



## **Agnon at Lorenz**

Neve Schechter proudly unveils the exhibition "Agnon at Lorenz" to mark the jubilee year of the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Shmuel Yosef Agnon.

The connection between Neve Schechter and Agnon began many years before the Noble Prize, when Café Lorenz was located on this site. Agnon describes the lively café in *Temol Shilshom (Only Yesterday)*:

And when Orgelbrand is in a generous mood, he invites Isaac to Lorenz's café, for Orgelbrand doesn't go into Café Hermon... Orgelbrand treats his guest to a glass of beer or a cup of punch and orders a cup of tea for himself, drinks two or three drops and puts it down, for those Germans who are experts in everything don't know how to make tea. (S.Y. Agnon, *Only Yesterday*, translator Barbara Harshav, Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000)

Agnon arrived in Palestine in June 1908. He settled in Neve Zedek, the first Jewish neighborhood built outside of Jaffa. In comparison to other communities in Palestine, Neve Zedek, which was composed of small but crowded apartments, was quite modern. Many intellectuals lived there including spiritual leader Rabbi Kook, artist Nahum Gutman, author Yosef Haim Brenner, founder of Neve Zedek Shimon Rokach, and many others. Agnon's house, located not far from the train bridge, was surrounded by eucalyptus trees, and from the windows one could glimpse the sea.

Although written several decades later (it was published in 1945), the plot of *Only Yesterday* takes place from 1908-1911. Agnon weaves his reminiscences from this period into the story, as in the description of Hemdat's room:

Hemdat lived in his garret at the edge of Neve Zedek at the edge of Jaffa. You go there from Neve Shalom through the houses of Zerakh Barnet...When you get there you see some houses burgeoning out of the sand.

Agnon would sequester himself in his room in Neve Zedek for many hours, constantly writing.

*Only Yesterday* is a rich masterpiece; it has been the subject of many notable literary studies. In the realm of art, however, only a few visual descriptions exist, among them Avigdor Arikha's illustrations for the chapter entitled "Stray Dog," on which he worked together with Agnon.

The works of art selected for this exhibition present the many facets of Agnon and the people associated with him during the time he lived in Neve Zedek. Works displayed include a series by the late Uri Lifshitz, who illustrated Agnon's *Baal Shem Tov Stories*. In these works, Lifshitz avoids idolizing Agnon and instead portrays him as an ordinary person. Yuval Yairi relates to the complexity of memory and space. In a series of photographs named after Agnon's story, Yairi introduces the audience to Agnon's immense library.

Illustrations by Danny Kerman connected to quotes from *Only Yesterday* are exhibited (he also illustrated quotes from Agnon's other works). Raya Brokental describes Agnon's friend, Rabbi Kook, and the relationship between inside and outside. Judy Kopelman created an immense wall mural which brings Agnon's hero, Isaac Kumer, back to Neve Zedek with a brush in his hand.

In addition to the works of art exhibited here, rare items from the S.Y. Agnon archive at the National Library are shown as well as a documentary film by Micha Shagrir and Yachin Hirsch.

A brochure with citations from *Only Yesterday* complements the exhibition.

Curator: Shira Friedman