

M rules below

Singular pronoun changes from she/his to his - stay? Use plural instead?

WRITERS AT WORK

The work of writing is an elusive instance of grace. No writer or poet can guarantee the conditions in which she will compose her works and imbue them with her unique spirit. The writer might sit at a wide table before a stack of parchment and a pen, or in front of a keyboard and screen, and the hours or days or even years will pass, and the muses will remain silent. But great works, including those that go on to shape the course of history, may be born suddenly, even in moments of distraction: scribbled in a notebook or on a random scrap of paper.

The wonder of creation can occur anywhere - in one's study, in a café, or even on the Sultan's throne. But a work may also be born in the middle of the desert, or as the writer wanders far from home, or in exile. This written archive of a life, be it a single poem or story or the thousands of pages of an epic, may be the only mark the creator leaves on the world and his only possession throughout his wanderings. One way or another, the work will bear witness to the environment in which it was written: the streets surrounding the studio or the elements of nature and history that inspire the creator.

The act of writing is lonely. Often the writer sits alone in a room. Sometimes the room is large and generously furnished; sometimes it is a narrow space meant for other, more basic needs. The writer's desk can also function as a shelter, where she preserves works in all the different stages of composition - those completed, those sequestered, and those in process, sometimes for years at a time. However much the writer strives to protect her work, it is never completely immune to outside forces. Fire, water, or war can in an instant devour all.

Documenting the creation of others is no less a creative act in itself - from transcribing ancient oral traditions to transfiguring music into notation, copying manuscripts, or printing books; or from laying out texts and illustrations for a journal issue to entering countless bits of data that preserve them in a digital dimension in a disc or in a cloud.

For every creator - be they writer, editor, illustrator, or composer - inspiration rarely arrives in a sudden, divine flash. Writing is work, a

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conscious and unconscious process that unfolds uniquely for every individual over the course of subsequent drafts. Authors sharpen their texts through arguments that play out over decades of correspondence or in idiosyncratic images, tables, or diagrams: while one prepares detailed lists, another will draw a sketch or paint with colors. Ancient sources are – sometimes violently – exhumed from their resting places and reincarnated in new works that both reinterpret them and preserve them for a new generation.

Only those works that survive this long and tortuous process of composition reach us, the readers, in the end; only they become the published masterpieces – on account of their contents, structure, or form – that live forever. And only rarely do we have a chance to peek behind the curtain to see these works in the process of formation, to witness the artist's struggle with himself as he attempts to give birth to the new.

HEZI AMIUR

✓

In Maimonides' Own Hand

Maimonides' Commentary on the Mishnah, 12th century

DANIEL LIPSON

Written in Morocco, completed in Egypt, sold in Syria, brought to England, auctioned in Switzerland, and purchased by Israel. This is the 800-year odyssey of Maimonides' (1138-1204) masterwork, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, written in the sage's own hand.

The first of three monumental works by Maimonides, the *Commentary* laid the legal and philosophical groundwork for the later *Mishneh Torah* (*Code of Jewish Law*) and *Dalalat al-Haririn* (*Guide of the Perplexed*). The *Commentary's* three lengthy introductions, in which Maimonides explains the nature of Jewish law, ethics, and theology, are among the most important works of Jewish philosophy of all time.

Maimonides wrote the *Commentary* over a period of seven years, as his family navigated a treacherous path from Fez to Cairo. This autograph copy allows us to follow Maimonides' revisions throughout his life; his son Rabbi Avraham and grandson added further marginal notes based on Maimonides' oral teachings.

Two centuries after Maimonides' death in Egypt, his descendants left Cairo. They settled in Aleppo, bringing his precious writings with them. Two English Christian scholars purchased three sections of the *Commentary* in the seventeenth century. They brought the volumes to England and ultimately bequeathed them to Oxford University's Bodleian Library. Another section disappeared.

Rabbi Jacob Moshe Toledano discovered the two remaining sections in Damascus and sold them to the famous bibliophile David Sassoon in 1908. After Sassoon's death, his family decided to auction the works off in Switzerland in 1975. Realizing the cultural importance of these works, the Israeli Minister of Education, the mayor of Jerusalem, and other important Israeli figures called on philanthropists and the general public to contribute funds for their purchase. The acquisition of these manuscripts using collective funds made these documents the symbolic property of the entire Jewish People.

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WRITERS AT WORK

change all footns to roman - 1480 + 1480

spell out?

change itals to roman except where underlined

'on' in text

Right: Autograph manuscript of Maimonides' *Commentary* to the *Mishnah*, *Order of Women* (Nashim), Egypt, d. 1160s. The page shows the edits and comments of Maimonides and subsequent family members on the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth chapters of Tractate "Marriage Contracts" (Ketubot) folio 31r. Ms. Heb. 4° 5703. Following page: Autograph manuscript of Maimonides' *Commentary* to the *Mishnah*, *Order of Women* (Nashim), Egypt, d. 1160s. Maimonides' comments on the end of the second and beginning of the third chapters of Tractate "Vows" (Nedarim) folios 40r-41v. Ms. Heb. 4° 5703.

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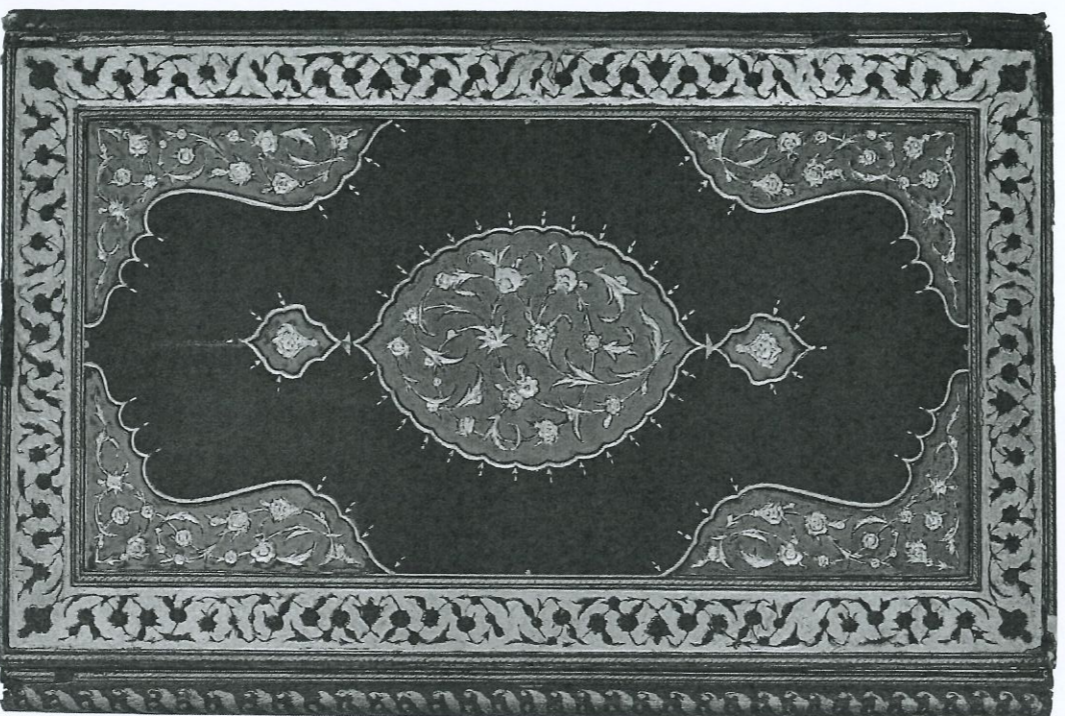
tr?

The Lover

Sultan Suleiman, Collected Poems of

Muhibbi, ~~leireca~~ 1553

SAMUEL THROPE



“Oh beloved, even though lovers say your love is easy at first, I have never seen anything in this world more difficult than that!”

Here in a theme explored by poets from Sappho to Shakespeare, a tearful lover complains of his beloved's indifference. Yet the writer of these lines was not a penniless bard, but rather the sixteenth century's most illustrious ruler, Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566).

Suleiman, the longest-reigning member of the Ottoman dynasty, conquered vast territories in Europe, reformed the imperial legal system, and sponsored numerous building projects, including the restoration of the Dome of the Rock and the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. He was, however, no less renowned as a poet. Writing under the pen name Muhibbi (the Lover), Suleiman composed a collection of verse (*diwan*) that develops the earlier Persian poetic tradition. For example, the poem quoted here plays on an earlier lover's lament by the famous Persian mystical poet Hafez.

Suleiman was not the only Ottoman ruler to compose poetry; his predecessors, his son, and others also left behind their own monuments in verse. Moreover, Ottoman sultans not only wrote verse but served also as patrons; in a sense, poetry was the currency of the court. This is evident in this beautiful copy of Muhibbi's *diwan*. Produced during Suleiman's lifetime, probably around 1553, the embellishments and illuminations reflect the skill of the craftsmen associated with the court. It is one of just five extant copies, the only one found outside of Turkey; it also includes otherwise unknown poems, such as an elegy composed on the death of Suleiman's son and heir apparent, Mehmed, in 1543.



Is this a note?

word spacing too tight

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first?



captives roman, not italics

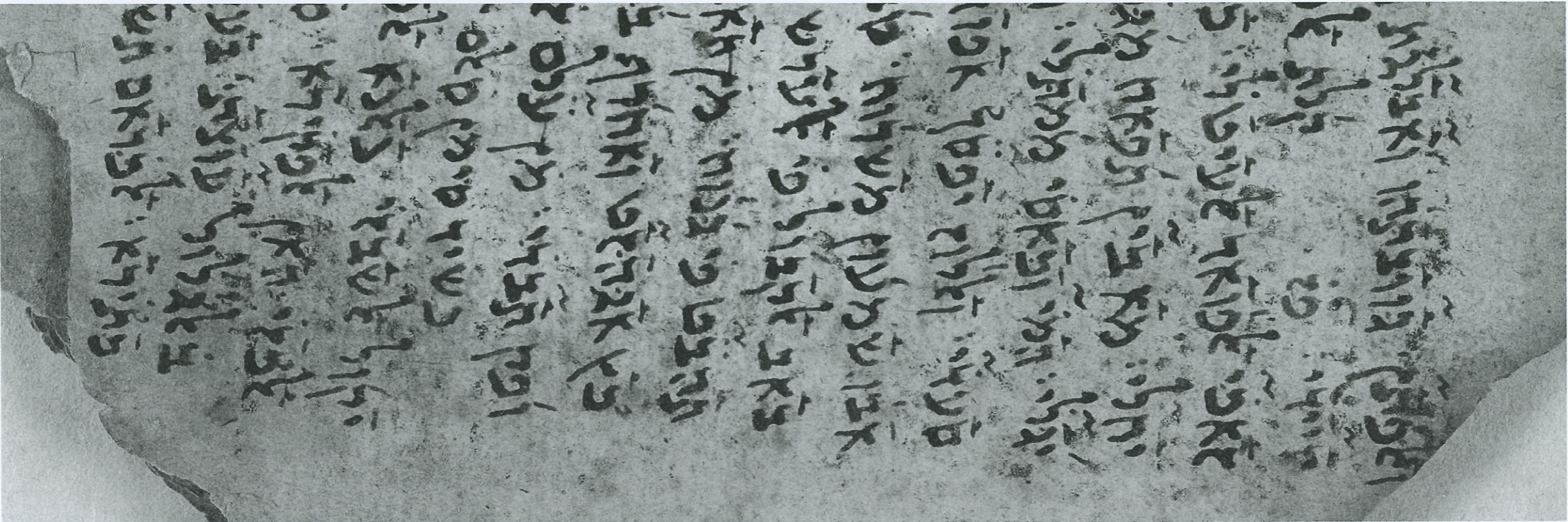
opposite

ca. 1

Text: Leather binding with inlay. Sultan Suleiman's Collected Poems (Diwan Muhibbi), copied Ottoman Empire, 1553.
Right: Opening folio of the work, folio 2v. The Abraham Shalom Yahuda Collection. Ms. Yah. Ar. 1065.

folia?

✓



Autograph of a Legend

Diwan of Shalom Shabazi,

17th century

YACOV FUCHS

One of the most beloved figures in Yemenite Jewry, Rabbi Shalom Shabazi (1619–c. 1680), was known as a scholar, rabbi, gifted poet, mystic, and, according to legend, even a miracle worker. According to one folk tale, he is reputed to have magically flown each Friday to the Land of Israel to spend his Sabbath in one of its holy cities.

Perhaps Shabazi was so beloved because he regarded himself as one of the people. His intellectual greatness did not remove him from everyday concerns and he was well-acquainted with the beliefs and fears of the people among whom he lived. His commentary on the Bible, *Hemdut Yamim*, is a brilliant synthesis of the heavenly and the earthly, the sublime, and the mundane. His commentaries contain interpretations based on the simple and hidden meanings of the text while also incorporating local folk tales involving demons, magicians, and supernatural forces. The world in all its variety is made harmonious in his work.

Likewise, most of his poetry emerges from his interactions with his people and is written for them. Shabazi feels the pain of his humiliated brethren “abandoned in Yemen” and expresses hope for better days. He pleads on behalf of his people while also sounding a message of confidence and consolation.

This autographed manuscript of a collection of Shabazi's poetry is known as a *diwan* in Islamic culture and includes poems in Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic. These poems express longing for the glories of the past, lamentations for the pain of the present, and hopes for future redemption. Some of the poems express great sorrow over the sacred books that Yemenite Jews were forced to abandon upon being exiled from their homes and the hope that their situation will improve and they will one day open and study these works once again.

caption woman

Autograph manuscript of Shalom Shabazi's Poetry Collection *Diwan*, Yemen, seventeenth century. This Judeo-Arabic poem reads: “Shabazi states / The deprivation has overcome us: / The poem describes a famine that plagued Yemen in 1677–1678 and asks God to help the residents survive it, folios 20r–21v. The Abraham Shalom Yahuda Collection. Ms. Heb. 8* 1229.

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Shabazi

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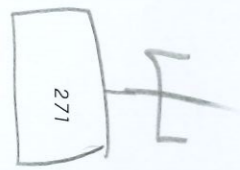
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Along with the nineteen volumes of the original manuscript of the
 concordance, the National Library is also home to "Mandelkern's
 Bible". From the outside, this Bible does not appear extraordinary in any
 respect, but seen from the inside, one can appreciate the years of toil
 Mandelkern invested in his research and his methodical and innovative
 approach. He color coded all the words in his Bible as a basis for the
 categories of the concordance: root words in blue, prepositions in
 yellow, personal pronouns in green, and proper nouns in red.
 Mandelkern carried his Bible with him wherever he went. It remained
 with him even in the final days of his life when he proudly showed it to his
 doctor. As Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow recalled: "All his acquaintances
 will remember the sight of the Bible that he would show to everyone -
 his inked, mottled, banded Bible with different colors under each word...
 Someone ought to donate that Bible to some Jewish museum or to the
 National Library in Jerusalem."

Hebrew Bible, published by Meir
 (Max) Hulev Letteris, Berlin, 1879.
 Solomon Mandelkern color coded
 every word in this Bible according to
 different categories, which formed
 the basis of his concordance. V.204.



A Boheme in Exile

The Else Lasker-Schüler Archive, 20th century

STEFAN LITT

In January 1945, an elderly woman died in Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus. This woman, who spoke almost no Hebrew or English, bore little comparison to the Berlin bohemian that Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945), the so-called "Queen of Literary Expressionism," had been twenty or thirty years earlier.

Poet, author, playwright, and artist, Lasker-Schüler was, at the turn of the twentieth century, one of the most prominent creative minds of the German-speaking world. Her personal and creative spheres, comprising a stormy life, flights of fantasy, personal tragedies, and great artistic achievements, merged in a myriad of ways during her decades of activity in her homeland, Germany. With the rise of the Nazis, she fled to Switzerland, becoming a penniless refugee struggling to survive in exile. Having twice visited Palestine, her third visit in summer 1939 became an extended stay that lasted until her death six years later.

Else Lasker-Schüler's personal archive reveals the diversity of her work, her relationships with important cultural figures, and the dynamic movement of her ideas and creations between East and West. In addition to the many manuscripts, documents, and letters, the collection also contains several of her colorful drawings. Some of the items were found in her sparsely furnished room in Jerusalem, while others were donated by friends who had kept her letters or drawings over the years. Both these and her prewar publications were rediscovered in the 1950s and helped restore her rightful place among the greatest German poets of the twentieth century.

Bohemian? Boheme not in Meriam-Webster dict.

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WRITERS AT WORK

4

Power

Else Lasker-Schüler, The Miraculous Rabbi Teaching in Jerusalem (Der Wunderrabbi predigt in Jerusalem), probably in Zurich, Switzerland, c. 1935. This drawing is part of a set prepared shortly after Lasker-Schüler had finished her large prose work, Land of the Hebrews, in which she reflects on the Holy Land and its inhabitants. Inspired by people and landscapes she had seen in Palestine, Lasker-Schüler drew this "miraculous rabbi" teaching in Jerusalem, using simple materials such as pencil, chalk colors, and gold foil. The Else Lasker-Schüler Archive. ARC. Ms. Var. 501.03.5.

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Writing Tel Aviv Through Children's Eyes

Leah Goldberg, *My Friends from Arnon Street*, 1943

DORIT GANI

Arnon Street is a small street in Tel Aviv that elicits a large emotional response for a few reasons. The first of these is that Leah Goldberg (1911-1970), one of the most beloved and venerated giants of modern Hebrew literature, lived on this street in building number 15. Goldberg SM lived here for nearly twenty years after moving to Tel Aviv in 1935. Second, it gives its name to *My Friends from Arnon Street*, Goldberg's first work of fiction for children, which she wrote in 1943 based on interactions with her young neighbors. The book grew very popular and was repeatedly reprinted.

My Friends from Arnon Street includes four stories about the neighbors and their pets: twins who plant candy in their garden, a vegetarian cat, an encounter with a girl from an immigrant absorption camp [?] and a stolen dog.

The National Library is home to a collection of writings by the literary scholar and journalist Abraham B. Yaffe, who was a close friend of Leah Goldberg. The collection includes journals, notebooks, letters, photographs, articles, and manuscript drafts from the Sifriat Podlim publishing house. One of these manuscripts consists of 114 pages from *My Friends from Arnon Street* in Leah Goldberg's handwriting. The manuscript also includes later editorial emendations in what appears to be Goldberg's hand, adapting the sophisticated language of the text for native Hebrew-speaking children. This manuscript offers a fascinating glimpse of Leah Goldberg at her writing desk, creating what would become a beloved work of children's literature, and a rare window into the lives of children on the streets of Tel Aviv during the British Mandate period.

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Autograph of Leah Goldberg's children's story, "My Friends from Arnon Street" (Yedidai me-rehov Arnon), Podlim Publishing House, Tel Aviv, 1943, with corrections and additions by the author. The Leah Goldberg Collection. Donated by Abraham B. Yaffe. ARC. 4*1655 02 061.

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Whoops, scanned pages in the wrong order!

A Brand Plucked

From the Fire

S.Y. Agnon and Martin Buber,
Corpus Hasidicum, early 20th century

TSILA HAYUN

Forty-one burnt scraps of paper bear silent testimony to a literary project that never saw the light of day. The *Corpus Hasidicum*, a comprehensive collection of Hasidic stories, was the brainchild of the young author S.Y. Agnon (1887-1970). Agnon turned to Martin Buber, a well-known philosopher who regarded Agnon as representing the spirit of Eastern European Jewry, and the two then reached out to the poet and publisher Haim Nahman Bialik. Bialik commissioned them to create the anthology.

How much did they achieve? Which stories did they manage to collect? We will never know. A fire broke out in Agnon's home in Germany and consumed all the contents of the house, including his vast library, the papers in his study, and the manuscript of the first volume of *Corpus Hasidicum*.

Agnon's enormous grief and sorrow led him to leave Germany in 1924 and return, once again, to the Land of Israel, this time to build his permanent home. There, in Jerusalem, he would write thousands more pages, including numerous stories interweaving Hasidic tales. His literary enterprise was unparalleled in its originality and influence on Hebrew literature, eventually winning him the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Martin Buber went on to publish *Hidden Light*, in which he rewrote Hasidic stories with a universalist and existential bent. Agnon's collection of the Hasidic stories of the Baal Shem Tov was published posthumously. The vestiges of the stories collected by Buber and Agnon may be read in the burnt pages housed in the National Library; however, Agnon never returned to the *Corpus Hasidicum* project.

Sometimes a file in the library archives is like a branch salvaged from a burning fire. It is a glimmer of writing and thought that never reached its culmination, whose full brilliance cannot be fathomed, though it might have illuminated our world with its radiance.

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WRITERS AT WORK

Remnant of S.Y. Agnon's manuscript, part of his and Martin Buber's *Corpus Hasidicum* that survived a 1924 fire in Agnon's home in Bad Homburg, Germany. The Martin Buber Archive, ARC. Ms. Var. 350 1114.

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Discovering the Origins of Jewish Music

The Abraham Zvi Idelsohn Archive, early 20th century

GILLA FLAM



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Left: Title page of A.Z. Idelsohn, *Thesaurus of Hebrew Melodies (Otsar neginot Yisrael)*, Volume 1, *Melodies of Yemenite Jews (Neginot Yehudai Taiman)*, published by Benjamin Herz in Jerusalem, Berlin, Vienna, 1914. Hebrew edition. Jacob Michael Music Book Collection/JMA 04228 (1).

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Right: Page 24 from the introduction of the German edition, analyzing the modes of Yemenite Jewish Bible recitation in comparison with Oriental-Sephardic and Ashkenazic musical traditions. Published by Breitkopf and Hartel, 1914. Jacob Michael Music Book Collection/JMA 4231 (1).

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WRITERS AT WORK

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Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882-1938), a pioneer of Jewish music research and the modern Hebrew song, was born in Russian Latvia. Having received a traditional Jewish education and musical training as a cantor in Russia and Germany, he immigrated to Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century in search of the origins of Jewish music. He believed that the essence of Jewish music remained intact in the musical traditions of the "Orient" among the Jews of Yemen, Morocco, Iraq, Persia, and the Eastern Sephardim, who, allegedly, had not been exposed to the peoples of Europe. This ambitious project resulted in the most extensive and pioneering collection of Jewish oral traditions, transcribed in Western notation and published between 1914 and 1933 in ten volumes and in three languages. The Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies. He managed to record some of the music on wax cylinders, using the most advanced technology of the time, the phonograph. Idelsohn's work in Palestine also resulted in the composition of dozens of new songs based on Hebrew texts, referred to by Idelsohn as "folksongs" and published in his 1912 *Sefar Hasirim* (*Book of Songs*). While clear traits of the Orient might be expected in these melodies, a closer look reveals typical Ashkenazi European and Western characteristics.

SM-1

Idelsohn's research project was the first of its kind and remains the largest in variety and scope to date. To his wide music ethnography, Idelsohn added extensive cultural and historical accounts of the Jewish groups whose music he documented. For example, the first volume (1914), dedicated to the music of Yemenite Jewry, includes a fifty-page introductory essay on their history, language, pronunciation, poetry, and music.

The conception of music as organic to time and place, to layers of history, language, and religious belief, despite its abstractness, is inherent in Idelsohn's ethnomusicological work and continues to inspire contemporary musicologists.

על שם שכיני

Mein Volk

דער אלט וויד מוסשל

דעם יעד אנדערמיש
אנד מיני גוטשטינדער שניש...
"אל שטייג יעד וואס שפג"ן
אנד ניעלע דאנג מי מויס
דעמאל, אלוי-ו'ער קלאנגע-
דעם ארעס יו' ^{שטען}

האל מיעל דע אקגעשונד
וואס וואסער בלינד מוסטגעגען-
אנד מינעל, יונער מאל אד ^{הייט}
דעם אויס, ^{ליינען}
ווען דעלויטליך דעם אד
דעם אנדערע אלגעבען,
דעם אלט שטייג.

roman

Above **Text** Elise Lasker-Schüler, My People (Mein Volk), Ascona, Switzerland, 1936. Autograph from a collection dedicated to Nehemia Zuri. This poem was part of her famous series Hebrew Ballads (Hebräische Balladen), first published in 1912. The Elise Lasker-Schüler Archive. ARC. Ms. Var. 501 02 39.

Right: A small drawing by Lasker-Schüler on a napkin, dedicated to S. Y. Agnon and his Jerusalem neighborhood of Talpilot. After a visit in Agnon's home, the artist drew this miniature and sent it to the writer, with whom she kept in contact over the years. The S. Y. Agnon Archive. ARC. 4* 1270 05 2207.

280 WRITERS AT WORK

7

I, Thou, and Us

The Martin Buber Archive, 1878-1965

STEFAN LITT

The papers of the famous philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965) were transferred to the National Library at the end of 1965, thus helping to transform the entire archives department into a world-class institution. Buber's archive offers a glimpse into the raw material of his monumental contribution to philosophy. For example, the treatise, *I and Thou*, shown here, was the cornerstone of his groundbreaking work on the philosophy of dialogue. The thousands of papers constituting the archive revealed the many sides of Buber's personality as an outstanding researcher of Hasidism, one of the leading figures of cultural Zionism, and a public intellectual who often challenged conventional wisdom.

Around two-thirds of the archive consists of Buber's extensive correspondence with intellectuals of his time, such as S. Y. Agnon, Albert Camus, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Herzl, Hermann Hesse, Karl Jaspers, Franz Kafka, Elise Lasker-Schüler, Thomas Mann, Max Nordau, and Stefan Zweig. For Buber, exchanging letters was, evidently, a crucial way of discussing and developing ideas. Some of these interchanges lasted decades; others just emerged on specific topics. Remarkably, Buber did not hesitate to correspond with figures



Left: Martin Buber's manuscript of *I and Thou*, Heppenheim, Germany, c. 1922. Autograph manuscript of Buber's famous work, page 3. ARC. Ms. Var. 350 02 9.
Right: Martin Buber and other members of a Jewish student association, Leipzig, Germany, 1899. Buber (center, with hat and white gloves) played a central role in Jewish students' groups in both Vienna and Leipzig. The Martin Buber Archive. ARC. Ms. Var. 350 15 86.

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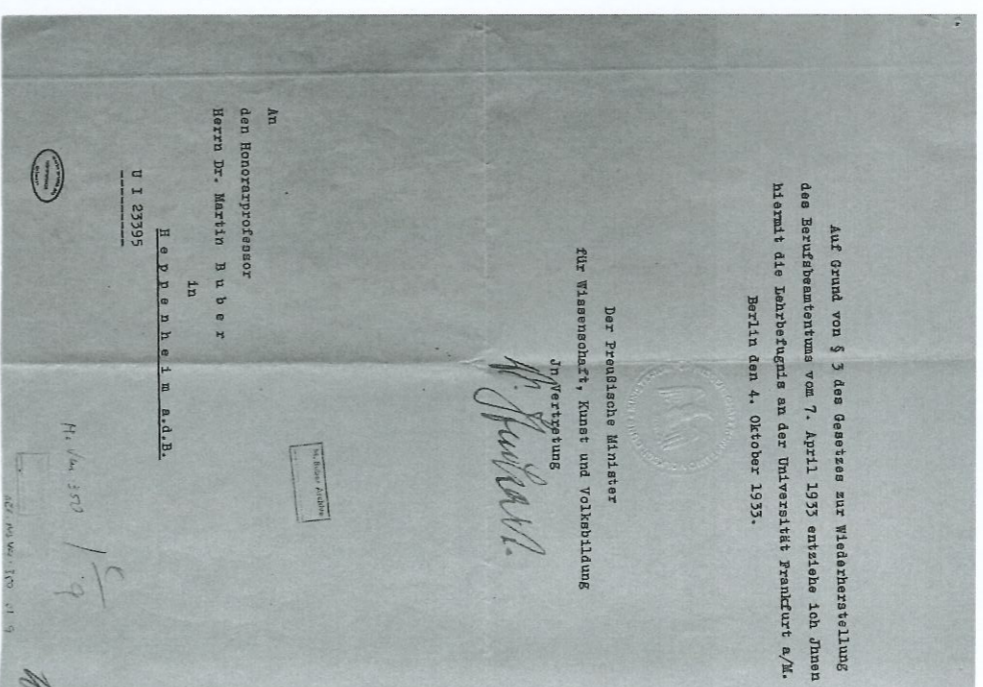
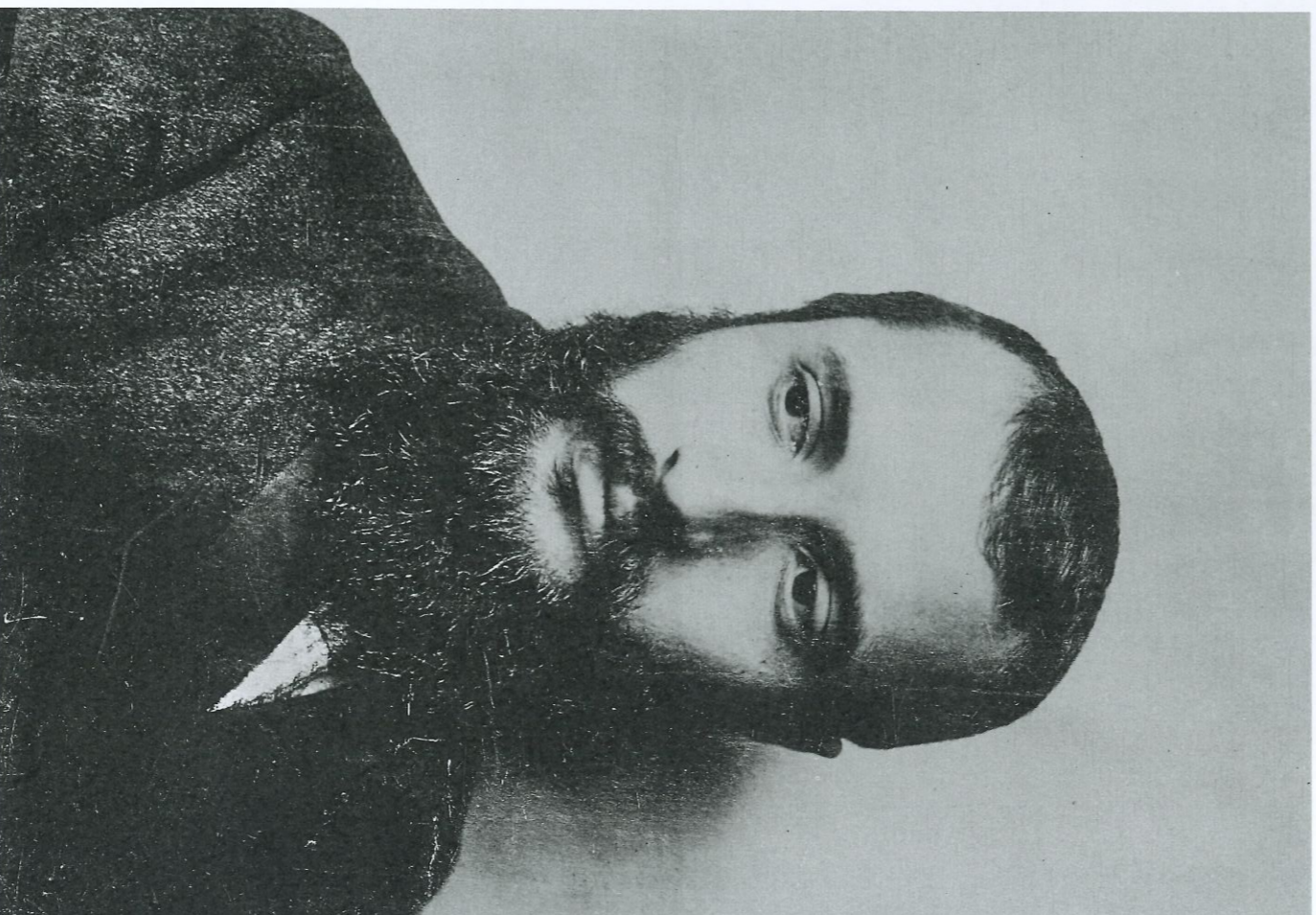
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whose reputations were stained following anti-Semitic statements, such as German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Buber's correspondence also contains hundreds of letters from international readers of his works and his contemplative responses.

Over the years and decades after his death, countless researchers the world over have spent time exploring Martin Buber's complex ways of thinking, thus keeping his humanist philosophy alive and relevant.



From left to right: Portrait of Martin Buber as a young man, ~~1902-1903~~. The Martin Buber Archive, ARC, Ms. Var. 350 15 04. Letter of dismissal in which Buber was suspended from his teaching position at Frankfurt University, Berlin, Germany, 1933. ARC, Ms. Var. 350 01 09. First page of a draft for Buber and Franz Rosenzweig's translation of the Bible into German, Heppenheim, ~~1920~~. ARC, Ms. Var. 350 003 04a.

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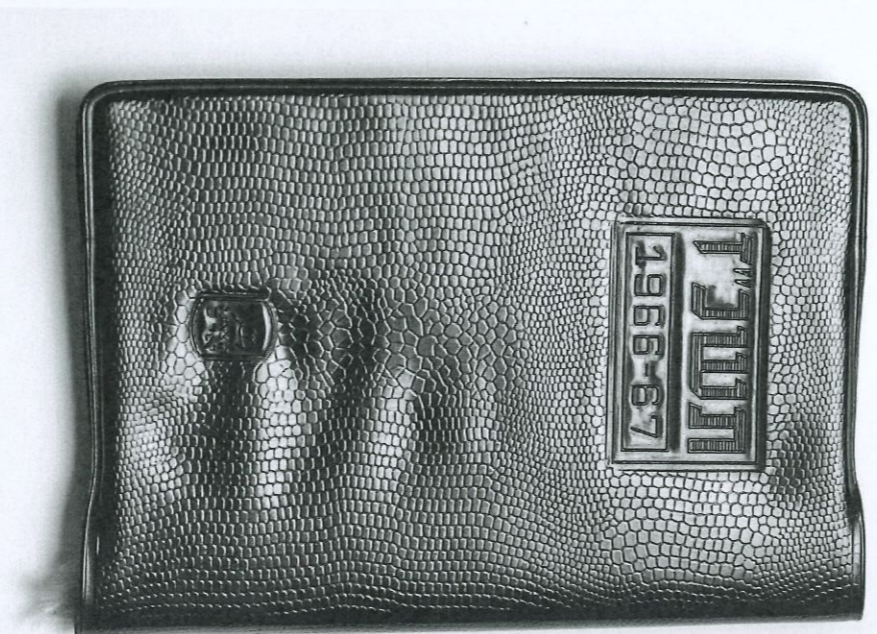
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The City of Gold

Naomi Shemer, "Jerusalem of Gold," 1967

GILA FLAM AND TAMAR ZIGMAN



Opposite, top / Top right: Early version of music of "Jerusalem of Gold" (Yerushalayim shel zahav) manuscript. Mus. 0250 A 016 (1). **As?** **Byman**

Opposite, bottom / Right: Draft of fourth verse of the song lyrics found in the personal diary of the author, 1967.

Above / Left: Outside cover of the diary. Donated by the Shemer-Horowitz family. Mus. 0250 E 083.

Between 1960 and 1980, the national celebrations of Israel's Independence Day concluded with a song contest produced by the Israel Broadcasting Authority and broadcast live first on radio and later on national television. In early 1967, the organizers agreed to honor the request of Jerusalem's mayor, Teddy Kollek, and include five additional songs about Jerusalem. They commissioned five different composers, among them the young songwriter Naomi Shemer (1930–2004).

Shemer was initially reluctant to take part in this venture, regarding herself unworthy of continuing the legacy of poets who had written about Jerusalem, such as the renowned twelfth-century poet Yehudah Halevi. However, she subsequently accepted the challenge and gave voice to her own affection for the city. Searching for a theme, Shemer recalled a Talmudic legend about Rabbi Akiva who promised his wife, Rachel, "a city of gold," namely, a piece of jewelry in the shape of Jerusalem. Redirecting this idea to the actual Jerusalem, Shemer wrote three verses and a refrain, describing the now forsaken city, once the home of the Temple and center of Jewish pilgrimage. The song, performed by the singer and guitarist Shuli Nathan, then a twenty-year-old soldier, was received enthusiastically by the audience and achieved immediate hit status in Israel.

In June 1967, the Six-Day War broke out, and Shemer, like other artists, went to Sinai to perform for Israeli troops. On the way, she heard on the radio that the Israeli Army had taken the Old City of Jerusalem, soldiers were standing in front of the Wailing Wall, and a shofar was being blown. Shemer took out her diary and added a fourth verse to the song: "We have returned to the cisterns, to the market and the marketplace; a shofar calls out on the Temple Mount in the Old City."

'Above' caption should be ~~be~~
First — revise? Outside cover of the
personal diary of the ~~author~~
author, 1966–67...
Then revise caption above: Draft of fourth verse
of the song lyrics found in the diary.

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These Will Be My Protagonists

A. B. Yehoshua, *Mr. Mani*, 1983

YARON SACHISH

A. B. Yehoshua's (1936–2022) monumental novel, *Mr. Mani*, might have remained no more than an idea in the author's mind, buried among the files of his extensive archives in the National Library.

Yehoshua's idea to write an intricate, complex novel consisting solely of dialogues in which we hear the voice of only one character was inspired by William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. He began writing the novel in a large notebook but, having completed only one chapter, found it too difficult to carry out his plan.

The chapter he had written before abandoning the entire project was published in 1986 in a special issue of the journal *Politica*. The issue opened with the novel's third one-sided conversation, preceded by a brief sketch by Yehoshua of the book's aborted master plan: "Five conversations between two people with each conversation taking place in a different historical period and a different place, moving back in time." The chapter was met with an enthusiastic reception, and scholars and critics pleaded for Yehoshua to continue his efforts and complete the entire project. The extraordinary reception of this chapter of a novel that had been stashed away in the author's bottom drawer also gave rise to a play performed at the Haifa Theater.

Encouraged by this enthusiasm, Yehoshua devoted himself to completing the entire book, and *Mr. Mani* was finally published in 1990. The book was an immediate success. It was translated into ten languages, garnered important national and international prizes, and is considered by both critics and Yehoshua himself to be the author's most important and complex work.

Yehoshua

Left and following page: A. B. Yehoshua's preparatory notes for his book *Mr. Mani* (Mar Mani), including information about the characters and the periods in which they lived. The A. B. Yehoshua Archive. ARC. 4* 1579 05 522.