וְעֵלִי זָקֵן מְאֹד... וּבְנֵי עֵלִי בְּנֵי בְּלִיָעֵל... וְהַנַעֵר הָיָה מְשָׁרֵח אֶת ה׳ שמואל א׳ ב

> אֵי־מִי קָרָא לִי: שְׁמֵע. אֵי־מִי קָרָא בִּשְׁמִי. מַה? מיז

עֵלִי אָמֵר: שׁוּב שְׁכָב. עֵלִי אָמֵר: לַשִּׁוְא. עֵלִי אָמֵר: אֵין חָזוֹן, כִּי כָּהְחָה עֵינִי.

> אָךְ שׁוּב לְּרָא לִי: שְׁמַע. אַךְ שׁוּב לְרָא בִּשְׁמִי. אַיכָה אַעַן: הָנִנִי ! ז

חֲצוֹת. עֵלִי יָשִׁישׁ עַל יְצוּעוֹ יִתְיַפֵּחַ: יְבְּנִי... הָהּ בְּנֵי... וְכְבָר רוֹבֵץ הַיְקוּם בִּי, פָצוּעַ כַּשְׁקִיעָה בִּין פִּנְרֵי־עָנָנֵי.

יָדְעְתִּי חָנֵה יָבוֹא יְהֹוָה. הַנֵה יָבוֹא וִינָשֵק פִּצְעֵיכֶם בְּסָעַר. וְעֵלִי זָקֵן מְאֹד. וּבְנֵי עֵלִי וְּכָלִים. וַאֲנִי עוֹדִי נָעַר.

אָף הָנֵה שׁוֹאֵג יְקוּם סב הָנוֹ כּוֹאֵב וָרָן וּבַמִּוְרָח הָאָדֹם אֶצְבַּע בָּרָק לִי קוֹרְאָה.

- דַבֵּר יְהֹוָה כִּי שׁוֹמֵעַ עַבְּדֶּף.

Born in Poltava (Ukraine) in 1900, Abraham Shlonsky belongs to the group of innovators who brought to Hebrew literature the revolutionary verve, experimental audacity, and inconoclasm typical of the new century. His father, a true product of the changing East European Jewish world, gave his son a secular Hebrew as well as a religious education, sending him off in his thirteenth year to study in Jaffa's newly founded suburb of Tel Aviv. Unlike earlier Hebrew poets, Shlonsky learned spoken Hebrew in childhood and for a short period

lived in the exciting milieu of the pre-war Tel Aviv gymnasium that was to give Israel many of its leaders and intellectuals. After the outbreak of World War I, he was forced to return to Russia, where he completed his high school work and lived through the crucial years of the Revolution. In 1922 he emigrated to Israel as a young pioneer and worked as road-builder and farmer.

A prolific writer, Shlonsky has published many volumes of verse, seventy translations (among them Hamlet, Eugen Onegin, Tyl Eulenspiegel), and an anthology, Russian

Poetry, co-edited with Lea Goldberg, which affected younger writers deeply. As editor and mentor, he headed the literary Left, an extremely productive force during the first decade of the new nation. As leader and spokesman of the anti-classicists, he challenged the authority of Bialik and in his own poetry he reflected the influence of Blok's symbolism and the experimentalism and wild imagery of Mayakowsky and Yesenin. A great innovator in language, Shlonsky introduced the raciness of the newly spoken idiom into the verse and where words were lacking he coined ther Many have since become an accepted part of the language.)

and in the mere enumeration of all these figures from the past who are now to admire the exploits, prowess, and wisdom of their lover-turned-child.

With the third stanza, the tone changes abruptly. Now that he has gathered his throng of female worshippers to witness his influence over the demi-god Moses, the child proudly hastens to the leader to show him the right way in which to continue the journey, when he realizes—suddenly become an adult—that the woman whom he truly desires is "not present" (17). The sudden and intense evocation of this unique Beloved has diminished all the others. If the previous glory is that of a dream, the speaker has now

awakened into the overpowering truth of adult awareness.

The first words of the last stanza—"Moses Moses"—set the new, disenchanted tone, and a total reversal of roles concludes the poem, dramatizing the shift from joyous dreaming to sorrowful waking. Whereas at the outset the voice was that of an adult talking as if he were an exuberant child, it is now that of a child talking as if he were a tired adult: "I am so weary... I am still a boy." It is as if the speaker were saying: "Waking reality is too much for me; I wish to sleep some more."

- ARIEH SACHS

TOIL · AMAL* · עמל

הַלְבִישִׁינִי, אָפֶא כְשֵׁרָה, כְּתֹנֵת־כַּסִים לְתִּכְּאֶרֶת ועם שחרית הוביליני אלי עמל.

Halbişini, ima kşéyra, któnet-pásim letif'éret Veím sáharit hovilíni eléy ámal.

בַּתִים נִצְבוּ כַטּוֹטַפּוֹת. וְבִרְצוּעוֹת־תְּפִילִין גוֹלְשִׁים כְּבִישִּׁים, סָלְלוּ כַּפַּיִם.

י עוֹטְפַה אַרְצִי אוֹר כְּטֵלִית. Otfa ártsi or katálit. Bátim nítsvu katotáfot. Vehirtsúot-tfílin gólsim kvísim, sálelu [kapáyim.

ה. אָלֵי בּוֹרְאָה אָלֵי בּוֹרְאָה ה הַתְּפַלֵּל קּרְיָה נָאָה אֱלֵי בּוֹרְאָה. 6 Tfilat-ṣáḥrit po titpálel kírya náa éley bór'a.

Uvabór'im

בָּנֵךְ אַכְרָהָם,

Bneh avráham,

י פוטן סוֹלֵל בּיִשְׂרָאל. Páytan sólel beyisráel.

וּבֶעֶרֶב בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת יְשׁוּב אַבָּא מִסִּבְּלוֹתָיו וְכַתְפַלֵּה יְלְחֵשׁ נַחַת:

Uvaérev beyn hasmásot yásuv ába misivlótav Vehitfila yilhas náhat:

עור וגידים ועצמות. הללויה.

ו הבן יקיר לי אברהם, Haven yakir li avraham, Or vegídim vaatsámot. Halelúya.

הַלְבִּישִׁינִי, אָמָא כְּשֵׁרָה, כְּתֹנֵת־כַּפִּים לְתִפְאֶרֶת וְעָם שַׁחַרִית הוֹבִילִינִי אלי עמל.

Halbişini, ima kşéyra, któnet-pásim letif'éret Veím sáharit hovilíni Eléy ámal.

"Toil" appears in a sequence named for Mt. Gilboa, a hill dominating the Valley of Jezreel in whose fields Shlonsky worked. All the poems of this era (1927) mirror a landscape which had been a nostalgic dream in Russia and which, after it became real, lost none of its festive appeal. Shlonsky presents the new Palestinian earth in an ecstatic, quasi-religious light. The building of the homeland and the tilling of its soil are transformed into acts of worship. And the modernist influences of Blok, Yesenin, and other Russian poets are absent from the "Gilboa" poems: they follow the style and language of the Bible and Prayerbook. The lines have the undefined rhythms of the

Psalms, varying in length and seemingly arbitrary in shape; but read aloud, they reveal an orderliness indicative of Shlonsky's inclination toward symmetry even in free verse:

- (1) Dress me, good (pious) mother, in a glorious coat of many colors (2) And with dawn lead me to toil.
- (3) My country wraps itself in light as in a prayer shawl. (4) Houses stand out [lit. stood] like phylacteries. (5) And like phylactery straps, the highways that palms have paved glide down.
- (6) Here [now] the beautiful town prays matins to its creator (7) And among the creators (8) [Is] your son, Abraham, (9) A hymn-writer (poet)-road-paver in Israel.

(10) And in the evening, at sunset, father shall return from his labors (11) And like a prayer, he will whisper with contentment: (12) My darling son Abraham, (13) Skin and veins and bones. (14) Hallelujah!

(15) Dress me, good (pious) mother, in a glorious coat of many colors (16) And with dawn lead me (17) To toil.

Each word in the first stanza is loaded with associations and symbols. The speaker addresses not his own but the generic "mother" common to Yiddish folk-poetry. In the new life, detached from the recent past, nostalgia turns "mother" into a symbolic figure who can give both a blessing and a sacrifice. The "coat of many colors" is of course an allusion to Genesis 37:3, where Jacob makes his gift of love to Joseph. But the Bible reader knows that the coat will be soaked in blood, and line 2 recalls the Isaac story, where sacrifice is also an act of love to be done with "your only son, which you love." I.ove and sacrifice become one. The pioneerspeaker is a beloved son and the altar is toil. Toil has become an act of worship.

Stanza 2 is a composite of allusions: to Psalm 104:2 (describing God as "wrapped in light as with a cloak"); to the prayer shawl (tálit); to phylacteries (tfilin), which are part of daily worship. The latter consist of boxes called "houses" and of leather straps. The square houses perched on the hills are like phylactery boxes worn on the head, and the roads gliding into the valley like the phylactery straps. The land is now a worshipper standing at his morning prayer.

The words gólsim kvisim make a striking synthesis of old and new. In the Song of Songs, the hair of the beloved descends (galşú) like a flock of mountain goats. Kvişim, however, is a modern term ("roads") associated with the new homeland. The lines also speak of labor, and kapayim ("palms") reinforces the image of worship: the roads are being paved by "palms" of young pioneers, many of whom as members of the int ligentsia had never worked with their hands.

חו ברוכות תהיו לי דגלים קטנות

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וברוך אלהים

בב המוריד גשם לַתִּינוֹקוֹת.

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רגלים קטנות היו לנו (אַפְרוֹחֶי־אֱלֹהִים! הוֹי נַחַת אִמָּא־אַבָּא!) צ וְמָה אָהַבְנוּ רְפַׂס בָּהָן יְיֵן כָּל בֹץ כל שלולית רבה.

> פִיטוֹב הַגִּשֶׁם טוֹם לַמְיַחַלִּים לוֹ אַנוֹת שַאַננוֹת שִאַננוֹת שִאַננוֹת שִאַננוֹת שִאַננוֹת פְשִׁדְמוֹת שִּאַננוֹת אך שבעתים טבו גשמיריה

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> וְאַתַר־כָּךְ שַׁתַ הַרְתַק־הַרְתַק אֵי לְשֶׁם וֹעָתַק־הַרְתַק אֵי לְשֶׁם שלוליות חופוות

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