

TITLE "Rachel: The Poet and her Times"

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RACHEL: The Poet and her Times

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This thesis is a study of the popular Palestinian poet Rachel Blaustein, better known by her pen-name "Rachel." She is worthy of study as one of the first Hebrew poets who wrote lyrical verse in a simple, conversational style with the Sephardi accent.

The motivation and context of her verse were the years of the Second Aliyah. She was a product of this period, immigrating to Eretz Yisrael in 1909. Part I is devoted to a study of the Second Aliyah in order to understand the intellectual climate in which Rachel lived. Although the history is selective, within the time-span of 1904-14 I have tried to indicate the beginnings and initial progress of the most famous institutions and ideas of the period. These include the Ha-Shomer and the first kibbutzim. The beginnings of Daganian were emphasized because of Rachel's special ties with it. A. D. Gordon, the spiritual father of the Second Aliyah, is also studied in this section, because his ideas influenced many of the pioneers and because he and Rachel were particularly close. She dedicated her first Hebrew poem to him.

The second section is a biography of Rachel for which I have used many of the available Hebrew sources, as well as translating many of the reminiscences of friends. Her relationship with Gordon is analyzed in the light of five letters which he sent to her.

The third section is called "The Poet as Artist." Two aims were intended. First, I attempted to note the poets who influenced Rachel. This involved a study of Russian Symbolist poets and, for the purposes of this paper, a study of the Russian Acmeist poet Anna Akhmatova who reacted against the Symbolists. Secondly, I attempted a thematic analysis of Rachel's poetry. This necessitated translating and using a wide range of Rachel's poetry.

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SECOND ALIYAH

Rachel Blaustein, the Russian Jewish poet known simply by her pen name Rachel, can be considered the first modern Israeli poet. It was Rachel who began employing the modern idiom with the Sephardi accent in her poetry. Uncomplicated rhythms and lyric simplicity make her poetry particularly adaptable to song; many of her poems, including "Kinnereth" (כִּנֶּרֶת),¹ approach the status of folk songs. Her poetry is still popular; in 1968 a revival of her works enjoyed a successful theatrical tour in Israel.

It is impossible, however, fully to appreciate or evaluate Rachel without understanding the context of the times in which she lived. For Rachel was a product of the Second Aliyah and it was the events and the idealism of those years which were the inspiration of her songs. Rachel immigrated to Palestine during this epoch which spanned the years between 1904-1915 and witnessed the beginning of major institutions and philosophies which became the cornerstones of present-day Israeli society. These were times which inspired greatness in men; Rachel sang of that inspiration. In an essay Rachel reflected upon the dream of the Second Aliyah and her own visions which were engendered by it:

To get up in the morning without
command, not to be concerned about
bookkeeping, but rather to be in a
framework of traditional labor in

field and garden...on Mother Earth.
To sow, to plant, and to be a
partner with the Holy One Blessed
be He in the act of creation. To
experience brotherly rest with
young men and women who like you,
ask favor upon the ancient home-
land. To have faith and to dream.
To gallop on an Arab horse and to
walk in the spring through the
mountains of the Galilee -- is not
this the life of happiness? ...the
feeling of being part of the cosmic
family?²

To comprehend this milieu, the world of Rachel, and to appreciate the fast progress made during these formative years preceding the modern State, one must first understand the condition of Eretz Yisrael before the Second Aliyah.

By the middle of the 19th century 11,000 Jews lived in Palestine; they subsisted chiefly on that system of Jewish charities from abroad known as Chalukkah. Most of these people had come to the Holy land either to study or to die. The precipitating factor which stimulated this immigration between 1882-84 and 1890-91 (the "First" Aliyah) was the pogroms that grew out of Czarist Russia's uncompromising autocracy and nationalism. Alexander III utilized anti-Semitism as an effective reenforcement of his policies of Slavophile nationalism. During the spring and summer of 1881, government inspired pogroms occurred throughout Southern Russia and the Ukraine. In August, 1881, Alexander demanded an investigation of allegedly "injurious" Jewish economic activities. The investigation culminated in the infamous May Laws, economically crippling

restrictions placed on Russian Jewry. According to this notorious legislation of 1882, Jews were no longer allowed to move to rural areas, their quotas in gymnasia and universities were radically reduced, and measures were instituted to strangle Jewish mercantile life. The result among the Jewish population was a concurrent rise of Hebrew nationalism. Several Zionist societies were founded in the Pale of Settlement by the Chovevei Zion movement. Among their activities was the conducting of classes in the Hebrew language and Jewish history. However, the aim of Chibat Zion propaganda was to stimulate immigration to Palestine with the goal of establishing agricultural colonies. Several thousand people actually did so, although they were ill-equipped for the trials they faced there. Unfamiliarity with the severe conditions coupled with inadequate funds quickly dissipated the idealism of such early groups as BILU, (a tiny organization whose aim was to serve as the prototype for colonization of the land (they took their name from the initial letters of *בית ישראל* "Beit Yisrael", House of Jacob, come let us go up!"). Not all those of this First Aliyah were committed to the same socialist principles as the BILU group; indeed, such agricultural colonies as Petach Tikvah, Zichron Ya'akov, and Rosh Pinah got their start in those days. In fact, by the time the First Zionist Congress met in Basle in 1897, 18 such Jewish settlements had already

been organized.³ Although the settlements meant that Jews were in Palestine, they meant little else in terms of a cohesive national group basic to the Zionist hopes of "redeeming the land." Rather, it was a question of personal survival. Conceivably, physical survival might not have been guaranteed had it not been for Baron Edmund de Rothschild. Half of those 18 settlements were under the supervision of this French philanthropist who took them under his patronage in 1883. In a little over 50 years, Rothschild poured 5,500,000 into the country and acquired 125,000 acres of land for Jewish colonization.⁴ Because of Rothschild's support, Jewish hopes for settlement of the land remained alive, despite all obstacles. It must not be forgotten, for example, that in 1882 and again in 1891 the Ottoman Empire which ruled Palestine issued ordinances which allowed Jews to enter the country only on short visits.⁵ Turkey saw the increasing Jewish immigration as a threat which could unleash the same sort of nationalistic aspirations as those that led to the Armenian uprising. Rachel Ben-Zvi describes the procedure Jewish immigrants encountered on their arrival even after the Second Aliyah period:

I could see shelves on which passports lay piled. In place of his passport, each newcomer was given a piece of red paper - a permit from the Turkish authorities to stay in Palestine for three months.⁶

It was usually only through bribes that longer stays were arranged. So essential was Rothschild's role in consolidating those efforts toward settlement which were being made in the country that he earned the title "Father of the Yishuv" (the term used for the Jewish population in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel).

Rothschild, however, was not a Zionist, and his motivation was solely philanthropic. Serious defects existed in the system of settlements which were under his sponsorship. Most of these colonies were based solely on viticulture. Thus they depended on a crop for which there was great competition abroad and very little demand on the domestic market. Beyond the problem of an unsound economic footing, the colonies faced deeper and more important issues. Since the Baron's help was purely philanthropic, there was little motivation for the settlers to become self-sufficient. For example, there was no way to predict to what extent or how long settlers would have to be supported in these colonies. No attention was paid to building the foundations of an independent Jewish middle class, a prerequisite necessary to insure a lasting Jewish presence. The colonies, then, had no ultimate purpose. As a result, it is no surprise that the managers of the Baron's colonies were not emotionally tied to Jewish settlement. Complaints about the arbitrary behavior of these officials increased. Particularly injurious to the

Jewish cause was the managers' apathetic (and very often negative) attitude toward hiring Jewish rather than Arab labor. A letter of A. Z. Levin-Epstein describes this attitude toward Jewish workers at this time:

In the Baron's 'colonies' - and there were virtually no others then - ...they had to keep their costs down and had to hire cheap Arab labor toward that end ...the agents, who built and planted on their own account, would also take on a few Jews... . Their limited perceptions could not entertain that the Baron aspired... to rebuild Israel ... with Jewish labor. But if the Baron deliberately wants Jews to work, let his wish be 'slightly' obeyed. They were sure it was easier to traffic with Arabs than with Jews. It was self understood that they had difficulty in handling Jewish workers, but what could they do if the Baron insisted on using some?⁷

It is small wonder that Jewish idealism quickly dissipated. Rothschild was convinced that a leadership more responsive to Jewish needs was necessary, and from 1900 on, his settlements were managed by the ICA (the Jewish Colonization Association). The ICA was founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch to help Russian Jews settle outside Europe. Although most of its activities centered in Argentina, individual loans to settlers in Palestine were begun in 1896. Certain improvements came under the ICA's administration of the Baron's colonies. The settlers formed a cooperative in order to sell their produce which began to find a wider market. The ICA bought several new

areas which supplemented the small land area of many settlements. Wheat and other crops were introduced which rendered the settlers less dependent on the world market for wine and which were also cheaper to raise. Under these new auspices, the beaucratic system was simplified, and many administrators eliminated. New villages were also established in the Lower Galilee and aimed at promoting the farmer's independence by emphasizing cereal crops (which could be harvested soon after sowing). Yet, the ICA had its defects. Droughts which caused crop failures threatened the viability of these wheat-growing settlements. Jewish labor in Palestine was not stimulated. Whenever a system depended on native cheap labor, as was true of the colonial method, Jewish labor would always be the loser. Arab workers were simply more plentiful and accustomed to a lower standard of living. There were not great numbers of Jewish workers in the country anyway at this time. For example, in 1893 only 500 Jewish workers were found in all Judean and Galilean settlements.⁸ The fervor for rebuilding an ancient homeland which has infused the BILU movement was soon forgotten, and instead a class of Jewish gentlemen farmers was established. They supervised large numbers of Arab workers, but were not developing an attachment for the soil, neither they nor their children. The ICA did not succeed in creating a rural economy among the Jews any more than did Baron Edmund

de Rothschild. This was the situation when the Second Aliyah, of which Rachel was a part, began.

Again, the exodus began from Russia. Again, pogroms were a main cause. This time, though, the ideological climate among the Jews in Czarist Russia was quite different. These later outrages were the culmination of years of official anti-Semitic policy. The pogroms of 1881 had followed a period of relative quiet. The May Laws, on the other hand, brought in their wake 20 years of relentless discrimination and bitter persecution. One of the consequences of these years was a solidification of the Jewish community's self-consciousness which, in turn, led to a demand for reactions to these events. Not that all reactions were Zionistic. On the contrary, for many, apostasy and emigration were the answers. However, there were also Jews who responded to outrages such as the Kishinev Pogrom with the vigor and sense of purpose which were to characterize the spirit of the Second Aliyah. The pogrom in Kishinev, the capitol of the province of Bessarabia, turned out to be one of the first significant dates in the Second Aliyah period.⁹ It occurred on April 6, 1903, as an outgrowth of a blood-libel case. The statistics record the destruction of over 1,500 Jewish homes and stores and the murder of 45 of their inhabitants. The pillage was overwhelming to Russian Jews. There grew a psychological need for self-

redemption spurred on by such Jews as Bialik:

With the dawn of morn the fugitive
returns, He finds his father's body
rotting in his home ... Why do you
weep, and why do you hide your face
in your hands? Clench your teeth
and arise!¹⁰

It was in an atmosphere of fear that the Jewish community sensed that it must take its destiny into its own hands; thus the Jewish self-defense groups were born. The wish to protect Jewish life against marauding Russian peasants would soon be transformed into the sentiments which were the basis for Ha-Shomer, the Jewish organization of watchmen in Palestine founded during the Second Aliyah. The self-defense groups were also important because their founders were among the nucleus who would soon leave for Eretz Yisrael. Yitzhak Ben Zvi, one of the founders of Ha-Shomer, was one of those involved in the defense groups of those days. In 1952, he was elected president of the State of Israel. His memories of the Jewish preparations made in Russia against expected pogroms are valuable:

I remember the pogrom in Kishinev which took place on Passover, 1903. This event came to us ... as a warning. I did not personally remember the wave of pogroms which swept Russia in the '80s, but they lived in the memory of the older generation, and my mother often talked of them. Now we recalled them and concluded that the pogrom in Kishinev was bound to be followed by others. I remember a meeting of a youth group which was held at that time, and a visitor from Odessa read

to us Bialik's "Songs of Wrath" in Russian translation. The poems were still in manuscript. We mimeographed and distributed them. Their effect on the Jewish youth was indescribable. The immediate reaction to them was: Self-Defense. We would not allow ourselves to be slaughtered like sheep with resistance. We made our preparations. The unofficial Po'ale Zion group ... found a ready response among the unorganized young people. The assimilated young Jews who had joined the Russian revolutionary groups also joined the self-defense temporarily. We began... storing weapons: knives, clubs, and fire arms, mostly pistols of dubious worth. These weapons were in the custody of the Po'ale Zion group, which considered the self-defense not a mere incident but a program. We established contact with groups in neighboring large cities. Our forebodings came true. The pogrom in Kishinev was followed by similar outbreaks in Homel and other cities.¹¹

The Jewish self-defense groups were successful and instilled in many young Jews a sense of pride in controlling their own destinies. Zalman Shazar, another president of Israel who came to Israel during the Second Aliyah, describes in his memoirs the exultation he felt as a youngster about the successful resistance engineered by the Po'ale Zion group in his town.¹²

Ironically, in 1904 when the Second Aliyah began, the Russian Government temporarily abandoned its program of pogroms. The Russo-Japanese War broke out then and Czar Nicholas had other concerns for the moment. This coincidence perhaps highlights the fact that the pogroms were

not the only cause for the "push" toward Palestine. It is necessary, therefore, to describe part of the ideology and particularly the political Zionist forces which influenced the pioneers who came in the second wave of immigration. Ben Zvi alluded to the Po'ale Zion ("Workers of Zion") group in his hometown of Poltowa. Beginning as informal study groups in the early 1900s, it became a potent political force, and finally a partner in the modern Mapai Party. Its founder was Nachman Syrkin.

Syrkin was an evolutionary socialist who, in 1898, published his analysis of the Jewish problem which in part declared that "the Jewish State can come about only if it is Socialist; only by fusing with Socialism can Zionism become the ideal for the whole Jewish people."¹³ Syrkin's synthesis of Zionism and socialism was the basis of the Second Aliyah pioneers' hope of founding the new Jewish State on socialist principles. The all-important dicta of a return to the soil and self-labor were seen as part of socialist doctrine. Imagine the gap, then, between the new pioneers and those who had come a generation before. The new immigrants did not want to be owners or managers of estates. Syrkin coupled socialism with Zionism, and Po'ale Zion combined Zionism and labor. The Second Aliyah pioneers, viewing the social order through the lens of socialism, saw its evils as private ownership of land and exploitation of wage labor.¹⁴ Thus, through

socialist doctrine, they came to consider Palestine as no less than the place where the Jewish problem could be solved. They began to anticipate a beginning, encouraged by the literature which they read. Mendele Mocher Sefarim and Brenner emphasized the dark side of Czarist Russia; Berdichevsky and Feilerberg helped point the way to Palestine. Why was it, though, that most young Russian Jews were not equally as influenced by the revolutionary movement or as enthusiastic in their participation in the Jewish Bundist movement (formed the same year that the First Zionist Congress met) as had many of their contemporaries? After all, both of these movements attracted people of similar personalities and backgrounds. Perhaps it was Palestine itself where, by 1904, over 300 dunams of agricultural land were in Jewish hands, purchased by Baron de Rothschild or the ICA.¹⁵ Shlomo Zemach, who came to Palestine during this period, captures the lure which the very word had for these Russians:

It was really and truly 'The Truth from the Land of Israel' of Ahad Ha Am. It was the 'yishuv' and the patronage and administration of Baron de Rothschild and the corruption and opposition that went with it. There were vineyards and cellars and Carmel wines and heavy clusters of grapes carried on a rod by two people. There were the sweet letters of Moshe Smilansky ... telling about the rains and kantars of almonds... the schools and the children who knew no other language than Hebrew ... (Palestine) served to crystallize their feelings, to stimulate and

strengthen their hopes.¹⁶

By 1903, the Zionist organization had official representation in Eretz Yisrael. Its agent was the Anglo-Palestine Company in Jaffa. The Second Zionist Congress in 1898 had already established a bank which it registered in London under the name of the Jewish Colonial Trust Fund. Three years later the Jewish National Fund was brought into existence. Its function was to purchase land in Palestine as the inalienable possession of the Jewish people. It was 1904 that saw the first spearhead of Second Aliyah settlers in the form of 14 members of the Himmeler, Russia, Jewish self-defense group. They arrived at a time when the country was violently split over the first serious crises in the Zionist movement. In the summer of 1903, the Colonial Secretary of England, Joseph Chamberland, offered Uganda to Herzl as a temporary asylum for the Jews. Herzl, who was horrified at the situation of Russian Jews in the Pale, was agreeable. Many Labor Zionists such as Nachman Syrkin supported the Uganda proposal. The sixth Zionist Congress was torn asunder over this plan, but afterwards the English government finally withdrew its offer. We mention the Uganda issue for it is another indication of the ideological differences between the new immigrants and the Old Yishuv. Many in Palestine were enthusiastic about Uganda. The Second Aliyah settlers immediately resolved to distinguish themselves

from these "Palestinian Ugandists." One of their group, Moshe Smilansky, went to Basle to defend Palestine in the name of the Palestine Zionists of Zion.¹⁷ One of those who arrived in 1905 states succinctly this cardinal principle of the Aliyah "...the object of Zionism is to live in Eretz Israel ... (this) idea brought me over to this country."¹⁸ There were other differences which continued to be obstacles to the pioneer's assimilation. Undoubtedly the major divergence between the generations is expressed by the words which became the motto of the Second Aliyah: Kibbush Ha-Avodah ("Conquest of Labor"). Manual labor was glorified, and they planned to forge a manual working class engaged in agriculture. It was only through participation in labor that an economic structure could be formed which would be capable of absorbing immigrants. They envisioned a "working peasantry who wouldn't use the land for personal gain but rather develop it in order to make room for the expansion of the working community."¹⁹ This philosophy was scarcely understood by Jewish farmers who worked the land for their own profit and modeled themselves after the French colonists in Algiers. The Second Aliyah pioneers did not equate right to the land with a charter or title deed (as did the Territorialist Zionists of Palestine). According to them, this right was determined by establishing a "living bond" through settlement of the land. This was the "idea

of the spade" which this new generation preached. The idea of Kibbush Ha-Avodah achieved political significance with the establishment of the Zionist party Hapo'el Hatzair ("Young Worker") in October, 1905, at Petach Tikvah. The party differed philosophically from Po'ale Zion which was based more on the principles of Marxian socialism as formulated by Ber Borochov. It placed no emphasis on the class struggle.

It is ridiculous to talk of the class struggle when both the 'classes' have to slink into the country by the back door, when the official Government does not recognize the existence of either one of them.²⁰

The first article in its program called for "the conquest by Jews of all branches of work in Palestine."²¹ The spade and the hoe were its symbols. The prophet of the Po'alei Zion party was A. D. Gordon, the spiritual father of the Second Aliyah, who was to give religious significance to Kibbush Ha-Avodah. His ideas and his influence on the poet Rachel will be examined later in greater detail. The "Conquest of Labor could not be successfully accomplished, of course, without a constant flow of like-thinking immigrants. One of those who recognized this was a young teacher at Kefar Tavor by the name of Josef Vitkin. A founding member of Hapoel Hazair, he had immigrated in 1898. His call to the Jewish youth of the Diaspora had great impact on many and influenced not a

few to come:

We must work and struggle to redeem our land, and fight with the courage of those for whom there is no possible retreat... Now hearken to the voice that cries to you from the mountains of Israel. Awake, O youth of Israel! Come to the aid of your people. Your people lies in agony. Rush to its side. Band together; discipline yourselves for life or death; forget all precious bonds of your childhood ... and answer to the call of your people... You are as indispensable to the people and the land as is air to every man. Arm yourselves with love of land and people, with love of freedom, with great patience and come. ...Hasten and come, O heroes of Israel. Revive the days of the Biluim with increased strength and valor. For yet a little, and we, alone here, shall perish.²²

This call to the Diaspora was the first time that the term *פ.318n* ("pioneers") was used. Vitkin considered the work that future immigrants would do as training directed toward agricultural settlement.²³ And in the years that followed, they did come. Mainly those from the lower middle class -- craftsmen as well as those who had graduated from talmudical colleges.

It was soon evident, however, that the "establishment" in Palestine was not influenced by the new "Return to the Soil" movement. They resented the young pioneers who seemed to them radicals (which, of course, they were). Instead of being religiously observant, they were socialists, disdainful of religious tradition. Instead of speaking Yiddish,

many of this vanguard insisted on speaking Hebrew. In 1904, there were still no signs of a Jewish working class; without exaggeration, most of the 90,000,000 francs invested in Jewish settlement was by then found in Arab purses as payment for their labor, buildings, or land. It was estimated that each Jewish family supported three Arab families. Nor were efforts to produce a Jewish working class, the goal to which the Second Aliyah was dedicated, encouraged by the Old Yishuv.²⁴ Petach Tikvah was a microcosm of all the animosities, frictions, and obstacles that the pioneers of the Second Aliyah were to face. Petach Tikvah, the "gateway to hope," was the center for Jewish workers and was the first contact with Palestine for many. It was an Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking town, never under the patronage of Baron de Rothschild. At first the young agricultural workers were welcomed there. As the number of new settlers increased, however, the conflict of interests became apparent. The competition with Arab workers was the first hindrance which was experienced. A. S. Hirschberg, commenting on his reactions on the Palestinian labor situation in 1901, had pointed out that

Almost all Jewish farmers prefer the Arabs for jobs a Jew could easily do because the Jewish worker is rather brusque toward his Jewish employer. Besides, the Jewish farmer can hardly exploit a fellow Jew in menial tasks outside the premise of his 'agric-

ultural' duty. ... Moreover, their needs being few, Arabs are satisfied with less wages and are ready to wait till harvest time to get them, which the Jewish worker cannot.²⁵

The situation had hardly changed four years later when matters reached crisis proportion. Shmuel Dayan, one of the Jewish workers who immigrated during this period, was in Petach Tikvah and recorded his memories. He recalls the hundreds of Arab casual workers who assembled before dawn. These plus the permanent Arab workers numbered nearly 1,500 people as compared with the few score of Jewish workers. Especially poignant are Dayan's recollections of the Jewish farmers dressed in white suits who rode by on donkeys as they inspected the force.²⁶ Those Jewish workers who were not lucky enough to acquire a day's labor (often, this was the majority) would return to a dirty hotel for workmen where the beds consisted of boards placed on kerosene cans, there to await the next morning. For many, this life of hopelessness and hardship, endangered by the constant physical threat of diseases such as malaria, became unbearable. Yet, for that small core who stayed on, nothing could deter them from their goals or force them to abrogate their socialist principles. Dayan, himself, once fainted in the street from malaria and woke up in a Jaffa hospital. He immediately took his clothes and left because he did not want to receive public charity.²⁷ Manya Shochot, one of the women to come during the Second Aliyah,

has also written of this idealism:

The Jewish workers in Petach Tikvah had accepted the same conditions as the Arabs; their pay was five piastres (25¢) a day. They believed that as Zionists they simply had not the right to ask for more. They lived eight in a room... When I told them that they ought to demand houses and public buildings from the colony they answered proudly that this would be philanthropy.²⁸

It is not surprising, then, that the workers in Petach Tikvah banded together to help themselves. Hapo'el Hazair, the party which had been founded in Petach Tikvah, established a communal kitchen to supplement the usual diet of onions, olives, and Safed cheese. A housing committee was founded to help find accommodations for the immigrants, and a hospitality committee organized workers to meet the boats carrying new immigrants and to help orient them to life in Eretz Israel. A labor exchange was also begun as a self-help project by the workers. All available jobs were centralized by the committee and distributed to the workers. The good name of the Jewish workers was protected because this committee sent new immigrants to work in vineyards and orange groves only after they became accustomed to hard work. These organizations presaged later institutions such as the Histadruth that have become hallmarks of the State of Israel. Ideology was the basis of these early forerunners, and ideology marked the origins of their conflict with the old order. The workers in Petach Tikvah

were not unlike most of their comrades throughout Palestine in being apathetic toward (if not contemptuous of) Orthodoxy, which often symbolized for them the perpetuation of a system which inhibited self-redemption. The culmination of tensions between the workers and the Old Yishuv in Petach Tikvah was the passing of many restrictive resolutions by the town council. The workers were to conduct themselves according to the tenets of strict Orthodoxy; workers must obey all orders of the local council; local residents of Petach Tikvah should not be allowed to be present at workers' meetings or entertainment (this rule was designed to increase the workers' isolation from the economic and social life of Petach Tikvah. Those who disobeyed these regulations were refused the right to rent a room or to work in the colony.²⁹ A. Even-Tov tells of a quarrel with Alter, a Petach Tikvah farmer's son, which captures the colony's mood at that time:

Once at lunchtime, Alter asked Yitzhak why he did not say his prayers in the morning. Yitzhak replied: And what good does it do you to take a leather strap, wrap it around your arm and kiss it? In a rage, Alter told his father: "See how far things have gone."

The decision was simple, to pluck out the evil by the roots. On the morrow, notices were posted on behalf of the Council. It was forbidden to let houses to them, it was forbidden to come into any contact with them."³⁰

The boycott of Petach Tikvah became a watershed in the history of the Second Aliyah. Its severity for the workers concerned is obvious. For example, the workers were denied access to the Colony's facilities for the care of the sick. They could not use either the doctor or the pharmacist or the loan company.³¹ Their response, however, was to intensify mutual aid among the workers. They instituted, for example, around-the-clock service for the care of the sick. Soon, the foundation for the modern Israeli workers' health service had been laid. However, the boycott focused the pioneers' efforts. No longer could the hazardous life of the Second Aliyah immigrant be ignored. The hard work, low wages, the improper housing and food, and the sickness made many of them realize that the Conquest of Labor could not be achieved by the present process. The new direction was to be Kibbush ha-Adamah: conquest of labor by means of the soil. In practical terms this meant the old idea that Josef Vitkin voiced in his call to the Diaspora: agricultural settlement of the land by working Jewish farmers. This is not to say that Vitkin's program was without its critics. Dissent was one of the rich resources of the Second Aliyah period. There were even those who had objected to his seemingly innocuous call for immigration to Palestine on the basis that immigration should be spontaneous and not planned. A call to settle on the land seemed to imply that an

immigrant's life would be taken care of, argued these critics, when it was obvious that a colonist would not have enough money to finance his settlement successfully and might finally have to depend on philanthropic support -- the scourge of the Yishuv. When Josef Vitkin issued his "call to arms" to Jewish youth, the year was 1904 and his critics reasonably pointed out that there was room in the colonies that then existed for an influx of Jewish workers. The bitter experience of the Jewish workers made the conquest of the land seem a viable alternative. At a special conference called by Hapo'el Hatzair in May, 1908, Vitkin argued for his plan and presented his idea for its successful implementation:

Hapoel Hatzair must strive to realize its goals of conquest of labor in the villages through conquest of the soil and its settlement. There are other countries where the worker passes through the stage of hired agricultural labor and on to settlement. There the worker is aided by grants of government land given him as small payments on a long-term basis, and loans from agricultural banks that he may acquire the necessary machinery and animals. Our government land is the land of Keren Kayemet. An agricultural bank suited to the needs of the first steps of settlement should be established from the money of the Jewish colonization fund (Keren Hayesod).³²

Vitkin wanted the Jewish National Fund to provide land on hereditary lease. He envisioned the creation of a Zionist

settlement agency which would give long-term loans at a low rate of interest. Happily, Vitkin's plan became possible with the decision of the Eighth Zionist Congress to begin the "practical" work of settling Eretz Israel. This meant a victory over the "political" Zionists who restricted the functions of the Zionist organizations to attempts at achieving a Charter of Colonization from the Sultan of Turkey. Now, funds became available for the Palestine Department of the Zionist Executive, and a Palestine Office was set up in Jaffa in 1908. A well known German economist, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, who had visited Palestine in 1907 in order to make a study of Jewish agricultural settlement, became the first head of the Office. Through the Palestine Development Company, systematic development in such areas as housing and agriculture was begun.³³ The focus of the new expansionist activity was the Galilee. Perhaps symbolic of this new thrust is the fact that beginning in the fall of 1907, seven immigrants from Petach Tikvah went to the Galilee to find work. Dayan describes the new hope that many workers felt when he wrote that "there was a feeling that we were only now arriving in Eretz Yisrael for the first time ... Galilee."³⁴ In 1907 a society of Jewish workers in the Galilee was founded (Hakhorest, "Ploughmen") whose ideology placed much emphasis on the ideal of labor; of the redemption of the soil. With the formation of the new

Zionist institutions in Palestine a question arose as to what strategy Ruppin would employ to bring these ideals to fruition. He immediately demonstrated his creativity by ingeniously utilizing the land which had been acquired by the Jewish National Fund. The immediate problem was that the constitution of the Jewish National Fund, while it provided for the purchase of land, did not permit money to be spent for settlement on that land.³⁵ Ruppin took advantage of a special Olive Tree Fund which had been in existence since 1904³⁶ and designated such places as Ben Shemen and Huldah as olive groves. The classic threat of cheap Arab labor unsurping Jewish opportunity arose and was met successfully at Ben Shemen where the managed hired Arab labor at the nurseries. This engendered a strike of Jewish workers from Petach Tikvah and Jaffa at the Herzl Forest at Ben Shemen. The solution was that only Jews do the planting. Among the workers at the Ben Shemen olive grove was a former Jewish self-defense group from Romni, Russia, which was to play an historic role in Jewish colonization.

In the same year that Ruppin took control of the Palestine Office, he used money from the Palestine Land Development Company to establish a national farm on the Juni tract at Kinnereth on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was not the first such venture; Jewish workers had already been working the land at the Jewish Colonization

(ICA) farm at Sedjara in the Lower Galilee. At both places, the settlers were supervised by a manager who was responsible to the Palestine Office. They were to receive a percentage of any profits. The idea of a workers' cooperative excited many pioneers of the Second Aliyah because it presented an honorable alternative to an unfulfilling life without necessarily compromising their principles. Many Shochot, one of the participants in the Sedjarn farm, summarized what collectivization meant to the settlers:

In August 1907, I returned to Palestine. I had one ideal not--the realization of collectivism ... the idea had (now taken deeper root in Palestine. In the colonies of Lower Galilee the Jewish workers lived wretched disorganized lives. They were housed in stables. Some of them had already lost all faith in the burning ideal of 'the Conquest of Labor.' They could not become individualist farmers, planters, exploiters of others, their socialist principles forbade it. And they could not continue their competition with Arab labor, for no European can long subsist on five piastres a day. I, for my part, had never believed in the Conquest of Labor through adaptation of the Arab standard of life.³⁷

It was at Kinnereth that a truly unique experience evolved. The farm at first did not seem to differ from any past model. The money to be received was figured on the basis of a Jewish farm worker's pay. Their food was supplied, clothes laundered, and mended plus 10 francs a month.

There was also an incentive program. Each man was to receive the net produce of one-half hectare of what and to be allowed (at farm expense) a calf or foal and ten sheep.³⁸ The manager of Kinnereth was an agronomist from Southern Russia named Berman. Ruppin and Berman determined that the farm should be that of mixed production based on the model of farms in the German Colonies. Kinnereth was to center around the dairy industry. Even by the time that 20 young men began settlement on May 8, 1908, there had been portents of the farm's failure. It was felt by some that the initiative for settlement should have come from the settlers themselves since there was the possibility that the Jewish National Fund would take responsibility for any losses incurred. As a result, only 1,000 of the projected 2,500 dunams of land were finally acquired. Also, the Hokhoresh society which had been founded the previous year at Sedjara decided that no Galilean worker could accept employment. This was in protest against Berman's heading the training farm. It was the same Berman who had hired Arab labor at the Ben Shemen olive grove. (This ban was lifted by July, 1908.) After the first year, troubles began to accumulate. Ruppin has written about the plight at Kinnereth:

The manager treated the workers as mere laborers, and gave them no voice in the direction of the farm. The workers, who saw in Kinnereth the cornerstone of a great future colonization, and who were prepared

to make every sacrifice to the success of the enterprise, believed they could demonstrate some errors of management. And their demand for a hearing made the situation of the administrator exceedingly difficult. Another source of constant friction was the difference in social views and philosophy between him and the workers; and all this caused the work of the farm to suffer.³⁹

By mid-October, 1909, the farm had already lost 780. As a remedy Berman wanted to hire more Arab workers. Issues became insoluble, and a strike was declared on October 11, 1910. Symbolizing all the frustration encountered by the Second Aliyah, this situation explained the decision taken in the Kinnereth strike:

The problem was finally solved by giving that part of Kinnereth which lay east of the Jordan to a group of seven workers who were to cultivate it on their own responsibility, under the direction of a committee chosen by themselves.⁴⁰

This group of seven workers was the Romni group. The Trans-jordan part of the Kinnereth known as the Um Juni tract covered 750 acres of land purchased by the Jewish National Fund. The name chosen for this site by the settlers was Dagania, and it became the progenitor of the kvutzah -- Israel's unique contribution to modes of agricultural settlement.

Dagania had, of course, been born out of necessity:

...the other alternative - to divide the large farm (Kinnereth)

into smaller units, and thus to make it possible to dispense with the manager - would have required quite a considerable amount of money for buildings, etc.; and this money was not available.⁴¹

The independence which Daganian offered to the workers became the greatest possible incentive for those whose lives were motivated by ideology. Shmuel Dayan reflected the feelings of many of his comrades:

To work in freedom. The words seemed to convey a deep breath... there is a feeling of creativeness in the work performed by the worker himself, even in services and administration ... we are free of employers and overseers...we are responsible to ourselves. We are working people who have given the possibility of understanding, thinking, and directing their work as they desire.⁴²

Daganian, the "mother of the kvutzot," developed a new pattern of communal living since everything was jointly owned. The capital investments were made by the Jewish National Fund which was to receive half of the net profits. The remaining half was to be given to the workers plus fifty francs a month.⁴³ However, among the Romni group itself there was no money which was owned individually. All matters concerning the settlement were discussed by all members at general meetings. Consequently, Daganian became the symbol of complete equality. When it was determined that no losses would be incurred after the first year's operation, the workers were exultant. There were difficulties,

of course. There was still not a lot known about the soil's characteristics. It was finally decided that the best method would be diversification of crops based on large-scale irrigation. It was also not long before the foundation of a dairy industry were begun. Another difficulty faced by the group at Daganian was the climate. Daganian is 200 meters below sea level and Europeans were not acclimated to this altitude. Daganian was isolated; the settlers had been living in a nearby Arab village. Nevertheless, problems were overcome and after the first year permanent living quarters were built. The future of collective farming was insured. By the fall of 1910, it was not even necessary for Daganian to have a manager. In 1910, the original settlers of Kinnereth moved to Merchavia where they hoped to duplicate the success of Daganian. They were organized by Ha-Shomer, an organization of Jews whose purpose was to defend Jewish property. The story of Ha-Shomer is noteworthy not only because it gave rise to what are today the Israel Defense Forces, but also as an important aspect of the Second Aliyah.

The idea of Jewish guards protecting their own property was novel. Maurice Samuel posits the theory that due to the experience of the exile the Jews never extensively enjoyed the privileges of government.⁴⁴ At any rate, it was assumed that Arabs were to guard Jewish settlements. The graft and irresponsibility which went along with this

situation were also assumed. Israel Shohot describes the conditions which the Jews faced in these villages:

At sunset all movement ceased on the roads for fear of robbery. Life and property in the Jewish settlements were at the mercy of the sheiks. The settlement used to pay a tax to its 'guardians' though only 'the name of the chieftan' provided protection.⁴⁵

In 1907 young immigrants who had worked in the Jordan settlements and were members of the social-democratic Poale Zion party took the initiative in prodding Jews to protect their own property. They formed a society called Bar Giora after the hero of the Jewish wars against the Romans. One of the original members of Ha-Shomer, Alexander Zeid, has written of its founding:

Our first secret meeting took place in Jaffa, in the tiny room of Ben Zwi. The society was given the name of Bar Giora, and its motto was 'In blood and fire Judah fell; in blood and fire shall Judah arise.' The meeting proceeded without discussion. The faces of all participants expressed loyalty ...we placed ourselves in the hands of destiny.⁴⁶

The weapons at that time included a six-chambered revolver plus a rifle and a Circassian dagger. Zeid describes the practice of members of the society decking themselves out in all these weapons when one of them happened to visit a neighboring Arab village.⁴⁷ By 1907, Ha-Shomer was composed of 15 members. That year they went to the training farm at Sedjara, and in 1908 they became re-

sponsible for its defense. Sedjara became the center for Ha-Shomer. In 1909, the group was constituted on a nationwide basis in order to allocate either individuals or larger groups to the necessary places. The Jewish village of Messcha (Kefar Tavor) became the first Jewish settlement to have its own Jewish guards on a regularly paid basis. Ten of their number went to Messcha. Four were to be employed as guards, and six primarily as workers. To be paid regularly did not imply many comforts. The conditions were very severe; Zeid remembers what the guards had to bear the year they were employed there:

Our economic circumstances were difficult. We did not have enough money to procure boots for the winter in sufficient quantity for both watchmen and workers. Each...therefore had to take turns in wearing a single pair of boots.⁴⁸

In 1910, the group organized officially, and its constitution was published in the Hebrew press. It was not long before more and more villages employed Jewish guards. Today in the Haganah Museum in Tel Aviv, one can see the quaint costume complete with kaffiyah which the guards wore. Perhaps their biggest contribution to the settlers of the Second Aliyah was not so much in guarding their property as in enhancing the reputation of the Jewish community. Ben Gurion recalls that before the Jewish watches began, the Arabs had nicknamed the Jews "Children of Death i.e., delicate, frightened, and gentle." Ha-Shomer played no

small role in changing that image and helping the Jewish community to respect itself.

Ideology, therefore, played a major role in the epoch of the Second Aliyah. Kibbush ha-Avodah and Kibbush ha-Adamah were powerful ideas which motivated the many immigrants of this period. Consequently, it is appropriate to review the life and philosophy of the man known as the "spiritual father" of the Second Aliyah. His name was Aaron David Gordon, although he was known only by his initials A.D. His family was native to Vilna, Russia where his grandfather was a talmudic scholar.⁴⁹ Gordon was born in 1856. He received a traditional Jewish education and was also encouraged in secular subjects. Thus he was never faced with family opposition in coming to terms with the modern world. When he was 18, Gordon married his cousin and they moved to Obodokva, her birthplace. According to Josef Aaronovitch, it was during the years in Obodokva that A. D. Gordon developed his close affinity for nature; it was not, in other words, a reaction against urban society. It is not surprising, according to his theory, that we never find Gordon celebrating the concept of the "noble savage." Nowhere does he recommend destroying the benefits of civilization as a way of achieving closeness with nature. If Obodokva was a positive experience in helping to form Gordon's philosophy of nature, it was also oppressive in the sense that he was repelled

by Hasidism as a fanatical expression of religion. The supremacy of the individual and the individual's right not to be coerced made the hasid-rebbe relationship strange in Gordon's eyes. Following S. H. Bergman's analysis,⁵⁰ however, Gordon may still be considered a religious figure, although transcending the boundaries of organized religion. A. D. Gordon soon moved to the town of Mokilva where his parents were already living. There, he secured employment where his father was working, on the estate of a wealthy cousin, Baron Horace Ginzburg. He worked for 23 years as a petty official. We know that Gordon was not happy working there, but it is difficult to find indications during this early period of his yearning for Palestine. On the contrary, according to Aaronovitch, Gordon did not oppose the idea of Jews immigrating to Argentina, an idea which had met with great disapproval among many of his countrymen. Indeed, we learn that he found that most Haskalah literature exhibited a "crudeness and dilettante spirit."⁵¹ Gordon felt that Hebrew literature could not be secular and still be faithful to its unique heritage and spirit:

When I read the love poems of
Lermontov, I feel the love that
is in him, and I believe him.
When I read the love poems of
some Hebrew poet, I am convinced,
indeed, that he is capable of
composing a poem on love, but I
do not feel his love and I do not
believe him.⁵²

Only with books such as Ahad HaAm's פ' דבר אלהים did Gordon begin to change his opinion about Hebrew literature. This is not to imply that during these years the philosopher displayed no love for Zion. He preached in the town synagogue on Zion and the national renaissance. Moreover, he supplied the library which he had instituted in Mokilva with Haskalah literature. Gordon also founded a girls' school in the town; there Hebrew was one of the main subjects taught. Yet his life remained basically unfulfilled. Of his seven children, only a son and a daughter survived infancy. His son later attended a yeshivah in Lithuania against Gordon's wishes; as the son's religious views became more extreme, he became estranged from his father, and even came to regard him as an epikorus. Gordon's feeling of being a stranger in his homeland became intensified with the passing of the May Laws. According to one strict provision, Jewish population centers were severely restricted. Gordon's family had to move to the neighboring town of Chaslchovata, from where he had to commute daily to work in Mokilva. In 1903, Mokilva was sold and the entire family moved back to Obodovka; in that same year, Gordon's parents died. A. D. Gordon then came to the major decision of his life. By this time his son was in the yeshivah and his daughter was already teaching and was thus able to contribute financial support for her mother. At the age of 48, Gordon decided to

immigrate to Palestine. This resolve became the classic example, cited again and again in the literature of the Second Aliyah, of translating one's ideals into action. What an unlikely person to come to Eretz Yisrael! Men much younger than A. D. Gordon had been overcome by the devastating hardships of living in the rugged country that was Palestine at the time. As the only son of middle class parents, he was surely not accustomed to physical labor. But it was physical labor that he insisted on. The reasons are imbedded in his philosophy.

Gordon's world-view was based on the theory that the cosmos is a unity. A correlary is that man and nature comprise a unity which is part of the cosmos. Man is potentially conscious of this cosmic unity only on an intuitive level which means that he can experience and live it, although not in an empirical way. Gordon subscribes to an iceberg theory in postulating that we are able to know only a tiny bit of the cosmos on a conscious level. Yet it is essential that we open ourselves up to the part of the cosmos that we do not consciously know. For it is in this "hidden" part of experience that the secret of man's individuality lies. Another of Gordon's postulates is that our intellect, our consciousness, while enlightening us, has also cut us off from the immediacy of life's experience. We have become alienated from the cosmos due to the excesses of intellectual power. It is

inevitable that this happened because of the unique way in which our intellect perceives the world. Intellectual cognition means differentiating between the object and its content for the purpose of study. Gordon, however, stresses the necessity of perceiving everything as a unity. We would then know simultaneously the particular in its living relationship to the whole. Our vision would be gragmented. This is not accomplished by intellect, but rather by means of intuition. There exists, then, a gap between life experience and our ability to comprehend it fully. Modern society has widened this gap because man's intellectual resources have been channelled toward gaining control over nature. A. D. Gordon's philosophy addresses itself to bridging this chasm. His response has been termed the Religion of Labor.

Through the Religion of Labor man can again achieve a sense of oneness with the cosmos. Gordon's religion is an assertion of cosmic unity; the religious act for him is one which promotes our comprehension of the complete harmony which man can feel with the universe. This goal cannot be reached by the intellect. Nor is its achievement limited to the aegis of the community's formal, organized religious institutions. Indeed, his writings criticize the forms of religion, although he always distinguishes between form and content. He considers the content of true religion to be an understanding of the overall unity

of every facet of the universe. On the other hand, societal forms of religion are both temporal and unimportant to Gordon. At one point,⁵³ he freely admits that he does not observe the forms of religion, but he decidedly does not view this as an inability to appreciate the existential significance of such holidays as Yom Kippur. Why have the forms of religion not generated a sense of cosmic unity? Gordon asserts that they are removed from the source of divine power which is manifest in the world of nature. Modern society has transmuted the world of nature into just another commodity. Our intellect has removed nature from its cosmic perspective and created a distance between it and ourselves. For instance, we speak of "enjoying" nature as if it were a commodity. As a result, nature is no longer a source of spiritual renewal for man. The theme of A. D. Gordon's philosophy is the need for a return to a direct and immediate relationship with nature. This is not to imply that he was a pantheist, for nature qua nature was never meant to be an ultimate goal. Rather is a vital and living relationship with nature seen as the vehicle by which man can open himself up to the wellspring of religion. It is through nature that man is able to confront the genuine source of religious meaning. It is through nature that man can restore a proper proportion between his intellect (דבור) and intuition (חידו). Finally, nature is the medium through which we can en-

counter the cosmos, which he sometimes refers to as infinity, directly. In sum, to return to nature means for Gordon nothing less than the fulfillment of humanity's potential:

Man must realize that there exists a world of infinity with which he has to reckon; an appreciation of life which we have never felt before, which we have never been taught to understand. Man must ... go back to nature ... This reversion to nature, I believe, will greatly enhance the consciousness of his self-esteem and the knowledge of his self as the supreme manifestation of life and existence.⁵⁴

He did not use the word "return," however, to signify "revert." Gordon's hope was that man achieve the experience of creative living by employing all his present resources, never by escaping or denying the challenge of creativity:

There is danger in thinking ... that you should go backward to childhood... . This is not true, O son of man! You have not lived in vain and you haven't spent your strength in vanity. When you return to Nature, you shall not retrace your steps and you shall not return empty-handed.⁵⁵

Gordon was not an academic theoretician unaware of the practical implications involved in implementing his program. He knew that it was no simple matter for Jews to return to nature: "A people torn away from nature and immured for two-thousand years... will not again become a living natural working people without exerting all its will."⁵⁶ Therefore, Gordon determined that labor would be the means

to effect the return to nature. It is physical labor which becomes the symbol of a living relationship with nature:

"If work becomes our ideal, or rather, if we bring the ideal of work into functioning, we... shall be able to bridge the gap between us and nature."⁵⁷ Gordon, the Second Aliyah pioneer, knew whereof he spoke; he had succeeded through labor in bridging the gap for himself:

... Sometimes the work is hard and crowded with pettiness. But at times you feel a surge of cosmic exaltation like the clear light of the heavens. Unfathomed depths stir within you. And you, too, seem to be taking root in the soil which you are digging, to be nourished by the rays of the sun, to share life with the tiniest blade of grass, with each flower, living in nature's depths, you seem then to rise and grow into the vast expanse of the universe.⁵⁸

To appreciate Gordon fully, however, is to remember that the context of his writings was the land of Palestine. The concept of the nation was a keystone in his system. It is the nation which is able to comprehend that infinite part of the cosmos which composes the "hidden" part of man's experience. The nation is the intermediary between these unperceived aspects of the cosmos and the individual just as physical labor is the bridge between nature and the individual. Since the nation plays such an important role in the life of man, the Galut seemed particularly destructive to Gordon. In the Diaspora, there was no mediator between the Jewish people and the cosmos:

There in the lands of the exiles we lack national creativity and we are spiritual parasites. There our national being has contracted and dried up to the point of being destroyed for there is no direct nourishment from the well-springs of its own life.⁵⁹

It is hardly a surprise, then, that the philosopher places such emphasis on the necessity for a national renaissance in Palestine. The nature of the Jewish nation which was to be resurrected was crucial for the creative role it would play for its inhabitants. The type of nation which Gordon envisaged would exhibit a culture which, in the words of Nathan Rotensreich, would be "springing from the primal source, from life within and with nature - fusing human life with the life of the world and human creativity of the world itself."⁶⁰ A. D. Gordon called this ideal nation which he hoped would be forged in Palestine the human-nation (*ḥay-ḥay*). By this term he meant that there would be a fusion of the national community with human values:

We must devote ourselves to set our nation on the path of evolution of the spirit of humanity, to guide it toward truth and justice, in its relations with all other nations and with every other person.⁶¹

Following Gordon's cosmic orientation, the human-nation, once brought about by means of nature, will link the soul of man with the soul of the universe, i.e., cosmos. Then, a "cosmic moment" will have occurred; here Gordon's hope

takes on a messianic tone, "And in that day a new spirit shall be given unto you ... and you will find joy in every deed which you will perform."⁶²

Gordon's world view was particularly appropriate for the settlers of the Second Aliyah. He was called their spiritual father; his gospel was the Religion of Labor. A. D. Gordon was a member of their ranks and even became a delegate to the Zionist Congress on behalf of the Po'ale Zion party of Palestine. Most important, he himself practiced his doctrine with a religious fervor:

He toiled with reverence and love;
his slender body moving to and fro
in his work, his lean hand rising
and falling vigorously with each
digging of the hoe, with heavy
streams of perspiration dripping
down his face and upon his white
beard, while his eyes were burning
with some special fire, the fire
of holiness.⁶³

On first coming to Palestine, Gordon got a job as a laborer in the Petach Tikvah orange groves; then, to earn more money to bring his wife and daughters to the new land, he became employed at the Rishon le Zion wine cellars. His life in Eretz Yisrael was not easy. He suffered a debilitating bout with malaria, and shortly before his family did come in 1909, Gordon nearly died from wounds incurred in an Arab attack on the way from Rishon le Zion to Jaffa. With his family, he moved to Ein Ganim in the Sharon Valley where his wife soon died of malaria. For the last ten years of his life, he lived in the Galilee.

Gordon was very fond of Daganian although he was not permanently attached there. Shmuel Dayan, who was at Daganian during this time, recalls that Gordon was treated in special ways which were unusual in light of the egalitarian nature of the kibbutz:

He felt he had to have a room of his own, a lamp and ink. When it was impossible for him to have a room by himself, he used the shower-room of the hay loft. There he nailed his lamp to a piece of tin which was fastened to the table where he kept his ink and paper (he used only one kind - halves of sheets about fifteen centimeters square.⁶⁴

As Dayan explains, Gordon's personal habits set him off from other members of Daganian. A vegetarian, he never wore colors but only a special uniform without buttons designed for himself. Gordon refused to bathe indoors, insisting, rather, on washing several times a day in the Kinnereth or the Jordan. Despite these idiosyncracies, the man's charisma was renowned; there are accounts of haverim from all over the Galilee making pilgrimages on Shabbat to seek his counsel:

There was a time when suicides were common among our young community. People came to him discouraged seeing nothing before them but absolute darkness. In his presence, many of them regained courage. He, the symbol of confidence, became an example of living, of tenderness and delight in man, and in all life. For he understood the struggles of the human soul and could give the perplexed the help they needed.⁶⁵

Gordon's capacity for empathy may have been particularly expansive because he himself was so afflicted with misfortune. Particularly upsetting was the news of his son's death in Russia. They had never become reconciled. Also, he was deeply troubled both by the massacres of Jews in Russia and later by the killings that occurred in Jaffa and the Upper Galilee settlements. Toward the end of his life he realized that he was dying of cancer and, after traveling to Vienna for treatment, he knew that the disease was incurable. A. D. Gordon returned to Degania to die, and was buried on 24 Shevat, 1922.

The Second Aliyah marked the national renaissance in Palestine. This regeneration came about with the triumphant Conquest of Labor and the Conquest of the Soil. A. D. Gordon's aliyah embodied the prototype of the motives and the efforts of the Second Aliyah pioneers. Gordon's philosophy and life were infused with the joy and thanksgiving with which they approached their tasks. He advocated the return to nature for personal and national renewal, and was grateful for the opportunity. Because of his emphasis on the return to nature, Gordon has often been called the "Tolstoy of Palestine." However, Tolstoy's approach to nature was quite different. He adopted the attitude of a Christian penitent in his return to the land. Gordon, on the other hand, did not view returning to the land as a religious sacrifice, but rather he continually

expressed his thanksgiving for being a part of such a grand national effort.

Gordon added a substance and depth to the spirit of these times. Because it was a period of such intense singlemindedness, it was not surprising that there were anti-intellectual elements. Perhaps this was inevitable due to the immediate concerns of agrarian reform. In his insistence on treating life as a unity, he disdains setting up priorities which would be prejudiced against intellectual and cultural attainment:

If they see in physical labor that which is to engulf the entire man without leaving him any free time to fulfill his higher needs - to fulfill his thirst for knowledge, art, and the like, this is not the idea of labor as I conceive it, which comes to broaden and deepen life, and not to constrict it.⁶⁶

In spite of this climate of anti-intellectualism, Gordon advocated a Hebrew University. It is an interesting footnote that he is studied at the present-day Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a serious thinker by a generation which has rebelled against so much of the idealistic spirit of the Second Aliyah.

For those living in a technocratic society, there is a freshness and appeal in A. D. Gordon's writings. It is, perhaps, the same allure which has made Henry David Thoreau a modern culture hero in America. However, Gordon was not a systematic philosopher. Understandably, much of what he

says is imprecise because the thrust of his philosophy is experiential rather than ideational. To understand Gordon requires participation.

The Second Aliyah was a time of such idealism and accomplishment that it has become shrouded in romanticism and sentimentality. Yet, the statistics remind us of the real achievements of the Second Aliyah. In 1880 the New Yishuv numbered only about 2,000 souls-; by 1914, the end of the Second Aliyah, the population was up to 30,000.⁶⁷ But the growth was not only in numbers. The concerns and concepts of that period are still live issues. For example, one finds similarities between the defense problems encountered by Ha-Shomer and Zahal, although Zahal's are on a scale and in terms of a modern military force. In the arguments concerning economic and social policy in the new territories administered since the Six Day War, we hear echoes of the discussions heard in Hapoel HaZair meetings more than 50 years ago -- on topics like an Arab majority in the Middle East. In addition, the questions of Jewish vs. Arab labor and the exploitation of the laborer are still politically relevant. The appeals for new immigrants to help consolidate gains and to continue the progress of the State contain language used in Second Aliyah proclamations. The fact that so much of the modern had its genesis at that time is the greatest testament to the Second Aliyah.

Other insights into the period emerge through studying Rachel, the poet of the Second Aliyah. For example, personal frustration and the joy of labor, Rachel's major themes, reflect the social realities of the period. We can now turn to the dimension captured only by song.

RACHEL: A BIOGRAPHY

Rachel Blaustein was born on September 20, 1890, in Saratov, the North Russian capitol situated on the Volga.⁶⁸ Rachel's father, Isser Leib Blaustein, originally settled in Vyatke on the Siberian border where he married a Jewish woman who bore him four children. Had his wife been a non-Jew it would have been no surprise, for Blaustein was conscripted into the Russian arm of Czar Nicholas II at the age of 12. This was the fate of many Jewish youngsters in Russia due to an ukase passed in August 1827,⁶⁹ which decreed that Jewish boys were to be impressed into the army for 31 years. As a consequence, most victims of the conscription laws converted to Christianity. This was exactly what Nicholas had in mind, he planned forcibly to assimilate the Jews into the Slavic, Greek-Orthodox majority. Rachel's father was one of the exceptions. When Isser Blaustein was finally freed from the army, he returned to Judaism in the town of Vietka, outside the Pale of Settlement. From his first dealings trading in bear skins with local hunters, Blaustein succeeded as a business entrepreneur. Subsequently, he traded in diamonds and gold, and diversified into such areas as ownership of a movie theater. After a time, Blaustein's wife died and he married Sophia Levite Mendelstom. Isser's Jewishness could only have been reenforced by this match, for Sophia was from one of the most illustrious Russian Jewish families. Her father was a well known rabbi, and her brother one of

the first Jewish ophthalmologists. Sophia's maternal grandfather was a court Jew during the reign of Alexander I - her uncles included a noted sculptor, an eminent jurist, an author, and a school administrator.

Soon after their marriage, Sophia moved with Isser and her four step-children to Saratov where Rachel and seven other children were born into the Blaustein family. Rachel did not spend her childhood here, but rather in the Jewish community of Poltava where the family moved soon after her birth. Poltava was within the Pale and not far from the Jewish center of Kiev. Still successful in business, Blaustein became one of the most respected men in the town. His home reflected the parents' emphasis on education. Shoshanah, Rachel's sister, recalls these early years:

Our father was honored in our city; a gabbai and considered a learned man. Our mother was very educated. She knew many languages and dedicated much of her attention to the education of her children. She used to exchange letters with some of the most important men of culture in Russia -- even with Tolstoy who wrote that she was one of the truly educated women he had met. All of our brothers acquired a higher education; whoever did not receive his studies in Russia was sent to Germany or other centers of Western Europe. Among those who came to our home was the Russian Korelenki whose daughter was a friend of our eldest daughter Liza. It was through his efforts that the Jewish community of Poltava would be saved in the 1905 pogroms.⁷⁰

Other guests of the Blausteins included Isaac Ben Zvi's family and also the Borochoy family. A. M. Borochoy, the father of Ber, was principal of the Jewish elementary school where both Rachel and Shoshanah studied. Later, the girls were taught by private tutors. Early in her life, Rachel was exposed to Hebrew. For a short while she joined a Hebrew club with Shoshanah, the main result, however, seemed to be only an ability to read certain prayers with Hebrew letters.

During her childhood, Rachel's real love was painting. She showed real ability in this area and her teachers encouraged her in her hopes of developing this talent professionally. Rachel's only opportunity to go to art school came after her mother died, at the time when Rachel finished the gymnasium. However, this event was traumatic for the young girl, and it was decided that she should live for a while with Liza in Kiev and study painting in an art academy there.

Rachel also tried her hand at verse; by the age of 15 she was regularly composing poems in Russian. Rachel wrote many of her early poems and stories for the diary which she kept jointly with Shoshanah. Both girls began the diary at the age of ten. Rachel often entertained members of the family by reading her creative efforts aloud. Increasingly, she wrote poems to fill the idle hours. One of the earliest poems which was not part of

the diary and is still extant was copied and kept for many years by Liza. She had accompanied her younger sister to Urnim, a Russian health resort, where Rachel was to receive complete rest for an eye ailment. Liza recalls in a letter that she read poetry to her sister constantly during this stay, but did not suspect that Rachel was herself writing verse. One day in Rachel's room, Liza found the following written on an empty page:

Tell me about the Gina (ג'ינא) tree
Tell me about the living God
Ah, what enchantment there is in your words,
Bring me pictures from afar
Tell me of Rabbi Eli the elder
Tell me of a crown of thorns
And even the Christmas trees will heed you
And the twilight hearken unto you.⁷¹

In 1909 Rachel and Shoshanah decided to take an excursion with an organized group of young Russian Jews to Palestine. The sisters met the group in Odessa and left by ship. It would not be correct to state that Rachel was a Zionist at this time. Her stay was not meant to be permanent, rather, she had plans eventually to continue her art studies in Europe. In the meantime, she intended to enroll at the three-year-old Bezalel Art School and to study with Professor Boris Schatz. On the other hand, Jacob, the oldest brother, was a committed Zionist who, together with the school principal Borochoy, may have influenced Rachel's decision to visit Eretz Yisrael. Still, Rachel must have known that by leaving Poltava she was embarking on an experience which would change her profoundly.

Indeed, the name she gave to their diary recording their impressions of Palestine was "A New Life."⁷² The diary was begun a few days before their departure in September. From the following extract which Shoshanah later translated into Hebrew, it is obvious that at the age of 19, Rachel was eager for that new life:

An early autumn morning of the twenty-eighth of August. We are standing by the railing of the railroad car. The third bell rings and the train shudders. Shalom, Poltava. We are standing one by the other and staring. We know all of the places. Memories of the summer... Shalom, shalom.

'Tell me, grandfather, is it true that the walls of the gloomy fortresses that were our fortress are falling?'

'Yes, this is true, my grandchild. From the strangling hold of our prison we have gone out to the wide spaces and freedom.'⁷³

The decision to come to Palestine was the most important of Rachel's life. They reached Jaffa after a two-week trip in bad weather. Both girls immediately fell in love with the city, and all plans to return to Europe were forgotten. Shoshanah expressed the emotion which she and Rachel had experienced:

With the first gulp of air from (Eretz Yisrael) we understood why we had come. At once we cut the tie with the galut knowing that we could not return. We began to learn Hebrew and wanted to be born again.⁷⁴

Rachel and Shoshanah spent their first night in a hotel in Jaffa. Among the guests was a young woman named Hannah Meisels whose ambition was to teach agriculture to Jewish girls. Hannah was to play an important part in Rachel's life. The Blaustein sisters next went to Rehovot where they were received with enthusiasm by the moshav.

There, they plunged into their Hebrew studies, spending many hours with a private tutor. Rachel also began studying the Bible with an emphasis on the Prophets. Chanaah Weissman, who lived in Rehovot, remembered Rachel's first efforts at speaking Hebrew:

The appearance of the two sisters in the colony proved quite an event. The one pale-faced, blue-eyed, was tall silent and sulking. The other (Rachel), dark-complexioned, dark-eyed, cheerful, smiling and attempting to speak. I say attempting because Hebrew was unknown to them. Yet, from the first moment of their arrival they declared that any language other than Hebrew was unfamiliar to them. Our first meeting with them took place in my kindergarten. One morning both appeared and asked my permission to visit the school: they desired to learn their Hebrew from the mouths of children.⁷⁵

It was frustrating at the beginning because there were many everyday things which the young Russian girls could not express in Hebrew. They finally decided to allow themselves the luxury of the one hour before sunset to speak Russian. One of the main way in which Rachel used this time was to recite Russian verse. It was not long

after their arrival in Rehovot that their younger sister, Batsheva, came to live with them. Though only 15, she had already studied at the famous Leipzig music conservatory. Isser Blaustein sent money for the support of his three daughters and an extra sum to buy Batsheva a piano from Jaffa. Their room was known as the "Tower of the Three Sisters," and soon became the cultural center of Rehovot. Young people regularly gathered there to hear spontaneous concerts and to take part in group singing. When the first shomer came to Rehovot there was no question but that he would meet the community in the Blaustein room. During this time, Rachel Ben Zvi visited Rehovot and saw Rachel: "Among the trees I caught sight of a figure that seemed to be floating between the sky and sand; she was slim and erect in a long white dress, her long hair in a braid down her back and her blue eyes filled gaiety."⁷⁶ However, Rachel was not completely fulfilled. She was unhappy that her physical abilities were not taxed fully. She worked a little in the orange groves, but there was no appropriate physical labor in which she could take part. Rachel yearned for a life of working the land in the true spirit of the Second Aliyah. It was then that Rachel decided to search for Hannah Meisels whom she remembered from Jaffa. Hannah was then employed in the agricultural village of Bloomenfeld at the foot of Mount Carmel. Rachel found Hannah working in the orchard there and asked for lessons

in agriculture and opportunities for physical labor.

This orchard was later the subject of the poem " / J J C " ("Our Garden") which was dedicated to Hannah Meisels.

...You stand under the tree
And I on a limb like a bird
On the summit of the olive tree covered
With darkening branches will we sing...⁷⁷

Hannah finally agreed to Rachel's proposal after entertaining initial doubts about her physical stamina. She was fond of saying that Rachel was her school, and, in fact, Rachel was her only student. Rachel soon traveled to Sedjara with Hannah and ultimately to Kinnereth. There Hannah was finally successful in giving agricultural training to girls. The Berlin Kulterverband of Jewish women furnished several thousand francs, and the first agricultural girls' school began in Palestine.⁷⁸

The years at Kinnereth were the happiest of Rachel's life; in her verse, she later reflected on this period with acute longing. This was the springtime of her life which she referred to in her poems as "then." Rachel Ben Zvi quotes a letter which Rachel wrote during her first summer at Kinnereth:

We walk on earth that still carries
the imprint of our Father Abraham.
We hear echoes of the word of the
Lord that sounded here in ancient
days... . We planted Eucalyptus
trees in the swamp where the Jordan
flows out of the Kinnereth. Most of
us got malaria after that, and shook
with feber on our beds, but not for
a moment did any of us lose the

feeling of gratitude to destiny
which beats so strongly in us.
We are grateful that we can work
here, and we work in a spirit of
exultation.⁷⁹

One of Rachel's companions at Kinnereth wrote in her
reminiscences that:

In Hannah Meisel's training farm
in Kinnereth, Rachel's life welled
up with all its force. Field work
then meant harvesting, stacking,
transporting, and the beginning of
vegetable gardening. All work was
accompanied by lusty singing...the
people of Kinnereth spent their
free hours singing and dancing.
Thus life passed on the training
farm in Kinnereth by day - work,
at night - in the granary or a
boat on the lake.

When I came to Kinnereth, I already
found Rachel an inhabitant of the
place. We, the 12 girls of Hannah
Meisel's training farm had a separate
kitchen from that of the colony. We
had already achieved a record of
thrift and of good management. One
Friday evening, after the meal, sitting
around our intimate circle we joined
in some light fun and Rachel poured
out her inimitable humor. We entered
our 'large' room, which seems small
to us today, that served to house
all 12 girls (only in summer was it
really big enough, for we slept in
the granary).

And so we entered our room singing
and began to dance. Rachel was
among the first to join. As we
danced we left the room and contin-
ued the length of the ground along
the Jordan in the water - a bridge
over the Jordan had not yet been
built and the water reached above
our knees - until we reached the
dining hall of Dagania....⁸⁰

At Kinnereth young Rachel met A. D. Gordon and the relationship which developed was one of the most meaningful of her life. The depth and scope of their friendship emerge in the series of letters which is preserved from their correspondence. Rachel looked to Gordon for inspiration and comfort. He was, in every sense, her spiritual father. Also during the Kinnereth years Rachel formed other relationships that sustained her later on. At Kinnereth she met Ben Zion Yisraeli who would later organize the project of planting "the garden of Rachel" in her memory. Kinnereth was the scene, too, of her first associations with Berl Katznelson and Zalman Rubashov. Rubashov, who later became Israel's third president under the name of Shazar, was one of Rachel's most enthusiastic admirers and translated numerous of her poems into Yiddish. Rachel dedicated many of her love poems to him. In his autobiography, Shazar tells of seeing Rachel for the first time:

Suddenly high on a hill above the lake the courtyard of Kinnereth revealed itself... . I had not quite reached the fence which surrounded the village when the bar of the gate was removed and the din of the farmyard filled the air. I made out the wonderful sound of a whole choir of birds, directed from a distance by an imperious voice speaking clear, majestic Hebrew. I stood still and then the gate opened and out of the yard issued a flock of white ducks while behind them in a white dress walked a

slim shepherdess, blue-eyed, lithe as a gazelle and lovely as Lake Kinnereth. She held a palm branch in her hand, and with that scepter and her young, warm voice and graceful body - softness and strength combined - she dominated the whole rushing mass. In lyrical Hebrew she led the ducks. She had been completely captured by the magic of Galilee and the marvelous spirit of antiquity, the proud spirit of Israel's childhood that was still to be felt in the desolate mountains across the Lake... Eight years later in a Russian sketch which appeared in the Odessa paper, Yefreiskaya Missl, she wrote, 'We walked over ground that still bears the imprint of our Father Abraham's footsteps. We heard the echo of the word of God to him in ancient days: 'I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless your name'.⁸¹

Lake Kinnereth inspired Rachel, becoming almost a mystical experience for her. One of the Hebrew sketches in the book of her collected poems is a description of an excursion across the Kinnereth:

We got up at dawn. Silence. If we had gotten up one moment earlier we would have taken the night by surprise, becoming familiar with its mysteries and absorbing the secret of its tongue. A first glance toward the Sea. At this hour it is immersed in slumber; it is a dimness in a framework of sky-blue mountains. Even they are sleeping.⁸²

Rachel then describes the shore from which they leave. It is the "known shore on which every stone and pebble was known and recognized." This was where Rachel "would day-dream hour upon hour." Kinnereth becomes the place where

past and present converge. "A treasure of wonder was in those waters; whosoever drank of them even once would surely return to them. Is this not why the children in foreign lands yearn for the still Kinnereth shores? Because here is where their father quenched their thirst?" Rachel's description finally transcends the physical dimension, and one begins to sense A. D. Gordon's influence. Kinnereth is Rachel's symbol for the fusion of man and nature:

The Sea of Kinnereth is not just a pretty view... not just physical nature alone. Rather the fate of a people becoming united with its (Kinnereth's) name. With a thousand eyes it will look from its midst to us; with a thousand lips speaking to the heart.⁸³

The motto of Hannah Meisels' training farm was "to sing with the hoe and to paint on the face of the land." Rachel assumed some of the hardest physical tasks and she was happy.

These halcyon days ended in 1913 when Rachel decided to travel to the University of Toulouse in northern France in order to study agronomy. There were not many in Palestine who were trained in scientific farming. This was where Hannah Meisels had studied; apparently it was felt that the new knowledge would benefit the training farm. Many of her friends did not think it a good idea for her to leave Palestine. In a letter written from Toulouse to Shmuel Dayan, Rachel reveals her patriotic motivation for

studying in France.

What point do you think I had in traveling? Did it not include labor - encompassing labor with all the ties of heart and mind? Has it not meant thinking deeply about all hidden aspects of the world of nature? To blow the breath of the spirit of life on clumps of dirt; to glorify and beautify my native land. I am surely helping her at present and then will surely return in two years. I will move away from all this to the midst of my yearnings and aspirations. Thus have I vowed to the Sea, to the mountains, to my Jordan.⁸⁴

However, Rachel soon found that being away from Kinnereth meant that something vital was missing from her life. To receive solace in her loneliness, Rachel wrote often to friends in Palestine. It was not easy being the only Jew and the only woman in her classes. Her correspondence with A. D. Gordon was perhaps the most supportive. Five of the letters which Gordon sent to her during this period are preserved.⁸⁵ It was his hope that their correspondence "would help both of us to explain many things to ourselves; much of life." But this depended on "how you view this correspondence and the extent to which it interests you."⁸⁶ It interested Rachel very much. Often, she wrote of her loneliness, her feelings of isolation from others. This was a facet of her self-image. For example, Chaya Rotberg relates how Rachel sent a picture of herself with the inscription from "Rachel the Recluse."⁸⁷ Gordon responded

with great empathy and insight to Rachel's sense of isolation. How could she be lonely he wrote once in mock anger; could it be that she was not aware of his vision in which

I saw your soul standing straight
and tall on the brink of the depths
begging for a way in which to rise
above - actually, some way to jump
with all its might. Will you not
pardon me that I approached and
squeezed your hand? Did you not
feel it? Afterward I accompanied
you along your way. Did you notice?
And still you are lonely!⁸⁸

In May, 1914, Gordon wrote about another concern which preyed on Rachel's mind. In spite of what she had written to friends like Dayan, wasn't the time in France a waste after all? Rachel felt stranded and sought comfort. She undoubtedly received consolation from the following:

You wrote that all bridges have been burned. Why? Doesn't any bridge exist between Eretz Yisrael and the rest of the world, between the Jew and all other human beings? Isn't each person a part of all the world and of all life? ... True there are social and natural boundaries, but only as far as the external forms are concerned, not in actual living or relating to the world. No one can take your mode of life from you no matter where you are.

Why shouldn't you live as completely in Europe as you do in Eretz Yisrael? Why do you consider that the time you are spending there is a period of transition, of preparation rather than as a part of your life? ... I told you that in my opinion one's attitude toward life should resemble that toward religion. 'In all thy ways shalt thou know him,' in everything that one does, in every time

and place should he search for life,
for universal life.

You are in Europe now. Are you only there to study? Aren't you there to live also? Isn't the life there rich enough for you? In every time and place one can find the expansive life if he wants it, the noble life if he seeks it. Therefore you must live as if in Eretz Yisrael. You have a goal which can be great (it depends on you) and why should your life there be poorer than in Eretz Yisrael?

These two-and-a-half years if lost will be irretrievably lost. The periods of human life are like geological layers: every layer is the basis for the one above, and though there seems to be no life in the granite layers - how much fire and power is hidden underneath it.

Yes, Rachel, live in Europe, live fully and vitally. Do not be afraid that your aspirations will be desecrated. On the contrary, when you return you will bring with you not only what you have learned in two-and-a half years but something much more important - you'll bring what you have experienced during this period -- two-and-a-half years of life.⁸⁹

Their relationship was deeply personal and some of Gordon's answers imply Rachel's need to be reassured that he thought well of her and that he believed her future to be promising. At one point he was compelled to promise that

My relationship with you has not changed, certainly not for the worse. In general I am not one of those fickle people in that sense - you can be certain of it. Perhaps there has only been

a change with regard to myself? I have always had my private complicated accounts.⁹⁰

Gordon also tried to dampen Rachel's occasional enthusiasm for greatness ("I would not desire to see you as a world-renowned person") because of the suffering which accompanies such status. Yet he did request "great things" from her. Gordon assured his friend that he was already the beneficiary of "the abundant fruits of your suffering."⁹¹ Rachel must have realized that Gordon needed her friendship and understanding quite as much as she relied on his. On one occasion, Rachel wrote that he did not need her letters because her struggles and victories were either too childish or passe for his interest. "I have condemned you to an appropriate punishment for these words," he wrote back,

If I really believed that you thought so, I would have considered these words a great insult. However, I have consoled myself by assuming them only the caprice of affection and have forgiven you. Just imagine yourself in the same situation -- if I treated your soul, your inner world in such a way. Would I have written thusly? Has this been my custom? On the contrary, I have complained often to you that you have withheld revelation of your inner world, internal wars, sufferings, and the joy of your victories from me. If you wish to repent, it will be incumbent upon you to reveal even more of your heart and soul in your letters to me.⁹²

Gordon complained at length to Rachel of his own anxiety, feeling "closed up within myself." He confessed to her the

burdens of being idolized ("You wrote to me once that it would be like this -- people bending on one knee before me"⁹³ The result of this, Gordon felt, was the lack of spontaneity and human warmth which he began to experience in relationships. Gordon trusted Rachel's friendship and sensed a soulmate in the young woman. He wrote that:

You last letter was a help. There is no better way to raise my spirit, no stronger source to destroy my soul's suffering, than your revelation of a suffering heart. As I strengthen myself in the fortress of my friendships I thereby raise myself up. They say that the prisoner cannot release himself from prison. This is really the answer to you who are afraid to bother me.⁹⁴

Theirs was a give-and-take relationship. In this same letter he responded to Rachel's fear that she had no penchant for originality:

I do not agree with your proposition that you have no capacity for originality. I have learned much from your soul and one does not learn much from a soul which lacks this capacity. I think that this (originality) lies essentially beneath your threshold of consciousness. It could be that its journey to consciousness does not seem so fast to you; but do remember that you have already exhibited originality in word and deed. It seems to me that I alluded to this fact in one of our conversations.

It could still be, of course, that the strength of your thought and the construction of your inner world has not yet been completed; that they will not come to fruition

till a later time. This was the case with Mendele Mocher Sefarim; one cannot tell by his earliest compositions what was to come later. One does not see in them the sources at all.

Thus, when it is advised that you study painting, for example, let it be advised not so much for the present as for the future when there might arise the need to paint. Then you will be able to express yourself in this way, having the necessary knowledge and required skill.

I don't mean to raise hopes in you of which I am not certain. Nevertheless, I say to you that there is within you that original talent which, precisely because it is original, has difficulty in finding itself.⁹⁵

In 1910, the first poem which Rachel ever published (in the periodical Ha-Shelo'ach) was dedicated to A. D. Gordon. Its name, "הדפדפה," means "Mood." Rachel felt indebted to Gordon for the courage to affirm life. In that first poem she exclaimed,

But I will not disobey the order of fate,
Ruling fate;
I will go in joy to meet all,
Over all will I give thanks.⁹⁶

Gordon responded to the poem with his own verse in which he urged Rachel to soar to the summit of her ability where she would never be alone.⁹⁷

Then the First World War broke out and many dreams were destroyed. Rachel suddenly found herself barred from entering Palestine. Her contact with family and

friends was suspended, and her feelings of isolation became almost overpowering. Nevertheless, she finished the course in agronomy, receiving her degree, and then thought of joining her brother Jacob in Rome. There she would have studied sculpture, thinking then that it offered even more opportunity for self-expression than did painting. This possibility was ruled out, however, because of her Russian citizenship. Rachel was forced to return to Russia. She moved to Saratov, her native region, where she lived with relatives. Isser Blaustein had remarried by this time and had moved to Palestine. He had been sending money to his daughter, but now most of his property had been confiscated and Rachel was forced to support herself. After trying various types of work, she moved to Odessa where she taught Jewish refugee children from Bransk and Saratov. Rachel pitied these young victims of war, and delighted in speaking to them about Eretz Yisrael. There were no opportunities for her to study art, but in Odessa Rachel did meet various writers. She translated some of the poetry of Bialik, Fichmann, and Schneur into Russian. She also kept a notebook in which she recorded some of her impressions of Palestine and wrote some Russian poetry. Still, the years in the Galut were very difficult psychologically for Rachel, and they were disastrous for her physical well-being. Her health became irreparably broken. In northern Russia she was hospitalized for a while with a

recurrence of her eye ailment. There were periods of hunger and over-exertion. The way years could not have ended too soon for Rachel; in 1919, she sailed on the Russlan, the first ship sailing from Odessa to Palestine. Rachel went directly to Kinnereth. Chaya Rotberg was there and recalls that

...there was no sigh of youth left on her face. She wore an old and faded simple wool dress in the fashion of a gymnasium student. She had grown very thin and stooped over a little; her hair was sparse and faded.⁹⁸

Rachel soon became a member of Kibbutz Degania where, in spite of failing health, she attempted arduous physical labor. It became apparent to the members of the kibbutz, though, that she should be given easier work, so it was decided that she would do what she had been accustomed to: look after the children of Degania. Among the children whom Rachel tended was Shmuel Dayan's son Moshe, Israel's present Minister of Defense. Despite Rachel's less taxing work, her health continued to deteriorate. Finally a doctor was summoned from Tiberias. His diagnosis was immediate: Rachel was suffering from tuberculosis. She was forbidden any more contact with the children, and was requested to leave Degania. The yearning for the Jordan Valley expressed in her later poems reveals how overwhelming this news was for her. In one of her letters to Devorah Dayan, Rachel described that night when the news

was broken to her: "A heavy cloud descended upon me. It strangled me and I wanted to cry out but I could not."⁹⁹ Rachel soon after began writing poems in which death was the constant refrain:

In the night came the harbinger
And sat on my bed;
The bones of his wasted body protruded,
Sunken were the sockets of his eyes

I knew that broken
Was the old bridge
That was between yesterday and tomorrow;
Suspended were the bonds of time.

A lean fist menaced me
I heard a malicious laugh:
'Indeed, let his poem
Be your last poem.'¹⁰⁰

Rachel was uncertain of where to go after leaving Degania. Her father's third wife had kept Isser at a distance from his children and grandchildren, so it would not have been possible to join her in Tel Aviv. Instead, Rachel moved to Petach Tikvah where she continued her studies in agronomy. After a short time, Rachel moved to Jerusalem, staying in a small room built in the courtyard of a relative's home. There she taught at a girls' school for Oriental Jews. For a brief period, Rachel attempted once more to live at Degania, but it simply did not work out. For the remaining years of her life she was compelled to live only in cities. Rachel was very sick, and she was forced to go to Safed where, for many months, she was a patient in the hospital. Her attending physician, Dr. Krieger, remembered that

On first seeing her it was obvious even without a special examination the nature of her sickness. We gave her a corner bed so that she would be as isolated as possible. As a special consideration to her we also acquired a table lamp.... I would talk with her about literature and art. I brought several books including the poetry of Francis James, and she was impressed with the poems of this lyrical French poet and even translated some of his poems into Hebrew.¹⁰¹

Rachel found her relationship with Dr. Krieger cheering during the months of her confinement. They continued to exchange books as their friendship deepened. He perpetually carried one of these books in a pocket of his hospital gown; Rachel wrote a poem during this period which began:

There is a banished town in the Galilee
And a doctor in that town
In a robe with a small pocket...¹⁰²

Rachel wrote other poems in which she came to terms with the fact that the ebullience of her youth was irretrievably lost. In Safed she wrote the poem "I" ("אני"):

I am like this: Silent
Like the waters of a pond
Enjoying the calm of week-days, the eyes of infants,
And the poems of Francis James.

In past days my soul was clad in purple
And on the tops of the mountains
I was like one with the great winds
With the screams of eagles.

In past days ... this was in past days;
The times change
And now --
Behold, I am like this.¹⁰³

Rachel continued to correspond with friends during her hospitalization, often with a gentle humor: "Yesterday Dr. K. himself fell ill; now, if even a doctor can get sick, then this is truly the end of the world."¹⁰⁴ At other times, however, her letters from Safed revealed her basic vulnerability: "They thought up the phrase 'a blunder in the form of a woman' for me."¹⁰⁵ After her release from the hospital, Rachel lived for a short time in Tel Aviv with her brother Jacob, who was one of the leading figures of the city and was responsible for the Beit HaAm cultural building there. However, because he had two small children at home, it became incumbent upon Rachel to find her own room. First, she lived in Beit Peretz on Hayarkon Street, and, finally, in a single room at 4 Bograshov.

These were the tragic years, the years of such acute loneliness, for Rachel was now painfully aware of her impending death. Once she inscribed a photograph showing her lying in bed while a niece read from her poems, "I am about to die and Sarah is reading Psalms before me." At this time, she also wrote to Shifra Yaravuski, a nurse at the Safed hospital:

Shifra, Shifra, why is this world
so filled with conflicts? Why is
a cruel unknown will obstructing
my way? It has already been half
a year since I have been uprooted
from my work and who can tell when
I shall return to it?¹⁰⁶

Yet these were also her most creative years. Most of her

well-known and best poems were written during the last six years of her life. Essentially, Rachel suffered by herself. It was understood that her health was not a subject to be discussed by visitors. The only gifts she accepted from friends were books and flowers; she kept small flowering plants on a stool by her bed, a small, sad echo of Degania. Rachel tenaciously held on to life. Occasionally, when her strength allowed, she appeared at some gathering, meeting, or celebration -- tall and slightly stooped over. In her public appearances, Rachel gained a reputation for never replying to those who, although they knew Hebrew well, refused to address her in that language. Soon, even these infrequent public appearances ceased altogether. Then it was the newspaper which became her constant companion. She wrote poetry and read even more voraciously. "In writing poetry," she said, "I find a bit of consolation. It almost helps transform my life to the life of labor in Kinnereth."¹⁰⁷

Eventually, Rachel required institutional care. In the spring of 1931, she was taken to the BILU Sanatorium for Consumptives in Gedera. These were the last days of her life. Bracha Chabas wrote of

...the sad last visit which we paid her on the day after Passover, 1931. She still possessed a few sparks of joy and spontaneity. For short moments she reclaimed her youth. A sad warmth flowed from her words, from her gestures, her questions

about the seder in Ein Harod, about activities in the land, about friends. The next day I received a short note from her. She begged to be removed from there, from her isolated corner; she requested to be with friends.¹⁰⁸

Rachel knew that the end had really come. She wrote her last poem, "My Dead" (" 'אֵל "),¹⁰⁹ on April 15, the same day that friends came to take her to the Hadassah hospital in Tel Aviv. The following day, April 16, 1931, Rachel died at the age of 41. Her coffin was brought to Kinnereth where she was buried in the famous cemetery there. Her grave, marked by a marble tombstone inscribed "Rachel," lies among the shomrim and chalutzim of the Second Aliyah. On the second anniversary of her death, friends came from all over the country to dedicate a garden planted in her memory. Today, Gan Rachel, composed of hundreds of date palms, stands as a living memorial to this poet whose beloved poems are still sung today.

THE POET AS ARTIST

Only two small volumes of her poetry appeared during Rachel's lifetime. Davar published the first collection of her verse, Aftergrowth (אחרי צמיח), in 1928. The second collection, From Opposite (מצד השני), was brought out in 1930, only a year before her death. A posthumous anthology which her friends called the "Kaddish" volume was published in 1932, shortly after Rachel's death. It was named Nebo (נבו) for the mountain from where Moses overlooked the promised land but could go no farther.

To understand Rachel's poetry we must first appreciate the language barrier she faced. She came to Palestine knowing neither Hebrew nor Yiddish. In this, Rachel differed from most pioneers of the Second Aliyah whose native language was Yiddish. According to Chava Weissman, it was "...in Kinnereth (where) she learned a little Yiddish and spiced her speech with it with particular pleasure."¹¹⁰ For Rachel, the transition was from Russian to Hebrew. As previously mentioned, Rachel's efforts to learn Hebrew were immediate and intense as evidenced by her decision to try not to speak Russian in Palestine. She shared the Second Aliyah enthusiasm for Hebrew as a national symbol binding a disparate people to the ancient Homeland. Her determination to express herself only in Hebrew has caused her to be remembered as a Palestinian poet. But we can only imagine how difficult this transition

in languages must have been for the young Russian immigrant. Suddenly viewing mother Russian as the Galut was certainly psychologically disrupting.

However, it is to Russia where we must turn in order to discern the influences upon Rachel as a writer. There is a notebook of these poems, written between 1915-18. Some of the later poems in this collection were composed after she moved back to Russia. At the outset, one does not recognize any of the characteristic themes or style of Rachel.¹¹¹ There is evidence of experimentation with various poetic forms and an encounter with idioms of different languages. Especially lacking in her first efforts are precision of lyrical expression and compactness of poetic form. However, one can also ascertain a marked development in style as the notebook progresses. These poems indicate Rachel's steadily growing mastery over her craft; in the later Russian poems, the poet frequently achieves the style and themes that characterize her work in Hebrew. For Rachel to have mastered Russian was no small matter. Rachel Katznelson Shazar describes how greatly a language can influence the world view of an artist:

A language has its own atmosphere. It is impossible to learn a language thoroughly without being influenced by its spirit. The history of the people ... which has been lived and felt, the totality of its aspirations and experiences -- is enclosed forever in its language. He who knows

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with Rachel, Akhmatova was born in 1888. She was a leading member of the Acmeist or Atomist school of Russian literature. Her husband, Nikolay Gumilev, was one of the founders of this movement - of which Akhmatova was the chief proponent. It was a rebellion against the Russian Symbolists. Russian Symbolist poetry was, of course, not monolithic in its approach, and included such dissimilar poets as Vyacheslov, Ivanov, and Annensky. Among the different Symbolist poets, however, there was common acceptance of Baudelaire's principle of "correspondences." According to this poetic doctrine, there is a Platonic world which is where the reality of the poet's vision is found. This ideal world "corresponds" with the empirical world. It is the poet who is able to make the ideal world manifest for the reader through the vehicle of the symbol. Consequently, one of the characteristics of Russian Symbolist poetry is an elaborate metaphorical language which conveys the poet's psychic experience of revealing the ideal world. Besides florid language, the Symbolist poetry evinces a pre-occupation with the mystical experience and a language which, at times, becomes rather obscure. By 1912, when the Atomists organized their group, Symbolism was already on the wane. Akhmatova emphasized not the mystical experience but rather a clear view of the life with which she was familiar. Dimitri Obolensky characterizes her early verse as

... mostly love lyrics reading like an intimate diary in which the author's sorrow and happiness are expressed simply and directly. Its style is colloquial and epigrammatic, it avoids metaphors and the melodic intonations beloved by the Symbolists, and is distinguished by brevity and expressive energy.¹¹⁴

He might well have been describing Rachel's poems.

A study of Akhmatova's verse indicates the same use of concrete images which Rachel was to employ in her poems. These specific images, rigorously fitted to their subject, cause the poetry to be limited rather than universal in scope, indicating the Neoclassical tendency of the Atomists. Akhmatova excels at painting word-pictures, a characteristic of much of Rachel's work. Through the word-picture, reality becomes at once simplified and intensified. The following examples from Akhmatova's work illustrate this technique:

The fine, perfumed vapor of cups of coffee
The wintry, heary heat of the stove.¹¹⁵

A fresh and pungent smell of the sea comes
from oysters on a dish of ice.¹¹⁶

I am pruning the lilac bushes of the branches
which have now Shed their blossom; along the
ton of ancient rampart two
Monks have slowly passed.¹¹⁷

"Bezehetsk"

There are white churches there, and
resonant, sparkling ice ...The Russian nights, speckled with diamonds,
are suspended above the ancient
town, and the crescent in the sky
is yellower than honey.¹¹⁸

Akhmatova, like Rachel, writes only of her own realm of experience. The confines of her world are limited as she states in one poem:

I learned to live a simple and
Sensible life
To contemplate the sky and to
Invoke God.¹¹⁹

The melancholy and sense of impending death in Akhmatova's later poetry are strikingly similar to Rachel's later work. For example, one of Akhmatova's poems, translated by Rachel, is called "The Song of our Last Meeting" ("שיר לשירנו האחרון"):

I know of only three walks,
Yet it seems their number was so great
Among the fir trees the wind entreats
We will die together
...My dear one, my dear one, I answered,
Me too; let me die with you.¹²⁰

There are many examples of this theme in her poems:

I flew behind him to the door.
Panting, I cried, "It's a joke,
All that just happened. If you leave,
I'll die!"¹²¹

In many of these late poems Akhmatova employs nature images to help convey the mood of decay and death:

The memory of the sun has faded in my heart,
The grass is yellower,
The wind, in which light flakes are dancing,
Scarcely, scarcely blows.¹²²

Behind the pond the moon stopped
... From here one can see nothing;
But a great sadness
Is foreshadowed. We will be killed.
The owls cried out their agonized prayer
And a cold wind raged in the garden.¹²³

It is in these last poems, too, that we find the theme of

isolation of which Rachel later sang so frequently:

Don't trouble your heart with earthly joys
Don't become attached to your wife or your home
... And never ask anything of Heaven.¹²⁴

X X X

An Iron enclosure
A bed of a pine box
...This bed I'm being prepared for
With prayers and sobs:
Leave not, go -- you're free...
And may God be with you.¹²⁵

Still another parallel between the poetry of Akhmatova and that of Rachel is their use of biblical characters. One of Akhmatova's poems is called "Lot's Wife"¹²⁶ and biblical allusions abound in her works.

It is indisputable, though, that Rachel's poetic vision was unique and deeply rooted in Palestine. It is within this context that we must understand her poetry. Eretz Yisrael is invariably the point of departure for her first poems. Only rarely does Rachel write of her life before going there. In the poem "Partition" (" *Q. n* ") we catch in an autobiographical glimpse the same young Rachel who was to sing of loneliness in later times:

I remember when I was a child
A secret sorrow was my companion
In my cloak of grief I was
Different and set apart from the rest.¹²⁷

In the beginning of her stay in Palestine her life was infused with a joy and gratitude for being part of the land. Her poetry reflected a thanksgiving. Patriotic themes are a tribute to Rachel's adopted country which she loved

so well. The most famous of this genre is the poem
"To My Land"¹²⁸ rendered by Maurice Samuel in his well
known free translation:

No deeds of high courage
No poems of flame
I bring you, my country.
To add to your fame;
By Jordan I planted
A tree in your soil
And I wore out a path
In the field of my toil.

Well knows your daughter
My own motherland
How poor is her tribute
How weak is her hand
But my heart shouts with joy
When the sun shines upon you
And in secret I weep
For the wrong that is done you.

Her love for Eretz Yisrael was profound and inextricably
bound up with her love for nature. In the poem "Spring"
(" ע'רץ ") she declared that,

With the stones of the field is my covenant
I have companions in the secret places of the sea,
And the words of the trees I understand
Like Solomon, cleverest of men.¹²⁹

The covenant was made during her first days in the Land.
In delicate hues, the poet painted word pictures which
portray a young Russian girl becoming initiated into
the life of the Second Aliyah. "Do you remember?" she
wrote in the poem, "On the Threshing Floor" (" /וידעו ע'רץ "),¹³⁰

...we used to sleep
On the top of the stack of corn
Woe on our faces at the time when the first sun beam
Woke us, jesting on the teeth of the pitchfork.

In the poem "Milking at Night" (" ע'רץ ארבע "),¹³¹ the

poet describes the courtyard in the light of the moon when

My hand silently pats
The large horned head
Joining my life with its life
With a thousand threads of mystery.

And a few hours later she arises with the exhilaration of
being "With the Dawn" ("one for ")¹³²

A pitcher of water in the hand; on the shoulder
Hoe, rake and basket
To far away fields, to labor

On my right -- mountains like a guard
The wide expanses of fields before me --
And twenty springs singing within me.

This is my portion till my end approaches
Your standing corn shinin in the sun
and the dust of your roads, O my Land.

These poems praised simple joys. Rachel knew that truth
and beauty need not be complex. Would that every man,
she called out, could share these joys. During her first
days at Degania, Rachel wrote the poem "Sabbath" ("one"):

The shore of the Jordan - full of the splendor of the day,
A fishing boat; I will lie back, I will drink
The drink of peace.

I look upward - the light is so great,
Even with the vision of childhood
There is not the shadow of a cloud.

Now I know: Here -- is everything
The beginning and the end. All who are hungry
Let them come and be satisfied.

The charm of these nature poems is in the immediacy with
which the poet conveys her life. She is never pretentious -
but writes only of what she knows. In the poem "Here on
Earth" ("one for ")¹³³ we are reminded of the
limited scope of these fragile poems:

Not the clouds of the morrow - but today
 which is actually in the hand
Today which is solid, warm, mighty.
To see this one short day
Here, on the face of our Land.

Rachel's descriptions of her one short day are artful and effective. However, as her disease progressed, her vision of these happy times dimmed. She often wondered whether they were simply "idle tales." Rachel wrote "Evening Prayer" (" אֶרְבֵּעַ ")¹³⁴ while in Russia:

Red gleams the western sky as day begins to fail,
And evening settles downward desolate and slow;
In such an hour the heart recalls an idle tale
'A little girl there was, long long ago,'

'A little girl there was, and her will was young--
Lightly she followed the plow from early till late
And far across the field she scattered grain until
Her paths were closed by barricades of fate.'

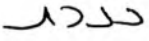
'The barrier stands forever about those joyous days,
From earth's four corners now the ancient storm
 wind wails.'

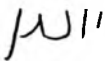
O evening! I am sated with your desolate ways
I will recall no more these idle tales.

(Maurice Samuels)

And again, in the poem, "Perhaps these Things Were Not" (" כִּי אֵין כֵּן ")¹³⁵ Rachel expresses the same frustration at her increasing inability to capture the reality of "rising early to go to the garden" or "loading hay on a wagon during the harvest day." "O my Kinnereth," she cried out, "were you really so or have I dreamed a dream?"

In the two poems above we recognize the spirit of her later work. In the poems about her sickness, Rachel emphasized the duality between the "then" and the "now."


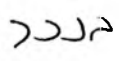
Time often becomes blurred in these poems; yesterday's memories are not always distinguished from today's realities. Yet, one is always aware of the life force of these first poems about her happiness at being part of the national effort of redeeming the Land. At the conclusion of the poem "Kinnereth" ("  "),¹³⁶ Rachel vows never to forget the visions of these happy days. Never to be untrue to the vision of flowers blooming on the hillside during the winter months; the gold of the crocus and the red of the anemone. This was the love of her youth and, indeed, she remembered it well.

Rachel is particularly effective when she writes simply about working with her hands on the Land she loved with such enthusiasm or of her reactions to the landscape of Eretz Yisrael. However, all of her poetry cannot be dismissed as parochial. Frequently, she uses the analogies and images of the Bible to express her own individuality. She sees herself as linked to the generations, and finds no difficulty identifying with Rachel, Job, Elijah, Jonathan, and Michal as vehicles to express her own frustrations, hopes, and commitments. In these poems the warp is the world of the Bible, interwoven with the woof of the poet's own feelings and sensations. For example, in her poem "Jonathan" ("  "),¹³⁷ Rachel refers to the story of David's companion who was condemned to die for disobeying Saul and tasting a bit of honey. She

uses the framework of the biblical narrative as a vehicle to depict her own suffering. "You are doomed to die?" commiserates the poet, "This is my fate, too -- such is the unfairness of life!"

And it is incumbent that you die Jonathan? How woeful
The path of man in the hostile world!
All of us must pay with the price of life
For the little taste of honey.

Irrelevant for Rachel is the outcome of the biblical narrative in which Jonathan is saved from death.

The biblical figure with whom Rachel identified most closely was, naturally, her namesake. The poem "Rachel" ("  ")¹³⁸ is one of her loveliest. With special affection, she sings of the "mother of mothers" whose "shawl waved freely in the desert winds." As Mother Rachel was wedded to the desert, so Rachel the poet uses this as a pretext to proclaim her own love for the wide expanse of nature, "And therefore the house is confining for me. And the city -- strange." It is as though Rachel is seeking to justify her anger at being forced to dwell in the city: "For in my feet are guarded memories of old, of old" -- (so naturally I would detest city life). In more than one poem Rachel expands upon this subject. If there is any doubt about the "Strangeness" ("  ")¹³⁹ of which she writes in the poem by that name, then it is stilled when we see the added postscript: "Tel Aviv." The modern Rachel describes "the dirt of the courtyard, the pernicious noise, the foreign intrusion" in her poem

"In the City" (" >'82 "). Rachel wrote another poem by the same name¹⁴⁰ in which her distaste for the cramped straits of the city was even more outspoken:

So day by day I gain the city habit
With mire in the streets and wearing turmoil round.

The concrete waste with strangers at each corner,
I whisper not, nor murmur 'Galilee.'

Only at nighttime in the hours of sorrow,
Only at night when all is dark and still
I weep, and scratch with the shard of memories
The wound that becomes a scar.

(L. V. Snowman)

Rachel again chooses the biblical Rachel to describe poignantly the steadfastness of her love, even though she knows it is doomed to be unfulfilled. The poem is "Song of Sadness" (" >'81 >'82 ")¹⁴¹:

My last days are already close to me
So near to today are the tears of farewell;
I will wait for you till my life is snuffed out
As Rachel awaited her beloved.

What sort of personal faith did Rachel have as she became ever more conscious of her approaching death? If Rachel's temperament had allowed her to deny reality, then she could have adopted the easy faith of "Elijah" (" >'81c ")¹⁴²:

And he stretched himself out seven times on the boy
The voice of prayer continuing to tear asunder
Then he sat by the nestling mother,
'Look, your son lives.'

But Rachel's faith had to be more sophisticated:

O my dead! He will not come as before
He will not stretch out upon you while his
mouth -- burning;
You are cold. And there is not voice or hearing,
And you will not rise again.

Still, there were times when she envied Job's capacity to
endure suffering without complaint.¹⁴³

My Bible is open to the book of Job.
O miraculous man -- teach us also
To receive the evil as one receives the good
With a blessing to the God who chastens us.

It is pain, itself, which is the key to the poet's faith.
Rachel refuses to suppress its reality. It is pain, for
example, which she sees as the link between her and "Michal"
(" *סוּחַ* "). In this case it is the pain of failing to
achieve a fulfilled love relationship:

Michal, distant sister, I am sad like you
My dowry is like yours -- to despise whom I love.¹⁴⁴

Rachel's image is that of a poet of sorrow. Many of
her poems, certainly the most personal, reveal a young
woman coming to terms with pervasive sadness. Rachel was
deeply touched by grief; when she sings of it, her voice
is compelling and authentic

At dawn in the hospital waking
To an insipid day; and to feel:
The teeth of despair in your heart's flesh
making their meal;
Against life's decay threading the minutes
With weak hand and slow
Again and again --
Of that difficult your; what can the well know?¹⁴⁵

(S. J. Kahn)

- - - - -

O, to awaken and to know
I only dreamed a fearful dream
O my God ... to awaken ... to awaken.¹⁴⁶

- - - - -

Take my hand in both of your good hands
In a brotherly caress.
Both of us know that the preyed-upon ship
Will not reach the shore safely.¹⁴⁷

- - - - -

Would that I had a son, a small son
... Uri I would call him. My Uri
... But still I am embittered like Rachel the Mother
Still I pray like Hannah at Shiloh
Still I wait
For him.¹⁴⁸

- - - - -

Narrow is my world like the world of the ant
I carry my burden like it,
Great and heavy on my frail shoulders.¹⁴⁹

Yet it is through pain that Rachel reaches full maturity.
She finally accepts pain because it is a part of life, and
she is committed to affirming, to saying "yes" to all of
life. The year before her death, Rachel wrote a poem based
on Job 5:18, "For he maketh more and bindeth up. He
woundeth and his hands make whole." In that poem, she re-
fers to a "pure pain, bestowed and made fruitful." As
Rachel is able to see pain as redemptive, her fear becomes
muted:

If you caused pain -- Blessed is the pain
There are clear windows with this pain
My path is at the sides of the roads
And my heart is at ease.¹⁵⁰

- - - - -

I desired pain -- eternal pain
To me it is as the ploughshare which tills me.¹⁵¹
Thus is Rachel's pain, the soil which nourishes her faith.

Despite personal tragedy, Rachel sanctified all of
life. From this vantage point, we can look once again at
her nature poems. Often, we find the poet gratefully
accepting her part in the chain of being:

Yes, it is better that the universe be my soul
... Then I will be strengthened; sanctified
as in the presence of my covenant
With heaven and with the field.¹⁵²

- - - - -

The blossom of the garden -- And I
The bird of the heavens -- and I¹⁵³

The cyclical nature of the world as symbolized by the
"Pear Tree" ("Olek *to* ") reminds the poet that the same
source that brings pain also brings blessing:

This is the conspiracy of spring ...
A man awakens from sleep
And sees a pear tree flowering before his window;
Is shattered and is gone.

You understand: he could not persist
In grieving for his one blossom withered by
Angry autumn's blast--
Since smiling spring was bringing for his
solace
A giant garland of flowers to his very window.¹⁵⁴

(S. Greenberg)

And in Rachel's apostrophe to the eucalyptus tree
("Olc *to* "), she implies that at the end of the
cycle will be victory:

You will visit us again; only a year not to stir;
You will stand, gazing in wonder, looking
At the heights as before, yearning for the boughs
And shining as before and flowering.¹⁵⁵

In "In the Orchard" (" עץ "), Rachel again expresses
her hope:

On the morning of Elul, the world pink and azure
Sheds its condolences
Perhaps to arise; to shake from herself
yesterday's dust
In order to believe in tomorrow,
Perhaps with a humble heart to bless the burden,
To justify the decree.¹⁵⁶

When pain is viewed in the perspective of all of life, then
Rachel's anxiety is stilled:

Are you really the end? The expanse is still
clear,
The mists of life beckon from the distance
The sky is still blue, the grass green,
It is night before the autumn

I will receive the decree. There is no complaint
in my heart--
My sunsets were red, my dawns so pure,
Flowers have smiled on the sides of my path
As I passed.¹⁵⁷

Rachel becomes capable of accepting the decree of death
"without rebellion and without wrath."¹⁵⁸ Finally, comes
evidence that the poet has reached an even higher stage
in her acceptance of life. At last, Rachel is able to
trust her fellow man. As we see in some earlier poems,
it was not always so:

Was I a creature among the creatures of the
field?
In the distant days? In one of my reincarnations?
And since then have I had a sisterly affinity
to creatures
And a dread of men, the oppressor?¹⁵⁹

- - - - -
O how like a star to a star in the sky
Is man to man on the face of the earth¹⁶⁰

- - - - -
A closed garden. No passage or access;
A closed garden -- is man.¹⁶¹

But Rachel does manage to overcome her isolation and to ask
for help from her fellow:

Be for me a narrow bridge over the abyss of grief;
Over the grief of my days¹⁶²

Rachel's final victory: she is able to trust man to enter
the "garden" of her heart:

You are planted in my garden,
In my concealed garden -- in my heart
We are entwined in your boughs
And your roots are sunk deep in me

And from morning until evening
It will not be soothed; the garden will
not be calmed;
This is because you are in it; you are in it
With a thousand of your jubilant birds.¹⁶³

Rachel once wrote that "I know only to tell of myself"¹⁶⁴
and this is what she did. Yet this is enough. Reading her
poetry is like looking at a miniature painting. We are
only sorry that her years did not permit the scope of a
larger landscape.

FOOTNOTES

11. 30 , סוף ארץ.
12. 17 , סוף ארץ , " ? אנדרג "
13. A. Bein, The Return to the Soil, p. 4.
14. M. Louvish, Challenge of Israel, p. 49.
15. Bein, op. cit., p. 5.
16. R. Ben Zvi, Coming Home, p. 11.
17. D. Ben-Gurion, "First Ones," in: Israel Government Year Book, p. 62.
18. Bein, op. cit., p. 60.
19. H. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, p. 248.
20. C. N. Bialik, "Burden of Nemirov," in: S. Zemach, An Introduction to Labor Settlement, p. 10.
21. The Jewish Frontier, Feb., 1955, p. 8.
22. Z. Shazar, Morning Stars, pp. 152 ff.
23. Louvish, op. cit., p. 56.
24. A. Yisraeli, The Kvutza: Essays on the Collective Settlements, p. 6.
25. A. Ruppin, "Twenty-Five Years in Palestine," in: Weisgal, ed., Theodor Herzl: A Memorial, p. 195.
26. Zemach, op. cit., p. 19.
27. Ibid., p. 21.
28. A. A. Yaari, The Goodly Heritage, p. 250
29. S. Dayan, The Growth of the Collective Settlement, p. 13.
30. The Jerusalem Post, December 24, 1954, p. 5.
31. Bein, op. cit., p. 53.
32. The Second Aliyah: An Anthology, p. 25ff. A photostatic copy of the original Hebrew text can be found in: א'רץ א'רץ , pp. 65 ff.

23. Zemach, op. cit., p. 32.
24. The Jerusalem Post, op. cit.
25. Ben-Gurion, op. cit., p. 64.
26. Yaari, op. cit., p. 284.
27. Ibid., p. 285.
28. M. Shochot, "In the Beginning," in: The Second Aliyah: An Anthology, p. 21.
29. Zemach, op. cit., p. 60.
30. The Jerusalem Post, op. cit.
31. The Second Aliyah: An Anthology, p. 15.
32. Ibid., p. 37.
33. Louvish, op. cit., p. 57.
34. Yaari, op. cit., p. 286.
35. Ruppin, op. cit., p. 199.
36. Bein, op. cit., p. 54.
37. Shochot, op. cit., p. 23.
38. Bein, op. cit., p. 257.
39. Ruppin, op. cit., p. 200.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Yaari, op. cit., p. 289.
43. J. Baratz, Degania, p. 8.
44. M. Samuel, Harvest in the Desert, p. 119.
45. The Jerusalem Post, op. cit.
46. Yaari, op. cit., p. 274.
47. Ibid., p. 276.
48. Ibid., p. 269.

49. Biographical details are from: J. Aaronovitch and S. Dayan, A. D. Gordon: Two Biographical Sketches, passim.
50. I am indebted to the writings of S. H. Bergman in viewing A. D. Gordon as a religious thinker; see the essay; " האדם והדת " in: האדם והדת.
51. Aaronovitch and Dayan, op. cit., p. 18.
52. Ibid., p. 19.
53. Burnce, trans., A. D. Gordon--Selected Essays, p. 284.
54. Gordonia, May-June 1936, p. 16.
55. quoted in: H. Rose, A. D. Gordon, p. 90.
56. quoted in: R. Wallenrod, The Literature of Modern Israel, p. 102.
57. Ibid., p. 101.
58. Ibid.
59. Burnce, op. cit., p. 106.
60. N. Rotenstreich, "Judaism in the Thought of A. D. Gordon," in: The Reconstructionist, June 10, 1960, p. 15.
61. Gordonia, op. cit., p. 17.
62. Rose, op. cit., p. 92.
63. Ibid., p. 41.
64. Aaronovitch and Dayan, op. cit., p. 6.
65. Ibid., p. 8.
66. Rose, op. cit., p. 48.
67. Theodore Herzl: A Memorial, op. cit., p. 209.
68. No biographical material is available in English except for a few details introducing poems in anthologies. I have relied on the biography by Bracha Habas in האדם והדת, p. 187 ff; and U. Millstein, " האדם והדת " in: האדם והדת, December 27, 1968.

69. Sachar, op. cit., p. 86.
70. Millstein, op. cit., p. 14.
71. Ibid.
72. כעס ופערסונל p. 579.
73. Ibid.
74. ג, חת ושראף
75. ג, חת ושראף
76. Ben Zvi, op. cit., p. 147.
77. שיר חת, ג
78. Ruppin, op. cit., p. 208. Two other accounts by other participants in the training farm, including Ya'el Gordon, A. D. Gordon's daughter, are found in: כעס ופערסונל.
a. "חפ' ביבול של אחת פ' ראשון-א" pp. 545 ff.
b. "ראשית פ' שגור" p. 579.
79. Ben Zvi, op. cit., p. 148.
80. ג, חת ושראף
81. Shazar, op. cit., pp. 215 ff.
82. שיר חת, ג
83. Ibid.
84. Millstein, op. cit., p. 16.
85. " חת ושראף, in חת ושראף, pp. 50 ff.
86. Ibid., p. 50.
87. " זכרון... in חת ושראף, p. 70.
88. " חמש חברים, in op. cit., p. 50.
(חברים א.ד. גורדון)
89. Ibid., p. 50.
90. Ibid., p. 50.
91. Ibid., p. 60.

92. Ibid., p. 68 .
93. Ibid., p. 68 .
94. Ibid., p. 71 .
95. Ibid., p. 72 .
96. שירי רחל, p. 7 .
97. Ibid., p. 68 .
98. רחל ושיריה, op. cit., p. 28.
99. Millstein, op. cit., p. 18.
100. שירי רחל, p. 68 .
101. Millstein, op. cit., p. 18.
102. "מחברותי רחל" in:
רחל ושיריה, p. 48 .
103. שירי רחל, p. 68 .
104. רחל ושיריה, op. cit.
105. Ibid.
106. Millstein, op. cit.
107. Ibid.
108. שירי רחל, p. 48 .
109. Ibid., 207
110. רחל ושיריה, op. cit.
111. "שירי רחל" in:
רחל ושיריה, p. 48 .
112. The Ploughman, p. 298 ff.
113. Ibid.
114. The Penguin Book of Russian Verse, p. xlv.
115. Anna Akhmatova: Poesies, p. 33.
116. The Penguin Book of Russian Verse, p. 315.

117. Ibid., p. 318.
118. Ibid., p. 321.
119. Poesies, op. cit., p. 22.
120. Ibid, p. 24 .
121. Poesies, op. cit., p. 13.
122. Ibid., p. 14.
123. Ibid., p. 42.
124. Ibid., p. 43.
125. Ibid., p. 36.
126. Russians: Then and Now, p. 252.
127. הנה ארץ, op. cit., p. 47 .
128. Ibid., p. 387 .
129. Ibid., p. 10 .
130. Ibid., p. 387 .
131. Ibid., p. 107 .
132. Ibid., p. 187 .
133. Ibid., p. 107 .
134. Ibid., p. 13 .
135. Ibid., p. 68 .
136. Ibid., p. 20 .
137. Ibid., p. 43 .
138. Ibid., p. 63 .
139. Ibid., p. 0 .
140. Ibid., p. 10 .
141. Ibid., p. 24 .
142. Ibid., p. 20 .

143. Ibid., p. ၁၈၇.
144. Ibid., p. ၈ .
145. Ibid., p. ၃၄ .
146. Ibid., p. ၈၁ .
147. Ibid., p. ၈၆ .
148. Ibid., p. ၃၃ .
149. Ibid., p. ၈၅ .
150. Ibid., p. ၈၃ .
151. Ibid., p. ၆၁၇.
152. Ibid., p. ၃၁ .
153. Ibid., p. ၅၁၇ .
154. Ibid., p. ၈ .
155. Ibid., p. ၅၇ .
156. Ibid., p. ၅' .
157. Ibid., p. ၃' .
158. Ibid., p. ၈၁ .
159. Ibid., p. ၆၃ .
160. Ibid., p. ၆၁ .
161. Ibid., p. ၂၅ .
162. Ibid., p. ၁၁ .
163. Ibid., p. ၈၆၇ .
164. Ibid., p. ၈၁၇ .

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