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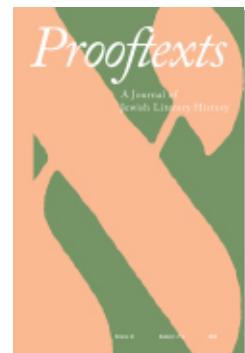
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Agnon's Post-1922 Revisions to “Ovadyah ba‘al mum”

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Agnon's 1920 story “Ovadyah ba‘al mum” was retypeset and republished three times in his lifetime. Agnon introduced numerous changes and edits with each successive publishing. This study examines these changes, focusing upon four categories of stylistic change that recur multiple times within the reprintings of this short story. It demonstrates that these revisions are not capricious or random but part of a consistent stylistic program that is reflected in the norms of his final corpus as a whole.

Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon's short story “Ovadyah ba‘al mum” was first published in 1920 in the journal *Miqlat*.¹ It was subsequently retypeset and republished three times in Agnon's lifetime: in his 1922 collection of his short stories entitled *‘Al kappot haman‘ul*, in his 1931 collected works, and again in his 1953 collected works.² Agnon introduced numerous changes and edits with each successive publishing. As Agnon's biographer Dan Laor has commented:

מעולם לא היה שלם עד הסוף עם מה שעשה—כולל הדברים שהופיעו בדפוס—ותמיד סבר שיש צורך לשכלי את הדברים עוד ועוד כדי שלפוחות יתקרבו אל השלמות הרצוייה.³

Agnon was never fully satisfied with what he had done—including items that had already appeared in print—and he always felt that there was a need to further polish his writings more and more, so that they would at least approach the desired perfection.

Nevertheless, there is a qualitative difference between the first round of changes and the subsequent ones. Between 1920 and 1922, Agnon performed a substantial rewrite of the story. Paragraphs were moved from one place to another,⁴ sentences

were omitted,⁵ and plot elements were dropped and added.⁶ The next two rounds of edits are completely different in character. Although we find many dozens of revisions both between the 1922 and 1931 editions and between the 1931 and 1953 editions, they are mostly word-level or phrase-level changes, and virtually all revisions are local within a sentence. Indeed, when we line up the 1922, 1931, and 1953 versions in synoptic form, the sentences almost all correspond with each other one-to-one; only in a handful of cases do we find a deletion or addition of a full sentence.⁷ With a few solitary exceptions, these latter two rounds of changes do not impact the plot in any substantial way; rather, the changes are almost all stylistic in nature.⁸ Essentially, by the time the story was published for the second time in 1922, just one year after its initial publication, Agnon had for all intents and purposes solidified the plot, yet he spent decades afterward polishing his style and tweaking his formulations.

In this article, I wish to examine the stylistic changes that Agnon introduces into “*Ovadyah ba’al mum*” after the stabilization of the plot in 1922. Specifically, I will focus upon four overarching categories into which many of his revisions fall. I shall demonstrate that these revisions are not capricious or random but part of a consistent stylistic program. Agnon’s revisions often act together as a group toward a single goal, and they are consistent with the stylistic norms that he adopts in his later writing.

CATEGORY 1: BIBLICAL MORPHOLOGY TO RABBINIC MORPHOLOGY

As a rule, Agnon’s stories are penned in a style that recalls the style of rabbinic texts: the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the midrashim, and the Hebrew sections of the talmudim. Thus, it is not surprising that in many instances we find Agnon tweaking his formulations to eliminate remaining vestiges of biblical Hebrew, replacing them with authentic rabbinic language. “*Ovadyah ba’al mum*” is no exception, and, as we will see below, quite a few of Agnon’s changes fit into this category.

One of the most distinctive elements of biblical style is the use of *waw*-consecutive forms, in which a past tense verb is formed by prefixing a *waw* to the front of a form that conveys future or iterative action. For instance, the use of **רָשַׁתְּ** to mean “she sang” (Judges 5:1), or **נִבְשָׁתְּ** for “she looked” (2 Kings 9:30). Rabbinic

texts, by contrast, almost never use such forms unless they are directly quoting biblical verses.

Agnon's 1922 edition of "‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum" contained a few instances of these biblical *waw*-consecutive forms. For instance, the following sentence contains two such forms: **וְתָהַס שִׁינָה סְרִיל אֶת רָאוּבָן וְתָאַמֵּר הַסְּסָס!**⁹ Yet, in the 1931 edition, we find that Agnon removed these two forms and rewrote the sentence with regular Hebrew past tense morphology, as would have been found in a rabbinic text: **הַשְׁתִּיקָה שִׁינָה סְרִיל אֶת רָאוּבָן וְאַמְרָה הַסָּס**.¹⁰

Agnon performed the same sort of revision in many other stories as well. For instance, in the 1919 edition of "Giv‘at hahol" Agnon wrote: **וַיֹּאמֶר אִם אַיִלָּן הוּא—סִימָן שָׁאַבְתָּה אֵלִי עַדִּין מַתְקִימָתְךָ הִיא** ("He said, if it is a tree—then it is a sign that her love for me is still intact").¹¹ In the 1931 edition, the *waw*-consecutive form is replaced with the regular past tense verb **אָמַר**.¹² Similarly, in the 1920 edition of *Bin ‘areinu uvizqeneinu* Agnon wrote ("He fell on my neck and cried: why should I live?"), while in the 1931 edition he revised to **נַפְלָה עַל צְוָאָרִי וַיַּבְךְ לְמַה לֵי חַיִם** ("He cried on my neck and said: why should I live?").¹³ And in the story *Hanidah* Agnon originally wrote **וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אָגִיד לְךָ דָּבָר** ("He said: I will tell you something") and subsequently revised to **וַיֹּאמֶר** in the 1931 edition.¹⁴

To be sure, Agnon did not fully eradicate all of the *waw*-consecutive forms from his early works, and some remain even in the final form of the stories in the 1953 edition.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in the new stories that Agnon wrote from 1931 onward, it is exceedingly rare to find any *waw*-consecutive forms at all, with the exception of deliberate quotations of biblical verses¹⁶ or for rhetorical effect in particular passages.¹⁷ Additionally, a small minority of Agnon's stories are specifically penned in a biblical style rather than a rabbinic style. In these stories, of course, *waw*-consecutive forms are the norm; indeed, these forms play a critical role in shaping the biblical character of those stories. These anomalous Bible-style stories are excluded from the present analysis.¹⁸

When it comes to past tense passive or stative verbs, rabbinic texts often use a morphological form called *nitpa‘el*.¹⁹ For instance, where regular past tense Hebrew morphology would have warranted the words **בּוֹשְׁלָו** ("they were cooked") or **יָרָאוּ** ("they were afraid"), rabbinic texts use **נִתְבְּשָׁלוּ** or **נִתְיָרָאּוּ**. The *nitpa‘el* form

is particularly marked as rabbinic because its use is almost entirely relegated to rabbinic texts. *Nitpa'el* forms do not appear in the Bible, and they have all but disappeared from modern Hebrew.

In a number of places, Agnon adjusted his formulations in “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” in order to include more of these rabbinically-marked *nitpa’el* forms. An example of this is the line **וְלֹא נִשְׁאָר מִן הַבַּיִת אֶלָּא גָּל שְׁלָאָבְנִים** (“And nothing was left of the house except a pile of stones”) from the 1922 edition.²⁰ In the 1931 edition, Agnon switched out the biblical form **נִשְׁאָר** with the rabbinically-marked *nitpa’el* form **נִשְׁתִּיר** (“was left”).²¹ Agnon’s overall preference for **נִשְׁאָר** over **נִשְׁתִּיר** is fairly consistent; by the time his stories reach their final form, we find fewer than fifty instances of **נִשְׁאָר** left within the corpus, in contrast with over four hundred occurrences of the word **נִשְׁתִּיר**.²² Additional cases in “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” in which Agnon reconjugated verbs as *nitpa’el* forms include **וּרְפַּפּוּ הַכְּתָלִים** (“the walls were weakened”), which is revised in the 1931 edition to **וּנְתַרְפַּפּוּ הַכְּתָלִים** (equivalent in meaning to previous),²³ and **וּרְאָה** (“She was amazed and cried out”), which is revised in the 1931 edition to **וּנְחַפְּלָה וְאָמָרָה** (“She was amazed and said”).²⁴ In one particularly interesting and subtle case, Agnon made a change that reflects a combination of both of the factors discussed above. Toward the end of “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum,” in the 1922 edition, the main protagonist states: **בָּרוּךְ הַשֵּׁם שָׁאַנְיִי וְאַתָּה קָמָנוּ וְנִתְעַוַּד** (“Blessed is the Lord, that you and I have risen up and taken heart”).²⁵ The words **קָמָנוּ** and **וְנִתְעַוַּד** are a quote from Psalm 20 (“we arose and took heart”).²⁶ The word **וְנִתְעַוַּד** is a *waw*-consecutive form, combining a *waw* clitic with the future **בְּנִתְעַוַּד**, “we will take heart,” to form the past tense “we took heart.” In the 1931 edition, Agnon appended just two letters onto the end of that biblical quote: **קָמָנוּ וְנִתְעַזְּדָנוּ**.²⁷ This change leverages the rabbinic *nitpa’el* form, in which **נִתְעַזְּדָנוּ** functions as a past tense form meaning “and we took heart,” and converts the *waw* from a *waw*-consecutive clitic to a conjunction meaning “and.”²⁸ It seems that in his original writing of “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” Agnon identified this quote from Psalm 20 as the perfect way to express Ovadiah’s optimism at the end of the story. However, in 1931, when perfecting the rabbinic style of the story, this quote posed a problem. Agnon aimed to convert biblical forms to their corresponding rabbinic forms, but he also did not wish to lose the clever integration of the verse from Psalms. The convenient overlap of the *nitpa’el* past tense conjugation with the future tense verb conjugation

provided the solution, allowing Agnon to both remove the biblical *waw*-consecutive form and insert an additional rabbinically-marked *nitpa‘el* form, all without losing the clear linguistic connection to the verse in Psalms.

Agnon's sensitivity to rabbinic morphology extends to his choice of grammatical stems (*binyanim*) for specific roots. For instance, when it comes to descriptions of dancing, which use the Hebrew root רַקֵּד, Agnon initially tended to use the *qal* stem. Thus, for instance, the 1922 version of “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” reads: **ולא עוד אלא שמחורת אחריהם ומתייחדת עמהם ורוקדת עמהם** (“Not only this, but she also flirts with them, and spends time alone with them, and dances with them”), **והיום את רוקדת כשפחה חרופה** (“and today you dance as a bondmaid”), and **היום הוא יושב כעולה תמיינה ומחר הוא רוקד עם כל הבתולות** (“today he sits as a pure offering, and tomorrow he dances with all of the girls”).²⁹ In all three instances, the *qal* stem is maintained in the 1931 edition, but in the 1953 edition Agnon shifted them to the *piel* stem: **ומركדת עמהם ומרקדת עמהם** (“and she danced with them”), **ומחר הוא מركד עם הבתולות כשפחה חרופה** (“She dances as a bondmaid”), and **ומחר הוא מרכד עם הילולות** (“and tomorrow he dances with the girls”).³⁰ Indeed, this shift serves to bring the text closer to rabbinic norms. In the Bible, both stems are attested: the root appears three times in the *qal* and five times in the *pi‘el*. In rabbinic texts, however, the *piel* stem is unquestionably dominant. Across the Mishnah, Tosefta, midrashim, and talmudim we find over sixty attestations of the *pi‘el* stem, compared to only a handful of instances of the *qal* stem.

This is not the only story in which Agnon introduced this change; we find this shift from *qal* to *pi‘el* regarding the root רַקֵּד in many of his other works as well. We can take *Sippur pashut* as an example. In the original 1935 edition, Agnon wrote **וזמרים ושרים ורוקדים ומחולצחים** (“and they sing and sing and dance and play”), which he revised in the 1953 edition to **וזמרים ושרים ומרקדים ומתולצחים** (equivalent in meaning to previous).³¹ Similarly, in *Oreah natah lalun*, the original 1938 edition reads **והיו כו רוקד בעיניו ובקמטיו פניו** (“and his smile dances in his eyes and in the wrinkles of his face”), but in the 1953 edition, **רוקד** is replaced with **מרקד**.³² And in *Hakhnasat kallah*, in the phrase **ראו קדרה אחת רוקדת** (“They saw a pot dancing”) in the 1931 edition, the word **רוקדת** is revised to **מרקדת** in the 1953 edition.³³

Agnon's consistent shift from *qal* to *pi‘el* regarding this root aligns with the rest of the changes examined in this section, purifying the rabbinic style of his text.

CATEGORY 2: POLISHING HIS RABBINIC IDIOM

In other cases, Agnon had already selected a postbiblical form for his 1922 edition, but he revised the text in order to ensure that his specific usage of the rabbinic form is consonant with normative rabbinic style. Our first example is the word **בודאי**. The use of **בודאי** as an adverb is prevalent in modern Hebrew, and that is how Agnon used it in the 1922 edition of “Ovadyah ba‘al mum”: (“**בודאי** לראות את בגדי נתקונה” (“She definitely intended to look at his clothes”).³⁴ However, in rabbinic sources, the form **בודאי** means “regarding the certain material,” wherein **בודאי** is a nominal form referring to produce whose status is certain; see, for instance, m. Demai (3:3): **ר' יוסה מתר בודאי**: (“Rabbi Yose permits regarding certainly untithed produce, as long as he informs him”) and t. Demai 1:24: **הלוקה יין ליתן לחור המורים . . . חייב בדמי, ואין צריך לומר בודאי** (“one who buys wine to put into brine . . . he is obligated [to tithe] if its status is questionable, and obviously if its status is certain [that it is untithed”]).³⁵

In contrast, the adverbial usage in rabbinic texts is without the *bet* preposition, as in **ודאי** (“now the king is definitely coming”) in b. Berakhot 58a or **ואם יהודה וודאי ירא שמים זה** (“And Yehuda said, ‘this one is certainly God-fearing’”) in Genesis Rabbah 93:13–14.³⁶ Accordingly, in the 1931 edition of “Ovadyah ba‘al mum,” Agnon replaced the form **בודאי** with **ודאי**.³⁷ Indeed, over the years, Agnon adopted a completely consistent approach to this word. In their final form, his stories include over six hundred instances of adverbial **ודאי**, compared to only a few dozen instances of adverbial **בודאי**. The one exception to this trend is in cases where a *waw* conjunction is prepended to the word—that is, where Agnon wished to write “and definitely.” In such cases, writing **וודאי** would be ambiguous because, in practice, a consonantal *waw* is often doubled in nonvocalized Hebrew writing. In such cases, Agnon tended to leave in the *bet* prefix; thus, for instance, **הלווא, בני עיריהם ובודאי ישמה את לבבי** (“for they are people of my town [that the scribe has offered to talk about], and he will definitely bring joy to my heart [with his story”]) **ישב וכותב, מנהג פשטוט בירושלים ובודאי בכל פלשתינה שהיהודים כותבים על עורם של כלבים** and **(“He sat and wrote: it is a widespread custom in Jerusalem, and definitely throughout Palestine, that the Jews write on the skin of dogs”**).³⁸

A second example of this category is the interrogative term **כלום**. In the 1922 version of “Ovadyah ba‘al mum,” Agnon used this term in the line **כלום מפני קבצנים**

ובְּמִפְנֵי קַבְצָנִים אֲלֹו לְהַתְבִּישׁ אֲנִי צָרִיךְ ("due to these beggars, must I be embarrassed?").³⁹ But then, in the 1953 version, he replaced it with an alternate interrogative: **כְּלָוָם** certainly bears a rabbinic character, and it is often used in rabbinic sources to initiate a question, as in **כְּלָוָם מֵעַמִּידָן מֶלֶךְ אֲלֹא מֵשִׁׁוּדָע טְכַסְּטִי מֶלֶכְתִּי** ("do we appoint a king, except for those who know the tactics of royalty?," b. Shabbat 31a) or **כְּלָוָם רָאוִי אָנִי לְהִיוֹת כָּהּ גָּדוֹלָה?** ("am I worthy of being a high priest?," b. Shabbat 31a).⁴⁰ However, a survey of rabbinic sources indicates that **כְּלָוָם** is not a direct substitute for other interrogative terms such as **מִפְנֵי** or **וְכִי**; rather, it is used in specific morphosyntactic contexts, generally before a verb or adjective. In contrast, before causal conjunctions such as **מִפְנֵי**, we never find the use of **כְּלָוָם** in rabbinic sources.⁴¹ Thus, this 1953 tweak of the text brings Agnon's text more in line with the particular way interrogative terminology is used in rabbinic sources.

Agnon was quite consistent about this point. Throughout his stories, he virtually never used the phrase **כְּלָוָם מִפְנֵי**; rather, when he wished to ask a rhetorical question with a causal conjunction, he consistently preceded it with the word **וְכִי**, as he did in his revised 1953 formulation here. Examples before **מִפְנֵי** include **וְכִי מִפְנֵי שֶׁ** (Because he talks the language of *Ashkenaz*, he deserves to die?) and **וְכִי מִפְנֵי שֶׁ** (Because she distanced herself from him, she became exalted?).⁴² So, too, with other causal conjunctions, such as **וְכִי כִּי** (In order to see plain Jews, I bothered to bring myself to this village?) and **וְכִי בְּשִׁבְיל** (For this alone you are rushing?).⁴³ Conversely, Agnon almost always chose the term **כְּלָוָם** when the rhetorical question begins with a past tense verb: **כְּלָוָם שָׁאַלְתָּ בְּרוֹפָאִים?** (Did you ask the doctors?), **כְּלָוָם עָלָתָה עַל דַּעַתְךָ שֶׁ** (Did it occur to you that a person like *Herbst* could be drawn to a woman?), and **כְּלָוָם רָאִיתָ** (Have you ever in your life seen such amorphous steps such as these?).⁴⁴ Thus, Agnon's choice of interrogatives was quite deliberate and consistent, and his revision here in the 1953 version of "‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum" serves to align the text in tune with this consistent program.

Our third example regards the use of the temporal prefix **כִּש-**. In the 1922 version of "‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum," Agnon made use of this prefix in the line: **כִּשְׁפְּשַׁטוּ** ("when they stripped him of his clothes").⁴⁵ However, in 1931, he

adjusted the phrase to read: **כיוון שפשטו** אותו את בגדיו (essentially the same meaning as the previous, although it may be literally translated: “once they had stripped him of his clothes”).⁴⁷ The use of **כיוון ש** as a temporal marker is a marked rabbinic usage; in contrast, it functions as a causal conjunction in modern Hebrew.⁴⁸ Examples of its use as a temporal marker in rabbinic texts include . . . הריני נזיר כמנין ימות השנה מעשה היה **כיוון שהשלים** מה ([he said]: ‘I am a *nazir* for the number of the days of the year’ . . . this incident happened: once he completed [his *nazir* periods], he died,” m. *Nazir* 1:7) and **כיוון ששמה ששה שמות** אחד מהן משיב שאלות שלום (“if he was writing five or six names [of God]: once he finishes one of them, he is permitted to respond to a greeting,” t. *Berakhot* 3:22).⁴⁹ The temporal prefix **כש** does appear in rabbinic texts as well, but it does not carry a specifically marked quality of rabbinic style because it is used so commonly in modern Hebrew. Thus, we find Agnon shifting instances of **כש** to **כיוון ש** in his writing in order to boost the rabbinic feel of the text.

Agnon made this adjustment in a number of other stories in the same 1922 volume of *‘Al kappot haman’ul*. For instance, in the short story “Mesubbin,” the 1922 text reads **אבל שנעל את הדלתות** ונסתלקה שמחתו (“but when he locked the doors, his happiness disappeared”).⁵⁰ In the 1931 edition, where the story is incorporated into the novel *Hakhnasat kallah*, this is changed to: **כיוון שנעל את הדלתות** (“once he locked the doors”).⁵¹ Similarly, in the short story “Torah ugedullah,” the 1922 text reads **ונשארה לו השעה** (“and when the hour became too long for him”).⁵² This story, too, is incorporated into *Hakhnasat kallah* in 1931, where the text is changed to read **כיוון שארכה לו השעה** (“once the hour became too long for him”).⁵³ A further instance is found in the story *Bilvav yamim*. In the 1934 edition, Agnon wrote **כשעמדו להתפלל וראו שהם פחות מעשרה** (“when they stood to pray they saw that they were fewer than ten”), whereas he revised it for the 1953 edition to **כיוון שעמדו להתפלל** (“once they stood to pray”).⁵⁴

In other cases, the original formulation of a sentence is such that the temporal sequence of two successive clauses is only implied, without any explicit temporal marker, and Agnon emended the text and added **כיוון ש** in a subsequent edition. This happens in “Ovadyah ba‘al mum” regarding the line **מיד הכל ממירם** (“The nurse turned her face away from them; immediately they all started switching”). This line is found in the 1922 edition and maintained as is in

כיוון שהפכה האחות פניה מלהם ("once the nurse turned her face away from them").⁵⁶ Similarly, in the 1920 edition of *Bin 'areinu uvizqeneinu*, Agnon wrote ("The morning came. We went out to inhale some wind"), implying temporal sequence via juxtaposed sentences, but in the 1931 edition he revised the text to read כיוון שהAIR הבוקר או. יצאנו לשאוף רוח ("Once the morning came, we went out to inhale some wind").⁵⁷

Thus, we find a recurring tendency to increase the presence of the rabbinically-marked temporal marker in Agnon's writing. At the same time, it should be noted that Agnon did not shy away from using the temporal prefix **כש**. Just as the rabbinic corpus features plenty of instances of **כש**, so does Agnon's writing, including in this very story of "Ovadyah ba'al mum" in its final 1953 form.⁵⁸ Indeed, it seems that Agnon aimed to avoid flooding the text with too many occurrences of the heavier כיוון **ש** phrase. Although the use of **כיוון ש** is quite prominent throughout all of Agnon's stories, we find that Agnon carefully interspersed it with occurrences of **כש**; on average, we find one occurrence of **כיוון ש** for every three to four cases of the prefix **כש**. Furthermore, we do find cases where Agnon reverted **כש** to **כיוון ש** when there are other instances of **כיוון ש** in fairly close proximity. Thus, for instance, in the 1922 edition of our story, we read כיוון שראו הבחורים שבעטה בו שינה סריל ("Once the lads saw that Shayne Serel kicked him"), whereas the 1931 edition has כשראו הבחורים ("when the lads saw").⁵⁹ This was likely influenced by the appearance of another **כיוון ש** clause in the very next sentence.⁶⁰ Similarly, in two places in *Bin'areinu uvizkeneinu*, Agnon reversed a **כיוון ש** phrase to a **כש** prefix; in both cases, the phrase is flanked by other **כיוון ש** occurrences on the pages both beforehand and afterward.⁶¹

Our fourth and final example of an emendation that reflects Agnon's polishing of his rabbinic idiom involves optional repetition of syntactic elements. In the 1922 version of "Ovadyah ba'al mum," Agnon wrote לא מין שנתנה לוזה נתנה לוזה. אלא לוזה חלב ולזה תה; לוזה קפה ולזה קקאו ("Not the same food that she gave this one did she give the other one. Rather, to this one milk and to this one tea; to this one coffee and to this one cocoa").⁶² In the 1931 version, the line is emended with *four* additional appearances of the word **נתנה**, one for each item: לא לוזה **נתנה** חלב ולזה **נתנה** תה. לוזה **נתנה** קפה ולזה **נתנה** קקאו ("Rather, to this one she gave milk and to this one she gave tea. To this one she gave coffee and to this one she gave cocoa").⁶³ From a syntactic standpoint, both formulations are perfectly valid in Hebrew. In the latter formulation, the verb

is explicit in each of the four parallel clauses. However, because the verb is identical in all clauses, and because it is already introduced prior to those clauses (with the words *לֹא מִין שָׁנְתָה לֹהֶה נָתָה לֹהֶה*, “Not the same food that she gave this one did she give the other one”), the fourfold repetition of the verb is completely unnecessary; dropping the repetitions provides a more concise formulation, which effectively conveys the same content. In modern Hebrew, the concise formulation would generally be adopted. In contrast, when encountering analogous structures in rabbinic Hebrew, we often find explicit repetitions of the verb. Consider three examples:

- *זה בכה על צוארו וזה בכה על שיניו* (“This one cried on his neck and this one cried over his teeth,” *Genesis Rabbah* 78:4).⁶⁴ The second recurrence of the verb could easily have been omitted, and, indeed, this is how it is restated in the later medieval work *Legah tov* (*Genesis* 33:4): *זה בכה על צוארו וזה על שיניו* (meaning identical to previous).⁶⁵
- *זה הוצל על ידי אמה וזה הוצל על ידי עבד* (“This one was saved by a maid-servant, and this one was saved by a servant,” *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* 6:13).⁶⁶ The repetition of the verb is unnecessary. Here, too, we find a postrabbinic quote of the line without the repetition, in the *Yalqut shim ‘oni*, section 999: *זה ניצל על ידי אמה וזה על ידי עבד* (“This one was saved by a maid-servant and this one by a servant”).
- *והיו ישראל עוסקין במלאתון זה עוסק בשדהו וזה עוסק בכרמו וזה עוסק בזיתיו וזה עסוק בפזמו* (“and the people of Israel were working on their tasks; this one working on his field and this one working on his vineyard and this one working on his olives and this one working on his beam,” *Ruth Rabbah*, *Petihta* 2).⁶⁷ The repetition of the verb “working” is unnecessary, and in fact one eighteenth-century work eliminates the verb when quoting the first half of the line: *עתה ישראל מתעסקים זה בשדהו וזה בכרמו* (“now the people of Israel are working, this one on his field, and this one on his vineyard”).⁶⁸

Thus, Agnon’s addition of the four explicit yet unnecessary repetitions of the verb *נתנה* (“she gave”) in his later edition of “*Ovadyah ba’al mum*” adds an element of marked rabbinic style.

Agnon used this marked rabbinic style in other places as well. These include פָעִים הִיא מְצִיאָה בְּפִסְלִי, פָעִים הִיא מְצִיאָה בְּבָלוֹמָה, פָעִים הִיא מְצִיאָה בְּגִיטָלִי ("Sometimes she looks at Pesili, sometimes she looks at Blumah, sometimes she looks at Gitali") in *Hakhnasat kallah*, מהם נעשו בדורות שלאחריהם, מהם נעשו בדור, שלפנינו, מהם נעשו סמוך לזמןנו ("Some of them were produced in the early generations, some of them were produced in the generations afterward, some of them were produced in the prior generation, some of them were produced close to our time") in *Ir umelo‘ah*, ואלו באים מזרחה מערבית, ואלו באים ממערב, ואלו באים מצפון, ואלו באים מדרום ("These come from the Southwest, and these come from the West side of the city, these come from the North, and these come from the East") in *Temol shilshom*.⁶⁹ In a similar vein, we find Agnon introducing successive unnecessary repetitions of the word ("and here is"). For instance, the first page of Agnon's story *Ha‘adonit veverokhel* contains the following line: שָׁמָא אֲפָל עַל פִּי כֹּן? הָרִי לֹלָאות וְהָרִי טְבֻעוֹת וְהָרִי מְטֻפָּחוֹת וְהָרִי סְדִינִים ("Perhaps even so? Here are chains and here are rings and here are handkerchiefs and here are sheets").⁷⁰ The fourfold repetition of the word *הָרִי* is not necessary, and all but the first could have been dropped without changing the meaning of the sentence. Indeed, in Agnon's manuscript draft of this story, he originally wrote in pen: הָרִי לֹלָאות וְטְבֻעוֹת וְמְטֻפָּחוֹת וְסְדִינִים ("Here are chains and rings and handkerchiefs and sheets").⁷¹ Only afterward, in pencil, did Agnon add interlinear emendations indicating the insertion of the three extra instances of *הָרִי*.

Here, too, the longer formulation containing the unnecessary repetitions is one that recalls rabbinic formulations. Examples include הָרִי שְׁלֹחָן וְהָרִי בָשָׂר וְהָרִי סְכִין ("Here is a table, and here is meat, and here is a knife," b. *Qiddushin* 46a) and אָמֵן לְהָמָר הָרִי הַכְּסָף וְהָרִי דָרְוָן וְהָרִי אֲחִיכָם ("He said to them: here is the money and here is a gift and here are your brethren," *Genesis Rabbah* 91:12).⁷²

This marked rabbinic stylistic element—successive repetitions of the word ("and here is")—continues to appear in many other Agnon stories as well, such as הָרִי עַט וְהָרִי דַי וְהָרִי נִיר ("Here is a pen and here is ink and here is paper") in *Bahanuto shel Lublin*, רְאוּתָה כָל מַה שְׁעִינִיךְ ("Here is rice and here are noodles and here are kernels and here is everything your eyes see") in *Sippur pashut*, הָרִי לַחַם וְהָרִי זִיתִים וְהָרִי עֲגַבְנִוָּתִים ("Here is bread and here are olives and here are tomatoes") in *Temol shilshom*, and מְגַבֵּת מִים וְהָרִי סְבָון וְהָרִי מִגְבָּת ("Here is water and here is soap and here is a towel") in *Shirah*.⁷³

CATEGORY 3: MINIMIZING RABBINIC QUOTATIONS

The previous two categories described changes that Agnon introduced in order to bring his writing closer to the rabbinic layer of Hebrew. Against that backdrop, this third category might seem surprising because when it comes to direct quotations of rabbinic sources, we find that Agnon pulls back over the years. For instance, toward the end of “Ovadyah ba‘al mum,” when Ovadiah finally leaves the hospital, he encounters his teacher’s apprentice, who asks him: *אתה הוא* (“are you indeed he?”).⁷⁴ In the 1922 edition, Ovadiah responds: *אני ולא אחר, אני ולא מלאך, אני ולא שרף, אלא אני בעצמי ובכבודי* (“I and no other, I and not an angel, I and not a Saraf, rather I myself in all my glory”).⁷⁵ The bulk of this line is a direct quote from the Passover Haggadah. In the 1931 edition, however, Agnon removes the words *אני ולא מלאך אני* and *ולא שרף*, which forged the clear connection to the Haggadah. Instead, in this edition, Ovadiah simply says (“I and no other, I myself in all my glory”),⁷⁶ cutting down the phrase such that the connection to the Haggadah is severely minimized, if not lost completely.

In the continuation of that section, in the 1922 version, the apprentice continues to prod him and inquires: *ואף אתה פתח פיך ואמור לי מאיין באת* (“and you, too, open your mouth, and tell me whence you have come”).⁷⁷ This phrase is a direct quote from the story of the persecution of Ḥanina ben Teradyon in b. Avodah Zarah 18a.⁷⁸ After Ḥanina is set aflame, his students plead with him to open his mouth so that he may die quickly and not endure so much pain. They state: *אף אתה פתח פיך ותכנס בך האש* (“and you too, open your mouth, so that the fire will enter you”). Agnon appropriates the precise four-word opening formula from that episode for the apprentice’s inquiry of Ovadiah. Yet, in the 1931 edition, the quote is eliminated completely, and we find a more natural phrasing instead: *מאיין באת היכין הייתה כל אותן הזמנ* (“whence have you come and where have you been all that time”).⁷⁹

A third example is from the scene in which Ovadiah visits his fiancée in the dance hall. Describing the youth dancing with one another, in the 1922 edition, Agnon writes: *גוף לגוף יסללו בקול* (“one body next to another, they trill loudly”).⁸⁰ This phrase is lifted from a New Year *piyyut* by Eleazar Haqallir (sixth–seventh centuries): *שרפים סובבים יסללו בקול* (“the swirling Serafim loudly trill”).⁸¹ Yet, in the 1931 edition, Agnon removes it completely, replacing it with a more direct and neutral description: *והם מרקדים זוגות זוגות* (“and they dance pair by pair”).⁸²

How does Agnon's minimizing of rabbinic quotes align with his clear attempt to be more rabbinic in his writing? He strove to formulate his writing in the style of the rabbinic sources, yet he also shied away from direct appropriation of extended rabbinic lines. It appears that he wished to avoid producing stories that would read as a series of rabbinic quotes strung together. Regarding this matter, Agnon stands in contrast with S. J. Abramowitch (best known as "Mendele Moykher Sforim") and Haskalah writers who produced compositions that could be seen, in part, as pastiches of quoted phrases from canonical sources. Instead, Agnon wishes to pen a completely new text, unmistakably rabbinic in its style but very much his own.⁸³

CATEGORY 4: POSTRABBINIC PRECEDENTS

To be sure, not every stylistic tendency in Agnon's oeuvre aligns with the pure rabbinic style as reflected in the Mishnah, Talmud, and midrashim. In some cases, we find Agnon instead adopting stylistic positions that veer from dominant rabbinic norms and find precedent only in later Judaic literature. For instance, the 1922 edition of "‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum" reads **ולא שחרית בלבד אלא כל פעם שהיה בבית** ("and not only the morning, but rather every time he was in the house"), but the 1931 edition of the story has **ולא שחרית בלבד אלא כל אימת שהיה בבית** (meaning same as previous).⁸⁴ The temporal phrase **כל אימת** ("every time that") is heavily attested in the Babylonian Talmud; for instance: אמר מר זוטרא: חווינא ליה לרב פפי, **כל אימת דמנה תפליין** ("Says Mar Zutra: I saw Rav Pappi, that whenever he put on tefillin, he would say the benediction," b. Sukkah 46a) and **כיוון דעתו רחמי היא כל אימת דבש מצליז ואזיל** ("since prayer is a request for mercy, whenever one wants, one may pray and continue," b. Berakhot 26a).⁸⁵ However, note that in these examples, and throughout the rabbinic corpus, the phrase **כל אימת** is followed by the Aramaic relativizer *dalet*. In contrast, when Agnon uses the phrase, he instead uses the Hebrew relativizer *shin*. Such usage is virtually nonexistent within the corpus of Mishnah, Talmud, and midrashim.⁸⁶ Rather, the rabbinic writers viewed the entire sequence **כל אימת** as a fixed Aramaic phrase.

The phrase **כל אימת** is attested sparsely in medieval Jewish literature and starts to gain traction only afterward. The *Levush* (R. Mordecai Jaffe, sixteenth–seventeenth centuries), and the *Turei Zahav* (R. David ben Samuel Halevi,

sixteenth–seventeenth centuries) appear to be the two earliest writers to make frequent use of the phrase; it occurs multiple times in each of their halakhic commentaries; for instance: **ושבואה זו צריך לישבע כל אימת שירצה החותם** (“and he must take this oath whenever the plaintiff desires,” Levush, *Hoshen mishpat* 93:1) and **אלא כל אימת ש שירצו י כתבו** (“rather, anytime they wish, they should write [the divorce contract],” *Turei Zahav, Even ha’ezer* 121:4). Why does Agnon veer from the established rabbinic norm of **כל אימת** **כ**, instead adopting the much later and less-attested usage of **כל אימת** **ש**?

Perhaps we can explain as follows. As a rule, Agnon shied away from Aramaic formulations. This is especially true with regard to the Aramaic clitic *dalet*, which functions in Aramaic as both a preposition and as a relativizer. Although Agnon will certainly use standard rabbinic phrases that include the *dalet*, such as **עד דלא ידע** (“until he no longer knows,” where it functions as relativizer) or **אגרא דכלה** (“the reward for going to the *kallah* sessions,” where it functions as preposition), we almost never find him using it productively in new constructions.⁸⁷ In contrast, it is likely that Agnon viewed the word **אימת** as a valid Hebrew word, akin to the frequent Hebrew word **אימתי**. To be sure, the word **אימת** generally appears in strictly Aramaic contexts, and the current scholarly consensus is that, at their core, both **אימת** and **אימתי** are Akkadian loanwords that were absorbed into ancient Aramaic dialects.⁸⁸ This was not always the reigning view, however. In the publication of the first fascicles of his dictionary at the very beginning of the twentieth century, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda listed both **אימת** and **אימתי** as part of the Hebrew lexicon. Regarding **אימתי**, he suggested that it may be a natural conflation of two Hebrew interrogative terms, **א** and **מי**.⁸⁹ Regarding **אימת**, Ben-Yehuda wrote that its Hebrew usage is simply an abbreviation of **אימתי**.⁹⁰ Indeed, **אימתי** is well attested in rabbinic Hebrew, and **אימת** is attested in a limited number of places in rabbinic Hebrew as well.⁹¹

We may therefore speculate that Agnon’s reasoning in preferring **כל אימת** over **כל פעם** ran as follows. Although **כל אימת** is particularly prevalent in Aramaic texts, it can also plausibly be construed as a Hebrew word, according to Ben-Yehuda’s etymological suggestion. Given this possibility, the phrase **כל אימת** is preferable due to its marked rabbinic style, as compared to the commonly used **כל פעם**. At the same time, when it came to the subsequent relativizer, Agnon preferred the precedent found in the later halakhic literature, in which the unquestionably

כל אימת *dalet* is replaced with the Hebrew *shin*. Agnon's preference for *sh* over *sh* is consistent through his oeuvre. In the final form of his stories, we find over one hundred cases of *כל פעם ש*, compared with under fifteen cases of *כל פעם ש*.⁹²

Although Agnon was quite consistent in preferring *כל אימת ש* in his writing to *כל פעם ש*, in his personal letters he tended towards the more colloquial *כל פעם ש*. We can see this, for instance, in two lines taken from letters he penned to his wife, Esther: “*תֵה יִשׁ כָל פָעֵם שָׁאַנִי רֹצֶה, בְשַׁבָּת הַאֲכֵל עַד יוֹתֵר טָוב*” (“There is tea whenever I wish, and on Shabbat the food is even better”) and “*שֶׁלְיַי גַם כָּן גְּבוּרִים כָּאֵלָה. הַמְרַבְנִים וְהַחֲכִמִים, שָׁאַנִי בְחָבְרָתֶם, כָל פָעֵם שָׁאַנִי הַוְלֵךְ מִן הַעֲבוֹדָה*” (“I also have such mighty people. They are the rabbis and learning people, whose company I keep, whenever I walk home from work”).⁹³

Our second example of this category involves pairs of successive negatively phrased questions. In the 1922 edition of “*Ovadyah ba'al mum*,” Ovadiah wonders why his fiancée ignores him: “*וְכִי לֹא רָחֵץ בַּעֲרֵב שְׁבָת וְלֹא לְבַשׁ כְּתֻוֹת לְכֻבוֹד שְׁבָת*?” (“Did he not wash before Shabbat, and did he not wear his cloak for the Shabbat?”).⁹⁴ The passage opens with the words *וְכִי לֹא*, “did he not?,” wherein serves as the interrogative marker and *לֹא* provides the negation. In the second half of the passage, however, although the negation *לֹא* is repeated, the interrogative *וְכִי* does not recur; rather, the initial occurrence of the interrogative governs both of the subsequent questions. This usage is in tune with what we generally find in rabbinic and postrabbinic Judaic literature, evident in the following four examples: “*וְכִי לֹא הָיָה יִכּוֹל הַבָּה*” (“Was not God able to save Noah and his children? . . . and was He not able to save them with his word?,” Genesis Rabbati 6, 14),⁹⁵ “*וְכִי לֹא פְשַׁתָּה הַיּוֹם וְלֹא עֲשִׂיתָם מְאֹמָה מִלְחָמָה?*” (“Did you not raid today, and did you not perform any act of war?,” commentary of R. Isaac Abravanel [fifteenth century] on 2 Samuel 1:27),⁹⁶ “*וְכִי לֹא יִשְׁן לְעוֹלָם וְלֹא יָלַךְ חֹזֶן לְאַוְתָה מָקוֹם*” (“Will he never sleep, and never leave that place?,” responsa of the Maharshadom, R. Samuel de Medina, [sixteenth century], *Hoshen mishpat* 134) and “*וְכִי לֹא יַעֲבֹר כָּלֵל וְלֹא יִקְיַמְוּ מְצֻוֹת קִימָה כָּלֵל*” (“Should he not pass them at all, and they not fulfill the commandment to stand at all?,” commentary of the Ridbaz, R. Jacob David Wilovsky [nineteenth century] on y. *Bikkurim* 3, 4). In all of these cases and many more, the single interrogative *וְכִי* governs both of the subsequent questions.

In the 1931 edition of “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum,” however, Agnon emended the text and repeated the interrogative: **וכי לא רחץ בערב שבת ובו לא לבש כתונת לכבוד שבת?** (“Did he not wash before Shabbat; did he not wear his cloak for the Shabbat?”).⁹⁶ In fact, Agnon consistently adopted this latter approach throughout his writing. In eleven additional places in his stories, Agnon used the same construction, doubling the **וכי לא**, including the following examples: **וכי לא ביקשה מך שתסור אצלה, ובו לא** (“Did she not ask you to come visit her; did Shammai not ask in her name for you to visit her?”), **וכי לא אוזדים בואו והיעדו بي, ובו לא נשחתם** (“Geese, O geese, come and give testimony, were you not slaughtered with a kosher slaughtering; did they not bless you with two blessings, on the slaughter and on the covering of the blood?”), and **וכי לא עשית מעשה ובו לא הוישתי עשרה בני אדם** (“Did I not perform an action; did I not seat ten people?”).⁹⁷ Conversely, from the publication of his collected works in 1931 and onward, I have not found any opposing instances in which Agnon poses a series of two **אלא** questions governed by a single **וכי**.

We find the same shift regarding the parallel interrogative term **כלום**. Here, too, Agnon emended the text of “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” and duplicated the term. In the 1922 version, the text reads: **כלום לא הייתה בשבת של פורענות אצל המחולות וראתה שנשאווה לבית החולים?** (“Was she not present for the dancing on the Shabbat before the mishap, and [did she not] see that they brought him to the hospital?”).⁹⁸ In the 1931 edition, Agnon revised it to read **כלום לא הייתה באותו שבת של פורענות אצל המחולות?** (“Was she not present for the dancing on the Shabbat before the mishap? Did she not see that they brought him to the hospital?”).⁹⁹ Regarding these terms as well, Agnon consistently adopted the doubled interrogative approach in his stories, repeating the **כלום לא** whenever presenting a pair of successive questions: **עוד אמרתי להם, ילדי כלום לא שמעתם אותו רビניר דורש בשבח ישראל, כלום לא שמעתם שהוא אומר לישראל אור לגויים?** (“And further I said to them, my children, did you not hear that same rabbi speak in praise of Israel, did you not hear him say that Israel is a light onto the nations?”), **כלום לא היו יכולים להמתין, כלום לא היו יכולים לשחות שם ברקיע עוד שעה קלה?** (“Were they not capable of waiting, were they not capable of staying another short hour in the heavens?”), and **אילו היה הוא עצמו חי, כלום לא היה דוקר אותנו כולנו כאחד בחרב שבידיו, כלום לא היה מעלה אותנו על גבי המזבח?** (“Had he himself been alive, would he not have

stabbed all of us together with the spear in his hand, would he not have sacrificed us all on the altar?").¹⁰⁰ Agnon's consistent use of the recurring interrogative in all of these cases veers from the dominant norm in rabbinic and postrabbinic literature. Nevertheless, it is not without precedent. Some late biblical commentators do attest such usage regarding וְכִי לֹא. In the commentary of the *Metsudat David* (R. David Altschuler, seventeenth–eighteenth centuries) on Jeremiah 5:22, we find וְכִי לֹא תִיראָו מִמֶּנִּי וְכִי לֹא תִרְעֹדוּ מִפְנִי ("Will you not fear me, will you not tremble before me?"). In the commentary of the *Malbim* (R. Meir Leibush Wisser) on Job 30:25, we find וְכִי לֹא בְכִתְתִּי לְקַשָּׁה יוֹם, וְכִי לֹא עָגַמָּה נְפֵשִׁי אֶל הַאֲבִין ("Did I not weep for the unfortunate, did I not grieve for the needy?").

CONCLUSION

We have examined four categories of stylistic change and emendation that Agnon introduced into his story “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” over the years. Although these changes are almost all local stylistic tweaks, there is rhyme and reason to the tinkering. Agnon's stylistic corrections are part of a consistent program to polish his language in a specific direction, and they reflect overarching trends in his stylistic development. The changes rarely stand in isolation. Rather, we find him introducing the same stylistic fixes time and again in his works, and he adheres to these stylistic choices in his subsequent writing as well. Overall, many of the changes are geared toward purifying his writing as original rabbinic-style writing: removing marked biblical forms and introducing marked rabbinic forms, adjusting the use of rabbinic terms to match the subtleties of their use in the rabbinic writings, and minimizing direct quotations that would make the writing appear as a pastiche of quotes rather than as original prose. At the same time, as we have seen, Agnon did not completely limit himself to usages from the early rabbinic corpus and at times chose to prefer formulations attested only in later Judaic writings.

We may of course wonder what was the motivation behind Agnon's obsessive tweaking of his text.¹⁰¹ To a certain extent it may simply reflect Agnon's perfectionist nature; as Agnon himself wrote once in a letter to Zalman Schocken, while apologizing for his delay in reviewing the proofs of the story “Hanidah”:

סבת העכוב: מהמת טבעי לתקן ולהזור ולתקן. "הנדה" זהה היה מוכן לדפוס. כיוון שקראתיו לא יכולתי להתגבר על יצרי וחזרתי ותקנתי

The reason for the delay: due to the fact that it is my nature to correct and to go back and correct again. This "Hanidah" story was ready for publication. Yet, once I read it, I could not hold back from returning to it and correcting it.¹⁰²

We can also pinpoint two specific practical factors that may have intensified Agnon's need to perfect his formulations. There is evidence suggesting that Agnon believed that his writings would be a key vehicle in establishing the new norms of modern Hebrew; this could account for his extra sensitivity in ensuring that every last phrase was perfectly formulated to serve as a model for the next generation of Hebrew speakers.¹⁰³ Fear of criticism may have played a role as well. As a high-profile author, Agnon's formulations were scrutinized by the critics, who did not hesitate to call him out publicly on seeming errors. A case in point is Abraham Avrunin, who singled out Agnon in a newspaper column entitled טעויות סופרים ("errors of authors") and took him to task for his use of the *bi'fil* verb (*she smelled*) as an intransitive (in the sense of "she gave off a scent").¹⁰⁴ The episode weighed heavily on Agnon, as attested in various pieces of correspondence, as well as in the full-length story that Agnon wrote in his defense.¹⁰⁵ In a separate incident, Abraham Asher Feinstein critiqued Agnon in an "errors of authors" column in the *Haaretz* newspaper regarding Agnon's use of the word *איז* ("which") as a plural determiner.¹⁰⁶ Here, too, Agnon responded at length, and with a solid dose of indignance.¹⁰⁷ His fear of these public critiques could also have intensified his compulsive need to fix every possible anomaly in his text.

Beyond these utilitarian factors, perhaps there is a literary message underlying Agnon's endless tinkering with his text. To begin with, we may speculate that he subconsciously attempted to compensate for the destruction of his European Jewish world via the perfection of his literary oeuvre, which tells the story of that broken world. In a sense, the continual process of correcting his text serves to methodically bring about a *תיקון*—a correction and rebuilding—of the community that was lost. Against this backdrop, Agnon's adoption of certain stylistic norms from postrabbinic halakhic literature, as evidenced in the previous section, may hint at something

more. Avidov Lipsker has demonstrated that Agnon's stories reflect a yearning for the Jewish community governed by Council of the Four Lands from 1520 to 1764. Agnon viewed this community as a golden age of European Jewry, in contrast with his own Jewish community of Buczacz.¹⁰⁸ As Lipsker writes, the Council of the Four Lands comprised a “paradigm of autonomous Jewish life . . . whose utopian foundation he continued to long for even as he came to reconstruct the life of his city, which had drawn away from it.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, as noted above, Agnon's use of the phrase *כל אימת ש* finds its earliest substantial precedent in the works of Jaffe and haLevi, two prominent figures who both were active in the Council of Four Lands and served as signatories on rulings issued by the Council.¹¹⁰ The other postrabbinic feature noted above—the repetition of the interrogative phrase *ונכי לא*—also finds precedent in the time and place of the Council, in the commentary of the Galician Altschuler. Thus, we might speculate that Agnon's adoption of these postrabbinic stylistic elements aligns with his yearnings for the days of the Council of Four Lands, forging a subtle linguistic connection with the prominent figures of the Jewish community at that time.

APPENDIX: COMPUTATIONAL METHODS UNDERLYING THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The classic computational tool for the study of Agnon is the Agnon Textual Database developed by Hillel Weiss and Reuven Merkin, which provides a graphic user interface for querying Agnon's oeuvre for particular text strings.¹¹¹ This database can easily provide some of the statistics cited in the article, such as the total number of occurrences of בודאי versus ונכי or the relative proportions of *כלום מפני* versus *ונכי מפני* and *ונכי מפני* within Agnon's writings. For the most part, however, this database does not provide the technical capability to perform the type of research demonstrated within this article. With a few exceptions, this database contains only the text of the stories as they were printed in the 1953 edition of Agnon's collected works, so it does not provide a basis for investigating the chronological development of Agnon's text. Additionally, the database is limited to queries around specific sequences of words or roots and provides no method for querying abstract morphological structures.

Fortunately, the last few years have seen the development and release of a series of computational tools for scholars, all free of charge, which provide a solid foundation for performing such investigations. First, in order to obtain a digital text of each of the versions of a given Agnon story, we scan the relevant publications and then extract the text via optical character recognition using the free Hebrew Tesseract model.¹¹² Next, we run a multiple sequence alignment algorithm to automatically generate a word-by-word comparative spreadsheet of the multiple versions using the free synopsis tool provided by Dicta: The Israel Center for Text Analysis.¹¹³ The spreadsheet highlights all cases in which words are altered between versions, such that Agnon's changes are immediately apparent.

Upon discovering a given alteration in the text, the next stage is to query whether this type of alteration represents a systematic shift within Agnon's stories—that is, we wish to determine whether the same type of alteration recurs multiple times across the corpus, and whether the shift is consistently performed in the same direction. For cases in which the shift is limited to a specific letter sequence, such as the כיון/כין shift discussed above, a simple script will suffice (e.g., within the popular scripting language Python), given the spreadsheets generated in the previous step. In practice, however, stylistic changes often require more abstract types of searching. For instance, we examined above a series of cases in which Agnon shifted a past tense verb to a *nitpa 'el* form. This requires a search not for specific letters, but for all cases in which an alteration between versions involves any word of this morphological form. The computational foundation for this type of query is provided by Dicta's free morphological tagging tool.¹¹⁴ Significantly, this tool is the first of its kind to provide support for rabbinic Hebrew, which is critical for this type of analysis. In contrast, modern Hebrew morphological taggers will always tag a form such as *נתפזר* as a first person imperfect rather than the third person past tense that it generally represents in Agnon's stories; furthermore, forms such as *נתעוררנו* would completely confound a modern Hebrew tagger.

Dicta's morphological tagger provides a context-sensitive morphological annotation for every word of the input text. Given this annotation, and given the synoptic alignment of the prior step, we can now employ a simple script to identify all cases in which a given morphological shift occurs. In sum, through the combined use of these three tools—Tesseract's Hebrew model, Dicta's synopsis tool, and Dicta's

morphological tagging tool—an ample computational foundation is provided to allow scholars to investigate chronological shifts of abstract morphological patterns within a corpus.

NOTES

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- 1 Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Ovadyah ba'al mum," *Miqlat* 5 (1920): 386–409, henceforth Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1920). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, including all translated passages from the multiple versions of the story "Ovadyah ba'al mum."
- 2 See, respectively, Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Ovadyah ba'al mum," in *'Al kappot haman 'ul* (Jüdischer Verlage, 1922), 31–50; henceforth: Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922); Agnon, "Ovadyah ba'al mum," in *Sippurei abavim* (Schocken, 1931), vol. 4 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 234–58; henceforth: Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1931); and Agnon, "Ovadyah ba'al mum," in *'Al kappot haman 'ul* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–62), 408–28; henceforth: Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1953).
- 3 Dan Laor, *Hayyei Agnon* (Schocken, 1998), 195.
- 4 For example, in the section where Ovadiah is finally released from the hospital and ventures out to visit the schoolteacher and his apprentice (section 16 in the 1920 version and section 11 in all subsequent versions), Agnon dedicates one paragraph to describing Ovadiah's tentative and feeble walking, and another (two paragraphs in 1920) to describing Ovadiah's deliberations as to whether to go first to visit his fiancée or to visit the schoolteacher (Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1920], 402–3; Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1922], 46). Between 1920 and 1922, the order is switched; in the former, Agnon first presents Ovadiah's deliberations and then describes his walking, and, in the latter, the order is reversed.
- 5 For example, the two paragraphs mentioned in the previous paragraph are both severely condensed in 1922. Whereas in 1920 the paragraph describing Ovadiah's walking occupied eighty-three words, in 1922 this paragraph is shortened to less than half of that, and an entire chunk of four sentences is eliminated, starting from the words *היה צבודה מהלך בעיר* ("Ovadiah was walking in the city").

Similarly, whereas in 1920 his deliberations are described over the course of over ninety words, in 1922 they occupy less than seventy words, with entire sentences removed from the description. In other places in this section, we find substantial multisentence sections omitted completely. For example, in the 1920 version, when Ovadiah comes across the schoolteacher's apprentice, there is a sequence in which the apprentice grabs hold of Ovadiah's shirt and drags him while Ovadyah shouts *הנני אתה קורע את בגד!* ("let me go, you are ripping my cloak!," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1920], 405). Eventually the apprentice lets go of him, but Ovadiah points out that one of his buttons is now falling off, and the apprentice responds, *הלווי שלא יארע מה!* ("would that this be the greatest damage you suffer!"). This entire sequence is dropped from the 1922 version. Additionally, the 1922 edition omits a full twenty-four-line poem that the apprentice hums as he ties *tsitsit* in the 1920 edition (Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1920], 403–4).

- 6 For instance, after his release from the hospital and his meetup with the apprentice, Ovadiah proceeds to look for his fiancée at the house where she was previously employed but fails to find her there. His next thought is that perhaps she is at the well. In the 1920 version, this thought is stated simply without any explanation: *אפשר שהיא אצל הבאר!* ("perhaps she is at the well!," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1920], 407). The reader understands why this thought would occur to Ovadiah, because, at the beginning of the story, during the discussion of Ovadiah's concern about his fiancée's flirtatious habits, the narrator tells us that she would often meet up with the other boys at the well (Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1920], 387). However, in the 1922 version, Agnon omits the initial paragraphs about Shayne-Serel hanging out with the boys by the well; as a result, Ovadiah's thought that she might be at the well is left without basis. To compensate for this, Agnon provides an extra line in the 1922 version, confirming that there was in fact no basis for the thought and explaining why Ovadiah would have raised such a possibility anyway: *לא שהשעה צריכה בכך אלא* *יתד בקש עובדיה לתולות תקוות עליה* ("not that it would have made sense at the time, but rather Ovadiah sought a peg on which to hang his hope," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1922], 49).
- 7 In the 1931 version, there are only six cases in which a full sentence is omitted from the previous 1922 version. Examples include *כין דדש דש* ("once he had tread, he continued to tread," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1922], 43), regarding Yehuda Yoel's physical intimacy with Shayne-Serel, and *נסתכל בו עובדיה מתוך קורת רוח וננה שונתבלבל זה* *על ידי* ("Ovadyah looked at him with a sense of satisfaction that he had caused him to be confused," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1922], 47), regarding the apprentice's surprise after Ovadiah sneaks up on him after Ovadiah has been released from the hospital.

Similarly, in the 1953 version, there are five cases in which a full sentence is omitted from the previous version. Examples include “*ומי אני אדם כמותכם?*” (“Am I not a person like you?,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1931], 238)—Ovadiah asks this of the youth who gang up on him at the dance hall—and “*יש פנים לכאן ויש פנים לכאן*” (“there is reason to go with this option and reason to go with this option,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1931], 257), regarding Ovadiah’s deliberations as to where he should search for his fiancée.

8 The one plot point that changes in the 1953 version regards the reason that Ovadiah goes to the schoolteacher’s house first after being released from the hospital rather than directly to see his fiancée. In all of the prior versions, including 1920, 1922, and 1931, Ovadiah’s primary motivation is to inspect the condition of his water jugs. As we are informed in the first line of the story, Ovadiah is a water drawer, and as the narrator tells us during the dance scene, Ovadiah would normally leave his water jugs with the schoolteacher’s apprentice. Thus, when he is released from the hospital, he wishes to inspect the condition of the jugs upon which his livelihood depends. The narrator adds that Ovadiah wanted to ask the schoolteacher when he is to say the *hagomel* benediction for his recovery; however, this is presented as a secondary motivation. In the 1920 version, we are even told that the jugs were a perpetual worry of Ovadiah’s throughout his hospital stay: *ימים שהביאו לו בית החולים והשכיבוו על המטה, דואג היה עובדיה תמיד על כדיו נוטני לחמו* (“from the day they brought him to the hospital and put him on the bed, he would worry about his jugs, the source of his livelihood,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1920], 402). In the 1922 and 1931 versions, this latter statement is missing; as a result, the reader is led to believe that in the hospital he was perfectly content to believe that the jugs were in good care in the house of the schoolteacher. Indeed, at one point during his hospital stay, Ovadiah says to himself, *מה אתה בהול כל כך ליצאת מבית,* *הרי דלייך אתה דואג, והרי דלייך שמדובר בבית המלמד* (“why are you so eager to leave the hospital? If it is because you are worried about your buckets, your buckets are in good care in the house of the schoolteacher,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1931], 246). Nevertheless, upon his release, the jugs become a primary concern, and this is what brings Ovadiah to go directly to the schoolteacher’s home. However, in the 1953 edition of the story, only one reason is provided for Ovadiah’s visit to the schoolteacher: to inquire about the *hagomel* benediction. The concern over the jugs after his hospital release is omitted completely. Accordingly, in the 1953 version, Agnon also removes the line that states that when Ovadiah’s conversation with the apprentice was interrupted, Ovadiah went into the house and inspected the jugs: *הפסיק העוזר שיחתו וזר למלאכתו ועובדיה בדק את כדיו* (“the apprentice stopped

the conversation and returned to his work, and Ovadiah checked his jugs,” Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” [1931], 255).

9 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 45.

10 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 253. The process of eliminating *waw*-consecutive forms from “‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum” begins already in the changes between 1920 and 1922. For instance, in the 1920 version, after Ovadiah’s crutch is snatched away from him, Agnon describes his fall: *וַיַּעֲלַף וַיַּפְלֵל* (“he fainted and he fell,” Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” [1920], 392); in the 1922 version, Agnon emends this to *לֹא הָסִיף לְגַמֵּר* *וַיַּפְלֵל* (“he hadn’t yet finished until he fainted and fell as if he were dead,” Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” [1992], 35). I thank Maya Barzilai for bringing this example to my attention.

11 Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Giv’at haḥol* (Jüdischer Verlag, 1919), 77.

12 Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Giv’at haḥol,” in *Sippurei abavim* (Schocken, 1931), vol. 4 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 225.

13 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Bin‘areinu uvizqeneinu,” *Hatequfah* 6 (1920): 55, henceforth Agnon, “Bin‘areinu” (1920) and Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Bin‘areinu uvizqeneinu,” in *Sippurei abavim* (Schocken, 1931), vol. 4 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 118, henceforth Agnon, “Bin‘areinu” (1931).

14 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Hanidah,” *Hatequfah* 4 (1919): 9 and Agnon, “Hanidah,” in *Me’az ume’atḥah* (Schocken, 1931), vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 17.

15 Examples of *waw*-consecutive forms that remain in the 1953 edition of Agnon’s collected works: *רְבוֹתִי קָרָאתֶם לִי וְאָבּוֹתָא* (“Learned men, you have called me, and I have come,” Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Bin‘areinu uvizqeneinu,” in *‘Al kappot haman ‘ul* [Schocken, 1953], vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken, 1953–62], 311, henceforth Agnon, “Bin‘areinu” [1953]); *וַיֹּאמֶר מְנַשֶּׁה* *חִימָם בְּלִבּוֹ לִמְהָה לִי הַצְדִיקִים* (“Menashe Ḥayyim said in his heart, why do I need these righteous men?,” Agnon, “Vehaya he‘aqov lemishor,” in *Elu ve’elu* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 2 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken 1953–62], 123); *שָׁלֹחַ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָד מַעֲבָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם* (“The king sent one of his servants, and he said to them,” Agnon, *Hakbnasat kallah* [Schocken, 1953], vol. 1 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken, 1953–62], 203, henceforth Agnon, *Hakbnasat kallah* [1953]).

16 To take one example, in *Oreah natah lalun*, we find a series of *waw*-consecutive forms when a character explicitly quotes a biblical pericope: **פתחתי חומש ודרשתי בפרישת** (the shivu‘ **בפסוק ויקץ יעקב משנתו וגוי וירא** ויאמר מה נורא המקום הזה) (“I opened a *chumash* and spoke about the weekly lection regarding the verse: And Jacob woke etc. and he feared and he said, how awesome is this place,” Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Oreah natah lalun* [Schocken, 1953], vol. 4 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken, 1953–62], 128, henceforth Agnon, *Oreah* [1953]).

17 For instance, in *Oreah natah lalun*, Freida quotes a letter that she received from her son. In contrast with the rabbinic style of *Oreah natah lalun* overall, this letter is written in a clear biblical style, containing a dense set of *waw*-consecutive terms. For instance: **ויבאו ויגרשו אותו ויאמרו צא ואל עיר אחרת** (“They came and chased me away and said: leave! I left to another city,” Agnon, *Oreah* [1953], 121).

18 Agnon’s most extensive and prominent story written in a biblical style is “*Bidmi yameha*.” Other such stories of his include: “*Huppat dodim*,” “*Herev duvish*,” “*Kippurim*,” “*Bimtsulot*,” and “*Ahot*.”

19 Miguel Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, trans. John F. Elwolde (Brill, 1997), 100–101.

20 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 36.

21 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 240.

22 These counts include prefixed forms such as **ונשטייר** and **ונשאָר**, and they include all of his stories, including those published posthumously. However, I exclude Agnon’s nonstory writings, such as his anthologies and personal correspondence. In fact, in his personal correspondence, Agnon generally uses the common **ונשאָר** rather than the rabbinically marked form **ונשטייר**. See, e.g., Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Esterlein yeqirati* (Schocken, 1983), 29, 48, 52.

23 See, respectively, Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 35 and Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 240.

24 See, respectively, Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 37 and Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 241.

25 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 50.

26 Translation from Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, 3 vols. (Norton, 2018), 3:64.

27 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 257.

28 The change in the function of the *waw* also entails a change in its vocalization; instead of *patah*, it is vocalized with *shewa*.

29 See, respectively, Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 31; Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 31; and Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 46.

30 See, respectively, Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1953), 408; Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1953), 408; and Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1953), 425.

31 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Sippur pashut* (Schocken, 1935), vol. 5 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 37 and Agnon, “Sippur pashut,” in *Al kappot haman ‘ul* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–62), 77, henceforth Agnon, “Sippur pashut” (1953).

32 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Oreah natah lalun* (Schocken, 1938), vol. 7 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 128 and Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 98.

33 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (Schocken, 1931), vol. 1 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 10 vols. (Schocken, 1931–51), 34, henceforth Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1931) and Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1953), 26.

34 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 37.

35 See, respectively, *The Mishnah: Kaufmann Manuscript A50*, 3 vols. (Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2017–22), 1:24. and *Tosefta Zera’im*, ed. Saul Lieberman (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955), 66–67. The word בודאי is attested in all textual witnesses.

36 All textual witnesses to the Babylonian Talmud that include this phrase attest to the use of זא without the initial *bet*, as per the Friedberg Project for Talmud Bavli Variants, The Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society, <https://bavli.genizah.org/>. For Genesis Rabbah, see J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, eds., *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah*, 2nd ed. (Wahrmann, 1965), 1163. The standard printing of the midrash also keeps the term זא without the initial *bet*. Note, however, that some of the textual witnesses referenced by Theodor and Albeck in their *apparatus criticus* do include the initial *bet*.

37 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 242. In another case, in *Hakhnasat kallah*, Agnon uses בודאי in his 1931 edition, but swaps it out for זא in his 1953 edition. The former edition states בודאי שאסור ליהנות מסעודתם (“for sure it is prohibited to derive benefit from their feast,” Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* [1931], 108), but in the latter edition it is זא שאסור ליהנות מסעודתם (equivalent in meaning to previous; Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* [1953], 84).

38 See, respectively, Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Shenei zugot," in *Elu ve'elu* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 2 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef 'Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken 1953–62), 253 and Agnon, *Temol shilshom* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 5 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef 'Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–62), 463.

39 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922), 32.

40 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1953), 409.

41 In both cases, the use of the interrogative **כלום** here is attested in all textual witnesses, as per the Friedberg Project for Talmud Bavli Variants.

42 Technically, a search for **כלום מפני** in rabbinic sources will turn up plenty of results; however, these are cases in which **כלום** functions not as an interrogative but as a negation term indicating "nothing" or "anything," thus, e.g., in *Tosefta Ketubbot* 9:5: **אין גובה כלום מפני שהיא אמרת אבד גיטי והוא אומ' אבד שובי** ("She does not collect anything, because she claims 'I lost my bill of divorce,' and he claims, 'I lost my receipt").

43 See, respectively, Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" (1953), 348 and Agnon, "Sippur pashut" (1953), 98.

44 See, respectively, Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 278 and Agnon, *Temol shilshom*, 337.

45 See, respectively, Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 416; Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, *Shirah* (Schocken, 1971), 236; and Agnon, "Etsel hemdat," in *Samukh venir'eh* (Schocken 1953), vol. 6 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef 'Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken 1953–62), 69.

46 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922), 35.

47 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1931), 239.

48 Yochanan Breuer, "Early and Late in Mishnaic Hebrew: Temporal Expressions Change into Causal Expressions," in *Sha'arei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher*, ed. A. Maman, S. E. Fassberg, and Y. Breuer, 3 vols. (Bialik Institute, 2007), 2:62–72 has traced the chronological development of the word **כין**: in Tannaitic sources it is exclusively a temporal marker, in Amoraic sources it is used in both temporal and causal senses, and in modern Hebrew it is limited to the causal usage.

49 See, respectively, *Mishnah: Kaufmann Manuscript*, 2:84 and *Tosefta Zera'im*, 17. The use of **כין ש** is attested in all textual witnesses.

50 Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Mesubbin," in *'Al kappot haman 'ul* (Jüdischer Verlage, 1922), 25.

51 Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1931), 233.

52 Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Torah ugedulah," in *'Al kappot haman 'ul* (Jüdischer Verlage, 1922), 14.

53 Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1931), 101.

54 See, respectively, Shmu'el Yosef Agnon, "Bilvav yamim," in *Sefer Bialik*, ed. Jacob Fichman (Vaad hayovel and Amanut, 1934), 20 and Agnon, "Bilvav yamim," in *Elu ve'elu* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 2 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu'el Yosef 'Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken 195–62), 514.

55 See, respectively, Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922), 38 and Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1931), 243.

56 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1953), 415.

57 See, respectively, Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" (1920), 39 and Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" (1931), 99.

58 See, e.g., ("וכשהגיעה אצלה עשתה עצמה ישנה" ("and when he came to her, she pretended she was asleep," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1953], 419) and בזאת מילך כשהגיעה שעתו לילך בבית המדרש ("from then on, when the time came for him to go to the house of study," Agnon, "Ovadyah" [1953], 421).

59 See, respectively, Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922), 33 and Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1931), 237.

60 The next sentence begins: ("וכין שגחה ליפול" ("and once he tipped and started to fall"). In the subsequent version, in 1953, Agnon takes out this *sh* clause as well, rewriting it as *כין*. Here, too, Agnon may have aimed to avoid overuse of the phrase, because instances of *ש* are to be found on the pages immediately beforehand and afterward.

61 In 1920, we find *כין שלא נענה*, *עשה חקירה וזרישה* ("when he wasn't answered, he performed an inquiry and investigation," Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" [1920], 77), and in 1931 *כשהלא נענה* ("when he wasn't answered," Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" [1931], 148). Similarly, in 1920: *וכין שםעו, שפערענות באה לפיטשוריין, אמרו* ("and upon hearing that riots had fallen upon Pishevits, they said," Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" [1920], 25); and in 1931: *וכששמעו שפערענות באה עלי פיטשוריין* ("and when they heard that riots had fallen upon Pishevits, they said," Agnon, "Bin 'areinu" [1931], 79).

62 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1922), 38.

63 Agnon, "Ovadyah" (1931), 243. Agnon also emends his spelling of the Hebrew word for "tea," changing the *tav* to a *tet*.

64 The repetition of the verb is attested in all textual witnesses, per Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah*, 927.

65 *Midrash leqaḥ tov*, ed. Salomon Buber (Room, 1880), 171. No textual variants are noted.

66 Here, too, the repetition of the verb is attested in all textual witnesses, per *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1987), 2:229.

67 Here, too, the repetition of the verb is attested in all textual witnesses, per the comprehensive manuscript transcriptions of Ruth Rabbah on the website of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies (<https://schechter.ac.il/midrash/ruth-raba/>).

68 Thus in the *Homat anakh* Psalms commentary by R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai (*baHida*).

69 See, respectively, Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallab* (1953), 276; Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Ir umelo’ah* (Schocken, 1973), 29; and Agnon, *Temol shilshom*, 427–28.

70 Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Ha’adonit veharokhel,” in *Samukh venir’eh* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 6 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–62), 92.

71 Thus in Ms. Jerusalem Arc. 4* 1270.1.442, folio 1.

72 The repetition of the word is attested in all textual witnesses to the Babylonian Talmud, per the Friedberg Project for Talmud Bavli Variants, although it is worth noting that one manuscript (Ms. Oxford 367) drops the conjunctive *waws*: *הָרִי שְׁלֹחַ הָרִי בָשָׂר הָרִי סְכָן* (“here is a table, here is meat, here is a knife”). As for Genesis Rabbah, the repetition of the word is attested in all textual witnesses, per Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah*, 1136.

73 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, *Baḥanuto shel mar Lublin* (Schocken, 1974), 22; Agnon, “Sippur pashut” (1953), 58; Agnon, *Temol shilshom*, 52; and Agnon, *Shirah*, 100.

74 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 47.

75 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 47.

76 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 254.

77 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1922), 47.

78 Additionally, on the backdrop of the previous Haggadah reference, the words *אַתָּה אַתָּה פְתַח לָנוּ* here would recall the Haggadah text regarding the four sons, which includes the phrases *את פתח לנו* and *ואת אַתָּה וְאַתָּה*.

79 Agnon, “‘Ovadyah” (1931), 255. To be sure, the phrase *מַאֲין בָּאָתָה* is also found verbatim in a rabbinic source (m. Avot 3:1), but as a short two-word fairly generic phrase, it does not necessarily lead the reader back to this source. Even if it does, it emerges that Agnon has replaced a substantial four-word quote with a much more minimal two-word quote.

80 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1922), 32.

81 Daniel Goldschmidt, *Maḥzor leyamim nora’im*, 2 vols. (Leo Baeck Institute, 1970), 1:78.

82 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1931), 236. The phrase זוגות זוגות (“pair by pair”) does appear in rabbinic literature, but it is a common phrase in many different contexts (e.g., m. Sanhedrin 5:5; b. Pesahim 39a; b. Bekhorot 60a; y. Kilayim 1:1). The multiplicity of its contexts effectively neutralizes its intertextual weight. It is worth noting an additional and analogous change from this same scene, albeit regarding the integration of a biblical phrase rather than a rabbinic one. In the 1922 version, Agnon also describes the dancing with the phrase וצעיריהם וצעירותו ירקדו שם (“and lads and lasses would dance there,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1922], 32), a clever play on the biblical verse *use’irim yeraqdu sham* (“and satyrs there shall dance”; Isaiah 13:21 [Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:666]), given that the Hebrew letters *tsade* and *sin* are very similar in their pronunciation. In the 1931 version, this line is removed from the text completely.

83 Of course, while revising, Agnon does not eliminate every rabbinic quote and in fact sometimes revises his text to restore a quoted phrase to its original rabbinic formulation. One such case in “Ovadyah ba’al mum” is the line באה שבת באה מנוחה; באה הרהורים (“come Shabbat, come rest; come rest, come thoughts,” Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1922], 32). The first half of this line is a quote from Rashi on Genesis 2:2 regarding God’s rest after the six days of creation. However, Rashi’s formulation uses the marked rabbinic past tense form *באת* instead of *באה*. Accordingly, in Agnon’s 1953 revision of “Ovadyah ba’al mum,” he fixes the phrase to read: *באת שבת באת מנוחה* (“come Shabbat, come rest”), precisely as it appears in Rashi (Agnon, “Ovadyah” [1953], 408).

84 See, respectively, Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1922), 43 and Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1931), 250.

85 Regarding both of these citations, the phrase *כל אימת* is attested in all textual witnesses of the passages, according to the Friedberg Project for Talmud Bavli Variants.

86 An exceedingly rare exception is found in a few manuscripts of Exodus Rabbah 23:7: *אבל אתם כל אימת שאבקש אתכם חיים וקימים* (“but you [heavenly angels], whenever I wish to request from you, you are alive and present”; thus in Ms. Jerusalem Heb. 24^o 5977 and Ms. London, Sassoon 920). However, other textual witnesses differ. One manuscript has the very unusual form *כל אימת ש*, perhaps reflecting the scribe’s unease with the Aramaic-Hebrew mix of *ש*. *כל אימת ש*. Similarly, the standard print editions of Midrash Rabbah replace *כל אימת ש* with the natural Hebrew phrase *כל זמן ש*.

87 Agnon uses the phrase עד דלא ידע in Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon, “Yisurei hada‘at,” in *Ha‘esh veha‘etsim*, vol. 8 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–62), 229; he uses אגרא דכלה in Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1953), 43. Occasionally, for rhetorical effect, Agnon will have a character purposely state a line in Aramaic, explicitly drawing attention to it. An instance of this is in the story “Tallit aḥeret,” where it is explicitly stated that the line is in Aramaic. The line reads: השיב לו בלשון תרגום, הדין יומא דצומה רבה ליתוהי ליליא דפסחא דאמרת כל דכפין ייחי (“He responded in the language of the *targum*: The day of the great fast is not the night of passover, on which you say: ‘whoever is hungry should come and eat’”; Agnon, “Tallit aḥeret,” in *Samukh venir‘eh* [Schocken, 1953], vol. 6 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken, 1953–62], 202). An additional exception regards passages dealing with the heavenly angels. In such contexts, Agnon shows a tendency to slip in *dalet* phrases, perhaps on the backdrop of the heavy angelic material in the Aramaic-language *Zohar*. One example of such is found in אם היא אינה מלאכין דשכינה דמתיהודה במלאכין דקדושה בריך הוא, הרי היא ‘Ido ve ‘einum: (“If she is not one of the angels of the heavenly dwelling, who are designated angels of the Holy one blessed be He, then she must be one of the twelve *mazalot*,” Agnon, “Ido ve ‘einum,” in *Ad henah*, vol. 7 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken 1953–62], 356). A second example is found שאר המלאכים לאות דמשתלהין אולין ומתחלפין לפי שליחות שליהם עד הנה in, which reads: (“The rest of the angels go to the place where they are sent, and they switch according to their mission,” Agnon, “Ad henah,” in *Ad henah*, vol. 7 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. [Schocken 1953–62], 141).

88 Stephen A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (University of Chicago Press, 1974), 58 and Yechezkel Kutscher, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic*, ed. Zeev Ben-Hayyim, Aharon Dotan and Gad Sarfatti (Magnes, 1977), 95.

89 Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Milon halashon ha‘Ivrit hayeshana veḥabadasha*, 17 vols. (Makor, 1980), 1:188.

90 Ben-Yehuda, *Milon*, 1:187.

91 Most famously, אימתי appears as the very first word of m. Berakhot: מאיימת קורין את אימתי appears as the very first word of m. Berakhot: “from when do we read the Shema in the evening,” m. Berakhot 1:1. شמע בערבית (“from when do we read the Shema in the evening,” m. Berakhot 1:1. For see, e.g., y. Berkhot 2, 1 (4b): “אימת יבנה בית המקדש (“when will the temple be built”) and Deuteronomy Rabbah 1, 2: (“until when will you remain angry at me”).

92 I distinguish between כל פגע ש (“whenever”), which introduces a subordinate clause, and the sentential adverb כל פגע (“every time”). Regarding the latter usage, כל אימת, 2025

would not form a viable replacement, and therefore we do find Agnon using **כל פעם** *היוינו נזכרים פסוק או מאמר והיינו מתרגשים הרבה* (“Every time, we would recall a verse or aphorism, and we would be very moved,” Agnon, “Bin ‘areinu” [1953], 274) and: (“**כל פעם** *היה תופס ראשו וצועק מה אירע* (“Every time, he would grab his head and shout, what happened,” Agnon, “Sippur pashut” [1953], 193).

93 See, respectively, Agnon, *Esterlein*, 44 and 82.

94 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1922), 36.

95 Ch. Albeck, ed., *Midrash Bereishit Rabbati* (Mekize Nirdamim, 1940), 61. No textual variants are noted.

96 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1931), 241.

97 See, respectively, Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Giv’at hahol,” in *‘Al kappot haman’ul* (Schocken 1953), vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken, 1953–1962), 384; Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1953), 268; and Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 161. For additional cases, see Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 62, 148, 230; Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1953), 48, 331, 343; Agnon, *Hakhnasat kallah* (1931), 207 (this case regards a sentence that is omitted from the 1953 version); and S. Y. Agnon, “Kenaggen hamenaggen,” in *Pith’ei devarim* (Schocken, 1978), 54.

98 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1922), 39.

99 Agnon, “Ovadyah” (1931), 245.

100 See, respectively, Agnon, *Oreah* (1953), 436; Shmu’el Yosef Agnon, “Hamalbush,” in *Ad henah*, vol. 7 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu’el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken 1953–62), 318; and Agnon, *Temol shilshom*, 386. It is worth noting that in all of Agnon’s successive **כלום לא** constructions, the second does not start with a *waw* conjunction. *Prima facie*, this might seem to veer from the previous examples, in which the second questions always starts with a *waw* (*כִּי לֹא*). In reality, however, in the case of *וכי לא*, the *waw* clitic is not a conjunction, but rather it is part of the interrogative term itself; without the *waw*, the term *כִּי* cannot express an interrogative function. Thus, Agnon is consistent across all these cases in repeating the interrogative term without any additional conjunction.

101 The ideas suggested in the following paragraphs emerged from a productive brainstorming discussion following the presentation of this paper at a conference at Northwestern University in November 2022. I wish to thank all of the participants of that discussion for their ideas and inspiration, especially Nitza Ben-Dov, Tafat Hacohen-Bick, David Roskies, Jeffrey Saks, Haim Weiss, and Wendy Zierler.

102 S. Y. Agnon—S. Z. Schocken. *Hilufei iggerot* (Schocken, 2003), 200.

103 Regarding Agnon's desire and belief that his crafted style would eventually be adopted as the norm, see Aaron Bar-Adon, *Agnon and the Revival of Hebrew* (Mossad Bialik, 1977), 191–95.

104 Abraham Avrunin, “Ta‘uyot sofrim,” *Davar* (November 26, 1934), 4.

105 Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon, “Hush hareah,” in *Elu ve‘elu* (Schocken, 1953), vol. 2 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon*, 8 vols. (Schocken 1953–62), 296–302. In multiple letters addressed to Agnon, Dov Sadan relates to the episode and encourages Agnon to not take the criticism so hard; see S. Y. Agnon, *Misod hakhamim* (Schocken, 2002), 224, 260, 305. Hanoch Yalon also sent Agnon a postcard about the issue, excitedly providing support for Agnon's formulation (Ms. Jerusalem Arc. 4* 1270.1.291).

106 Abraham Asher Feinstein, “Ta‘uyot sofrim,” *Haaretz* (July 17, 1942), 4.

107 Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon, “La‘amitah shel lashon,” in *Me‘atsmi el ‘atsmi* (Schocken, 1976), 330–31.

108 Avidor Lipsker, “The Heavenly City’: A Historiographic Paradigm in the Scholastic Cartography of S. Y. Agnon,” in *Building a City: Writings on Agnon’s Buczacz in Memory of Alan L. Mintz*, ed. Sheila E. Jelen, Jeffrey Saks, and Wendy Zierler (Indiana University Press, 2023), 71–86.

109 Lipsker, “Heavenly City,” 80.

110 Regarding R. Mordechai Jaffe’s participation in the council, see Ephraim Kupfer, “Jaffe, Mordechai ben Abraham,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik, 2nd edition, 22 vols. (Macmillan Reference, 2006), 11:67. Regarding R. David ben Samuel Halevi’s participation in the Council, see Shmuel Ashkenazi, “David ben Samuel ha-Levi,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik, 2nd edition, 22 vols. (Macmillan Reference, 2006), 5:469.

111 Reuven Merkin, “Agnon bamahšhev,” in *Qovéts Agnon: An Agnon Miscellany*, ed. Emuna Yaron, Rafael Weiser, Dan Laor, and Reuven Merkin (Magnes, 1994), 319–44.

112 Tesseract, <https://github.com/tesseract-ocr/tesseract>.

113 Dicta: Analytical Tools for Hebrew Text, <https://synoptic.dicta.org.il/>; for the algorithm underlying this tool, see Oran Brill, Moshe Koppel and Avi Shmidman, “FAST: Fast and Accurate Synoptic Texts,” *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 35 (2019): 254–64.

114 Dicta: Analytical Tools for Hebrew Text, <https://morph-analysis.dicta.org.il/>; for the algorithm underlying this tool, see Avi Shmidman, Shaltiel Shmidman, Moshe Koppel, and Yoav Goldberg, “Nakdan: Professional Hebrew Diacritizer,” *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: System Demonstrations, July 2020*, ed. Asli Celikyilmaz, Tsung-Hsien Wen (Association for Computational Linguistics, 2020), 197–203.