* 97b,"This reading [Torah] is far down in the abyss," which is a biblical allusion. Strauss explains that Bialik

110 The verse is quoted in *Midrash Eikha* 4:14, and in Eikha Buber on 4:13, as well as in b*Gittin* 57b.
asks for help from "the aspirations of his people for justice in earlier times." If there is no legal framework, the spilled blood will bubble up and destroy the world of injustice – blood will become law, the poet transforms the law of the Talmud into the blood of the poem. This reader appreciates Strauss' explanation as it provides deeper understanding of the blood motif in "Shir Shilem".

The poem "Poem of Compensation" (שיר שלם) ends with feelings of humiliation, disgrace and shame for having received reparations. The poet infers that as the hand stretches form to receive the blood money, it encounters a "triple finger" – a Jewish symbol of mockery.

In an article titled "Let’s have an accounting", published in Masah (מאמר נבוא חשבון, February 7, 1952), Gilboa ‘hides’ behind his first name ‘Ami’. The poems delineated in the above article are never published again. Barzel quotes from the introductory poem:

and perhaps it is not simple math for them. / But light it is, very light / compared to the heaviness of the blood. [...] Because it is lacking / the comparison/ between the money / and the blood.

There is no doubt in the speaker's mind that the weight of the blood will tip the scale. The missing parameter is that there is no basis for comparison, you simply cannot compare money and blood.

Barzel presents additional poems from the article "Let’s have an accounting," which emphasize Gilboa’s point of view. In the fourth poem Gilboa claims:

112 Amir Gilboa, "Let’s have an accounting" (Hebrew). In Meged, ed. Masah, 1952.
113 Barzel, Poetry and Poetics, 103.
If the others / because of miscalculation / and distortion of the concept / claim forgiveness / in the name of distorted principal / and miscalculation,/ then for them (it is forbidden!) but possibly /a mistake. / but for us it is forbidden,\(^{114}\)

The poet makes it clear that the Jewish people cannot forgive the Holocaust, and cannot afford mistakes. In part five of the poem, the poet calls for bloody vengeance:

Then all the nation will stand up// for the redeeming of the blood. / and payment will come. / and it is six hundred thousand (Ribô).\(^{115}\)

The demand for revenge is also expressed clearly and forcefully in the poem "Dew of Revenge" (טֵל נַקְמָה), not just as a cry and a call for vengeance, but as the will of the dead to avenge their own blood. In the poem "Dew of Revenge "the poet journeys toward defeated Germany; he is going to curse [them] in anger and tears, his hands raised to heaven "and on their palms are the wills of my saints -/ dew of revenge!"\(^{116}\) Personal and national sentiments merge in the poet’s agitation, due to the discovery that his own family and others perished in the Holocaust. His strong identification with them causes him to feel their wills, their command for revenge, as part of the palms of his hands. He raises his hands towards heaven and cries out for revenge, which will descend like the dew, in moderation.

"A Poem Forever" (שיר לעולם) is only one sentence: "Should my people atone the murderers of my people, no atonement shall there ever be for my people. My mother, my mother!"\(^{117}\)

There is no forgiveness for the murderers of the Holocaust, and forgiving them will be considered a sin. The repeated call for his missing/dead mother is more like a lament for the death of the mother. The proximity of the words *Ami* (my people) and *Immi Immi* (my mother) emphasizes the convergence of the personal and national in Gilboa’s poetry. This

\(^{114}\) Barzel, *Poetry and Poetics*, 104.
\(^{115}\) Barzel, *Poetry and Poetics*, 104.
\(^{116}\) Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 89.
\(^{117}\) Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 287.
repetition is reminiscent of a similar call, in the ballad "The Rabbi’s daughter and her mother" (בת הרב והאם) written by Shaul Tchernihovsky (1942). The daughter approaches her mother: "My mother, My mother! He says to me..." The daughter is enthusiastic about the knight who offers her jewellery, and she wants the other girls to be consumed with jealousy. At the end of the dialogue, the mother summarizes: "My daughter, my daughter! With necklace of gold, richly clad, /he’ll look at you from the balcony, as they throw you to the fire." Both, Gilboa and Tchernihovsky, claim, through their poems, that you cannot trust murderers! Gilboa concludes also that there will never be atonement for the murderers of our nation.

3.10 Conclusions

Descriptions of Jewish national destruction in Gilboa’s poetry draw on his personal loss, and take the form of sensory pictures, which use many nuances of the colour red (as opposed to the legendary blue). Sometimes Gilboa offers descriptions of destruction without mentioning any specific historical event. He thus opens the door to a variety of interpretations of the situations depicted in the poems. He has children from modern times taking part in historical events, enabling different readers to approach these tragic situations from a myriad of perspectives. Gilboa also uses different language registers, so as to fashion a text that is open to various interpretations, and creates transitions between the language of children, slang and elevated biblical language.

118 Shaul Tchernihovsky, Selected Poems for Schools and People (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: Dvir publication, 1926 (1922), 89.
119 Tchernihovsky, Selected Poems, 89.
When writing about destruction, Gilboa uses the following key words: blood, ashes, smoke, silence, cry and light. The repetition of these words emphasizes the connection between Gilboa and Bialik’s poetry, which Gilboa admired. Zoritte suggests that blood in Gilboa's work is a symbol of destruction and pogroms, as well as nightmares, and destructive physical and psychological power.\footnote{Zoritte, \textit{Spheres of Life and Emanation}, 219.} As I demonstrated in this chapter, particularly in poems highlighting his quest for revenge, Gilboa continues Bialik’s use of blood as representing destruction and vengeance. The ancient \textit{gevilm} (parchments), which appear in Bialik’s poetry, are symbols of national, physical and geographical destruction, and at the same time, the \textit{gevilm} are connected to the pain of losing the spiritual world of Jewish antiquity. By locating "\textit{gevile sefer}’ between \textit{smoky pillars}, Gilboa continues to develop Bialik’s themes. In this new context, however, the \textit{gevilm} are an allusion to the Torah scrolls that were burned by the Nazis.

Even though Gilboa was part of the founding generation in Israel, the trauma of the Holocaust accompanied him and influenced his writing. Gilboa was an innovator in the way he used the Jewish sources. Like Bialik, Gilboa reformulates idioms (concepts) and takes them out of their original religious context, as I have shown in the idiomatic language in the prayer "Please, Strongly" (אנה בכח).

In his poetry, Gilboa worries about another cataclysmic destruction that may occur as a result of the attack from surrounding nations and losing the war. The impetus to write the three poems: "From: Like a Recognized Blister" was the fear and insecurity that the Yom Kippur war brought on, and indeed the poems were first published in \textit{Moznaim}, in July, 1974.
Gilboa describes the fear of being destroyed, the fear of a further exile and he ends with a prophecy of redemption. In the final sentence the speaker addresses himself with a common wish that can teach us about his general approach: "Oy, your bad dream, who prophesized it [!?], may it all fall on the head of your enemies." ¹²¹

Barzel reports in his book *Poetry and Poetics* that in the process of preparing Gilboa’s second collection book *All the Poems II* for printing, Gilboa preferred to end this collection positively. The decision to add the poems of "From: Like a Recognized Blister" at the end of the book was made by the editors, Carmi and Gabrielle Gilboa, who believed that the great national vision therein empowered Gilboa’s mission as a poet.

¹²¹ Gilboa, *All the Poems II*, 264.
Chapter 4

The "Binding" (the binding of Isaac) Motif as an Expression of the Victim and the (Holocaust) Survivor's Feelings

4.1 Introducing the Binding of Isaac

The biblical story of the binding of Isaac wherein Isaac is bound on an altar by his father Abraham in preparation for sacrifice is an important intertext for Gilboa. Abraham proves that he is willing to sacrifice his beloved son, both physically and spiritually, at God's command. In Rabbinic reenactments of the story (in Midrash, biblical exegesis, and liturgical poetry), Isaac is presented as a passive victim who is led to his death, and who becomes cognizant of his impending sacrifice. His acceptance of his fate is seen as an act of bravery. As time passes the use of the binding/sacrifice motif expands and appears in other contexts such as the murder of Jews in pogroms (for being Jewish), in the crusades and in the Holocaust. Many of those who were killed were religious and viewed their death as fate. The poet Bialik would often employ sacrifice in his poetry, including the baring of the neck for the knife, being bound upon the stake, and finally martyrdom. Holocaust survivor Meir Busak describes life in the camps as "Isaacs bound upon altars." Itzik Manger, a Yiddish poet, in his poem "The Binding of Itzik," has the grandfather complete the binding of his grandson: "Come Isaac the bindings are ready." His rationale appears later on in the composition: The

1 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew). The poem: "If you only knew," 141. The sacrifice model also appears in Agnon's story "On the Slughter" as well as in Bialik's poem "On the Slughter."
elderly God regrets saving Isaac, and now demands a sacrifice. The binding in Manger's poems is a symbol of Jewish existence in the midst of Christian Europe. Uri Zvi Greenberg defines Europe "as the ground that binds and devastates / and everyone like Isaac is destined to be sacrificed." The examples above are evidence of the transmission of trauma throughout the generations, from the individual who is bound to the collective which is humiliated and destroyed. The influence of these bindings upon the individual and the Jewish collective fits the definition of "cultural trauma" according to Jeffrey Alexander. Alexander in his book *Trauma*, relates specifically to the Holocaust.

In the twentieth century the focus on the binding of Isaac shifts from the father to the son, much like the Midrash (and unlike the Bible which records nothing of Isaac reaction). The descriptions of the atrocities committed against Jews in the Holocaust employ the terminology of binding, and apply it not only to the fathers who were killed but also to the children of those who survived. Amir Gilboa is among those who experienced the torture viscerally despite not having been in Europe during the Holocaust. In his poems he expresses his pain for the deaths of his murdered family members, writing of them as holy martyrs, and continues Bialik's use of "binding" terminology. In this chapter we shall elucidated the various elements which make up "the binding" motif; we shall demonstrate this motif's usage as an expression of the feelings of the victim and the survivor in Gilboa's poetry, and compare his use of the motif with other poets.

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Yael Feldman in her article "From "Martyrdom" to "Happy Binding", or the "Invention" of the Binding as a Heroic Image in Zionist Rhetoric" discusses "when the secularization of the binding as a seminal heroic image in the ethos of Zionist rhetoric began." Feldman finds the oxymoronic combination "happy binding" in an article by Katzanelson from 1919: "and [she claims] that by his use of this word combination he attempted to secularize…Isaac whom [he depicts as] consciously and even joyfully walking toward certain death (like Jesus?) […] Here the binding is being applied to the present, to the secular, to the army, rather than to its religious historical context." Feldman locates the origin of the expression "happy binding" in the Russian term podvig, "Heroic tale," or "Heroic act". Podvig is also a key term in the theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and its semantic field includes the idea of "spiritual struggle." It appears in the context of a Christian saint who is willing to die on the cross (which is equivalent to being bound, or to going to war. Feldman also brings Adam Baruch's suggestion, which pinpoints the 1973 Yom Kippur war as the watershed moment in the transformation of the heroic imagery of the binding: "Until 1973 the hero of the binding of Isaac was Abraham (the parents). Beginning in 1973 the hero of the binding was Isaac (the children)." Amir Gilboa, who writes in 1953, predated this by twenty years, and in his poem "Isaac" he speaks of both generations as being bound, expressing the feelings both of one who is bound and one who survives.

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6 Yael Feldman, "From 'Martyrdom' to 'Happy Binding', or the 'Invention' of the Binding as a Heroic Image Zionist Rhetoric" Israel 12 (Hebrew), 2007:108. Additional explanation on the oxymoron is in Yael S. Feldman, Glory and agony; Isaac’s Sacrifice and national Narrative (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 44, 92-93.

7 The collection of Achdut Haavodah, Jaf, Israel 1919, 1-22; also in Katzanelson’s writing, v. 1, 103.

8 Feldman, "From ‘Martyrdom’ to ‘Happy Binding,” in Glory and Agony 143-144 she writes: "My guess is that in using this expression [Osher Aqedah] Katznelson was trying to secularize …not the… one [Isaac] who was saved at the last minute, but rather that of Isaac going to his certain death with awareness and even joy (like Christ?),", 93.

9 Adam Baruch, "Epilogue." In Aryeh Ben-uryon, ed. Don’t Touch the Lad: Poems and Articles on the Akedah (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: 2002), 128. (Quoted in Feldman is article, 109).
In her analysis Feldman relates to the differences between the expressions: "martyr," "victim," "sacrifice," and "warrior." According to Feldman, in pre-state Israel, there is a struggle between the historical model of martyrdom (holiness, heroism) and the militaristic model (remembering the heroes as part of the unbroken chain of martyrs) – in the ethos of "heroism and sacrifice." An example of a secular national hero who is remembered as a martyr is found in the commemoration of Sarah Aharonson, the Nili\textsuperscript{10} heroine, about whom Smilensky writes: "...as a martyr she withstood trial by torture and died as a martyr."\textsuperscript{11} I will examine use of the expressions "martyr" and "bound" more closely in what follows.

The bravery of the victim who dies for the freedom of the Jews and their land was a common motif in the War of Independence and beforehand. The emphasis was upon the spiritual bravery of the warrior in addition to his physical and active bravery. In contrast, Israelis related to the victims of the pogroms and the Holocaust as a negative symbol of the passive sacrifice of the Diaspora, who were led as sheep to the slaughter. This is the backdrop for Gilboa's writing on the Holocaust and the war. Gilboa relates to "the bound" in Europe not as to sheep led to slaughter but as to secular heroes, in the same mold as the Israeli champions. An example of this is the description of his dead brother as a hero in the poem "And my brother is silent," whereas Gilboa's brother died in Auschwitz.

### 4.2 Midrashic Sources on the Binding of Isaac

In the Book of Genesis, Abraham and Isaac's journey up the mountain is described tersely:

"And they walked together" (\textit{Genesis} 22:8). There is no description of Isaac's feelings, and it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] This is the acronym for the Israeli underground which acted in favour of England, prior to the establishing of the state of Israel.
\end{footnotes}
is unclear whether he is a passive victim who is obedient to his father, or ready and willing to
sacrifice himself for God's sake. The phenomenon of child-sacrifice, especially sacrifice of
the first-born, was acceptable in the pagan cultures of the ancient Near East. In a later biblical
narrative, Mesha the King of Moab is described as sacrificing his first-born son (II Kings
2:3), and in the Book of Judges Jephta the Israelite leader sacrifices or dedicates his
daughter to God ( Judges 11). Tanhuma (Buber) Vayera 40 collects the sages' thoughts
regarding God's intention when he commanded people to sacrifice other people. God had no
desire that Abraham actually kill Isaac.

Thus our Sages instruct: "What I did not command, did not instruct, and did not cross
my mind" (Jeremiah 19:5) — "I did not command" Jephta to sacrifice his daughter, and
"did not instruct" the King of Moab to sacrifice his son, "and did it cross my mind" that
Abraham should sacrifice his son.\footnote{Tanhuma (Buber) Vayera 40 (Hebrew), (also found with minor changes in bTaanit 4,1).}

The sages understood that withstanding the trial was the crux of the matter: In Bereshit Rabba
R. Phineas in the name of R. Benaiah puts the following supplication in Abraham's mouth:
"Lord of all ages, regard it as though I had offered up my son, Isaac, and afterward had
offered up the ram in his place." ( Bereshit Rabba (Theodor-Albeck) Parashat Vayera, 56, 9:
p. 606-607).\footnote{Jehuda Theodor, Chanoch albeck, ed and commentaries, Bereshit Rabba with compared version v. II
(Hebrew), (Berlin: Verlag M. Poppelauer, 1927).}

In Midrash haGadol Vayera 22:19, this interpretation is accepted:

And Abraham returned to his servants." And Isaac, where was he? Rabbi Elazar ben
Prat said: Though Isaac was not dead, scripture considers him dead and [considers] his
ashes to be scattered upon the altar, thus it says, "And Abraham returned to his
servants."\footnote{Mordechai Margaliyot, ed. Midrash haGadol, Genesis, Vayera 22, 19 (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav
Kook, 1967 (1947), 360.}
Mordechai Margaliyot adds the *Palestinian Talmud*'s version in his comments: "We see Isaac's collected dust as though it was upon the altar."\(^{15}\) Instead of "scattered ashes" what would imply a sacrifice, the Palestinian Talmud uses the expression "collected dust" which lies in safekeeping for subsequent generations.

The binding as remembered virtue and an aid to subsequent generations is part and parcel of the perception in *Midrash haGadol* that Israel is in a perpetual state of bondage: "The Holy One Blessed Be He said: "Blast the ram's horn, so that I will remember Isaac's binding and consider it as though you bound yourselves on the altar for my sake." * (Midrash haGadol 22:13 p. 358).

The definition of the verb "to bind" [ע.ק.ד.] in Hebrew is the tying of the hands and feet diagonally behind the back so as to prevent the movement of the victim, a practice common in the sacrifice of animals.\(^{16}\) Abraham binds Isaac as he is commanded "And he bound his son Isaac and he put him on the altar on top of the wood" (*Genesis* 22:9). The verb רעָקֹד in the Bible belongs to Pa'al verbal paradigm whereas in *Midrash haGadol* it appears also in the Pi'el and Hithpa'el paradigms: "The father binds (מעקד) with all his heart, and the son is bound (מתעקד) with all his heart." * (Midrash haGadol 22: 11. p. 354)

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\(^{15}\) *Palestinian Talmud*, yTaanit, chapter 1, halachah 1.

\(^{16}\) In the liturgical poem written by Rabbi Ephraim of Bunna, lines 45-46, Abraham, whose soul is tied to his son, bound him, in the same way that one would bind the Tamid offering: "When he who was bound to his soul like a bracelet heard / he tied his foot and his arm like a Tamid sacrifice." This is the version according to a number of manuscripts, including Oxford 1154: in Shalom Spiegel, *Legends from the Aqedah*, in *A Jubilee Volume in honor of Alexander Marcks*, (New York: JTS Press, 1950), 542 [72]. (the original is in Hebrew). Also in English: Shalom Spiegel, author. Judah Goldin, *trans. The Last Trial, The Akedah* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 148.
The use of the substantive form עקידה as indicating binding is not found in the *Pentateuch*, and first appears in the Midrashim, in later Rabbinical exegesis, and in liturgical poetry and prayer. For example: "Ishmael said: Now that Abraham is sacrificing Isaac as a burnt offering upon the altar (לשלח תקדה), 1, his eldest son shall inherit everything." (*Midrash haGadol* 22:3, p. 351). The term עקידה is the accepted nomenclature today, and often appears as part of the expression *Akedat Yitzhaq* עקדת יצחק.

The Midrashic sources fill in narrative gaps and offer exegetical suggestions, for instance: The victim's Christ-like willingness to be sacrificed, and the cognizance that the virtuous act of binding would help Israel in the crises of future generations. This reader believes that Gilboa is familiar with the *Midrashim* from *Bereshit Rabba*, most likely from Bialik's *Sefer ha-Aggadah*. Gilboa integrates midrashic motifs into his poetry such as the knife (מאכלת), Isaac's ashes, Isaac's weak eyes, the [Jesus'] Cross, the shofar, and the faith that God will help the Jewish people because of Isaac's right. I will provide examples throughout the relevant poems.


"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac, his son" [*Gen. 22:6*]: It is like one who carries his own cross on his shoulder. "And he took in his hand the fire and the knife". Said R. Haninah, "Why is a knife called in Hebrew by a word that means 'the eater'? [מאכלת] Because it turns food into edibles." [And Rabbis say:] Whatever act of eating Israelites do in this world is on account of the merit attained through that 'eater', [namely, that knife]. "So they went both of them together" [*Gen 22:6*]: This one went to tie up and the other to be tied up, this one went to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered. 17

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If one calculates the number of years from Isaac's birth to Sarah's death, Isaac is grown up, and thus the Midrash assumes that he was cognizant of his impending doom and cooperated with his father. It follows that his virtue is great. The Midrash also describes Abraham's cries as he prepares for his difficult task. Thus *Bereshit Rabba* (Vilna) Parashat *Vayera*, 56, 8:

Another interpretation: Rabbi Yitzchak said: When Abraham wanted to bind his son Isaac, [Isaac] said to him, "Father, I am a youth, and I am concerned that my body may tremble from fear of the knife, and I will cause you trouble, and perhaps [even] invalidated the slaughter, so that will not count for you as a sacrifice. Rather,[to avoid this] bind me very well. Thereupon, "he bound Isaac". Is it possible for a person to bind a thirty-seven-year-old (another version: a twenty-six-year-old) unless he consents? Immediately, "Abraham stretched out his hand". As he was stretching out his hand to take the knife, his eyes were flowing with tears, and his tears were falling into Isaac’s eyes, because of the compassion of a father. Nevertheless, his heart was happy to do the will of his Creator.18

Targum Neophyti19 on *Genesis* 22:10 repeats the Midrash quoted above, and adds more details regarding the cooperation between Abraham and Isaac:

Abraham's eyes looked into Isaac's eyes, and Isaac's eyes were gazing at the angels of heaven. Abraham did not see them. At that moment a heavenly proclamation was heard: "Come see these two unique individuals, one is sacrificing and one is being sacrificed, the one who is sacrificing does not hesitate, and the one who is being sacrificed bares his neck.

The baring of the neck here also appears as a motif in poems of the binding. The motif of the sacrifice/offering will appear again in descriptions of pogroms perpetrated against the Jews in the 18-20th centuries. A good example is Bialik's ironic call to the executioner: "Hangman! Here is my neck, come and slit it!"20 in "On The Slaughter." Gilboa also mentions knives and

18 This Midrash does not appear in the Theodor Albeck version, instead it explain that while Abraham built the altar, he hide Isaac:"He [Abraham] thought, 'Lest that one who tried to seduce him throw a stone at him and render him unfit for use as an offering.'"(Bereshit Rabba, Teodore-Albeck, parashat vayera 56, 9: p. 600.


20 Bialik, *The Poems* (Hebrew), 249.
writes about "the nightmare of knives that slaughtered and slaughtered."\textsuperscript{21} The citation from Neophyti comes from the description of the neck. Isaac's baring of his neck.

The Midrash suggests that Isaac was bound on an altar that had been ready since the dawn of time. The description is found in \textit{Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer} (Higger) – \textit{Horev}, chapter 30:

\begin{quote}
Rabbi Simeon said: The Holy one, blessed be He, pointed out the altar with a finger to Abraham our father, and said to him: This is the altar. That was the altar whereon Cain and Abel sacrificed; it was the same altar whereon Noah and his sons sacrificed, as it is said, "And Abraham built an altar there." That was the altar whereon the first ones (of old) had sacrificed.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

The binding according to this Midrash is evidence that Isaac, the bound one, was part of the ancient lineage beginning at the dawn of time. In Gilboa's poem "Remember" (זכור)\textsuperscript{23} the father is being presented as part of the chain of Jewish generations, for hope and for death.

According to \textit{Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer}, Abraham alone saw the pillar of fire (as opposed to the pillar of cloud as in other Midrashim), which marked Mount Moriah, upon which he was supposed to sacrifice Isaac:

\begin{quote}
Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off" (Gen. 22:4). What did he see? [He saw] a pillar of fire standing from the earth to the heavens. Abraham understood that the lad had been accepted for the perfect burnt offering.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

In twentieth century Israel, "a pillar of fire" was the name of a television series documenting the \textit{sui generis} history of Zionism beginning in 1896 until the Holocaust and the foundation of the state. The series by Yigal Lusin was aired in 1981. This phenomenon is evidence of the unbroken terminological tradition related to the binding of Isaac, including in contexts of holocaust and rebirth.

\textsuperscript{21} Gilboa, \textit{The Days are Coming} (Hebrew), 68.
\textsuperscript{23} Gilboa, \textit{The Days are Coming} (Hebrew), 311.
\textsuperscript{24} Friedlander, trans. \textit{Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer}, Chapter 31, 226.

Liturgical poetry expands the tersely written Biblical narrative, filling in the lacunae and adding sentiments and conversations, basing itself on Bereshit Rabba and other midrashim. The biblical characters are presented as human, as crying and hurting as they anticipate what is about to happen, resolving ultimately to fulfill God's commandment. The story of the binding is embedded in many liturgical poems as part of the chronicle beginning with creation and the patriarchal narratives, for example in the poem "Who is like you, and there is no one who is your equal" (מי כמוך ואין כמוך) written by Rabbi Yehuda haLevi. In contrast there are liturgical poems which focus only on the binding story, such as the poem "A Time for the [opening of] the Gates of Compassion" (עת שערי רצון) which is also known simply as "The Binding," written by Rabbi Yehuda ben Shmuel Abbas.

"The Binding" which begins with the stich: "[It is] time for the gates of compassion to open" was written by Rabbi Yehuda ben Shmuel Abbas, who lived in Fez, Morroco in the 12th century. In Sephardi and Eastern communities this poem is part of the liturgy of Rosh haShannah and is chanted before the blowing of the ram's horn. Every stanza of the poem ends with the same words, "the binder and the bound and the altar," which focuses the attention of the reader on the biblical binding of Isaac. Shulamit Elitzur demonstrates in her analysis of the poem how the poet expands the circle of heroes, which now include: Isaac, the servants, Sarah, and the angels, basing himself on early well-known Midrashim. Even in these early sources Isaac is not the passive victim, but rather the central hero, who is willing

25 Dov Yarden, ed. The Liturgical poems of Rabbi Yehudah haLevi, v. 1 (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Dov Yarden Publication, 1978). The poem is long, but only lines 115-144 relate to the Akedah.
to sacrifice himself. Isaac even gives a stirring farewell speech. The poet reimagines the biblical story and presents the conflicting emotions: on the one hand, the willingness to sacrifice oneself, and on the other hand the hope that this fate may be averted, both of which derive from Isaac's absolute certainty in divine munificence.\textsuperscript{27}

Ephraim Chazzan presents the liturgical poem "The Binder Took [him] to be Bound," which is found in a sixteenth century manuscript in the Sasson collection. Chazzan identifies the key to successfully passing the tests, both of the binder and the bound, in the second stanza of the poem: "Ask for mercy for those you have had mercy upon / perhaps he shall see my plight and yours."\textsuperscript{28} Chazzan surmises:

> From this point onwards the one who is bound, the Isaac of the binding narrative, identifies with the father figure who asks for mercy on behalf of his children and his people. Moreover, the father figure identifies with the children, and from this point forth the speaker is composed of Isaac the bound son begging for his life, Isaac the father begging for mercy on behalf of his children, and the congregation of Israel pleading on behalf of the entire nation.\textsuperscript{29}

The twelve stanzas of the poem record Isaac's many questions, in contrast to Abraham and Isaac's silent walk up the mountain in the Bible. The one who is bound speaks out in a one-sided conversation, the second part of which uses Isaac's question from the Bible: "My father, my father, what is this that you do / here is the fire and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering."\textsuperscript{30} All remaining stanzas begin with the words, "My Father, my father" as a plea to act differently. Every stanza begs for mercy, "perhaps God will see my plight / will

\textsuperscript{27} Shulamit Elitzur, \textit{Poetry of Parasha: The Torah Parashot in the Mirror of the Piyutim} (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1999), 41-52.

\textsuperscript{28} Ephraim Chazzan, "A Conversation Between the Binder and the One to be Bound – Regarding the Feeling of Yitzhaq" (Hebrew): http://www.piyut.org.il/articles/945.html

\textsuperscript{29} Chazzan, "A Conversation," in the web essay above.

\textsuperscript{30} The poem is from Sasson collection.
remember / will have mercy / will show compassion / will grant reprieve / will grant glory instead of ashes / will redeem."

The reader will see in the coming chapters that these poems (piyyutim) serve as a basis for Gilboa’s poems. For example, Isaac is an active character in Gilboa’s "Prayer to Isaac", and identifies closely the relationship between father and son, as in "Isaac".

4.4 The Binding of Isaac as a Symbol of Rebirth and Resurrection

Shalom Spiegel in his article "Legends of the Binding: A Liturgical Poem on Isaac's Sacrifice and his Resurrection from the Dead, by Rabbi Ephraim of Buna" examines the development of legends in which Isaac was actually sacrificed, but was then miraculously resurrected. The biblical basis for this claim was Abraham's return from the mountain without Isaac, "And Abraham returned to his servants." (Genesis 22:19). Spiegel ignores the explanations of early exegetes such as Rashi and takes the verse at face value which is also supported by biblical criticism of the 19th - 21st centuries. Spiegel presents a liturgical poem written by Rabbi Ephraim Shalom of Buna and published in the book A Groom's Domains. The poem records God's command and its fulfillment by Abraham and embeds Midrashim such as the legend of Satan and the fire on the mountain. Abraham sacrifices his son, but the dew that falls on his body resuscitates him.

ירקא ד' אל אברם שית נומנעה.

Down upon him fell the resurrecting dew, and be revived.

31 Shalom Spiegel, Legends from the Aqedah in A Jubilee Volume in honor of Alexander Marcks, 543 [73].
[The father] seized him [then] to slaughter him once more. Scripture, bear witness! Well-grounded is the fact: And the Lord called Abraham, even a second time from heaven.\(^{32}\)

The angels protested the possibility that Isaac would be sacrificed a second time, and thus the Lord stopped Abraham on his second attempt and Isaac was saved. In Midrash Sekhel Tov (Buber) on Genesis 31:42, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi understands Jacob's expression: "Isaac's fear" as "the fear Isaac felt upon the Lord's altar, Isaac's soul left him and the Holy One Blessed Be returned it to him in drops of dew." At the end of the poem, the poet asks that the Lord remember the virtue of the ones who were bound and killed sanctifying His name and help his children in the future.

A different description of Isaac's resurrection is found in Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (Higger) – Horev, chapter 30:

Rabbi Judah said: when the blade touched his neck, the soul of Isaac fled and departed, [but] when he heard His voice from between the two Cherubim, saying [to Abraham], "Lay not thine hand upon the lad" (Gen. 22:12), his soul returned to his body, and [Abraham] set him free, and Isaac stood upon his feet. And Isaac knew that in this manner the dead in the future will be quickened. He opened [his mouth], and said: Blessed art thou, O Lord, who quickeneth the dead.\(^{33}\)

Midrash haGadol 22:12 (355) adds the verb,"And he freed him," i.e. Abraham freed his son from the bonds with which he had tied him.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Taanit the sages explain the custom of putting ashes on one's head in times of mourning: "One [sage] said: We are as insignificant as these ashes before you [God]. And the other sage said: So that He [God] remembers Isaac's ashes."\(^{34}\)


\(^{33}\) Friedlander, trans. Pirkei De Rabbi Eliezer, chapter 31, 228.

\(^{34}\) bTaanit 16a.
one assumes that the sages believed that Isaac was saved, Isaac's ashes are symbolic. It is as if he were sacrificed, it is as if the ashes of the ram symbolized Isaac's ashes.

In the poem "A Prayer for Isaac" שיח ליצחק, Gilboa describes Isaac as alive and well, in reality as well as in the poet's imagination. The memory of Isaac trussed up is now a legend. It will serve as a symbol and as a metaphor representing other bound victims.

Moshe Bar Asher in his article, "Regarding Two Liturgical Poems from Magreb," reports that there was a tradition in some Moroccan communities of chanting binding poems while giving birth in the belief that it would help the woman in her travails. When it became necessary the shofar was blown as well. Bar Asher quotes a woman from Marakesh saying: "When the time to bind came I knew that Abraham and Sarah's virtue would preserve me and that I would survive the ordeal as would the fetus in my belly." Bar Asher adds that it is almost unnecessary to point out that when she said "the time to bind", what she meant was "the time to give birth."

This reader who chooses to combine the poems and the midrashim and is impressed by the symbolic connection between the Akedah narrative, including Isaac's ashes, and the resurrection of the dead, as well as the belief that Akedah poems help the woman giving birth. In Gilboa's poetry, the motif of life-giving dew represents not only personal resuscitation, but also national rebirth. In the fifth chapter of this thesis I will relate directly to the subject of rebirth from the ashes of the Holocaust. I will bring examples of this from the poem: "Poem

35 Moshe Bar Asher, "On the Folk- Use of Two Piyutim in the Magrav":
of the Early Morning", and regarding the birth of poetic inspiration from the poem: "The blessing over dew."36

4.5 The Binding Taking Place: Sanctifying God's Name as Martyring Oneself

In a Baraita in Babylonian Talmud bGittin 57a we find a number of Midrashim which connect the sanctification of God's name and martyrdom, and the willingness to sacrifice oneself. Martyrdom is considered to have a future recompense.

There was an incident in which four hundred boys and girls were captured [and taken by ship to Rome] to [engage in] shameful activity. They sensed for what they were wanted. They asked: 'If we drown ourselves in the sea, will we enter the life of the World to Come?' The oldest one of them expounded [yes]...They jumped into the sea. In reference to [people such as] them, Scripture states (Psalms 44:23): 'It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'(Psalms 44:23).37

The verse from the Book of Psalms complains of the victimization of Israel. In the story about the children, they are compared to passive sacrificial victims who are led as sheep to the slaughter. But this is not the entire picture. Since they knew that their actions would lead to their death, it is a sign of spiritual bravery. Then there is the legend of a woman (Miriam or Hanna) and her seven children who refuse the emperor's request to bow down to the idol and are murdered one after the other. The woman connects between their choice to die in this way and the binding:

And Rav Yehudah said: This is a woman and her seven sons. They brought the first [son] before Caesar and said to him; "Worship the idol!" [But he refused]. As they took him away to kill him, his mother said to them: "Give him to me, and let me kiss him a little." She said to him: "My sons, go and tell Abraham your father: You bound

36 Normally the imaging connected to birthing is opening. God holds the key to the uterus (both for conception and birth) as well as the key for rain and this key for the resurrection of the dead (b Sanhedrin, 113a)

37 bGittin 57b. The translation was done by using the Schottenstein edition, 1999.
[a sacrifice] on one altar, but I bound on seven altars. She too went up on a roof, fell down and died. 38

And in *Eikhah Rabba* Miriam bat Tanhum demanded from her youngest son, a moment before his death, to tell Abraham:

"Tell him in my name: 'You built one altar and did not sacrifice your son, but I built seven altars and sacrificed my sons on them. More than that, for you it was a test, and for me it was in earnest." 39

The spiritual fortitude of this woman who sacrifices her seven sons and sanctifies God's name is referred to in the Midrash as a binding and is compared to the biblical binding of Isaac. Contrary to Isaac's binding, which was only a trial and did not actually culminate in his sacrifice, she bound and lost seven sons upon the altar of Jewish belief.

Just like Miriam in the Midrash, twentieth century poets compare those who are bound and killed in their own generation to the binding of Isaac who was saved. In the poem "Bindings" (עקדות) published by Zalman Shneor in 1958 he laments and is hurt by the Israelis who were killed on behalf of the land of Canaan, who had no angel or ram to save them. His starting point, however, is different than Miriam's. The poet begins: "Boasted [גדプラス עליי] grandfather Abraham to me: / Indeed, both of us sacrificed our sons / in the inherited land [בארץ מורשה]./ We bound them before God." 40 In spite of the pain the poem expresses a pride in their sacrifice on behalf of their homeland.

38 bGittin 57b. The translation was done by using the Schottenstein edition, 1999.
39 *Eikhah Rabba* (Buber), parasha 1, 420. Buber mentions that the name of the woman in Josephus is Hanna. Galit Hasan-Rokem explains in her book *The Web of Life* how wide-spread the name Miryam was used in stories of martyrdom. The source of the name Miryam is from bitter, but also from 'Marta' which means brave woman. In the oldest sources 2 and 4 Maccabies she is not named at all. This is the case in b Gittin.
The binding of Isaac was a model of emulation for Jews throughout the generations who faced physical and spiritual destruction. The biblical story of the binding became a prototype for sanctification of God's name. The choice to sanctify God's name by giving up one's own life is related to the axiomatic ruling in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, the principles of the Torah, chapter 5:4: "And regarding any [transgression] for which one is commanded to be killed rather than sin, if one is killed and does not sin, that is sanctification of God's name."\(^{41}\)

A feature that many liturgical poems have in common is Isaac's joy at his impending sacrifice because through his sacrifice he is sanctifying God's name. In the liturgical poems of Sephardi and North African origin (the North African poets were generally influenced by the Sephardi tradition) one also finds the emotional ambivalence of the father and the son, which is expressed in their cries: "Eye is cries bitterly, but the heart is glad / binder and bound upon the altar." \(^{42}\)

Shulamit Elizur suggests that the crusades were the reason for the difference between these poetic traditions, "especially in liturgical poems from the 12\(^{th}\) century and onwards, which were composed mainly as a response to the martyrdom of 4856 [according to the Jewish calendar] and the other crusades. The absolute devotion and the willingness to die, to kill and to be killed, were not merely ancient legends for the Jews of Ashkenaz, but rather an unfortunate reality. The story of a father who takes a knife to slaughter his son was no longer

\(^{41}\) The situations in which one is obligated undergo martyrdom rather then transgress include: murder, idol worship, and adultery.

\(^{42}\) Rabbi Yehudah ben Shmuel iben Abbas, "A time for the [opening of] the gates of compassion," in Fleischer, 479.
in the realm of trial, fathers did this [...] in this context the great joy of the martyrs stands out as they kill and commit suicide.”

Eliotzur brings a liturgical poem by Rabbi Eliezer ben Nathan from Magentzah (Rabn) in which those who are slaughtered are compared to Isaac:

ונעקד בהר המור אביו כפתו
ונעקב בל יעקב נפשות מאובנות
ונעקב בהר המור אביו כפתו
ונעקב בל יעקב נפשות מאובנות

The one who is bound upon the Mountain of Myrrh, his father tied him up
He slept so that he would not kick and disqualify the sacrifice
We are without binding and will be sacrificed for his love
Our soul shall sing to God, shall be happy in his redemption

The children of the poem know of the Midrash in Bereshit Rabba (Vayera 56) in which Isaac asks to be bound in order to prevent his possible movement and ensure that sacrifice be acceptable. These children, however, do not need to be bound, since they are happy to die as martyrs. Other poems describe the children saying amen after their father says a blessing before slaughtering them. In Agnon's short story "On the Slaughter" the goat says amen according to her way. The goat stretches her neck forwards, ready to be slaughtered.

In 1901, Shaul Tschernichovsky wrote the poem "Baruch of Magentza" in which he describes the bloodletting of Jews and the emotional turmoil of a father who kills his daughters so that they would not be converted to Christianity. He relates to the victims as sacrifices: "Here are

45 Agnon, Elu Vaelu (Tel-Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1968), 371. (Also in Bialik's poem "On the Slaughter").
gathered and interred / the bloody sacrifices." In the father's monologue he claims that "The hands that shed the blood were not mine/ […] but the enemy's hand struck them…" 46 The father's words betray the religious obligation to which he felt bound and which led him to martyr his daughters.

In the Neophyti Targum to Genesis 22:10: "And he took the knife to kill his son," the Midrash in which Isaac bares his neck so that it may be cut is added to the translation. This is an expression of Isaac's willingness to die sanctifying God's name. This motif also appears in Ashkenazi liturgical poems. Agnon describes in his story "According to the pain, the gain", the virtue of the Jews who "suffer all their travails and do not shirk from the pain, and bare their neck to be sacrificed on His behalf."47 The hero of this tale is the poet Ribbi Tzidkiyah, who ruminates that "every day we are slaughtered and every day we are bound."48 He concludes that the spiritual strength of the nation and their willingness to sacrifice themselves to God comes from their father Isaac. Tzidkiyah writes a poem about the binding but then burns it for he is not completely at ease with the binding, and he does not know that his poem was already accepted in the heavens.

Bialik, in his poem "If Thou Wouldst Know," suggests that the willingness to sacrifice oneself is one of the values learnt in the Beit Midrash (house of learning):

אם יש את נפשך לדעת את המעין
פמלי ית滟 אחיך המומתים
בימי הרעה הוהי כזה
תעצומות נפש

46 The translation from Hebrew was made by using parts from: Sholom J. Kahn, trans. Saul Tschernichowsky. (New York: East and west library, Corneil University Press, Ithaca), 122- 123.
47 Shmuel Yosef Agnon. All the stories of S.Y. Agnon, v. 8 The fire and The Woods (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Schoken Press 1968), 8.
48 Agnon. All the stories of S.Y. Agnon, v.8; The fire and The Woods, 9.
If thou wouldst know the mystic fount from whence  
Thy brethren going to their slaughter drew  
In evil days the strength and fortitude  
To meet grim death with joy, and bare the neck  
To every sharpened blade and lifted axe,  
Or, pyres ascending, leap into the flame  
And saintlike die with Ehad on their lips-

In Gilboa's descriptions of the father dying as a sacrifice he uses some of the motifs of Bialik's poems. In his poem "The Spring of 5705 [1945]" the father sanctifies God's name in his death, "he became holy through the blood," and in the moment of his death he calls "to the one," that is, he says the Shema "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." The knife appears in many of the poems (this will be discussed at length elsewhere). In a poem about his father's murder Gilboa writes: "An axe / smashing the diadems- glory of my brothers."50 The idea of baring one's neck for the knife found in Bialik's poems does not appear, the premise being that contrary to Bialik he wishes to present his protagonists honorably rather than as sheep being led to the slaughter.

The poem "The Spring of 5705 [1945]" brings with it a cacophony of colorful sound from which unidentified murderous intent springs forth, and after the murder the surroundings are colored red, even the water in the fountains create "a carpet around the stake."51

Here is Gilboa's description of his father's martyrdom:

49 Bialik, (Holtzman edit.) The Poems, 141.
50 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 61. Also in All the Poems I, 55.
51 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 97.
The father accepts his fate, and relates to the sanctification of the blood as though it was the blessing over wine on Sabbath’s eve. The poem expresses the father’s sanctification of God's name very powerfully and includes the religious side of his martyrdom. Gilboa did not include this poem in his book and it was only published in the journal laHayal (For the Soldier) in 1945 and in The Days are Coming.

In Gilboa’s poems one finds an intertextual reference regarding holiness in its general- secular context. This is apparent in his poem "Dew of Revenge" which was written from the perspective of an encounter with the Nazi killers. The preparation for this meeting is referred to as sanctification: "Afterwards, I will be sanctified through the holiness of my ancestors."  

The yearning for revenge is described by the poet as deriving from the "last testament of my holy ones." In both these places the sobriquet "holy ones" is accorded to his parents who died in the Holocaust. Relating to dead parents as holy ones is also found in Greenberg’s poem "The holy ones of silence" (קדושי דומיה):

Now – my mother is like my father: the holy ones of silence. 
there is a path made by the moon [levanah] above the shining waves

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52 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 96.
53 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 119. Also in All the Poems I, 88.
54 Greenberg, The Paths of the River (Hebrew), 216.
and there is the only son
the survival
in the world - -

The poet imagines his mother as walking upon the water to visit him, but when she does not find him on the shore waiting for her, she returns to the Diaspora.

In the poem "The Soul of My Nephew Broniah" the poet is nostalgic about his joyful nephew, Yossi, in a dream and thus feels that he himself is a "whole burnt offering"() 55 sacrificed to God in its entirety. We can compare it to the poet's wish to die when he was twenty, together with his murdered sisters. This willingness to die is like an Akedah, and resonates only from his love and longing for his family.

Reading the Akedot narratives, which take place throughout Jewish history, provides the reader with an essential background for understanding the way Gilboa presents the Akedah trauma. The reader can find it hard to understand phrases like o'leh kalil (whole burnt offering) and Ma'akhelet (slaughtering knife) without knowing some Jewish classic and rabbinic sources regarding the Akedah narrative. It is important to compare Gilboa's writing to the way other poets relate to the trauma of Akedah, in relating to their era. Therefore, I present sample poems of Bialik, Tschernichovsky, Greenberg and the prose of Agnon. The Jewish people developed a perception of "cultural trauma"(the term of Jeffry Alexander) that starts from the trauma of the binding of Isaac, continues with sacrificing for God, being murdered in pogroms, and then develops a secular kind of sacrificial for the existence of the state of Israel.

55 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 131.
4.6 Survivor's Guilt in Gilboa's Poems

The poem "Isaac" which was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis describes a situation in which the son feels guilty for his father's murder, because he as the son, Isaac, was supposed to die. The poem employs expressions which clearly evoke the biblical binding of Isaac: "together with me and my father," the knife, the kindling, and the repeated cries of the father. The experience is described from the son's point of view and the son's feelings of guilt become evident only at the end of the poem, when the son's right hand remains "bloodless," evoking the feelings of numbness as a result of his trauma. The poem reverses the roles and identities of father and son: The son fears for his life as in the myth of the binding, but afterwards we find out that it is the father who was murdered.

Malkah Shaked in her book "I shall Play You Forever" relates to Gilboa's description in the poem "Yitzchaq":

> The father's binding occurs in a surrealistic environment, and like in the son's dream, intensifies the power of the atrocity of the father's death and describes the son's life as a nightmare from which there is no awakening, in other words as another binding. In this way a double binding story is created.\(^{56}\)

Shaked surmises from this analysis that in general Gilboa emphasizes "the father's death [in the Holocaust] from the perspective of the children, and that he prefers to do this employing symbols from the binding story, perhaps because through this [symbolism] the idea of the victim is better expressed."\(^{57}\) The modern myth of the binding is doubled: There are no survivors and there are two victims. She writes that "the poet expresses by way of his poems the horrible death of his parents, as sacrificial victims, but also relates to the survivor's

\(^{56}\) Malkah Shaked, *I will play you Forever* (Hebrew), 132.

\(^{57}\) Shaked, *I will play you Forever*, 132.
difficult experience of losing parents and family, from both the personal and historical perspective.\textsuperscript{58}

The poem "In the Trial" (במשפט) tries to come to terms with the feelings of guilt cognitively, by asking difficult questions and answering them. "In the Trial" is the personal argument of the speaker with God; every stanza begins with an expression of guilt:

\begin{verbatim}
אם אני שקרן? או לא瀚_meshו נקוף האצבע.
אם אני שקרן בי, אשה נreesome
...
על כל כי, על כל התחתנים, כל?
\end{verbatim}

Am I guilty? There was no [maligning] intent when my finger was raised.

If I am guilty, I'll bear my punishment […]
For this, for this will you make me suffer, God?

The speaker in the poem protests that God is making him suffer without reason. His claims are replete with allusions to biblical leaders, such as David's remonstrance with Saul who is pursuing him: "If the Lord has caused you to pursue me, let him smell an offering, and if humans [have caused you to pursue me] they are cursed" (I Samuel 26:19). He also alludes to Samson and Deborah.

Between the stanzas God gives two answers in two separate stiches, like a refrain accusing the speaker: "Of course, of course, you are to be blamed!" (ודא, ודא, יש בך זאמשו!) These accusations of guilt are strengthened by rhyming \textit{asham} [guilt] with \textit{ashan} [smoke], and \textit{asham} with \textit{sorfue bebaosham} [he burnt them in their stench]. The alliterative sequence of guilt [\textit{asham}], ashes [\textit{efer}], guilt [\textit{asham}], carry [\textit{essa}], and will smoke [\textit{ye'eshan}], is also

\textsuperscript{58} Shaked, \textit{I will play you Forever}, 132.
\textsuperscript{59} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I}, 269.
apparent. This give and take with God in the first four stanzas of the poem alludes to the problematic circumstances: Apparently the speaker smoked a cigarette under a tree, and accidentally his finger caused some ashes to drop from the ashtray. Because of what he did nuts fell from the tree and "the nuts’ shells burst open like a soap bubble" (נמחט קליפות כבועות בורית), and according to God they were burned. The expressions "nuts" and "shell which has burst open" brings us to the symbolic and perhaps Kabbalistic plane of meaning.

When the speaker in the *Song of Songs* says: "I descended to the garden of walnuts" (*Song of Songs* 6:11), the nut is understood as a symbol for the people of Israel. Rashi explains that this phrase ["I descended to the garden of walnuts"] was said by the Shekinah (the presence) (*Song of Songs* 6:11, on the word el).

Why are Israel compared to walnuts? On the outside a walnut looks like it is wooden and its insides are not apparent, if you crack it open you find it filled with many compartments of food, thus Israel are modest and their [good] deeds are not apparent (*Song of Songs* 6:11 on the words "the pomegranates were blossoming").

Because the shell protects Israel's virtues, when the shell is broken they are vulnerable to danger. In the Kabbalah the shell is identified as a negative factor, as the bad part of the good soul. When "the breaking of the vessels" in the later Kabbalistic spheres of the Ari takes place, the sparks were scattered and were mixed up with the shell. Matters will be rectified when the sparks will be separated and will ascend in holiness. In the poem "In the trial," however, this is impossible, because both the shell and the innards of the walnut are already burnt and rotten.

The final stanza of the poem is the speaker's lengthy conclusion:

For I know your beard, thick and of large proportions,
Has one hair [...]  
So linen-like, that it sparked the torches.

God is described here as elderly, doubly alluding to Samson who burns the fields of the Philistines and to Deborah the wife of Lapidot (torches). God locates the unnecessary wood in the forest and cuts it or, in other words destroys it. The speaker's accusatory tone implies that God is an irresponsible governor of the world. The irony of the poem is that God does what God wants and then accuses the speaker. From the perspective of the speaker, recognition of the fear and the guilt within him enhance these feelings. This is a subtle accusation of God. The poem concludes "And your laughter then – [was] fear of Isaac’s God!" In God's macabre laughter there is fear. Eda Zoritte explains that in the Kabbalah fear turns into laughter and vice-versa: "This idea is rooted in the Hassidic interpretation of "Isaac's fear." Which suggest that in the moment of fear, Isaac knows that he will laugh."62

Zoritte reports that "the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, who wrote "Degel Mahaneh Ephraim," relates that his grandfather was afraid of the mouth of the chasm (pachad [fear] = peh echad [one mouth]) – a Hassidic expression for perpetual fear."63 In Gilboa's poem "In the trial," Zoritte identifies "a triple reversal: from laughter to fear to laughter once again: "And your laughter then – [was] fear of Isaac’s God!"64 And he plays a sinister-philosophic word game connected to God's laughter, which causes those to whom God promised laughter

61 Gilboa, All the Poem I, 269.
62 Zoritte, Spheres of Life and Emanation, 202.
63 Zoritte, Spheres of Life and Emanation, 202.
64 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 269.
to fear. "The fear of Isaac's God" is the fear of the God, of the one who was bound whose virtue helps subsequent generations. Jacob said to Laban: "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and Isaac's fear had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty handed" (Genesis 31:42). Radak [Rabbi David Kimchi] explains: "Afterwards he elucidated: "the God of Abraham and Isaac's fear was with me," [should be understood] as it is translated [in Targum Onqelos], but a deeper understanding is that Jacob was alluding to "Isaac's fear" regarding the binding, that because of his fear of God he bared himself in order to be sacrificed. And one should understand "the fear of Isaac," as Jacob's fear lest he would not find Isaac alive. And he explained [to Laban]...because I feared for Isaac I hurried and did not inform you [I was leaving]" (Radak Genesis 31:42, on "the God of my father").

Ricanati (Menachem ben Binyamin) adds that:

In the future, when people will ask for mercy, "Isaac's fear will influence His Name and His benevolence as mentioned. And when he says "in the latter days" this is a hint to the good things that will occur in the latter days. And this is the attribute of "the God of Isaac", but "the fear of Isaac" is the fire which consumes upon the altar, and this is the attribute of judgment up above, which is terrible, as it says [Deuteronomy 4, 24] "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire: The book of the Bahir [section 135] [says] "Jacob swore upon the fear of his father Isaac. Is there really a person that swears in that way, upon a belief in his father's fear?! It was because until that moment no power was given to Jacob and he swore on the power given to his father, as it says, "And Jacob swore upon the fear of his father Isaac." And what is this [fear], it is the [fear] that brings out the evil which sows confusion in people. And what is it? It is as scripture says (I Kings 18:38), "and a fire of the Lord descended," and it says (Deuteronomy 4:24), "for the Lord your God is a consuming fire." (Ricanati, Genesis 31, 42, on the words: "Were it not")65.

The biblical allusion as it appears in this poem says the opposite: the fear of Isaac's God and the binding do not help the remonstrating speaker. The God of Isaac who is bound does not

65 Menachem Ricanati, Commentary on the Torah (Venice, Daniel Bombirg), 283. A computer file is in Jerusalem, the National Library.
help stop the scattering and the burning of the walnuts, which represent the people of Israel who are bound and burned in the Holocaust.

The Isaac figure in the poem "A Prayer for Isaac" (شيخ ליצחק) is described as complacent and self-satisfied. In the hinted-at background there is a positive coming-to-terms with the memory of the binding: "alive among the living / and was never among the dead."66 "And they in heaven /are eagles./ And hate to die."67 He is free as an eagle and lives a full sensory life. His appearance is described as sudden, like electricity (chashmal). The word chashmal [electricity] appears in God's revelation to Ezekiel: "And I saw the semblance of electricity" (Ezekiel 1:27). Metzudat David's understanding of electricity fits the description of Isaac in the poem: "I saw [a vision?] the color of electricity which is the purest and cleanest part of the fire, which few can see; chasmal is a compound word, composed of "chash" and "mal," that is worthy of sensing what is distilled from it" (Metzudat David commentary to Ezekiel 1:27). The coming of Isaac in the poem is accompanied by the gentle shine of electricity, and he is revealed in the light of the Sabbath candles:

He always came simple as that
And was like lightning that struck suddenly
At the light
Of the [Sabbath] candles at home
Which went up with him
undivided.69

66 Bargad, trans. To write the Lips of Sleepers, 190.
67 Bargad, trans. To write the Lips of Sleepers, 190.
68 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 312-313.
69 Bargad, trans. To write the Lips of Sleepers, 190.
Zoritte explains: "According to the Kabbalah, Isaac the hidden and disappeared righteous one symbolizes ascent, and the letters "chet, yod, tzaddi" (חץ) are a permutation of the letters of Yitzchaq, and Tzlif (צליף) is a permutation of the letters paizal (פצל). According to this, the candles (in the plural) are a symbol of the division of the one light, which ascends to Isaac, who is the force diminishing the light, to a further place without any partition, to the light which emanates. Thus the binding of Isaac alludes to the world of the bound, which is the first emanation from the emanator, and only in it does electricity exist ("chash" and "mal" – disappearance and appearance, the light of God's face, which are opposites contained in one subject). Towards the end of the poem the Isaac figure becomes a posthumous legend, and with his silence a symbol for those bound in the following generations.

The poem which opens with the line "Every day eliminates one more bucket in its wells" was written by Gilboa while he served in the Jewish brigade in Italy, and was first published in the collection The Days are Coming. The poem spontaneously expresses his pain as he witnesses the daily demise of people dear to him, whose death he describes as buckets of blood. The poem may be understood as relating both to the death of soldiers and to the Holocaust. The poem describes parents losing children on a daily basis. The poem alludes to the binding of Isaac, employing the plural and speaking of recurrence: "Every day there are moments when [you feel] like glints of a knife/ cutting your insides and blood." The glint of the knife of the bindings kills every day "Everyday someone dies young." When describing his weak vision Gilboa alludes to the biblical Isaac:

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70 Zoritte, Spheres of Life and Emanation, 203-204.
71 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 85.
72 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 85.
73 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 85.
"and suddenly your eyes are too dim to see". This is parallel to the verse in Genesis: "When Isaac was old his eyes were too dim to see" (Genesis 27:1). Bereshit Rabba (Theodor Albeck) Parshat Toldot 65:10: p. 719 on the words ‘his eyes were too dim to see’, relates the following:

When our father, Abraham, bound Isaac his son, the ministering angels wept. That is in line with this verse: "Behold, their valiant ones cry outside" (Isaiah 33:7). The tears fell from their eyes into his and made a mark on them, so when he got old, his eyes were dim, so that he could not see.

Another way [of reading this is] "So he could not see", It was on account of that spectacle. Now at the moment at which our father, Abraham, bound Isaac his son, he looked upward and gazed upon the Presence of God.

The poem "Every Day" (כל يوم) is reminiscent of the father’s anguished walk in Bialik’s poem "My Father", Bialik describes: "Day by day – going to the gallows – day by day thrown to the lions." The poet sees the head of his father as the skull of a martyr. His father went to his job in an alcohol-bar every day, as though it was a desperate duty, until he keeled over, dead.

Shin Shalom in his poem "The Binding" relates to the same daily routine as in "Every day":

מא נפקחה / עיני לעדה, /[…]/ אוכי מולי/ לומד לעדה /oczęo גופי/ ו.listView בהל.  
[...]  
כל תמרך קפ רגלו/ ומרח כורד/ וכמל יל תור/ ממנה הסבל.  
[...]  
ובכל יום תמרך/ יורד ה ולהים/ על בתרי לבבי/ ורצה הוהה.

Ever since my eyes / have opened to the evidence,[…]/ I lead / my body and my soul / every day to the binding.  
[…]  
Every step is to mount Moriah / where the altar of suffering / is ready for me.  
[…]

74 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 85.  
75 Hadari, trans. Song from Bialik, 21.  
And every day, always,/ the angel descends / on the pieces of my heart,/ and the sacrifice is accepted.

The speaker in Shalom's poem feels that every day he is led to his binding upon Mount Moriah, but there is no happy ending as in the Biblical story; the angel does not prevent his death, he participates in it. This conclusion accuses God, whose angel did not save those who were sacrificed in the Holocaust.

In the description of the moment of Gilboa's father's death as a martyr in the poem "The Spring of 5705 (1945)" , the helpless response of the poet and others as they witness the event, glued to their seats is recorded in the poem:

לבדותינו בצאת
ורגלינו מסד
ועינינו לראות יהוה ושמוחה
את כל של אבון
שיםנסל עלי קרא
ל"אוה" 77

We feel a twinge in our hearts
And our legs are in stocks
our eyes see visions and our ears hear
the voice of our father
who while dying still called
to the "One."

The heart is full of anguish, but the legs are constricted and cannot move freely, at least in the metaphorical sense. Undoubtedly this type of situation in which the son is unable to help his father begets guilt. The poem was not part of any collection until after the death of the poet. The father’s death and martyrdom and the son’s helplessness are a feature found both in Gilboa and Bialik’s poems.

77 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 97.
The final stanza of the poem "Every day eliminates one more bucket in its wells" describes the death in every moment. The speaker identifies with the dead, as though his life is dead, too. This identification as well as a stich from the second stanza: "But the fire of your nothingness [helplessness] still burns your soul-jail" describe the sharp guilt of helplessness, the poet's live body remains a prison burning in a metaphorical fire. His inability to save the victims from death intensifies his feelings of guilt that he is still alive while others are dead.

The final stanza:

ככל יום – בו כל רגע يوم
ותוחר מעיתך על אריא סלעים בשמות [%]
ועש עד מוקשתת כל-抑え
את יחודך על- CDN

Every day – In which every moment [ is] a day
And your life dies on islands of rock while being in a crowd
[...]
And your hand still plays music in public
Your unique ability on the harp - -

The feelings of guilt are further intensified by the expression "and your hand still": It is not enough that you are alive, you also show off your unique artistic abilities by playing the harp. Playing the harp represents writing poetry. Gilboa feels that it is not the time to be writing poetry, but as he testifies in his letters, he cannot arrest his muse.

Hagit Halperin, in the collection *The Days are Coming* (139), notes that in the final two lines of this poem there are echoes of the harpist Yasha Chefetz's performance for soldiers in Italy.

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78 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 85.
79 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 85.
The speaker of the poem feels special about his talent, in his case, the writing of poems. This connects him to Shlomo ibn Gabirol, though they describe themselves differently. Ibn Gabirol, who felt that he was special and different from other people, writes about himself in "I am the Minister": "I am the harp for all singers and musicians." The expression "Upon the harp" in Gilboa's poem appears in Psalms 92, "the psalm for the Sabbath" as "through the sound of the harp" (Psalms 92:4), in other words, the sound emanating from the harp. In this psalm, which is included in Sabbath liturgy, one praises God for help against enemies.

The process of coming to terms with the trauma is described in the poem which begins "In order to remember what doesn’t exist anymore / I must forget much." Forgetting is necessary in order to get on with one's life. The poet asks "If only I could throw on the consuming earth / before the stake and the sacrifice/ that it may burn." He feels guilty that he could not deal with the fiery stake and the binding of his loved ones, and could not help against "the consuming [okhelet] earth", an allusion to the knife (ma'akhelet) of the binding of Isaac. In Midrash haGadol (p.351) the expression לולעמל מוקדה "to sacrifice upon the stake" is used in relation to Isaac.

The poet concludes that even the miraculous one escaped early in the morning and did not stay and help. The miraculous one is an allusion to the angel who fought with Jacob and had to return at the crack of dawn, as angels are wont to do.

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81 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 121.
82 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 121.
The poem was written in Florence in 1944, but was first published in The Days are Coming, and it expresses the helplessness of the poet as he was aiding the fallen of Europe. The survivor's guilt is expressed generally in the poem, without mentioning Europe or any nationality.

4.7 The Use of the Word Ma'akhelet (knife) in Gilboa's Poetry

The noun ma'akhelet (knife) appears in the Pentateuch only twice, both times in the story of the binding of Isaac: "He took the kindling and the knife" (Genesis 22:6), "He raised his knife to slaughter his son" (Genesis 22:10). It also appears once again in the Book of Judges, in the story of the concubine murdered at Givah: "And he took the knife and grasped his concubine and cut her up into pieces" (Judges 19:29). The concubine was killed after the vicious gang raped and tortured perpetrated by the inhabitants of Givah members of the tribe of Benjamin. Her body was cut up and sent by her husband to the tribes of Israel, in order that their sin be known and they be punished. The use of the word knife (מאכלת) in this context adds a layer of viciousness and emphasizes the need for retribution.

The use of the word ma'akhelet was accepted in Hebrew literature as a direct allusion to the binding of Isaac, to the killing of Jews, and especially to the pogroms and to the Holocaust. This term was sometimes exported from its original context of the physical and spiritual devotion evinced by Abraham who is prepared to sacrifice his beloved son as God commanded, and becomes a metaphor for the murder of Jews. In this binding of Jews, the gentiles are presented as a violent external force murdering Jews who are the innocent victims.
In the first poem of "Lights to Heaven (אורים למרום) Gilboa expresses his outrage at the vicious massacre which took place during the Second World War, and calls upon the word to listen to the torrent of blood:

Let it know how to discern between choking throats
The lightning of the slaughtering knife, if for one whisper
As it continues this way himself to deceive.

He demands is that we recognize the downward arc of the knife and its glint in the moment of sacrifice. The expression "slaughtering knife" hints at a metaphorical murder but is employed in a different context than in the binding of Isaac. The poet is pessimistic regarding the world's readiness (the world as the general collective of human beings) to develop sensitivity to the committed atrocities. His conclusion is that the world will continue to ignore the suffering and engage in self-delusion.

In a different poem Gilboa's knife is traded for a shiny spear which turns into butchers' knives:

Mornings in my den are as a drawn spear
Which with its shiny sharpness blinds the parchment of wrath
And the pain yearns in caged jealousy
Of the nightmare of knives, which slaughtered and slaughtered

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83 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 50.
84 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 68. Also in All the Poems I, 56.
The separation of "the parchment of wrath" emphasizes the poet's anger. Later on, when he included this poem in *All the Poems I*, the words "the parchment of wrath" joined the second line, which demonstrates how much stronger was the spontaneous response. The rage and the pain over the multitude of murders turn into the poet's nightmare, even though he himself is in a safe haven. It is the perpetual post-traumatic nightmare of the survivor, forever locked in his soul.

The poem "Isaac" already analyzed in previous chapters, preserves the intertextual allusions to the biblical Isaac (walking together, kindling wood) and to the midrashic Isaac (the blood), but creates a transformation in which the father is the one who is sacrificed rather than the son. The murder is described as the glint of the knife leaving drops of blood on the leaves: "A ma'akhelet [knife] flashed between the trees like lightning." The knife gleams and burns like lightning, and the murder is accomplished quickly. The child, who fears for his own life, feels guilty that his father died.

The *ma'akhelet* appears as a simile to the suffering that cleaves the poet's heart in the poem which begins with "Every day eliminates one more bucket in its wells". The loss of life is measured daily by buckets of blood. In the second stanza:

85 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 213, (from the poem "Isaac").
86 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 85.
cutting your insides and blood- on the threshold
and your legs already devour the paths in the passage.
But the fire of your nothingness [helplessness] still burns your soul-jail

The poet, traumatized by the murder he has witnessed, is on the threshold, his feet are in the passageway, leaving, but he cannot escape the guilt in his soul. The fire of impotence, the inability to save a life sears his imprisoned psyche. Halperin, in her notes to this poem, remarks that Gilboa recorded some of his hesitancy regarding where the poem should appear in the volume. It seems that this poem was a key, but it is not included in any collection printed in his lifetime.

The metaphorical use of the term ma’akhelet is also found in a ballad written by Natan Alterman "About the child abram [Avram]." Avram is plagued by severe post-traumatic stress following the death of his family in Poland, especially his mother who died with a knife in her heart. The ballad concludes with an intertextual link to the binding as advice for the future, identical to God's command to Abraham. "Go forth… to the land which I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). The original section, however, which speaks of leaving one's homeland is substituted in this poem for the night of the binding:

לך לך, דרך ליל מאכלת ודם.
אל הארץ אשר אראך.

Get you out through the night of knife [ma'akhlet] and blood
To the land that I will show you.  

Alterman shows Avram the way from the exceptionally bloody Holocaust of Polish Jewry, full of bound martyrs, to the land of Israel, from Holocaust to renewal.

88 Natan Alterman, "About the Child Abram," in Caspi, Take now Thy Son, 253. I changed "To a land" for "To the land."
Hayim Gouri and Leah Aini describe the second generation as born with an inherited knife in their soul. Hayim Gouri in his poem "inheritance" describes Isaac's traumatic experience of being bound upon the altar. When the angel appears, the knife drops from the father's hand and the poet focuses upon what the child sees as he is rescued from sacrifice. The memory of this traumatic event continues to be a part of the infrastructural experience of Isaac's progeny, as part of the Jewish destiny. The poem summarizes:

אבל את השעה ההדיע והורישה לָזאצאָיו.

They are born
With a knife in their heart.

The next generations inherit Isaac's traumatic experience as kind of "original sin," when they are born with a knife in their soul. Leah Aini demonstrates the survivors' post-traumatic state using her father's response to the violence he experienced during the Holocaust as an example. She describes the violent behavior of survivors toward their children in the midst of normative family life. At the end of the article, published in Yedioit's internet paper on May 2, 2011 she asks the poignant question: "Until when will we be born with the knife of the Holocaust in our heart? Until when will we wade in violence?" She suggests that we remember the importance of human empathy and kindness to others, and according to her it is time for us to grow from these wounds but she offers no baptismal equivalent to do so.

89 Haim Gouri, Collected Poems, volume 1 (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, haKibbutz haMeuchad Press, 1988), 211.
91 Leah Aini, article in ynet internet from 2.5.2011 http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4061663,00.html
4.8 The Use of the Binding Motif as Criticism in the Bellicose Reality of Israel

The binding of Isaac is also alluded to in Gilboa's poetry through the metonymy of the bush in which the ram is entangled, itself also connected to the burning bush where God revealed himself to save his people. Usually Gilboa expresses himself negatively, remonstrating with God who did not save his people. The poem which begins with "How the stars walk in their constellations" (איך הלכו במסילותם כוכבים) alludes to the divine aid granted to Deborah and Barak in their war against Sisera: "From the heavens they fought. The stars from their constellations waged battle against Sisera" (Judges 5:20). The poet stands at the threshold of his father's house (Bialik-like) and does not see the stars in the sky which represent the absent deity. In contrast, 'every one' sees the fire "and no one at the bush to guide the fire/ as a Sneh to be sent away - / haven’t - have!"92 The absence of the ram waiting in the bush is a sign that God is ignoring his people and not sending an emissary to save them from the fires of the Holocaust. The disappointment in God is alludes in the poem beginning with the words: "I will grab hold," in the line: "in the dense thicket of sleep."93 The poet forgets God because God is sleeping and will not send the ram as a substitute for the poet's anguished state. In Zalman Shneor's poem "Bindings," the poet explicitly mentions those who died for the land: "But the angel did not appear / to drive back the hand of his slaughterer / and the ram was not caught in the thicket."94 He also accuses Abraham the grandfather of aiding and abetting the binding.

92 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 111. All the Poems I, 80.
93 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 7.
94 Zalman Shneor, "Bindings," in Caspi, Take now Thy Son, 233. [Hebrew in Shaked, I will Play You – Anthology, 92.]
The reason for God's indifference is explained by Uri Zvi Greenberg in his poem "The Prophecy of the Skeletons and the Prayer before the Binding." He lays the blame upon the shoulders of a generation that is not god-fearing and innocent like Isaac, and therefore an angel and a ram do not come to save this generation from the knife. The poet and his friends stand before the Jordan river and proclaim that "we will pray for the generation that forgot its prayer to God for life,/ that is not ready, even with a child on its breast, for the purification prayer before Akeda (binding)." The process of secularization has continued and gained strength since those days and most of us live in a world of secular concepts and feel free from this guilt.

Contemporary Israeli poets use the binding motif as a comparative tool to criticize parents for sending their children/soldiers to their deaths as bound victims of Israel's wars. David Jacobson relates to this tendency at length in his book, Does David Still Play before You? Israeli Poetry and the Bible. He quotes and interprets poetic responses of Israeli poets to Israel's wars, beginning with the Six-Day War. One of his examples is Aliza Shenhar. Shenhar, in her poem "The Binding" (העקדה) objects to Bialik's and Gilboa's approach, which sees the fallen as heroes. Jacobson writes: "Alizah Shenhar expresses the anguish of the parents, and in particular the mothers, when they contemplate the deaths of their sons in war." She builds her poem with biblical excerpts which break up when they are made to face the new world: Instead of God's command to Abraham there is a loudspeaker screaming, an altar destroyed, wood scattered, …youths' games are stopped by "the knife [is] shining in

\[95\] Greenberg, The Paths of the River, 46.
the wadi / in the light of the moon / of mid-border." The angel in white is characterized by his loud behavior. Death is presented as serving no purpose and God's directives undergo a process of secularization, with no shred of holiness, or any hope of divine aid. Shenhar represents a generation which has wisened up and does not wish to sacrifice itself or its children for an ideal. This protest poetry grew strong during the Lebanon war (1980), regarding which there was no national consensus. Gilboa fears for Israel's existence and cannot share the critical positions adopted by the younger poets of his generation.

4.9 Conclusions

The way in which the binding motif was used changed as attitudes changed over times. Beginning with the liturgical poems and songs describing the biblical binding in which God and His angel exist and prevent Isaac's sacrifice, to the descriptions of martyrdom which employed the terminology of the binding story, and then afterwards when the victims of the pogroms and the Holocaust are described as being bound. It is here in pre-state Israel that the secularization of the binding myth begins: in the "binding" reality of the land of Israel, then in the binding of the second generation of survivors and those who stood from afar as their families were butchered, and finally in the highly critical attitude of the "binding" of Israeli society and the army.

In Gilboa's poems the Holocaust victims are presented as bound against their will, without any purpose. Their blood was spilled needlessly by a powerful entity, whose identity is not revealed in most of the poems. He does not accuse the victims of going like sheep to the

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97 Alizah Shenhar, in Jacobson, 121.
slaughter as was common in Israeli dialogue of his generation, rather the victims were
overpowered by a force more potent than them. In this way the universality of his poems is
maintained.

In his book, *The Days are Coming*, a seminal volume of his poetry, Gilboa focuses on the
descriptions of pain and trauma which are formulated generally; most of the poems can be
understood as relating to the Holocaust’s victims, whereas a few others relate to the emotions
or deaths of soldiers. Since this chapter brought examples focusing on the Holocaust, I
present here an excerpt from a non-Holocaust poem which commemorates the death of a
soldier, employing the term friend, which begin with the lines "I would like to sing /
yesterday a friend was killed here."98 In this poem Gilboa focuses on the pain and difficulty
of coming to terms with the death of "a friend" before his family and community were
notified. A combination of the two kinds of dead is found in a later poem (1953) "And My
Brother is Silent." Gilboa describes his dead brother as if he was a soldier. In both poems, as
in others, the focus is on a human trauma and not on identifying circumstances or reasons.

The survivor's guilt is expressed clearly in the spontaneous reaction of the poem "To have
mercy from afar" from *The Days are Coming*: "That you, anyhow, you are the only one / that
saves his own life."99 The guilty conscience of his survival far away from where his loved
ones perished bothers him his entire life and his poetic post-traumatic response is manifest
throughout his entire oeuvre. The fathers are bound physically, the sons suffer spiritually and

98 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 66.
99 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 77.
live in a post-traumatic world. According to his widow Gabriella, Gilboa lived his every-day life in this way.

From the theological perspective one finds sporadic accusations and remonstrance against God who did not come to the victims' aid as in the binding of Isaac. In Gilboa's poetry: the angel, the thorn and bush in which the ram was stuck are disappointing mirages. His poem "In the trial" marks the apotheosis of his remonstration with God regarding the victims' guilt.
Chapter 5

"Suddenly Man Arises": Revival Emerges from Destruction and Crying

5.1 Revival and Rebirth Emerging from Destruction and Devastation

a. The Connection Between Destruction and Binding, and Redemption and Revival

The previous chapter discussed binding as representing destruction and devastation. This chapter begins with Midrashim highlighting the importance of the binding as destruction which ultimately leads to and national redemption revival.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac, his son" [Gen. 22:6]. It is like one who carries his own cross on his shoulder. "And he took in his hand the fire and the knife." Said R. Haninah, "Why is a knife called in Hebrew by a word that means 'the eater'? [מאכלת] Because it turns food into edibles." [And Rabbis say:] Whatever act of eating Israelites do in this world is on account of the merit attained through that 'eater', [namely, that knife]. (Bereshit Rabba (Theodor-Albeck) vol. II, Parshat Vayera, 56, 6: p. 598).  

According to the above quoted sage the virtue of the one who was bound aids the nation in generations to come and leads to their redemption. This implies that following the devastation and the many reenactments of the binding which took place during the Holocaust, redemption will come and Israel will dwell in their land. In Bereshit Rabba the comparison of Isaac walking with the wood for the sacrificial fire to the bearing of the cross alludes to death that is part of the process of the deceased coming back to life. This is somewhat like the story in the New Testament, where Jesus carried his cross prior to his crucifixion.

1 The English translation for Bereshit Rabba is based on: Jacob Neusner, Genesis Rabbah v.II (Atlanta, Georgia Scholars Press, 1985). Parasha 56 is on 277-289. There are small changes in word order and punctuation.
In Bereshit Rabba (Theodor Albeck) Parshat Vayera, 56, 13: p. 605-606 we find:

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram" [Gen. 22:13]. What is the meaning of the word for "behind? Rabbi Yudan said: 'behind' in the sense of 'after,' that is, after all that happens, Israel nonetheless will be embroiled in transgression and perplexed by sorrows. But in the end, they will be redeemed by the horns of a ram: 'and the Lord will blow the horn' (Zech. 9:14).” Said R. Judah bar Simon: "after' all generations […] Said R. Hinena bar Isaac said: All through the days of the year Israelites are embroiled in transgression and perplexed by sorrows. But on the New Year they take ram's horn and sound it, so in the end, they will be redeemed by the horns of a ram: 'And the Lord God will blow the horn' etc (Zech. 9:14). R. Abba bar R. Pappi, R. Josha of Siknin in the name of R. Levi [said]: "Since our father, Abraham, saw the ram get himself out of one thicket only to be trapped in another, the Holy One, blessed be he, said to him: So your descendants will be entangled in one kingdom after another, struggling from Babylonia to Media, from Media to Greece, from Greece to Edom. But in the end, they will be redeemed by the horns of a ram: 'And the Lord God will blow the horn…the Lord of hosts will defend them' (Zech. 9:14-5).

The sages viewed the memory of the binding as a symbol of the redemption of Israel from future travails. The source quoted below is evidence of the Lord's compassion for his people:

Bereshit Rabba (Theodor Albeck) Parshat Vayera, 56, 14: p. 607.

"So Abraham called the name of that place 'The Lord will provide'" [Gen. 22:14]. R. Bibi the Elder in the name of R. Yohanan [said]: "He [Abraham] said before him: Lord of the ages […], May it always please you, Lord our God, that, when the children of Isaac will come into trouble, you remember in their behalf that act of binding and be filled with mercy for them.

These Midrashim from Bereshit Rabba draw upon traumatic experiences which hopefully lead to eventual national redemption and revival by virtue of our Patriarchs. In the Midrashim the Sages try to clarify what are the traumatic events that might break the cycle of suffering and lead to a better national future. Actually, these discussions serve as a way of "working through" traumatic symptoms, and present a tactic for survival. Victor Frankl's explanation about the importance of having a goal for successful survival is presented in Chapter One.
b. Revival as a Response to War and Holocaust in Gilboa’s Poetry

Wars and the periods preceding wars in which there was the danger that the State of Israel would cease to exist had great emotional impact on Gilboa's writing. Gilboa describes his fear of what would come with images of burning. The poem that opens the collection "I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers," which is the first part of All the poems II, begins with the line "I’ll grab hold of a butt of a dream," and continues with the morose notes of the Book of Lamentations: "O Daughter of Jerusalem." The poem was written in 1966 and expresses the fear of the destruction of the national homeland prior to the Six-Day War, an angst shared by many at that time. The poet feels that this knowledge of danger was always with him like a burn "like a recognized blister." The book ends with three poems entitled "Like a Recognized Blister" (כמיכות הכר), written in 1974, echoing the fear of destruction during the Yom Kippur War.

The fear from what the war would bring is expressed by Gilboa early on, in the midst of the Second World War. On the eve of Rosh haShannah, September 1944, when Gilboa was in Anaconca in Italy, he writes the poem "The End of the Battle," and even publishes it in the journal laHayal (For the Soldier) and afterwards in "Seven Domains." The poem as it appears in The Days are Coming describes the devastation and destruction that the war caused as a global failure: "The same moment and in the streets stood the queen of / all of humanity […] and they fell as cards, one house after another / as when the letter fell." The poem then describes vapor emerging from the chasm and from the blood, and clouds blocking the

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2 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 7.
3 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 7.
4 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 44.
sunlight – descriptions which hint at the fear of what an atomic bomb would bring. Whilst organizing "The Days are Coming" collection, Gilboa placed the poem "A City Remembers" (in an earlier manuscript it is entitled "A memory of the battles") next to "The end of the battle." The poem "A City Remembers" balances out the terror of the previous poem. Though he describes the desolation of the city after the war, he focuses upon what survived: The soldiers’ snatches of song, an echo of the explosions, and an anthropomorphic description of quiet roads with mines on either side. His descriptions are focused on the future.

The motif of revival features in both "I’ll Grab Hold," and "Like a Recognized Blister" (הכוהן). The poem "I’ll Grab Hold" alludes to Deborah the prophetess who led Israel to victory (Judges 5:7). There is also an allusion to sleeping and to the return to Zion: "Until I arose, as though seventy years had passed." The latter hint is to the midrashic-talmudic tale of Honi the Circle Maker who slept for seventy years, from the time of the destruction of the first temple until the second temple was rebuilt. When he awakened from his slumber it seemed to him that the Babylonian exile was but a dream, thus the verse: "When the Lord restores the fortunes of Zion, we see it as in a dream" (Psalms 126:1). In the Palestinian Talmud Tractate Taanit we find emphasized that Honi the Circle Maker saw both the destruction of the first temple and the foundation of the second. The final poem "He will Take you with Him" describes an enemy taking the people into exile, "and from the unremitting tears up and down like the verses of lamentations / your dear son Ephraim will be born." The lament will ultimately segue into prophecies of salvation as in Jeremiah: "Is...

5 Gilboa, All the Poem II, 7.
6 The Midrash appears in Midrash Tehillim Buber, Psalms 126, opening words [b]"Honi the Circle Maker," in the Palestinian Talmud, yTaanit 3: 9, 66d, and in the Babylonian Talmud, bTaanit, 23a.
7 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 264. This poem will be analysed later in this chapter.
Ephraim my dear son, is he my favorite child. Whenever I talk about him, I remember him more, therefore, I missed him, I shall have mercy on him, God said" (Jeremiah 31:19). The connection between crying and the hastening of the redemption was expressed by Gabriel Freil in his poem "The Autumns of My Brother": "If you cry until the coming of your autumn, which deepens, which saves / maybe you will begin to believe in the spring that comes from afar."8

In the poem beginning "My eye is torn with fear" written in 1944, and collected in "Seven Domains" under the title "With Kin of My Blood," Gilboa reminisces about his family and ends with a poignant scene in the graveyard: His brothers pass before him in a carriage without horses in what may be characterized as a post-traumatic memorial. The dead brothers, who mutter as though they were alive, tell him what could be understood as their last will and testament: "Whisper, Joshua and Moses – both my brothers- / Berel, the ground is burning."9 The original version contains more personal information: The names of his brothers in order, and their name for him: "Berel." In a later version of the poem, Gilboa creates distance and generalization by placing Moses' name before Joshua's, as in the Pentateuch, and his first name is replaced by the expression "our brother." The dead brothers call on him to save them, similar to the Yiddish poem: "Undzer Shtetl Brent" / אונדזער שטעל בראנט (Our town is burning), written by Mordecai Gebirtig in Yiddish in Poland 1938, as a warning for what could happen and a call for help. The poem in Yiddish repeats the sentence: "S'brent, brider, s'brent / Oi undzer shtetl nebech brent"/ סברנט! ברידר, סברנט! אוי! undzer shtetl nebech brent

9 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 100. In All the Poems I, 75, Gilboa added an exclamation mark in the end, like in the Yiddish poem.
In Gilboa's poem which begins "Like this once more to gather strength," the memories burst forth from his blood and "strike his eyes with atrocities / Don’t be silent." The memories of the atrocities command the poet not to be silent. By writing or by speaking, the memory of the past is preserved, and one can save what is left.

In a prose section beginning: "Not the big calculation, gives it its taste," Gilboa describes the end of youth and the beginning of a young woman's cohabitation. The point of the poem is to infuse the act of giving birth with holiness: "[the young woman] through the fire of forgetfulness dons the power of vitality and builds life." The stage of forgetting is meaningful for one's preparedness for the travails of childbirth and thus for the perpetuation of humanity. Gilboa's use of the expression "the big calculation" in a time of devastation, will evolve in later poems to paying back the Nazis and his position against reparation payments in the poem: "Let's Do an Accounting Poem" (שיר נבוא חשבון).

Hillel Barzel in his article, "Amir Gilboa: From that which is open to that which flows," writes regarding Gilboa's understanding of the need to begin anew:

From a psychological perspective [Gilboa] felt a perpetual emotional kinship with the transformation in the nation's situation after the European Holocaust. He wanted to add to the "Dew of Revenge" – "The dew of blessings" and of joy, and to call for change and the awakening a new revival. This is what he accomplished in "The Book of the Perpetual Day," which is the concluding poem in "Seven Domains." The storm brings with it a new beginning, he writes ("She doesn't walk in the storm," 168), "come and let us call for slumbering with an exuberant strength – and joy shall come into our

10 Mordecai Gebirtig, S'brent (Yiddish), Our Town is Burning (Krake, Poland: 1946), 33-34. Abraham Levinson translated it to Hebrew as "שרפה, אחים, שרפה! / עירתנו בוערה כלה" http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=526
11 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 117.
12 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 94.
13 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 306.
eyes" ("The Song shall Arise and Come Forth," July 1946, 169-170). At the right moment the light shall burst forth and the sleeping princess shall awaken ("A Tale of the Forest," 171). A cloudy day with black edges shall shine in our eyes as the smoke dissipates, as a white prayer shawl ("Roses in the Night," 172). And he commands the poet: "You, Pluck a Song."\(^{14}\)

From the examples that Barzel brings it is apparent that Gilboa even added a few optimistic hints to his Holocaust poems: Poetry as the revival that draws its content from the grief of Holocaust and war.

5.2 The Importance of Waiting for the Messiah as a Prelude to Revival

a. The Messiah Figure in Gilboa’s Poems

In the poem "The Revenge of Words," the words that flew away come back for requital, but this payback is positive. The words hunt only those who kept the seal, those who kept their human attributes, those who were worthy of redemption:

\[\text{ובכל דלת נפתחת עומד המשיח} \]
\[\text{היוצא לפלל בעדן.} \]

And in every opening door stands the Messiah
Who goes out and prays for them.

The belief in the coming of the Messiah because of the virtue of children's prayers and temple worship is presented as the false hope of difficult times. In the poem "Rabbi Shoel and the grandson" the children argue about names and their meanings. The name of the grandfather in the poem is Sho'el but he does not goel (redeem). King Saul (Sha'ul), however, is paired with (and rhymes with) "saved"(ga'ul) – the savior of himself and his people. When the door opens in the evening the grandfather stands at the threshold and asks: "Maybe, children, you heard /

\[^{14}\text{Barzel, A History of Hebrew Poetry, 173-174.}\]
\[^{15}\text{Gilboa, All the Poems I, 50.}\]
the steps of the redeemer [Messiah]?"\(^{16}\) Yair Tzoren in his article, "Who Sits upon a State?"

compared this tableau to Bialik's:

Not as in [the poem] ‘On the threshold of the house of learning,’ here there is an old man who stands on the threshold – the threshold of a new reality, but does not enter. He stands on the threshold in order to peep in, not to leave. One should note that in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition the threshold is connected to the coming of the Messiah.\(^{17}\)

The Rabbi still lives in the old world and will not be redeemed, but he does expect the next generation to do so. It is the children who will first hear the footsteps of the Messiah, as is recorded in the poem "The Revenge of Words."

In the poem that begins: "Matters were very timeworn then," written on May 31, 1044 in Italy and first published in The Days are Coming, the poet describes the atmosphere in his parents' house before the Holocaust: "Fear peaked from the whisper of [my] mother, as she received from Grandma / the fear of something [emanating] from worn pages. / And father spread horror."\(^{18}\) There is a feeling of dread in their traditional Jewish home. Gilboa employs the Bialik-like expression "worn out pages" with which the latter identifies the Talmud. In the year he wrote this poem, Gilboa still did not knew that his parents had died in Auschwitz, and his description is an attempt to revive a past. He alludes to his father's stories about the Messiah and concludes the poem with a description of the natural world and his sisters' laughter. One can appreciate that the legends regarding the Messiah influenced the poet and helped him digest the loss of his family and see it in the broader national context of exile and redemption.

\(^{16}\) Gilboa, All the poems I. 349.  
\(^{17}\) Yair Tzoren, "Who Sits Upon a State: The Nation and the State in the Poetry of Amir Gilboa," in Iton 77, Year 23, August-September 1999, p. 17.  
\(^{18}\) Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 81.
Structurally, the Messiah is at the center of the poem:

---And in the year 5688 young priests shall roast
Potatoes on the fire of the altar
And the Messiah shall descend from his white donkey
To tell in the ears of the children
How he was freed by their prayers
From his shackles at the gates of Rome - -

The figure of the Messiah is described by the prophet Zachariah, who predicts the joy at his coming: "Rejoice greatly, Fair Zion; Raise a shout, Fair Jerusalem! Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass." (Zachariah, 9:9). *Babylonian Talmud* (bSanhedrin 98a) states that Cyrus offered him a horse so that his coming will be more dignified. In bSanhedrin 98a, there is also a legend about Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who found Elijah the prophet standing at the threshold of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's cave: Rabbi Yehosua asks Elijah when the Messiah will come, and Elijah answers: "Why don't you ask him yourself?" He asks him where the Messiah dwells and what will identify him:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: I saw two, and I heard the voice of three." He said to him: When will the Messiah come? He said to him: Go ask him. And where does he sit? At the entrance to Rome. And what is his identifying mark? He sits among the poor, those suffering with disease, and all of them untie and tie all [at] once, [and] he unties one and ties one.  

19 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 81.
According to the response given to Rabbi Yehoshua the Messiah dwells at the entrance to the city of Rome. The sign which will identify him is that he sits in the midst of people afflicted by sicknesses (Rashi: plagues) and everyone around him unrolls a number of bandages and then ties them up once, but he unrolls one bandage and ties up one bandage.

Agnon incorporates this talmudic legend in his story, "The Shawl." The child-speaker ruminates about the coming of the Messiah, who will appear as a poor person who unrolls and ties up his bandages amidst other poor people, and will eventually reveal himself as the Messiah King. He dreams that: "The bird spread its wings and brought me to a certain city called Rome. I looked down and saw a congregation of poor people and one poor person among them was unrolling and binding his wounds. I looked away so as not to see his suffering." On the day of his bar-mitzvah the same poor man appears before the child with many wounds and with torn clothes. The child gives the poor man his new shawl, which his mother had given him as a gift, and the poor man binds his wounds. The child is full of wonder and feels as if he has given his shawl to the future Messiah.

In Gilboa's poem in *The Days are Coming* the bandages are ropes. The Messiah is tied up at the gates of Rome and the prayers of the children have the power to release him from his bonds and hasten the redemption. This is contrasts the Christian view that the Messiah comes from Rome, from Christianity, because he was bound there [in Rome] in ropes.

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The figure of the Messiah in Gilboa's poetry is drawn as a human, as someone who lives with us and will reveal himself at the right time. Also, the Midrashim that Gilboa chooses to bring from the Talmud depict the Messiah as human. This is influenced by Hasidut.

b. The Need to Expect the Redemption as a Path to its Realization

Destruction and revival come in cycles. Hillel Barzel writes that from the distance time imparts, one can distinguish the blessing in the curse:

Though to believe in change, at the moment that the destruction was at its zenith, that was what distinguished the greatness of spirit of Holocaust poetry. For one must realize: There is hardly a poem written at the time of the annihilation which does not have belief in it. The poetry under discussion does not contain nihilistic revelations, though if those existed, one could definitely understand their source. It is specifically the prophetic precedent which informs here: verses of comfort which come right after anger and judgment, are what gives this poetry its spiritual character.22

He brings Uri Zvi Greenberg's juxtaposition: The Book of Lamentations and Strength, that is, the Book of Lamentations is also a book of strength.

In a prose section in The Days are coming the poet wonders how one can truly believe that a vicious fate was in store for millions of people. He elaborates: "The culling in the furnaces of torture knows no boundaries, its shadow does not darken and its light is great and overwhelms. The sign is real and apparent to all who are sad and are desperate and still hope."23 The sufferer is not cognizant of the physical confines of his environment and thus the great spiritual light within him breaks through the darkness of his suffering. The expression "The sign is near" was written in a prophetic style. The prophecy shall be realized only if the sufferer hopes and yearns for it, and only then will he see the light. The use of the term "sign"

22 Barzel, Poetry and Poetics (Hebrew), 284.
23 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 91.
hints to the signs / wonders of biblical tales, for example in Isaiah: "And this is the sign for you from the Lord that the Lord will do the thing that He has promised" (Isaiah 38: 7). The section begins with lamentive remonstrance, as in "how shall I believe?" But later he adds prophetic hope for enlightenment in the near future.

Isaiah employs the "It shall come to pass" (והיה), when prophesizing the nation's redemption: "It shall come to pass in that day, My Lord will apply His hand again to redeeming the other part of His people" (Isaiah 11:11); "It will come to pass, when my Lord has carried out all his purpose on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem," (Isaiah 10:12). In the prophecy predicting the fall of Babylon to the Median army, which is described as a sudden disaster coming from God, Isaiah says: "Howl! For the day of the Lord is near" (Isaiah 13:6). An expression resembling "the day of the Lord is near" appears in the Book of Deuteronomy in reference to the revenge against the enemies of Israel: "To be My vengeance and recompense, at the time that their foot falters. Yea, their day of disaster is near, and destiny rushes upon them" (Deuteronomy 32:35). The Lord will hasten the day of revenge and the day of his war against the enemy.

Hizkuni interprets this verse as relating to Israel's enemies as well: "'Revenge and retribution is mine' – against the seven nations [of Canaan], 'when their feet shall stumble' – the feet of the seven nations [of Canaan], 'their day of woe is nigh' – the day of woe of the seven nations, 'and their future fate is anigh' – the future of the seven nations [of Canaan]" (Hizkuni on Deuteronomy 32:35). The woe that will befall Israel's enemies shall lead to Israel's redemption.

The book All the Poems, volume II ends with the poem "He’ll Take You with Him," which is the third poem of the pessimistic series "Like the Recognized Blister." The enemy shall take
the nation to Babylon and there the nation shall cry under the willows as in the lamentations in the Book of Psalms, and from these tears a redeemer will be born. Gilboa writes:

He’ll take you with him faraway and there
Under the willow tree you’ll cry for your sufferers [...]
[...]
And from the continuing crying up and down like the verses of Lamentation
Your playful son Ephraim will be born again, to walk in his green mountains. You wish to see him in your spirit’s eyes
But you will hold your breath, who knows
How many thousands of years until the dream blooms once more [...]

In order that the redeemer from the tribe of Ephraim be born the nation must yearn for him in their soul of souls. Herein lies the importance of yearning for the redeeming Messiah. But the nation must be patient, for it is unclear how many thousands of years it will take to realize the dream. Gilboa uses a textual allusion to Jeremiah's prophecy: Ephraim is a playful boy, and the root of the word "his greenness" yarkuto is ירק, which if transposed with the ק/ר turns into ירק dear. The verse from the prophecy of Jeremiah is: "Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me, a child that is playful! Whenever I have turned against him, my thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love" (Jeremiah 31:20). The reader is familiar with the liturgical cultural resonance of yakar as it describes God. In

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24 An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter three. Therefore, I mention here only some notes.
25 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 264.
the prayer Aleinu we say: "To your glorious name may they give glory." In I Samuel it states that "the Lord's word was rare [yakar] in those days" (I Samuel 3:1), while the Psalms praises God: "How precious [yakar] is Your faithful care [chasdeka], O God" (Psalms 36:8). In the poem, the liturgical presence adds its part for the yearning for the Messiah.

The trek eastwards toward Israel is accompanied by scarlet illumination, as a symbol of redemption just like it was for Rahab in Jericho (Joshua 3:21). The bright eastern light shall strike the soul of the nation and illuminate as it was illuminated prior to the exile thousands of years before: "[The light] will strike your heart and your inside until tears flow / from the joy of seeing your sins turn snow-white / and you will be revived." This is a realization of Isaiah's prophetic consolation: "Be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white" (Isaiah 1:18). All sins are forgiven, and light strikes their faces and makes them cry for joy. The nation is ripe and ready for the revival which will now come.

5.3 Symbols of Revival: The Morning, Walking, Dew, and the Identification of I-Nation

a. The Morning as a Symbol of Renewal and Poetry

The motif of the early morning is very common in Gilboa's poetry in its entirety, not only in the collection entitled: "Poems in Early Morning," which was written in 1953 and is composed of poems which were written early in the morning, or about that period in the day.

26 Siddur Sim Shalom, 160-161.
27 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 264.
Awakening early in the morning brings with it hope for new and joyous life, which are symbolized in Gilboa's poetry by the morning's light.

The morning appears in the Book of Psalms as a symbol of redemption and joy: "Satisfy us at daybreak with Your steadfast love that we may sing for joy all our days" (Psalms 90:14). Rashi on Psalms 90:14 (on the expression: "Grant us satiety") writes: "Satisfy us at daybreak’ – on the day of the redemption and salvation, which is the morning after the night of the trouble, the sighing, and the darkness. ‘We may sing for joy all our days’ – in all the troubles which happened in our time." A similar source in Psalms 92:3 says: "To proclaim Your steadfast love at daybreak, and Your faithfulness each night." Rashi on Psalms 92, 3 (on the expression "to utter") writes: "To proclaim Your steadfast love’- At the time of the redemption. ‘and Your faithfulness each night’ – and during the distress of the exile, to believe in You that You will keep Your promise, all this is beautiful and good." This reader is impressed by the positive statements of the Psalms regarding morning's role on context of people's life in relation to God.

The early morning is also employed as a metaphor for the birth of the nation. The poem "Israel" presents the boisterousness of soccer fans chanting "el el, Israel," juxtaposed to a description of Jacob's struggle with the angel until the crack of dawn which is clearly intertextual. The transition between the concreteness of time in the poem and the birth of the nation is anchored by the dawning of a new day: "And there is nothing but the dawn rises and the sun shining / as during the birth of a nation, as the beginning." The sun shining in the present is in the masculine (as opposed to the feminine one would expect) and may be

28 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 346.
explained as the virility in the rebirth of the people and the nation. This reader notices Jacob-Israel's struggle and victory as parallel to Israel's national struggle for independence. Those readers who first focus on the Israeli soccer game later find that the poem's real focus shifts to the rebirth of the nation.

Gilboa's poem "Silence's Corners," written in 1945 as part of The Days are Coming collection describes his longing for the return of his dead family members, as part of a revival of the dead, as part of redemption. Gilboa describes the anticipation for the moment of their return:

חדר ירצף בחיכות  
ותהלך אליהם בברכות-שלום  
של אלף בקרים מצרים  
שוא וצירה

The room shall be tiled with waiting  
And the path which hails him with greetings  
Of thousands of distressing mornings.

The word for wait is חיכיון a neologism from the root ח.כ.ה. He intends for us to understand that the room is full of sentiments of longing and waiting, even the tiles are waiting. The tiles appear in a different form in a later poem, "Poem of the Early Morning," as the cracks in the sidewalk. In "Silence's Corners" the trail to the room is happy with thousands of greetings, from thousands of mornings. In "Poem of the Early Morning," however, he takes us in a different, more realistic, direction: The poet greets the passersby, and the original expression "thousands of mornings" is substituted naturally with "thousands of years."

The repetition of the word "morning" (בוקר) in the poem "Poem of the Early Morning" (שיר בבקר בבקר) (apparent only in the Hebrew), takes its inspiration from the paean of praise in

29 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 47. Also in All the Poems I, 72.
I Chronicles: "and to be present every morning to praise and extol the Lord" (I Chronicles, 23:30). A different facet of this is apparent in Isaiah, where the prophet hears the prophecy in the early morning: "The Lord God gave me a skilled tongue, to know how to speak timely words to the weary. Morning by morning, He rouses, He rouses my ear to give heed like disciples" (Isaiah 50:4). Gilboa's poem expresses optimism and a prophecy of future revival.

The repetition of the word "morning" (בָּבֹקֶר) also appears in the Book of Exodus (16:21), in a description of how the Manna was gathered, as well as in reference to the timing of the incense sacrifice and the setting up of the candles (Exodus 30:7). Ibn Ezra in his shorter commentary explains the expression babogar babogar (In the early morning) in two ways. In the case of the Manna he explains that it refers to the time before the sun rises. Regarding the setting up of the candles in the tabernacle he explains: "Every day in the morning. And what it means to set up candles – it means caring for the wicks, so that the light from the candle is good." The light in Gilboa's poetry appears in context of future renewal.

One should note that Bialik uses the expression babogar babogar, prior to Gilboa in his poem: "When the Days Grow Long" ("From the Visions of the Later Prophets") והיה כי יארכו הימים. The first part of the poem describes desolation and emptiness, a jeremiad. But in the second part of the poem there is a messianic awakening among those present in the poem, and their ears are attuned to the coming of the Messiah. The description of the early rising in the morning:

[...]
Very early in the morning, just before sunrise
The man, in the seclusion of his tent,
Weary from wandering, sated with dreams, empty of soul
Will rise from his bed, [...] and seek the Messiah! 31

Gilboa adopted Bialik's juxtaposition of jeremiads ending with a hopeful note as is apparent in the collection *The Days are Coming*, though Gilboa only hints of hope in the second half of the poems.

The building blocks of the poem "Poem of the Early Morning" (שיר בבקר בבקר) are renewal, revival, and Jewish identification. Barzel writes that this poem "was according to many, the most succinct expression of the feeling of enlightenment and reawakening, which accompanied the foundation of the state."32 The poem begins with a personal and national awakening:

Suddenly a person gets up in the morning and feels he’s a people and begins to walk

33 Gilboa, *All the Poem I*, 281.
And calls out "shalom" to everyone he meets on his way.

Dew drops sprinkle and mountains, ten thousand sunbeams – they bring forth a canopy of sun for his betrothed.

And he laughs the courage of generations from the mountains
And, ashamed, all wars bow down
To the glory of a thousand years mysteriously flowing.

A thousand young years are before him –
Like a cool stream.
Like a shepherd’s song.
Like a limb of a tree.\textsuperscript{34}

In this poem Gilboa uses a number of elements to symbolize the revival of the people and the nation: An early-morning nature walk, invigorating dew, the identification of oneself with the nation, the connection between the past and the creation of a hopeful future.

Tzvi Luz refers to the opening line of the poem:

\begin{quote}
The human being, who is the personal and the national intertwined, led Gilboa to create some of the most succinct expressions regarding the founding of the state. With these expressions, his \textit{oeuvre} may be seen as part of the chain of national Hebrew poetry, an heir to Bialik's great poetry, to Y. Lamdan, to Uri Zvi Greenberg, and to S. Shalom.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

The person who takes a walk in the early morning is happy to meet other people and interacts joyfully with his natural environment. The dewdrops and the mountains shine and create a wedding canopy for his marriage with nature, and for the individual with the nation. It is a morning of renewal and hope for a better future, just like the optimism following a wedding.

The bravery of previous generations is placed on a pedestal and the wars hide themselves in shame and bow down before one thousand years of nobility, which continue to bubble forth and flourish in hidden places. The number "one thousand" appears again as a symbol in the next stanza "A thousand young years are before him – / Like a cool stream." In the book of

\textsuperscript{34} Bargad, trans. \textit{To Write the Lips of Sleepers}, 179.
\textsuperscript{35} Tzvi Luz, "Region and Centre – Amir Gilboa", in Avraham Balaban, ed, \textit{Amir Gilboa: Selected Critical Essays on his writing} (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Press, 1972), 138.
Psalms there is a comparison between the human day and the divine day: "For in Your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that has past, like a watch of the night" (Psalms 90:4). The book of Psalms also describes God coming to Mount Zion accompanied by thousands of chariots and fanfare, as he did at Mount Sinai: "God’s chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai in holiness" (Psalms 68:18). It seems that one may interpret God's chariots as being thousands of years old, which adds an aura of great antiquity to the expression "one thousand years." The allusion to the book of Psalms enriches the text and hints at the two-thousand year exile.

The poet and the nation's future are set before them fresh like a bubbling brook of clear cold water. The image "Like a shepherd’s song" hints to the nation's past, a past in which they were shepherds, or perhaps the use of the word "shepherd" is a metaphor for leadership. This reading points not only to the renewal of the nation but also to the renewal of Israeli leadership. The third image "like a limb (branch)" is an allusion to Ezekiel's prophecy of redemption: "Thus said the Lord God: Then I in turn will take and set from the lofty top of the cedar; [...] I will plant it in Israel’s lofty highlands, and it shall bring forth boughs and produce branches and grow into a noble cedar" (Ezekiel 17:22-23). Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi, 12c., France) in his commentary on this verse, on the words, "from the top branches," explains that the Lord will take a branch from this same cedar tree which represents the highest levels of leadership, which were exiled to Babylon, and will plant it in Israel. The tree will grow and become a strong cedar. This branch is identified as Zerubabel the son of Shaltiel, the sons of Yehoyachin. Metzudat David (17 c., Poland) identifies the branch as the Messiah from the house of David: "In the days of the Messiah I will take a scion from the house of David and place him upon the throne in Jerusalem" (Metzudat David
commentary for verse 23). He will plant him on a high mountain so that he shall have a good view of the surroundings.

Eli Shavid sees this poem as evidence of spontaneous creativity, reflected in freer rhythmic structures, the use of wordplays and subjective imagery. In his words these poems represent the release of a sudden urge which is satisfied in this bizarre and wonderful combination. Through this he discovers a natural state of mind or behavior. The poem expresses a naïve awakening representing a person's state before actually encountering the new world, where the forces are on the cusp of being revealed, and they know the power of their elasticity without being able to guess the imperviousness of that which stands against them, like a spring in which the internal tension is an absolute, and the outside is simply the place where it is released. 36

Zoritte notes the originality Gilboa evinces in this poem:

A person needs a great deal of audacity to write in a high prophetic register, where he appears as the master of the environment and the crowned emissary of his people, as the Messiah [...] whoever makes the long journey from the depth of sorrow to the pinnacles of the lofty experience of identification and faith with Gilboa sees how this style is a chip off of his personal block. 37

The purpose of the human being according to Hasidic thought is to feel the community.

b. The Mornings' Scream

In the first poem that Gilboa published in Israel, "For then I will Scream," there is an element of the tone he employed in the Yiddish poem he published in Poland in his youth. The poem was published in Yediot of the haHalutz in 1933.

In the Yiddish poem, "A life of stone and iron" א לעבן פון שטיין און פון אייזן (in Barzel's Hebrew translation: חיים של אבן ושל ברזל) the poet describes how he was acclimated to the

37 Zoritte, Sphere of Life and Emanation, 228.
difficult life of the pioneer in the preparatory camps in Poland. Barzel writes about the holiness of labor, and how his materialism ascended to heaven: "Backbreaking, grey work, difficult, is actually an expression for a new morning, full of song, personal, national."  

An excerpt from the Yiddish composition:

"עס ווייסן פיס שואאכע: די نيיזן אטשקנט אנאראגָן א נייעם, באשטראלאן – "

In translation: "Weak feet know: They march toward a new morning, bright and fresh."

This line contains a few elements indicating the departure from a difficult reality toward renewal: the morning motif, marching forward to a bright future.

The scream in the poem "For then I will Scream" expresses an uncontained emotion bursting forth, which may be identified as poetry. It is a response to his difficulty in adapting to Israel and to the beginning of World War II. He calls for help and for action. The fourth stanza betrays his feelings of helplessness, but hints at revival: "And this was the scream of the rejoicing-morning. / The sound of thousands of suns at my feet."  

This line hints at a later poem "Poem of the Early Morning": The happiness of "the rejoicing mornings" is connected to the expression "the scattered dews" and "thousands of suns," which evolved into the sun as a canopy and one thousand years of youth and positive acts. Moshe Shamir writes that Gilboa draws his poems "from tragedy, which is not only the tragedy of the individual struggling with his torture, but also the tragedy of a person who struggles in his attempt to conquer the world which passes him by, with all its thousands of faces and myriads of meaning."  

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40 Moshe Shamir, "The writer and his creation", in Balaban, 40.
c. The Dew as a Symbol of Blessing and Renewal

The basis for dew as a symbol of renewal and blessing is found in the Bible, especially in the Book of Psalms. In the figuratively rich verse, Psalms 110:3, the dew is described as being born in the womb of dawn, which coalesces into the dew of youth, of positivity: "Your people come forward willingly on your day of battle. In majestic holiness, from the womb, from the dawn, yours was the dew of youth."

Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi) explains in his commentary on the word "your people" that the people come to ask for benevolence on the day that God showed his might in the war in holy Jerusalem. Radak continues:

"from the womb, from the dawn, yours was the dew of youth,"- the day you emerged from the womb and you were born, that day the dawn was for you, in other words for your benefit. And the dew that fell on the day you were born, that was for you. In other words, from the womb you emerged as royalty, and the dew of blessing was yours on that same dawn (Radak, Psalms 110:3).

The Malbim explains that the nation volunteered for the army, and that the verse was addressing David:

It means that though you sinned with Batsheva, the dew of your childhood, the good deeds that you did when you were young will be like dew, and make your glory sprout. And he notes that the dew will fall in holy glory, for he was anointed in his youth with the oil of anointment, and this shall be like dew for him, like the good oil which falls upon the beard, like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion. And the dew comes at dawn and then the dawn shall give birth to the dew, and thus he imagined metaphorically that the dew came out of the womb of dawn, which means that the dew of his youth was born at the same time his light sprung forth, as it says, "With the light of the morning comes the sun," which is a metaphor for the kingdom which sprouts forth like dawn, and then the dew of his youth shall ascend in holy glory and shall be anointed in oil, and this dew shall still be there for him (Malbim, Psalms 110:3).
The above commentaries emphasize the connection between the dew of blessing, which is accompanied by forgiveness for past sins and the emergence of a bright new kingship. The dew of youth is a blessing for life.

d. The Dew of the Hermon as a Metonymy for Yearning for Israel

Poets who lived in exile expressed their longing for Israel through rich depictions of Israel's natural environment, and specifically the dew which descended upon the Hermon mountain. Rabbi Yehudah haLevi in his poem "Zion, Won’t You Ask?" expresses his personal exile as that of a prisoner who wishes to come to Israel and cries with longing: "He lets his tears flow like the dew / of Hermon and longs for them to fall on your mountains!"\(^{41}\) The image of tears like dew upon the Hermon intensifies the sentiment, and the poet aspires that his tears fall upon the mountains of Israel. Rabbi Yehuda haLevi ask Zion to find out how her children fare, and Bialik asks the bird if it brings regards from the Land of Israel. In his poem "To the bird" Bialik asks: "Will the dew fall like pearls upon mount Hermon / will it fall and flow like tears?"\(^{42}\) The dew is at the center of the image, does the dew fall upon Mount Hermon like pearls or like tears? In this poem the pearl and the tear make their first appearance, they will evolve into a key motif of Bialik's poetry.

e. The Blessing of Dew as Revival

In Isaac's blessing to Jacob the dew is quite prominent: "May God give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, abundance of new grain and wine" (Genesis 27, 28).

\(^{41}\) Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, *Selected Poems (Hebrew)*, 72.

\(^{42}\) Bialik, *The Poems* (Hebrew), 15.
The Ramban on this verse beginning with the words: "rather, its explanation is" questioned this prominence, because ostensibly the dew was given to everyone, he answers:

So [Isaac] said, "May God give you a blessing of the dew of the heaven and the fatness of the earth" – for the term "blessing" refers to increase and abundance. […] The most sound interpretation in my view is that a gift from God is constant and has no interruption ever. Thus he was saying, "May God give you all your days on the earth of the dew of the heavens." "And may He give you …the fatness of the earth," means, "the fattest,[i.e., most fertile], of all lands," namely, Eretz Yisrael, like the concept stated [regarding Eretz Yisrael], "It is the splendor of all the lands" (Ezekiel 20:6). 43

The prayer for dew is found in the amidah prayer: "He who causes dew to fall."

Midrash Aggadah (Buber) Exodus 22 [24] beginning with the words "if money," regarding the prohibition against taking interest on loans and the lender who is buried in an impure place and will not merit revival from the dead:

He said, prophesize concerning these bones; The Master of the Universe said: when I prophesize concerning them, they shall be connected with flesh and sinews. He said to him, prophesize, and when the sound of my prophecy [was heard], behold there was a [very] loud noise and the bones gathered together (Ezekiel 37:7). Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah said: Resurrection descended upon them, which is dew from the heavens, and then the sinews and flesh bubbled forth like a stream bubbling with water, right then He said to Ezekiel (son of man): Prophesize concerning the wind (Ezekiel 37:9), at that moment the four winds of heaven came forth and opened the four treasuries of souls, and every person got their soul back, as it says, and the spirit came into them and they lived, and stood upon their feet in a great host. (Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Exodus 22:24)

Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (Higger) Horev, 34 (33 in Hebrew), beginning with the words "See that now" states:

In the future life the Holy one, blessed Be, will cause the reviving dew to descend, and will quicken the dead and renew all things, as it is said: "Thy dead shall live." […] They are the Israelites, who died trusting in His name. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." They are the righteous, for they dwell in the dust. "For thy

"dew is as the dew of light": And it gives healing to the earth, as it said, "And the earth shall cast forth the dead." [...] Rabbi Tanchum said: On account of the seed of the earth, when it is commanded, (it) discharges the dew for the resurrection of the dead. From what place does it descend? From the head of the Holy One [...] is full of the reviving dew. In the future life the Holy One, blessed be He, will shake His head and cause the quickening dew to descend, as it is said, "I was asleep, but my heart waked ...for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night. (Song of Songs 5:2)"

The full verse from the *Song of Songs* is "I was asleep, but my heart was wakeful. Hark, my beloved knocks! "Let me in, my own, my darling, my faultless dove! For my head is drenched with dew, my locks with the damp of night." (Song of Songs 5:2). The accepted understanding of this verse is that it is an allegory for the relationship between God and Israel. The first part of the verse from the *Song of Songs* is explained by Rabbi Joseph Soleveichik in his article: "My beloved knocks," as God's call to found the State of Israel, and the revival of the nation in their homeland. In the fourth chapter entitled "Six Knocks," Rabbi Soleveichik describes the nightmarish atmosphere of the death camps and the search for help and prayer, he writes:

The Almighty, who was hiding in His splendid sanctum, suddenly appeared and began to beckon at the tent of the Lover, who tossed and turned on her bed beset by convulsions and the agonies of hell. Because of the beating and knocking at the door of the mournful Lover, the State of Israel was born."

From the suffering of the Holocaust the State of Israel was born as a political and geographical entity, which would answer the Jews' need for defense.

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f. The Reviving Dew as a Symbol of Poetry and Speech

In Moses' last poem-speech, "Haazinu (listen) Poem" (שירת האזינו), Moses wishes that his words be received like dew and rain which fertilize the earth: "May my discourse come down as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like showers on young growth, like droplets on the grass." (Deuteronomy 32:2). Dew appears in the Bible as a symbol for prayer and as bringing blessing and growth. One can bring modern proof of the scriptural claim of the reviving power of dew from the annals of scientific inquiry. Below you will find an excerpt from the doctoral proposal of the agronomist Mordechai (Moti) Shomron, from Ben Gurion University. Shomron brings research to show the dew's influence upon the efficiency of water usage:

In research projects of recent years (Ben Asher et al 2010) it was found that dew has a positive effect upon the ability of plants to photosynthesize and increase the efficiency of water use (WUE – water use efficiency). It was found that when dew was present, the WUE of the plant grew by 20-40%. According to these results one can surmise that dew has a positive effect on plant-growth in dry areas, and in semi-dry areas, such as the Northern Negev. In this area there is low precipitation but there are many dewy nights (Zangvil 1996, Goldreish 2003). In these conditions the influence of the dew on water use efficiency is clear cut (van Keulen and Wolf 1986).

The connection between morning dew which revives and the resurrection of the dead was already made by Isaiah: "Oh, let Your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake and shout for joy, You who dwell in the dust!- For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth; You make the land of the shades come to life." (Isaiah 26:19). In the same way that dew revives vegetables, it will revive the dead. In the Babylonian Talmud, bBerakhot, 57b, sleep is considered to be a small death: "sleep – is one sixtieth of death," and thus waking up is parallel to revival.

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Dew reviving the dead appears in the *Palestinian Talmud* in Tractate Taanit 1a, 81d:

The Holy one Blessed be said to Elijah: Go and release dew from its vow, since the dead do not come to life without dewdrops, and I am reviving the son of the woman from Tzarfat. And how do we know that the dead do not come back to life without dewdrops? Because it says: "Your dead shall come to life, their carcasses shall arise, the inhabitants of the ground shall awaken and sing, for Your dew, is the dew of light [Isaiah 26:19]."

Gilboa's poem "A Blessing for Dew" (ברכת טל) opens with an allusion to the love permeating the *Song of Songs* and ends with the drops of dew which are used as the letters of love for the composition of his poetry. In the early morning: "my blinds and my windows are opened/ and on the window-sill – fragment of dew/ write my early-morning poems." The male lover in the *Song of Songs* says: "For my head is filled with dewdrops, my locks with the droplets of the night" (*Song of Songs* 5:2), and Gilboa created a composition out of these dewdrops. In the midst of the war in 1942, however, Gilboa wrote a prose piece which begins with the sentence: "I won’t name the morning, since I don’t know": "There were once days, and one like that one, would hear them [the chirping of the birds], he saw the songs of the book of Psalms upon the rooftops and the fences as blessed dew, upon that day his heart and eye destroyed themselves like beat up bronze." The lack of clarity regarding the fate of his loved ones, and how the war would end prevented him from composing poetry.

Zoritte surmises that Gilboa saw his poetry as a kind of a holy mission: "This [his poetry] was for him the "dew" that would water the graves and bring words to the lips of his sleeping loved ones and revive them." One should note that those who perished in the Holocaust

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47 Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 338.
48 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 93. It was printed like a poem in *All the Poems I*, 60.
49 Zoritte, *Spheres of Life and Emanation*, 129.
have no marked graves and using this formulation comes from his yearning to ground his poetry in a way to which people could relate. Gilboa resuscitates his loved ones through his poetry, such as Yossi who lives in his memory as a happy and laughing figure in the poem "The Soul of Yossi the Son of Brunyah my Sister." The dead ones, however, cannot be revived every time.

The poem "Dew of Revenge" (תל נקמות) appears in The Days are Coming collection (Florence, in the hospital, November 7, 1944) without a title, whereas in All the Poems I Gilboa gave the poem a title and placed it in the "Of the very blue nights of Florence" section. The poem opens with a walk towards the defeated Germans and is characterized by anger and tears. Three times he repeats the words: "I am going to" (אני הולך ל) at the beginning of a line, twice this anaphora continues with the expression "towards you," and the third time, when his anger is greater the final words in the line are the emphatic "to curse you in anger," and the final Hebrew word of the sentence ubivkhi ("and with tears") gets its own line. The march continues in the second stanza with the anaphora "I am walking to." After he buries the harshness which characterizes his enemy he begins a new stage of accepting the holiness of his ancestors, and thus his values overcome his anger: He holds back his tears at being an orphan. This control allows him to survive and to revive himself.

The poem concluded using a verb in the future form: the poet will find his hands up. His hands are raised as though in supplication to heaven "And on the palms of their hand, the testaments of my holy ones -/ Dew of revenge!" The use of the plural: "the palms of their

50 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 131.
51 Gilboa, The poem "Dew of Revenge" in All the Poems I, 88-89; in The Days are Coming, 119.
52 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 89.
hands" as opposed to "the palms of my hands," the inheritance of his holy ones, clarifies that
the revenge is in fulfillment of his family's will and testament. The revenge is expressed
through the element which revives – the dew. The dew is a layer of miniscule water droplets
which lie upon the ground as the morning comes; it is not a strong flow of water which could
symbolize a mighty revenge. In dew there is a blessing and a giving of life to plants and thus
its use with the term "revenge," softens the revenge into a blessing of sorts for the dead, who
are mentioned in the poem as possessing holiness, perhaps hinting to the Yizkor (memorial)
prayer.

We see the importance of "dew" as revival which alludes to the resurrection of the dead. This
idea appears in biblical commentaries and in the Talmud. Gilboa refers to the drops of dew as
letters for his poems. He even uses the blessing of dew in order to restrain the desire for
revenge; instead of the phrase "God (El) of revenge" he creates "dew of revenge".

**g. Walking as a Sign of Revival and Renewal**

Walking was an integral part of Amir Gilboa's biography: Walking and gazing at Israel's
vistas in contrast to his homeless wandering during his early years in Israel. Zoritte expands
upon this: "But the walking is also a sign of the continual flowing of the [his] spirit, of
internal restlessness and the wandering within the kingdom of the subconscious."53 According
to her, the imagery which emerges from his deep subconscious then meets the general human
or national consciousness.

53 Zoritte, *Spheres of Life and Emanatin*, 220.
Zoritte also discusses the Hassidic-Kabbalistic associations of walking in the poem "Upon the trail upwards" (בדרה העולה):

And he walks upon the noisy path of burning,  
and the entire nation was with him, but he was alone.  
And the path was for him as a female Levite and Priestess  
And he was to her as a gift for words

According to Kabbalah the combination of a Levite and a priest, of Moses and Aaron, hints at the spheres of Netzach [eternity] and Hod [splendor], an identification which is bolstered by the description of his two feet while they march. His feet start their march as they stand their own with constraint and hate but develop towards a positive behavior of love and joy.

At the end of the stanza, the young poet "gives" (the Aramaic loanword yahav is used, which is equivalent to the Hebrew natan) his word to complete his mission. The poem begins with a Samson-like walk and associations with Delilah (sleep, rope); seeing his image in a trough, parallel to his image mirrored in a well (alluding to revival), the rocks, and the moaning of the storm and the echo – ends positively, with love and joy. The voice of the young poet is at one with the echo, which relates to the command to the nation:

And he heard his voice, in hollow tones  
Which were heavy as stone and they built the tower.

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54 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 34.  
55 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 34.
And an echo answered him. An echo of voices from marketplaces
Which composed the command: my nation, grow!

The rhyme scheme (abab) emphasizes the connection between the voice of the poet that "built a tower" which symbolizes future aspirations and the echo which commands the people to grow and revive themselves. Building the tower hints to the Israelis' system of establishing settlement by "wall and tower" in pre-Israel state. In walking there is identification between the positive personal goals and the national goals.

5.4 Revival in the Land
a. The Motto of the Poem "Poems on the Perpetual (Tamid) Day"

The motto of the poem "Poems on the perpetual day" begins with the prophecy of redemption and does not contain the difficult tone of the book *The Days are Coming*.56

Pathways glow from the inside
And wind caresses their backs as a big father.
And pathways became straight for the walkers
in the big day of the Tamid.
And the entire sun covered
both night and day.

The internal glow of the pathways together with the wind caressing their backs hint at shining and morning winds which awaken the renewal, a symbolism Gilboa borrows from Bialik.

56 An analysis of this book is found in Chapter Two.
57 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 178.
The key to the stanza is the expression "pathways which became straight for the walkers," which depicts the end-of-days scenario when the paths will straighten themselves to facilitate Israel's return from exile as Isaiah prophesized: "A voice rings out: 'Clear in the desert, a road for the Lord! Level in the wilderness, A highway for our God! Let every valley be raised, every hill and mount made low. Let the rugged ground become level, and the ridges become a plain" (Isaiah 40:3-4).

The day which he speaks of is the great perpetual (tamid) day, the day when the Levites sang the psalms dedicated to the daily sacrifice (tamid), and which today Jews chant as a daily psalm at the end of the morning prayers. The perfection of the sun symbolizes positivity, as in the poem "The Nation’s Night" ליל עם, in which "a great sun was taken"\(^58\) and, as it was brought to the center of the square for the celebration of the proclamation of the state, comes to be identified with the state. In the opening poem of the collection "Poems in the Early Morning" which begins "We returned as in a dream," the return to Jerusalem is depicted as "The glow returning to the roofs of Jerusalem/ a young sun"\(^59\) The young sun is described in the masculine form to emphasize strength. The sun’s youth is a sign that the state too is young.

b. The Poem "The Nation's Night" ליל עם

The poem "The Nation's Night" was written on the night the United Nations decided that the State of Israel would be established, and when there was naturally an outpouring of joy among the born-to-be Israelis:

\(^{58}\) Gilboa, All the Poems I, 182.
\(^{59}\) Gilboa, All the Poems I, 274.
Ho, night of a nation! Its open heart brimming with comfort
And the storm in the heart
Whispered big tidings.

The word "tidings" is accentuated through the structure of the poem. Gilboa placed it in the middle of the line, not where one would have expected it. In Isaiah's prophecy regarding the ingathering of the exiles to Israel, the prophet asks from "Zion's herald," "Jerusalem's herald" to ascend to a high mountain and to proclaim God's arrival as a redeemer of his nation (Isaiah 40:9). Later in the poem Gilboa describes how on a night like this the elders begin to utter prophecy. And the night "calls to the day, which shall come to eternity. / For on the pinnacle of the mountain it is secure/ and it is higher than valleys." This expression is taken from Micah's latter day prophecy: "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord’s House shall stand firm above the mountains; and it shall tower above the hills. The peoples shall gaze on it with joy" (Micah 4:1).

The final stanza of the poem mentions the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea juxtaposed with the echo of the voices of the early morning, employing an anomalous plural of the word "dawn" (שָׁרָה, שָׁרֵרִים):

An Eastern wind passed upon the people

60 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 182.
61 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 182.
62 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 183.
Voices from dawn[s] responded with their echoes:
Your life is from the blood!
Your life is from the blood!

The revival of the nation and their renewal in the land stems from the sacrifice of their comrades during the war. The separation of the verbless sentence "your life is from the blood!" and its repetition in an important part of the poem highlights the importance of the command to remember the dead by whose sacrifice we are alive.

Barzel points out that the poem incorporates

Yanai's liturgical poetry on the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt, structured around the key word "night," because all the miracles that occurred were at midnight: "And it came to pass at midnight." At that time many miracles are related to the wonder of this night, it is a list of miracles without forgetting the destruction and the blood. The poem combines holocaust and renewal, a transition from sadness to joy, and from mourning to celebration. It is written in the spirit of prophetic consolation which is part of the Passover seder: "In your blood, live!"63

Barzel summarizes that there are a number of nights amalgamated in the poem: The ancient night at Mount Sinai, the songs of the Passover seder, and the night the State was proclaimed.

5.5 The Revival That Comes

a. "A Poem of Forgivness Through Strength"  שיר סליחה מן הכח

"A Poem of Forgiveness through Strength" delineates the situation at the end of the war in an ironic way: the need to forget the murders and the cheapness of life. The murderers were interested in property, not in people, the opposite of what the King of Sodom said to Abraham: "Give me the person and take the possession for yourself" (Genesis 14:21). The irony is that one could bring things back to their original state: "The cut wood shall return

63 Barzel, A History of Hebrew Poetry, 293.
from the march of pain and sadness, to flower anew on the sound base of its trunk. In spite of the murder, the morning comes, smiling and forgiving.

At the center of the stanza there are two lines structured as two short summaries. These lines will reappear as the basis of another poem:

The morning came. The night went alone. He walked and cried. All night I didn’t cry. All night powers came to me.

The night in the first line is described anthropomorphically, which raises the question: Does the night cry over the suffering that it caused?

The expression: "He walks and he cries" appears a number of times in the Bible, in contexts of sadness, or a murderer's pretense at mourning, or worrying at an uncertain future. All these contexts contribute to the meaning of the poem. In the Book of Samuel, Palti the son of Layish cries when he had to bring Michal back to David: "Her man [husband] walked with her as far as Bahurim, weeping as he followed her" (II Samuel 3:16). The Hebrew reads "weeping and crying" הלך הלוך ובכה. Gilboa uses this intertext to show the deep sorrow of the speaker. The reader's perception deepens when he reads from the Book of Jeremiah, when Gedaliah's murderer feigns mourning: "Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, went out from Mizpah to meet them, walking and weeping as he walked [הלך הלוך ובכה]. As he met them, he said to them, ‘Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam.’ "(Jeremiah 41:6). The commentary, Metzudat David, explains "He walks and he cries" – feigns crying for the loss of his homeland so as to cheat them: “come!” - he convinced them to come from Jerusalem because at Mitzpah he

64 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 286.
65 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 286.
could kill them." Metzudat David's commentary enriches the poem by strengthening the meaning of this possibility of betrayal in one nation. The reader understands the night as a representation of war that now appears as a traitor and a murderer. The last verse is sung right before the blessing after meals: "Though he walks and weeps, carrying the seed-bag, he shall return with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves." (*Psalms* 126:6). At the time when a person sows his field he is worried that the crop will not develop properly causing crying along with worry, but when he is reaping his crop he is joyful. Metzudat David compares this to doing good deeds in exile and getting recompense at the time of salvation. *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) Parshat *vaYera* 39, on the words: "And it came to pass after these things" claims that Abraham cried internally in his heart before Isaac's binding and he is rewarded for his actions and his silence. The identification of Abraham contributes to the poet's request to give the property to the murderers and that Abraham who represents the people of Israel shall keep the people. Later in the poem the father asks his son to cover his face and to offer atonement. This is parallel to the binding which constitutes atonement, and because of it Abraham and the people of Israel were rewarded. The reader sees how the intertext of 'walking and crying' and the comparison to Abraham enrich the poem's meaning.

The poem ends optimistically: from a place of strength, from victory, one can atone / forgive and then:"From the ashes (*epher* אפר) it shall burn with all its lights/- the glory (*peer* פאר)."66 Gilboa transposes the letters *aleph* and *peh*, from the ashes (*aleph, peh resh* אפר) of the fires of war, shall emerge glory (*peh, aleph, resh* פאר), which will blaze with much light. This line is an allusion to Isaiah's prophecy of consolation "To provide for the mourners in Zion- To

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66 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I (Hebrew), 286.
give them glory instead of ashes,(Isaiah 61:3). Gilboa is thus able to cast off the personal and national trauma which blanketed him and to continue to write about renewal. Though it is important to remember past traumas, there is also benefit in a modicum of forgetfulness in order to create something new.

The two lines that were at the basis of the above poem ("The morning….powers come to me") are repeated as the foundation of the poem "A Poem About the Triumphant Dew." The two lines, but on this occasion they appear without a period at the end of the sentence. The poem offers a different solution, stemming from the fact that the poet not only holds back the tears, but also gathers strength during the night. The poet in a heady race throws his various instruments and no one picks them up. He ends with a strong accord: "This morning they heard / how the dew played music." The dew in this case is a metaphor for singing. The poet debates between the various musical instruments and ultimately finds his voice in accord with the dew.

b. Revival from Ashes and Blood

In the poem "The Good Memory," the following statement is addressed to second person: "You shall still rise, with a shining visage / through the gold of memory, which your dream brought forth." The memories and dreams will help with the rehabilitation, but the optimistic phrase is in the future tense. In the past "you" were among many people, who dusted themselves off and created a new life.

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67 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 289.
68 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 45.
You were then lifted among many heads
And in an army of piercing eyes, until the rise
From the dust, life rustles in the furrows
From a merciful valley of blood

A modicum of mercy for it (the valley of blood) and for renewed life may be drawn from the trauma of the valley of blood as an analogy to the valley of bones which create life in Ezekiel 37. Later, when the human being is in a cleansed and enlightened state he is able to deal with the memories that emerge. The erasure of the past is achieved through memories: "They covered tunnels’ openings and filled every pit / with human pride."70 The positivity and the humanity covers the pits of devastation. An image of life bursting from the blood of a murder victim in the Holocaust poem: "The Poem About the Binding," composed by Aaron Zeitlin. The poem's speaker comes to terms with his death as a victim, assuming that his blood will nurture another victim and revive him: "From my viscera's essence sprouts the Messiah -/and this shall be my revenge upon the universe and upon man / that from my blood a redeemer shall burst forth and redeem them / as a lion it shall arise and save them."71 From the body and blood of the dead man the redeemer shall arise like a young lion and shall save those who are in danger from their enemies. Revival and redemption shall emerge from the murder.

69 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 46.
70 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 46.
5.6 The Light as a Symbol of Revival

a. The Light Bursting Forth from the Blackness

In a prose section, which begins with the question "Is this what fate has in store?" (דעת גורל), first published in The Days are Coming, the poet wonders at the fate of the millions of victims and describes the transition from a time spent in darkness and suffering to the light. He writes: "The culling in the furnace of suffering knows no bounds, and its shade darkens not, and its light is great and unstoppable. And it was a tangible sign for all who were hopeless and sad and yearning." Those who suffer undergo a culling/purification process, and are not absorbed into the dull background, rather the light within them emerges, bursting forth. The light bursting forth is a symbol of revival, for it is "a sign" for those suffering, and the hopeless ones who still yearn to be redeemed and to return to a normal life. The expression: "This shall be a sign to you" in the context of redemption appears in God's words to Moses: "And He said, ‘I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain’."(Exodus 3:12). Isaiah employed this expression three times in his quest to present the king with a sign (II Kings, 20:9; Isaiah 37:30; Isaiah 38:7). At the end of "Memorial Prayer" (תפילת אזכרה) there is an emphasis upon the requirement of memory, which begins in the morning. From the memories of the past and from the tears, the light of morning shall emerge. The light is born from the blackness, and from the cursed

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72 Gilboa, The Days are Coming (Hebrew), 91.
73 The motif of the "light" appears in the opening poem "If it will be" in its negative form: The death as a situation in which the light does not penetrate into the grave, whereas the spiritual light of the soul "will rhyme in the quiet last legend about the kingdom's end". Apparently, this will occur before the speaker's death in the poem.
satiety which the speaker flees. It is important to remember where to go in the future. The poem's conclusion:

לזרות את זרע המחר
ופני לא לחביא
שח俣י אל הבק

[צונח - זอลת סוס, טלולוגיה, חברה, סע-פתוח ]

כפי ממכס שמלאחר-ך
לידיו העת האוחר.

To spread tomorrow's seed
And not to hide my face
The blackness of the morning
Shakes the nation's heads in black
From the crying after it all ended
Light shall be born.

In Gilboa's manuscript in The Days are Coming collection, he writes "From the cries" (مبכר) but when he edited the poem for the printing of the Blues and Reds collection he changed "From the cries" to "From crying" (mibekheh مbecح ). In the book of Ezra it says that the nation "Wept many tears (bekheh בגה" (Ezra 10:1), and it is possible that this form indicates many tears, or howling, as in the poem where it is an eternal cry, after everything ended.

In a different poem, which describes rising up from mourning and crying when the morning comes, there is a command to the light emerging from the oven: "To cleave to every nook and cranny / and to every threshold / so that there will be light forevermore." Cleaving to the earthly reality shall lead to the eternal light, and to a process of revival of the burnt out face:

"All eyes which were shut shall gleam and fill with tears / blinded with tears they shall gaze." 

74 Gilboa, The poem "Memorial Prayer," in All the Poems I, 52-53, also in The Days are Coming, 71-72.
75 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 190.
76 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 190.
b. The Feeling of Personal Emancipation

In the poem which begins "What pride" the poet describes his soul's elevation as the triumph of victory of freeing oneself from the shackles thanks to the light and the invigorating cold of the morning: "To stand together face to face with / this light/cold of morning, to walk powerfully / freed from one thousand and one travails / and worries…" 77

In the motto of the collection "As a Sign" (לאות) Gilboa describes the primeval joy he feels in the morning:

78

On this morning, who invigorated him with wind
Who lit the streets with the cold and caressing sun.
And I, it seems to me, am drawn into a primevality.
To a purity that has yet to burst forth, it ascends.

The poet feels the joy of renewal and revival because of the blowing wind and the glow of the morning; even the sun is pleasant and seems cool early in the morning. The combination of the words light (or אור) and cold (קור) into one word אורקור is Gilboa's innovative contribution to Hebrew literature. His wonder at experiencing nature is at the root of his poetry. The combinations of expressions and ideas in this poem allude to Bialik's poems about shining: The caress of the morning wind – the zephyr, the glow, a noun from which Gilboa invented a verb in the pi‘el paradigm - "to enlighten" (זיהר) and the sun. Bialik used the regular hiph‘il paradigm: "The field suddenly glowed [הזהיר] with thousands of

77 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 196.
78 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 9.
lights, and the bright morning winds are referred to by him as "the zephyrs of light." Gilboa's phrase: "To a purity that has yet to burst forth, it ascends" hints at the explosion and the eye in Bialik's poem "I Was Not Given Light." In his description of the process by which Bialik wrote the poem, the poet progresses from the explosion in his heart, which created a spark, and from the spark in his eye he composed the poem: "I Was Not Given Light out of Darkness." It seems that Gilboa reveals his poetics in the motto to his first poetry collection, and his poem about sanctification, which appears right after this motto ("For then I will Scream") and which describes poetry as an experience which bursts forth with a shout. From the distress a poem of bold sentiments is created and is in conversation with situations and expressions in Bialik's poetry. For example: A line which seems very Bialik-like: "In the eye, the pearl of light shall shed a tear" is revealed as a Gilboa original.

Bialik describes "A pearl of dew" in "If the Angel Asks," "Your tears shall be treasured like pearls," in the poem "Calls to Zion," and in "The Scroll of Fire":

The pearl of a tear fell from the angel’s eye and sank hissing into the pile of embers. It was the only pearl the angel had ever taken from the cup of speechless sorrow – a tear of relief and compassion at the saving of the remnant of the fire of God. [...] to look after the hidden tears in the cup of speechless sorrow.

One cannot locate an expression identical to Gilboa's, thus one must surmise that Gilboa used words which were key to Bialik's world of experience, but created his own juxtapositions and expressions.

79 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), The poem "Zohar", 196.
80 Hadari, tr. Songs from Bialik, 32.
81 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 10.
82 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 290.
83 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 134.
Gilboa’s 'scream' (צעקה) represents his poetry which begins in the mornings, as he writes in the poem "For then I will Scream":

For this was the scream of the joyful mornings. 
As the song of one thousand suns shone on my foot treads.

The joy of morning and the "thousand years" are repeated in "Poem in the Early Morning."
Here there is wordplay and the hyperbole of one thousand suns, which reminds one of the depiction in Bialik's poem "The Glow": "Suddenly, the field glows with thousands of lights."86

c. The Poem "Givers of Light"

This poem describes the light that reigns over us and accompanies us on all our journeys: The light of joy, legends and poems, a silent/laughing/shining light and many other descriptions of light and its attributes. The descriptions of shining and the light of consciousness allude to Kabbalistic principles: The light of consciousness is compared to choosing a source of water. Zoritte explains: "...when according to the Kabbalah the blocked stream in the crown bursts forth through will power or through choice, which resembles the light of consciousness which is revealed in 'Wisdom'."87 One can surmise from this that a person must choose to ascend and renew himself; it does not come automatically.

85 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 10.
86 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 194.
87 Zoritte, Spheres of Life and Emanation, 193.
The source of the eternal light is in the blood that is kept alive in the echo, through music (nigun), which is a Hassidic principle

Light from the eternal raised from the blood
In the breadth, the depth, the joy of the sea
And life in music that raises the echos.
For the light which revolves and revolves – lives forever.

Zoritte explains the Kabbalistic context of "the light which revolves and revolves – lives forever" as: "According to the Kabbalah one of the three levels of light is the light which encircles the entire world." Zoritte specifies that it takes place at a time and specific locus and within an emotion.

The light in the poem continues to be accompanied by music, as it descends from the heavens to the earth and grants it additional ancient holiness and the renewal of the morning:

The light revolves and revolves in the circle of his music
And comes from his heavens
And kisses the ground, marveling anew
Like the morning which comes with the rising of the sun
After the night that rose from the threshold

88 Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 186.
89 Zoritte, *Spheres of Life and Emanation* (Hebrew), 193.
90 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 186.
To walk
Calmly. Sleepily. Like an old man in the Temple.

The final stanza of the poem summarizes the elements of shining light, of morning and walking which are akin to a birth announcement, to revival: "The glowing light - / the blood, the crystalized drops / inlaid with the help of youth's abstinence / and the tongue of the golden bell / the birth-tidings (вшורת הלידה) in the hills." 91

A crown encrusted with blood is reminiscent of Jesus' crown of thorns, thus the birth announcement is also connected to Jesus' birth. The allusion is made more explicit by mentioning bells – like the bells of Christian churches. It is likely that Gilboa wished to expand the interpretive horizons of his poetry and aspire to universality. The word "gospel" (вшורה) appears in the New Testament in the names of books: "The gospel according to…" An examination of the Hebrew Bible reveals that the term "gospel" is connected to people who came to deliver a message to the king, such as Saul or David, as one finds three times in II Samuel 18 (22, 25, and 27). The giving of the gospel/message upon the mountains transforms it into a universal message. The shining light announces the birth of the king or the Messiah, King Jewish or Christian. It ties to Isaiah's prophecy of the latter days: "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord’s house shall stand firm above the mountains, and tower above the hills; and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy" (Isaiah 2:2). This prophecy is interpreted differently in different religions.

Zoritte focuses on the Kabbalistic Jewish interpretation according to which light by a mountain symbolizes Mount Sinai. She summarizes:

91 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 189.
The Messianic spark, which is found in each and every Jew according to the Kabbalah, is the power of self-sacrifice which is needed in order to spread the light of infinity which flows and emanates from the very core of his being (and in the soul – from the over-consciousness to the cerebral consciousness), whereas in the poem "Givers of Light" the poet sings about ‘the shining light’, which is like the Messianic spark and is found in the blood of ‘youth.’”\footnote{Zoritte, \textit{Spheres of Life and Emanation}, 193.}

Zoritte identifies the redemption as the secret of birth, as the travails before the coming of the Jewish Messiah.

In the poem "The Ancient God" (אל קדמון) the poet wishes to stop time in order to gather the shards of light and complete and correct what lies at hand – a Kabbalistic idea of mending the world, "Gather the rays which are scattered in every direction./ [...] From the sun's abode to here, so that it shall shine /and complete his corrections here is the infected music (nigun)."\footnote{Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems} I, 48.}

The sun appears as a metaphor heralding renewal and the music shall be emended until it is perfect. The land shall not gird itself until there is renewal and creation.

d. The Revelation of the Morning's Light

In a poem Gilboa wrote in Florence on October 11, 1944, and which was first published in \textit{The Days are Coming}, the poet ruminates regarding the indecisive and problematic interpretation of events, at a time when the fire is burning foundations which seemed as strong as cedar. The first three stanzas relate in their opening lines to the time-dimension:

"They have not yet come," "Meanwhile and the fire," "And until one of the mornings."

The opening stanza:

\begin{center}
עוד لا בא כל דבר שהוא מתולי
אך בלי זה המ nosotros פשר
\end{center}
Not yet, have all matters come to decide
But without judgment they demand an explanation
And when the man shall come to speak
They shall accuse him of conspiracy

The poem is in conversation with Bialik's composition: "When the Days Grow Long: from the Visions of the Latter Prophets," which is based on the question in the book of Ezekiel: "O mortal, what is this proverb that you have in the land of Israel, that you say, ‘The days grow many and every vision comes to naught?’" (Ezekiel 12:22). After everything and everyone becomes desolate Bialik writes: "And it shall come to pass when every man shall return to his tent…"95 Gilboa uses a similar turn of phrase: "And it shall come to pass when a man shall come." The words of the prophetic emissary are not acceptable to his listeners (the leadership?), in the same way that the nation dismissed the prophets' warnings.

The third stanza of Gilboa's poem relates to the revelation of the morning light as containing within it the word of God:

And till one of the mornings will reveal its lights
And God’s word is in it – the One and absolute –
Until they know that a dream in a human being is a command
For those who walk the ways of eternity

The enclosed anaphora "And until" – "until" relates to a period time as though it has already arrived, employing prophetic concepts: The word of God is a command to those who follow

94 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 108. The poem has no title.
95 Bialik, The Poems, 363.
96 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 108
his eternal path in "eternal paths." The poem's envelope deals with the ability to make a decision: People's indecisiveness as opposed to the word of God which is one and absolute at the third stanza.

Bialik describes in the final stanza of "When the Days Grow Long" the longing for the revelation of the Messiah, which begins early in the morning, before first light. The man described in the poem lifts his eyes to the pile of the garbage in front of his house and asks for the Messiah. The woman also cocks her ear and listens: "Is not Messiah coming? / was that not the braying of his she-ass?"  

Even the servant expects this event: "Is not the Messiah coming? / Was that not sound of his ram's-horn?"  

The description of the Messiah in this poem is identical to the sources listed under the title "The Messiah figure" in section 5.2. The purpose in relating to the poem again is to emphasize that the events happen in the early morning. Gilboa continues on Bialik's path and the early daylight creates a longing for renewal and for messianism.

5.7 Conclusion:

The book The Days are Coming shows the process of transition from lamentation over loss to hope for revival and renewal in Gilboa's poetry. Though it begins in a traumatic trope and ends with the poet orphaned, he scatters hints and even explicit statements at the end of his poem which allude to revival. Motifs such as waiting for the Messiah, for the revival of the dead, the ram's horn, the blessing dew, the walking and the light – these first appear in the hidden book and show us where his poetry is going. In later poems such as 'Poems in Early

Morning" (1953), Gilboa continues developing those motifs in a more optimistic manner: symbols such as the revival of one thousand mornings, the walks through nature (the shining trail, greetings), the dew, and the light. The colors which dominate The Days are Coming are: red, yellow, blue, and black, a colorful scheme which is presented with the same pessimism which characterized Gilboa's early poetry. His definition of yellow is apparent from "Elul 5703 (1943)" (אלול תשג) in which "The yellowing day"99, is the end of the day. When Gilboa presents hope he uses variations of the word light (or, אור).

An example of the juxtaposition of lamentation and the desire to find purpose in life is found in the poem: "I Am an Orphan" (אני יתום) from The Days are Coming, which was entitled more generally "Orphan" in the "Seven Domains" collection. The poem begins with the question: "What grows heavy and presses on the heart and the light?" whereas in the "Seven Domains" the expression is "heavy" and "darkens." The answer is that being an orphan darkens the soul's yearning for light (a Bialik-like motif). The use of the lamentive expression Eikhah [How] appears here in juxtaposition with the desire to enjoy life: "How [Eikhah] is it I can’t gallop like a wild horse,/ […] / How can I not quench happiness to the end?" 100 The longed-for revival is described through the metaphor of the joyful gallop of a wild horse. The poem which seems immersed in post-traumatic stress, upon a second reading is found to champion the soul's longing for revival.

Gilboa's poetry continues Bialik's path of yearning to break free from the vicious circle of pogroms and destruction by the rehabilitation of the people in their land; from the depths of

99 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 59.
100 Bargad, trans. 65. [The Hebrew in Gilboa, The Days are coming 127, All the poems I, 70.]
the devastation and tears, light shall emerge. Bialik already saw the poetry of destruction as a step in the process that would lead to future consolation. The angry miracle-man from "The scroll of fire," who wishes to disseminate the poetry of destruction to the nations, asks: "Brothers, do you know the song of comfort and redemption?" Gilboa, as well, can shed the personal and national trauma and continue and write about renewal. Despite the importance of remembering past trauma, there is some benefit in partially forgetting so one can renew and create.

Chapter 6

Common Motifs in the Poetry of Gilboa and Early Agnon:

Yiddish and Hebrew.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of motifs in Amir Gilboa's poetry and the writings of Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the famous Hebrew novelist and Nobel Prize winner. The comparison will begin with their Yiddish poems and then will relate to the bulk of their writing in Hebrew.¹ I shall present the Agnon material first. Agnon's cited poems, here in the original Yiddish, were published between 1904 and 1906, and reflect exilic themes written in an original style. Gilboa's poem in Yiddish "א לעבן פון שטיין און פון אייזן" (A Life of Stone and Iron) appeared in Yediot a circular published by the haHalutz movement in Poland in 1933. This poem and its pride of place in Gilboa's oeuvre were already discussed in the previous chapter. In this comparative analysis of motifs I will also relate to some of Bialik's poems, which stand in between Gilboa and Agnon and draw upon the same culture. Gilboa's poems in Hebrew are taken from his three collections and are relatively late than those of Agnon and Bialik.

Examples of motifs found in both Agnon and Gilboa's poetry include: A memorial candle as both personal and communal; blood dripping/bubbling; fire and light; tears; the sun, the

¹ The two writers hebraicized their names. Biographically Agnon came before Gilboa, as did his writing.
figure of a child trying to save his nation; abstention from playing the harp and a call to the God of Justice to uphold righteousness.

6.2 Connections between Gilboa's Poems and Agnon's Youthful Poems in Yiddish

Amir Gilboa began composing poems and ballads in Yiddish, but was forced to discard his belongings including his poetry when he fled Europe and immigrated to Israel. Only a small number of poems survive. A youthful poem which Gilboa (Berel) wrote in Yiddish when he was sixteen was "A Life of Stone and Iron" ([א Leben פון שטיין און פון אייזן]). This poem includes material and organizational motifs which afterwards appear in his Hebrew poetry, such as: "For then I will Scream." Though he adapted to Hebrew writing very successfully and with consummate skill, he incorporated much of his rich cultural heritage including traditional Judaism.

In his youth Shmuel Yosef Tschatschkes (later Agnon) wrote both in Hebrew and in Yiddish. In "Poems of Youth," Dov Sadan evaluates the importance of Yiddish in the development of his style, claiming that "his writing in Yiddish was the dialectical bridge between his Hebrew poesy and his Hebrew style."2 His early work in Yiddish contains motifs and directions of thought which would be developed in his later writing. Most of his early work was published in the weekly Der Yudischer Weker ([דער יודישער וועקער]) in Butschatsch, in 1906. Tschatschkes published four Yiddish poems in 1906,3 and the last of his Yiddish poems, a ballad, was published in 1907, when he was nineteen years old.

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3 A rare copy of the Der Yudischer Weker is being held with the collection of Zalman Pbzner in Tel-Aviv.
Yosef Bar-El in his article: "Characteristics of the Yiddish language used by Shmuel Yosef Tschatschkes," surmises the following regarding Agnon's originality. Bar-El writes:

Whoever wishes to compare between Tschatschkes' Yiddish and the Yiddish spoken at the beginning of the 20th century in Galicia and in the Jewish communities of Butschutsch and Brody, basing themselves on the Yiddish press, books of fables which were published then, and letters that were preserved by the inhabitants, shall come to the conclusion that Shmuel Yosef Tschatschkes did not use the expressions and the idioms which were common to that time and place, but coined his own usage.⁴

It is apparent that Agnon's originality began in his youth as a writer of Yiddish. He mixes Galician Yiddish with other dialects, translates Talmudic Hebrew into Yiddish, and creates new expressions. Yosef Bar-El notes that specifically in the rhyme scheme of his poems, Agnon preserved his spoken Yiddish dialect.

Agnon's poem "Memorials," published in Der Yudischer Weker,⁵ with the Hebrew translation of Dov Sadan:

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אותך

איןهو יברך, אתך אהובים.
גופים הם גופים,
גופים שלנו, בני אדם.

עד למלים, אמת נקמה.

 veter Nữל, אתה אהובים.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.

ראה אהובים
רוהב דוקאך
inesis נקמה, ואתך אהובים.

אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.

יאיר קיפפר, ואתך אהובים.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.

ראות 우ות במיליון ברי-
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.

ראות נקמה, ואתך אהובים.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.

יהלול ועידי אירבי ואתך אהובים.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
אני מתעמר, אני מתעמר.
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⁵ Eliezer Rokach, ed. Der Yudischer Weker [Yiddish]. year 2: 33, July 6 (Butschatsch: 1906).
Memorials

Not from oil, O dear brothers,
Do we fuel our memorial candles,
But rather from blood, dripping blood
So many days, without measure, without end.\(^7\)

And the wick, O dear brothers,
Is not made of simple string:
They are bodies, oh they are bodies,
Our bodies, miserable people.

And in the heart it will burn,
the holy fire for your memory,
And a roar full of revenge
Will recite the kaddish for many years.

[...]

For hearts that shrunk
a memorial stone commemorating your death
And our life in a strange land

Yitzchaq Bacon in his book: *The Young Agnon*, suggests that this memorial poem was written in response to the Bialistok Pogrom. This idea is apparent at the beginning of the poem and "the rest of the stanzas are a continuation of the sentimental chain of anthropomorphic realization of situations reminiscent of the First stanza."\(^8\) Indeed each stanza is another link in the chain: The fat is the blood, the wick is the bodies, the fire burns in the soul and it seems...

\(^6\) Agnon’s poem, in Sadan, *About Shay Agnon*, 143-144.

\(^7\) In the fourth line one could have translated: "So much, without measure, without end.

\(^8\) Yitzhak Bacon, *The Young Agnon* (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: The Yiddish chair of Ben Guryon University, 1989), 200.
that the thunder calling for revenge is only hidden in the heart. The stanzas which were omitted here include a chilling portrait of the victims, and the memorial stone at the end of the poem is both personal and collective. The memorial candle represents the bodies of the victims in another poem Gilboa wrote about the death of his family in the Holocaust:

Here I extinguish it
the candle.
Not merely a memorial candle –
it is the candle of the twisted body
of my father,
of my mother,
of my little sister
of Esther.  

Here as well, the memorial candle functions as both personal / familial and communal. Later in the poem the candle is anthropomorphized as a person crying, and the wax which gathers around the wick is described as "Bubbling with blood and tears." In Agnon's poem "Memorials" the candle itself is made from the dripping blood.

Agnon's poem: "You Should not Think" (איר זאלט), published in Der Yudisher Weker\(^{11}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יאיר זאלט נישט מיינען</td>
<td>He should not think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יאיר זאלט ניט מיינען, אז כשרייב,</td>
<td>He should not think, as he writes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>איז דאס פראסט, מת טנט נטערбан,</td>
<td>As the days arrive, the tears aregathered,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ניטו! - בולט רינט פון מורי לייחב</td>
<td>And the tears flow on the high mountain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^9\) Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 65.
\(^10\) Bargad, Trans. in *To Write the Lips of Sleepers*, 59.
You should not think, that when I write,
The words are in simple ink, -
No – it is blood from my flesh
And from it come the letters.

You should not think, that when I speak,
What I say is the essence,
No! – my heart has turned into a skeleton,
And from it come the words (In pieces, in pieces)

You should not think, that when I am angry,
That I am angry because I am bad,
No – I speak, and sweat pours over me
And they refuse to hear me, O God of justice!

His writing is like blood dripping from his flesh, the production of words is a difficult and painful process, and in the end people refuse to listen to him. The poem ends with a call to "the Lord of justice," an expression from Malachi 2:17: "You have wearied the Lord with your talk. But you ask, ‘By what have we wearied [Him]?’ By saying, ‘All who do evil are good in the sight of the Lord, and in them He delights,’ or else, ‘Where is the God of justice?’"

The prophet claims that the people are tiring God with their complaints, which assert that God prefers to reward evildoer, and they asks: 'Where is the Lord of justice?' The biblical exegete

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12 Agnon’s poem, in Sadan, About Shay Agnon, 144.
13 Ibid.
Cassuto suggests that the people doubt God's just governance of the world.\textsuperscript{14} Rashi on \textit{Malachi} 2:17 states: "For you see the evildoers' ways prosper and the righteous suffer and fail, and you say in your hearts, one of two: either anyone who does evil is pleasing God, or there is no justice and no judge who will make you pay." In other words, God does not govern justly. Radak adds his comments, on the words "Or where is the God of Justice": "Or if it is not the case, and he is not pleased by evildoers, then where is the God of justice? Why does he not render justice upon them?"\textsuperscript{15} This is the famous question of theodicy, why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer? The poet like the prophet speaks and is met by refusal to listen to him and understand him.

In his anguished poem: "In the Trial," Gilboa presents a dialogue between the poem's speaker and the God who is torturing him: "Am I guilty? There was no [maligning] intent when my finger was raised."\textsuperscript{16} The accused is willing to bear the punishment for his crime, but only if God is convinced of his culpability. God refuses to hear and understand the speaker's motives, and God simply repeats the accusation.

In another poem, Gilboa describes his reluctance to write as stemming from the fear that the readers are not interested in his message and ignore his stories of the past by falling asleep:

\begin{verbatim}
רצויה לכתב שפתי ישנים
ראתי תבאת כל ינשמ
ולא היה שומע לבי עיר
בבחדות ולא
ורפוי לי.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{verbatim}

I want to write the lips of sleepers
And I saw they're really all asleep

\textsuperscript{14} Cassuto, Commentary to the book of Malachi,(Tel-Aviv: Yavneh Press, 1962), chapter 2:17.
\textsuperscript{16} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems I}, 269. An analysis of the poem "On the Trial" is found in chapter four.
\textsuperscript{17} Gilboa, \textit{All the Poems II}, 51.
And there won’t be anyone to hear my heart’s awakening
And I was terrified
And my hands went limp.  

Bialik in his poem "I Was Not Given Light" (לא זכיתי באור) describes the difficult process of writing a poem, which begins with an internal spark which bursts forth, but when the rhyme gets to his audience:

ובאור אשכם הצתיו
ואנכי בחלבי ובדמי
את הבערה אשלם.

And in the light of your fires I burn it and it’s hidden.
And I with my fat and blood
will pay for the burning.

When the poem enters the public domain, people sometimes misunderstand the poet's intentions, and the poet is disappointed and pays a deep personal toll. The poem "Your Breath Passed Upon my Face" (חלפה על פני) includes a metaphorical image of the poet's great disappointment from the misunderstanding of his poems and his language: "My pure, pure doves I sent in the morning skyward returned to me at dusk – crows educated in junkyards." 

A generalization of this disappointment may be expressed as the inability of the poet's words to truly express, a betrayal of language. In the personal realm one may explicate that the adults made the words of his poems impure after they were published. The poet's solution was to approach the children, who were still pure. In Gilboa's poem: "For then I will Scream" (כי אז אצעק), employing Bialik's style, he breaks up the response. It is not silent pain; it is a primal scream. The scream is poetry, but the choice of the word "scream" to express this is

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18 Bargad, Trans. in To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 245.
20 Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 98.
important to the essence of his oeuvre. Gilboa complains: "Words, I sent upwards like songbirds, fell upon my head like carcasses from above." \(^{21}\)

Since the poem "For then I will Scream" was written and published in 1941, one may identify a further aspect of his personal perspective of his poetry, the identification of his scream as a reaction to the destruction in Europe. Furthermore, the poet declares later on in the poem that his poems are like tongues of fire and light, which shall annihilate evil. "For then I will Scream" contains elements of the tone he adopted in his earlier Yiddish poem.

### 6.3 Ties Between Gilboa's Poetry and Agnon's First Poems in Hebrew

In his book *About Shay Agnon: Treatise, Scrutiny, and Analysis* Dov Sadan brings four poems which Shmuel Yosef Tschatschkes wrote, and which the editor of *haMitzpeh* published in 1904.\(^{22}\) The poems were chosen for publication because of their connection to the Hebrew calendar: The thirty-third day of the *Omer*; the seventeenth of Tammuz; the ninth of *Av*; and Chanukah. An analysis of the poem reveals characteristics of a classical structure and a rich vocabulary, with allusions to the Midrash and the Talmud. The young writer tends toward pathos and sentimentality.

The first poem he published, "A Small Hero" (גיבור קטן) was written on the occasion of the thirty-third day of the *Omer* in 1904.\(^{23}\) Agnon recalls in *From Myself to Myself* the importance of this first publication as a Hebrew writer: "Until that moment, I saw myself in my city amongst my fellow inhabitants, as though their place was not my place, and their language was not my language; when I saw my name and my poem in a Hebrew language

\(^{21}\) Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 11.

\(^{22}\) Agnon's poem, in Sadan, in the chapter "The First Year," 130-138.

\(^{23}\) Shimon Menachem, Lazar, ed. *HaMicpe*. Year 1: magazine 4 May 6 1904 (Hebrew), (Krakow, Poland: 1904).
paper I recognized my place and my language." This declaration places this poem on a pedestal as a composition of seminal importance in his development as a writer.

A Small Hero

The rays of the sun are hiding,
The light of the beams is dead
And the army of the night's stars come
The sun has ridden away to its resting place,

And upon the stool of the cloister
A little boy stands
In his hand he has arrows, and he cocks his bow
He shoots at the devil.

He drops his bow and he lifts it
At the entirety of heaven,
Upon his lips a chuckle of revenge
He sings in high spirits.

And thousands of eyes gaze from above
From heaven tears drop
O little boy! O valiant one!
You shall yet perform miracles for your people.

(Tschatschkes/ Agnon)

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24 Agnon, From Myself to Myself (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Shoken Press, 1976), 358.
The poem begins by anthropomorphizing the setting sun and the coming of the army of stars. In the first stanzas the small boy is standing on the stool in the cloister so as to appear taller, and he demonstrates his bravery by cocking his bow in revenge against Satan. According to Agnon in *From Myself to Myself* the poem is based upon his own experiences as a young boy and he sculpted its literary form when he was a young man.

The humanized description of the sun riding away to its resting place is accompanied by a description of the sun's light and the sun's radiance which have parallels in Bialik's poems, such as in the poem "Radiance" (Zohar): "In the sun's radiance and in the afternoon's shadows" and "Swallowed in luminescence." Gilboa continues exploring this motif in his "The Nation's Night":

27 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 182.

This poem describes a celebration in the city square at night. The big sun symbolizes hope which was fashioned from the yearning for the land of Israel throughout the generations, and was pulled with golden threads to the center of the square. In Agnon's poem the sun rides away to its resting place at the end of the day, whereas in Gilboa's poem the sun is pulled and rolled to the center of the square to celebrate the joyous occasion. The later events following

They took a big sun
And the yearnings of generations fashioned a golden thread
And it [the sun] was tied with it
And they rolled it
To the center of the square.
the sun's setting connected to the small hero, also contain hope for a bright future for the Jewish people.

Gilboa's use of the sun metaphor is original relative to his predecessors. The motif of the sun appeared in the past in connection to its natural function and in conventional metaphors such as Agnon's sun returning to its abode.\(^\text{28}\) In Shlomo ibn Gavirol's poem "The Sun like a Bridegroom Wreathed in Light" \(^\text{29}\) the sun is presented as a loyal servant who marches all day into the west in order to bow down to God. This is also the case in his poem "A Crown of Kingship" (כתר מלכות) "And every day she bows to her sovereign and she stands at his abode / and at dawn she lifts her head and bows to the night in the west, / in the evening she comes and in the morning she returns."\(^\text{30}\) The incorporation of the excerpt from the Book of Esther in which she goes to the king: "In the evening she comes and in the morning she returns" (Esther 2:14) accentuates the coming of the sun to bow down before God her king.

The line in "Upon his lips a chuckle of revenge/ He sings in high spirits" in Agnon's poem is reminiscent of the famous biblical expression "paeans to God," as in Psalms 149:6: "With paeans to God in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands." Though the poem employs the expression "high spirits," the poem takes place in the house of study and this focuses one on praise to God, who will give him strength to mete revenge upon his enemies. The paean to God in the poem is accompanied by a bow and arrow (alluding to Lag Baomer), instead of a two-edged sword, such as the one Ehud ben Gera had when he saved Israel from their enemies (Judges 16:3). Midrsa Tehillim (Buber), Psalm 149 states that "It says ‘My

\(^{28}\) I do not relate here to the use of the sun in philosophy as a symbol of wisdom and of other attributes.

\(^{29}\) Shirman, The Hebrew Poetry in Spain, v. I. 252: "שמש כחתן יעטה סות אור”.

\(^{30}\) Shirman, v. I. 266. Shlomo ibn Gavirol; the poem "A crown of Kingship" lines 147-149.
words shall give You pleasure' (Psalms 104:34), for this reason there are ‘paeans to God in
their throats’ The Holy One Blessed Be said: Israel's mouth is their sword, as it says ‘And two
edged [literally: mouthed] swords in their hands.'” In Agnon's poem the child expresses his
exuberant "high spirits" with a paean to God, and thus feels good about his chances to
overcome his enemies. Dov Sadan remarks that the poem describes a childhood experience,
but "his intended stand [against Satan] takes place at a slightly later period, since the
expressions and the images – a war against Satan, the feeling of revenge and laughter, high
spirits – are not those of child, but rather of a youth." When Agnon published his poem he
was sixteen years old, but the events he narrates took place a number of years beforehand,
thus the mixture of teenage vocabulary with childhood experience.

The figure of the small child as an agent in the redemption of his nation appears also in
Gilboa's poem "Besieged"(במצור), wherein the little girl Daliah gives Jeremiah a bullet and
asks that he shoot and kill Nebuchadnezzar, who is besieging the city, in a last-ditch attempt
to save Jerusalem, and says: "Take what is being kept with me/ The pistol/ And small bullet/
in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar/ In our God [you will] be praised.” Daliah employs the
elevated cadences of prayer when she says "He will be Praised"(ישתבח), and Agnon's little
hero is in the high spirits associated with "Paeans to God," this is praising God. It is apparent
that both poems end with praise for he who acts on behalf of his people.  

31 Midrash Tehillim (Buber), Psalm 149, 5, the word, "I return."
32 Agnon’s poem, in Sadan, About Shay Agnon, 131.
33 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 217.
34 An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Three.
Thousands of eyes peering from above were understood by Sadan as an extension of the star imagery. Yitzchaq Bacon takes this interpretation one step further: Bacon sees in this poem sentiments and dreams of

Extreme superiority, which is declared immediately in the title "The Small Hero" and finds expression in the body of the poem when the "small hero" shoots at the devil. The apotheosis of hauteur occurs at the end of the poem, when the stars...predict that he will have a glorious future.35

Bacon recognizes the centrality of the prophecy, which beats in the youth's heart, to Agnon's later composition and to his use of literary stratagems to obfuscate the prophecy by means of his typical irony. This being said, one should not ignore from the "simple" reading of the "thousands of eyes which gaze from above": The image that Agnon expresses is childlike, an exaggeration, from the perspective of a child who sees what seems to him to be many big people looking at him and encouraging him to continue his miracles. Gilboa's poem "The kingdom of silence" (מלכות הדממה) which focuses on the perspective from above of the world at the end of World War II, contains an interpolation which describes a dream-like future normalcy:

Spring shall come
[...] young
Eyes shall spill over with love
Upon the beach.
One thousand shapes shall be scenery
For the eyes of one thousand in the treaty.

35 Bakon, The Young Agnon (Hebrew), 36-37.
36 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 316.
This excerpt describes the hope of young eyes which shall witness love. Here, too, there is a hyperbolic usage of the symbolic "one thousand," to enhance this prophecy of the future: One thousand eyes shall gaze upon one thousand scenic shapes. In both poets' compositions one finds the next generation's missions to create a better and more protected world, better than the one in the poem.

Tschatschkes' second poem: "Silence," was published close to the seventeenth of Tammuz 1904, two days before Hertzl's death.37

 Silence

Do not compose, do not sing
Harp of mine, remain silent!
Do not sing, do not play
For today is awful for us.

Today is awful for us
The days are days of mourning
Remain silent, harp of mine,
You too, lyre.

These days are days of mourning
The destruction of the nation,
Do not play, do not sing.

37 Lazar, ed. HaMicepe (Hebrew), Year 1: magazine 12, July 1, 1904.
38 Agnon's poem in Sadan, About Shay Agnon, 132.
Hand to mouth place.

The key word in the poem is "no/not" followed by the roots of *zemer-shir-nagen* (song-poem-play). Two other important terms are "silence," and the final "hand to mouth place." There is a call to musical instruments, the harp and the lyre, to stop playing and singing, because of the mourning of the nation. The title "Silence" in and of itself emphasizes the call to stop all sound. The poem moves forward by means of repetition of key words, which makes it sound like a lamentation. The end of the poem: Do not play, do not sing / Hand to mouth place" is reminiscent of the words of the recently exiled Judeans: "How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil? If I forget you, o Jerusalem, [...] , let my tongue stick to my palate" (Psalms 137:4-6). Young Agnon's stance is that one should not sing on days of mourning and destruction.

Gilboa’s poem: "Upon the Rivers of Babylon" (על נהרות בבל) presents various attitudes typical of the generational differences. The attitude of the adult exiles is identical to young Agnon in his poem, represented by the inability to play and sing while in exile, whereas the young man's attitude towards the exile is entirely different and is more reminiscent of the young people of our generation. As opposed to the young man in Gilboa's poem, young Agnon expresses the continuity of the earlier generations' perspective, and his poem is pathetic and calls for national mourning and a cessation of song.

Gilboa's description of the Babylonian exiles is based upon the verses from Psalms: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, and wept, as we thought of Zion. There on the poplars we

39 An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Three.
hung up our lyres" (*Psalms* 137:1-2). But already in the opening of the poem, right after the title, the focus of the poem swerves from the mourning exiles to the attitude evinced by the young boy who is able to play the lyre, and distinguishes himself from the adult generation:

"There on the poplars we hung up our lyres./ Meaning the elders./ I had a small lyre."  

In the same way that the speaker of the poem "Silence" saw himself as the lyre of the nation (which must be silent), so too the lyre-player in the poem "On the Rivers of Bablyon" expresses the sadness of the nation with which the adults have a hard time coming to terms.

In Agnon's poem "By the Light of the Hanukah Candle" (לאור הנר של חנוכה) the flame awakens within him visions regarding the diaspora, and he keens and laments at how low the nation has fallen, "which rolled to the Hanukah menorah / and a tear dropped from my eye." In the same way that the speaker of the poem "Silence" saw himself as the lyre of the nation (which must be silent), so too the lyre-player in the poem "On the Rivers of Bablyon" expresses the sadness of the nation with which the adults have a hard time coming to terms.

As the candles' fire burns low, he asks: "What shall fuel this lamp-/the oil? No, the tears." The motif of the tear in Agnon's poem resembles the tear in Bialik's compositions, such as in the poem "My mother, Her Memory Be blessed" (אמי, זכרונה לברכה). There the mother's tear lights the candle which had been put out from her crying:

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וא נשל מלחי הצדקנית דמעה אחת בוערת,
ירסס אש בלבה,
ברצנחנו. רפל בבית אור משנאה, כי נצרת
ונר אחר כהן.
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Then there fell from the cheek of the righteous one a single burning tear
One sliver of flame
And as it fell there lit in the house a double light to fire
The candle that went out.  

40 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 218.
41 The poem was first published in *HaMitzpeh*, year 1, magazine 35, December 9, 1904.
Gilboa uses Bialik's image of a burning tear in his poem "Now I will Scream" (כי אז אצעק): "And fire, which was kindled in the eye, was put out by the light of every lamp." The fire in his eye was put out by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Gilboa concludes on a pessimistic note: Beginning with the tear that burns instead of the oil (Agnon), continuing on to Bialik's tear that lights the fire that had been extinguished, to the opposite image, wherein the fire that was lit with tears cannot survive in a world of kerosene lamps (Gilboa). The "fire" motif is closely bound to the holiness of the past which then undergoes secularization and modernization. Now, we might say: a cold and artificial fluorescent light.

45 Hadari, trans. 19. (The Hebrew in Bialik 454.)
46 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 11.
47 Since I mentioned this for the sake of a brief comparison, I did not relate to the Kabbalistic context of the fire and water elements and to the metamorphosis of the tear into fire.
Chapter 7

Gilboa's Poetry at the Crossroads: Between Bialik and Amichai

7.1 Introduction

In earlier chapters, I demonstrated the continuity between Gilboa's poetry and that of his revered predecessor, Haim Nahman Bialik, by means of thematic and linguistic analyses. This final chapter adds a short summary of Gilboa's use of motifs borrowed from Bialik's poetry as was demonstrated in the analysis of poems in previous chapters. The conclusion which was reached was that Gilboa continued writing like Bialik but he persistently developed modern structural patterns and employed theological expressions in different contexts.

When discussing the place of Gilboa’s poetry in classic or Modern Hebrew literature, Bargad presents the question: "Did Gilboa represent the denouement of an extended ‘Age of Bialik’ or was he part of the new modernistic trend?"¹ I continue Bargad’s research and apply it to the entire collection of Gilboa’s works, which specifically includes the poet’s latest published works listed but not used by Bargad, The Days are Coming. In this chapter I prove, through Gilboa’s usage of the Hebrew language that he is Bialik's heir, but that he also developed his own modern writing style. On the one hand he used Modern Hebrew syntax, with its colloquial sound, and on the other hand he laced his poetry with rich biblical vocabulary and expressions uncommon in everyday speech. Gilboa’s writing style, with modern rhythm and syntax, was considered new in his time, and was emulated by other contemporary poets. I

¹ Bargad, To Write the Lips of Sleepers, xi.
will demonstrate how Gilboa’s poetic art interacted with the language of Yehuda Amichai and Dalia Ravikovitch. The second part of this chapter contains a comparison between the above mentioned poets.

Gilboa was connected to the Diaspora where he was born and to his childhood experiences and hardships. Amichai came to Israel as a child with his family, was fluent in Hebrew, and studied in Jerusalem. Ravikovitch was one of the first poets born in Israel for whom Hebrew was a mother tongue. The poetry from the establishment of the State of Israel and onwards possesses a personal-lyrical quality. The poet diminishes him or herself in the inner world of creation. Thus dealing with Holocaust themes connected to the Diaspora did not appeal to the founding poets. From this perspective Gilboa was an anomaly among Israeli poets, though he did write like the others about the Palmach (פלמ"ח) period and the struggle for independence.

Hillel Barzel met with Gilboa at a café for a series of interviews and then wrote about it in *Iton 77*, in an article entitled: "With Amir Gilboa – Conversations from the Café." Barzel notes Gilboa's opinion of himself regarding his influence:

> He was angry that I did not mention that he influenced other poets. I said that according to my humble opinion, no school had formed that followed his type of poetry, though he had many admirers among the new generation of poets. I said that it was probably due to the modern characteristics of his poetry. I promised him that I would look into it further. ²

A positive appraisal of Gilboa's influence is given by Hamutal bar Yosef in the chapter: "All the Poetry of Amir Gilboa," in her book *The Reasons for Reading*. Bar Yosef claims "that Gilboa, for example, was a lesser influence [upon Hebrew poetry] than Amichai and Zach

were in the sixties, but in the seventies and onwards, Hebrew poetry was closer to Gilboa's than it was to Amichai's and Zach's. One may come to the same conclusion, albeit indirectly, from Barzel's book *A History of Hebrew Poetry Vol VIII: Revolutionary Forms*. Barzel analyzes at some length the revolution that Gilboa initiated in the structure and form of Hebrew poetry, whereas regarding Amichai, Barzel emphasizes the uniqueness of his surprising imagery and his bold tableaus. Thus it is possible that Gilboa's innovative poetry influenced other poets as Amichai's writing, though Amichai went farther than his predecessors when it came to developing new structures and wordplays.

### 7.2 From Bialik to Gilboa: Continuation and Differentiation

Gilboa was about twenty years old when Bialik, the subject of his admiration, passed away. Gilboa consciously continues Bialik's approach when it came to implicit allusions to the Bible and to Midrash which the readers must discover on their own. Gilboa incorporates key terms in his poetry which Bialik employed, such as: pearl, tear, scrolls, ashes, smoke, and others. Often the use of these terms by Gilboa is an extension of Bialik's own ideas. At other times Gilboa plants these words in his poetry in a different context, or expresses a different position or theology than Bialik's. Gilboa continued Bialik's poetic style, but developed it further.

Barzel in a conversation with Gilboa spoke of a central difference between Bialik's poetry and Gilboa's poetry, namely that it

> developed from the general to the particular, as opposed to Bialik who developed from the particular to the boundless (in "My poetry," "Glowing"), thus he begins with a little bird in "To the bird" and ends with God and his throne of glory in "The Scroll of Fire." "You [Gilboa]," I remarked to him, "began with "For Now I Scream," and with

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Samson-like characters and ended up with "The lips of the sleepers," the man who is tied to the surgeon's table, and the deer that is sent off to the fiercest battle like Uriah the Hittite.\(^5\)

It is indeed clear that Gilboa tried to broadcast universal sentiments in his poetry, but the individual at the center of the poem does creep in later on in the poem cycles.

Both poetries contain a deep identification between the personal and the national: Bialik lamented the emptying of the house of study, whereas Gilboa feared for the existence of the State of Israel in light of the enemies surrounding it. Different subject matter appearing in Gilboa's poetry is in conversation with Bialik or an extension of Bialik's poetry. The following examples shall demonstrate both aspects of Gilboa's relationship with Bialik.

One may compare Bialik and Gilboa's descriptions of the creative process as bursting from the heart, or the blood, into the eye and into writing, including how the poetry was received. Bialik in his poem "I Was Not Given Light" (לא זכיתי באור), first published under the title "My spark" in 1902,\(^6\) describes the difficult process by which the spark in his heart turns into a poem:

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\text{ותחת פטיש צרותי הגדולות}
\text{כד יתפרצ לבבי, צור-עין,}
\text{הז ניצוץ עף, נתה אל-עין,}
\text{ועיני – להרוי.} \quad 7
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And under the hammer of my great strifes
when my heart breaks, my refuge,
this spark flies, struck before my eyes
and from my eye – to my verse.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) This poem was published first in the newspaper "Hatzofeh," Varshah 1903, but only twenty years later was it given the title with which we are now familiar.
\(^7\) Bialik, *The Poems*, 233.
\(^8\) Hadari, trans. *Songs from Bialik*, 32.
Gilboa in a poem which begins "This way again" (ככה עוד פעם), written in 1944, describes the process by which the memories in his blood burst forth:

ג懷ך את ידים פני הבולות
ומכים על עיני בזועות
אל-דמי

And to see how the voice burst forth
From my blood
And hit my eyes with atrocities
Do not be silent

The process of the command to write and not to be silent begins with a burst of blood into the eye. Bialik's influence is obvious.¹⁰

Bialik's disappointment in the reception of his poetry is expressed by the image of doves which become crows. In the poem "Your Breath Passed upon My Face" (חולה על פנין), Bialik rages:

יוני הזכות, שלחתין לעת בקר שמימה,
שבו الي אלי לעת ערב – והנן עורבים מלמדי אשפתות.

My pure, pure doves I sent in the morning skyward
And they returned to me at dusk – crows educated in junkyards.¹²

In the poem "For then I will Scream," (כי אז אצעק) Gilboa continues Bialik's style, breaking up his response, though the silent pain is replaced by the scream. Gilboa complains that his

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⁹ Gilboa, The Days are Coming. Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik, 32.
¹⁰ Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 117.
¹¹ An analysis of this poem is found in Chapter Two.
¹² Bialik, The Poems, 431.
poems are not understood: "Voices, which I sent as songbirds, fell dead upon my head from on high" ( "קולות שלחתים על כזמירים, צנחו פגרים על ראשים מגבוה") .

"For then I will Scream" continues: "And fire which was kindled in the eye, was extinguished at the light of every lamp." Because his words and poetry were not understood as he wanted, the fire of his poetry (which is parallel to Bialik's spark) was extinguished by the light of an oil lamp. The motif of extinguished fire is reminiscent of the candle which was extinguished and then lit in Bialik's "My Mother, Her Memory Be Blessed": "a single burning tear, [...] lit /the candle that went out. // My mother just opened her dimming eyes." Gilboa used some of Bialik’s vocabulary in this intertextual reference, but according to the belief he presents in the poem there is no miracle. Gilboa uses the same root that Bialik used אש.ש.ש, "Worn out [ешחת] eyes," but in the form of noun (ешחת), as well as Bialik vocabulary of fire /candle (アー), eye ( Cialis), light and to extinguish the fire. Bialik is closer to the biblical origin "My eyes are wasted by vexation, worn out because of all my foes" (Psalms 6: 8). In this verse the speaker begs for God's help, and states that he does not see well because of his sorrow and his enemies' actions. This verse became part of the Tahanun in the Shaharit prayer, when the speaker hopes that due to his cry of anguish God will forgive him.

Gilboa also used some of Bialik's vocabulary in "If Thou Wouldst Know"( אם אשת נפשך 돌לת): "To meet grim death with joy, and bare the neck / To every sharpened blade and lifted

\[13\] An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Six. Gilboa, All the Poems I, 11.
\[14\] Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 11.
\[15\] Hadari, trans. Songs from Bialik. 19. (The Hebrew is in Bialik, 454).
\[16\] Bialik, The Poems, 454.
\[17\] I am grateful to Tirzah Meacham for pointing out the reference to Tahanun.
axe,/ [...] And saintlike die with ehad on their lips –."\(^{18}\) In Gilboa's poetry the knife is often used, a subject we covered extensively in Chapter Four. The axe is mentioned in the description of his brother's death in the poem which begins "Now in Front of a Day"(עיֵבֶר וּמָוֶר) in the book *The Days are Coming*: "The axe / shedding wreaths of light / my brothers."\(^{19}\) In the poem "The Spring of 5705 (1945)" (אביב תש"ו) the father sanctifies God's name through his death by "dedicating his blood" and at the moment of his death calls out "to the one," which is the Shema prayer.\(^{20}\) Bialik's description regarding the baring of the neck does not fit with Gilboa's perspective, and thus he does not employ this particular expression or vocabulary. Gilboa prefers to present those who died in the Holocaust as dying with dignity and not as sheep to the slaughter.

Bialik in "On the Slaughter" begs for God's mercy from a position of helplessness and hopelessness. The heavens symbolize the divine abode, and there is a question mark attached to its existence, apparent in the words "if" and "maybe," but one should not ignore this search for God. The word "blood" is repeated in the poem, for example: "Let murder's blood leap … and never be blotted out."\(^{21}\) Gilboa also mentions blood frequently. In the opening poem of the section "To Grace from Far and Cry for the Blood" (לחונן מרחוק) in *The Days are Coming*, Gilboa adds the act of jumping and the roar of the fallen to Bialik's leaping blood: "The fallen yell out: God of revenge! / in the cry of their leap – it is not God, it is man."\(^{22}\) The call for

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\(^{19}\) Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 61. The poem was published in *All the Poem I*, 55, without the last stanza.

\(^{20}\) Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 97. See also Chapter four.

\(^{21}\) Bialik, *The Poems* (Hebrew), 249.

\(^{22}\) Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 77.
revenge is based upon the fact that it is not God acting in this case, but rather human beings. It reflects a different theological perspective.\textsuperscript{23}

The latter three examples were taken from the book \textit{The Days are Coming}, and two of the examples were from poems which were not printed until 2007. They describe horrendous trauma, and are evidence of the post-traumatic past of the speaker. It is thus apparent that the basis for his writing about the loss of his father and siblings is anchored in early poems, which were written spontaneously during the course of the war, and were set aside.

In Chapter Five I showed that Gilboa's poetry continued Bialik's aspiration to break the vicious circle of pogroms and destruction by rehabilitating the people in their land renewal from the midst of the destruction, from the tears the light shall arise. At the end of Chapter Five, I brought examples from "The Scroll of Fire" of how Bialik saw his destruction poetry as a stage in a process that would eventually lead to consolation. The miracle man who disseminates poetry about the destruction of the nation is the one who afterwards asks about consolation.

In "The Scroll of Fire" Bialik writes: "And the Temple Mount still all smoke. Heaps of ashes, mounds of cinder and smoking embers together piled.\textsuperscript{24} Echoes of this description are found in Gilboa's "The Kingdom of Silence"(מלכות הדם), in which he created the expression "Mounds of ash." Bialik described the smoke from the end of the burning of the temple, but Gilboa describes the end of the massacres and burning with the words: "Its embers already

\textsuperscript{23} An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{24} Hadari, trans, 147. (The Hebrew in Bialik, 310).
smoke in the book. Later in the poem Gilboa writes on "parchment scrolls / among smoking pages." The use of the word "parchment scrolls" (גelihoodים) for Torah scrolls is a direct reference to Bialik's poetry. For example: Bialik writes in "Before the Book Closet," about "an old book with tattered papers (gevilim)." Gilboa places his scrolls among the events of World War II.

The motif of the silent convoy of the dead, which froze, appears in Bialik's "The Dead of the Wilderness" (מית המדבר), as a "camp of corpses." Similarly, Gilboa speaks of "a field of corpses" in "The Kingdom of Silence." The speaker as a pure and clear-eyed youth appears in Bialik's "The Scroll of Fire" and in stanzas which were omitted from Gilboa's "A Locked Garden," and published by Barzel. (The poems were compared in Chapter three).

The prolific use of the word morning is characteristic of both poets; the morning will bring with it the chance for optimism. Bialik concludes the poem "When the Days will Grow Long" with awakening into difficult circumstances that create a yearning for the Messiah: "Very early in the morning, just before sunrise [...] and [he] seek[s] the Messiah!" Gilboa refers to a certain group of poems as songs of the early morning, especially the poem entitled: "Poem of the Early Morning," which is characterized by personal and national renewal. In the fifth chapter, when I dealt with the revelation of the morning light as the revelation of God's word,

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25 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 316.
26 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 316.
27 An analysis of the poems mentioned are found in Chapter Three.
28 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 220, 221.
29 Gilboa, All the Poems II, 62.
31 An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Five.
I demonstrated how Gilboa was in conversation with Bialik's poem "When the Days will Grow Long: Prophecies from the Latter Prophets." Bialik writes: "And it shall come to pass, when a man returns," and Gilboa writes in "Not all things have come to pass,": "And it shall come to pass when a man will return." In contrast with the general optimism of Gilboa's 'morning' poems, the collection *The Days are Coming* is enshrouded in prophecies of destruction with only a few hints of consolation. When one looks at the poem "When the Days will Grow Long" in its entirety, one discovers desolation and exhaustion among those who dwell in the house because of their miserable circumstances. But in the final section of the poem, which describes the awakening in the morning, the tortured yearning of those who dwell in the house for the Messiah is emphasized. The relative length of each section is in accord with Gilboa's perspective in *The Days are Coming*, but stands in contrast to the morning poems, which are optimistic when compared to Bialik's poems.

The daily grind of the father appears in Bialik's poem "My Father"(אבי): "Day by day -- going to the gallows." The expression "day by day" was substituted in Gilboa's poetry with the expression "every day" [the individual continues to suffer] in the *The Days are Coming* collection: "Every day eliminates another pail in its wells /[…] every day there are moments like the glint of the knife."

Bialik creates the atmosphere of a ballad by employing the mewing of cats. Examples of this are found in the poem: "My Poetry"(שירתי): "Upon the stove the cat wailed hungrily," and in

33 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 108. See more on this topic in Chapter Five.
35 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming*, 85. Further analysis of "every day" is found in Chapter Four.
the poem "When the Days Grow Long": "The cat’s yowling and scratching." In "The Scroll of Fire," the young man describes being shrouded in darkness "and owls frightened me with their hooting," the night bird frightens him with her screech. Gilboa continues to use this motif, but creates a different and more complex context. In the opening poem of "Also Tonight" the poet is awake at midnight and is aflame with post-traumatic nightmares. He describes his situation as "Burning / with the final-dial-the hours-which yowl/ from the prey of owls." Bialik mentions the sound of the "orlogin" (wall-clock), but not the "ballad-clock" Gilboa favors. Similarly, in the opening poem of "My eye is torn with fear," Gilboa uses the tinkling of glasses and spilled wine as part of balladic description of events in the graveyard and the appearance of the dead.

As I showed in Chapter Five, Gilboa uses terminology taken from Bialik, but on occasion these terms are in a different and original context. An example of this is the very Bialik-like line "In the eye a pearl of light shall shed tears" which is original to Gilboa. Bialik describes "a pearl of dew" in "If the Angel Asks," and "Your tears shall be collected like pearls" in the poem "The Calls to Zion, and in "The Scroll of Fire": "The pearl of a tear fell from the angel’s eye and sank hissing into the pile of embers. It was the only pearl the angel had ever taken from the cup of speechless sorrow – a tear of relief and compassion at the saving of the remnant of the fire of God. No expression of Bialik’s is identical to Gilboa's, thus one must

37 Nevo, trans. Chaim Nachman Bialik, 62 (Hebrew on 63).
39 Gilboa, The Days are Coming (Hebrew), 64.
40 The poem has no title in The Days are Coming, 100; but titled "מש בני דמי" in All the Poem I, 74.
41 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 10.
42 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 290.
43 Bialik, The Poems (Hebrew), 134.
draw the conclusion that in this case Gilboa used key terminology from Bialik's world, but created new and original juxtapositions. Gilboa integrated Bialik's linguistic style and was then able to create new phrases in the image of Bialik's poetry.

7.3 A Comparison Between Gilboa's Poetry and Amichai's

Gilboa began publishing his work in Israel in 1942, under the dark shadow of World War II and the Holocaust, whereas Amichai only began writing in 1948, with descriptions of his personal experiences in the War of Independence. Both poets served as soldiers in Israeli units of the British army, and their writing was influenced by the events of the war, by the dangers and by the outcome. Their writing in the first person can be interpreted as autobiographical fiction, though Amichai's first person is not all-knowing and his vantage point is of a spectator of the world. Whereas Gilboa arrived in Israel alone at age twenty and subsequently lost his family in the Holocaust, Amichai came to Israel from Germany as a child with his family and studied at a religious high-school in Jerusalem. Therein lies the difference in the starting point of their poetic composition. Gilboa focuses on trauma, with a modicum of hope, whereas Amichai juxtaposes the dangers of war and love with a critical eye. Gilboa felt responsible for the past and for the state's future, whereas Amichai felt the nowness of the individual. Both are part of the generation of poets writing as the state was founded, and are considered to be innovators of modern Hebrew poetry, of structure and form, and in other respects as well. It seems that Gilboa's poetry marks an interim stage which paves the way for younger poets, among them Amichai.

Gilboa and Amichai were the recipients of the Israel prize for poetry in 1982, for their innovations in form and expression in the field of Hebrew poetry. Barzel relates to the controversy surrounding the negative reviews of Amichai's poems, which were considered
nihilistic and inciting people against core values. In his view, receiving the Israel prize had a positive influence:

Having received the Bialik prize and afterwards the Israel prize, Amichai was placed on the same pedestal as Amir Gilboa, who was universally lauded. The scales were tipped toward approval, and the poet's *oeuvre* from beginning to end, was defined as a bold and accomplished iteration of modern and postmodern Hebrew.  

Ortzion Bartana takes the stance that Israeli poetry only began with the foundation of the state. He thus opposed seeing Gilboa as an Israeli poet, and saw him as merely a Jewish poet due to his proliferate use of Jewish sources. This is an erroneous and narrow view regarding Hebrew poetry. In an article he wrote for *Maariv* in June 1987, he states that:

Gilboa's poetry was compared mostly to Zach's and Amichai's poetry, as though Gilboa's adopters were saying that it wasn't Amichai and Zach who were the first creators of a blueprint for state-poetry, but rather Gilboa. The Israeli poets understood his poetry as a wide bridge between the Israeli poetry of the twenties and thirties and the poetry of the fifties, sixties, and seventies.

Tzvi Luz in his article, "Broad and center – Amir Gilboa," relates to the indirect influence Gilboa had on Amichai:

Gilboa, by completely lyrical methods, was the first to add a wide world full of possibility to the annals of Israeli literature. What was unique in his vision was not only the embrace of planes of existence both near and far-away, but also that he related them to his own world through personal and autobiographical motifs [...] Some of those who followed Gilboa learnt from his example, directly and indirectly: Especially Yehuda Amichai. I am not speaking of direct influence, but rather of basic world-view. Thus, I see Gilboa as standing in the center, on one side there is Yitzhak Shenhar and the other side extends to Natan Zach.

Amichai broadened the cultural and linguistic dialogue in his poetry and wrote with many countries in mind. He lived for short periods in New York, Paris, Mexico, and elsewhere. He was at-home in international poetry meetings and his books were translated into many

47 Tzvi Luz, "Broad and Center – Amir Gilboa," in Balaban, 139.
languages. It is apparent that he is one of the most popular Israeli poets in the world and the personal experiences he describes speak to a diverse audience.

Despite Bartana's criticism of Gilboa, he summarizes:

> In my eyes Gilboa's poetry is better than Amichai's, for it is deeper and more meaningful than Amichai's superficial pieces, in spite of Amichai's great linguistic talents. But Amichai's poetry has influenced and will influence people far more than Gilboa's poetry. This is true because Amichai among other things was consistent, he created new ironic-poetic paradigms and was careful to present them to the reader in a clear way.48

Bartana is correct with regard to Amichai's popularity and influence upon younger poets, but regarding his virtuosity with biblical and liturgical wordplay was preceded by Gilboa who following the earlier incomplete move of this sort in Bialik, began the secularization and disconnection of this poetic device from its religious context. An example of this is in the poem "Please, Strongly," which is based on the prayer asking God for help: "O Please with [your] Strength free the bound one." Gilboa takes this sentence apart and places it in an ironic and macabre context as a criticism against the forces which terrorize / tear away. The poem begins with what may at first be seen as a call to violence:

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אנא בכח, בכח התירו
צרורת הקלע
ואבן ירו לבתימו.
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Please, strongly, with power release
The sling’s volley
And shoot a stone at their houses.

The poem "My God, the Soul You Gave Me" demonstrates Amichai's use of an excerpt from prayer which praises God's holy spirit but overturns its meaning in traditional liturgy.

49 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 350. An analysis of the poem is found in Chapter Three.
Amichai’s relationship with Jewish sources is clear: he brings clear-cut quotes from the Bible and from prayer. Gilboa is generally satisfied with a word or a short expression which alludes to the Bible or liturgy, and usually preserves the source enriching or deepening our understanding. After the direct address to God, the definite article is added; the soul of the first person, of the speaker is at the center, not praise to God. In the continuation of the poem it becomes clear that the soul is smoke, a term with associations to the Holocaust, as is found in the work of Holocaust poets such as Gilboa. In the third line of the poem Amichai surprises us once more:

אללי, הנשמה שננתה בך
היא עשן
משרפת תמיד של זיכרונות אהבה

Smoke is the immolation of the daily offering. The speaker clarifies that these derive from memories of love and not from the smoke of the crematoria. Amichai’s foundation is different from Gilboa’s and he focuses on personal situations.

Amichai based his poetry on the new poetics founded upon a critical viewpoint of the traditional sources and freedom in the use of wordplays. Amichai was especially adept at bold deconstructions of biblical and liturgical expressions while placing them in a new ironic

context through a repetition of the words and expression, as is demonstrates in "God Full of Mercy":

God-Full-of-Mercy, [the prayer for the dead]
If God was not full of mercy,
Mercy would have been in the world,
Not just in Him. 53

From the original context of a prayer ushering the dead to heaven, Amichai develops a remonstrations against God who keeps the mercy with him and does not give it to human beings. He thus turns a supplication for divine munificence that contains a praise of God into a critique prayer. This is an expression of his critical attitude towards God. If we take a bird's-eye view of Gilboa's poetry, Gilboa's attitude to God is traditional and less critical than Amichai's, even in poems where he is protesting against the fact that God did not save the Jews in the Holocaust, or in his requests for revenge.

Early in his literary career, in his hidden book The Days are Coming, but also in his later poetry in All the Poems II, we are privy to Gilboa's modern style: There are many poems without titles, a first line that is incomplete and sometimes difficult to understand, but that upon further reading is revealed as playing a key role. The broken structure of stanzas, missing lines, and a free rhyme scheme are other examples of his modernist approach. As Barzel describes: "Amir Gilboa bursts forth from insular poetry, rhyme and meter, into an open and free-flowing kinetic poetry, such as is manifested in the paintings of Yaakov

52 Yehuda Amichai, Poems 1948-1962 (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1962, 1969), 69. (The poem was published earlier in 1953)
Agam. The syntax is broken up by pauses which help focus the meaning, it is accompanied by a supple rhythm and rich alliteration adding to the meaning of the poem. There are many structural repetitions, such as anaphoras, as well as lines that grow shorter, such as: "I want to sing / to sing." The openness inherent in the use of the first person pronoun is accompanied by his engagement with the activities of the group, such as: "We were on the roads, picking up scrap iron." In this way Gilboa also belongs to the Palmach generation, the generation of poets that preceded the foundation of the state.

Gilboa's language incorporates sentences, words, and concepts from every-day life, side-by-side with words from older Jewish strata, which add depth and meaning, elevation with pathos. Gilboa began with pathos (in the poem "For then I will Scream") and then switched to a tone of every day life which incorporated an elevated register of speech. Amichai's first poems, which were written six years after Gilboa began writing, begins right away with an every-day register incorporating allusions, tableaus, and bold and original combinations. Gilboa's poetry is characterized by heaviness and seriousness. Even the joy is a heavy joy, such as in the poem "Orphan": "How the breath grows heavy, from boundless joy?" Amichai's poetry, in contrast, is characterized by a lightness, simple descriptions and original metaphors and depictions.

54 Barzel, Poetry of The Land of Israel, 621.
55 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 66, All the Poems I, 61.
56 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 98.
57 Gilboa, The Days are Coming, 127.
Examples of Comparisons:

a. The Binding Motif

Yael S. Feldman in her book *Glory and Agony* analyzes Gilboa’s poem "Isaac" and concludes:

I would suggest, then, that by placing the burden of the Holocaust guilt on the shoulders of Isaac, Gilboa may have been carving out his *difference* vis-a-vis the imaginary of his native-born peers, the 1948 writers known as *Dor ba’aretz*, namely, the Native (in the land) Generation." 58

In Gilboa's "Isaac" (1953) there is complexity and feelings of guilt, whereas Amichai uses the binding story as a private game he played with his father. It was so secret that Amichai claims ironically that even God did not know about it. The poem "We Played at the Binding of Abraham and Isaac," which was published in 1968, opens with the death of the father: "His early death was the knife / which was raised against me, forever hovering." 59 Here, as well, there are feelings of guilt that Isaac's life was saved, but Abraham's life was cut short by a knife, contrary to what we would have expected as readers of the biblical story. This trauma accompanies him his entire life. This playful attitude towards biblical stories is characteristic of Amichai's poetry, who very openly states that he wishes to jumble up the Bible. Another idea, original to Amichai, is in "The Real Hero of the Binding," which was published in 1982:

The real hero of the sacrifice was the ram  
Who had no idea about the conspiracy of the others.  
He apparently volunteered to die in place of Isaac. 61  

This post-modernist approach is in accord with the generation of poets younger than Amichai, for whom he paved the way. The poet wanted to sing a memorial dirge to the ram with the human eyes, who was sacrificed when everyone else went home. Isaac is presented as a spoilt child, dressed prissily, which of course has no basis in the Bible or in the Midrash. Amichai retells the biblical story and demythologizes it. In another poem in his book Open Closed Open published in 1998, poem number 18 entitled "The Bible and You, and Other Midrashim," Amichai connects between two disparate subjects, a lover's relationship and the feeling of being bound. Amichai describes an erotic situation employing terms from the binding story:

Two lovers lie together like Isaac on the altar
And it feels good. They don't think about the knife
Or about the burnt offering –
She thinks about the ram and he about the angel.
Another version: He is the ram and she is the thicket.
He will die and she will go on growing wild.
Another version: The two of them get up and disappear among the revelers.  

Amichai definitely uses a midrashic style: He offers a few possibilities separated by the expression "Another version." In the first tableau the two lovers are embracing and full of optimism, and the binding terminology is completely disconnected from its original context.

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In the second case she will most likely be saved at his expense, and the third possibility assumes that both rise up and continue their celebration.

Amichai begins his poem as an extension of Gilboa's viewpoint in his poem "Isaac": Isaac's feelings of guilt shift the focus from Abraham to Isaac, from the first generation to the second generation. Later, Amichai also shifts the focus of the poems: First he focuses on the ram as the hero, and then on the two lovers and their experiences. Amichai demythologizes the biblical account. He crafts a different story for us, employing the binding motif.

b. Amichai's "Scream" and Gilboa's "Scream"

The screaming motif, identified as poetry, bursts forth in the first poem Gilboa published in Israel, "For then I will Scream," in 1941. It is a poem of purifying oneself for a mission, and about his aspirations regarding his poetry. This scream will have a strong effect: "the winds of my anger sweep the universe / and the tongues of fire lick at the evil until [its] destruction." Gilboa will express personal and national crises in his poetry, and will aspire to make the emptiness into a sanctuary, and a joyous atmosphere: "From the Temple’s empty space/every being celebrating./And no longer will I scream." The poet's scream in "For then I will Scream" is heard both at night and during the day: "And it was the scream of cursed nights [...] // And it was the scream of rejoicing/ joyful mornings." These are the times of day Amichai makes reference to when he describes his

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64 Bargad, trans. To Write The Lips of Sleepers, 15.
65 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 13.
66 Gilboa, All the Poems, 10.
difficulty in reacclimatizing himself upon his return to Jerusalem from abroad, in his poem "Jerusalem 1967":

עכשו כששבתי, אני צועק שוב.
ובלילה עולים כבבים כעולים של טובעים,
כל בקר אני צועק צעקה של תינוקولد.
מבלבול הבתים ומכל האור הזה.

Now that I have returned, I scream again. 
And at night, stars rise like bubbles of people drowning, 
Every morning I scream like a newborn babe 
At the confusion of houses and all this great light. 

What the two poets have in common is the difficult nights. In Amichai’s poem the nights are marked by a danger of drowning, and in Gilboa's poem they are marked by a curse this in contrast to the mornings when new life is created as well as new poems. Renewal in the morning is a theme that also brings to mind Gilboa's poem "Poem of the Early Morning," which was first published in a small book in 1953.

Amichai, in person, defined a poem as a scream at a writer's conference in 1968, remarking "A poem is liked an anguished scream and a joyful cry about the beautiful things in pain and the beautiful things removed from pain." 

Screaming as poetry appears in the poem "And this is Your Glory" (והיא תהלתך), which Amichai published in 1958: "In my great silence and my small scream, I inspire / Mixed kinds." The poet searches for God in a variety of permutations of silence and screaming, as one who sows two different types of crops in the same field. Compared to the dialogue

67 Amichai, Now in the Storm, 9.
69 Amichai’s speech, reported in "yoman"Moznayim 29. 1. 1969. Also in Boaz Arpali, The Flowers and The Vase, 294.
between God and Adam (Genesis 3: 8-10), there is a reversal of roles: The person yells: "Where are you," and the God hides from the human being. The expression "And this is your glory," the source of which is a liturgical poem for the High Holidays (noted in the title of the poem), adapted to the speaker in each stanza: Your glory, his glory, my glory. One may surmise that God's glory is not unique to him. Moreover, Amichai dares to depict God as a mechanic who lies under his world and fixes it. This is a secular boldness of which Gilboa would have never dreamed! When God is mentioned in Gilboa's poetry it is done so with pain, because the deity did not help his family, or in a call to the "God of revenge." In this way Gilboa belongs to the generations which preceded Amichai.

Amichai writes in his poem "Try Again" (נסי שוב), published in 1971, "And my scream is made of strange parts / it is like a complicated key./ It will be hard to open/ the world with it..." He confesses that it is difficult to decipher the world through his poetry. In fact Amichai's poetry is easier to understand than Gilboa's. The depiction of a sensory and original tableau of the scream as the key, is typical of the imagistic uniqueness of Amichai's poetry.

c. Open Closed Open

Gilboa wrote the poem "A Person Really Needs Only" (אדם באמת אין צריך), in "Three returning gates" (שלשה שערים חוזרים) published in 1963:

אדם באמת אין צריך אלא לספר אחד בחייו
כאשר כל חייו נקמבizens לעיניו ספר הפתוח לעיניו

A person really needs only one book in his life
When all his life is gathered into his eyes in the book opened before his eyes

71 Yehuda Amichai, Not to Remember (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1971), 123.
72 Gilboa, All the Poems I, 366.
While reading the life-story of a human being, the poet sees a positively inclined world, and that is sufficient. In the concluding poem of the "Three gates" series – "I am not" – Gilboa states in protest that he does not say what in his heart is forgotten – pierced – opened. In other words he shall keep it in his heart, without words. He concludes: "I will not say to you what opens my heart / And no one to close [it]."74 The heart remains open without anybody trying to close it, as though it were frozen, full of experiences and emotions. Gilboa understands the clear boundaries between open and closed, in one's heart and in the book of life.

A year before Gilboa wrote about open books and the heart, Amichai defined the relationship between a closed door, and a closed door's seeming eternity. Amichai develops his concept of "closed," which is transformed into eternity, but is also temporary, in quatrain, which Amichai published in 1962. Amichai writes: "No eternity is greater than the door upon which is written: Closed Today./ It shall be closed forever and it shall not be opened nor shall anyone come there."75 He suggests that one who encounters a closed door should accept his fate and go home.

Years later Amichai presents the concepts of open and closed as fluctuating depending upon one's perspective. In his book From Man You Came and to Man You Shall Return, published in 1985, in the poem "In the Restaurant" (בעשתה), he describes the perspectives of those who ponder the sign "Open" hanging outside the door. The poet who is sitting in the restaurant sees the other side of the sign, upon which is written "Closed."76 It thus stands to reason that

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73 Bargad, trans. To Write the Lips of Sleepers, 209.
74 Gilboa, All the Poems I (Hebrew), 394.
75 Amichai, Poems 1948-1962 (Hebrew), 264.
76 Yehuda Amichai, From Man You Came and to Man You Shall Return (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv: Schocken Publishing House, 1985), 86.
everything depends on the viewer's perspective. This is a more modern view than the permanence depicted in Gilboa's poems and in the early poems of Amichai.

In his final book, Open Closed Open, Amichai debates attitudes towards God, love, and Jewish history and in poem twenty four (From the section: "Gods Change, but Prayers are Forever"), he compares God and love:

A book that stays open on the table beside a pair of glasses –
God. A closed book and a lamp that stays lit –
Love. A key turning in the door without a sound –
God. A key hesitating – love and hope.  

In this poem God's book is open, he is able to open a locked door. This means that there is still hope, but the poet immediately write, that it is entirely possible that things are not that way, and this undermines the reader's confidence. Perhaps Amichai is in correspondence with Gilboa's perspective regarding the openness of a person's book of life as is described in "A Person Really Needs Only."

In the series of numbered poems entitled "I wasn't One of the Six Million: / and What is My Life Span? / Open Closed Open," poem number 4 states:

Open closed open. Before we are born, everything is open

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77 Amichai, Open Closed Open (Hebrew), 16-17.
79 Amichai, Open Closed Open, 126-127.
In the universe without us. For as long as we live, everything is closed
Within us. And when we die, everything is open again.
Open closed open. That’s all we are.  

The poet wonders what his personal place is in history and in the Bible. Before a person is
born all possibilities are open, as well as at his death. During a person's life he feels enclosed
and pessimistic. In poem number two, Amichai deals with Jewish theology and protests that
God's acts are without purpose, a door which opens and closes, endlessly. In "God Changes,
Prayers are Here to Stay" we find:

בֵּין רַאוּשַׁת בַּל אָחִירָה.

but God is like a revolving door, which turns, turns on its hinges
In and out, whirling and turning
Without a beginning, without an end.  

The allusion in the poem is to Kohelet the son of David, who claimed that all was vanity. In
the world there is circularity, and everything returns to its beginning; human beings have no
way of changing this. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) describes this state of affairs thusly: "Southward
blowing, turning northward, ever turning blows the wind; on its rounds the wind returns."
(Kohelet 1:6). Amichai develops a moving picture of a revolving door. One should note that
Gilboa, with his ties to the previous generation, treats God with reverence, and his criticism is
less pointed, despite his anger and helplessness when God does not save his family in the

81 Amichai, Open Closed Open, 6.
Holocaust. Amichai takes biblical excerpts and turns them on their head adding vivid imagery in the process. This is his original contribution to Israeli poetry.

**d. Noise and Eternity**

In his collection: "I Wanted to Write the Lips of Sleepers," published in 1968, Gilboa gazes deep within himself, just before death: "I am to myself. I am not only to myself with noise"
(אני לעצמי. אני לא רק לעצמי ברעש"). 83 This sentence juxtaposes the question in Pirkei Avot (Words of our fathers): "And when I am to myself, what am I?"84 with the way one may die in the "Let us chant about the power" (ונתנה תוקף) prayer of the High-Holidays, one of which is: "Who [shall die] in noise? 85 Later in the poem he debates the looming enormity of the night that shall cover him upon his death. He debates the essence of his psyche at death: "What is it that shall be buried beneath the pile of the great woods / is the eternal eternity only one moment long?"86 In one moment, the moment of burial, he shall be buried forever.

In his poem "I am a Poor Prophet," published in 1989 Amichai declares: "I paint my life in war / And in love, in clamor and in silence."87 Indeed this is the essence of his writing: The War of Independence and what came afterwards, the hope for a better future because of love, noise that was part of daily life, and the silences in between. The eternity of human beings is described as "Disposable people / this is their eternity,"88 according to Amichai. In this perspective there is an acceptance of reality at the end point of a person's life. Words as well,
according to Amichai are good only once: "Words soak up 'blood, tears, and sweat' / And are thrown out in the ashcan. Disposable words, / Like Kleenex." As mentioned, "blood" and "tears" are key terms in Gilboa's poetry that deals with traumatic situations of death. Amichai, on the other hand deals with these issues in a light way, using the word "sweat" in order to transform it into something mundane without pathos. Amichai's use of the word-combination: "blood, tears and sweat" come from Sir Winston Churchill's speech to the British Parliament on May 13, 1940. The Germans had just conquered France and Britain was threatened. Churchill said that all he could offer Britain was "Blood, toil, tears, and sweat." Amichai preserves the order of three of the words, though the combination "Blood, sweat, and tears" is more common. Amichai is blasé about these heavy words, for him they fulfill their one-time use, and then they are discarded.

Every-day noise in contrast to the silence is mentioned in Gilboa's poem "Regarding the Noise," which was published early in 1949: "The roads fill the silence of the pedestrians with noise / every tile cries to the feet of the individual / it is not hidden that your tablets are broken here." The noise in the street shatters the poet's belief, symbolized by the broken tablets. In Amichai's poems the noise comes from children at play, as does the silence. Amichai, in his book *Now, in the Storm: Poems 1963-1968*, published in 1968, writes (the quote is from the title poem):

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89 Amichai, *Even a Fist was Once an Open Palm with Fingers*, 61.
90 Gilboa, *All the Poems I*, 41.
91 See Amichai, *Even a Fist was Once an Open Palm with Fingers* (Hebrew), 133.
Now, in the storm before the calm,
I can tell you things, I
couldn’t in the calm before the storm,
for we’d have been overheard and found out.93

The noise allows the poet to speak with his partner without fear that others (maybe the children who are later mentioned) will hear them. This sophisticated idea is expressed in simple language relative to Gilboa. Amichai plays with the words "silence-noise-silence"; with the noise screen he can speak freely. The noise, connected to the title of the poem, hints to God's revelation to Elijah: "the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake - fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire - a soft murmuring sound [קול דממה דקה]" (I Kings, 19:11-12). God appears in silence, not in noise. Rashi explains the expression: "A soft murmuring sound" as an almost inaudible noise which comes from the silence." The allusion to God's revelation to Elijah elevates the speaker's words in the poem, but turns the biblical reference on its head, because now there is a requirement to speak while it is noisy.

In contrast to Gilboa's personal-national identification, Amichai, Zach, and other poets of the generation of the founding of the state related to the notion of togetherness and sacrifice with ironic reservation. When the state was established the poets, in tandem with public dialogue in Israel, sought to express a person's individuality, a person who wished to live his own life and not die in a war for national ideals.

e. Samson's Desire to Die

The desire to die at a young age, passively, not in any brave way like the biblical Samson, appears in a poem published by Amichai in the collection "The Distance between Two Hopes." The poem "I Want to Die in My Own Bed" deals with an individual soldier opposed to wars in which soldiers die and the trauma in seeing the dead lying side-by-side. He does not care if he dies alone, so long as he dies on his bed. In the third stanza he compares himself to the biblical Samson:

Samson, his strength in his long black hair,
My hair they sheared off when they made me a hero
Perforce, and taught me to charge ahead.
I want to die in my own bed.  

Samson, גבורת השער ארך ושחור
אתי שיל גמרמשועונים לפני
חברת הלמורות לדורות ואנ書き.
אני רוצה למות על מטתי.

The source of Samson's bravery is that he dedicated himself to God as a nazarite and did not cut his hair. In contrast, soldier's hair is cut upon induction to the army, as preparation to be a hero. The jump from the word hero (גבור) to the word duty (חובה) emphasizes that he is being forced to play the hero. All the speaker's desires are summarized in the one wish to die in peace in his bed, at the young age of conscription to the IDF.

The poem "Samson the Hero" was published by Gilboa in 1963 in "Three Returning Gates." Samson is described from the synoptic view of every event in his life, from youth to old age. Gilboa sculpts this biblical character adding his own explanations: Samson's

stubbornness is presented in the poem as *jejune;* even at eighty years old he is hallucinating like a newborn baby. The danger to which he subjects himself as well as his daring emanate from Samson's desire to die young. Gilboa explains the burning of the Philistines fields as the vengeful activism of a young man, acting alone, because his wish to die young was not fulfilled:

כשגדל והיה לנער בקש למות בלילה שתמלאנה לו שבע עשרה.
לא רצה למות זקן: בן שבע עשרה ויום.
כדי לשרף הכל-
על כל קרש למרכיב ביצות שלח-איזות והשועל.

As a young man he wanted to die on the night of his seventeenth birthday. He didn’t want to die old; seventeen and a day.  
That’s why he fastened torches to the tails of three hundred foxes to burn everything.

The willingness to burn everything evinces a lack of care for this world, and a focus on himself. There may be an emotional connection between Samson's motives and his desire to die young, and Gilboa's wish to die with his sisters in the Holocaust: "If I could have died / as a twenty year old / then / facing my sisters." The poet feels that he is emotionally older, and not twenty-two years old, encountering young women of his age. Freud explains the will to die following the death of loved ones in his article from 1917, "Mourning and Melancholy."

96 Gilboa, *All the Poems* I, 356.
97 Tirzah Meacham suggests that the age seventeen and a day echoes the age of legal status changes like nine years and a day, three and a day, twelve and a day etc., found in rabbinic literature for example mNidda chap. 5. In this poem he comes to his adult decision before his conscription to the army at age eighteen. Sefer haBagrut leRav Shmuel ben Hofni Gaon veSefer haShanim leRav Yehuda ben Yose; *Rosh haSeder.* Edition of text, Introduction and Notes by Tirzah Meacham (leBeit Yoreh). Translation from Jeudeo-Arabic to Hebrew by Miriam Frankel. Jerusalem: Yad haRav Nissim 1998, chap 4.
99 Gilboa, *The Days are Coming* (Hebrew), The poem that opens in "This is my shadow," 62.
The difficulty of the mourning process and the internalization [and acceptance of] the loss of a loved one may lead to melancholy and the desire to die.  

The poems presented above are cited in order to demonstrate the different perspectives of the two poets. Amichai writes from a personal post-modern nowness, whereas Gilboa chooses to fill in the lacunae of the original [biblical] story, in order to understand the character and predict the character's behavior if the character had hypothetically survived to old age, which is more of a classical-modern perspective. Amichai writes his poem in a classical structure, like previous poems, but Gilboa's poem has no consistency, every line is different. It is written in a free modern style, which emphasizes Gilboa's innovation in the structure of his poems.

7.4 A Chain of Correspondence Between Amichai, Gilboa and Dalia Ravikovich

A person standing by the window looking outside and worrying about what they see is a feature of two poems written by Gilboa and Amichai. In both of them the sentence featuring the standing at the window and gazing outwards is repeated at the beginning of the poem and at its center. Amichai's poem entitled "Out of Three or Four People in the Room" (משלשה או ארבעה בחדר, from his collection Two Hopes Away," written in 1958 begins "Out of three or four people in the room / One always stands at the window." The person gazing outwards is forced to witness injustice, burning, and people returning to their houses dead. Amichai's


assumption is that there is always one person in a group who gazes at the outside world through the lens of a closed window.

The Gilboa's poem: "I Stand at the Window" (אני עומד בחלון), from the collection "Three Returning Gates," published in 1963, opens with the line: "I stand at the window and see nothing." Gilboa may be relating to Amichai’s poem, but the continuation of the poem is different: "If the dew has not dried from my eyes / not far from here there is a field lying in wait for it." The speaker suffers from blurry vision because of the dew and surmises that he is seeing a field of golden horses and horses of fire, that after the day's events will be bloody. This image depicts something metaphysical and unclear. The second repetition of the opening sentence is then followed by the realization that there is no field in store, and thus it may have been a dream. He ends by recognizing it is an illusion:

לאilihan UInt משלים
 orch ani bahlal
 עדיןRIA
 זמנה אל כר נחלם.

Perhaps these never existed
And it was only me at the window
Still alive
Gazing at a field of dreams

Gazing at nature in wonder at the reality of what ones sees seems to be drawn from John Keats' poem: "Ode to a Nightingale," from 1817. Keats ends his wonderment with the following proclamation: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music: - Do I wake or sleep?"
Dalia Ravikovich in her poem "The Window" which was published in 1986 in her book True Love presents a poetic structure seemingly in conversation with Gilboa, but not with Amichai. Ravikovich was one of the first modern poets writing in Hebrew who was born in Israel, for whom Hebrew was a mother tongue, and who was also completely at home in the literary sources of Hebrew culture. Her lyrical style is more conversational and abstract than Gilboa's, she incorporates some words from a higher register, and in a few poems employs archaic language. Ravikovich begins with a tirade typical of Israelis (and some would say of Israeliness):

מה כاهر עשהתי?
אני שנים לא עשיתי כלום.
אני רק הסתכלתי בחלון.
טפות גשם נספגו לתוך הדשא,

So what did I manage to do?
Me – for years I did nothing.
Just looked out the window.
Raindrops soaked into the lawn.\(^{106}\)

The poet cynically clarifies that she has no responsibility for the seasons and for the plants growing, but her tone and her repetition of the claim that "she did nothing" hint at a potential action which she denied doing it and this is accompanied by guilt. The last four lines of the poem describe a state of somnolence and her dream about what she saw outside her window:

ישנתי כל כמה שאפשר.
היה זה חלון גדול די הצרכו [צרכו].
כל מה שיש בו הצרכו [צרכו] רואתי בחלון.

I slept as much as possible.
That window was as big as it needed to be.
Whatever was needed
I saw in that window.\(^{108}\)

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The poet in her dream is content to see the narrow world outside her window. The kinship with Gilboa's poem "I am Standing at the Window" is apparent in the content and in the arrangement of lines which grow shorter. Ravikovich's poem was written twenty-three years after Gilboa's poem. The speakers in both poems express their feelings that the entire tableau was part of a dream.

In Gilboa's "The End of Days" (קץ הימים) from the collection "Poems in the Early Morning," written in 1953, soldiers take control from an officer who follows their commands. The poet shares experiences with a disappeared Messiah, girds his loins and discovers the foundation stone: "Upon which all who step, grow." Towards evening the poet witnesses the soldiers' torture of the officer, his vantage point being: "I saw this through the window –." In spite of the torture of the officer, he [the officer] recovers and then "When he falls he hits the foundation stone." The fall causes him to assume his officer-role again, because the stone has special mythical powers which cause people to grow. The description alludes to Jesus' travails and his return to life as the Messiah. The expression: "The foundation stone" is from Zachariah 4:7, where the angel instructs Zachariah to go to Israel and complete the building of the second Temple. The angel also gives Joshua the High Priest a symbolic stone, which is supposed to be the corner stone of the temple (Zachariah 3:9). The foundation stone is the stone at the center of an arc which gives the arc stability, it thus represents the entire edifice, and total salvation.

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110 Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 211.
111 Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 211.
112 Gilboa, *All the Poems I* (Hebrew), 211.
Ravikovich describes the foundation stone in her poem "Royal Gifts" (מלגות מלכים), which was published in 1959 in literary journals and afterwards in a book in 1963, called The Love of an Orange. The story is of a king and his beloved, an allusion to King Solomon. The king promises his beloved gifts, one of which will be a foundation stone. The beloved knows that her desire for the king will bring her demise and will harm him, and in the spirit of love "till death do us part," sees the king "as the foundation stone." In the story told by Ravikovich the foundation stone's job is to complete the process. This is parallel to the conclusion offered by Gilboa in his poem. Julliette Hassin in her book: Poetry and Myth in Daliah Ravikovich's Work explains:

The foundation stone dimension is connected to heavenly wisdom and divine sovereignty, and it is thus clear why the speaker-poet strives to gain its inspiration, and relive that spiritual odyssey, which throws him hither and thither between inheriting the "foundation stone" and a situation in which he is impoverished because of it, which is clearly apparent in "Royal Gifts" and in "The Love of an Orange."

The officer's hit of the foundation stone in the poem "The End of Days" by Gilboa, accepts undoubtedly the identification regarding heavenly wisdom and divine sovereignty.

Ravikovich's style is much simpler than Gilboa's, with the exception of a few poems, such as "Royal Gifts," in which she incorporates a number of archaic words. When Gilboa quotes the verse in the title to the poem "Upon the Rivers of Babylon," he intends the readers to have the biblical verse in mind and develops an additional exegetical tableau in which a young boy from the modern period takes part. Ravikovich, as a representative of the young poets, disconnects the verse from its biblical context and uses it to represent any diaspora. Thus in her poem "Adloyada in Manhattan" (2010) she opens:

Ravikovitch, The Complete Poems So Far, 33 (31-33).
Julliette Hassin, Poetry and Myth in Dalia Ravikovich' Work (Tel-Aviv: Eked publication, 1989), 9.
Gilboa, All the Poems I, 218.
By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat,
Yea, on All Saints’ Day
(in Manhattan)
And talked about Big Bucks. 117

This verse is transferred to a new and foreign context: A Christian–pagan culture and a culture of money she even incorporates English. Moreover, when Ravikovich speaks in the poem “Guilt Feelings” 118 she describes a personal cultural nihilism, a lazy personality, and she is cognizant of the complete lack of guilt in the loss of values and tradition. Gilboa, of the previous generation, is cognizant of traditional Judaism and his feelings of guilt are connected to his inability to save his family.

7.5 Conclusion

The conclusion to this chapter fulfills some of the goals of the entire dissertation. The chapter begins with the debate among poets reappraising Gilboa's work at the crossroads between different generations of Hebrew poetry. Gilboa's circumstances greatly influenced his poetry. On the one hand, Gilboa was Bialik's heir, replicating the classical structure of the stanza and the line. On the other hand, he seems to flow into a freer and more modern style, and has attitudes that are characteristic of his time. His freer use of rhyme and poetic stanza, and his divergent attitude toward biblical expressions, was appreciated by his generation and especially by the younger members of his generation, who continue to develop this

116 Dalia Ravikovitch, All the Poems (haKibbutz haMuchad Publication, 2010), 289.
118 The poem “Guilt Feeling” is in Ravikovitch, All the Poems, 283: in Bloch and Kronfeld, trans, 241.
methodology. Amichai, his younger contemporary, continued to mix classical and freer styles, and was especially adept at wordplay and original tableaus.

The infrastructure of Gilboa's poetry is anchored in the European diaspora, and his writing is especially focused on the loss of his family members in Auschwitz. The impressions of this tragedy account for the post-traumatic aspect of his writing. In this he resembles Bialik who lamented the wholesale destruction and national plight. Like Bialik, Gilboa points toward hope and renewal: From the tears shall come new light.

Many examples in this chapter are taken from the hidden book *The Days are coming*, which is added proof of its central importance in Gilboa's oeuvre. Some of the poems, written in 1942-1946 were not published until 2007. The poems in this collection are evidence of a spontaneous, overflowing poetic reaction to the events of World War II. These poems were written in real time, reimagining possible scenarios, and with feelings of guilt about his inability to save his family. These first poems shed a new light on Gilboa's oeuvre as a whole. Amichai who was also a part of this war, preferred to begin his poetry with the personal experience of the War of Independence. This choice emphasizes the generational gap between their writing despite the great overlap of their creative periods.
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9. Appendix A

More on: A Comparison between the Hidden Manuscript of *The Days are Coming*, published in 2007, and the 1949 "Seven Domains" Collection, which Became Part of *All the Poems I*

Some poems which lack titles in earlier versions have them in the published version as in "Dew of Revenge," and "A Prayer for Silence." Changes were made to those poems, the purpose of which was generalization and universalism of the subject matter.

"Dew of Revenge" appears in the shelved version without a title (119), as opposed to the published versions ("Seven Domains" 84-84, *All the Poems I*, 88-89). In the body of the poem Gilboa singles out the expression: "And to bury" in a separate line in order to focus the poem on the march towards the enemy for the purpose of revenge, and the intention is the burial of certain character traits, such as hardness, rather than burying a human being. The different version found in "Seven Domains" accords better with the poem, and there is a better correlation between content and form. The poem "Dew of Revenge" ends the series "From the Very Blue Nights of Florence", with a call for revenge.

The poem "A Prayer for Silence" appears in the shelved version without a title (80), but was published with a title in the versions Gilboa oversaw ("Seven Domains," 88, *All the Poems I*, 92). Another difference: In *The Days are Coming* Gilboa writes: "To walk upon them like redeemed Jews to a well / which in their humility they asked to ascend –" (*The Days are Coming*, 80). The allusion to a well in the desert, most likely the well over which the Israelites sang: "Spring up, O well – Sing to it" (*Numbers* 21:17). In other versions the word(s) "Like the Jews" were omitted, so as to conform to a general universalism. In spite of this erasure, the Biblical allusion does insure that we understand that the reference is to the
Jews. Gilboa emended the syntax of some sentences in this poem. The first version was
unduly complicated, so he added the word "only." This resulted in a more colloquial Hebrew:
"Only one more time did he create the day" / "Allow me to live only one more time" ("Seven
Domains" 88, All the Poems 1, 92).

There are examples of greater sophistication of poetic expression. An example of the creation
of complexity in comparison to the original version is found in the poem: "A City
Remembers," in which the roads are described as remaining silent upon their underbellies
with landmines on either side. The version in The Days are Coming is simpler: "Also / on the
sides" (The Days are Coming, 45). In contrast in later editions there is further
emphasis on the first word "Which also on the sides" ("Seven Domains", 68,
All the Poems I, 73). In Genesis God remarks that the antediluvian generation "was also
flesh" (Genesis 6:3). The Hebrew הבשר is a compound word which literally
means when also, or moreover. Moreover, because a person is also flesh and not just spirit,
God decreed that his days would be numbered to one-hundred and twenty years. The biblical
allusion provides a reason for the poem: both have deadly mines.

During the editorial process the gap between the stanzas was in some cases erased and two
stanzas were combined into one: The poem "Tonight Also" as it appears in The Days are
Coming is composed of two stanzas of eight lines and an additional stanza of two lines (64).
In the published version the gap was erased and the whole poem appears in one stanza
("Seven Domains" 56, All the Poems I, 59). The speaker describes a nightmare at midnight,
and the setting is balladic. There is a yowling clock, the clinking of glasses and a volley of
bullets. The poem, according to the note at the bottom, was written in Benghazi with the
Sylvester celebration in mind. The poem ends in The Days are Coming with the lines: "And
cleaving to the heart of my ears, the thud-thud-thudding: - / Trepidation! Trepidation!" The ear feels the echo, but the trepidation is psychological. In the printed version, however, a bet preposition was added so as to clarify that the trepidation echoes in his ear, and not that the ear itself echoes, as may be understood from the version in *The Days are Coming*. The emendation clarifies that the cleaving and the noise from outside echoes in his ear and in his heart.

Most of the poem: "A Memorial Prayer" appears in the same form both in the manuscript of *The Days are Coming* and in the later published versions. There are however, a number of differences: The opening line in *The Days are Coming* is "Do not let my feet carry me to dewy satiety" (71), while in the later editions it was changed "to cursed satiety" ("Seven Domains" 47, All the Poems 1, 52). The poet wishes he could escape the cursed place, but in order to write about it, he has to overcome this desire. The meaning of מטללת (translated above as dewy) is unclear, but it may mean either dewy or, based on the Aramaic root, 'with a covering.' In later versions there are some insignificant changes, such as the deletion of brackets in the second line, and the expansion of the brackets beginning in the middle of the third stanza until the end of the stanza. There is a significant change to the border between the second and third stanza in the different versions. In *The Days are Coming* the second stanza ends with a period: "However, all my time intervals have escaped from me / they have gone very far away." The third stanza begins with "To walk with thousands of feet to every rounded end" (71). The second stanza describes the poet's turmoil, a storm in the soul, and the lines at the end of the third stanza emphasize that he has no control over time. In the editorial process preceding the poem's publication in "Seven Domains" the final sentence of the second stanza was added to the third stanza and a syntactical connection was created. The
third stanza now begins: "However, all my time intervals have escaped from me / they have
gone very far away / to walk with thousands of feet to every blue end" ('Seven Domains" 48,
All the Poems 1, 52), one may interpret that all the poets thoughts go now to the world of
legend and imagination, which is symbolized by the color blue. It seems that change served
to clarify and focus the lines of the poem.

The deletion of lines in the later editions as opposed to the version in The Days are Coming
is justified in a few places, since it helps the poem cohere. In the poem begins "Now in front
of a day," which describes the cruelty and the bloodiness of his brothers' deaths, three lines
were omitted at the end, lines which seem to stray. Thus the focus on the murder of his
brothers is preserved (The Days are Coming 61, "Seven Domains" 51). Another example of
deletion is found in the poem that begins "Seeing and feeling is greater than poetry" which
deals with the poet's poetics, and his cognizance that doing is more important than writing
poems. The second line according to The Days are Coming is: "And the voyage into the
murky and unclear distance" (79), with metaphorical sense of feeling. Gilboa changed it for
'blurred' distance ('Seven Domains" 44, All the Poems 1, 54). The middle stanza was omitted
from the published versions of this poem, since it was not as focused and coherent as the
other two stanzas. Gilboa did well in omitting it, since in this case anything that he would
have added would have taken away from the poem.

Two prose sections were copied from The Days are Coming to "Seven Domains," in which
lines were shortened in order to create a poetic structure. This change is technical, however,
and is unsuccessful and the prose form is more appropriate. The section which begins with
"Though it is miraculous" describes the soldiers on their way to war (The Days are Coming
92). And the second section begins with "I shall not call the morning by a name"( }
(לְבַכָּרּ שֶם) describes birds and psalms' poems upon roofs and fences and nature's knowledge that "at night convoys of people covered in prayer-shawls passed this way" – an allusion to the Jewish Tallis and to the Jewish identity of the soldiers (The Days are Coming, 93).

In the following two pages there are additional prose sections which are personal, the holy forgetfulness in the loss of virginity so as to perpetuate life, and religious belief, but these were not chosen and their connection to the framework is unclear. An additional prose section which was not published in All the Poems, begins with "Is this destiny's misfortune?" and relates to personal suffering as part of a collective: "How shall I believe in the tortured fate of the individual, when it is the fate of millions?" (The Days are Coming, 91). This section is lamentive but later is hopeful for the return of the light. This excellent piece fits well with the themes of the collection, and despite its artistic merit was not chosen for publication.

The short poem beginning "I wronged you more than a field, I contended with you in the poem"(The Days are Coming, 87), underwent a variety of changes in the process of publication ("Seven Domains" 75, All the Poems 1, 79), and already in the first line the expression mi'nir מִנִּיר (more than a field) was changed to mi'kir מִקִּיר (more than a wall). The poet offers to correct himself, like Jacob who contended with an angel and overcame him. A period was added to the end of the second line. The third line of The Days are Coming – "Regarding the coldness of my bow, he should shed a tear" (87) is divided into two in the published version. The resulting gap emphasizes the word וַגַּהְרֵית, which alludes to Elisha the

1 The verb וַגַּהְרֵית (to kneel over) is also mentioned in connection with Elijah on Mount Caramel in I Kings 1, 18: Elijah knelt on his knees and prayed for rain. One may interpret the declined verb וַגַּהְרֵית, as I prayed, but the connection to Elisha fits the context better.
prophet who bowed over the Shunamite woman's son, warmed him and revived him (II Kings 4, 35). The poet attempts to thaw out the frozen blood and body, but the distance between a live person and a dead person remains intact. Gilboa plays with the words: "From one person to another" (מאדמ לאדם) (in The Days are Coming) and changes it to "From blood to blood" (מדם לדם) (in the published versions). The fact that Gilboa did not emend the manuscript of The Days are Coming even when it came to this short poem is evidence that he wished to preserve both versions. The versions are thus in conversation with one another.