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TEN POETESSES IN MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE

Aliza Wallin Berk

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1980

Referee, Prof. Werner Weinberg

"Blessed the One who made me a woman"

Esther Rab

To my husband, Michael, and my family,

with love

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I want to thank Dr. Werner Weinberg for his help in preparing this thesis. His knowledge of Hebrew language and grammar added to my understanding of Hebrew poetry. He transformed a requirement for ordination into a creative learning experience. His dry wit made the many hours of study quite enjoyable.

I also wish to thank my husband and family for their love and emotional support. I want to express my gratitude to my sister-in-law, Shoshanah Berk, for proofreading my thesis.

DIGEST

This thesis is a study of the life and work of ten Israeli poetesses including: Elisheva, Rachel, Esther Rab, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, Anda Pinkerfeld, Peninah Bergstein, Leah Goldberg, Zelda, Hannah Senesh, and Daliah Rabikovitsch.

I attempted to find common themes, intrinsic values, major trends, perceptions about building the land, adjusting to the new life, religious attitudes, and other questions. I concentrated on the following major themes: love, women, the land of Israel, nature, religion, and death. I studied the literary styles and technical aspects of the various poetesses. I also addressed myself to the contribution of contemporary Israeli poetesses to modern Hebrew poetry.

The work of each of these poetesses is examined and evaluated individually in chronological order. A chapter is devoted to each poetess. Each chapter includes a short biographical sketch, a listing of her poetic works, followed by a critical analysis of one to three major themes. The chapter may include an analysis of the technical aspects and a critical evaluation of her poetry, based on the opinions of literary critics and my own impressions. Each chapter will be followed by poems which I translated.

In the concluding chapter, I concentrate on the common themes which emerge from this study. I compare

the literary styles and technical aspects of the various poetesses. An effort is made to compare the treatment of several themes by male and female Hebrew poets. I also attempt to identify the particular feminine contribution to modern Hebrew poetry as seen in the works of the ten poetesses selected for this study. The thesis concludes with notes indicating sources of materials cited in the thesis and a list of works consulted.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, I intend to present a survey of the work of the following Hebrew poetesses: Elisheva, Rachel, Esther Rab, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, Anda Pinkerfeld, Peninah Bergstein, Leah Goldberg, Zelda, Hannah Senesh, and Daliah Rabikovitsch. The ten poetesses selected for this study are not the only Hebrew poetesses. These ten are considered to be the most representative.

I intend to concentrate on the following major themes: love, women, the land of Israel, nature, religion, and death. Occasionally, an additional theme particularly important to understanding the work of a given poetess will also be examined. An attempt will be made to find intrinsic values, major trends, perceptions about building the land, adjusting to the new life, religious attitudes, and other issues in the works of these ten poetesses. I will try to elicit the unique contribution of each poetess. I will also examine the style and technical aspects of each poetess. I shall attempt to define the specific feminine contribution to modern Hebrew poetry. I intend to approach these poetesses without any preconceived notions. I also wish to determine whether female Hebrew poets treat major themes in a manner comparable to male Hebrew poets.

The work of each of these poetesses will be examined and evaluated individually in chronological order. A chapter will be devoted to each poetess. Each chapter will include a short biographical sketch, a listing of her poetic works, followed by a critical analysis of one to three major themes. The chapter may include an analysis of the technical aspects of her poetry, focusing on the use of symbolism, dialogue, biblical expressions and allusions, personification, point of view, and poetic form and style. In most cases, a critical evaluation of the poetry is included, based on the opinions of literary critics and my own personal impressions. Each chapter will include poems which I have translated.

A comparison with other literatures will be made when appropriate. A concluding chapter will bring out common features, themes, styles, techniques, etc. in their works. The thesis concludes with notes indicating sources of materials cited in this study and a list of works consulted.

ELISHEVA

Elisheva, christened Elisaveta Ivanovna Zhirkova, is a convert to Judaism. She occupies a unique position in Hebrew literature, and is acclaimed as a modern Ruth. She is immersed in two worlds -- Jewish and Russian. Referred to as "Ruth from the banks of the Volga," her poems and stories reflect her appreciation and love of Judaism. In a Russian poem, she compares herself to Ruth:

> Like Ruth I glean the fallen ears
> Of his rich harvest field,
> And feel the rising hope of years
> That he, the mighty, will consent
> To let me gather earthward bent,
> The leavings of his plenteous yield...[1]

Elisheva was born in Ryazàn, Russia on September 20, 1888. Her father, Ivan Zhirkova, the son of a peasant, worked as a village schoolteacher and later as a publisher of popular books and school texts. He died in 1917. Her mother was of Irish-Catholic extraction. She died when Elisheva was three years old. Following the death of her mother, Elisheva was brought up in her English aunt's house in Moscow. Later, she studied in a girl's school and completed advanced courses in education. During this time, she began writing poetry in Russian. From 1907, she came into contact with Jewish circles, and was attracted by the national Jewish movement. Elisheva writes in her autobiography:

> In 1907, I became acquainted with Jewish circles in my school friend's home. I began to recognize the Jewish world and became interested in the Hebrew language. [2]

She studied Hebrew at the evening sessions of the Association of Friends of the Hebrew Language in Moscow (1913-1915). She learned Yiddish rapidly, due to her knowledge of German. In 1920, she converted and married Simeon Bikhowsky, and under his influence, she began writing in Hebrew, using the pen name of Elisheva Bikhowsky. Elisheva recalls her initial attempts to write in Hebrew:

> In 1920, I tried for the first time to compose an original poem in Hebrew, and from that time I began to cling to the Hebrew nation, its language and its literature. [3]

Her thinking was greatly influenced by Zionistic ideals, leading to her immigration to Palestine with her husband in 1925. Her husband died in 1932, leaving Elisheva bereft and alone. This solitude increased her grief in her last years, which is reflected in her poetry of this period. She died on March 17, 1949 on route to the Tiberias Hot Springs, and was buried by the shores of Lake Kinneret.

She was particularly influenced by the Russian writers Jacob Pat and Alexander Blok, and the Hebrew writers G. Schoffmann and U.N. Gnessin. She translated into Russian both Yiddish and Hebrew works by Judah Steinberg, J.H. Brenner, J.D. Berkowitz, G. Schoffmann,

and U.N. Gnessin. Her Russian poems were published in two volumes in 1919: Minuty ("Minutes," and Tainye Pesni ("Hidden Songs.") Her first Hebrew poems were published in Hatekufah.[4] Shortly after her publication of these Hebrew poems, she began writing prose. Following World War I, her work appeared in numerous Hebrew newspapers and periodicals. Besides her poems and stories, her articles of literary criticism on Hebrew and general European literature, particularly Russian, were widely published. Her Hebrew books include: Kos Ketanah ("A Small Cup," poems, 1926); Haruzim ("Verses," 1928); Sippurim ("Stories," 1928); Mikreh Tafél ("Unimportant Incident," story, 1929): Simtaot ("Alleys," novel, 1929); Meshorer Ve-Adam ("Poet and Man," about poetry of Alexander Blok, 1929); Shirim ("Poems," 1946); and Yalkut Shirim ("Anthology of Poetry"-- Hebrew poems written in Russia and Eretz Israel -- 1970). Lubner and Snowman have published an anthology of her poetry and prose, translated into English.

The principle themes in her poetry are of two types. The primary axis in her poetry revolves around love, fate, and dreams. The secondary axis includes poems dealing with the landscape of Russia and Eretz Israel. These poems are short in form, capturing in a concise form the essence of a memory, dream, or experience.

Elisheva's grasp of human love is very refined.

Her love poems are filled with an intense longing for happiness. This yearning is often shattered by the harsh realities of life:

> We both yearned and pined for happiness
> And we were brought to shame;
> 'Tis written thus on the pages of our heart -
> "Life" -- a cruel name.[5]

Her love is of a spiritual nature, without a future, without a past:

> This is all. The sublime essence --
> Love in vain,
> Love without blame,
> Without future, without past...[6]

One finds at the basis of her love poetry a description of personal anguish coupled with sadness and uncertainty. In "The Words of the Wind," the speaker yearns to know the answer to a tormenting question:

> Thus the wind whispering answers,
> And beating doth my heart exclaim,
> O, when shall I have my respite,
> And know my lover's name?[7]

The speaker in the following two verses in two separate poems recognizes a difference between her heart and herself. The speaker has accepted her fate, but her heart lacks fulfillment:

> All is known to me: I saw
> Many different nights,
> I dreamt and even cried --
> But this was all in the past.
> My heart, what do you want to hear
> In the narrow silence?
> Why don't you find rest?[8]

Suffering continues to torment her. The skies reflect her

depressing thoughts:

> But the pleasure -- to dream,
> For me -- only suffering.
> Over my heart, as over the day, --
> Grey skies. [9]

Loneliness and a lingering Russian melancholy are imbedded in the core of her poetry. Life appears to the speaker to be slipping by too rapidly. Once again, it is the lonely heart that suffers throughout the night:

> At eventide on the lonely ways
> The woe of the wood is strange,
> None hear the pulse of its stricken heart,
> None know of its secret grief.
> And the lonely heart in suffering
> Sighs in the still, dark night,
> Yearning for memories of youth,
> And for the moon to shine. [10]

In her loneliness, she is plagued by eternal yearnings for the past. She also senses the cruel fate of man and nature -- life passes by like a fading shadow:

> The strings are singing, complaining...
> My heart, what do you want?
> Ancient refrain: The flowers are wilting,
> The days fly by like an arrow... [11]

After looking within herself, she engages in a more sophisticated comparison with nature. The flowers and candle smoke will disappear like her dream of youth:

> The green tree, on every branch
> The candle flame flickers.
> In awhile, the pleasant dream of childhood
> Will dissolve with the candle's smoke. [12]

She searches for some explanation of life which will give it additional meaning:

The heart reasons: is he guilty?
That the strings complain,
That the secret desire has no purpose, no name,
That the graves, too, live? [13]

In "Even Him I Do Not Know," the speaker expresses disappointment that her hopes were not fulfilled. Unrequited love is a recurring theme in many of Elisheva's poems:

We spoke plain words;
Not worth dreaming about...
We passed at twilight,
Today was never lit for us. [14]

There is the hope that with someone to cling to, the sorrow of each passing day will be less painful:

Give me your hand not sadly,
Life passes, and dreams pass too,
Like a flower of fire day flourishes
In the garden of burning blue. [15]

In "Remnant," a sad scene in a coffee house graphically depicts the broken hopes and dreams remembered in old age:

This remains for me in my old age:
An hour towards evening. The dining room
of a coffee house.
A prolonged conversation, and my companion --
He's not youthful and he's not handsome. [16]

Death alone awaits those for whom dream and memory have replaced reality:

An unknown hand fills the cup
Of wine of memories -- so sweet and chilling. [17]

Dreams and dream imagery appear in a large number of her poems. In her Russian poems, there is a yearning for dreams that will not die:

I never planted flowers
I never raised anything
Other than forgotten dreams! [18]

Remaining within the boundaries of dreams, Elisheva transforms these visions into verse. Many of her poems seem to be sad dreams transcribed into a notebook containing memories of the past. In one poem, the poetess admits her proclivity to dream both day and night:

I am dreaming all the day,
My heart awakens all night long,
When I sing my soul is silent,
When dumb -- I have a magic song. [19]

Dreams are attributed to reversing one's mood from sorrow to joy, making one's life bearable and even worth living:

And if we pass through passages of darkness
And daybreak throws its beam,
We shall know the secret of our joy,
Its name must be -- "A dream." [20]

She sees life as a dream and as a lofty mystery. As a result of her childhood suffering -- the early death of her parents -- it may be better for her to believe that:

The life of man is the sea-port's toil,
The life of the heart -- a dream. [21]

Her dream world allows her to envision herself in any form she wishes. In the following poem, she assumes the role of a queen, The content of the poem is similar to a fairytale. However, the poetess identifies it as a dream:

Once on a time I used to say
I am a queen in state,
By day and night I kept the ward
Upon my castle gate . . .

And so I wandered in my dream -- . . . [22]

The tone changes in the poem. The poetess steps back and looks at the dream as a rational adult:

I laugh at the kingdom of my dreams,
I talk not thus today,
All know that these are foolish things,
Rhymed stanzas by the way. [23]

The chance to dream is considered to be the greatest pleasure; to be deprived of dreams leads to suffering:

But the pleasure -- to dream,
For me -- only suffering. [24]

Poems written in her natural homeland, Russia, and her adopted homeland, Eretz Israel, reveal a secret longing for the pristine beauty of nature. Her early poems are filled with a love of the landscape of Russia, especially the woods and forests near her home. She has a mysterious connection with the oaks which enables her to identify their changing emotions:

At eventide the oaks are silent,
Dreams wander in the wood,
At eventide the oaks are mourning,
And wait for the light of the moon,
To throw its beam on every path,
On every trunk and twig, . . . [25]

She especially loves the cedars from which she seeks a special type of protection. She dedicates to them a simple poetic prayer:

Green cedars in my native woods,
Guard my spirit's joy and rest.
There are many trees in my fair land,
You alone know that peace is best. [26]

A feeling of melancholy is expressed in the poem entitled "The Fall." The poetess chooses to live in her memories among the autumn leaves:

> 'Tis not for me to journey far;
> My soul, why dost thou fear?
> In shades of the past, 'mid autumn leaves
> Alone I shall dwell here. [27]

The poetess searches the woods for her lost soul, knowing that her soul would seek its favorite place:

> Today I went into the wood
> To capture my lost soul,
> And lo, I had forgot its paths
> And the song upon my scroll. [28]

Elisheva appears in her poetry as a lover of the world of trees and flowers, sea and sky, and responsive to every mood of nature. She wishes to merge with the natural elements and share with them her feeling of joy:

> To the gladness of the world
> My lattice opens wide,
> My brother Wind, embrace me,
> As thou wast wont to bide. [29]

She turns to the wind for answers to questions regarding love and happiness. She wishes to know the identity of her future lover:

> I shall go forth and ask the wind
> Who has me for his very own?
> Softly the wind laughs back at me
> "A certain one unknown." [30]

She does not mind returning to the dust from which she came, knowing that she will rejoin her mother:

> On the grave of my mother, on the grave of childhood
> Grass grows in Spring . . .

They say -- I, too, must die . . .
So what, O my beloved tree? [31]

Several of Elisheva's Israel poems parallel her Russian nature poems. In the following verse, the poetess creates an idyllic setting for her dreams to spin their webs of illusion:

The sun is a flower of gold
That grows in a garden of blue;
The trees spread their arms to it,
And the birds their songs renew.

The day draws on -- without shade
From the yoke of the noontide ray,
In the azure, the lofty heavens
My dream has flown away. [32]

The wind often serves as an important element in her nature poems. In poems previously mentioned, the poetess refers to the wind as a brother, and as an omniscient being. [33] In the following poem, the wind seems to reflect the poetess' changing moods:

On the red roof a dove is perched,
The dove of love;
From the sea the wind blows in,
Light and untamed.

In yet an hour the wind is still,
And the dove asleep:
I remember, surely now
My heart grows old. [34]

An early poem written in Israel describes the poetess' adjustment to her newly adopted homeland. This poem refers to the trees of Eretz Israel which are so different from the trees of her native Russia:

It is not for my soul to know
If the trees -- are foreign;
I listen to their conversations
A tale which has past. [35]

In her poem entitled "By the Shores of Lake Kinneret," the mountains surrounding the lake form a natural frame:

Like a silver mirror in a frame
With the hills that rise around,
Kinneret looks towards the clouds . . . [36]

By the shores of the lake, the poetess finally finds her true home. Here she can experience nature and allow her thoughts to wander:

Here I'll sit twixt sea and sky
And imagine that the end too has come,
That my soul has found its home. [37]

She enjoys the serenity and quietude of the lake's still waters:

Softly, softly the waters murmur;
Lake Kinneret rests in eternal silence. [38]

And yet, she prefers not to write poetry by its shores, in case she would disturb the silence:

No, here I will not sing! shall I disturb
The beauty of the silence from its sleep? [39]

The poetess enjoys the calm waters but regrets that she didn't take more advantage of her life.

Elisheva employs simple rhyme structure in her verse. Occasionally, her rhyme patterns are not perfect as in the following instance:

שמש חרף שמש קר
שוב בצל היום המר

The winter sun, cold sun
Again, in the shadow of the bitter day. [40]

The rhythm often is reminiscent of a folksong. It is similar to Heine's rhythm; indeed, an imitation of his style. Her verse is very close to prose. Most of her poems come under the heading of a narration of an event, a dream, a memory of the past, or a fairytale.

Her use of language is not artificial; the Hebrew flows in a natural fashion. Her language is sometimes equivocal, lacking definition. She artfully describes a situation in vague terms. The overall effect of this devise is that it leaves the reader with an impression which requires an interpretation. The third verse in the poem "Remnant" leaves an impression of a past event vaguely remembered:

All this was -- in the past, in fantasy, in verse,
The poet, hoping in vain . . .
Beyond our everyday conversation -- a kind of memory:
Something that was -- and left -- and did not return. [41]

Her images are simple, common, not trite. In "Near My Window," she uses phrases that often occur in poetry such as "silver net of the moon," and "the wind is rustling among the leaves." Although these metaphors are not unique, she effectively integrates them within the structure of the poem. Her use of metaphor is often strikingly accurate. She describes Lake Kinneret as a "silver mirror in a frame /

With the hills that rise around." This metaphor captures the lake's placid beauty and stillness. Creative word-play is often found in her rhyme scheme. For example, הרית and הירח are rhymed. Anthropomorphism abounds in her nature poems. The following is an example of its usage:

> At eventide the oaks are silent,
> At eventide the oaks are mourning . . .
> The woe of the wood is strange. [42]

In Elisheva's later poems, she uses numerous biblical expressions such as דממה דקה (1Kings 19:12); ואין מקשיב (Proverbs 1:24); לפנות ערב (Genesis 24:63).

The majority of literary critics analyze Elisheva's life rather than her poetry. The critics are intrigued by Elisheva's attraction and conversion to Judaism. Ben-Or is particularly interested in Elisheva's 'conversion' from writing in Russian to writing in Hebrew. [43] Elisheva does have a special style which is unlike other Hebrew writers. Lubner suggests that this may be the result of her unusual upbringing and religious background. [44] Nevertheless, Elisheva writes about Jewish life from the inside, as a daughter of Israel. Her treatment of themes gains in freshness and originality from her unique perspective. Her poems are filled with a deep yearning for the noble qualities of Judaism.

At times, her poetry seems simplistic in language and content. She often focuses on one central concept,

somewhat superficial, often cliché. Sometimes she manages to combine simplicity and subtlety and tap the emotional underpinnings of Russian sadness, the pervading melancholy, wistful romanticism, and hint of tragedy beneath the surface of human existence. Her poems often have the innocence of a folksong, joining dream and reality, content and form. A sharp, realistic picture of the Russian landscape is portrayed in her works.

The reader feels overpowered by Elisheva's persistent yearning that fills her words. Poetry seems to be a means by which she wishes to recreate her world filled with perfect peace, fulfilled desires, and harmony as one would in a dream. And yet, she is unable to fully believe her dream. Her yearnings remain unquenched; her dreams, unrealized. She learns to resign herself to her fate. She approaches poetry out of a spiritual need, a sacred quest which has its moments of satisfaction:

> My heart is prisoner to magic,
> My song is silence come to birth,
> What son of man can be as happy
> As am I upon this earth? [45]

NEAR MY WINDOW

Near my open window
I will sit one long hour.
The wind blows against my face,
A light, gentle wind,
    has the same smell
Which it had in the past;
The silver net of the moon
Is cast over the gardens.

All is known to me: I saw
Many different nights,
I dreamt and even cried --
But this was all in the past.
My heart, what do you want to hear
In the narrow silence?
Why don't you find rest?
For what am I waiting? . .

The wind is rustling among the leaves,
Time is passing . . .
I know that you will not rest,
My faithful heart!

THE WINTER SUN

The winter sun, cold sun
Peers into my window.
Again, in the shadow of the bitter day
I shall forget my dream.

The walls are closed about me,
The day is so gloomy,
In my dust-grey eyes --
Happiness is forgotten.

In my ears -- a cooing sound,
Sad and hushed . . .
I now remember --
I was a princess long ago.

But the pleasure -- to dream,
For me -- only suffering.
Over my heart, as over the day, --
Grey skies.

EVEN HIM I DO NOT KNOW

Even him I do not know.
His pure eyes
Never once I touched
With kisses.

The voice that reaches
To the depths of my soul --
Never uttered in my ear
Soft words of love.

We spoke plain words;
Not worth dreaming about . . .
We passed at twilight,
Today was never lit for us.

They say: "he will not forget me" . . .
What shall I say?
-- He will not remember,
For there was nothing.

THE STRINGS ARE SINGING

The strings are singing, complaining. . .
My heart, what do you want?
Ancient refrain: the flowers are wilting,
The days fly by like an arrow. . .

The green tree, on every branch
The candle flame flickers.
Shortly, the pleasant dream of childhood
Will dissolve with the candle's smoke.

The heart reasons: Is he guilty,
That the strings complain,
That the secret desire has no purpose, no name,
That the graces, too, live?

On the grave of my mother, on the grave of childhood
Grass grows in Spring. . .
They say -- I, too, must die. . .
So what, O my beloved tree?

BY THE SHORES OF LAKE KINNERET

Softly, softly the waters murmur;
Lake Kinneret rests in eternal silence.
The white-winged seagulls pass by,
Suddenly -- a shadow glides across the waters,
Suddenly -- a note of song trembles in the heart.

Like a silver mirror in a frame
With the hills that rise around,
Kinneret looks towards the clouds
And the waters tell in a whisper
Secrets of the world -- and none listen.

No, here I will not sing! shall I disturb
The beauty of the silence from its sleep?
Here I'll sit twixt sea and sky,
And imagine, that the end too has come,
That my soul has found its home.

REMNANT

This remains for me in my old age:
An hour towards evening. The dining room
    of a coffee house.
A prolonged conversation, and my companion --
He's not youthful and he's not handsome.

The hallway is empty. For us alone
A violin and piano play in the corner.
A tune of the tavern -- it will live forever,
And how sad are the musical sounds!

All this was -- in the past, in fantasy, in verse.
The poet, hoping in vain . . .
Beyond our everyday conversation -- a kind
    of memory:
Something that was -- and left -- and did not return.

Let's drink, without the need to grasp
The deceiving shadow that flies in the air.
An unknown hand fills the cup
Of the wine of memories -- so sweet and chilling.

RACHEL

Rachel Blaustein, usually referred to simply as Rachel, is considered one of the first modernists in Hebrew poetry. In her poetry, she utilized the developing spoken idiom, with the Sephardic pronunciation. Her poetry is associated with the history of the Second Aliyah (1904-1915). She described the experiences of a generation returning to the land of its ancestors. In her poetry, she characterizes the emotions and perceptions of these pioneers who developed the kibbutzim and kevutzot. Within the history of Hebrew literature, she serves as a transitional figure between the generation of Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik and Saul Tchernichovsky, and the middle generation of modernists -- Nathan Alterman, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, Leah Goldberg, and Abraham Shlonsky.

Rachel was born on September 9, 1890, in Saratov, on the Volga in northern Russia. Her father, Isser Blaustein, was a rich merchant and a deeply religious man. Her mother, Sophia, was the daughter of a well-known rabbi. In an essay entitled "Zichronot" ("Memories"), Rachel's younger sister, Shoshanah, describes her mother:

> Mother, a rabbi's daughter, was not only orthodox in her observance, but her heart was filled with simple, innocent faith. And in this spirit she reared her children. [46]

When Rachel was ten-years-old, her parents moved to Poltava. She and her sisters studied in a Hebrew elementary school under the directorship of the father of Ber Borochov.[47] Through the influence of her eldest brother, Jacob, she became interested in Zionism. At the age of fifteen, Rachel was writing poems in Russian; at seventeen, she went to Kiev to study art.

In 1909, she emigrated to Palestine with her sister, Shoshanah. Rachel originally intended to study at the Baẓalel Art Institute founded by Boris Schatz in 1906. Instead, Rachel and her sister settled in Reḥovot and worked in the orange groves. Shoshanah writes of this transitional period:

> With the first mouthful of Palestinian air, we understood why we had come. We immediately cut ties with the Diaspora, realizing that it was impossible to go back. We started to learn Hebrew; we wanted to be born again.[48]

Soon thereafter, Rachel became the first student in a school of agriculture established by pioneer Zionist Hannah Meisel on a farm near Haifa. They later moved and reestablished the school as a young women's training farm at Kinneret, near Degania. Their motto became: "To make music with the hoe, and to draw on the earth." At Kinneret, she met Aaron David Gordon, the philosopher of Zionist agrarianism. He was to have a lasting influence on her life. Her first Hebrew poem entitled "Halokh Nefesh" ("Mood") was dedicated to him.[49]

In 1913, she went to the University of Toulouse in France to continue her studies in agronomy. The outbreak of World War I prevented her return to Palestine. She briefly visited her brother Dr. Jacob Blaustein, intending to study drawing and sculpture. But as a Russian citizen, she was forced to return to Saratov, her native region. During the War, she taught Jewish refugee children from Lithuania. Her health became irreparably broken. She suffered through periods of hunger and over-exertion. In 1919, she sailed on the Russlan, the first ship leaving from Odessa to Palestine. She settled in Degania as a member of the kibbutz. Having contracted tuberculosis during the War, her health continued to deteriorate, and she became too ill for kibbutz life. She was forced to leave the settlement lest the kibbutz children would be infected. She spent the remainder of her life in Jerusalem, Safed, and Tel-Aviv. She died on April 16, 1931, at the age of forty-one. She was buried near the Kinneret. Following her death, a garden of date palms (Gan Rachel) was dedicated in her memory.

Rachel's poetic style was influenced by the conversational school in Russian poetry (Blok, Akhmatova, and Yesenin). Her verse was especially influenced by Anna Akhmatova (1888-1966), leader of the Acmeist movement, which attempted to cultivate accuracy, conciseness, and

economy of language in reaction to the stylistic vagueness of the Symbolists.

In 1920, at the age of thirty, Rachel began publishing her poems in Hebrew. Many of her poems and principal writings appeared in the Hebrew newspaper "Davar." She translated selected poems of Bialik, Fichman, and Schneur into Russian. She also translated Russian, Yiddish, and French poetry into Hebrew, and wrote some literary criticism. Many of her poems, such as "Kinneret" were made into songs. Two volumes of her verse appeared in her lifetime: Safiaḥ ("Aftergrowth," 1927); and Mineged ("From Opposite" 1930). One volume was published posthumously, shortly after Rachel's death in 1932. Her friends labeled this anthology the "Kaddish" volume. It is entitled Nebo, named for the mountain from which Moses viewed the promised land but was unable to enter. These volumes were collected in Shirat Rachel ("The Poetry of Rachel," 1935). The eighth edition of Shirat Rachel (1961) contains her collected poems including a biography and bibliography of her poems and their translations. Posthumously, a volume of children's poetry was published entitled Babayit Uvahuẓ ("Inside and Outside," 1975). It is not known when she wrote these poems.

The major subjects of Rachel's poetry are few: Eretz Israel, love, and death. She also gleans some of her

themes from the Bible. From the moment of her arrival in Eretz Israel, Rachel considered it her adopted homeland about which she wrote numerous poems of praise and thanksgiving. In the poem "To My Land," Rachel describes the nature of the gift which she offers as a token of her love. Her offering may seem insignificant to the outsider, but it is apparent that this subject is emotionally laden for the poetess in the poem:

> Very small indeed --
> I know it, O mother,
> Very small indeed
> Is your daughter's gift;
> Just a shout of joy
> When morning brightens,
> Just weeping in secret
> About your suffering. [50]

Her patriotic treatment of the land and her belief in the value of labor, particularly appealed to the pioneers of the Twenties. Her poems describing farm life may appear romantic, but rarely sentimental. In "Dawn," Rachel expresses the sense of self-fulfillment which the Jewish pioneers attained as a result of working the land:

> A jug of water in the hand, and on
> My shoulder - a basket, spade, and rake.
> To distant fields, to toil, my path I make.
>
> Upon my right the green hills fling
> Protecting arms; before me -- the wide fields!
> And in my heart my twenty Aprils sing . . .
>
> Be this my lot, until I be undone;
> Dust of the road, my land, and thy
> Grain waving golden in the sun. [51]

In her cycle of nature poems, Rachel delves into the importance of the moment, searching for faith in tomorrow. She acknowledges that man's fate is tied to the land. She transforms this belief into a distinguished epic, filled with strength and power:

> Not nebulous tomorrow but today:
> solid, warm, mighty.
> Today materialized in the hand:
> Of this single, short day to drink deep
> Here in our own land.
>
> Before night falls -- come, oh come all!
> A unified stubborn effort, awake
> With a thousand arms. Is it possible to roll
> The stone from the mouth of the well? 52

"In the Garden" is a poem that glorifies the compassionate aspect of nature. The speaker in the poem is ready to disregard the past, enjoy the present, and look forward in anticipation towards the future:

> Autumn mornings find the world in
> violet blue array,
> With compassion aflow.
> Perhaps I'll get up, shake off the
> dust of yesterday,
> Trust in tomorrow,
> And bless the burden in a humbled
> heart someway,
> Accept the sorrow? 53

Rachel felt a close identification with nature, which is vividly expressed in her poem entitled "Spring:"

> The stones of the field are my brethren,
> I have friends in the deeps of the sea,
> And know the words of each tree
> Like Solomon, wisest of men. 54

In the poem "Aftergrowth," the question is asked, "Is it the aftergrowth, provender of the old, / Grains of

delight harvested long ago?" [55] The speaker in the poem proclaims:

> Burgeon, flourish, plains of wonder,
> Burgeon, flourish, ripen in haste!
> I remember the words of comfort:
> Aftergrowth and aftergrowth, you shall eat. [56]

On a literal level, the aftergrowth refers to the sign that Isaiah sent to King Hezekiah, "And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same . . ." (II Kings 19:29, Isaiah 37:30). This is called the aftergrowth. In the biblical verse that follows, it states: "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." (II Kings 19:30) Through her interpretation of these biblical verses in her poem, Rachel alludes to the collective experience of a remnant of the Jewish people, ready to root themselves in their ancestral soil.

It has been suggested that Rachel's love poems resemble Emily Dickenson's love poetry. [57] Although the subject matter is similar in many respects, the American poetess did not suffer from a terminal illness at a young age. In Rachel's love poetry, one detects a mixture of longing and pathos. In the poem "To You," it is difficult to determine to whom the poem is addressed. It would appear, based on Rachel's biography and the majority of her poems, that the speaker is addressing a male friend.

However, it is also possible that her thoughts are either directed to God or to the world:

> To you and you only, of you and you only --
> My strings are a thousand, my song is but one:
> In storm or in silence, in comfort or weeping,
> When sunlight is shining, when sunlight is gone. [58]

The poem "In My Garden I Planted You" describes the beloved in figurative terms as if he actually were a tree with roots and branches which she plants in her heart. This poem operates on both a literal and figurative level, in which a real situation (the planting of a tree in a garden) is transformed into a metaphorical one -- the heart is referred to as a "hidden garden":

> In my garden have I planted you,
> In my secret garden -- in my heart.
> Extend your branches
> Your roots are deep inside me.
>
> From morning to night
> It will not rest, the garden will not be calmed --
> Since you are in it, you are in it.
> With your many joyous birds. [59]

Rachel is often referred to as a "poetess of sorrow." She suffered both from unrequited love and physical illness. The following poem compares the situation and fate of a married woman versus that of a secret lover. The first two lines of each stanza describe the conditions of the wife, and the second two lines describe those of the secret lover. The wife walks securely by her husband's side during the day, while the lover is concealed at night. The question is raised whether that which <u>seems</u> preferable is truly

preferable. The speaker appears content with her fate -- she prefers to suffer with her "iron fetters." She considers them much stronger than a "ring of gold:"

> She turns and calls him by name,
> With the voice of every day.
> How can I trust my voice:
> Not to give me away?
>
> In the street, in the full light of day,
> She walks by his side.
> I, in the dark of the night,
> Must hide.
>
> Bright and serene on her hand,
> Is her ring of gold;
> The iron fetters I wear
> Are stronger, sevenfold. [60]

The poem "Ishah" ("Wife" or "Woman") also addresses itself to the same theme, but it is seen from a different perspective. It is clear that the poem is describing a certain situation, but it is not defined whether it was experienced by the poetess herself or by someone else. It may refer to the lives of the majority of women or to the lives of all women. In any case, it appears that the situation alerts the reader to the poetess' view of wives and womanhood in general. This poem has also been interpreted as an objective, satirical look at wives:

> With an upward glance . . .
> thus. . .
> the sad, devoted look
> of a slave, of a knowing dog.
> The moment full and clear.
>
> A secret longing
> to kiss the hand of her lord -- [61]

Besides her poetry about land, labor, and love, Rachel wrote a large corpus of poems which reveal even a deeper layer of emotions. As an individual who endured great suffering, Rachel wrote about the effects of her illness and thoughts about death. The poem "Take My Hand" was written in 1925 while Rachel was hospitalized in Safed. In this poem, she appeals to her "brother soul" for comfort. A sense of despair and resignation enters into many of her poems:

> Take my hand in both your faithful,
> Brother soul.
> We both know that the stormy ship
> Will never reach its goal.
>
> Comfort me, only one, with steadfast
> words --
> My heart is sore.
> We both know that the wandering child
> Will never reach its mother's door. [62]

Following the onset of tuberculosis, Rachel began to describe the duality between "then" and "now." "Then" (TN) refers to the period of her life before World War I, a time of good health, rigorous labor, and fellowship. In one of her most popular poems, "Ve'ulai" ("Perhaps"), written in 1927, Rachel wonders whether the joy-filled days of the past were but a dream:

> And perhaps it was only a dream after all?
> And perhaps
> I never really went forth with the dawn
> to toil in the sweat of my brow? [63]

The joyous days of her youth are viewed by the ailing poetess as "Idle Tales," which are blocked in her memory,

out of reach:

> 'The barrier stands forever about those
> joyous days,
> From earth's four corners now the ancient
> stormwind wails.'
> Oh evening! I am sated with your desolate
> ways.
> I will recall no more these idle tales. [64]

Rachel's nostalgic yearning for her past youth is described in the following poem. This is one of several poems dedicated to Zalman Shazar, the third president of Israel:

> This I remember:
> The steep wall of mountain--
> mountain without end;
> From peak to stony peak I call,
> "Hurray! To youth! May youth live long!"
> And then the echo answers strong,
> "May youth live long!" [65]

The poem "In Sickness" is an eloquent statement of a woman's fear of death and struggle with her fate, "To curse my fate and to accept my fate:"

> To feel the darkness hammer on the eyeballs;
> To thrust blind fingers into empty space;
> To start in terror when the bushes rustle;
> To pray for miracles and long for grace. [66]

"Barren" reveals the extent of Rachel's sadness and loneliness. She compares herself to Mother Rachel and to Hannah from Shiloh:

> Like Rachel, the Mother, still will I complain.
> Like Hannah in Shiloh, still will I pray.
> Still will I wait
> For him. [67]

As her strength diminishes, she turns to either man or God for support and kindness:

My strength grows less and less --
Please be good to me, please be good to me!
Be my narrow bridge across a sad abyss,
across the sadness of my days. [68]

Her poem "My Dead" which was written shortly before Rachel's death has a motto "Only the dead won't die." In this poem, the speaker relates her thoughts about those who have died, and will accompany the speaker at the end of her life:

Only they are left me; they are faithful still
Whom death's sharpest knife can no longer kill.

At the turn of the highway, at the close of day
They silently surround me; they quietly go my way.

A true pact is ours, a tie time cannot dissever.
Only what I have lost is what I possess forever. [69]

In a number of her poems, Rachel attempts to understand and accept her tragic fate. In the following poem entitled "Let the Judgment Be," Rachel declares her willingness to submit to divine justice. She constructs an analogy between the condition of the heart and the fields. Just as the heart must humbly accept the judgment regarding its fate, so too the fields must accept the winter's decree. Not only does Rachel reveal her connection with her personal fate, but she also describes this connection of man with his fate in universal terms. "Judgment" most likely refers to her illness and imminent death:

Let the judgment be, the heart be humble;
let the judgment be as it hath,
no struggle, no wrath.

High in the northern fields
snow covers the ripe grain
secretly, silently.

With humble heart bear your
shame;
like those seed-corns be
that wait for Summer. [70]

In "Only of Myself I Know to Tell," the poetess wonders about her character and her fate. Once again, the speaker in the poem compares herself with something in nature. In this case, she sees a similarity between herself and the ant:

Only of myself I know to tell.
My narrow world is like the ant's,
I carry my burdens like it
Too heavy for my frail shoulder. [71]

Rachel focuses on her character and her fate. She compares and contrasts her present self with her past self. She sees herself as full of contradictions, but finds it difficult to verbalize her conclusions:

Long ago. . . but that was long ago.
Times
change. And now --
this is the way I am. [72]

She returns once more to the theme of judgment and acceptance, which takes place "In the Garden:"

Calm is the garden with blue and grey
In the peace of dawn.
I will rise from the dust of yesterday
To faith in the morn,
Accept with humble heart and free
The judgment that was given me. [73]

Rachel progressed to a certain degree of acceptance of her fate. She realized that, like Moses, "Each man has his Nebo;" [74]

each of us must learn to accept our death.

Professor Eliezer Schweid has pointed out that the awareness of Rachel as an individual is never lost, not even in her most objective poems written on biblical subjects, "Whenever she is singing about the Bible, she is really singing about herself" -- in contrast to Bialik, who "does not write about the Bible, he writes from within it." [75] She uses biblical characters, analogies, and motifs in order to fully express her personal emotions and individuality. She sees herself as linked to the generations of the past. One of the most famous is the poem entitled "Rachel," the biblical figure with whom she most identified herself. She does not emotionally respond to Rachel the shepherdess in a superficial fashion; rather, she closely links her fate with her biblical ancestor. The character of Rachel which is portrayed in this poem is not the Rachel from the pages of the Bible. This is the Rachel in the image and from the perspective of Rachel, the poetess, who possesses a greater depth of feelings, and a more tragic fate. Rachel, the shepherdess, represents for the poetess a well-known historical figure who reminds her of two important motifs which recur in her poetry and in her life -- a longing for love and the yearning for a child:

> Her blood in my blood streams,
> Her voice in me still sings --
> Rachel, the one who tends Laban's flock,
> Rachel -- mother of mothers. [76]

She also feels connected with Michal, Saul's daughter, through a common sense of pain and disillusionment. This poem also reveals the hidden feelings of the speaker regarding one whom she must have loved:

> By a small window still you stand,
> Proud, but a death within your eyes.
> My sister, I can understand --
> Who also love whom I despise. [77]

In a poem entitled "Elijah," Rachel recalls Elijah's ability to resurrect the dead. She wishes that she could restore life to her loved ones who have died. Realizing her limitations, she is left with only their memories:

> My dear dead! He won't come as before,
> to pray -- outstretched --
> with burning lips and eyes.
> No voice cries out. None listens.
> You are cold.
> And you will never rise. [78]

Rachel weds simplicity, love of her adopted homeland, and the Tanakh together in her well-orchestrated poetry. Her poems are characterized by clear, concise lyrical lines, which frequently lack a fixed rhyme scheme, but remain balanced and symmetrical. Her system of rhyme emphasizes certain words. Rachel is one of the first Hebrew poets who wrote poetry according to the tenets of the French school, varying both meter and rhyme. She is also among the first modern Hebrew poets who wrote in a conversational style. For example, in the previously mentioned poem "Ve'ulai" ("Perhaps"), a conversational tone prevails. The poem appears to be a series of complex

questions addressed to an intimate friend.

Her poems are invariably short, elegiac or nostalgic in tone, reflecting the pessimism of a dying writer. The majority of her poems are written in the first person, for example, "I," "My Strength Grows Less and Less," "To My Land," "Barren," and "Rachel." Rachel also includes biblical vocabulary in her poetry; e.g.: לחם חוק "daily bread" (Proverbs 30:8-- לחם חוקי "mine alloted bread"); מצל "shade-giving" (Ez. 31:3 -- מצל "shadowing"); בכי במסתרים "weeping in secret" (Jer. 13:17 -- במסתרים תבכה-נפשי "my soul shall weep in secret"); שמה לאל "has undone" (Job 24:25 -- וישם לאל מלתי "And make my speech nothing worth."

* * * *

Since so many of Rachel's poems are written in the first person, one can conclude that they serve as a diary of her life's journey. The poetess has allowed the reader ready access into the privacy of her soul and has revealed the heights and depths of her emotions through the medium of poetry. The great diversity of moods in her poetry is reflective of the different periods in her life. The appelation "Poetess of Sorrow" resulted from the pathos of her illness during the last years of her life, about which a legend developed by the cult who knew and loved her. For many years, Rachel's popularity seemed to prevent

literary critics from taking her work seriously. Sholom Kahn suggests that Rachel was affected by the general reaction of the younger generation of Israelis against the idealism and sentimentalities of the Zionist movement, associated with the history of the Second Aliyah. [79] Many critics were unable to find elements in her poetry which required elucidation. Critics such as Harari, [80] Ben-Or, [81] and Katzenelson-Rubashow [82] refer to the lyric simplicity of her work. Reuven Kritz in his book On Rachel's Poetry (Al Shirat Raḥel) claims that the exegetical essays, by focusing on the poem's manifest meaning, have only offered partial explanations of their meaning. [83] He states that this stems from the assumption that Rachel's poems are simple, spontaneous, humble autobiographical documents. He uses a structural-analytic approach in an attempt to reveal new levels of meaning. Kritz views these poems as "complex artifacts" which challenge the interpretative ability of the critic. He believes that the understanding of her poems ". . .is considerably enhanced when viewed as multi-dimensional rather than as uni-dimensional." [84] Although Kritz correctly analyzes the poems on many levels, his catagorization of her verse into poetical patterns is problematic since many poems belong in more than one thematic grouping. [85] Nevertheless, Kritz's systematic study clearly demonstrates the need for a revision of the popular view of Rachel. One must look beyond the legend and examine

more closely the relationship between her life and her literary development and composition. This will enable the reader to better understand the unique qualities of her poetic labors, and the emotional impact of her work will be greatly increased.

TO MY LAND

I've not sung to you, my land,
I've not praised your name
With great deeds,
With spoils of battle;
Just a tree -- my hands planted
By Jordan's quiet shores,
Just a path -- my feet follow
Through the fields.

Very small indeed --
I know it, O mother,
Very small indeed
Is your daughter's gift;
Just a shout of joy
When morning brightens,
Just weeping in secret
About your suffering.

IN MY GARDEN HAVE I PLANTED YOU

In my garden have I planted you,
In my secret garden -- in my heart.
Extend your branches
Your roots are deep inside me.

From morning to night
It will not rest, the garden will not be calmed --
Since you are in it, you are in it.
With your many joyous birds.

NEIGHBOR

I don't see him.
But I remember,
Remember quite well: he's here, he exists.
Guard and shield me from nightly fears
A square of golden light from his window.

If we only remembered: he is!
If we only were given to know:
There is one, invisible but certain as the light,
The knowledge of his nearness is like a soothing
hand
On a forehead covered with sweat and tired fear.

BARREN

If only I had a son, a little boy,
With black curls and clever.
Just to hold his hand and stroll
Through garden paths.
A boy . . . a little one.

Uri I'd call him, Uri my own;
Gentle and soft is his short name,
Like a tiny drop of light.
To my dark-haired child
"Uri!" --
I'd call him.

Like Rachel, the Mother, still will I complain.
Like Hannah in Shiloh, still will I pray.
Still will I wait
For him.

RACHEL

Her blood in my blood streams,
Her voice in me still sings --
Rachel, the one who tends Laban's flock,
Rachel -- mother of mothers.

Therefore the house is too narrow for me
And the city -- foreign,
Because her scarf would flutter
In the desert winds.

Therefore I hold on to my way
With such confidence,
Since my feet guard the memories
From long ago, long ago.

FROM OPPOSITE

The listening heart, the attentive ear:
Has he come? Will he come?
With every expectation
There is the sadness of Nebo.
On opposite sides -- two banks
Of one river
A harsh decree:
Forever distant.

Hands spread forth. Seen from opposite.
There -- He can't enter.
Each man has his Nebo
Over the wide land.

MY STRENGTH GROWS LESS AND LESS

My strength grows less and less --
Please be good to me, please be good to me!
Be my narrow bridge across a sad abyss,
    across the sadness of my days.
Please be good to me, please be good to me!
    be to me something of soul,
Be my heart's support, be a shade-giving
    tree in the arid desert.
Please be good to me! The night is so long,
    the dawn is so distant.
Be my small light, be sudden joy,
Be my daily bread.

ONLY OF MYSELF I KNOW TO TELL

Only of myself I know to tell.
My narrow world is like the ant's,
I carry my burdens like it
Too heavy by far for my frail shoulder.

Also my path -- like her path to the tree-top --
Was a path of pain, a path of toil,
A giant hand, wicked and sure,
A playful hand has undone.

All my paths twist, are covered with tears
From my secret fear of the giant hand.
Why did you call me, wonderous shores?
Why deceive me, distant lights?

ESTHER RAB

Esther Rab is Eretz Israel's first native-born poetess. She demonstrates in her poems an unaffected affinity with her homeland. The major theme of her poetry is Israel's landscape and man merging with it. Her poems are distinctly lyrical and highly original. Her short lyrics have a highly polished artistic style.

The poetess was born in Petaḥ Tikvah on April 4, 1899. She was the daughter of Judah Rab, one of the first Jewish guards in Eretz Israel. He helped found Petaḥ Tikvah in 1878. Esther joined Kibbutz Deganiah at the age of sixteen. She attended a teacher's training seminary, and later served as a teacher at Ben Shemen. She also was employed as an agricultural worker. Immediately following her marriage, she and her husband lived in Egypt for a few years, returning to Eretz Israel in 1925. They lived first in Tel Aviv, and afterwards in Petaḥ Tikvah.

She published her first poem in 1912. Her books of poetry include: Kimshonim ("Thistles," 1930); Shirei Esther Rab ("Poems of Esther Rab," 1963); and Tefilah Aḥaronah ("Last Prayer," 1972).

As a daughter of a settler in Eretz Israel, Esther Rab observed a settlement town develop in a desolate area.

Her poetry overflows with the sights, smells, and images of a newly cultivated land. This preoccupation with the land is a recurrent motif, incorporated into the following themes: homeland, love, religion, and death.

All of her poetry is enlivened with the spirit of Eretz Israel, its flora and fauna, its land and people. According to Y. Zemora, the poetess does not write poems about the landscape alone; rather, she writes poems of the heart, poems of the blood. [86] Zevi Luz concurs with this perception. He states that Esther does not write love songs to the land as do the majority of poets. He states: "On the contrary, her poems issue forth from the land, out of the simple thistles, prickly like a thorn-bush and pleasant like the days of childhood." [87] Esther Rab's homeland serves as a mental framework which furnishes her the freedom and material for poetic creation. She draws her strength from the earth itself. She does not romanticize her material. Instead, she uses concrete images for her description of her homeland. In the following poem, she expresses her love for the sea and mountains and belief in a religious presence:

Golan, Bashan,
Hermon, Kinneret:
The entire land
To hug with a glance.

The majesty of the mountain,
the dream of the sea.
God of the Fathers
Is in these skies.
I tremble, I shudder. [88]

One senses that the nature of the land deeply influenced the poetess, and perhaps molded her character, bequeathing to her a sense of confidence in herself and her heart.

Ginsburg questions why the poetess chose Kimshonim as the title of her first book of poetry.[89] He states that the answer to this question becomes clear with the first poem in the book. He concludes that as the first Hebrew poetess born in Eretz Israel, the land is particularly precious to her. In the first poem, a solitary bramble lies in the fields after reaping:

> And should the eye grow weary
> Of light's deceiving flow
> It will dip in green of bramble
> turning blue
> As in a pool of water chilled.[90]

Her images, drawn from nature, are particularly authentic. Her unique combination of visual images, crisp sounds, and tactile objects form a tapestry of colors and sensations. Lichtenbaum states that the golden sun, the smell of thorns and thistles appear as a complete, inseparable picture, and these verses, by themselves, cause the silence to speak.[91] The reader is presented with an opportunity to see the land through the eyes of the poetess with all the senses alive and functioning to their ultimate capability. Concrete images such as thistles, brambles, and thorns bring to life Eretz Israel before the plows tilled the fields and pushed back its wilderness.

The overused word "homeland" (מולדת) acquires new and different meanings when used by Esther Rab:

> My heart is with your dewdrops, O my homeland,
> At night, in the fields of nettles,
> The scents of cypress and moist thistle
> A hidden wing will I spread. . .[92]

The poetess concentrates her attention on the scents of the land and its produce. She will spread out her hidden wings among the scents of cypress and moist thistle. The phrase "hidden wing" (כנף החבויה) is further elucidated in another poem, "Bemazal Tammuz" ("In the Constellation Tammuz"):

> We will spread a wing,
> Wander endlessly
> To the other side of existence.[93]

Thistles and brambles serve as significant images in the following two poems. In "The Eruption of Thistles," the smell of the screw-beans and thistles will fill the spaces in the earth:

> The smell of soft, pungent odour of thistles
> Nestling close to each other
> Will fill the wide gaps
> In the shallow clods.[94]

The thistles burst forth unexpectedly and catch one's attention:

> Thistles erupted in the standing corn,
> Spilling like milk
> On the face of the earth.[95]

In another poem, the prickly thistles are presented as a gift:

> I am under the bramble
> Light, wicked,
> Laughing at its thistles
> I lift up towards you;[96]

Although the poetess uses concrete images, she does not describe the actual appearance of the landscape of her homeland. She tends to cling to nature as one clings to the breast of one's mother. [97] Her homeland appears to be engraved in her soul, submerged in her expressions, in her descriptions, and her comparisons. [98] The landscape is not described in bright colors. Instead, she paints her poetic canvas with vague, muted hues. One sees more of the background than the foreground.

Her poem "To Father" is autobiographical. In this poem, her father's identity is closely associated with nature. She refers to her father as:

> The one who ploughs the furrow despite the desert,
> The first one who penetrates the virgin soil.
> Blessed are the hands. [99]

She praises her father's capable hands which planted eucalyptus trees on the Yarkon waters.

In "Tel Aviv," the poetess revolts against the stark reality of city life. She contrasts the rural life of the Jewish pioneers with the artificiality of the urban culture:

> No threshing floor and no olive tree,
> Improperly furrowed
> You will press here,
> And stones of cement
> On your scrawny breast. [100]

As a daughter of nature, Esther Rab is opposed to everything which is not natural, and she pities those who distance themselves from nature, the source of life.

This motif of the land also adds a personal perspective to her short, lyric poems. For Esther Rab, Eretz Israel, the land of Israel, serves as a symbol of love. Nevertheless, her love poems and nature poems have their own distinct characteristics. Love is, as it were, one side of the revealed essence of this landscape. She does not attempt to feminize or soften her expression of feelings and desires. In fact, Zemora asserts that Esther's love poems are written in a masculine style, authentic and direct. [101]

She uses expressive, contrasting images to convey her ideas. With unflinching realism, she compares her lover to "a dead bird on the stream:"

> And then you floated toward me
> Like a dead bird on the stream.
> Dimmed, dark, your eyes,
> And for a moment, still flickering
> Beyond the dusky gold;
> Your arms weary,
> Dripping sorrow.
>
> A bare olive tree above us,
> Pale shadows at our feet. [102]

The bare olive tree parallels their barren relationship, filled with emptiness and sorrow. Despite her disappointments in relationships, the speaker in the poem which follows is willing to open up and embrace friends, lovers, and strangers:

> Today I am modest like an animal,
> open like rain-drenched fields.
> With a little fat hand I guide my life
> toward compassion and children.
> Every stranger, every sufferer
> comes to me today. [103]

Despite her supposed masculine style, there is a strong feminine presence in her poetry. She presents a new interpretation of a traditional prayer which is charged with feminist and traditional viewpoints. In order to understand "A Woman's Poem," it is important to know the basic prayer which she reinterprets. During the preliminary morning service (Birkhot Hashaḥar), men customarily say:

> Blessed art thou, Lord our God,
> King of the universe, who hast not made me
> a woman.

Women have an alternative prayer:

> Blessed art thou, Lord our God,
> King of the universe, who hast
> made me according to thy will.

She rewrites this prayer, beginning the poem in the following manner:

> Blessed the One who made me a woman. [104]

The poem is written in the form of a prayer. It is a hymn of thanksgiving, exalting God for creating woman. God's creation of woman is viewed as a positive act. She expresses her personal pride of being created as a woman, on a level equal to man. She affirms the beauty of a woman's body, its soft roundness:

> Blessed You who made me
> Round all over
> Like the wheels of the universe
> And like round fruit . . . [105]

This idea of voluptuousness is an important motif in this poem. After revealing the speaker's satisfaction that she was created as a woman, the emphasis changes. The speaker expresses the wish to become a child again:

> I am an adult
> And want to be a child,
> Crying from sorrow,
> Laughing, singing with a voice,
> Still and small --
> Like a tiny cricket. [106]

"Portrait of a Woman" describes the bond of devotion which develops between two people involved in a meaningful relationship. The love expressed is unqualified and trusting. The beginning of wisdom is realized in three ways: (1) to be with you; (2) to obey you; (3) to be yours. Silberschlag notes that the attitude expressed in this poem is characteristic of Rab's poetry. [107] He attributes it to her conservative view of life and her traditional femininity. This viewpoint assumes that a female speaker is addressing a male lover. However, it is unclear whether the speaker is addressing God or a lover. This poem may be alluding to the personal relationship between humankind and God. In this way, the poem would be describing the close bond and devotion which is the basis of wisdom.

One also senses a female presence in the poem which begins "I am under the bramble." The woman reveals her hiding place, "I am under the bramble / Light, wicked." A profound understanding of life is expressed in an unexpected way:

Each fold in my gown
Whispers to me:
Towards death
White and dancing
You go forth. [108]

The woman wants to merge with her beloved. The verdict does indeed accomplish this goal:

In bright daylight
In white fields of light
I pronounce our verdict
Together! [109]

If the beginning of wisdom is to obey and belong to one's beloved, then the natural culmination of the process must be to become one with the object of one's love.

Religious concerns arise in several of her poems. Zemora alludes to the paradoxical underpinnings of Esther Rab's religious poems. He characterizes them as religious poems of the irreligious, overflowing with the Jewish tradition and wisdom. [110] An example of her mode of religious expression is found in "Holy Grandmothers in Jerusalem." The reader is presented with an interwoven vision of the people and the land. As in so many of Esther Rab's poems, the smells of the environment combine with the imagery to create a particular mood. The scents of the blossoms and blooming orchards are contrasted with the aroma of the Sabbath. These divergent images also help delineate the differences between the secular and the religious life:

The smell of blossoms and blooming orchards
I suckled with my mother's milk . . .
I can feel the smell of your garments,
The aroma of Sabbath candles and naphthaline. [111]

The poem addresses itself to the importance of uncovering the source of life, and the meaning of one's existence. The stark reality of the life of a sabra is juxtaposed against making aliyah to Jerusalem. There is no separation between the two realms:

> Feet soft as hands, fumbling
> In the torrid sand,
> And tousled eucalypti
> Laden with bees and hornets
> Whispered a lullaby to me.
> Seven times shall I steep myself
> Into the Mediterranean
> To prepare for King David, my beloved,
> And I shall go up to him, with glorious dignity,
> To the mountains of Jerusalem; [112]

The poem takes place in the eternal present that permits the speaker in the poem to converse with historical personalities. The religious act of ritual immersion leads to a meeting with King David, and afterwards, a conversation about war and defense with Deborah, the judge and military leader. Religious leaders of the past are turned to for assistance by those who are in the process of shaping a homeland:

> I shall sit with Deborah under the date-tree,
> Have coffee with her and talk
> About war and defense. [113]

In "The Widow's Poem," traditional Judaism is exalted as a rational way of life:

> I can't extend my hand to you --
> Due to the holiness of the ring on my hand.
> I can't even give you my brow --
> My eyes are open beyond this . . . [114]

Thus, Esther Rab has found a way to harmonize the new wave of pioneering spirit with the shalshelet hakabbalah, the chain of Jewish tradition.

Her later poetry is much less in harmony with the world. Wisdom, resulting from maturity, self-examination, old age, and death especially permeate the pages of her later works. She does not compose poetry about death in the normative sense. For her, death is a plucking out, a detachment from life, as a plant is uprooted from the earth. In the poem, "As a Poppy, Borne by the Wind," the poetess describes the process of death as one which uproots the living, comparing the dead to the poppy returning to the dust:

> Lord, when you come to uproot me:
> Strew my petals in the wings of the wind
> And I shall be like a headless poppy
> And I shall bow down to the dust,
> And the parched clods of earth
> shall gather me to them. [115]

Her beloved insects, plants, and animals will continue their song of life:

> And insects will rustle
> In the acacia - hedges
> And the song - thrushes will be planing
> away in the secrecy of the orange-groves;
> Mustard and camomile herbs will spread their
> carpets
> Across the broad sands. [116]

While the body has returned to the earth, the spirit will soar above and observe it all:

> And my spirit will hover above them,
> Like a poppy borne in the wind. [117]

Bitter melancholy encompasses a mature poem entitled "Self Portrait." Should a person discover the bones of the poetess, he is told how to interpret them:

> Thus, interpret them:
> Long-straight bones,
> Bones for truth,
> And a firm stride
> In the paths of a good homeland,
> A clean, round skull
> For smooth thought. [118]

Along with the mind and body, unexperienced emotions are mourned:

> The heart eaten by worms
> With the blossoming of groves
> And longings which never came
> Or were lost
> Without love. [119]

In another poem, life is depicted as a thin thread which is drawn taut, ready to melt and extinguish one's life:

> A hairsbreadth
> Is your life;
> The thin cord
> Is drawn taut --
> Toward nothingness:
> There is no hook
> To fasten it on --
> The thread is melting;
> The cord is cracking --
> Fluttering over the nothingness:
> Shining and dying,
> Dying and shining. [120]

This description about the approach of death and man's inability to prevent its occurrence, is a common motif in her poetry. "Songs About the End" narrates the evening of a woman's life. She is ready to settle her accounts. She finds the stillness frightening. Nevertheless, the world

is becoming silent and dark as death approaches. She begins to protest her eventual death, and pursues a course of action. She passionately recollects all that has occurred in her life. She begins to regress back into her childhood as death approaches. Recalling her childhood, she focuses on a large doll with blue eyes:

> Now I am gathering
> A handful, thirstily
> Like one gathering
> Pieces of
> Multi-colored linen,
> For the big doll --
> The one which I had --
> Blue eyes . . .
> (Eyes of the grandson,
> Even more blue!) [121]

The mood changes. The sun's smile is bitter but tranquil as evening falls, symbolizing the onset of old age and approaching death:

> This sun is joyful --
> Accompanies me --
> Her smile is bitter, tranquil --
> Towards evening; [122]

The effects of age are felt in every line. The bare lilac tree, the tired limbs, the falling leaves -- all signify the beginning of the end:

> I will sit under
> A bare lilac tree --
> The pleasant warmth --
> For tired limbs
> I will not be happy --
> I will not be grieved
> I am in the falling leaves --
> Like a lilac tree. [123]

The majority of literary critics begin their analysis of Rab's poetry by commenting on the rich imagery and content of her poems. Her images are so striking and authentic. She describes the heavens in vivid terms:

> Like Cleopatra's eyes
> Dark green with evening
> And ominous. [124]

In another poem, she describes the great tiger in metaphysical terms:

> He lived
> beyond time,
> he was
> "the eternal tiger" --
> granter of visions,
> dispenser of dreams,
> collector of pain. [125]

By creating indelible mental impressions through the use of creative imagery, Esther Rab elevates prosaic lines into a poetic work of art. Each poem is like a still life dedicated to the moment.

The following poem is characteristic of her style. It contains a small number of sparse, concise lines which present a momentary impression:

> The rustle of flight wings,
> A multitude of greenery
> Like the murmur of holy
> Brooks.
> Two vultures
> And one fig-tree
> Are hanging
> On naught. [126]

Many of her earlier poems are built on one rhythmic movement which unifies the entire poem, as in "Two Vultures and

One Fig-Tree." In her later poems, one notices a staccato rhythm, which is often jarring, yet effective. Several one or two word lines are interspersed between two or more longer lines:

> The wind is whispering something --
> A vague whisper,
> Frightening . . .
> This mist
> In the treetop --
> From where?
> Is it in the eyes? [127]

Although she neither consolidates her poems through the use of rhyme nor separates them into verses, Esther Rab does employ free verse, focusing on a poem's internal rhythm. In fact, the poetess composed free, unrhymed verse long before it became popular. Although her verse lacks regular metrical patterns as well as the patterns of rhyme that signal traditional verse, it is more rhythmical than ordinary prose. She attempts to balance small word groups and phrases. Her style is more flexible and subjective than that of traditional versification. She includes in her verse syntactic patterns, strengthened by parallelism and sound orchestration. [128]

Zevi Luz [129] and Reuven Shoham [130] have different theories to explain Esther Rab's use of free verse. Luz claims that David Vogel (1891-1944) and Avraham Ben Yizḥak (1883-1950) wrote free verse which was influenced by the current trends in modern European poetry. He believes that Esther Rab's style was influenced by these poets. Shoham agrees with Luz's former statement but disagrees with Luz's

conclusion that Vogel and Yizḥak influenced her poetic style. Shoham asserts that she was not so much influenced by other poets; rather, he proposes that her free verse is an expression of the freeing experience of being a daughter of Eretz Israel. Shoham suggests that Esther Rab, as the first native Hebrew poetess, was far from the central literary culture of Europe, only becoming familiar with it later in her life.

It would seem that Shoham's position is too adamant and uncompromising. It may be true that Esther Rab had minimal contact with modern poetic circles; however, it seems unreasonable to assume that she was completely "cut-off" from European culture as a daughter of the land. The poetess herself permits us an insight into her interpretation of poetry. She indicates that "internal rhythm" is a pivotal factor in her poetry:

> What is poetry? Now the time has come to say: I think that poetry is (a) music; (b) a structure which comes from unknown depths, not one that is built with hands and intellect. The true underlying structure of poetry is its rhythm . . . This is the sort of thing that lives within the poet . . . The internal rhythm is difficult to express in words. This is the rhythm which goes against the rules; rather, a rhythm of the heart, of different cultures mixed up within you. I learned about rhythm and I learned about rhyme, but I forgot it all; and I have no attachment to it . . . Why do I write short lines, because then it is as if I have an internal point of judgment, of this feeling or this melody. This is like a pause in music, the name of this is internal rhythm. [131]

Esther Rab acknowledges that she studied prosody but "I forgot it all." Shoham concludes that this poetess does not carry with her the cultural baggage of a prosody system. She is not simply attempting to act contrary to convention. She is trying to express reality as exactly as possible.

Parallelism occurs periodically in her poetry, the most highly structured of which is "Portrait of a Woman:"

> Beginning of wisdom / To be with you - / Like the wind in the tree.
>
> Beginning of wisdom / To heed you - / Like a bird that heeds its flight.
>
> Beginning of wisdom / To be yours - / Like the vine to the earth. [132]

Esther Rab's syntax, her simple phraseology, her lack of flowery, lyrical language are highly influenced by biblical syntax. Her unique rhythms are also effected by biblical rhythms. One discerns explicit biblical allusions in many poems. The following are two examples: In "A Woman's Poem," one finds the phrase "you made me like a plant of the field (כצמח השדה)." This phrase is found in Ez. 16:7. In "Songs About the End," one finds the phrase "I am in the falling leaves." The word בשלכת is found in Isa. 6:13.

The literary critics praise Esther Rab as a mature and deeply serious poetess. Ginsburg extolls her interpretive ability and emotional expression:

> Each interpretation of hers is as if it were hewn from rock. Esther Rab is a part of the rocky landscape . . . A sense of tenderness

> bursts forth here and there, as if from under the rocks of a cliff. [133]

It is generally agreed that she composes poetry which is carefully weighed and measured. Her rich, precise language reveals very intimate emotions, concerning man and nature.

Inner feelings are analyzed in a refreshing manner, without pretext or any artificiality. Ben-Or notes that Esther Rab's poems are reality-based:

> These are modern poems, based in reality, describing internal reality, the idea, dressed in clothes, descriptive of feelings and wrapped the reality in hints and symbols. [134]

Lichtenbaum comments on her power of observation and contemplation. He asserts that she transcends reality and expresses the inexpressible in poetic form:

> But in several of her poems is sensed not only the power of sight, but also the power of observation and contemplation. There is also the incomprehensible which is couched in form, the hidden flashes from behind the revealed picture of the present comes a far away picture from the vision of generations. [135]

Most of her poems manage to combine something of the tangible and intangible, the conscious observation and the unconscious sensibility. Her poetry can be classified somewhere between a poem and a meditation on life.

Esther Rab presents her senses and moods in an honest and straightforward manner. According to Y.Zemora, the mark of truth gives her work special meaning. [136] Kimshonim which was published during the generation of Bialik, Peretz, and Shlonsky is very different in content

and form from the works of these masters. In her first book, she reveals her original poetic expression. Her best poetry flows effortlessly out of her love of Eretz Israel -- the fields, distant landscapes, the old and new cities. She mixes both the historical and personal past with the concrete present, maintaining an integrity about preserving the past.

Silberschlag is somewhat critical about Esther Rab's short poetic style:

> In the short poem, she creates neither memorable types nor memorable images, but only a vague impression of love for her native land. [137]

Lichtenbaum's analysis of Esther Rab's short poems seems to be more compelling. He states that the poetess well understands that the minimal approach is appropriate to her lyrical works. [138] Apparently, the short poetic form was relatively uncommon in Hebrew poetry at that time. Ben-Or explains that the poetess was unconcerned with publishing vast amounts of verse, and instead concentrated on sharpening her poetic form. [139]

Many critics refer to Esther Rab's use of masculine language. They state that her poems exhibit character, emotional upheaval, and strength. Neither feminine sentimentality nor feminine tenderness is discerned in her writings. However, this does not necessarily mean that she employs a masculine style. It is true that she does not have a romantic view of life. She is too much of a realist

to concern herself with petty flights of the imagination. Rather, she confronts life in a straight-forward manner, with her gaze directed to life around her -- the difficult life of a sensitive soul who draws her inspiration from the soil of her homeland.

A WOMAN'S POEM

Blessed the One who made me a woman --
I am earth and earthling,
A soft rib;
Blessed You who made me
Round all over
Like the wheels of the universe
And like round fruit --
That you gave me living flesh
Blossoming,
You made me like a plant of the field --
Bearing fruit;
That torn wisps of your clouds,
Gliding as silk
Over my face, my thighs;
I am an adult
And want to be a child,
Crying from sorrow,
Laughing, singing with a voice,
Still and small --
Like a tiny cricket --
In the exalted chorus
Of your cherubim.

I play

The smallest --

At your feet --

My creator!

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Beginning of wisdom:
To be with you --
Like the wind
In the tree.
Beginning of wisdom:
To heed you --
Like a bird that heeds its flight.
Beginning of wisdom:
To be yours --
Like the vine is
Of the earth.

MOUNTAINS AND HILLS

Mountains and hills
Under eyes --
Wide open --
Without seeing:
Oceans
Of light,
Abysses of darkness
And you move among them
Like a seed --
A hairsbreadth
Is your life;
The thin cord
Is drawn taut --
Toward nothingness:
There is no hook
To fasten it on --
The thread is melting;
The cord is cracking --
Fluttering over the nothingness:
Shining and dying,
Dying and shining.

I AM UNDER THE BRAMBLE

I am under the bramble
Light, wicked,
Laughing at its thistles
I lift up towards you;
Light strikes the expanse,
Each fold in my gown
Whispers to me:
Towards death
White and dancing
You go forth.
You appear --
But I, softly rejoicing
Though the gleaming sword is swinging --
In bright daylight
In white fields of light
I pronounce our verdict
Together!

O MY HOMELAND

My heart is with your dewdrops, O my homeland,
At night, in the fields of nettles,
The scents of cypress and moist thistle
A hidden wing will I spread
I shall forever move in cradles of soft sand --
    your ways
Between the long stretch of your acacia lanes
Like on pure silk
A landscape of charm that will not die,
The clear heavens are whispering
About the sea and trees, dark and frozen.

SONGS ABOUT THE END

The wind is whispering something --
A vague whisper,
Frightening . . .
This mist
In the treetop --
From where?
Is it in the eyes?
I do not love the clouds,
Now I am gathering
A handful, thirstily
Like one gathering --
Pieces of
Multi-colored linen,
For the big doll --
The one which I had --
Blue eyes . . .
(Eyes of the grandson,
Even more blue!)
This sun is joyful --
Accompanies me --
Her smile is bitter, tranquil --
Towards evening;

Greening fields
No longer mine,
Fields -- I sowed --
Already distant.
I will sit under
A bare lilac tree --
The pleasant warmth --
For tired limbs
I will not be happy --
I will not be grieved
I am in the falling leaves --
Like a lilac tree.

YOCHEVED BAT-MIRIAM

Yocheved Bat-Miriam (Zhelezniak) was awarded the Israel Prize for Hebrew Literature in 1972. She is the first woman writer to be honored by Israel's foremost literary award. She is considered to be a modernist poetess in the same genre as Nathan Alterman, Leah Goldberg, Abraham Shlonsky, and Ezra Sussman.

She was born in Keplits, Belorussia on May 3, 1901 and died January, 1980. Raised in an Hasidic family, she received both a traditional Jewish education and modern instruction in Russian and Hebrew. She studied education in Kharkov and later attended the universities of Odessa and Moscow. Leaving the U.S.S.R., she lived in France for several years. In 1928, she immigrated to Eretz Israel. She worked as a kindergarten teacher and participated in literary circles. She married and later divorced the writer Ḥayim Hazaz. Her only son fell in the War of Liberation.

The majority of Bat-Miriam's poetry was written between the two world wars, reflecting her personal experiences as a child in a small Russian village and as a settler in Israel. Her first poems were published in 1923, in the important annual "Hatekufah." Her first

volume of poetry Merahok ("From Afar") was published in 1932. These lyrically romantic poems contain intimate memories infused with love and with yearning for the religious sanctity of her father's house. It was followed by six other volumes of poetry. The poems collected in Demuyot Me'ofek ("Images from the Horizon," 1942) recreate pictures of her family in the distant world she left behind. The collection Reayon ("Interview, 1949") deals with life and death, and displays the marked influence of the Russian Symbolists. Her volume of selected poems, Shirim ("Poems," 1963) was dedicated to her son, Zuzik, one of the "Thirty-Five" who fell in the Hebron Hills during the War of Liberation. Other works include: Eretz Israel ("The Land of Israel," 1937); Mishirei Rusyah ("Songs of Russia," 1942); and 1943 - Shirim La-Ghetto ("Ghetto Verse," 1946.)

According to Ruth Kartum-Blum, one can divide Bat-Miriam's poetry into two distinct periods: (1) Poems of her youth, prior to her aliyah to Israel (1929); (2) Poems written in Eretz Israel.[140] Her early poems are characterized by a clear, concise style, as exemplified in the poems about the writer's childhood. During her second creative period, Bat-Miriam began to use complicated, vague imagery. According to Ben-Or, Bat-Miriam became a greater adherent of Symbolist poetry than any of the Israeli poets of our generation.[141] A student of Russian literature, Bat-Miriam was greatly influenced by several Symbolist poets such as Alexander

Blok (1880-1921) and Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900). Her symbolic verse absorbs the sights, colors, and sounds of her childhood, filled with exotic, dream-like imagery. One image fades into another, causing the past to converge with the present, and the future. Her symbolism delves into the internal essence of an idea or object, attempting to present its true image. The following is an example of her vague symbolism:

אל תשאל פה בהירות מסברה
פה הברור - כסופה החול .. . . .

Don't ask here for a clear explanation,
Here it is clear -- the longing for sand . . .[142]

Tradition, Eretz Israel, women, and love are several important themes in Bat-Miriam's poetry. An overarching feeling of religiosity encompasses this wide range of thematic content. Bat-Miriam remarked upon accepting the Bialik Prize:

> The Bialik Prize. Bialik poems -- the first book I ever received from my father. Not as a gift, but as a prize for having learned some chapters from the Bible by heart. Somewhere behind us are the years of our childhood, closed and shut away like a garden in perpetual bloom that knows no change.
>
> It is there I see myself, still sitting on the doorstep, learning my chapters while the great skies spread out above me descend like flocks to the far edges of the field . . .[143]

One senses in these words the poetess' ever-present preoccupation with her childhood memories. "Cranes from the Threshold" is an example of the numerous poems inspired by

the poetess' memory of the pastoral landscape of her youth in southern Russia:

> Behind me you remained on the road,
> And my footstep exults remembering.
> A golden, pensive sheaf,
> Cranes, cranes on the meadow. [144]

These cranes, which serve as the central image of the poem, symbolize her remembrances of things past.

As in the poetry of Saul Tchernichovsky, -- a poet whom she greatly admired -- Bat-Miriam focuses in her earlier poems on the ideal world of her natural homeland. She fondly recalls her father's house as imbued with holiness, prayer, the study of Torah, mitzvot, and tzedakah:

> My father's house rose peacefully
> Like a prayer -- pure and bright.
> Saintly men illumined it
> With religious light. [145]

Her father was a Chabad Hasid, a scholar, and an owner of a water-mill. His description, together with poems about her mother, grandmother, grandfather, and uncle appear in her book Demuyot Me'ofek. [146] The ancient melodies of the Kiddush, the Barchu, and the Shabbat niggun reverberate in her memory:

> A patriarch's niggun cries in me
> The suppressed cry of the matriarchs. [147]

She often cries out to God, lamenting her difficulty in composing a prayer:

> How will I open my lips to you
> In a prayer and a whispered request -- [148]

Nostalgia and sincere longing for the past characterize her poem "God of the Fathers." In this poem, the speaker cries out to the God of the patriarchs for assistance in her prayers. The poem itself is composed in the style of a supplication:

> God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
> Be gracious, O merciful one, God of Gods!
> How to pour forth, I do not know,
> Behold, my heart is before you, O Lord. [149]

In this poem and other poems written in the form of a prayer or supplication, the speaker converses with God and confesses her personal shortcomings. The poetess identifies with other Jews who pour forth their supplication to God from the depths of their soul. The sense of uncontrolled grief of women joined together in public prayer leaves a lasting impression on the reader:

> Readings of "Tehilim" in a minyan, in public,
> Joined around me, crying and weeping
> Excited and moved congregation, you rise!
> Ask me what is in my soul. [150]

Ruth Kartun-Blum provides an essential key for unlocking the underlying stylistic structure of this poem. She states that in Bat-Miriam's religious poetry, one finds all the signs of an introverted writing style of a person speaking to himself. Indeed, Bat-Miriam attempts to emphasize the ancient and mysterious attachment of man to all that is transcendent and symbolic in existence. [151]

The shadow of the matriarchs hovers over the empty Sabbath menorah in "From Your Hand, My God, My Destiny:"

From your hand, my God, my destiny --
Submitting, I accept Him and silence.
But the melody "Ministering Angels"
Is humming in my aching heart.

How can Friday, the most blissful of days,
Skip over my house --
Come! on my empty menorot
I'll whisper the innocent whisper. 152

She whispers a song of heart-felt yearning to the Sabbath in an attempt to recapture her former religious innocence. However, the Sabbath spent in her father's home is only a memory. She has the empty menorot as a momento concomitant with fond memories and unfulfilled longings as expressed in a melody imbedded in her soul.

Besides poems which express longing for the landscape of childhood, one finds in Bat-Miriam's early poetry, as in the works of the majority of poets of her age and generation, verses about her longing for Zion. These include motifs characteristic of Zionistic poetry such as a feeling of strangeness towards the landscape of Eretz Israel, even though it is the landscape of her spiritual homeland. After immigrating to Eretz Israel, she yearned to totally identify with the national aspirations of her people; yet, it still remained a distant vision for her. In her poem "Eretz Israel," Bat-Miriam expresses the mysterious connection between the people and the land itself:

My land, my land is aglow
In the luminous vision of my people
Longing for an unsolved redemption.
It is dispersed to a hidden and stormy world. 153

She also succeeds in transmitting the spirit of the holiness of the land, which she sees as if in a vision. Once again, the poetess appears to be removing herself from her poetic descriptions, observing the land from afar:

> You are ungrasped, unseen.
> Undemanding, far-off, unexpressed
> Like some frost-frozen query, I stare.
> May the mystery unmanifest
> Be hallowed in me evermore. 154

In her series of city poems entitled "Five Cities," Bat-Miriam describes the nature of life and tradition in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Kiev, Paris, and St. Petersburg. Jerusalem has left its indelible mark on the very rocks on which it stands:

> Engraved in a cleft of stone,
> Carved in a rock and a crevice,
> Inscribed in the landscape and
> on the side of a slope --
> Mountain, valley, and green hill -- 155

There is a mood of lurking fear regarding the precarious position of Jewish Jerusalem which is caught between the Christians and the Moslems:

> A stranger, you turn, wrapped
> In the bell sound of cross-covered monasteries,
> Image of a crescent drawn from the side,
> Like a sword from those lying in wait. 156

The city of Tel Aviv evokes the whole gambit of emotions. Tears are mixed with laughter, visions of death, love, and fantasy animate the lives of its inhabitants:

> From this planted poverty
> The still life, the animal, the plant,

The all-inclusive humility,
Tears, laughter, and want.[157]

Her humility prevents her from following in the footsteps of the city:

Flowering within their clear smiles,
to remember
Death, vision, love, and fantasy.
I am too humble to follow, O city,
My city, my beautiful city.[158]

The poetess reveals her deep love and concern for her people and her complete identification with their fate:

Yet only you, dishevelled from the whirl
Still rent from cry and hue,
Emburdened with your stormy way,
What, my people, will you do?[159]

The subject of women is another major theme in her poetry. Bat-Miriam portrays women as standing at the crossroads of a changing generation. According to Silberschlag, her poems serve as a memorial to the woman of the past.[160] She considers the housewife and mother to be the feminine ideal. For Bat-Miriam, the highest attribute of womanhood is "to soothe and to please:"

This is our gift of gifts
To ease for awhile
Man's grief with a song
And a motherly smile.[161]

She extolls the close relationships among female members of a family, including poems of a daughter to her mother, of a mother to her daughter, and of a sister to her sisters. In her poem entitled "Grandmother," she extolls the religious faith and humility of a Jewish grandmother:

Large, strict, and festive,
Towards the blacksmith's wife
She walked, with modesty and a feeling
Equal to an extended holiday. 162

The poetess is appalled by the effects of modernity on Jewish lives,preferring to elicit former memories of traditional observance. She respects only those modern women who retain a connection with their religious past. She praises the old women who sit on the threshold of the house of study with their prayer books open. It appears that these women are doing their upmost to keep the religion alive:

They sit, still they sit, old ancient women
On the stoop of the slumbering synagogue,
As on a fainting shore between fact and
fantasy,
Staring unstirring in still setting fog. 163

These women are not concerned with their mundane existence; rather, they peer into the mysterious world found "among spaces between letters and signs":

Prayer books open towards leaning horizons
Inclined in desire to see and divine
The splendours of a world that dreams
of itself
Among spaces between letters and signs. 164

Bat-Miriam loved and respected the poetesses Rachel and Else Lasker-Schueler. She dedicated two elegies to her friends, each one filled with love and pain. The anguished feeling of loss at the death of a close friend is the subject of the poem "And You Are Not," dedicated to Rachel. She compares the intensity of this feeling of

loss to the emptiness of an abandoned palace:

> The streets are swallowing me today
> without you,
> Empty and abandoned --
> As in ancient palaces
> My strange steps are shaking,
> listening to themselves.[165]

Through her revelation of the inner workings of the soul of a Jewish woman, Bat-Miriam stumbles on the universal experience of human isolation. This understanding is intensified by the poetess' expression of her personal isolation:

> I
> Am the loved one
> Secluded
> On a lonely mountain.[166]

She does not fail to convey the inner strength and religiosity of the biblical woman. In "Miriam," events of the past are intermingled, reminiscent of the rabbinic dictum: ein mukdam ume'uhar batorah, "there is no "before" and "after" in the Torah. Miriam, Bat-Miriam's namesake, is portrayed as a strong religious figure who is confronted with an echo of the future:

> -- With you, with you in the storm
> Your body extends like a timbrel,
> With you, in your dance opposite
> the flame
> The smell of sands and infinity.
>
> -- I will tell of being jealous and leprous,
> I will tell you something about myself.
> I beseech you in your unyielding seclusion
> do not submit,
> Remain in your splendid isolation.[167]

In Bat-Miriam's love poems, she expresses her ideas in natural imagery, in an impressionist manner, sensitive to shades of color and varying sounds. Her creative use of symbolism provides the dominant foundation of her love poetry. Once again, the poetess chooses to view her world at a distance. By distancing herself, she is able to uncover new perceptions that help her understand the past. She states at the conclusion of a poem:

> I answered:
> Here I am,
> I love -- the distance. [168]

There is a strong religious sensibility underlying her love poems. Ruth Kartun-Blum writes:

> . . . Her love poems are sometimes more religious than her poems in which she turns to God . . . Her love is idealistic, spiritual, abstract, and self-defeating. The source of this concealed paradox is found in the mixture of the erotic with the religious. [169]

One discerns a feeling of longing, of expectation of the mysterious visitor:

> I shall break my crust into two
> And wait on my stoop, hand on knee,
> They will come:
> The wanderer, the blue --
> To drink my water with me. [170]

It is sometimes difficult to determine whether the object of her love is God or man:

> Not a word will I be able to say,
> Not a thing will I be able to show
> Of his height that keeps rising higher,
> Of his good and gentle glow. [171]

There is an expression of death even in her love poems,

mingled with a feeling of serenity and completion:

> When the parting suddenly flings wide forever
> The unknown distance, in a little while,
> I'll remember everything by name, by the quiver
> Of their wise and bashful smile.
>
> I shall put on my dead face with a
> silence free
> Of joy and of pain forevermore,
> And down will trail like a child after me
> To play with shells on the shore. [172]

Bat-Miriam uses metaphors and similes drawn from the past. Her shoulders are "a book of prayer and praise to the Lord," and the door to her father's house is "an illuminated title page of the hymnal." [173] Many examples of biblical expressions are found in her poetry. In Merahok, the vav conversive, a biblical form which changes a future form into the past tense, and hineini, a common biblical expression meaning "here I am," are used:

> ואען:
> הנני,
> אוהבת אני הרחוקה ---
>
> I answered:
> Here I am,
> I love the distance. [174]

She frequently employs biblical parallelism that emphasizes her vivid imagery:

> חקוקה בנקיק ובסלע,
> חרותה בצור ונקרה
>
> Engraved in a cleft of stone,
> Carved in a rock and a crevice [175]

The expression בנקיק הסלע is found in Jeremiah 13:4, and בנקרת הצור, in Exodus 33:22.

One senses in reading her poetry that Bat-Miriam is not particularly concerned with revealing to the reader the identity of the person or object addressed. It is as if the poem describes an internal conversation between a person and his soul. It seems perfectly clear to the speaker to whom s/he is appealing. This characteristic gives the poem a dream-like quality. In "Cranes from the Threshold," the first line of the poem begins מאחרי את "Behind me you . . ." On first reading, it is unclear who is the unnamed feminine singular, "you" (at) the poetess is addressing. Perhaps it is the poetess' homeland, the past, or the image of her life. By the third stanza, one realizes that the poetess is speaking to the landscape of her childhood: [176]

> Because you (at) were, because you were
> radiant in your weeping,
> Because you bent over a painted wave,
> Breathing as you sailed on and on,
> The breath. [177]

Bat-Miriam often uses selected colors with symbolic significance in her poetry. Blue, green, gold, and white occur with the greatest frequency. Blue (כחול and תכלת are used synonymously) often is used to describe the landscape of her childhood or Eretz Israel:

> With your flute, gilded and dying
> As a distant house suspended in blue. [178]

Green is also used in the description of the landscape as well as of moods and emotions. One poem begins:

> In my dream
> I saw a green fire. [179]

This is the fire of jealousy; green is often associated with jealousy in folklore. Green also appears in her poem "Eretz Israel:"

> While over the standing corn whispering
> With gentle green humility
> Emergent, more plain, quivering,
> Your clear inmost likeness I see. 180

She frequently uses the color "white" to portray the pristine beauty of nature:

> In gardens they will stroll, where white and clear
> On pedestals madonnas muse
> Who bless their prayers, their vows of love,
> Their fresh and joyful views. 181

White, the color of purity, and gold, a color of richness, help describe the virgin land of Eretz Israel:

> Hill, mountain, sandstrip a-twining
> Without shadow or fountain or tree.
> Slow camels pacing and hovering
> Through a white, bare and golden country. 182

Gold is the predominant color reminiscent of the landscape of her childhood. In "Cranes from the Threshold," the landscape of the speaker's childhood is bathed in gold -- "a golden, pensive sheaf," "golden distance," and "goldening letter." Arnold Band asserts: "the 'golden' hue will flicker like a leitmotif throughout the poem." 183

Within her rhymed verses and traditional stanzas, Bat-Miriam uses consonance, alliteration, and assonance. By juxtaposing בכחול "with blue" and התוחלת "hope", she strives for internal rhythm in the first line of a stanza:

> העומדה בכחול התוחלת
> Standing with blue hope.

In the third line of the stanza, alliteration, consonance and rhyme are employed. The final words in both lines rhyme:

המיח לב מעפיל מקפלת
Yearning for the brave embrace.

Bat-Miriam's bold, unusual phraseology, sophisticated rhythm, and biblical parallelisms emphasize the skill of her poetic craft.

Ruth Kartun-Blum writes in the introduction to her book "Distant Remoteness:"

> The poems of Bat-Miriam, daughter of the generation of Shlonsky, Alterman, and Leah Goldberg have generally not merited the academic response -- in the respect of criticism and research -- which several others of her generation have merited. [184]

This is the first book which deals with Bat-Miriam's poetry in depth. Those literary critics who have chosen to respond to some aspect of Bat-Miriam's work seem to express a preference for either her earlier or later poetic style. Lichtenbaum prefers her earliest work, Merahok, due to its clarity and simplicity. [185] He asserts that these are personal poems which probe the intimate recesses of the soul in the manner of a personal confession, moving from the subjective to the objective. He recognizes that the poetess sometimes distances herself from the reader in these intimate poems.

Eisig Silberschlag prefers her later, nonpersonal poems. He states:

> The personal poems of Bat-Miriam -- the love poems -- lack the immediacy of appeal of her nonpersonal poems. [186]

There truly is a marked contrast between her earlier and later works. According to Kartun-Blum, the works which follow Merahok exhibit more originality. Zemora's claim that it is almost impossible to believe that Merahok and Demuyot Me'ofek were written by the same poetess is absolutely valid. [187] Ben-Or warns the reader that the collection of poems which appeared after Merahok requires intelligent readers who are capable of uncovering its hidden secrets. [188]

Critics often comment on her sense of independence, originality, and "rootedness." Her sense of belonging to the land of Israel contrasts sharply with the feelings of rootlessness which was the fate of other poets of her generation who also emigrated from Russia.

Several critics have attempted to identify that unique quality in her poetry that sets her apart from others. Ginsburg attributes this unique characteristic to her humble origins. He believes that her childhood spent in a small village greatly influenced her spirit and her personality. [189] He suggests that she created an ideal vision of her village in her soul and retaught her eyes to see that past, as if a priori, as if from afar. Ben-Or presents a more compelling interpretation. He submits that the poetess is speaking in her poetry as if

to herself and not to others.[190] Bat-Miriam seems unconcerned whether the reader understands the intention of her words. One senses that the hidden meaning of her words is only known by the poetess herself. Kartun-Blum seems to understand the true sense of Bat-Miriam's unique style. According to her, one feels like one has entered the world of dreams when one reads her poetry:

> Here, the walls between object and subject tumble down, between the past and present and future. The memory becomes 'now,' and now is as if it were not now, because the past dwells in it.[191]

One cannot help but notice that Bat-Miriam is thrown alternately between two opposing forces -- rebelliousness and submission; the enchantment of remoteness and the attraction of her father's house. During her youth, she found happiness in the Jewish tradition. In her newly adopted homeland, the tradition was perceived by others as a joyless burden. She found the process of adjustment to this world rather difficult, and discovered renewed faith in her cherished memories.

Out of her love of Judaism, Bat-Miriam has succeeded in conveying her hopeful vision of the landscape of both her natural and spiritual homeland. She effectively combines the past with the present in her descriptions of Eretz Israel. She gives expression to the deepest Jewish sentiments regarding the land of Israel, employing special poetic images in a distinctive fashion. Lichtenbaum states

that in her "Eretz Israel" poems, she tries to bring a sense of the exotic to the verses by emulating the oriental style, using abstract images to create an inspired form.[192] Joseph Carmel successfully articulates the nature of this poetry:

> Messianic mania and the dizzy longing for redemption are woven into Bat-Miriam's poems about Eretz Israel, which sweep you away with their raging, monotonous rhythm from stanza to stanza, from poem to poem, without giving you a moment to breathe or look aside, or concentrate on a small item or to meditate. When you finally arrive at the end of a brief section:
>
> My land, my land is aglow,
> In the luminous vision of my people . . .
>
> you know that something is happening to you, words of prophesy pass you by in an apocalyptic manner.[193]

Bat-Miriam has an intimate, intuitive understanding of the soul of woman. She delves into the inner recesses of her own being in an attempt to reveal the essence of womanhood. According to Silberschlag, neither love of land nor love of man compares to her overpowering love for the woman of the past. He states:

> Bat-Miriam became -- through sheer force of empathy -- her recorder, her annalist, her historian in verse.[194]

Lichtenbaum asserts that she reveals one of the exalted symbols of the feminine craft -- the life of the soul, not only her own, but also the universal soul.[195] Similarly, Gurfein lauds Bat-Miriam's ability to express the fragile, intimate feelings of women by explaining the emotional underpinnings of their personalities.[196]

The reader will undoubtedly notice Bat-Miriam's preoccupation with grief and loneliness. Harari somewhat overstates this point by attributing this to the poetess' obsessive fear of life and death, by claiming that almost every poem that she writes includes the word "death." [197]

Bat-Miriam's impressionistic poetry is replete with unusual images that enlarge the scope of poetic expression. While gazing at the world from afar, she is able to peer through the looking glass of a woman's soul and disclose the chaos of human emotions. Her charming verse contains within it the qualities of great inspiration and honest exploration, capable of awakening the reader to the beauty of the natural world and man and woman's place within its perimeters.

To Rachel

AND YOU ARE NOT

And you are not, you are not, you are not.
There as one who is planted and sprouting,
From the silent and united earth and heavens
Rising from your grave
Observing -- a single white stone.

And you are not, you are not, you are not.
Days -- a flock of birds are ruffled,
To the deck of a wrecked ship.
Clinging to one another,
Beaten by this
Calling in silence,
Melting like foam in space
You are not, you are not, you are not.

The streets are swallowing me today without you,
Empty and abandoned --
As in ancient palaces
My strange steps are shaking, listening to themselves.

Lofty and very alone
The echo falls near them - - -
And you are not, you are not, you are not.

In the coming of a new red day on its banks
Let it be as a river
In its depths: mountain, tree, and I.
Floating, floating, floating:
Smells, echoes, colors
And taste, things remembered long ago
Like green and blue on the water
You return
Not caught like a cloud.
Like an invisible memory,
But affirm in silence your hidden nature
And ascend like a mist from the earth.

And you are not, you are not, you are not.
Your name is raised and moves
    like a drowning veil
Your name moves and hovers like circles
    in the river
From a stone descending to the depths,
A white stone, alone;
And you are not, you are not, you are not.

MIRIAM

She stood opposite the bulrush and reeds
Breathing stars and desert.
The eye of Apis, round and sleepy
Floating like its cautious sands.

Near the sand, near its golden rustle
Near the hidden smile of the princess
Near the secret of the scribes on stone
Advancing to the melody of the palace

Far away, in the memory of affluence
Like a viper at the border of the world,
The trodden -- Goshen strengthens
The image of the dimmed tribes.

-- With you, with you in the storm
Your body extends like a timbrel,
With you, in your dance opposite the flame
The smell of sands and infinity.

-- I will tell of being jealous and leprous
I will tell you something about myself.
I beseech you in your unyielding seclusion

do not submit,
Remain in your splendid isolation!

She stood shaken by the whisper
As the white crest of a crashing wave
Bent over the infant as a vow,
As a command,
As redemption,
As fate.

I SAW YOU IN MY DREAM

I saw you in my dream
Today.
Silence and a deep valley
All around.
I went outside,
Three glowing candles
I lifted to face the sky;
They gaze at all the expanse from above
Thousands of stars shimmering
In modesty.
I raised them
And even more, was I quiet.

LAND OF ISRAEL

My land, my land is aglow
In the luminous vision of my people
Longing for an unsolved redemption
It is dispersed to a hidden and stormy world.

With it you are exalted, permeated
Like tidings in the space of the world,
With it you are exalted, unredeemed,
A fiery chariot between mountains of the world.

JERUSALEM

Engraved in a cleft of stone,
Carved in a rock and a crevice,
Inscribed in the landscape and on the
    side of a slope --
Mountain, valley, and green hill --

You ascend, brooding, groping
In ancient houses of study.
Fear of memories, whispering
Amid the dimness of days long ago.

A stranger, you turn, wrapped
In the bell sound of cross-covered monasteries,
Image of a crescent drawn from the side,
Like a sword from those lying in wait.

Onward, spins the web
Yesterday, tomorrow, fleeting as a shadow.
You raise the high smiling wall
Against an ancient tower and remember - - -

Standing with blue of hope!
Prolonging in gold your blessed surrender!

It doubles the yearning of the brave
With the last whisper and fading sound!

Jerusalem -- purple evenings
Opposite the dark cave's mouth.
Light in the water is doubled
On the blue stone of the depths.

Superficial as magic tricks
Of a tired wanderer of the desert,
Tattered at the portals of heaven
Taking in your veiled image.

With your flute, gilded and dying
As a distant house suspended in blue
Inciting oneself without rest
My people's vision of beauty and bereavement.

Until you ascended and your countenance
Was borne in glory,
Envious of redemption, hidden and desperate
An eternal and secret covenant of life --

But your name I will whisper -- Jerusalem,
As one who wishes to enclose in its borders
All the splendor unseen by the eye,
Whose light forms your kingdom.

GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Be gracious, O merciful one, God of Gods!
How to pour forth, I do not know,
Behold, my heart is before you, O Lord.

I'll take a "Tehina," aged, crushed.
I'll read a prayer, each prayer in silence.
Tears, cries, sighs -- go before me,
Rise, all of you, on my lips.

Readings of "Tehilim" in a minyan, in public,
Joined around me in crying and weeping
Excited and moved congregation, you rise!
Ask me what is in my soul.

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Be gracious, O merciful one, God of Gods!
How to pour forth, I do not know,
Behold, my heart is before you, God.

ANDA PINKERFELD

Anda Pinkerfeld is the first poetess to write Hebrew poetry specifically for children and distinguish herself in this field. Her principle strength is found in her poetry about Das ewig Weibliche, 'eternal femininity.' 198 No other Hebrew poetess permits us such a profound insight into the essence of womanhood in all its variations and nuances.

The poetess was born in West Galicia on June 26, 1902 into an assimilated Jewish family. During her youth, her family moved from the small town of Risha to Lvov. Their daughter was educated in this center of Hebrew and Polish enlightenment in Galicia. She studied Hebrew with private instructors and was educated in a Polish secondary school. After she completed her studies, she was admitted to the University of Leipzig, Germany to study microbiology. She also studied at the universities of Lvov and Berlin. In 1920, she visited Eretz Israel with a Shomer Hatzair group and worked in the Shomron. She soon returned to Poland. In 1924, one year following her marriage, she and her husband (Amir) emigrated to Israel. They initially lived and worked in Kiryat Anavim, where Anda pursued her earlier interest in biological research. In 1946, the Jewish Agency sent her on a mission to refugee camps in Germany.

Following the Israeli War of Liberation, she worked for several years gathering material on the victims of the Holocaust. She was later employed as the director of the Manya Bialik House and at D'vir, the publishing company.

She published her first book of poetry in Polish at the age of eighteen. (1920) Her first poem was a prayer of a Polish child for the liberation of his country. In the following year, she published Songs of Life, another volume of poetry in Polish. Under the influence of Uri Zvi Greenberg, (1894-) she began writing in Hebrew. Her first Hebrew poem was published in Davar in 1928. Yamim Dovevim ("Days Tell," 1929) is her first collection of Hebrew poems. Her books of poetry include: Yuval (1932); Geisha Lian Tang Sharah (Geisha Lian Tang Sings," 1935); Gittit (Biblical musical instrument, Ps. 8:1, 1937); Duda'im ("Mandrakes," 1943); Gadish ("Grain Heap," 1949); and Kokhavim Bideli ("Stars in a Bucket," 1957). Her first collection of children's poetry is Al Anan Kevish ("The Highway in the Clouds," 1933) which was edited by Bialik. Her collection Shirei Yeladim ("Songs of Children," 1934) was awarded the Bialik Prize for children's poetry.

Women, love, and Eretz Israel are three main themes of her poetry. In her poetic monologues, Anda Pinkerfeld addresses herself to the condition of the Jewish soul by delving into her own inner psyche. This wellspring of

hidden emotions is revealed through her prayers of the heart. She infuses her poetry with vitality through the process of honest confession and reflection.

The poetess relentlessly explores the nature of woman's inevitable destiny as passionate lover, supportive wife, and sacrificing mother. According to Simon Ginsburg, three motifs are present in her poetry about women: love; desire; and suffering, or the fear of suffering.[199] Two of these motifs -- love and desire -- are vividly depicted in the following poem which appears in the collection Yuval:

> We, women,
> Pass through the world
> Like torches of love.
> Our dresses burn with the warmth of our bodies.
> We, women,
> Call hungrily for lovers
> With eyes, with mouth, with heaving chest,
> With each motion of the body
> We call.
> And this is life
> To us, women.[200]

Anda Pinkerfeld fully identifies with all women who, she believes, share a universal fate. Women are seen as active participants in life who "pass through the world like torches of love." The love and desire which emanate from their bodies reflect the magnitude of their ability to love.

Each of her ten books of poetry contributes additional insights to our understanding of women and womanhood. In "All Mothers" Anda Pinkerfeld exhibits a profound understanding for mothers of all pigment hues -- black, white,

yellow, and red. Once again, the poetess extends her vision beyong herself and speaks in universal terms. Suffering, Ginsburg's third motif, is seen as concomitant with giving birth. While they suffer in childbirth, they understand nothing at all, "except the fear of life and of death." She reduces the process of childbirth to the most common denominators of suffering, fear, and nurturing.

In Gadish Ve-omer, [201] Anda focuses on the eternal female of former times. She deals with the mysterious quality of woman's love. [202] "Astarte" is an ode to life taken from the Jewish people's mythopoetic past. Astarte, the goddess of fertility, personifies life and fertility inherent in the biblical injunction "be fruitful, and multiply." (Gen. 1:28) The poem is a hymn of adoration to fertility symbolized by Astarte, the "mother of the earth" who nourishes all creatures and is deserving of their praise.

It is appropriate for a female poet to concern herself with the women in the Bible. She is preoccupied with the nature of heroic and pre-historic women such as: Eve, Lot's wife, Hagar, Leah, Yael, Jephthah's daughter, Delilah, and Abishag. According to Eisig Silberschlag, "their common denominator is sensuous intoxication and violent passion." [203] The poem entitled "Eve" reflects on the image of Eve, the mother of all life. The intense yearning of a woman for motherhood is the subject of this

poem. Just as bearing fruit is the goal of fruit-bearing trees, so too, childbearing is seen as the goal of all women. In the poem, Eve seeks out the tree in the garden and feels a kinship with it, a common destiny:

> I will know your secret, you grew because of Him,
> You grew tall because of Him, you even branched
> outwards.
> So too, I grew,
> So too, I grew tall --
> Like you I will bear my fruit,
> Truly you taught me, O tree. [204]

Anda Pinkerfeld depicts Hagar, Abraham's maidservant and concubine, as the archetype of the despised woman. In her poem "Hagar," [205] the poetess confronts the issue of masochistic love. In the poem, Abraham maltreats Hagar, who is "entangled like a vine about his feet." [206] However, his cruel deeds serve to increase her love. Abraham accuses her stating: "The more I cause you pain / The more you love me." [207] After Abraham sends Hagar away, she wanders with her son in the desert, waiting for Abraham to ask her to return. She is willing to forget her pain:

> If only he would call her
> Wholeheartedly she'd run to him
> Embrace his feet
> As before. [208]

But he doesn't call. The poetess views this as a grievous wrong, worse than death. She takes a position contrary to Scriptures which state: "And God said to Abraham: 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of thy bondwoman . . .' [209] Anda Pinkerfeld disregards God's statement to Abraham, and

holds Abraham responsible for Hagar's suffering. According to the poetess, Abraham is the only one who could atone for this sin, but he chooses not to:

> Abraham alone could wipe this guilt away.
> But Abraham wiped not this guilt away.
> Forever Hagar lives.
> Forever she waits. 210

Following this is a cycle of poems entitled "And These Are the Poems of Hagar Until Today," reflecting the suffering and agony which men have inflicted upon women throughout the ages.

In contrast to the story of Hagar, there are women who rule in the kingdom of love. These are represented in her poetry by Yael and Delilah. Yael is shown to be a heroine of love, rather than a national heroine. In her poem, Yael kills Sisera out of love for him, and in order to save him from the hand of his enemies. The poetess makes use of poetic licence to achieve this novel interpretation. In the poem about Delilah, Anda Pinkerfeld shows us the attraction of the woman to her beloved who, nevertheless, is willing to deceive and endanger himself out of curiosity, and lives to regret it.

Woman's love of man is a major theme in her poetry. She elevates erotic feelings to the heights of sublime love, filled with wonder and mystery. She weaves together the threads of yearning and fulfillment. Especially delightful are her short love poems which describe

solitary, memorable moments. She describes a person's first encounter with romantic love and the rejection of that love. In her poem "A Key," the poetess describes the first kiss. It begins like a cliché -- an earth shattering kiss:

> A miracle:
> With this small kiss
> Mountains are melting
> Depths are leveling. [211]

The tone changes. The poetess describes the urge to express the experience in words, leading to the realization of the ineffable nature of the experience:

> The words --
> So much like ruffled birds
> Wanting to break through the clenched lips
> And retreating --
> Flowing now, serene, redeemed
> Clearly and so simply. [212]

The collection of poems The Geisha Lian Tang Sings tells the story of the unhappy love affair of a geisha and Judge Tsung-Tu. This preface introduces the cycle of poems:

> Tsung-Tu, descendent of a noble family of judges of Japan, read to me the poems of the Geisha Lian Tang, which were written to one of his ancestors in the 12th century. [213]

This book of poems is written in special script and is illustrated with oriental pictures which nicely complement the imagery, tone, and form of the poetry.

The following is an excerpt of one poem which expresses the Geisha's sense of expectation and patient

hope that her lover Tsung-Tu will visit her:

> In patient repose I await the evening hour,
> He will come and visit me
> Tsung-Tu. [214]

Eisig Silberschlag correctly asserts that this entire collection of poems would have given Anda Pinkerfeld a special place in Hebrew literature even if she had written no other poetry. [215] In her love poems, the poetess attempts to expose the feminine soul to a thorough inspection in an attempt to reveal the emotional underpinnings. She succeeds in her demonstration of the many-faceted nature of love.

In several of her poems dealing with Eretz Israel, one is aware of the poetess' religious love of the land. In the poem "Valley," this love of the land is explicit:

> We knew the land's secret.
> How it dried up our wrinkled brow,
> Its sun burned up our tears,
> How we loved the land. [216]

This poem goes well beyond the love of the people for the land and alludes to God's love for His people. A correlation is made between the people's love of the land and God's love of His people.

In the poem "Fields," the land is described as "burning with divine love." The land readily accepts its role as God's footstool:

> Fields of our land burning with divine love - -
> He chose it as His footstool.
> The land bows her head:
> Accepting His glory. [217]

Another poem, "Our Beautiful Land" is dedicated to the poetess' brother and other young scouts who died in the war. The land is attributed with anthropomorphic feelings. The land supposedly suffers and feels the wounds of the injured and the dead:

> O, till the pain of our beautiful land,
> Till the pain,
> Is cleanly bathed in a shower of tears.
> Its rocks are polished by droplets pure,
> To sooth the sharpness of the wound;
> May their parts sparkle like a mirror of God,
> To look at His splendor in it. [218]

Through the medium of her poetry, Anda Pinkerfeld skillfully presents her God-concept. In all three poems, God is an active participant in the life of the land and its people. God is seen as immanent in all creation, who cares about His land and His people.

Anda Pinkerfeld's large corpus of children's poems and songs serve as a prototype for subsequent writers of children's poetry. Her unique use of subject, imagination, and imagery infuses her poems with a sense of the unexpected. Her children's poetry appeals to the real and imaginary fears and fantasies of a child's world.

Ben-Or praises Anda Pinkerfeld's children's poetry without reservation. He compliments her work by alluding to the title of a book of her poetry -- Gadish Ve-omer: "Amir's children's poetry is certainly an important sheaf in her heap (gadish)." [219] He further states that her

children's poetry is joyous and refreshing, also simple and enchanting. It is filled with the innocence of youth -- its dreams, laughter, and capriciousness. She always reveals in her poetry something of educational value, be it on a linguistic, emotional, or imaginary level.

Eisig Silberschlag also lauds her poetic genius in the area of children's poetry. According to Silberschlag, she has earned a fine reputation as a writer of children's songs and poems, and has ". . . delighted children with nimble fancies in nimble verse." [220]

The relationship between a mother and child is believed to be one of the closest human bonds. It is most interesting to note that prior to 1950, the majority of children's poetry in Hebrew was written by men. [221] Zevi Scharfstein [222] applauds the rise of a generation of women who can communicate from their souls with children in Hebrew verse.

In her children's verse, Anda Pinkerfeld reveals her familiarity with the composite world of children. According to Yehudit Harari, [223] the poetry of the poetess emanates the charm and happiness of childhood, describing the delightful activities of childhood in simple and pleasant verse. Even the titles of her poems appeal to a child's imagination, such as "Stars in a Bucket" and "Highway in the Clouds." She imbues her verse with intelligence, imagination, humaneness, and lively spirit.

She describes the daily lives of children, composing poems about a doll's birthday, being lulled to sleep, a doll catching a cold, a train's journey, a button under a chest of drawers, and a great treasure in a child's pocket.

She also captures a child's ability to animate the inanimate world by the spirit of imagination as in these lines from a poem about a sick doll:

> The doll caught a cold,
> She has a fever and a runny nose.
> The doll caught a cold,
> All day she coughs. [224]

The poetess displays her vivid imagination not only in her poetic tales about miraculous events, but also in her description of ordinary events:

> To the pencil
> Disaster calls:
> Here it fell
> From the box,
> Broke its yellow nose
> And can
> No longer write. [225]

In this poem, the poetess plausibly compares the breaking of the pencil point to the breaking of one's nose. The poem "works" due to her success in closely associating animate and inanimate images.

Anda Pinkerfeld's use of subtle humor pervades her children's poetry. She juxtaposes the expected and unexpected with amazing results. She consistantly concocts a fusion of imagination and reality in her poetry, similar to the way a child's mind functions which can't always differentiate

between fact and fantasy. The poetess' unique style is found in her use of simple vocabulary. She utilizes children's speech patterns without literary embellishments. Her children's poems seem effortless in their simplicity.

Although Anda Pinkerfeld is universally acclaimed by literary critics for her children's poetry, many of these same critics sharply criticize her overall poetic skills. They find several defects in her poems. Lichtenbaum claims that she does not utilize the poetic tools of our Western, contemporary, modernistic poetry.[226] He disapproves of her infrequent use of symbolism, images, and epigrams. Ben-Or's assessment of Anda Pinkerfeld's poetic style seems to be the most persuasive.[227] He presents the following argument: since her poetry is not designed according to contemporary poetic style, it is impossible to judge her according to the principles of the modern school. Rather, one must evaluate the poems themselves, from their foundations, from their manner of expression, from her ability to present and achieve her aims. Thus, one must evaluate her poems individually to determine whether a particular poem is successful.

First of all, one must especially single out her characteristic use of dramatic monologue. Dramatic monologue usually occurs in a poem of moderate length in which the poet ostensibly does not speak, but presents the

speech of an individual character, speaking to an unheard auditor who stands in a dramatic relationship to the speaker at a critical moment in the speaker's career or schemes.[228] During this process, the individual is often involved in an heroic soul-searching, or the settling of accounts with the world. By thinking aloud, the character uncovers his/her naked heart. This form of monologue dominates her poems and infuses the poems with vitality. There is an element of the "true confession" in many of her poems, particularly those dealing with womanhood. The poetess endeavors to shamelessly reveal the inner recesses of her hidden soul. In her poetic monologues, she addresses herself to the condition of the soul, often in this form of an internal conversation. An excellent example of Anda Pinkerfeld's creative use of dramatic monologue is found in her poem "Astarte." In the poem, the speaker addresses the unheard auditor, Astarte, the goddess of fertility. The speaker sings the praises of Astarte in the form of a prayer of thanksgiving.

Her verse generally takes the form of lyrical poetry, that is, short, subjective, emotional poems, supposed to be spoken by a single speaker.[229] Her lyric poetry is mostly of a meditative nature, revealing the poet's feelings about a person, object, event, or idea. Anda Pinkerfeld has been accused by some critics of writing poems of excessive length. This defect does not

exist in her short lyrical poems which are often presented in the form of a monologue.

She is not particularly concerned with symbolism in her poetry. Rather, she deals with the inner thoughts and emotions. She includes a mixture of simple and difficult language in her poems. Her use of rare biblical terminology may be initially problematic for the reader who is unfamiliar with this vocabulary. The section "Me-az Ume-olam" in Gadish Ve-omer [230] is replete with biblical allusions. In this section, she presents her own interpretation of heroic and pre-historic female Biblical personalities. For example, there are two rare biblical terms in "Astarte." One is the hapex legomenon והתאבכו "And they roll upward," [231] (Isa. 9:17). She also uses היקום "creatures," [232] a rare word which occurs three times as a noun in the Bible (e.g. Gen. 7:4).

Instead of a consistent rhyme scheme, Anda Pinkerfeld uses rhythm and alliteration in her poems. One frequently finds word alliteration and repetition used in two adjacent lines, such as יגעת and רגעת:

ועל כן לא יגעת
ועל כן לא רגעת [233]

And therefore you didn't tire
And therefore you didn't rest

She also creates a certain rhythm through her use of metathesis of adjacent words as in the phrase:

להחריש רחשי השכול [234]

to silence the noises of bereavement

Biblical parallelism also appears in her poems. Consider, for example, the following two lines:

בהאיר פעם בוקר [235]
בבוא פעם יום

When once the morning shines
When once the day arrives

Anda Pinkerfeld effectively uses imagery to create a vicarious sense impression. She employs concrete images to convey an emotional experience. In the poem "At the Gates of the Hospital," shades of color and concrete images convey a sense of loneliness. The grey, sickly faces are juxtaposed against a solitary lit window:

Grey faces,
Joined together at the gates of the hospital,
At night.
Their souls go forth to the same single,
illuminated window,
Behind it fate is sealed . . . [236]

The poetess also uses personification in her poetry, the giving of nominal human attributes to natural objects or forces. [237] In her poem "Astarte," the goddess serves as a personification of fertility. In a children's poem, a doll is described as having a cold.

The subjective involvement of the poetess is evident in many of her poems. In the poem "From the Songs of the Shaken Foundations," the first person narrator begins "Let us play like children." [238] The speaker, who

appears to be the poetess, asserts that we can no longer live in an ivory tower since the vipers inside don't give us any rest. We can only cry out. The speaker/poetess is speaking in the first person plural in order to incorporate everyone, including the speaker, in this statement. On the other hand, the poetess also serves in some poems as an objective observer, or narrator, as in the poem "At the Gates of the Hospital."

A quality of universality encompasses a large number of Anda Pinkerfeld's poems. In the poem "All Mothers," she describes the common life experience of giving birth which transcends the moment and the color of one's skin.

Those critics who accuse the poetess of lacking the proper technical skills of poetry should consider the overall strengths of her poetry. Anda Pinkerfeld has made a major contribution to the sphere of women's literature. The poetess manages to explore the inner soul of women and present to the reader, in a structured, artistic form, the results of this search. She portrays the women of Biblical times in a highly positive manner, as strong, proud, compassionate women who constantly strive to understand their world. Only a woman poet could describe this essence of 'eternal femininity.' She has the ability to extend her poetic vision beyond her limited perspective and thus describe the essence of womanhood and motherhood

in universal terms. In her Geisha poetry, she creates an oriental framework as a setting in which she allows the reader to feel the pain and joys of romantic love. Her highly imaginative children's poetry, which recounts the multi-faceted experiences of childhood, captures the interest of the reader. It is unfortunate that Anda Pinkerfeld is relatively unknown outside of Israel, for the subject matter of her poetry certainly has a universal appeal.

ASTARTE

To Astarte I sing,
Astarte, mother of the earth,
Mother of the blood of the trees.
All creatures suckle the milk of her breasts
And live by it.

Life is rolled up in her
Until it hurts,
It erupts in her
And contracts her into a thousand forms.

You are alive, Astarte,
In a cluster of grapes, ripe and heavy,
In a roll -- golden ear of corn.
You press oil from a sleeping olive tree,
You bring forth fruit from each flower.

And if the tree should fall,
And if the tree should rot,
A thousand tiny lives
You resurrect from its carcass.

And if a man should fall,
And if a man should rot --
A thousand of tiny lives
You resurrect from his carcass --
    O wise queen.

But you -- your fertility doesn't satiate you,
You will bear and beget forever --
    O blessed one!
Blessed Astarte,
Your motherhood is obstinate,
Your motherhood is madness:
You don't let up on your earth,
You will never loosen your grip:
If you are wearied of bearing,
If you are wearied of bearing fruit, --
Beneath the garment of her sleep
Blind juices flow and stream,
Digging, digging in her smarting lap,
Bursting forth, welling up from dark clods,
Greening, renewing the world and its fullness with joy.
The tired earth will not defeat you.

The lambs bleat in praise of you,
For your sake, they are fruitful and multiply,

In pain and in joy.
One ewe gives birth to twenty lambs --
And dies.
And twenty lambs do bless you with their bleats.

Each night is richly blessed
With your wondrous blessing
The breasts of dreaming virgins.
Rolling, swelling breasts like pomegranates.

A strange commotion stirs
In limbs of dreaming virgins.
The touch of your bewitching hands
Makes thirsty their parched lips.

How happy are your eyes
To her who bears the fruit of the womb
Towards each mother:
Joyous towards her as ever,
As towards the mother of all creatures.

How you love yourself in every mother,
Your living image,
Its flesh and blood has, in its motherhood, become
As you.

We are your blood and flesh,
Each clod of earth
Hidden in it has life --
Your blood and your flesh.

So, do not tire,
So, do not rest.
Life is forever burning, flaming inside you,
You are drunk from it.

You are blessed, Astarte,
    Great goddess.
I bow before you
In ripe gratitude
I shall serve you.

ALL MOTHERS

All mothers,
    Black,
        White,
            Yellow,
                Red,
All of them,
Give birth in suffering.
And while giving birth
They understand nothing,
Nothing at all,
Except the fear of life and of death.
And while giving birth
Eyes of all mothers
Those very eyes,
Wide open, almost bursting
With that fear,
Fear of life and of death.
All mothers,
    Black,
        White,
            Yellow,
                Red,

All of them.

After giving birth,

Swelling, their bulging breasts,

Stand up eagerly

Towards hungry mouths,

To crying young ones.

All of them.

OUR BEAUTIFUL LAND

(To my brother Jacob and
to the young scouts who
fell for the beauty of
our land)

O, till the pain of our beautiful land,
Till the pain,
Is cleanly bathed in a shower of tears.
Its rocks are polished by droplets pure,
To sooth the sharpness of the wound;
May their parts sparkle like a mirror
    of God,
To look at His splendor in it.
O, till the pain of this beautiful land,
Till the pain,
Princely-scouts caress it,
Yearning with love,
Till death.

Look, how the beat of our land
And their glance treads here,
Hung in the distance,
In eternal blessing,
The glance of the princely-scouts who
    loved it.

VALLEY

To Beit Alpha

We knew the land's secret.
How it dried up our wrinkled brow,
Its sun burned up our tears,
How we loved the land.
Our little ones' deeds are forgotten,
Giants have we brought up here.
Therefore the stones of rock did wonder:
And bring forth grass themselves, --
For the God of the land He loves us.

FIELDS

Fields of our land burning with divine love --
He chose it as His footstool.

The land bows her head:
Accepting His glory.
But how will you bloom,
How will you sprout grass, perfect and green?

AN EXCERPT FROM:

LIAN TANG SINGS TO HER BELOVED TSUNG TU.

In patient repose I await the evening hour,
He will come and visit me
Tsung Tu.

He will sit with me, he will drink rice wine
With the scent of mayongo flowers,
I will tell him a story.

In patient repose I await the evening hour,
I surely know
You will come again this evening, Tsung Tu.

A KEY

A miracle:
With this small kiss
Mountains are melting
Depths are leveling.

The words --
So much like ruffled birds
Wanting to break through the clenched lips
And retreating --
Flowing now, serene, redeemed
Clearly and so simply.

Now, the every secret
We set on the open palm,
In the light of the sun
In the light of the eyes --

Look now!

ANDA PINKERFELD'S CHILDREN'S POETRY

LAND OF ISRAEL

All the land is before you;
Take a pencil in your hand
Draw the borders
Of Judah, Galilee, Shomron.
Also mark, if you know,
The place in which you live:
Red circle -- sign of a city,
Green circle -- sign of a village.

MONKEY

Go out to the street!
There's an Arab
Who brought with him
A monkey.
The adorable monkey
Like a trained dancer
Dances to the sound
Of the flute.

PENINAH BERGSTEIN

As a member of Kibbutz Gevat in Emek Jezreel, Peninah Bergstein's poetry reflects her belief in the intrinsic value of working the land, and a constant awareness of the place of the individual in the chain of generations. The subject of her poems is derived from her daily life in Gevat. She also addresses herself to the struggle of man with his fate.

She was born on April 11, 1908 in Szczuczyn, near Lomza, Poland. Her family moved several times during her childhood. They settled in Tiktin during World War I. At age 16, she and her parents moved to Sumi, in the district of Cracow. She received a Hebrew and Russian education. She was taught by her father, a Hebrew teacher, and afterwards, she studied in a Russian high school. In 1922, her family moved to Augustow, Poland. She continued her education and became active in the Zionist youth movement, Hehalutz hatsa'ir. After five years in pioneer youth training, she immigrated to Palestine in 1930, and joined Kibbutz Gevat. She wrote many poems about kibbutz life. She served as an agricultural worker and in her spare time she wrote poetry. She suffered from heart disease, as a result of which she was confined to a sick-bed for many years. She died on September 18, 1950 in Gevat.

Her first poems, written in Polish, were published in Warsaw's newspaper Hayom and in newspapers of the Zionist youth movement. From 1932, her Hebrew poems were published in many newspapers in Eretz Israel. Her books of Hebrew poems include: Batsir ("Vintage," 1939); Avim Ḥolfot ("Clouds Pass By," 1950); Asif ("Harvest," collected poems, 1955). Her collected prose is published in a book entitled Reshimot ("Writings," 1952). She has published ten volumes of poems, stories, and plays for children. These works include: Tekhelet Ve-adom ("Blue and Red," poems, 1961); Einayim Semeḥot ("Happy Eyes,"poems, 1961).

In her poetry, Peninah Bergstein primarily concentrates on her thoughts, feelings, and experiences as a resident of a kibbutz. An appreciation of nature, love of humankind, and feeling of melancholia are the major motifs which permeate her poetry. She weaves together the threads of imagination and reality in her lyrical poems.

Love of the land, the importance of the pioneering spirit, and kibbutz work ethic are important themes in her nature poems. She frequently blends fact and fantasy in her nature poems. This characteristic is particularly evident in the poem "With the Flowers of the Field." In this aggadic poem, the poetess delights in the beauty of a peaceful moment, a time of conciliation. The speaker in the poem is filled with wonder and exudes a child-like spirit of inquisitiveness. She describes her love of

flowers, butterflies, birds, and the simple caressing wind that understands the soul of man:

> The wind heard, silent, listening.
> The wind heard, and all was understood.
> You caressed my head softly
> And whispered to me:
> 'Tomorrow! See you then' 239

This poem exemplifies a type of poetry that is appropriate for both adults and children. These pleasant verses are both playful and subdued, capable of evoking creative fantasies and gentle soul searching. The poetess travels in an animated kingdom, absorbing all the sights and scents. The poplars, the foliage, the curling vines -- in all of them she sees fantasy and reality as interchangeable. In "Three Poplars," nature serves as a backdrop to human emotions:

> Three poplars
> Naked and bare
> In the clear, quivering light.
> Maidens reprimanded
> Ashamed with regret
> Eyes lifted. 240

She is very possessive of her field, furrow, and vine. All these belong to her and she blends them together with her own feelings in her vision of her homeland:

> My field is still blooming and corn flourishes,
> My furrow is still open to dew and light,
> My vine is still asleep, a quiet observer
> Of the days to come, of the Spring to awaken. 241

She is aware of every moment -- "Somewhere a cradle is moving, a hamlet, a family." 242 Yet nothing seems to

change the regularity of the daily routine:

> My flock still ambles slowly every morning
> To the verdant hills with shepherd bells,
> As long as there's dew and sun, clouds and rainbow --
> My golden cornfield and green furrow. [243]

Her poems are filled with a love of the landscape, of nature, of man who toils to bring forth bread from the earth. "And Also Today," is an ode to work. Peninah Bergstein glorifies the kibbutz work ethic that acknowledges the intrinsic value of working the earth. This attitude recalls A.D. Gordon's concept of Dat Avodah, the religion of work, which asserts that time only has value when it is used for work. One's life is composed of days of toil, "As life passes day by day in toil." [244] The day is described in terms of its activities of labor. Three actions combine to create a song about the world's beauty:

> The song of a beautiful world, transparent
> and luminous
> From swaying hands, by the effort of an arm,
> From beads of sweat on a flaming forehead; [245]

History is seen as a continuous process in which the historical past and unknown future collide in the present, bringing with them "heaviness and oppression:"

> After one day and the day before,
> And all those days that will come after it
> Descends on your shoulder with all their
> heaviness and oppression
> They imprison your breath as they threaten you,
> A long grey row until the end of your days,
> Until your last day --
> And also today [246]

In this poem, life is portrayed as a long grey row of days

of hard work until the end of one's life. There is a religious strain in this poem. God serves as a comfort to the working person. Work is perceived as within God's dominion; He is a partner in work-day toil:

> And also today, God is with you in the hours
> of burning toil.
> And also today, exists and dwells the wind
> The poem hums with each bending of a finger,
> In every movement of a hand and in every
> flexing of a muscle --- 247

Due to God's presence, the gloomy day will be illuminated with a purple border:

> In each and every step of toil
> Threading together a string of moments and hours
> On the thread of a gloomy day toward a purple
> border ---
> Also today. 248

The poem "My Field" describes more than an interest in the soil. Although the poem is written in the first person, the intended message of the speaker extends beyond the self. The sowing of a seed in the earth parallels the process of motherhood. The speaker vocalizes the golden dream of the immigrant. All three generations wish to have their descendant, a Jewish child, grow up on Jewish soil:

> A kernel, a dream of gold on black sadness,
> On the ground of my life, tomorrow, a pure kernel ---
> Longing for my father and the memory of my grandfather,
> For the sake of my child, my soft baby. 249

The poem was written in 1936, at the time of rampant Arab terrorism. The carefully watched grain had grown to maturity. However, no one was able to enjoy the fruits of labor because the Arabs burned the ripened wheat:

In my beautiful field, the wheat has ripened ---
Waiting for me, calling, yelling from the straits
Flames consumed the innocent creature. [250]

Following the catastrophe, she expresses her willingness to start anew. Despite her black sadness, she is willing to plant her seeds once more, still hoping for her dream of gold:

I will plant. Still I will plant the golden kernel.
I will bury it deep in the ploughed furrow.
Again I will number the days, again I will number
the nights
'Till I'll harvest, 'till I'll thrash --
Wheat, a dream of gold in my black sadness,
A golden tomorrow standing on the ground of
my life --
Longing for my father and the memory of my
grandfather,
For the sake of my child, my soft baby --- [251]

In Peninah Bergstein's love poetry, she exalts man's love of God, the love of man and woman, the love of friendship, and the love of a mother for her child. According to Ben-Or, [252] the poetess wrote love poems from the viewpoint of a woman regarding man, her heart secretly rejoicing with tender, pure emotion, yearning for life's pleasures. He further states that she concentrates on popular subjects and creates from them Hebrew folksongs, which are caressing, impulsive, light and simple. One senses in her love poems veiled allusions to the past. Also, she willingly peers into the window of her soul in order to reveal her inner feelings. She does not disclose the essence of love itself. Rather, she concentrates on the memories of and yearning for love that has passed. This love is like the dreams of childhood. [253]

In her final poem before she died, she praises "the one who pulled me from the depths." [254] God is portrayed in this poem as "a very great light," the epitome of heavenly perfection. In "Prayer of the Road," God is described as "a distant father," [255] and as a friend, who will help her along the path of life:

> Now we'll go as friends
> We'll talk between ourselves.
> We have always gone together
> in the mountains
> The two of us. [256]

Peninah Bergstein composed an elegy which she dedicated to Rachel. She expresses an affinity to her "silent sister" who has become one with her beloved land:

> My silent sister
> Now you are one
> With the murmur of waves in Lake Kinneret,
> With the dust of earth on the shore. [257]

She also fondly recalls Rachel's clear, poetic style that served as an inspiration to those of her generation and generations to follow:

> Precious is your memory, O sister.
> And the clear lines of your poetry
> Are like delicate flowers at the crossroads,
> As a prayer to the heavens. [258]

In the poem "I am the Daughter," she attempts to describe her role in Jewish history from the perspective of a daughter, sister, and mother. She examines different facets of the Jewish collective past -- of Jewish men and women in the shtetl; of the messianic hopes of pious Jews awaiting redemption; and of her generation. She asserts

that she belongs to all three generations and is a part of the Shalshelet Hadorot, the chain of generations. She contrasts the timid ghetto Jews with the new generation of Jews in Palestine who bravely confront death each day:

> I am the daughter
> Of Jews who wipe spit from their faces,
> Express silent gratitude, whisper
> frightened pardon
> To every oppressor of their lives; . . .
>
> I am the sister
> Of all those who go forth each day to
> meet death
> Never knowing if it is their last -- [259]

She labels herself as the mother of the children of the future who will no longer suffer the utter humiliation of the ghetto Jew or the fear of martyrdom:

> To all these tiny children
> Who no longer will be compelled
> To forgive, to be silent, and die heroically;
> All those in the future will continue to walk
> On the face of this little earth
> Without seriousness and oppressive fear
> The crown of martyrs on their heads --
> I am the mother. [260]

Her love of children is evident throughout her corpus of poetry. In one poem, she describes the despair of a woman bereft of offspring:

> My child,
> All the paths you traveled not,
> Cry out at my feet.
> All the songs left unsung,
> Choke in my throat,
> My child, son of mourning. [261]

In "Before," Peninah Bergstein describes the tumultuous emotions of an expectant mother, expressing the joys and

fears of pregnancy. Motherhood is described as the source of happiness, like a hymn to the act of creation:

> And if I knew, still you are not,
> A dark tomorrow fully covered you,
> Every sinew in me heralds with joy your coming
> My child. [262]

The general mood of her later poems is wistful melancholy mixed with grief. An awareness of ensuing death permeates the lines of almost every poem. She writes:

> I had the feeling that my days were
> limited, and the sky seemed to me so
> very blue, and I wanted to live,
> I wanted so much to live. [263]

As a daughter of "the generations of bent Jews, bowed under the burden of heavy days," [264] she carries with her the memories of pogroms and concentration camps, the final resting place of her entire family. "A Song of Grief" is a vivid expression of her attempt to suppress her great sadness. Grief becomes a personification of her own inner turmoil. This poem helps explain her conviction that no one can ease another person's grief:

> Bent, grief wallows on the earth's breast,
> And the grass answers, dewy from tears
> The pain has silenced the widower's path,
> Purple blossoms rise up here and there. [265]

She fears that the carefully constructed dream will disappear, leading to a bitter awakening:

> When removed, melting toward the horizon,
> this beach belonging to the dream
> The ship day by day departs far away from
> us to the kingdom of reality; [266]

Sadness resulting from unrequited love is a recurrent motif in her poems:

> That I cried all the night ---
> With the light of the day, you
> will not know.
> I will rinse my eyelashes
> With the cool dew of morning. [267]

Grief and despair are the primary emotions articulated in the poems "On the Death of the Child" [268] and "In Nature's House." [269] These poems describe the reaction of parents to the death of their child.

The origin of this sadness is not difficult to uncover. Peninah Bergstein became accustomed to suffering due to the fact that her illness prevented her from enjoying life. She writes:

> . . . And thus I was always chained to Gevat. I never went out. I never saw anything; I did not know the land. Until today, I still do not recognize the land. I am embarassed to say that only three years ago I saw Degania and Kinneret for the first time . . . It was difficult for me. But then I found in writing a way to bring forth this problematic feeling. I wrote and I found satisfaction and was rewarded. [270]

In the declining hours of her life, she appeals to God for additional assistance. The poem entitled "Prayer of the Road" is constructed as a prayer of hope and faith directed to God. One associates this prayer with Tefilat Haderekh, a prayer recited by religious Jews prior to any long journey. In this case, the poem/prayer refers to the final journey of life. The speaker expresses confidence that God will be there any time she calls:

Have mercy on me, the declining days
Are calling me from their lofty height,
The supporting hand of my child, so I
don't stand still
Give me it for the way, O God. 271

In her last poem, written in 1950, she seems to come to terms with life and death, happiness and sadness:

Light, a very great light.
A perfect heaven
Over dry earth.
And bright eyes
Dewy love
And tears. 272

Peninah Bergstein had a very close relationship with children. Her door in the kibbutz was always open, and she accepted every request for a poem, short story, or class play. In the last years of her life, she did not loosen her strong bond with children, even though she was confined to bed. In her children's poems, imagination and reality are inextricably joined together. She writes about the everyday concerns of children, their thoughts and fantasies, or events which occur in their lives. In "Holiday," the poem celebrates the eleventh year of the founding of Kibbutz Gevat. She compares the past with the present:

Do you know that once,
When Gevat was young . . .
It had no flowers,
There were no crops . . .

And now, look!
Gevat has become beautiful.
Already her tresses have grown --
Already it's budding and sprouting! 273

"Harvest" describes the interaction between a small boy and his father at the beginning of the harvest season. The little boy tells his father that he is interested in going to the fields to see the harvest. He repeats his father's words from Psalms, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy:" (Ps. 126:5)

> Then in Fall you said:
> They sow in tears.
> In Springtime he will say --
> They reap in joy. [274]

"How Good it Will Be" describes a messianic age in which "No one will cry / Not even a baby, / There'll be no tears at all." [275] A smile will be found in every eye; birds will sing at every window. The child innocently asks:

> Mother, tell me,
> How they do this. [276]

Peninah Bergstein's poems are primarily written in free verse, with a definite rhythm, but the rhyme scheme is often arbitrary. In fact, she infrequently employs a rhyme scheme. Her children's poetry and songs are an exception. These poems usually are based on a strict rhyme and rhythm. When she utilizes rhyme in her general poetry, it is for a particular reason. In her poem "Prayer of the Road," she makes use of a strong rhythm, alternating lines of <u>milra</u> and <u>mil'el</u> (ultimate and penultimate stresses). She also employs a strict ABAB rhyme scheme, like a child attempting to rhyme in a simplified fashion:

זקוף, גאה ונכון - מצעד
במעלה ההר פסעת.
מה בעיני הינוקת בת - - -
אז רמת וגבהת.

(Upright, sure of his steps
He treads on the mountain slopes,
What is in the eyes of the infant daughter --
How high and mighty are you.) 277

One notices several idiosyncrasies in her poetry, especially the recurrent use of the color blue and the number three, or a group of three things. The poem "I am the Daughter" deals with three generations of Jews. Also in the poem, three things are mentioned that will not be demanded of children in the future: to forgive, to be silent, and to die heroically. "Prayer of the Road" is divided into three sections, representing the morning, noon, and night of one's life; in effect, the totality of one's life. "And Also Today" includes a grouping of three movements: "From swaying hands, by the effort of an arm, / From beads of sweat on a flaming forehead."278 It is difficult to determine the meaning of this symbolism.

Peninah Bergstein frequently writes poetry in the first person. In the poem "My Field," the action is repeated twice, and the object of that action comes later. This device emphasizes and intensifies the action of the first person speaker:

זרעתי, זרעתיו - הגרעין הזהוב,

I sowed, I sowed it -- the golden kernel. 279

In this poem, she also uses several dashes to notify the

reader that she is moving from one subject to another. This can also represent an unexpected switch of scenery, as well as topic:

> On the ground of my life, tomorrow,
> a pure kernel ---
> Longing for my father and the memory of my
> grandfather. [280]

She also includes biblical parallelism in her poetic style. In the following instance, two verbs with similar meanings, and two nouns with opposite meanings are used:

> ספרתי ימים ומניתי לילות.

> I number the days and count the nights. [281]

Her poetical vocabulary includes biblical terminology. In "My Field," she mentions the yoreh, the first rain of Fall, which is referred to in the Shema and its blessings, originating in the Bible (Dt. 11:14).

In "Prayer for the Road," she incorporates words from the Prayerbook into the poem. As previously mentioned, she writes her own version of Tefilat Haderekh. The liturgical element in the poem begins when she evokes her master:

> Father of the great peaks.
> Master of mighty life,
> Your mercy reaches the narrow path
> Between the cliff of the abyss and
> the mountains. [282]

The Palestinian Hebrew poet Joshua Rabinov (1905 -) describes the nature of Peninah Bergstein's poems in the following manner: "The line drawn from reality to aggada is the line on which the poetess strings her poems, and

the aggadic foundation is the goal." [283] She effectively weaves together fact and fantasy in her poems which are written in a simple, natural style. Every line speaks of her love of man and nature. In her graceful style, she reveals the cogitations of her sad spirit and tender feelings. Peninah Bergstein raises questions about the fate of man and the secrets of life, which she grapples with in her poetry. Thoughts of death seem to permeate her greatest joys. As an invalid for part of her life, she was acutely aware of life's limitations and unfulfilled expectations. Poetry served as an emotional outlet for her depression. Goren considers her work to be lyrical meditations on life. [284]

The poetess perceives herself as a link in the chain of the generations. She portrays a realistic picture of Jewish history from "the generations of bent Jews, bowed / Under the burden of heavy days," [285] to the young children "whose clear, wondering eyes / Wordlessly ask one question of adults, Piercing in its innocence: / Why? For what? How long?" [286]

The Bible, Prayerbook, and ancient past have left a lasting impression on her soul which she describes with a few, well-chosen words. She will be remembered not so much for her love poems as for the intensity of her suffering and her ability to verbalize the depths of her sorrow in simple words which are nonetheless eloquent and moving.

THREE POPLARS

Three poplars
Bare twigs
In the background of a green forest.
Barefoot little girls
Hiding their curls
In fine tresses.

Three poplars
Naked and bare
In the clear, quivering light.
Maidens reprimanded
Ashamed with regret
Eyes lifted.

Three poplars
Lifting upwards
Arms adorned with foliage.
The pretty damsels
Disheveled curls
In arms of love.

MY FIELD STILL BLOOMS

My field is still blooming and corn flourishes,
My furrow is still open to dew and light,
My vine is still asleep, a quiet observer
Of the days to come, of the Spring to awaken.

On the scales, in the flickering distance
Somewhere a cradle is moving, a hamlet, a family,
A crimson anemone on a reddish rock
Cries to my son and to his blue eyes.

My flock still ambles slowly every morning
To the verdant hills with the shepherd bells,
As long as there's dew and sun, clouds and rainbow --
My golden cornfield and green furrow.

AND ALSO TODAY

And also today ---
As life passes day by day in toil,
When removed, melting toward the horizon,
    this beach belonging to the dream
The ship day by day departs far away from
    us to the kingdom of reality;
After having nearly strangled the perfect
    thin sound of the poem,
The song of a beautiful world, transparent
    and luminous
From swaying hands, by the effort of an arm,
From beads of sweat on a flaming forehead;
After one day and the day before,
And all those days that will come after it
Descends on your shoulder with all their
    heaviness and oppression
They imprison your breath as they threaten
    you
A long grey row until the end of your days,
Until your last day --
And also today,
And also today, God is with you in the hours
    of burning toil.

And also today, exists and dwells the wind
The poem hums with each bending of a finger,
In every movement of a hand and in every
    flexing of a muscle ---
In each and every step of toil
Threading together a string of moments and hours
On the thread of a gloomy day toward a purple border ---
Also today.

MY FIELD

I sowed, I sowed it -- the golden kernel,
I buried it deep in the ploughed furrow.
I looked to the sea, I prayed to the wind,
To the cloud's shadow over the blue height;
I hoped for the mercy, the blessed first rain,
I bent to the earth and explored each bud,
I restored my soul by the coming up green.
I number the days and count the nights.
I grew up together with the ears of corn
Together with it, as the seed becomes filled,
So my soul becomes filled with kernels of hope.
A kernel, a dream of gold on black sadness,
On the ground of my life, tomorrow, a pure kernel ---
Longing for my father and the memory of my grandfather,
For the sake of my child, my soft baby.

In my beautiful field, the wheat has ripened,
The golden standing grain is ripened.
The corn tops bend with the night
Heavy with fruit, awaiting the harvest.
In my beautiful field, the wheat has ripened ---
Waiting for me, calling, yelling from the straits
Flames consumed the innocent creature.

Myriads of wheat stretched out
Like frozen fingers suppressing an outcry
Opposite a black, dark sky, crying out for help
Desperate, dumb at the sight of the fire
Choking in a closed ring of fire
Standing ripe in my beautiful field.

I will plant. Still I will plant the golden kernel.
I will bury it deep in the ploughed furrow.
Again I will number the days, again I will number
    the nights
'Till I'll harvest, 'till I'll thrash --
Wheat, a dream of gold in my black sadness,
A golden tomorrow standing on the ground of my life --
Longing for my father and the memory of my grandfather,
For the sake of my child, my soft baby ---

I AM THE DAUGHTER

I am the daughter
Of generations of bent Jews, bowed
Under the burden of heavy days.
Afraid of every official and every "sheigetz,"
Fearful of the neighbor's barking dog,
Making way for street urchins
Offering greetings to every scoundrel and drunkard,
Trembling as a leaf in a storm
At the echoes of pogroms and slaughter,
Of their brothers.

I am the daughter
Of mothers, confused and speechless
The years of their lives slip away
Like a long corridor, dark and narrow,
With the light of two candles flickering on Shabbat,
Nourished by their dream of joy from children
And a pure tearful prayer flowing from the heart.

I am the daughter
Of Jews who wipe spit from their faces,
Express silent gratitude, whisper frightened pardon

To every oppressor of their lives;
The daughter --
Carrying in the holiness of their hearts
A dream of distant light and compassion
About the wing of Zion, wiping off the sadness of
    their sons,
Of the Shechinah crying bitterly on the distant
    shore
Lamenting the welfare of its prisoners.

I am the sister
Of all those who go forth each day to meet death
Never knowing if it is their last --
Day on earth,
Sunset glow,
Child's kiss, he lisps: Shalom,
This silent, trembling handshake
While the other hand grasps the rifle --
His last and only friend that remains
There is fear and murder in the silent nights.

I am the sister
Of all those who concentrate on the road each day,
The hand grasping the steering wheel
Prepared for every curve in the road
Towards death,

Like a frightened guess
Every day, every hour, every moment.
All those who give their jubilant lives
With their own two hands to the jaws of death,
That doesn't ask, doesn't choose, doesn't separate;
All those who lie down at the foot of the rocks
    soaked with sweat
And at the head of mountains wrapped with plants
Their lives, their pure souls --
I am the sister.

I am the mother
Of all these little children
Whose clear, wondering eyes
Wordlessly ask one question of adults,
Piercing in its innocence:
Why? For what? How long?
For all these children, each step of their feet
Kisses the ground
Every clod they engage with joy,
They sanctify every green shoot in its budding;
For these soft hands that have hidden in them
All desire for the beauty of tomorrow;
These innocent eyes
That are opened beneath the heavy sky

Good tidings of the ploughed field,
    the forest and garden
The dry dunes in the desolate desert --
I am the mother.
To all these tiny children
Who no longer will be compelled
To forgive, to be silent, to die heroically;
All those in the future will continue to walk
On the face of this little earth
Without seriousness and oppressive fear
The crown of martyrs on their heads --
I am the mother.

LIGHT

Light, a very great light.
A perfect heaven
Over dry earth.
And bright eyes
Dewy love
And tears.

Light over the house,
And light in the eyes
And in tears.
Blessed is the one who pulled me
From the depths.

TO RACHEL

My silent sister
Now you are one
With the murmur of waves in Lake Kinneret,
With the dust of earth on the shore.

Precious is your memory, O sister.
And the clear lines of your poetry
Are like delicate flowers at the crossroads,
As a prayer to the heavens.

BEFORE . . .

Before my hopeful eye saw you,
Before I encouraged you to the tablets of my heart,
In my pure dream you already cried, you struggled ----
My son.

Before I dare believe you will come,
Before I silently ask my creator for you,
Rejoicing towards you as to the blazing sun
Is my womb.

And if I knew, still you are not,
A dark tomorrow fully covered you,
Every sinew in me heralds with joy your coming
My child.

A SONG OF GRIEF

1.

A silent grief that does not lament --
A man doesn't come with loving compassion
    to embrace;
The pain that is ashamed of crying tears --
A man has not called with him bread to eat,
And all the simple daily blessings
Surrounding the path of grief.

He will dress his heart in his gloomy grief
Borrowed garments and luxurious mantle,
To send it among the people
A covering veil.

Grief went, and smiled, and they recognized
    it not,
Sadness came into the house, and they seated
    it at the tables
From their bread of blessing, they dealt it
    with a generous hand.
Sadness became drunk from the wine within her
And forgot the vows of silence it vowed
And extended its hand to the veil -- and it was lifted.

All heat froze inside the house,
All light vanished from all eyes,
All the gates within were locked
With seventy-seven latches.

Grief rose and returned to twist its steps
And the wind whistles after it and stirs
The hem of its borrowed garments
And tattered veil.

2.

Grief returned to wear the sackcloth,
Grief lifted its voice and cried without shame.
The wind came, rocking his cry
On the shoulders of dark clouds.
Their last light commanded it
Fading stars.
A fallen leaf rests on the ashes of his head
Of a wasted touch,
And orphaned thorns approach
Its feet.

Bent, grief wallows on the earth's breast,
And the grass answers, dewy from tears
The pain has silenced the widower's path,
Purple blossoms rise up here and there

All wrap themselves in sackcloth like him,
They secretly bless him in his going.
One wreath surrounds them all,
The wreath is bruised to the blood
Embraces them and unites them.

Grief will raise its head
In its going and its coming
And will carry its burden.

THAT I CRIED

That I cried all the night --
With the light of day, you will not know.
I will rinse my eyelashes
With the cool dew of morning.

That I was so deeply grieved --
You will not notice in my voice:
And with the echo of my song in the morning
Come to my side, you do not dare.

Even when you place at my feet
All that is sealed in your heart --
You will not soften the hard rock
Even the slightest.

PRAYER OF THE ROAD

1.

Upright, proud, sure of your steps
You tread on the mountain slopes.
How high and mighty were you then --
In the eyes of the little girl.

When over any rock and stone
A little foot would stumble --
A voice calls me from high above:
Come after me, don't be afraid!

His hand beckons and calls
From the height its strength leads on,
All hope, all fear
That I do not stand still.

It was good for me to go like this,
Clasping the thread of your voice,
'Till the horizon from the peak is revealed,
The strength is in me: Now I will go alone!

But when I went away alone
And a wrathful spirit met me --

You walk by my side,
I know it.

2.

Extend your hand to me, distant father,
The abyss is behind us,
The valley of shadow and green landscape
Calling us to come down.

Here the path is the same for me
As the one you traversed.
Wait for me, father, just a moment,
And I'll attune myself to your step.

Now we'll go as friends
We'll talk between ourselves.
We have always gone together in the mountains
The two of us.

If on the descent you tire
And your step becomes heavy on the path --
Wait, never go alone,
Hold my hand before evening.

Extend your hand! . . until suddenly
I no longer see it,

Without you, opposite the abyss
I silently bow down.

3.

Father of the great peaks.
Master of mighty life,
Your mercy reaches the narrow path
Between the cliff of the abyss and the mountains.

Have mercy on me, the declining days
Are calling me from their lofty height,
The supporting hand of my child, so I don't
    stand still
Give me for the way, O God.

Command, my God, my ear will still hear --
Before you snuff out the light of my days --
The song of the summit in my child's mouth
I never sang to my father.

PENINAH BERGSTEIN'S CHILDREN'S POETRY

HOLIDAY

A great holiday for us,
Joy and song --
Today Gevat completes
Its eleventh year.

Do you know that once,
When Gevat was young,
When Gevat was a baby --
It had no garden?

It had no flowers
There were no crops,
Also vineyards
It didn't have it.

There was only sky,
It was desolate,
Thistles grew here
On the face of the earth.

And now, look!
Gevat has become beautiful.

Already her tresses have grown --
Already it's budding and sprouting!

In the tresses -- her ribbons,
Blue and red, --
Fresh flowers blooming
In the light of day.

Her houses are standing,
Fields are flourishing,
There are cows in the barn,
And chickens in the coop.

And now, look,
Gevat has grown so much --
Come, let's sing,
Come, let's be happy.

HARVEST

Don is rejoicing today,
Great rejoicing and song.
This morning in the field
Harvesting began.

So he asked father:
Take me to the field!
I want to rejoice
With you this day.

Then, in Fall you said:
They sow in tears.
In Spring he will say --
They reap in joy.

Now they are already harvesting,
And outside -- Spring.

Take Donny with you,
My dear father!

HOW GOOD IT WILL BE

Mother,
How good it will be, when the bird
Will sing at every window
Songs without number.

At every doorway
Flower tops will blossom
Happy, blessed;

And in every flower bed
Will grow the radish and the cabbage,
And the grain will sprout;
And in every eye
Will blossom a smile,

No one will cry
Not even a baby,
There'll be no tears at all.

Mother, tell me,
How they do this.

MOTHER HAS A CHILD

Mother has a little child,
Blue-eyed and blond curls,
Mother's child is sick
And lies in the hospital.

Mother's child lies
Closed up in one of those rooms
So many doors
Turning on hinges.

Mother has a little child,
He already knows how to read,
She writes him a letter
In clear, round script:

"We, all of us, all of us
Love you so much,
And miss you
Daddy, brother, and I.

Hello from the chicken-coop,
Hello from the garden,
And from the dog, hello,
And from the tiny kitten."

Mother has a lovely child,
Clear-eyed and golden curls.
Mother's child is sick
And lies in the hospital.

THE SHADOW AND I

Here I sit,
And there the shadow sits.
I lower a finger --
Here it falls!

I raise a finger,
Like a high tower --
Please, look here,
Already the shadow has risen.

I lift two,
Two of my fingers --
A head of an animal
Appears on the wall.

This is the goat's head,
Maybe a donkey?
I don't know
To say with certainty.

I lift a second hand
And stretch a pinky --

Look! the cow
Opens and closes its mouth.

Here I sit,
And there the shadow sits.
It rises -- with my hand,
It falls -- with my hand.

* * *

IN THE JEZREEL VALLEY

There is in the Jezreel Valley
The light of the sun, dew and shade.
It has olive and carob.
Lovely, beloved valley!

* * *

IN THE GARDEN

In the garden, in the garden
The rose already blossoms!
Don't touch it, dear boy,
For it's forbidden, forbidden to pick.

* * * *

WHO IS BARKING?

Who is barking all the time?
This is my loyal dog.
This is our guard dog
Which says "Good Night" to us.

* * * *

I RAN

I ran, I ran, and I fell,
I hurt my hand!
Ouch, the wound aches
Mother, give me a kiss!

* * * *

LEAH GOLDBERG

Leah Goldberg -- Hebrew poetess, novelist, dramatist, translator, and literary critic -- was born on May 29, 1911 in Koenigsberg, Eastern Prussia. She spent the early years of her childhood in Russia. Shortly after the Revolution, her family moved to Kovno, Lithuania. As a schoolgirl, she began to write Hebrew poetry. Her first poem was published in 1926. She graduated from the Hebrew Gymnasium of Kovno and continued her education, specializing in Semitic languages and philosophy at the universities of Kovno, Berlin, and Bonn. In 1933, she was awarded a Ph.d. in Semitic languages from the University of Bonn. She arrived in Tel Aviv in 1935 and joined the "Yachdav," a literary group of modernist authors, which included Abraham Shlonsky (1900-) and Nathan Alterman (1910-). She worked with Shlonsky as a translator and editor of Turim, the literary forum of the group. She also began publishing her poetry in this magazine.

Following a career as a schoolteacher, she became a drama and literary critic for various newspapers and journals. Leah Goldberg joined the editorial staff of Davar and later Mishmar. She also served as the editor of Al Hamishmar's literary supplement. She became involved with children's literature, serving as a member of the staff

of Davar Liladim, a popular children's magazine and was the children's book editor of Sifriyat Po'alim. She served as literary adviser for the Habima theater, Israel's national theater, and also lectured on the history of the theater for the Habima drama school. In 1954, she joined the faculty of the Hebrew University as a lecturer in Comparative Literature and served as department chairperson until her death in 1970.

Her poetic works include: Tabaot Ashan ("Smoke Rings," 1935); Shibolet Yerukat Haayin ("Green-Eyed Ear of Corn," 1940); Mibeti Hayashan ("From My Old Home," 1944); Al Hapriḥa ("On the Flowering," 1948); Barak Baboker ("Morning Lightning," 1959); Mukdam Ume'uḥar ("Sooner or Later," 1959); Im Halayla Hazeh ("With This Night," 1964); and posthumously, She'erit Haḥayim ("Remains of a Life," 1971).

Of the ten poetesses discussed in this study, Leah Goldberg's poems are perhaps the most well-known. Written in a conversational style, her poems are based on traditional verse forms. According to Ezra Spicehandler, the poetess expresses:

> . . . her modernism through a conversational style which eschewed the ornate rhetoric of many of her predecessors and the bombastic expressionism of her contemporaries. Her language though symbolic is simple and familiar in which ordinary words, images, rhythms, and rhymes have an astonishing freshness. [287]

Her poetic style is understated, direct, almost deceptively simple in form. Her imagery is influenced by the French,

German, and Russian imagist and symbolist poetry. According to Robert Alter, Leah Goldberg's style resembles Verlaine " . . . with his melodic orchestration of assonance, alliteration, and rhyme, his attachment to stanzaic forms, and the general attitude toward style . . ." Her further states, ". . . Leah Goldberg brought to Hebrew verse a subtle sense of beauty in small words and small things, a gracefulness and even playfulness of style." 288

Her poems are brimming with melancholy that is expressed through symbols and imagery. She wrote poems on universal themes including childhood, nature, love, aging, and death. Since the themes of love and death and dying have been dealt with extensively by contemporary literary critics,[289] I have chosen to explore in greater depth the theme of childhood. Many of the poets transplanted from Eastern Europe to Eretz Israel include within their poetic repertoire poems about their childhood. Leah Goldberg is no exception. Her book entitled From My Old Home contains delightful vignettes about her childhood home that describe the vicissitudes of provincial life in Lithuania.

Of particular interest is her series of evocative poems entitled "Childhood" which are imbued with wistful, childlike wonder. The poetess presents the reader with an impressionist landscape of the inner territory of childhood, colored by newly discovered hopes and fears. At first glance, these ten poems appear to be written from

a child's perspective in which daydreams, fantasies, and fairytales intertwine with the realities of daily life. There is a sense of growth from innocence to experience. This selection of poems evokes the memory of William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience. In the beginning, life appears "So simple, / So simple and complete." [290] As the little girl becomes more aware of the world around her, she notes the injustices and inconsistencies in life. She delves into a dream world in an attempt to recapture her lost innocence and to restore her harmonious vision of life, reminiscent of the Hasidic concept, Tikkun Olam, the improvement of the world. She encounters death face to face, and leaves childhood forever. Robert Alter detects "a certain tough strength" in these lyrical poems. He writes: ". . . One senses in the quietly stated beauty of her brief lyric poems a certain tough strength precisely because that ordered beauty stands in tense relation with a dark background of chaos, ugliness, suffering." [291] Alter lauds her creative use of imagery which derives from romantic poetry and traditional folksongs: " . . . these traditional properties often seem freshly perceived and surprisingly persuasive because the poet has rediscovered them, somehow through inner struggle has won back from the chaos of modern experience the recurrent object of eternal beauty. [292]

One can not help investigating the symbolic underpinnings of these poems. An analysis of the veiled and indirect symbolism of poetry is often based on conjecture, but hopefully, it is also founded on an understanding of literary symbolism. Ezra Spicehandler injects a note of caution to this endeavor:

> Analysis of symbols is a dangerous thing. A good poem should stand as it is written and should not be tampered with too much. Certainly, whatever the meanings of Leah Goldberg's "riddle-enchanted language," the sheer beauty of her imagery is exciting in and of itself. [293]

Nevertheless, it can be worthwhile to pursue the meaning of this "riddle-enchanted language." This process may yield new insights into the deeper meaning of the poems. Ḥanoch Gay in his book entitled Tsipor Sasgonit ("Multi-Colored Bird") [294] approaches Leah Goldberg's poetry through an analysis of the symbolism inherent in the poems. Gay asserts that the colors which Leah Goldberg uses in her poems have symbolic meaning. In the series of poems entitled "Yaldut" ("Childhood"), white, red, and green are the primary colors mentioned. The color white is generally used to symbolize innocence, simplicity, and purity. Examples of the color white in these poems include a little girl dressed in white, a white moon, and daylight. The color red frequently symbolizes blood, death, and destruction. Examples of the color red in these poems include the red sunset and the seagulls' red wings. The

color green symbolizes the pristine state of fulfillment and happiness. Examples include a green meadow and green clover.

An analysis of these poems follows. Reference will be made to the symbolism in the poems when applicable. The first poem "Beginning" is suffused with light. Stars, day, and light are all mentioned:

> As stars that find their way to every window.
> As a day that gazes at every opened eye.
> As light, . . . [295]

The setting is so idyllic and peaceful. Soft images colored green and white, symbolizing purity and perfection, complete this picture:

> As a green meadow embraces the lost path
> And dew
> And clover
> And a lamb. [296]

The beginning of childhood appears as an idealistic vision which arises from a dream or a memory. In "Night," the white moon shines down on all those who are blessed. Once again, the color white is the dominant color -- white moon, light, and shells:

> But he who merits such a white moon,
> Who casts a spell in the light of crashing waves
> Legends, like bewildered eyes --- [297]

In the third poem "The Shore," there is an abrupt change in tone. A new color is introduced -- red. As mentioned previously, the color red symbolizes blood and death. Born three years prior to the outbreak of World

War I, Leah Goldberg most likely encountered the harsh reality of death at an early age. The sunset, the red paths, and the red wings of the seagull remind a little girl that her happiness is temporal. Near the end of this poem, a small girl appears in a white dress; she is crying. The question is raised:

> So why did she cry,
> The small girl dressed in white
> Alone on the sand? 298

Her innocence, symbolized by her white dress, is being affected by the realities of the world. Her innocent view of the world begins to mature. Gay carries his analysis too far when he states that the fight between the red and white is disrupting the silence and makes the little girl cry. Instead, it appears that the small girl feels disconnected from the external world and her sense of isolation is the cause of her sorrow.

In "The Courtyard," simple things like hanging ivy, a barrel, and a shack are viewed as if they had magical qualities. The small girl apparently finds some solace in an enchanted world which is disconnected from the present horrors of war and death:

> The small girl in a white dress --
> The silent courtyard, enchanted paths.
> That great bliss
> Of first solitude. 299

The love of solitude is a fundamental theme which frequently recurs in Leah Goldberg's poetry. The thrill of solitude

can only be realized in a silent setting, which allows the little girl's fantasy world to take charge. Thus, in her fantasy, the courtyard appears as if it were enchanted.

"The Street" offers the reader a short reprieve from the world of fantasy. In this poem, a simple man, a gardener, is described with warm affection:

> On streets like these live the simplest of folk --
> Gardeners. Their sun-bronzed hands --
> earth, stalk, and stem.
> In the bulging veins of the hands
> Are blueness of sky and of glance. 300

This poem has the lilt and easy expression of a folksong. Its earthy quality contrasts sharply with the next poem in the sequence, "The Mirror." The external world is transformed into a legendary kingdom veiled in secrecy. In this world of legend and fantasy, the small girl feels safe and protected from all evil. Here she can frolic with her friends:

> Seven young goats await their mother,
> A princess pricks her finger with a needle,
> Seven dwarfs celebrate their holiday . . .
> And a girl -- so untidy, joyous -- 301

In "Seven Young Goats," the fantasy continues. The white goats represent the young girl's last vestige of innocence. In fantasy, it is permitted to reverse roles. She wishes to change reality by allowing the goats to live and the wolf to die:

> Once upon a time,
> In the high heavens
> Dimly lit by a star
> Seven goats played all day
> On the grave of a wolf torn to pieces. 302

In the next poem, "Dimness," the deception is discovered; the veils are lifted. The young girl confronts death face to face. The death of her brother brings her back to reality:

> Those coming back from the funeral.
> Restrained steps of sadness.
> The door immediately creaks.
> Shielding the eyes of the girl,
> who saw death face to face. 303

The final two poems in this section "The Forest" and "Garden" reveal feelings of grief and ultimate acceptance of death. Two tears are the physical manifestation of her sorrow:

> The drops on a spider's web -- two tears
> Stretched from branch to branch in the sorrow
> of their purity. 304

She has traversed the realm of childhood. Springtime has gone; childhood is replaced by budding adolescence:

> . . . Springtimes like these! Come and gone.
> Gone to another's childhood. 305

In the short series of poems entitled "From the Songs of the Red Colt," the poetess juxtaposes the color white against the color red. Death serves as a primary motif in these poems. The child confronts death and loss face to face:

> They sent the child into the whiteness blind
> To seek the red colt.
> The blustering wind
> The frozen tear
> Sunset hovers between frost and fire.
> A "Yahrzeit" candle
> For a six-year-old. 306

The use of symbolism can help explicate the inner dynamics of Leah Goldberg's poetry. However, Ḥanoch Gay extended his symbolic analysis beyond the limits of acceptability. Nevertheless, the painstaking use of symbolic analysis can be useful when tempered by the sheer enjoyment of her lyric ballads. The following words by Leah Goldberg help clarify her feelings about her childhood:

> The Golden Era. The Golden Era.-- Childhood, they call it in Tolstoy's book . . . we who grew up during the World War have not succeeded even until this day to heal the wounds of this "Golden Era." [307]

She was unable to forget the horror of war and its aftermath. Even dreams and fantasy could not fully distract her from the ravages of war and the sorrow of death. Her poems based on childhood have a universal appeal. They particularly speak to anyone who, like Leah Goldberg, viewed death, war, and destruction as a child.

CHILDHOOD

I. BEGINNING

As stars that find their way to every window,
As a day that gazes at every opened eye,
As light,
Fingers that touched the string of the final dream
That made joy tremble, and fear melt
And there was a song.

So simple,
So simple and complete,
As a green meadow that embraces the lost path
And dew
  And clover
    And a lamb.

II. NIGHT

But he who merits such a white moon
Who recalls the childhood of many people
And the lullaby which many mothers sung,

But he who merits such a white moon,
Who casts a spell in the light of crashing waves
Legends, like bewildered eyes --

He who merits it knows that he is blessed,
This night is childlike and wise --
In his large palm -- all the rooftops of the city
Like shells for play from the sea.

III. THE SHORE

For the paths were red that led to the sunset
And the flocks of dunes that trail to the sea,
For the seagulls' wings redden by the light
    of the sunset,
For all this was
Here
  Nearby
    In the world --

For it was only exalted, festive, and blue,
For God cast off the yoke from his shoulder,
This they remembered and they understood it all.

So why did she cry,
The small girl dressed in white
Alone on the sand?

IV. THE COURTYARD

The ivy that climbs like a secret on the dark wall,
Of the shack, the gutter, and the deep barrel.
A smell of summer rain so strong and refreshing.
Raindrops on poppy leaves
Like melting pearls.

The shoulders are weak, narrow, and wet --
The small girl in a white dress --
The silent courtyard, enchanted paths.
That great bliss.
Of first solitude.

V. THE STREET

On streets like these live the simplest of folk --
Gardeners. Their sun-bronzed hands --
    earth, stalk, and stem.
In the bulging veins of the hands
Are blueness of sky and of glance.
They have no need to smile, in the golden blessing
    of their silence.
Here they live in her street, the simplest of folk.

Her gate revolves on its hinges facing the day
    that closes its eyes.
The grass breathes autumn.
The street -- a pool of gold,
Its silence -- who will draw it forth?
In the entrance stands the great, ancient gardener,
A basket filled with pears.

VI. THE MIRROR

In the folds of the curtain the wind is hiding
And the room is an isle in a moon lit sea.
In a mirror, tales appear in reverse --
The hunchbacked pony swallowed up kingdoms,
A brother and sister went walking in the forest,
And a wolf and a hunter in the forest.

Seven young goats await their mother,
A princess pricks her finger with a needle,
Seven dwarfs celebrate their holiday,
The isle is a place, the mirror is a lake
He sailed in a boat with a high mast --
And a girl -- so untidy, joyous --

The small girl in a white boat
Sets sail for another land.

VII. SEVEN YOUNG GOATS

Once upon a time,
In the high heavens
Dimly lit by a star,
Seven goats played all day
On the grave of the wolf torn to pieces.

The large goat looks into the mirror:
There a flimsy little house
Seven goats throwing balls
To the white, round moon.

The small girl in a white dress
Alone -- and seven young goats.
They come to her from every corner
Like living furniture.

VIII. DIMNESS

It is well-known that Perrault's*tales are just lies,
"The Golden Library" -- this is a red book, with gold
binding.
Dimness enters to a room. The day snuffs out its
candle.
On the black piano shelf are silent dots and notes.

To wait for their return;
Those coming back from the funeral.
Restrained steps of sadness.
The door immediately creaks.
Shielding the eyes of the girl, who saw death face
to face.

(*See note 308.)

IX. THE FOREST

Pine needles. Their dark, warm gold.
Lying on the ground. Moss and trunks.
A glance and treetop in blue.
The whisper of the forest in the wind,
    mysterious and wise.
O, those tall trees.

Two drops on a spider's web -- two tears
Stretched from branch to branch
    in the sorrow of their purity.
Perhaps a very tall tree already grows
On the grave of the little brother.

X. GARDEN.

Cherry resin -- so sweet and clear.
To peel, to take it from the stem.
Exalted in the morning and the garden in blossom
A white storm of blossoms.

To ascend to the hill and to laugh: "Brothers.
Look at the clearness of the treetop!
Springtimes like these! Come and gone."
Gone to another childhood.

FROM THE SONGS OF THE RED COLT

I. THE BOY

The smell of a barn and light before morn,
The haystack next to the pond.
Mounted on the red colt
Your small, fair son will welcome the dawn.

The field will uncover an endless path
And the boy will ride and will meet the heavens.
And morning is humble and eyes are opened.
And day.
An orphaned glass of milk
Remains alone in the house.

II. THE BIRTH OF THE COLT

A wide yard and gilded fence.
Lithuania's clever spring of my childhood.
All of them stood near the stable --
The large horse is giving birth.

Olya had a startled look,
She touched its skin. We too touched it.
So very small and so reddish
Our new colt!

And the voices of children.
And the fresh morning.
The yard is wide like our spacious world.
The colt has grown; the colt has left.
The colt was red as blood.
Away he went and is no more.

III. IN ITS FOOTSTEPS

The red colt -- he fled to the west,
To the white forest, to the pure frost.
Mother went to find him but did not return,
Footprints of blood in the snow.

They sent the child into the whiteness blind
To seek the red colt.
The blustery wind
The frozen tear
Sunset hovers between frost and fire.
A "Yahrzeit" candle
For a six-year-old.

HANNAH SENESH

Hannah Senesh is one of Israel's greatest national heroines. As a Haganah fighter, she parachuted into Nazi-occupied Europe in an attempt to warn the Jewish population of their impending fate. Today, her lyric poems are memorized by Israeli school children. Since her poetry is directly related to her life experience, I will attempt to illuminate her poetry in the context of her life.

She was born in Budapest, Hungary on July 17, 1921 to a wealthy, assimilated family. She is the daughter of Béla Szenes (1894-1927), a Hungarian writer and journalist. She greatly admired her father's literary talents and deeply mourned his premature death. She writes of the legacy which her father left to his family:

> This morning we visited Daddy's grave. How sad that we had to become acquainted with the cemetery so early in life. But I feel that even from beyond the grave Daddy is helping us, if in no other way than with his name. I don't think he could have left us a greater legacy. [344]

Her mother was a pianist and a lover of art. She dedicated some of her most moving poems to her mother whom she revered. At the age of twelve, Hannah Senesh wrote the following poem entitled "Mother:"

> If the world offered a reward,
> A laurel for patience and love,
> One person alone would be worthy:
> Mother.

> Let there be thanks in your hearts
> And on your lips a prayer,
> Whenever you hear that most beautiful word:
> Mother. [345]

Hannah Senesh studied in a Protestant school, the Lyceum, in which the majority of students were gentiles or Jews converted to Christianity. Her brother, George, attended high school in Budapest and later was accepted to a university in France. At an early age, Hannah Senesh displayed literary talent and a precocious intellect.

At the age of thirteen, she began to keep a diary in which she recorded her impressions of life, including her inner feelings and experiences. The diary -- the first part written in Hungarian and the last section, in Hebrew (see below) -- reveals a sensitive, perceptive, critical mind.

At age fourteen, she began to write poetry. She wrote the following poem in Hungarian for her mother's birthday in 1935:

> Life is a brief and hurtling day,
> Pain and striving fill every page.
> Just time enough to glance around,
> Register a face or sound
> And -- life's been around. [346]

At this age, she had already written a play entitled Bella Gerant Alii; Tu, Felix Austria, Nube. [347] It seems apparent that she wished at this time to emulate her father's literary pursuits. Although she enjoyed writing, she questioned her ability in this field:

June 15, 1936

> I have had such strange thoughts lately. I would like to be a writer. For the time being I just laugh at myself; I've no idea whether I have any talent. I've been inspired by the success of Bella Gerant -- everyone likes it. But even so, I don't think I would write plays. I would rather write novels. [348]

At age fifteen, she explored in her diary the reasons underlying her desire to become a writer. Little did she know that her ultimate goal would become a reality:

> I still long to be a writer. It's my constant wish. I don't know whether it's simply a desire for praise and fame, but I do know it is such a marvelous feeling to write something well that I think it is worth struggling to become a writer. On the whole, the above-average man suffers more, but his joys are greater too, and I would rather be an unusual person than just average. I am not even thinking now of the writing profession, because when I think of an above-average man I don't necessarily think of a famous man, but of a great soul . . . a great human being. And I would like to be a great soul. If God will permit! [349]

It is interesting to note that both she and her brother heard little about religion and being Jewish in their early childhood. [350] On Rosh Hashana, 1936, Hannah Senesh records in her diary her attempts to sort out her religious values:

> It's the second day of the Jewish New Year. Yesterday and today we went to synagogue. I am not quite clear just how I stand: synagogue, religion, the question of God. About the last and most difficult question I am the least disturbed. I believe in God -- even if I can't express just how. Actually I'm relatively clear on the subject of religion too, because the Jewish (sic) fits in best with my way of thinking. But the trouble with the synagogue is that I don't find it at all important, and I don't feel it to be a spiritual necessity; I can pray equally well at home. [351]

By the age of sixteen, several of her poems were published, and she was mentioned in a literary magazine as being "a great hope of Hungarian poetry." 352 In her diary, she continues to write about her thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. One of the most interesting excerpts from her diary at this time deals with antisemitism and Jewish identity:

May 30, 1939

> In my way of thinking, you have to be someone exceptional to fight antisemitism, which is the most difficult kind of fight. Only now am I beginning to see what it really means to be a Jew in a Christian society. But I don't mind it at all. It is because we have to struggle, because it is more difficult for us to reach our goal, that we develop outstanding qualities. 353

In 1938, she visited friends in Tatra, Biela-Voda, a town in Czechoslovakia.. She describes an early morning walk in her diary. This description is representative of her fine poetical sensitivity:

July 31, 1938

> . . . Last night we went for a walk, and this morning I got up at five and went for a walk again. It was marvelous. I was all alone, the air was heavenly, the view superb. I saw the sunrise, sang, picked strawberries, and some other edible berry, looked for a four-leaf clover (didn't find one), . . . then sat on a tree stump and marveled at the view. Stupendous! 354

She also composed a poem entitled "Leaves," based on her encounter with nature, juxtaposing this pristine setting against the troubled times;

First it was green,
Then it turned yellow.
Soon its face changed to wine-red.
Tomorrow it will hide in a monk's robe,
And its next colour will spell death. [355]

Another poem written at this time reveals the poetess' desire to express herself in a unique fashion, and her difficulty in doing so:

Now, now I'd like to say something,
Something more than mere words,
More dappled than colour,
More musical than rhythm or rhyme,
Something a million people haven't
already said or heard.
Just something.
All about the land is silent, listening,
The forest gazing at me, expectant.
The sky watches me with a curious eye.
Everything is silent. And so am I. [356]

Under the impact of the antisemitic atmosphere in Budapest, she became an ardent Zionist and began to learn Hebrew. Following her seventeenth birthday, she writes about her recent decision:

October 27, 1938

I don't know whether I've already mentioned that I've become a Zionist. This word stands for a tremendous number of things. To me it means, in short, that I now consciously and strongly feel I am a Jew, and am proud of it. My primary aim is to go to Palestine, to work for it . . . I'm convinced Zionism is Jewry's solution to its problems, and that the outstanding work being done in Palestine is not in vain. [357]

Within three months, Hannah Senesh became totally preoccupied with thoughts about Palestine. She writes, "The thought that now occupies my every waking moment is Palestine. Everything in connection with it interests me, everything

else is entirely secondary. Even school has lost some of its meaning, and the only thing I am studying hard is Hebrew." [358] She reveals in her diary her decision to go on aliyah, to emigrate to Palestine:

November 12, 1938

> I am determinedly and purposefully preparing for life in Palestine. And although I confess that in many respects it's painful to tear myself away from my Hungarian sentiments, I must do so in my own interests, and the interests of Jewry. Over two-thousand-year history justifies us, the present compels us, the future gives us confidence. Whoever is aware of his Jewishness cannot continue with his eyes shut. . . [359]

In June, 1939, she began writing her diary entries in Hebrew. She describes why she wants to learn to read the Bible in Hebrew. She also refers to a fateful statement of her brother's which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy:

> I want to read the Bible in Hebrew. I know it will be very difficult, but it is the true language and the most beautiful; in it is the spirit of our people . . . I want to write some more about George, my brother. He's also learning Hebrew and, at the end of one of his letters, he wrote: 'It's good to die for our land.' Recently that sentence has taken on real meaning for these are difficult times in Palestine . . .' [360]

Shortly before she finished her secondary studies, she wrote a letter in Hebrew to the Girls' Agricultural School in Nahalal, Palestine, requesting that they accept her as a student. She also wrote her brother in France and told him of her decision. She was pleased to learn that he also intended to emigrate to Palestine after he completed his studies. Three days following her eighteenth birthday,

she was notified that she was accepted into the school in Nahalal. One senses the intensity of her excitement:

July 21, 1939

> I've got it, I've got it -- the certificate! I'm filled with joy and happiness! I don't know what to write; I can't believe it. I read and re-read the letter bearing the good news, now I can't find words to express what I feel. I have no feeling other than overwhelming happiness. But I can understand that Mother can't see the matter as I do; she is filled with conflicting emotions, and is really very brave. I won't forget her sacrifice. Not many mothers would behave as she is behaving. [361]

In September, 1939, she arrived in Palestine and began her studies at the Nahalal Agricultural School. Four days following her arrival, she writes, "I am in Nahalal, in Eretz. I am home." [362] Although she was satisfied with her decision to emigrate to Palestine, she continued to worry about her mother's welfare. She expresses her feelings of sadness and remorse in the following excerpt from her diary:

June 29, 1940

> And Mother . . . I can imagine her spending sleepless nights, getting up in the morning worried, searching the newspapers, waiting for the post, locking her worries and sadness in her heart because she is much too noble to burden others with her worries. And I, thousands of miles away, cannot sit beside her, smooth her creased brow, calm her, share the worries. [363]

She wrote the poem entitled "To My Mother" which expresses these thoughts and also serves as an ode of praise to her mother's strength and courage. The poem begins:

> Where did you learn to wipe the tears?
> To bear the pain in silence?
> To hide in the recesses of your heart
> The complaint, the suffering,
> the weeping, the sorrow . . . [364]

She became more adept at Hebrew, yet found it difficult to believe that she would ever learn to write fluently in Hebrew:

> Hebrew has become part of me. I write it easily now (although incorrectly), but lines which came to mind this morning during my walk in the meadow came in Hungarian. I don't think I shall ever be able to write poetry in Hebrew. [365]

Fortunately, her fears were in vain; she began writing Hebrew poetry in 1940. Her first Hebrew poem which appears in her diary is "Fires of War." [366] In May, 1941, she wrote three Hebrew poems, "To Die," "A Song to the Galilee," and "For the Brothers" which demonstrate her natural ability as a poetess. In these poems, she addresses herself to the meaning of life, death, and the Holocaust. She elaborates on these important themes in her diary, in an entry on May 17, 1941:

> I want to believe that the catastrophe won't come to pass. But if it does, I hope we'll face it with honor. And if we can't hold out, then we will fall honorably.
>
> The words of Zalman Shneur ring in my ears: 'It's glorious to die the death of saints, and to leave the world to the inglorious.' What is a heroic death? To consecrate God's name in a manner divorced from life itself? Is there anything more holy than life itself? [367]

Her poem "To Die" succinctly expresses her belief in the need to affirm life and to accept an honorable death for

the sake of one's homeland:

> To die . . . so young . . . to die . . .
> no, no, not I
> I love the warm sun,
> The light, the song, a sparkle of a pair of eyes,
> No, I didn't want war, destruction.
> No, no, not I.
>
> But if it is decreed that I live today
> In the spill of blood, in the awesome devastation,
> I will say: thank God for the right
> To live, and may the hour come to die.
> Upon your earth, my land, my homeland. [368]

In the poem "To the Galilee," she states that it is the memory of the past which infuses the landscape of Palestine, and the Galilee in particular, with its unique beauty:

> On the face of the mountains, in the heart
> of the children
> The enchanted memory of thousands of years.
> He who cries with the sounds of the flute.
> It is the Galilee. [369]

She wrote "For the Brothers" a few days prior to Russia's entry into World War II. She refers to the costly nature of war, even if the cause is just:

> And know, costly
> The road to the just
> And the true. [370]

At the young age of nineteen, Hannah Senesh reveals in her diary her sincere belief that she has a duty, a mission which she must follow in order to help others. She claims, "Sometimes I feel I am an emissary who has been entrusted with a mission. What this mission is -- is not clear to me. (After all, everyone has a mission in life.) I feel I have a duty towards others, as if I were obligated

to them." 371 A few months later she writes, " . . .I'm conscious-stricken that I have it so good and easy here while others are suffering, and feel I ought to do something -- something exerting, demanding -- to justify my existence." 372

In the meantime, Hannah Senesh continued to write poetry. In September, 1941, she visited Avigdor Hameiri, the author, in Ramat Gan. She read to him her poems "Moment" and "To the Galil." She writes in her diary, "He listened attentively, and said they were 'interesting examples, showed technique, facility of expression, and simplicity...'" 373

She writes in her diary about one close friend named Miriam. She confided to her friend all her thoughts and concerns. Nevertheless, Hannah Senesh felt isolated and often alone:

> Sometimes I look about me and realize how very alone I am among my colleagues and acquaintances. I wonder if everyone feels this way, or am I unique? I read my poem, 'Ginosar,' to Miriam. 374

Although she felt alone in terms of her relationship to others, Hannah Senesh was comforted by the sea:

> You are not alone. Here is your sea.
> It will ask you with its gentle humming
> Of the manner of your dreams, of your hopes. 375

Several boyfriends proposed to her, but she chose not to accept these offers. She was looking for the ideal man who would help her alleviate her feeling of being lonesome and could understand her inner soul:

Could I meet one who understood all . . .
Without word, without search,
Confession or lie,
Without asking why. [376]

She also yearned to see her brother George once more. He had been her confidant in her youth. The following poem entitled "If You Came" reveals the intensity of her yearning for her brother:

If you suddenly came before me in the street . . .
Hands in your pockets and laughter in your eyes,
And the sound of your steps in a well-known rhythm
I used to stand startled, frightened
At the light of a splendid, cherished vision.

Until your picture breaks forth to the depths
You cause all my walls of doubt to fall,
You make me swing forth my arms to embrace you
In laughter and in tears: my brother! [377]

She understood the desperate concern and longing of mothers in the diaspora for their children who emigrated to Palestine. Her poem "To Mothers in the Diaspora" describes the anguish of the separation of a mother from her offspring. The poem is even more poignant considering that in 1942, any Jewish mother living in the diaspora of Europe did not know whether she would see her loved ones again:

A day, two days, a week, a month,
One year, ten years . . . to wait
For a line, a word, no matter how late.

Through endless plight
To gather and to store
The terror of the night.

Concealing in the dread
Vast seas of blood
A tear.

Then what word can we say?
Only a look, a word today or any day:
Mother! Mother! 378

Hannah Senesh was enraptured with the beauty of the landscape of Palestine. She was particularly captivated by the sand and sea of Caesarea. In this poem, she reiterates her attachment to her newly adopted homeland:

Hush, cease all sound.
Across the sea is the sand,
The shore known and near,
The shore golden, dear,
Home, the Homeland . . .

But reaching the city of ruins
Soft a few words we intone.
We return. We are here.
Soft answers the silence of stone,
We awaited you two thousand years. 379

In her diary, she writes about a visit to Caesarea:

February 4, 1942

> I've just returned from a short visit to Caesarea. It was my second time there, and I was more impressed with the site than ever. The infinite horizon, the sea . . . As one sits by the sea and thinks of the world's past, and contemplates its future; one's scope broadens, one's determination to achieve something great and beautiful strengthens. 380

After completing her agricultural studies, she visited several kibbutzim, and decided to join a kibbutz of youth workers in Sedot Yam, next to Caesarea. Here she wrote some of her most memorable poems. She marveled at the blue waters and golden sands, giving rise to the well-known poem and song, "Walk to Caesarea," ("Eli, Eli"):

God -- may there be no end
to sea, to sand,
water's splash,
lightning's flash,
the prayer of man. 381

By the beginning of 1943, Hannah Senesh was deeply concerned with the fate of European Jewry. She began to concoct a plan to help organize a youth emigration and bring her mother to Palestine. She writes in her diary:

January 8, 1943

> . . . I was suddenly struck by the idea of going to Hungary. I feel I must be there during these days in order to help organize youth emigration, and also to get my mother out. Although I'm quite aware how absurd the idea is, it still seems feasible and necessary to me, so I'll get to work on it and carry it through. [382]

One detects in her diary a resurgence of optimism and a sense of purpose. In a poem called "At the Crossroads," she writes, "A voice called and I went. / I went, for it called. / I went, lest I fall." [383] On February 22, 1943, Hannah Senesh writes of a fateful coincidence:

> How strangely things work out. On January 8, I wrote a few words about the sudden idea that struck me. A few days ago a man from Kibbutz Ma'agan, a member of Palmach, visited the kibbutz and we chatted awhile. In the course of the conversation he told me that a Palmach unit was being organized to do -- exactly what I felt then I wanted to do. I was truly astounded. The <u>identical</u> idea! My answer, of course, was that I'm absolutely ready . . . [384]

This visitor told her about a group of paratroopers in the process of formation. The group would be sent to Hungary in order to rescue Allied prisoners of war and organize Jewish resistance. The poem "The Hora of a Daughter in the Diaspora" speaks of her determination to pursue this courageous goal:

Blue eyes, a questioning look,
Gloomy silence and a stubborn mouth --
The silence overcomes me -- I remain standing
Alone among hundreds. My mother and I. [385]

In the following two entries in her diary, Hannah Senesh describes her excitement and readiness for her mission:

May 27, 1943

My entire being is preoccupied with one thing: departure. It's imminent, real . . .

May 29, 1943

. . . I pray for only one thing: that the period of waiting will not be too long, and that I can see action soon. As for the rest -- I'm afraid of nothing. I'm totally self-confident, ready for anything. [386]

Prior to her departure for her training program in Egypt, Hannah Senesh indulges in a few moments of introspection and retrospection. She asserts that she accepts her fate:

September 19, 1943

In my life's chain of events nothing was accidental. Everything happened according to an inner need. I would have been miserable following a road other than the one I chose. No, perhaps this is an exaggeration. But had I chosen differently, I would not have been in harmony with myself. [387]

In the last line of her diary, she states "I want to believe that what I've done, and will do, is right. Time will tell the rest." [388] Her last Hebrew poem written in Palestine about a week before her departure, is entitled "We Gathered Flowers." The poem expresses her desire to absorb Eretz Israel into her blood in order to infuse the broken

Hungarian Jewry with pride, courage, and love for Eretz Israel:

> We gathered flowers in the fields and mountains,
> We breathed the fresh winds of spring,
> We were drenched with the warmth of the sun's rays
> In our Homeland, in our beloved home.
>
> We go out to our brothers in exile,
> To the suffering of winter, to frost in the night.
> Our hearts will bring tidings of springtime,
> Our lips sing the song of light. [389]

Before she left on her mission, she gave her diary and a notebook of her poems to Kibbutz Sedot Yam in Caesarea.

In March, 1944, she parachuted over Yugoslavia and joined with Tito's partisans. In May, 1944, while in Sardice, Yugoslavia she wrote her last Hebrew poem, "Blessed is the Match." Earlier in her life, she wrote these words, "If I had great talent, I could express all in a poem of four lines . . ." [390] She succeeds in this task. These four Hebrew lines capture the spirit of her life and will remain emblazened in the memory of those who appreciate her poetry:

> Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
> Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret
> fastness of the heart.
> Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its
> beating for honor's sake.
> Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame. [391]

On June 7, 1944, she crossed the border into Hungary during the peak of the deportation of Hungarian Jewry. Subsequently, she was arrested by the Hungarian police. During her imprisonment in Budapest, she wrote a final poem in

Hungarian which concludes:

> I could have been twenty-three next July;
> I gambled on what mattered most,
> The dice were cast. I lost. [392]

She was cruelly tortured; nevertheless, she remained faithful to her mission and did not divulge any information. A secret court condemned her to death following the Fascist takeover in Hungary. On November 7, 1944, she was executed by a firing squad in a Budapest prison courtyard. In 1950, her remains were taken to Israel and interred on Mt. Herzl. She will be remembered as one of the most beloved Jewish martyrs of this century. Her poetry will continue to speak to young and old of generations to come.

TO MY MOTHER

Where did you learn to wipe the tears?
To bear the pain in silence?
To hide in the recesses of your heart
The complaint, the suffering,
    the weeping, the sorrow . . .

Hear the wind!
Its open jaw
Roars through hill and dale.
Behold the sea --
Lashing the giant rocks
In fury and rage.

All of nature shakes and quakes
Bursting through every fence and form . . . .
Whence comes this quiet in your heart?
Where did you learn such courage?

Nahalal, January 5, 1940

TO DIE? . . .

To die . . . so young . . . to die . . .
no, no, not I
I love warm sun,
The light, the song, a sparkle of a pair of eyes,
No, I didn't want war, destruction.
No, no, not I.

But if it is decreed that I live today
In the spill of blood, in the awesome devastation,
I will say: thank God for the right
To live, and may the hour come to die.
Upon your earth, my land, my homeland.

Nahalal, May 5, 1941

A SONG TO THE GALILEE

Your mountains, O Galilee, are like all mountains.
Gold and green, rocks and meadows.
Between your slopes, the light shadow.
But the mountains -- this is not the Galilee.

And also the cornfields like all the fields.
In the bosom of your earth, hidden secrets,
Of white bread, of luscious fruit.
But the fields -- this is not the Galilee.

And so also your children, like all people.
Days of toil, long and hard.
Deep lines are engraved on their faces.
But the Galilee -- it is not the children.

On the face of the mountains,
    in the heart of the children
The enchanted memory of thousands of years.
He who cries with the sounds of the flute.
It is the Galilee.

Nahalal, May 29, 1941

IF YOU CAME . . .

If you suddenly came before me in the street . . .
Hands in your pocket and laughter in your eyes,
And the sound of your steps in a familiar rhythm
I used to stand startled, frightened
At the light of a splendid, cherished vision.

When your picture breaks forth to the depths
You cause all my walls of doubt to fall,
You make me swing forth my arms to embrace you
In laughter and in tears: my brother!

March 5, 1942

THE HORA OF A DAUGHTER IN THE DIASPORA

The Hora rages, clamors, rattles
Quivers, surges around me.
The charm of the rhythm
From joy and sorrow
Pulls my body and my heart.

The foot is stepping, the shoulder is trembling,
The song is blazing, the tune is burning,
Dance and song,
A prayer without words
To the God of the future, to the God of creation.

And suddenly . . .
An image hovers opposite my eyes.
My arm is removed from the shoulders of friends,
My heart is estranged from the raging song.
Whether near or far, my mother still rules me.

Blue eyes, a questioning look,
Gloomy silence and a stubborn mouth --
The silence overcomes me -- I remain standing
Alone among hundreds. My mother and I.

Caesarea, February 27, 1943

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

You are not alone. Here is your sea
It will ask you with its gentle humming
About the dreams of your way, and your hopes.

They waited for your coming -- they all waited:
The shore, the sand, rocks, waves and sea,
They surely know: you will come in the dark night.

From on high, the myriad eyes in the sky,
They understand their two friends
That steal from the sea of infinity -- a tear.

Caesarea, July, 1943

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ZELDA

Zelda (neé Schneurson) was born in Chernigov, Ukraine in 1914. She is a descendant of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Ladi (1745-1813), the founder of the Ḥabad movement. Her father, Shalom Solomon Schneurson, was a Hasidic rabbi. In 1925, Zelda immigrated to Eretz Israel with her family and settled in Jerusalem. She received a religious education and lived in a religious quarter of Jerusalem. She studied in the Mizraḥi Teacher's Seminary and taught at religious schools for girls. In 1950, she married Hayim Mishkovsky, who died in 1970.

Zelda has published her poems in various Israeli periodicals. Her three books of poetry include: Penai ("Leisure," 1967); Hakarmel Ha'inireh ("The Unseen Carmel," 1971); and Al Tirḥak ("Let Me Not Be Forsaken," 1974). Her books have been highly praised by literary critics. She received a number of literary prizes including the Brenner Prize for Literature.

In her poetry, she probes the nature of the human condition; particularly, man's pursuit for religious truth. She confronts the issue of faith versus doubt in the modern age. One discerns echoes of biblical works such as Job, Isaiah, and Psalms and many liturgical

references in her poetical works. Several of her poems delineate her attitude towards God and the details of a religious life. There is a synthesis in her verse of religious awareness with a modern sensitivity. She achieves this by describing her religious self in the context of modern verse.. One occasionally notices a conflict arising between the traditional Jewish world and the secular world. Of the ten poetesses covered in this study, Zelda exhibits the greatest preoccupation with religion. Thus, I intend to concentrate on the religious themes in her verse.

Hillel Barzel in an article entitled "Between Revelation and Lamentation" [309] claims that it is customary to define Zelda's poems as either religious or metaphysical. Barzel finds these definitions to be too general. He would prefer to view Zelda's poetry from a hasidic or kabbalistic perspective. He notes that she includes in her poetry a treasury of words and concepts taken from the Kabbalah. For example, the kabbalistic term ayin (אין) "nothingness" appears in many of her poems. Her use of this term is based on Schneur Zalman of Ladi's interpretation of its meaning. Ayin refers to formless matter in the aspect of wisdom. This term occurs in her poem entitled "The Old House":

> The humble house does not
> Sing songs of its closeness to the abyss
> Or to the kingdom of nothingness,
> Nor does the silent house reel,
> Nor is the strange house
> Drunk. [310]

Although this perspective can heighten one's understanding of her poetry, it is sometimes difficult to determine the full extent of this influence on her work. At times, Barzel seems to read hasidic meanings into the text. Attention will be given to words and metaphors in Zelda's poetry which seems to bear a hasidic or kabbalistic imprint.

As a daughter and granddaughter of hasidic rabbis, Zelda was greatly influenced by their attitudes and teachings. In one poem, she remembers her father's serious demeanor which she interprets as a product of religious attitudes:

> But I recall the strictness of my childhood:
> Laughter was not proper
> For a bearded man,
> It was not proper for a halachist --
> It was not proper for a father. [311]

She compares "the perfect faith" of her grandfather to the faith of Abraham who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to prove his devotion to God:

> Like Father Abraham
> Who counted stars at night,
> Who called to his Creator
> From the furnace,
> Who bound his son --
> So was my grandfather.
> The same perfect faith
> In the midst of the flame . . . [312]

She respected her grandfather's belief in God. She pays tribute to the religious atmosphere that pervades her grandfather's room:

> And in his broken-down room
> Cherubim sang
> Of the heavenly Jerusalem. [313]

In "Kiddush," Zelda sings words of praise about her grandfather. She credits him with the ability to inspire the hearts of his loved ones with an appreciation of the Shabbat:

> He brings forth our hearts from the darkness
> To the crystal Shabbat
> From the chaos of despair
> To a holiday of friendship. [314]

In the Ḥabad philosophy, great emphasis is placed on the intellect and on the study of Torah. The Hasidim believe that the rebbe or ẕaddik is able to lift up the fallen souls of his followers. In the following poem, Zelda's grandfather, a ẕaddik, is credited with probing the inner soul of the individual. The "holy words of tradition" are seen as having a similar capability:

> Praise to the holy words
> They are the small sisters
> Of the tender night,
> Like him they know to open
> Doors
> To the inner self . . . [315]

For Zelda, the Shabbat is a major emotional experience. Light is the primary motif in the following three poems: "When I Bless the Candles," "Light a Candle," and "A Shabbat Candle." The lit candle serves as the focal point of the Shabbat. In the poem "When I Blessed the Candles," the speaker wishes to receive religious inspiration as a result of her performance of the mitzva of blessing the candles on Shabbat. However, the lights do not speak to her and she is disappointed that she is unable to be

comforted by the holiday:

> When I blessed the candles
> They gave voice to my longing:
> Shabbat Shalom, my dear ones --
> But they forsook the land of the living
> And they did not answer the weak one. [316]

The light of the candles illuminates her tears and reveals the depth of her pain:

> Through my tears wander the flames
> The golden wall is all aglow,
> So much light all around me
> So much pain --
> Another moment and my soul will leave. [317]

The Shabbat is depicted as a heavenly queen, reminiscent of the Shabbat bride which the hasidic rabbis would welcome each Kabbalat Shabbat:

> Secretly the Shabbat plucked
> The setting sun.
> Slowly the Shabbat descends
> The rose of heaven in her hand. [318]

Silberschlag suggests that the rose, often a symbol of perfection, is metamorphosed into a symbol of the messianic era. [319] According to tradition, the Shabbat is a foretaste of the messianic age. The poem concludes without the arrival of the Messiah. The question is raised whether the world can be perfected in a generation caught up in death and destruction. Silberschlag's interpretation is suggestive; however, another interpretation seems more appropriate. In the poem, the rose is a symbol of Israel. The question is raised whether Israel will be able to flourish in a generation enmeshed in death and destruction: [320]

Will the rose of eternity grow
In a generation enslaved
To destruction.
In a generation enslaved
To death? [321]

In the poem entitled "A Shabbat Candle," the candlelight represents for the speaker in the poem entirely different phenomena, both beneficient and malevolent. Her heart asks the evening the secret of the flame. She learns that love is the basis of the fire. Her blood rebels at this answer:

My blood listens --
And cries and cries.
Woe, a flame -- also auto-da-fé. [322]

The candle flame reminds her of the burning of heretics during the Inquisition and, presumably, the incineration of bodies during the Holocaust. The speaker finds it difficult to reconcile the amazing fire of candlelight with its destructive potential:

It is further said --
The fire mocks the miracles to dust. [323]

The candle's sparks also remind the speaker of the temples in which mothers sing praises to God:

The candle's sparks -- temples,
Inside the temples
Mothers sing to the heavens
Until the end of time. [324]

"My Mother's Room Is Lit" provides the reader with an intimate description of a beautiful room bathed in Shabbat light. Past, present, and future converge in this poem which exults life and envisions death. The Shabbat

mood in this silent apartment is compared to the world to come:

> The large inner room, dark
> Like the cave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai.
> In it is the silence of the sea --
> In it is the Shabbat, like the world to come. [325]

In this room, a veil of Shabbat light covers all pain and sorrow. Beneath the veil, life flourishes and eventually diminishes:

> A veil of light covers
> Suffering, weakness, mistakes.
> So pass the days and noisy life. [326]

In "Shabbat and Weekday," Zelda defines the Shabbat in terms of a universe filled with candlelight. According to the Kabbalah, there are 310 worlds which fill the universe:

> To light candles in all the worlds --
> This is the Shabbat.
> To light the Shabbat candles
> This soul-leap, pregnant with secret things
> To a grand sea, imbued with the mystery
> Of a sinking fire. [327]

On the Shabbat, her room is aglow and her imagination soars into the firmament:

> When I lit the candles, my room
> Turned into the Milky Way,
> My heart sank into the emerald cascade. [328]

The speaker in the poem sinks into a reverie on the first day of the week. She meets a shopkeeper and sees her image reflected in his eyes:

> When I enter the store, the shopkeeper
> feels right away

That I came from another star, and in wonder
The mirror looks strange to him, refugee
from the abyss ---
In his cold pupils, like in a black mirror,
I see my wrinkled veil, my confused smile . . .[329]

In the poem, the mirror is a metaphor of the soul. This poem is reminiscent of the passage in Pirkei Avot ("Sayings of the Fathers") which states ". . . the shop stands open and the shopkeeper gives credit and the account book is open." [330] In both cases, the shopkeeper symbolizes God.

The speaker in many of Zelda's poems directs his/her thoughts to God. In "I Cried All Night," the speaker petitions God throughout the night. She is searching for a death without pain and suffering. God serves as her repose and her source of comfort:

I offered my pleas all night
Even though I am dust
Let there be rest for me
To look to the heights of heaven
Again and again
To take leave from their beauty. [331]

"A Place of Fire" is another example of a poem written in the form of a petition to God. In this case, the speakers in the poem using words from Psalms, appeal to the mountain air to serve as their intermediary:

Mountain air alive
Beloved breathing
Ask mercy for us
From Him who is above all. [332]

According to her poem entitled "Everyone Has a Name," God is one of the participants in the naming process:

Everyone has a name
Given to him by God
And given to him by his parents . . .
Everyone has a name
Given to him by the sea
And given to him
By his death. [333]

Zelda is appealing to a very personal God. Employing biblical language, the speaker in the following poem, "Be Not Far," submits a Job-like protest to the "Creator of nights and winds":

Creator of night and winds,
Against Thee is this dreadful weeping.
Be not far.
Let not millions of light-years
Stand like a wall
Between Thee and Job. [334]

She sometimes expresses the fear that she may lose her priviledged status by God's side. In the poem "Cast Me Not Off From Before You," [335] a dialogue ensues between her self and her soul. She feels manipulated and controlled by a power outside herself. In fear, she turns to God and asks not to be cast away:

It's hard for a lost heart
With darkness
And with words --
Cast me not off from before you. [336]

Out of loneliness, she prays that she will not be abandoned:

When I awake from my dream
And darkness will be all around me
My old furniture will sigh
With faintly creaking sounds --
Cast me not off from before you. [337]

She is filled with uncertainty. She wants to have a

religious experience, but wonders whether it's possible. Although she is willing to be directed, no direction is seen. Her senses seem to be in contradiction to the revelation. Even a beautiful flower is of no comfort to her:

> Surely the soft beauty of a flower
> Has touched me with the hardness
> of words
> In an hour of smouldering grief. [338]

In "The Seamstress," the angel of death reigns supreme. At first he serves the seamstress at night. Subsequently, as the woman grows ill, he comforts her. When she is dying, the angel of death enters and draws her to him until the Messiah comes:

> By day, her small house is so empty --
> Without a friend, without a groom.
> At night a lord rules her --
> Faithful, supreme.
>
> When she grows ill - he embraces her,
> When she is dying - he kisses her,
> When she is dead --
> He'll hold her
> To his heart of frost
> In his hands of dust.
>
> I banished all the words
> From my heart
> For the day has passed
> And my mother fell asleep --
> And my mother will sleep
> Till the Messiah comes. [339]

Zelda infuses traditional Jewish activities with holiness and meaning. The speaker in a poem entitled "Make Your Voices Heard, Morning Blessings" looks out on a beautiful new day and feels impelled to offer praise

and thanksgiving. Reciting the morning prayers never seemed so logical:

> Behold, the sun exists
> Everywhere --
> And the world exists.
> Already the homes are outlined in gold.
>
> Make your voice heard
> You beloved morning blessings
> In the splendor
> Make your deep voice heard. [340]

During Zelda's childhood, she was immersed in a traditional Jewish milieu replete with holy men, fervent faith, and religious dogma. This period of her life was later recalled with nostalgia in a poem appropriately titled "Time." Her youth is remembered as " . . . a time of stories, tears, embraces and holy days." [341] In this poem, she recreates an impressionistic picture of an idyllic moment she spent with the women in her family:

> A time of Mother, Grandma, and the aunts.
> Sitting tranquil in a boat
> Of splendor,
> Gliding slowly -- slowly
> In a tiny boat of peace
> With the moon and all the stars. [342]

Occasionally, Zelda yearned for a magic, visionary world in which anything was possible. She composed a poem in which the moon is teaching Bible:

> The moon is teaching Bible.
> Cyclamen, anemone, and mountain
> Listen with joy.
> Only the girl cries. [343]

In her religious poetry, Zelda explores the poignant

memories of her traditional upbringing. She is willing to probe the innermost depths of her soul in order to understand the ways of God. She then encounters the modern age with a heightened religious sensibility. Her poetic insights offer the modern Jew a fresh perspective on the religious milieu of Eastern Europe. She is one of the few modern Israeli poets who can effectively bridge both the secular and religious world.

WHEN I BLESSED THE CANDLES

When I blessed the candles
They gave voice to my longing:
Shabbat Shalom, my dear ones --
But they forsook the land of the living
And they did not answer the weak one.

My trembling holiday said: my roots are above.
I whispered:
Shalom to you, Shabbat for you, my soul.

Through my tears wander the flames
The golden wall is all aglow,
So much light all around me
So much pain --
Another moment and my soul will leave.

CAST ME NOT OFF FROM BEFORE YOU

She bent towards my soul
To touch the sobbing in my throat,
Eternal God --
Her touch makes me into
Shreds and tatters,
It's hard for a lost heart
With darkness
And with words --

Cast me not off from before you.

When I awake from my dream
And darkness will be all around me
My old furniture will sigh
With faintly creaking sounds --

Cast me not off from before you.

When I awake to ponder
If the stories were really so sweet
As the senses tell
To my soul --
Are these stories my fortress?

Surely the soft beauty of a flower
Has touched me with the hardness of words
In an hour of smouldering grief.

When I awake in tears
If only I knew
Where heaven directs my life.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD, MORNING BLESSINGS

A troubling thought
She holds in her hand
My spirit
All night long
And I can not sleep --
Her nails tear the traces
Of my dreams
And I sink
Into the remote cisterns
From the world.

Like a dear friend
Whom the heart despairs to see
In the land of the living
The morning appears.

Blessed is his coming
Blessed is his coming
You angel of redemption!
And how they wait for the sunrise
The sick when
They turn
From one side of the pain
To the other side of pain

And she moistens
His scorched lips
In the dark
And her heart is filled with great fear.

Behold, the sun exists
Everywhere --
And the world exists.
Already the homes are outlined in gold.

Make your voice heard
You beloved morning blessings
In the splendor
Make your deep voice heard.
In awhile the splendor will turn
To consuming fire
And the slim hope will be burnt.
But perhaps you will answer
O soul
Comfort ye, comfort ye
By the evening winds.

MY MOTHER'S ROOM IS LIT

The pale plasterer mixed into the moist plaster
A delicate pink,
The lustre of a flaming apple, the smile of a baby.
Grape clusters and engraved crowns of brass he put
In heirloom candlesticks, flickering on the console,
Visible in the round mirror,
(Gardens of love from generation to generation
    and prized crowns and tears).
And on the table -- in the tales of the Hasidim,
    in stories of gold,
(that Rav Zevin collected, compiled),
Turn over so slowly, the wind of mountains
Mixing the landscape of snow with the burning heat.
My mother is praying -- on her head is silk brocade.

The large inner room, dark
Like the cave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai.
In it is the silence of the sea --
In it is Shabbat, like the world to come.
All the apartment is silent
My husband went to the office. My mother is in
    the temple of her prayers.

I am in the kitchen.
Geraniums grow in the pot and overflow like blood.
In the paved yard next to the plants
A cat walks like a landowner from the old generation.
Very slowly
The door is opened
For milk, for bread, for candles,
For taxes, for a letter.
Friday is her day for painting her laughing
    eyes blue,
And the day of the sad mouth.
Friday is the day of the poor.
So pass the days, so the years pass.
A veil of light covers
Suffering, weakness, mistakes.
So pass the days and noisy life.
Desires abound, buds, babes, oceans and forests,
Secretly depart from my limbs, flowing like blood.
When I die --
God will rip out my embroidery
Stitch by stitch,
And He casts my colors into the sea
To its storehouses in the abyss.
And perhaps He will turn them into a flower or
    a butterfly
My gentle dark night, my dark night lives.

KIDDUSH

Praise to my grandfather
With axes of fire and gold
Hammers at distress
With the words of kiddush he strikes
He opens a gate in the troubled heart
Far out stretch endless years of existence,
Orion and Pleiades in a wretched hole
He dares them to wander
Inside poverty and sorrow
He drinks wine
To honor their shining journey.
He brings forth our hearts from the darkness
To the crystal Shabbat,
From the chaos of despair
To a holiday of friendship,
Friend of mountains and forests,
Gazelles of the field and birds of paradise.

Praise to the holy words
They are the small sisters
Of the tender night,
Like him they know to open
Doors

To the inner self
And its thousand gates
Until the stream of my soul,
This free life
Mingles with the stream of creation.

WITH MY GRANDFATHER

Like our Father Abraham
Who counted stars at night,
Who called to his Creator
From the furnace,
Who bound his son --
So was my grandfather.
The same perfect faith
In the midst of the flame,
And the same dewy glance
And the soft curly beard.
Outside the snow fell
Outside they roared:
There is no law, no judge,
And in his broken-down room
Cherubim sang
Of the heavenly Jerusalem.

LIGHT A CANDLE

Light a candle
Drink wine.
Secretly the Shabbat plucked
The setting sun.
Slowly the Shabbat descends
The rose of heaven in her hand.
How will the Shabbat plant
A large and shining flower
In a blind and narrow heart?
How will the Shabbat plant
The bud of angels
In a heart of wild and crazy flesh?
Will the rose of eternity grow
In a generation enslaved
To destruction,
In a generation enslaved
To death?

Light a candle!
Drink wine!
Slowly the Shabbat descends
And in her hand a flower,
And in her hand
The setting sun.

A SHABBAT CANDLE

My heart asked the evening
My deep and gracious friend:
How can wings of gold
Cause fire to grow
And how does the enchanted flight work?
What is the secret?

A lonely flower answered my heart:
Love is the basis of fire.
The spirit of the sea
Responded to my thoughts:
A rose is all the freedom in creation,
This light with its marvelous lustre.

My blood listens --
And cries and cries.
Woe, a flame -- also auto-da-fé.
It is further said --
The fire mocks the miracles to dust.

Is it proper for a mortal,
A timid creature
To wander about

In a garden of fire?

How can you dare,
To foretell the spark of peace
In the chaos of smoke,
A flame that you light
Sarah bat Tovim.
The Shabbat candle in the darkness of pain.
Between the walls of nightmare
It thrives, burning slowly
In the collapsed house, in the cistern.
Facing it -- she closed her eyes,
Doleful in the abyss,
From worry, mourning, disgrace,
    and unholy things.

The candle's sparks -- temples,
Inside the temples
Mothers sing to the heavens
Until the end of time.
And she wanders among them
Towards God, with her barefoot infant
And with the murdered one.
Alas!
The timid soul dances
In the golden sanctuary, in the spark.

SHABBAT AND WEEKDAY

To light candles in all the worlds --
This is the Shabbat.
To light the Shabbat candles
This soul-leap, pregnant with secret things
To a grand sea, imbued with the mystery
Of the sinking fire.
When I lit the candles, my room
Turned into the Milky Way,
My heart sank into the emerald cascade.

But on the first day of the week
My soul is cast
From the heart of the ocean to the dry shore
Long, narrow, and desolate.
When I enter the store, the shopkeeper feels
    right away
That I came from another star, and in wonder
The mirror looks strange to him,
    refugee from the abyss --
In his cold pupils, like in a black mirror,
I see my wrinkled veil, my confused smile . . .
In the store another woman stands, a plump woman,
Slowly picking golden fruit,
A creature of a distant world.

I will awake from this reverie
In the dance of change, in the sound of air,
    in the rhythm
Of sounds, because the stout woman discovered
That she had lost her money . . . oh my!
The dark shopkeeper poured the dung of suspicion
On my grimy, neglected mirror. His glance
Withered like an overripe flower, my past
    has shriveled.
My dreams are dead.
Alas, I am alone in the dense forest,
In the dark, a lion roars, in answer to my cry,
And all around me the silent trees are drinking
    to me . . .
The door is opened, but I can not go out
From the store trap.
Now I see with harsh clarity
How little a man knows about his neighbor --
Even your family, even your dear ones,
    are capable
In a moment of utter blackness
To see in you every bad fault.
I am drowning in darkness . . .

And suddenly, in the very midst of blindness,
I heard a voice:

The truth will not die with the stopkeeper,
The truth will not die with the stout lady,
The truth will not die with your death.
My soul is awakened, and trembling
She senses that the honored king is present
With her in the muddy store.

I always say:
The voice of the Lord is on the great waters,
The voice of the Lord is in the song of the
    morning stars,
The voice of the Lord is in the whirlwind.
And here
In the midst of this commotion the master of
    the winds gathered me,
On waves of hate like on sticky stone
I danced before Him,
I raised my voice in song
To that truth for which sun, moon, and stars
    are the footstool.
I almost kissed the shopkeeper --
Since behind his back the worried one is revealed
To me, a scene of shining freedom,
The freedom of Shabbat lands
Burns in their songs of the children of the palace.

In the eyes of the butterfly,
In paradise, and in the eyes of the raging
Wind on the sea, my beauty did not depart.
I did not bend from the searching look
At my cheeks, so wrinkled and collapsed
He did not see my roving soul
Full of life and he does not know
That my soul is a ray of sun,
It will not be caught in the hand.

THE MOON IS TEACHING BIBLE

The moon is teaching Bible.
Cyclamen, anemone, and mountain
Listen with joy.
Only the girl cries.
The anemone can't hear her crying,
The anemone blazes in the Torah,
The anemone burns like the verse.
The cyclamen doesn't listen to the weeping
The cyclamen swoons
From the sweet secret.
The mountain will not hear her crying,
The mountain is submerged
In thought.

But here comes the wind
So soft and fragrant,
To honor hope,
To sing --
Each heart is a flying horseman,
A zealous hunter,
Lifted to the ends of the sea.

I CRIED ALL NIGHT

I cried all night
Master of the Universe
Perhaps there's a death that has no
Terror
A death that seems like a flower.
I offered my pleas all night
Even though I am dust
Let there be rest for me
To look to the heights of heaven
To take leave from their beauty,

I thought all night
Of many people living
In my aching chest
And different stories,
One must light a candle
To look at them
Before the sleep of death.

BIRDS OF PARADISE

Birds of paradise
Were singing in his eyes
And feathers of gold fell
On the books.

But I recall the strictness of my childhood:
Laughter was not proper
For a bearded man,
It was not proper for a halachist --
It was not proper for a father.

DALIAH RABIKOVITSCH

Daliah Rabikovitsch was born on November 27, 1936 in Ramat Gan. She was educated in Kevutsah Geva and attended high school in Haifa. She studied for three years at the Hebrew University. She has worked as a journalist and teacher. She published her first poems in Orlogin at the age of eighteen. Her poems have appeared in various Israeli newspapers and journals. She has published several articles on literature and art. She has also published stories and children's books and edited an anthology of short stories entitled The New Israeli Writers.

Her first volume of poetry, Ahavat Tapu'aḥ Hazahav ("The Love of an Orange," 1959), immediately established her reputation. It was followed by Ḥoref Kasheh ("A Hard Winter," 1964) and Hasefer Hashelishi ("The Third Book," 1969). Kol Meshabrim Vegalim ("All Thy Breakers and Waves," 1972) includes selections from these volumes. Her most recent book is Tehom Koré ("The Depths Call," 1976).

Feelings of loss and disorientation pervade much of her poetry. She reveals the depths of her personal pain, anguish, and loneliness. She readily expresses her complaints about the injustices of life. Daliah Rabikovitsch is a confessional poetess. She willingly delves into dreams

and fantasies and focuses on her own anxieties and subconscious thoughts. Many of her very personal poems assume the impersonal form of hallucination and myth.

The reader detects many images of pain in her poems. In the poem "The Tearing," the wind gores a stranger, ravens shriek, and the sunset signifies terror:

> Then that stranger walked away
> a shred of ivy clung to his shoes
> his scarf knotted around his neck
> and the wind gored him
>
> The larks were whistling
> starlings hung in the clouds
> and the skies were filled
> with the raven's shrieking
> the terror of sunset,
> the glare of the rose [393]

This poem conveys an ominous feeling. The malevolent elements are seen as focusing their wrath on a stranger. Daliah Rabikovitsch reveals great susceptibility to physical and emotional pain -- both her own and the world's.

"On the Road at Night" describes the original source of her personal pain. Her father was run over by a car when the poetess was six-years-old. In this poem, she tells how she returned to the scene of his death out of a sense of responsibility and tried to evoke from him "one word of love":

> And he doesn't tell me one word of love
> Though once upon a time he was my father.
> And even though I was his eldest daughter
> He cannot tell me one word of love. [394]

The trauma of his death is destined to remain with her for

a lifetime. She realizes that she will always have to confront her memory of him:

> And night after night he stands there alone
> in his place
> And I must go down to his place and be there.
> And I want to ask the man how long will I have to.
> And I know, even as I ask, I will always have to. [395]

This initial sense of great loss will have an adverse effect on all her subsequent relationships. It appears that her fear of loss and ensuing pain will lead to feelings of alienation as an adult.

In "Only the Dust," the child speaks of her utter loneliness:

> Think of it: only the dust
> followed me,
> I had no other companion.
> Trailed me to the kindergarten,
> Tangled my hair
> on the warmest days. [396]

The child becomes a young adult and she yearns for companionship and love:

> The pine cones rustled, and for a while
> I ached to be alone with the wind.
> Nights I dreamed in a fever
> about houses drenched
> with love.
> Imagine how I was cheated if the dust
> was my only companion. [397]

But she is disillusioned -- her dreams were not fulfilled. She remains alone with the dust, "I had no companion at all, and only / the dust / kept me company." [398] In this poem, Daliah Rabikovitsch reveals the ravages of social ostracism and their effects on the individual who is scorned.

In "Pride," people are compared to rocks. The poetess informs the reader, "Even rocks crack, I tell you, / and not because of age." 399 She asserts that rocks remain stationary and covered by vegetation so that the cracks are hidden -- as a sign of pride. Rocks stay this way for years like people:

> Till a little seal comes to rub against the rocks,
> comes and goes away.
> And suddenly the stone is split.
> I told you, when people break it happens by surprise. 400

She claims that people are capable of covering up the cracks in their personality until a certain person rubs against them unexpectedly and reveals their vulnerability. She implies that people are fragile and easily broken.

She also writes about the difficulty of maintaining one's sanity in an unpredictable universe unless one is on the defensive against the traumas of life. In "Hard Winter," the mulberry trees serve as a paradigm for the condition of man. The mulberry trees are described as preoccupied with their own needs, "All the fibres of the plants were intent on themselves alone." 401 So too, each person is wrapped up in himself, "Each of us was sunk in himself alone." 402 This self-preoccupation and lack of concern with the malevolent external forces can lead to one's downfall:

> But for an instant, off-guard,
> I saw
> how men topple from this world . . .
> This time I never thought I'd survive. 403

The voice of the poetess in "A Personal Opinion" is adamantly against pain. She labels pain inhuman and claims that there is no excuse for the existence of pain:

> Pain is inhuman,
> I insist,
> there is no extenuating circumstance.
> Look, isn't it monstrous:
> someone secretly dying away,
> growing blacker and blacker,
> withering,
> without a wife, without sons. [404]

And yet, pain is a constant element in her life. In "The Dress," "The Marionette," and "The Clockwork Doll," Daliah Rabikovitsch displays her fragile self which is controlled by others, vulnerable, and easily broken and shattered. A friend in "The Dress" tries to warn the first person speaker that her dress is on fire. She acknowledges it without exhibiting any signs of concern:

> What will become of you, she said,
> they made you a burning dress.
> They made me a burning dress, I said,
> I know it.
> So why are you standing there, she said,
> you've got to be careful,
> don't you know what a burning dress is? [405]

The speaker soon reveals that there is no external garment which is burning; rather, she is burning inside:

> But the dress, she said, the dress is on fire.
> What are you saying, I shouted,
> What are you saying?
> I'm not wearing a dress at all,
> what's burning is me. [406]

Her inner fire is destructive, not passionate. It appears to signify the deterioration of the self.

A marionette is controlled by others and manipulated according to their fancy. The poetess describes the marionette as "a pale fragile china doll / held by threads." [407] In the last verse of this poem, the twentieth century woman is considered lucky to be a marionette:

> In the twentieth century, in a grey, precious dawn,
> how fortunate
> to be a marionette.
> This woman is not responsible for her actions,
> say the judges.
> Her fragile heart is grey as the dawn.
> Her body is held by threads. [408]

She has an excuse -- she is not responsible for her actions. Her fate is in someone else's hands. Life's pressures are alleviated; her body is supported by another.

The poetess also envisions herself as a mechanical doll, programmed to move in the correct circles and to act properly. Then, all propriety was destroyed when she fell down and was shattered. "They," presumably the doctors, tried to patch her together, but somehow she had changed:

> That night, I was a clockwork doll,
> And I turned round and round,
> to the left and the right,
> And I fell on my face and shattered to bits,
> And they tried to patch me with all of their skill.
>
> And once again, I was a proper doll,
> My manner carefully poised and polite.
> But I'd become a doll of a different sort,
> A broken twig that only a tendril holds. [409]

According to Chana Bloch, the poetess sees herself as used by those who do not understand her. "'Clockwork Doll' recalls an experience of breakdown and partial recovery." [410]

She realizes that she can no longer return to her former innocent self. Ariel Sachs asserts that "a sense of thwarted eroticism runs through the poem." [411] The doll resembles an attractive girl but is sexless and incapable of expressing emotions.

Love and eroticism are the subjects of many of her poems. She deals with the full spectrum of emotions associated with love and the lack of love -- alienation, pain, loneliness, loss, destructive passion, happiness, and joy. "A Poem of Explanation" is a modern poem on the essence of love. Daliah Rabikovitsch describes the love habits of her generation. This poem bears the poetess' personal imprint. Humor, irony, bitterness, and sarcasm are combined in a unique fashion. She divides people into two catagories -- those who can express love and those who cannot:

> There are people who know how to love
> And there are people for whom it is unsuitable.
> There are people that kiss one another in the street
> And there are others for whom it is distasteful.
> And not only in the street. [412]

Those who do not know how to love are often alienated from others. In "Sands of Nothingness," there is a great feeling of dissatisfaction. The woman in the poem wishes to clarify her relationship with her lover but he dismisses the subject. She begins to nag, resenting his subterfuge. She feels displeased and attributes her dissatisfaction to the place, instead of to themselves. She tries to

dominate the situation, but ends by criticizing herself for it. She realizes that her relationship is really becoming "like crumbling sand":

> And I hinted again that perhaps we should think
> And I said again that this is like crumbling sand,
> But what he answered, I do not remember.
> And there, at that moment
> Next to the sea
> Everything crumbled for me indeed like the sand. [413]

"Hills of Salt" describes in vivid pictoral terms the loneliness of human relationships. Two figures sit close by one another, but never touch. Each one feels isolated in his/her own world, separated by sand and seaweed:

> The two of us sat, each by his pool,
> two sand strips between us
> and a wealth of seaweed.
> The heavy fronds swayed back and forth,
> grasping at the teeth of the rocks in their lust. [414]

The inanimate world expresses its lust while the two individuals sit alone, repressing their emotions. The last verse of this poem provides a painfully accurate description of human alienation. During the entire day neither individual made any attempt to draw closer to the other. Their bodies appear as though they were inanimate objects, lacking energy or desire:

> Pools lapped at the palms of our hands,
> the sand between us -- the length of two arms.
> We did not draw near all day,
> Not by a hairsbreath,
> Our bodies two salt hills and our feet seaweed. [415]

"From Day to Night" contains a similar feeling of

nothingness and despair. There is a timeless quality to this poem. It is hard to differentiate between day and night. One senses her vague, unfulfilled feelings. She is longing for companionship. She believes that if her beloved were with her, she wouldn't feel so cold. Desperation begins to enter her consciousness. She has not found her beloved and she fears that she won't have the strength to find someone else:

> The one who is dear to me isn't here
> Perhaps he'll never be found.
> I move from day to day
> Like a feather --
> The bird doesn't feel
> As it falls. [416]

She has become resigned to her colorless life which has no borders or separation between things:

> Perhaps that explains
> Why nothing awaits me.
> This coming spring is like the one before. [417]

"The Noise of the Waters" describes the effects of destructive passion. The woman in the poem lives in expectation of pleasure:

> I sank in a cloud of pleasure
> I sank,
> Oh I melted away. [418]

Instead, she encounters disappointment and terror. She is totally subjected to the whims of a man who supposedly loved her. She ultimately loses herself and all memories of the past:

> But no I was drowned in the ocean
> There a man loved me
> didn't leave me a fingernail.

His hand caught me by the hair
in the oceans pounding
I nearly went under.

His hand
dragged me by the hair
in the teeming ocean

I no longer
remember
a thing. 419

"Time Caught in a Net" is a sarcastic description of the anger and frustration underlying young girls' immature fantasies of love:

Again I was like one of those little girls
who sail in one night around the whole world
and sail to the land of Cathay
and Madagascar,
And who smash plates and saucers
from so much love
so much love,
so much love. 420

In "Matters that are Measurable," the love of a sunflower for the sun is compared to a woman's love for her man. As a sunflower is committed to the sun for its survival, so too is the woman willing to commit herself to her man. Her lover, like the sun, shows no firm commitments to any one which would exclude others:

It was like this in the beginning:
I loved him as a sunflower loves the sun
As she turns to it.
Not because it's the sun
and I'm the sunflower.
I loved him for what he is
And for what I am. 421

In the second stanza of the poem, her beloved is described with God-like powers. Indeed, she may be referring to God as her Lord in this verse:

Sometimes when my sorrow overpowers me
I want to say to him
My Lord, you are everywhere,
Everywhere, just not here.
Besides this, my Lord,
My life is in your hand. 422

Daliah Rabikovitsch reveals the ecstasy of love in "Hide-and-Seek." She describes the inner sensation of love in terms of overly laden clouds and man's vivid imagination:

When I fall in love I am as dense as a cloud
Laden with rain,
Pouring forth rain.
When I fall in love
I am everything
That can arise in man's mind. 423

In several poems, the destructive power of love is portrayed and erotic feelings remain unfulfilled. Daliah Rabikovitsch confronts the brutality of adult relationships in unusual terms. The following poems appear to be based on dream, hallucination, myth, allegory, and fairytale. Consequently, it is somewhat difficult to define the exact meaning of these works. Nevertheless, certain common metaphors and themes recur in these poems.

"The Gifts of Kings" is an archaic story about the love of a king and his beloved. The poem appears to hark back to the time period of King Solomon. Several parallels can be drawn between words and expressions in the poem and the Bible. The king in the poem is reminiscent of King Solomon and the beloved seems to be an amalgamation of the many lovers of the king. 424 In the biblical text, the

great wisdom of King Solomon is demonstrated.[425] In the poem, the king is described as a wise man:

> And all that I weigh and examine in wisdom
> I will reveal to you -- out of love for you.[426]

In the biblical text, the Queen of Sheba viewed the king's many attendants,[427] and the king constructed "sandal-wood pillars for the house of the Lord." (1 Kings 10:12) So too, in the poem, the woman is presented with horsemen and attendants and temples of prayer:

> I will give you horsemen and attendants
> I will build you temples of prayer.[428]

"I will bring you ivory and peacocks" is reminiscent of an expression which occurs in the story of Solomon, " . . . bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks."[429] The recurring term האבן הראש "top stone" is based on Zechariah 4:7 which states, "who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it." At first, it seems that the "top stone" is one of the many presents which the king wishes to give to his beloved, and the beloved doesn't know the meaning of this present and how it is different from the others. At the end of the poem, the top stone becomes identified with the king, "The king is the top stone." The fire which goes forth from the bramble and burns the king recalls the verse in Judges in which the bramble threatens to "let the fire

come out of the bramble, and devour the Cedars of Lebanon." (Judges 9:15) The chorus, the all-knowing refrain from Greek poetry and drama, reflects the altered perception of love. In the first chorus, it states: "happy is he who takes and possesses it." [430] By the final chorus, the reader understands that pleasure is often accompanied by destruction and sorrow, as evidenced by the concluding words: "Alas, to take and possess it." [431]

"Patches of Light" has a similar motif as "The Gifts of Kings" but it does not use archaic or biblical language to such an extent. It is composed in a narrative fashion -- long sentences strung together with conjunctions. Baruch suggests in his book entitled Studies in the Poems of Daliah Rabikovitsch, [432] that the dark and light imagery in this poem is descriptive of the contrasts between male and female. He further states that the colors in the poem are linked with the lover and his beloved. He perceives an erotic tension and magnetic attraction between the darkness and gold and infers that this refers to male/female attraction:

> There is joyous love between the darkness and the gold
> They are embracing and are peaceful and there is no wind nor rustling
> And the light drips and kisses this matter with its lips
> And the darkness turns its body like a well to the gold patches. [433]

Red, white, and gold are seen as connecting the feminine images and green and dark colors, the masculine images.

The contrast between light and dark is suggestive of the female/male dichotomy, but it is difficult to ascertain whether this is the correct meaning of the poem.

"Desire" is not about physical desire; rather, it is a personal poem about the moment of spiritual desire. One senses the inner yearning, the lyrical feelings of the poetess regarding her visions and perceptions. Light permeates the poem. The poem is also filled with expressive movement and descriptions of hunger. In the first verse, the branches of the tree are "straining to reach high." [434] The light is described as "flooding like a river." [435] The river lilies desire to swallow the river ripples carrying stems of grass to satiate hungry feelings:

> The yellow river lilies open their mouths wide to swallow
> In a hurry the river ripples and the stem of grass. [436]

This poem attempts to recapture the setting and mood of Maaseh Bereshit ("The Act of Creation"). It is a graphic depiction of the Garden of Eden bathed in light and framed by rivers which circumlocate the garden. The poetess derives material for this poem from the first chapter of Genesis and from the Sabbath Amidah. In this prayer, the seventh day is referred to as חמדת ימים ("desirable of days"). [437]

In "Love," two fish descend to the depths of the sea to reveal "how their love has grown." [438] The descent,

which serves as the central metaphor in the poem, is an erotic symbol:

> Two fish dived
> And lingered at the sea depths
> And the deeper they sank
> The more their love grew. [439]

In "The Gifts of Kings," the king and his beloved descend to the bottom of the ship. In the first poem, the descent led to increased love and in the latter, it led to eventual death.

"Like Rachel" details the consuming nature of love. The love of Jacob for Rachel appears to be one of the causes of Rachel's death:

> Jacob's love consumed her
> With a hearty appetite.
> Now when the soul departs
> She will no longer need it. [440]

Thus, love for Daliah Rabikovitsch is frequently destructive, often disappointing, and occasionally gratifying. It would appear that the poetess' life is so inundated with pain and feelings of loss and disorientation that her love poems primarily reflect these feelings.

Literary critics are particularly impressed by the poetess' unique content and language. According to Eisig Silberschlag, Daliah Rabikovitsch is a "rebel against reality." He writes:

> In her poetry the dead come back to the living, fish fall in love, oranges lust for their

> consumers, and a little woman fashions a cradle out of the whole, big, spherical world. [441]

Robert Alter comments on her unusual use of imagery and exotic settings:

> Miss Ravikovitch's poetry modulates from incantatory repetition to colloquial directness. Some of her finest pieces have a fairytale quality, both in language and in imaginative setting. [442]

Adir Cohen asserts:

> The most important element of Daliah Ravikovitsch's poems is their inner honesty which flows from pure, genuine lyrical experience. She knows how to express momentary experience . . . in quivering original poems. [443]

A most interesting aspect of her poetry is its personal quality. She describes a world of unfulfilled longings using unique verse forms to give voice to her personal feelings. Her poems also contain a mosaic of biblical and midrashic allusions. She uses biblical words and expressions in a modern syntax. She generally incorporates the original meaning of the biblical text. Her later work is more colloquial in tone. She writes in a normal conversational style in many of these poems. Both content and form are effectively synthesized in her poems. One notes a sharpness of description expressed in witty, innovative language.

Zevi Luz [444] claims that there is a change in the direction of Daliah Rabikovitsch's poetry from the popular path of modern poetry at the end of the Fifties. This shift

in her poetry is marked by the return to Jewish subjects instead of solely concentrating on universal subjects. The literary critics generally agree that Daliah Rabikovitsch is an important modern Israeli poetess. Y. Zemora prefers to view her as a poetess first and a modernist, second. He concludes:

> Daliah Rabikovitsch is, first of all, a poetess only afterwards is it possible to explain her connection with the adjective 'modern,' a modernist of this time.[445]

She offers the reading public her own individual slant on poetic possibilities. Her poems often have indefinable meanings, similar in effect to abstract paintings. Nevertheless, the mood, her emotional honesty, and intensity of feeling sustain even the most obscure of her poems. I would agree with those critics who consider Daliah Rabikovitsch to be one of Israel's leading poets of today.

MATTERS THAT ARE MEASURABLE

I love him now
With all my strength.
A few more days and I'll stop.
It was like this in the beginning:
I loved him as a sunflower loves the sun
As she turns to it.
Not because it's the sun
And I'm the sunflower.
I loved him for what he is
And for what I am.

Sometimes when my sorrow overpowers me
I want to say to him
My Lord, you are everywhere,
Everywhere, just not here.
Besides this, my Lord,
My life is in your hand.
But these matters are measurable
And these matters contain errors.
These matters
Have always been.

FROM DAY TO NIGHT

Each day I awake anew from sleep
As if for the last time
I don't know what awaits me
Perhaps that explains
Why nothing awaits me.
This coming spring is like the one before.
I know what is the month of Iyyar,
But it doesn't matter to me.
I don't notice when
Day passes to night --
Only that the night is colder
And silence is equal to them both.
At dawn I hear the sound of birds
Affection for them
Puts me easily to sleep.
The one who is dear to me isn't here
Perhaps he'll never be found.
I move from day to day
From day to night
Like a feather --
The bird doesn't feel
As it falls.

SANDS OF NOTHINGNESS

Once again we went to the seashore,
Again I said, what will be?
And he said it is too early to speak
This hurts very much but it's likely to change.

And again I said that too many times,
And too many times
He apeaks to me or tries
To change the subject.

Once again we embrace one another for a time
We also searched for a more enchanting landscape,
And only quite late we shook off our clothes,

And I hinted again that perhaps we should think
And I said again that this is like crumbling sand,
But what he answered, I do not remember.
And there, at that moment
Next to the sea
Everything crumbled for me indeed like the sand.

A POEM OF EXPLANATIONS

There are people who know how to love
And there are people for whom it is unsuitable.
There are people that kiss one another in the street
And there are others for whom it is distasteful.
And not only in the street.
I think that this is a talent like all talents,
Perhaps this is an advantage.
Like the rose of Sharon
That knows how to bloom,
Like a lily of the valleys
That chooses her colors by herself.
You know
When a rose and lily blossom
They strike you with blindness.
I didn't say this to insult anyone,
I know that there are also others.
Honeysuckers are the most beautiful of birds
For my taste,
But someone else might prefer the starling.
If so, I'll return and tell myself,
A greyhound
A three-year-old ram, *
An apple that doesn't become red,
This is not me.

* Cf. Genesis 15:9

THE SOUND OF BIRDS AT NOON

This chirping
Is certainly not malicious.
They sing without thinking of us
And they are many
As the seed of Abraham.
They have their own life,
Flight is a thing they take for granted.
Some are rare and some are common,
But the wing is all grace.
Their heart is never heavy
Even when they peck at worms.
Perhaps they're just light-headed.
They were given the heavens
To rule over day and night
And when they touch a branch
The branch is also theirs.
This chirping is completely free of malice.
Over the years
It even seems
To bear
A note of compassion.

LIKE RACHEL

To die like Rachel
When the soul trembles like a bird
Wanting to escape.
Beyond the tent Jacob and Joseph stood frightened,
Shaking, speaking of her.
All the days of her life tumbled in her
Like a baby that wants to be born.

How difficult.
Jacob's love consumed her
With a hearty appetite.
Now when the soul departs
She will no longer need it.

Suddenly the baby cried
And Jacob went to the tent
But Rachel no longer felt
Pleasure flooding her face
And her head.

A great rest has descended on her.
Her breath would no longer stir a feather.

They placed her between mountain stones
Not eulogizing her.
To die like Rachel
Is what I want.

DESIRE

There I knew a desire unlike any other,
It was the seventh day, Shabbat
All the branches of the trees straining to reach high.

The light is all around, flooding like a river
The eyeball coveted the ball of the sun.
Then I knew a desire unlike any other.

The tops of the shrubs warned and the light
    could not get enough,
Poured out in the waves of the river and in all its
    ripples all aglow,
Even my head was in its eyes like an orange to swallow.

The yellow river lilies open their mouths wide to swallow
In a hurry the river ripples and the stem of grass,
And that same day was the seventh day, Shabbat
And all the branches of the trees straining with
    longing to reach high
And then I knew a desire unlike any other.

THE GIFTS OF KINGS

The king descended with his beloved
To the bottom of the ship
To the bottom of the ship
To choose a present for her from his treasures.

--I will give you horsemen and attendants
I will build you temples of prayer
I will say your prayer to God
Your prayer for you -- out of love for you.

I will bring you ivory and peacocks.
Sages and old men will serve you.
And all that I weigh and examine in wisdom
I will reveal to you -- out of love for you.

I will bring you midgets and moors
And Sheba's chariot, her commander and charioteer
Your head will turn like a wheel at my great delight.
I will bring you the top stone. *

* See Zechariah 4:7

CHORUS:

The top stone, the top stone
Happy is he who takes and possesses it.

--I will possess the top stone
And Sheba's chariot, her commander and charioteer.
My head will turn about in my desire
To touch the top stone
To lick the top stone
To crush the top stone.

I took all my desire
As my desire increased
My desire was insatiable
I took a part of six even seven.

I want the top stone
To touch the top stone
To lick the top stone
Knocking my head on the top stone.

My desire will be my trouble-maker
I will see my death - not far
I will talk in the presence of all my desire --
I want the top stone

To touch the top stone
To lick the top stone
On me and on my head
On me and on my head
And on my neck
I knew that my desire will be my trouble-maker.

The king is the top stone.
From the bottom of the ship to the ends of the
earth
It's too bad that all the attendants are blind
Don't they see the fire
Coming out of the bramble
Burning their king?

The king is the top stone.

CHORUS:

The top stone, the top stone
Alas, to take and possess it.

PATCHES OF LIGHT

Patches of light are drowned in this dark matter
And no voice is heard in them and no whisper
passes through them
Like the oil of myrrh they flow and splash
from the jug.

They are flowing like perfume, their soft,
calm movements
And in the dark matter they are gathered to
the small fountain
In it grace and desire rise up and pass over their
rim.

In this dark matter a gold mine is discovered
And this dark matter reveals its depths
There is joyous love between the darkness and
the gold

They are embracing and are peaceful and
there is no wind nor rustling
And the light drips and kisses this matter
with its lips

And the darkness turns its body like a well to
the gold patches.

Patches of light are drowned in this dark matter
And no voice is heard in them and no whisper
passes through them
Like the oil of myrrh they flow and splash
from the jug.

HIDE-AND-SEEK

There's something that I forgot
And there's something that I still remember
My childhood blossomed and passed by
And I remain.
Also the honeysucker flies
From branch to branch
From stick to beam
And I observe.
Something is there behind the wall
And the door;
A memory that uproots mountains
And crushes them against each other.
I once loved
An Italian statue.

When I fall in love I am as dense as a cloud
Laden with rain,
Pouring forth rain.
When I fall in love
I am everything
That can arise in a man's mind.
I ask
With amazement:

What can happen to me
That has not happened before?
I hang from a cloud
Without falling
Without wings without beak.
Once, when I fell in love
I felt neither
Hot nor cold.

LOVE

Two fish hurried,
And descended to the sea depths
To tell one another
How their love has grown.

Two fish dived
And lingered at the sea depths
And the deeper they sank
The more their love grew.

No longer did they ascend to the shore
These lovers of the sea depths.
The mouth is tired of telling
How their love has grown.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I examined the life and work of ten Israeli poetesses, concentrating on the following major themes: love, women, the land of Israel, nature, religion, and death. Of course, the ten poetesses did not write on all six themes. Therefore, I shall here try to give an overview of these themes, calling attention to those poetesses who primarily focus on a given theme. I will also attempt to compare the literary styles and technical aspects of the various poetesses. Finally, I shall address myself to the contribution of contemporary Israeli poetesses to modern Hebrew poetry.

Love is the most recurrent theme found in this study. The poetesses explore the full spectrum of personal emotions associated with love. For example, the multi-faceted nature of love is most typically expressed by Anda Pinkerfeld. Woman's love of man is a major motif in her poetry. She exalts the richness of feeling associated with romantic love:

> A miracle:
> With this small kiss
> Mountains are melting
> Depths are leveling. 446

Elisheva describes love in different terms. Personal anguish and uncertainty are at the basis of her love poems. Unrequited love is a motif endlessly repeated in her poems. The speaker

longs for a spiritual type of happiness:

> This is all. The sublime essence --
> Love in vain,
> Love without blame,
> Without future, without past . . . 447

Similarly, a religious sensibility underlies Yocheved Bat-Miriam's love poems. Her impressionistic poems are descriptive of an idealistic, spiritual love. Peninah Bergstein glorifies man's love of God, the love of man and woman, and the love of a mother for her child. In these poems, she relives the memories of past loves. She also includes veiled allusions to her love of the country. Like Peninah Bergstein's, Rachel's love poems contain a mixture of longing and pathos. Daliah Rabikovitsch is the only poetess who immerses herself in the destructive power of love. She willingly investigates this dark side of human nature.

As women poets, it is inevitable that they would offer the reader profound insights into womanhood. One detects a strong feminine presence in many of Esther Rab's poems. In "A Woman's Poem," she reinterprets a traditional prayer, transforming it into a prayer of affirmation and pride at being created a woman:

> Blessed the One who made me a woman --
> I am earth and earthling
> A soft rib;
> Blessed you who made me
> Round all over
> Like the wheels of the universe
> And like round fruit -- 448

Each poetess delves into her own psyche and offers an honest

confession of its intricate contents. Several of the women consider the contemporary Jewish woman's emotional make up to be comparable to her biblical counterpart. Yocheved Bat-Miriam protrays women as standing at the crossroads of a changing generation. She respects modern women who retain connections to their religious past. She exalts the feminine ideal of woman as wife and mother. Several of the poetesses express a concern and interest in motherhood. Peninah Bergstein and Rachel both composed poems about women unable to give birth. Anda Pinkerfeld counters with a poem on the joys of motherhood.

Love of the land of Israel is another major theme in their poetry. As Eretz Israel's first native-born poetess, Esther Rab is preoccupied with the beauty of her homeland, which appears to be engraved in her soul:

> My heart is with your dewdrops, my homeland,
> At night, in the field of nettles,
> To the scents of cypress and moist thistle
> A hidden wing will I spread . . . [449]

For many of the immigrant poetesses, Israel - then Palestine - became their adopted homeland. The shore of Lake Kinneret attracts the poetic eye of both Elisheva and Rachel. Elisheva writes:

> Here I'll sit twixt sea and sky
> And imagine that the end too has come,
> That my soul has found its home. [450]

Rachel and Peninah Bergstein offer romantic descriptions of farm life and both assert the importance of labor and the

kibbutz work ethic. Their poems are filled with love for the land and the people who toil its soil. Hannah Senesh was particularly captivated by the sand and sea of Caesarea and the overall beauty of Palestine's landscape. Anda Pinkerfeld proclaims in several poems the people's love of Eretz Israel and God's love for His people. Yocheved Bat-Miriam gives expression to the people's longing for redemption and wish to return to the land of Israel. She reveals her deep love for the people of Eretz Israel and her willingness to accept their fate.

Nature often serves as the backdrop for human emotions in many of their poems. Particularly in the poetry of Elisheva and Rachel, man's fate is seen as tied to the land. Both poetesses allude to the compassionate aspect of nature. In her poems, Elisheva appears as a lover of nature from whose presence she seeks solace:

> Green cedars in my native woods,
> Guard my spirit's joy and rest.
> There are many trees in my fair land,
> You alone know that peace is best. 451

Rachel's poem "In the Garden" is based on a similar view of nature.

Of the ten poetesses, Zelda exhibits the greatest concern with religion. She infuses traditional Jewish activities with holiness and meaning. Religious awareness and modern sensitivity are synthesized in her poems. She also probes man's search for religious truth. The speaker

in many of Zelda's poems directs her thoughts to God, either directly or through an intermediary:

> Mountain air alive
> Beloved breathing
> Ask mercy for us
> From Him who is above all. [452]

A number of her poems concentrate on the religiosity of her grandfather and the Shabbat. Several other poetesses -- who grew up in religious homes, immigrated to Eretz Israel, and became secular Jews -- attempt to harmonize the pioneering spirit with the religious spirit. For example, Yocheved Bat-Miriam and Esther Rab strive to reconcile their religious past with their current secular life.

Death and dying is a common theme in almost all of the ten poetesses' work. Of the ten, Peninah Bergstein and Rachel wrote many poems on this theme. Both had much in common and a similar fate. Each one became gravely ill and died at a young age. Peninah Bergstein felt a special affinity for Rachel. She composed an elegy which she dedicated to Rachel:

> My silent sister
> Now you are one
> With the murmur of waves in Lake Kinneret
> With the dust of earth on the shore.
>
> Precious is your memory, O sister.
> And the clear lines of your poetry
> Are like delicate flowers at the crossroads,
> As a prayer to the heavens. [453]

As there are similarities and differences in thematic content among the poetesses, so too one notes similarities

and differences in style, form, and technique. Each poetess uses the Hebrew language in a unique fashion to create her own poetic recipe.

Elisheva and Rachel have certain poetic techniques in common. Elisheva's verse is written in a simple rhyme structure with the rhythm of a folksong. Her verse resembles prose; it is written in a narrative style. Short, concise in form, her verse contains simple images, language, and content. She tends to focus on one central concept. Likewise, Rachel's poems are written in a natural, simple language without embellishment. Rachel generally wrote short poems composed of concise lyrical lines, balanced and symmetrical. Simple rhythms permeate the works of both poetesses. Rachel was one of the first modern Hebrew poetesses to write in a conversational style. Leah Goldberg and Daliah Rabikovitsch would later be influenced by this technique.

Rachel and Peninah Bergstein both have an elegiac tone and intimate style. A melancholic mood pervades much of their poetry. Peninah Bergstein's poems are written primarily in free verse. She uses a definite rhythm but her rhyme scheme is often arbitrary. Zelda's poems also possess an elegiac quality. Zelda tends to ignore the accepted rules of versification. Her poems are written in simple language with unconfined rhythms, lacking external symmetry, rhyme, or formal meter.

Both Anda Pinkerfeld and Esther Rab are lyrical poetesses. Anda Pinkerfeld wrote short, subjective, emotional poems. Esther Rab's poetry is particularly noted for its authentic, rich imagery. Her poems are written in sparse, concise lines, composed of small word groups and simple phrases. She was one of the first poetesses to employ free, unrhymed verse. Internal rhythm is a pivotal factor in her poetry. Hannah Senesh was also a lyrical poetess. Using natural, direct images, her poetry had a simple eloquence.

In contrast to the lyrical poetesses, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, Leah Goldberg, and Daliah Rabikovitsch are considered modernist poetesses. All three employed symbolic verse in which they delved into the eternal essence of an idea or object. Yocheved Bat-Miriam was the greatest adherent of symbolist poetry of the Israeli poets of her generation. Her early poems were written in a clear, concise style, and her later poems revealed complicated, vague imagery. In her verse, she incorporates consonance, alliteration, assonance, and a sophisticated rhythm. Leah Goldberg's symbolic language includes ordinary words, rhythms, and rhymes with a fresh twist. She wrote in a conversational style which was based on traditional verse forms. Daliah Rabikovitsch also writes in a normal conversational style. The reader is especially impressed with her unique use of

language and exotic story-telling ability. Leah Goldberg and Yocheved Bat-Miriam infuse colors with symbolic significance. Leah Goldberg attaches meanings to the colors white, green, and red; while Yocheved Bat-Miriam focuses on blue, green, gold, and white.

All ten poetesses wrote numerous poems in the first person. Often, the identity of the poetess and the speaker in the poem appear to merge. In many cases, the poetess engages in a dialogue with herself. Occasionally, the speaker in these poems is an objective observer or a narrator. Anda Pinkerfeld uses dramatic monologue as an effective devise in many of her poems. The speaker thinks aloud and reveals her innermost feelings and concerns. Thereby, the poetess succeeds in addressing herself to the condition of her soul.

All ten poetesses were influenced by biblical language and syntax to a certain extent. For example, Elisheva uses many biblical expressions in her later poems. Esther Rab was greatly influenced by biblical syntax and rhythm. One notes many biblical allusions in her poems. Yocheved Bat-Miriam includes a large number of metaphors and similes drawn from the Bible. Bat-Miriam, Pinkerfeld, and Bergstein also employ biblical parallelism in their poetry. Anda Pinkerfeld uses rare biblical terminology in her verse, as does Peninah Bergstein. Daliah Rabikovitsch incorporates biblical and midrashic allusions in her poems in a unique fashion.

An attempt has been made to identify the particular feminine contribution to modern Hebrew poetry as seen in the works of the ten poetesses selected for this study. They have been recognized by literary critics as talented writers. Several poetesses have received Israeli prizes. For example, Zelda received the Brenner Prize for literature; Leah Goldberg, the Ruppin Prize; and Yocheved Bat-Miriam, the Israel Prize for Hebrew literature. Hannah Senesh is considered one of Israel's greatest national heroines. Leah Goldberg also served as a department chairperson in Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University.

Female Hebrew poets treat several themes in a manner comparable to male Hebrew poets. The themes of nature, Eretz Israel, and Jewish religious tradition are treated in a similar fashion. However, the women poets tend to be more lyrical in form than their male counterparts. The women poets offer unique perspectives in two areas -- love and womanhood. All ten poetesses deal with love from a feminine perspective, and reveal the essence of being a woman. They courageously delve into their private souls in order to discover an inner truth. Most of the poetesses tend towards personal confessions as well. This accounts for the large proportion of poems written in the first person by Israeli women poets. Elements of old-fashioned femininity is preserved by modern Hebrew poetesses. Also,

several of the contemporary poetesses have unabashedly produced sensual, erotic love poems. It takes a female poet to describe the essence of "eternal femininity." Through their revelation of the inner workings of the soul of Jewish women, the poetesses shed light on the universal human condition. Also, these poetesses were well-educated, cognizant of the most current trends in poetry. Several of the poetesses were among the first to use symbolism and free verse.

I have tried to present a critical survey of the work of modern Hebrew poetesses. Unfortunately, the majority of modern Hebrew poetry written by women has not been translated into English. This accounts for the amazing number of women Israeli poets who are relatively unknown outside of Israel. Hopefully, the reader of this study will choose to explore the collected works of the ten poetesses in greater depth. It is important that more of their poetry be translated into English in order to widen the reading audience. It is apparent that modern Hebrew poetry would not be the same without their contribution. I believe that women poets will continue to have a lasting impact on modern Hebrew literature.

NOTES

[1]The New Judea, (June 25, 1926), p. 762.

[2]Ben-Or, p. 331.

[3]Ibid., p. 332.

[4]Hatekufah, (Tishrei-Kislev, 1921), p. 396.

[5]Lubner-Snowman, p. 153.

[6]Elisheva, 1928, p. 57.

[7]Lubner-Snowman, p. 153.

[8]Elisheva, 1945, p. 36.

[9]Ibid., p. 37.

[10]Lubner-Snowman, p. 139.

[11]Elisheva, 1945, p. 39.

[12]Ibid., p. 39.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 38.

[15]Lubner-Snowman, p. 147.

[16]Elisheva, 1945, p. 83.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Elisheva, 1970, p. 14.

[19]Lubner-Snowman, p. 145.

[20]Ibid., p. 153.

[21]Ibid., p. 142.

[22]Ibid., p. 143.

[23]Ibid., p. 144.

[24]Elisheva, 1945, p. 37.

[25]Lubner-Snowman, p. 139.

[26]Ibid., p. 141.

[27]Ibid., p. 157.

[28]Ibid., p. 156.

[29]Ibid., p. 160.

[30]Ibid., p. 152.

[31]Elisheva, 1945, p. 39.

[32]Lubner-Snowman, p. 147.

[33]See Lubner-Snowman, pp. 152, 160.

[34]Ibid., p. 149.

[35]Elisheva, 1928, p. 46.

[36]Ibid., 1945, p. 82.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 37.

[41]Ibid., p. 83.

[42]Lubner-Snowman, p. 139.

[43]Ben-Or, p. 332.

[44]Lubner-Snowman, p. 4.

[45]Ibid., p. 145.

[46]Shiner, p. 13.

[47]Dov Ber Borochov (1881-1919) was the first theoretician

of Socialist Zionism, and one of the first leaders of Poalei-Zion.

[48]Kahn, p. 11.

[49]Hashiloah, vol. 37, 1920.

[50]Rachel, 1960, p. 15.

[51]Halkin, p. 127. Translated by Maurice Samuel.

[52]Mintz, p. 112.

[53]Kritz, 1975, p. 27.

[54]Kahn, p. 21.

[55]Mintz, p. 112.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Kahn, p. 23.

[58]Katznelson-Rubashow, p. 281.

[59]Rachel, 1960, p. 28.

[60]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 209.

[61]Kahn, p. 23.

[62]Ibid., p. 24.

[63]Ibid., p. 15.

[64]Katznelson-Rubashow, p. 279.

[65]Kahn, p. 18.

[66]Katznelson-Rubashow, p. 280.

[67]Rachel, 1960, p. 31.

[68]Ibid., p. 14.

[69]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 208.

[70]Poetry, 1958, p. 214.

[71]Rachel, 1960, p. 27.

[72]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 206.

[73]Katznelson-Rubashow, p. 278.

[74]Rachel, 1960, p. 26.

[75]Schweid, p. 135.

[76]Rachel, 1936, p. 9.

[77]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 204.

[78]Ibid., p. 205.

[79]Kahn, p. 5.

[80]Harari, p. 451.

[81]Ben-Or, p. 210.

[82]Katznelson-Rubashow, p. 274.

[83]Kritz, 1975, p. 23.

[84]Ibid., 1969, p. 400.

[85]Kritz divides Rachel's poetry into ten main patterns for interpretation. See: Kritz, 1969, pp. 398-400.

[86]Zemora, 1976, p. 418.

[87]Luz, p. 44.

[88]Silberschlag, pp. 167-8.

[89]Ginsburg, p. 278.

[90]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965b, p. 20.

[91]Lichtenbaum, p. 256.

[92]Rab, 1963, p. 11.

[93]Ibid., p. 83.

[94]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 236.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Rab, 1963, p. 33.

[97]Zemora, 1976, p. 420.

[98]Ben-Or, p. 336.

[99]Rab, 1963, p. 19.

[100]Ibid., p. 15.

[101]Zemora, 1976, p. 420. For further information and discussion of this issue, see the evaluation at the end of this chapter.

[102]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965b, p. 21.

[103]Anderson, p. 295.

[104]Rab, 1972, p. 93.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Silberschlag, p. 167.

[108]Rab, 1963, p. 33.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Zemora, 1976, p. 420.

[111]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 237.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid.

[114]Rab, 1963, p. 104.

[115]Ibid., 1953, p. 11.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Ibid.

[118]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965b, p. 22.

[119]Ibid.

[120]Rab, 1972, p. 51.

[121]Ibid., p. 49.

[122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid.

[124]Rab, 1963, p. 23.

[125]Anderson, p. 295.

[126]Penueli, vol. 1, p. 239.

[127]Rab, 1972, p. 49.

[128]Bloom, p. 151.

[129]Luz, p. 45.

[130]Shoham, p. 85.

[131]Ibid.

[132]Rab, 1963, p. 99.

[133]Ginsburg, p. 278-9.

[134]Ben-Or, p. 335.

[135]Lichtenbaum, p. 256.

[136]Zemora, 1976, p. 418.

[137]Silberschlag, p. 168.

[138]Lichtenbaum, p. 255.

[139]Ben-Or, p. 335.

[140]Kartun-Blum, p. 7.

[141]Ben-Or, p. 318.

[142]Ibid., p. 319.

[143]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965a, p. 16.

[144]Burnshaw et al., p. 86.

[145]Silberschlag, p. 162.

[146]Bat-Miriam, 1942.

[147]Ibid., 1963, p. 107.

[148]Ibid., 1932, p. 148.

[149]Ibid., p. 109.

[150]Ibid.

[151]Yafeh, p. 325.

[152]Bat-Miriam, 1963, p. 112.

[153]Ibid., 1942a, p. 27.

[154]Ibid., 1949, p. 15.

[155]Ibid., 1942b, p. 46.

[156]Ibid.

[157]Ibid., 1950, p. 8.

[158]Ibid., p. 9.

[159]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965a, p. 15.

[160]Silberschlag, p. 162.

[161]Bat-Miriam, 1932, p. 164.

[162]Ibid., 1963, p. 127.

[163]Penueli, vol. 2, p. 331.

[164]Ibid.

[165]Bat-Miriam, 1963, p. 19.

[166]Ibid., 1932, p. 33.

[167]Ibid., 1962, p. 179.

[168]Ibid., 1932, p. 17.

[169]Kartun-Blum, p. 80.

[170]Penueli, vol. 2, p. 333.

[171]Ibid.

[172]Ibid., p. 334-5.

[173]Silberschlag, p. 162.

[174]Bat-Miriam, 1932, p. 17.

[175]Ibid., 1942b, p. 46.

[176]See Kartun-Blum, p. 58.

[177]Burnshaw et al., p. 87.

[178]Bat-Miriam, 1942b, p. 46.

[179]Ibid., 1932, p. 7.

[180]Ibid., 1949, p. 15.

[181]Institute for the Translation . . ., 1965a, p. 15.

[182]Bat-Miriam, 1949, p. 15.

[183]Burnshaw et al., p. 87.

[184]Kartun-Blum, p. 7.

[185]Lichtenbaum, 1942, p. 69.

[186]Silberschlag, p. 163.

[187]Zemora, p. 190.

[188]Ben-Or, p. 318.

[189]Ginsburg, p. 286-7.

[190]Ben-Or, p. 319.

[191]Kartun-Blum, p. 33.

[192]Lichtenbaum, p. 263.

[193]Yafeh, p. 324.

[194]Silberschlag, p. 163.

[195]Lichtenbaum, p. 261.

[196]Gurfein, p. 176.

[197]Harari, p. 473.

[198]Based on Goethe's Faust, "constant renewal."

[199]Ginsburg, p. 300.

[200]Silberschlag, p. 163.

[201]Pinkerfeld, 1969.

[202]Ben-Or, p. 337.

[203]Silberschlag, p. 164.

[204]Pinkerfeld, 1961, p. 10.

[205]Ibid., p. 20-23.

[206]Ibid., p. 20.

[207]Ibid.

[208]Ibid.

[209]Genesis 21:12.

[210]Poetry, vol. 92 (July, 1958), p. 234.

[211]Pinkerfeld, 1961, p. 131.

[212]Ibid.

[213]Ibid., p. 97; Also see: Pinkerfeld, 1965, p. 1.

[214]Ibid., 1961, p. 101-102.

[215]Silberschlag, p. 164.

[216]Pinkerfeld, 1961, p. 349.

[217]Ibid., p. 343.

[218]Ibid., p. 337.

[219]Ben-Or, p. 341.

[220]Silberschlag, p. 165.

[221]Male authors of children's poetry include: Hayim Nahman (1873-1934); Jacob Cahan (1881-1960); Zalman Schneur (1887-1959); and Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943).

[222]Scharfstein, p. 103.

[223]Harari, p. 470.

[224]Scharfstein, p. 104.

[225]Pinkerfeld, 1933, p. 8.

[226]Lichtenbaum, p. 260.

[227]Ben-Or, p. 338.

[228]Bloom, p. 147.

[229]Ibid., p. 155.

[230]Pinkerfeld, 1961, p. 9-85.

[231]Ibid., p. 93.

[232]Ibid.

[233]Ibid., p. 96.

[234]Ibid., p. 284.

[235]Ibid., p. 286.

[236]Ibid., p. 285.

[237]Ibid., p. 284.

[238]Bloom, p. 160.

[239]Bergstein, 1960, p. 252.

[240]Ibid., p. 93.

[241]Ibid., p. 91.

[242]Ibid.

[243]Ibid.

[244]Ibid., p. 37.

[245]Ibid.

[246]Ibid.

[247]Ibid.

[248]Ibid.

[249]Ibid., p. 31.

[250]Ibid., p. 32.

[251]Ibid.

[252]Ben-Or, p. 346.

[253]Gill, p. 261.

[254]Bergstein, 1960, p. 263.

[255]Ibid., p. 120.

[256]Ibid., p. 121.

[257]Ibid., p. 19.

[258]Ibid.

[259]Ibid., p. 33.

[260]Ibid., p. 36.

[261]Ibid., p. 275.

[262]Ibid., p. 19.

[263]Ibid., p. 274.

[264]Ibid., p. 33.

[265]Ibid., p. 237.

[266]Ibid., p. 37.

[267]Ibid., p. 76.

[268]Ibid., p. 199.

[269]Ibid., p. 208.

[270]Ibid., p. 275.

[271]Ibid., p. 122.

[272]Ibid., p. 263.

[273]Ibid., 1967, p. 56.

[274]Ibid., p. 54.

[275]Ibid., p. 28.

[276]Ibid.

[277]Bergstein, 1960, p. 120.

[278]Ibid., p. 37.

[279]Ibid., p. 31.

[280]Ibid.

[281]Ibid.

[282]Bergstein, 1960, p. 122.

[283]Ben-Or, p. 345.

[284]Goren, p. 146.

[285]Bergstein, 1960, p. 33.

[286]Ibid., p. 35.

[287]Spicehandler, 1971, p. 703.

[288]Alter, 1970, p. 85.

[289]See: Cohn; Rubin, pp. 24-27; and Spicehandler, 1960, pp. 61-79.

[290]Goldberg, 1973, vol. 1, p. 101.

[291]Alter, 1970, p. 85.

[292]Ibid.

[293]Spicehandler, 1960, p. 75.

[294]See Ḥanoch Gay, 1977.

[295]Goldberg, 1973, vol. 1, p. 101.

[296]Ibid.

[297]Ibid., p. 102.

[298]Ibid., p. 103.

[299]Ibid., p. 104.

[300]Ibid., p. 105.

[301]Ibid., p. 106.

[302]Ibid., p. 107.

[303]Ibid., p. 108.

[304]Ibid., p. 109.

[305]Ibid., p. 110.

[306]Ibid., p. 113.

[307]Goldberg, 1938.

[308]Charles Perrault (1628-1703). French writer of fairy tales.

[309]Barzel, 1976, p. 121.

[310]Friend, 1974, p. 10.

[311]Zelda, 1971, p. 6.

[312]Ibid., 1967, p. 24.

[313]Ibid.

[314]Ibid., p. 25.

[315]Ibid.

[316]Zelda, 1974, p. 6.

[317]Ibid.

[318]Ibid., 1967, p. 29.

[319]Silberschlag, p. 170.

[320]For examples of the rose symbolizing Israel, see the following two expressions found in the Bible and in prayer: שושנת יעקוב and the word שושנים in the song Ma'oz Tzur ("Rock of Ages.")

[321]Zelda, 1967, p. 29.

[322]Ibid., p. 30.

[323]Ibid.

[324]Ibid.

[325]Ibid., p. 9.

[326]Ibid., p. 10.

[327]Ibid., p. 32.

[328]Ibid.

[329]Ibid.

[330]Pirkei Avot 3:17.

[331]Zelda, 1974, p. 32.

[332]Dor, p. 50.

[333]Ibid., p. 48.

[334]Anderson, p. 325.

[335]The title and refrain of this poem are based on a prayer recited on Yom Kippur following the Amidah.

[336]Zelda, 1974, p. 8.

[337]Ibid., p. 9.

[338]Ibid.

[339]Ariel, 1975, p. 15.

[340]Zelda, 1974, p. 13.

[341]Anderson, p. 322.

[342]Ibid.

[343]Zelda, 1967, p. 51.

[344]Senesh, 1972, p. 14.

[345]Ibid., p. 244.

[346]Ibid., p. 19.

[347]Ibid., p. 23. The Latin title is not her own. It originates from a popular saying about the Hapsburgs. The title loosely translates: "What others gain in battle, Austria gains in wedlock!" This refers to the fact that all the Hapsburgs married for political expediency rather than for love.

[348]Ibid., p. 24.

[349]Ibid., p. 25.

[350]Ibid., p. 7.

[351]Ibid., p. 26.

[352]Bar-Adon, p. 86.

[353]Senesh, 1972, p. 32.

[354]Ibid., p. 58.

[355]Ibid., p. 245. Written in Tatra, Biela-Voda, 1938.

[356]Ibid. Written in Tatra, Biela-Voda, 1938.

[357]Ibid., p. 63.

[358]Ibid., p. 64.

[359]Ibid.

[360]Ibid., p. 74. "Ein davar, tov lamut be'ad artzenu" ("Never mind; it is good to die for our country,") were the last words spoken by Joseph Trumpeldor (1880-1920), a Zionist pioneer active during World War I, prior to his death.

[361]Ibid., p. 76.

[362]Ibid., p. 81.

[363]Ibid., p. 90.

[364]Braslavski, ed., p. 269.

[365]Senesh, 1972, p. 87. This refers to the poem entitled "Harvest."

[366]Braslavski, ed., pp. 124-125.

[367]Senesh, 1972, p. 103. Zalman Shneur, Hebrew and Yiddish poet and novelist, (1887-1959).

[368]Braslavski, ed., p. 272. Written in Nahalal, May 5, 1941.

[369]Ibid., p. 273. Written on May 29, 1941.

[370]Senesh, 1972, p. 248. Written in Nahalal, May 4, 1941.

[371]Ibid., p. 102.

[372]Ibid., p. 105.

[373]Ibid., p. 114.

[374]Ibid., p. 121.

[375]Braslavski, ed., p. 284.

[376]Ibid., p. 253.

[377]Ibid., p. 278.

[378]Senesh, 1972, p. 252.

[379]Ibid., p. 250.

[380]Ibid., p. 122.

[381]Ibid., p. 254.

[382]Ibid., p. 125.

[383]Ibid., p. 255.

[384]Ibid., p. 127.

[385]Braslavski, ed., p. 283.

[386]Senesh, 1972, pp. 128-129.

[387]Ibid., p. 131.

[388]Ibid. This entry is dated January 11, 1944.

[389]Ibid., p. 256. Written at the beginning of March, 1944.

[390]Bar-Adon, p. 85.

[391]Senesh, 1972, p. 256.

[392]Ibid., p. 257.

[393]Bloch, p. 14.

[394]Ibid., p. 13.

[395]Ibid.

[396]Ibid., p. 17.

[397]Ibid.

[398]Ibid.

[399]Ibid., p. 23.

[400]Ibid.

[401]Ibid., p. 32.

[402]Ibid.

[403]Ibid.

[404]Ibid., p. 29.

[405]Ibid., p. 30.

[406]Ibid., p. 31.

[407]Ibid., p. 38.

[408]Ibid., p. 39.

[409]Ibid., p. 19.

[410]Ibid., p. 6.

[411]Burnshaw *et al.*, p. 186.

[412]Rabikovitsch, 1976, p. 33.

[413]Ibid., p. 16.

[414]Bloch, p. 21.

[415]Ibid.

[416]Rabikovitsch, 1976, p. 17.

[417]Ibid.

[418]Bloch, p. 22.

[419]Ibid.

[420]Ibid., p. 20.

[421]Rabikovitsch, 1976, p. 18.

[422]Ibid.

[423]Ibid., p. 20.

[424]See I Kings 11:1-3.

[425]See I Kings 10:3-4.

[426]Rabikovitsch, 1967, p. 26.

[427]See I Kings 10:5.

[428]Rabikovitsch, 1967, p. 26.

[429]I Kings 10:22.

[430]Rabikovitsch, 1967, p. 27.

[431]Ibid., p. 29.

[432]Baruch, p. 43.

[433]Ibid., p. 45.

[434]Rabikovitsch, 1967, p. 48.

[435]Ibid.

[436]Ibid.

[437]"The people that sanctify the seventh day, even all of them shall be satiated and delighted with thy goodness, seeing that thou didst find pleasure in the seventh day and didst hallow it; thou didst call it the desirable of days, in remembrance of creation." (Shabbat Amidah)

[438]Rabikovitsch, 1967, p. 51.

[439]Ibid.

[440]Ibid., 1976, p. 30.

[441]Silberschlag, p. 168.

[442]Alter, 1979, p. 11.

[443]Cohen, p. 297.

[444]Luz, p. 168.

[445]Zemora, p. 421.

[446]Pinkerfeld, 1961, p. 131.

[447]Elisheva, 1928, p. 57.

[448]Rab, 1972, p. 93.

[449]Ibid., 1963, p. 11.

[450]Elisheva, 1945, p. 82.

[451]Lubner-Snowman, p. 141.

[452]Dor, p. 50.

[453]Bergstein, 1960, p. 19.

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