

1. Tracy Frydberg, *Mystery of who wrote the 'Prayer for the State of Israel' is finally solved*, Times of Israel Apr. 18 '18
Unbeknownst to most worshippers is the decades-long debate over who back in 1948 authored the prayer, which was then and remains today an important addition to Jewish and Israeli liturgy. Until now, theories have split academics into two camps — those who attribute the prayer to Israeli author S.Y. Agnon, and those who believe Israel's first chief Ashkenazi rabbi, Isaac Halevi Herzog penned the poem. But recent findings discovered by Dr. Yoel Rappel, an Israeli scholar of Jewish history, confirm that Herzog, the grandfather of current opposition leader in the Knesset, Isaac "Bougie" Herzog, was the true author of the symbolic prayer, which was then edited by his friend and Nobel Prize winner, Agnon. Rappel's findings were corroborated by Israel's National Library. The evidence and discourse between Agnon and Herzog surrounding the prayer are a part of the Library's S.Y. Agnon Archive.

2. 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

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.

The Story

3. "From Enemy to Friend"

Until Talpiyot was developed, the King of the Winds reigned in the entire area; all of his nobles and servants, mighty and harsh winds, lived there on the mountain and in the valley, in the hill and the lowlands, doing as they wished, as though the land had only been given to them.

Once I happened to go there, and I saw that it was pleasant, and the air was pure, and the sky was pure techelet, and the land was spacious. I wandered there at my leisure.

The wind encountered me, and said, "What are you doing here?"

I said, "I'm wandering around."

He said, "Just wandering?" He slapped my head and threw away my hat. I bent to pick it up. The wind scattered my clothes, blowing them over my head, and it made a mockery of me. I drew my clothes off of my head; the wind reared up and knocked me down and laughed wildly. I picked myself up and stood. The wind struck me and cried, "Go away! Go away!" I saw that I could not battle one who was stronger than me, and I left.

I returned to my city and went home, but I became impatient and departed. Consciously or unconsciously, my legs brought me to Talpiyot. I remembered what the wind had done to me; I took canvas and stakes and set up a tent, a refuge from the stormy wind.

One night, as I sat there, the light was suddenly extinguished. I went out to see who had put out my light, and I found the wind standing outside. I asked it, "What do you want?"

The wind struck my mouth and punched my ears. I returned to my tent. The wind lifted my stakes, cut my rope, flipped my tent and scattered my canvas. His hand struck me, too, almost knocking me over.

I saw I could not win; I picked up my feet and returned to my city.

Returning to my city, I settled between the walls. I became impatient, and I wanted to go to a place with pleasant air. Since nowhere in the land has air like Talpiyot, I went to Talpiyot. To keep the winds from abusing me, I took wood with me and built a hut for myself, and I thought I had found rest. The wind thought otherwise. Not one day had gone by, before he knocked on my roof and shook the walls. One night he lifted the entire hut. He blew away the hut, leaving me without shelter. I picked up my legs and returned to my city.

That which happened to me once and twice, happened to me a third time. I came to my city, and became impatient with living there. My heart, oy, my heart drew me to the place from which I had been chased out. I told my heart, "Do you not see that we cannot return to the place from which I was exiled? What is impossible is impossible!" But my heart had another view. If one thousand times I said "Impossible," my heart told me one thousand times, "It certainly is possible." I brought wood and stones, and built a house for myself. I will not glorify my house; it was small, and I am not embarrassed that there are bigger, better houses. My house is small, but it has room for someone like me, who does not seek big things. The wind saw that I had built myself a house. He asked me, "What is this?" I told him, "It's a house." He laughed and said, "By your life, I have never seen anything as ridiculous as this house." I laughed, too, and I told him, "That which you have not yet seen, you will see." He laughed and said, "What is this house?" I laughed and said, "A house is a house." He laughed and said to me, "I will go check." He extended his hand and tested the door; the door broke and fell. He extended his hand and tested the windows; the windows broke and fell. In the end, he picked himself up and ascended to the roof; when he did that, the roof fell. The wind laughed at me and said, "This house you built – where is it?" I also asked, "Where is my house?" But I did not laugh.

At first, when the wind chased me out I returned to my city, but then events kept me from returning there. I sprawled between boundaries, not knowing what to do. I could not return to my city because of those events there, I could not return to Talpiyot because the wind had exiled me. To make a tent or hut – they would not last. To make a small house – that also did not stand before the wind. But perhaps – why didn't it stand before the wind? Because it was small and weak. Perhaps if it were large and strong, it would stand. I took strong wood, beams, big stones, clay and mortar, and I hired good workers, whom I watched day and night. My wisdom stood for me, and I made deep foundations. The house was built, standing on its base. When the house stood, the wind came and banged on the shutters. I asked, "Who is banging at my window?" He laughed, and said, "A neighbour." I told him, "What does a neighbour want of his neighbour on a stormy night?" He laughed and said, "A neighbour comes to bless his neighbour, dedicating his house." I told him, "Does a neighbour come through the window, like a thief?" The wind banged on the door. I asked, "Who knocks at my door?" The wind said, "I am your neighbour." I said, "You are my neighbour, come in!" He said, "The door is locked." I said, "The door is locked, I must have locked it." The wind answered, "Open it!" I said, "I am afraid of the cold. Wait until the sun comes up, and I will open it for you." When the sun rose, I went to open it for him, but I did not find him. I stood before my house and saw the whole land was desolate, no tree and no garden, just dirt and stones. I said, "I will plant a garden."

I took a hoe and worked the earth. Once the ground was plowed, I brought saplings. Rain came and watered the saplings, dew came and made them flower, sun came and made them grow. It was not long before the saplings I had planted became trees with branches. I made a bench and I sat in their shade.

One night, the wind came and struck the trees. What did the trees do? They struck back at the wind. The wind struck the trees again. The wind did not rise again; it turned and left.

From then on, the spirit of the wind was reduced, and he acted properly. Since he acted properly with me, I acted properly with him. When he came, I greeted him and invited him to sit with me on a bench in the garden, among the trees. He came with a sweet smell from the mountains and valleys, and he fanned me as with a fan. And since he was repentant, I did not remind him of his earlier deeds. And when he left me, I asked him to come again, as one does with a good neighbour. In truth, we are good neighbours, and I love him completely, and it is also possible that he loves me.

4. Rabbi Natan of Breslov, *The Praises of Rebbe Nachman, His Journey to the Land of Israel #7*

And [Rebbe Nachman] said: With every step of the journey to the Land of Israel, I sacrificed. And he said: I wish to travel immediately, however it happens, even without money - but whoever wishes to have mercy upon me may give me money for expenses. Immediately, our associates travelled among the nearby towns and immediately they gathered a sum for him to have, at least, for the expense of leaving his home. For the trip was very rushed, and they saw they could not delay him in any way, for any time. And he travelled with alacrity from his home on the 18th of Iyar [Lag ba'Omer - MT]...

5. S. Y. Agnon, *To the Galilee* Rabbi Jeffrey Saks tr.

After a few years in Jaffa and her settlements and in Jerusalem and her study halls I decided to go and see the Land—the Kinneret and Deganya kibbutzim and their inhabitants, who have added two settlements to the existing thirty-seven. I had too little money to hire a donkey to ride on or a wagon to travel in, but I had plenty of time, so I decided to make my way by foot.

I timed the trip to celebrate Lag BaOmer in Meron, because I still remembered something of what I had heard in my childhood about the spectacles and wonders witnessed on Lag BaOmer night at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I placed a loaf of bread and some olives in my pack, took my walking stick, and locked my door. I placed the key on the windowsill behind the blinds, so if a friend came to visit and found me away he could still find the key, open my room, and find himself a place to rest. It was the custom in the Land in those days that a person could always find lodging with a friend—if not a proper bed, then at least a floor to sleep on and a roof above his head.

I departed Jaffa and walked nine hours to Hadera.

6. Rabbi Natan of Breslov, *Likutei Halachot, Orach Chaim, Laws of the Minchah Prayer #7*

The essential repair was via Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his colleagues... For Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai pursued this especially, to mend the limitations mentioned earlier, to mend the level of the vessels, to extend the light of the Infinite, to reveal His Divinity in the world...

7. Bereishit 26:12-22

(יב) וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ הַנְּחָל הַחַיִּל וַיִּמְצָא בִּשְׁנָה הַהִוא וַיִּמְצָא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ ד': (יג) וַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיִּלְךָ הַלֶּוֹף וַיִּגְדַּל עַד כִּי גָדַל מְאֹד: (יד) וַיְהִי לוֹ מִקְנֵה צֹאן וַיִּמְקַנֶּה בְּקָר וּבְעִבְדָה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנֶאוּ אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: (טו) וְכָל הַבְּאֵרֹת אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ עֲבָדֵי אַבְרָהָם בְּיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו בְּיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו סָתְמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּמְלְאוּם עֶפֶר: (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל יִצְחָק לֹךְ מֵעַמְנֹנִי כִּי עֲצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְאֹד: (יז) וַיִּלְךָ מִשָּׁם יִצְחָק וַיִּחַן בְּנַחַל גְּרָר וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם: (יח) וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפֹּר אֶת בְּאֵרֹת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בְּיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיִּסְתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרַי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שְׁמוֹת כַּשְׁמֹת אֲשֶׁר קָרָא לָהֶן אָבִיו: (יט) וַיַּחְפְּרוּ עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק בְּנַחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים: (כ) וַיְרִיבוּ רָעִי גְרָר עִם רָעִי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם הַבְּאֵר עֶשֶׂק כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ: (כא) וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֲרַת וַיְרִיבוּ גַם עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ שִׁטְנָה: (כב) וַיַּעֲתֶק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֲרַת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי עֵתָה הִרְחִיב ד' לָנוּ וַיִּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ:

And Yitzchak planted in that land, and he found in that year one-hundredfold; and Gd blessed him. And the man became great, and he continued to grow to the point where he was very great. And he possessed sheep and cattle and many servants, and the Philistines were jealous/outraged of him. And all of the wells his father's servants had dug, in the days of his father Avraham, the Philistines sealed and filled with earth. And Avimelech said to Yitzchak: Leave us, for you have become much mightier than us. And Yitzchak left, and he camped in *Nachal Grar* and dwelled there. And Yitzchak again dug the water wells which had been dug in the days of his father Avraham, and which the Philistines had sealed up after Avraham's death. And he gave then names like the names his father had called them. And Yitzchak's servants dug in the nachal, and there they found a well of living water. And the shepherds of Grar fought with Yitzchak's shepherds, saying, "The water is ours!" And they called the well *Eisek*, for they had fought (*hitasku*) with him. And they

dug another well and they fought about this one as well, and he named it *Sitnah* (obstruction). And he moved from there and he dug another well and they did not fight over it, and he named it *Rechovot*, saying, "For now Gd has expanded for us, and we have borne fruit in the land."

The Mission of S.Y. Agnon

8. Rambam (12th century Egypt), *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:45

המכוון ג"כ בשיר להפעל הנפש בדברים ההם ולא יפעלו הנפשות רק לקולות ולנגונים הערבים ועם כלי השיר ג"כ.

The goal of the song is for the spirit to be moved thereby, for spirits are moved only by sweet voices and tunes, and by musical instruments.

9. Rabbi Yosef Babad (19th century Eastern Europe), *Minchat Chinuch* 394:7

התורה צוותה לשורר ולהודות לו ית' על הקרבן מה שירצו כפי צחות לשונם, ואח"כ בא דוד המלך ע"ה ויסד מזמורים על זה, כמו בתפלה שהיא מן התורה לדעת הר"מ והנוסח תקנו אנשי כנה"ג. וכן ברכת המזון.

The Torah commanded to sing and thank Gd upon the offering as they choose, based on their eloquence. Then King David established songs for this. It is like prayer, which Rambam believes is biblical, but the Great Assembly established the text. And the blessing after meals.

10. S.Y. Agnon, 1966 Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

Who were my mentors in poetry and literature?... First and foremost, there are the Sacred Scriptures... Then there are the Mishna and the Talmud and the Midrashim and Rashi's commentary on the Torah. After these come the Poskim - the later explicators of Talmudic Law and our sacred poets and the medieval sages, led by our Master Rabbi Moses, son of Maimon...

11. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, Pg. 244

To those who extol chemistry because it bespeaks the glory of the Ribbono shel Olam, but dismiss Shakespeare because he only ushers us into the Globe Theater, one must answer, first, that great literature often offers us a truer and richer view of the essence... of even physical reality.

מאויב לאוהב, ש"י עגנון

עד שלא נבנתה תלפיות היה מלך הרוחות מושל שם בכל הארץ, וכל שריו ועבדיו רוחות עזים וקשים יושבים שם בהר ובעמק בגבעה ובגיא ועושים כל מה שליבם חפץ, כאילו להם בלבד ניתנה הארץ.

פעם אחת נזדמנתי לשם [לתלפיות], ראיתי שהמקום נאה והאוויר צח והרקיע תכלת טהורה והארץ רחבת ידיים, טיילתי לי להנאתי. פגע בי רוח. אמר לי, מה אתה עושה כאן? אמרתי לו, מטייל אני. אמר לי, מטייל אתה? טפח על ראשי וזרק את כובעי. כפפתי עצמי להרימו. פיזר את בגדי והפכם על ראשי ועשאני לצחוק. העברתי בגדי מעל ראשי. עמד הרוח והפלני לארץ וצחק וצחוק פרוע. הגבהתי את עצמי ועמדתי. הטיח בי וצעק, כלך ולך, כלך ולך.

ראיתי שאיני יכול לדון עם מי שתקיף ממני והלכתי לי.

חזרתי לעיר ונכנסתי לתוך ביתי. קצרה עלי נפשי ויצאתי. מדעתי או שלא מדעתי הביאוני רגלי לתלפיות. נזכרתי כל מה שעשה לי הרוח. לקחתי בד ויתדות ותקעתי לי אוהל, מפלט מרוח סוער וסער.

לילה אחד ישבתי שם. כבה האור פתאום. יצאתי לראות מי כיבה אורי. מצאתי את הרוח עומד בחוץ. שאלתי אותו, מה אתה מבקש? הטיח על פי ותקע באוזני. חזרתי ונכנסתי לתוך אוהלי. הסיע [הרוח] יתדותי וניתק את חבלי והפך את אוהלי ופיזר את יריעותי. אף בי פגעה ידו וכמעט שהפילני.

ראיתי שאיני יכול לו. נטלתי את רגליי וחזרתי לעיר.

חזרתי לעיר ונתיישבתי בין החומות. קצרה עלי נפשי וביקשתי לצאת למקום אוויר נאה. מאחר שאין בכל הארץ כאווירה של תלפיות הלכתי לתלפיות. וכדי שלא יתעללו בי רוחות לקחתי עימי נסרים ועשיתי לי צריף, הייתי סבור שמצאתי לי מנוחה והרוח סבור היה אחרת. לא יצא יום עד שהקיש על גגי וזיעזע את הדפנות. לילה אחד הסיע [הרוח] את כל הצריף כולו.

הרוח הסיע את צריפי והעמידני בלא מחסה. נטלתי את רגליי וחזרתי לעיר.

מה שאירע לי פעם ושתי פעמים אירעני שלישי. באתי לעיר וקצרה עליי ישיבתי. וליבי אוי ליבי מושכני למקום שהבריחוני משם. אמרתי לליבי, אי אתה רואה שאי אפשר לנו לחזור למקום שגרשוני משם. ומה שאי אפשר הרי אי אפשר. ואילו ליבי דיעה אחרת היתה לו. ואם אלף פעמים אמרתי אי אפשר היה ליבי אומר לי אלף פעמים אפשר ואפשר. הבאתי עצים ואבנים ובניתי לי בית.

לא אשבח את ביתי, כי קטן הוא ולא אתבייש בו בשביל שיש גדולים וטובים ממנו. ביתי קטן, אבל מקום יש בביתי לאדם שכמותי שאינו מבקש גדולות. ראה הרוח שבניתי לי בית. בא ושאלני, מה זה. אמרתי לו, בית הוא. צחק ואמר, חייך שלא ראיתי עוד דבר של צחוק כבית זה שאמרת. צחקתי אף אני ואמרתי לו, את שעדיין לא ראית אתה תראה. צחק ואמר, בית זה מהו? צחקתי ואמרתי בית הוא בית. צחק ואמר לי, אלך ואבדוק. פשט [הרוח] את ידו

ובדק את הדלת. נשברה הדלת ונפלה. פשט את ידו ובדק את החלונות. נשברו החלונות ונפלו. לסוף הגביה עצמו ועלה לגג. כיוון שעלה נפל הגג. צחק בי הרוח ואמר, בית זה שבנית היכן הוא? אף אני שאלתי, היכן ביתי, אבל לא צחקתי. בראשונה שהיה הרוח מגרשני חזרתי העירה. לסוף אירעו דברים שלא נתנו לי לחזור לעיר. רבצתי בין המשפתיים ולא ידעתי מה אעשה. לחזור לעיר אי אפשר, מפני דברים שאירעו שם, לחזור לתלפיות אי אפשר מפני הרוח שמגרשני. ולעשות לי אוהל או צריף, והרי אין להם קיום, לבנות לי בית קטן, אף הוא לא עמד בפני הרוח. או אולי, מה טעם לא עמד בפני הרוח, מפני שהיה קטן ודל, ואילו היה גדול וחזק היה עומד. לקחתי לי עצים חזקים וקורות ואבנים גדולות וטיח ומלט ושכרתי לי פועלים טובים ועמדתי עליהם ביום ובלילה. אף חכמתי עמדה לי, שהעמקתי את היסודות. בנה הבית ועמד על תילו.

כיוון שעמד הבית בא הרוח והקיש על התריסים. שאלתי, מי מקיש כאן על חלוני? שחק ואמר, שכן. אמרתי לו, מה מבקש שכן משכנו בליל סועה וסער? צחק ואמר, שכן בא לברך את שכנו לחנוכת הבית. אמרתי לו, וכי דרכו של שכן לבוא בעד החלונות כגנב? בא [הרוח] והקיש על הדלת. אמרתי לו, מי מטיח על דלתי? אמר הרוח, אני הוא שכנך. אמרתי, שכני אתה, בוא והכנס. אמר לי שהרי הדלת נעולה. אמרתי לו, הדלת נעולה, נראה הדבר שנעלתי אותה. השיב הרוח ואמר, פתח. אמרתי מתיירא אני מן הצינה, המתן לי עד שתצא החמה וافتח לך. כיוון שיצתה החמה יצאתי לפתוח לו ולא מצאתיו. עמדתי לפני ביתי וראיתי שכל הארץ שממה, לא אילן ולא גן, כי אם עפר ואבנים. אמרתי לי, אטע לי גן.

לקחתי מעדר ועדרתי בקרקע. כיוון שנחרשה הקרקע הבאתי לי שתילים. באו גשמים והשקו את השתילים, באו טללים והפריחו אותם, באה החמה והצמיחה אותם. לא היו ימים מרובים עד ששתילים ששתלתי נעשו אילנות בעלי ענפים. עשיתי לי ספסל וישבתי בצילם.

לילה אחד חזר הרוח ובא והטיח באילנות. מה עשו האילנות, הטיחו בו ברוח. חזר הרוח והטיח באילנות. חזרו האילנות והטיחו ברוח. לא קמה בו עוד רוח נפנה והלך לו.

מכאן ואילך נתנמכה רוחו של רוח ובא בדרך ארץ. והואיל והא נהג עימי בדרך ארץ נוהג אני אף עימו בדרך ארץ. כשהוא בא יוצא אני לקראתו ומבקש ממנו לישב עימי על ספסל שבגן בין האילנות. והוא בא ויושב. וכשהוא בא מביא עימו ריח טוב מן ההרים ומן העמקים ומניף לי כבמניפה. ומאחר שהוא נוהג כבעל תשובה גמור איני מזכיר לו מעשיו הראשונים. וכשהוא פורש ממני והולך לו אני מבקש ממנו שיחזור ויבוא, כדרך שנוהגים עם שכן טוב. ובאמת שכנים טובים אנו, ואני אוהב אותו אהבה גמורה. ואפשר שאף הוא אוהב אותי.