

Zot Hashira

Achievements and Challenges

Through the Eyes of Contemporary Israeli Literature

1978 - 1988

The Forth Decade

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About All Theses – Naomi Shemer

Honey and sting
The bitter and the sweet
Our baby girl,
Good Lord please watch over them.

The burning fire
The pure water
And the man coming home
From afar

Chorus:
For all of these for all of these
Watch over them dear God
Bless the sting and bless the honey
Bless the bitter and the sweet.

Do not uproot that which was planted
Do not forget hope
Turn me back so I can return
To the good land.

Keep this home
The garden, the wall,
From sudden fear and sadness
And of war.

Guard the little that I have
Light and toddlers
Un-ripened fruit
And the harvested ones too.

A tree whistles in the wind
A distant star is falling,
My heart desires, are now registered,
In the dark.

Please watch over all these
And over the ones I love
Over silence and weeping
And over this song too.

על כל אלה נעמי שמר

על הדבש ועל העוקץ,
על המר והמתוק,
על בתנו התינוקת
שמור אלי הטוב.

על האש המבוערת,
על המים הזכים,
על האיש השב הביתה
מן המרחקים.

על כל אלה, על כל אלה,
שמור נא לי אלי הטוב.
על הדבש ועל העוקץ,
על המר והמתוק.

אל נא תעקור נטוע,
אל תשכח את התקווה
השיבני ואשובה
אל הארץ הטובה.

שמור אלי על זה הבית,
על הגן, על החומה,
מיגון, מפחד פתע
וממלחמה.

שמור על המעט שיש לי,
על האור ועל הטף
על הפרי שלא הבשיל עוד
ושנאסף.

מרשרש אילן ברוח,
מרחוק נושר כוכב,
משאלות ליבי בחושך
נרשמות עכשיו.

אנא, שמור לי על כל אלה
ועל אהובי נפשי,
על השקט, על הבכי
ועל זה השיר.

Farewell to Sinai Haim Hefer

There is time to give birth, time
There is time to plant and time to uproot, time.
There is time to kill and time to heal, time
There is time to breakthrough and time to build, time
There is time to weep and time to laugh
Time to eulogize, time to dance, time, time

I am spreading my wings
Over all the rocks and sands
Over the pains of your vista
I am disappearing like a dream
Yet I am still staying there
In the scorching marks of fire and smoke
In the trumpets of glory and the drums of guilt
Thus I take leave of you, trembling
My estranged strange one, beautiful and lost
My beautiful strange one, legend like.

There is time to plead (beg) and time to loose, time
There is time to keep and time to through away, time
There is time to tear apart and time to saw, time
There is time to keep quiet and time to speak, time
There is time to plant and time to uproot that which
was planted, time
There is time to love and time to hate, there is time
for war and time for peace.

I am spreading my wings...

שיר פרידה מסיני

חיים חפר

עת ללדת ועת למות, עת
עת לטעת ועת לעקור נטוע, עת
עת להרוג ועת לרפוא, עת
עת לפרוץ ועת לבנות, עת
עת לטעת ועת לעקור נטוע, עת
עת לבכות ועת לשחוק
עת ספוד ועת רקוד, עת, עת ...

ואני פורש כנפיים
מעל כל הצוקים והחולות
וממכאובי נופיך
הריני נעלם כמו חלום
אבל אני נותר עדיין שם
בצלקות האש והעשן
בחצוצרות התהילה ובתופי אשם
וכך אני נפרד ממך ברעדה,
זרה ומוזרה שלי, יפה ואבודה
יפה ומוזרה שלי, כמו אגדה .

עת לבקש ועת לאבד, עת
עת לשמור ועת להשליך, עת
עת לקרוע ועת לתפור, עת
עת לחשות ועת לדבר, עת
עת לטעת ועת לעקור נטוע, עת
עת לאהוב ועת לשנוא עת מלחמה
ועת שלום, עת ...

ואני פורש כנפיים...

THE MAIDSERVANT'S SON Emunah Alon
THE MAIDSERVANT'S SON Emunah Alon

Soon after the new neighborhood was completed, even before the roads were paved and the last families had transferred their belongings from their temporary homes in the settlement to the red roofed houses which twinkled on the hilltop like a quaint Swiss village, Sarit's neighbors recommended that she employ the Arab cleaning woman who worked for them. "I've never had a cleaning woman before", Sarit protested, but her neighbors reminded her that she'd never owned a house on two levels with three bathrooms before, either. "You owe it to yourself", they assured her.

In the end, mainly to put an end to the subject, Sarit agreed to hire the Arab woman for a trial period. The neighbors promised to send her along for five hours every Wednesday, and sure enough, next Wednesday morning the cleaning-woman ascended the unfinished path and rang the front door bell loudly.

When Sarit opened the door she saw a red-cheeked Arab woman, her black hair gathered under a flowered head scarf, and a mocking smile on her face. Sarit knew that it couldn't really be a mocking smile - after all, the woman didn't even know her, so why would she mock her? Nevertheless she hesitated as she put out her hand, and her "Hello, my name is Sarit" sounded faint and childish to her ears.

"Intisar¹", the woman introduced herself, and, totally ignoring Sarit's outstretched hand, she marched into the house. She was about Sarit's height and approximately Sarit's age - thirty-five, but her shoulders were much wider and her body appeared very strong, as if cast in cement. After she entered Sarit closed the door, somewhat at a loss for words. Not only had she never employed a cleaning lady before, she had never before entertained an Arab woman of her own age in her home either.

Meanwhile Intisar strode into the middle of the wide new living room, swinging the plastic bag she held from side to side as she gazed around her, smiling her mocking smile the whole time. Sarit told herself that the other woman was merely trying to assess the amount of work that would be required of her, so she remarked politely, "I can show you the whole house, if you want."

"I can already see what's necessary", the Arab woman replied in guttural Hebrew. Without further ado she whipped a huge black apron out of her plastic bag and draped it over her colorful clothes. Then she hung the empty bag on a coat hook in the entryway, rolled up her sleeves, and instructed Sarit to provide her with a bucket, floor cloth, and bleach, so she could get to work.

Wednesday was once Sarit's favorite day of the week because it was the only day she didn't work at her job as secretary in a law office in Jerusalem, the only day she didn't have to leave for work early in the morning. Every Wednesday she enjoyed taking her young son to nursery school, stopping to gaze at the new flowers waving in the gardens. Together they would admire the size and charm of their community, and Sarit would tell her son that a few short years ago

¹ Intisar in Arabic means victory

there was nothing here but a few terraced hills which had stood barren since the time of the patriarch Abraham. When they reached the top of the highest hill the child would indicate the large synagogue under construction, pointing proudly to the changes which had occurred since the previous Wednesday. It made Sarit smile to think of the Moslem laborers who from time to time stopped working on the synagogue to kneel facing Mecca. After taking leave of her son Sarit strolled home, stopping at the Post Office or chatting with neighbors, finally drinking a leisurely cup of coffee in her peaceful kitchen.

But from the time that Intisar took charge of the cleaning Wednesdays became burdensome, and by Tuesday afternoon Sarit was already nervous. Intisar preferred to start her work by washing all the floors, so Sarit was obliged to rearrange all the rooms in the house before she arrived, putting away all the clothes, the books and the toys, sweeping under beds and dressers and emptying out the trash cans. Sometimes she toiled until the wee hours, which both astonished and annoyed her husband Haim. "Who's working for whom?" He asked his wife, as he passed her on his way to bed at midnight, while she continued wiping kitchen appliances or folding towels. But Sarit dared not go to sleep before the entire house, with its two levels and its three bathrooms, was ready for a thorough scrubbing. The memory of Intisar's mocking smile acted like a concentrated shot of adrenaline in her veins, and once she even found herself plucking dry leaves off a houseplant at three in the morning. On another occasion, busily cleaning the large mirror in the entry way until it shone, she was startled to hear, rolling over the hills, the *muezzin's* summons to dawn prayers.

Sarit would open the door fearfully, retreating before her in dread. Intisar would swathe herself in her black tent, hang up her plastic bag and roll up her sleeves while Sarit hurried to bring the bucket, the floor cloth and the various cleaning materials which she was expected to line up on the floor. Then began the splashing of water, the beating of carpets and the scrubbing of floor tiles. The next duty of the lady of the house was to turn on the stereo radio and locate the Arabic station which Intisar most enjoyed, making sure that the volume was turned all the way up. While the sinuous eastern sounds penetrated every nook and cranny of her two story house, Sarit grabbed her shopping basket and rushed to the grocery store, because before tackling the second floor Intisar liked to drink a cup of very sweet coffee and eat two pitas with hummous, salad and olive oil, and she preferred newly baked pita with fresh vegetables.

Each song was at least as long as the Exile and the words were incomprehensible to Sarit, but judging by the wails of the singers and the melancholy gloom of the melodies they all dealt with unrequited love. Accompanied by these mournful strains Sarit stood in her spanking new American kitchen with its sparkling appliances, chopping vegetables for Intisar's salad. Intisar found Jewish onions tasteless, so she brought two little onions from her garden, instructing Sarit to chop them well.

"That's good", Intisar would remark when she saw Sarit's streaming eyes, and the mocking smile never left her red cheeks.

"Who's working for whom?" Sarit muttered to herself, as she stared through her tears at the refugee camp opposite her kitchen window. There, on one of the gray hills on the far side of the Jerusalem-Shechem road, under the blazing sun of Eretz Israel, lived Intisar with her husband and six children. On her very first day at work Intisar had pulled Sarit over to the window above

the Italian marble counter, to point to the camp. “That’s Jezoun”, she announced. Sarit gazed at the heap of miserable huts dotted here and there by pecan and olive trees and encircled with a stone wall. “Is that your home?” inquired Sarit. The Arab woman chortled. “That’s nobody’s home”, she explained, “Jezoun isn’t a village at all, it’s just the place where we’re waiting until we can go back to our land.”

Sarit wondered silently how they intended to return to their land two generations after a kibbutz or a university had been established on it. She regretted that the architect had placed the kitchen window precisely at that spot, facing the road and the camp. “We haven’t returned to the land of our forefathers in order to solve the problems of other nations”, she told herself, and went to the plant nursery where she bought five cypress saplings in black plastic bags. Haim suggested that they exchange them for fruit trees but Sarit wanted evergreens which would grow quickly, planted closely together in a row opposite her kitchen window to block the embarrassing view.

Trucks delivered dark earth and fertilizer to the yards of the new houses in the new neighborhood. Sarit’s children planted the roots of the small cypresses in the earth. Sarit hoed the garden bed, sprinkled it with chemical fertilizer and watered it daily. She even considered playing classical music to the saplings because she had read somewhere that it encourages growth. She had second thoughts when she realized that she was not at all acquainted with the musical preferences of Samarian cypresses. Would they prefer Schubert’s symphonies, or songs of unrequited love, accompanied by oud and derbouka? She decided to settle for fertilizer.

For three years Intisar cleaned Sarit’s house. During that time the community grew and developed. The synagogue stood imposingly on the top of its hill, and a new wave of families moved from their temporary houses into the white buildings of a new neighborhood.

For three years Sarit wept over the sharp onions which Intisar had cultivated in her temporary garden in the refugee camp. Every few months she raised Intisar’s salary without been asked, and in return the cleaning woman invited her to sit at her side during her meal of pita and hear about her hard life: her husband, who worked as a plasterer for an Israeli building firm, missed many workdays when the government imposed closure on the Arabs living in the territories. Her elderly father feared that he would go blind before he realized his life’s dream - to see the village on the coastal plain where he was born. And her son, Adnan, had been severely beaten by the young men of Jezoun, who erroneously suspected him of collaborating with the Israeli army.

It’s possible that Sarit was attempting to pacify Intisar, or maybe she wanted to compensate her. “What’s mine is yours, and what’s yours is yours”, she would think, hearing the words of Rabbi Akiva in Intisar’s guttural accent, as she handed her a pile of children’s clothes, hardly used toys or an aluminum pot large enough to prepare food for an entire family. One day she even went through her own clothes and picked out two outfits for Intisar. They were her personal favorites, being both elegant and comfortable, but she preferred to hand them over to this refugee whose size was similar to her own.

Intisar received all these offerings with a nod of her head, thrusting them into her bag before hurrying to scrub the three toilets, or brush the sofas and release clouds of dust.

By the end of three years the five cypresses had reached the height of the window, but they didn't yet conceal the heap of gray shacks from Sarit's view. They also didn't screen the road where our forefathers passed on their way to Shechem or the smoke which rose every day or so from the tires which the refugee children burned on the same road.

Early one winter's evening Sarit was startled by a long, loud peal at the doorbell. It was Sunday evening, not Wednesday morning, but when Sarit opened the door the Arab woman stood before her, her shoulders drooping.

"Intisar!"

"Do you have visitors, Sarit?"

"No. What's going on?"

Intisar called something over her shoulder and hoisted a cloth bundle lying at her feet. A tall lad appeared hesitantly in the doorway. He looked like a young god. His curly hair was the color of mountain earth, he had delicate, sculpted features and his green eyes glowed from under long, thick lashes.

Intisar hurried him into the house, following hard on his heels with the bundle. Agitatedly she explained: "This is Adnan², my oldest child. Some people from Nablus are coming to kill him tonight!"

She was trembling. Her eighteen year old son stood with hanging head, his hands behind his back as if handcuffed.

"I've brought him to you," pleaded Intisar, "because we have nowhere to run to".

Sarit leant against the wall. The walls seemed to spin around her. Out of the corner of her eye she saw her children watching silently from the stairwell.

"Sit down", she finally blurted out, indicating the sofas in the living room. The smile that crept over Intisar's face as she sank into the sofa cushions was not one of mockery but of simple gratitude.

"What will you drink?" asked Sarit, hurrying to the kitchen to prepare a tray for her guests.

Intisar sipped some coca cola, while Adnan sat on the edge of his seat, keeping a watchful eye on the large French window facing the hills. He wore the almost-new jeans which until recently had belonged to Sarit's daughter. As a rule people get rid of clothes when they don't need them anymore. Our matriarch Sara even got rid of her maidservant Hagar when she had no more use for her. But Sarit often gave Intisar new or hardly-used clothing she had bought for her own children.

² Adnan means permanent dwelling in Arabic- Adnan is also one of the descendants of Ishmael

Adnan is a golden child, explained Intisar, rocking mournfully to and fro, but the Jezoun *shabab* (street gangs) suspect him of collaborating with Israelis. Perhaps it's because he has worked a great deal among Jews and learned to speak Hebrew like an Israeli, or perhaps they simply envy him because he's so clever and kind-hearted. Maybe they think he's following in the footsteps of his uncle Badr³ (Intisar's younger brother), who was indeed working for the Jewish army until the Jihad operatives caught him and left his head next to the mosque in the camp. Ever since Badr died the *shabab* were after Adnan, because they knew he was very close to his uncle. But Adnan never betrayed Palestine, cried Intisar, he would never do such a thing. The camp hooligans had falsely accused him and now the Jihad people were coming to kill him because they believed the *shabab*.

"And he," hissed Intisar furiously, with a nod to indicate Adnan, "at first he refused to come here. I said to him, 'let's run away' but he said one must not flee from the Jihad, because in the end they always get their way, and if they want to kill someone - he's dead!"

Adnan hung his head on his slender neck, while Intisar hid her face in her large, callused hands. Tormented and afflicted, Hagar and Ishmael her son were driven from the home of Abraham. Alone and helpless they wandered in the wilderness. Sarit felt strong and powerful. She instructed her two older children to clear their room for the guests and move in with their younger brothers.

"Thank you, miss", murmured Adnan, as his beautiful olive eyes glanced round the tidy room with its freshly-made bed and the picture on the wall, depicting a ship in full sail on a deep blue sea. In a low voice, so his mother wouldn't hear, he added: "But my place is not here."

"Not here?" Sarit repeated.

"I should be in Jezoun now", he replied sadly, but said no more.

Hurry up, Sarit commanded herself, knead and fry for them, set up the best meal you can. Chop up the hottest onions you have and let the tears take care of themselves. After the meal Intisar returned to Jezoun, but not before she kissed Sarit's hand and whispered: "You're a good Jew. I won't forget this."

She parted from her son with a fierce hug and a brief argument conducted quietly and hopelessly in Arabic. Adnan shut himself up in the bedroom which the older children had vacated. When Haim returned from work the house was as quiet as an abandoned Arab village. Sarit had nearly finished washing the dishes.

Haim listened to his wife's tale with a smile on his face, as he watched the evening news on television. "You don't say", he remarked, each time her torrent of words stopped for a moment, "You don't say, you don't say". It was only when she expressed her concern for Adnan, who looked so miserable and hardly ate anything that Haim burst out laughing. "Loss of appetite should be his biggest problem", he declared.

³ Badr means full moon in Arabic

Sarit awoke at dawn to the sounds of the muezzin echoing off the hills, and thought of Adnan safely asleep in her house. She listened to the seven o' clock news as she prepared to leave for the lawyers' office, pouring cocoa for the children and packing their lunches. Suddenly her ear caught the announcement of a killing which had taken place during the night in Jezoun refugee camp in the heart of Samaria. The radio announcer reported that security forces were investigating the murder to ascertain whether the victim was suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Just then the doorbell rang loudly and Intisar burst into the house, barefoot and dressed in her black work clothes. Her eyes darted around the room and she was breathing heavily. "Good morning, Intisar", said Sarit, but for the poor refugee it was apparently a bad morning, because she stood in the doorway with her hand on her heart, as if she feared she would lose it. "The Jihad killed someone in Jezoun", she sobbed. Her voice was that of a wounded animal. "They burnt him and placed him next to the mosque - he's all black... all burnt... he's unrecognizable... you can't even see what he's wearing... I couldn't see if it was Adnan or not..."

"But Adnan's here, fast asleep", Sarit tried to soothe her. She didn't understand why Intisar flew up the stairs to the second floor and flung open the door of the bedroom, until she saw her fall at the foot of the sail boat on the empty bed with its clean sheets, exactly as it had been prepared the night before.

Sarit stood there, stunned. In her hand she gripped the breadknife. Her children stood by her side, ready for school. They all watched as Intisar descended the stairs in terrible, bitter silence, clawing at her face until it was streaked with blood, plucking at her long black hair, which had escaped from the flowered head scarf. She raged and stormed, but not a sound escaped her.

As she left she encountered Haim, returning from morning prayers in the synagogue. Silently she fled to the back of the house, between the five young cypresses - and only there, beyond the line of trees, did she fling out her arms and rend the heavens with her terrible cries, running to and fro, wailing her agony to the impervious skies. Her robe flew around her like a tent. Her bare feet trampled over thorns and rocks as she descended the hill on the winding path to Jezoun refugee camp.

Challenge II

○ The First Lebanon War (1981)

A Baby Can't Be Killed Twice

On the sewage puddles of Sabra and Shatila
there you transferred masses of human beings
worthy of respect
from the world of the living to the world of the dead.
Night after night.
First they shot
then they hung
and finally slaughtered with knives.
Terrified women rushed up
from over the dust hills:
"There they slaughter us
in Shatila."
A narrow tail of the new moon hung
above the camps.
Our soldiers illuminated the place with flares
like daylight.
"Back to the camps, March!" the soldier commanded
the screaming women of Sabra and Shatila.
He had orders to follow,
And the children were already laid in the puddles of
waste,
their mouths open,
at rest.
No one will harm them.
A baby can't be killed twice.
And the tail of the moon filled out
until it turned into a loaf of whole gold.
Our dear sweet soldiers,
asked nothing for themselves—
how strong was their hunger
to return home in peace.

Translated from the original Hebrew by Karen Alkalay-Gut.

תינוק לא הורגים פעמיים
על שלוליות שופכין בסברה ושתילה
שם העברתם כמויות של בני אדם
הראויות להתכבד
מעולם החי לעולם האמת.

לילה אחר לילה.
קודם ירו
אחר כך תלו
לבסוף שחטו בסכינים.
נשים מבוהלות הופיעו בדחיפות
מעל תלולית עפר:
"שם שוחטים אותנו,
בשתילה."

זנב דק של ירח בן ראשית החודש היה
תלוי
מעל למחנות.
חיילינו שלנו האירו את המקום בנורים
כאור יום.
"לחזור למחנה, מארש!" ציווה החייל
לנשים הצורחות מסברה ושתילה.
היו לו פקודות למלא.

והילדים היו כבר מונחים בשלוליות
הסחי,
פיהם פעור
שלוים.
איש לא ייגע בהם לרעה.
תינוק לא הורגים פעמיים.

וזנב הירח הלך והתמלא
עד שהפך כיכר זהב מלאה.

חיילים מתוקים שלנו,
דבר לא ביקשו לעצמם,
מה עזה הייתה תשוקתם
לחזור הביתה בשלום.

Get Out of Beirut - Dahlia Ravikovitch

Take the knapsacks
and the utensils and washtubs
and the books of the Koran
and the army fatigues
and the tall tales and the torn soul
and whatever's left, bread or meat,
and kids running around like chickens in the village.
How many children do you have?
How many children did you have?
It's hard to keep tabs on kids in a situation like this.
Not like in the old country
in the shade of the mosque and the fig tree,
when the children the children would be shooed outside by day
and put to bed at night.
Put whatever isn't fragile into sacks,
clothes and blankets and bedding and diapers
and something for a souvenir
like a shiny artillery shell perhaps,
or some kind of useful tool,
and the babies with rheumy eyes
and the R.P.G. kids.
We want to see you in the water, sailing aimlessly
with no harbor and no shore.
You won't be accepted anywhere
You are banished human beings.
You are people who don't count
You are people who aren't needed
You are a pinch of lice
stinging and itching
to madness.

Translated from the original Hebrew by Karen Alkalay-Gut.

לצאת מביירות – דליה רביקוביץ'

קחו את התרמילים
ואת הג'ארות והפיילות
ואת ספרי הקוראן
ומדי קרב של חיילים
ואת הדאווין והנפש הקרועה
ומה שנשאר, לחם או בשר,
וילדים מתרוצצים כמו תרנגולות בכפר.
כמה ילדים יש לכם?
כמה ילדים היו לכם?
קשה לשמור במצב כזה על הילדים.
לא כמו שהיה בארץ הישנה
בצל המסגד והתאנה
שהיו מגרשים את הילדים החוצה ביום
ומשכיבים אותם לישון בלילה.
אספו אל השקים מה שאינו שביר,
בגדים ושמיכות וכלי מיטה וחיתולים
ומשהו למזכרת
אולי תרמיל פגז מבריק,
או כלי שיש לו ערך שימושי,
ואת התינוקות עם המגלה בעיניים
ואת ילדי האר.פי.גי.
אנחנו רוצים לראות אתכם שטים
במים, שטים בלי מטרה
ללא נמל ובלי חופים.
לא יקבלו אתכם בשום מקום
אתם בני אדם מגורשים.
אתם אנשים לא נחשבים
אתם אנשים לא דרושים.
אתם קומץ כינים עוקצות ומגרדות
עד לשגעון.

I HAVE NO OTHER HOME LAND

Ehud Manor

Translated by: Karen Alkalay-Gut

I have no other homeland
though my earth is aflame
a word in Hebrew alone
pierces through my veins to my soul -
with aching body, with hungry heart,
Here is my home.
I will not stay silent
that the face of my land has changed
I won't give up but keep reminding her --
singing in her ears
until she opens her eyes
I have no other country
though my land is burning
only a word in Hebrew
pierces my veins my soul -
with aching body, hungering in my heart,
this is my home.
I will not remain quiet
though the face of my land has changed
I won't stop reminding her --
singing in her ears
until she opens her eyes
I have no other country
until she renews her days of old
until she opens her eyes
I have no other country
though my land is burning
only a word in Hebrew
pierces my veins my soul -
with aching body, hungering in my heart,
this is my home.

אין לי ארץ אחרת

אהוד מנור

אין לי ארץ אחרת
גם אם אדמתי בוערת
רק מילה בעברית חודרת
אל עורקיי, אל נשמתי
בגוף כואב, בלב רעב
כאן הוא ביתי

לא אשתוק, כי ארצי
שינתה את פניה
לא אותר להזכיר לה,
ואשיר גם באוזניה
עד שתפקח את עיניה

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או או או או...

אין לי ארץ אחרת
עד שתחדש ימיה
עד שתפקח את עיניה