Against the Sabra Current: Hanokh Bartov’s *Each Had Six Wings* and the Embrace of Diasporic Vitality

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MEETING EXPECTATIONS: HANOKH BARTOV AND HIS APPROACH TO ISRAELI IMMIGRANT ABSORPTION

When the State of Israel proclaimed its independence on May, 14, 1948, its provisional government justified the state’s establishment by pointing to the Holocaust: “The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish state, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.”¹

While Israel’s role as a sanctuary enabling Jews to pursue “their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil” should not be diminished, Israel’s provisional government asserted a more expansive vision.² Declaring that “the State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles,” it drew on the traditional Jewish rhetoric of exile and return to communicate the momentous nature of what they perceived to be taking place.³ Even though the second clause proves largely synonymous with the first, the strong resonance that it has among Jews led to its introduction. First referenced in Deuteronomy 30:3 and later developed by the former prophets, the concept of ingathering of the exiles [*kibbutz galuyot*] became entrenched in the weekday Jewish liturgy. The tenth blessing of the Eighteen Benedictions reads “sound the great shofar to herald our freedom, raise high the banner to gather our exiles [*lekabetz galuyotenu*]. Gather us together from the four corners of the earth.”⁴ This prayer expresses the idea that God will return the scattered Jewish people to their ancestral homeland and improve their lives when they repent for their sins. Subsequently, the medieval Jewish scholar Moshe ben Maimon (1135–1204) connected the exilic ingathering to the messianic age.

The State of Israel’s founders secularized the idea of the ingathering of exiles and employed its rhetorical force to convey the idea that the state
would radically transform and better Jews’ lives. Consequently, they created expectations for the State of Israel that far surpassed those assumed by other postcolonial nation-states that emerged after World War II. During the first years of Israeli statehood hundreds of thousands of Jews, whose expectations had been influenced by the proclamation of independence’s ideas and tone, made their way to Israel. Its population doubled in four years, and the need to integrate these immigrants into Israeli society was widely recognized as the most significant challenge facing the new state.  

Hebrew writers were pushed to depict this transformative event and to provide guidance to the coalescing nation. Although not an immigrant who arrived in Israel during statehood’s first years, Hanokh Bartov took up the challenge of portraying early state period Jewish immigration to Israel. His novel *Shesh kenafayim le-echad* (*Each Had Six Wings*, 1954) numbers among the first depictions of immigrant absorption in Israeli literature; its groundbreaking nature earned it widespread acclaim. Subsequently, it was adapted for the stage and published in multiple editions. *Each Had Six Wings* has long received scholarly consideration. By and large, critics have asserted that it directs immigrants to temper their expectations and let elements of their diasporic pasts wither so they can emerge reborn in the Israeli melting pot. Recently, scholar Batya Shimoni challenged this reading when she asserted that the novel expresses disappointment with mainstream Zionist ideology and a yearning for connection to the Jewish past and tradition offered by diasporic Jewish life.

Building on Shimoni’s reading, this essay highlights *Each Had Six Wings*’ promotion of an Israeli culture actively drawing on diasporic Jewish culture as necessary for more effective realization of the Zionist vision—something that sets it apart from other contemporary Israeli works and differentiates its author from his Israeli literary counterparts. Born in the small agricultural community of Petakh Tikvah and socialized in Palestine’s incipient modern Jewish community, Bartov (1926–2016) numbers among the first Sabras, or native-born Israelis. Yet he stood apart from most native-born Israelis and immigrant youths who cleaved to Sabra norms and characteristics. He did not see it as necessary to uncritically assume these characteristics and adopt these norms to highlight the difference between diaspora Jews and himself. Raised in a traditionally oriented settlement by East European immigrants who arrived in Palestine the year before his birth, Bartov implicitly understood and accepted his connection to the diaspora and did not view it as wholly negative. Furthermore, his encounter with Holocaust survivors in Europe immediately
after World War II while he served in the Jewish Brigade drove home his sense of Jewishness. Consequently, the idea of exilic ingathering resonated strongly with him. He expected that the new state and its veteran citizens would dedicate their time and resources to new immigrants’ integration into their society.

Bartov unexpectedly found veteran Israelis, including those who served alongside him in the 1948 war and expressed their commitment to the Jewish collective by putting their lives on the line to guarantee national survival, abandoning the utopian dreams that fueled the Zionist project. Solipsistically, they turned a blind eye to Holocaust survivors’ unspeakable losses and the sacrifices made by Jews from Arab lands who left everything behind to pursue their Zionist aspirations. Instead, they myopically focused on the heavy losses that they and other young Israelis suffered during the 1948 war. Consequently, when resources were scarce, veteran Israelis proved ready to use force to ensure that limited resources went to them. While veteran Israelis supplied immigrants with resources and opportunities, these went primarily to immigrants, especially immigrant youths, ready to abandon Jewish traditions and aspects of the Jewish past. Rather than viewing this as the best or most just form of resource allocation, Bartov viewed it as a waste of the tremendous resources brought to Israel by immigrant Jews whose values, norms, and social structures primed them to contribute effectively to the advancement of communal needs in difficult times with limited resources. Rather than having immigrants transform themselves to adapt to their new surroundings, Bartov turned to native-born and veteran Israelis and called upon them to learn from the new immigrants and alter their ways to better advance Jewish Israelis’ shared vision.

THE PROLOGUE’S PRESENTATION OF THE DOMINANT ISRAELI FRAME OF REFERENCE

The prologue of Each Had Six Wings presents widely accepted early state period Israeli views about diaspora Jews and Sabras and the possibility of transitioning from one group to the other. While critics have interpreted this as confirmation that Bartov shared these views and believed in the dominant paradigm for immigrant acclimation to Israeli society, he rejected this interpretation both immediately after the novel’s publication and decades later. In fact, Bartov introduces the dominant Israeli frame of reference for understanding the fictional world of the novel and the Israeli reality that it reflects to highlight this narrative frame’s inadequacy. He saw the need to work toward the creation of a
more balanced frame of reference acknowledging immigrants’ abilities and the resources they brought with them from the diaspora.

Indeed, the prologue appears to support the view of diaspora Jews as “uprooted, cowardly and manipulative [and] helpless and defenseless in face of persecution” and the individual acting in accordance with Sabra norms and values “as young and robust, daring and resourceful, direct and down-to-earth, honest and loyal, ideologically committed and ready to defend his people to the bitter end.”

Nonetheless, the prologue presents the view that diaspora Jews could transform themselves into Israelis through adherence to the Zionist Conversion Paradigm. This conversion process, symbolically initiated by the diaspora Jew’s assumption of a Hebrew name after arrival in Israel, brought about individual rebirth through the shedding of one’s diasporic traits and features and the assumption of a native-Hebrew identity considered to exist at the core of every Jew’s being. Viewing the world in accordance with this widespread Zionist frame, the Sabras constituted a faultless ideal type that everybody, especially immigrant males, should unhesitatingly endeavor to emulate, since nothing about diasporic Jewishness proved authentically Jewish or worthy of retention.

The prologue opens with a description of a displaced persons (DP) camp in postwar Germany and presents the dominant early state period Israeli view of diasporic existence as fragile and unsustainable and those who reside in the diaspora as defenseless and morally suspect:

The camp—the same camp. The square of red buildings, brick buildings, stood in its place. The asphalt square—the same square. The long barracks, the black barracks with their smell of tar, forests, and urine-soaked sheets—the same barracks. The barbed wire. The guard towers. Even the large Gothic letters in the workshop. Only the gates were removed and absent. Only the road that headed out from here and merged into the main road was open to all. People came and went as they pleased, but the camp was not emptied. People now came freely, or could it be that the same fear haunted them? People crossed borders, people walked in the rain, and people hung on as they travelled by train. Now the camp was open to the world, but the world was still closed before the camp.

Rather than stressing diasporic Jewish life’s improvement following Nazi forces’ defeat and the end of systematic efforts at European Jewry’s extermination, this
description promotes the idea that diasporic Jewish life has not changed at all. Element after element accentuates continuity. Even the description of the concentration camp gates torn off of their hinges serves this theme. Instead of voicing the arrival of liberation and freedom, it communicates diasporic Jewish insecurity. Like millions of other contemporary European refugees, Jews are on the move. Yet they do not have a tangible home to which they can return. Throughout Europe, survivors returning to locations they previously considered their homes are not welcomed. Even those who survive frequent anti-Jewish violence, such as the Kielce pogrom, feel dispossessed. Consequently, the former camp turns into a voluntary ghetto. For all intents and purposes, the surrounding world is closed off to Jews. Little hope for improvement is visible.

Three nameless teenage boys soon appear and come to personify the camp’s ghettoized Jews. As convoys head west and east, they remain immobile. They await a man with whom they will share a pilfered bottle of rum. These youths’ act of theft and their daytime drinking and inactivity intimate how exilic life erodes Jews’ moral character and inhibits their ability to better their lives.

The prologue’s presentation of the possibility of individual transformation and a better Jewish future’s realization through return to the ancestral homeland contrasts sharply with its linkage of exilic Jewish life with a bleak future. Amnon, the messiah-like figure awaited by the boys, embodies this brighter future. Even though he spent his first fifteen years in the diaspora and still speaks fluent Yiddish, immigration to Palestine and kibbutz membership have transformed him. He drinks a toast with the three boys to honor them, but rum is not his preferred beverage. He and the other kibbutz members drink vitamin-rich Palestinian-grown orange juice and live healthy, productive lives. The three boys yearn for physical contact with Amnon and are drawn to his stories about kibbutz life. Hinting at their ability to transform themselves from consumers of sweetness to its producers through mimicry of his lifestyle, Amnon enlists the boys to distribute candies to the camp’s other children while he narrates additional kibbutz tales. All three boys yearn for the ancestral homeland’s sweetness, but Amnon clarifies that their transformation into Sabras requires that they leave their diasporic past behind. Hence, he forecasts that this transformation will be easier for the two orphaned youths free from a parental yolk than it will be for the third boy, who resides in the DP camp with his parents and young sisters.
SIDELINING THE ZIONIST CONVERSION PARADIGM

After arriving in Israel together with his family, Menasheh Klinger, the third boy featured in the prologue, abandons it, settles on a kibbutz, and pursues Zionist conversion. Had Bartov intended to promote the Sabra as a faultless ideal type that all Israelis should unhesitatingly endeavor to emulate, it would have been easy for him to draw upon experiences from his four-year membership on kibbutz Eyn ha-Horesh to portray Menasheh’s Zionist conversion on the kibbutz. Yet following his journey to the kibbutz, Menasheh almost completely disappears from the novel. Bartov’s decision to forgo this opportunity points to his disinterest in confirming mainstream Zionist beliefs and views. Viewing the Sabra as an illusory social construct with little basis in reality, he deconstructs it to more realistically portray emerging Israeli life.

Rather than looking upon the Jewish diasporic experience as something that could be sloughed off like a growing snake’s constricting skin that it must molt to survive, Bartov believed that it was necessary to engage with Jewish diasporic experience and address its significance for his whole generation. As he explained in his Ussishkin Prize acceptance speech in 1954, “when I started to narrate, I already knew that I was not just telling the story of strange immigrants. I was telling my story, my memory of my childhood, my parents’ home from when it was the home of new immigrants, the story of my generation that allegedly distanced itself 500 parasangs from the world referred to as the Second Israel.”

To even indirectly tell his story, Bartov needed to present his disinterest in exclusive pursuit of the idealized and unrealizable norms of his generation and his belief that such disinterest was not shameful. Initially, this proved difficult. Yet decades later he succinctly explained, “I do not pass the entrance exam for mythological sabraness. As a real flesh and blood Sabra, that simply isn’t me.”

Since serious engagement with the complex legacy of diaspora Jewishness proved fundamental to the form of Israeliness that Bartov considered truly authentic, he used it as one of the central threads from which he wove his novel. He offers the following description:

The attitude of a native-born Israeli to diaspora Jewry, to that whole way of life that we refer to as the diaspora. This attitude would subsequently be defined as a feeling of guilt, and the character of this feeling is such that when it found voice it expressed itself in divergent ways. On the one hand, it was hatred of this origin and all that it involved, and, on the other hand, it was a yearning for roots, a
genealogy, and paternal tradition. Initially, shame that they preserve diasporic implements in father’s home, and, in the end, a feeling of absence and a search after what is missing.¹⁹

When Menasheh abandons his family’s home and escapes to the kibbutz, he fulfills his novelistic function by voicing the hatred of the diasporic past described above. Bartov does not keep the novel focused on Noah and Gitl Klinger’s home and the immigrant community that organically forms around it in Jerusalem’s imaginary Bik’at Zayit neighborhood to communicate this sentiment or to serve as an indirect vehicle for advancement of kibbutz ideals and the Zionist conversion paradigm.²⁰ Bik’at Zayit proves important to Bartov because it serves as a point of contact between the diasporic Jewish way of life and Israeli society. It enables him to draw on his childhood memories, the literature he read in his youth, material gleaned during his studies at the Hebrew University, and his experience living in a Jerusalem immigrant neighborhood in 1949 and 1950 to convey the rich inheritance that contemporary Israelis could attain from diaspora Jewry if they just made an effort. In this way, Bartov proved able to convey the full complexity of the native-born Israeli’s relationship to the diaspora.

THE DIASPORIC JEWISH COMMUNITY STRIKES ROOT IN ISRAEL’S ROCKY SOIL

The opening chapter of Each Had Six Wings intentionally disrupts the frame of reference presented in the prologue. It does so by demonstrating how maintenance of one’s diasporic character, rather than its jettisoning, offers a way to succeed in Israel. After journeying by boat to Israel and a three-month stay in a coastal transit camp, the Klinger family finds itself loaded on the back of a truck with other new arrivals and their meager possessions. While fifteen-year-old Menasheh and the children on board orient themselves by hanging out of the back of the truck or peering through tears in the tarpaulin enclosing the truck’s back end to see what is before them, the adults, who can only orientate themselves by looking at where the truck has already gone, view the future through the prism of the past. Attention to Gitl and Noah Klinger’s responses following their arrival at their destination enables one to observe the continuing usefulness of employing earlier strategies to guide one’s movement into the future.

When the truck stops toward nightfall on the Jordanian border in what will soon be revealed to be one of Jerusalem’s abandoned formerly Arab
neighborhoods, Gitl and other adults, whose eyes are “well-versed in disappointment,” find an earthly Jerusalem radically divergent from the heavenly Jerusalem of their imaginations: “The well-known sights, the sights that stalk them. Again, spread out before them were desolate landscapes, rocky fields, and olive trees with dust-covered canopies. And, again, ruins—barbed wire, sandbagged windows.”

Therefore, it would prove unsurprising if Gitl, who has experienced tremendous heartache, including having a child die of starvation in her arms, refused to get off the truck and wallowed in self-pity. Yet she chooses to take control of her situation through language: “If you asked me, more than this is a city, it is a cemetery whose dead are sleeping in it.” By presenting her perception of reality, Gitl shakes off her discontent and finds a way to soldier on and care for those who need her.

In contrast, Noah endeavors to optimistically seize hold of any opportunity to improve his life and the lives of those around him by not lingering too long on past and current disappointments. This is what enabled him to remain alive and allowed him to care for his family after the war broke out. When it was still possible, Noah escaped from Poland with his family. In the Soviet interior, he found sanctuary and security for them in the forests, where he and Gitl fought as partisans. After months in a transit camp, whose inhabitants await infrequent prospects for resettlement in Tel Aviv, Noah decides to take another chance to try to better his life and those of his family. When presented with the opportunity for permanent housing and the prospect of supporting his family through work as a shoemaker, he jumps at it. Consequently, he looks past the destruction of war visible in Jerusalem to see a “a great city for the Lord.” Noah recognizes that it has tens of thousands of residents who can provide him with a decent living making and repairing shoes. Therefore, he displays little reticence when he gets off the truck.

Soon Noah starts noting what will be necessary to strike root and starts doing these things. His family has been given the right to reside in part of an unoccupied Arab house rendered barely habitable by war, looting, and lack of upkeep. Nonetheless, while holding the hand of his five-year-old daughter, whom he has just lifted out of the truck, Noah immediately “surveyed what stood before him with a calm experienced eye.” A lockless front door, shattered windows, an absence of furniture, a filthy interior, a broken-down stone courtyard wall, a dislodged entrance gate, and a lack of running water soon get placed on a prioritized mental to-do list. After feeding his young children and eating something, Noah starts working with Gitl and Menasheh to transform the house into a home. Significantly, when Menasheh comes back
with a foraged lock mechanism, Noah immediately installs it in the door and supplements it with boards nailed to the door’s interior and exterior surfaces to cover over a large hole. In contrast with the DP camp, where residents were vulnerable to external threats, the installation of the lockable door creates a boundary between the outside world and the home’s interior and establishes a nurturing familial space.

Then, with a wandering Jew’s help, Noah and Menasheh repair a malfunctioning pump and ensure that the family will have a reliable water supply. While the Sabra truck driver condescendingly portrays new immigrants as dependents waiting for veteran Israelis to do everything for them, the Klingers display independence, initiative, and an ability to systematically address the issues at hand. These are not attributes that they acquired in Israel. Instead, they brought them from the diaspora. It will be this diaspora legacy that will guide the family’s acclimation to Israel and their ability to anchor communal development in the Bik’at Zayit neighborhood.

MENAKHEM-MENDL AND SHEYNE-SHENDL ASCEND TO ISRAEL

Critics have noted a connection between Each Had Six Wings and East European Jewish literature, but the novel’s connections to Sholem Aleichem’s literary work, both large and small, remain unexplored. Although Sholem Aleichem (1859–1916) composed most of his fiction in Yiddish, his son-in-law Yitzhak Dov Berkowitz (1885–1967) spent decades translating it into Hebrew, and his translations assumed a prominent position in the Palestinian Hebrew literary polysystem. Thus, Palestinian Jewish children such as Bartov were quite familiar with Sholem Aleichem’s work and his portrayal of East European Jewish life. Two explicit references to Sholem Aleichem’s work in Each Had Six Wings demonstrate this. When he denigrates Bik’at Zayit’s East European immigrant residents by comparing them to the frequently foolish residents of the shtetl Kasrilevke, where many of Sholem Aleichem’s stories are set, the immigrant physician Theodore Stern references Sholem Aleichem’s work. Similarly, the schoolteacher Rakefet, the novel’s most prominent Sabra figure, refers to Sholem Aleichem’s work when speaking with her vacuous native-born friend Iyya. When Iyya delays communication of the most important details of the story she is telling, Rakefet compares her storytelling technique to that of Sholem Aleichem’s famed protagonist Menakhem-Mendl, who saves the most significant things he has to say for epistolary postscripts.
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This reference’s presence in a largely realist novel conveys Bartov’s sense that Sholem Aleichem’s fiction constituted a cultural touchstone for both diaspora Jews and native-born Israelis.

More significantly, awareness of Sholem Aleichem’s influence on Bartov’s fiction enables one to recognize that Bartov draws on the figures of Menakhem-Mendl and Sheyne-Shendl from Sholem Aleichem’s epistolary story cycle Menakhem-Mendl when he depicts Noah and Gitl Klinger. In so doing, Bartov creates more positive archetypal representatives of diaspora Jewry.

When Menakhem-Mendl encounters financial difficulties, he is forced to leave Kasrilevke to retrieve his invested dowry to use in support of his wife Sheyne-Shendl and their children. Striking out on his own for the first time, Menakhem-Mendl does not get the whole dowry back. Nonetheless, he finds his newfound freedom invigorating and optimistically tries to make back the lost money by investing in the stock exchange. Unfortunately, after earning a great deal on paper, he loses his money. Yet rather than despairing, he picks himself up, optimistically pursues another get-rich scheme, and fails again. This cycle repeats itself over and over. Throughout his adventures, Menakhem-Mendl writes to Sheyne-Shendl to communicate his successes, but over and over he is forced to acknowledge failures.

Meanwhile, Sheyne-Shendl, who lacks her husband’s optimism and proves unable to envision a genuine improvement in the family’s situation, writes to Menakhem-Mendl to convince him to come back to Kasrilevke. At the very least, he could help her shoulder the burden of raising their family. Sheyne-Shendl finds it incredibly frustrating that Menakhem-Mendl does not listen to her. She wants him to accept that the world will continue on as it always has and put aside his quest for material success. As her anger and helplessness mount, she peppers her letters with proverbs and idiomatic expressions that draw on the accumulated folk wisdom of East European Jewry in an unsuccessful effort to convey her message.

Despite the tenuousness of their relationship, reflected by their exclusively epistolary connection, Menakhem-Mendl and Sheyne-Shendl combine to give archetypal expression to early twentieth-century East European Jewish society. Menakhem-Mendl conveys its belief in modernization, progress, and a better future; Sheyne-Shendl presents its deep conservatism, its connection to Jewish wisdom of the past, its fatalistic approach to the world, and its ability to endure hardship and suffering to ensure the survival of future generations of Jews.

Drawing on the model provided by Menakhem-Mendl and Sheyne-Shendl, Bartov intends for Noah and Gitl to represent the yin and yang of
East European Jewish society; he draws on his studies in East European Jewish history and culture to breathe life into this representation and advance a more positive attitude toward diaspora Jewry than the one offered by Sholem Aleichem. Bartov expresses gratitude to Ben-Zion Dinur (1884–1973), who taught Jewish history at the Hebrew University and served as president of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center between 1953 and 1959, for teaching him about East European Jewish history. Bartov fondly recalls two seminar papers that he wrote for Dinur. While researching one of them, Bartov spent months reading East European Jewish folktales, folksongs, and proverbs written in Yiddish and Hebrew. Later, he explains, “I transplanted the treasures of folk wisdom that I had copied on to index cards into the speech of the characters of Each Had Six Wings.” These treasures serve as the basis for Gitl’s snappy Yiddishized Hebrew retorts and evoke Sheyne-Shendl’s letters.

Cognizant of a strong anticapitalist and antispeculative bias that would have made it difficult for him to model his desired archetypal East European modernizer and optimistic forward thinker too closely on Menachem-Mendl, Bartov drew on knowledge of the East European Jewish labor movement acquired during his studies with Dinur and sociologist Arye Tartakower (1897–1982) to construct a diasporic figure better able to garner contemporary Israeli readers’ sympathy and identification. Making Noah a shoemaker enables Bartov to employ him to advance progressive values such as equality and justice frequently identified with the East European Jewish labor movement.

Finally, Bartov delicately depicts Noah and Gitl’s sex life to communicate their strong and fruitful bond, as well as Jewish diasporic experience’s vitality and its ability to nourish Israeli society:

As he stood there, half-dressed and caught up in thought, he turned to Gitl’s bed and sat on its edge.

“Gitl,” he whispered.
“What’s going on?”
“Gitl, I’m telling you, it will be good here yet.”
“My heart’s fluttering with joy. Now let me go to sleep.”
“We’ve already been through more difficult days and we came out whole. Gitl . . .”
“A type of desolate exile, without people, without livelihood. . . . Get your hands off me, Noah.”
“We’ll make a good living yet. I have two healthy arms.”
“Get out of here, Noah. Even without you, I am warm. You’re already having problems sleeping?”
“People settled here too. Just have some patience. The day isn’t far off.”

“Beggars and fools like you.”

“On the contrary,” his naughty giggling voice expanded in the darkness. “The more fools there are, the more beggars there will be. The more beggars there will be, the more they will need to mend their old shoes . . . Gitl.”

“Stop yourself, you evil beast. You’re going to wake the kids.”

In contrast with Menakhem-Mendl and Sheyne-Shendl, whose relationship is constantly on the verge of disintegration, Noah and Gitl live together peacefully and only rarely allow their differences in worldview to drive a wedge between them. These differences are part of what attracts them to each other, keeps them together, and enables their success through performance of complimentary tasks. Even if Gitl is a full-figured woman who might not be attractive to everybody, her husband finds her sexually arousing. Aware of her husband’s optimism, Gitl does not make pessimistic statements to convince him. Instead, she wants him to persuade her with more than words. The couple’s increasingly playful debate of the future is merely a form of verbal foreplay, likely accompanied by actual foreplay initiated by a half-naked Noah. The sexual pleasure that Gitl begins to feel overwhelms her fatalism and brings her to embrace the moment.

When Gitl tells her “evil beast” that he is going to wake the kids, she has already consented to his advances and just wants him to be a bit quieter during intercourse. The couple’s five-year-old daughter Haya’leh, conceived and born during the war, and their two-year-old daughter Tzipi, conceived and born in the DP camps, hint that they have had a healthy relationship with an active sex life for a long time. It is what has enabled them to weather devastating traumas such as the loss of a child. Their relationship’s health and Gitl’s fertility allude to the ability of the diasporic worldview they collectively represent to contribute to Israeli society’s development.

FROM HOUSEHOLD TO COMMUNITY:
THE EXPANDING REALM OF DIASPORA JEWISHNESS

Although the novel’s first chapter replaces the prologue’s antiasporic narrative frame with a more positive image of diaspora Jewishness and the presentation of diasporic Jewish characteristics’ ability to aid immigrants in building their lives in Israel, this worldview still finds voice in a single family. Consequently,
its ability to serve a larger population looking to find their way in Israel remains in doubt. In subsequent chapters, this diasporic worldview takes hold among the residents of the Bik‘at Zayit neighborhood and enables them to come together as a community. Noah’s charismatic leadership proves critical to this worldview’s spread, because his actions express its central elements. His interventions in neighborhood life initially appear rather insignificant, but they gradually spread his worldview throughout the neighborhood and pave the way for its political empowerment.

After a decade of war and upheaval, it would have proven perfectly reasonable if Noah had retreated into his own private world once he ordered his home and opened his shoe shop for business. Yet when he consciously forgoes this option, he begins to emerge as Bik‘at Zayit’s charismatic leader. During the previous decade, Noah inhabited a world where animalistic self-interest, rather than social ties and the types of behavior they dictate, governed individual behavior. Yet as the assistance Noah receives with the water pump on his first night in the neighborhood makes clear to him, reestablishment of broader social ties would enable him, as well as the neighborhood’s other residents, to accomplish more. By working to reproduce the type of productive social ties that Jews previously shared in Eastern Europe, he and other survivors, who numbered among Bik‘at Zayit’s first postwar residents, could start putting the Holocaust behind them.

Furthermore, if they did not begin to think more broadly, Bik‘at Zayit’s residents would remain a disconnected hodgepodge of people. Moral action, grounded in consideration of collective needs, as well as the particular needs of others, could create trust between neighborhood residents, develop social ties, and transform these residents into a community. As Bik‘at Zayit gradually fills with newly arrived immigrants from Europe and North Africa, the need to forge communal bonds that transcend the ethnic, political, and economic differences that divide the neighborhood’s residents becomes increasingly pressing.

When Noah adopts Tzirkin, his efforts to forge broader social ties begin. Wounded in the chest during the Independence War, after being drafted upon arrival in Israel, Tzirkin proves his worth according to native-born standards, and the government rewards him with a place to live. Consequently, when he is released from the hospital after eight months, he arrives to take up residence in a bedroom allocated to him in the Arab home inhabited by the Klingers. A five-member family, the Klingers usurped his room when nobody arrived to claim it. Interested in keeping it, Gitl tries to get him to leave by arguing that he is in the wrong place. Even after Tzirkin explains “I am not one of the
Hebrews” and makes clear that he is also a Yiddish-speaking East European Jew who suffered a great deal during the war, Gitl ignores his fragile physical condition and evident need. Instead, she actively works to best prioritize her family’s needs.35

While Noah also wants to keep Tzirkin’s room, he proves unable to keep Tzirkin at a distance. After learning about Tzirkin’s injuries, how he has lived on his own since World War II broke out, and how he survived the war in the Soviet Union like the Klingers, Noah feels compelled to give him his rightful room. Yet unlike the government, Noah recognizes that this solitary young man needs more than a room and, consequently, looks to provide him with the intimacy and community that he lacks. This effort starts small when Noah invites Tzirkin, who lacks relatives and friends, to share his modest Shabbat table. Tzirkin recognizes and appreciates Noah’s concern for him. The two men soon become close friends. Due to Noah’s overtures, Tzirkin cedes the large room to which he is entitled, cognizant of the Klinger family’s greater need for space, and takes a smaller one.

Similarly, Noah repeatedly puts aside self-interest to promote collective interests and communal bonds that transcend the immigrants’ divergent origins. Government failure to allocate sufficient resources and opportunities to the new immigrant community prompts two important examples of this. Despite the neighborhood’s location far from most employment sites, only one bus serves it; even when it arrives, it arrives at irregular times and is frequently full. Consequently, those repeatedly thwarted in their efforts to make it into town to work or apply for work grow frustrated. Extended waits combine with summer heat and the condescending attitudes of the bus drivers, who look down on the neighborhood’s North African immigrants, to bring things to a boil. A group of immigrants denied access to transportation start rioting. Looking to vent their frustration, they pick up stones and prepare to attack a bus driver and destroy his bus. Regardless of the immediate satisfaction that destruction and violence will provide the exasperated immigrants, the end result will likely be further curtailment of their transportation options that will hurt all neighborhood residents.

Noah has little need for public transportation, because his shoe repair shop is found on the neighborhood’s main artery. Yet when he sees the riot beginning, he immediately acts in the neighborhood’s best interest. While he uses physical force to subdue the rioters, who attempt to inflict bodily harm on him and even stab him, Noah remains calm and does not let interethnic prejudice inflame him. Instead, he empathizes with the frustrated rioters.
When the disheveled mother of one of the rioters curses him for injuring her son and physically strikes him, Noah does not raise his hand to hit her and lets her continue until she tires. He has no personal agenda. Order needs to be maintained in the neighborhood so that the residents can, as Menasheh explains, “live like people live.” While Gitl pleaded with Noah not to get involved, she recognizes the importance of what he accomplishes. She takes pride in it and the status it gives her in the neighborhood.

A second and pivotal instance of Noah advancing collective interests and forging communal bonds that transcend the immigrants’ divergent origins occurs when he brings the neighborhood’s residents together in support of Glik, one of its neediest figures, and his family. Initially, when viewed through Gitl and Tzirkin’s critical eyes, Glik’s masculinity is attacked and his unsuitability for Israeli life is emphasized. The stark contrast between diaspora Jews and more veteran Israelis found earlier in the novel reproduces itself with Gitl and Tzirkin in the role of veteran Israelis.

When Glik borrows a chair from Tzirkin’s barbershop so that his pregnant wife can sit comfortably in the shade while he purchases chicken at the neighborhood butcher shop, he becomes a conversation topic for Gitl and Tzirkin. Glik is a bald nearly sixty-year-old man with a Polish-style handlebar moustache, and his wife is decades younger than him. On its surface, their union proves difficult to comprehend. Gitl, who forgoes inquiry into its origin, finds “the bridegroom’s” impregnation of his wife laughable. Incapable of controlling his sexual desire, a senior citizen, who should know better, knocks up a younger woman. Then, rather than owning up to the absurdity of a man his age raising a newborn, he acts like a besotted eighteen-year-old. Tzirkin and Gitl, who find it shocking that “this grandpa” has attained such a young woman, or pargit, for a wife and view it at the last flickering of his potency, employ Glik’s efforts to attain a young chicken, or pargit, to ridicule him. To satisfy its citizenry’s dietary needs, the young state established rationing. Even when individuals had ration cards, they could not always exchange them for foodstuffs. With meat one of the most difficult foods to attain, the neighborhood women push and shove to get a chicken before the supply runs out. Consequently, Glik fails to secure a place in line. Successive waves of exiting women push him back. Unlike the neighborhood’s capable housewives who get chickens for their pots, Glik remains outside the store wiping streams of perspiration from his face and neck. When he finally enters the store, Tzirkin employs double entendre and calls out approvingly “penetrated and entered.” Gitl follows up with a faked groan of sexual pleasure.
They find Glik’s impotence humorous, certain that his penetration of the store’s door is the only successful penetration that he can now perform. This impotent “diaspora” Jew is contrasted with virile Israelis like them.

Rather than taking pleasure in ridiculing Glik from a distance, Noah recognizes his inherent value and looks for a way to help him contribute to the community and strengthen it. Therefore, he works to bridge the gap between Glik and other community members. Noah searches Glik out. When he learns where Glik lives, he goes with Tzirkin to visit him. They find him outside his ramshackle one-room apartment and explain to him that he is not alone. All of the neighborhood’s residents are “new [to Israel] and they need to help each other.” Indeed, Glik and his wife Masha do their best to make do with limited material support. Yet the couple does not make enough to eat properly; Masha, whose pregnancy is advanced, finds it difficult to ascend to the rooftop, where the apartment received from the Jewish Agency is situated alongside water tanks and clothes lines. Even though he has thirty years of experience as a pastry chef and baker, Glik cannot find work in his profession or outside it. Recognizing Glik’s professional experience and his ability to contribute to the community, Noah looks for a way to help him help himself and others.

Initially, Noah makes use of a personal resource to aid Glik, but his individual effort fails. Noah splits the space he has attained for his shoe repair shop to provide a location where Glik can open a bake shop. This enables Glik to get a loan for necessary equipment and supplies. Yet as the birth of Glik’s child approaches, his efforts to open the bakery hit a brick wall. The municipal authorities refuse to grant him permission to open the bakery.

Rather than accepting the municipality’s rigidness, Noah organizes the neighborhood’s residents to get it to permit Glik to support his family to the best of his ability. Noah recognizes that “the veterans will not help.” Nevertheless, he refuses to allow them to impede mutual immigrant aid. Recognizing the community’s right to have its voice heard and honored by the institutions purported to represent it, Noah and scores of community members head to the mayor’s office to lodge a protest and demand that the city permit Glik to open the bakery.

When the protesters arrive, they are met by bureaucrats less interested in justice or equality than promoting the needs of veteran Israelis, including themselves. Noah turns to the clerk who greets the protesters at the entrance to the mayor’s office and respectfully requests to speak with the mayor as a representative of the Bik’at Zayit neighborhood’s residents. The clerk ignores...
him because he speaks in Yiddish. Consequently, Noah turns to the native Hebrew speaker Rakefet, who teaches in the neighborhood school and whose empathy for the immigrants has led her to participate in their protest, to act as the group’s spokesperson. She requests to see the mayor in fluent Hebrew, but the clerk ignores her too. He then tries to turn away the protesters by telling them that they can meet with the mayor only by appointment. When they refuse and say they will wait to speak with the mayor, the clerk rejects this idea out of hand. Instead of granting the protesters the access they desire, the clerk spirits the mayor out of his office and calls the police to disperse the protesters.

Noah, his co-organizer Vidal (a Bulgarian-born communist), and Rakefet decide that they will not be moved until they get a permit that will allow Glik to open his bakery. They begin to shout the three Hebrew syllables for mayor to make their voices heard:

The three of them were already calling out rhythmically—a weak, embarrassed rhythm. The people in their places were perplexed, but very quickly they recognized that an innovation had been made, that a new stage had begun, that they would no longer sit like beggars at the door. One by one they joined in, repeating it and coming together with these three rhythmic syllables. And already the voice of one was blended with the voice of the general public, attracted to and drawn forth by the general public, and the voice of the general public is nothing but the echoed voice of one amplified and strengthened a hundred fiftyfold, rolling and echoing through the halls. 43

When the neighborhood residents, who barely understand each other and might not even understand what they are shouting, join Noah, Vidal, and Rakefet in their protest chant, they demonstrate that the callous clerk’s reference to them as a mob proves incorrect. They are no longer willing to act like beggars ready to accept whatever crumbs the Israeli government sends their way. They constitute a unified group of Israelis who demand that the democratically elected government act justly and serve the common good.

Unfortunately, native-born and veteran Israelis refuse to heed the protesters’ poignant call for justice and democracy. Labeling the protest “illegal assembly, amidst disruption of public order and the municipality’s proper function,” the callous clerk ignores the protester’s democratic right to free expression and calls on the police to disperse the “Communist” protest. 44 Even after Rakefet reiterates the group’s motivations, when she explains that “we demand justice and this is the only chance we have of getting it,” the police...
commander refuses to accept the protest’s legitimacy. Soon policemen freely wield their batons, beat the steadfast protesters, and arrest their leaders.

Rakefet and Benzion, the police commander sent to disperse the demonstrators, are mutual acquaintances who served alongside Rakefet’s fallen boyfriend Gabi in the Independence War. Their acquaintance enables Bartov to employ their confrontation immediately prior to the protest’s violent suppression to present Rakefet’s embodiment of the ideals for which Gabi died and Benzion and other native-born Israelis’ betrayal of them. Struggling with how best to honor Gabi’s memory, Rakefet commits herself to educating the immigrant children attending Bik’at Zayit’s neighborhood school and helping them acclimate to Israeli life. She sees it as inevitable that Israeli society will assume the character that they and their parents give to it. Consequently, by aiding them in building a democratic country committed to justice and equality, she finds a way to transcend her personal loss, voice her dead beloved’s ideals, and join a new community offering her a more meaningful existence.

In contrast, Benzion embraces a legacy of injustice and suppression of the popular will when he dons a former British Mandatory Police uniform—something that foreshadows his men’s indiscriminate use of batons against other Jews, including Holocaust survivors. When Benzion ignores the legitimacy of the protesters’ claims and explains to Rakefet that he is just following orders, his betrayal of Gabi’s legacy is further amplified. Benzion’s justification proves identical to the one employed years earlier by Germans to explain their participation in the Final Solution.

To better realize the ideals she identifies with Gabi’s legacy, Rakefet distances herself from veteran Israelis who do not live in accordance with them and aligns herself with the newcomers, whom she sees as their actual guardians. Cognizant that Benzion needs to make a living and that his police service is his livelihood, she does not attack him and tells him to just do his job. Nonetheless, she refuses to step aside and make it easier for her former comrade-in-arms to act in opposition to her beliefs. If he and his underlings want to employ indiscriminate and illegitimate force against protesters, they will need to beat her too and suffer the pangs of conscience. Noah and the other immigrant protesters understand that Rakefet is committed to the same values as they are and looks to join their community. Therefore, when two policemen grab her and push her to the floor, they rush to defend her.

While the protest does not immediately bear fruit and the dropping of charges against the jailed protesters and the acquisition of a permit for Glik’s bakery are attained only through intervention of native-born Israelis, the
protest points to Noah’s transformation of the immigrant neighborhood into a community that embodies higher ideals. Rather than promoting the Zionist Conversion Paradigm, the novel calls on native-born Israeli Jews to reengage with the diasporic Jewish experience. This will require that they acknowledge their society’s most vulnerable Jewish members, yoke their fate to that of the newly arrived immigrants, and work to satisfy the needs of all Jewish Israelis.

THE IMPENDING INTERRUPTION OF THE DIASPORIC JEWISH LEGACY’S TRANSMISSION

Despite the community’s unification around its commitment to caring for its least fortunate members’ needs, the novel points to native-born culture as a potentially insurmountable obstacle to positive diasporic Jewish values’ effective transmission. It appears that immigrant children, native-born Israelis, and children of immigrants will encounter difficulties when trying to employ these values to aid in Israeli state and society’s productive development.

While Noah’s charismatic leadership catalyzes community development and elevates his status among Bik’at Zayit’s residents, Menasheh finds little value in his accomplishments and moral stature. As long as Menasheh stays close to home, these perceptions go unvoiced. Yet when Menasheh discovers a completely different world inhabited by native-born and veteran Israelis, his anger about his father’s failure to adequately support the family and his father’s failure to integrate into Israeli society by attaining Hebrew fluency rise to the surface. Menasheh still dreams of the utopian world that Amnon promised him and a mature sexual relationship that he envisions at the heart of it. While his father can guide Menasheh toward attainment of a mature sexual relationship, his father cannot offer his son a path free of pain and difficulty. Consequently, when his friend Shimi tells him that he can attain the type of life he desires by leaving home and jettisoning his family, Menasheh heads off to realize his dream on a kibbutz with little regret.

When Menasheh accepts a neighborhood boy’s invitation to go out to the movies at his expense, he takes an important step forward. To mature, he needs to think about what elements of his previous socialization and which standards of his new country he will ultimately adopt. Yet when Menasheh observes veteran and native-born Israelis wearing nice new clothing, going out to cafés, and viewing films at the cinema, he is overwhelmed. He begins to wonder if the sacrifices his father requires him to make for his values are worth it. Money suddenly seems more important to Menasheh. It would enable
him to dress appropriately and take part in the types of dating activities that could help him find a partner. When Menasheh tries to get around his lack of money by placing his palm on that of a girl he meets at the cinema, she rebuffs his advances. Lacking self-confidence and being reticent to turn to his father for help, he does not see a way of furthering this relationship. Consequently, recollection of a traumatic experience that occurred years earlier, when he ran away from a girl who took a fancy to him in the DP camp and dragged him to a secluded forest location for sex, leads Menasheh to view himself as sexually deficient.

Noah tries to help Menasheh deal with the negative feelings that his sense of sexual inadequacy produce, but Menasheh shuts him out. Menasheh finds it hard to talk with his dad about the discomfort his relationship difficulties makes him feel. Nonetheless, when Menasheh complains about his lack of money and the inability to do things that other teenagers do, Noah does what he can and gives him money. Menasheh uses it to take the girl he met earlier out on a date. Fearful that she will dump him once his poverty is exposed, Menasheh feels that he must bed her before it is too late. He takes her to a secluded spot—something that recalls his earlier forest encounter. As he prepares to have his way with her, he forcefully undresses the girl and caresses her upper body. Yet when he kisses her face and tastes salt, he recognizes that she has been crying and becomes aware that his unchecked sexual desire has almost led him to rape the nonconsenting girl. Menasheh stops what he is doing, takes the girl home, severs his relationship with her, and represses the incident.

Menasheh overhears his parents having sex and is likely aware that their experiences have not prevented them from maintaining a healthy sexual relationship, but he proves reticent to expose himself to them and chooses to forgo their aid. When Menasheh meets Shimi, a former acquaintance from Germany, he is presented with a solution that will not require him to consider the connection between his past experiences and the difficulties he encounters developing a mature sexual relationship. Shimi asserts that Menasheh can find happiness by just abandoning his childish idealism. While Shimi’s sister lives in Jerusalem and pressures him to live with her to preserve what remains of their shared past, Shimi finds his sister and brother-in-law’s urban bourgeois life monotonous. Once he learned Hebrew, Shimi easily integrated into kibbutz life. He finds it more pleasurable to live together with other young people on the kibbutz than to struggle to repair frayed familial ties. If Menasheh learns Hebrew and ceases to let his family hold him back, Shimi prophesies that he too will find an enjoyable life on the kibbutz. Eventually Menasheh gets his parents, who feel guilty
about their limited ability to care for him, to allow him to try kibbutz life. By acquiring the new language and embracing the new culture at the expense of his exilic heritage, Menasheh looks to finally start afresh.

While Menasheh’s short-term future might look bright, his abandonment of his family foreshadows the difficulties impeding exilic values’ ability to impact either Israeli society or Menasheh and the problems that will likely result. Menasheh is blind to Noah’s heroic community-building efforts and how adoption of the ethos that he embodies can advance Israeli society. On a personal level, he fails to comprehend the significance of Noah’s ability to balance his pursuit of the communal good with a pleasurable relationship with Gitl that includes an active sex life. It seems unlikely that Menasheh will learn how to achieve this balance on the kibbutz and that his relationship problems will cease.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, when Menasheh leaves his family behind, he only makes it more difficult for his father to support it and lead the community. Without a clear heir, things might soon descend into chaos in the immigrant neighborhood and destroy everything his father worked to build.

The implosion of Rakefet’s engagement with Theodore Stern points to an additional obstacle to positive diasporic Jewish values’ employment for Israeli society’s productive development. As the novel opens, Rakefet mourns her dead boyfriend Gabi and their lost future together. When she comes to perceive her efforts to aid new immigrants in creating the best possible Israel as the best way to honor his legacy, however, she finds a way forward. Consequently, she dives into her work at the neighborhood school and actively participates in the protest. This motivation also makes her the native-born character most sympathetic with the new immigrants, most open to what they can contribute to the emerging nation, and best prepared to integrate into the community they are creating.

Rakefet consents to a date with Theodore Stern, an immigrant doctor studying Hebrew language with her friend Iyyah, seeing it as an additional way to link her fate with that of the new immigrants and transcend her loss. Despite how different Stern is from Gabi, Rakefet learns to appreciate and love him. Their engagement bodes well for the possibility of veteran Israelis absorbing the best of what exilic Jews bring to Israel and immigrants embracing the best of what the native-born can offer. Yet when Masha Glik is revealed to be Theodore’s wife, whom he has presumed dead, veteran Israelis and new immigrants’ ability to build a better future together by putting their personal traumas behind them comes into doubt. Theodore recognizes that he still loves Masha and wants to be with her. Yet she is married to another man, who has fathered
her child. Theodore cannot resurrect his past. Simultaneously, a new future with Rakefet seems increasingly unlikely. If Theodore cannot move beyond his relationship with Masha, he likely will be unable to help Rakefet put aside her lingering feelings for Gabi. Their relationship looks doomed to fail.

Finally, the novel concludes as Bik’at Zayit’s residents head from a synagogue, where a baby-naming ceremony for Glik’s daughter has just occurred, to a rooftop celebration outside Glik’s apartment. While previous scholars have accepted Glik’s assertion that assignment of the name Rakefet, linked to both an indigenous flower and a virtuous native-born woman, will enable the baby to leave behind the trauma of the Holocaust and integrate into Israeli life, the novel’s ending before the celebration proves significant. The fact that the girl is the product of an adulterous relationship between a married woman and a man who is not her husband further emphasizes this abrupt ending’s noncelebratory character.

While the neighborhood’s largely secular character and its residents’ casual religious observance likely mean that they would not ostracize the girl like devout Jews, who would bar her and ten generations of her descendants from marrying ordinary Jews, Bartov’s assignment of the status of mamzerah [bastard] to the girl belies her parents’ desire to give her a fresh start. Ultimately, their well-intentioned efforts to cover over the events of the Holocaust will fail. The baby will never truly be able to transcend what they endured. She will likely attempt to rebel against this familial past and the liminal status it will cause her to inherit. Reinvention, such as what Menasheh undertakes, will likely drive her, but only active engagement with the diasporic past will ever allow Baby Rakefet to draw positive elements from it and move forward happily as an Israeli. From a humanistic perspective, she is the product of years of mutual support under extreme conditions and a love that gradually develops. If Baby Rakefet and those around her can embrace this diasporic legacy, the deferred celebration will indeed arrive.

CONCLUSION

While the first-generation of native-born Palestinian Jews are traditionally viewed as maintaining a condescending attitude toward diaspora Jews and their exilic lives, Each Had Six Wings reflects a more equivocal attitude to diasporic Jewish life maintained by Bartov that many other young native-born Israelis likely shared. Rather than believing in the inherent superiority of the culture that he took part in creating, the Holocaust and the trauma of the 1948 war
brought home that culture’s limitations to him. Looking to incorporate productive elements of exilic life into Israeli culture to strengthen it for Israeli society’s benefit, Bartov strove to provide a more balanced view of diasporic Jewish life. Despite the setbacks that they encountered, most immigrants to Israel displayed a surprising vitality, and many looked to use their energies to restore the organic bonds of community typical of diasporic Jewish life prior to the Holocaust.

Indeed, the legacies of the Independence War and the Holocaust made it difficult for veteran Israelis and new immigrants to appreciate this vitality and draw on diasporic communal forms to develop Israeli society in a way that benefited the whole Jewish population. Nonetheless, by the early 1950s Israeli writers such as Bartov, who attempted to shape the national response to mass immigration, asserted the value of such efforts. Unfortunately, veteran Israelis interested in an end to national mobilization and the opportunity to finally live a “normal life” put their personal interests first. Not enough was done to bring Israeli Jews together as one people. While wholly understandable, the high expectations set by the idea of ingathering of the exiles were never met. Consequently, many internal Jewish cleavages were introduced. After more than seventy years of statehood, they remain unrepaired.

NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
7. For a scholarly treatment of the novel that addresses its early reception, see Avner Holtzman, The Heart’s Key: The Literary Art of Hanokh Bartov [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2015), 67–84. For a scholarly discussion that contextualizes the novel in the literature of its time, see Laor, “Mass Immigration as ‘Content and Subject’ in Hebrew Literature in the First Years of Statehood,” 161–75; Gershon Shaked, Hebrew Fiction, 1880–1980 [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibutz ha-Me’uhad, 1977–98), 4:70–71;


13. Ibid., 117.


16. For a similar reading, see Shimoni, “The Place to Which the Heart Yearns,” 297–99.


18. Ibid., 134.


22. Ibid., 12–13.

23. Ibid., 13.

24. Ibid., 18.

25. For assertion of East European Jewish literature’s influence on this work, see Gertz, “Zionism, the Kibbutz, and the Shtetl,” 498–99; Shimoni, “The Place to Which the Heart Yearns,” 305.

26. On the influence of Sholem Aleichem’s fiction and Berkowitz’s translation on Bartov, see Bartov, *To Grow Up and Write in the Land of Israel*, 67–70.


30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Marxist scholar Oded Nir categorizes Noah and the other craftsman who open shops in Bik’at Zayit as members of an emerging petit bourgeoisie critical to the novel’s political unconscious. This, however, does not invalidate the claim that Bartov strove to depict Noah as the embodiment of the East European Jewish labor movement. See Nir, *Signatures of Struggle*, 87–93.
34. This scene challenges Nurit Gertz’s claim that Gitl is linked to desolate land, death, and infertility in the novel. Gertz, “Zionism, the Kibbutz, and the Shtetl,” 305.
36. Ibid., 54.
37. Ibid., 143.
38. Ibid., 144.
41. Ibid., 215.
42. Ibid., 219.
43. Ibid., 279.
44. Ibid., 281.
45. Ibid.
46. Holtzman asserts that the novel’s polyphonic nature, which leads it to present the interior worlds of various characters and not just Sabra ones such as Rakefet, gives it a “democratic” spirit. Holtzman, *The Heart’s Key*, 81.
47. Laor, “Mass Immigration as ‘Content and Subject’ in Hebrew Literature in the First Years of Statehood,” 170.
49. Careful attention to Menasheh’s psychological problems contradicts earlier reference to him as a realization of the Israeli dream. Laor, “Mass Immigration as ‘Content and Subject’ in Hebrew Literature in the First Years of Statehood,” 169.