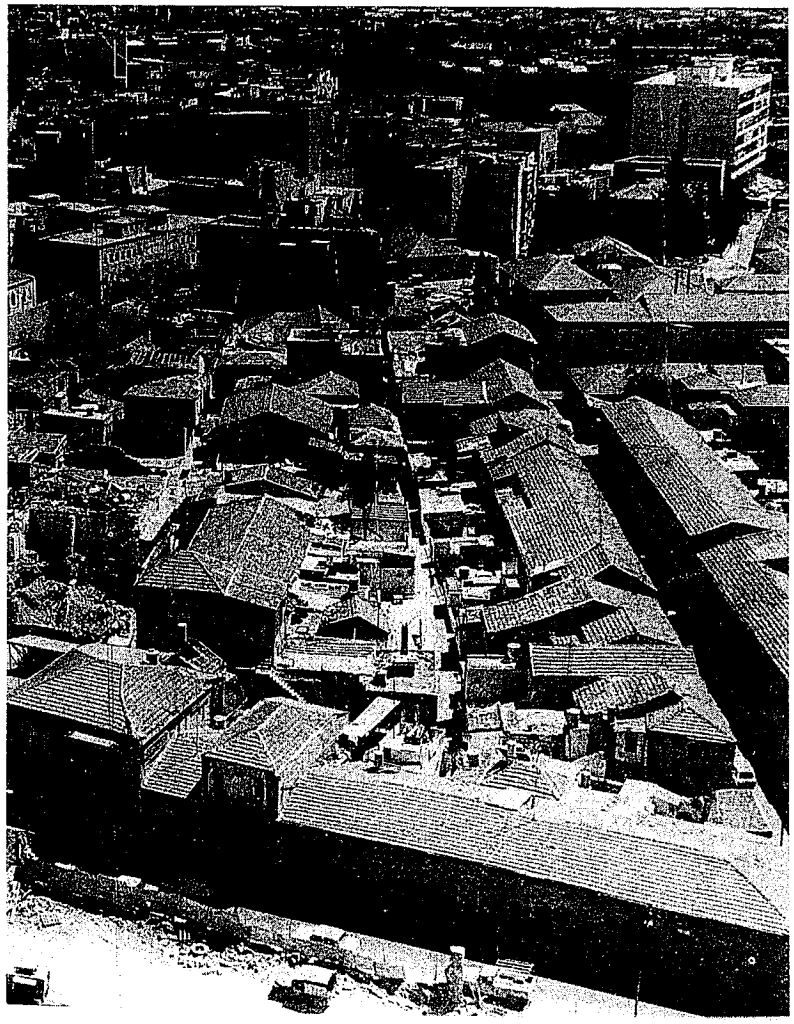


משכנות ישראל – מראה כללי 1977

פרק שני

ירושלים של עגנון במפנה המאות ה־19 וה־20:
Jerusalem in S. Y. Agnon's *Yesterday before Yesterday*

Introduction

The Jerusalem that Agnon describes in *Yesterday before Yesterday* is essentially the portrait of the city located outside the Old City's walls. As opposed to the Old City of Jerusalem, which dates from ancient times, modern Jerusalem outside the walls originated from the nineteenth century, or more precisely from 1840 onwards. Nothing had been built in the area outside the city walls prior to that date, and the city was virtually imprisoned within its walls.

In the years 1840–1855 the first harbingers of construction outside the walls appeared. Greek monks and Protestant missionaries began cultivating areas of land outside the walls, while a number of Christian institutions were erected outside the city walls at the same time. These activities were tied to the reforms instituted by the Ottomans upon their return to Jerusalem in 1840. The reforms encouraged foreign nationals to undertake a number of initiatives including land cultivation and the construction of various institutions. As a result of the Crimean War, these reforms were broadened during the 1850s and 1860s, which in turn facilitated a further stage in the development of the area outside the walls. Immigration to Palestine and to Jerusalem in particular accelerated during those years, as steamships began arriving in Palestine, the Suez Canal was inaugurated (in 1869) and a railway was laid connecting the port of Jaffa to Jerusalem. Jews occupied first place amongst the groups immigrating to Jerusalem. The number of Jews increased nine-fold from 5,000 in 1840 to 45,000 in 1910.[1] By comparison the general population of Jerusalem grew during that same period from 13,000 to 70,000 (a 540 per cent increase). This spurt of growth in Jerusalem's Jewish population stimulated the construction of

1 The statistical details about the size of populations noted above are from Ben-Arieh (1973), p. 108 (in Hebrew).

many Jewish residential areas outside the city walls in order to cope with the paucity of housing opportunities inside the walls. The Jewish communal leadership took the initiative in starting the new neighborhoods. Prospective tenants committed their entire, if paltry, life-savings to defray construction costs. Other neighborhoods were built by Jewish capitalists who donated the apartments to the tenants. Some neighborhoods were established by the leadership of the various Jewish ethnic communities and as such were restricted to members of that same community. This process gave rise to a number of Sephardic and Yemenite neighborhoods and a quarter for members of the Bukharan community. The Ashkenazic organizations (the Kollels) erected neighborhoods for Kollel members. As each Kollel was in charge of immigrants from a specific country of origin distinct neighborhoods arose. Examples of this pattern were the Batei Ungaren (Hungarian houses), for immigrants from Hungary, and the Batei Varsha (Warsaw houses), for immigrants from Poland. At the turn of the century a number of commercial housing companies arose who sought to supply the growing demand for housing.

Batei Ungaren

If the growth of the Jewish population resulted in the establishment of new neighborhoods, the increase in the Christian population (from 3,350 in 1840 to 13,000 in 1910) found its spatial expression in the establishment of a number of Christian institutions. Christian growth was shaped by competition between the European powers for increased influence in Palestine and especially in Jerusalem. A number of duplicating institutions arose at the initiative of the competing European nations. For example, a German hospital, a French hospital, an Italian hospital and an English hospital were built during this period. The various European countries built post offices and banks as well as schools and other institutions. This burst of public construction was in addition to the feverish construction of churches during the same period.

The Moslem population, which during the years 1840–1910 increased by less than three-fold (from 4,650 to 12,000), also contributed to the development of Jerusalem outside the city walls. Most importantly the Muslims constructed a number of residential quarters. Moslem development differed from the Jewish pattern. Whereas the Jewish residential neighborhoods were intended for all strata of the Jewish population and were constructed in the entire region outside the walls, the Moslem neighborhoods were intended only for the affluent. The neighborhoods were located near the Old City walls and were thus adjacent to the existing Moslem centers within the city walls.

Jerusalem outside the city walls was built in a haphazard fashion without the benefit of any planning. A master-plan was devised for Jerusalem only during British Mandatory rule. Nonetheless, we can observe a pattern of segregation in the development of Jerusalem, since the Jewish neighborhoods, the Christian institutions and the Moslem neighborhoods were established in different areas. The main axis of Jerusalem's urban development was westwards, along the main road connecting the Old City with the port city of Jaffa and along the parallel arteries adjacent to this road. Additional clusters of construction arose north of the city on the Mount of Olives and Christian institutions and religious edifices were erected nearby. The Jews also took advantage of the relatively moderate cost of real estate north of the city and built another group of Jewish neighborhoods. Construction was sparse to the south and east of the Old City, and Christians and Moslems were the primary builders.

On the eve of World War I, it was possible to perceive Jerusalem as a mosaic of communities and religions, and this was responsible for Jerusalem's special character. One could apparently find in Jerusalem the entire range of Christian and Jewish communities, and this diversity accounted for the city's unique architectural character. As opposed to the Old City, which could be

Much research has been devoted to Jerusalem, the eternal city, on topics dealing with its history, geography, society and the economy. Little research, however, has been awarded to Jerusalem as a background and location in literature. Scholars of literature have been almost exclusively responsible for the limited attention devoted to the subject in academic research. Historians and social scientists, whose interest generally focuses on objective realistic situations, do not deal with this subject, just as they generally tend to neglect the role of the city or the area of literature. This chapter is an initial attempt to examine the role of Jerusalem in literature from the perspective of historical geography, an approach which is apt for one literary text set in the early years of the twentieth century, Shmuel Yosef Agnon's *Yesterday before Yesterday*.[2]

Agnon, who was a Zionist Jew, and one of the greatest Jewish writers of the modern period, makes extensive use of the eternal city in his works. He was born in 1888 in Galicia, immigrated to Palestine in 1908 and lived there until 1913 when he left for Germany. In 1924 he immigrated for a second time to Palestine, and in 1966 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He lived in Jerusalem for most of his life and died in 1970.

Four sources, deriving from his own experience in Europe and Palestine, are of seminal importance to the works of Agnon; the first is Galicia, its Jewry and well-springs of Jewish culture. Then there is modern Hebrew literature and Judaica. The "Second Aliyah" and its literature provides that stream of Jewish immigration which reached Palestine during the years 1904–1914 and especially that elite component of idealistic, young and indigent pioneers, who sought employment in agricultural labor and in which can be found the origins of the labor movement. Finally, Agnon's work is influenced by the experience of German literature and culture and European literatures in general.[3]

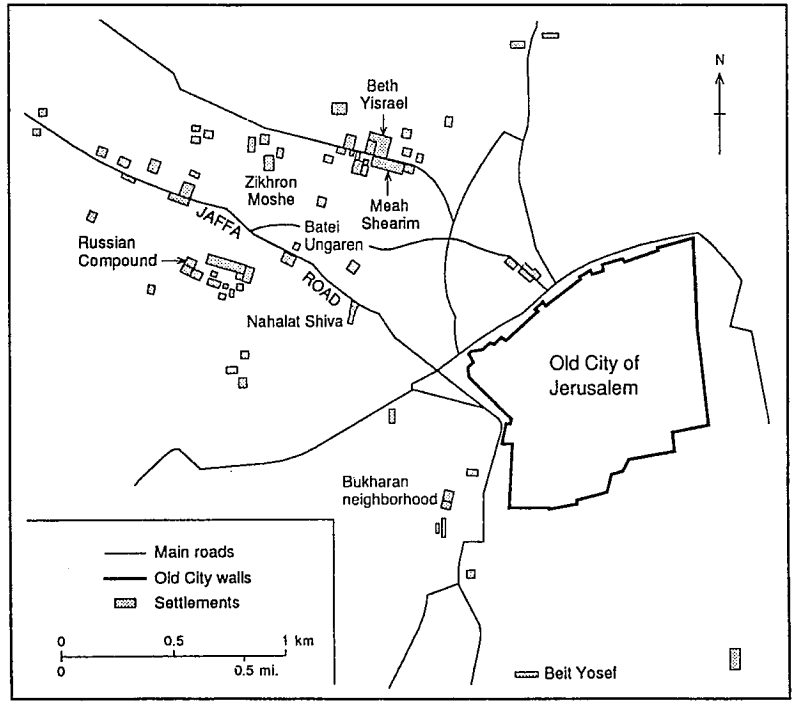
A good deal of historical and historical geographic research has been undertaken on the period in Jerusalem's history covered by the novel.[4] Documentation on the subject is extensive and this helps us to implement our aim in this chapter:

2 Agnon (1952) (in Hebrew). Page references are from the original publication.

3 *The Hebrew Encyclopedia* (1974), pp. 728–734 (in Hebrew). Most of Agnon's works have been translated into English and German. *Yesterday before Yesterday* has yet to be translated into English; we have attempted the translations that appear in this chapter, which hopefully do some justice to the original

4 See, for example, Ben-Arieh (1979) (in Hebrew). Aside from this volume, additional volumes and various articles have appeared which deal with Jerusalem during the nineteenth century and up to World War I.

characterized during that period as a backward pre-modern city, Jerusalem outside the city walls was a developing modern city. New Jerusalem gradually assumed a character of its own, which was independent of the Old City. This differentiation gathered further momentum in the years following World War I. The Jews were the major factor behind the growth and development of Jerusalem outside the city walls. They constituted the demographic majority of the city from the close of the 1860s onwards. The city's Jewish majority increased continuously and hence one can already by the nineteenth-century view Jerusalem outside the city walls as a Jewish city.



Map no. 4
Jerusalem

examining the degree of connection between the imaginative reality (including its urban, social and economic dimensions) of Jerusalem as depicted in the novel and the empirical reality that emerges from research. we hope also to examine how Agnon's subjective conception of Jerusalem emerges in the novel. This goal is predicated on the assumption that the author "is present" in his work, and that the manner in which the author occupies a specific space in his literary creation constitutes a statement of his ethical attitude towards the space that appears in his work.[5]

Background to the Plot and Its Literary Characteristics

Yesterday before Yesterday (the English translation of *T'mol Shilshom*), a novel of about 600 pages, began taking shape in the 1930s and was published in full in 1945. The period covered by the plot is that of the Second Aliyah, and the geographical space in which the novel is set encompasses the cities of Jaffa and mainly Jerusalem. Agnon, who as a resident of Palestine personally witnessed the Second Aliyah, chronicles the life-style of the period's two major social strata – the "Old Yishuv" (traditional Jewish community) and the "New Yishuv" (modern Jewish community). The community dubbed "Old Yishuv" is the Orthodox one which scrupulously and zealously observes the commandments of the Torah. This community had originated in Palestine towards the end of the eighteenth century and exemplified the values of the traditional ultra-Orthodox ("Haredi") society. Hence it occupied itself primarily with the study of the Torah, was concentrated mainly in Jerusalem and derived its principal sources of sustenance from outside support. The "New Yishuv" community originated in Palestine at the close of the nineteenth century with the waves of Zionist-inspired immigration. It personifies the values of the Jewish Enlightenment and the modern national movement and finds employment in productive occupations such as agriculture, trade and handicrafts. The "New Yishuv" is characterized by processes of secularization and abandonment of religion, although even the "New Yishuv" contained circles that strictly observed the religious commandments. It was geographically concentrated primarily in Jaffa, the agricultural villages, Haifa and only to a small extent in Jerusalem.[6]

5 Regarding the "presence" of the author in his works see Booth (1961); Fish (1964); S. Katz (1978), pp. 2–3 (in Hebrew).

6 Regarding the "New Yishuv" and the "Old Yishuv", see in detail Kaniel (1981), pp. 21–34 (in Hebrew).

Yesterday before Yesterday is a socio-psychological novel, steeped in unrealistic foundations and begging a mythical interpretation. Yizhak Kumer and the dog Balak occupy two distinctly separate areas at the beginning of the novel but the areas gradually merge into one in the course of the novel. The novel narrates Yizhak Kumer's immigration to Palestine. He immigrates due to Zionist ideological motives and an aspiration to work the soil, like his young pioneer compatriots of the Second Aliyah. Yizhak comes from small-town Eastern Europe, where the Jews maintained an Orthodox life-style. Again, like his fellow pioneers, Yizhak casts off the religious commandments immediately upon his arrival. He tries to join the life-style of the Second Aliyah but fails in his attempt at agricultural settlement. He proves no more adept at assimilating into the modern Jewish urban community of Palestine. Yizhak Kumer is still umbilically linked to his past and small-town roots. He finds himself inexorably returning to the values of religion and its commandments within the framework of Palestine's traditional Jewish community.

The story which chronicles the Second Aliyah must rely on extra-literary material to supply documentary authenticity. Agnon describes the social milieu of Jaffa and Jerusalem's neighborhoods and quarters as well as life in some of the agricultural villages. The author invokes a lengthy list of historical and fictional characters to portray Palestinian reality and provide a reliable backdrop to Yizhak's peregrinations over time and space.

The expanse epitomizes the psychological and social problems that assail Yizhak and create the bipolar contradiction that tears him apart. Jaffa represents the secular immigrant city while Jerusalem represents the religious city. Jaffa is an expanded version of Sonia with whom Yizhak falls in love and similarly the light-headed Sonia reflects the character of Jaffa. Shifra, Yizhak's future wife, lives in one of Jerusalem's most ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods. Yizhak's meandering between Jerusalem and Jaffa echoes his painful choice between Sonia and Shifra and his overall crisis of identity: is he to affiliate with the modern community or go back to the traditions maintained in the old community? His deliberations between the two poles cause Yizhak pangs of guilt. He has abandoned his parents' home for the sake of taking up agriculture. However, already on his voyage to Palestine, Yizhak chanced upon an alternate livelihood – house-painting. His betrayal of his father was thus compounded by his betrayal of Zionist values for whose sake he had originally betrayed his father. When Yizhak returns to religion in Jerusalem, his return must remain incomplete because it entails Yizhak's casting-off of his secular essence. This essence assumes a satanic yet satirical shape in the form of the dog Balak, who,

as the personification of apostasy, gazes upon traditional Jerusalem.

Jaffa and Jerusalem, Sonia and Shifra, are two extremes and the twain will never meet. Yizhak Kumer may be regarded as a sacrificial victim of the eternal rift between exile and redemption, and between Judaism and Zionism. The novel concludes with a drought, and only after Yizhak Kumer's funeral does the land flourish again. A grave sin weighed oppressively on the land and this sin is expiated only after Balak has bitten Yizhak and caused his death. Yizhak's link to the dog leads to his demise. Since in a symbolic sense the link is genuine, Yizhak's death is also symbolically justified.[7]

Yesterday before Yesterday As An Historical Source

Geographers reading *Yesterday before Yesterday* would find it difficult to free themselves from the impression that one of the goals of the novel was precisely to offer the reader a description of various aspects of the empirical reality of Jerusalem during the period between the last half of the nineteenth century until World War I, and it is quite clear that Agnon relied on historical sources.[8] It is not only by a comparison of the novel with historic reality that we can establish Agnon's intention to provide an accurate picture of Jerusalem in this period; Agnon himself alludes to this intention most explicitly when he describes in the novel a meeting of the Jerusalem intellectual set in the local "culture house". He has the participants say the following:

> When a great author will arise to write a novel about Jerusalem, a two part novel, the one part dealing with the ethereal upper Jerusalem and the second dealing with the corporeal lower Jerusalem... the part dealing

7 Shaked (1983), pp. 206–209 (in Hebrew).

8 See, for example, *Yesterday before Yesterday*, pp. 570–571, for the following historical sources: Grayevsky (1930), pp. 6–7 (in Hebrew). Grayevsky's works are considered outstanding historical sources for the history of Jerusalem: *Hamagid* (January 13, 1859). Compare *Yesterday before Yesterday*, p. 569, with Grayevsky (1930), p. 45 (in Hebrew); compare *Yesterday before Yesterday*, p. 522 with the letter sent by Mordecai Solomon to Moshe Montefiore in June 1839, which appeared in Yaari (1971), pp. 409–421 (in Hebrew). A comparison of the details that Agnon provides and the language employed in the text would attest to the extremely high likelihood that Agnon employed the historical sources. See also Hagar (1978), p. 156, Note. 5 (in Hebrew); Holtz and Holtz (1989/90), pp. 215–216 (in Hebrew).

> with the lower Jerusalem must mention built-up Jerusalem with all its functionaries and builders.[9]

It is difficult to liberate oneself from the impression that the major "urban geographic" topic with which the author sought to acquaint the reader was the development of Jerusalem outside the city walls beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century and the development of the Jewish part of the city outside the walls. There are many details about the squalid conditions experienced by the Jewish community within the walls – for example, living quarters

> in the outskirts of twilight bereft of the sun's illumination and lacking even a patch of garden or greenery. They who would do away with their eyesight, for want of light and distress their souls for lack of air to breathe... Not every house had a window, and there were those houses who received some illumination through a chimney in the ceiling while other houses derived their light through a hole in the wall over the door-frame or via an opening to the air in the courtyard where the water cistern lay. Here the women washed their laundry while in the lower courtyard stood the privies which were cleaned out only once every few years.
>
> (pp. 197, 198)

These conditions deteriorated still further as the immigration from abroad swelled, and necessitated an exodus outside the city's walls despite the precarious security conditions prevailing there.

> All the pathways outside the wall were perilous, for there was no settled area outside the Russian Compound and when they locked the gates of the city at night the life of anyone found outside the wall was forfeit... all the areas that were teeming with people during the day turned into a wasteland and when they would lock the city gates from sunset to daybreak anyone remaining outside the wall placed his life in mortal danger at the hands of cut-throats.
>
> (pp. 195, 231–232)

Agnon gives details of the names and order of construction of the Jewish neighborhoods erected outside the walls (pp. 199, 273, 290, 301, 312, 336, 563, 569, 583). Emphasis is placed on the unique fact that Jerusalem outside the wall was in a sense an assortment of neighborhoods, each with its special attributes

9 *Yesterday before Yesterday*, p. 329.

of size, organization and population, but also sharing common features such as the existence of a synagogue, a prevailing Orthodox character and the dynamics of their physical expansion. In Agnon's words:

> Jerusalem is recumbent like an eagle carrying her offspring on her wings. There are neighborhoods exclusively populated by Ashkenazim and exclusively populated by Sephardim and there are neighborhoods where both Ashkenazim and Sephardim reside. There are neighborhoods for Yemenites, Gruzians, Moroccans or Persians and there are those where a number of communities live together. But you will not find a neighborhood without a synagogue, and there are some neighborhoods where they have erected synagogues, Yeshivas for children and Yeshivas for adults [and the houses in the neighborhood] are in a state of growth; some add a room, some an upper story, some two rooms and some two stories, and there is no one to complain again that it is too cramped for me to reside in Jerusalem.
>
> (p. 200)

Meah Shearim

Certain neighborhoods which are important historically, symbolically and in terms of the plot are described in detail. Such is the case with the Meah Shearim neighborhood, the fifth to be established outside the wall. Agnon aptly describes it as a "city within a city"[10] which was built at a distance from both the main thoroughfare of Jerusalem and from the existing neighborhoods:

> Meah Shearim stood lonely and desolate at its beginning within Jerusalem's wilderness. Not a single house existed from Jaffa Gate to Meah Shearim, save for the seven houses of Nahalat Shiva [the third Jewish neighborhood built outside the walls] and the houses of the Russian Compound [the complex of institutions built by the Russians in 1860 near Jaffa Road]. Ten houses built in Meah Shearim, allotting each family one room and a foyer. Every night a candle was lit in these homes to ward off robbers and brigands and one member of the household would remain awake and study the Torah the whole night long, for the Torah afforded protection and safety. It did not take long for their companions to arrive and build houses of their own. Thus Meah Shearim filled up and even its environs were built up, until it appeared that it had been swallowed up by Jerusalem, but it kept to itself and did not blend into the adjoining neighborhoods and remains standing as a city within a city.
>
> (p. 202)

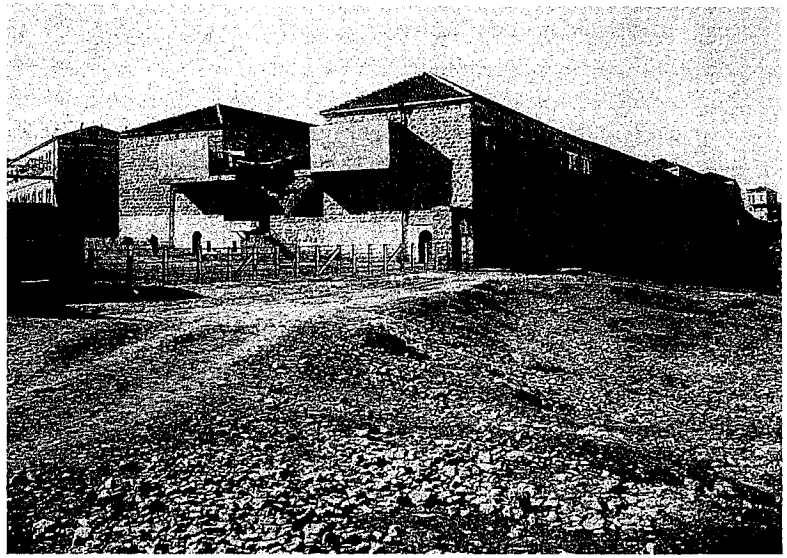
The author is not required to provide an immediate explanation why he dubbed the neighborhood "a city within a city". Extensive parts of the novel display how Meah Shearim constituted the very heart of the "Old Yishuv", and was sealed off by the way it conducted its Orthodox, even zealous, communal life. The life style of its inhabitants was sharply distinguished (and remains sharply distinguished even to this day) from the life-style of the other Jewish neighborhoods; thus it is "a city within a city".[11]

Other neighborhoods described at some length are Batei Ungaren and Zikhron Moshe. The Batei Ungaren neighborhood was built by Kollel Hungarin, the economic, cultural and political organ unifying Jewish immigrants from Hungary. (Other Jerusalemites similarly organized in Kollels in accordance with their place of

10 Ibid., p. 202. Meah Shearim was constructed in 1874 and was the fifth Jewish neighborhood to be built outside the wall

11 On the place of Meah Shearim in the novel see also Tochner (1978), pp. 67–71 (in Hebrew).

origin.) Shifra, Yizhak Kumer's future wife, lives in this neighborhood. This provides Agnon with the opportunity to give his readers an idea of the uniqueness of a Kollel neighborhood which unlike others contains no permanent residents but experiences a turnover every few years in order to permit the maximum number of Kollel members to enjoy its comfortable conditions.



Batei Ungaren

> In the western part of Jerusalem which adjoins Meah Shearim and Beth Yisrael stand fifteen large houses with three hundred apartments for the Kollel members who lived there for three years and sometimes longer periods at the discretion of the benefactor and those in charge of administering the Kollel. All the houses are similar and each apartment has two rooms and a small corner for the women to do their cooking. A large cobblestone courtyard meanders between adjoining rows where one finds the water cistern. Just as the houses were similar to each other so all their residents were stately personages who observed the Torah and the religious commandments.
>
> (p. 266)

Zikhron Moshe is symbolic and representative of the "New Yishuv" neighborhoods in Jerusalem. It was a modern neighborhood – the physical and cultural opposite of those comprising the "Old Yishuv". It was built at the beginning of the twentieth century when elements of the "New Yishuv" began proliferating in the city,[12] and it was precisely at this juncture that Agnon immigrated to Jerusalem. By that time the neighborhoods established in the 1860s and 1870s had "become obsolete" (p. 204). Zikhron Moshe, by comparison "excels all other neighborhoods. It was established according to a modern plan and incorporated sanitary laws. Every house stands by itself," in contrast to Meah Shearim where "every house clings to its neighbor" (p. 237). In Zikhron Moshe "an avenue courses through the middle and trees are planted alongside the road and are slated to provide shade during the summer months and roofing for the booths of the Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles] holidays" (p. 237), whereas in Meah Shearim

> which had no... gardens or orchards or anything else to provide a sense of commodiousness... the streets are barely wide enough to afford passage to a loaded camel and there is no additional intervening space... As befitting a quality neighborhood its population similarly bespoke quality... they were pleasant company in religious matters and towards their fellow men and did not persecute each other for their opinions... some are merchants and store-keepers, some are teachers and scribes, some are journalists and some secretaries to charitable institutions. And since their houses exceed their earnings in size, they tend to rent out a room or two. Students in the teachers seminary, modest Jewish youths, seekers of knowledge, Hebrew speaking, meek of spirit and ready to accept authority dwelled there.
>
> (pp. 202–203)

Some details are provided about other neighborhoods, probably selected precisely because of their intrinsic uniqueness. The Nissim Beck neighborhood near the Damascus Gate was composed of a number of Sephardic communities: Gruzians, Syrian Jews from Haleb and Iraqis (p. 301). Beit Yosef, small, isolated and the solitary Jewish neighborhood in south Jerusalem, most of which was in the hands of European religious institutions, receives mention: "and there were fourteen houses and a synagogue and because of our multiple transgressions they sold these to non-Jews" (p. 563). The Bukharan neighborhood gained renown because of the wealth of its inhabitants and possibly because it was increasingly

12 On the neighborhood see Ben-Arieh (1979), pp. 214–218 (in Hebrew).

penetrated by a modern population (p. 274). It was therefore one of the few neighborhoods where one could find seated together "couple upon couple of youths and maidens... who would relate to one another matters which even Adam did not confide to Eve in the Garden of Eden" (p. 279).

Zikhron Moshe

Agnon also draws the reader's attention to one of the interesting and unique phenomena connected to the establishment of Jewish neighborhoods outside the city walls: that people contributed funds to build houses in a neighborhood not for the purpose of living in them but in order to donate those houses to one of the Jewish public institutions. These houses furnished a source of income to these institutions once they were rented out. The name of the contributor and his work were immortalized on special plaques which were affixed to the face of the building. Thus "any person dedicating a house in Jerusalem affixes a memorial stone in order that he may be fittingly commemorated on its walls and he inscribes his name and his pious generosity for everlasting memory extending until the final generation" (pp. 272–273). To this very day such memorial plaques can be seen on houses in many of the original neighborhoods established outside the wall.

The central Jewish institutions erected outside the wall during the second half of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century also receive

attention in the novel. There are descriptions of the Central Synagogue "Yeshuat Yaaqov" in the Meah Shearim neighborhood (p. 560) and the mill-house built by Moshe Montefiore in Jerusalem. This project, for grinding grain into flour and intended to be wind-driven, is of vast historical importance because it constituted an innovative attempt to improve the lot of Jerusalem's inhabitants outside the wall.[13] Agnon also mentions the school of the "Kol Yisrael Haverim" (the "Alliance" Association of France), the girls' school established by the Ahim Association of London, the Bezalel Art School, the Central Library and the Culture House (pp. 290, 302, 326–329). Although important Jewish institutions within the city walls are also mentioned by Agnon (p. 331), it is strikingly evident that Agnon lays emphasis upon those institutions outside the walls.

The author does not ignore the role played by non-Jewish elements in the building of Jerusalem outside the walls, and mentions all the Christian communities present in Jerusalem: Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Gregorian Armenians, Catholic Armenians, Syrians, Maronites, Copts, Ethiopians, Franciscans, Presbyterians, Lutherans (p. 283). The survey of Christian activity is, however, limited and it seems that Agnon's intention is to shed light on the characteristics of the Christian exodus outside of the walls and the Christian role in building the new city in comparison to the Jewish role in these same processes:

> And what would the nations of the world proceed to do... they would take houses, courtyards and lands and would build houses and distribute to every member of their community, be he rich or poor, an apartment for nothing, and this was aside from the houses which were constructed on behalf of pilgrims which stand vacant all year round... The Armenians purchased an area in the south-west corner in addition to fields and villages outside the [old] city... and they re-invested rental fees from the apartments and stores which they let out to Jews and purchased lands and built houses and stores. The Greeks purchased the north-west corner, aside from the fields and villages outside the [old] city, and they re-invested the rental fees on apartments and stores which they let to people who did not belong to their community, and purchased lands and built houses and stores until they surrounded Jerusalem. The Russians purchased themselves that very same field and built houses for themselves, their priests, monks and their pilgrims who come every year from Russia in order to kiss the dust on the grave of their messiah.
>
> (p. 198)

13 Ibid., pp. 74–75.

Agnon also observes the rivalry between the Great Powers in Palestine which found expression in consular activity: "It is the manner of consuls in Palestine that when they witness the actions of their counterparts they are quick to emulate them because they are most excitable about their honor and hasten to display their might to Jerusalem" (p. 219). Let us note that this competition also found expression in the Christian building projects in Jerusalem.[14] We can also discover a little about the Moslem exodus from the walled city in Agnon's descriptions (p. 191).

The reader also receives an impression of a number of important sites outside the wall, such as Jerusalem's main thoroughfare, Jaffa Road, which bisects Jerusalem from west to east. Regarding this road – the way it operated, its urban centrality and its colorfulness – Agnon writes:

> On Jaffa Road there are banks, houses of commerce and people who have no spare moment for matters which do not offer pecuniary profit... At that time of day there was no trace of a Jewish presence. There was not a peddler or merchant to be seen... neither buyer nor seller... not a bagel hawker nor a raisin vendor... not a cookery chef nor a manufacturer of dainties... not a drink tapster, or a sorcerer... not a charity collector nor a nondescript collector, no one to utter incantations or unearth transgression, no kisser of mezuzot, no beggars, rabbinical fund raisers, or freelance solicitors of charity... in short there was not a Jew to be seen on the streets. There were only Ishmaelites [Moslems] and Edomites [Christians]... These were smoking water-pipes over a cup of black coffee... the ones harboring thoughts about Adam, the other about Eve... all wearing striped clothing, they were holding chains in their hands, counting the rings, as out of one ear they listened to wondrous tales.
>
> (pp. 301, 582)

Yesterday before Yesterday also deals with the city's economic and social geography, especially of its Jewish community. The economic base of the Jewish community was the "Halukah". The "Halukah" system arose from the fact that the traditional Jewish community in general thought its purpose in life to be the study of the Torah rather than engaging in any productive occupations (p. 43). The "Old Yishuv's" economic existence was made possible by virtue of the funds gathered by Jewish communities abroad, who viewed the Torah scholars in Jerusalem as their emissaries in the performance of righteous deeds and considered themselves

14 See for example Katzburg (1964), pp. 37–39 (in Hebrew).

morally bound to see to their needs, which were sent to Palestine and ear-marked for distribution amongst members of the traditional Jewish community. These "Halukah" funds were distributed by the heads of each and every Kollel:[15]

> They constituted the main source of sustenance for Jerusalem. At the time when the Temple existed, Jerusalem was sustained by the Temple. Now it is supported from the alms of Charity, for Jerusalem, unlike all the other cities which host trade and industry, contains Torah and prayer.
>
> (p. 329)

Agnon divulges hints as to the manner in which the "Halukah" was distributed (p. 218). It was thanks to the "Halukah" money that the building of Jewish neighborhoods became possible (p. 232).

The "Halukah" moneys sufficed with difficulty to support the traditional Jewish community and conditions deteriorated further with the intensification of Jewish immigration to Palestine. Additionally, some of the residents of Jerusalem, despite the fact that they belonged to the "Old Yishuv", supported productive labor on ideological grounds and sought an end to the total dependence on others. As a result, quite a few turned to agricultural work, trade and handicrafts (p. 522). However, the opportunities were very limited, given the economic condition of Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular:

> For Jerusalem has no factories and no one to pay off arrears and presently there is nothing to do there... Jerusalem is a city where people cannot earn a living on a day-to-day basis... A person can't do everything he wants to... this is doubly true in Jerusalem which was not blessed with handiwork.
>
> (pp. 224, 230)

Additionally, even as productive occupations were possible, they were still tied in one form or another to the "Halukah" money and the conclusion that emerged was

> that there is no form of occupation in Jerusalem that does not contain a trace of "Halukah". One must realize that save for the "Halukah" the enemies of Israel [Agnon means the very opposite, i.e., the Jewish people] would perish from hunger for there is no trade and industry in Jerusalem – and from what source could they earn a living?
>
> (p. 231)

15 On the "Halukah" see, for example, Eliav (1978), pp. 110–129 (in Hebrew).

Agnon also addresses the social consequences stemming from the reliance of the traditional Jewish community on the "Halukah" and the generally negative attitude in this community to occupations apart from Torah study. This was the antithesis of Jaffa whose entire Jewish community belonged to the "New Yishuv" and supported itself by its own labor. For example, Agnon shows Yizhak Kumer, a house-painter by trade, going in to a local Jaffa restaurant:

> Here one does not look askance at a painter because here a profession confers respect. Here well-to-do persons who engage in handiwork dignify the labor, whereas in Jerusalem, a city where bans and excommunications imposed on a vocational school are made public, how can handiwork be praised in it? Therefore all the artisans in Jerusalem are held in low esteem by the people and their own self-esteem is low. They do not experience a moment of fulfilment and one cannot detect a rhapsody in their work.
>
> (p. 398)

Yet, in other respects, Yizhak

> was pleasant company to his friends and his friends in turn were pleasant company to him, as is the case with all the artisans in Jerusalem who offered good fellowship because their spirits are low and their opinion is downcast. So too they are regarded as lowly and downcast in the eyes of the trustees who distribute "Halukah" to them according to the number of souls in their family; they do not provide them with any additions from the special funds that arrive from time to time as they are want to add to Torah scholars and other worthies.
>
> (p. 218)

Criticism was leveled at the heads of the Kollels because too large a portion of the "Halukah" moneys remained in their hands. Agnon takes a clear stand on this issue:

> As for those in charge against whom it is imputed that most of the money remains in their hands... we have not witnessed them during their lifetime promenading in carriages through gardens and orchards and they do not bequeath capital and wealth upon their death. The elders of Jerusalem still remember Rabbi Yoshi Rivlin; for twenty-five years he was a scribe and a trustee. He would tire himself out by day dealing with the poor, and at night he would exhaust himself in the study of the Torah. During his entire lifetime he did not experience any comfort but

> he would steel himself to bear the burdens and sufferings with good heart and meek spirit, and all the money that arrived in Jerusalem he would distribute to the needy... He did not eat meat nor drink wine even on the Sabbath and festivals, but contented himself with black bread. And when he departed this world he did not leave enough money for his widow or orphans to suffice for a single meal, but his legacy consisted of eleven neighborhoods which he had added on to Jerusalem.
>
> (p. 231)

In general, in contradistinction to the leadership of the "New Yishuv", which did not spare any criticism regarding the life-style of members of the traditional Jewish community because they did not engage in productive labor and relied on the funds of the "Halukah", Agnon lavishes praise upon the traditional Jewish community:

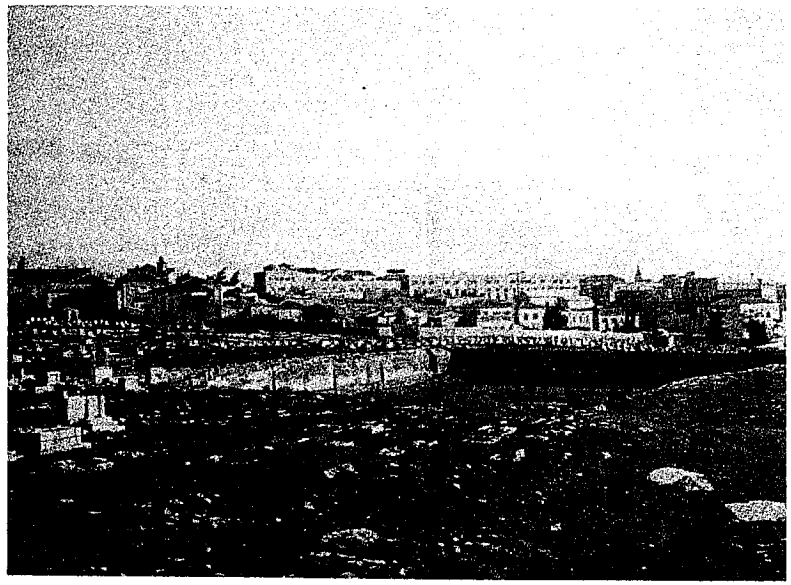
> Who was responsible for the building of the new neighborhoods of Jerusalem? The residents of Jerusalem! The recipients of "Halukah", who found themselves mired admist a motley group of avaricious and blood-thirsty enemies. In order to settle Jerusalem they did not spare themselves or their families. We who are their contemporaries can see their deficiencies and not their virtues. However, were it not for those people who expanded the boundaries of Israel, Jerusalem would have been constricted between the walls and all these places would have remained desolate.
>
> (p. 232)

These examples should suffice to demonstrate that *Yesterday before Yesterday* provides richly detailed descriptions of both the locales and the physical and human milieu. The spatial and social processes that the novel chronicles broadly resemble the historical processes that actually took place. This prompted Kurzweil, one of the foremost Agnon scholars, to contend that *Yesterday before Yesterday* constitutes "an invaluable historical source regarding the history of the Jewish community in Palestine."[16] This contention is unacceptable and the novel does not merit the status of an authentic source of information regarding Jerusalem's recent history. Agnon's descriptions leave the reader with the notion that the novel and historic reality are interchangeable; on occasion, Agnon's descriptions and authentic reality are in total accord and this only further strengthens the illusion. This false identity breaks down and the

16 Kurzweil (1963), p. 103 (in Hebrew).

differences emerge[17] when Agnon's descriptions are subjected to a rigorous comparison with the empirical reality captured in the research of historians and historical geographers. The following points demonstrate the differences between "empirical geography" and the novel's geography.

Agnon, in describing one of the reservoirs located outside Jerusalem's walls (Mamilla Pool), emphasizes that the reservoir ran dry during the summer and therefore "Baedeker [the tourist guide authored by Karl Baedeker in 1876] erred when he wrote that it was full of water, since he viewed it during the rainy season" (p. 285). However, a check of the guide-book reveals that Baedeker explicitly noted that the reservoir fills up with rain-water during the winter months but is empty during the summer and autumn.[18]



Mammila Pool

17 See Note 8.

18 Baedeker (1973) p. 125; Baedeker (1904), p. 61; Baedeker (1906), p. 61; Baedeker (1912), p. 68.

Agnon reports the intention of the founders of Meah Shearim to sow seeds and plant trees in the neighborhood. He adds that this plan was aborted because planting and sowing require noxious-smelling fertilizers, which the founders deemed incompatible with Jerusalem's unique holiness (pp. 202–203). These descriptions have no historical basis and the historical record shows precisely the opposite. Meah Shearim's by-laws (which served as a binding planning and legal document) made explicit provision for planting trees in the neighborhood and emphasized that the fears that Jerusalem's holiness would be impaired as a result were groundless.[19]

Agnon's data regarding the area of land purchased for building Meah Shearim are 20 per cent higher than the area that was actually purchased. In contrast, Agnon understates by 40 per cent the number of houses built in Meah Shearim. Similarly, Agnon supplies figures for housing in Beit Yosef that are 50 per cent below the number of houses actually built in the neighborhood.[20]

Agnon supplies a demographic sketch of Jerusalem's population: "Jerusalem is a city with a majority of old people arriving from all places in order to die here" (p. 248). This general impression of Jerusalem's traditional Jewish community is negated by historical research which shows that a substantial percentage of the "Old Yishuv's" new members were not aged.[21]

The novel surveys Jerusalem's Jewish community from the middle of the nineteenth century until the eve of World War I. Agnon treats this entire period, as well as the actions and policies of the various forces and personages who animated it, uniformly. However, historians divide the period into distinct sub-periods; accordingly, it is to be expected that the forces and actors functioned differently in each one of these sub-periods.

Finally, Agnon erroneously identifies two Jewish neighborhoods, although he was undoubtedly aware of their real names (pp. 312, 563).

On the basis of these discrepancies, one can convincingly argue that historical geography, which aims to reconstruct and analyze an urban setting, cannot utilize Agnon's descriptions as an *exact* source for research purposes. This in no way detracts from the novel's importance, since *Yesterday before Yesterday* still manages to convey a sense of Jerusalem's spirit and milieu

19 Jerusalem Municipal Archives, By-Laws for the Meah Shearim Neighborhood for the year 1889, p. 16.

20 Compare *Yesterday before Yesterday*, pp. 202–203, to Ben-Arieh (1979), pp. 155–157, 228 (in Hebrew).

21 Morgenstern (1985), pp. 92–93 (in Hebrew); Assouline (1987), pp. 9–20 (in Hebrew).

during that period. Agnon, himself a resident of Jerusalem during that time, employs his literary gifts to bring the city to life and imparts an in-depth appraisal to the events. He can accomplish this *tour de force* only via a humanistic approach. Kurzweil perhaps had this aspect in mind when he made his claim for *Yesterday before Yesterday* as an invaluable historic source. It is necessary from the standpoint of historical geography also to understand the spirit and culture of a given historical period. Agnon's ability to instill life into the period being researched directs the historical geographer to profound insights. In this manner *Yesterday before Yesterday* renders an invaluable service towards our understanding of Jerusalem in the period between the mid-nineteenth century until World War I.

Agnon's Perception of Jerusalem

Earlier, we stated the assumption that an author discloses his subjective value-orientation to a specific milieu by the way he chooses to portray it. The author is therefore "present" in the geographic milieu that he creates.[22] Agnon serves as a prime example of this tendency, and this is clearly the case where Jerusalem is concerned. Literary critics and researchers specializing in Agnon's work have already made this observation. Kurzweil, in attempting to sum up the centrality of Jerusalem as a theme in Agnon's stories, contends:

> Jerusalem in Agnon's stories is the entire purpose of his epic project, it is the reality of realities... which is identical to completeness. This completeness holds within it most antithetical phenomena: but it manages to weld them all together – the unreal, the ethereal, the legendary are part and parcel of Jerusalem's reality.[23]

Agnon treats Jerusalem as an entirety allowing the contradictions and the unreal to coincide with the real. On the other hand, Agnon does not idealize Jerusalem. From a Jewish standpoint, argues Kurzweil, Jerusalem is the center of the world:

> The city of Jerusalem, the holy city, is the point of gravity in the Agnonian epic. It is both the goal and the spirit. It is the meeting-place between the divine presence and the Jewish people. It is also the point of

22 See Note 5.

23 Kurzweil (1963), pp. 301–310.

> collision and struggle between the forces of belief and apostasy. The nobility, eternal nature and holiness of Jerusalem combine to subdue the opposing and hostile forces and induces them towards integration – to a new unity. It is this completeness of Jerusalem that constitutes this new unity which raises contradiction to the level of a reality of realities, to a sublime reality.[24]

Weiss adds that Agnon felt that his stories about Jerusalem justified his entire literary efforts. Jerusalem, for Agnon, constituted the very essence of the Jewish nation: "The entire Jewish people are dependent upon the Land of Israel and the Land of Israel is dependent on Jerusalem which is the very heart of the Land of Israel."[25]

All these perceptions of Jerusalem in Agnon – Jerusalem as an entirety which encompasses contradiction, Jerusalem as a reality of realities and Jerusalem as the essence of the Jewish nation – are strikingly corroborated in *Yesterday before Yesterday*. Agnon reiterates the encomia and merits of Jerusalem and the advantages that she bestows upon her inhabitants throughout the entire novel. Thus for example: "Jerusalem the holy city" (p. 215); "Jerusalem which even it its state of devastation provides air which invigorates the soul" (p. 199); "Its men are hearty and hospitable people" (p. 207); "It is a good deed to hear the praises of Jerusalem" (p. 208); "Every four cubits of Jerusalem endow a person with knowledge and understanding" (pp. 230–231); "Jerusalem is well versed in miracles. The eyes of the Lord rove through the city and He does not withdraw his protection from it even during its destruction" (p. 235); "Jerusalem, the city of G-d, most excellent of all other cities, the divine spirit never departs it" (p. 258); "They relate about Jerusalem that the divine spirit never departed from it and even the gentiles resident in the country do not contradict these facts even during Jerusalem's destruction. And the divine presence is always resident near the Western Wall, which though desolate, retains its holiness and remains impervious to all the actions and importuning of the nations" (p. 259); "The people of Jerusalem consider themselves superior since they have been privileged to live in Jerusalem" (p. 328).

However, alongside this impressive roster of advantages, we encounter the precise opposite when Agnon describes the day-to-day plight of Jerusalem and her Jewish inhabitants. Agnon informs us of the drought and hunger conditions prevalent in Jerusalem during this period (pp. 209–300, 312) and of the constant

24 Ibid.

25 H. Weiss, "Jerusalem's position in Agnon's works", Maariv (September 9, 1977), p. 38 (in Hebrew) .

economic privation: "don't say I am satiated. I don't believe you. I have yet to see a person who had eaten his fill in Jerusalem" (p. 213). Filth, squalor and overcrowding plagued various places (especially in the old city); diseases were rampant; and the problems of poor and wretched people cast into the street were all-pervasive (pp. 312, 344–345, 557–558). Agnon unflinchingly describes Meah Shearim and the paths leading to the Western Wall:

> And in front of every store either a lame or a blind person sits down upon the ground, a person missing limbs or afflicted with sores and set before him is a charity box. Flies and mosquitoes flutter between their eyes and the sun broils their wounds and glistens upon their charity boxes... On every step of the stone stairs leading to the Western Wall are strewn clusters of indigent lame and blind people, amputees of arm and ragged of leg as well as the assorted other maimed and impaired... bits of inhumanity whose Creator has abandoned them in the midst of his work and did not complete their creation; and when he put them aside, he set his hand against them and multiplied their afflictions or he completed their creation and they were smitten by his attribute of severity.
>
> (pp. 204, 349)

Agnon manages to sum up in a nutshell his sense of Jerusalem as a contradiction between her unreal and ethereal aspects and her oppressive reality, while clinging to his concept that Jerusalem constituted the essence of the Jewish people:

> Is there any other city in the world as holy or as dear and as cherished as Jerusalem? Yet why do these misfortunes beset her so? And is it not sufficient that she has been visited by these commonplace afflictions that we also have no water to drink?... Is there a nation as comely as Israel among the nations? Yet we are smitten and flogged.
>
> (p. 603)

Agnon's Jerusalem is a place for prayer and Torah study, a bastion of orthodoxy but also of zealotry (pp. 217, 222–223, 234, 266, 294, 304, 329, 471). Agnon's esteem for "Halukah Orthodoxy" did not deter him from criticizing those negative aspects of the "Halukah" that promoted idleness, divisiveness and fractiousness (p. 33). Jerusalem, since it possessed a modern community, could by herself supply an antithesis to her traditional community. Agnon strikingly contrasts the Beit Ha'Midrash (house of study) – the seat of the Torah scholars and the symbol of orthodoxy – to the Beit Ha'am (house of culture),

the meeting-place for the modern community and the symbol of the young generation's revolt and abandonment of orthodoxy (pp. 533–534):

> At Beit Ha'Am [house of culture], Yizhak met various people, amongst them a number of Jerusalem youths who came there surreptitiously unbeknownst to their parents because everyone who came to Beit Ha'Am [house of culture] was considered by them to be a cult-member or an apostate. When they were small they studied at the Eitz Haim [Tree of Life] Yeshiva. As they grew older they stretched forth their hands to the tree of knowledge. They sought their path in life not only through the study of Torah and Halukah, because their eyes had already been opened and they saw how many corruptions befall the Torah students and recipients of Halukah.
>
> (pp. 229–231, 326–327)

Agnon expresses his concept of Jerusalem – as a city that radiated completeness while encompassing contradictions – most engagingly by intermittently weaving comparisons between Jerusalem and Jaffa throughout the novel.[26] These comparisons, covering various aspects, show how differently Agnon perceives these two important Jewish cities. The chasm between Jerusalem and Jaffa runs deep and cannot apparently be bridged: "between Jaffa and Jerusalem lofty mountains extend upwards" (p. 221). Jaffa reflects the partial as opposed to the complete. It is totally unbeset by contradictions. It is not the holy city (p. 378). It symbolizes the "New Yishuv" with all the consequences that derive from it. In Jaffa one cannot find members of the "Old Yishuv" or "a poor person begging" (p. 204). One does not encounter "Halukah" but people who earn a living (p. 378). Jaffa likewise does not lack for drinking water (p. 488). Its inhabitants appear bronzed and sturdy rather than bent and wan (p. 328). Jaffa is even more egalitarian than Jerusalem ("for Jerusalem is quite unlike Jaffa. In Jaffa everyone sits together. In Jerusalem artisans sit apart and the intellectual professions apart") (p. 256). Outwardly, Agnon casts Jaffa's penchant for the partial in a generally positive light, but he drops reminders that Jaffa's incompleteness is a veritable quicksand. Agnon, as mirrored by Yizhak Kumer, cannot find his place in Jaffa and he prefers Jerusalem. Agnon describes one of Yizhak's strolls through the sands of Jaffa:

26 Historical and geographic research also addresses the socio-cultural differences between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv in the period that our chapter deals with. See Kaniel (1981a), pp. 185–212 (in Hebrew); Kellerman (1989), pp. 120–124 (in Hebrew).

> Yizhak would walk about the sands of Jaffa. Yizhak who was used to the terrain of Jerusalem would ask himself if he could ever make it on foot through the sand. He had hardly managed to extract one foot and the second foot was already submerged in the sand... Upon his return to Jerusalem, despite the melancholy feeling which permeated the city on account of the traditional days of mourning [due to the destruction of the Temple]... Yizhak suddenly felt the terra firma of Jerusalem where a man does not lose his footing, as in the sands of Jaffa.
>
> (pp. 377, 505)

Agnon writes at the start of the novel: "and if Jaffa was not sanctified with the holiness of the Land of Israel, it was nevertheless privileged to serve as a gateway to the Holy Land. For all those who ascend to Jerusalem, the Holy City, must first go up to Jaffa" (p. 98). He counterbalances this praise by reminding us elsewhere in the novel that Jaffa was also the point of embarkation for those leaving the land of Israel (p. 181). Sonia, the hero's first girlfriend, who lives in and symbolizes Jaffa, comes to Jerusalem for a brief period to study at Jerusalem's art-school. She fails to make a go of it and returns to Jaffa. On her return, she draws a compelling comparison between the two cities:

> The nights of Jerusalem are beautiful but the days are languid. The sun burns like a flame; the garbage exudes a stench and the city is suffused by sadness. The clods of hardened mud assault your legs and you skip over the rocks like those foul-smelling goats. At every turn you encounter either garbage and filth or a beard and side-curls, and when you approach one of them he flees from you as if he has seen a ghost. Whereas Jaffa... is chock-full of gardens, vineyards and orchards, it has the sea and coffee-houses and young people and every day one sees new faces... those arriving by ship from abroad and those coming in from the agricultural villages... there are those whom you wish to see and those who desire to see you... and there are those with whom you can promenade up lovers' hill and they don't talk to you... about all sorts of creatures who died many centuries ago. They talk to you about people who are alive... you can love them or you can hate them; they are intimate with you due to a propinquity of time and place. When the people of Jerusalem speak to you they don't call you by your name or address you directly but they speak in the third person... the lady, her excellency, her worthiness. When you address an individual by his name and speak to him in the second person, he gapes at you in bewilderment as if you have trespassed the bounds of good taste.
>
> (pp. 155–157)

It would appear that when the comparison between the two cities is drawn on the obvious and superficial level rather than on a profound, fundamental and eternal level, it is Jaffa that enjoys the upper hand. Yizhak himself concedes the point when he visits Jaffa to wind up his affair with Sonia. Jaffa's "superficial" allure beckons him to remain:

> Look what a person sees in Jerusalem during the summer months. Torrid dust covers the city's horizon... even the bird in the sky, even the dog in the street are covered with dust... a person takes but a single step and he sinks into pits and ditches of dust... the roads are filled with holes and cavities, crevices and sharp objects. Save for the carcasses of cats and dogs, insects and reptiles, Jerusalem would seem to be a desert. A noxious odor emanates from the carcasses and all sorts of flies and insects swarm through the carcasses and scatter dust about so you won't notice them until they set upon you suddenly and sting you... but here you find the sea of Jaffa which gladdens one's heart and the green orchards, a delight to the eyes, and the red pomegranates which distill charm and beauty and the palm trees swaying in the breeze amongst the orchards and vineyards which stretch on and on... and Jaffa enjoys this advantage as well over Jerusalem. Every place you go you encounter friends. Go into an eatery and no one will turn up his nose because you are a house-painter, because here an occupation confers honor on the person performing it.
>
> (pp. 396–397)

However, as soon as Yizhak completes his comparison, Agnon has him recall his friend and fellow house-painter from Jerusalem and the conversation that the two had at one of their first meetings. Yizhak's friend initiated him into Jerusalem's profundity, depth and hidden aspects and provided him with an inkling into Jerusalem's completeness. He congratulated Yizhak on leaving Jaffa and moving to Jerusalem:

> For there is not a single moment in Jerusalem which does not partake of the world to come. But it is not everyone who is privileged to see this, since Jerusalem only reveals herself to her lovers. Come, Yizhak, and let us embrace each other because we have been privileged to live in Jerusalem. At first when I would compare Jerusalem to other cities, I found many faults with her, but when my eyes were finally opened I saw her as she truly was. What can I tell you, my friend? Can language do her even partial justice?
>
> (pp. 214–215)

Agnon concurs with the assessment:

> a pact has been concluded with every city which leaves its imprint on its inhabitants and this is evermore the case with the City of G-d which excels all other cities and from whence the divine presence has never departed. And if the divine presence is cloaked and concealed, there remain those moments when even the humblest Jew who has been privileged to live in Jerusalem perceives it. Every person perceives it according to the capacity of his sensitivity, according to his merits and according to the light of mercy which illuminates his soul. He perceives it thanks to the ill fortunes that he has endured in the Land of Israel, which he accepted with a loving spirit and without demurral.
>
> (p. 258)

Agnon expresses Yizhak's deep empathy towards Jerusalem in comparison with his casual attitude towards Jaffa as follows:

> In the course of walking with his friends in the outskirts of Jerusalem, Yizhak felt how beautiful the city was. How could Jaffa and even Jaffa's sea compare? There was only one Jerusalem. He would not consent to live in another city even if he was given the entire earthly void in return.
>
> (p. 331)

A comparison that Agnon draws between the intelligentsia of the "New Yishuv" in both cities is similarly intended to show Jerusalem's sense of rootedness to good advantage in comparison with the superficiality of Jaffa:

> what is the difference between the wise people of Jaffa and the wise people of Jerusalem? In literary matters the wise of Jaffa have the edge because they are familiar with the literature and are acquainted with the authors. In matters of science, the wise men of Jerusalem have the upper hand because they are fluent in German and can derive things from the original source, as opposed to the wise men of Jaffa who study from Russian texts which are translations of the original German. Not every translator is proficient in the language from which he translates.
>
> (p. 328)

Conclusions

Agnon has demonstrated in his writings that the task of describing Jerusalem is an end in itself. Jerusalem is not merely a neutral setting for the novel; it functions independently as one of Agnon's major and most colorful heroes. In *Yesterday before Yesterday,* Jerusalem exerts a powerful influence upon the unfolding plot. Jerusalem is the heart and mind of the novel. One cannot subtract Jerusalem from *Yesterday before Yesterday* without dooming the entire novel to extinction.

We have attempted to show Agnon's deep interest in acquainting the reader with the socio-historical and geographic processes pertinent to the expansion of Jewish Jerusalem beyond the city walls during the latter half of the nineteenth century and until the outbreak of World War I. He considered this task as well to be an end in itself. Agnon's descriptions were based on historical sources of varying levels of reliability, but these descriptions cannot be utilized by historians and historical geographers as a scientific source. The descriptions can, however, be regarded as invaluable source-material for deriving a sense of Jerusalem's general atmosphere and acquainting oneself with the general processes that transpired within the city.

Agnon conceives Jerusalem as an entirety and he has therefore chosen to describe both the real and the unreal; the sublime and the ugly; the sacred and the secular; the old and the new, and so on. Agnon does not idealize the details of Jerusalem, which conveys that Jerusalem, in Kurzweil's words, is a "reality of realities". As such, Agnon's Jerusalem, enhanced by its depth and sense of rootedness, is an urban entity which enjoys preference over rival cities such as Jaffa. Nonetheless, since Agnon regards Jerusalem as the essence of the Jewish people, the Jerusalem of *Yesterday before Yesterday* in terms of its physical and human landscapes is first and foremost Jewish Jerusalem. Agnon does not give the Christian and Moslem areas the attention that they proportionally "deserve", given their share of Jerusalem's population and built-up areas.