Harold Fisch

Professor Fisch, graduate of Oxford University, is chairman of the Department of English at Bar Ilan University and the author of numerous studies in the field of literary criticism.

AGNON'S TALES OF MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION

I

S. Y. Agnon has achieved the rare distinction of the Nobel Prize; but he has achieved the even rarer distinction of having provoked in his own lifetime a quite impressive literature of criticism about his own work — almost all of it, of course, in Hebrew. Not only have his three major novels (*The Bridal Canopy, The Day Before Yesterday, A Guest for the Night*) attained the rank of classics of modern Hebrew prose, but whole books have been written about even single short tales, and critics have hotly debated the interpretation of individual passages. Perhaps only Kafka and T. S. Eliot among twentieth-century authors have generated the same degree of intense critical discussion. The reason for this may be in something that all these three writers have in common, namely, an impacted quality of meaning, an occult dimension. They all three stir ripples in the soul's depths, and invite us to speculate on the ultimate questions. They are, in the technical language of literary scholarship, metaphysical poets, in whom word-play, symbolism, and ideas combine to produce in the art-work a palpable spiritual tension, an unmistakable seriousness.

But here Agnon stands apart from the other serious poets and prose writers with whom he, in other respects, claims comparison. When reading him, it is possible to be oblivious, or almost oblivious, to the symbolism, to what I have termed the impacted quality of meaning. It is possible to read his tales — and thousands of people of all ages enjoy them thus — as simple fables, made up of anecdote, rambling reflections, and bits of out-of-

the-way information culled from here and everywhere. He is in a way extraordinarily artless, extraordinarily unsophisticated. But this artlessness of Agnon is only of the surface. The real fact is that he is one of the subtlest of storytellers: his fables have behind them a complex hinterland of verbal suggestiveness, ambiguity, and metaphysical resource. The careful reader will suddenly be pulled up with the sense of some door being opened within the house, some echo, some mystery, some inward conflict disturbing the calmness and mildness of the surface.

A word or a phrase is thrown out and sinks into the mind's depths, sending out ever-widening ripples of meaning. Thus, in the novel *A Guest for the Night,* the period after the first World War is described:

> When the sword of battle rested in the land, the people supposed in their error that the days of the Messiah had come about, and so the wife of Daniel Bach took her daughters and returned to her native town. But they did not know that the Messiah was still busy binding and loosening his wounds, and that the world had not yet returned to a state of health (Chapter VIII).

If the reader of this passage has had a traditional education, he will certainly recall Rashi's comment (quoting the Midrash) on Genesis xviii, 2, where Abraham is described as sitting at the door of his tent on the third day after his circumcision, "binding and loosening his wound." At first one may feel this use of rabbinic echo is merely a matter of stylistic color, but the more thoughtful reader will inevitably pursue its implications. Abraham's wounds are covenantal wounds, they are the signs of promise; not only that, but Abraham is about to be visited by three angels: his wounds are the herald of revelation. The passage from Rashi opens up a whole world of theological reference, a whole interpretation of history applicable to this tale. The sufferings of the war have scarred Europe and have left their mark on the *shtetl* where Daniel Bach lives; but there is also a kind of promise in the air: Daniel Bach's father, Reb Shlomo, is about to leave for Palestine where he will eventually be found cultivating his garden in Ramat Rachel. The history of this family is, in a way, covenant history. But this would be

too simple an interpretation of the use made by Agnon of this particular rabbinic allusion. One is bound to note the profound irony of the context, the misery, the frustration, which causes Daniel Bach to abandon the road of piety and the simple faith of his fathers. This disillusionment is conveyed in the wording and, above all, in the bitter tone of Agnon's sentence:

> But they did not know that the Messiah was still busy binding and loosening his wounds, and that the world had not yet returned to a state of health.

His use of rabbinic quotation is not unlike the ironic quotations from Spenser, Shakespeare, and Goldsmith which we note in Eliot's *Waste Land*. They highlight (among other things) the emptiness of the world which Eliot surveys, the absence in it of the charm and beauty of the past. Similarly, Agnon's use of biblical and rabbinic quotation often ironically underscores for us the relative absence in the world he describes of the piety and comfort of traditional faith.

If, therefore, all interpretation of Agnon's writings necessarily begins with his use of the language and symbolism of the Bible, his use of Midrash and Kabbalah, this does not mean that he is in any simple sense a religious novelist, much less an Orthodox novelist. We can say truthfully that Agnon's writings reveal more clearly perhaps than do any other series of present-day documents the crisis of modern Judaism, the tension and even the alienation of the modern Jew from his traditional way of life. Agnon is very far from confidently announcing the message of the written and unwritten Torah and making of that a simple affirmation of faith, so much so that some critics have been led to conclude that he is fundamentally a non-religious, even a secular writer![1] On the other hand, he is undoubtedly concerned with the religious quest, with the life of the soul, with the meaning of Jewish history, and the dialogue between the Jew and his God. The religious issue arises in Agnon's work in a dialectical form, as an aspect of the clash between the generations — the generation of Daniel Bach and that of his pious father. The author mediates between them, holding these two conflicting positions together in a certain ironical perspective, and treating

the past with a veneration and sympathy which falls short of absolute devotion. He looks back with nostalgia to the life of the *shtetl* in *The Day Before Yesterday,* and in such a story as *Tehillah.* But elsewhere — for instance in *The Simple Tale* (*Sippur Pashut*) — he reveals something of the decadence within the *shtetl* itself in the early part of the century. There is ugliness, meanness, and narrowness there, as well as grandeur and simplicity of soul. Agnon is profoundly attached to the past and to the pattern of Jewish life which it reveals, but Agnon's piety is very complicated: it is harshly streaked with realism and disillusionment.

Paradoxically enough, his most affirmative Jewish statement is often made in tales which have little or no overt Jewish message, and which are not located either in Palestine or in the traditional Jewish settings of Eastern Europe. One of his shorter tales, *The Doctor's Divorce,* tells of the life of a Jewish couple from Vienna. Dinah and the doctor she marries are modern, sophisticated, cultured folk with intellectual interests far removed from traditional Judaism. The tale relates their gradual estrangement from one another following the discovery (made actually before their marriage) of a moral lapse on the part of the young wife. The knowledge of this corrodes the thoughts and imagination of the doctor until the only solution left them is a divorce. The acute reader will sense a metaphysical dimension to this tale: the "divorce" is also the divorce between "Knesset Yisrael" and her divine Partner. The emptiness, the longing, the uneasiness of the characters has a meaning which transcends the immediate limits of the tale; it has a theological bearing. Dinah is the erring wife, the unhappy Israel, haunted by the past, by her sins. The doctor, apparently enlightened, modern, unbound by old-fashioned prejudices about the importance of virginity, becomes strangely obsessed by his wife's infidelity. Both are bound to the past by unbreakable bonds. But the bond of the past is no healthy bond; it is compulsive, wearying, fatal to health and joy; it cannot be thrown off:

> And so we parted from one another, in the way a man and wife part outwardly. But in my heart, my friend, the smile on her lips is still

> locked up, and I see that blue-black in her eyes, as on the day I first saw her. Sometimes at night I sit up in bed like those patients she used to take care of, and I stretch out both hands and call out, 'Nurse, nurse, come to me.'[2]

On the surface of it, the tale is as far as possible from being an affirmation of the values of Judaism. The characters are almost completely "divorced" from Jewish tradition: the description of the *Chuppah,* for instance, is without any attractiveness — it takes place in the presence of a paid *minyan,* "miserable creatures who an hour or two ago were called for a funeral and now were summoned for my wedding." But at the symbolic level, this very "divorce" from Jewish values is of the substance of the tale. The alienation of the doctor from his wife symbolizes the alienation of the modern Jew, and in the pathos of the finale we sense the power of longing, the haunting desire for renewal, for a lost faith, which the story ultimately yields. But it is a defeated longing.

II

The key to Agnon's writing lies in this sense of the compulsive quality of the past: his characters are haunted by the past. They are contemporary figures, strangely laden with the weight of bygone days. This burden is not pleasant for them, but it is real. It is the condition of existence for the Jew. Such reflections are newly prompted by a reading of two of Agnon's finest short novels in the English translation of Mr. Walter Lever which has just been published.[3] *Betrothed* (*Shevuat Emunim*) tells of Jaffa before the first World War, with its small but colorful community of traders, officials, intellectuals, and the occasional farmer. Dr. Jacob Rechnitz, a young scholar hailing from central Europe, teaches German and Latin in the local high school to the sons and daughters of the settlers. So far everything is straightforward and realistic, and we may be sure that Agnon here has drawn heavily on his own observations of the life of the period and of the locality which he knew so well. But there is a remoter, more occult dimension to the story: it is symbolized in the first place by Rechnitz's chosen hobby, that of

collecting and classifying the seaweed that he finds on the beach. This interest, first kindled at the University, becomes for him a scientific passion. But he is a methodical scientist, a botanist of the sea, whose discoveries are published in the professional journals dealing with this curious specialty. Eventually his labors will be recognized, and he will be offered a professorship in an American university. But if the academic aspect of his profession is stressed, the romantic aspect is not lacking. He can say with Eliot's Prufrock,

> I have heard the mermaids singing each to each. . .
> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown.

The mermaids are seven: six of them are young ladies of Jaffa, Rechnitz's older pupils who are in the habit of promenading with him on the beach talking of poetry and of things more mundane as well; the seventh and more mysterious maiden is Susan (Shoshana), the daughter of the consul Ehrlich from Rechnitz's home-town of Vienna. They have been known to Rechnitz from his earliest youth and now they are come to Jaffa on a visit after touring many parts of Africa and the East. The oath of undying love which binds Susan and Jacob together was first uttered beside the goldfish pool in her father's garden when they were both small children. Susan had once jumped into that pool and had emerged covered with seaweed like a veritable mermaid (p. 104). The oath is ratified on the beach at Jaffa amid the sound of the waves, whilst a solitary fisherman stands waist-deep in the water. Susan will finally win her beloved by means of a moonlight race along the shore with the other six maidens, and having run her race she will be crowned with a garland of dried seaweed taken from Rechnitz's desk. Here is the strange mingling of the quotidian and the mysterious which constitutes the essential quality of Agnon's fiction just as it is the essential quality of all great fictive art. The symbolic invades the everyday world, and the imagery of everyday gives substance and actuality to the world of symbols.

It is easy to see to what region of archetypal symbolism the sea, the seaweed, and the mermaids belong. They symbolize the

past ages, the depths of our spiritual memory. The sea-symbolism takes us back to the origins of our life as individuals, as members of a nation, and as members of the human race. It signifies the attachment of Rechnitz and Susan to their common beginning and to the oath of eternal love and loyalty that they have sworn:

> At the sound of the waves, at the sight of the limitless expanse of sea, Rechnitz closed his eyes. And now he saw his mother kneeling down before him. He was a small boy; she was threading a new tie round his collar, for it was the day Susan was born and he was invited to the Consul's house (p. 136).

Here the bond linking Jacob to Susan is taken back to the day she was born. It represents the weight of the past, its sweet inexorability. But sweet as the memory of his and Susan's youth is, it is also compounded with images of death (the death of her mother who also in a mysterious way is confused with his own mother) and with a sense of constraint and sadness. Upon Susan lies the shadow of disappointment and of melancholy far-off things. Moreover, she draws Jacob with her into the melancholy sphere of her own obsessive rootedness in the past. A supporting motif here, which picks out the connection of Susan with death and the past, is her interest in Egyptian mummies and in the stuffed animals made by the taxidermist at Ein Rogel:

> "What was the name of the taxidermist at Ein Rogel?"
> "His name was Ilyushin."
> Susan opened her eyes. "That's it—Illusion."

(Mr. Lever has here brilliantly caught the play on words: in the original Hebrew the name was *Arzav* which Shoshana mishears as *akhzav,* i.e., disappointment.)

> "And what has Ilyushin to do with us?" asked Jacob.
>
> "Since you mentioned him, I wanted to know what he was called. Now that I know, you don't have to say any more about him. Cattle and wild beasts may enjoy a privilege granted to no man except the mummies in Egypt. Don't you smoke? I'll call a waiter to bring you

> some cigarettes. Let's honor the wisdom of Egypt, the land that gave eternal life to her sons, by ordering Egyptian cigarettes." (p. 91)

The eternal life which Egypt gave to her sons is the existence for which Suasn yearns, the petrified existence of the mummy. She goes on, echoing this time the rhythm, and imagery of the book of *Job*:

> Then forgetting all about cigarettes, Susan went on, "Our days on earth are like a shadow, and the time of our affliction is the length of our days. How fortunate are those mummies, laid in the ground and freed from all trouble and toil. If I could only be like one of them."

Her wish is soon granted. She does not die, but she succumbs to a strange and paralyzing ailment, a form of sleeping-sickness which serves to deepen the gloom which descends on those who love her — her father and Jacob. The doctors of Jaffa can do nothing for her; and so, day after day, she remains living and not living, suspended in the world of the past and laid up on purpose to a life beyond. She is in a state of suspended animation, whilst Jacob, having received his invitation to take up a chair in an American university, paradoxically turns back to his work with recovered energy:

> Never in his life had Rechnitz been so free a man as now; he had separated himself from Rachel and Leah, from Asnat, Raya, and the rest, on account of Susan Ehrlich; he had come to despair of Susan Ehrlich because of her disease; his journey lay before him, and yet even this was put out of his thoughts in order that work might be his sole object and end. (pp. 120-121)

His new found freedom and energy underline for us the fact that while Susan is arrested in the life of the past, Jacob's existence is oriented towards the future. He is a scientist, a new man, starting out on a new and interesting career, speaking the new Hebrew of the new settlers in the new-old land, while Susan still thinks of Hebrew as the language of the prayer-book. He looks westward to America, while she looks backward to the encrusted conservatism and ordered gravity of the Austro-

Hungarian Empire. But though Jacob might turn away from it, the past is not to be eluded. In the end, Susan will rise from her bed in a state of somnambulism, she will run her race and capture Jacob for herself, thus by a superhuman act of self-renewal bringing about the fulfilment of their age-old vows. The ending is neither joyful nor sad; it betrays instead the fundamental ambiguity of Agnon's experience of history and tradition:

> Suddenly there was a voice calling him by name, a voice that came as if it were from beneath Susan's eyelashes. Jacob shut his eyes and replied in a whisper, "Susan, are you here?"
> Susan's eyelashes signaled assent. She put out her hands, took the crown from Jacob's arm and placed it on her head. (pp. 138-139)

It should be obvious, even if a host of verbal indications in the Hebrew original did not make this clear, that Jacob is Israel (they are historically identical), and Susan (Shoshana — the lily of the valleys in the *Song of Songs*) is the divine partner, or *Shekhinah* representing Israel's religious destiny, the burden of past vows and past responsibilities. In a particular sense, Susan can be identified as the Sabbath day,[4] and this is borne out by the rabbinic interpretation of the "seven maidens" of *Esther* 2:9 from which the motif of the "seven maidens" is originally drawn. There in the Talmud the "seven maidens" are said to have been employed by Esther for the purpose of checking the days of the week: the seventh is the Sabbath day. Here is one strand of hidden meaning in the story, though on the surface it has nothing to say about the observance of the Sabbath day in Jaffa or anywhere else. The combination of such symbolism with a matter-of-fact story of a quite different sort may surprise the reader with expectations of modern realistic fiction; but it is no surprise for those who are attuned to the midrashic and kabbalistic sources from which Agnon drew.

But we must be careful when we speak of Agnon as a symbolic novelist. His characters, like those of Kafka, have a hidden life, a secret meaning; but unlike those of Kafka, they also have a compulsive everyday reality. He is more like Conrad who writes genuine sea-tales and tales of adventure which

nevertheless have an inward psychological and symbolic bearing. Agnon, in *Betrothed,* has written the history of Jaffa in the time of the second *aliyah;* he has also written a symbolic fable portraying the bond linking Jacob-Israel and the Queen-Shabbat — the *Shekhinah* — the sleeping beauty of the fairy-tale who can be aroused from the sleep of the centuries only by the kiss of her destined spouse.

III

The sleep-walking motif reappears in the far stranger and more mysterious tale printed in the same volume under the title, *Edo and Enam.* Gemulah, the wife of Gamzu, a bookseller and collector, has come with him to Jerusalem from the far-off mountains of the East (Arabia? Asia Minor?). She suffers from a strange lunacy which causes her to wander about in a trance-like state on the night of the full-moon. But Gemulah's father, Gevariah ben Ge'uel, has given Gamzu a charm in the form of some inscribed leaves of papyrus in a jar.

> There is magic in them; what kind of magic I do not know. I do know that it has power to influence the atmosphere that surrounds the moon, and the moon itself. I now give you all these plants, and as they remain in your keeping you may control Gemulah's steps so that she will not go astray. (p. 167)

Gamzu is bidden to place them by the door of his house (clearly, a *mezuzah* motif), so that no matter how far Gemulah will stray, she will return home to her husband. But Gamzu has lost the plants with their mysterious inscription — they have been inadvertently sold, and as we soon realize, they have come into the possession of the antiquarian philologist Dr. Ginath, who resides in the house of the Greinfenbachs — (all the names of the main characters mysteriously begin with the same letter, *gimmel.*)[6] From now on Ginah, through his possession of the strange documents or plants (there is some ambiguity here — are they primarily plants, or are they primarily documents?) will have control over the sleepwalker's movements.

The climax of the story is reached when Gemulah, drawn by

the power of the hidden charm, is discovered in Ginath's study. She is singing her strange song in the lost language of her tribe — the language of Edo. It goes:

yiddal, yiddal, va, pa, ma —

whilst Ginath is sitting at his writing-table recording the hymns of the deities of Enam in the language of Edo. Gemulah has left her husband, drawn to Ginath by a secret bond of love, but even more by the fact that he has in his possession the talisman of her race, the key to her destiny. It is not difficult to discern in this symbol of the documents or plants the notion of a written Scripture, a *Torah,* which holds within itself the guarantee of the bond linking God and Israel. Above all, the ancient documents symbolize something handed down from the *past.* As in *Betrothed,* there is the same overarching theme of the past weighing down the present. In fact, Agnon draws the connection and humorously compares the Enamite leaves with "such weeds as Dr. Rechnitz drew up from the seas near Jaffa" (p. 166). Gemulah's language and the language inscribed on the leaves is the language of the past, a dead language; but Dr. Ginath, the antiquarian scholar, has the key to it, just as Rechnitz has in the dried seaweed the symbolic possession of the past.

But the two stories are not in other respects alike. *Edo and Enam* is both in theme and structure more complex than *Betrothed,* at the same time as it is more obviously symbolical — almost, one might say, an allegory. The atmosphere of *Edo and Enam* is also more tense and tragic. Unlike Susan, Gemulah is torn between two lovers. The one, Gamzu, loves her with heart and soul; the other, Ginath, though he alone understands the language of Edo, is not emotionally involved either in the symbols of the past or in the life of Gemulah. He is a student, an archaeologist. The narrative links him by association with the Gentile Bible critics "who turn the words of the living God upside down." He is a European man of learning, not a native of Jerusalem (p. 202). Gamzu, by contrast, is a former Yeshiva student. He does not understand the ancient tongues

scientifically, but on the other hand, his interest in old books is based on "the love of the Torah for its own sake" (p. 180). His piety and his feeling for simple Jews like himself leads him, as one of the digressive episodes relates, to the discovery of the original text of the hymns of Rabbi Adiel. This tale within the tale (and there are many such digressions) serves to explicate the nature of Gamzu's relation to the past, and thus his hold upon the love of Gemulah.

He of course loses the talisman, and the tragedy and tension of the story derive from this loss, and from the anguished search which ensues. It is the primary motif. It can be suggested that the motif of the lost talisman, with its obvious symbolism, is primary in Agnon's major fiction as a whole. A very similar short tale, *For Ever* (*Ad Olam*), relates how another scholar, Adiel Amza, is searching for the mysterious clue to the reason for the overthrow of the ancient city of Gumlidata. He finds it in a document mysteriously preserved in a leper colony and covered with the filth and slime of many generations of lepers. The discovery of the missing evidence affords the scholar profound satisfaction: he takes up his residence in the house of the afflicted lepers and meditates on the sacred text "for ever" afterwards. *In A Guest for the Night,* the narrator (clearly Agnon himself) is given the great brass key to the old *Bet Hamidrash* of his native town of Shebosh (Butzatch), since the people left in the town have no further use for the house of study. He loses the key for a period and finds himself unable to enter the *Bet Hamidrash* until he has a duplicate key made. There is the same sense of loss, the same anguished search for the missing talisman. Later on, the narrator returns to Palestine, and finds the original key which had slipped down between the folds of his travelling-bag. He decides not to send it back to Shebosh, but to keep it most carefully against the day when the *Bet Hamidrash* of Shebosh will come trundling back to the Holy Land in fulfilment of the rabbinic legend which speaks of the ultimate ingathering into Israel of the houses of prayer and houses of study of the Diaspora. Here the lost key is again the key to the past, and more particularly, the key to the religious values of the past. To lose it means to be shut out from

the indescribably precious warmth and comfort of the *Bet Hamidrash* and the intimacy of the love enacted therein between God and Israel. Similarly, for Gamzu to lose the magic plants, in *Edo and Enam,* is for him to lose the love of his precious, albeit sick and tormented wife.

Ginath, the cold European scholar, whose mastery of the Word is philological rather than existential, has now achieved control over Gemulah's hidden mysterious divine life. But his union with her — which is no union — leads to death and emptiness. Gamzu, alone of the three, is left alive at the end, bereft and widowed. The papers on which Ginath had recorded the speech of Gemulah are found burnt to ashes after his death. But the tale, in spite of the tragic dénouement, does not end on a completely negative note. The work of Ginath will live on; his orders to his publisher not to reprint his research on "the ninety-nine words of the Edo language" are not carried out. The magic charm of a bygone world is not to be entirely lost to sight. There is still a future:

> As usual, the dead man's orders were not carried out. On the contrary, his books are printed in increasing numbers, so that the world is already beginning to know his works, and especially the Enamite hymns with their grace and beauty. While a great scholar lives, those who choose to see his learning, see it; those who do not, see nothing there. But once he is dead, his soul shines out ever more brightly from his works, and anyone who has the power to see, readily makes use of his light.

We are reminded here of an earlier bit of apparently trivial dialogue in which Gamzu had spoken of Ginath:

> "I don't know him, though I have heard of his books. But I haven't read them. I don't look at books that are less than four hundred years old."
>
> "Ginath's books," I replied, "go back four thousand years and more." Gamzu smiled. "I am looking at the pot and not what is in it." Smiling in turn I said, "In another four hundred years you'll be looking at Ginath's books." (p. 179)

It is this hint of the future relevance of Ginath's researches

which is picked up at the end. The values of the past are to be preserved for the future. Even though Gamzu is widowed and Ginath himself is annihilated, he has through his philological labors succeeded in carrying over into the future some vital meaning, some message of salvation and hope.

I have tried to explain one central episode in this strange tale. But there are many, subtly enfolded motifs, and no fewer than twelve major digressions, forming together a complex, impacted narrative, all of it closed around one central spiritual nucleus. Mention should be made, for instance, of the related motif of the abandoned house, and of the search for a dwelling. In one brief, but incisively narrated episode, a young couple are presented at a bus-stop looking with pain at one another. They are homeless, and though they have been married for a full year, they still live apart in their separate parental homes. Again, the Greifenbachs with whom Ginath lodges are concerned with the security of their dwelling. The narrator looks after their apartment in their absence while they wander about Europe on "holiday," i.e., without a settled abode. This theme of home and homelessness has been acutely analyzed by Baruch Kurzweil who points out that it runs throughout the tale.[8] Clearly it is related to the central theme of the past and its bearing on the present. Gemulah wanders away from her home in the night, because she is a symbol of the past insecurely rooted in the present. The symbolism of homelessness points by wider implication to the exile and homelessness of the modern Jew and the efforts which are the subject matter of modern Jewish history to establish for him a "National Home." All the hope, the paradox, and the anguish that that dream has entailed are hinted at in the story. But beyond that, in the deeper region from which such symbolism draws its strength, is the notion of a home, a secure foundation for twentieth-century man as a whole, confused and lost as he is — the hope of a resting-place for the sole of his foot.

NOTES

1. This is the position taken by the distinguished critic Baruch Kurzweil. See his *Masekhet HaRoman* (*Treatise on the Novel*), Schocken Books, Tel-Aviv, 1953, p. 10, and his *Massot al Sippure Shay Agnon* (*Essays on Agnon's Tales*), Schocken Books, Tel-Aviv, p. 328 f.

2. From the translation by Robert Alter, in *Hebrew Short Stories,* selected by S. Y. Penueli, and A. Ukhmani, *The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature,* Tel-Aviv, 1965, vol. I, p. 273.

3. *Two Tales by S. Y. Agnon*: *Betrothed* and *Edo and Enam,* Schocken Books, New York, 1966. Page references in the text are to this edition.

4. This suggestion is made by Dov Sedan; see his *Al Shay Agnon* (*Studies in Agnon*), Hakkibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1959, pp. 91-94. His treatment of this story is throughout perceptive.

5. See B. T. Tractate *Megillah,* f.13a and Rashi thereon.

6. Gemulah is from the tribe of Gad, meaning luck, and perhaps also, magic. The *gimmel* may stand for "Gan Eden" which is the value it seems to have in the allied story *Ad Olam* (*For Ever*) where all the names of the characters begin with either *gimmel* or *ayin,* and where the main female character is actually named "Eden." *Ayin* and *gimmel* are also the components of Agnon's own name. Like all students of the Kabbalah and the rabbinic writings, Agnon is much given to the play on words, and the use of significant abbreviations, *notarikon,* and *gematriah.* In his delight in words and word-jingles he resembles the English writers of the first Elizabethan Age.

7. Meshullam Tuchner points out (*Haaretz* 10. 10. 58) that this formula actually consists of the initial letters of the verse from the *Song of Songs* (4:16) יבא דודי לגנו ויאכל פרי מגדיו, (Let my beloved come to his garden and eat his pleasant fruits), a verse traditionally applied to the love between God and Israel.

8. *Masekhet HaRoman,* p. 137 f.