

## Holocaust representations in early Hebrew poetry: Uri Zvi Greenberg

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### Introduction

Although he did not experience the systematic destruction of European Jewry directly, having escaped Poland in 1930 for Palestine, Uri Zvi Greenberg's personal catastrophe carved deep cicatrices in the young poet's soul. This led him to plunge into his autobiographical and psychological waters to sculpt characters and tales based on his own heart of darkness. Born in Bilkamin, Galicia in 1896, Greenberg began his career at the age of 21, penning Hebrew and Yiddish poems. One of the founders of the Yiddish expressionist movement in Warsaw, the three-time winner of the prestigious Bialik Prize published his work in various journals. In 1923, after personally witnessing the explosion of antisemitism, he moved to Palestine. As a matter of fact, during a pogrom in Lemberg, Greenberg and his family were cruelly subjected to a mock execution by the Polish perpetrators, a savage act that traumatized the young man.<sup>1</sup>

The collection of poems *Rehovot Ha'nehar: Sefer ha'iliyot vehakoah* (*Streets of the River: The Book of Dirges and Power*), published in 1951 and awarded the Bialik prize, was the poet's anguished response to the Holocaust and is arguably the most magnificent meditations in the pantheon of Holocaust poetry. Indeed, Robert Alter sums up the critics' enthusiasm for the work, by declaring that, "The scale of the book, its originality, and what must be called the grandeur of its conception, clearly still sets it apart as the most substantial poetic response in Hebrew, perhaps in any language, to the destruction of European Jewry."<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless one of the classics of Hebrew literature, "received by Israeli readers as indispensable literary testimony to the impact of the Shoah...",<sup>3</sup> the title is borrowed from a Sabbath prayer that rhapsodizes the rivers of faith flowing with wisdom, representing the stream of bloodshed and tears shed by the victims as well as the constant wanderings of the Jewish people that ultimately led to the Holy Land. Eisig Silberschlag acclaims *Streets of the River* as a "grand elegy" and enthuses that it is "the most abiding document of the Holocaust."<sup>4</sup> Similarly lauding the collection, Ezra Spicehandler argues that it is "one of the most moving dirges composed about the Nazi Holocaust."<sup>5</sup> Going even further, Avidov Lipsker avers that the book should be treated as a sacred artifact, demanding from its readers that they acknowledge and admit its religious form and compelling those who "reach its gates to stand with awe as if before a holy object."<sup>6</sup>

### Central Themes in the Greenberg Canon

It is noteworthy that in Greenberg's literary universe, there exists an acute dichotomy—a duality that is the golden thread running through the 385

pages of the vengeful utterances. The cycle of poems by Israel's prophet of wrath oscillates between the passages that are at times almost involuntary in mood, exploring the horrible calamity, to imaginative modes of rebirth shot through with visions of regeneration. Indeed, Greenberg's *ars poetica*, while showcasing a tortured human soul that throbs beneath a cracked surface, abrim with feelings of mourning, guilt, and powerlessness, simultaneously betrays a shard of hope. As such, the poet renarrativizes the Holocaust experience, presenting it through the prism of the ancient covenant that God had made with Abraham and that encases within its midst ultimate salvation.

Renewal and survival are based on the age-old doctrine that Jewish existence is immortal and cannot be brought to an end. Amid the scenes of massacres and mourning, one discovers a note of faith—that out of the ruins, post-Holocaust Jewry will triumphantly rise to once again establish sovereignty in the cherished homeland, restoring the Davidic destiny in fulfilment of manifest national destiny. In that spirit, Wolf-Monzon and Livnat explain that alongside Greenberg's exploration of the satanic viciousness of the gentile and his cruel degradation and abasement of the Jew, Greenberg probes the "spiritual strength and sources of inspiration through which he seeks to restore the entire spiritual world that was lost with the destruction of European Jewry."<sup>7</sup> This is in concert with the poet's desire to examine a newer and more broad metaphysical thematic quilt that includes the "sources of Jewish faith, the conception of God after the holocaust, the uniqueness of the Jewish people, and the yearning for the rise of the third kingdom of Israel."<sup>8</sup>

Also looming large is the overarching topos of Greenberg's personal loss on which the poet hangs a large part of his jeremiads. For the orphaned narrator, the destruction of his childhood paradise extends far beyond the individual scale to include an entire people who stand at the edge of an abyss. To return to Spicehandler, he maintains the following: "For Greenberg the Holocaust puts into question not only God's theodicy but appears as a horrible practical joke which God and history have played on the Jew."<sup>9</sup> Yet, unexpectedly, Greenberg resuscitates the idea of salvation for the broken people, embracing the God he seemed to rebuke: "Thus, out of the ashes of the crematoria, redemption will come, and out of despair of faith. The Holocaust and the vision of sovereignty are two sides of the same coin of history."<sup>10</sup> Roskies further adds that Greenberg "was not tormented by the loss of faith; the poet could rouse the people even in God's absence."<sup>11</sup> And although settlement in the Land of Israel augured a redemptive value for the people, "What could not be purged, mediated, redeemed or transmuted was the incalculable loss of life. The death of the millions was unassimilable; it admitted no analogies...That was the cumulative force of Greenberg's massive lament."<sup>12</sup>

### **Streets of the River**

In *Streets of the River*, the prophet-poet stirs the bleakest depths of his seared soul and unveils a magisterial, philosophical treatise that renders the Holocaust in an inventive, outstanding fashion. To borrow Alan Mintz's words, in the collection, the poet confronts the extermination of European Jewry through a "...description of the procession of Jewish victims; the loss of self-confidence and engulfment by feelings of guilt and impotence; and a return to messianic hope and the vision of the Kingdom of Israel."<sup>13</sup>

Greenberg, a scion of a Galician Hassidic family, was au courant with the traditional Jewish model of lament (*kinah*), based upon the Book of Lamentations, which narrates the fall of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon, among other events. Still, Greenberg felt the need to partly jettison the fettering canonical shackles of the past in his desire to evoke the vast dehumanization and murder, as well as his personal grief. As a result, his work is a braiding of German expressionism and the ancient paradigms of Hebrew poetry, thus creating a whirlpool of rasping invectives, abrupt shifts in tone and tempo, and apocalyptic visions reminiscent of Jeremiah and the *Midrashim* such as *Eicha Rabbah*.<sup>14</sup> In the main, Greenberg, who in 1920 assumed the role of copublisher of Warsaw's *Khalyastre* ("The Gang"), an expressionist, avant-garde literary journal, drew from German expressionism the operating idea that Jewish poetry must be undergirded and imbued with realism, engage with people's contemporary experiences. As Abramson appositely notes, Greenberg oeuvre closely mirrors the writing of German expressionist poet August Stramm, in that his verse suggest, rather than describe, "Greenberg's text is a collage of tropes, as if clear statement is impossible in this context and meaning must be intuited from the disparate verbal pictures. His metaphors are opaque, together establishing a kind of objective correlative of death and misery, blood and suffering in a watery landscape of river, rain, and poisonous fog, with little difference between night and day."<sup>15</sup>

It is also significant that as a soldier in the Austrian army in the years 1915 to 1917, Greenberg personally encountered the brutal pogroms that took place in Poland. These seismic events ruptured the core of Jewish society and created a rupture from which it never recovered. It is not too much to say that the waves of antisemitic attacks profoundly affected the young poet and left an indelible imprint upon his work that would become an exemplar of secular national sorrow. Certainly, as Uri Shavit notes, Greenberg's overarching conviction, shaped after the First World War, was that European Jewry faced total annihilation because of Christianity's "imminent, existential and eternal hatred...a result of the impending transfiguration of the unending hatred for the people of Israel and the coalescence of dark forces at a given historical moment."<sup>16</sup>

What is more, Greenberg's recurring frustration and anger were amplified by the fact that his warnings of an impending apocalypse were not given any credence by the sanguine populace, but rather were rejected as fanciful, adding to his rage. It followed that Greenberg would proclaim himself as the castigating oracle, the only one capable of recording and wrestling with this traumatic and terrible calamity. Indeed, Greenberg is regarded as the "greatest innovator in the annals of the Zionist idea, and one who has read Jewish history wholly and correctly: hence he was able to warn of the approaching disaster..."<sup>17</sup>

The cycle of poems in *Streets of the River* is typically infused with an extreme, violent polemic against the pillaging gentiles, freighted by manifold exclamation marks, stirring metaphors, epic images, and free, lengthy verse. And while Greenberg promotes the poetic persona à la Walt Whitman, the emphasis in this moving dirge is often on the national myth and the collective memory of the Jewish disaster. Neta Stahl observes that in *Streets of the River*, Greenberg eschews urging violence and the spilling of blood of Israel's tormentors. Rather, he now

...re-identifies with the old Jewish stance, distancing himself from "the nations" and the aesthetics of blood. Instead, he now focuses exclusively on those whose blood was shed... It is not God who bears witness now, but the poem itself, emphasizing the poet's role as the voice of the victims. This time blood does not trigger a poetic call for revenge, but rather a cry, which the poet transforms into a poetic lament.<sup>18</sup>

Stahl further maintains that Greenberg's role has been transformed "from the one who calls for blood to be shed, to the one who voices the lament for those whose blood had been shed. This shift is an important theme in *Streets of the River*, many of whose poems are meta-poetic and deal with this very question of how to represent the great *Hurban* (destruction) of European Jewry."<sup>19</sup>

At heart, the poems lament both the gruesome fate that befell Greenberg's parents and sisters whom he could not save and the victims that perished in Auschwitz. Often is the case that Greenberg references quintessential Jewish symbols such as the family at the Sabbath table, with a nod to the early Hebrew poets, while at the same time accentuating his own voice as a metonym for the whole people. Moreover, Greenberg frequently describes the unspeakable slaughter through the mourning of his own immediate family, affirming the individual voice while stressing the universality of the pain. In doing so, the reader is positioned and is imperceptibly co-opted into imaginatively identifying with the experience they were excluded from. It is thus not surprising that in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, given the paucity of Hebrew narratives responding to the ghastly terror, Greenberg's poetry was used by the Israeli

state in Holocaust commemorations and gradually assumed center stage in the country's official and public stance toward the remembering of the Shoah.

Overall, the message hammered home to Israelis was that there existed a connection between those Jews who lost their lives in millennia of murderous sprees and those exterminated in the camps—both part of a holistic chain of catastrophes leading to the establishment of Israel. Actually, Greenberg unequivocally underlined the notion of rebirth of the Jewish state and the sacrifice of the victims in the poem “Keter Kina Lechol Beit Israel” (“A crown of Lament for the House of Israel”): “They in the blaze of battle and their sons—because of them: they have a land and a sea.”<sup>20</sup>

The tempestuous bard's oeuvre is marked by an explosive rhetorical force, seething with exhortations and powerful declamations against the tormentors of his people. The speaker's individual persona addressing the reader accentuates the subjective, potent voice, conflating the political with the personal. Not infrequently, the “I” is employed to dramatize the horrors endured by the European Jew and the nation, suffering destruction and clinging to their eternal longing for redemption. Skirting along the edge of egocentric obsessiveness and with an intense sense of thunderous fury, Greenberg assumes the role of a biblical prophet to bemoan the devastating terror of the Holocaust, willing to confront and denounce the God who, instead of sheltering his chosen people, had surrendered them to the murderous gentiles. In one scathing poem, “Le’elohim B’eiropa (“To God in Europe”)<sup>21</sup> Greenberg beseeches God to wander through Europe and through its conquered lands, where the six million sheep of Israel are buried underneath the ground, covered in snow, victims of the Christians’ “Winter of horror.”<sup>22</sup> According to Aliza-Corb Bonfil, Greenberg embraces a transcendental outlook, recognizing that God is a passive being, who observes the suffering of his people from afar and does not intervene.<sup>23</sup> She further argues that Greenberg believed that regeneration and salvation for the Jewish people would not spring from any divine action, but from human, prophetic activity based on the Abrahamic covenant.

### **The Indifference of God**

Elsewhere, Greenberg confirms God's indifference, declaiming that the chosen people cannot rely on their creator for refuge, mercy, or protection. In complaining and raging about the silence of God, the poet contrasts Christianity with Judaism, betraying his anger at the lack of heavenly intercession: “The Jews did not have bells to ring God. Blessed is Christianity since it has bells in the heavens. And their voice passes over the plains now, in the springtime, flowing heavily over the wide landscapes of brightness and fragrance. He is mighty and the ruler of all: there is nothing to pass over, as He once passed over the roofs of the Jews....”<sup>24</sup>

In offering his assessment of the poet's central message about the divine, Roskies maintains that:

Since God, the Shepherd-Seer, had retired to heaven, leaving no covenantal rainbow behind, the few surviving Jews would continue to whore after strange gods until the poets' rebuke, steeled by centuries of sorrow, would finally rip the clouds apart, making a flood of retribution descend. Meanwhile, the murdered Jews of Europe, whose treatment at the hands of the Gentiles defied all comparisons, would remain the ultimate reference point of torture and extermination.<sup>25</sup>

While the poet points an accusatory finger at the Nazis, he is intent on reminding us that the European genocide that engulfed his people is only but one link in a chain of mythic narratives that have divided Christian from Jew. To wit, Alter notes that, "Greenberg means not only to record the immediate pain of a people's bereavement, but to bring to bear on it a transhistorical perspective, which is to say, to fit the historical suffering of the Jews into a larger structure of myth."<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, Chaya Shacham avers that:

Greenberg creates an analogy between the events of the Shoah in the 1940s in Europe and the decrees of the Crusades and the Spanish expulsion. In all of these, he sees a continuum of deliberate targeting of the Jews, and when searching for a reason for these episodes, he attributes it to the historical hatred of Christianity, a hatred whose manifestations recur in every generation...Greenberg establishes a broad context for what he deems an eternal enmity between Christianity and Judaism....<sup>27</sup>

The opening verse of *Streets of the River*, "Luach bemavo Alef" ("First introductory tablet") powerfully exemplifies this theme:

It happened to us yesterday...but it is as if it happened generations ago /  
Encrusted in ancient parchments buried in concealed bundles within  
pottery jugs / We found this written in blood of black: There was a flood  
of Jewish blood, unlike anything else, trembling, severed from the Exiles,  
And even an angel who dipped his wings in the blood is murmuring—no  
remnant. In Zion followed the events of Ararat.<sup>28</sup>

In deploying the genre of lamentation or Eulogy-construct Holocaust memory, Greenberg is coming to grips with an emotional entanglement that is buried within his own attempt to cover up and suppress his personal catastrophe, namely, the loss of his family. In one dream sequence, the author visits his family home in Poland, now occupied by a gentile family that cooks pork in the family's pots and sips wine from Sabbath goblets. The narrator, shamed and distressed, admits that there is nothing he can do. Further, Greenberg depicts this tragedy in antiquated terms, as if it occurred in ancient times and etched in pottery jugs, since his cracked, weakened voice cannot

contain the private anguish and therefore the pain must be stored in an archaeological museum of national torment.<sup>29</sup>

Ezra Spicehandler asserts that, for Greenberg, the Shoah is a calamity that will forever divide Christianity from Judaism: “The tragedy, in his view, is the logical culmination of the 2,000 year confrontation between the cross and the Star of David and the six million dead are an insuperable barrier which shall eternally separate Christian from Jew.”<sup>30</sup> David Roskies concurs, adding: “Greenberg’s Jewish response to catastrophe was one of unreconcilable oppositions: Because those who dreamed of redemption had all been destroyed, the nations were left to make their own choice between ‘Sinai, The Tablets of the Laws, the God of Israel’ and the pagan blood lust of Christianity.”<sup>31</sup> In this ahistorical version, the modern catastrophe is situated within a broader story line in which the Jews, from time immemorial, have been subjected to persecution by the same archetypal enemy—Christianity and the Crusades: “Again, Germany, draws out its breasts and summons the people of the Cross to its thigh,”<sup>32</sup> we read in one poem.

Overhanging Greenberg’s entire arc are religious themes—specifically, the Binding of Isaac—which is intimately related to his belief that it was the age-old libel of Jews as Christ killers that drove the “Gentiles” (a term he frequently uses to denote the murderers, which include not only the Nazis but their collaborators the Poles and Ukrainians) in the fantastical quest to exterminate the Jews. From Stahl again:

...he depicts the Gentiles/Christians (and not only the Germans) as barbarian and blood-thirsty pagans, whose beastly desire has been directed toward the Jews throughout history and has now found its most triumphant fulfilment... Greenberg here accuses not only the murderers themselves, but also the silent bystanders... The effect is to blame the whole world... for the murder of the Jews, who were created in God’s image with man’s blood. The Gentiles, with their wild animal nature/blood and desire to consume human blood, have thus murdered humanity itself.<sup>33</sup>

Various poems center on the artist’s close and extended family as he laments their death, though in the process of imagining their end, he braids the personal with the national, grieving over the fate of his destroyed people. He details the horror and the slaughter, accusing the gentile nation for their crimes and issuing a warning about the future that awaits them in a world absent of the Jews. Enrobed by Jobian desperation and protestation, Greenberg speaks of a time when a Jewish messiah will exact a heavy vengeance on those bloodthirsty nations, collaborators, and bystanders who perpetrated the unspeakable deeds against his brethren, bringing darkness into their world. This accords with Greenberg’s religious and biblical schema in which the Jewish people are always granted redemption following a disaster. In fact, the poem “Shir Ha’malach Hagadol” (“The Song of the Great March”)

directly references the Jewish people's spiritual triumph over adversity, "...but our will to live, to return and rule as we once ruled, from field to sea, fortress and wall. We have not been defeated in battle, we have not been overtaken by the sword, have not been dominated by the teeth of despair and pain."<sup>34</sup>

The deeply veined sense of dejection by the lack of heavenly intercession and indifference is registered by the poet's employment of an assortment of metaphors and images drawn principally from nature, such as the sun, snow, flowers, rivers, and forests that function as an evil expanse that harbors and hides the bestial atrocities. Indeed, the primary locus of extermination in Greenberg is not to be found in the familiar death camps, but in pastoral areas. The idyllic beauty of nature—such as the sun, which is anthropomorphized as laughing while the crematoria burn the bodies of the victims—dramatically and chillingly contrasts with the indescribable human brutality unfolding in its midst.

This trope is finely illustrated in the poem, "Tachat shen macharashtam" ("Under the Tooth of their Plough")<sup>35</sup> in which the seemingly tranquil Polish countryside, fused with the Christian symbology of the church bells, serves as scene where the savage farmers carry out their slaughter, "Again, the snows have melted...and the murderers now are—farmers."<sup>36</sup> The ploughshares that usually emblemize the tools utilized to cultivate the land and which epitomize rural life morph into a device with a tooth that digs up the "fields of my graves." Later, when spring returns, the Jews have disappeared "Under the tooth of the plough of the Christians."<sup>37</sup> The author underlines the farmers' wilful cruelty when he writes that when the skeletons of the Jews are discovered in the furrow, "...the ploughman will not be saddened or shocked. He will smile...recognise it in the strike of his tool."<sup>38</sup> Concurrently, in another poem, the terms drawn from nature also serve to depict the slayers as wild animals and the whole land as a killing field: "We, the Jews, are now in this world, and all this killing land revolves in the heart."<sup>39</sup> For instance, Greenberg's fictively reconstructs the felling of his father in a snowy field, again, to underline the lack of God's protection and how pervasive is human injustice.

The theme of German barbarity looms large in "Lo nidemenu leklavim bein hagoyim" ("We Were Not Likened to Dogs Among the Gentiles"), a disturbing poem that shines a light on the wicked and their treatment of the Jews. The artist gasps at the love and care bestowed upon the dog by his gentile owners, who grieve at his passing as they would a family member, while denying the Jew any similar humane compassion afforded to the animal. According to Greenberg, the violation of the Jew is comparable to that meted out to an infected sheep:

We were not led like sheep to the slaughter in the boxcars. For like leprous sheep they led us to extinction. Over all the beautiful



landscapes of Europe... The gentiles did not handle their sheep as they handle our bodies; Before the slaughter they did not pull out the teeth of their sheep: They did not strip the wool from their bodies as they did to us: They did not push the sheep into the fire to make ash of the living. And to scatter the ashes over streams and sewers.<sup>40</sup>

In a volcanic outburst, the poem's coda contains the vehement warning that the desecration of Jewish life will forever be embedded in the annals of western civilization, destined to become the axis of reference for all human atrocities to come: "And there are no analogies to this, our disaster that came to us and their hands? There are no other analogies (all words are shades of shadow). Therein lies the horrifying phrase: No other analogies!"<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, Greenberg references the murder of his father by a Nazi soldier on a snowy hill, the invasion of the Jewish home by gentiles who engrave a cross onto the walls, and a yearning to be buried with his parents for he cannot live without them. It is noteworthy that hand in hand with his escalating rage against the evildoers, Greenberg at times expresses disapproval and castigates the Jews, whom he believes were helpless and did not offer any resistance to their oppressors.

In the lacerating poem "Keter kina lechol Beit Yisrael" ("A crown of Lament for the House of Israel"),<sup>42</sup> Greenberg conjures up the haunting and disturbing image of the Jews marching toward their death, naked and barefoot, through the fields, toward the crematorium. Suddenly, he notices the faces of his parents, sisters, and their families. In one stanza, his nephew Shmuel pleads with his uncle, questioning his seeming lack of concern, and asking why he has abandoned him to the executioners and has journeyed to Jerusalem. Burning with guilt and shame, after lamenting the death of his sister, the poet wonders how, confronted with a world devoid of mercy and divine providence, he can pray and enlist the aid of heavens or how he can sit for a meal, embrace another, laugh out loud or express love while underneath him lie his family's silent blood and corpses.

*Streets of the River* is the only volume in which Greenberg subjects himself to such intense flagellation and serrating sorrow, most conspicuously when he recalls his own inadequacies and his desertion of his sister.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, Greenberg's absence from the death circle that enveloped his kin remains for the poet an injurious and macabre verity that he cannot come to grips with. In this connection, as Lipsker points out, the theme of theodicy that runs through Greenberg's series of poems, also brings into sharp focus and mirrors the poet's own sense of culpability and failings.<sup>44</sup>

Further, the poet points to his own inadequacy in finding the right pathways to reach God, asking how he is able to heartily praise the Lord in the absence of heavenly providence. Yet, abrim with sorrow and torment, Greenberg conjures up an uplifting tableau of revived nationalism that

unfolds on Mount Sinai and in which the Jewish nation reclaims their ancient glory.

The intermingling of biblical motifs with the European genocide is further amplified in “Elohim! Hitzaltani me-ur Ashkenaz” (“Lord! You Saved Me from Ur-Germany As I Fled”<sup>45</sup>). Employing the legend in which God saves Abram from the fire (Ur) after being tried and sentenced to death, the poet equates the furnaces of the ancient Chaldees with the crematoria of Auschwitz. Further, the poet’s survival (albeit with a scarred and riven psyche) and the shielding of Israel from Nazi attack is a redemptive affirmation of divine kindness and a sign that the holy covenant will be actualized with the return of the Jews to their homeland.

### Conclusion

Above all, Greenberg’s central message in the cycle of poems discussed here, is that the supreme form of retribution will be victory over the Jewish people’s enemies and the ascendancy of Jewish pride in the land of their forefathers. In that context, one could argue that Greenberg is, in fact, propounding the Zionist principle of national revival, believing that the redemption and deliverance of his people to the Land of Israel is a direct result of the material forces of history, namely, the suffering endured by the Jews at the hands of the Nazis. At the same time, Greenberg does see the end of exile in terms of divine redemption, marshalling as proof of God’s intercession the fact that Palestine was spared a Nazi invasion.

In exploring the genius of *Streets of the River*, it is easy to understand why it is considered as the single greatest literary response to the Holocaust in the Hebrew language. Still haunting readers today, the poems remain unmatched for their thundering force and rhetorical heights. Ablaze with apocalyptic wrath, the dramatic series of lamentation pieces rage at the barbarity of the Nazi oppressors and the ancient tradition of antisemitism buried within Christianity while mourning the dead. Doubtless, even those critics who rejected Greenberg’s political ideology “recognised him as the one great poet of his generation and as a superior thinker.”<sup>46</sup> So monumental was the impact of this work that, soon after its publication, the Dean of Israeli critics, the late Baruch Kurzweil, declaimed that *Streets of the River* “is the most commanding and authentic historical document of the life of the nation of Israel and the 20<sup>th</sup> century catastrophe that struck our people...it is without precedent...this book of poetry is a magnificent, singular event in our literature, the most faithful reflection of our reality, the perfect fusion of the image of loss and redemption.”<sup>47</sup>

As Tamar Wolf-Monzon and Zohar Livnat argue, Greenberg marshalled elements and language from the Hebrew Bible and medieval poetry, “which has developed since the era of the piyyut.”<sup>48</sup> The scholars cite, the poet’s continuous use of rhetorical terms such as kosef (“yearning”), nigun (“the soul’s melody,”) and nofim (“landscapes”) that underline his connection to

medieval Hebrew.<sup>49</sup> In fact, Greenberg, rejected the use of the term *Holocaust*, instead choosing “The destruction of the exiles,” to argue that the “Final Solution” was an inevitable and direct extension of the atrocities of the past. In other words, by drawing such equations, Greenberg mythologizes the evil of the Third Reich and its crematoria as a link in the scriptural chain dating back to the casting of Abraham into the oven in Ur. Accordingly, Greenberg, in coming to terms with the overall destruction of European Jewry and the loss of his family, manages to suffuse the national tragedy with a scorching personal sense of guilt while at the same time confecting a magnificent vision of a messianic hope, redemption, and restoration of the Kingdom of Israel.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Colin Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Alter, *Defenses of the Imagination: Jewish Writers and Modern Historical Crisis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 106.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Weingrad, “An Unknown Yiddish Masterpiece that Anticipated the Holocaust,” *Mosaic*, April 15, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Eisig Silberschlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance II: Hebrew Literature in the Land of Israel 1870–1970* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977), 115.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra Spicehandler, “Greenberg, Uri Zevi,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 8, 2nd ed., ed. Fred Skolnik, 75 (New York: Thomson Gale, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Avidov Lipsker, *Shir adam, Shir Khachol: Sheva mason al shirat Uri Tzvi Greenberg veshetaim al shirat Elza Lasker Shiler (Red Poem, blue poem: seven essays on Uri Zvi Greenberg and two essays on Else Lasker-Schuler)* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2010), 139.

<sup>7</sup> Tamar Wolf-Monzon and Zohar Livnat, “The Poetic Codes of Rechovot ha-nahar (“Streets of the River”), *Shofar* 23, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 20.

<sup>8</sup> Wolf-Monzon and Zohar Livnat, “The Poetic Codes of Rechovot ha-nahar”, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Spicehandler, “Greenberg, Uri Zevi,” 75.

<sup>10</sup> Spicehandler, “Greenberg, Uri Zevi,” 75.

<sup>11</sup> David G. Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 567.

<sup>12</sup> Roskies, ed., *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, 567.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Mintz, “Streets of the River,” in *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 178–79.

<sup>14</sup> Talia Horowitz. *Hakina Be'shirat Uri Tzvi Greengberg*. Kiryat Shmuel: Shahanan Publishers: 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Glenda Abramson. “The Wound of Memory: Uri Zevi Greenberg's “From the Book of the Wars of the Gentiles” *Shofar*. Volume 29 (1) (Fall 2010):11.

<sup>16</sup> Uri Shavit, “Eschatology and Politics: Between ‘A Great Prophecy’ and ‘A small Prophecy’— the case of Uri Zvi Greenberg,” 330, in *HA'MATOKONET VE'HA'DMUT: Studies on the Poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg*, ed. H. Weiss, 330 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Shavit, “Uri Zvi Greenberg,” 63.

<sup>18</sup> Netta Stahl, “‘Man’s Red Soup’—Blood and the Art of Esau in the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg,” in *Jewish Blood: Reality and Metaphor in history, religion and culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Hart (London: Routledge, 2009), 166–67.

<sup>19</sup> Stahl, “‘Man’s Red Soup’—Blood and the Art of Esau in the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg”, 166.

<sup>20</sup> Uri Tzvi Greenberg, “Keter Kina Lechol Beit Israel” (“A Crown of Lament for the All of Israel) in *Rehovot Ha'nehar: Luach bemavo alef ad shir melo hayareach*. Vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1992), 59.

<sup>21</sup> Uri Tzvi Greenberg, “Le'elohi B'eiropa,” in *Rehovot Ha'nehar: Luach bemavo alef ad shir melo hayareach*, Vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1992), 33–36.

<sup>22</sup> Greenberg, “Le'elohim B'eiropa,” 35.

<sup>23</sup> Aliza-Corb Bonfil, *Where Words are Silence* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011), 170–71.

<sup>24</sup> Greenberg, “Tachat shen macharashtam” in *Rehovot Ha'nehar'* Vol. 6, 67–68.

<sup>25</sup> David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 273.

<sup>26</sup> Alter, *Defenses of the Imagination*, 106.

<sup>27</sup> Chaya Shacham, *Bedek Bayit: al levatey zehut, ideologia vecheshbon nefesh basifrut ha'ivrit hachadsha* (*Home-Searching: On Identity, Ideology and Introspection in Modern Hebrew Literature*. (Sde Boker: Machon ben Gurion, 2012) 169.

<sup>28</sup> Greenberg, “Luach bemavo alef” in *Rehovot Ha'nehar*, Vol. 5, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Lipsker, *Shir adom, Shir Khachol*, 144.

<sup>30</sup> Spicehandler, “Greenberg, Uri Zevi,” 75.

<sup>31</sup> Roskies, *The Literature of rgDestruction*, 567.

<sup>32</sup> Greenberg, “Luach bemavo alef” in *Rehovot Ha'nehar*, Vol. 5, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Stahl, “Man’s Red Soup,” 168.

- <sup>34</sup> Greenberg, "Shir Ha'malach Hagadol," in *Rehovot Ha'nehar*, Vol. 6, 117.
- <sup>35</sup> Greenberg, "Tachat shen macharashtam," in *Rehovot Ha'nehar*, Vol. 6, 67.
- <sup>36</sup> Greenberg, "Tachat shen macharashtam," 67.
- <sup>37</sup> Greenberg, "Tachat shen macharashtam," 67.
- <sup>38</sup> Greenberg, "Tachat shen macharashtam," 67.
- <sup>39</sup> Greenberg, "Shir Ha'malach Hagadol," 117.
- <sup>40</sup> Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Lo nidmenu leklavim bein hagoyim" ("We Were Not Likened to Dogs Among the Gentiles"), in *Modern Hebrew Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. Ruth Finer, 124–26 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).
- <sup>41</sup> Greenberg, "Lo nidmenu leklavim bein hagoyim", 26.
- <sup>42</sup> Greenberg, "Keter kina lechol Beit Yisrael," in *Rehovot Ha'nehar*, Vol. 5, 46.
- <sup>43</sup> Lipsker, *Shir adom, Shir Khachol*, 152.
- <sup>44</sup> Lipsker, *Shir adom, Shir Khachol*, 154.
- <sup>45</sup> Uri Zvi Greenberg, "Elohim! Hitzaltani me-ur Ashkenaz" ("Lord! You Saved Me from Ur-Germany As I Fled"), in *Modern Hebrew Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. Ruth Finer, 126–29 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).
- <sup>46</sup> Yaacov Shavit, "Uri Zvi Greenberg: Conservative Revolutionarism and National Messianism," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 48 (Fall 1988): 63–72.
- <sup>47</sup> Baruch Kurzweil, "Shirey rehovot Ha-Nahar," in *Rehovot Ha-Nahar le Uri Zvi Greenberg: mechkarim ve-teudot*, ed. Lipsker Avidav and Tamar Wolf Monzon (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2007), 45, 53.
- <sup>48</sup> Tamar Wolf-Monzon and Zohar Livnat, "The Poetic Codes of Rechovot ha-nahar ("Streets of the River"), *Shofar* 23, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 19.
- <sup>49</sup> Tamar Wolf-Monzon and Zohar Livnat, "The Poetic Codes of Rechovot ha-nahar ("Streets of the River"), *Shofar* 23, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 20.