



## Introduction

1. S. Y. Agnon's Acceptance Speech for the 1966 Nobel Prize in Literature

[https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1966/agnon-speech.html](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1966/agnon-speech.html)

It is said in the Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 23a): "In Jerusalem, the men of discrimination did not sit down to dine in company until they knew who their companions were to be," so I will now tell you who am I, whom you have agreed to have at your table.

As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But always I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem. In a dream, in a vision of the night, I saw myself standing with my brother-Levites in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David, King of Israel, melodies such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed and its people went into exile. I suspect that the angels in charge of the Shrine of Music, fearful lest I sing in wakefulness what I had sung in dream, made me forget by day what I had sung at night; for if my brethren, the sons of my people, were to hear, they would be unable to bear their grief over the happiness they have lost. To console me for having prevented me from singing with my mouth, they enable me to compose songs in writing.

2. An English translation

<https://torontotorah.com/flyers/circles.pdf>

## Controversy

3. Gershom Scholem, *Reflections on S. Y. Agnon*, Commentary Magazine Dec. 1967

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/reflections-on-s-y-agnon/>

Agnon began by writing short stories, and it is in this mode that he has achieved a perfection which leaves the reader breathless. More than twenty years of intense productivity passed before he published his first long book... The secret of their perfection lies in Agnon's compression of an infinite wealth of detail into infinitesimal space. Unsurpassed in this respect are his masterpieces of fiction in the third volume of his collected writings; many of these tales are suffused with an atmosphere of immense sadness, while at the same time they hold out a promise of consolation. There is, for example, the story of Azriel Moshe the Porter, an ignoramus who grows enamored of the books in the great library of the Beth Hamidrash and teaches himself the titles of all the books whose contents he will never be able to grasp; this Azriel Moshe becomes the keeper of the library, dying a martyr's death while shielding the books with his body in the hour of persecution. Another story concerns an impoverished vinegar maker, all alone in the world, who saves up diligently in order to make his way to the Holy Land; uncertain as to where he should hide his money for safekeeping, he places it in an almsbox under a crucifix on the road. Upon coming finally to fetch his cache, the vinegar maker is arrested for robbing sacred funds. He is imprisoned and condemned to die, but is visited in his cell by "that man," as Jesus is called in Hebrew, who takes him to Jerusalem, where he is found dead by his compatriots.

4. An Open Letter to S. Y. Agnon, Feb. 26 1960, quoted in Erela Abramson, **במעגלי צדק**

With its publication, D. Sadan (then: Stok) protested that it flirted with "that man"... Chaim Lieberman also mentioned you in a derogatory way regarding the battle [regarding the alleged conversion of Shalom Asch to Christianity]. Our master Rabbi Yitzchak Aizik Herzog asked that you recant from that story and bury it. Your established translator, Professor Dr. B. Kurzweil, could not find a satisfactory explanation for the story...

"In one" - He has suffered terribly

5. Daniel 9:25

אבותיו ואבות אבותיו היו סוחרים יין מפורסמים אבל בצוק העתים ירדו מנכסיהם

ותדע ותשפיל מן מצא דבר להשיב ולבנות ירושלים עד משיח נגיד שבעים שבעה ושבעים ששים ושנים תשוב ונבנתה רחוב וחרוץ **ובצוק העתים:** Know and you will have insight, from the issuing of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem until the anointed prince, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, it will return and be built, roads and ramparts, in times of trouble.

6. Psalms 128:5

בדירה זו לא ראה טובה מימיו  
יְבָרְכֶךָ ד' מִצִּיּוֹן וְרָאָה בְּטוֹב יְרוּשָׁלַם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

May Gd bless you from Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all of the days of your life.

"But since" - Love of Israel is strong in him, and he sets a goal of aliyah

7. Mishnah, Taanit 2:9

The first set of three fasts would be Monday-Thursday-Monday, and the second set of three fasts would be Thursday-Monday-Thursday.

8. Rabbi Jacob Moelin (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c. Germany/Austria), Maharil, Laws of the Period between Passover and Shavuot 5  
In Iyar they fast the fasts on the Monday-Thursday-Monday after Passover. And so they fast after Succot. They linked this to the verse, "Serve Gd with happiness, and rejoice in trembling," meaning: in the place where there is happiness, there shall be the trembling of a fast. (Midrash) And they also linked it to Job, "And it was, when they completed a circuit of feast days, Job sent and he sanctified them and he woke early in the morning and brought burnt offerings according to their number [of his children], saying, 'Perhaps my children sinned.'"

9. Talmud, Yoma 35b

They said of Hillel the Elder that daily, he would work and earn a *tropik*. Half he gave to the guard of the study hall, and half for his support and for the support of his household.

10. Mishnah, Maaser Sheni 2:6

One may redeem silver [*maaser sheni*] coins for copper in a case of need, but not to leave them that way. Rather, one must again redeem those for silver.

11. Samuel II 18:14

הואיל ואהבת ארץ ישראל היתה תקועה בלבו חישב בדעתו לעלות לארץ ישראל  
...וַיִּקַּח שְׁלֹשָׁה נֶשֶׁבִּים בְּכַפוֹ וַיִּתְקַעם בָּלֵב אֶבְשָׁלוֹם...

...And [Yoav] took three spears in his hand, and he stabbed them into the heart of Avshalom...

"From then on" - He feels great joy from this drive to make aliyah

12. Talmud, Berachot 3b

[Psalms 119:62 says, "At midnight I rise to thank You for the laws of Your justice."] Until midnight he would involve himself in Torah, and from then on he would sing songs and praises.

13. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Poland), Mishneh Berurah 1:9

The Kabbalists went on at great length regarding the value of rising at midnight [to mourn for the Temple] for it is great.

14. Mishnah, Berachot 2:5

היה מתפלל ולא דקדק באותיותיה

קרא ולא דקדק באותיותיה רבי יוסי אומר יצא. רבי יהודה אומר לא יצא.

If one recites Shema but does not enunciate the letters carefully, Rabbi Yosi says he has fulfilled his obligation, Rabbi Yehudah says he has not fulfilled his obligation.

15. מאמרי אדמו"ר הזקן תקס"ה א. pg. 219 The first Lubavitcher Rebbe, on Dance as elevation

This is dancing, that the groom and bride dance opposite each other. First they are close together, and then they become distanced, apart in space, and the bride turns her face, etc. And then they draw near, actually close... For through the duration of the Diaspora, until the Redeemer comes, speedily in our days, it is above, the groom and bride above...

16. Talmud, Berachot 31a

Such was the practice of Rabbi Akiva: When he prayed communally he abbreviated and ascended, lest he strain the community. And when he prayed privately, one would leave him in one corner and find him in a different corner. Why so much? From the bendings and bowings.

17. Talmud, Berachot 31a

One may not fill his mouth with laughter in this world, as in Tehillim 126:2, "Then our mouth will be filled with laughter, and our tongue with song." When? When the nations will say, "G-d has performed great deeds for them."

18. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 33b

"A *teruah* is as long as three *yevavot*." But we have learned, "A *teruah* is as long as three *shevarim*!"... One said [a human wails] by groaning, and one said by ululation.

"One day" - The container breaks, and he is ready to go

19. Talmud, Bava Metzia 83b-84a

כובשים פניהם בקרקע ומתאנחים על חילול ד' ואומרים "הוי חומץ בן יין"

Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon advised a government police officer [regarding how to catch a thief]... Word of this was brought to the government, and they said, "Let the reader of the scroll be the one to carry it out!" They brought Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, and he caught thieves.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karchah sent to him: Vinegar, son of wine! How long will you pass the nation of our Gd to be murdered?! Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon responded: I am eliminating thorns from the vineyard. He replied: Let the Owner of the vineyard come and eliminate His own thorns...

20. Talmud, Bava Batra 16b

הואיל והכסף שבקופה שלו הוא ואין אדם נתפס על ממונו  
מכאן שאין אדם נתפס בשעת צער

We see from here that one is not caught for [what he does in] his time of pain.