

Naso

June 18, 2016

### This Week's Text

בְּרַכָּהּ יְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶהָ. אֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּנֶךָ. יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

*Numbers 6:24 May Adonai bless you and protect you. May Adtonai deal kindly and graciously with you. May Adonai bestow Divine favor upon you and grant you peace.*

### Linking Our Text to Modern Israel

The priestly benediction originates in this week's Torah portion as the blessing Moses and Aaron were instructed to recite to the Israelite people. The intricacies of the text, still used today as a blessing in many contexts, are unique and remarkable for this ancient Biblical text. Though this is not considered an actual poem found in the Torah - the classic ones being Song of the Sea, Song at the Spring, and Moses Final Song - the shape of this blessing points to the fact that indeed it is poetry at its best. The phrases build one upon the other from 3 words in the first line, to 5 in the second and finally 7 in the third. The number of letters go from 15 to 20 to 25. Furthermore, parallelism, so frequently found throughout other Biblical poetry is present from line to line, each intentionally expanding on the previous verse. Clearly, this is not ordinary narrative or prose, rather it is an intentionally crafted set of verses. To date, archaeologists and historians consider it to be the oldest pre-exilic text to be found within Israel (from around 6th C BCE). The verse has been found on amulets that would have been worn by or buried with early Israelites. These amulets can be viewed today at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

What role does poetry play in Israel today? Hebrew University Professor Ruth Kartun-Blum asserts that contemporary Israeli poets have tried to distance themselves from Biblical traditions. She calls their efforts a form of subversive midrash. Whereas rabbinic sages would write midrash to substantiate and endorse Biblical text, Kartun-Blum says, "The modern Hebrew poet uses a new midrashic method that seeks to neutralize the Bible's sway over modern Israeli life."

In spite of Kartun-Blum's assertions, the art of contemporary Israeli poets is rich and varied. In no particular order, the names Shaul Tchernichovsky, Yehudah Amichai, Aharon Appelfeld, David Avidan, Zelda, Dan Pagis, Esther Raab, Abba Kovner, Rachel Bluwstein, Chaim Guri, Yona Wallach, and Dahlia Ravikovitch may be familiar to people who've merely scratched the surface of poetry emerging from Zionism and Israel over the past 100 years.



[Parody in Israeli Prayer Poems](#)

[The Flourishing of Post-Amichai Poetry](#) - Tablet Magazine Jan. 10, 2012

[Chaim Guri](#)

[David Avidan](#)

[Yona Wallach](#)

There are certainly poets who reference the Bible, but it reflects the complex relationship Israelis have with their religious heritage, substantiating Kartun-Blum's claims. Poets struggle with their Biblical and liturgical roots, cultural traditions, as well as the often contested land on which they live. Israeli poets toy with language, helping Hebrew grow from its ancient roots to the modern, spoken language of today.

From the earliest days of statehood, Israeli poetry has reflected an inner world that is often emblematic of the turmoil of the outer world navigated by the authors and artists. We offer three examples of Israeli poetry for study and discussion. For information on each of the poets, and recent articles see 'Additional References.'

1. *Song of the Sea* 15:1-19:21 (Ex 15:1-19:21); *Song at the Spring* (Num 21:17); *Moses Final Song* (Deut 32:1-43)

<p><b>An Ode to Comradeship - Chaim Guri</b> Translation: Roni Eshel</p> <p>The eve of autumn descends on the Negev and lights the stars inaudibly while the wind crosses the threshold clouds hover above the road</p> <p>For almost a year we hardly noticed how times lingered through our fields already one year passed, only a few of us are left so many are not amongst us any longer</p> <p>But we shall reminisce about them all their rugged handsomeness and tussled forelocks because such comradeship will never let our hearts forget as love sanctified by blood you will return to us, and once again flourish</p> <p>We carried you, comradeship without a word grey, determined and silent from the gory looming nights friendship remains bright and lit</p> <p>Comradeship filled by your youthful adherents will smile again and move forward because those who fell, swords in their hands, left us with your vigor to be remembered</p> <p>But we shall reminisce about them all</p>	<p><b>שנת כתיבה: 1948 - חיים גורי</b></p> <p>על הנגב יורד ליל הסתו ומצית כוכבים תרש תרש עת הרוח עובר על הסף עננים מהלכים על הדרך.</p> <p>כבר שנה. לא הרגשנו כמעט איה עברו הזמנים בשדותינו. כבר שנה, ונותרנו מעט מה רבים שאינם כבר בינינו.</p> <p>אך נזכר את בלם: את יפי הקלוזרית והתאר – כי רעות שקזאת לעולם לא תמן את לבנו לשפחה. אהבה מקדשת בדם את משובי בינינו לפריח.</p> <p>הרעות נשאנוה בלי מלים אפרה עקשנית ושותקת מלילות האימה הגדולים את נותרת בהירה ודולקת.</p> <p>הרעות, כנעריה בלם שוב בשמה נחנה ונלכה כי רעים שנקלו על חרבם את חיהו הותרו לזכר.</p> <p>ונזכר את בלם...</p>
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**HEART-TO-HEART PRAYER - David Avidan**

Translation: Lisa Katz

Lord our god lord you knew  
we didn't know a thing  
make us a miracle now so we'll know what you knew  
everything you'll know everything you'll think  
everything you'll feel  
make us a miracle now so we can make miracles  
for ourselves and for others and for the lord our god  
and don't limit our possibilities lord our god  
  
more than you limited your own possibilities  
and give us our own little world  
that we'll create in six days and won't rest  
on the seventh day more than a seventh of a day  
and don't pity us lord our god  
have pity on the little ones and the fools  
pity on the foolish of nations  
  
and give us the strength to be ourselves  
lord our god the one who knew, didn't you  
lord our god the one who heard, didn't you  
lord our god you are the one, aren't you  
and the lord our god is the lord our god  
so give us the strength not to give up  
  
and not to arouse pity unless needed  
and even if needed lord because there is no need  
lord our god who had no pity, did you  
lord our god who won't be pitied, will you  
give us a strong heart and an open mind  
and don't think about us too much  
  
blessed are you lord creator-of-humankind  
you won't rest and you won't sleep my lord of hosts  
blessed are you lord ever vigilant  
blessed are you lord creator of humankind in his  
image  
blessed are you my lord blessed of the blest  
and the blessed mouth will bless and say amen

**תפילה מלב אל לב - דוד אבידן**

אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲדוֹנֵי אֶתָּהּ יְדַעְתָּ  
שֶׁאֲנַחְנוּ לֹא יוֹדְעִים דְּבָר וְחֲצֵי דְבָר  
עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ נָס עֲקֹשׂוּ שְׂנֵדַע כָּל מָה שֶׁיְדַעְתָּ  
כָּל מָה שֶׁתִּדְעֶה כָּל מָה שֶׁתִּחַשְׁבוּ  
כָּל מָה שֶׁתִּרְגֹּשׂוּ  
עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ נָס עֲקֹשׂוּ שְׂנוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת נִסִּים  
לְמַעַן עֲצֹמְנוּ וּלְמַעַן זִוְלַתְנוּ וּלְמַעַן אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְאֵל תִּגְבִּיל אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת אֶפְשָׁרֵינוּ  
יִתֵּר מֵאֲשֶׁר הִגְבַּלְתָּ אֶת אֶפְשָׁרֵינוּ  
וְתוֹ לָנוּ עוֹלָם קָטָן מִשְׁלָנוּ  
שֶׁנִּבְרָא אוֹתוֹ בְּשֵׁשׁ יָמִים וְלֹא נִגְוַח  
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִתֵּר מִשְׁבִּיעֵית הַיּוֹם  
וְאֵל תִּרְחַם עָלֵינוּ אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
רַחֵם עַל הַקְּטָנִים וְעַל הַשׁוֹטִים  
רַחֵם עַל הָעַמִּים וְעַל הָאֲרָצוֹת  
וְתוֹ בְּנוּ כּוֹחַ לְהִיּוֹת אֲנַחְנוּ עֲצֹמְנוּ  
אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֲלֵא אֶתָּה יְדַעְתָּ  
אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֲלֵא אֶתָּה שֶׁמַּעַתָּה  
אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֲלֵא אֶתָּה אֶתָּה  
וְאֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
לְכֹן תּוֹ בְּנוּ כּוֹחַ לֹא לְיִתֵּר  
וְלֹא לְעוֹרֵר רַחֲמִים שְׁלֵא לְצַרְךָ  
וְאֶפְלוּ לְצַרְךָ כִּי אֵין אֲדוֹנֵי צַרְךָ  
אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֲלֵא אֶתָּה רַחֲמֵת  
אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְלֹא אֶתָּה תִּרְחַם  
תּוֹ לָנוּ לֵב חֲזָק וּמוֹת פְּתִיחַ  
וְאֵל תִּחַשְׁבוּ עָלֵינוּ יִתֵּר מִדֵּי  
כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵי בּוֹרְאֵךְ  
לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן אֲדוֹנֵי צְבָאוֹת  
כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵי עַר לְתַמִּיד  
כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵי בּוֹרְאֵ אֵדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ  
כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵי מְבַרְךָ מְבַרְכוֹת  
וְפִי מְבַרְךָ יְבַרְךָ וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן

<p><b>All That and Me</b> -Yona Wallach Translation: Linda Zisquit</p> <p>The house is standing, surrounded by... around it are trees. and I am not home, I am not inside (and so many days have passed accumulated to years all that and me are momentarily identified).</p> <p>Later we sense as if being led soon we may enter there we shall feel pleasant (how have we done so, turning ourselves into fetuses? is it us that wish to be the ones who seek to reverse? all that and me momentarily identified).</p> <p>We wish to be here filled with desire to be entwined we are close to all that even feeling familial (after all we have been the masters here for lengthy periods. Whatever was then, went by leaving our hearts – an island – when nonsense dissolved all that and me momentarily identified).</p>	<p><b>כל זה ואני - יונה וולך</b></p> <p>הבית עומד ומסביבו יש... מסביבו יש עצים. ואני לא בבית, אני לא בפנים. (ככה חלפו הרבה ימים והצטברו לשנים. כל זה ואני היננו לרגעים מזוהים).</p> <p>אחר כך אנחנו מרגישים כאילו מובלים. אנחנו עוד נכנס לשם, יהיה לנו נעים. (איך נתנו ככה לעשות מעצמנו עוברים? ובעצם אנחנו רוצים להיות אלה ששבים? כל זה ואני היננו לרגעים מזוהים).</p> <p>אנחנו רוצים להיות פה, ממש להיות ארוגים. אנחנו לכל זה קרובים, אפילו משפחתיים. (הרי היינו אדונים פה לזמנים ארוכים. איך שלא היה הלך אז לבנו אי אחרי הכלים. כל זה ואני היננו לרגעים מזוהים).</p>
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### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the central idea of the poem?
2. What is the tone being conveyed by the author? Do you share that sentiment?
3. How does the poet use figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification, metonymy)?
4. What kind of imagery is employed in the poem?
5. Where does the poet reference Israel's history - both ancient and modern?