From Medieval to Pop Culture: An Old-World New Text, the Golem of Prague—A Traveling Monster/Hero

Gila Aloni

Prologue

In my attempt to retrace the path of an ancient story that harkens back to the Middle Ages and has survived to the present day—the fable of the "Golem," a huge, ghoulish automaton with supernatural powers that was summoned to the aid of the Jews to fight villains[1]—I reached Israel at the beginning of July of 2014 in the midst of a new outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas[2] in Gaza, this time referred to as "Operation Protective Edge" by international media.[3] By the time of my departure in early August, a cease-fire of sorts had come into effect. Needless to say, no magical superhero had rushed in to the rescue, or to prevent the suffering of innocent civilians on both sides. The cease-fire held only for a few days, but "Operation Protective Edge" lasted a full fifty.

As a result of this coincidence, my efforts to piece together an article about the Golem tale as a mnemonic device that recorded events as it traveled throughout history were framed by an episode of warfare that is now added to a memory of the area's long history of conflict.

Hence, these lines composed for a special issue on "Text as Memoir" are themselves a memoir, caught in a moment of history in the making, and capture yet another aspect of the complexity of the Middle East. The diaristic nature of this paper hopes to avoid taking any political standpoint or bias for either side. It aims simply to capture moments, indelible snapshots of life.

Thursday, July 17

The war ("Protective Edge") still rages. How long is it now—19 days since it started? Where was I when it began? . . . Ironically, when the first siren sounded I was at the port of Old Jaffa, a place where Jews, Muslims, and Arabs live and work shoulder-to-shoulder.

Yesterday, an old man was killed on his way to the shelter. But it wasn't a missile that killed him. He was hit by a car. . . .

After several days stuck in Turkey because the air space over Israel was declared a no-fly zone (I struggle to grasp the concept of "shutting down skies" where no foreign flights come into the country anyway), my friend Yael's child was finally able to fly back home.

I was at the cinema today watching a movie when at a certain point an alarm suddenly went off. It was part of the sound track, but we were all ready to jump up and run to a shelter before we realized it was not "real". . . These days, the slightest sound triggers the nervous system. . . .

Sunday, July 20

I am driving through Tel-Aviv listening to Israeli Radio and a reporter is reading from Gazan Youth's "Manifesto for Change":

> F*** Hamas. F*** Israel. F*** Fatah. F*** the UN. F*** the UNWRA. F*** the USA! We the youth of Gaza have had enough of Israel, of Hamas, of the occupation, and of the violations of human rights and indifference of the international community! We want to scream and break this wall of silence, injustice and indifference, just as the Israeli F16 jets break the sound barrier over our heads. We scream with all the power in us, every ounce of our souls, to vent this immense frustration that consumes us because of this f***ing situation we live in; we are like lice between two nails living a nightmare inside a nightmare, no room for hope, no space for freedom. We are sick of being caught in this political struggle; sick of blackout nights with planes circling above our homes; sick of innocent farmers getting shot in the buffer zone while tending their lands; sick of bearded guys walking around with their guns always at the ready, beating up or arresting young people who are simply demonstrating for what they believe in ("Gaza's-Youth-Manifesto-for-Change").

* * *

Surreal flash: yesterday one of my friends told me that on her way to work she heard a siren and got straight out of her car, lay down on the ground and covered her head, while missiles flew through the sky above her. But what really made her panic was the sight of other driv-

ers, big muscular tough-guys, cowering on the ground and scared as shit. These guys did not look like heroes, but they are part of a memory of a moment in history.

Introduction

This paper examines the function of the "Golem" story as a mnemonic device in the form of comics[4] styled to illustrate the historical events that shaped the identity of the Jews in moments of grave threat to their existence, including blood libels and persecutions. There are many versions of this story, but the best-known version is the one written by Rabbi Judah Löew Ben Bezalel (1520–1609), also known as the *Maharal* (teacher) of Prague. The framework of the Golem story could basically be adapted to any locality,[5] and traveled around the world through the ages, published in a variety of forms including movies[6] and comics.[7] This paper examines an Israeli graphic novel titled as *HaGolem: Sipuro shel comics Israeli* [*The Golem: The Story of an Israeli Comic*][8] illustrated by Uriel Reshef and published in 2003 by Eli Eshed and Uri Fink, which at the time of writing this article has not been translated into English, and therefore has not received the attention it deserves.[9]

The Golem: a Historical Perspective

The concept of the Golem originated in the Middle Ages[10] but stems from the Old Testament tale of the Golden Calf, which the Jews created as an idol of worship, after which they received the Ten Commandments as a call to order.[11] Gershom Scholem in "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovot" argues that "the creation of such [forbidden] totems is deeply ingrained in the thinking of the Jewish mystics of the Middle Ages, known as the Kabbalists" (337). Formulas for creating Golems were extracted from the *Sefer Yetzirah,* or *Book of Creation*, dated between the third and sixth centuries CE . . . Such formulas required various ingredients including clay, dust, and/or soil, from which the object was fashioned, and then the names of letters were spoken aloud to bring the thing to life (Friedman 39). The word *golem* ("unfinished object" ["Golem"])[12] has its origins in biblical Hebrew, where it appears only once:

> וּבִסְפְרָךְ כֻּלָּם, יִכָּתֵבוּ--יָמִים, יֻצָּרוּ; וְלוֹ אֶחָד בָּהֶם.
> גָּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ (וְלֹא) אלו [וְלוֹ], וְעַל-סִפְרְךָ כֻּלָּם יִכָּתֵבוּ:
> Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance, and in Thy book they were all written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them in. (Psalm 139:16)

Centuries later, as Lewis Glinert explains, "the rabbis of the Talmud declared that these words were the personal memoir of creation set down by Adam himself" (78). Here "the speaker, perhaps Adam, praises the Creator, acknowledging how God secretly formed his body 'in the lowest parts of earth,' from which came his 'imperfect substance [i.e., golem]'. . . in short matter without form" (Goldsmith 16).

Since scholars have already traced the Golem tale from the Middle Ages "to modern times, there is no need to repeat this history here" (Goldsmith 16). Yet, whereas much criticism has been devoted to earlier versions of the legend, this paper focuses on the modern/Israeli rebirth of the Golem story. Although comics might be seen as something essentially modern, lightweight and "not serious"(Jenkins 1),[13] and thus hardly a suitable vehicle for an ancient text, in fact it is possible to see connections between comic strips and "the communication systems of early civilizations," such as the Egyptians' "combination of images and hieroglyphics, while narrative composed of sequences of pictures were common in other ancient cultures"(Saraceni 1). Hence, just as the format of the graphic novel as an old-new text that combines images with words that trace back to early civilization, so too is the story itself of the Golem in comics a combination of an ancient legend composed during the diaspora and a new version created in Israel.

Visual Memory

The modern reappearance of an old story, one that changes from being a text-based account to one with images and relatively minimal text in the classic comic form of balloons above a series of hand-drawn illustrations (cartoons), calls for a discussion regarding uses of visual cues to assist the memory. Researchers today argue that "brain images are influential because they produce a physical basis for abstract cognitive processes" (McCabe and Castel 343). This understanding of the effectiveness of visual language dates to long before the modern age, and indeed can be traced back to the Middle Ages. According to the Roman rhetorician Cicero in *De Oratore*, of all the five senses, sight provokes an emotional reaction that enhances memory.[14] In her acute examination of Cicero, Mary Carruthers suggests that what he terms *sensum vivendi* ("sight") "is the keenest of all our senses," and continues: "perception received aurally or by other senses, or objects conceived through thought alone, can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes" (22). Based on her inquiry of pre-modern and ancient scholars, and

pointing to mnemonic devices, Carruthers cites "the empirical observation that remembering what is aurally received is more difficult for most people than remembering what is visual" (28). Furthermore, according to her examination of the period from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance, memory is associated with one of the virtues favoring the development of moral character (1). The correlation between memory and moral character suggests that the act of retelling the Golem story in the form of a comic that both *relates* and *shows* important events of Jewish people in exile facing existential threats throughout history, and after the establishment of the state of Israel, is part of shaping the identity of the "New Jew" (Almog 1), the one born in Israel and not in the diaspora, as a moral being. The emphasis on the notion of shaping a moral being is significant because of the contrast with the storyline of the function of the Golem to fight against blood libels.[15] According to a 1909 manuscript attributed to Moshe Idel (Friedman 39), such a Jewish folkloric character, a Golem, was created by Rabbi Judah Löew.

The Golem Legend

Rabbi Judah Löew (1520–1609) created an animate being fashioned from clay endowed with super-powers who would help save the Jewish community in Prague from a blood libel and persecution.[16] The Rabbi's Golem also did menial work, such as cleaning up or bringing water to the congregants of the synagogue. This creature obeyed orders but did not have the ability to speak. It was made out of clay and then given life through a combination of letters. The Rabbi put a slip of paper in the creature's mouth[17] with the name of God written on it: *emet* ("truth" in Hebrew). In accordance with Jewish tradition, every seventh day, on Shabbat, it was given a day of rest, which was done by removing the slip of paper from its mouth, at which the Golem became inanimate again for the traditional day of rest. But one Shabbat the rabbi forgot to remove the Name from the Golem's mouth, and it ran amok, switching from benevolent to destructive, and laid waste to the Jewish ghetto. Horrified, the rabbi tried to stop his creation, which he eventually managed only by erasing the first letter of God's name from the slip of paper and re-inserting it into the Golem's mouth. In this way the Hebrew word *emet* became *met*, meaning "dead." Because of this, the Golem turned into a lifeless heap of clay, which the rabbi did not bury, but placed in the attic of the Great Synagogue in Prague.[18]

That the remains of the Golem of Prague are not buried in the ground but stored in the attic of the synagogue—among the old, decrepit and no longer used holy books—allows an endless re-emergence, reconstruction, and deconstruction of the monster and the identity of this monster. As J.J. Cohen explains, this is the very essence of a monster: "We see the damage that the monster wreaks, the material remains (the footprints of the yeti across Tibetan snow, the bones of the giant stranded on a rocky cliff), but the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else (4)."[19] Such a reappearance took place in the year 2003 with one of the less-studied versions of the Golem published by Eli Eshed and Uri Fink, who produced a comic strip compilation of Uriel Reshef's earlier work.

According to the two authors, Reshef created the figure "Yoske Trakture"—a modern version of the Golem of Prague, who fights different enemies throughout history.[20] Eshed and Fink created a narrative according to which there was once a magazine called *Our Lapid*, with Yakkov Moked as its editor, that published the "Golem" story. A brief opening comment on the cover page of the comic strip announces that "all interviews obviously never took place in reality" (19) while framing the interview with Moked, in which the editor explains "Ze'ev Zabotinsky's Revisionist ideology" of the non-religious right of Israel that is the basis of this comic strip.[21]

The first comic story depicts an incident that took place in Palestine (Israel today) during the British Mandate in the 1940s (Fig. 1).[22] This particular story is relevant for this study because of its importance as the first in series of one-page comic strips charged with "historical significance" (Eshed and Fink 23).[23] The narrative that follows the strip states that the "first comics had the same plotline, which, because of its historical significance, will be explained in detail" (Eshed and Fink 22). The narrator's reference to the repetitious element in the "same plotline" provides it with "historical significance" because it was a one-page story in which innocent Jews were threatened by some enemy.

In all of these comic strips, the situation looks doomed until the moment in which the invincible Golem appears and declares, "wherever there is injustice, violence, and abuse of power by the powerful against the powerless, or inequality and threat toward the Jews, that is where you will find me coming to the aid of the needy and miserable" (Eshed and Fink 24). The reiteration of the "same plotline" echoes the mnemonic technique of repetition: while the enemy's identity changes, it always portrays an attempt to inflict harm upon the Jews, until a Golem appears to save them.

Such is the case in the comic strip examined here. A comment in the first row (Fig. 1) suggests that this is "the First Golem story, 'Our Lapid' 1940" (my translation). But, Eshed's introductory comment next to the "Table of Contents" states that "this is all a bluff," revealing that the history of the tale's publication is itself also part of Eshed's creation. Thus, Eshed's comic book does not only reflect moments in real history, but also includes an invented publication so as to found a legacy of comics published in Hebrew and in Israel, as a way of canonizing the genre.[24]

Fig. 1

Courtesy of Modan Press (Ben-Shemen, Israel).

As Alon Raab claims: "Eshed and Fink wish to present comics as a normative cultural creation albeit one that the canonic culture has until recently viewed as inferior"(223).[25] This attempt to create history can be seen not only in the side comment next to the first row, but also in the "Table of Contents," followed by an introduction to the ensuing seven chapters.

Each chapter represents a decade in the period spanning from 1940 to 2003 in the history of the publication of the comic. Chapter 1, titled "The New Immigrant," builds a narrative around the biography of the illustrator Uri Reshef as a recent immigrant to Israel from Germany. The second chapter, titled "We Have a Golem," is composed around the years prior to the establishment of Israel. There follows "The Golem Goes to Independence: Uriel Reshef in the Days of the Establishment of the State," covering the 1940s and the period in which the Israeli state was established (1948). Chapter 4 is devoted to the subsequent decade, as the title suggests: "The Golem and the Return to Zion: Uriel Reshef in the 1950s." This is followed by "The Invincible Hero: The 1960s, the Golem in its Best." Maintaining the chronological order, chapter six refers to the ensuing decade with the title, "The Golem's Decline: the Golem in the 1970s." Finally, Chapter 7 continues with the historical timeline: "The Golem's Sons: The Golem from the Eighties to Our Days." A close examination of the first Golem story, introduces the comic with a caption that declares, "wherever there is injustice, violence, abuse of power by powerful against powerless, inequality and a threat to the Jews, that's where you will find me" (my translation).[26]

The first row is comprised of nine panels; the first on the right begins with the narrator's comment that introduces the story—"One sunny spring day, a group of people go out for a nature walk"—and shows two children setting off on their walk, accompanied by a female adult: either a teacher or a parent. One of the boys is wearing a *kova temble* hat of the kind worn by Israelis when the country was first established. The speech bubbles of the two kids and their escort report an exchange of remarks on the beauty of the flowers, called *kalaniot* ("anemone") in Hebrew, much prized for their striking red color. One of the kids replies, "Indeed, Ze'ev [meaning 'wolf' in Hebrew], it is a very beautiful flower," confirming the identity of the second boy as being Jewish—the name obliquely links this tale to the wolf in the well-known children's story of "Little Red Riding Hood" and therefore alerts the reader to some imminent danger—but the reply can also serve as an allusion to Ze'ev Zabotinsky's political ideology that frames the comic, and alludes to the ongoing fight for the land of Israel.[27] The next panel carries the comment, "But suddenly. . ." (top right, in a rectangle), confirming the danger implied by the child's name. The bubble above the man in a hat

and uniform worn by British policemen during the British Mandate states, "What are you doing here, Jews? This is not your country. It is part of the glorious British Empire," directly raising the issue of a land that is still the subject of controversy today between Israelis and Palestinians. The reference to the "glorious British Empire" marks the period in history before this land was declared an independent state and assigned to the Jewish people. The children express their surprise, open-mouthed: "Good God! We did not expect this *kalaniot*!" The reference to the flower ironizes its double meaning as both anemone (the flower they had seen on their way) and one of the nick-names the Jews in Palestine gave to the British 6th Airborne Division owing to the red cap worn by the parachutists.[28] Though initially sent to Mandate Palestine for parachute training, the British division subsequently became involved in an internal security role.

The next panel shows an abrupt change of scene with a man holding a dagger and wearing a *keffiyeh* headdress traditionally worn by Arabs. The speech bubble above his head says "I will deal with them, Sir," while the commentary in the box at the top reads "An Arab Villain," confirming the menacing figure's identity. Interestingly, the identity of the various figures in the cartoon is conveyed by their headgear: in turn, a *temble* hat, a *keffiyeh*, and a military cap. These visual cues belong to the type of non-verbal, visual information that Cicero's *sensum vivendi* suggests[29] and serve to enhance the reader's memory.

The second row begins with the narrator's comment: "Everything seemed doomed, when suddenly—," ending in a dash to leave the reader guessing as to what is about to come. The word "suddenly" is repeated in rows one and two to accentuate the element of surprise. The next visual cue comes in the form of the blue gown worn by a faceless, muscular figure who appears from the side, utters "smart on the weak ones?" and adds a juicy curse. This injection of color in the standard black-and-white comic-strip inevitably evokes the blue-and-white flag of the budding state of Israel—established in 1948, a mere eight years after the (fictional) date of the publication of the comic itself. This reference to the "weak" alludes to the power imbalance in the territory at the time and is an allusion to the David and Goliath story.[30] It also ties in with the other information the narrator has introduced in the panel, and which concludes the story, as we will see.

Next comes the full image of the Golem dressed in a blue cape and the Star of David on its forehead. It is the only frame without any text and features a classic comic superhero in a blue gown, his fist raised. The silhouettes of the horrified faces of the Arab and the British officer wordlessly convey their shock and fear. This wordless central frame aptly ties in with the original idea of the "speechless"

Golem of Rabbi Löew. Instead of the word *emet* that appears on the forehead of Löew's Golem (or mouth in some versions), here we have the Star of David—a cogent reflection on the stark difference between the periods and ideologies involved: while Löew's Golem is associated with the Jewish community in the diaspora and created by a rabbi, with clear religious affiliations, the Golem that appears in Ze'ev Zabotinsky's Palestine belongs to a revisionist, non-religious ideology (see above) and is emblematic of both the inchoate secular identity of Israel's new Jewish population and of a burgeoning sense of nationalism. The Star of David commands the center of the blue-and-white banner that in 1948 would become the official flag of a newly independent Israeli state.

The third panel in the second row portrays the futile attempt to kill the Golem; as the shots bounce off his chest, the British soldier exclaims, "Bullets cannot harm him!" Behind the Golem, the silhouette of an Arab wielding a dagger presents another attempt, which is illustrated further in the next panel. Indeed, the "given information" (Saraceni 38)[31] of the Arab is fully explored with the "new information" (Saraceni 38) of both image and text in row three, bottom right, in which the dagger is seen snapping against the Golem's back as the Arab cries out in Arabic, "Allahu Akbar![32] He is a demon!"—with its monstrous size and strength, the as-yet unidentified creature can only be a supernatural being. Meanwhile the British soldier raises his arms in defeat and says, "I surrender in the name of his Highness!" in reference to the British monarch at that time George VI (r. 1936–52).[33] The middle panel (third row) shows the silhouettes of the fleeing Arab and the British soldier, who cry out, "Who are you?" to which the creature replies, "I am the Golem!"—finally confirming the heroic figure's identity.

In amazement, the children ask him, "Where did you come from to save us?" In the final panel, the Golem turns to the reader and proclaims his manifesto: "Wherever there is injustice, violence, abuse of power by powerful against powerless, inequality and a threat to the Jews, that's where you will find me coming to the add of the needy and miserable"(Eshed and Reshef 20). This speech echoes the narrator's introduction, and emphasizes the heroic role of the Golem as a savior, but this time it is the Golem himself who declares it, in the first person, engraving it in the reader's memory.

The Golem's role as a savior appears not only in this edition but also on several magazine covers: one example is the cover page of an issue supposedly published in 1943 carrying an illustration of the Golem punching the Jewish archenemy Adolf Hitler, under the title "The Invincible Golem Fights the Nazi Enemy" (Eshed and Fink 27). Another issue of the magazine featured as the cover page the Golem

fighting Hitler's collaborator Al-Hussini, Mofti of Jerusalem (28) and one of the architects of the "Final Solution" of systematically eliminating the entire Jewish population from Europe through genocide. The Golem in the context of the Holocaust is significant in illustrating the moment in Jewish history in which systematic extermination was taking place, and no Golem showed up to save the six million Jews and other victims of the Nazis.

As in Rabbi Löew's Prague, the existence of Jews was threatened in Nazi Germany, and here too a creator of a Golem figure emerges: two years after the appearance of the first Golem comic, another publication explaining the origin of the Golem is issued under the title "Who is the Golem?" (Eshed and Fink 24). According to this story, a German scientist named Professor Algert Finshtil invented a drink with "super-power qualities equal to those of the Golem from old Jewish legends" (my translation), which he gives to an intrepid Israeli boy when the professor escapes from Nazi Germany to Israel" (Eshed and Fink Reshef 24). The allusion to the "old Jewish legend" next to an illustration of a faceless Golem bearing the word *emet* on its forehead appeals to the Jewish collective memory of Rabbi Löew's creation. The "source story" latches onto the reader's memory and evokes physical attributes from Rabbi Löew's Golem that are similar to the modern version: both Golems are faceless and have supernatural powers. Yet, unlike Rabbi Löew's version and earlier medieval versions, the modern Golem does not rise against its creator. In Löew's version and most others, the creature's life must be taken, because he has become a threat to his creator, or to the Jewish community. Also, whereas previous Golems are without the power of speech, the modern Golem makes a pronouncement each time he commits a deed.

This difference manifests the change in the identity of the modern Golem, an identity related to a specific time and geographical land, namely the 1940s and the creation of Israel. Hence the rebirth of the modern Golem coincides with events leading to the establishment of the new state. The stereotype of the diaspora Jew is that of a physically inferior individual confined to a ghetto, who spends his time studying the Torah, applying intellectual faculties rather than any physical exertion. "Stereotypes in the folklore and literature of eastern Europe portrayed Jews and gentiles as opposite, complementary versions of humanity. Jews were seen as an intellectually active, mercantile, non-violent people. . . . Stereotypes of gentile peasants describe a . . . violent, fertile, and earthy people" (Friedman 72). Conversely, gentile stereotypes of Jews often focused on money, perceived craftiness, and the relative non-physicality of Jews" (Friedman 72). It is this "non-physicality" of the diaspora Jew that changes with the es-

tablishment of Israel. The modern Golem represents the new Israeli, masculine and athletic, the Jew who after 2,000 years now has a land of his own and an army to defend it: first come the Jewish resistance movements, and then, after the establishment of Israel, comes the Israel Defense Force. As Haim Kaufman explains, "Zionism's founding fathers regarded gymnastics and sports as important activities for repudiating the biases surrounding the Jew's alleged physical inferiority"(147).[34] In other words, the essence of the "new Jew" is physical. Kaufman continues, "Max Nordau (writer, physician, one of the early leaders of the Zionist Movement) coined the term 'Muskal Judentum' (muscular Jewry). This term expressed the desire to change the image of the subservient, anxiety-ridden 'Diaspora' Jewry and create a new Jewish ethos grounded in military skills and the refutation of denigrating racial biases regarding the Jews' inherent physical inferiority. The term also expressed the romantic notion of the return to ancient glory . . . Bar-Kochva . . . Shimshon, and Yehuda Hamaccabi" (Kaufman 151). Interestingly, the new image of the Jew is actually a return to an old glory, that of historical and biblical heroes such as Shimshon or Bar-Kochva. This modern, new or *neue* return to ancient times of *alte* is embodied in a traveling hero Golem, whose remains were deposited in the *alte-neue* synagogue of Prague, allowing for its reappearance in a new version of the Jew in Israel.

This "new Jew" is called a *sabra*—a word in both Arabic and Hebrew that immigrants to the British Mandate for Palestine began using in the early 1930s (Rosenthal).[35] The term alludes to the prickly pear, a thorny desert plant that hides a softer interior, suggesting that the Israeli Sabras are masculine on the outside, and delicate and sensitive on the inside. The soft (interior) and tough/masculine (exterior) is the embodiment of the *alte*, medieval, diaspora Jew, whereas the image of the masculine is the fledgling Israeli, the "new Jew."[36] Once the Jews possess a land of their own and have acquired the kind of rights associated with national identity, the Golem creature—which in medieval versions was always portrayed as dumb—is now possessed with the faculty of speech. This modern Golem is a combination of old and new, an *alte-neue* Golem. The former boundaries between "interior" and "exterior" dissolve, as the new Golem is at once intimate and foreign, familiar and alien, the two seamlessly entwined. Such "problematization of oppositions entails a desire for and deferral of the limit between inside and outside"(Aloni, "Extimacy" 163). Some however may claim that with recent disagreements between Israelis and Palestinians, this inner transformation has already begun.[37] That change in the body politic may lead to the reemergence of yet another Golem whose struggle

for identity never ceases and is in constant transition. This brings us to the story that appears in the final publication of the Golem series.

Epilogue

The seventh and the final chapter in Eshed and Fink's graphic novel tells the reader that the last publication of the original series in 1985 was titled "The Golem and the mystery of the stolen neutron bomb" (68). It was an "unfinished" story of the Golem's fight against Palestinian terrorists who threaten to use a neutron bomb to destroy the city of Tel-Aviv, located at the center of Israel. According to Eshed and Fink, the readers were "left without a clear answer as to whether the Golem actually managed to save Tel-Aviv or not" (68).[38]

Ironically, it is indeed an "unfinished" story, since while this paper is being written, missiles fired from Gaza are landing in Tel-Aviv—a momentum now engraved in the Palestinians' and Israelis' memory. The reminiscence of this event is recounted in this text, thus turning it into a memoir.

Notes

1. For various adaptations of the Golem story, see Wisniewski; Neugroschel, *Yenne velt: The Great Works of Jewish Fantasy and Occult* 162–225; Leivick; Ellstein and Leivick, *The Golem: An Opera in Four Acts*; Neugroschel, *The Golem: A New Translation of the Classic Play and Selected Short Stories*; Lee; Meyrink; and Singer and Shulevitz. For a version that has not yet been translated from Hebrew, see Ben-Mordecai. On the Golem tradition in general, see Graham; Glinert; Schafer; Idel; Bilski; Sherwin; Scholem, "The Idea of the Golem"; Thieberger; Held; Bloch; Müller; Grün; and the various essays in Putik, *Path of Life: Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel*.

2. "Its name is an Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, originating as it did in 1987 after the beginning of the first intifada, or Palestinian uprising, against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It originally had a dual purpose of carrying out an armed struggle against Israel—led by its military wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades—and delivering social welfare programs. But since 2005, it has also engaged in the Palestinian political process, becoming the first Islamist group in the Arab world to gain power democratically (before forcibly taking control of its stronghold of Gaza). Hamas is designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the US, EU, Canada and Japan due to its long record of attacks and its refusal to renounce violence. Under the group's charter, Hamas is committed to the destruction of Israel. But to its supporters it is seen as a legitimate resistance movement" ("Profile: Hamas Palestinian Movement").

3. In Hebrew: *Mivtza' Tzuk Eitan* translated as "Operation Strong Cliff." The official date for the launching of this operation is July 8th, 2014. This conflict started with kidnapping and murdering of Mohammed Abu Hadir from Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem on June 2nd as an act of revenge for kidnapping and murdering three Israeli teens from the West Bank.

4. In this article the term "comic" is alternatively used with the terms "graphic novel," and "sequential art." Although some critics argue for a generic distinction between these terms (see, for example, Romero-Jódar), others apply the term "comics" to denote the "employment of both words and pictures; texts organized into sequential units, graphically separated from each other" (Saraceni 5). According to Saraceni, "in an attempt to create a term which would better describe the art form of comics, towards the end of the 1970s a new expression 'graphic novel,' was coined to replace 'comic book'. . . . In fact the distinction between 'comic books' and 'graphic novels' is nothing more than a matter of labels, and has barely anything to do with content or with any other feature" (4). Since this paper offers an analysis of comics, I would like to introduce a few basic terms that serve as the semantic field of comics and will be used in this article. The terms listed below (panel, gutter, speech balloon, caption, and thought balloon) are not organized alphabetically, but rather thematically and grouped under two main categories: images and words. The "panel" is "a rectangular frame that contains pictures . . . depicting a single scene within a narrative in comics. Each page of a comic book normally has six panels, separated by the gutter." (7). The "gutter" is a blank space that separates each panel from the others. The gutter is similar to the space that divides one sentence from the next: there is always a certain amount of information that is missing from the narrative, and the readers have to provide it by themselves (9). The "speech balloon" is " a bubble-like shape that contains the words spoken by characters. It is equivalent of direct speech in narrative" (9). The "caption" represents the narrator's voice; unlike the balloon, the caption "is not positioned inside the panel, but is always a separate entity, often on the top of the panel, but sometimes at the bottom or on the left side. Normally the text contained in the caption represents the narrator's voice . . . to add information to the dialogues contained in the rest of the panel" (10). The "thought balloon" is a cloud-like shape that contains the words thought by characters (9).

5. See Dekel and Gantt Gurley; they focus on two sources of the story written in the period between 1834 and 1847.

6. Movies related to the golem date all the way back to 1915 with the German *Der Golem* released in the US as *The Monster of Fate,* directed by Paul Wegener as two other Golem films (1917, 1920) (Robert G. Weiner 51).

7. For a list of graphic novels about the Golem, see Robert G. Weiner, 50–72.

8. See Eshed and Fink.

9. I have already written about Eshed and Fink's graphic novel; see my "'*Je est un autre*'(I is another): *Monstrum*—The Transparency of the Alte-Neue Gole(man)." My initial study of Eshed and Fink's graphic novel examines the golem as a monster, *monstrum*, which is etymologically "that which reveals,"

that which allows us to "see through," as transparent to the cultures in which these stories of the Golem were written" (23).The first academic essay on Eshed and Fink's graphic novel was published in 2008. Raab's essay, "Ben Gurion's Golem and Jewish Lesbians, Subverting Hegemonic History in Two Israeli Graphic Novels," studies Eli Eshed and Uri Fink's *The Golem; A Story of Israeli Comics* and llana Zeffren's comic "Pink Story," as a reflection on the development of the "nation's consciousness of itself " (230), but it does not offer the close analysis of the first Golem story as presented in this article.

10. Neil W. Levin suggests that "The development of the Golem in Jewish contexts derives from the magical exegesis of the mystical work *sefery' tzira* (Book of Creation)" and can be traced back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries among the sect *hasidei ashkenaz* with the creation of the golem as a "mystical ritual" to understanding the work of God (4–5).

11. For a presentation of the major texts concerning the creation of the artificial man in Franco-Ashkenazi and Sefaradi mysticism, see Yodel, especially "Part One: Ancient Traditions" 3–46 and "Part Two: Medieval Elaborations" 47–127. See also Friedman.

12. On the origin of the word "golem," see "Golem: Some Semantic Remarks" in Idel 296–306.

13. Henry Jenkins, in his introduction "Should We Discipline the Reading of Comics?," argues against what he calls his childhood's myth that reading comics was perceived as "a monumental waste of time [as] . . . there was nothing like Publish or Perish pushing us to read more comics" and introduces various approaches to the discipline of "Comic Studies" (1).

14. *De Oratore.,* II, 86–87. Cited by Carruthers on p. 22.

15. Blood libel is the allegation that Jews murdered Christian children to use their blood to bake Mataza (unleavened bread) for Passover. Blood libel is first recorded in England in 1144. For a discussion about blood libel in the Middle Ages, see my article (with Shirley Sharon-Zisser) "The Prior Root: The Transit through Hebrew in the Prioress's Tale."

16. For a survey of the Golem legends, see Idel.

17. In some versions of the story, the slip was etched to the Golem's forehead. Rabbi Löew Golem stories date from the seventeenth century. See Thieberger.

18. As scholars have suggested, "there are hundreds of variations to this tale" (Robert Weiner 52).

19. Such reemergence manifests itself in various forms, including, as Norbert Weiner, "the father of cybernetics," suggests in his *God and Golem Inc.,* the machine as "the modern counterpart of the Golem." Similarly, in dedicating the first computer at the Weizmann Institute, Gershom Scholem named the computer "Golem No. One."

20. "The Golem" comic is not the only Israeli graphic novel in which a superhero fights villains in order to protect the Jews. Thus, for example, in 1978 Uri Fink created "Sabraman," who fights villains such as the Nazi Dr. Mengele.

See Fink, *Sabraman*. But, Eshed and Fink's "The Golem" comic, chosen as a case study for this article, is the only comic that adopted the original name of the "Golem" as well as the physical resemblance to the clay raw material from which Rabbi Löew created his creature.

21. Revisionist Zionism is a branch within the Zionist movement. It is the founding ideology of the non-religious right in Israel. Revisionism advocated the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River (present-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and all or part of the modern state of Jordan). This was against the terms of the Mandate that restricted Jewish settlement in parts of the mandate territory (Shelef 125–48).

22. The British Mandate for Palestine, or *Mandatory Palestine* (1923–1948) formalized British control over the area which had constituted the Ottoman Empire: "His Majesty's Government accepted full responsibility as Mandatory for Trans-Jordan" (Peel 37). See also "The Balfour Declaration" (22).

23. Two years after the appearance of the first Golem comics, Reshed started to illustrate comics longer than a single page, slowly increasing it to three and four pages (Eshed and Fink 23).

24. For the history of Israeli comics first appearing in 1935 before the establishment of Israel, see Farber.

25. Raab's analysis compares Eshed's graphic novel with Ilana Zeffren's *Pink Story*—the first graphic novel published in Hebrew to feature a lesbian heroine—so as to argue for ambiguity of the political sentiments expressed in Eshed's comics. Raab claims that "at times it is difficult to determine what the authors think of such divisive issues as the relations between secular and religious Jews, the growing economic inequality in Israel society, or the matter of the occupied territories"(223). My paper does not seek to explore political opinions. Rather, it studies the method and use of mnemonic technique in order to convey ideology.

26. Throughout this article, all translations from Hebrew to English are mine.

27. For Ze'ev Zabotinsky's ideology, see above.

28. See Wilson, *With the 6th Airborne Division in Palestine 1945–1948* and Ferguson, *The Paras 1940–84*.

29. See Carruthers 25.

30. Goliath, the giant Philistine warrior, comes to battle against David, the future king of Israel, with armor and shield, whereas David, who is much smaller in size, carries his staff and sling. David overcomes Goliath when he hurls from his sling a stone that hits Goliath in the center of his forehead. Goliath falls on his face to the ground and David cuts off his head (Samuel 1:17).

31. Saraceni explains the use of repetition as a way of linking panels: "what is repeated is called 'given information,' while what is added is called 'new information'" (38).

32. "God is the Greatest" (my translation).

33. The official website of the British Monarchy: http://www.royal.gov.uk.

34. See Kaufman 147.

35. On the culture of the "new Jew," see Oz Almog's sociological study, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*.

36. On the Jewish diaspora and Israel, see *Israel Studies. Special Issue: Israel and the Diaspora: New Perspectives,* particularly Sheffer, "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation."

37. In the Introduction to a cluster of articles about "The State of the Israeli State," Sheffer argues that Israel is in a state of transition: "this is a consequence of recent far-reaching global, regional and internal developments" (113). As Sheffer explains, all the five essays that follow his introduction have a common conclusion based on an inherent struggle "between traditional forces in the Israeli social and political systems and the new tendencies" (117). This crossroads between old and new in the social and political system fosters questions of identity and is embodied in the essence of a raw material, a Golem that constantly reshapes its identity according to the time and place in which it appears.

38. See Eshed and Fink 68.

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About the Author

Gila Aloni is the Associate Editor of *Medieval Perspectives*. After receiving her PhD in English Literature from the University of Paris-IV, La Sorbonne (*Summa cum laude*), she was Medieval Fellow at Columbia University, New York, and Visiting scholar at the Medieval and Renaissance Center (MARC) at New York University (NYU), which was followed with her appointment as an Associate Professor at Lynn University, Florida. Aloni's first book, *Pouvoir et Autorité dans "The Legend of Good Women"* (Paris: Publications de l'Association des Médiévistes Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2000), is subsequent to a series of publications in leading books and journals, including *The Chaucer Review, Medievales*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, among others. Aloni is currently a faculty member at Ransom Everglades (Miami) and is working on "The Topology of the Marginalized Other: The *Fantasme* for the Place of Hetronormativity." Email: gilaaloni@aol.com.