

DRAFT OF A REPARATIONS AGREEMENT



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

“DRAFT OF A REPARATIONS AGREEMENT”

BY: DAN PAGIS

All right, gentlemen who cry blue murder as always,
Nagging miracle makers,
quiet!
Everything will be returned to its place,
paragraph after paragraph.
The scream back into the throat.
The gold teeth back to the gums.
The terror.
The smoke back to the tin chimney and further on and inside
back to the hollow of the bones,
and already you will be covered with skin and sinews and you
will live,
look, you will have your lives back,
sit in the living room, read the evening paper.
Here you are. Nothing is too late.
As to the yellow star: immediately
it will be torn from your chest
and will emigrate
to the sky.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. Describe the tone of the poem. How does this poem convey the emotions of the victims who sought justice for the crimes perpetrated against them?
- B. The poem reads, “look, you will have your lives back, sit in the living room, read the evening paper. Here you are. Nothing is too late.” Consider: Is this too late? Is this true? Can the payment of reparations allow victims to return to normal lives? What does not go back to normal for survivors?
- C. How does Pagis utilize references to the body to convey the inability of survivors to return to what life was like before the Holocaust? Use textual evidence to support your answer.
- D. List the images present in the poem. Juxtapose those images with the title: “Draft of a Reparations Agreement.” Analyze the relationship between these two entities. Can justice for the Holocaust ever truly be achieved?



ABOUT THE POET

Dan Pagis was an Israeli writer, born in Bukovina, Romania in 1930. His early years were spent in a Nazi concentration camp in Ukraine, formerly in Romania, from where he escaped. He immigrated to pre-state Israel in 1946 and taught medieval Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He became one of the most vibrant voices in modern Israeli poetry. His references to the Holocaust are sometimes oblique, filtered through his use of biblical or mystical images. He died in 1986.

Photo courtesy of Yad Vashem

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