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PREFACE

GARDEN, ORCHARD and NATURE **In Jewish and Japanese Culture, Literature and Religion**

The Twelfth Annual CISMOR Conference on Jewish Studies (CJS12) was held in Kyoto over two days in the early fall of 2023. Like CJS10, it was organized in collaboration between Doshisha University's Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions, Doshisha's School of Theology, and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Heksherim Research Institute for Jewish & Israeli Literature & Culture. It saw the participation of numerous scholars from Japan, Israel, the USA and the Netherlands. This was the fourth conference of the twelve held so far to explore religious and cultural aspects in modern Japanese and Hebrew literatures, following CJS6 (2012), CJS9 (2017), and CJS10 (2019).

For the current conference we chose the title: *Garden, Orchard and Nature in Jewish and Japanese Culture, Literature and Religion*. The preservation of nature and the health and sustainability of our planet are grave issues that are on everybody's mind in recent years. We chose to approach it not from the purely ecological angle, but rather from the perspective of looking at expressions celebrating nature in Hebrew and Japanese literatures. Japanese culture and literature are famous for their special sensitivity towards nature, and the many expressions given to all its aspects since early time. In Jewish culture too, we find many references to nature, beginning with the great peaks in the Bible, in books such as Song of Songs, Job, and some of the Psalms, followed by the fascinating expressions in the Medieval poetry written in Spain and elsewhere. The interest in nature and its expression in literature have been greatly enhanced since the revival of Hebrew literature in the 19th century, and in particular through the meeting with the landscape of the Land of Israel. Many of these expressions in prose and poetry were discussed by our presenters during the two days of the conference. Unfortunately, some scholars who were expected to participate had to cancel their attendance, and especially the Japanese side of the conference suffered for this reason, but still, many stimulating papers on a wide variety of subjects were offered, with particular focus on the image and idea of the garden in both cultures.

Out of the sixteen papers read at the conference, eleven were submitted by their authors for publication, and are published here after undergoing a thorough editing process. We offer as a

Prologue the article by Yigal Schwartz, who expounds on the mytho-flora of Hebrew literature, namely the use – symbolic and otherwise – made of numerous plants throughout the long history of Hebrew writing, a subject requiring an elaborate study through collecting and analyzing a large amount of data. In this article, one example for such a study is given in the way two writers from consecutive generations – Nathan Alterman and A. B. Yehoshua – use the symbolic olive tree in opposite directions.

We have divided the rest of the articles into three parts. The theme of the first part is *Gardens and Trees in Hebrew Prose Literature*, and it includes four articles. Outstanding Israeli poet and author Shimon Adaf points out in his paper two competing tendencies in Hebrew literature: the traditional Jewish one, which was mostly suspicious of nature, and the secular modern one, which embraced it. Adaf then elaborates on how this conflict is expressed through the depiction of gardens in his own prose writing. Hanna Soker-Schwager bases her article on her dialogue with author Anthon Shammas, surrounding his seminal Hebrew novel *Arabesques*. She explores the various expressions of sensual experiences in the novel, focusing on smell, and in particular that of a certain shrub which has the special quality of bringing up memories and feelings. Michal Ben-Naftali focuses on the work of prominent writer Yehudit Hendel, and in particular on her novel *The Mountain of Losses* in which the author follows bereaved parents who garden around their sons' graves in a military cemetery. Through the theme of gardening, she exposes subtle connections with other works by Hendel. Noam Krohn Borjovich exposes the complex relationship between place, nature, and city in a story by Nissim Aloni that takes place in Tel Aviv, and another by Yehudit Katzir, which takes place in Haifa.

The second part is titled *Between Japanese and Hebrew Culture, Religion and Literature*. It opens with Aida Yuen Wong's survey of three of the great *Daimyō* gardens created during the Edo Period. She opines that these gardens epitomize a fully-fledged multi-sensory art form. Being embedded in the tenets of Neo-Confucianism, which prioritize the cultivation of self and society, these gardens embody a profound philosophy valuing the refinement and benevolence of rulers. This is followed by Hiroshi Ichikawa's inquiry into the symbolism of the garden in both Jewish and Japanese Zen cultures. He points out that while in Judaism the garden was mainly a symbol signifying a heavenly garden through which divine teachings are revealed, in Zen-Buddhism actual gardens have been used as the means to make our mind observable for ourselves or to project our mind onto the natural garden. Turning to literature, Shirah Malka Cohen delves into two

outstanding novels by modernist writers: the Hebrew Uri Nissan Gnessin and the Japanese Shiga Naoya. She illustrates how both authors bring together music and nature in order to demonstrate how art and nature help us give meaning to the world and ultimately find some truth about the human condition. This part is concluded by Kaori Ozawa's study of the flight of Jonah from the prospective of ecological hermeneutics. Through her analysis she seeks a new model for understanding the relationship to God from an ecocentric perspective.

The third and final part is titled *Gardens and Flora in Hebrew Poetry*. It opens with Naoya Katsumata's study of the poetical function of flora in Hebrew liturgical poetry (*piyyut*). He discusses the question whether the depiction of flora was realistic or imaginary, which he finds difficult to answer, but gives precedence to the liturgical occasions where descriptions of flora appear in *piyyut* and the poetic functions that the flora motifs serve. Anat Weisman analyzes a poem by seminal Hebrew poet Yona Wallach on the theme of metamorphosis into a tree. According to her analysis, the very essence of the poem is transformation, and further, poetry can give us a glimpse of seeing the naked existence stripped of symbolism. Finally, as an Epilogue, recalling his closing words at the conference, Doron B. Cohen offers a peek into one of Hebrew literature's most outstanding gardens, poet H. N. Bialik's "I Have a Garden".

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As in some of the previous conferences, this time too, all papers and comments were delivered in English. The edited papers in this volume are also presented solely in English, but the List of Participants and the List of Previous Publications in this series are given in Japanese as well.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to all the participants and to those who helped with the organization of the conference and the production of this volume. We are especially grateful to the students who volunteered to help in various ways, and for their dedicated assistance to the office administrator of CISMOR, Ms. Miyuki Yoshino, and to Ms. Ravit Levin, the administrator of Heksherim Institute.

Ada Taggar Cohen & Doron B. Cohen
Editors
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