DAVID DAICHES

The Valley of Tears *and* Dover Beach

THE FIRST SACKS LECTURE

OXFORD CENTRE FOR
POSTGRADUATE HEBREW STUDIES

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MODES OF SADNESS IN
ENGLISH AND HEBREW POETRY

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SHORTLY before the middle of the sixteenth century a mystical Jewish poet living among the community of Kabbalists at Safed composed a poem of welcome to the Sabbath. He was Solomon ben Moses Halevi Alkabetz, and the poem was *Lekha Dodi*, 'Come, my Friend', which soon achieved enormous popularity and was included in the Sephardi prayer-book published in Venice in 1584, whence it spread to become a part of the universal Jewish liturgy. The poem links the welcome of the Sabbath, personified as a bride, with Israel's hope of redemption and restoration, and, like so much post-biblical Hebrew poetry, it is full of biblical echoes. One such echo occurs in the third stanza: רַב לָךְ שֶׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא, 'you have dwelt long enough in the valley of weeping'. The phrase is addressed not to the friend, nor to the Princess Sabbath, but to the lost royal city of Jerusalem. It is time that the מְקֻדַּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה, the royal sanctuary, stopped mourning, for God will at last have mercy upon her and restore her. In 1558, only a few years after the composition of this poem with its hopeful assertion that the days of weeping were over, Joseph ha-Kohen, a Jewish historian and physician living in Italy, wrote a work which showed that Solomon Alkabetz's optimism was premature: the people of Israel were still dwelling in the valley of tears. Indeed, he used that very phrase, עֵמֶק הַבָּכָא, as the book's title. It is a history of Jewish suffering from the time of 'Judah's exile from its

land' up to his own time. (More recent events were added in the second edition.) Now the phrase עמק הבכא first occurs in the 84th Psalm, where it seems to be simply the name of a valley known for its dryness. The man whose strength is in God will pass through the Valley of Bakha as though it were a place of springs. *Bakha* means a mulberry tree (or some say a balsam shrub), but the point is that the valley in which these trees grew was known for its dryness. The New English Bible translates the verse: 'As they pass through the thirsty valley they will find water from a spring.' Why, then, 'valley of weeping' or 'valley of tears'? Because the word *bakhah*, spelt differently (with a *he* and not an *aleph* at the end), means weeping, and later writers deliberately chose to interpret the word as though it were spelt that way. So עמק הבכא, the valley of weeping, that potent expression in Hebrew literature, begins as a place-name and continues as a pun. (It is presumably the same pun which led to the word בכא, in the same spelling as in the Psalm, being used in modern Hebrew for weeping willow.)

It is perhaps not surprising that a people who yearned towards their lost land through nearly two hundred years of exile should associate lamentation with particular places. The Book of Lamentations itself is an elegy on a place, the city that was once great among the nations and has now become like a widow. עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָוֶה לִבֵּנוּ · · · עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שֶׁשָּׁמֵם, 'Because of this our hearts are sick, . . . because of Mount Zion which lies desolate'. But what might be called the topographical tradition in elegy is older than this. When David lamented over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, he reproached the place where the fatal battle had taken place:

הָרֵי בַגִּלְבֹּעַ
אַל־טַל וְאַל־מָטָר עֲלֵיכֶם

Hills of Gilboa,
Let no dew or rain fall on you.

And elsewhere in biblical literature states of sadness and

depression are associated with real or symbolic places. The best known example of this is the 23rd Psalm: גַּם כִּי אֵלֵךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמָוֶת, 'Even though I walk through a valley of thick darkness . . .'. This is a symbolic valley, rather different in its literary effect from the mournfully caressing references in Judah Halevi's famous ode צִיּוֹן הֲלֹא תִשְׁאֲלִי, 'Zion, Wilt thou not Ask?' which reaches out in longing to the old lost places:

לִבִּי לְבֵית־אֵל וְלִפְנוּאֵל מְאֹד יֶהֱמֶה.

My heart yearns towards Bethel and Peniel.

Yet in spite of these and other examples the fact is that the topographical element in Hebrew elegiac poetry is not, except in *kinot*—laments for the loss of Zion—predominant or especially significant. For most Hebrew elegy, *Emek Habakha* is a state of mind, not a place. The biblical precedent for poetry of generalized melancholy is of course *Kohelet*, Ecclesiastes, and this brings us at once into much closer contact with the English elegiac tradition. That marvellous description of the coming of old age and death in the final chapter with its mysterious yet movingly suggestive imagery has had, in the rendering of the Authorized Version, a sustained effect on the English poetic imagination:

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

We think of eighteenth-century graveyard poetry, of Victorian poetry of loss and loneliness, and recognize the tone. It does not come through in the same way in medieval Hebrew poetry, which is prosodically brisker, lacking the 'melancholy, long, withdrawing roar' that Matthew Arnold heard on Dover Beach, because of its quicker movement. One does, however, hear an echo of *Kohelet* in the conclusion of Moses ben Jacob Ibn Ezra's poem on the death of his brother:

יִכְלֶה כְּגוּשׁ עָפָר, וְלֹא יָסוּף
זֵכֶר תְּהִלּוֹתָיו, וְלֹא יִבֶל.
אַחַר הָלַךְ אָחִי לְבֵית שַׁחַת,
בַּנְתִּי הָכִי כָּל הַיְצוּר הָבֶל.

[The host of heaven] will vanish like a clod of earth
And yet the memory of his glory shall never fade.
After my brother went to his grave
I knew that all creation is vanity.

We hear the echo of הֲבֶל הֲבָלִים, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity', but in the poem as a whole the note is more urgently personal, less gently diffused than either in *Kohelet* or in Arnold's or Tennyson's poems of mourning:

בֵּית הָאֱסוּר אֵין אַחֲרָיו רֹחַב
חֶלְדִּי, וְהָעוֹלָם כְּמוֹ כֶּבֶל.
סוֹבֵל כְּבוֹד כָּל הַיָּקָר, אֵיכָה
עָפָר לְגַבּוֹ יִהְיֶה סֶבֶל?

My life since his death is a narrow prison
And the world like fetters.
He who upheld the glory of everything splendid,
How is it that his back now lies burdened in dust?

More interesting, I think, are Samuel Ha-Nagid's three poems on the death of *his* brother. The first, where the poet

stands by the graveside the day after the funeral, uses the language of urgent prayer to demand an answer from the silent dead:

הֲלֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקָרְאִי־לָךְ בְּכָל־כֹּחִי ?
הַשִּׁיבֵנִי: הַתַּכִּיר מַ־ עֲנֵה קִינִי בְּהַצְרִיחַ ?

Do you not hear
When I call out to you with all my power?
Answer me. Do you not recognize
The sound of my lamenting prayer?

(David Goldstein's translation)

But the poet continues in a harsher vein:

הֲרָפְתָה מִמְּךָ עֶצֶם וּמַכְתֵּשׁ מִמְּקוֹם לֶחִי,
וְנָס לֵחְךָ בְּלַיְלָה, כִּי כְבָר נָס מִבְּכִי לֶחִי ?

Are your teeth becoming slack in the jaw?
Are your bones now beginning to wither?
Has your moistness disappeared in the night,
As mine has fled through the tears of a mourner?

The second poem, written at the end of the seven days of formal mourning, has moved from anguish to fatalistic resignation, and the third, returning to the theme of the dead man's being unable to return his greeting, comes to rest in a benediction before glancing forward to his own death. There is none of the concluding hope that we find in the traditional Christian lament for the dead, no looking forward to glorious resurrection as Milton looks forward at the end of *Lycidas*:

אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לְאַרְצִי, כִּי בְּאֶרֶץ סָגְרוּ אֹתָךְ,
וְאָנוּם עֵת וְאִיקַץ עֵת – וְאַתְּ לָעַד בְּנוּמָתֵךְ,
וְעַד יוֹם בּוֹא חֲלִיפָתִי בְּלִבִּי אֵשׁ פְּרִידָתֵךְ !

I shall go now to my land, for
In the earth have they enclosed you.
I shall sleep a while and wake a while,
And you will slumber eternally.
And until the day when I too change,
The fire of your parting will remain in my heart.

(David Goldstein's translation)

The combination of a highly stylized art form with the expression of a bitter personal grief may remind us of, say, the uses to which the stylized pastoral elegy was often put in English poetry, but the personal element in the Hebrew poems of mourning often sounds out more fiercely than in any European tradition of elegy. It is remarkable that even in laments for the loss of Zion, which are in a sense national rather than personal poems, the note of personal loss sounds out with plangent forcefulness: indeed, it is this counterpointing of national and deeply individual feeling that strikes us most in Judah Halevi's poems on this subject. It may not be extravagant to trace this personal note back to the rhetoric of the Hebrew prophets, who often spoke to their people in personal grief and anguish and even represented God as speaking to His people in a similar tone. I have always found some of the phrases in the 63rd chapter of Isaiah moving and indeed disturbing in a strangely powerful way because of the sense of *lonely* passion they convey:

פּוּרָה דָרַכְתִּי לְבַדִּי
וּמֵעַמִּים אֵין־אִישׁ אִתִּי . . .
וְאַבִּיט וְאֵין עֹזֵר
וְאֶשְׁתּוֹמֵם וְאֵין סוֹמֵךְ

I have trodden the winepress alone,
and of the peoples there was no man with me . . .
And I looked and there was none to help,
and I beheld in astonishment and there was none to uphold.

לבדי, 'alone', literally, '*my* lone', 'by myself'. It is a magical word in Hebrew poetry. It is the title—if I may be allowed to skip across the centuries to the beginnings of modern Hebrew poetry—of one of Chaim Nachman Bialik's finest and best-known poems and a recurring theme in his work, לבדי. The loneliness of the poet is the result of his finding himself between the age of traditional faith and the attitudes of the modern world, and is thus precisely

analogous to the sense of loss and loneliness we find in such English poems as Arnold's *Dover Beach* and Tennyson's *Break, break, break*. The opening, however, is reminiscent (to my ear at least) of a much earlier English poet. Here is the opening stanza of a famous poem by Henry Vaughan:

They are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

And here is the opening stanza of Bialik's לבדי:

כֻּלָּם נָשָׂא הָרוּחַ, כֻּלָּם סָחַף הָאוֹר,
שִׁירָה חָדָשָׁה אֶת בֹּקֶר חַיֵּיהֶם הֵרְנִינָה;
וַאֲנִי, גּוֹזָל רַךְ, נִשְׁתַּכַּחְתִּי מִלֵּב
תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה.

The wind has carried them all away,
The light has swept them all away.
A new song has rejoiced the morning of their lives,
And I a tender fledgling left alone
Under the winds of the *Shekhinah*.

The poet is left alone with the *Shekhinah*, that feminine personification of God's presence and God's love for His people, in the בית המדרש, the House of Study, the *Shekhinah's* last place of refuge in the modern world. But, while sharing her sorrow, he cannot be satisfied with what she offers and yearns for the light outside:

וּכְשֶׁכָּלָה לִבָּבִי לַחַלּוֹן, לָאוֹר,
וּכְשֶׁצַּר לִי הַמָּקוֹם מִתַּחַת לִכְנָפָהּ—
כָּבְשָׁה רֹאשָׁהּ בִּכְתֵפִי, וּדְמִעָתָהּ עַל דַּף
גְּמָרְתִּי נָטָפָה . . .

And when my heart pined for the window, for the light,
And when the place under her wing was too narrow for me,
She hid her head on my shoulder, and her tear
Dropped on my Talmud page.

The *Shekhinah* echoes the poet's cry of loneliness:

"כֻּלָּם נָשָׂא הָרוּחַ, כֻּלָּם פָּרְחוּ לָהֶם,
וְאוֹתִי לְבַדִּי, לְבַדִּי . . ."

"The wind has carried them all away,
They have all flown away,
And I am left alone, alone..."

The רוח, wind or spirit, that has carried them all away is the spirit of the modern world, the אור, the light or Enlightenment for which the poet, for all his sympathy with the desolate *Shekhinah*, himself yearns. There is no resolution at the end of the poem, which concludes in doubt and grief:

וּכְעֵין סִיּוּם שֶׁל קִינָה עַתִּיקָה מְאֹד,
וּכְעֵין תְּפִלָּה, בַּקָּשָׁה וַחֲרָדָה כְּאַחַת,
שָׁמְעָה אָזְנִי בִּבְכִיָּה הַחֲרִישִׁית הַהִיא
וּבַדִּמְעָה הַהִיא הָרוֹתַחַת . . .

And it seemed like the ending of a very ancient lament,
And it seemed like a prayer, at once a supplication and a shudder of fear,
That my ear heard in that silent weeping,
And in that boiling tear . . .

This is the Arnoldian dilemma expressed a generation after Arnold in a very different idiom. Arnold saw himself

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,

and in *Dover Beach*, which can be considered the central expression of the Victorian elegiac mode, he linked his sense of loss and loneliness quite explicitly to the loss of religious faith, which he compared to the retreat of the tide. While Bialik remains alone with the lamenting *Shekhinah*, the conflict between nostalgia for the age of faith and the new enlightenment unresolved, Arnold falls back, as the English Victorian poets so often did, on self-indulgent introspective melancholy shared with one loved person, a sort of joint solipsism, an *égoïsme à deux*, a dependence on one personal relationship as the only certain thing, which became a tradi-

tion of the English liberal imagination and was given its fullest expression in the fiction of E. M. Forster. It is Bialik's problem but not Bialik's solution, for in לבדי, at least, Bialik had no solution. I quote only the well-known ending of Arnold's poem:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The outside world is not seen, as it is in לבדי, as the אור, the light, to which the poet yearns as he looks through the window of the House of Study; it is alien and meaningless, and the poet feels no relation to it, any more than Tennyson did in *Break, break, break*:

> O well for the fisherman's boy,
> That he shouts with his sister at play!
> O well for the sailor lad,
> That he sings in his boat on the bay!
>
> And the stately ships go on
> To their haven under the hill;
> But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!

This is a classic expression of grief as withdrawal, withdrawal from the daily affairs of the world into a deliberately indulged sense of isolation. We find it at least as early as Keats, who, contemplating his own death and his separation from his beloved, could only retreat into himself in a mood of introspective brooding:

> then on the shore
> Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
> Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

And we find it, less intense and more of a literary pose than a reflection of a deep cultural dilemma, in the meditative poetry of the eighteenth century. In Gray's *Elegy* the homeward-plodding ploughman

> leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Perhaps the most concentrated example of the poetic mood of withdrawn sadness that reveals itself in connection with a particular place is not in English poetry at all. This was a European mode of feeling in the early nineteenth century, and the Italian poet Leopardi expressed it quintessentially in his poem *L'Infinito*. It begins with the place:

> Sempre caro me fu quest'ermo colle
>
> This solitary hill was always dear to me

and goes on to present the poet sitting there and gazing and meditating and listening to the rustle of the wind, comparing the voice of the wind to the infinite silence of an imagined eternity:

> e mi sovvien l'eterno
> e le morte stagioni, e la presente
> e viva e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
> immensità s'annega il pensier mio:
> e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.
>
> And I remember the eternal
> and the dead seasons, and the present
> living one and the sound of it. So amid this
> immensity my thoughts drown,
> and shipwreck is sweet to me in such a sea.

There it is in a nutshell, 'e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare', the poet drowning himself willingly in a sea of sad-sweet contemplation.

There is nothing quite like this note of withdrawn personal elegy in Hebrew poetry. Nor is there anything quite like Arnold's turn to the one other person with whom to face the nothingness of the universe, that strange note of love as a desperate remedy against chaos.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light . . .

Arnold's stanza sounds strange in Hebrew:

הָהּ אֲהוּבָה, לוּ וֶה לָזֶה
נִשְׁמָר־נָא אֱמוּנִים ! כִּי הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר דּוֹמֶה
שָׂרוּעַ לְפָנֵינוּ כָּאן כְּאֶרֶץ חֲלוֹמוֹת,
כֹּה רַב־פָּנִים, יָפֶה כָּל־כָּךְ, חָדָשׁ,
לֹא גִיל בּוֹ בֶּאֱמֶת, לֹא אַהֲבָה, לֹא אוֹר,
לֹא בְטָחוֹן, שַׁלְוָה, וְלֹא מַרְפֵּא;
וְאָנוּ כָּאן כְּמוֹ בְּגֵיא אֶפֶל,
סְחוּפֵי שְׁאוֹן מְנוּסָה וְהֹלֶם שָׁעַט,
בְּהִתְנַגֵּשׁ עִם לֵיל צְבָאוֹת בִּלִי־דָעַת.

This is from Shimon Sandbank's translation of the poem, one of a series of remarkable translations in his anthology of English poetry in Hebrew translation published last year by the Schocken Press in Jerusalem. And might I add parenthetically that, reading these translations, which range in time from the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons to the present day, one becomes aware of the kind of English poetic mood that goes readily into Hebrew and the kind that does not. Interestingly, the Anglo-Saxon elegiac mood as represented in such a poem as *The Wanderer* goes much more readily into Hebrew both prosodically and in terms of accommodated feeling than the Victorian elegiac mood. Here is Talbot Donaldson's translation of lines 19 to 32 of the poem:

So I, often wretched with care, deprived of my homeland, far from dear kinsmen, had to fasten my heart's thought with fetters—after the time, in years long past, that I covered my gold-friend in the darkness of earth; and thence downcast I crossed over the woven waves, winter-sad, yearning for a hall, sought a giver of treasure—where, far or near, I might find one who should know of my people

or would comfort me friendless, receive me with gladness. He who has felt it knows how cruel a companion is sorrow to him who has no beloved protectors. The past of exile attends him, . . .

And here is the Anglo-Saxon:

Swā ic mōdsefan mīnne sceolde
oft earmcearig eð le bidæled,
frēomāegum feorr feterum sælan,
siþþan gēara iū goldwinne mīnne
hrūsan heolster biwrāh and ic hēan þonan
wōd wintercearig ofer we ema gebind,
sōhte sēle drēorig sinces bryttan,
hwǣr ic feor oþþe nēah findan meahte
þone þe in meoduhealle mine wisse
oþþe mec frēondleasne frēfran wolde,
wenian mid wynnum. Wāt sē þe cunnað
hū slīþen bið sorg tō gefēran
þām þe him lȳt hafað lēofra geholena:
waraðhine wræclāst . . .

And here is Sandbank's Hebrew:

וְכָךְ אָנֹכִי, רוּחִי נְכֵאָה,
רָחוֹק מִמְּכוֹרָה, נָתוּק מִגּוֹאֵל,
אֶכְבֹּל בְּכֶבֶל מַחֲשֶׁבֶת לִבִּי,
מֵאָז עָטְתָה עֲלֶטֶת עָפָר
אֶת גּוֹמֵל־הַזָּהָב, זֶה רוֹוָנִי, נָאֲנִי,
מְבֻהָה־סַגְרִיר, שָׂמְתִי פְּעָמַי
וְהָלַכְתִּי גַּלְמוּד עַל גְּלִידֵי גַּלִּים,
תָּר לִי בְּצַעַר חֲצַר אִישׁ נָדִיב,
בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא שָׁם, שָׁכֵן אוֹ רָחוֹק,
שֶׁלִּבּוֹ לִי יָשִׁית בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַתֶּמֶד
וִישׁוֹבֵב נַפְשִׁי, כִּי נָטָשׁוּנִי רֵעָי,
וְיִסְעַד וְיִסְמָךְ־לִי. יָעִיד הַמְּנָסֶּה
מַה כָּבֵד אַכְפּוֹ שֶׁל פֶּגַע פּוֹקֵד
אָדָם, שָׁמוֹדָע וּמַגֵּן לוֹ אֵין.
לוֹ מִשְׁעוֹל זָר . . .

(מִשְׁעוֹל זָר, the way of the stranger, outlaw's lane, translates 'wræclast', literally 'exile's track', the way of exile. נְתִבַת גָּלוּת would perhaps be the more obvious Hebrew

rendering, but Sandbank needs the shorter phrase.) This is the end of my parenthesis.

Let me now turn to a very different mode of sadness in Hebrew poetry, though also illustrated by a poem of Bialik's. The poem is עַל הַשְּׁחִיטָה, 'On the Slaughter', and the mood is one of intense personal anguish and fury. It was written in response to news of the notorious Kishinev pogrom of 1903, and in spite of its spontaneous tone of outrage the poem is as meticulously constructed (in four carefully balanced stanzas) as Milton's sonnet *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont*. Milton's sonnet, however, shows a distanced emotion, a statuesque rhetoric which states his case with majestic and marmorial precision:

> Avenge O Lord thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
> Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old
> When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
> Forget not: in thy book record their groans
> Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
> Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
> Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
> The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
> To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
> O'er all the Italian fields where still doth sway
> The triple Tyrant: that from these may grow
> A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way
> Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

The poet is in total control, so much so indeed as to be able to move the conclusion of the sonnet away from the actual massacre to point a moral and express a hope that this will teach people to fly from popery ('the Babylonian woe'). The conclusion shows that from the beginning Milton was looking away from the massacre to the politico-ecclesiastical moral he could draw from it. His involvement in the whole situation is that of an indignant observer who is anxious for the world to act on what his observation proves.

The indignation is thus part of an argument, as it were, rather than the true core of the poem. Contrast the opening of Bialik's poem:

שָׁמַיִם ! בַּקְּשׁוּ רַחֲמִים עָלָי !
אִם יֵשׁ בָּכֶם אֵל וְלָאֵל בָּכֶם נָתִיב –
וַאֲנִי לֹא מְצָאתִיו –
הִתְפַּלְלוּ אַתֶּם עָלָי !
אֲנִי – לִבִּי מֵת וְאֵין עוֹד תְּפִלָּה בְּשִׂפָתָי,
וּכְבָר אָזְלַת יָד אַף אֵין תִּקְוָה עוֹד –
עַד־מָתַי, עַד־אָנָה, עַד־מָתָי ?

Heaven, ask mercy for me!
If there is a God in you
And if God has a path in you
—But I haven't found it—
Do you pray for me.
As for me—my heart is dead and there is no longer prayer on my lips.
And already the hand has failed and there is no more hope.
How long, until when, how long?

The two Hebrew phrases עד מתי and עד אנה both mean 'until when', i.e., 'how long', and it is difficult to render them differently yet effectively in English. עד מתי comes from Psalm 94:

עַד־מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יְהוָה
עַד־מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ׃

Lord, how long shall the wicked
How long shall the wicked exult?

while עד אנה is an echo of Psalm 13:

עַד־אָנָה יְהוָה תִּשְׁכָּחֵנִי נֶצַח
עַד־אָנָה תַּסְתִּיר אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי׃

How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me utterly?
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

The biblical echoes are bold, because the tone is far from biblical. In view of what has happened, the poet can no longer pray and asks Heaven to pray for him—if indeed

there be a God in Heaven. The next stanza gives images of slaughter beside which Milton's picture of 'the bloody Piedmontese that rolled / Mother with infant down the rocks' is cool and distanced:

הַתַּלְיָן ! הֵא צַוָּאר – קוֹם שְׁחָט !
עָרְפֵנִי כַּכֶּלֶב, לְךָ וְרֹעַ עִם קֶרְדֹּם
וְכָל הָאָרֶץ לִי גַּרְדֹּם –
וַאֲנַחְנוּ – אֲנַחְנוּ הַמְּעָט !
דָּמִי מֻתָּר – הַךְ קָדְקֹד, וְיַזֵּנֵק דַּם רֶצַח,
דַּם יוֹנֵק וָשֵׂב עַל כֻּתָּנְתְּךָ–
וְלֹא יִמַּח לָנֶצַח, לָנֶצַח·

Executioner! Here is my neck—kill!
Break my neck like a dog's, you have the power and the axe.
For the whole earth is an executioner's block to me,
And we—we are the few.
Shedding my blood is permitted. Strike the crown of the head and let the blood gush forth in murder,
Blood of babe and of old man on your shirt,
And it will never be wiped out, never.

The agony of *Einfühlung* with the slaughtered is expressed in a stanza of seven carefully balanced lines, shaped exactly like each of the other stanzas. And because it is contained in this precise form the pressure of the meaning rises almost to bursting point. The third stanza expresses an anguished scepticism about the existence of justice in the universe, and the poem ends in a stanza denying the cry for vengeance with which Milton, more orthodox and more distanced, opened his sonnet.

וְאָרוּר הָאוֹמֵר : נָקֹם !

And cursed be he who says: vengeance!

Even Satan, the poet goes on to say, has not created a vengeance appropriate to the murder of a little child:

נְקָמָה כְּוֹאת, נְקִמַּת דַּם יֶלֶד קָטָן
עוֹד לֹא בָרָא הַשָּׂטָן –

The concluding lines of the poem present a fearful image of the blood of the slaughtered rotting away the foundations of the earth:

יִקֹּב הַדָּם עַד תְּהֹמוֹת מַחֲשַׁכִּים,
וְאָכַל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ וְחָתַר שָׁם
כָּל מוֹסְדוֹת הָאָרֶץ הַנִּמַּקִּים.

Let the blood curse the depths of darkness
And consume in the darkness and undermine there
All the rotting foundations of the earth.

The echoes of biblical imagery in this savage poem are twisted and contorted to present an indictment, by implication at least, of God and the universe as well as of the murderers of Kishinev, or indeed to go further and suggest that since God and justice may be absent altogether from the universe, there is nothing for it except to allow unpunished evil to flourish and so ultimately destroy the whole earth. This is hardly a 'mode of sadness', which my title commits me to describe: the tone goes far beyond mourning into agony and violence. But it is nevertheless a modulation, a development, of an earlier tone of sadness.

עַד־מָתַי 'How long, O Lord, how long?' wells up through this carefully constructed poem like a sobbing echo of a once-reasonable cry, a cry which no longer has a reason or expects an answer. In this it is very different from the kind of sadness we find in more traditional appeals in Hebrew poetry for an end to Jewish suffering. At the end of the Chanukah hymn מָעוֹז צוּר, 'Rock of Ages', which may date from the thirteenth century, someone much later—was it also after a pogrom in Russia?—added a final stanza, not found in most Hebrew prayer books today, which makes a desperate appeal to God for an end to the Jewish ordeal. Though it is a response to a situation similar to that which evoked Bialik's poem, its tone is very dissimilar:

חֲשׂוֹף זְרוֹעַ קָדְשְׁךָ, וְקָרֵב קֵץ הַיְשׁוּעָה, נְקוֹם דַּם עַבָדֶיךָ, מֵעוֹשֵׁי רִשְׁעָה, כִּי אָרְכָה לָנוּ הַיְשׁוּעָה, וְאֵין קֵץ לִימֵי הָרָעָה · · ·

Reveal thy holy arm and bring near the time of salvation. Avenge the blood of thy servants against the evil-doers. For our salvation is long delayed, and there is no end to the days of woe . . .

This is a *cri de cœur* very different from Bialik's. It remains rooted in a confidence that God's strong arm does exist and will eventually be revealed. It appeals, as Milton in his sonnet appealed, for divine vengeance against the wicked. But it comes very near to despair nevertheless. The cry כי ארכה לנו הישועה, ואין קץ לימי הרעה, 'for our salvation is long delayed, and there is no end to the days of woe', rises up with melancholy force, giving the impression of a people absolutely at the end of its tether. In a sense it goes even further than עד מתי עד ענה עד מתי, for it does not inquire 'how long?' but says, desperately, we cannot wait any longer. At the same time there is a hint of determination to bear it out in the acrostic which is formed by the initial letters of the first three words of this stanza, which form the word חזק, 'be strong'.

I remarked earlier that in Hebrew poetry עמק הבכא is more likely to be a symbolic place, like גיא צלמות, than a real one, except in the case of laments for Zion. English poetry, on the other hand, is rich in poems which associate particular real places with a specific mood. I am thinking especially of the tradition, begun in the seventeenth century by Sir John Denham in *Cooper's Hill*, of what Dr. Johnson called 'local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation'. That tradition culminates in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. A rather different use of topography, though equally allied to meditation, is found in Arnold's *Thyrsis*, his elegy for his friend Clough, which, like the same author's *Scholar Gypsy*, is determinedly localized in the Oxfordshire landscape. And there are yet other kinds of mood-and-place poetry in English. A. E. Housman found it

necessary to link the stoical sadness of his poems to a particular county, Shropshire, and to specific place-names.

When smoke stood up from Ludlow
And mist blew off from Teme,

or

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear,

or

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

(Another parenthesis: Housman's rhythms go easily into the rhythms of Ashkenazi Hebrew, with its stress on the penultimate syllable of a word and its resultingly trochaic beat, but it is more difficult with Sephardi Hebrew. It is interesting to see what Sandbank does with Housman.

שָׂח לִבָּבִי לִזְכֹּר
רֵעִים, רֵעֵי זָהָב.
עַלְמָה שְׂפָתֶיהָ וֶרֶד
וְעֶלֶם קַלּוֹת רַגְלָיו.

Do you recognize it?

With rue my heart is laden,
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.)

But I must not allow myself to be side-tracked by the fascinating problem of metrics. I was talking of topographical meditative poetry as a powerful tradition in English literature. It is not one which I have been able to trace in Hebrew poetry until we come to the modern period. Then, suddenly it seems, among poets writing first in Palestine then in Israel, a sense of the landscape of their ancestral land develops in association with new moods and attitudes, and we get a kind of Hebrew topographical-meditative poetry which has characteristics all its own. One aspect of

the new mood is summed up in a poem by Rachel beginning:

כַּאן עַל פְּנֵי אַדְמָה — לֹא בֶּעָבִים, מֵעָל —

Here on the earth—not in high clouds—
On this mother earth that is close:
To sorrow in her sadness, exult in her meagre joy
That knows, so well, how to console.

(Ruth Finer Mintz's translation)

It was Rachel who wrote the poem about Kinneret that became a Hebrew folk-song in its author's lifetime, a poem not indeed of sadness but of pure nostalgia, which is a mood akin to sadness. She recalls in vivid imagery the hot days of gathering the harvest in Kinneret and ends הֲהָיִית אוֹ חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלוֹם?, 'Did it happen, or was it a dream?' This pushing back of landscape description into memory is very Wordsworthian, yet the poem reverses Wordsworth's recipe of emotion recollected in tranquillity to express tranquillity recollected with emotion.

One of the most explicit examples of a topographical-meditative poem in modern Hebrew literature is Shimon Halkin's long elegiac poem תַּרְשִׁישָׁה 'To Tarshish'. The poem opens with the statement that

אֶלֶגְיָה לֹא תַעֲגֹם קוֹלָהּ בְּשֶׁפַע אוֹר דְרוֹמִי

'An elegy does not raise its sad voice in the flooding southern sunshine', as though aware that this kind of poetry belongs to more northern climes, but, the poet continues, the Tarshish scene has nevertheless called out in him a young plaintive song like the mournful wail of a flute. I can quote only one of the eighteen seven-line stanzas of this slow-moving poem, which means that I cannot trace its structure but only illustrate its tone:

קִיצְךָ קֵץ הַהֲדִים· עַד הָעוֹלָם לֹא יִפָּגֵם
אָפְקְךָ גָּבֵשׁ, דֹּק הֶעָשָׁן גָּוַע וַיִּתְבַּדְלַח
מֵעֹצֶר פֶּלֶא· עַד עוֹלָם יִרְעַף פְּרִיוֹן עָגֵם
מִצְּנַן זִיו תְּכֶלְתֵּךְ בַּצָּהֳרַיִם וְרַעַד לַח
בָּהּ יִתְנַחֵשׁ, כְּאִלּוּ גַּם הַלַּיְלָה רָחֲצָה

בְּגֶשֶׁם לֹא נִשְׁמָע. צוּלָה שְׁקוּפָה אַתְּ וְכָאַצָּה
עֲלֵי־ לִבְנִיךְ מַקְלִישִׁים בְּיגוֹן אוֹר יִשָּׁקֵם.

Your summer is ever Indian summer. Forever unscarred
Is your crystalline horizon, smoky sheerness that dying crystallized
In withheld wonder. A melancholy fruitfulness showered
From the coolness of your azure sheen at noon, a moist tremor waves
In it, as if the night had been washed in unheard rain.
You are a translucent depth and like seaweed your birch leaves wane
Within the mournful light that kisses them unstirred.

(Ruth Finer Mintz's translation)

This may sound Keatsian, but that I think is because the translator has inevitably had recourse to Keatsian language. 'Melancholy fruitfulness', פִּרְיוֹן עָגֻם (I don't quite know the significance of פִּרְיוֹן rather than the more usual פְּרִיָה or פֶּרִי) is not really Keats's 'mellow fruitfulness', and the kind of restless self-examination that goes on in the poem is quite unlike the movement in Keats's *Autumn* ode. The overall tone of the poem is one of profound melancholy:

לִבִּי לְמֶגֶרְפוֹת שָׂדֶה, הַמַּשְׁחִירוֹת רָווֹת,
נִכְאָב מִבְּרוֹחַ מִן הַכְּאֵב, מִשְׁאוֹף לַחֻדְלוֹן,

My heart belongs to the dark moist clods of the field
Anguished with fleeing from pain, with longing for extinction.

This is the climax of a passionate weaving of nature images and changing moods—the poem is partly about the poet's daughter, towards whom he feels both love and guilt, and this gives it a special dimension—and the concluding desire for extinction ends a more complex process than Keats's 'I have been half in love with easeful death' in the *Nightingale* ode or the desire for dissolution expressed in the third stanza of the same poem: '. . . Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget / What thou among the leaves hast never known.'

Perhaps the most distinguished poem in the modern Hebrew topographical-meditative tradition is Leah Goldberg's בְּהָרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, 'In the Jerusalem Mountains'. It

reminds me more of Whitman than of any English poet, particularly in the handling of the bird imagery in the latter part of the poem. Its opening, however, seems to derive entirely from the poet's immediate physical environment.

אֲנִי מֻטֶלֶת כְּאֶבֶן בֵּין הָרְכָסִים הַלָּלוּ,
בְּתוֹךְ עֵשֶׂב כָּתֹם וְשָׁדוּף וּשְׂרוּף־קַיִץ,
אֲדִישָׁה וְדוֹמֶמֶת.
שָׁמַיִם חִוְרִים נוֹגְעִים בַּסֶּלַע.
מֵאַיִן בָּא לְכָאן פַּרְפַּר צְהֹב־כְּנָפַיִם?
אֶבֶן בֵּין אֲבָנִים – אֵינֶנִּי יוֹדַעַת
מָה עַתִּיקִים חַיַּי
וּמִי יָבוֹא עוֹד
וְיַדְחֵנִי בְּרַגְלָיו
וְאֶתְגַּלְגֵּל בַּמִּדְרוֹן.

I am thrown like a stone among these ridges,
in yellow grass, blasted and summer-singed,
passive, inanimate.
Pale skies touch the rock.
Whence came this bright-winged butterfly?
A stone among stones—I do not know
how ancient my days,
who yet may come
and, walking, push me,
rolling, down this slope.

(Sholom J. Kahn's translation)

In the midst of the 'forever-frozen beauty', הַיְפִי הַקָּפוּא לָעַד, the poet feels a sense of eternity, death, love:

אוּלַי זֶהוּ הַיְפִי הַקָּפוּא לָעַד.
אוּלַי זֶהוּ
הַנֶּצַח הַהוֹלֵךְ לְאַט.
אוּלַי זֶהוּ
חֲלוֹם הַמָּוֶת
וְהָאַהֲבָה הָאַחַת.

Perhaps this is forever-frozen beauty.
Perhaps this is
eternity, slow-moving.
Perhaps this is

a dream of death
and of the one love.

The poet turns from her own unhappy love to the bird flying in the skies above, and ends by repeating a question that the poem has posed earlier:

אֵיכָה תּוּכַל צִפּוֹר יְחִידָה
לָשֵׂאת אֶת כָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם !

How can a single bird
bear all the heavens!

Place has certainly come back to Hebrew poetry, specific place in the Land of Israel, and is used in a great variety of ways to develop, illustrate, and counterpoint different moods. And though this talk has been about modes of sadness, I shall follow an old Jewish tradition by turning in the end to a note of joy. The Emek, the valley, for the modern Hebrew poet who has lived and worked on the land, is no longer Emek Habakha, the valley of weeping, but a valley of singing. Here is the conclusion of Levi ben-Amitai's poem שָׂדוֹת שֶׁבָּעֵמֶק, 'Fields in the Emek':

אָסְפֵנִי אֵלַיִךְ,
אֶסֶף כַּשִּׁבֹּלֶת –
שִׁבֹּלֶת לַגֹּרֶן
בְּחַג הַקָּצִיר.
הַלַּיְלָה בָּעֵמֶק
אֲנִי אֲזַמֵּרָה,
כִּי אַשְׁרֵי בָּאַנִי
וְחֶסֶד הַשִּׁיר.

Sholom Kahn has translated it:

Gather me to you,
as a corn-ear is gathered—
like a corn-ear in harvest
to threshing-floor bent.
Tonight in the Emek
I shall be singing,
for bliss to me—poetry's
grace—has been sent.