Chapter - 3

Dread and Anxiety: The Maze of Life

Here is a dimension of me which I cannot get rid of and cannot live; it is given and has to be endured. At this point and in this sense, I am something that I have not chosen to be. This limitation of my liberty is not at all the limitation imposed by others…my being a Jew or a worker is not for another, and in that my lived situation it is for me, but is a determination….

This is an alienation of myself: for myself, I am nothing.

Sartre (Being and Nothingness 636)

The present chapter delineates the fictional characters of Amos Oz and their behavioural pattern in the context of Jewish socio-political turmoil in Jerusalem. In all of these works, the characters encounter a constant clash between belonging and not belonging and being an insider and an outsider, in the family, culture, society and Land. The fictional characters from Michael, Woman, Night, Fima, and Hill represent the fragmented, anguished, and tormented Jewish selves. These selective works of Oz are chosen for an elaborate study to understand the Jewish struggle for existence in the Land of conflict, creates the plot in all stories of Oz.

Conflict, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary, is a state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs. It is further defined as a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles or interests. Conflict, in psychological terms, is the arousal of two or more strong motives that cannot be solved together. The two distinctive categories are a conflict between two desired gratifications and a conflict between two dangers or threats. The conflicts that
involve intense threat or fear are not solved readily but make the person feel helpless and anxious. Karl Marx, in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, established Conflict Theory which emphasizes interests rather than norms and values, in conflict. The pursuit of interests generates various types of conflicts. Karl Marx, thus, recognizes conflict as a normal aspect of social life than an abnormal occurrence.

Evidently, in literature, it is essential for a writer to introduce, develop and resolve a conflict, internal or external or both, in his storyline in order to achieve an objective in the story. Internal conflict is a mental or emotional struggle that occurs within a character. When characters undergo an internal conflict they have to make the right choice for their lives and they are compelled to overcome emotions or mixed feelings. On the contrary, external conflict is a struggle that occurs between a character and outside forces, namely, another character, nature or the society. In both, internal and external conflicts, the characters struggle for their survival.

Oz’s fiction is primarily concerned with domestic relationships. His fictional characters resist with internal conflicts between body and spirit, personal aspirations, social limitations, absurd fantasies that conflict the stability and their faith in Israel dominated with uncertainty. Oz’ writings are psychological and solicitous. The fictional characters of Oz encounter external conflicts connected to socio-political circumstances in the Land of Jerusalem, nostalgia for European culture, the cruel Middle Eastern realities, the perils of passion and fanaticism, and the wounded romantic love and marriage by a ruthless political milieu. These external reasons pave way to the personal, psychological and emotional pains in the individual. Oz’ works reflect on aspects of Israeli life both before and after the War of Independence (1948).
Since Oz presents his fictional families as a microcosmic representation of Israeli - Palestinian society, there is an absence of solutions to the internal and external conflicts in his stories. Oz effectively portrays that countries and societies are equally unable to communicate and to live together harmoniously. In such traumatic conditions, the individuals are forced to choose a way of living in an existential no-hope situation. The choice of each individual differs mainly on the willingness to abandon, yield, overcome and survive hardships. The researcher classifies Oz’ fictional characters into four major categories based on their existential crisis. At the outset, there are characters that choose to doom their lives by spoiling their own happiness and the happiness of people who live with and around them. An individual who finds difficulty in adjusting to one’s environment or circumstances is commonly considered a misfit. In being a misfit in the family and in the society, the individual becomes a loser, an anomaly, or an idler.

Secondly, there are individuals who succumb to the situation in which they are compelled to live. Such characters choose to live a life which is melancholic. They make themselves unfortunate and are unable to perform effectively. Being passive to the demanding circumstance, these individuals become the most unfortunate individuals who suffer many misfortunes. Sian L. Bailock and Thomas H. Carr, Professors of psychology in Michigan State University, propose Distraction theory in which they establish that high-pressure situations harm performance by diverting individuals’ attention to task-irrelevant thoughts. Thus, in distracting environment, attention is divided between the task at hand and worries about the situation and its consequences. The individual becomes a choker when he has a divided focus while performing. Such chokers are predominantly identified in almost all works of Oz.
Thirdly, there are characters who find escape routes from the situations which they find difficult to cope with. Though the escapists reject the significance of obligations to life’s goals, they are innovative in gratification by goal achievement. To gain such fulfilment, they develop a tendency to indulge in daydreaming, reverie or fantasy. Escapists develop a habit of retreating from unpleasant or unacceptable reality because reality is too painful or nightmarish to deal with in a functional way. Sigmund Freud, with a positive outlook, considers fantasy as a defence mechanism from the monotonous routine of everyday life. When an individual stays longer in the world of fantasy and becomes addicted, it creates trouble to both the individual and the people around the individual. In Oz’ works the fictional characters are Jews living in the muddled State of Jerusalem. Living in the Land of Jerusalem which is blooded by war due to the political commotion does not provide a peaceful atmosphere to live. Therefore, Oz creates characters who are escapists who find solace in the falsehood and fantasy. The fictional escapists in Oz’ novels, ultimately, create a replica of Jewish individuals in Israel.

Finally, there are individuals who wrestle the world to identify a reason and principle for a meaningful living in the world that is full of chaos and confusion. These individuals experience exertion, pain or destitution without giving up and survive over difficulties. The survivors, unlike the misfits, chokers and escapists, carry on their living despite adversity or trauma. They are courageous to persevere through every challenges of life and thus remain constant to a purpose, idea, or task in the face of obstacles or discouragement. Jews, down the history, is well known for their survival against the cruelties that have come upon them. Jews, in general terms, are the survivors of Holocaust, genocides, anti-semitism and many battles. There are such Jewish characters in Oz’ fiction who endure the adversities of life considering the struggle for survival as fascinating and inspiring. The survivors in Oz’ works are proved to be strong willed people who fight hard to find hope against hopelessness and meaning out of the meaninglessness of the obscure world.
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| Social Misfit | An individual who finds difficulty in adjusting to one’s environment or circumstances is commonly considered as a misfit. | Hannah in *Michael*  
Theo and Noa in *Night*  
Fima in *Fima*  
and  
Yoel in *Woman* | “I [Noa] always feel I’m being cheated, always adopt a negative stance, in advance, and whatever the situation I’m suspicious, defensive, as though everybody is an enemy. The whole world is against us” (*Night* 66).  
“...has no ambition. He simply does not think about tomorrow” (*Fima* 27). |
| Chokers      | An individual becomes a choker when he has a divided focus while performing. In distracting environment, attention is divided between the task at hand and worries about the situation and its consequences. | Hannah in *Michael*  
Theo in *Night*  
Fima in *Fima*  
and  
Yoel in *Woman* | “Now she has stopped interfering. As if she’s lost interest. ... She has lost that radiant joy that always seemed to well straight up from the core of life. She had lost that sparkle she had in her eyes” (*Night* 171).  
Yoel, “still felt the nagging worry that there was some discrepancy, some implausibility, some irregularity. What it was, he could not tell” (*Woman* 21). |
| Escapists    | An individual who finds escape routes from the situations which they find difficult to cope with. Escapists find solace in the falsehood and fantasy. | Hannah in *Michael*  
Theo and Noa in *Night*  
Fima in *Fima*  
and  
Yoel and Ivria in *Woman* | “I relished my cruel sufferings because out of them rose pride. ... I was reluctant to recover. ...I mock at my vague longing to fall seriously ill. ...One of the reasons why I enjoy being asleep is that I hate making decisions” (*Michael* 16-17).  
“He found less falsehood in sleeping than in waking. ...petty lies filled his everyday life like a fine dust that penetrated even to the most intimate crannies” (*Fima* 2). |
| Endurers     | An individual who wrestle the world to identify a reason and principle for a meaningful living in the world that is full of chaos and confusion. These individuals experience exertion, pain or destitution without giving up and survive over difficulties. | Michael in *Michael*  
Fima in *Fima*  
and  
Yoel in *Woman* | “All the troubles I have experienced have done nothing to weaken my faith; on the contrary, they have strengthened it” (*Michael* 133).  
“...in the evening he would stand alone at the window listening to his inner voice which up to now he had always tried to silence with inanities and buffoonery (*Fima* 280-81).  
“Yoel Ravid began to give in. Since he was capable of observing, he grew fond of observing in silence. With tired but open eyes. Into the depth of the darkness” (*Woman* 261). |
Evidently, maladies become the core reason for the behavioural pattern of the individuals which result in their choice of their living. Historical documents patently records the utmost sufferings of Jews in all spheres of their lives in diaspora and in Jerusalem. The maladies caused by the special partition of Jerusalem have lead to the political turmoil. The political disarray in the multi-religious and multi-cultural Land of Israel results in religious and cultural problems to its zenith. All such chaos in the physical space, Jerusalem, causes worst effect in the personal life of every resident individual. The emotional, physical and attitudinal exhaustion, in psychological study, is termed as burnout state. Burnout is interpreted differently depending on the dominance of the particular culture. W. B. Schaufeli, a Professor of work and organizational psychology, in his article, “Burnout”, published in *International Encyclopedia of Ergonomics and Human Factors*, elaborates the term “burnout”. He states that:

Burnout is a metaphor that describes a state of mental exhaustion… Literally it means to fail, to wear out or to become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resource. In the mid-1970s, the term “burnout” was introduced as a scholarly construct to denote a negative psychological condition mainly characterized by lack of energy, detachment, decreased motivation, distress and a sense of reduced professional efficacy. The New York psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger and the Californian social psychological researcher Christina Maslach were the first to use “burnout” as a psychological notion. (605)

The physical, psychological, social, religious, cultural and political chaos and maladies end up an individual in a “burnout” state of living. The symptoms for the
“burnout” state of existence are the physical maladies that they face. Christina Maslach, an American social psychologist and Professor, and Michael P. Leiter, an organizational psychologist, in their article, “Burnout”, published in Encyclopedia of Stress, clearly brings out that burnout state is a cumulative stress reaction to ongoing stressors. They also list out the physical health symptoms. They are:

...stress symptoms as: headaches, chronic fatigue, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, hypertension, cold/flu episodes, and sleep disturbances. ...burnout may result in subsequent mental disabilities, and here is some evidence to link burnout with greater anxiety, irritability, and depression. However, an alternative argument is that burnout is itself a form of mental illness rather than a cause of it. (359)

It is evident that, an individual in a burnout state would not only left with psychological struggles but also end up with different facets of physical maladies. Such constant physical and psychological disturbances in everyday life added with the pressures from the external forces, namely, socio-political, cultural and religious turmoil ultimately shatters the peaceful existence of an individual in the world.

The term “burnout”, thus, fits well with Jews. Jews are exhausted both emotionally and psychologically due to the worst experiences from external and internal forces that have pressurized them for centuries together. All traumatic extremes have left them in a burnout state of existence. Such a burnout state of living is explicitly brought out by Oz through his Jewish fictional characters. The researcher identifies such burnout state of living in many of the fictional characters of Oz.

Oz’ characters in his fiction are in a burnout state, with physical and emotional ailments, find difficulty in making choices for their lives. In so doing, they either choose to doom their lives, or succumb or escape the existing difficulties of life. A
very few of fictional characters of Oz, choose to make meaning out the
meaninglessness in the world around and within themselves. Yet, the choice that an
individual makes for his existence does not remain the same forever. There are certain
times in the course of the individual’s life when realizations come up and they choose
a different path for their living. Therefore, the choices keep changing for the
betterment or for the worse in every individual’s life both in fiction and in reality
during the course of their living. The researcher, thus, finds the necessity that an
apparent study of such fictional characters of Oz, demands validation from the
existential theory of living. By this manner, the Jewish fictional characters of Oz
become a worldkin for the entire human kind in a humdrum universe.

While analyzing the characters in four major categories, based on their choices
that they make for their life, the primary importance is given to the major characters
who are obstinate in blaming the outer world for what they have become. Hannah in
Michael, Theo and Noa in Night, Fima in Fima, and Yoel in Woman are some of Oz’
characters who actively involve in dooming their self and become a misfit both in
family and society. These characters doom themselves by blaming the existing
systems because of their refusal as well as their inability to find meaning out of chaos.
Instead, the individuals choose to hold on to their bad faith. This is one of the primary
reasons for their damnation. The other reasons include the characters’ dread, anxiety,
disappointments and despair caused due to the personal and political unrest in the
physical space, Jerusalem. In addition, their awareness about the monotonous routine
in life and the unending chaos around them compel their inner self to involve
themselves in their own disapprobation of the existing outer world. They do that
solely because life fails to offer them all that they desired for, in the time and in the
way they wanted them. This sort of frustrated attitude leaves them with a feeling that they are a misfit in the world in which they live.

The chief reason that is identified in Oz’ characters who choose to doom their life is their bad faith in themselves. Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic, calls it mauvaise foi. Bad faith is one of the key concepts of Sartre, in his Being and Nothingness. It is a term which describes the phenomenon where a human being under pressure from societal forces adopts false values and disowns his/her innate freedom to act authentically even though every individual has the freedom to have his own choice for his life. This is a special form of self-deception, a lie to oneself. As Sartre defines:

Since he [an individual] cannot endure the tension of an existence between the poles of facticity and freedom….individual shows evidence of bad faith toward himself, this implies a case of self-deceit. … It is a form of belief (foi) and as such an activity of consciousness that must be located between knowing and not-knowing. Self-deceit is a semi-knowing, a pseudo knowing. … As self-deceivers they are “believers”. (84)

Sartre’s concept of bad faith is also referred to by Camus, in his Myth of Sisyphus, as make-believe. Camus delineates, “A man defines himself by his make-believe as well as by his sincere impulses. There is thus a lower key of feelings, inaccessible in the heart but partially disclosed by the acts they imply and the attitudes of mind they assume” (10). The idea of both bad faith and make-believe go hand in hand. An individual, when he is anxious about his existence and is left with unanswered queries about life, chooses to deceive his own self. The unconscious act of self deception
ultimately replaces the original self of the individual. The individual, thus, adopts the other self of his, for the sake of his survival.

The in-depth scrutiny of Oz’ fictional characters reveal the bad faith or the make-believe attitude in them. Hannah, Fima, Yoel, Theo and Noa are identified with such a bad faith about the place they live in, about the people whom they live with and also about their own individual self. When pessimistic attitudes start to dominate, those attitudes eventually direct the human mind to stop acting. Towards the end, such a pessimistic attitude would result in creating a bad faith or a make-believe stance that everything around is futile.

In Fima, Oz creates his eponymous protagonist as a representative of an entire generation. There is no plot development due to the titular protagonist’s passive response to the demands of the outer world. Though Fima has noble dreams, he fails to achieve them. He constantly has arguments within his own self about his life, society and politics. He also firmly believes that he is a misfit in Jerusalem. He does not know what he ought to do and where he is supposed to be, if not for Jerusalem. Fima’s choices for his living, has ended him with a bad faith. He firmly declares that, “…we’ve [Jews] all forgotten and we’ve all faded. We are all dead souls. Everywhere we go, we leave behind us a trail of lifeless words” (Fima 202).

Such a pseudo understanding of life leads to a stereotypical way of looking at the world. Fima loses his hope in future and in a later stage he has been lost in the course of subtle disappointments and minor misunderstandings about life on the whole. When Fima chooses only to highlight the depressing situations in politics and society, his own dreams to achieve greatness and his desire to publish a new book of poems, seem to shatter away. He firmly pronounces that, “Those eyes that were alert and dreamy started to fade and now they’ve gone dull” (Fima 165). Fima does not
choose to take another route to find a meaning for his life and does not attempt to have hope for the future for so many years during the course of his life in the Land of Israel. Eventually, he not only stops acting, but even stops thinking. In such a living condition, one could find Fima as an individual who, “...has no ambition. He simply does not think about tomorrow” (Fima 27). Fima has, thus, become a man who stands as a representation of the twentieth century Jerusalemites who dream noble dreams but does nothing. He is considered a misfit due to his reluctance in giving up his bad faith in his own self and in the social and political situation in Jerusalem.

Similarly, in Women, Yoel has devoted many years of his life as an agent in the Israeli secret service. His professional experience has left a strange intuition and facility to sense the truth. His wife’s accidental death leaves him with a haunting past. He moves to Tel- Aviv with his daughter, mother, and mother-in-law. Yoel is much disturbed by the monotonous routine. His present is filled with so much of unclear emotions that he has forgotten something, but he is unable to fix what he has forgotten. He also feels that life has become an indecipherable secret code.

Oz presents the character of Yoel as a person who tries hard to know the details of his haunting past and in knowing the past, Yoel wants to escape from it. Life to him seems to be doomed with monotonous day to day routine. His relationship with people around him does not seem to contribute any good. At last, “He even replaced Mrs. Dalloway, lost in Helsinki. ...He had nothing to do all day long. The days were all alike” (Women 44-49). His bad faith or the make-believe attitude towards life has blurred his vision from looking into the brighter colours that each day would bring upon him. The suspicious attitudinal struggle does not stop him from fulfilling his responsibilities as a father, as a son or as a son-in-law.
Yoel holds on to an attitude that keeps on deceiving his own self and pushes him out from his own world of reality. Yoel feels that, “the days and nights were empty and vacant. Yoel fell into the habit of watching television almost every evening until the programs ended at midnight” *(Woman 34).* The lies to which he holds on, leaves him in a state of indolence. Everything is blurred and everyone is unreliable and nothing interests him because of the bad faith which he believes to be the truth.

In the same way, Hannah in *Michael*, holds on to one such an outlook like Fima and Yoel. *Oz’ Michael,* revolves around the narrator of the story, Hannah who is a humanities student when the story begins. She discontinues her studies as she decides to marry Michael when both fall in love for one another. Hannah, through her narration, brings out her discontented life with Michael and Yair, her son, throughout the plot line. She constantly complains about her ill health and brings out her dissatisfaction for the place, Jerusalem. Oz effectively presents Hannah’s psychological burnout state and the physical illness that are caused as an outcome of the burnout state of living. Hannah willingly stretches her dreamy nights to her waking hours and feels that, “Hard things plot against me [Hannah] every night” (93). When this pessimistic outlook towards life becomes the dominant reality of her life, all her responsibilities become so tiresome and she detaches herself from every important relationships of her life.

The pleasurable responsibilities and life-giving relationships have started to burden her and she chooses to keep herself away from all that hurt her ego. She proves herself to fail as a student by discontinuing her studies and as a mother when she is reluctant in taking care of her son. She enjoys Michael doing every little thing for their son, Yair. Hannah’s indifference towards her son Yair compelled Michael to tell her that, “Hannah, but you must try as hard as you can to love Yair. It will be
better for you, too, if you do... But I have a feeling that you are not wild about him. One’s got to be wild, Hannah” (Michael 142). She becomes aware of her inability to handle life’s challenges. She realizes her irresponsible way of living and daringly confesses that, “It was often I who upset the balance” (Michael 61). Though she finally is able to identify the flaw in her, she could not rectify her inability to cope with the reality. She always places her demand to leave Jerusalem because she has made herself believe that, “Jerusalem is a burning city… Jerusalem is different … There is no Jerusalem … This is a brooding city” (Michael 97). The negative outlook about the people and place coerce her in choosing to doom her life.

In the same way, Night is a fiction about the long time love story of Theo, a civil engineer and Noa, a school teacher. Both Theo and Noa are the narrators of their story in alternate sections. Oz modulates the existential implications of absurdity and nobility of creating and maintaining a human world at the edge of nothingness. At the story’s outset, Immanuel, a pupil of Noa dies in an ambiguous drug-related incident. Immanuel’s father Avraham decides to fund a rehabilitation centre in Tel Kedar for drug-troubled youth and suggests that Noa spearhead the project. Haunted by the afterimage of Immanuel, a pupil she barely remembers, Noa leaps into the project of setting up the centre without foreseeing the political difficulties that would involve in executing the project.

In contrast to the character of Noa, Theo, a master of organizational skills, offers to help her in the project but she considers him as an unwanted interference. Night, is much more concerned with the hovering, shifting, day-to-day relations between Theo and Noa. Noa finds it difficult to handle the complexity of life due to the struggles that she undergoes. She chooses to play the blame game. Noa is so cynical about everything in life. She believes in her deceptive understanding about her
own self and about others. In her family life, she could find neither involvement nor commitment. Noa daringly declares to Theo, “It’s so complicated with you, Theo; it’s getting more and more unpleasant” (Night 65). She also admits that, “I [Noa] always feel I’m being cheated, always adopt a negative stance, in advance, and whatever the situation I’m suspicious, defensive, as though everybody is an enemy. The whole world is against us” (Night 66). To carry on with life holding on to a mind-set that does not feel good about anything around would sooner or later ruin the goodness of life.

Resultantly, Oz’ characters hold fast to the bad faith that deceives them and characters end up as a failure. The self deceptive choices that they make and the understandings that they have about people and situations around block them from moving towards the available better choices for life. The routes that they choose for their life not only shatter the happiness of their own self but also the happiness of people who relate with them.

Apart from the truth that damnation becomes unavoidable when an individual chooses to hold on to their bad faith, and prolong in the pessimistic stand about life, it is also true that emotions such as dread, anxiety, anguish, despair, forlornness and disappointments will also lead human life to a greater disaster and make them a misfit in both family and in society. Sartre deals with anguish, forlornness and despair, in his Existentialism and Human Emotions. He elaborates:

What that [anguish] means is this: the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a law-maker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as well as himself, can not help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility. Of course there are many people who are not anxious;
but we claim that they are hiding their anxiety, that they are fleeing from it. … Anguish is evident even when it conceals itself. (18-19)

Sartre, thus, declares that all these emotions are common to every human being. Oz in creating his fictional characters does not keep them away from these disturbing emotions. Evidently, it is impossible to witness a Jew without all these emotions, both in the world of reality and in fiction.

Accordingly, the existentialists establish the idea that individuals will not escape all those above mentioned human emotions. When there is a refusal to action where fear and anxiety rule over, added with disappointments, there the individual lands up in nothingness, leading to meaningless existence and that ultimately dooms their own life. When he/she fails to take up the responsibilities, the burden is forced on the people who live around the individual. The relationship between the individuals is shattered or ruined because of such irresponsibility. The fear of the past or present, in various forms creates the threat to face life’s challenges. In such a situation, handling the everyday pressures of life’s routine becomes a great burden for the individual. In terms of Heidegger, the German philosopher, it may be regarded as the call of conscience. Heidegger affirms this in his *Being and Time* as:

For dread separates me from the interests and meanings of life in the world, absorbed and lost in my relations and preoccupations, and isolates me in this recognition … Thus dread which at first in contrast to fear is so vague and meaningless and so proves the most specific and significant of all emotions, a pitiless pointing to my original situation, an awful anticipation of my personal choice, a fear of being already cast into the world and a fear for my authenticity in living in the world. (322)
This call of conscience may cause Dasein (Heidegger’s term for the individual) to live a life of authenticity. An individual who listens to the call of conscience may possibly live a life of authenticity. Oz’ fictional characters have almost lost hope and interest in their life.

Hannah in *Michael*, holds on to a different kind of fear from that of Noa. Her character traits and actions during her childhood days have grown to be haunting memories, which eventually cramp her present day life with her husband and son. She constantly has dreams about the twins with whom she has spent her childhood days. By then, Hannah has always dominated the twins in their childhood sports. In the present, Hannah has a constant fear that the twins may take up revenge for her dominance during her earlier days. This rootless fear of Hannah has left her in continuous anxiety leading to a depressed state of living. She declares that, “I was on the verge of telling Michael about my pain, about the twins. A gnawing fear restrained me. I kept quiet” (*Michael* 53).

Apart from her fear for the past, Hannah has inhabited certain superfluous fears for life. When Yair, her son, is small, she has a troubled thought about him. She muses:

> Between periods of sleep the baby would open his eyelids and display islands of pure blue. …When my son looked at me I remembered that he could not see yet. The thought frightened me. I did not trust nature to repeat successfully the established sequence of events. I knew nothing of the natural bodily processes. (*Michael* 77)

Hannah finds herself incapable to unleash the dread and anxiety that dominated her psyche and eventually affects her entire life’s pattern. Though she wants to be away with the horrors of her past, she finds herself incapable of doing it.
She rather chooses to stay with the fears and pains, and wants to live her life without being influenced by any emotional or physical aspects with people whom she once chose to share everything of herself. Hannah is truly insensitive when she tells, “I was not moved by his [Michael] success. Let him celebrate by himself and leave me alone” (Michael 60).

In addition to all these attitudinal indifferences, the core of her womanhood in itself becomes an unacceptable part of her life. She even hates herself for being a woman and not being a man. She vehemently pronounces that, “I [Hannah] hated being a girl” (Michael 23). Willing acceptance of her inabilities, dread, anxieties and disappointments reveal the self-realization that has happened in Hannah. She accepts the fact that, “I [Hannah] would ruin all Michael’s effort at getting on and achieving something in life” (Michael 57). Yet, no realization has led her to come out of her inabilities. She remains to be a misfit by not fulfilling her responsibilities, by lingering in the fear, anxiety and tormenting past.

Noa, in Night, is given the responsibility to take up the project to build a rehabilitation centre for the drug addict youth. The innate fear in Noa that she is not accepted and her abilities always go unrecognized by Theo, leaves her in an anxious state. Noa is uncertain about her own ability while performing her responsibilities. Establishing a rehabilitation centre in Jerusalem has involved many political problems and Theo has learned that Noa may end up a failure in executing the project successfully. The indifferent attitude that Noa recognizes in Theo makes her conclude that, “He [Theo] knew from the start that I’m not up to the challenge” (Night 13). This constant anxiousness in her leads to a lack of involvement in the liaison with her husband or with anyone around. Thus, the anxiety and fear makes Noa a misfit in her
family and in the society. Noa chooses to distance herself from the reality and keeps herself away from Theo even while living together.

Contradicting Noa, Theo undergoes a different phase of fear as Noa records. Theo travelled to many places due to his professional commitment. Seldom Theo would stop working and surrender himself to total idleness. In doing so, it is believed that he has felt the fear within himself. Noa states that:

Occasionally he [Theo] felt fear or rather a vague apprehension, that in the absence of suffering he might be missing something that would never return. Without having any idea what it was that was being missed, if indeed anything was being missed. Sometimes he had a feeling that he had forgotten something he should remember but when he collected his thoughts he had forgotten what it was he thought he had forgotten. (*Night* 100)

The uncertainty and the unresolved queries of life, leave the human world inactive towards any great achievements or success. Ultimately, when a man stops to act, he stops living and starts to exist. In that manner, Theo chooses to foresee a fiasco of self on earth by doing nothing. In that, Theo, thus becomes an idler and chooses to be a misfit due to the unreasonable fear that has been within him.

A constant wretchedness in life is what the protagonist in *Fima* experiences. Fima miserably expresses that, “The sadness has not left me” (*Fima* 4). He always holds a disturbing emotion for his country in which he lives as it is identified with Hannah in *Michael*. Fima presents the anxiety about his future in Jerusalem. He laments the past and fears the future. This gives him a sense of insecurity about his living in the Jerusalem. He hopelessly affirms:
Will, longing, memories, carnal desires, curiosity, passion, gladness, generosity – everything gradually faded. As the wind died in the mountains, so the spirit too expired. Indeed, even pain decreased somewhat with the passage of the years, but then, together with pain, other signs of life also declined... so many primal things that we once had, but have lost. Things never to return. Or, worse, they will return rarely, glimmering in the distance, while the original excitement will have vanished forever. And everything is dimmed and dissolved. Life itself is gradually growing dusty and grubby. (Fima 201)

Being so much involved in the political arguments, Fima is totally disappointed with the state of Jerusalem and the prevailing chaos for so many years. Fima fears that his life would become dusty and grubby like Jerusalem which loses its charm and beauty due to the partition problem. Through analyzing a few characters of Oz, it is established that no human on earth could escape the emotions of fear, anxiety, forlornness, and disappointments.

However, it is more important that an individual should handle life by overcoming such inevitable emotions. John Blackham, in his *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, presents the idea of Heidegger. He underscores, “Dread which at first in contrast to fear is so vague and meaningless proves this most specific and significant of all emotions, a pitiless pointing to my original situation, an awful anticipation of my personal choice, a fear of being already cast into the world and a fear for my authenticity in living in the world” (95). As Blackham puts it, the dread in human mind has the power to affect the choices that human makes for his living. This is the anguish that Soren Kierkegaard, in his *Fear and Trembling*, has called as the anguish of Abraham, the first Jew. Kierkegaard’s profound idea is that, “despair is not a fact
but a state: the very state of sin. For sin is what alienates from God” (38). Sartre in his

*Existentialism and Human Emotions*, establishes the idea that, “Forlornness and

anguish go together” (29).

According to Sartre and Kierkegaard’s arguments, if all such emotions create a

predominant disturbance which results in an individual’s failure to make the right

choice for life, is considered a sin. It becomes an obvious fact that after man loses

control over his own life and his emotions, the external forces seem to rule his internal

power to make the choice. Yet, Kierkegaard suggests an option to come out of those

tormenting emotions and lead a life of bliss. His ideologies as presented, in his *Fear

and Trembling*, suggest that:

He who loves God has no need of tears, no need of admiration, in his

love he forgets his suffering, yea, so completely has he forgotten it that

afterwards there would not even be the least inkling of his pain if God

Himself did not recall it, for God sees in secret and knows the distress

and counts the tears and forgets nothing. So either there is a paradox,

that the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute/ or

Abraham is lost. (117)

Kierkegaard, thus, suggests that spirituality could be one of the ways to live

through fear, anxiety and disappointment. According to him, if man does not choose

the Absolute, that is God Himself, he would end up ruining his own life unlike

Abraham. Contradicting Kierkegaard’s opinion on spirituality, Camus in his *Myth of

Sisyphus*, declares, “...neither fear of God nor piety were capable of bringing him

[man] to peace. Thus it is that, through a strained subterfuge, he gives the irrational

the appearance and God the attributes of the absurd: unjust, incoherent and

incomprehensible” (37). So, it depends upon the individual whether to choose
spirituality and God as a source to find meaning for his living amidst the disorderly and frenzy world. Holding on to a mere bad faith or to hang back with the negative emotions of despair, fear, anguish or forlornness, or to give up hope and remain in uncertainty, would surely end up the individual as a misfit. He, in the place where he lives, becomes a loser or an anomaly. Instead of ruining or dooming life by making wrong choices in life, there are individuals who become chokers.

The individuals choose to be passive and live at ease through sheer existence. Many of Oz’ fictional characters refuse to act. Such an individual is identified to be a choker who neither holds on to spirituality nor to his own capability in making the right decision for his life. When the burdens of everyday routine seem to be too tough to fight against, it may create a vacuum in the human life which would at the end make the individual to lose hope in spiritual life or in his own capability as a human. The aspect of God might become an absurdity. It will make man pronounce that God destines damnation and the end of the world has already come. When such an attitude takes root in the human mind, man stops acting swiftly to make a meaning amidst a meaningless ambiance. Succumbing to the situation and being passive or hostile towards everything makes man an antagonistic individual. This state of living may ultimately lead to worthless existence and eventual disaster. The individual concludes that life has nothing to offer him and is left with no choice to make.

While Camus, in his *Myth of Sisyphus*, places his notion on the absurd man, he observes that, “The choice would not be hard to make. But there is no choice and that is where the bitterness comes in. The absurd does not liberate; it binds” (65). In dealing with the bitterness of life, Camus suggests a state of living where man is left with no choice, but bitterness is intensified when the individual refuse to make a choice for his living. In refusing to choose, the individual becomes inert to both
happiness and bitterness of life. Sartre considers the state of refusal to choose as a choice. It is thus learnt that there are not signs or inherent meanings given to the individual in the world, rather he gives value through his choices. Oz in his fiction creates characters that are passive and non-reactive to the existing demands.

As mentioned earlier, these individuals thus choose to succumb or sustain when they find difficulty in making the choice and in not choosing they become chokers. Patrick Gardiner, a British academic philosopher, in his Kierkegaard - A Very Short Introduction, finds Kierkegaard to be:

…profoundly dissatisfying with the emptiness of his existence and with his inability to find some centre or focus for his life…

Kierkegaard described himself as existing in the ‘subjunctive’ as opposed to the ‘indicative’ mood and despairingly compared his position to that of a chess piece which could not be moved. (8)

Heidegger defines existence as, nothing but a stretching of Da-sein. In his Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit, he elaborates the notion of dwelling. With dwelling, our self, stretched in time and place, exists in a manner that cares for the people and things that are incorporated into this stretching. He further describes:

Da-sein has been our theme only as how it exists, so to speak, “forward” and leaves everything that has been “behind.” Not only did being-toward-the-beginning remain unnoticed, but, above all, the way Da-sein stretches along between birth and death. …What seems “more simple” than the nature of the “connections of life” between birth and death? … The self maintains itself in a certain sameness throughout this constant change of experience. …Da-sein does not first fill up an objectively present path or stretch “of life” through the phases of its
momentary realities but stretches *itself* along in such a way that its own being is constituted beforehand as this stretching along. The “between” of birth and death already lies *in the being* of Da-sein. (343)

Philosophers like Camus, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Heidegger establish the idea that human being is seldom left with least opportunities to choose. Such a state of living with nothing to choose would come when man reaches his middle age. This is the age when man comes to the absolute understanding of the world and life. As Camus states, the realization leaves man in perfect absurdity. Anthony Stevens, a well known Jungian analyst and psychologist, in his *Jung A Very Short Introduction*, highlights Jung’s comparison of mid-life with midday. In establishing the ideas of Jung, Stevens remarks:

At the middle of life an *enantiodromia* occurs, carrying with it terse intimations of morality. For many of this is a time of crisis, of self-doubt, and inner questioning. ‘What exactly have I achieved with my life?’ ‘What am I to do with the rest of it?’ ‘What is there to look forward to but old age infirmity and death?’ … Instead of looking forward one looks backward. … One begins to take stock, to see how one’s life has developed up to this point. (80-81)

Therefore, it becomes evident that most men will reach their greatest possible height in his middle age. Once he reaches his middle age, it is the reversal that would happen in any individual. Jung explicates, “At the stroke of noon the decent begins. And the decent means the reversal of all the ideas and values that were cherished in the morning. The sun falls into contradiction with itself. It is as though it should draw in its rays instead of emitting them. Light and warmth decline and are at last extinguished” (qtd. in Stevens 80). When man comes to this state, as Heidegger
elaborates, man chooses to stretch his life for the rest of the years. He chooses to succumb to the situation. He is found to be a passive being and a choker.

Consequently, the being or the self has been pushed to a situation where he gives up his ardour for life and everything around him seems to be aspects of annoyance. When the individual feels an anxiety and soreness over things around, he is unable to identify the specific cause for such a struggled emotional experience. This kind of inability to have control over the self and situations around causes a feeling of exasperation in the individual. The person is bottled up with many unanswered and bizarre questions. All the meaningful questions reveal the meaningless of the reality. Thereby, the person chooses to sustain the traumatic condition and continues to exist with no progress. In such a state, the passiveness in the individual reaches its zenith and the individual becomes helpless about his own passiveness. The individual has no development and life becomes extremely monotonous. A sort of a barrenness and absurdity fill up the life of an individual when he chooses to remain with no interest in anything and anyone around. The interest in the family and its affairs are least considered and the professional commitments are left unattended. He gives up his hold in religion too. In so doing, the place, the people, God and society seem meaningless.

Oz, major characters are in their middle age. Evidently, the political unrest and social turbulence caused due to the frequent war and riot have created the commotion at its maximum in Jerusalem and its suburbs where Oz sets his novels. The ultimate reason for a Jew’s life is questioned. This state of living in extreme turbulences in both external and internal sectors of life creates a tormenting psyche in the individual. The wounded psyche of Jews leaves them passive to the personal and professional demands. Oz’ characters in their middle age are disabled to actively involve
themselves in creating a meaning to their existence. The unresolved and prolonged struggles of everyday life have compelled them to become passive and inactive leading to oblivion and futility in the living.

In *Woman*, Yoel, the widower, has become so conscious about every word that he speaks and curious about every individual he relates. Nothing in his life is taken for granted. When Yoel comes to know of his wife Ivria’s death, on his way from Helsinki to Jerusalem, he is much disturbed, not by the death of his wife but by a cripple whom he has seen in the streets of Helsinki who has nothing to do with him. Yoel, “still felt the nagging worry that there was some discrepancy, some implausibility, some irregularity. What it was, he could not tell” (*Woman* 21).

The passive emotions that Yoel has for his wife’s death and the unreasonable involvement that he shows for a passer by shows the indifference in Yoel’s state of mind. He, “could not see himself explaining to anybody what it was all about. He did not know himself” (*Woman* 51). Though he is found to be less emotional, he fulfils his personal responsibilities after the death of his wife. He believes that he has understood life in its perfect form. He keeps pondering over his own self. He reflects on the realities of life which he has learnt from his long years of experience. When he thinks about his own self, he realises:

People want such and such. They want what they do not have and what they will never be given. And what is attainable, they take for granted. “What about me? … what is it I’m after? What is it that drives me from hotel to hotel…? Its duty, he had answered himself… But why me? And if I suddenly drop dead in this empty train will I know a little more, or will everything just go blank? It would seem that I have been here for forty- some years and I still haven’t so much as begun to work
out what’s going on. If anything at all. Perhaps something is. At times you can almost sense here and there some hints of a pattern. The sad thing is that I’m not managing to figure it out and it looks as though I never will. (Woman 37)

The realization of Yoel’s self reveals the fact that he is unable to hint the pattern for his life. This sort of an inability in a grown up individual results in frustration about his own meaningless existence. The haunting past and hopeless future ruin the present life of Yoel. He tries to succumb to the prevailing situation and stretch his life until it seems possible to do so, but has ended up to be a choker.

In Night, Theo is said to have, “a feeling that he had forgotten something he should remember but when he collected his thoughts he found that he had forgotten what it was he thought he had forgotten” (Night 100). When Theo is unable to recognize his own thoughts and fix his own needs, he proves his inability in finding the meaning and purpose for his living. Being a civil engineer by profession, Theo has the difficulty in relating with his wife and is totally handicapped in understanding his own emotions. Oz, while introducing Theo in Night, he believes that, “He [Theo] feels a sense of gratitude, but for what he is not sure” (Night 3). Living without an ability to make out the reasons for his own emotions reveals the reluctance of Theo for his own life. His disinclination is ultimately reflected in his relationship with his wife Noa. When Theo realizes that his life with Noa has started to crumble, he expresses what he feels about their relationship. He reacts saying, “What do I see in you Noa, or what do you see in me? I shall stop. Let’s suppose that you see in me what I sometimes see in the desert” (Night 11). The relationship between the two seems to be so perfunctory. The desert land becomes the symbolic representation of their life. Like an unfertile and unproductive desert land, the life of Theo and Noa is
also futile. Both seem to have lost interest in life. Theo observes Noa and identifies a difference in her. He comprehends that, “Now she has stopped interfering. As if she’s lost interest. … She has lost that radiant joy that always seemed to well straight up from the core of life. She had lost that sparkle she had in her eyes” (Night 171). Theo and Noa have lost their zeal for life and passion for one another. Everything in their life has become meaningless and both exist together knowing the harsh reality that they have nothing to share. Yet, both Theo and Noa do not take efforts to set right the indifference that prevailed among them and thus end up as chokers in their personal life as different individuals and as a family.

In Michael, the marriage of Hannah and Michael gradually turns out to be a failure because of their passive acceptance of their failure and their hesitance to take efforts to set them right. Hannah, the narrator of the story, tells about the life which she and Michael shares. She confirms:

> There was a kind of uneasy compromise between us. We were like two travelers consigned by fate to adjacent seats on a long railway journey Bound to show consideration for each other, to observe the conventions of politeness, not to impose and not to intrude on each other, not to presume on their acquaintance. To be courteous and considerate. To entertain each other, perhaps, from time to time with pleasant, superficial chatter. Making no demands. Even displaying restrained sympathy at times. (60)

As Hannah looks at her life with Michael, she finds every thing as a monotonous routine. She feels that they are compelled by fate to live together. The emotional bond and nuptial commitment is found to be a non-existing aspect in their life of togetherness. The monotonous routine does not seem to bother them both.
Comfortably, both Hannah and Michael co-exist without taking any efforts to set right the prevailing discrepancies.

The fictional couples, in Oz’ works, live with many problems and difficulties in their marriage. Michael and Hannah, Yoel and Ivria and Theo and Noa do not attempt to rectify the toughness that has constantly prevailed between the two individuals in order to restore the relationship. They seem to be comfortable with the unrest that fills their life and wilfully they surrender to live a separate life though they choose to live under the same roof. Both the individuals in the families do not seem to suffer because of such a confused state that prevails.

In Fima, Oz creates a man Fima who has a long wish list of what he desires to do for a glorious life to be lived with all talents and capabilities that he possesses. The same man is the one who does nothing to achieve any one of the desires in his list. He is dissatisfied with the space in which he lives. He has his own arguments to prove the Israel government wrong. His relationship with people seems to be shallow and meaningless. The desire and enthusiasm to achieve greatness is always dominated by the feeling of not knowing what he is supposed to do to achieve them. Fima remained to be a man who does nothing to fulfil his desires and do not become the person he wants to be, just because of the reason that he idles himself. Fima, the man of noble dreams proves himself to be a choker, an idler and a scrounger. It is said that, “Fima was full of unbelievable powers, and it was only tiredness that made him put off exercising them. Like someone waiting for the precise timing. Or for a blow to crack the inner crust” (Fima 86).

Fima, thus, keeps waiting for a chance and misses all the opportunities that come on his way. Resultantly, Fima has been dominated by a sense of failure of not achieving anything in life. He has also realized that his life is being lived with no
purpose. He apprehends that, “I feel that I’m not really living. Just existing. Creeping from day to day. Without sense and without desire. My soul droops with sorrow” (Fima 193). This attitude in a man who is in his middle age leads to a frustration towards life and living which, therefore, envisages a catastrophe of psyche. In such a psychological state, Fima gives up on his spiritual stand and has felt that God has forgotten the men and matters in Jerusalem. He also feels that everything would fade away which is otherwise a beginning for the damnation to come up. He tells:

To be forgotten by God is not necessarily to be doomed. On the contrary, it may mean becoming as light and free as a lizard in the desert. He brooded on the similarity between two Hebrew verbs, the one meaning “forget” and the other “dwindle” or “die away.” The most wretched fate was not to be forgotten but, precisely, to fade away. Will, longings, memories, carnal desires, curiosity, passion, gladness, generosity- everything gradually faded. As the wind died in the mountains, so the spirit too expired. Indeed, even pain decreased somewhat with the passage of the year, but then, together with pain, other signs of life also declined. The simple, silent, primal things, those things that every child greeted with excitement and wonderment … so many primal things that we once had but have lost. Things never to return….And everything is dimmed and dissolved. Life itself is gradually growing dusty and grubby. (Fima 201-02)

Fima realizes his own individual self and he has gained consciousness about life, which in turn, leads him to strange way of questioning his future. He questions:

Half a life time later. By what right? What have you accomplished with your life? He scolds himself. Will it be of any use that once in Jerusalem there lived
a troublesome layabout who got on everybody's nerves with his petty linguistic corrections? Who fornicated with married women? Who argued with lizards and cockroaches? (Fima 219)

The individual is left with the powerlessness to find the purpose of his existence. It is because of such a state, that they lose their interest to hit upon a unique aspect in life and in so doing could find a purpose in living. Oz reveals the meaninglessness that governs the human existence through his fictional characters who bear closer resemblance to another in their mode of managing their existence. Either living or existing, both are found to be an impossible task for them because they choose to succumb and not to overcome.

In Oz’ works; the personal and internal struggles within the family members and the tough relationships that have caused the existential strain in individuals are identified as an outcome of the external social pressures. The very place where they live does not seem to be a satisfactory one. Michael Curtis, a Professor Emeritus of political science at Rutgers University, in his *Inner Marxism: The Dialogues*, quotes Marx’ theory of human nature. He states that, “For Marx man is not only a social animal but ‘an animal that can develop into an individual only in society.’ In his consciousness of his species, man confirmed his real social life” (107).

With reference to Marx, it seems to be an important aspect that an individual needs to have a perfect society to create a better self for his own. Oz’ fictional characters find the society in which they live to be more of an obstacle for their own development. The characters deliberately want to get away from the country. Fima expresses his reluctance for the place. It is the fact that, Fima finds, “no sign of life outside… Fima was overcome by the feeling that he was here [Jerusalem] by mistake, that he ought to be somewhere completely different. But what the mistake
was, or where he ought to be, he did not know this morning. In fact he never did” (Fima 5-6).

For Theo, in Night, “This [Jerusalem] then is a desert on a summer night, ancient, impassive, glassy. Neither dead nor alive. Simply there” (Night 3). For Hannah, in Michael, “Jerusalem is a burning city… Jerusalem is different… There is no Jerusalem… This is a brooding city” (Michael 97). Though the characters want to move away from the place, it is clear that the individuals just remain in Jerusalem continuing to complain and grumble and find themselves a misfit in the place and keep playing the blame game. They find mere nothingness and emptiness in the place and find themselves as a non-existing being within the walls of Jerusalem. With reference to Marx, Oz’ characters can never develop into a better individual due to the society in which they live.

The characters of Oz meet with different situations that make them to succumb to the situations and live a passive life of choice, choosing not to choose anything to read their life. When they reach their middle age, they find themselves incapable to identify their needs and rise to the demanding situations. When the needs are left unidentified, the monotony seeps, leaving them in a wretched state of stretching their life. In choosing not to choose, which Sartre identifies it to be one of the choices; the characters face a lot of mysterious questions which are left unanswered. In such a state, even spirituality is found to be meaningless and religion and God become an added burden to their life. This brings an emptiness and weirdness in their relationship with every one around.

Compared to the other reasons, the place Jerusalem has been the most tormenting thing in life. All these are identified to be the reasons, why an individual chooses not to choose and chooses not to live but exist. Any passionate commitment
could give a particular meaning to life. Without passion, life becomes meaningless and there comes no difference between the really existing and the so-called existing state. It is thus evident that with no passion or commitment people fail to choose their life’s choices and thereby, they remain to be what they are. They succumb to everything that they undergo and end up to be chokers in not being successful in every sphere of their lives.

Consequently, when internal or external struggles are upon the individuals, they choose to actively involve in dooming their lives or passively succumb to the situations which demand active participation. In so doing, the individuals become a loser and a misfit or a choker and an anomaly. Even though an individual chooses to overcome the bad faith that comes to his mind, he gets frustrated with the existing monotony of the world. The individual realizes the fact of existence that everything in life is a repetition and nothing seems to excite the individual. Sometimes, when man becomes satisfied with life, the excitement is soon vanished. Therefore, it is very essential for the human kind to understand the fact that nothing in the world is bound to permanence.

Subsequently, Blackham in his *Six Existential Thinkers*, affirms that, “Whoever fails to understand that life is repetition, and that this is its beauty, has passed judgment upon himself; he deserves no better fate than that which will befall him, namely to be lost. Repetition is life’s daily bread, which satisfies and blesses.” (35) Eventually, the refutation about the reality of life will surely lead to so many disparaging ends. Oz presents characters who fail to understand this basic principle of life. Those are the individuals who feel so dejected by life’s routine. Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philologist, philosopher, cultural critic, and poet, in his *Human, All Too Human* tells:
To escape boredom, man works either beyond what his usual needs require, or else he invents play, that is, work that is designed to quiet no need other than that for working in general. He who is tired of play, and has no reason to work because of new needs, is sometimes overcome by the longing for a third state that relates to play as floating does to dancing, as dancing does to walking, a blissful, peaceful state of motion: it is the artist’s and philosopher’s vision of happiness. (254)

Escapism is identified to be another choice for existence in the chaotic universe. Once the individual becomes aware of the reality of life and the monotony that exists in human living, the tragic part of life begins with the realisation. In times when man finds the pain and pressures too much to bear, he hunts for escape routes and thereby derives comfort during their stay away from the world of reality. He chooses not to come back to the world of nothingness which remains to be the absurd reality. As Camus puts it in his *Myth of Sisyphus*, “The workman of today works everyday in his life at the same task, and his fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moment when it becomes conscious” (117). It, thus, becomes evident that man becomes frustrated only when he is conscious about the reality that life is a repetition.

According to Sartre, it is the consciousness which creates the ego. It is evident that the ego is that part of the mind representing consciousness. Sartre explains it through the two regions of being, the being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Hazel E. Barnes in the article “Sartre’s Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being” presents Sartre’s two regions of being. It is that, “Being-in-itself is non conscious being and that being-for-itself is conscious being. And at least pragmatically, we may as well restrict being-for-itself to human being. …the two regions of being will aid us
in understanding the connection of consciousness with (1) nothingness (2) body (3) external objects, and (4) the ego” (15-16). When consciousness about nothingness, body, external objects and the ego becomes a dominant part of human life, man finds it too tough to handle the reality. The individual, therefore, finds escape routes from the nothingness of the world, physical troubles, external commitments, and the ego.

Escaping from the struggle is found to be a better option than to face the problem and fail. Though the individual do not get the satisfaction of winning life, they have a fulfilment of not losing anything. The individual, thus, tries to escape his responsibilities in family, profession and society. The escape routes may be individual’s preference to live with the sickness, to live in a world of dreams and fantasies, the unwillingness to fulfil the commitment in every sphere of life, or to blame others for their own failures. The routes may be different but the purpose for such an escape is due to the refusal to take up life’s challenges. Human beings who fear to face the reality’s threats are the ones who choose to escape. The inner instincts and the power of the mind are not believed by the individual who has already given up the fervour to fight life’s battle. Even though an individual chooses to wrestle against life’s trials, the monotony that follows the fight becomes unbearable. Therefore, man shuts himself away from the inner voice or the positive instinct that would encourage human heart to face life and make meaning out of the chaotic situation.

Karl Jasper, a German psychiatrist and philosopher, in his *General Psychopathology*, explains the escape routes that people choose:

> We escape from reality with the help of *fantasies*. They conjure up easily and lavishly all that in reality would be so hardly and sparsely achieved. Fantasies are related to wishes which arise from the
inhabitations and deprivations of individual existence and they bring us relief though they have no concrete reality. Bleuler calls this self-incapsulation in an isolated world as ‘autistic thinking’. The content of fantasy longing may be for example, one’s lost childhood, foreign lands, spiritual homelands, but the crucial point is the tendency to turn away from present conflicts and obligations. It is an aspect of metaphysics and poetry that they rob man of his real personal part in Existence itself in favour of a dissipation of his powers in fantasy, and this was most profoundly comprehended by Kierkegaard. (328-29)

Jasper evidently brings out that one of the major escape routes that an individual chooses is escaping into the world of fantasy. In this regard, Oz presents many characters who find the pressures of the reality as something beyond their bearable limits. Hannah and Fima find solace in their hours of slumber. Dreams are being utilized as an escape route, which provides relief from life’s anxieties which over rule peace and wish fulfilments. Dreams hold all the fantasies, memories and irrational experiences that ultimately provide a state of respite. The individual prefers to live in solitude by escaping the reality’s hectic pressures and demands. They isolate them willingly from the world around so that the individual enjoys the experience of being true to the personal self thoroughly. Therefore, dreams and hours of sleep provide an escape route out of the world of reality.

The story of Michael focuses on Hannah’s psychological evolution. She admits that she has always pined for a time in her youth when she has fallen sick and bedridden because she loves the adventure of her vivid dreams while she rests. In her adulthood, her dreams and visions grow fantastically wild and frighteningly dangerous, even masochistic. In her world of dreams, she could have her dominance
as an emperor and she dreams that she has a handful of supporters who plot to rescue her. Hannah asserts that:

I used to carry my dreams over into the world of waking. Night and day were one continuous world. My high fever contributed to this effect. Those were dizzy, multicolored weeks. I was a queen. My cool mastery was challenged by open rebellion. I was captured by the mob. …I relished my cruel sufferings because out of them rose pride. My returning authority. I was reluctant to recover. (Michael 16)

Hannah drowns herself in her dreams and hallucinations, when she is in Jerusalem and has experienced the dreamy sameness of the days. She prefers to continue with her dreams where she could be dominant over other people as an emperor or as a queen. Hannah prefers to escape the real world where she is expected to fulfil her responsibilities in both domestic and social spheres.

Oz creates Fima in the labyrinth of fantasy and pain. Fima summons up imaginary cabinet meetings and lectures the politicians on how to make peace with the Arabs. He feels comfortable to stay away from the world of reality where he is destined to live. He prefers to continue his sleep only to escape the reality, which pressurizes him to take up falsehood. He deliberately wants to be away from the lies of the world, but his incapability in attaining the desires and live a life that he chooses to live becomes impossible. When the urges of his heart is being unfulfilled he rather prefers to escape the reality rather than to face it. In the beginning of the work of fiction, Oz introduces Fima as an escapist. He decrees that:

He found less falsehood in sleeping than in waking. Even though he had long ago come to understand that truth was beyond his reach, he wanted to distance himself as much as possible from the petty lies that
filled his everyday life like a fine dust that penetrated even to the most intimate crannies. (*Fima* 2)

Oz’ fictional characters are very often unrealistic that they fail to perform even material duties. Hannah finds it difficult to fulfil her duties as a student, a wife, and a mother. She quits her studies once she gets married. She is not bothered to continue her studies even when she witnesses Michael, her husband, moving towards greater heights in his academic career. As a mother, throughout the work, Hannah does not fulfil her duties as a mother in taking care of Yair but she allows Michael to take care of the entire household responsibilities. Hannah declares that, “At five in the morning Michael would get up, boil some water, and wash the baby’s diapers. Later I [Hannah] would open my eyes to see him standing over me, silent and submissive. …I was drowsy” (*Michael* 78). Her sickness thus paves way for her escapism. She emphasizes that, “I relished my cruel sufferings because out of them rose pride. … I was reluctant to recover. …I mock at my vague longing to fall seriously ill. …One of the reasons why I enjoy being asleep is that I hate making decisions” (*Michael* 16-17).

It is not that Hannah experiences any incurable ailments, but it is her unwillingness to be out of her sickness. Dr.Rosenthal, who examines Hannah clearly understands that she refuses to be cured, because in her illness she is in a state of freedom. She herself firmly affirms that, “The body is trying to get well, the mind perhaps is causing us delay” (*Michael* 178). She constantly feels herself sick with various illness. She says that:

…I continued to suffer from various troubles. …I had dizzy spell….The doctor forbade me to go on working. …I had a permanent headache. …My dreams became tormented. …I stopped attending lectures …I would never study… The housework, too, was neglected.
... I would collapse on my bed, exhausted. I could not even read the newspaper. (Michael 58)

All sorts of physical inabilities that Hannah experiences are merely routes to escape from the duties that she ought to do. When she is left alone in the house and when she realizes that she has no duties to perform, she finds herself with perfect health, both physical as well as emotional.

Yet another way to escape the reality’s pressure is to give least importance to the personal self but to dictate terms on others. The characters of Oz do not choose to take up the responsibility, when they could no longer handle the pressures. The unconscious self of the individual is at work when the conscious self is deliberately avoided and takes up some other routes to survive in life, which seems to be meaningless and purposeless. When the unconscious self of an individual is at work, the world becomes aware of the individual’s conscious self that is left uncared and unnoticed by the individual himself. In Fima, Tamar, who works with him in the clinic, makes it too lucid in explaining the character of Fima. She articulates:

On the one hand, you’re so absent-minded you can’t even button your shirt right; on the other hand you turn the world upside down for a clue in a crossword puzzle. And you organize everyone’s life for them. Just look at your sweater: half in and half out of your trousers. And your shirt half in and half out too. Like a baby. (Fima 211)

Fima continues to live his life without taking up the responsibility to execute his desires or to achieve greatness but spoils his days in arguments about the political happenings in Jerusalem and dictating what the government ought to do to rectify it.

Moreover, the individual at times not only skips the priorities that have to be given to the personal self but also chooses to put up a self which would pretend as if
the conscious self is totally unaware of the demands around. This sort of a pretension gives way for the individual to keep himself away from being blamed either by his own consciousness or by the world around. Every individual finds the route of pretension to escape the truth, which cannot be faced with mettle. What Oz calls as the state of falsehood is refereed by Satre as bad faith. Oz, through the words of Fima, states that, “We are all steeped in falsehood. We all pretend. … But come the moment when we should open the gates of compassion, we pretend we know nothing. Or that compassion and mercy are merely a way of patronizing others, something too old-fashioned and sentimental (Fima 212).

Almost all of Oz’ fictional families are unhappy families. The unhappiness that prevails within the members of the family is mainly because of the superficial relationship that they have among themselves. Whenever a problem or a misunderstanding comes in the family, efforts are not taken to rectify the problems but they choose to stay away from each other. The relationship is not given the priority, rather it is the individuals’ comforts that demand priority in Oz’ novels. This leads to discard in the family. Oz’ representation of families can be considered rightly as the reflection of the modern family structure. Michael and Hannah in Michael, Theo and Noa in Night, and Yoel and Ivria in Woman, undergo rifts in their relationship. Difficulties between the couple and indifferences between the parents and children arise due to various reasons. However, the commonness in all of them is that they choose not to disturb one another. They choose their own path to move ahead without disturbing the other. They do not decide on getting into an argument or a compromise; instead find it comfortable to escape from the reality’s demands and choose a contented zone to live in. By staying away from the problems, the characters find perfect comfort.
With regard to Yoel, Ivria and Netta in *Woman*, “Most of the time Yoel was away from home. … they used to meet in the kitchen... sleep in their respective bedrooms… She [Ivria] had a tacit agreement with him and Netta: there was a no entry to her room unless it was strictly necessary” (*Woman* 10). It has always been a rigid family with strict unspoken orders. It is observed about the family that, “Sometimes their neighbour, Itamar Vitkin, came in ‘looking for some life’. Father, mother, and daughter were always attentively careful not to disturb one another. Whenever they talked, they did so politely. They all knew their boundaries” (*Woman* 13). After the death of his wife Ivria, Yoel changes his name, retreats to a new house in a Tel Aviv suburb, and refuses a posting to Bangkok. Even after shifting to the suburbs, with his mother, mother-in-law and daughter, the new family set up remains the same as before. Yoel finds a four-bedroom apartment so that nobody would disturb the other.

With regard to Theo and Noa in *Night*, Noa voices her opinion that, “Our life is quiet and steady. We have separate bedrooms because it turned out that we sleep differently” (*Night* 115). At one point of time in their life, Theo volunteers to do some help to his wife without seeking her permission or help. This has been a very tough thing for Noa to accept it whole-heartedly from Theo. She tells him, “Who gave you permission, Theo? They’re not yours, they’re mine” (*Night* 67).

Pertaining to Michael and Hannah, Hannah mulls over the thought that, “We were strangers to each other, he and I’ (*Michael* 28). Hannah, as a mother, never to discharge her duties, neither has she ever seemed to love her son like any mother ought to love. She admits the fact that, “Only when Michael took him from my arms and sang to him softly would Yair consent to be quiet. I resented this; it was as if a stranger had shamed me with base ingratitude” (*Michael* 81). The relationship for
Hannah is not only obdurate with her son but it is more the same with her husband too. She affirms the reality by stating, “I would suddenly observe in all three of us, a quality which I can only call melancholy, because I do not know what other term to use” *(Michael 81).* While living together, Hannah always wants to live away from one another. When they plan to shift to a new neighbourhood, the satisfaction is gained in the truth that they would have chances to live separately:

He poured two glasses half-full of wine, and said:

“To us, Hannah. I am sure the new neighborhood will have a calming effect on you. Mekor Baruch is a gloomy place.”

“Yes, Michael,” I said.

“All these years we’ve dreamed of moving to a new apartment. We’ll have three whole rooms, plus a small study. I expected you to be happy this evening.”

“I am happy, Michael,” I said. “We’re going to have a new apartment with three whole rooms. We’ve always dreamed of moving. Mekor Baruch is a gloomy place”. *(Michael 232)*

The same attitude and behaviour is identified in Hannah even when she thinks about her mother. When she tells about her, she realises, “What a small place my mother occupied in my thoughts. She was Father’s wife. That was all. On the few occasions when she had raised her voice against Father, I had hated her. Apart from that, I had made no room for her in my heart” *(Michael 247).* Hannah seems to have a shallow way of relating with everyone around her which includes her mother, husband and son.

In this sense, every family in Oz’ fiction, experiences hopelessness of an unrequited love. The gloominess and melancholy keep them at ease. Never,
throughout the works, the characters seem to rectify the defects in them. They escape from the demands and duties. Escapism seems to be a better option than to face problem and adjust to the differences that are inherent in the individuals. They never want to break the monotony that exists in the family life. Instead, they find escape routes to be away from one another and thereby live a life which is away from getting involved in someone else’ life and routine. The two in marriage has never been one as it is expected to be.

Accordingly, it is clear that every human individual consciously finds routes to escape the reality. The route may be different like sleep, dream, fantasy, sickness, avoidance, or pretension, but the individual escapes the reality when the boredom or the pressures of the chaotic world seems too much for him to handle. It is all because of the inability of the conscious self to get along perfectly well with the demands of the reality.

In *Will to Power*, Nietzsche reasons out that, “Perhaps I know best why it is man alone who laughs; he alone suffers so deeply that he had to invent laughter” (91). By this means, it is clear that man has to keep on inventing things so that he continues to live and cope with the situations around. Finally, in identifying or making the choices for living, any individual could choose to make meaning out of meaninglessness or create something out of the nothingness and be a survivor. Finding escape routes or to end life as it begins or even to remain with no involvement can never be an ideal choice of an individual. But deriving meaning out of the experiences and finding ways out to succeed when there remain no rays of hope can be an ideal choice of an individual. Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book For Everyone And Nobody*, affirms the fact that, “We love life, not because we are used to living but because we are used to loving” (36).
Amidst the pain and struggle, the individual makes his life and only then he can find meaning in the fruitless happenings and situations. Existentialism has also imbibed the doctrine, which seeks to make meaning in a chaotic world. Hazel E. Barnes, in the article, “Sartre and Feminism Aside from The Second Sex and All That”, published in Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre, says that, “The ultimate, crowning manifestation of Sartre’s famous dictum… ‘man makes himself,’ in other words, that the human being is an ongoing activity of self-creating” (41). Existentialism, thus, tries to find the literary works with special stress on the struggle to identify meaning and look for an identity in the face of estrangement and seclusion.

When Oz presents a similar idea in Michael, he firmly believes, “There is no sense in worrying. It will all be all right. Everything, absolutely everything will turn out for best” (Michael 200). With the existentialists, Oz puts forth the idea to derive meaning in existence though it is a fact that it seems to be tough. It is highly impossible for a human to live either in a perfect order or in a complete disorder. Both the order and disorder, when becomes a routine, will ultimately create boredom. Therefore, it is a difficult task for any human to take up the routine repeatedly which would ultimately result in constant monotony in life. As Camus puts it in Myth of Sisyphus:

The absurd man thus catches sight if a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope and the unyielding evidence of a life without consolation. (58)
The universe is made in such a way that everything is subjected to change. Without the conscious understanding of any human, everything in the universe relentlessly undergoes many changes. The physical state of chaos in cosmology remains a formless matter supposed to have existed before the creation of the universe. Similarly, the apparent disorder in life paves way for changes to occur in extreme unpredictable situations. In other words, chaos is resourceful to create new ideas or things. Accordingly, it is essential for every human to accept that life would come to a state of monotony without any disarray. It is also a fact that the individual should find an order from the chaos and a purpose in living.

Too many impediments and obstacles ultimately lead to an emotional downfall in the individual and force them to choose different choices for life. However, it can be an ideal choice to find meaning out of every experience that one undergoes. Man always holds on to painful past memories, which eventually lead to frustration in the present. This ultimately creates a fear for the future. This sort of an emotional fall messes up the entire life of human. He could find no hope anywhere and gives up the will to live his long years in the world amidst the chaos. Nevertheless, man succeeds to live a life when he struggles hard to find meaning amidst all unfavourable or favourable situations into which he is thrown.

Oz, while presenting his fictional characters has put them amidst the existential pressures of the world. He effectively brings out the difficulties that every individual has to cope with. Some of his characters manage to resist the impossibilities and the meaninglessness of life and they get refined by the difficulties that they have faced in all different circumstances. Though every effort of the individual seems to give unpromising effects, be it in personal, familial, or social surroundings, the individual determines to live through the pain and finds life out of
lifeless living. Once an individual succeeds in living through the confusions and chaos, he gains the determination to face life with the moral courage resulting in a meaningful existence.

Shergill, a consultant counsellor and Psychotherapist, in his *Psychology*, shares the existential idea of Kierkegaard about the reality of life. He suggests, “...happiness grows at our own fire-sides and is not to be picked from stranger’s garden. A man as a physical being is always turned towards the outside, thinking that her or his happiness lies outside her or him. However, she or he finally turns inward and discovers that the source is within her or him. Accept life unconditionally” (334). It, thus, becomes a fact that life has to be accepted in the way it comes. It is always essential to have a perfect understanding about life and make the best use of what life brings on the individual’s way.

Oz’ characters Michael, Fima and Yoel are the embodiments who live through extreme disappointments and frustrations. In different walks of their life they attempt to choose different paths to live their lives. They always try hard to fit themselves into the chaotic world with their own conflicts, both internal and external. But they fail to realize the capabilities within them but search for it in so many outside sources but in vain. Most of the years of their lives turn out to be full of disappointments and confusions. The individuals struggle hard to find meaning out of all futility and bleakness. But towards the end of Oz novels, the characters make efforts to find meaning for their living. Through his novels, Oz presents that an individual has found out the reality of life which has a purpose. People have also found the fact that it is only discovering meaning for their lives would accomplish the purpose of their living.

Oz always perseveres on not to go to extremes in any ideology or standard. He is in favour of the “Third State”, which he emphasizes through the words of the
protagonist in *Fima*. He writes, “Third state came into being, equidistant from complete waking and from the deepest slumber and yet distinct from both. There is no more tragic loss in the whole world than missing the third state” (*Fima* 248). This is same as the idea that the world cannot be in complete order or in complete chaos either. Anywhere it is always a risk to choose the extremes. In *Michael*, *Oz* presents a similar idea through the words of Aunt Jenia. When Michael and Hannah decide to marry even before getting financially settled, Michael’s Aunt Jenia advises Michael that, “… only marry for love. Life isn’t a game. In life one ought to follow the middle path, and avoid both extremes” (*Michael* 53).

*Oz* through his works reveals that there is nothing permanent in this world. Very few of his fictional characters choose to identify the meaning of life and realize the value of it. In *Michael*, *Oz* presents two extreme characters. Hannah finds everything to be an aspect of annoyance and Michael firmly believes, “For there is no sadness in the world that cannot be turned into great joy.” (*Michael* 87). *Oz* makes it clear, in *Night*, that it is also an existential reality that, “Whoever has some goodwill can find goodwill everywhere” (196). Such a goodwill is clearly seen in *Oz*’ three main characters from the works *Michael*, *Night*, and *Fima*. All of *Oz*’ characters are compelled to face the traumas of life that pressurizes them from personal and social spheres of life. They face all possible internal and external crises. The characters are compelled to face dejection, frustration, monotony, boredom, fear and anxiety. The life for the individuals seems to be a severe hurt and perplexity. The relationships and the situations have not been favourable at any point of their life. Sometimes it seems to give a ray of hope for betterment yet vanishes as it comes. The individuals, in their process of becoming, attempt to derive meaning out of the chaos in their lives and in the world around.
Michael has no perfect way to live a peaceful life with Hannah. His son, Yair loves him and enjoys his company more than his mother’s. Hannah, as a wife, never cherished the success of Michael in his professional life. He takes up the responsibility to do the household work when Hannah finds herself sick and weak. Hannah proves to be a disappointing wife who totally alienates herself from the world of reality and prefers to be in her world of dreams and fantasy. She is never satisfied with Michael even after the sacrifices that he makes for the good of their family. He willingly takes care of Hannah and little Yair. He does all the household chores and his professional duties. Nowhere Michael seems to complain about his life. The entire narrative depicts two characters, Michael and Hannah, who deal in different ways with crises in their lives and marriage. The binary opposition is constituted through the character of Michael and Hannah.

Subsequent to so much of struggles that lead him to further frustrations, Michael has found out that he can live his life with passion and find the reward at some part of his life. One of Michael’s aunts, Jenia tells him, “All the troubles I have experienced have done nothing to weaken my faith; on the contrary, they have strengthened it” (Michael 133). Though Michael has crossed many discouraging experiences, he wins over the past pains by holding on to a remarkable attitude which finds a meaning in everything:

Like most optimists, Michael regarded the present as a soft, shapeless substance from which one has to mold the future by dint of responsible hard work. He viewed the past with suspicion. An incubus. Somehow unnecessary. The past appeared to Michael as a pile of orange peels which must be disposed of, not by scattering them along the way, because they would make a mess; they must be collected up and
destroyed. To be free and unburdened. To be responsible only for the plans which have been set before him for the future. (Michael 229) Michael has realized very well that, “It was a mistake to demand too much from life”. (Michael 56)

The way he handles life’s struggle is astounding. He never lets his useless past to spoil the shapeless present. Instead he always looks forward to a better life in the future.

Fima, at 54, is a troubled intellectual, who has failed in both his professional career and in his marriage. He undergoes a constant longing for all comforts of life. His course of life is not a peaceful one. He does not feel comfortable to live in Jerusalem, the place where he lives. For Fima, he is in Jerusalem by mistake. A sort of monotony dominates his life. Fima’s life has constantly been a life with no commitment and liability. For many long years, he continues to remain as he is with no progress in either professional or personal life. Ultimately, it has happened to be a routine filled with monotony and nothingness which in due course lead to boredom: “For fifty years, like the gestation of an elephant, this faceless clerk had been swelling inside the womb of child and youth and grown man, and now fifty years were up, the gestation was complete, the womb had burst open, the butterfly had begotten a chrysalis. In this chrysalis Fima recognized himself” (Fima 8). Oz allows his readers to see the complicated life of Fima. To realize the truth that exists around him, it took fifty long years for Fima. Once the realization has bloomed, Fima has the urge to “Start a new chapter. Get a little closerr to the third state….Change his life for the better” (Fima 274).

Earlier in the plot, Fima finds comfort in the state of sleeping than in staying awake. He finds everything around a matter of frustration. Unable to relate and cope
with the world of reality, Fima lived a life of falsehood. The realization of what he is and what the world around him is all about, have now given him a shaft of optimism to take a different route in life so that he does not continue to exist as an element on earth but lives as a human. The awareness that he has gained from his experiences helps him to realise that he has buried his life and has used it for no purpose in the long run. The conscious self of Fima, creates a better stand to be taken for the rest of his life. He comes forward to make meaning out of his misery and reconcile with it:

Perhaps it was this: to sweep away at a single stroke, starting today, from the onset of this Sabbath, the empty talk, the wastefulness, the lies that himself finally to the solitude he had brought on himself, to the very end, with no right of appeal. From now on he would live in silence, he would cut himself off, he would sever his repugnant links with all the do-gooding women… and he would stop pestering…with casuistic sophistry. He would love Yoel [Fima’s son] from a distance, without being a nuisance. He might not even bother to have his telephone repaired: from now on let it too be silent. Let it stop boasting and lying…. And in the evening he would stand alone at the window listening to his inner voice which up to now he had always tried to silence with inanities and buffoonery. (Fima 280-81)

Though the past years of his life has been spent in confusion and disorder, he decides to create an order out of it. He has lived the extreme end of chaos, which has resulted in nothingness. Through Fima, Oz attempts to present a man who dreams noble dreams but does nothing to achieve. Everything has stopped with mere verbal declarations and no action has been done to hit the same through all his life time. All such way of living has come to a stop when the realization has had its bloom.
In the life of Yoel, a difference could be seen from that of Michael and Fima. There has been a monotony and a blurry understanding of women in his life. In the earlier part of the tale, Women, Oz presents Yoel as one who feels contented with what life and relationships offer him. With no demands he continues to live the life. The monotonous life that he lives, with least involvement, has not affected him much. Even when his wife was alive, it seemed Yoel happened to stay away to look after his profession. After the death of his wife, his life goes on with his daughter, mother and mother-in-law. No one in the family seems to contribute anything profitable to his life. Yet Oz carries Yoel as one who advances towards wisdom. One of Yoel’s visitors observes the truth about the life and living of Yoel. He tells:

You’re a very clever man, shrewd even, you’re also a decent man. No question about that. Straight as a die. You’re a really OK fellow. Trouble is, there’s three serious things missing with you: A. desire, B. joy, and C. pity. If you ask me, Captain, those three things come together in a package. If you haven’t got number two, then you haven’t got numbers one and three either. And so forth. The state you’re in, you’re in terrible way. Now you’d better go indoors. Look at this rain. Be seeing you. Whenever I look at you I feel almost like crying.

(Woman 166)

Without passion for life, it is evident that life would become meaningless. All through Women, Yoel has desire for nothing in life. He fails to derive joy from all possible ways and he seems to be too careless to pay attention to the subtle joys that life offers. It is also a fact that he is not sensitive to the needs of people who live around him. He continues his life, for so many years, as a sincere human who discharge his own duties. After the death of his wife he resigns his job, shifts his family to another place
and also changes his name. He stays back at home for the whole day looking after the garden. Purposeless life does not affect him much. Though compelled by Krantz, he remains without working to kill away the boredom.

Yoel undergoes an unexpected transformation within his own self. A realization that comes in him, makes him realize the fact about his own potential as an individual. That consciousness in him leads to a state of ecstasy which he has never felt before in his life. Never before in his life time, has Yoel attempted to find meaning for his living. However, his realization has led him to appreciate that the very life that he lives is a boon. He then makes deliberate efforts to make the fullness out of life. Until then his life is like a sterile existence, and he is very much aware of his life. Ironically he makes it his mission to fill their small yard with every form of landscaping vegetation imaginable, in his attempt to awaken, to finally figure out things.

Until the time of such an insight, Yoel was content to live in a pseudo hope that he too lived his life for a purpose with all secrets in him. But the later part of his life has been a meaningful one when he starts to understand his own self and he has made the relationship with his daughter a better one. This ultimately makes people around Yoel to understand him better. The purpose of his living has found a concrete meaning. Mr. Maxine tells about Yoel as a, “Liar. I’ve seen all sorts of liars in my time, so help me, but I’ve never yet met a liar like this Sasha [Yoel]. He’s a liar you can trust. A liar who doesn’t lie” (Woman 261). When people around him come to know the reality about the individual, it is made easy for them to get along well and maintain a perfect and meaningful relationship. As a consequence, Oz’ Woman, ends when Yoel realized the crux of human living and the purpose for the existence. He starts to give up his own rigid standards so to get along with the world around:
And so Yoel Ravid began to give in. Since he was capable of observing, he grew fond of observing in silence. With tired but open eyes. Into the depth of the darkness. And if it was necessary to focus the gaze and remain on the lookout for hours and days, even for yeas, well there was no finer thing than this to do. Hoping for a recurrence of one of those rare, unexpected moments when the blackness is momentarily illuminated, and there comes a flicker, a furtive glimmer, which one must not miss, one must not be caught off guard. Because it may signify a presence which makes us ask ourselves what is left.

Besides elation and humility. (Woman 261-62)

The willingness to accept the harsh reality that the world is full of chaos and meaninglessness has given Yoel a willingness to find meaning and order out of it. Though it is a tough challenge that he takes up, he comes forward to give meaning to his life as well as to the lives of people who live with him. Kierkegaard firmly asserted that the individual is solely responsible for giving his or her life meaning and must live with integrity, despite the existential distractions of despair, angst, alienation, and meaninglessness. So it turns out to be that it is the responsibility of the individual to find meaning for life. No one can be blamed for the decisions and choices that an individual makes. It is one’s free will that is at work.

The characters and situations so far discussed affirm that the individual has the freedom of choice. Choices are aplenty and the consequences too. The essential life pattern of survival in Oz’ fiction rests mainly on the potential capabilities of an individual to manipulate the intricate pattern of existence so that, [s]he might clinch an identity or in existential terms a sense of being. The quintessence of living, as all existentialists put forth, lies in the essential exercise for survival. The sole
responsibility of the individual is to enact continuously an attempt to survive. This is possible when one accepts the reality that pervades the world. It is the apprehension of fact that the world is full of nothingness, which could only generate frustration and pain.

But, Camus insists firmly upon the idea that, “Everything considered, a determined soul will always mange” (39). In Nietzsche’s autobiography, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, written in 1888, a few weeks before his decent into madness, he brings out his ideas of how a human should live in good terms with his own self to be who he is. He advocates:

> And basically, how do you know that someone has *turned out well!* By the fact that a well-turned-out person does our senses good: by the fact that he is cut from wood that is simultaneously hard, gentle, and fragrant. He only has a taste for what agrees with him; his enjoyment, his desires stop at the boundary of what is agreeable to him. He works out how to repair damages, he uses mishaps to his advantage; what does not kill him makes him stronger. He instinctively gathers *his* totality from everything he sees, hears, experiences: he is a principle of selection, he lets many things fall by the wayside. He is always in his own company, whether dealing with books, people, or landscapes: he honours by *choosing*, by *permitting*, by *trusting*. He reacts slowly to all types of stimuli, with that slowness that has been bred in him by a long caution and a willful pride, - he scrutinizes whatever stimulus comes near him, he would not go to meet it. He does not believe in ‘bad luck’ or ‘guilt’: he comes to terms with himself and with others, he knows
how to forget, - he is strong enough that everything has to turn out best for him. (8)

Oz’ fictional characters are mostly sad and feel withdrawn from the outside world into a world that belongs only to them, with their thoughts, memories, endless questions, and repentance. Breaking the shell and coming to the outside world is an effort. Every work of Oz is a brilliant commentary on life as it enacts the existential struggle that his people undergo in Jerusalem. However, his characters eventually become universal in that, they become a replica of the whole humanity. The situations, the events and the supplementary episodes end up as illustrious specimens of existentialism.

It is a fact that human beings living in the modern era are forced to take up choices for their living. In different phases of life the individual is compelled to choose different path ways. In that, he might choose to doom his life or escape the situations. Otherwise, the individual may also choose to remain passive to the world around. In all these choices, a comeback for betterment would be a welcoming one. Finding the meaning for the life could carry out the purpose of being born a human.