

Israel @ 70

Achievements and Challenges

Through the Eyes of Contemporary Israeli Literature

Zot Hashira - Study Kit

2008- 2018

The Seventh Decade

Teachers' Guide

2008 - 2018
The Seventh Decade
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The Seventh Decade

Introduction to the Unit

Looking at contemporary Israeli poetry is a very different learning experience than studying the earlier years.

Both you, the educator, as well as many of your audience, may have personal knowledge of life in Israel. The social networks and abundant media channels are eliminating distances and are also providing overwhelming amounts of information. Often times rude language and verbal violence have become the characteristics of this decade.

Our perspective, however, is, as always, the literary one.

Among the achievements of the 7th decade I chose to focus on the emergence of multiple new voices; many of them within Orthodox communities:

Achievements

New Voices: Orthodoxy

Introduction to Uri Orbach Maybe on Shabbat

Uri Orbach (1960-2015) Journalist, writer and funny story teller. Member of the Knesset and Minister for Senior Citizens affairs in the Israeli government.

His poem “Maybe on Shabbat” is one of many depicting life of modern Orthodox kids in Israel. Following his untimely death, his passing is commemorated by distributing sweets during Shabbat services on the date of his passing.

In this unit, I have chosen to highlight a few of the gems of Israeli children’s literature. I hope adult readers can gain by watching how poets address young audiences.

Uri Orbach had written a series of short poems for children, all from a child’s point of view, thus allowing a certain freedom of description that is avoided in more mature voices.

Note the description of all the fun things that can happen on Shabbat- for the secular Israeli and maybe the non-observant American Jew, it may seem that



Shabbat for the Orthodox is nothing but prohibitions and restrictions. Yet this boy has a lot to look forward to on Shabbat, which by the way are mainly sweets.

You may also notice the secular neighbor who turns on his radio or television set too loud. What is most precious to me is the normalcy of mom going to deliver the new baby – if not this Shabbat than the next. Orthodox families have many children thus the event is treated as something not worthy of special attention. Just something that can happen any week.

*Maybe they will through candy in Shule on Shabbat
And Ovadia's son will yell "Gut Shabes" from the terrace'
Maybe on Shabbat we will have guests with kids my age
And maybe I will beat dad at chess
Maybe on shabbat we will walk all the way to the sand hill
Maybe our neighbor will not turn on his radio too loud..
Maybe on Shabbat when I will say a Dvar Torah
Grandpa will say "Yishar Koach
all the pistachios are yours"
Maybe on Shabbat we will have a special cake
and maybe on Shabbat mom will go to deliver the baby
and if not on this coming Shabbat
then maybe on another...*

Maybe
on
Shabbat
Uri
Orbach



אולי בשבת יזרקו סכריות בבית הכנסת
והבן של עובדיה יצעק "גוט שאבעס" מהמרפסת.
אולי בשבת יבואו אורחים עם ילדים בגילי,
אולי בשחמט אנצח את אבא שלי,
אולי בשבת נטייל עד גבעת החול,
אולי השכן לא יפתח את הרדיו בקול.
אולי בשבת, כשאגיד דבר תורה
סבא יאמר: "יישר כוחך!
כל הפיסטוקים - רק בשבילך!"
אולי בשבת תהיה עוגה מיוחדת,
אולי בשבת אמא תלך ללדת.
ואם לא בשבת הזו,
אולי בשבת אחרת.

Introduction to Coke and Jeans Yosef Ozer

Yosef Ozer (b. 1952) was born in Jerusalem and grew up in northern Israel. In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, Ozer embraced a more religiously-inclined Jewish identity. He studied education and literature at the University of Haifa and worked as an educational director in ultra-orthodox Jewish education until resigning with profound discontent. Ozer is the author of several volumes of poetry, and twice the recipient of the Prime Minister Levi Eshkol Prize for Literature.

Most people would not expect a poem like **Coke and Jeans** to be written by an Orthodox person.

The pain over the loss of life, the deliberate biblical images and the tongue in cheek reference to the "Population Exchange" terminology which is often used by Israeli politicians.

Click on the poet's picture on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation for a link to a musical rendition of the poem. It is sung like a lamentation.

For more about Ozer's intercultural activities visit the [Bustan Retreat Site](#)

Coke and Jeans Yosef Ozer Translated by Mark Elliott Shapiro

The same week Jews read in the synagogue the section in the Bible

About Sarah's banishment of Hagar and Ishmael,

Seven-year-old Ali Jawarish was wounded

By a plastic-tipped bullet

That penetrated straight through to his brain.

Ali Jawarish became a vegetable.

He lay dying in an Israeli hospital for two whole days,

And the Angel of Death who arrived

Did not show the well to Ali's mother.

The same week Jews read in synagogue

The section in the Bible about

The binding of Isaac

Ali Jawarish was divided into several parts –

One 15 – years – old boy received Ali's liver and lungs.

The boy's mother told the media

That her son sat up in bed and asked for

A Coke and a pair of jeans.

Ali's father said that they should also donate his son's organs

To a Jew (yesterday

A Jewish soldier was divided up

Among a number of Arabs)

This insane poem is begging to be written.

Perhaps in this way,

Slowly and delicately we will carry out a population transfer:

Palestinians will receive the organs of Jews

And Jews the organs of Palestinians

And Sarah our Matriarch and Hagar their Matriarch

Will be oh so pleased with their lot,

And we will all drink Cokes and wear jeans.

קולה ומכנסיים - יוסף עוזר

בשבוּע בו חלה פְּרִשֶׁת וַיָּרָא
כְּשֶׁגִּרְשָׁה שָׂרָה אֶת הַגֵּר וַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵל
נִפְצַע הַיָּלֵד עֲאֵלִי גֵ'אֲוֹאֲרִישׁ בֶּן הַ 7
מִכְּדוֹר פְּלִסְטִי
יָשָׁר אֶל תּוֹךְ הַמֶּחֶ
עֲאֵלִי גֵ'אֲוֹאֲרִישׁ הִפְךָ לְצֶמֶח
בְּבֵית הַחֹלִים הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי גָסס יוֹמִים
מִלֵּאדָה הַמִּנּוֹת שָׁבָא
לֹא הִרְאָה לְאִמּוֹ בְּאֵר מַיִם

וּבשְׁבוּע שִׁחְלָה בוּ פְּרִשֶׁת תּוֹלְדוֹת
אֶת עֲאֵלִי גֵ'אֲוֹאֲרִישׁ פָּרְקוּ לְחֻלְקִים
לְיָלֵד בֶּן 15 חֻלְקוּ אֶת הַכֶּבֶד וְהִרְאוּ
אִמּוֹ אֲמָרָה בְּשִׁדּוֹר
הַיָּלֵד קָם וּבִקֵּשׁ קוֹלָה וּמִכְּנָסִים
אֲבָא שֶׁל גֵ'אֲוֹאֲרִישׁ אָמַר שְׂיִתְּנוּ
חֻלְקִים גַּם לַיהוּדִי
רַק אֶתְמוֹל חֻלְקוּ חֵיל יְהוּדִי לְעֶרְבִים

וְשִׁיר מְשֻׁגָּע לְכַתֵּב
אוּלַי כִּד לְאֵט בְּעֵדִינּוֹת
נִעְשָׂה אֶת חֻלּוֹפֵי הָאֲזֻרָחִים
פְּלִשְׁתִּינִים מִחֻלְקִים שֶׁל יְהוּדִים
וַיהוּדִים מִחֻלְקִים שֶׁל פְּלִשְׁתִּינָאִים

וְשָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וְהַגֵּר אִמָּם
יִהְיוּ מִבְּסוּטוֹת בְּחֻלְקוֹן
וְנִשְׁתָּה קוֹלָה וְגַם גִּלְבֵּשׁ מִכְּנָסִים

- **Feminist Orthodoxy**

Introduction to the poems of Shlomit Naim Naor

Shlomit Naim Naor is an educator and poet with over 20 years' international experience in informal Jewish education. In her most recent position, she was a training and content specialist at Makom, the educational content unit of the Jewish Agency for Israel. Shlomit has served as a Jewish Agency community emissary in London, and as chair of the Israeli Batei Midrash Network. She is a board member for the religious Zionist organization Ne'emanei Torah Va'Avodah, a member of the editorial board of the periodical *Deot*, and an editor for *Mashiv HaRuach*, a Jewish-Israeli poetry journal. Her first book, *No End in Sight*, was published in 2016 and received the Minister of Culture's Prize, the Mifal Hapayis Award, and the Ramy Ditzanny Helicon Prize for emerging authors.

Even these very short biographical notes, will show that Shlomit Naim Naor is a woman totally committed to the Orthodox halachic way of life alongside her ongoing artistic and personal development. The two short examples of her growing body of poetry, are a perfect illustration of her ability to combine and articulate her value system, her sensuality (note the reference to her husband's body in the first poem) and her quest for personal feminine expression within the world of Hlacha. As in *Hineni*. Both poems adopt the position of an inner voice speaking to the poet's persona. As if she needs this constant reminder of the two voices inside her.

Safety Pin – Shlomit Naim Naor

This is not a laundry pile.

These are clean clothing that just came out of the washing machine, straight into the dryer. These are the cloths that are covering the people you love. The man you have waited for and built a home with, this is the shirt enveloping his softness, giving him a home when he goes outside. These are the cloths enveloping your daughters, your only ones, when they venture out to the vulnerable outdoors. Breath in their childish smell, do not let them leave you, this age will never come back to you. Fold their dreams into the tight boulevard and the streets of pants.

Your love is a safety pin in their hearts.

Hineni

And you will stand, facing yourself and you will say loud and clear and your lips and your heart are one and you will spread your hands and breath deep and the sea will spread at your doorstep and you will dip and rise from the bath pure and clean with no blemish and you will face your God in front of the desert the city and the wall in front of your childhood self and in front of what you will be and you will roar that you have chosen life, chose yourself and you shall forgive yourself for all yesterday's crimes and your will forgive those around you for what they have done today and you will find compassion for all creatures and your will find love for all your eyes caresses and you will know that you are one and your name is one. אָתְּ אַחַת וְשִׁמְךָ אֶחָד

הנני

וַתַּעֲמִדִי מוֹלַעְצָמֶךָ וְתֹאמְרִי בְּקוֹל רֶם וְנִשְׂאָ כִי פִיךָ וְלִבְךָ שְׁוִים וּפְשָׁטֶת יָדֶיךָ וְנִשְׁמַתָּ עִמָּךְ וְיָם לְפִתְחוֹךָ הַשְׁתַּרְרִי וְטָבַלְתָּ וְעֵלִית מִהַרְחֻצָּה וְטָהוֹרָה וּבְרָה וְאֵין בָּךְ מְאוֹם וַתַּעֲמִדִי מוֹל אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹל הַמְדַבֵּר מוֹל הַיָּם מוֹל הָעִיר הַהוֹמָה מוֹל עֲצָמֶךָ שֶׁל הַיְלָדוֹת וּמוֹל מָה שֶׁתִּהְיִי בַשְּׂכָחָה וְשֹׁאגָתָ כִּי בְחַרְתָּ בַחַיִּים בְּחַרְתָּ בְּעֲצָמֶךָ וְסִלַּחְתָּ לְעֲצָמֶךָ עַל פְּשָׁעֵי הָאֶתְמוֹל וְסִלַּחְתָּ לְסוֹבְבֶיךָ עַל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם הַיּוֹם וּמִצָּאת חַמְלָה עַל כָּל בְּרוּא וּמִצָּאת בָּךְ אֶהְבָּה לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר עֵינֶיךָ לְטָפָה וְתִדְעִי כִי אַתְּ אַחַת וְשִׁמְךָ אֶחָד.

Introduction to Reut Hamburger She Enters the Café

While Reut Hamburger's poetic persona is getting ready to enter a café for probably yet another date, she invites the readers to enter the world of young Orthodox women (and men) who are going through the process of dating for the purpose of finding "the one". There is an expectation and a lot of pressure by family and peers to get married and start a family at a young age. With women today opting for studying and careers the pressure gets even harder.

Your audience may get a better insight into this side of Israeli society through the TV series Srugim. See link on slide 3 of the PPT presentation and [here](#)

In the poem, note the series of prayers/requests all so simple and emotionally touching yet so difficult to achieve. Readers, especially women of the "Me Too" generation would easily recommend a rebellion against this system of values. The poet however, wishes to continue to belong to the very world that makes her so uncomfortable.

Reut Hamburger She Enters the Café

And when she entered the cafe, she adjusted a fold in her skirt,
Gathered a stray lock of hair behind her ear,
And said a short prayer:
"May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors
That we will have fun, Amen.
And let me not make a blooper.
Let me rejoice in him and him in me.
Let me open my heart,
That I shall not unveil anything too early.
Let me not judge too fast and not say "Yes, for sure, let us continue", just because
Perhaps – perhaps – perhaps.
Even though I know in my guts, that
NO!
Let God grant his mouth and mine wisdom,
Knowledge, smarts and sensitivity.
And if possible, let that moment with the bill, at the end, not be too awkward.
*
And upon leaving the cafe she whispered a short prayer:
"God,
Just let my heart not break."

ובכניסתה לבית הקפה, הייתה מסדרת קפל בשמלתה,
אוספת שוונץ סורר מאחורי האזן
ואומרת תפלה קצרה:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו נאלהי אבותינו,
הלואי אמן שיהיה לנו פיה.
שלא יאָרע דבר פְּדִיָּה על ידי,
שְׁאֲשֵׁמַח בוֹ וְיִשְׂמַח בִּי.
שְׁאֲפַתַּח לִב
וְשֵׁלֵא אַחֲשֵׁף מֵה שְׁאֵין זְמַנּוֹ.

שלא אֲשַׁפֵּט מֵהָר מֵדִי וְשֵׁלֵא אֲגִיד "כֵּן, בְּטַח, בּוֹא נִמְשִׁיךְ" רק פי
אולי-אולי-אולי
למרות שאני יודעת בִּבְטָן
שלא.
שיתן ה' חֲכָמָה מִפִּי וּמִפִּיו,
דַּעַת, תְּבוּנָה וּרְגִישׁוֹת.
וְאִם אֲפָשֶׁר, שֵׁלֵא יִהְיֶה מִבֵּיךְ כָּל הַקָּטַע הַזֶּה עִם הַתְּשׁוּבֹן בְּסוּף.

*

וביצאתה מבית הקפה הייתה לוחשת תפלה קצרה:
אלהים,
רק שלא ישבר לי הלב.

Introduction to Delicate Balance Sivan Har-Shefi

Dr. Sivan Har-Shefi has a doctorate from the Department of Hebrew Literature at Bar-Ilan University. She teaches literature and creative writing at Herzog College, and is one of the founders and leaders of the Beit Midrash "Zohar Hai". An accomplished poet, Dr. Har-Shefi was the Prime Minister Prize laureate in 2012. She is the author of three books -- Levithan's Exile (2005), Psalm for a Day of Thunder (2010), and Sun Which Ecclesiastes Knew Not (2014), published by Rythmus KM Press -- and is the editor of the Atar journal of literature and art. Dr. Har-Shefi is married to Avishar and is the mother of five. She lives in Tekoa.

Reading the short bio above shows the delicate balance in the poet's own life between the academic world and that of an observant, traditional family living on a settlement.

Read the poem carefully to note the elements of Shabbat observance and how through the acceptance of differences between gender roles a balance is created.

Read Channa Pinchasi's article: ["To Welcome Shabbat"](#) for a more detailed discussion of this as well as another poem in this unit

Our Shabbat

The one only I can bring in¹
And only you can let go² (leave, out)
Holding two candles³
But when it ends they become one
Two wicks in one candle⁴
For a new beginning
In the beginning we were two faced⁵
The world was hanging by a spinal cord
Now two spinal columns
Are holding a home
And when I bend a little,
When you,⁶ delicate balance.

¹ It is the woman's role to light the Shabbat candles and bring in Shabbat.

² It is the man's role to perform the Havdalah to take leave of Shabbat

³ The traditional Shamor V' Zachor candles to welcome Shabbat

⁴ The united candle of Havdala

⁵ There is a Talmudic tradition that in the beginning there was one human with two faces.

⁶ Both need to bend a little to create the balanced whole.

איזון עדין, סיון הר-שפי

את השבת שלנו
שרק אני יכולה להכניס
שרק אתה יכול להוציא
מחזיקים שני גרות.
אבל בסופה נהיים אחד
שתי פתילות בגר אחד
להתחלה חדשה.
ובראשית היינו דו-פרצופין
בחוט שדרה הנה תלוי עולם.
עכשו שני עמודי שדרה
מחזיקים בית
וכשאני קצת מתכופפת,
וכשאתה. איזון עדין.

- **LGBT**

Introduction to the LGBT texts:

In Israel as well as all over the world, LGBT communities enjoy today recognition and a larger measure of freedom. Israel does not have same sex marriages but couples are recognized as parents and spouses. Israeli cinema started addressing itself to gay topics in earlier decades already.

[Walking on Water](#) (2004) [Yossi and Jagger](#) (2002) [Out in the Dark](#) (2012) to name a few famous ones. It is important to note that all three movies place the LGBT story within typically Israeli circumstances: Jews and Germans, Serving in the IDF, Israelis and Palestinians.

The song “Come” that became probably the best known Israeli gay song, was composed years before it became that. It was sung by Rita and was understood to be a love song with no particular gay connotation. In 2002 Ivri Lider, one of the first publically known gay Israeli artists, created his rendition of the song as the soundtrack for Yossi and Jagger. All the references to secrecy and the dream to be able not to love in hiding, became associated with gay love. On slide 4 of the PPT you will find links (the movie pictures) to an English rendition of the song as well as a very recent one in Hebrew from a concert in the Caesarea Amphitheater. Note the lyrics do not suggest a freeing experience but rather seek support for fears. Indeed **Yossi and Jagger** was such a movie. The sequel [Yossi](#) (2012) shows a different reality. The sequel as well as the recent concert at Caesarea are both testimonies to the changes in Israeli society.

Come Lyrics Miri Feigenbaum Ivri Lider

Come, let us disperse the screen of fog
Come, let us stand in the light and not in
darkness
How long will we keep running away?
To games of control?
It is okay to cry sometimes
When something breaks inside of you.

Tell me a little about the moments of fear
As it is much easier to be scared together.

And when cold winds storm outside
I will send you a scorching fire
One day perhaps, you will stop running
Among the shadows in the soul.

Come, let us disperse the screen of fog
Come, let us stand in the light and not in
darkness

How long will we keep running away?
To games of control?
It is okay to tremble sometimes
When something wonderful is happening inside.

Tell me a little about the moments of happiness
Until the sun rises upon us.

And when cold winds storm outside
I will send to you a scorching fire
One day maybe you will stop running
Among the shadows in the soul.
Tell me a little about the moments of fear
As it is much easier to be scared together.

בוא עברי לידר
מילים: מירי פיגנבוים
לחן: רמי קלינשטיין
בוא נפזר את מסך הערפל עברי לידר
בוא נעמוד באור ולא בצל
עד מתי נמשיך לברוח
אל משחקים של כוח
מותר לך לבכות לפעמים
כשמשהו נשבר בך בפנים
ספר לי קצת על רגעי הפחד
קל הרבה יותר לפחד ביחד
וכשרוחות קרות יסערו בחוץ
אשלח בך אש חמה
יום אחד אולי תפסיק לרוץ
בין הצללים בנשמה
בוא נפזר את מסך הערפל
בוא נעמוד באור ולא בצל
עד מתי נמשיך לברוח
אל משחקים של כוח
מותר לך לרעוד לפעמים
כשמשהו נפלא קורה בפנים
ספר לי קצת על רגעי האושר
עד שיעלה עלינו הבוקר
וכשרוחות קרות יסערו בחוץ
אשלח בך אש חמה
יום אחד אולי תפסיק לרוץ
בין הצללים בנשמה
ספר לי קצת על רגעי הפחד
קל הרבה יותר לפחד ביחד

Introduction to Tehila Goldberg Turquoise the Tortoise

Turquoise the Tortoise is a children book. This is the first time I am including choices of Israeli children's literature as an additional and very unique way of looking at Israeli society. Children's literature was always a true reflection of the values and principles a society holds dear. Israeli children's literature is no different and it can provide a rich resource for learning about the changes and developments in Israel throughout its seven decades. Stories of pioneers, Holocaust survivors and their integration into the country as well as a very slow emergence of Arab figures, who are not all enemies, are a few examples. Here we hear about Turquoise the tortoise who has two mothers and what happens when he meets this cute boy who also happens to have two mothers.

Tehila Goldberg who wrote and illustrated the book, lives with her partner in Beer Sheva. They are both Orthodox. The story does not explain the family of either boy or tortoise, it just tells it. I trust you will enjoy following this short adventure and use it as a stepping stone to discuss some of these new voices.

For complete text see attached [PDF](#) or [PPT](#)



Challenges

- **I Splits with Diaspora Jews**

Introduction to Splits with Diaspora Jews

While working on this unit, almost every day brought another major issue of disagreement between Israelis and Diaspora Jews. Not only did the government go back on its promises to create a respectable egalitarian parrying place by the Kotel for non-Orthodox Jews but it seemed most Israelis either did not know or did not care about the issue at all. “Women of the Wall”, seem to most Israelis as a weird phenomenon and few understand its importance to a large number of Jews living mainly in North America.

In the North American Jewish community there is a growing split about Israel. The almost automatic support is a thing of the past.

As I expected it was practically impossible to find any literary work about these topics written by an old timer Israeli. The people who address themselves to the subject are Olim of relatively recent years. People who were born and raised outside of Israel. Made a conscious decision to become Israelis and now are trying to bridge the growing gap between these two parts of the Jewish people.

In my personal life Sarah Tuttle Singer is a permanent feature. I follow her posts and blog, I feel for her when she gets horrible talkbacks from people who will call her names for trying to represent the complexities of life here.

It is also a good opportunity to include in our sources some of the publications so characteristic of the last decade namely: social media.

Unlike Israeli poetry, this text is fully accessible to North American readers. I think the learning should focus on discussing Sarah’s suggestions.

I'm at #AIPAC2018, and I'm hearing the same question Sarah Tuttle Singer

What can American Jews do to support #Israel?

I'm glad you're asking:

Well, I will tell you one thing you DONT need to do. You don't need to defend our right to exist. Because we exist. And we are strong and thriving.

And in all we are, we have won the right to celebrate our country, and be criticized, too.

Here's what you can do, and should do:

Come visit Israel.

Come see it in all its splendor... and all its ugliness, too.
Have coffee at a cafe in the middle of the night in Rothschild, and look at the family with the kid sleeping on his father's lap right next to you. That kid is growing up in a world where the year is measured according to the Jewish calendar, protected by an army that is one of the strongest in the world, in a place where he never has to hide his Jewish star necklace under his shirt. This is a beautiful thing, and something we should never take for granted.
Visit our beaches. Swim in the sea. But look at the memorial just north of Jaffa right near the water -- a memorial for all those teenagers blown to smithereens on a Friday night.
Go to Yad Vashem. Cry. Get angry. Swear out loud "never again."
Visit all our holy sites if that's what moves you - but remember they're just stones. It's the people there that make them holy.
Buy cucumbers and fresh strawberries and clementines in the Ramle Shuk, and take the train and the bus and look around at all the people.
Get stuck in traffic. Get annoyed.
Eat hummus.
Go to checkpoints, too. And stay long enough to see how it really is if you aren't Jewish- if you're a Palestinian who just wants to get to work. Look everyone in the eye.
Go to East Jerusalem and ask yourself why no one picks up the garbage or fixes the streets when East and West Jerusalem are meant to be Israel's "united and eternal capital."
Mostly, talk to people. Lots of people.
Talk to Jews, talk to Palestinians. And notice how both sides are exquisite and painful and true.
And try to be comfortable with that.

But don't get too comfortable with what Israel's leadership is doing right now. I know we've all used that line about Israel being the only democracy in the Middle East... and while it's true, we are a democracy, we need to look something squarely in the face and talk about it before it's too late. Because this is what you can do to help:

You may not know this but there are several measures that Israel has put in place or is putting in place to silence dissent.

For instance, if an organization publicly commemorates the Nakba in Israel, they can lose state funding.

Is coercively shutting down the narrative of the Palestinian citizens of Israel a sign of a healthy democracy?

Or do you know about the law that was passed in 2011 which makes it possible to sue Israeli citizens who call for settlement boycotts?

Is silencing criticism the sign of a healthy democracy?

Or the fact that Israel can now ban both foreign national BDS activists AND even proud liberal Zionists (including many Jewish leaders and rabbis) who love Israel, oppose BDS, but are against the settlement enterprise and call for settlement boycotts from entering Israel?

Look: I'm against BDS and boycotts, but I support the RIGHT to boycott... because boycotts and dissent are both signs of a healthy democracy.

So what does it mean when we ban those who disagree?

Look: I know a lot of Jewish Americans feel they shouldn't weigh in about internal Israeli matters -- but I call bullshit. And so does President Ruvi Rivlin.

He says Israel is made up of five tribes:

Secular.

Religious nationalist

Ultra-orthodox

Arab

And diaspora.

That's you.

Firmly part of our tribe.

And we need you to weigh in: not only for moral reasons but for pragmatic ones:

Most American Jews voted for Hillary - most young American Jews are progressive, and many are either checking out of the Israel conversation or they're ashamed of Israel -- because they are unable to reconcile their values with what's happening in Israel and Palestine.

The Occupation, settlement expansion, silencing voices of dissent in Israel, and casting out the stranger, goes against everything young American Jews are taught to celebrate and champion.

And there is so much worth celebrating and championing about Israel -- but the truth is we are in trouble.

At this point, it isn't too late, but we are like that frog in the pot on the stove, and the water is freaking hot right now, and the steam is rising, and unless more American Jews who care about Israel speak up and say "we love you but this is unacceptable," you stand to lose an entire generation of caring Jewish American young people who won't be able to justify support of Israel because our government policies will be so out of whack with their values.

So now is the time to stand as proud Zionists and condemn the Occupation. Yes, Israel needs strong, secure borders, but we are ruling over 2.5 million Palestinians in the process, and most of these people are just everyday ordinary folks who want

to go to work, and take care of their kids, and maybe even drive to the beach on a hot summer day. But they can't, and while certainly their own leadership is flawed and to blame for many of their problems, we are to blame as well, we have taken big steps away from the two state solution we say we want, and we are responsible for taking the first steps to make it right. After all, we know what it's like to yearn for a homeland, and yearn to be free.

And now is the time to stand with the tens of thousands of African asylum seekers, men and women and children literally prefer PRISON and detention centers to going back to face what they fell is certain death in Africa. Because while their countries problems are NOT our fault, we have a responsibility here, because we Jews know what it's like to be afraid and to be strangers in a strange land and seek refuge.

Because something irreplaceable is at stake, and that is Israel's Jewish and democratic soul, and we cannot lose that.

So please:

Come visit. Come see this place for yourself -- and challenge yourself beyond the basic tour of Masada and the Western Wall. Come see the miraculous things that will give you hope for Israel's future and our shared future, and come see the terrible things that we are doing, too -- things that will jeopardize our future unless we stop.

That's what you can do to help - love us AND hold us accountable for the ideals we signed on to champion in our Declaration of Independence.

That's what we need now more than ever before it's too late.

The Tale of Two Zions

Michael Zion

[See Video Clip](#)

In his 14 minutes long talk, Michael Zion a modern orthodox scholar who is at home in both the North American and Israeli Jewish communities discusses the complex relationship or rather the lack of it between these distant cousins; Israelis and Diaspora Jews.

Presenting the unique reality we are living nowadays as both Jewish dreams have come true; the sovereign state of Israel and a full equality in America. Class discussion may analyze this model and see if/how it relates to their own understanding of the situation.

Personally I must say that I wish something similar existed in Hebrew to discuss with Israelis. I may end up creating it 😊



• II Splits Within

Introduction to Splits within

We started this unit with looking at new voices in the Orthodox community as part of the achievements of the seventh decade of the state of Israel. Yet the reality is way more complex. There are growing gaps between the Ultra-Orthodox secular Israel.

Gaps are deepening between Right and Left along the political spectrum and between Arabs and Jews.

The poet Yosef Ozer, was born in Jerusalem and grew up in northern Israel. In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, Ozer embraced a more religiously-inclined Jewish identity. He studied education and literature at the University of Haifa and worked as an educational director in ultra-orthodox Jewish education until resigning with profound discontent. Ozer is the author of several volumes of poetry, and twice the recipient of the Prime Minister Levi Eshkol Prize for Literature.

The title of the poem “Reeducation”, evokes totalitarian regimes. Indeed it is an in-depth soul searching and self-critic of his time within the Ultra-Orthodox world. As you read it pay attention to the many references of main stream Israeli cultural icons that are looked down upon in Haredi circles. The split therefore is a true culture war between Jewish societies that seem worlds apart. It may seem tedious to work your way through all the references. Yet the whole creates a tapestry of the puzzle that makes up modern Israeli culture and how it is seen by the Ultra-Orthodox. It may even help your audience better understand why the Ultra-Orthodox oppose egalitarian Judaism.

“Learn Haredi Nobility”⁷

Reeducation Yosef Ozer 2018

After the war⁸ I wanted to run away to another continent,
I wanted distance, I wanted a passport to silence
To save myself from here, from death, I found You, with You there is unity, wholeness
Unity between yesterday and tomorrow. The security wall of returning a stolen soul
One penny is as important as a hundred, and mainly...
God is ancient, he forgives transgression, sing the Song of Songs, and candle light, the smell of
Chulent.
I agreed to hate anyone who is not Ben Torah (Observant)
Rav Kanievsky said that Rav Oerbach deserves to be stoned⁹.
I agreed to hate Ben Gurion, to hate water sprinklers, Eucalyptus trees

⁷ A quote from the poem – that is said to the poetic persona who is trained to become a Haredi

⁸ Most probably the 1973 Yom Kippur War that brought about people seeking answers for the tragedy and trauma they have suffered.

⁹ This refers to inter factional dissent within the Haredi world expressed in very harsh intolerant language.

“Rejoice, rejoice now in the dream”¹⁰
 Yitzhak Ben Tzvi¹¹, “Believe the day will come”¹²
 You taught me “Those burnt in the ovens accuse..”¹³
 I agreed to hate the National Water Carrier¹⁴ and all those who planed Moshavs and fields and
 water –
 Just like those who dug water holes for the pilgrims¹⁵. And what did you dig? Or built?
 I agreed to hate all the forests planted by the Zionist heretics.
 The forests you are going to for picnics,
 Trees you did not plant.
 Forgetting who said to whom: “There is no foretold Apocalypse”
 On Israel’s fruit bearing trees hills.
 I agreed to mock the weeping on the eve of Independence Day¹⁶.
 I went to visit my friend who was killed, on mount Herzl¹⁷, secretly.
 To laugh at your jokes about the Hallel: “It is a Yom Tov (Holiday), did you make Kidush?
 How you told me while dressed in a nice white shirt – “It is more appropriate to say Mishnayot
 for the souls of the soldiers”.
 As if we said even a low calorie one at the Yeshiva, for them.
 I agreed to hate the sense of responsibility, the camaraderie,
 The good morning, the “And perhaps, these things never happened,
 Perhaps I never woke up at dawn to the garden..”¹⁸
 I agreed to hate the sweat of my brow.
 You remember how you taught me to say Hi?
 Without touching, one does not touch the hand.
 Bow your head, like that, forward and with a little angle,
 Facing the person, like that, you said, do not touch the hand.
 Learn some Haredi nobility, you are not like the Franks¹⁹.
 I came to you to be part of the Garden of Truth,
 A unifying Torah, the candle sticks all come out of one structure –
 To say that we are all...one heart.
 Ha Ha Ha ! How you rejected my daughter
 And what I had to pay secretly so she is accepted to school –
 How you accepted my daughters into a segregated class until the head of school testified:
 He is not a Frank²⁰, he is one of us. And I am after all a Frank son of a Frank father.

¹⁰ A quote from a poem by Shaul Tchernichovsky (A secular Zionist poet) – glorifying man’s free spirit

¹¹ The second president of the state of Israel, known for his hard work to bridge gaps between Jewish communities in Israel.

¹² Reference to an Israeli song expressing hope in peace

¹³ A reference to the Holocaust victims in whose name certain messages are taught.

¹⁴ Major Israeli project to carry water from the North to the South of Israel.

¹⁵ Reference to the time of the second Temple when people were digging water holes for the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem

¹⁶¹⁶ Mocking Israelis who mourn the fallen soldiers on Yom Hazikaron

¹⁷ Military cemetery

¹⁸ Reference to a poem by the poet Rachel A Zionist secular poet who sang the beauty of life close to the land.

¹⁹ Derogatory name for Mizrachi Jews

²⁰ Ashkenazi Haredim do not accept Mizrachi students into their schools.

And whose sons are you. It is not possible that you are the sons of a straying woman!
I agreed to hate Bialik²¹; that hour between sun and shadow,
How beautiful is this tree, the soil, the cyclamen;
Sometimes I was surprised, when I was shocked by two hundred and fifty thousand killed by the
Tsunami:
What do you care if Goyim die at the Tsunami? But it is written: 'My creations are drowning²²?
You did not understand! Only God says this about the Egyptians during the Exodus! –
To hate – the bastards who gave us the Health Fund so that every Jew has health.
You better learn, because of this Health Fund there is now less Chessed and fewer people say
psalms!
It is a fact, it was not done by rabbis! Anything new is forbidden by Torah!
To hate, to hate Zionists, who made the Health Fund-
They destroyed faith, because God is the healer!
I agreed to hate the cotton I had picked when I was 8 at the Moshav²³
And it still tickles my fingers
I agreed to hate the chicks I raised
I agreed to hate the main water tap I opened
And the rainbow that was so happy in the palace of water drops.
I looked at the rainbow, and no cataract grew on my eyes,
I agreed to accept forged checks from the rabbi, who created the yoke of Torah-
I agreed to hate everything you hinted at secretly or out loud
I agreed to hate the non-white shirts
I agreed to hate the guitar
I took you for a model
What did you teach me to love?

²¹ The National poet of Zionist secular Hebrew literature.

²² Reference to the dying of the Egyptians in the Sea of Reads (Exodus)

²³ Cooperative farm

תלמד, אצילות של חרדים. אתה לא כמו כל הפרענקים

חינוך מחדש. פואמה מאת יוסף עוזר

פורסם ב-30.07.18

לאחר המלחמה ההיא רציתי לברח. יבשת אחרת,
רציתי מרחק, רציתי דרכון לשתיקה,
למלט עצמי מפאן, מהמנות, ומצאתי אתכם. אתכם האחדות, השלמות
האחד בין אתמול ומחר, חומת המגן של הלכות השבת נפש גזולה,
דין פרוטה כדין מאה. ובעקרה—
אלהים עתיק, נושא עוון, שיר שירים. אור גרות. ריח סמין.
הספמתי לשנא את כל מי שאינו בן תורה.
הרב קניבסקי אמר שהרב אורבך סקילה.
הספמתי לשנא בן גוריון, לשנא ממטרות, את האיסקליפטוסים,
את שחקי-שחקי על תלומות.
את יצחק בן צבי, את האמיני יום יבוא.
למדתם אותי: "שופי הפכשנים מאשימים,"
הספמתי לשנא את המוביל הארצי ומי שתכננו מושב ושידות ומים—
כמו זה שחפר בורות לעולי הרגל. ומה אתם תפרתם? מה בניתם?
הספמתי לשנא את כל היערות שנטעו הפופרים הציוניים,
היערות שאתם הולכים אליהם לפיקניק,
עצים שלא אתם נטעתם.
שוכחים מי אמר על מה "אין לה קץ מגלה מזה,"
על הרי ישוראל נושאים עצי פרי.
הספמתי ללעג לכבי בערבי יום עצמאות,
(אל חברי ההרוג עליתי בתשאי בהר הרצל)
ולצחק מהבדיחות שלכם על ההלל: "היום יום טוב, עשית קדוש?"
איד הספרתם לי, ענובים יפה, בתלצה צחורה—
"יותר נכון לומר משניות לעלוי נשמת החילים,"
כאלו אי פעם אמרנו בישיבה משנה אחת
דלת קלוריות לעלוי נשמת החילים.
הספמתי לשנא את חוש האחריות, את התברות,
את הבקר טוב, את "ואולי... לא היו הדברים מעולם,
ואולי... לא השפמתי עם שחר לגן..."
הספמתי לשנא את זעת אפי.
זוכרים איד למדתם אותי לומר שלום?
ללא נגיעה. לא נוגעים ביד.
מכופפים את הראש ככה, קדימה וקצת בנוית,
מול הבגדים, ככה אמרתם, לא נוגעים ביד.
תלמד, אצילות של חרדים. אתה לא כמו כל הפרענקים.
באתי אליכם בשביל להיות חלק מגן האמת,
תורה מאחדת, קני המורה יוצאים ממקשה אחת—
להגיד שכלנו... לב אחד.
קה קה קה! איד דחיתם את בתי
ומה שלמתי בסתר בכדי שתפנס לסמינר—

איך הכנסתם את בנותי לכתה צדית. עד שהמנהל העיד:
הוא לא פָרעַנְק, הוא מְשַׁלְנוּ, וְהָרִי אָנִי פָרעַנְק בְּן אבָא שֶׁל פָרעַנְק,
וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי מִי אַתֶּם. לֹא, אֵי אֶפְשֶׁר שְׂאֵתֶם בְּנֵי נַעֲנֹת הַמְרָדוֹת!
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת בְּיָאֵלִיק, אֶת שְׁעֵת בֵּין חֲמָה לְצַל,
אֶת מַה יִּפְה אֵילֶן זֶה, אֶת הָאֲדָמָה, אֶת הַרְקֵפֶת.
לְפָעַמִּים הֵייתִי מְפֹתֵעַ, כְּשֶׁהִנְדַעְזוּעִתִּי מִמְּאֵתִים וְחֲמֹשִׁים אֶלֶף מֵתִים בְּצוּנָמִי:
מַה אֶכְפֵּת לָךְ שְׂמֵתִים גּוּיִים בְּצוּנָמִי? אֶכְּל כְּתוּב: מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי טוֹבָעִים?...
לֹא הַבְנָת! אֶת זֶה אוֹמֵר רַק אֱלֹהִים עַל הַמְצָרִים בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם! —
לִשְׁנֹא — אֶת הַנְּבִלוֹת שֶׁהֵעֵנִיקוּ לָנוּ קִפַּת חוֹלִים שֶׁלְכָל יְהוּדֵי תְהִיָּה בְרִיאוֹת.
(תְּלַמֵּד: בְּגִלְל הַקִּפַּת חוֹלִים הָאֵלֶּה, פִּתַּח הַחֶסֶד וּפְתַח לֹאמֵר תְּהִלִּים!)
עֲבָדָה — לֹא רַבָּנִים עָשׂוּ אֶת זֶה! כִּי חֲדָשׁ אָסוּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה!
לִשְׁנֹא, לִשְׁנֹא צִיּוּנִים, עָשׂוּ קִפַּת חוֹלִים —
הָרְסוּ אֲמוּנָה כִּי הַשֵּׁם רוֹפֵא חוֹלִים!
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת הַכְּתָנָה שֶׁקִּטְפֵתִי בְּגִיל 8 בְּמוֹשֵׁב
וְעַדִּין מְדַגְדַּגְתִּי אֶת אֶצְבָּעוֹתִי
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת הָאֶפְרוֹחִים שֶׁגִּדְלֵתִי
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת הַשִּׁיבֵר שֶׁפִּתְחֵתִי
וְאֶת הַקִּשָּׁת שֶׁהִיָּתָה מְאֹשְׁרֵת בְּכָל אַרְמוֹן טְפוֹת הַמַּיִם
וְהַסְתַּכְלֵתִי בְּקִשָּׁת, וְלֹא צָמְחוּ לִי תְבִלוֹת עַל הָעֵינָיִם.
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לְקַבֵּל צ'קִים מְזִיפִים מֵהֶרֶב, מְקִיִּם עֲלֵה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה —
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת כָּל מַה שֶׁרְמַזְתֶּם בְּסֵתֵר וּבְגִלּוֹי
הַסְכַּמְתִּי לִשְׁנֹא אֶת הַחֲלָצוֹת שֶׁאֵינָן לְבָנוֹת
רְאִיתִי בְּכֶם מוֹדֵל.
מַה לְמִדְתֶּם אוֹתִי לְאַהֲבָה?

Introduction to Agi Mishol and A Post to the Poet Rachel

Agi Mishol is one of Israel's greatest and most beloved poets of our generation. Her writing forges a rare balance between literal and poetic precision and accessibility to the readers, combining everyday language and slang with inventive linguistics. Infused with irony and humor, hers are very personal poems, which, at the same time, provide extensive human insight. For her, "Poetry is swimming against the current of all the noise and commotion, the political events and the wars. It is being in an underground stream. It is seeing what everyone sees, but differently."

Both poems included in this unit are articulating rebellion against the state of affairs in Israel that the poet is uncomfortable with. In "A Post to The Poet Rachel", Mishol uses the contemporary form of "Post". She is holding a discourse with an iconic poem of the early Zionist poet Rachel. The poem "To My Land" is very well known. It depicts the idealistic love of the country as expressed by the early pioneers of the beginning of the 20th century. By looking at both poems side by sides, the critic is very clear. Mishol once as loyal to the country as her poetic predecessor is now contemplating leaving it.

Agi Mishol A Post for the Poet Rachel

I sang for you my land
I pressed a trail with my feet too
My hand planted a tree
And I walked with Uri²⁴ my son slowly
In the garden trails.
But I will not glorify her name
With spoils of war
And Deeds of heroism
Much waters ran down river Sorek²⁵
Since the kikayon
The pear trees flowered and withered
Distant lights winked and faded
Idiom after idiom
Are crashing backwards
My poems are also emigrating
Dress up in foreign languages
No visa
No passport
I am packing everything by my self²⁶
Except for hidden weeping

TO MY LAND RACHEL

I have not sung to you, my country,
not brought glory to your name
with great heroic deeds
or the spoils a battle yields.
But on the shores of the Jordan
my hands have planted a tree,
and my feet have made a pathway
through your fields.

Modest are the gifts I bring you.
I know this, mother.
Modest, I know, the offerings
of your daughter:
Only an outburst of song
on a day when the light flares up,
only a silent tear
for your poverty.

²⁴ Naming sons after Rachel's longed for son was common. (myself included)

²⁵ Reference to one of Israel's nuclear research sites

²⁶ Reference to security checks at the airport

No one gave me anything to carry.

פוסט לרחל

* * *

שָׁרְתִי לְאַרְצִי,
גַם שָׁבִיל כְּבֹשׁוֹ רַגְלִי,
עֵץ נָטְעוּ יְדֵי
וְעַם אוֹרֵי בְּנֵי פְּסַעְתִּי לְאֵט
בְּשָׁבִילֵי הַגֶּן,
אֲךֹ לֹא אֶפְאַר אֶת שְׁמָה
עַל שְׁלַל קְרָבוֹת
וְעֵלִילוֹת.
מִיָּם רַבִּים זָרְמוּ בְּשׁוֹרֵק
מֵאֵז הַקִּיקִיּוֹן,
עֲצֵי אֶגֶס פָּרְחוּ וְנָבְלוּ,
אוֹרוֹת רְחוּקִים קָרְצוּ וְכָבוּ
וְנִיב אַחַר נִיב
קוֹרְסִים פֹּה לְאַחֹר.
גַּם שִׁירֵי יוֹרְדִים מֵהָאָרֶץ
מְחַפְּשִׁים לְשָׁפוֹת זְרוֹת
בְּלִי וַיְזָה
בְּלִי דְרָכּוֹן,
הַכֹּל אֲנִי אוֹרֶזֶת לְבַד
וְחוּץ מִכִּי בַּמְסַתְרִים
אִישׁ לֹא נָתַן לִי דָבָר
לְהַעֲבִיר.

אל ארצי

לא שרתי לך ארצי,
ולא פיארתי שמך
בעלילות גבורה
בשלל קרבות.
רק עץ ידי נטעו
חופי ירדן שוקטים,
רק שביל כבשו רגלי
על פני שדות.

אכן דלה מאוד,
ידעתי זאת, האם,
אכן דלה מאוד
מנחת בתך
רק קול תרועת הגיל
ביום יגה האור,
רק בכי במסתרים
עלי עניך.

Introduction to Kabbalat Shabbat

“Kabbalat Shabbat – Welcoming Shabbat” repeats the pattern of **A Post to Rachel**. Mishol expresses her disgust. This time she holds an angry dialogue with Bialik’s Shabbat Hamalka (Shabbat the Queen). As a liberated woman she will not accept any ancient Shabbat stories. She insults Shabbat the queens, and claims the anger and fatigue of women who have to work hard for the glory of Shabbat. With the rude tone of this poem Mishol draws a separating line between herself and women like herself and the traditional views of Shabbat.

Read Channa Pinchasi’s article: [“To Welcome Shabbat”](#) for a more detailed discussion of this poetic phenomenon.

Kabalat Shabbat / Welcoming Shabbat Agi Mishol

Fuck the stain of grace
That spread out from my chest
Into the world

Shabbat the queen can suck it up
With all its cousins
With the chicken in the oven
My father and my mother
And my husband and my kids as well as the sun
That finally left
The top of the trees.

קבלת שבת , אגי משעול
קוס אוחתו פתם החסד
שהתפשט מחזי
לתוך העולם
ושתקפץ לי שבת המלכה
עם כל בני דודיה
ועם העוף בתנור
ואבי ואמי
ובעלי וילדי והחמה
שנסתלקה סוף סוף
מראשי האילנות

Shabbat the Queen (excerpt) H. N. Bialik

The sun o’er the treetops no longer is seen;
Come, let us go forth and greet Sabbath the Queen.
Behold her descending, the holy and blest,
And with her the angels of peace and of rest.
Welcome, welcome, queen and bride,
Welcome, welcome, queen and bride.
Peace be unto you, angels of peace.

Introduction to Almog Behar

*Almog Behar, a Jewish Israeli-born writer of Iraqi, Turkish, and German descent, is one of the leading voices in contemporary Mizrahi culture in Israel. (For an explanation of the terms “Sephardi,” “Mizrahi,” and “Arab-Jew(ish),” please see note below. *) Behar’s lyrical, surreal, and politically groundbreaking story “Ana min al-yahud” (“I am one of the Jews”) sets the issue of contemporary Arab-Jewish identity against Zionism’s rejection of diasporic identities and diasporic languages such as the Jewish dialects of Arabic once spoken by many Mizrahi Jews from Arabic-speaking countries. In so doing, it also touches on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁷*

Since the following story by Almog Behar is five pages long, you may prefer to have your students read it before class.

Ana min al yahoud recalls famous transformation stories such as **Metamorphosis** by F. Kafka or **Rhinoceroses** by Eugène Ionesco. In all these works a mysterious disease affects a human being or a whole town and changes them into a different creature. It is through this metaphor that the writers depict and criticize a given human condition, mainly under totalitarian regimes.

In Behar’s story the narrator does not change only his accent does. It becomes a strong Arabic or rather the Iraqi accent of his grandfather. The one his parents never wanted their children to have. Wanting them to be Israelis. But in Israel, having an Arabic accent exposes one to a number of unpleasant reactions both at home and outdoors.

Start by reading the foot notes so you are familiar with the particular references.

Note the tone of bewilderment and pain. In Israel it seems, one needs to deny their Arab like, Mizrahi origins in order to be considered a true Israeli.

The title of the story is in itself its essence: “I am a Jew” it says in Arabic!!

There is a lot of similarity between this story and “Reeducation” by Ozer. In both there is a demand to negate one’s past in order to be accepted.

- **Ana min al yahoud – I’m one of the Jews / Almog Behar**

Translated by Vivian Eden

At that time, my tongue twisted around and with the arrival of the month of Tammuz the Arabic accent got stuck in my mouth, deep down in my throat. Just like that, as I was walking down the street, the Arabic accent of Grandfather Anwar of blessed memory came back to me and no matter how hard I tried to extricate it from myself and throw it away in one of the public trash cans I could not do it. I tried and tried to soften the glottal `ayyin, the way my mother had in her

²⁷²⁷²⁷ The Yiddish Book Center Resource kits <http://teachgreatjewishbooks.org/resource-kits/almog-behar-ana-min-al-yahud#introduction>

childhood, because of the teacher and the looks from the other children, but strangers passing by just rooted me to the spot; I tried to soften the pharyngeal fricative het and pronounce it gutturally, I tried to make the tsaddi sound less like an "s" and I tried to get rid of that glottal Iraqi quf and pronounce it like "k," but the effort failed. And policemen started to head assertively towards me on the streets of Jerusalem, pointing at me and my black beard with a threatening finger, whispering among themselves in their vehicles, stopping me and inquiring as to my name and my identity²⁸. And for every passing policeman on the street I would want to stop walking and pull out my identity card and point out the nationality line and tell them, as if I were revealing a secret that would absolve me of tremendous guilt: "Ana min al yahoud, I'm a Jew. "But suddenly my identity card started to vanish precisely when I was very much in need of it. And thus, every evening and every morning the police would arrest me without anything in my wallet that would agree to protect me. Then at home I would find the identity card rolled up between two NIS 20 bills, or in my pocket outside my wallet I would find my driver's license as though I had taken it out for some reason, or in my knapsack among the papers my military reserve service card would appear as though I had forgotten it there unintentionally. But when the policemen stopped in front of me I couldn't find any document at all that would tell them about my past and my future. And then I would start to make phone calls, telling the policeman, look, it's only since yesterday that my accent has been Arab like this, heavy like this, and it isn't even Palestinian, it's Iraqi, and you don't look to me like you spoke Yiddish in your parents' home yourself, maybe you learned it somewhere outside, maybe your own grandfather had an accent like mine and listen, I'm calling friends, my friends, listen to what a beautiful accent they have, Hebrew as Hebrew should be spoken, without any accent, and if these are my friends, then who am I.

But all of a sudden my Ashkenazi friends weren't answering me at all, they wouldn't hear the plea of my ringing and only in the evening or the next day would they call me back, ask what I wanted and refuse to identify my voice. And I'd remain standing there facing the policemen all alone and start to call my friends whose parents were from Aleppo or Tripoli or Tunisia saying maybe their Hebrew is not perfect, it isn't so pure, but nevertheless it's better than mine. And they'd answer right away, not hesitating at the sound of the ringing, and suddenly they too had such a heavy Arab accent and they'd be listening to some meandering oud in the background or some persistent qanoun, and they'd greet me with "ahlan bik" and call me "ya habibi" and ask me "ashlonek" and take their leave of me with "salamatek" and what could the policemen do, how could they believe me, after all of my friends had abandoned me, that I was an Israelite and not an Ishmaelite. And then they'd check me slowly, rummaging in my clothes, going over my body with metal detectors, stripping me of words and thoughts in their thorough silence, searching deep in the layers of my skin for a grudge, seeking an explosive belt, an explosive belt in my heart, eager to defuse any suspicious object. And when the policemen presented themselves to me in pairs, the one would say to his companion a few minutes into their examination, look, he's circumcised, he really is a Jew, this Arab, and the other one would say, an Arab is also circumcised, and explosive belts don't care about circumcision, and they would continue their search. And really, during the time when I left my body to them explosive belts began to be born on my heart, swelling and refusing to be defused, thundering and thundering. But as they were not made of steel or gunpowder they succeeded in evading the mechanical detectors. In the end, when the policemen had left me alone, I would continue on my way from the beautiful Belgian Consulate building and the circle at the top of Jabotinsky Street and walk down

²⁸ Arabs are often stopped by police and asked to identify themselves

Marcus Street to the Jerusalem Theater. There I would wait to see some American film plentifully endowed with Oscars, but suddenly there was no theater at the end of the street, and suddenly it wasn't Marcus Street, it was a street with an Arabic name, and the house had gone back to being Arab, and so did the Belgian Consulate, and the people in the yards, family by family, were Arabs, not only construction workers, not only street cleaners and renovators²⁹.

2.

And I would start to walk the streets of Katamon³⁰ and the streets of Talbieh and the streets of Baqa and instead of seeing the wealthy Jerusalemites who had gathered there in the spacious homes, and instead of reading there on the street signs "Kovshei Katamon" and "Yordei Hasira,³¹" I'd once again see the wealthy Palestinians, and they were the way they had been before the 1948 war, as if there had never been a 1948 war. I see them and they are strolling in the yards among the fruit trees and picking fruit as though the newspapers had not told them that the trees would wither, that the land would be filled with refugees. And it was as though time had gone through another history, a different history, and I remembered that I had asked my mother why we talked history so much, enough history, we've had enough of history, because this history binds me, leaving nothing inside me, and also nothing inside you.

And really, we have become so fixed in our history, and extinguished, but here for a moment history has followed a different trajectory. And I would walk through the wealthy Palestinians' streets, and I thought that perhaps they would speak to me respectfully, not like the policemen. I hoped that I would be able to tell them how much I had read about the writer and educator Khalil al Sakakini, and how much I wanted to make friends with his grandchildren, and I would walk among them, approaching their yards and I do not succeed in mingling with them because all I have at my disposal is Hebrew with an Arabic accent and my Arabic, which doesn't come from my home but from the army, is suddenly mute, strangled from my throat, cursing itself without uttering a word, hanging in the suffocating air of the refugees of my soul, hiding from family members behind the shutters of Hebrew. And all the time, when I tried to speak to them in the small, halting vocabulary of the Arabic I knew, what came out was Hebrew with an Arabic accent, until they thought that I was ridiculing them, and had my accent not been so Iraqi, had it not been for that, they would have been certain that I was making fun of them.

But like that, with the accent, they were confused, they thought I was making fun of the Iraqis, the Saddam Husseins, or maybe some old Iraqi who had kept his accent but forgotten his language. And I didn't make friends there even though I wanted to, and I remembered how I had once heard an uncle of mine say of those Arabs of the wealthy neighborhoods of Jerusalem, they are effendis, they wear Western suits and tarboushes on their heads, and I heard the word effendi at that time with a kind of scorn, even though now I can remember that he hadn't said it that way and I had heard the scorn as though I were some Palmachnik³² in sandals and shorts who scorns the Arab landowners and praises his own holy socialism and that of all the Zionists. They are effendis, my uncle told me, and he meant it respectfully, but I had lost their language and they

²⁹ Manual jobs often done by Arabs.

³⁰ Katamon, Talbiye and Baqa are all neighborhoods of west Jerusalem that used to be inhabited by affluent Arabs prior to 1948

³¹ "Kovshei Katamon" (the conquerors of Katamon) and "Yordei Hasira, (the boat men) are street names in the above mentioned neighborhoods. They are commemorating Jewish acts of bravery during the 1948 war of independence and before

³² Jewish fighters during the pre-state years.

didn't know my language and between us remained the distance of the police forces and the generations.

On my way back home, only the bus drivers were accepting of my accent, knowing that it is impossible to expect what the accent of a passenger who boards a bus in Jerusalem might be. And my heart did not know I had returned to my heart, he didn't know, and my fears didn't know they had all returned to me, they did not know.

3.

And thus my voice was replaced by my grandfather's voice, and suddenly those streets that had become so accustomed to his death and his disappearance and his absence from them began to hear his voice again. And suddenly that beautiful voice, which had been entirely in my past, started coming out of me and not as a beggar and not asking for crumbs, but truly my voice, my voice strong and clear. And the streets of Jerusalem that had grown accustomed to my silence, to our silence, had a very hard time with the speech, and would silence the voice, gradually telling it careful, telling me careful, telling me I am alien telling me my silences are enough. And despite my fear, and even though this voice was foreign from the distance of two generations of forgetting, I spoke all my words in that accent, because there was speech in me that wanted to come out and the words would change on me as they came out of the depths of my throat. And a stranger who didn't know me would have thought that I was a loyal grandson, and would not have known how much I had piled non-memory on memory over the years, and would not have guessed how much my memory had blurred and how many times, how many, many times, I had not made the connection to my grandfather on my lips.

And when I returned home from that first walk in the streets with my new accent and the policeman's searches of my body, my life's companion wondered about my voice, and as she spoke to me and advised me to stop she was infected by my transformation and her lips connected to a jumble of her father's Yemenite Arabic accent and her mother's Istambouli Ladino accent. And a few days later, she began coming home from work with reports that there was anxiety going around the different departments and a small plague was spreading among the people at her office and the old accents that were hoped to have vanished are coming out again. And a small item in the margins of one of the major newspapers revealed that the security authorities are keeping track of who has been infected by whom with the forbidden accents, and there is already concern that the country will be filled with Arabs, many, many Arabs, and therefore they have decided to reinforce the radio with announcers whose Hebrew is so pure that we will feel alien in our speech. And shortly thereafter, my life's companion was explaining to me in an unsteady voice, one moment veering north to the Straits of the Bosphorus and one minute veering south towards the Gulf of Aden, that this dybbuk³³ was also haunting Ashkenazim. For them, the change would develop more slowly, she prophesized, because their children were convinced that their parents' accent and their grandparents' accent had originally been American, and they have less concrete memories of their old speech. But in a little while the Polish and the Hungarian and the Rumanian and the German and the Ukrainian accents will be heard again in the streets, and this is what is most feared by those who are responsible for public security, their fear being that they will no longer be able to find announcers to send to the armies of the radio and teachers will not be found to instruct our children in the secret of the correct accent.

³³ In this context the reference to Dybbuk an evil ghost entering the body is a bit of an intended mixed metaphor as it is rooted in Ashkenazi culture.

And despite her prophecies of a huge wave of change, my parents stood staunchly against me and against the plague, remembering the years of effort they had invested to acquire their clean accent, and they began to hint strongly to me to cease and desist, reminding me of my plans to study. And they would ask me earnestly what could I do, how I could cover up my longings, my longings so suddenly in this voice that is so foreign to me, and I am so sorry and regretful that it is coming out of me, but I can't, I can't stop it just like that in a single moment, because there is no barrier inside me and no brakes. If you persist in this speech that keeps coming out of you, you will distance yourself from the scholarships, said my father, and he was very, very right, if you don't come back to our plain speech, what will become of you, said my mother, and she was very, very right. In all my interviews all the professors and the women professors were very surprised at my accent, trying to find a different speech in me, something more like university speech, more academic, even though the words were almost the same words, perhaps a bit more broken. How will you go on if you speak like this, they said plaintively, and they are very concerned about my future, and neither my heart's ruined tranquility nor my heart's broken stones nor my heart's sharp corners could help lift the decree from me. But during those days of their worry my ears were not opened to hearing them, and my language became deaf and their accent became alien to me and distant, and I took pleasure as cycles of the moon went by and my life companion's prophecies were being fulfilled and the streets of Jerusalem were changing and my own parents were alone in their non-transformation. And I revealed to her ear that I had started to write my stories in Arabic letters, and soon the important departments would be shocked again. And some days later she came home to tell me that the department heads had laughed and said, let him write like that. Let him write stories that only he can read, his parents or his children will not read them and our children will not fall into the danger and, if he applies, we will give him all the government prizes for Arabic literature without having read a word in his books.

And of course the department heads were right, and my wife began to prophesize the future in Ladino³⁴ proverbs, telling me this proverb my mother had used and though I don't remember how she said it in her language, I do remember the accent. This is the last visit of health before death, she would whisper and then begin to explain, these are death throes and not the resurrection and in the highest of the departments they already know, they've decided that it is possible to relax, they will assign job slots for correct Hebrew speech and everyone will think back to the source of his income, earning his living and his family's penury, and then regular Hebrew will return as if there had never been a plague.

4.

And my heart began to give indications in my voices, saying this is my voice and this is not my voice, this is a lamed coming out of my mouth and this is an alien quf, alien to my heart. And I would slow down the pace of my thoughts, in order to think, to think about my thoughts and not only about my thoughts, but I had no time and I would scatter words to the wind like the sea salt that certainly no one is scattering into the sea. And my grandfather would speak to me, asking me in my voice whether there is any end to this story, and why is this history of mine mixed up with yours, how I have come to trouble your life, I am the generation of the desert and how have you arisen to renew me. You are the generation for which we waited so that there would be no difference between its past and the past of its teachers, because our past was already very painful and we remained in the desert for the birds of prey to eat us for your sake, so that you would not

³⁴ Sephardi Jewish language

remember me, so that you would not be hurting like me and how is it that your teeth are again biting into my words and where, the

Districts of Jerusalem are different, there are no teahouses, there is no Tigris River flowing through the city for pity's sake, but I did not meet my death in Jerusalem, nor in the city of my birth, but rather in the desert between them, a great desert of silence. Build extensions in your heart, my grandson, he would say to me, make many departments, and lodge me in one of the hidden departments, and live in the rest of them. Or move into the silence department, because the change that you thought is occurring is too simple, and what is going to change if a different accent is spoken? Will I live again, will you live my new life? Enough of the streets for you, go to your parents, my accent will not convince them, and they know it and have already raised the flags of many revolts. Perhaps silence will put the present's fear of the past and of the future into their hearts. And why you don't show them your story, perhaps that way they will wake up, said my grandfather from the dead, almost making me swear an oath.

And I started to measure my silences, this is a day's silence, this is a week's silence, this is a month's silence, well-framed inside the walls of my house, and no mouth opens and no window opens and the scenes of the profane do not come in, but there is nothing sacred either, and nothing is subtracted and nothing is added. And everything is the voice of my silences, my silences are many, many silenced words, and I am not being, and I am not becoming, and there is no end to the story and there is no before there was the story, there is no beginning. And I was silent for more and more time, until my parents would say speak, if you don't speak how will you get a scholarship, how will you continue your studies and what will you do with your life, and where are your smiles and where have they gone into hiding, speak, speak in any accent because the fear of silence has descended upon us.

5.

There is no Tigris³⁵ flowing through Jerusalem, and its murmur does not silence the borders that rise up against us, the borders that separate myself from myself. I am not here not there, not East not West, not my voice now and not the voices of my past, and what will happen in the end. I walk through the streets mute and also somewhat deaf. This time only my appearance worries the police, my thick beard and my stubbornness not to utter a word. Again the month of Tammuz is waning in me and despite the heat I wrap myself in coats to cover up the explosives belt of my heart. And thus out of the policemen's devotion to duty I am brought to the jail and my parents come after me, to see their son and where he is being taken.

I stay silent in front of my parents, and how they will respond, I stay silent in front of my parents and give them all my stories that I had concealed from them, hinting here I have written about you, Mother, and here about you, Father. Here I have written poems of opposition to Hebrew in Hebrew. I give them many more signs, because I have no other language to write in, out of so much shame you have not bequeathed me anything. And these times prohibit me poetry and force me to sing, and while they are crowding in on me, crowds and crowds, crowding in on you too, and the language that has become my language is commanding me to pour my soul in it, to be an empty flute for its gusts, until together we produce a sound, and together we would become nay – an arab flute, we would be disguised as a different language, an absent language. And this really is the same story, recurring over and over again, how many stories do I have, Mother, Father, how many stories does a person have? Each time he tries to tell the story in different words, each time he tries to resolve the unsolved story a bit differently, and aren't you identifying your own story here, nevertheless your silence has told me a little. Look, now I've tried to write

³⁵ The Tigris flows in Bagdad

the story in the Arabic accent, but what has come of it. Look where we are meeting. Take them, read my story, Mother Father, read all my stories that I have hidden from you for many years, you too are the same exile, the same silence, the same alienation between heart and body and between thought and speech, perhaps you will know how the plot will be resolved.

And the first speech my parents uttered was a denial, Father said this is not our son and this is not the beard we have raised, said Mother, and where, we don't have this accent, they said in chorus to the officials, he had nowhere to inherit this accent from, not from the nuclear family, his grandfather Anwar died before he was born, our son wasn't there.

And the second speech they uttered was the implication that if thou doest not well we shall go home from the jail disappointed in the cycle of generations and if thou doest well and drop the stories, this story, this speech and this silence and speak to us in our language, we will stay here with you until you are judged fit to go free, until all of us together are judged.

And my parents did not know that I had returned to their heart, they did not know, and they did not know that all of their fears had returned to me, they did not know.

Adar Bet, 5765, Jerusalem (March-April 2005)

Introduction to Loyalty in Culture



In 2015, Miri Regev, the minister of culture, tried to pass the law of loyalty in culture. In a Haaretz editorial we find the following comments:

“The proposed law from the school of [Miri Regev](#) wants to allow the culture minister, after consultation with the Israel Council of Culture and

Art, to decide whether or not to cancel financial support or reduce this support to a cultural body, whose content it creates or distributes do not fit in with the opinions of government and its approach concerning the existence of the country and its fundamental principles.....It is almost superfluous to explain why such legislation is inappropriate in a free and democratic country, and certainly does not represent the values of freedom of expression and striving for truth, which are safeguarded fundamental values in Israel.” Yuval Karniel Haaretz 2018

The law proposal brought about a wave of objections mainly by performing artists. In this short video clip some of Israel’s most famous comedies, films and ballet performances are being restricted by the proposed law. The English sub titles make this clip self-explanatory even if the audience is not familiar with all shows mentioned. It is clear that, nudity, critic of the military, the use of Arabic and gay content are going to be restricted. The law did not pass. None of these shows was censored. Nevertheless the clip provide an insight into yet another area of splits with Israeli society.

Links to the clip can be found on slide 7 as well as [here](#)