

**“MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DESTINY”  
THE ABSENCE VERSUS THE REALIZATION OF SUBLIMATION IN THE LIVES  
OF MEN AND WOMEN IN AGNON'S  
"THE DOCTOR AND HIS EX-WIFE"**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe significant representations in the relationships between men and women and to examine their meaning on two levels: the latent and the manifest, which characterize Agnon's works and draw the reader to decipher their significance. In the first part, I aim to show that the representations of men and women oscillate between traditional and modern perceptions, revealing the gap present in Agnon, the religious writer who held conservative values, versus the implied author who expresses a modern stance through a psychological story about the processes of total love and jealousy as a mental illness. In many of Agnon's stories, it is evident that the male character prefers a knowledgeable, challenging, and dominant woman over a weak woman whose submissiveness even elicits aversion and rejection from the man. In the second part, I will present the personality structure of the male narrator in the story, navigating a maze of relationships before, during, and after three years of marriage, which will help me present Agnon's attitude towards the marriage- divorce system and the changes occurring in men versus women concerning the realization or absence of sublimation. I will argue that there is an absence of sublimation in the man during the marriage period, compared to its realization in the woman towards the request for a divorce and at the end of the story when the doctor is among the patients and calls Dina, "Nurse, nurse, come to me." The methods of shaping the characters emphasize the theme of creation, love, and sublimation in the work and point to a process of psychological growth in Agnon's heroines, also serving as agents of social change that continues to exist in modern literature and society here and now. In the third chapter, I will explain the intertextuality between Agnon's story and the biblical story, where the biblical story of Dina thickens Agnon's story. There are similarities and differences, and I will also address the possibilities of analyzing the sentence that closes the epilogue and opens the story, "Nurse, nurse, come to me," which proves the lack of correction (sublimation) in the doctor.

**Keywords:** Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Sigmund Freud, Sublimation, Male Character, Female Character, Implied Author, Role Of The Dream, Intertextuality.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shmuel Yosef Agnon was one of the first Hebrew writers to place female characters at the center of his works. Agnon's perception of the female character was influenced by the social and cultural background of Jewish history in Poland, Israel, and Germany between the late 19th and 20th centuries. Born in 1887 in Buczacz, Eastern Galicia (today's Ukraine), Agnon developed and absorbed influences in Israel (1908-1911, 1924-1970) and Germany (1912-1924).

Agnon, an avid book lover, first met his future wife, Elsa-Esther Marx, in 1913 in Munich, at the home of Esther's brother, Moshe Marx, who was a book dealer. Agnon began serving as a Hebrew teacher to Esther, and the two started seeing each other frequently until their relationship became intimate. Esther decided to break off her engagement to a wealthy furrier from Leipzig against her father's wishes, and married Shmuel Yosef. Her father opposed their marriage because Agnon barely knew German and had no profession or means to provide for his daughter.

Esther was an opinionated young woman who left her parents' home at a young age, abandoned religious observance, joined the Zionist youth movement, and studied Hebrew, Arabic, and painting at the Academy of Arts (Lior, 1998, pp. 127–130). From her youth, she dreamed of being a Hebrew teacher, and even after her marriage, she did not abandon her dream. In a letter to Shlomo Zalman Schocken, her husband's patron, she wrote: "In the past six months, I have successfully and enjoyably taught Hebrew, and I am sure I am more suited for this than being a housewife. I intend to continue this in Israel" (Rabi, 1983, pp. 45-46). In response to her letter, Schocken replied: "If you want to hear my advice, I would suggest that you do not engage in any vocational plans, but rather focus your main attention on creating a quiet and orderly home" (Rabi, 1983,

p. 45). Agnon himself also opposed his wife's attempts to develop her talent and fulfill her teaching dream. He wrote to her when she suggested finding a job as a teacher: "I am a man of the old generation; I do not hold the view that women should earn money; it is enough that the husband earns. Leave the jobs to the old girls who, unfortunately, are hungry and cannot find work" (Rabi, 1983, p. 46). Esther had to give up her dream, focused on her home and family, and managed the household. She dedicated most of her life to advancing her husband's literary work, typing his illegible manuscripts so they could be brought to print, and retyping them for each new edition based on his notes.

Despite Agnon's conservative nature, the exchange of letters between him and his wife reflects an unclear and ambiguous stance regarding his attitude towards women. On the one hand, he regretted that his educated and learned wife, from an aristocratic and affluent banking family, had to spend many hours on trivial household tasks. On the other hand, he took it for granted that his wife would devote herself to household chores and raising children, allowing him to focus on his writing and literary pursuits without interruption.

It is evident that both in his non-literary life and his literary writing, Agnon understood the social and cultural changes concerning women's education and status in Jewish society. Agnon recognized that alongside the processes of enlightenment and secularization, the shift from villages and small towns to large cities, technological scientific advancements, and modern industrialization, another significant transformation occurred regarding women's status and their place in society. However, it is unclear to what extent this transformation affected his personal life and his relationship with his wife. Nevertheless, the representations of female characters in his works are neither homogeneous nor one-dimensional; they are complex and influenced by both conservative and modern perceptions.

Love stories in Agnon's works have a common hallmark: the "love triangle," where there is at least one pair of lovers, a man and a woman, and a third party present in the couple's lives. Romantic themes revolve around the creation of the work, stemming from loss and lack, their constant connection to these themes, and the artist's transition from reality into the work,

thereby into the world embodied within it, a world that has passed and no longer exists. The work interprets the creator's world, establishes and founds its own reality (Arbel, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. The lives of couples in works like "The Doctor and His Ex-Wife," "In the Prime of Her Life," "Other Faces," "Oath of Allegiance," revolve around the desire and unfulfillment of strong erotic yearning and its channeling into the realm of art. At the beginning of the century, before Freud's theories gained widespread recognition, Agnon's work demonstrates that the desire and its psychoanalytic solution originate from the artist Agnon's psyche (Frued, 1990). However, the topic of sublimation that occupies some of his stories may ultimately influence the refinement of this topic in his later works<sup>2</sup> (Ben-Dov, 1987, p. 65).

The modern-romantic conception of the work, in which the hidden layer can be deciphered, should be an individual expression of the creator, reflecting their personality and uniqueness. This—where the tension arises from duality—without giving up being a replica of something or a creation that existed before and being referred to the past outside the creator<sup>3</sup> (Shaked, 1994).

In this article, I will discuss whether the doctor and his ex-wife find a remedy for the negative emotions and instincts developed or ingrained in their relationship before marriage, during the marriage years, and after, as a seemingly "loving" couple whose relationship hits a dead end. I will try to present where each character finds sublimation or fails to channel the negative instincts and whether there is a creation. Discussing the characters of the doctor and his ex-wife means linking the background factors of the doctor to his desire to behave suspiciously, persecutingly, and annoyingly, and the woman's desire to reach a remedy.

The concept of "sublimation" according to Freud's theory is one of the defense mechanisms known in Hebrew as refinement, where forbidden impulses, emotions, and instincts, such as jealousy, fear, lust, and desire as primitive instincts, are channeled into acceptable activities, actions that do not violate social conventions. This mechanism is considered one of the most effective and mature because its use allows legitimate expression of the impulse and often leads to creativity<sup>4</sup> (Bittman, 1992).

The article is divided into two parts: In the first part, I will describe the different representations of the male narrator's character and the female character in "The Doctor and His Ex-Wife" as a confession story. The work was first published as an independent work in 1941 in the collection "Firstborn," and in the second part, I will dedicate a unique discussion to the representation of the characters in the love triangle in a state of unfulfillment and dependence on an insurmountable obstacle, the love that does not open gates but leaves the lovers near the "locks"<sup>5</sup> (Barzel, 1975). In this story, Agnon creates an innovative depiction of marriage and divorce in a modern secular world. Agnon, who lived his time intensely, expresses through this story—both explicitly and implicitly—his connection to the changes that occurred in the status of women in Jewish society and the attitude of men towards these women. The choice of Dina's character is not coincidental,

as it will help me present my position regarding Agnon's complex perception of women, especially as the biblical story of Dina echoes in the work and creates intertextuality. Moreover, examining Dina's character representation in both versions, the biblical and Agnon's, will clarify the gap between Agnon the writer and the implied author, the change in the psychological growth process in the man and the woman in the marriage and divorce system, and help me discover if there was a fulfillment of the instinct of creation and sublimation in

both parties. I will argue that although Dina is described by Agnon according to traditional female stereotypes, she is a hybrid character that may symbolize the Jewish woman transitioning from traditional to modern society, ready to embark on a new path as an independent woman after the divorce. The interaction created during the story between the doctor who became a patient and the man from Dina's past disrupts the prevailing equation that the man is the representative of culture—the rational, active, and shaping element—and he is the doctor, while the "divorced" woman is the representative of nature—the emotional, passive, and yielding element. Dina fails to bring about a significant change in the doctor's consciousness and behavior.

## 2. CHAPTER ONE

### 2.1 Different Representations of the Characters in the Story: The Couple in a Relationship Maze

The story "The Doctor and His Ex-Wife" carries a nature of sexual awakening or lack thereof, and the work itself seems to be a substitute and compensation for erotic and sexual fulfillment that never took place in the relationship between man and woman. The work becomes complete through the creator's (quasi-erotic) devotion only to it, by withdrawing from all social, familial, and instinctual commitments, dedicating himself to one instinct, and in addition, writing the work as a confession story<sup>6</sup> (Shaked, 1994). This is a psychological story dealing with psychological processes of total love and the instinct of jealousy that leads to painful mental illness.

In fact, the story was initially intended to serve as part of the novel "Guest for the Night," which Agnon wrote in the late 1930s (1938). He extracted the story from its original framework within the novel, made changes to it, and published it as an independent story. Nevertheless, despite this separation from the novel, a dialogic relationship remains between the two works: between the accompanying story that remained within the novel and "The Doctor and His Ex-Wife," which is essentially a monologue of the protagonist when the story appears in its independent form.

The doctor confesses to a witnessing recipient (this fact becomes clear from the few references to the recipient within the story, "my friend"). The recipient's identity details are unknown, and no dialogue takes place between the sender and the recipient. Instead, it is the doctor's monologue, unfolding the relationship's narrative filled with emotional turmoil between him and his wife, a nurse named Dina. This relationship disintegrates, as indicated by the title, due to the doctor's mental deviation. A forgotten and distant connection, a faint memory that Dina had in the past with another man, haunts his thoughts, reaches monstrous proportions, poisons the couple's life, and leads to their separation. The doctor describes a personal struggle that occurs when a person encounters their ability to love and contain the love of another or describes the failure of this love<sup>7</sup> (Shribum, 1993).

The first-person narration strengthens the feeling of hearing a confession where the most intimate behavioral details are exposed, and the character's hidden mental systems are revealed. The doctor conveys his words from a later time perspective, years away from the time of the events, making it a retrospective confession. In literary terms, there is a distinction between the story's time and the narration's time.

**Story Time:** Describes the doctor's experiences over three years of marriage, between the two World Wars, after World War I and before World War II.

**Narration Time:** The narrative of the story, after World War II, as a retrospective story, reflecting on the events from a temporal distance. This possibly allows viewing the events from a broader perspective, potentially enabling new insights and creating a narrative that might liberate him from the past and open a new future. These insights are rare and few and, in any case, do not redeem the doctor or allow him to find a solution.

With the help of the implied author, a credibility gap is created between the doctor as the narrator and the reader. The doctor's seemingly personal and true story is perceived as unreliable, and with the help of the implied author, the reader can discern the truth. The narrating doctor knows the facts but is not connected to their meaning and the real motives behind his behavior.

The main focus of the story is the confrontation between the event itself and the attempt to reconstruct it anew and reach a corrective experience. The central and visible theme is jealousy out of love, but in that total love, the lover's jealousy can destroy and undermine the lovers to the point of a severe tragedy. If the wounded, suffering, and tormented lover does not return to his normal mental state, it will bring him to a state of terminal illness, and he might resort to madness and self-destruction<sup>8</sup> (Binyaminov, 2001, pp. 38-39).

The instinct of jealousy in the story leads the plot. The dangerous jealousy and fixation become a consuming judgment, as happens with the doctor in the hospital, who is jealous of his wife, Dina, whom he met in the hospital as a nurse. The reason for his jealousy is revealed with a confession from his wife about the nature of her relationships before their marriage. On the surface level, these will determine the couple's future because Dina had sexual relations, as implied by her words, "I had things with another." The doctor cannot come to terms with what happened before they met and severely punishes Dina, who confessed to him before their engagement. It may be that he cannot redeem himself when the sexual drive is supposed to be channeled into socially acceptable behavior, as in most of Agnon's stories. As a result, there is no fulfillment of a normal married life, causing Dina, the wife, to channel the unfulfilled sexual instinct and emotional distance into creating a divorce, volunteer work that serves society and her feminine abilities alike, thus finding sublimation.

The central themes, key scenes, foreshadowing clues, and central motifs in the work contributed to understanding the doctor's motives for tormenting his wife and pursuing small details that lead Dina towards the end of the story to attempt a change, uniquely seeking a divorce after a long ordeal, which is her desire for correction.

It is worth noting that Agnon's works can be a metonymy for their creator, reflecting the forces invested in them and the artist's achievements, and perhaps their purpose is also to commemorate the creator's tragedy. The creator's intention for individual expression of himself, even to the point of rebelling against society and social norms, turns the hero into a tragic figure, lonely, paying a heavy price. This can express a romantic perception that Agnon might have clung to, to distract himself on a personal and social level.

There are similarities and differences between the works, which Hillel Barzel explains in his book "Love Stories of S.Y. Agnon." He discusses Agnon's possible motives for adapting the story into an independent work, focusing on a short story that emphasizes the psychological



motives guiding the hero's behavior, while the novel has a hidden infrastructure and is linked to a higher sphere 9(Barzel, 1975).

The Exposition Begins with the Doctor's Words:

**"When I began working at the hospital, I found a compassionate nurse, a blonde girl, who was beloved by all, and all the patients praised her. When they heard her footsteps, they would straighten themselves in their beds and stretch out their hands towards her like only children towards their mothers, and each one would say, 'Nurse, nurse, come to me.' The excess of her smile, her eyes like black azure, everything she looked at saw itself as if it were the core of the world. Once I asked myself where this power comes from. When her eyes were revealed to me, I became like the patients, the smile on her lips, and that black azure in her eyes added an advantage that made themselves more than what their mistress sought."**10 (Agnon, 1998, p. 367)

This is a story of a doctor who starts working at a Vienna hospital after World War I. The framework that opens the story is the same one that closes it: the hospital, a world of diseases, serves as a metonymy. The doctor as a patient and the nurse, who at some point in the story cannot care for the patient, ironically and symbolically says, "I was like the other patients"11 (Agnon, 1998, p. 367). The use of the verb "entered" leaves the reader wondering whether the doctor's entry marks the beginning of his career or as a doctor-patient after his marriage to Dina.

The use of the verb "found" creates a situation of objectifying the woman. He found Dina, not met her, like finding an object. Although she is described as a compassionate nurse, what emerges from the doctor's testimony is that he first found a nurse who is compassionate, and only then does he refer to her femininity, mentioning she is blonde, if there is any such reference in the story at all.

The word "all" is mentioned twice, characterizing the doctor's thinking. It can be understood that what is important to him is what everyone thinks of Dina, the society around him; the opinion of all is decisive in his consciousness12 (Tamir, 1985).

He describes Dina's magical smile and black-azure eyes, which have autonomous speech power and influence everyone around her, and this power affects the doctor, who confesses: "When her eyes were revealed to me, I was like the other patients." (ibid.)

80, ועיון מקרא, "נפשי כחולי בטוטאלית האהבה" (2001), ישראל בנימינוב

The black-azure, the color combination, creates ambivalence of good and evil, joy and sadness, desire and repulsion. This will later serve as a reflection of Dina's fate, a fusion of opposites in the doctor's eyes, beauty and distress, purity and the memory of sin, all merged together in her life13 (Binyaminov, 2001, p. 41).

In the black-azure, the nurse's life's fluctuations are reflected, revealing her secret, which remains the focal point of the doctor's memory and does not leave him14 (Barzel, 1975, pp. 37-38). Manor claims that black azure is the color of a bruise, suffering, and sorrow15 (Manor, 1986, p. 25).

The use of the oxymoron, black azure, represents qualities like innocence and purity for the color azure, while black pulls towards mystery, threat, and indicates sin. Additionally, Dina's smile, which holds innocence and softness, is perceived by the doctor as both seductive and threatening. The doctor retrospectively sees the black stain, which can be understood as a foreshadowing of his diseased state since he likens himself to the other patients rather than to his fellow doctors, whose job is to cure the sick.

His marriage proposal to Dina was indirect, through the "other," Dina agreed to him, but it can be said that there is no word indicating emotion: "(the children) said she and he are bride and groom," "I told her, 'The saying among people is true, with children and with fools'" (Agnon, 1998, p. 369). The use of others' words indicates his inability to speak for himself. He depends on others' opinions, expressing an intimate matter through banal quotes from others, indicating insecurity, dependence, and excessive consideration of his social status.

**"What can I add? A straight girl in my eyes, just as she is straight in everyone's eyes. But I will add that I, too, was straight in her eyes. And indeed, every person can say this, but others did not presume their opinion, and I presumed mine, and she married me"** (Agnon, 1998, p. 367).

**The use of the verb and expression 'presumed,' the word 'presumed' connects to the marriage proposal. The reader would expect the marriage proposal to be accompanied by words of emotion and tenderness, but the word 'presumed' hints at boldness, a person who can be rude and do something against shyness and convention. Therefore, this word creates an anti-romantic, even violent atmosphere, which can be a foreshadowing of the couple's married life and the personality of that doctor.**

Ben Dov claims that the presumption the doctor boasts about in a bragging tone indicates that his approach to Dina was not intimate but violent, mental-psychological violence rather than physical (Ben Dov, 2006, p. 81).

Describing the doctor's courtship of Dina, Agnon introduces several symbolic episodes to outline his character and map the narrator-doctor's personality, building meaningful connections that will be expanded and developed later. In the scene where the doctor enters Dina's room in the hospital, he smugly lists the flowers' names on her table in German and Latin. In this way, he empties the flowers of their romantic context, their colorful appearance, their scent, and turns them into a tool for boasting about his knowledge (Tamir, 1985). These flowers will also be mentioned on the wedding night.

Foreshadowing hints contribute to understanding the existing irony, the gap between displaying his education as a doctor and his fixed atavistic inner self, which will be fully revealed as the plot progresses. One of the additional hints in the work is the narrow bed in that room of Dina. It can be understood symbolically that the bed is too narrow to accommodate two; perhaps the doctor is afraid of engaging in sexual relations with Dina, or he sees her as a biological sister or sister in different senses, as a taboo of incest.

## 2.2 The Scene of the Confession

When Dina confesses to the doctor the reason for her sadness, "You know, I have been with somebody else," his feelings for her cool immediately in response: silence, investigation, wonder, and reproach towards Dina: he had never conceived of such actions on her part. There is a great chasm between his declared opinions and what he truly believes. Outwardly, he is a

doctor, an educated man, a citizen of the great open world, highly intellectual, progressive, and modern. In this liberated world, intimate relations between a man and a woman are common and accepted. But deep inside him, he is a captive of conservative values that are deeply imprinted on his soul. The doctor feels that his status has been damaged because her previous intimacy was with a person of lowly status – just a clerk. He cannot conceive of love as an emotion free of any interests, independent of any position or status. Still, he decides to disregard this and marry Dina, but he cannot control his behavior towards her, and he tortures both her and himself. He is overwhelmed with jealousy and suspicion that destroy any chance of happiness. In his eyes, the beloved is property, property to which he claims exclusive rights. When the doctor saw Dina smiling, he asked her if she was smiling because she was thinking of that "louse" (the clerk). Dina sobbed, and he confessed: "From all the anguish I caused her, she fell sick." (Davidovitch & Agnon, 2011)

### 2.3 The Tram Station Scene

The first passenger car that arrives is full of passengers, followed by another tram. But after Dina boards the car and the doctor prepares to follow her, the driver says all seats are taken. Dina gets off, and they wait for another tram. The foreshadowing hint here, in its symbolic meaning, suggests that this journey is a metonymy for the couple's life journey, which is not a shared journey. The reader is exposed to foreshadowing hints indicating that the individual is largely responsible for their destiny. There may be a missed love here because even after their tram ride, they travel outside the city, which was a different direction than the doctor had in mind. The close reading that the reader does as part of the work's interpretation leads them to realize that the "couple" is not on the path to the kingdom of happiness because the tram's seats are occupied on the way. The journey is not accompanied by conversations. Additionally, the description emphasizes the sudden speed of the ride, and soon they will be bride and groom.

The Proposal Scene

**"I said to her, do you know what they said? He and she are a bride and groom" (Agnon, 369, 1998).**

**"There were no better days for me than the days between engagement and marriage" (Agnon, 369, 1998).**

The place where the doctor and Dina are surrounded by children, and the playing children create a romantic atmosphere, accelerating the plot. They ease the doctor's path to proposing to Dina, already on their first walk. Barzel continues that the children can be seen as prophetic of the event, clear-sighted, and able to declare the couple as bride and groom even before they are such (Barzel, 1975).

The doctor proposes to Dina and testifies that there were no more beautiful days than those between engagement and marriage. Between him and her, he wonders about the miracle of falling in love. He pays no attention to the other women in the hospital except for Dina, all his thoughts are on her, and his excessive focus on a single female figure will develop into an obsession, possibly indicating mental illness. The proposal is not direct from the doctor's mouth but through accompanying characters, which could put his feelings of love for her in question. This proposal is foreshadowed by verbal hints: "I will come and enjoy everything you give me and ask for more" (Agnon, 368, 1998). The expression **"I will ask for more"** could imply an invasion of privacy, beyond the norm and beyond the expected, meaning **"I will ask for more than just a relationship or more than just marriage."**



One thing overshadows the doctor's happiness and gives him no rest—the **same black** blue mentioned at the beginning of the work, which reflects in Dina's eyes and shows the fluctuations of her spirit: "But this black blue in her eyes darkened like a cloud about to shed tears. Once I asked her. She looked at me and did not answer... I continued to pester her to reveal what was the cause of it... I asked her, Dina, what are you sighing about? She smiled and said through her tears, please, my dear, be quiet... but my mind was not at rest. I expected she would want to reveal the cause to me" (Agnon, 370, 1998).

That cause of sadness, which the doctor wanted to know, is presented in a distinct and important scene, which serves as a turning point in the plot. This is the critical revelation from Dina to the doctor before the wedding: "She raised her eyes to mine and said: I had dealings with another" (Agnon, 370, 1998). And then the doctor testifies to his reaction to what was said: "My heart weakened and I was seized with cold" (ibid).

The concise, short, and unclear sentence from Dina will later stand in disproportion to the series of torments she will endure in her marriage. The doctor's statement "My heart weakened and I was seized with cold" contains a symptom of the mental and physical illness the doctor testifies to himself, which will deepen to the point of neurotic behavior and madness (Binimov, 42, 2001).

Afterward, the doctor wonders about his silence and is astonished that Dina did something not befitting her dignity. He insists on knowing who the lover is, interrogates her to know his name and profession, if he is a respected and important person. If he is a docent or professor. Dina confesses that he is a clerk, a scribe in the legislature.

In this article, I discuss the possibility for the doctor to find sublimation for his negative feelings towards the marriage he chose and the importance of society in his eyes and his dependence on it. Therefore, it was important to him that even the lover be of a good status; the thought that he was marrying a woman that even a lowly clerk found unworthy of marriage reflects his perspective.

#### 2.4 The Wedding Scene

The couple gets married. The wedding scene is crucial for understanding the path of suffering that Dina will live through with the doctor's attitude. This distinctive scene is described in a non-romantic, ridiculous, grotesque, and bohemian manner. The wedding took place in Vienna, shortly after World War I. The couple married secretly and not publicly, in a miserable and uncelebrated ceremony, without the participation of relatives from either side. It is important to note that the story is told from the doctor's perspective, who tries to rationalize it by the socio-political background of the time. It can be understood that the multitude of excuses and explanations the doctor provides indicate that other factors of shame, insult, obsession, and paranoia caused him to marry Dina secretly, without the participation of relatives (Tamir, 1985). The required quorum is composed of wretched individuals, who were called two hours earlier to participate in a funeral. Their eyes are hungry, insolent, as if knowing Dina's sin and mocking it. These individuals do this to receive payment and have no emotional or other part in the event. Ronit Tamir explains that the fact that these people were invited to a funeral before the wedding suggests that the marriage will not live and associates it more with burial, with death (Tamir, 1985).

The important question is whether in this seemingly broken atmosphere the "couple" will reach a rectification in their married life, whether they will overcome the obstacles and channel their negative emotions in the maze of relationships to a successful marriage. This is a matter of jealousy, fear, fixation, and suffering that will lead them to a certain outcome.

"The one who looked at the bride with improper eyes... he was a clerk and they dismissed him" (Agnon, 372, 1998). At the wedding canopy, the doctor notices one of the wretched individuals looking at Dina with improper eyes, and everything is conveyed through the eyes of the sick doctor—that this person is a clerk who was dismissed from his position, and this threatens the doctor's mental world. Additionally, the canopy collapses by one of the four pole holders, which is a foreshadowing hint indicating the failure of the relationship between him and her, to be understood as the expected collapse. The beginning of the distortion.

The doctor uses the word "bride" when one would expect him to say "my bride." His use of the word "bride" perhaps indicates her status and the role she plays, rather than her as a beloved. The protagonist here constructs a reality born from his heart's imaginings, perhaps feeling that she is the "other," the lover Dina had. The story the doctor recalls about a bride who spoiled herself with her many lovers before the wedding, and these were invited to the wedding as guests by the groom, the story of digression, the associative story, takes over his thoughts in describing the canopy and creates an analogy between its events and the actual wedding events. The digression reveals the doctor's mental world and his heart's imaginings, linking with that sentence "I had dealings with another" and trying to present himself as a victim.

It is important to note that because of the analogy created between the doctor's mental stories and the real-world story, everything that applies to the woman in the story of digression implicitly applies to Dina as well. Binimov explains that the doctor brought up this story to remind her of her disgrace and perhaps also to take revenge on himself for agreeing to marry her (Binimov, 42, 2001).

The Wedding Night:

**"My wife inspected the room and set her eyes on the red roses that stood there. I joked and said, who is so kind as to send us these lovely roses? Who asked me with amazement? As if she thought there was someone here who knew about us other than the hotel staff. I said, in any case, I am removing them because their scent is hard to sleep with" (Agnon, 373, 1998).**

**The doctor immediately suspects that Dina's lover is the one who brought the flowers, and since this is a completely pathological sign, the red color could indicate many things, including a callous scandalous act that implies Dina's loss of virginity before marriage. He asks to remove the flowers, fearing perhaps the audacity of the desires that the flowers symbolize and the "other" suspect.**

During the wedding night, in the most intimate moments, the doctor hears the sound of someone's footsteps in a nearby room and suspects that it is the clerk whom Dina knew before her wedding. When he confesses his thoughts to his wife, she bursts into tears, and when he asks her why she is crying, she suppresses her tears and says, "Open the windows and let the world know of my disgrace... I am ashamed of my words and I made peace with her. We reconciled and she accepted me" (Agnon, 374, 1998).

These passions of jealousy and madness intensify: suspicion, criticism, accusations, anger, hostility, and obsession do not relent. He neglects Dina's image as a bride on their wedding night, and instead of enjoying a new, delightful, and beautiful married life, he focuses on the figure of the "other."

The doctor's pursuit of the "other" and his obsession to the point of searching and rummaging through Dina's library and belongings, hoping to read love letters, leads him to read novels about women in order to understand the nature of women and their lovers. He even turns to

criminal documents. It can be said that he is satisfying himself with reading to understand her and other women, rather than understanding himself, whose personality is in need of investigation.

Dina, overwhelmed with sorrow and suffering, asks for a divorce as a way to free herself from her torment, both from herself and from her sick husband. The doctor admits that he is experiencing a revival of love for her, which fills his heart. He decides that from now on, he will fill his heart with love instead of jealousy and hatred. The question is whether this is his sublimation: "And I would think that everything is as the person desires and wills" (Agnon, 1998,377). It is likely that this does not free him from his troubling thoughts. It seems that this illness, as a chronic condition and the irrational forces associated with impulse and desires, will take over him again, and indeed, this happens when, one day, a patient arrives at the hospital, and the doctor recognizes the name of the twin who haunts his thoughts on the board next to the patient's bed and identifies him as his wife's lover, the "other." Thus, when he discovers his identity, he clings to him and showers him with attention, examinations, treatments, and food. He makes allowances for him and goes to great lengths on his behalf, praising his strong body and keeping him in the hospital, extending the "other's" stay beyond what is necessary until his time to be discharged arrives.

The doctor attributes excessive significance to their relationship as if their relationship has more length and meaning than his relationship with Dina. He testifies about himself that due to his preoccupation with him, he begins to adopt some of his mannerisms. **"I am so concerned about him, all because of that deed which is hard to mention and hard to forget... Not only that but I look at him and observe him. Perhaps I will learn what he gained from Dina, and what Dina gained from him, and since I have been preoccupied with him, I have adopted some of his mannerisms"** (Agnon, 1998,377).

**Davidai and Kaspi** explain that the protagonist here constructs a reality based on his own reflections, perhaps concerning the same clerk who had dealings with Dina (Davidai and Kaspi, 134, 1995). Similar to his suspicion towards the clerk appearing in the wedding scenes, but here he knows the name, as if he is reaching his desired goal, and begins to think about how to behave with him. On the other hand, perhaps this might alleviate his strong emotions, assuming he meets the lover.

**Ben-Dov** explains that there is reason to doubt whether the person the doctor considers to be the one from Dina's distant confession is indeed the same person in the hospital (Ben-Dov, 86, 2006). Therefore, there are two lines of thought here: either accept the doctor's words as an empirical fact despite being an unreliable narrator, according to Ben-Dov, or suspect that this is the reality that the ailing doctor has created for himself out of his own necessity.

The process of intensification of his jealousy and obsession, and the domination of the figure of the "other" over him, is felt through the use of senses, which may lead to a lack of correction: the sense of smell, the red roses in the room; the sense of hearing, hearing the footsteps of a person in the adjacent room on the wedding night; the sense of sight, **"From now on, that person did not move from my sight"** (Agnon, 1998.374).

It can be assumed that Agnon portrays the patient in the hospital as a victim of suspicions that are creations of the doctor's mind and speculations, perhaps someone the doctor chose to project his pathological illness onto. He overfeeds him as if he has become a fat and unattractive woman, castrates him, unconsciously. He hides the matter of the patient from his wife, but not for long, due to his desire to torment his wife. "At first, I kept the whole matter from my wife,

but not for long, due to his desire to torment his wife. 'At first, I kept the whole matter from my wife, but he broke through my defenses, and told it himself" (Agnon,1998. 378).

During the patient's discharge from the hospital, the doctor erupts and rages, treating him in a coarse and humiliating manner, with hatred and a feeling of disgust, revulsion, and abhorrence: "He extended his hand before me with excessive humility and began to stammer words of thanks... I extended my fingertips to him through disgrace and humiliation, and immediately wiped them on my robe. As if I had touched a dead carcass, and turned my face from him as from something abominable, and walked away" (Agnon,1998, 378).

The doctor goes out, agitated and excited, for a walk, and after an hour and two hours, he stands and sees that he has circled and spun in the same place. It should be noted that such a state might symbolize his difficulty in freeing or extricating himself from his thoughts.

### 2.5 The doctor's dream

The doctor's illness leads to the birth of a pathological dream for us: **"One night, that man came to me in a dream with somewhat pathological and somewhat - slightly - sympathetic features. I was ashamed of him, thinking bad things about him. And I took upon myself to transfer my anger from him, he bowed down and said:"What do you want from me? And did I force myself upon you? Are you asking for my evil?" (Agnon,1998, 379).**

**Ben-Dov** argues that based on the dream, it can be understood that Dina, according to the doctor's pathological perception, is the one who is forcing him. However, the term "אִנְיָוּתָא" (you forced me) can also be understood in two ways:

1. You, the doctor, have raped me, and now you are also taking revenge on me for something you did?
2. Perhaps the intention is that Dina raped him, and thus there is no reason to take revenge on the clerk, the patient, for Dina's rape, but rather on her, the one who raped.

In both interpretations, there is a linguistic mixture indicating a sexual, gender, and identity confusion. Perhaps the figure of the patient in the dream is actually a reflection of the doctor himself. (Ben-Dov, 89, 2006)

I would argue that according to the first interpretation, the doctor raped the patient by placing him and forcing him to exist in his imagination, within the relationship between him and his wife. If so, rationally, the doctor should understand that the clerk is not interested in Dina, so he is not the root of the problem but rather the doctor himself. And apparently, this "knowledge" does not relieve him of his torment.

The doctor tells his wife about the dream; she embraces him with sisterly love and compassion, understanding, apparently, how ill and tormented her husband is. Perhaps this will not bring a resolution. The inevitable ending arrives, Dina whispers again and asks for a divorce. A harsh exchange of words occurs between them, culminating in her locking the door until nightfall. The locked door may symbolize the blocking of the path between them, and the divorce is final, already decided. This is a closure without remedy, and like many of Agnon's characters, they remain at the lock's mercy. Dina seems to have become aware of her situation and the state of affairs between her and her husband. Thus, she no longer welcomes him when he returns from work, is absent during the day, and refuses to celebrate their engagement day. Additionally, she finds herself as a caretaker for a poor and paralyzed girl, perhaps finding her sublimation in this and channeling her negative emotions into charity and giving.

The doctor acknowledges this and grants Dina a divorce. I would expect this to change his perception of the facts around him, but it may not yet free him from his illness. The final lines indicate this: "Thus, we parted from each other, as one parts externally, but in my heart, my

friend, I still keep the smile on her lips, and that black-blue color in her eyes, which I saw for the first time today. At times during the night, I lift myself from my bed, like those patients I treated, and extend my hands and call: Nurse, nurse, come to me" (Agnon, 1998,383).

The story's closure is circular, an ironic closure. At the end of the confession, the doctor joins and explicitly aligns himself with the patients seeking Dina's presence. This takes us back to the beginning of the story when the patients would hear the sound of her footsteps, rise from their beds, and extend their hands towards her, like only children towards their mothers, each one saying: "Nurse, nurse, come to me" (Agnon, 367). The final paragraph creates confusion and creates a kind of equality between the doctor and the patient. The doctor has lost his shared life with Dina and remains like one of the patients, calling in vain for her arrival (Davidson, 1996).

### 3.CHAPTER TWO

#### 3.1 The Absence of Sublimation in the Doctor's Maze of Relationships

In this section, I will present the personality structure of the speaking character, the doctor, within a maze of relationships. As mentioned in the first chapter, the doctor develops an intense, irrational jealousy towards Dina's past lover. From the beginning of their acquaintance, the doctor notices the deep sadness in Dina's smile and the blackish-blue in her eyes and is drawn to them. This situation requires and invites a psychological reading, where the focus is on the nature of the jealousy, the doctor's drives and desires, which were repressed and hidden, breaking out and taking over him.

The story features two central characters, a man and a woman, and an infinite number of possible encounters and configurations between them, primarily focusing on the third figure, the "other" from the past, with its emotional and sexual complexity and gender interconnections.

Therefore, if the poison of love takes over the wounded body and soul, making them captive and losing their balance, it is a state of illness that can only be cured by removing the abscess, if that is even possible. Only then can the wounded lover, the jealous one, return to his normal mental state. But if the "abscess of love" has brought the lover to a state of terminal illness, he might resort to monstrous actions, violence, torment, and near madness (Ben-Yaminov, 38, 2001).

The blackish-blue, as mentioned in the first chapter, is a hint at the ambivalent relationship that will develop between the couple, combining both the good and bad aspects of blue and black, desire and aversion. This is reflected in the doctor's first visit to Dina's private room at the hospital, where he removes the flowers from their romantic context and boasts about his scientific knowledge. The tram conductor announces occupied places as the couple tries to board the car, with war-disabled veterans and whispering children. All these are hints at the fragile relationship between them, which from the start is destined to be fragile. The total love that is born from disaster is doomed to end in disaster; death is its companion, and the solution to this absolute love.

It should be noted that the mental illness leads to a severe outburst of jealousy triggered by Dina's reference to her past lover as a "clerk." The doctor's reaction was: "I am amazed at you, Dina, that a small clerk, a scribe, took your heart to such an extent" (Agnon, 371). He hints to her that if the lover were of his status or even superior, it would be fitting for someone like Dina to fall in love with him. However, a person of lower status, in the doctor's eyes, is just a "mere" clerk.



**Davidai and Kaspi** explain that the prominent trait of the doctor is his conformism, being trapped in the normative patterns of society. His conformity and social validation dictate his attitude towards Dina: "That sweet woman is straightforward in my eyes as she is straightforward in everyone's eyes" (Agnon, 1998, 375). He has a class-based mindset; his conformist behavior reflects insecurity and a low self-image, leading him to a constant search for validation of his worth in society. Even as he tries to cultivate his external image: "I am the son of the poor, the son of a poor tinsmith, meticulous about my dress" (Agnon, 1998 370).

### **Dina's Relatives: "Their Wealth Adorns Them, and Their Honor Adorns Their Wealth" (Agnon, 375)**

Here, the doctor wishes to belong to the wealthy and educated class. Only through belonging to this group does he feel secure and protected. He does not dare to form an opinion that deviates from socially accepted consensus. He is dependent on society and preoccupied with impressing others. Only social motives, not love (he touches her dress and smooths his hand without approaching her body), lead him to that woman, trying to find excuses to convince himself that Dina is accepted and loved both in the hospital and by her family (Davidai and Kaspi, 132, 1995). It can be said that the doctor's feelings of inferiority make him dependent on society and its bourgeois values.

The doctor's perspective is that the "other" overshadows the couple's situations: "Sadness was in her, casting a shadow on my joy." In contrast, Dina's response is: "Let us be happy, my friend, and not dampen our joy." Dina has a symmetrical, egalitarian, and participatory view of reality, allowing space for the other, and uses the first-person plural. In contrast, he can only see the other from his own personal perspective and uses the first-person singular.

The doctor's obsessive tendency and compulsiveness, marked by his detailing the scientific names of every flower, reveal his drive to control unfamiliar situations through obsessive knowledge. An irrational element is hidden beneath the thin layer of acquired rationality. He tries to cope with his existential reality using intellectual tools he trusts. It turns out that these tools are insufficient to solve his distress. The internal emotional and instinctual forces, which he tried to deny, break through and undermine his ability to perceive the world insightfully.

**Arlette Mincer** provides a medical explanation, stating: "The character of the doctor suffers from a jealousy delusion that gradually develops and meets the criteria of a delusional disorder—namely, a false personal belief based on incorrect inference about external reality, rigidly ignoring clear evidence that contradicts it. The delusion is connected to aspects of love and jealousy. The person interprets facts according to his delusion while maintaining his internal logic and becomes impervious to logical arguments presented by others in his environment" (Mincer, 2004, 82).

One feature of delusional disorder in the story is the doctor's excessive attention to small details, heightened emotions, suspicion, accusations, etc. Mincer also adds that there is a specific delusional disorder restricted to one area, where the person functions normally in other areas (Mincer, 2004, 86).

The basis for the doctor's delusion is Dina's statement "primordial things with another," which leads to his extreme reaction: "My heart weakened, and I was seized by chill," accompanied by excessive curiosity. The delusion gains momentum during the wedding ceremony, where the figure of the clerk staring at Dina during their wedding threatens the doctor's mental world and destabilizes him. What troubles the doctor's mind is the story of regression about a man

who, forced by his beloved to marry her, went and gathered all her past lovers to remind her of her disgrace and take revenge on himself for agreeing to marry her. In his thoughts, he admits: "How ugly that man was, and how ugly that act was, but I was fond of that man, and that act seemed beautiful in my eyes" (Agnon, 1998, 372). The story indicates the awakening of both sadistic and masochistic impulses, accompanied by a distorted sense that haunts his mind. As if He is a Victim Deceived by Marriage to Dina. Dina did not coerce him into marrying her; rather, he chooses to view her as a licentious figure and that the marriage was imposed upon him.

According to what I stated in the first chapter, the story of the regression during the wedding ceremony reveals the narrator's mental world and the true content of his consciousness, and it should be understood that everything said about that event is implicitly directed at Dina.

On the wedding night, the doctor wishes to remove the flowers from the room, which might be a sign of his fear of the audacity of the desires symbolized by red flowers, and also of the suspected lover who sent the flowers. This is a distorted reality that the doctor creates in his mind. This fear intensifies when the doctor hears the sound of a man's footsteps in the adjacent room, during the intimate moment between him and his bride, Dina. The "other," the foreign man, threatens him and becomes an object of jealousy; the footsteps of a man from the adjacent room drive him mad: "My heart was shaken, and I bit my lip, so as not to utter any indecent words" (Agnon, 373, 1998). Dina, hearing this from him, cried out. The wedding night at the hotel in a nearby village turns into a night of nightmares, and thus the doctor's male jealousy is revealed in all its horror. It can be said that the first night is a prelude to their married life; on the night of their first passion, he accuses her of having been with another and brings him into his thoughts, tormenting himself in infernal suffering and dragging his bride into the abyss, thus destroying their marriage.

"From now on, that person never left my sight, in front of my wife and not in front of her" (Agnon, 374). Here, madness takes on new forms; instead of focusing on his new bride's figure, he focuses on the figure of the "other," the figure that haunts him like a demon.

"Not in her presence did he search through her belongings and bookshelves, perhaps she had hidden letters from him there" (Agnon). This madness expands, and the doctor starts reading love stories as a form of sublimation, perhaps trying to understand the nature of women and their lovers, which might bring him some mental peace. It could be a form of sublimation that allows him to read books and be aware of reading as a type of emotional channeling. He turns to reading criminal documents, perhaps projecting his anger or sick thoughts there.

Dina falls ill, and he treats her with medicine, but the jealousy delusion does not release him: "All the illnesses have come upon you, because of the person who deprived you of your life" (Agnon, 375). Despite his thousand regrets for every word he said to her, a thousand times he repeated them in her mouth. The doctor's condition reveals the seriousness of his mental state, changing his image from a man with moral values to a person consumed by blind revenge, a victim of his illness and character.

The doctor's madness intensifies: since he dealt with the lover in the hospital, he has adopted some of his gestures. Ben-Yemin suggests that this preoccupation and imitation of the lover's gestures may serve to make the doctor resemble the "other" to win his wife's affection (Ben-Yemin, 44, 2001). Perhaps this is how he seeks to refine his obsessive jealousy. The doctor's profound hatred and deep contempt for the patient under his care are revealed: "I extended my fingertips to him with ease and contempt, and immediately wiped them on my sleeve, as if I had touched a dead vermin, and turned away from him as from a loathsome thing" (Agnon, 378). This revulsion towards the "other" is displayed whenever his memory of the "other" arises. The prolonged stay of the "other" in the hospital was imposed upon him and was akin

to rape (Barzel, 1975, 39). The doctor showers him with all good things until he becomes an "inmate" who has given up everything for food and drink.

When the doctor leaves the hospital, he walks in a manner that "encircles himself and turns in place" (Agnon, 1998, 379). It should be noted that this reference is not to physical walking but symbolically to his mental "compulsive circling" of thoughts. He cannot break out of the cycle of obsession, and this indicates that there is no correction or solution. He continues to torment his wife about what happened with the patient, the clerk, to express his contempt for her for having given her heart to a man whom he considers contemptible, and Dina remains silent and indifferent.

The doctor's illness gives rise to morbid dreams. In the dream, he sees himself as the "other" coming to speak with him: "What do you want from me, and is it because you raped me that you seek my goodwill?" I mentioned in the previous chapter the double meaning of the verb 'to rape' ('אנסתני'), and here the doctor projects his hatred towards his beloved, seeing Dina as having raped this man, which depicts her as a betraying woman. According to Sharivum, dreams are a pathway to the unconscious layers of the personality and can lead to the hidden layers of the story. Focusing on the motivation behind the doctor's strange behavior (Sharivum, 1993, 198).

The dream is a reflection that distorts the appearance of things as they seem in waking life, and in its hidden layer, it presents a valid truth and reality. In the dream, the clerk appears as a character in need of treatment and arouses sympathy, while the doctor appears as a character embarrassed by his feelings and seeking reconciliation with the clerk.

The use of the verb 'to rape' according to Mincer suggests a possible latent motif of hidden homosexuality in the dreamer's psyche, and this is confirmed when the doctor's delusion intensifies to the point where he fears having children with Dina: "Perhaps they will resemble him" (Agnon, 383). This point reinforces the hypothesis of a homosexual component in the doctor's psyche. The "relationship" between the doctor and the other may yield a child (Mincer, 87, 2004).

Barzel explains that the use of the verb 'to rape' may imply that the doctor is imposing himself on the lover and keeping him in his consciousness constantly, and this forced reality is also projected onto Dina's psyche. He does not allow her to rid herself of the memory of the lover (Barzel, 39, 1975). Hallel also notes that the rape in the doctor's dream indicates compulsiveness and a latent motif of hidden homosexuality in the dreamer's psyche (Barzel, 35, 1994). The doctor seems to commit a disgraceful act upon the lover's body, an act that can be seen as the doctor's inability to free himself from the memory of the "other" and a specific act from the past. The more he tries to rid himself of it, the more this knowledge forcibly returns to his thoughts and behavior. The doctor not only rapes the clerk but also the entire relationship with Dina. When he tells Dina about the dream, it reveals to her the nature of the torments her husband is experiencing, not by his own choice.

Dina's husband stirs her emotions; she feels pity for him: "She suddenly stretched out her arms and embraced my neck and hugged me. And I embraced her too, and thus we stood embraced in love, affection, and pity" (Agnon, 380). Here, Dina is portrayed as a compassionate and good mother, showing maternal warmth towards a person in distress, in this case, her husband. The dream serves as a turning point in Dina's emotional stance. It becomes clear to her that her life with the doctor has no remedy. Therefore, after this scene, Dina draws a conclusion and reiterates her request for a divorce. The dream was a high point in the illumination of their married life, where violent jealousy harmed and destroyed it. The figure of the clerk becomes more and more tangible to the doctor, and this obsessive process eventually gives the doctor's

figure a tangible form due to the lack of sublimation of his emotions, and the dream absorbs the problematic lines of the dreaming character.

### 3.2 His Masochistic-Sadistic Impulse Towards Dina Continues

Dina remains silent throughout the story until her request for a divorce; suddenly, she shows activity, transforming from passive to active. Dina ultimately changes; she is no longer merely a voice of her master, as she appeared initially, but has developed her own understanding and sense of destiny. She evolves from a companion into a self-aware woman. She no longer welcomes her husband, is absent during the day, refuses to celebrate their engagement anniversary, and finds a way to channel her pain, silence, and compassion through working as a caregiver for a poor, paralyzed girl who reflects Dina's own distress. Caring for the girl is a form of self-care for Dina.

The doctor acknowledges his illness and understands that he belongs to the category of the sick. He gives Dina a divorce because he recognizes that there is no remedy for their relationship, and the lock is sealed forever. According to the last lines of the story, it can be said that there is no sublimation for him compared to Dina: **"Sometimes at night, I get up from my bed like those patients I treated and extend my hands, calling, 'Nurse, nurse, come to me'"** (Agnon, 1998, 383). It can be said that the very recognition of the illness is a path to healing that goes beyond the story, beyond the text.

The circular closure of the confession story told by the doctor proves that he does not escape his jealousy, fears, and the pursuit of the "other." He joins the voice of the patients seeking Dina's closeness as a maternal figure and acknowledges it. He seeks the proximity of the compassionate Dina, not necessarily the beloved one. The sentence: **"I feared having children with her, lest they resemble him"**, shows that only after the divorce does the doctor allow himself to think about Dina's eyes and smile and to reach out to her like a child because, for him, there is no longer a danger of sexual relations. Throughout the story, he describes only her face, not her body, reflecting the innocent child who recognizes his mother's face first (Tamir, 1985).

Ben-Dov explains that at the end of the confession, the doctor joins the group of patients seeking Dina, the rare nurse. This illustrates the fatal loss of his life. The patients' desire to be some children to their mother, and the doctor was given this unique opportunity to be Dina's "only child," which he squandered himself. He has nothing left but to beg for her presence like the other patients (Ben-Dov, 2006, 73).

Ben-Dov further explains that Dina is not only a hospital nurse but also a sister of flesh, where the jealousy from the brother is a primordial mixture of forbidden incest and ancient possessive belonging (Ben-Dov, 2006, 74).

Dina, the nurse, is seen as both a potential prostitute and a compassionate sister. According to him, Dina did not fulfill her destiny even after their divorce. "On the surface," they are separated, but inside, she remains the same angelic figure, enchanting the doctor and serving as a catalyst for his psychological ailments (Ben-Dov, 2006, 74).

There is a strong tension between the modern, educated, refined external appearance and his fixed, archaic inner self. As I mentioned in the introduction, this does not make him happy or allow him to channel the painful emotions consuming his soul, nor alleviate his sorrow through

volunteering, affection, and compassion for his wife, and the divorce. The doctor's intense impulses lead to self-destruction and the destruction of relationships. Jealousy is stronger than the flow of time; while everything is in motion, jealousy remains in a fixed state. The dream does not change his consciousness or bring about an epiphany but accelerates a process that had already begun, leading to the inevitable end (Katz, 2008).

It can be said that the doctor is trapped in a closed circle with no escape, with no outlet for his emotions. The reversals govern the doctor's life; the more he loves Dina with his idealized, unfulfilled inner love, the more he pursues and hates her in their shared reality. Similarly, the more he hates the "clerk" in his thoughts, the more he loves him with the same "impossible love" when encountering him in real life (Sharivum, 209, 1993).

#### 4. CHAPTER THREE

##### 4.1 The Intertextuality Between Agnon's "The Doctor and His Wife" and the Biblical Story of the Rape of Dinah

In her book "And She Is Your Glory," Ben-Dov notes an intertextual connection between the biblical story of Dinah and Agnon's story "The Doctor and His Wife."

In Genesis 34:1-4, the rape of Dinah is described: "1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the land, saw her; and he took her, and lay with her, and humbled her. 3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the maiden, and spoke kindly unto the maiden. 4 And Shechem spoke unto Hamor his father, saying: 'Get me this damsel to wife.'"

In this text, we can see three verbs of rape: "he took, he lay, and he humbled." However, immediately after, three opposite verbs are presented to soften and mitigate the sin of rape: "his soul clave, he loved, and he spoke kindly to the maiden." Shechem seeks to marry Dinah and asks for his father's intervention.

Jacob's reaction to Dinah's rape is silence: "And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; now his sons were with his cattle in the field, and Jacob held his peace until they came." Dinah's brothers' reaction to the rape is grief and anger: "7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done."

Hamor the Hivite asks for Dinah from her family for his son Shechem. His request again contains a term of love (he says: "Shechem my son longs for your daughter"). Shechem himself offers a particularly generous dowry, and Hamor the Hivite proposes establishing them as citizens with equal rights and landholding, as Dinah's family was still a minority that had not yet established roots in the land.

Dinah's brothers condition the marriage request on a revenge scheme involving the circumcision of all the males in Shechem: "13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and spoke, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14 And they said unto them: 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent unto you: if ye will become as we are, to have every male of you circumcised; 16 then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17 But if ye will not hearken unto us to be circumcised, then will we take our daughter and we will be gone.'"

Hamor and Shechem agree to the request and persuade all the men of Shechem to undergo circumcision. Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, exploit the weakness and pain of the men of



Shechem after the circumcision and carry out a massacre and collective slaughter that exceeds all moral and natural standards: "25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and smote every male. 26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went forth."

The massacre carried out by the brothers causes Jacob to recoil in fear of damaging his reputation and fearing retaliation: "30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: 'Ye have troubled me to make me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.'"

The brothers' blunt and emotional response to their father concludes the episode: "31 And they said: 'Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?'"

Ben-Dov contrasts the biblical and Agnonian stories and examines how the biblical story enriches Agnon's narrative. An important layer that Ben-Dov refers to is the similarities and differences between the biblical Dinah and the Agnonian Dinah. In Agnon's story, Dinah is the only character given a name; all other characters, including the doctor, remain anonymous. As a result, the name receives heightened prominence and is linked through intertextuality to the biblical Dinah.

In both cases, the character is a sister: a biological sister in the biblical story and a hospital sister in Agnon's story, though the jealousy here recalls the ancient possessive jealousy of a brother towards his sister. In both cases, there is an attack on the chastity of a maiden before marriage, and both women in the texts are silent and speak little. Initially, they are passive and lack their own will, though the biblical Dinah remains so, while the Agnonian Dinah undergoes a process of personal empowerment and discovers an original and assertive self that enables her to extricate herself from the sickly and violent world she has entered.

It can be said that both have good relationships with women of their own kind: the biblical Dinah went out "to see the daughters of Israel," and the Agnonian Dinah "was so loved and accepted by people that even her friends treated her with affection and kindness." Violent men aggressively invade their worlds and influence their fate. Their silence does not quell the desires of the jealous men who rage because of them.

Another shared layer in both stories is that the primal, destructive, and unchecked jealousy is present in both the modern and biblical narratives. Both stories share a central theme about the soul enslaved to the emotions of earlier periods. In the biblical story, these are the vengeful brothers and Shechem, who first defiled Dinah and then sought to marry her. In Agnon's story, the doctor, beneath his modern cultural veneer, reveals himself as primitive and jealous. It should be noted that there are dark, irrational feelings, social fears, and primal urges in both the biblical and Agnonian stories.

In both texts, there is a disproportion reflected in the contraction and expansion of the text. While the sin of rape is condensed into four verses, the description of the punishment is long, detailed, and shocking. Similarly, there is textual disproportion between sin and revenge in Agnon's story. The "sin" perceived by the doctor as "I had issues with another" is allocated a brief sentence, while the revenge is described extensively and spans three years of marriage.

The word "rape" resonates in both stories. In the biblical story, the term "rape" is not explicitly mentioned, though it is understood as the story of the rape of Dinah. In Agnon's story, "The Doctor and His Wife," the word "rape" appears once in the doctor's dream: "And because you raped me, you ask for my wife?" Thus, in Agnon's story, the rape is psychological and obsessive-compulsive, inflicted on Dinah and the lover by the doctor through a pathological perspective, as a metaphor for a sick society between the two World Wars, and also for himself.

The use of the following words creates a literary parallel between the two texts. The doctor describes a series of abuses against Dinah by saying: "At that time we remembered all the troubles and sufferings I had brought upon her... that at every moment I was spilling her blood and abusing her, and she accepted everything in silence. My heart was filled with love and affection for this wretched soul who was so ill-treated by me... and so I did for a day and two days and three days" (Agnon, 380). The emphasized words—tortures, silence, bloodshed, and the triad—are parallel to the biblical story. Both stories conclude with a chilling emotional cry, where the word "sister" seals the narratives: "Sister, sister, come to me," in Agnon's story, and "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?" in the biblical story. Ben-Dov argues that the brothers justifying their acts of revenge with "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?" indirectly provides a rationale for the doctor's revenge, who ostensibly seeks to purify Dinah's defilement and prevent her from being considered a harlot (Ben-Dov, 77, 2006).

The drive for revenge and destruction is common to both stories. The doctor seeks vengeance for what he sees as a sin, paralleling Dinah's brothers' revenge in the biblical narrative. Additionally, the doctor sees Dinah not just as a hospital sister but somewhat as a biological sister, akin to Dinah's two brothers in the biblical story. The statement by the doctor, "No praise for a brother who praises his sisters," supports the argument that the doctor's revenge is about family honor. The cry "Sister, sister, come to me" carries a taboo of incest, as the sister represents an erotic attraction that cannot be realized, and it could be a call for warmth and loving embrace.

The verbs used: took, lay, humbled, and asked to marry in the biblical story are variations that also appear in the modern story: he found, seduced, and then married her. Additionally, Shechem and the clerk whom Dinah loved can be seen as similar; just as the clerk had "issues" with Dinah, Shechem defiled Dinah's purity, and thus both seek revenge: the brothers avenge Shechem and his people, while the doctor attempts to emasculate the clerk and damage his masculinity, turning him into a woman who has sacrificed everything for food and drink. It can be said that the two texts converse with each other, and more precisely, that the modern text is built on the foundations of the ancient text, with the comparison between the two texts enriching the meaning of both the new and the old.

## 5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In this article, I focused on Agnon's characters within the framework of marriage, particularly highlighting the behavior and desires of the learned doctor as shaped by society. In his view, society constantly observes him as a person of high status, engaged in impressing others and himself. This doctor is driven by instincts such as jealousy and primal urges, fear and apprehension, suspicion, and anxiety about society.

Dinah, the wife, undergoes a process of awakening and discovers two things: first, she cannot survive in a marriage based on suspicion and accusations against her and finds it difficult to stay at home all the time without any occupation to ease her. Second, she realizes that her husband suffers from a mental illness, haunted by the figure of the 'other,' which should not affect their married life, and she discovers this at moments meant to be the most intimate and beautiful between them, maintaining silence. However, towards the end of their marriage, she begins to pity her husband, embracing him like a compassionate mother, and her resolution is divorce and finding a way to sublimate and treat herself.

In the first chapter, I attempted to present the guiding lines for the doctor's character and the foreshadowing hints that contribute to understanding the psychological and social motivations that led the doctor to fail to correct the wrong and caused Dinah to seek a divorce. I discussed distinct scenes that help understand the dynamics of their relationship and explain the doctor's

behavior towards his wife within the complex web of relationships, demonstrating his desire to torment both himself and his wife, leading to self-destruction.

In the second chapter, I mapped the personalities of the doctor and his ex-wife. This is a retrospective confession, narrated in hindsight, meaning it does not accompany the events as they occur. It should be noted that the confession is the creation of the doctor, an act of sublimation. The doctor's appeals to a specific individual, "my friend," who listens to the confession, place sublimation at the center. The doctor's storytelling can be seen as a therapeutic process, refinement, and redirection of his pathological state. In this chapter, I tried to present his destructive instincts, which result in a cold and distant relationship with his wife, and a manipulative system he employs on her and the patient in the hospital. The clerk's character, who evoked dormant feelings in the doctor, sheds critical light on this matter. I explained Dinah's awakening, her achievement of self-awareness similar to other heroines in Agnon's stories, but the doctor fails to find a remedy for his condition, and the results are the product of his thoughts, revealing himself as a patient awaiting the return of the compassionate nurse Dinah.

"We are educated people, modern humans, seekers of freedom, for ourselves and for all the inhabitants of the world, and in practice, we are worse than those who cling to antiquity" (Agnon, 374, 1998).

In the third chapter, I explained the connection between the modern story and the biblical text, which deepens and creates an analogy between the two texts. I explained the immoral behavior parallel in both texts.

## 6. LIMITATION OF STUDY

Agnon's perception of the female character is influenced by the social and cultural background of Jewish history between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, across his central life stages in Poland, Germany, and Israel. Agnon, adept at portraying Jewish life during the transition from the traditional era to the modern era, recognizes the feminist revolution as one of the significant historical transformations of his time and reflects it in his work. The representation of female characters in his literary creation moves between two central perceptions: one, the traditional view, depicting the lower status and role of women in the conservative Jewish society, and the second, the modern view, which seeks to liberate women from the patriarchal framework and fundamentally change their status.

The depiction of female characters reflects Agnon's dual nature as a writer rooted in Jewish tradition and positioned at the modern existential sphere. Some of his stories describe women who accept the conservative values of their time out of love for religion and respect for tradition, while others present women who are forced to accept them under societal pressure and submission. Alongside stories that portray women wanting to change their status but avoiding confrontation with norms and limitations imposed by their gender, there are stories depicting bold women actively striving for change. These women leave the authority of their fathers and husbands, acquire education, live independently, and lead their own lives. They are willing to pay a heavy price to realize their identity and independence, thus being seen as trailblazers and agents of social change.

It is evident that in many of Agnon's stories, men prefer assertive, challenging, and dominant women over passive and weak women, whose submissiveness even evokes their reluctance and rejection. The perceptions presented in the stories reveal the gap between Agnon, the religious author holding conservative views, and the implied author expressing modern and liberal views regarding the place and status of women in the home, marriage, family, and community. The shaping of female characters, their prominent place, actions, contributions to channeling

negative emotions, and their roles as active and initiating women, positioning them at the center of family and social activities, present them in a feminist light. This feminist approach, which strengthened in Agnon's later works compared to his earlier ones, was opposed to the general prevailing perception of the literary establishment, which viewed women as marginal and peripheral. Agnon not only describes the wisdom and strength of women but also encourages their entry into the 'male' domain of writing, seeing the importance of their writing as a lever for real change in their condition and status. Understanding the gap between these two perceptions reveals the complexity of Agnon's work in relation to female characters and allows for a different perspective on both his private life and his creative process. One of the restrictions is that everyone should look about the story from his own point of view. Other limitation can be that the analysis of the story should'nt be from different aspects like psychological aspect or gender aspect or social aspect because it can have an effect the literary reference.

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- <sup>65</sup> בן דב ניצה (2006), והיא תהילתך, שוקן, ירושלים ותלאביב.