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Joint Commission for Sustaining Rabbinic Education



Sefirah Study

Portraits of the Holy Land: Antiquity to the Present
April 25 – June 13, 2005

Week 2 – Additional Background Readings
“Fulfillment and Healing in Zionist Poetry”
Dr. Stanley Nash

Background Biographies:

The following biographies are from the Encyclopedia Judaica.

1. Tchernichowsky, Saul
2. Bluvstein, Rachel
3. Lamdan, Yizhak
4. Greenberg, Uri Zevi

Tchernichowsky, Saul

TCHERNICHOWSKY, SAUL (1875–1943), Hebrew poet. Born in the village of Mikhailovka, Russia, Tchernichowsky grew up in the home of pious parents who were, however, open to the influences of the Haskalah and Hibbat Zion. He attended a modern Hebrew school, where he studied mainly Hebrew and the Bible, and at ten entered a Russian school. The manysidedness of his education left a distinctive mark on his poetry in which the village, its life, and its landscape are also intrinsic components. Opening wide intellectual vistas for the young poet, his learning and knowledge were a source of inspiration as well as a wealth of material which Tchernichowsky transformed into aesthetic experiences. His education developed and nourished his critical attitude toward Diaspora Jewish culture and the yoke of the Jewish exile; cultivated his interest in other cultures; inspired his devotion to the Hebrew language, Jewish nationalism, and Zionism; and influenced his attitudes toward the traditional Jewish way of life. His literary life may be divided into five periods:

The Odessa Period (1890–99)

At 14, Tchernichowsky was sent to Odessa to further his education: first in commercial secondary schools, and later through independent study in preparation for entry into the university. He was especially interested in languages and his studies of German, French, English, Greek, and Latin later stood him in good stead when he translated poetry from these languages into Hebrew. An avid reader of poetry, he was particularly influenced by the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Goethe, Heine, Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, Longfellow, and later the Greek classics. In Odessa, Tchernichowsky was drawn to Zionist circles as well as to the younger Hebrew literary circles; the latter stimulated his interest in modern Hebrew literature, especially in the poetry of M.J. Lebensohn, J.L. Gordon, H.N. Bialik, and the stories of Mendele Mokher Seforim. These left their mark on the writings of the young poet who at that time started publishing in various periodicals. His first two poems were: "*Masat Nefesh*" in *Ha-Sharon* (Cracow, 1892/3) and "*Ba-Halomi*" in *Ha-Pisgah* (Baltimore, 1892/3); and his first published book of verse—*Hezyonot u-Manginot* ("Visions and Melodies," 1898). This full-length work reflects the poet's deep involvement with the poetry of different nations and the influence it had on both the form and the content of his original poems, as well as his translations.

Characterized by a variety of classical poetic forms and complex rhythms, Tchernichowsky's poetry reveals his sensitivity to the sound and rhythm of language and his flair for accurate epithets. In this first collection of poems, the Tchernichowsky style is already clearly expressed. While most of his contemporaries developed their style through a struggle with classical Hebrew sources, Tchernichowsky put special emphasis on formal elements in both the choice of language and forms of verse. He drew his images from direct observation. Though his style has a biblical flavor and is replete with biblical imagery, he did not draw on the multifarious traditional implications and overtones that Hebrew terms and stock phrases could yield. Tchernichowsky's concept of love and nature, major themes in *Hezyonot u-Manginot*, is in the spirit of the Romantic poets. This quality added a new dimension to contemporary Hebrew poetry. The ideological concepts of his poetry may be traced to the poet's early Haskalah education and to the influence of Zionist and Hebrew literary circles with which he associated in Odessa. His reflective poems strongly call for a revolt against the fate of the Jewish people in exile, and even more, against the futility of the people's struggle for freedom. Criticism of Diaspora Jewish

culture, an important motif in Tchernichowsky's later poetry (see "*Be-Leil Hanukkah*," "*Harbi Ei Harbi?*" and others) is already anticipated in this early work. The socialist influence (as in "*Ani Ma'amin*" and "*Me-Hezyonot ha-Navi*"), although found in these poems, was to remain marginal.

The Heidelberg-Lausanne Period (1899–1906)

Failing to gain admission to a Russian university, Tchernichowsky studied medicine in Heidelberg. He completed his medical studies in Lausanne in 1905. During this period, the poet came under the influence of the works of Goethe and Nietzsche. His own writings at that time are contained in two volumes: *Hezyonot u-Manginot* (Book 2, 1900), and the first part of *Shirim* ("Poems," 1910, which subsequently appeared in four enlarged editions). The motifs and stylistic peculiarities of the first volume of *Hezyonot u-Manginot* are also basic to the second, but the work is characterized by a more profound insight. Formalistically, the poet experiments with the long poem (the ballad and the epic). The form and structure of "*Bein ha-Mezarim*," "*Amnon ve-Tamar*," and "*Barukh mi-Magenzah*" are an extension of the ballad; while "*Levivot*," "*Berit Milah*," and "*Ke-Hom ha-Yom*" are narrative poems of wide scope. These poems are marked by the poet's close involvement expressed through his identification with his protagonists (spiritual personages in Jewish history) whose victory in defeat epitomizes the tragedy of the Jewish destiny.

In his narrative poems (the idylls) he lovingly describes the traditional Jewish way of life as he remembers it from his village childhood. His reflective poems, influenced by Nietzsche, are a criticism of Diaspora Jewish culture and Jewish religion which he contrasts with the Hellenic ideal of beauty, advocating an absolute response to the life impulse which imbues earthly existence (e.g., in "*Le-Nokhah Pesel Apollo*," "*Me-Hezyonot Nevi'ei ha-Sheker*," and "*Le-Nokhah ha-Yam*"). The motifs of enjoyment of the life of the senses and corporeal existence, whose tragic undertones are already felt in these early poems, are also dominant in the love and nature poems of the period ("*Ha-Navahmi-Dilsberg*," "*Lenchen*," "*Aggadot ha-Aviv*," "*Si'ah Kedumim*," and "*Mi-Tokh Av he-Anan*"). Tchernichowsky's romantic tendencies evidenced in the poems in the first collection are here replaced by an outspoken and consistent pantheistic and worldly view of life. His poetry at this time, infused with an underlying tension between two extreme yet mutually complementary motifs, embodies two different, possibly contradictory attitudes to reality. Ideologically, this tension is manifest through the poet's ambiguous attitude toward the Jewish heritage and the Jewish destiny. In terms of poetic experience and style, it is marked by a simultaneous double play of expression-sentimental lyricism and the restrained epic narrative.

The Russian Period (1906–1922)

His personal experiences and the contemporaneous historical events left a deep impact on the poet; they form the subject of many of his works, and are a crucial factor in the molding of his outlook during these maturing years. Upon completion of his studies in Lausanne, he returned to Russia but had difficulty in finding a permanent post since he did not have a medical degree from a Russian university. He wandered from place to place, holding various posts. In Melitopol, he was arrested as a "political agitator" (1907). He settled in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) in 1910, after his medical degree had finally been recognized. At the outbreak of World War I, he was drafted and served as an army doctor. After the Bolshevik revolution his economic situation deteriorated and in 1919, he settled in Odessa after a long journey through the Crimea. There he earned a scanty livelihood as a physician, and after three years of hardship left Russia.

Despite the years of adversity, there was no letup in Tchernichowsky's literary creativeness. In addition to poems, most of which were written in the latter part of the period, he composed stories, a number of scholarly essays and, of particular importance, translated a number of literary works from the Greek: Anacreon's lyrics (1920), Plato's *Symposium* (1929), and part of Homer's *Iliad*; and various English works, including Longfellow's "Evangeline" (he had previously translated the "Song of Hiawatha" which appeared in Odessa in 1912–13).

His poems of this period were collected and published under the title *Shirim* (Part 2) and *Shirim Hadashim* ("New Poems," 1923). Few of the poems in this volume, however, directly reflect the contemporaneous events that agitated the world, they are rather marked by Tchernichowsky's deliberate tendency to evade a confrontation with his time. In *Shirim Hadashim*, the poet expresses himself mostly in the rigorous form of the sonnet, but the poetic content does not complement the form. In his long narrative poems, especially those written in the later part of the period ("*Ba-Goren*" and "*Hatunnatah shel Elkah*"), he reverts back to the past and its tranquility, particularly his childhood years. These poems are free of the tragic undercurrent that lurked in his early "idylls," instead they highlight the comic ("*Ma'aseh be-Mordekhai ve-Yukhim*," "*Eli*," and "*Simhah Lav Davka*").

Tchernichowsky also continued to write in the vein of the nature poetry of the Heidelberg period ("*Kisimei Ya'ar*") with his detailed and minute descriptions of landscape (the Crimea sonnets) and the recrudescence of his "pagan" motifs, especially in the first part of the period ("*La-Ashtoret Shir ve-la-Bel*," "*Olat Regel*," and "*Mot ha-Tammuz*"). Through withdrawal and by delaying and restraining his reaction he responded to contemporary historical events, which had undermined his naive attitude toward reality; they were reflected in a literary retrogression (e.g., in "*Al Tivez li-Meshorer*"). The shock finally finds direct expression in "*Ha-Kaf ha-Shevurah*" where for the first time he describes the experience of his arrest; in some of his stories based on his experience as an army doctor; and, especially, in the two sonnet sequences "*La-Shemesh*" (1919) and "*Al ha-Dam*" (1923). The aesthetic moment in these sonnets is kindled by a powerful tension between two diametrically opposed, incompatible, and irreconcilable attitudes. In "*La-Shemesh*," Tchernichowsky affirms life in all its manifestations, despite the disease and death that surround him; he accepts civilization: religion, art, and philosophy, despite fading ideals and the degeneration of the times. This is a crystallization of the ideal of the poet's cultural universalism which characterizes his previous works and now also includes the religious aspects of Jewish culture. In "*Al ha-Dam*," however, civilization is seen as a manifestation of the degeneration of the creative life force and is rejected with the same vigor as it had been affirmed in "*La-Shemesh*." The poet spurns any ideology which claims to bring salvation to the world but which, in fact, only leads to more bondage and death. The redemptive power of art is man's only hope and the poet's only asylum in the wreckage of his universe.

The Berlin Period (1922–1931)

After a brief stay in Constantinople where he tried in vain to secure a position as a doctor in Palestine, Tchernichowsky moved to Berlin. He visited Palestine (1925) on behalf of the newly founded World Red Magen David Organization and tried to find permanent employment there; unable to do so, he returned to Berlin. In 1928, he visited the United States. In Berlin he earned a meager living from his literary work. For some time he edited the natural sciences and medicine section of the *Eshkol Encyclopaedia* and the literary section of the quarterly *Ha-Tekufah*. During this period, he wrote stories and articles which were published in the collection *Sippurim* (including also works he had written in Odessa, 1921–22) and in *Sheloshim u-Sheloshah*

Sippurim (1941–42). In the main, he devoted himself to translation. Among the works he rendered into Hebrew are: Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*; Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire*; Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*; the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*; the Finnish epic *Kallevallach*; Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*; and he completed the translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Tchernichowsky also wrote children's poems, published in the collection *He-Halil* (1922–23), a literary study of Immanuel of Rome (1925), and a play *Bar Kokhva*. Many of his writings of the period were collected in a ten-volume jubilee edition of his works (1928/29–1933/34). These were edited by him and published by the Zionist General Council as a mark of appreciation to Tchernichowsky. Most of Tchernichowsky's poems of the period were printed in the third volume of his collected works.

"Mayim she-Lanu" ("Stale Water"), a narrative poem which bears a thematic link with the poet's earlier literary periods has for subject, an episode that occurred during his stay in Odessa after the revolution. It describes the physical but mostly the spiritual distress of an intellectual who had become superfluous in the new social order and seeks escape in his memories of the distant, stable, and peaceful past. The keen awareness of historical perspective, missing from the earlier work "*Hatunnatah shel Elkah*," is one aspect of a general tendency in Tchernichowsky to retrospect now through a tragic consciousness. This casts his themes in a new light. His despair "of God and of gods," the general theme of "*Al ha-Dam*," also forms a background to his love poems "*Shirim le-Ilil*" and "*Ha-Na'ar ha-Kushi*"; the motif of the poems is the tragic nature of a fateful, ephemeral chance meeting expressed through desire and longing for another and fateful dependence on him. This motif does not form part of the exultant and egocentric love lyrics of his earlier works. Love now takes the place of faith and has become almost a cult. His serious poetry on nature and the theme of sensual existentialism have taken a mystical bent. The affirmation of the redemptive mission of art and of the gospel of beauty are the subject of several poems in this collection. This affirmation the poet has also filtered through his tragic consciousness in which he has come to is impossible (see "*Ha-Pesel*"). An external expression of this mood are his tragic ballads.

Tchernichowsky also develops the tragic theme in his nationalist poetry of this period. At the beginning of his career, he had expressed sorrow at his alienation from his people and its culture, brought on by the futility of their struggle for freedom; now his sorrow is caused by his inability to be in Erez Israel and to participate in the national rebirth to which he was so committed. During this period, he wrote some of his most fervent Zionist poems ("*Omerim Yeshnah Erez*," "*Zedaktem ha-Bonim ha-Ze'irim*," and "*Al Harei Gilbo'a*"). In his tragic absence he recognizes the inexorable fate of the eternal wanderer. Only through acceptance of his fate and identification with it, is he able to overcome its tragedy. The entire universe now becomes the scene of his wanderings (see "*Ha-Adam Eino Ella*").

The Erez Israel Period (1931–1943)

In 1931 Tchernichowsky was commissioned to edit (in Latin, English, and Hebrew) *Sefer ha-Munnahim li-Refu'ah u-le-Madda'ei ha-Teva* ("The Book of Medical and Scientific Terms") on the basis of material collected by A. M. Masie, and was thus able to settle in Erez Israel. Upon completion of the work (1934), he was appointed physician of the municipal schools in Tel Aviv. In 1936, he signed a contract with Schocken Publishing House, and moved to Jerusalem where he lived until his death in August 1943.

Despite economic and social difficulties which led to his silence during his early years in Erez Israel, he soon found himself at home in the country and its public life. Three times he was elected to represent the Hebrew branch of the P.E.N. Club, an international literary organization, at its world conference, and he expressed his opinions freely on current political questions. During this volatile period of Arab rioting, the struggle for Jewish labor and land settlement, controversy over defense policy and partition, World War II, and the beginning of the Nazi Holocaust, Tchernichowsky supported the Jewish maximalist-nationalist position. His poems were imbued with deep nationalist pathos (see the one-volume *Kol Shirei Sha'ul Tchernichowsky*, 1937); the collection *Re'i Adamah* (1940); and his last volume of poetry *Kokhevei Shamayim Rehokim* (1944), many of them expressing his direct reaction to the struggle of the Jewish *yishuv* for its rights. This change in the poet's outlook is also discernible in the development of constantly recurring themes in his poetry on love, on nature, and of contemplation. Tragic retrospection gives way to direct and optimistic identification with contemporary life, in many respects recalling Tchernichowsky's early poetry with its critical attitude to religion and its "pagan" credo. This apparent retrogression to his earlier view, however, seems to have been prompted by an attempt at identification with the life in Erez Israel which he saw as a regeneration of the ancient myth of settlement in the homeland.

In this last period, the poet, retracing his literary path, arrives at a second culmination: a more comprehensive and balanced tragic retrospection. With the outbreak of World War II and the Holocaust of European Jewry, he relives the shock of the World War I period and the Bolshevik revolution. As in his earlier works, Tchernichowsky reacts with ballads whose themes were taken from the tragic history of Jewish persecution in the Diaspora ("*Harugei Tirmunya*," "*Nisset ba-Olam*," and *Balladot Vormaiza*"), seeking in the past an explanation for the tragedy of the present. No less characteristic is his return to early narrative poetry ("idylls") describing his childhood and village life. These poems served as a vehicle both to express the poet's present emotional state and, in a way, to escape it. His identification with the tragic Jewish fate, emphasized by the moral victory of the innocent victim devoted to truth and righteousness, however, overpowers pagan triumph. There is also a recrudescence of the idyllic love for the traditional Jewish way of life. This return to memories of a European childhood may possibly explain the poet's sense of estrangement from the renascent Jewish life in Erez Israel. This tragic consciousness is apparent in many of Tchernichowsky's later poems ("*Ani-Li mi-Shellu Ein Kelum*," "*Amma de-Dahava*," his most comprehensive epic work, and his last poem "*Kokhevei Shamayim Rehokim*") which bear parallels to the poet's tragic retrospective poetry of the Berlin period. For the third time, the poet comes to feel alienated from his people, due to his culture, his emotional reactions, and his national and social outlook. Though he reverted to the tragic evaluation of the national and individual destinies, Tchernichowsky's later poetry also shows a tendency toward reconciliation and acceptance. In "*Amma de-Dahava*" there is an attempt to bridge the gaps between the experiences of the child and those of the aging poet, and between the experiences of the alien homeland and that of alienation in the historical homeland.

Tchernichowsky's work, as a poet and as a translator, reveals a consistent tendency to break the constricting bonds of Hebrew literature and expand its content and form. In his translations, the poet presented the Hebrew reader with some of the finest classics of world literature: in the fields of epic and lyric poetry, of folk literature and drama. In this way, he realized the logical consequence of his proclivity for a universal culture which does not contradict one's national loyalties. His work as a translator had a direct influence on his original poetry which, with every successive collection of poems, showed a greater command of form; it was in consonance with

his avowed program for widening the horizons of Hebrew poetry through the mastery of classical poetic forms (see his critical essay on the poetry of Immanuel of Rome). Tchernichowsky's concern with the aesthetic form is one of his important contributions to modern Hebrew poetry. This deliberate program to come to grips and to control the classic poetic form and structure was undoubtedly connected with the poet's national, social, and cultural outlook with which every critical evaluation of his work must contend. It is easy to perceive the connection between his criticism of stagnant Jewish culture in the Diaspora and his admiration for the ideal of Hellenic beauty or paganism on the one hand, and, his concern with aesthetic form on the other. It is also easy to understand the effect that these extreme ideological criticisms had on the Hebrew reading public. This inconsistent and often self-contradictory ideology is, however, one of the fundamental premises which underly the total poetic experience in Tchernichowsky. The national, social, or cultural ideology is not merely a central characteristic which may be isolated and separately recorded, it is an integral and consistent feature of all his poetry. Tchernichowsky's "ideology" is, in effect, a rejection of life bound by ideology; its aim is to justify the unmediated expression of experience by its own inner logic. His sensitivity to sound and rhythm, and his predilection for realistic narrative stem from this view. This "ideology" is the basic motif in his earthy love and nature poetry in which he expresses the feelings of a Jew of his time. This poetry among all his works is his most individual and characteristic contribution to modern Hebrew literature and it produced a lively and enthusiastic reaction among his younger contemporaries.

His aspiration for an unmediated expression of the totality of existence, of which man is a part, also explains the poet's vacillation between idyllic contemplation, which conceives man as a being who belongs to the universe, and tragic contemplation, which sees man as a stranger in the universe. One view or the other may at times be emphasized, but each element (tragic or idyllic) is alternatively present in the poetry of the other. The duality, inherent in a view of reality where the idyllic and the tragic are components, apparently explains Tchernichowsky's changing evaluation of Jewish and world cultures. The interchangeability of the sense of belonging and the sense of alienation, which ideologically is contradictory, in the sphere of experience is a fluctuation between extremes. Tchernichowsky comes to accept his people's heritage within the framework of human culture. In "*Amma de-Dahava*" and "*Kokhevei Shamayim Rehokim*," the poet welded out of the contradictory experiences and evaluations that constituted his universe as a Jew who is devoted both to the culture of his people and to European culture a balanced and harmonious acquiescence. These two works are among his most complete artistic achievements, and his most important contributions to Hebrew poetry. A list of the English translations of his works appears in Goell, Bibliography.

[Eliezer Schweid]

Bluvstein, Rachel

RAHEL (pseudonym of Rahel Bluwstein, 1890–1931), Hebrew poet in Erez Israel. Rahel was born in Saratov, on the Volga in northern Russia, and raised in Poltava. She began writing poetry in Russian at the age of 15 and also studied painting. In 1909 she emigrated to Erez Israel, settling in Rehovot. She abandoned her native Russian idiom and learned Hebrew. Under the influence of the pioneer Zionist Hannah Maisel (Shohat) she became a pioneer and was one of the first trainees at the young women's training farm at Kinneret. At Kinneret she met Aaron David Gordon, the philosopher of Zionist agrarianism, and to him she dedicated her first Hebrew poem, "*Halokh Nefesh*" ("Mood"), in *Ha-Shilo'ah*, 37 (1920). Having decided on an agricultural life, she studied agronomy at the University of Toulouse (1913). Unable to return to Erez Israel because of World War I, she went to Russia, where she taught Jewish refugee children. After the war she settled in Deganyah. However, having contracted tuberculosis during the war, she soon became too ill for farm life and had to spend the rest of her life in hospitals and sanatoria.

Rahel is among the first modern Hebrew poets who wrote in a conversational style. Her knowledge of Hebrew was drawn from both the developing spoken idiom and the Bible. She was also influenced by the conversational school which then prevailed in Russian poetry (Blok, Akhmatova, and Yesenin). Her poems are characterized by a clear, uncomplicated lyrical line and a musicality, then rare in Hebrew poetry. Invariably short, her poems are elegiac and nostalgic in tone, many of them reflecting the pessimism of a young writer on the brink of death. These qualities made her writings very popular with younger Hebrew readers and with the general public. Many of the poems, including the widely sung "*Kinneret*," have been put to music. Rahel also translated Russian, Yiddish, and French poetry and wrote occasional pieces of criticism. Two volumes of her verse appeared in her lifetime: *Safi'ah* ("Aftergrowth," 1927), *Mi-Neged* ("From Opposite," 1930), and one posthumously, *Nevo* (1932). These were collected in *Shirat Rahel* ("The Poetry of Rahel," 1935), the eighth edition (1961) of which also contains her other works as well as a biography by Bracha Habas and a bibliography of her poems and their translations.

[Ezra Spicehandler]

Lamdan, Yizhak

LAMDAN, YIZHAK (1899–1954), Hebrew poet and editor. Born in Mlinov, Ukraine, Lamdan received a traditional and secular education. During World War I he was cut off from his family and wandered through southern Russia with his brother, who was later killed in a pogrom. These grim experiences made Lamdan rally to the communist cause and he volunteered for the Red Army at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. Disillusionment, however, soon set in because as a Jew he could not feel at home in the revolutionary movement. He left the army and returned to Mlinov which had been annexed to Poland. There he became a teacher at the local Hebrew school and published his first poem in *Ha-Shilo'ah* (1918). Immigrating to Erez Israel in 1920, he spent his first years as a *halutz*, building roads and working on farms. His poetry, now imbued with a *halutz* spirit that grew out of his experience, was published in various literary journals in Erez Israel and aroused great interest since it reflected the hopes and despair of the Third Aliyah and also the struggles and inner conflicts of the individual *halutz*. He later gave up physical labor and devoted himself exclusively to literary work, from 1934 until his death publishing and editing his own literary monthly *Gilyonot*. He was a member of the central committee of the Hebrew Writers Association for many years.

Lamdan's magnum opus, *Massadah* (1927), an epic poem in blank verse of six cantos, comprising 35 poems, established his reputation. The poem reflects the spirit of the young pioneers of the 1920s who had left behind them not only the memory of the brutal senseless murder of defenceless Jews, but also their shattered illusions about the possibility of establishing a free, revolutionary society in Eastern Europe. *Massadah*, the last fortress which continued to hold out against the Romans even after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., in Lamdan's poem symbolizes Erez Israel, the last stronghold of the destroyed Eastern European Jewish communities.

The voice throughout the poem is the "I" of the poet who embodies both the horror experienced by his generation and its vision for a new future. In the first canto (the prologue) the poet, standing in the midst of the ruins of his home, at the height of the Russian Revolution, receives a message about *Massadah*: face of the adverse fate of generations" the sons of *Massadah* have thrust out their "breasts in revolt and roared 'Enough!'" He sets out for the Promised Land in order to join them. His path to *Massadah* is obstructed by three friends who symbolize the various anti-Zionist or Diaspora-orientated ideologies and who try to turn him back. By an overwhelming act of will, the speaker frees himself from his friends and scales the barriers blocking access to Israel's stronghold. The second canto is a series of short poems in which the different Jewish refugees who came to *Massadah* describe their tragic experiences.

Cantos three, four, and five are movements from joyful hope to despair. Night, "in which the air is heavy with blood," transforms into a time for kindling fires, dancing, and the renewal of faith. Night thus becomes a symbol of strength and hope while day is a time of despair and disillusionment. The fortress itself weeps for her listless sons. The ecstasy of the early movement is passed, the verve of pioneering among the weaker is spent and they fall to the wayside. Less and less of those imbued with the spirit of freedom throng to *Massadah* and peddlers, longing to engage in commerce, increase. Not only the fires but also the "flames of revolt" brought to *Massadah* as "holy Sabbath candles in the twilight of the worlds" flicker faintly, yet they are not extinguished. There are always those who stand guard over *Massadah* watching "every cloud rising somewhere over the horizon." In the sixth canto the poet turns to these sturdy souls calling

out to them that their sacrifice is not in vain and that all roads trodden by the Jewish people lead to Massadah, none lead away.

The poet's "I" of the first canto, with its clear biographical references, later merges into the collective consciousness of the Jewish people but even in Canto I it is not intrinsically individual. A symbolic poem of moods and situations, rather than heroes and plot, *Massadah* is rich in expressionistic images and rings with the cadence of biblical rhetoric.

The poems published after *Massadah* had far less of an impact on the reading public. Some were collected in *Ba-Ritmah ha-Meshulleshet* ("Triple Harness," 1930) and *Be-Ma'aleh Akabbim* ("On Scorpions' Pass," 1945), others appeared in literary journals. In these later works, though more individualistic and less rhetorical, Lamdan remains fervently nationalistic and adamant in his belief that the individual must serve the cause of national rebirth. The poet-narrator assumes the role of man of destiny and denounces those who refuse to hearken to his message of redemption. Lamdan's poetry remained social poetry in which the poet's rhetorical rather than lyrical skill predominates. His sincerity and idealism to some degree cover this artistic flaw, of which he was aware. His later works carry a note of personal tragedy. The poet is fully conscious of the fact that his devotion to the national renaissance is at the expense of his art as a poet. In the preface to his series of poems *Mi-Shirai she-me-Ever la-Daf* ("My Songs on the Other Side of the Page," in *Gilyonot*, 25, 1951), the conflict is starkly exposed with the poet apologizing for his inner urges and drives not rooted in the national consciousness. He declared that his conscience, which has totally surrendered itself to the nation, prevents him from retreating into purely individualistic poetry; underlying the statement, however, is an almost imperceptible sadness and yearning at an inevitable loss.

The same integrity manifested itself in his editorship of *Gilyonot*, a literary periodical which he founded and which propounded his national ideals. Lamdan insisted on the independence of his periodical, and refused to allow it to be controlled even by political groups whose ideology he shared. During the 1930s and 1940s, *Gilyonot* was one of Erez Israel's leading periodicals.

[Gideon Katznelson]

Kol Shirei Yizhak Lamdan, the collected poems of Lamdan, including hitherto unpublished poems, with an introduction by S. Halkin was issued by Mosad Bialik in 1973.

[Editorial Staff Encyclopaedia Judaica]

For Eng. trans. of Lamdan, see Goell, 974–1000.

Greenberg, Uri Zevi

GREENBERG, URI ZEVI (pseudonym Tur Malka; 1894– 1981), Hebrew poet. He was born in Bialykamien, eastern Galicia and was descended from hasidic leaders (Meir Przemyslany on his father's side and the *Saraf*, Uri Strelisk, on his mother's). In his infancy his parents moved to Lvov where Greenberg received a traditional hasidic upbringing and education. His earliest poems, both in Hebrew and Yiddish, were published in 1912 in leading periodicals of the day. In 1915 he was drafted into the Austrian army and, after serving on the Serbian front, he deserted in 1917, returning to Lvov where he witnessed the Polish pogroms against the Jews in 1918—an event which made an indelible impression on him. After the war he published poems in both Yiddish and Hebrew and soon became a leader of a group of Yiddish expressionist poets (including Perez Markish) and the editor of a short-lived avant-garde periodical, *Albatros* (1922–23). He spent a year in Berlin (1923) and then immigrated to Erez Israel (1924).

In Erez Israel, Greenberg stopped writing in Yiddish and published in Hebrew exclusively. When *Davar*, the Labor daily, was founded in 1925, he participated as one of its regular columnists. His columns were headed *Mi-Megillat ha-Yamim ha-Hem* and *Shomer Mah mi-Leyl* and expressed strong views against Zionist sloganeering and calling for self-realization through pioneering. Between 1925 and 1927 he edited the booklets *Sadan* and *Sadna Dar'ah* in which he contended that Hebrew artists must abandon "the fixed confines of art, join the Jewish collective, and wrestle with and think out the complex of problems of Jewish national life." Although during this period he was committed to the Labor Zionist movement, he already began to express extreme ultranationalistic ideas which contradicted the official line. In the wake of the Arab riots of 1929, he broke with the Labor movement, joined the ranks of the nationalist Zionist Revisionist Party, and denounced both the British government and the Zionist leadership of the *yishuv* for betraying the Zionist dream. He became active in political life and was elected as a Revisionist delegate to the *Asefat ha-Nivharim* (the legislative body of the *yishuv*) and to several Zionist Congresses. Between 1931 and 1934 he lived in Warsaw where he was sent by the Revisionist movement to edit its Yiddish weekly *Di Velt*. Returning to Erez Israel in 1936, in his poetry and articles he attacked the moderate socialist Zionist leadership and warned of the imminent danger to European Jewry. During the final struggle against Great Britain for national independence, he identified with the Irgun Zeva'i Le'ummi and following the establishment of the State of Israel was elected to Israel's Knesset as a member for the Herut Party, serving from 1949 to 1951. He was awarded the Israel Prize for Hebrew Literature in 1957.

In contrast to most Hebrew writers who were committed to a secularist-humanist Zionism, Greenberg asserts a religious mystical view of Zionism as the fulfillment of the Jewish historical destiny. The Jew is, in his view, wholly other than the non-Jew, having been elected by God at the beginning of time as a holy instrument of His will. The covenant made with the Jewish Patriarch, Abraham, and renewed at Sinai, is a meta-historical event which cannot be altered by time nor ignored by Jew or gentile. The Jew exists outside of history in an eternal dimension in which mere rationality has no validity. "What shall be in the future, has already occurred in the past and what was not, shall never be. Therefore I put my trust in the future, for I hold the shape of the past before me: this is the vision and the melody. Selah, Hallelujah, and Amen" (*Rehovot ha-Nahar*, 1951, p. 37). In Greenberg's scheme the future shall bring about the fulfillment of God's promise to establish Jewish sovereignty and the Messianic redemption. Any attempt by the Jew to shirk his cosmic role, either by default or by an attempt to imitate the value system of the unelected (Europe, the gentiles), leads him to disaster. The secular nationalism or socialism of

most contemporary Jews are superficial readings of the meaning of the Jewish destiny and can only lead to a holocaust. The call for the renewal of Jewish sovereignty is an imperative of the eternal mythos of Judaism. It is neither a sociological nor historical solution of practical human needs, but an absolute value which may exact any price which its realization requires.

Halfhearted attempts at Zionist fulfillment are doomed to failure whether they are inhibited by moral niceties, which are derived from alien value systems, or are diffused by human selfishness.

In his Yiddish phase, *In Malkhus fun Tselem* ("In the Kingdom of the Cross," 1922) Greenberg already foresaw the European Holocaust. His poetry from then on is obsessed with this vision of horror (*Migdal ha-Geviyot*, "The Tower of Corpses," in *Sefer ha-Kitrug ve-ha-Emunah*, 1936). Greenberg in *Rehovot ha-Nahar* wrote one of the most moving dirges composed about the Nazi Holocaust. The tragedy, in his view, is the logical culmination of the 2,000-year confrontation between the cross and the star of David and the six million dead are an insuperable barrier which shall eternally separate Christian from Jew. For Greenberg the Holocaust puts into question not only God's theodicy but appears as a horrible practical joke which God and history have played on the Jew: "You promised to come one day to gather and lead them proudly to Zion and to renew their kingdom, raise their king. But, behold you did not come, O God; the enemy came and gathered them all, an ingathering of exiles for annihilation. Now there is no need for redemption. Sit, sit, God, in your heavens" (*Rehovot ha-Nahar*, p. 249). God, the Redeemer of Israel has become "the keeper of the Jewish cemetery" (p. 250).

Greenberg's God however moves outside the rational dimension and in a sudden leap of faith the poet reasserts the vision of redemption: "Will the Messiah yet come? Amen, he shall surely come." Divine history, of which Jewish history is a part, is based on an irrational paradox. Thus, out of the ashes of the crematoria, redemption will come, and out of despair faith. The Holocaust and the vision of Jewish sovereignty are two sides of the same coin of history. Greenberg's personal poetry often sings of his agony as the suffering prophet-priest of the mythos of Jewish catastrophe and redemption. In the years preceding the Holocaust, he laments the tragic fact that the multitude did not heed his terrible message of the imminent massacres, reviling him as they had always spurned their prophets in the past. He is filled with revulsion at their obstinacy and their blind concern for material trivialities in the face of disaster: "God how did I ever get here, inside the swamps—a man of vision befouled by their mud?"

He associates his national poetry with his personal history which also turns into mythos. The Jewish home in Poland, its Eden-like security of faith, his mother and father, assume archetypal dimensions. His love poetry, too, is inhabited by these primordial symbols: mother and father, Adam and Eve, Eden, primeval forests, the sea, the moon, lakes, rivers; they form a mythical landscape not very different from that of much of his national verse.

In an age when poets were concerned with formal and aesthetic problems, Greenberg's poetry is one of engagement, his poetic energy is fired by his all-consuming ideological commitment. Often in his poetry the poetic line surrenders to the overwhelming force of his rhetoric with which he pounds his readers mercilessly. At other times his verse is terse and brilliantly lyrical. While philosophically he rejects European aesthetics and the European poetic tradition, in practice he sometimes uses its devices and forms. More frequently his formal resources are indigenously Jewish: the Bible, medieval dirges, and concepts and statements drawn from kabbalistic literature. His early commitment to expressionism is retained throughout and is evidenced by his rhetorical flourishes, changing rhythms within the poem and sometimes even in one single line, wild metaphors, free verse, and his frequently irregular rhyme patterns.

His anti-humanist approach and ultranationalism, although mitigated by a commitment to Jewish ethical values, is not representative of contemporary Jewish thought. But Hebrew literary criticism has recognized the poetic genius of Greenberg though it rarely shares his ideology. Not that Greenberg's views lack a genuine Jewish basis; they are often deeply rooted in the Jewish subconscious and when expressed expose the raw nerve of the Jewish historical experience. But Greenberg's ideology reflects only one aspect of the Jewish soul—the particularistic, aristocratic sense of election—and often ignores its universalistic humanist character.

U.Z. Greenberg's main works include:

In Yiddish: *Ergetz oyf Felder* (1915); *In Zaytens Roysh* (1919); *Krig oyf der Erd* (1921); *Farnakhtengold* (1921); *Mefisto* (1921, 1922).

In Hebrew: *Eimah Gedolah ve-Yare'ah* (1925); *Ha-Gavrut ha-Olah* (1926); *Hazon Ahad ha-Ligyonot* (1928); *Anacreon al Kotev ha-Izzavon* (1928); *Kelappei Tishim ve-Tishah* (1928); *Kelev Bayit* (1919); *Ezor Magen u-Ne'um Ben ha-Dam* (1930); *Sefer ha-Kitrug ve-ha-Emunah* (1937); *Min ha-Hakhlil ve-El ha-Kahol* (in *Lu'ah Haaretz*, 1949); *Al Da'at ha-Nes ha-Nikhsaf* (1951); *Mi-Tokh Sefer he-Agol* (in *Lu'ah Haaretz*, 1950); *Menofim Rehokei Mahut* (*ibid.*, 1951, 1952); *Rehovot ha-Nahar—Sefer ha-Ilyot ve-ha-Ko'ah* (1951); *Massa ve-Nevel* (in *Lu'ah Haaretz*, 1953); *Shirei Aspaklar be-Hai Alma* (*ibid.*, 1955); *Massekhet ha-Matkonet ve-ha-Demut* (in *Moznayim*, 1954); *Be-Fisat ha-Arig u-ve-Helkat ha-Hevel* (*ibid.*, 1965).

For English translations see [Goell, Bibliography](#), 776–825.

[Ezra Spicehandler]

The 80th birthday of Uri Zevi Greenberg was marked by a series of celebrations, most of which were held in 1976. He was given a doctorate *honoris causa* by the Tel Aviv University in April 1976 and by Bar-Ilan University in June 1977. He was made a freeman of the cities of Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan, and a special session of the [Knesset](#) was held in his honor on November 1, 1977. In December he was awarded the Bialik Prize for the third time.

A fourth edition of *Rehovot ha-Nahar* was published in 1978 and in 1979 a selection of his poems to be used in schools was published.

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