INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

REVIEW: Avraham Holtz, ed. **HOLTZ'S ANNOTATED EDITION OF AGNON'S *HAKHNASAT KALLAH*:** *MAROT UMKOROT: MAHADURAH MUERET UMUYERET SHEL HAKHNASAT KALLAH LESHAI AGNON*. Jerusalem: Schocken, 1995.
Author(s): Arnold J. Band
Source: *Prooftexts*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (October 2003), pp. 397-407
Published by: Indiana University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/pft.2003.23.3.397
Accessed: 30-01-2017 19:42 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://about.jstor.org/terms

Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Prooftexts*

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Holtz's Annotated Edition of Agnon's *Hakhnasat kallah*

Avraham Holtz, ed. *Marʾot umkorot: Mahadurah muʾeret umʾuyeret shel hakhnasat kallah leShai Agnon.* Jerusalem: Schocken, 1995, 326 pp.

Ordinarily, the publication of an annotated edition of a modern novel, even one regarded as a classic by a formidable writer, attracts scant attention in the world of literary criticism, particularly in an age preoccupied with theory and cultural criticism. At best, only those scholars interested in the specific text annotated cite the publication or purchase the book. Fortunately, this has not been true in the case of Avraham Holtz's annotated edition of Agnon's novel *Hakhnasat kallah;* the book was granted a prepublication award by the Israeli Department of Education and Culture in 1994 and has been amply noted in the Israeli press. Unfortunately, the most ambitious study of this novel to date, Dan Miron's *Histaklut beravnekher* (Under a motley canopy, 1996), reviews the history of Agnon criticism, including Avraham Holtz's previous book on Agnon, *Maʿaseh bereb Yudel Hasid* (1986), but accords this commentary only one passing reference. Miron is interested in plot and episode rather than in narrative style, and thus his slight of this commentary might have led to its apparent neglect by the scholarly community over the past five years. Holtz's commentary, however, deserves our careful attention for several reasons. First, it is the only full commentary we have on a major work in modern Hebrew literature. Second, in that it is a commentary on Agnon, the quintessential master of traditional Jewish texts, it raises a host of significant questions about intertextuality, an area much alluded to, but rarely seriously explored in modern Hebrew literary criticism. Third, in that it is a commentary, we are prompted to ask questions about its place in the history of Hebrew commentaries, a venerable field of traditional Jewish intellectual endeavor.

The notion that this annotated edition may evoke associations with a traditional religious text is neither far-fetched nor insignificant. Holtz shies away from the term *perush,* and prefers the term "annotated edition," but both the object of his annotation, Agnon's very layered text larded with biblical and rabbinic terms, and the very format of the book suggest the term "commentary." Instead of

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

publishing Holtz's annotations separately, as was done in the case of Joyce's *Ulysses* (Holtz's model cited in his introduction), the notes were published together with the text. The resulting format: quarto with the notes running along the outer and bottom margins in a different typeface from the Agnonic text, which is printed here in the same typeface as in the canonical Schocken editions, must evoke associations with the standard text of the Babylonian Talmud. And since the text is written in Agnon's well-known creative amalgam of rabbinic/hasidic Hebrew and the notes repeatedly refer to biblical and rabbinic texts or aspects of the narrated world—eastern Galicia about 1820—the reading experience may well resemble what one experiences while reading a rabbinic text.

The erudition displayed in the preparation of this volume is formidable, even awe-inspiring. While it is true that with the availability of computer databases, one can retrieve passages and references from an extraordinary range of biblical and rabbinic texts, the scholarly range and the evident industry invested in the preparation of this commentary are impressive. The footnotes are copious; the bibliography is full; there are fascinating illustrations on almost every page; even the maps of Reb Yudel's journeys throughout Galicia are accurate. Obviously, if one is to prepare an edition of a complex novel written by a writer prodigiously learned in Jewish texts, which he deploys throughout his work, the pervasive resonance of the traditional texts with all they imply must be engaged. And this is Holtz's mission.

Yet it is precisely this resonance that raises the central question posed by this major effort of annotation: What type of annotation is Holtz generating here? Is it a modern scientific annotation? Or is it what one would expect in a commentary upon a traditional rabbinic or biblical text? Could it be both? What is the target audience? Is it written for readers who have no background in Judaic texts? Or is it designed to enrich the reading experience of scholars or readers familiar with rabbinical texts? Could it be for both? Certainly, these questions confront the reader on every page of this challenging edition. Since this is a rare publication in the history of modern Hebrew literature, we should clarify these issues with the hope that other scholars will produce annotated editions of other modern Hebrew classics.

Holtz is careful to call his work *mahadurah mu'eret um'uyeret,* that is, an annotated and illustrated edition. In the introduction he never employs the term *perush* (commentary), but rather *hev'er* (clarifying explanation), a coinage that

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

ספר ראשון

פרק ראשון: איש חסיד היה. ג׳ אחיות. חכמת נשים. פתשגן הכתב. ומורא לא יעלה על ראשו. 1

מעשה בחסיד אחד שהיה עני גדול ומדוכא בעניות רחמנא ליצלן והיה יושב על התורה ועל העבודה רחוק מהויות העולם ולא היה לו שום מסחר ומשא ומתן כשאר כל אדם, רק בתורת ה׳ חפצו בנגלה ובנסתר. והיה עובד את השם באימה 5 **וביראה ובאהבה, ולא היה מתכוין להתגדר ולקנות שם או כדי שיהא לו חלק לעולם הבא, אלא כדי לעשות כסא לשכינה. ומקום דירתו היה למטה במרתף אפל צר ולח, לא היו שם לא ספסל לישב עליו ולא שולחן לסעוד עליו ולא מטה לשכב עליה ולא שאר כלים להשתמש בהם, אלא מחצלת של קנים שטוחה על הקרקע ואנשי ביתו שוכבים עליה, ולא היו זזים משם לא בלילה ולא ביום** 10 **שלא יקלקלו כיסויי הגוף. ולרש אין כל כי אם תרנגול אחד רבי זרח שמו, שהיה מעוררו לעבודת הבורא. ולמה נקרא שמו רבי זרח, על שם הכתוב שבתהלים קי״ב זרח בחושך אור לישרים. ולא היתה קריאת הגבר מגעת עד שרץ לבית המדרש ומקשר מדת יום במדת לילה מתוך תורה ותפילה בקולות ערבים ובניגון נאה, עד שנמצאה נפשו בעולם השכלים כאילו היא נסתרת מן המוחשיות. ומנהג** 15

1. **איש חסיד היה** כלשון השיר המושר במוצאי שבת, שפתיחתו: ׳איש חסיד היה / בלי מזון ומחיה / בביתו עוסק מְלֻבּוש / ואין בגד ללבוש׳. **חכמת נשים** על הספר *חכמת נשים* קרא *צינברג*, ד, עמ׳ 108. כאן בשימוש אירוני על־פי *אוצר*, מס׳ 234, עמ׳ 165: ׳חכמת נשים... [ניט בנמצא]׳ (אין בנמצא). וראה משלי יד א: ׳חַכְמוֹת נשים בנתה ואִוֶּלֶת בידיה תהרסנו׳. ניתן לפרש ׳חכמת נשים׳: החכמה בנשים.
פתשגן הכתב כלשון אסתר ג יד, שפירושו העתק הכתב.
2. **ומורא לא יעלה על ראשו** על־פי שופטים יג ה: ׳ומורה [תער] לא־יעלה על־ראשו׳. כאן במשמע שאין ר׳ יודיל חסיד מתיירא כלל (להלן, עמ׳ 12:14).
3. **ומדוכא בעניות** מזכיר את המאמר התלמודי: ׳כל שהקב״ה חפץ בו מדכאו בייסורין׳ (ברכות ה ע״א).
רחמנא ליצלן (הרחמן יצילנו) ניב חז״לי שנשתגר בפי העם קודם להזכרת עניין רע. וכן ביידיש (*אוצר*, מס׳ 558, עמ׳ 634). לעיון בזיקת הגומלין בין יידיש לעברית ראה *אבן־זהר 1986*, ובמגמה למסור דו־שיח אותנטי בלשונות אלה קרא *אבן־זהר־שמרוק*.
יושב על התורה ועל העבודה כלשון אבות א ב: ׳על שלושה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים׳; ועוד.
4. **מהויות העולם** וכן ביידיש (*אוצר*, מס׳ 309, עמ׳ 272), ופירושו אורחות החיים היומיומיים, דברים מעשיים. מי שיושב בבית־המדרש עוסק ב׳הוויות דאביי ורבא׳ ולא ב׳הוויות העולם׳. כלומר, לא בענייני העולם הזה.
ומשא ומתן כלשון חז״ל, ופירושו מיקח וממכר. וכן ביידיש (*אוצר*, מס׳ 484, עמ׳ 499): מסחר, מֶקח ומֶמכר, מַשא ומַתן.
5. **רק בתורת ה׳ חפצו** על־פי תהלים א א-ב: ׳אשרי־האיש אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים ובדרך חטאים לא עמד ובמושב לצים לא ישב. כי אם בתורת ה׳ חפצו ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה׳.
בנגלה ובנסתר כלומר, בתורה שבכתב, שהיא בחינת נגלה, ובקבלה ובתורת הסוד, שהן בחינת נסתר. וכן ביידיש (*אוצר*, מס׳ 609, עמ׳ 706-707).
באימה וביראה ובאהבה על־פי ברכות כב ע״א: ׳באימה וביראה וברתת ובזיעה׳.
6. **ולא היה מתכוין להתגדר** כלומר, לא התכוון בלימודו להתגדל או להתנשא. על־פי ברכות יז ע״א: ׳כשם שהוא אינו מתגדר במלאכתי כך [אומר ה׳] איני מתגדר במלאכתו׳.
ולקנות שם להיות מפורסם. על־פי אבות ב ז: ׳קנה שם — קנה לעצמו׳. והשווה המאמר בסנהדרין סב ע״א: ׳שלא יאמר אדם אקרא כדי שיקראוני חכם, אשנה כדי שיקראוני רבי, אשנה כדי שאהיה זקן ואשב בישיבה אלא למוד מאהבה וסוף הכבוד לבוא׳. רעיון זה חוזר בספרי המוסר, כגון ב*חובות הלבבות*, עמ׳ 11; ועוד.
או כדי שיהא לו חלק לעולם הבא כלומר, שלא למד תורה על־מנת לקבל פרס לא בעולם הזה ולא בעולם הבא.
7. **אלא כדי לעשות כסא לשכינה** לשם הבהרת המושג מן הראוי לצטט את *שלום 1976*: ׳בעל ״תיקוני זוהר״ פיתח תורה חדשה... לכל אחד מרמ״ח איבריו ושס״ה גידיו של האדם מקביל אחד האורות העליונים... ייעודו של האדם להביא את דמותו האמתית הזאת... כל המקיים את המצוות כראוי עושה את גופו משכן לשכינה. אבל כל איבר שלא נעשה כסא לשכינה, כלומר כל מצוה שלא קויימה ועל כל עבירה שעבר האדם חייב הוא להתגלגל עד שיקיים וישלים מה שהוטל עליו מבראשית׳ (עמ׳ 329). וכן: ׳אחרי תיקון חצות הוסיפו עוד תיקון — ״תיקון הנפש״... ונתייחד הקדוש ברוך הוא ושכינתיה על כל איבר ואיבר ותעשה כל גופך מרכבה לשכינה׳ (עמ׳ 145). ובדומה לכך נמצא ב*קב הישר* (נא א-ב): ׳על כן יהיה שגור בפי האדם לומר תפלה קצרה: רבונו של עולם זַכֵּני להיות אני כסא לשכינה כי כשהגוף הוא בקדושה נעשה כסא לשכינה׳; ובהמשך (נג ד): ׳עיקר לימוד ועסק התורה הוא לעשות כביכול כסא לשכינה׳.[1]
8. **לא היו שם לא ספסל... ולא שולחן... ולא מטה...** על־פי מלכים ב ד י: ׳נעשה־נא עֲלִיַּת־קיר קטנה ונשים לו שם מִטה ושלחן וכסא ומנורה׳.
9. **מחצלת של קנים** שטיח העשוי מקני־קש. כלשון סוכה א יא: ׳מחצלת קנים גדולה עשאה לשכיבה מקבלת טומאה ואין מסככין בה׳.
11. **ולרש אין כל כי אם תרנגול אחד** על־פי שמואל ב יב ב-ג: ׳לעשיר היה צאן ובקר הרבה מאד. ולרש אין־כֹּל כי אם כבשה אחת קטנה׳.
שהיה מעוררו לעבודת הבורא על התרנגול המעיר לתפילה אנו קוראים ב*זוהר* (פרשת לך־לך, כרך ב, עמ׳ קכד): ׳ר׳ אבא היה מהלך מטבריה... אמר ר׳ אבא לבעל הבית יש כאן תרנגול? אמר לו בעל הבית למה לך תרנגול? אמר לו משום שאני קם בחצות לילה ממש [ואני צריך לתרנגול שיעיר אותי]׳. ראה להלן, עמ׳ 200: 9-14.
12. **על שם הכתוב שבתהלים קי״ב זרח בחושך אור לישרים.** וזו לשון המקור (פסוקים א-ד): ׳הללויה אשרי־איש יָרֵא את־ה׳ במצותיו חפץ מאד. גבור בארץ יהיה זרעו דור ישרים יבֹרָך. הון־ועשר בביתו וצדקתו עֹמֶדת לעד. זרח בחשך אור לישרים חנון ורחום וצדיק׳. האירוניה, המיתוֹספת על־ידי הציטוט בהקשרו המלא, מבליטה את מצבו השפל של ר׳ יודיל חסיד, שבביתו אין הון ועושר.
13. **קריאת הגבר** עיין *שלום 1976*, עמ׳ 142.
14. **ומקשר מדת יום במדת לילה** לשון זאת נמצאת, למשל, ב*צוואות נפתלי הכהן* (דף ח ע״ב): ׳תיקון חצות יעשה כסדר התיקון הנדפס ואין צריך יותר רק שלא לישון אחר כך ורק לעסוק בתורה ובתהלים מי שאינו יכול ללמוד ויקשר מידת יום בלילה ומידת לילה ביום׳. *ראשית חכמה*, ׳שער האהבה׳, עמ׳ 32: ׳וצריך לעסוק בתורה עד אור היום כדי לקשר מדת לילה ביום׳. וראה *דן*, עמ׳ 174-175.
בקולות ערבים ובניגון נאה על־פי שיר השירים ב יד: ׳כי־קולך ערב ומראיך נאוה׳.
15. **עד שנמצאה נפשו בעולם השכלים...** ראה הביאור להלן, עמ׳ 9: 4-5; *קלצקין*, כרך ב, חלק ד, עמ׳ 98-100.
המוחשיות ראה *קלצקין*, שם, עמ׳ 159-160.
ומנהג יפה היה לו... ראה ברכות ח ע״א: ׳שהמתפלל מבקש שתהא תפילתו בעת רצון. מתי עת רצון זו? בשעה שהציבור מתפללין שאין ה׳ משיב ריקם פני הציבור לכן רצוי

Mar'ot umkorot: Mahadurah mu'eret um'uyeret shel hakhnasat kallah leShai Agnon, ed. Avraham Holtz (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1995), p. 8. World Copyrights Schocken Publishing House Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel.

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

merges the *b'r* root and the *bhr* root. Adopting the terminology "non-interpretive annotations" used by Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman in their *Ulysses, Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses,* Holtz claims in his introduction that these non-interpretive annotations "present the information necessary to understand the allusions of the text and all the layers of nuances embedded in it, but refrain from any interpretive determination." This aspiration, however understandable and admirable, is in essence impossible, since there is no such thing as a non-interpretive annotation. Holtz would be hard-pressed to find any literary theorist who would deny the widely held claim that all annotations, all translations, all readings are, in effect, interpretive. All readings are, so to speak, allegories. Holtz's methodological claim is, therefore, problematical.

We can, however, turn this problem into a heuristic advantage: by seizing upon this aspect, we can interrogate his annotation, probe its method, and uncover its real riches. To do so, we have to study a sample of his text, analyzing each note, writing, as it were, a supercommentary on his commentary. In doing so, we shall raise a host of fascinating questions regarding Holtz's method, his employment of his great erudition, the nature of Agnon's text and the problems of reading it, the competence of today's readers, and, finally, the legitimacy of interpretation—or abstinence from interpretation. We begin with the first page and use Holtz's pagination and line enumeration.

Page 7. *Hakhnasat kallah.* In a helpful introductory note, we learn that the novel's name, *Hakhnasat kallah,* is a rabbinic term in common usage, since it is found in the siddur among other laudable mitzvot a Jew should perform. After reading this list, we are informed what this mitzvah is: it was customary to raise funds to marry off young brides with a respectable dowry. That the term is an abbreviation of *hakhnasat kallah leḥuppah* (bringing the bride to the marriage canopy) is never explained. Clearly, Holtz suspects that his reader might not know the origin or meaning of this central phrase, but the reader who knows Hebrew but not the custom would be left with a linguistic query: How does the term "bringing the bride" refer to a wedding, or assume the status of a cardinal mitzvah?

We are told, furthermore, that the term is also used in Yiddish, as attested by Nahum Stutchkoff in his thesaurus, *Der oytser fun der yidisher shprakh.* The purpose of the reference to Stutchkoff's thesaurus is never explained here or elsewhere.

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Reb Yudel miBrod. In Agnon's subtitle, we find the name of the hero, Reb Yudel miBrod, that is, from the town of Brody. We are told that Brody, in eastern Galicia, was in 1820 (the approximate time of the action of the novel, a fact never explained) a city of 18,000 inhabitants, of whom 16,000 were Jews. We are referred for further information on Brody to Nathan Gelber's book on the history of the Jews of Brody (1955). While this elucidating note is welcome and again assumes that the modern reader might not know where Brody is, the citation of Gelber raises an interesting problem. If the reader is curious enough to study the pages in Gelber, he will find that by 1820 Brody had the beginnings of a Haskalah community and was one of the major centers of Jewish entrepreneurial trade, from which many Jews began to migrate toward Odessa. Brody was no provincial shtetl. In Brody, Yitzhak Erter, one of the leading anti-hasidic Hebrew satirists of the first half of the nineteenth century, wrote and published between 1823 and 1851 (roughly the time of the action in *Hakhnasat kallah*) his five satires that were collected in 1858 as *Hatsofeh levet yisra'el.* Given this historical background, why did Agnon, whose imposing knowledge of Galician Jewry was legendary, situate his hero in Brody? Can we imagine that Agnon was unaware of Erter? Should the reader be suspicious that this is no mere hasidic tale?

Ufarashat gedulat. The note merely cites the biblical origin of this term in Esther 10:2. In doing so, Holtz follows a tradition of a text annotation that refrains from any explanation or interpretation: cf. the many volumes edited by the medievalist Y. Schirmann. We are never told, however, that this term, *ufarashat gedulat,* the chapter of the greatness, probably conveys a touch of irony, since there is nothing in the book to confirm the greatness of the Jews living in the Hapsburg Empire. Similarly, there was no annotation of the first term of the subtitle, *nifle'ot,* the wonders of. The term *nifla'ot* appears frequently in reference to hasidic tales, wonder tales, but could Agnon be using this term constatively, without irony, in the subtitle to this novel, in itself a modern literary genre that assumes the subversion by inclusion of traditional subgenres? Even in his short tales written before *Hakhnasat kallah*—for example, "Aggadat hasofer"—Agnon demonstrated his penchant to parodize hasidic tropes. The genius of this novel, I would argue, lies in its brilliantly subtle parodic tone, which allows a traditional reader to read the book as a pious tale and the modern reader to read it as a hilarious satire.

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Yoshevei medinat hakirah. We are informed that the territory mentioned is eastern Galicia, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, obviously the time of the novel. For the reader who does not know the meaning of the acronym KIRAH, Holtz supplies in parentheses: *Hakesar yarum hodo* (His Imperial Majesty). We are informed that the emperor of the time was Franz II and that the term *Galitsyah bimdinat hakirah* is found in a traditional commentary on a known rabbinic homily. Again, the range of targeted readers is wide, including one who does not know the common acronym and one who might be interested in the fact that the term is attested in a traditional rabbinic text.

8:1. *Ish ḥasid hayah.* The reader is referred to the source of these three words, the first part of the content heading of chapter 1. They come from a *mizmor* sung on Friday evenings and, written in fairly simply Hebrew, tell us that there once was a poor Hasid, and so forth. Holtz avoids here any interpretive commentary, though the reference raises fascinating questions. What, for instance, did Agnon intend the reader to understand by this rather obvious reference? And how is the reader to react to the use of this premodern, stylized content heading? The Hasid in the *mizmor* is terribly (and conventionally) poor, as is Reb Yudel in the novel. This content heading is immediately realized in the very first, signature line of the novel, 8:3, where we read: *Maʿaseh beḥasid eḥad shehayah ʿani gadol umdukah baʿaniyut, raḥamana litslan* (This is the tale of a certain Hasid who was terribly poor and depressed in poverty, God help us). An experienced reader of Agnon cannot escape the deliberate ambiguity of this first, signature line where the author piles up clichés taken from hasidic tales, including the obligatory *raḥamana litslan.* What, we must ask, does this deliberate and obvious pastiche mean to the author, to the reader? And, further: What is this novel about? What could Holtz mean by merely referring the reader to the *mizmor?* What, ultimately, is the effect of his avoidance of interpretation? Do we assume that Holtz is unaware of the ambiguities of the parodic tone?

Ḥokhmat nashim. These two words also appear in the stylized content heading to chapter 1. Holtz has three points to make about this term. First, it is the name of a popular book (written originally in Italian) for Jewish women, explaining Jewish laws and customs; one can read up on it in Israel Zinberg's multivolume history of

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Jewish literature, *Toldot sifrut yisra'el,* 4, 108. Holtz says nothing about the role of Frumet, Reb Yudel's wife, in the development of the plot; without her seeking the advice of the Apter rebbe, there would be no story. This certainly would qualify Agnon's use of the title of a book written for the education of women—a rare phenomenon in Jewish history. Second, we are referred to the entry in Stutchkoff's thesaurus where we learn that the term can be used in Yiddish as well as in Hebrew; and that the semantic effect of the Yiddish usage is ironic, hence negative, that is, women have no wisdom. Since he brings this entry, Holtz clearly assumes that Agnon was aware of the misogynistic connotation of the term in Yiddish and that it is thus meaningful in the novel. But the novel really portrays the opposite: Frumet, Reb Yudel's wife, is not a stupid woman at all. Third, we are also referred to Prov. 14:1, where we learn that "the wisest of women builds her house, but folly tears it down with its own hands" (Jewish Publication Society translation). Holtz adds to this citation the possibility of reading *ḥokhmat nashim* as the wisdom of women or *ḥokhmah banashim,* the wisdom in women. We thus have three glosses on the phrase: one bibliographic; one lexicographic; and one exegetical. The reader must ask, at this point: What is one supposed to do with this rich information? What does it tell us about the novel, or about Agnon's attitude toward women in the novel?

Patshegen haketav. Here we are referred to Esther 3:14, where the term means "the text of the document." The need to gloss this phrase raises a revelatory question. The term has two meanings: in the Book of Esther, it means "the text of the document"; in early modern literature, it means the plot of a play or a novel. Agnon uses it in the biblical sense. Is Holtz directing his reader toward the biblical rather than the early modern meaning, or does he assume that the contemporary Hebrew reader knows neither of these meanings? This gloss and many like it attest to one of the fundamental problems facing the author of this commentary: What does the contemporary reader of Hebrew know about the world of ideas, practices, and references that constitute the text of *Hakhnasat kallah?* Certainly, Holtz had to encounter this challenge in each line that he chose to annotate. But then, can Holtz's choices serve as an index of the Hebrew and Judaic erudition of the implied reader of his commentary?

8:2. *Umora lo ya'aleh 'al rosho.* This is the last item in the content heading of chapter 1, and to explain it Holtz refers us to Judg. 13:15, where one finds the source

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

of the Agnonic phrase. Holtz, however, does not explain the parodic play here. In Judges, *morah* means razor, while here, *mora'* means fear. The verse in Judges reports that Samson's mother-to-be was told by an angel that no razor should be used on her son's head. Here, Agnon playfully foretells us that Reb Yudel will not be afraid. Holtz observes that this refers to 14:12 in Agnon's text, where Reb Yudel has no fear as he is being stoned by a crowd of young gentile boys, since he has already prayed *tefillat haderekh,* the prayer for a journey. There is no mention here of the hilarious comparison of Samson with Reb Yudel, or any intimation that Agnon might think that Reb Yudel's confidence in the protective powers of *tefillat haderekh* is ludicrous.

8:3. *Umdukka baʿaniyut.* Without explaining this rare usage, meaning "depressed/sunken in poverty," Holtz adduces a source from the Babylonian Talmud that states that "the Lord depresses with/in agonies whomever He favors." The idiom itself is never explained to the reader who might not know it. More important, does Holtz imply that Agnon espouses the pious sentiment expressed by the talmudic saying? In Agnon's text, this phrase is one of a string of pious clichés often found, as we have said, in hasidic tales and that therefore evoke a tone of parody. I would argue that if, indeed, Agnon had this source in mind, he was rejecting it as he wrote this line. We have enough evidence from Agnon's copious writing to doubt that in the late 1920s, when he wrote most of *Hakhnasat kallah,* he could have entertained such a position.

Raḥamana litslan. This Aramaic phrase meaning "may the Merciful One save us," is glossed in Hebrew and explained as "a rabbinic expression that one frequently utters before mentioning some misfortune." (In this text, incidentally, it is uttered—as it often is—after, not before, the mentioning of Reb Yudel's poverty.) Holtz reports that it is also used in Yiddish and brings as support Stutchkoff's thesaurus. While in previous references to Stutchkoff he has nothing to say about Yiddish, here he advises the (scholarly) reader to explore Itamar Even-Zohar's discourse on the relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish, and the work of both Even-Zohar and H. Shmeruk on the efforts of modern writers to render authentic dialogue in these two languages. While the curious reader can find these studies cited in the bibliography, he would never know without reading them that Holtz here is touching upon one of the most fascinating aspects of Agnon's text. The richly woven

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Hebrew texts, using citations and parodies from thousands of sources, is actually rendering a world of Yiddish speakers.

Yoshev ʿal hatorah veʿal haʿavodah. Unlike the above reference to sophisticated scholarly articles, Holtz's note here informs the reader that this phrase is based on the Pirke Avot 1:2, a basic text that most Hebrew readers have encountered in the original or in a variety of popular venues. The disparity in the level of glosses is startling.

8:4. *Mehavayot haʿolam.* We are told, first, that this phrase is also found in Yiddish (again a reference to Stutchkoff) and second, that it means "worldly affairs." To make the point, Holtz brings the well-known saying that rabbinic scholars busy themselves with the *havayot* (debates) of Abaye and Rava and not with the *havayot* (matters) of this world. Two questions arise here: Would the reader who does not know who Abaye and Rava were comprehend this added clarification? And would the reader understand that this term actually continues the string of clichés introduced in line 3, the first line of the text of the narrative?

Umassa umattan. Holtz explains here that this is a rabbinic expression for the term *mikkaḥ umimkar* (business). But what lexicographical point is being made here? Both these terms are found in rabbinic literature, and it would be difficult to demonstrate that the contemporary reader is more familiar with *mikkaḥ umimkar* than with *massa umattan,* which *mikkaḥ umimkar* is supposed to explain.

8:5. *Rak betorat adonai ḥeftso.* Here we are referred to the text of Ps. 1:1–2. No explanation is given.

Banigleh uvanistar. This phrase is carefully explained as meaning "in revealed Torah texts and esoteric texts." Holtz obviously assumes that the reader is unfamiliar with these terms. He adds that these terms are also found in Yiddish, "see Stutchkoff."

Beʾeimah uvyirʾah uvʾahavah. We are referred to a statement in the Babylonian Talmud for the source of these rather common words meaning "with fear, with awe, and with love."

While one can find more illuminating entries throughout the volume, those brought here are representative of the method and its problems. Holtz is inhibited by two methodological contingencies, one external, one internal. The external one is

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

the nature of the targeted readers. The author is clearly trying to engage two distinctly different groups of readers with radically different competencies: those who have the erudition to read the Agnon text with ease, and those who will have some difficulty doing so because of their ignorance of literary, often rabbinic Hebrew. The glosses, as we have seen, thus vary widely in their level. This difficulty, perhaps impossible to overcome, is revealing. Traditional Hebrew commentaries—Rashi, for instance, or even contemporary commentaries aimed at a learned audience—can assume a common fund of information, a familiarity with biblical and rabbinic texts, and daily Jewish religious behavior patterns. The commentator on an Agnon text or, for that matter, many other Hebrew texts written before the 1930s, cannot make this assumption. Holtz has written this commentary partly for his contemporaries who do not have a fraction of his erudition, and partly for his colleagues or readers with a significant level of Hebrew literary competence. The burning question is: Who will be able to read Agnon one hundred years from now?

Holtz's second problem is self-inflicted. By forswearing interpretation, as he does in his brief introduction cited above and in his actual practice of explanation, he both implicates himself in a logical impossibility (I assert again: there is no non-interpretive commentary) and actually cuts himself off from any appreciation of the delightful and ingenious intertextual play of this author. Within the realm of intertextuality, he thus exhibits no interest in the subtle differences between such categories as citation and allusion, on the one hand, and irony and parody, on the other. He thus reads the opening line of the novel, for instance, as a straightforward description of Reb Yudel, devoid of irony or parody or satire. He seems to diverge completely from what has crystallized over the decades as the sophisticated reading of the novel, which Miron, for instance, traces in his above-mentioned book. By forswearing "interpretation," he constricts himself to a limited reception of the text, a reception that, unfortunately, does not allow him fully to exploit his prodigious erudition.

The abstinence from the interpretive impulse allows Holtz to focus upon Agnon's representation of the realia of Jewish life in Galicia at the time of the novel and the raw linguistic material of the text, that is, its sources and references. The motivated reader who comes to this annotated edition with an adequate Hebrew literary competence will find in it treasures of information that he can exploit in his

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

reading and interpretation of the text. Much of this information cannot be found elsewhere and even in its state in the notes, demands both work and imagination, as demonstrated in our supercommentary above. Using this valuable material, the reader forms a historically grounded interpretation that he can then convey to others, either in articles or in lectures. Holtz's annotated edition is thus a significant contribution to Agnon studies and will ensure the continued reading of this major classic of modern Hebrew literature. Though he does not mention it in his introduction, it is difficult to escape the notion that he, like others before him, senses that without this annotation, both present and future generations might lose this text. This sense of potential cultural loss is over a century old in Hebrew literary circles—one thinks of Bialik's *kinnus*—and imbues Holtz's *Mar'ot umkorot* with a distinctive gravity.

Arnold J. Band
Department of Comparative Literature
University of California, Los Angeles

This content downloaded from 129.79.38.71 on Mon, 30 Jan 2017 19:42:50 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms