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Report on the Master of Sacred Music Written Project Submitted by

Fran Lawson

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Investiture

The Poetry of Rachel

Fran Lawson's study of the poetry of Rachel Bluvstein is distinguished in its being a close reading - and, occasionally, a first translation into English - of some of this poetry's most moving words. Ms. Lawson chose poems for which she found some unusually beautiful musical settings. The loveliness of these renditions served very well, in this case, as an indication of the deep pathos inherent in these verses of lyrics. In the case of such poems as "The Minder," I found myself engaged for the first time in reading a poem of Rachel which I had previously overlooked and which may be overlooked by Hebrew literary scholars generally.

Ms. Lawson made very effort to explore secondary sources in Hebrew dealing with Rachel's poetry. I found her to be undaunted by even highly technical language, and although she did not exhaust every point, her good linguistic intuition helped her to understand the kernel of significance in many a paper of literary and academic Hebrew. The translations which she produced, after some consultation with me, I felt were very good. She also had the opportunity last spring to discuss the poetry of Rachel with our visiting scholar, Yizhar Smilansky, and this added a unique dimension to her analysis.

The strength of the thesis is in the close, personal, reading of the poems. There is, of course, much more that could have been done, but Fran did not look for English language short cuts to produce a surface impression of comprehensiveness. (At times, the thesis might have gained from such a college term paper style of writing.) I remain impressed with the finished product, which should be examined together with her very fine recital and recital notes.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dr. Stanley Nash

May 14, 1990

THE POETRY OF RACHEL  
by  
Frances R. Lawson

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

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I appreciate the help of Nitza Amit Silins who helped with some of the translations and gave me the perspective of a native Israeli about the poems of Rachel.

I would like to dedicate this project to my sons, Jay and Michael Wampold who have been a wonderful source of support to me in the course of my graduate studies.

## THE POETRY OF RACHEL

Rachel is one of the most popular poets in modern Hebrew literature. Her poems are an integral part of Israeli Folk Culture. Many Israelis can quote by heart from the poems of this remarkable woman whose life and work are intertwined in the popular imagination. When Naomi Shemer, Israel's best known popular song-composer, characterizes a typical room in a young kibbutz, she mentions the volume of Rachel's collected poems on the book shelf.<sup>1</sup> Her poetry is exquisitely simple and spans a range of subjects and depth of emotion. It is so personal that it is difficult to separate the poem from the poet. The elegance and rhythmic movement of the poems have inspired numerous musical compositions.

Not only is Rachel's poetry central to the literary culture of Israel but the songs composed to these poetic texts have become some of Israel's best known folksongs. The accessibility and great popularity of the poems, as well as the way they live in the songs of the people, has formed the basis for this project. The spectrum of music available for performance covers a wide range from the simplest folk song to art songs and ensemble works.

An important observation about the poems of Rachel is that they were the first Hebrew poems to be written in a conversational style.<sup>2</sup> They have an historical significance

as an important bridge between the generation of Bialik and Tchernichovsky and the middle generation of U.Z. Greenberg, A. Shlonsky, N. Alterman, and Leah Goldberg.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of Rachel's widespread popularity, Rachel was not taken seriously enough by her critics.<sup>4</sup> Most thought that the simple line of her poems needed little elucidation. Reuven Kritz devoted an entire book to the analysis of Rachel's poetry.<sup>5</sup> In his book, he insists that Rachel's poems merited an interpretive effort, since they possess a complex structure with multi-dimensional meaning.

The simplicity of the line was inspired by a style of poetry found in the work of Anna Akhmatova a well known Russian poet. Akhmatova was a leader of the Acmeist movement, which had certain affinities to the Anglo-American Imagists. In 1910 the poet M. Kuzmin, in an essay "Concerning Beautiful Clarity," urged young poets to cultivate "accuracy, conciseness, and economy of language" in reaction against "the mysticism and stylistic vagueness of the Symbolists"<sup>6</sup> Rachel like Akhmatova was part of this reaction. Another influence on Rachel was the French poet Francis Jammes. Her translations of both Akhmatova and Jammes are included in the volume of her poems entitled Shirat Rachel published by Davar in Tel Aviv.

Much of the Jewish intelligentsia in Poltava were influenced by V.G. Korolenko, a Russian writer exiled in northern Russia who wrote with great optimism and bridged

the writing of Turgenev and Chekhov. Rachel was also influenced by Korolenko as she commenced to write poems in Russian at the age of fifteen.<sup>7</sup>

Rachel's Hebrew poetry, emerged from a period in Palestinian history, 1905-1914, known as the Second Aliyah. Sizable groups of immigrants made their way into Palestine from Europe. These pioneers developed various Socialist Zionist philosophies which became the dominant ideology in the reconstructed homeland. Their philosophy was a kind of religion based on a socialist nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

Rachel Bluwstein was born to Sofia and Esar Leib Bluwstein on September 20, 1890 in Saratova, on the Volga River in Northern Russia. Rachel's mother, Sofia, was the daughter of a Rabbi and raised her children in an observant Jewish home. Rachel's father had served in the army of Czar Nicholas and later worked as a teacher.

Shortly after her birth the family moved to Poltava where Rachel spent her early childhood and attended school. Hebrew was taught in the home to enable the children to understand their prayers, which their mother insisted would keep their hearts pure.<sup>9</sup>

Rachel's sister Shoshanah described their early days in Russia as follows: "Mother, a rabbi's daughter, was not only orthodox in her observance but her heart was filled with a simple, innocent faith, and in this spirit she reared her children. We studied in an elementary Hebrew

school where the principal was the father of Ber Borochov," who was one of the first leaders of the Poalei Zion, Workers of Zion, a Zionist party. They later attended a Russian gymnasium, and at the age of twelve or thirteen, they became greatly influenced by their older brother, who brought home the message of Zionism.<sup>10</sup>

Sofia, Rachel's mother, died when she was eight.<sup>11</sup> In the poem "Chayitz", "Barrier", Rachel describes what it was like to wear mourning garments which caused her to appear different from the other children. She compares the sadness of her youth to her infirm state. Her father remarried a woman who became the hated stepmother and distanced Eesar Leib from his children.<sup>12</sup>

As teenagers, Rachel and Shoshanah moved to Kiev to live with an older sister Liza. Rachel studied painting in Kiev and dreamed of becoming a painter. In her dreams she envisioned living in Eretz Yisrael as she was greatly influenced by her older brother who was already living in Palestine.

In 1909 the two sisters moved to Odessa where they joined other young Jewish students and boarded a ship to Palestine. Their intent had been to visit Palestine. Rachel planned to study art at the Bezalel Art School and Shoshanah hoped to study piano before returning to Russia to complete their academic studies.



Shoshana wrote: "With the first mouthful of Palestinian air, we understood why we had come. We immediately cut the ties with the Diaspora, realizing that it was impossible to go back. We started to learn Hebrew and wanted to be born again."<sup>13</sup> Shoshanah and her sister rented a room in Rechovot and began to learn Hebrew. They made a vow not to speak Russian as they were intent on being reborn in their new homeland and wanted desperately to be able to speak Hebrew fluently.<sup>14</sup>

Another sister, Bat Sheva, joined Rachel and Shoshanah in Rechovot after studying in a music Conservatory in Germany. Their father sent them enough money to buy a piano. Soon, their room became the popular meeting spot and cultural center for people from all over the Moshav, and they would gather in the evening to sing and listen to Bat Sheva play the piano.

In 1911 in Rechovot, Rachel met Zalman Shazar, who later became the third President of the State of Israel. Shazar was a writer and intellectual educated in Europe. They developed a very close friendship which continued throughout the poet's life. He was her friend, critic and admirer. He translated many of her poems into Yiddish and many of her poems are dedicated to him.<sup>15</sup>

After becoming acclimated to the language and the country, Rachel decided to study agriculture. She attended an agricultural school for girls near the Sea of Galilee which



had been started by Channah Meisel. Eventually, Rachel joined a moshav in Degania, a settlement in the Galilee and became a true pioneer. These were probably the happiest days of Rachel's life. The memories of her days spent working in the fields in the Jordan Valley fill the lines of many of her poems. It was here near the Kinneret that Rachel found her true purpose in life and was reborn.<sup>16</sup>

Rachel met A.D. Gordon in Degania. Gordon was the foremost Zionist philosopher of the Second Aliyah. His philosophy influenced the members of this group of pioneers. He believed that only by returning to the soil and the hard work of making the land of his ancestors rich and fertile would the Jewish people actually be redeemed. His philosophy was filled with a certain mysticism which greatly influenced Rachel and her poetry.<sup>17</sup> Her very first Hebrew poem Halach Nefesh "Mood" was dedicated to Gordon.<sup>18</sup>

In 1913 Rachel left Degania for Toulouse, France to improve her knowledge of agriculture and to study agronomy. When her studies were completed she was ready to return to her beloved Kinneret to implement her new skills, but her plans were thwarted by the outbreak of the first World War. Because she had a Russian passport, she was not allowed to remain in France and was also not allowed to return to Palestine. For a short time she joined her brother in Rome and studied sculpture. She then returned to her native Rus-

sia where she lived with family and worked with refugee children. It was during her six years in Russia that she contracted tuberculosis.

In 1919 in the aftermath of World War I Rachel was allowed to return to her beloved new home in Palestine. She returned to Degania to the work she had left behind, though her ill health prevented her from performing the difficult labor necessary on the Kibbutz. She wished to remain on the Kibbutz and tried to remain useful through childcare duties. This, too, became impossible because she was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was contagious to the children in her care. Rachel had no choice but to leave her happiest of homes.

Thus the last ten years of the poet's life began. She spent a short time in Jerusalem, some time in the hospital in Safed and finally settled in a room in Tel-Aviv. It was in this room that the majority of her poems were written. Two volumes of Rachel's poems were published during her lifetime and the last volume was published posthumously. Davar the newspaper in Tel Aviv published her books of poetry. The first collection "Safiach" appeared in 1925. The title poem of her first collection of poems entitled "Safiach" ("Aftergrowth") expresses her joy for the poetry she was able to create.

In 1930 "Meneged" "From Afar" was published and the posthumous volume, "Nebo" came in 1932. In 1946 Davar published Rachel Veshirata which was a collection of essays,

memoirs and memorial tributes which was revised and expanded in 1971. Her collected poems, Shirei Rachel known as the "slender white volume" since it first appeared in a white hard cover, is now in its twenty sixth edition.<sup>19</sup>

A collection of children's poems entitled Babayit U'vachutz had originally appeared in 1930. According to Uriel Ofek<sup>20</sup> the poems were rediscovered in 1974 and republished much to everyone's surprise. Most of Rachel's friends had no knowledge of this poetry. After inquiring, Ofek discovered that some friends had given Rachel illustrations upon which to base her children's poems in order to help her earn some money. Rachel was not pleased with the project and made the publisher promise it would not be reprinted. The rediscovery of these poems was an unexpected delight to everyone. The poems are charming as in Rachel's style she uses alliteration to imitate the sounds of cats, bees, birds, donkeys, and other animals as she describes simple settings in daily life.<sup>21</sup>

Very little is known about the personal life of Rachel. Good friends, when questioned, commented that she was a free spirit and had many friends and probably many lovers, but they didn't know for sure.<sup>22</sup> Many of her poems contain an expression of jealousy, and unrequited love.

In the poem "Ishto" ("His Wife") Rachel writes: "She turns and calls him by name, as always; but I cannot trust my voice; speech betrays." She continues: "Shining securely

on her hand, she wears a ring of gold; but my fetters of iron are stronger--sevenfold".<sup>23</sup> There has been speculation that "his wife" was the wife of Zalman Shazar. We know that Shazar and Rachel were extremely close as mentioned earlier. He was fond of her poems and translated many of them into Yiddish. Biographers have gleaned information from Shazar and from his collection of Rachel's work. Their friendship was formed in 1911. Rachel left Palestine in 1913 and they didn't see each other again until Rachel returned after the War in 1920. By then Zalman Shazar had married Rachel Katzenelson. Their close bond of friendship is widely known, but anything else is conjecture. Any conclusions are based on speculation.

The poems "Zemer" ("Song") and "Hatishma Koli" ("Do You Hear My Voice"), portray a sadness and frustration of unrequited love. In a book entitled L'choh V'alecha by Benjamin Hachlili,<sup>24</sup> he speaks of finding love letters written in Russian by a Michael Bernstein to Rachel between the years of 1915 and 1923. According to Hachlili, Rachel met Bernstein in Toulouse, France and it was there that they developed a deep and intimate relationship. The letters indicate that they had a deep and stormy relationship and Bernstein wrote passionately of his inability to go on without her, his love for her, and spoke of being tormented. They both lived in Russia after 1915 and it was known that Bernstein was a teacher in Leningrad. From the

letters it appears that the affair was tumultuous and must have ended as Rachel returned to Palestine without him, though his letters to her are dated to 1923.<sup>25</sup> Hachlili points out that Rachel wrote poems in Russian around 1915-1916 that resemble the poem in Hebrew, "Hatishma Koli". Perhaps they are the response to his letters as she wrote; "...Ani itach r'choki sheli, itach ani."<sup>26</sup> "I am with you my distant one, with you am I".<sup>27</sup> Hachlili points out the similarities in the poem, translated from the Russian into Hebrew to the famous Hebrew poem, Hatishma Koli. It is interesting to note that in an article published by Reuven Kritz<sup>28</sup>, he comments that "some of Rachel's poems dealing with love appeared under the pseudonym Michael Bernstein, which made critics speculate it was the name of one of her real or imaginary lovers." In light of the discoveries of Benjamin Hachlili we know that Michael Bernstein really existed and was involved with Rachel.

The personal nature of the poems make it difficult to separate the poems from the life of the poet and leave many wondering for whom or to whom the poems were written. Consequently, there is a motivation amongst some to search for more biographical information to explain the "who" in many of the poems. The themes are universal and written so simply and personally that it is easy for the reader to identify with their contents. The reader's personal reaction to the poem is in the final analysis all that is important.



It was known that Rachel was a beautiful and talented woman and though we know she never married and did not have children, she had a life filled with important relationships and events. Her sadness about not having children appears in her poem "Akara" ("Barren") which is discussed in depth later in this work.

The poems that follow were selected for analysis because they form the basis for the recital that is connected with this paper. The musical compositions of these poems will be presented. This writer created translations for those poems for which English translations could not be found. It is hoped that the elucidation of this poetry will demonstrate the complexities of these poems and the multifaceted nature of their author.

The translations from Hebrew to English are unsatisfying since the use of the Hebrew language is intrinsic to the rhythm and sounds as well as the expression of the poetry. The use of alliteration in Hebrew cannot be conveyed in English. The English translations, therefore serve as a means for the reader to begin to understand the poems and to appreciate the poetic genius of Rachel. One characteristic of Rachel was to transcend her own world by using images and situations from the bible. An attempt has been made to point out the biblical references as they occur throughout the poetry.

Most of the musical compositions used in the recital were composed by Israeli composers. Of course, the intrinsic value of the Hebrew language was utilized and demonstrated in the compositions. The settings selected seemed to be extremely appropriate to the texts.

The order of poems that follow is based on their appearance in the collection entitled Shirei Rachel published by Davar in Tel Aviv.



BALAILA BA HAMEVASER

At night came the messenger  
 He sat upon my bed  
 His fleshless bones protruded  
 From sunken eye sockets

Then I knew  
 The ancient bridge was breached  
 Between yesterday and tomorrow  
 The hands of time were suspended

He shook a skinny fist at me  
 Malicious laughter pealing  
 "Lo, in truth this song you sing  
 Shall be your very last."

Carol Diamant

The Angel of Death is often portrayed in Jewish tradition. The messenger in Rachel's poem can be none other than the "מלאך המוות" the "angel of death".

Rachel knew that she was dying. The poem is either a reflection of her imagination or the retelling of a dream. It was her own poetic, creative way of dealing with the inevitable, the end. Perhaps this was her image of doom. She describes death as "the breach of an ancient bridge between yesterday and tomorrow." She goes on to say "the hands of time were suspended," meaning that in death time is suspended: there is no past, present or future.

The poem ends: "Lo, in truth this song you sing Shall be your very last." The poet knows that death will also bring an end to the writing of poetry.

Though written in the last ten years of her life, this poem was not by any means Rachel's last poem. It was included in the first group of poems published entitled "Safiach", "Aftergrowth." Thus it becomes somewhat evident that the poet had a dream or a vision of a visit from the Angel of Death, as she contemplated her own demise.

SAFIACH

Aftergrowth

Yes, I did not plow, I did not sow.  
I did not pray for the rain.  
Suddenly, see now, my fields have sprouted,  
In place of thorn, sun blessed grain.

It is the aftergrowth, provender of the old,  
Grains of delight harvested long ago?  
They have remembered me in days of calamity,  
Burst forth the secret way in me to grow.

Burgeon, flourish, plains of wonder,  
Burgeon, flourish, ripen in haste!  
I remember the words of comfort:  
Aftergrowth and aftergrowth, you shall eat.  
Ruth Finer Mintz

The poem "ח'ג ע" translated, aftergrowth has its basis  
in biblical texts.

It says in Leviticus 25:5 "You shall not reap the  
aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your  
untrimmed vines; it shall be a year of complete rest for  
the land."<sup>29</sup> The reference is to the ancient law of the  
Sabbatical year for the land.

There are three references in the Bible to the Sabbati-  
cal year, each slightly different in terms of what food is  
available and who may eat it. The only food available will  
be the grain that sprouts from seed dropped during the pre-  
vious harvest and the untended vines and fruit trees that

continue to bear.<sup>30</sup> In Exodus 23:11 it seems forbidden for the owner of the land to use the products of the aftergrowth during the Sabbatical year. He must leave them to the poor and to foraging beasts. In Leviticus 25:6-7 the farmer is permitted to share the aftergrowth with all others.<sup>31</sup> The third reference is in Dueteronomy 15:1-10 dealing with cancellation of outstanding debts during the Sabbatical year.

In the second Kings:19:29 In a message from God to Hezekiah, "And this is the sign for you; This year you eat what grows of itself, and the next year what springs from that; and in the third year, sow and reap, and plant vineyards and eat their fruit."<sup>32</sup> A reference is made to the Jubilee year which comes every 50 years. The land must lie fallow for two years. The issue of the sabbatical year for the land is discussed extensively in rabinnic sources.

Understanding the biblical meaning of aftergrowth is extremely important when discussing the content of this poem. In brief, the aftergrowth is the grain that grows during the Sabbatical year when no planting is allowed. That growth results from the seed dropped in the previous years harvest.

In Sholom Kahn's article about Rachel he says that Rachel's use of the term aftergrowth referred to her poems. Her saying; "that which had risen up in (her), I know not how," gives one the idea that the poetry springs from ear-

lier experience rather than from the present. He also suggests that she was also referring to the national experience of a remnant taking root again on ancestral soil."<sup>33</sup>

The poem begins with a double negative like the poem "El Artzi"; "I haven't plowed, nor did I plant, and I didn't pray for dew." and then the positives; "And suddenly! look! The fields are giving forth with sun blessed grain in place of thorns."

The second verse attributes this miracle to the aftergrowth. Rachel's use of the word pekahduni פִּקְחָדֻנִי in the second verse is of interest here. The word implies being remembered in a very unusual way. This is the same word used in Genesis 20:1 וַיִּפְקֹחַדֵּן וַיִּפְקֹחַדֵּן "The Lord took note of Sarah as He had promised, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken."<sup>34</sup> God remembered Sarah and gave her a son. Perhaps Rachel feels the ability to write poetry is a reward or gift from God.

There is a parallel drawn here between the aftergrowth of grain and the poems that spring from within. She says in the second verse "grains of delight harvested long ago, they have remembered me in my days of despair." Perhaps She is saying that the poetry which springs from past experience brings great comfort to her. In the final verse she remembers the words of comfort, and ends with the phrase,

"aftergrowth is what you shall eat." Here is the idea that the poems will offer some form of spiritual nourishment to those who read them.

The biblical references, the metaphors, parallels, and the language used in this poem provide the reader with endless possibilities for analysis and deeper meaning.

ZEMER NUGEH

Will you hear my voice, my distant one  
Will you hear my voice, wherever you are  
A voice calling strongly, a voice filled with tears  
Blessing you forever and ever.

This world is great and its many paths  
Meet for a moment, part for ever.  
Man seeks, but his feet stumble.  
He cannot find what he has lost.

Perhaps my last days are close  
The day of parting tears is nigh  
I shall wait for you till the end of my life.  
As Rachel awaited her beloved.

translator unknown

Like many of Rachel's poems, the first reading of the poem seems very simple and straightforward. However, upon rereading many ideas and possibilities come to mind.

The first stanza seems to imply unrequited love. "Can you hear my voice wherever you are, I call to you with a strong voice and sometimes I cry softly, blessing you forever." The second verse is a metaphor for the chance meetings that occur in life. "The world is great and its many paths meet for a moment", reminds one of the chance meetings that occur between lovers. When the moment has passed the lovers may continue to search forever for the opportunity to recapture that glorious and yet fleeting



moment. " Man continues to search for that which he cannot find", that brief and glorious moment of happiness which is difficult to find or to sustain.

In the final verse the end of life and, I suppose, the end of the quest seems imminent and yet there is still hope. She says, "I will wait for you until the end of my days," and then compares herself to the biblical Rachel who waited for a long time for her beloved Jacob saying "as Rachel waited for her beloved."

Between the lines one can read of existential loneliness and the wish and need to pursue the love that will end the loneliness. The struggle is a universal one, a theme with which any reader can identify.

The poem is evenly metered with four beats to each line.

Hatishmah Koli, R'choki sheli and this metrical pattern continues throughout the poem until the last line which has only three beats; Ka-chakot Rachel l'dodah." According to Rueven Kritz<sup>35</sup> and other writers, in the original version the last line of the poems read " ka-asher chikta Rachel l'dodah" " כַּאֲשֶׁר חִיקְתָּ רַחֵל לְדוֹדָהּ "as Solveig waited for her lover". Solveig was a character in an Ibsen novel "Pyr Gynt", and it ended with her waiting for her lover, Pyr Gynt. It is known that Ibsen was an extremely popular writer at the turn of the Century and many literary people were influenced by the writing of Ibsen.<sup>36</sup>

We don't know why Rachel changed the ending of the poem though it appears that the change in meter was used to emphasize the change in the poem. Perhaps it was a desire on her part to give the poem a Jewish theme by making the reference to Rachel in the Bible as she did in her poem "Rachel" where she compares her self to the Biblical character, where she uses the phrase; "her blood runs in mine." She seems to identify strongly with the pain and longing present in the Rachel who desperately wanted the love of Jacob and to bear his children.<sup>37</sup>

Rachel also uses the phrase "ode achakeh lo", "I will wait for him" in her poem, "Akara," as she compares herself to the biblical characters Hanna and Rachel who both complained and cried out to God to give them a child and their prayers were answered. The poet seems to find comfort in the stories of the Bible as they provide her with great hope. Like the biblical characters who continued to pray to God and never gave up hope, her poems indicate that she will never give up hope and never stop waiting for her prayers to be answered.

Maimonides used the phrase, "אֲנִי מְחַכֵּה לְךָ יְיָ" in kol zeh achake lo, "even with all this I will wait for him" in the Ani Maamin, as he referred to the Jewish people awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. Possibly, Maimonides served as the inspiration for the use of "achake l'choh" I

will continue to wait for you" in Zemer Nugeh and " Ode  
achake lo," I will continue to wait for him" in the poem  
Akara.

EL ARTZIMy Motherland

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.  
 Maurice Samuel

This is a key poem in Rachel's collection of poems. It is a hallmark poem of the Second Aliya as it confirms their obsession with the land. For Rachel, making Aliya to Israel was the fulfillment of a great dream. Having grown up in Russia, Rachel had to face a difficult adjustment to a new landscape and new way of life. The work was back breaking, the landscape was relentless as she and other pioneers struggled to create gardens in the desert. This poem acknowledges the intensity of her feelings for the land.

The poem begins with two negative statements. "I have not sung to you, my land. I have not glorified your name with great battles,"

she goes on with a positive statement; "I just planted a tree with my hands on the quiet shores of the Jordan, I simply conquered<sup>38</sup> a path upon the fields." Rachel seems to be saying that though she is a simple person and her contribution to the land appears inadequate, it has great significance. Planting and creating a path makes this dusty, unyielding landscape into a home.<sup>39</sup>

The second verse is an elaboration of the theme presented in the first verse, as she goes on to say, "I know, Mother, that this is a very meager offering from your daughter." Mother here refers to motherland. As we know this is not Rachel's motherland. But it is her newly adopted motherland and she is deeply committed to her survival. As in other poems, Rachel refers to "עֹלָה" as an offering which alludes to the offering of the high priests in the Holy Temple. Her gifts to her land "El Artzi" are the tree that was planted and the path conquered.

Notice the contrast as the poem opens with "I haven't sung to you my land, and ends with "Just a cry of joy for the first light of the day, and secret tears for your impoverished state." A song was hardly the appropriate expression of her feelings rather, "kol truat haqil" / "the voice crying out with joy..." and "silent tears..." not a lyrical expression rather a declamatory call of joy, and then quiet tears.

The use of the word "אֲנֵיֶךְ" "Anyech" is interesting at the end of the poem. "אֲנֵיֶךְ" Oni the Aramaic as well as the Hebrew word for poor is found in the Passover Haggadah

"Ha lachma anya" this is the bread of affliction.\* The word "אֲנֵיֶךְ" can also mean a poor woman. It was then an important choice of words as Rachel refers to the land as the "mother" and then as the "poor impoverished woman" or "land of affliction."

I discussed this poem at great length with Yizhar Smilansky<sup>40</sup>. He said that poets of later generations wrote about time, and history, of groups relating to one another and about wars, while the subject here is simply the land. He emphasized the words, "artzi", "shvil", "my land" and "a path". He commented that there was no one fighting a human enemy here; rather the enemy was the elements of nature, the lack of water, the hot dry sun and the difficulty in coaxing the earth to give forth with even the simplest bit of nourishment.

Yizhar went on to describe this poem as analogous to a large canvas where the artist strikes a line, a simple line. A simple hand planting a tree, a path. It is the picture of a minimalist landscape.

Finally, the poet is saying that in spite of her own simplicity and meager offering her actions are not without significance. She is saying that she will not leave "her land" without having left a sign that she was there. The path and tree will be her mark for future generations.



RACHEL

For her blood runs in my blood  
and her voice sings in me.  
Rachel, who pastured the flocks of Laban,  
Rachel, the mother of the mother.

And that is why the house is narrow for me,  
and the city foreign,  
for her veil used to flutter  
in the desert wind.

And that is why I hold to my way  
with such certainty,  
for memories are preserved in my feet  
ever since, ever since.

Naomi Nir

The biblical allusions in this poem are quite strong and cannot be overlooked. Rachel Blaustein likens herself to the biblical Rachel. The poem begins with the phrase "her blood runs in my blood," and continues "her voice sings out within me, Rachel the shepherdess of Laban's flock Rachel mother of mothers." Rachel the shepherdess is a simple, plain person yet mother of mothers indicating great internal strength<sup>41</sup>.

According to Elie Schweid<sup>42</sup> the connection of the poet to the biblical character is very deep and internal. He feels that the parallel drawn by the poet is intentionally intimate. Schweid points out however, that the life of the poet, Rachel, is far more tragic than the Rachel of the bible. Rachel in the bible longed for her lover and after



seven years of waiting, her wish was fulfilled. She was able to marry Jacob, while we know that the poet Rachel never saw the fulfillment of her romantic dream. Rachel in the bible desperately wished for a child and prayed to God. Finally her prayers were answered as she gave birth to her son. As we know, Rachel the poet never bore the child she longed for.

In the second verse Rachel explains why it is difficult for her to stay in a "strange town in such a narrow room" referring to her small room which she inhabited in Tel Aviv during her last years. "Rachel's shawl fluttered in the desert breeze," and she contrasts her confinement to that scarf blowing freely in the breeze. This is powerful imagery. The Rachel whose veil flutters freely in the desert breeze is natural and free while the Rachel in the narrow house in the strange town is constrained.

In the final verse she says; "And so I hold to my way with such assuredness because the memories are preserved in my feet." This means that her blood connection to Rachel of the Bible enables her to keep alive that biblical character. It also enables Rachel to explain her own longing, and restlessness, as well as her inner strength, and ability to persevere. It is interesting to note that these words which end the poem Rachel, "Ki shmurim b'raglai zichronot minei az, minai az." כִּי שְׁמוּרִים בְּרַגְלַי זִכְרוֹנוֹת מִנֵּי אַז, מִנַּי אַז. "because the memories are preserved in my feet from now

on," were used by Devorah Bortonov as the introduction to her dance cycle entitled Zichronot Am (Remembrance of the Nation).<sup>43</sup> Not just the poetry and the song eternalized this memory for Rachel but the words became associated to a folk dance as well. Joseph Tal composed the music for the dance cycle and chose a melody suited for percussion instruments appropriately focusing on the rhythm of the feet in relation to the earth thus preserving the memories as described in the poem "Rachel".<sup>44</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Rachel was a friend of A.D. Gordon and was deeply inspired by his thinking. In Gordon's "The Immortality of the Soul" he speaks of an eternal stream to which all beings are connected. "...The eternity he seeks is the same eternity that was in life and in existence before his birth and will continue in the life and end in existence after his death. ...that in his individual form, is only one of the waves of which eternity is composed."<sup>45</sup> He goes on to say that man aspires to "have made some imprint on life - to leave their name as a memorial in life after their death. One wishes to preserve his memory in books which he has written; another in artistic creations,..."

By assuming the character of the biblical Rachel she has not only immortalized herself and the biblical figure but has also left her poems as a written memorial to life and eternity.

What appears on first glance to be a simple biblical metaphor, upon rereading takes on many other meanings that can be much deeper, which is, of course, one of the great charms of this particular poet.

KINNERET

Over there are the hills of Golan, stretch out your hands  
and touch them.  
In their stalwart stillness they give the command to halt.

In splendid isolation grandfather Hermon slumbers. A cool  
wind blows from  
the peak of whiteness.

Over there, on the seashore, a low topped palm tree stands,  
dishevelled like a mischievous infant that has slid down  
and splashes in the waters of Kinneret.

When I become poor and I will go bent over,  
and my heart will be like a stamping ground for stranger  
Could I betray you? Could I forget the  
affection of my youth?

Carol Diamant and Fran Lawson

This is a poem depicting contrasting pictures. In the  
first stanza you see Mount Golan, you can almost reach out  
and touch it but are commanded to stop by a quiet self  
assured command. "In shining loneliness the mountain (per-  
sonified here as a grandfather) sleeps and a bitter cold  
blows from the white peak." Contrast the bitter cold  
mountain to the second verse portraying a palm tree, along  
the shore of the sea, whose low, disheveled top appears as  
though it is a baby who slid down into the water and  
splashes with his feet.

Verse three describes a scene that is critically impor-  
tant to Rachel and which is actually the central theme of  
the poem. The word " קרע " The "kerach" is a hillside

on the banks of the Kinneret. This was a favorite spot for Rachel who is also buried there.<sup>46</sup> Here she describes the kerach, "how much grew in the winter on the kerach, red of the kalanit, and the gold of the daffodils, There are days - when the green is seven times greener and the blue is seventy times more blue." This then, the kerach illustrates Rachel's favorite home.

The final verse concludes: "When I become poor and walk bent over, and my heart will be like a stamping ground for strangers, could I betray you? Could I forget the affection of my youth"<sup>47</sup> The use of the term chesed neurim is interesting as it appears in Jeremiah 2:2 and is translated in the Jewish Publication Society Bible as the devotion of your youth. Yizhar Smilansky described chesed neurim as a deep emotion between young lovers.<sup>48</sup> It also has the biblical overtones of the devotion of Israel to God as found in Jeremiah. It seems in the end of the poem, that she fears that her memory will fade making her a veritable stranger, thus betraying the sacred memory of this place, her devotion to Israel, and the kerach beside the Kinneret.

The entire poem describes the view while standing on the kerach. From there one can see Mt. Golan and a palm tree at the waters edge. This was a familiar scene and favorite spot. It gave Rachel great pleasure to describe the richness of the colors and the feelings which bound her to this place. The bitter cold of Mount Golan contrasted to

the tranquility of the palm tree languishing in the Kinneret and the beautiful setting on the kerach filled with multi-colored flowers, represent the contrast between the icy winters she once knew in Russia to the winters she experienced on the kerach in her beautiful Galilee home.<sup>49</sup>



VEULAIPerhaps

Perhaps it was never so.  
 Perhaps  
 I never woke early and went to the fields  
 To labor in the sweat of my brow.

Nor in the long, blazing days  
 Of harvest  
 On top of the wagon, laden with sheaves,  
 Made my voice rise in song.

Nor bathed myself clean in the calm  
 Blue water  
 Of my Kinneret, O, my Kinneret,  
 Were you there or did I only dream?  
 A.C. Jacobs

This entire poem is a single long sentence asking a rhetorical question. There are three parts to the sentence. The first line, comprising the first section, is short consisting of five words. The second part is long consisting of thirty three words, lines two through eleven; and the third part is short, a mere three words.

The poem begins with a general rhetorical question, as the writer laments: "Perhaps these things never occurred."

In the second part, three examples are discussed depicting a scene that might have occurred long ago. "Perhaps I never awoke to the early morning garden, to work with the sweat of my brow. Nor in the long hot days of the



harvest as I rode above the cart filled with sheaves did I not give my voice in song?" Finally, "I never cleansed myself in the pure quiet deep blue waters of the Kinneret."

The poem ends with the same rhetorical question with which it began: "Oh my Kinneret, did it really happen, or was it just a dream?"

The poet says, did it really happen, was I really there? She is trying to recall her experience on the kibbutz in Degania where she spent such happy fulfilled days.

Yizhar Smilansky suggested, in a conversation with me, that he associated Rachel's religious zeal with a Kabbalistic notion. He likened her references to toiling in the garden in the early morning, to what The Ari Hakodesh,<sup>50</sup> called his going to the mountain early in the morning to hechal tapuchim, orchard of apples or the garden.

The use of the verb "תָּהַרְתִּי" taharti, purify, to express the feelings of being immersed in the cool, quiet waters of the Kinneret carry the religious implication of purification in the Mikva.

The language in each example paints such a clear and powerful picture that the reader can almost experience the freshness of the early morning garden and the heat of the day as the sun bakes the cart full of sheaves and then the cooling soothing waters of the Kinneret.

We have seen in other poems that Rachel finds comfort in her memories of her time on the Kibbutz in Degania. In this poem she fears her memory may be tricking her and wonders if perhaps it was only her imagination or a dream. It is likely that her infirmity adds to the feeling that she might never have done these things.

This is one of the most popularly known poems of Rachel due in part to the song composed by Yehuda Sharret which seems to fulfill the poetry so beautifully. Even those who don't know the poetry of Rachel are often familiar with this song.

ZEMERTo You

Morning and evening, toward you and you only,  
Toward you and you only my singing must strain;  
Wounded or healed, rejoicing or weeping,  
In storm or in silence, in comfort or pain.

Instants may come when the magic seems broken  
My vision is blinded, my compass untrue;  
Sudden awakens my jubilant singing.  
Turns once again to its lode-star, to you.

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

The poem represents many contradictory feelings of the writer. Perhaps it is her way of telling her lover that she has many conflicting feelings for him.

The poem is a song to someone very special. From the recent findings mentioned earlier in this work from the book L'cha V'alecha by Benjamin Hachlili,<sup>51</sup> we might assume that this is the poem that Rachel wrote to Michael Bernstein, her lover, in Toulouse in 1915. The poet writes,

"I sing to you morning and evening, to you and of you;" The next line begins to show the conflict, the word "סער" sa-ar indicates raging or storm, while "דומי" domi signifies quiet. The word "תזחל" tzahal is a cry of joy while the word "צעה" ve-cheh is a cry of sadness. "פצע" petza is a wound while "תזרי" tzori indicates balm. "נחת" nachat is a peaceful quiet and "דאי" d'vai indicates sorrow or distress. 52

Verse two expounds on the conflict by telling her beloved that "there are times when she is unable to hear the sound of his answer... the chain is almost severed... then in a moment... I return and sing of you, of love and hate." Perhaps she is saying that the memory of him begins to fade and then it returns filling her with emotion.

In the final verse the writer returns to the theme of the first verse with some embellishments. She writes "to you and of you, a single song to one hundred violins, stormy and peaceful, rejoicing and weeping with pain and salvation, darkness and light."

In the first verse the poem says "שירי שירי" sharu shirai referring to her own simple song and in the final verse she says "שירי שירי" sharu shirai a single sound to a hundred violins, which is a richer orchestration of her original simple song.

Based on the letters of Michael Bernstein to Rachel, it appeared that their love affair was fraught with conflict, he felt he couldn't exist without her yet they were not

together.<sup>53</sup> This poem is a reflection of her mood toward him, her passion was great and yet we see a great deal of conflict in her feelings as portrayed in this poem.

Note the liberties taken by the poet with the Hebrew in order to create a rhyme and rhythm. She uses the word "אהב/c" "ahav instead of ahava" אהב/c, tzori" 'צ' " instead of tzari" 'צ' "domi" 'ד' " instead of dmamah" דממח' " ofel" אפ' " instead of aflah" אפלח' " and tzahal" צח' " instead of tzahala" צחל' ". This use of short words with the accent on the penultimate syllable produces a unique rhythm which resembles the style of the liturgical poem known as the piyyut.<sup>54</sup>

AKARA

Barren

Oh, if I had a son, a little son,  
With black, curled hair and clever eyes.  
A little son to walk with in the garden  
Under morning skies,  
A son,  
A little son!

I'd call him Uri, little, laughing Uri,  
A tender name, as light, as full of joy  
As sunlight on the dew, as tripping on the tongue  
As the laughter of a boy -  
"Uri"  
I'd call him.

And still I wait, as mother Rachel waited,  
Or Hannah in Shiloh, she the barren one,  
Until the day comes when my lips will whisper,  
"Uri, my son!"  
Maurice Samuel

The title "Akara" means barren, childless. The poem begins, "Oh if only I had a little boy. With black curls, clever. To hold his hand and walk slowly through the path in the garden. Boy. Small." It continues in the second verse; "I would call him Uri, My Uri; gentle and clear is this short name. Fragmented light. Him, my dark son, I will call him Uri.

The last verse of the poem refers to the Bible when she says, I'll continue to complain like Rachel the mother. I will continue to pray like Hannah in Shilo. I'll continue to wait for him. As in the poem Rachel, and Zemer Nugeh, Rachel refers to the biblical characters with whom she strongly identifies.



The first two verses describe the child quite clearly. It is obvious that the poet intended not just to write about her wish for a child, but a very specific child of her own creation. He has dark curly hair and he is clever and he would be named Uri. The name Uri means "my little light."

Rachel in Genesis 30:1 complains to God and to Jacob that she has no child and finally is blessed with a child. Hannah in Samuel 1 prays for a child and her prayers are answered. Likewise the poet will continue to wait for her prayers to be answered? Is this, then her prayer to God? The emotions of the two biblical characters are unusually intense and obviously Rachel intended was to convey this same kind of intensity of feeling in her poem.

It is interesting to note that the poetry itself is barren. The sentences are quite incomplete, almost as if spoken in a sob of pain or sorrow. Perhaps this was another way of emphasizing her intense feelings of longing for a child.

The last line " *יִשְׂרָאֵל נִצְחָה* " "ode achake lo" resembles the line in "Zemer Nugeh," "I will wait for you."<sup>55</sup>

This is an extremely popular poem. Several songs have been written to the text indicating the level of inspiration contained in these words.



SHABBATSABBATH

The Jordan's shores. The day full bright.  
 A fisher boat. I lie and drink  
 My peace and light.

I look aloft. Oh how much light!  
 Yet in the heart, as in infancy,  
 A cloud in sight.

I know it now. For all is here.  
 Beginning, ending. Whoever needs--  
 Take without fear.

I.M. Lask

The first two verses paint a picture. The poem begins; "On the banks of the Jordan; the day is filled with sunshine. A fishing boat: I recline and drink the drink of peace, or drink in the peacefulness of the moment." Thus the scene is set. The writer is drinking in the beauty and peacefulness of a beautiful sun-filled day along the shore of the Jordan and there is a fishing boat. (It's hard to tell whether the writer is in the boat or on the shore observing the boat.)

Verse two expands the scene including a personal response to the tranquility pictured: "I look out over the scene and there is an abundance of light. Also, in my heart it is as though I was a young girl, (not a care in the world) there isn't even a shadow of a dark cloud."

Verse three concludes: "and now I know, that here, this is everything. The beginning and the end. All who are in need may take."

The title of the poem Shabbat tells us all we need to know. What we have here is a description of the perfect day of rest. The setting is ideal, tranquil, bright and light hearted, free of even a shadow or hint of trouble. It is a day of complete fulfillment. There is no mention in this poem of the work done by the pioneers of the Second Aliyah; no trees planted, no harvest, just the appreciation of the natural setting created by God. The Shabbat originates in the story of the creation in Genesis 1 where it is written that the world was created in six days and on the seventh day God rested.

The poem ends with Kol dichfin ye-eteh, vitol, whoever is in need may take, which is like the line in the Passover Haggadah in the Aramaic prayer, "Ha Lachma Anya," the Bread of Affliction," which says kol dichfin ye-eteh v'yay-chul, let all who are hungry come and eat. Rachel uses the verb "נָטַל" natal to take, instead of the verb "אָכַל" "ochel," to eat, but her use of the Aramaic is definitely a reference to this text in the Haggadah. It emphasizes the beneficence, hospitality or munificence of nature. The setting described is filled with so much beauty, just for the taking.

This is yet another example of the poetic genius of Rachel. She creates, in incredibly simple terms, a picture of a most spectacular Sabbath setting, the purity of the heart accompanying this day, and the time to drink in and appreciate the wonders of nature.

This poem like El Artzi demonstrates the poet's artistic talents. Her description creates an imaginary painting in the mind of the reader. Included in the Appendix is a copy of a sketch by the Israeli artist, Abba Pnichal who was inspired by Rachel's poem, "Shabbat."<sup>56</sup>

KOREH

The cry of the pick ax rings out in the hand of a  
dying person  
in the depths of the mine shaft.  
"--I am still alive! Where are you comrade?  
Answer me, give me a sign."

Another day, another night -- no sound, no one to  
listen.

Another day, another full night,  
The pick ax will fall from the weakened hand,  
it will stop forever.

I am a refugee of a disaster like him  
Pining away, waiting  
My lot has been to cry out into these depths  
"I am still alive."

Each moment is an hour, each moment wounds  
the hope of a tomorrow.  
The help of a friend, a weary miner  
Will come too late.

Frances Lawson

The poem tells a story of a miner buried deep in a mine shaft due to a cave in. The miner picks away with his ax trying to free himself. The sound of the pick ax personifies the miner's cry for help saying: "I am still alive. Where are you my comrade? Answer me. Give me sign." In this first verse there is still hope. The miner is still alive, awaiting the rescue of his friends.

In the second verse, hope begins to fade as days and nights pass without help and in time the pick ax will fall from the miner's weakened hand forever.

Verse three explains the metaphor of the buried miner. Rachel now speaks for herself. She says, "I am like that survivor of a caved in mine shaft; pining away in waiting." She continues, "My lot is like that of the man trapped in the depths of the cave, where I cry out, I am still alive."

In verse four we are told that each moment that passes without rescue diminishes the hope for the future, and that help will come too late.

The poet likens her fate to that of the miner. She is initially hopeful that she will be saved from her fate and then becomes resigned to the fact that hope of survival is dimmed and that it will soon be too late. Knowing as we do that Rachel was dying of Tuberculosis, for which there was no cure, and that she spent many lonely, despairing days in

her room in Tel Aviv, it is quite convincing that her loneliness is akin to that of a miner buried in the mine shaft.

There is the possibility here of a Biblical reference to the language in Jonah 2:3-4. Jonah says that "In my trouble I called to the Lord, and He answered me; from the belly of Sheol I cried out, and you heard my voice, you cast me into the ("לְטֹהַר") ("tohu") depths..." There is an interesting parallel as one contrasts the idea of the belly of the whale to the depths of the earth, or the belly of the earth where the miner lies following the cave-in awaiting a sign or an answer. The buried miner, like Jonah in the whale, appears to be a metaphor describing the poet's feeling of desperation and entrapment, as though she is being buried alive, while clinging to a hope for life.

This association is reinforced by the use of the word shavat<sup>57</sup> שָׁבַת a cry for help, which can be found in Jonah 2:3 "From the belly of Sheol I cried out, and you heard my voice."

שָׁבַת שִׁיר לְיֹנָח

The word Tohu לְטֹהַר translated in this poem as ( the depths) is found in the expression Tohu Va-vohu " "

"It is impossible to translate Tohu into English. In the Jewish Publication Society translation of the bible, the expression Tohu Va-vohu, Genesis 1:2, is translated as being "unformed and void." One might also think of this as



a state of chaos. Rachel was certainly experiencing chaos is her life as she struggled with the limitations of her illness.

Thus we can see that the poem is a metaphor comparing the state of a buried miner to the poet's unhappy lot in life.



MINEGED

The heart is very attentive  
 The ear is listening sensitively  
 Has he arrived?  
 Will he come?  
 In all longing is the sadness of Nevo.

One is facing the other - the two shores  
 Of one river.  
 The stonehearted decree  
 Forever apart.

Stretching out ones hands  
 Looking from across the way  
 No one comes.  
 Each man has his Nevo  
 on the face of the earth.  
 Frances Lawson

The poem Mineged, though not one of the poems used in the recital related to this project, is thematically important to the collection of Rachel's poems and therefore included here. Rachel identifies strongly with Moses and his fate. Her last collection of poems entitled Nevo was published posthumously, and though there is no poem with that title, this poem "Mineged" sets the stage for Nevo.

The poem deals specifically with the situation of Moses on Mt. Nevo found in Deuteronomy 32:48-52. God tells Moses to go to Mt. Nevo and behold the land of Canaan and then instructs him to die there. He is not permitted to enter the promised land. The general application or meaning of this poem really has to do with Man's eternal unfulfil-

ment<sup>58</sup> The verse from the Bible states: "...Mineged tireh et ha-aretz v'shama lo tavo." "...View the land from a distance, but you shall not enter it..."<sup>59</sup> Every expectation carries with it the possibility of the disappointment of Moses on Mt. Nevo.

The translation of "Mineged" that is found above emanated from a discussion of this poem with Yizhar Smilansky.

Verse one describes a person intensely waiting for someone to arrive whether it be a real person or a metaphor of hopeful expectation. The last line imparts the sense of impending disappointment.

In verse two we have the river. There are two shores which face each other though they never meet. They are forever apart as though there had been a stone hardened decree.

Finally you may reach out to acquire that which you want and you never quite reach it. It isn't really there. This is the fate of Man or, as the poet says, Man and his Nevo exist everywhere.

This theme of Nevo runs throughout much of Rachel's poetry as she discovers and learns to accept her fate. She longs for a child and it doesn't come though she imagines exactly how her little Uri will look. She awaits her beloved and longs for him yet she never satisfies her yearning. Her work on the Kibbutz which fulfilled her

Zionist dream is interrupted by illness. How well she knows the sadness of Nevo, yet, she fulfilled herself in spite of her disappointments by leaving her wonderful legacy of poems to nurture the generations that followed her.

SHAI

Like the gatehiring of the remnant of the vine  
I will send you the remaining  
Whisper of my heart as my gift  
From the song in my heart  
All that the hand of suffering  
Did not uproot, and  
The angry dry winds did not leave  
Dry inside of me.

I will line the basket with  
Memories of the Kinneret,  
The rose of the morning sky  
Amongst the trees of the garden,  
The gold of the noon over the  
Calm expanse and  
The purple of evening  
On Mount Goldan.

The memory of the moonlit night  
Over the water.  
This is the cry of joy of  
My youth, with it as  
With a crimson ribbon  
I will tie the basket  
And I'll send it to you--  
Will you be happy with my gift?  
Frances Lawson

SHAI

A biblical allusion opens this poem. In Jeremiah 6:9  
it says שִׁיר שְׁמִירָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
"Let them glean over and over, as a vine The remnant of  
Israel."<sup>60</sup>

suggesting the practice of gleaning the remnant of the  
vine.

The title of the poem, "Shai" means "a gift." We do not know whether the gift is a poem to a lover or an offering to God? In the third line the poet writes "

" I will send you a gift. The use of the word mincha alludes to the sacrifices to God by the High Priests in the Holy Temple giving one the idea that this could be a prayer or offering to God.

The first stanza of the poem is one long sentence, detailing the nature of the gift ( '0) Shai. I will glean the vines, the remaining rustle, and I will send you a gift ( 301N) mincha from the song in my heart, all that the hand of suffering did not uproot and the angry dry winds that did not leave me dry inside. In other words I'll send you whatever I have.

Verse two; another long sentence continues to describe the gift, "I will line the basket with the memories of the Kinneret, the rose color of the morning sky between the trees of the garden, the golden noon of the calm expanse and the purple of evening on the Mountain of Golan,...".

In the last verse, the first two lines complete the description begun in verse 2. Included in the lining of the basket are the "memory of the moonlit night over the water," "the cry of joy of when I was young," and the crimson ribbon.



Again, as in "Veulai," "El Artzi" and other poems of Rachel she is comforted with the memory of the beautiful days as a young woman in the Kinneret. The parallel drawn compares what is left of her to the remnant of the vine, an interesting Biblical reference.

In the final verse she says "זו תרועת האֹֿשֶׁר" "zo truat ha-osher" the shout or cry of joy as compared to "זמרת לבי" "zimrat libi" the song of my heart perhaps to create a

richer orchestration of expression.<sup>61</sup> We have seen Rachel allude to a richer orchestration in the poem Zemer.<sup>62</sup> The use of the cry of joy as compared to a song as in the poem "El Artzi," demonstrates different expressions of emotion. Rachel's use of the word "זמרת" zimrat has the dual meaning of song and agricultural harvest, a frequent dual motif in her poetry. In the poem "Chag" we re-call her using the word "מלילותיך" melilotavich, your fields of corn, in a play on words for "milotavich" "מילותיך" your words. The use of the word "זמרת" zimrat is used in Genesis 43:11 as Jacob refers to the "choice products of the land" as "מִזִּמְרַת הָאֶרֶץ" mizimrat ha-aretz.

The expression "בְּאֵלֹת יָמַי" "ba-alot yamai" is the opposite of an expression in Hebrew "בְּאַרְוֵי יָמִין" "ba-arov yamin" which can be translated the end of my days. Though the expression used here by the poet is not a common expression it may be her use of word play to coin a phrase, in other words, taking poetic license.<sup>63</sup>

The gift, Shai, is a special gift of self, the memories, and whatever remains of life.



### CHAG

Expressions speak to me: planted  
in the furrows of the heart;  
The day will arrive when they will become  
sheaves of gold.

A young boy will come to you  
to pick wild flowers  
and a poor wayfarer will fill himself  
on ears of corn.

Harvest oh harvester, sow oh sower, plant oh  
planted,  
in the furrow of the heart,  
and come, come stranger and friend  
to the approaching holiday of harvest.  
Frances Lawson

The poem is a play on words. The crops that are planted are actually a metaphor for the words of the poet which she feels inside and hopes one day will spring forth and ripen into beautiful poems.

In verse two she refers to the ears of corn providing nourishment to a gentle boy and a poor wayfarer. Here as in "Safiach", there is a note of hope that her poetry will give spiritual nourishment to all who will read it; including a young boy or a poor stranger.

The final verse plays with words, Charash, Chores, U'zra, zorea. The words when spoken create an alliterative sound that could be likened to the sound of the harvesting of grain. The last verse is filled with sound and rhyme in a playful melody when recited aloud.

The last line speaks of the holiday of harvest drawing near. Perhaps, for this reason this is a popular poem and is read often on the Kibbutzim in Israel on Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks.<sup>64</sup>

An interesting play on words is the use of Bim-  
lilotayich בִּמְלִילֹתַיִךְ ("Of your ears of corn") It is sounds  
 like milotayich מִלִּלֹתַיִךְ ("your words"), which strengthens the  
 argument that the poem is about the expression of the  
 poet's verse rather than actually about the crops alluded  
 to in the text.

### CONCLUSION

Now we can readily see that the poems of Rachel are filled with sufficient depth and complexity to stimulate further academic study. In order to do justice to the study of Rachel's glorious poetry, one needs a complete understanding of poetry in general, and specifically the poetry and literature typical of the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth Century in Europe. Biblical knowledge is a must as well as a good working knowledge of Hebrew, biblical and modern.

Biographical material for this paper was culled from numerous sources as there is no complete biography yet written on the life of Rachel. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to separate the poetry from the life of the poet, thus the need for a complete biography. Yet the real genius of Rachel was her ability to create an intensity in colors, moods and feelings through the medium of words. Her poetry is a richly orchestrated expression of many universal themes in life including, existential loneliness, unrequited love, despair, hope and joy and the ability to come to terms with ones fate.

The vast talents of this woman are reflected in her writing. The artist in her paints pictures with words and her musicality created a rhythm in her poetry which inspired many composers to set her poems to music. The musical compositions to Rachel's poems are sufficient to fill many musical programs. The compositions run the gamut from Abraham Daus' song cycle for voice, flute and viola to the beautiful "Akara" by Paul Ben-Chaim, the mysterious "Balaila Ba Hamevaser" by Lawrence Avery to the simple and yet classic folk songs of Yehuda Sharret and others. Most of the music available is composed and published by Israeli composers as they seem to possess the greatest ability to set the texts to music appropriate and fitting. A selected musical bibliography is included in this work.

Rachel is considered a tragic figure by many of the people who knew her or wrote about her poetry. Perhaps her own suffering enabled her to write convincingly of the struggle man has with his own fate. Her writing is filled with a romantic fatalism, capturing the most intense, intimate human experience in her poetic lines. We are left with a wonderful legacy of poetry that is still universal and widely appealing. Indeed the poetry of Rachel continues to spiritually nourish all who read it, or as Rachel would probably say, "enjoy the fruit of the harvest" of this pioneer woman.

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3. Kahn, Shalom J. "The Poetry of Rachel". Ariel No. 38.1975:p.5.
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7. Ibid. p. 11.
8. Burnshaw, Stanley, "An Outline of Modern Hebrew Poetry". p. 202.
9. Milstein, Uri, Ed. Rachel. Tel Aviv:Zmora Publishers: 1985. p. 29.
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11. Kritz, Al Shirat Rachel. p. 242.
12. Milstein, Rachel. p. 29.
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16. Yizhar Smilansky. Known as S. Yizhar. Hebrew Author in a personal interview in New York.June, 1989.



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27. Ibid. (translated from the Hebrew by this writer)
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29. Tanakh. New York: Jewish Publication Society. 1988. p. 195.
30. Plaut, Gunther W. ed. The Torah A Modern Commentary. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations. 1981. p. 940.
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32. Tanakh. p. 601-602.
33. Kahn, Shalom. "The Poetry of Rachel" p. 12.
34. Plaut, Gunther W. ed. The Torah A Modern Commentary. p. 138.
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48. Yizhar Smilansky.
49. Ibid.
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54. Dr. Stanley Nash. Advisor for this project.
55. As discussed in the analysis of Zemer Nugeh elsewhere in this paper

56. Kritz, Reuven, Al Shirat Rachel. p. 259.
57. Alcalay, Reuben. p. 2568.
58. Kritz, Reuven, Al Shirat Rachel. p. 285.
59. Tanakh, Deuteronomy 32:52. p. 330.
60. Ibid. Jeremiah 6:9. p.780.
61. Kritz, Reuven, Al Shirat Rachel. p. 119.
62. Analysis of the poem "Zemer" included in this paper.
63. I am indebted here to Nitza Amit Silins, native Israeli for this concept.
64. Ibid.

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APPENDIX I

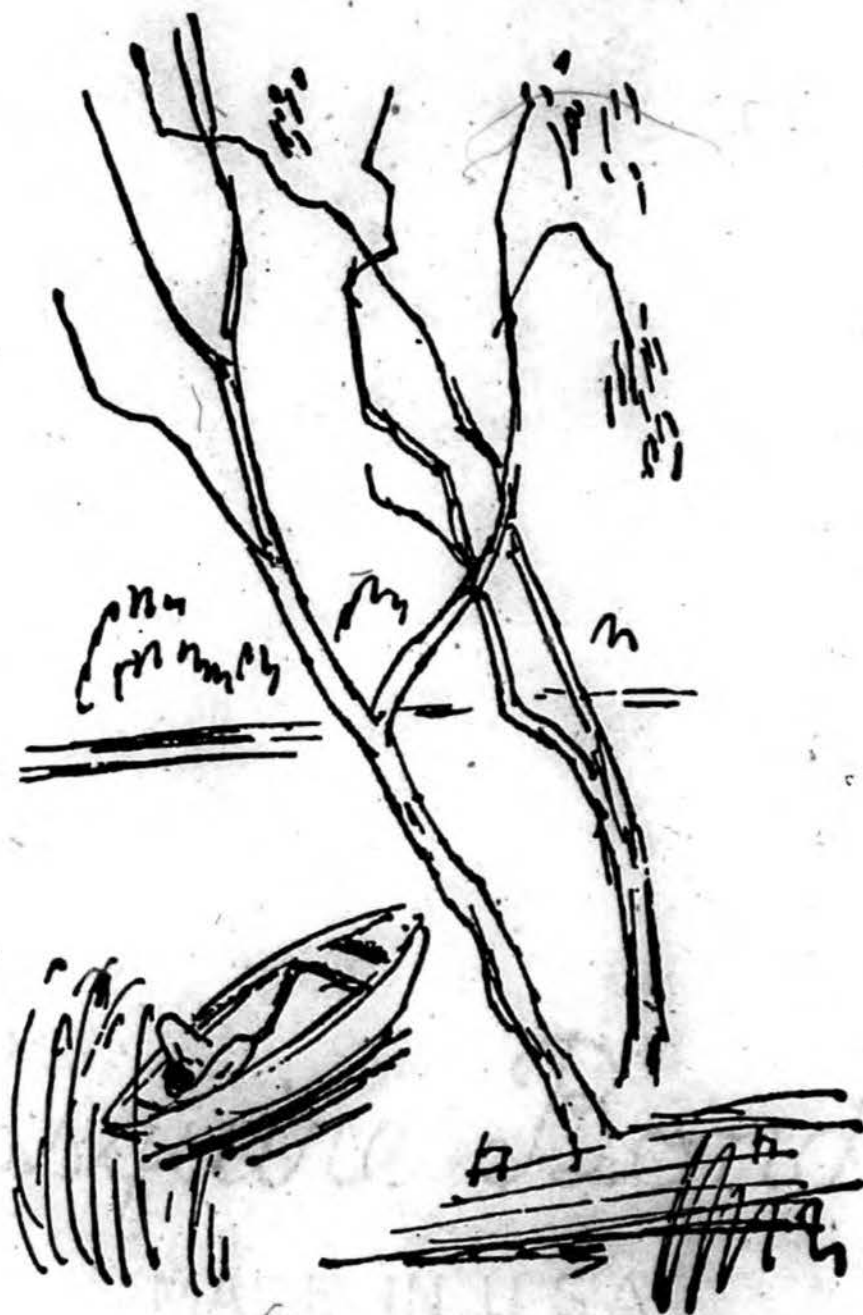


ILLUSTRATION OF POEM "SHABBAT" by Abba Pnichal

APPENDIX II  
HEBREW TEXTS OF POEMS

\*

בלילה בא הקבשור  
על משכבי ישב.  
בלטו עצמות גוף אין-שאר.  
עמקו חורי עיניו.

אוי ידעתי כי נשבר  
הנשך הנישן.  
שבין אהמול לבין סער  
חלו ידי סוקו.

אם עלי אגרוף רזה.  
נשכס לי צחוק ודון:  
אכן יתא השיר הזה  
שירך האחרון!

# ספית

הן לא תרשתי. גם לא ורשתי.  
לא התפללתי על הקסר.  
וקסתי. ראיתי נאו שדוסי הנציח  
דגן ברוד ששש במקום דרדרי.

האם הוא ספית תגובות סקרים.  
חסי סדנה הם. קצורים סאוו  
אשר שקדוני בימי העני.  
בקעו שלו כי בארז רי.

שגשגנה. שגינה. שדמות הקלא.  
שגשגנה. שגינה. וגמלנה חישו  
אני זוכרת דברי הנחם:  
תאכלו ספית ואף סחיש.

# זמר נובה

החשמע קולי, רחוקי שלי,  
החשמע קולי, באשר הנך —  
קול קורא בעז, קול בוכה בדמי  
ומצל לזמן מצוה ברכה ?

תכל זו רבה ודוכים בה רב.  
נמשות לזק, נמרדות לעד.  
מבקש אדם, אך משלות רגליו,  
לא יוכל למצא את אשר אבד.

אחרון ימי קבר קרוב אולי,  
קבר קרוב טיוס של דמעות פרידה.  
אטקה לד עד יקבו טי,  
קטנות רחל לדודה.



# אל ארצי

לא שרתי לך, ארצי.  
 ולא פארתי שמך  
 בעלילות גבורה,  
 בשלל קרבות.  
 רק עץ — ידי נסעו  
 חוסי ירדן שוקטים.  
 רק שביל — נבשו רגלי  
 על פני קדוה.

אכן וילה קאד —  
 ידעתי זאת, האם,  
 אכן וילה קאד  
 מנחת בלד.  
 רק קול תרועת הגיל  
 ביום יגה האור,  
 רק דבי במסכתרים  
 עלי עגיד.

חל-אביב, תרס"ו

# רחל

הו דסה קדמי וורם,  
הו קולה בי רן -  
רחל תרועה צאן לבן.  
רחל - אם האם.

רצל בן תביח לי צר  
והעיר - ורה,  
כי הנה מתנוסס סודרה  
לרחות ממדבר.

רצל בן אה דרכי אמו  
בבקשה קזאת.  
כי שמורים בגללי וקרנות  
מני און, מני און!

תרס"ז

# כנרת

שם הרי גולן, הולשט היד ונע גם ! —  
בדממה בושחת מצוים : עצר.  
בבדידות קורנת גם חרמון הסבא  
וצנה נושבת מפסגת הצחור.

שם על חוף הים יש דקל שמל צמרת.  
סתור שער הדקל כתינוק שוכב,  
שגלש למטה ודמי כנרת  
משקשך רגליו.

מה ירבו פרחים בחורף על הכרם,  
דם הצלנית וכתם הכרם,  
יש ימים — פי שבע או ירק הירק,  
פי שבעים תכלה התכלת במרום.

גם כי אנרש ואהלך שחות,  
והיה הלב למשואות זרים, —  
האוכל לבגד בך, האוכל לשכח  
חסד נעורים?

חל-אביב, תרפ"ז

ואולי לא היו הדברים...

ואולי לא היו הדברים מעולם.  
אולי  
מעולם לא השקמתי עם שחר לגן.  
לעבדו בנצח-אפי?

מעולם. גיטות ארזים ויוקדים  
של קציר.  
במרומי עננה עמוסת אלמות  
לא נחתי קולי בשיר?

מעולם לא סתמתי בתכלת שוקקה  
ובתם  
של בנות שלי... הוי. בנות שלי.  
ההיית. או תלמתי תלום?

תרפ"ז

# זמר

באר וקרב לך ואליד.  
לך ואליד שרו שירי:  
סער נדמי, צמל ודקה.  
פצע נדמי, נסת ודני.

יש לא טכנותי קול סאנד,  
יש ונפשה טשן שרת כקצט.  
רבע - ושוב ושרו עליך.  
שרו עליך, אהב ושקט.

לך ואליד, לך ואליד -  
זמר יחיד הוא לשלך כנור:  
סער נדמי, צמל ודקה.  
פצע נדמי, אקל נאור.

ניסן, תרס"ח

# עקרה

בן לו היה לי ו ילד נסן.  
 שחר תלמים ונבון.  
 לאחו גידו ולקסצ לאט  
 בשבילי נגן.  
 ילד.  
 נסן.

אורי אקרא לו. אורי שלי!  
 רך וצלול הוא השם הנקצר.  
 רסיס נהרה.  
 לילדי השטרטר  
 אורי ו" -  
 אקרא!

עוד אומפרטר קרנל האם.  
 עוד אומפלל קטנה בשילה.  
 עוד אומקה  
 לו.

תרס"ח



שָׁבַת

חופי ירדן: מלא ותר יום.  
סירת דונה: אשכב אשתה  
שקרי שלום.

אביט אל על: האור מה רב!  
וגם בלב בבלדות  
אף על של עב.

עתה ידעתי: זה — הכל.  
ראשית נקמה, כל דקסין  
אחתה יטל.

(דבניה, 1920)

# כורה

שנעת סבוש ביד גור.  
בעסק המקדוח:  
— "עודני חיו אצרה, רצו  
ענני, סן לי אותו"

עוד יום, עוד ליל — אין קול, אין קשב —  
עוד יום, עוד ליל חמים,  
יפל סבוש סיד נחלשת.  
ישבח לעולמים.

אני פליטת אסון קבועה,  
אקלה בצעיה.  
היה חלקי זה אל התנו  
לנעק: "עודי טיה..."

כל ידק — שעה, כל דק פוצע  
תוחלת המקור.  
עזרת חבר, כורה יגע,  
קבוא בקאמר.

בי תשרי, תר"ץ

מנגד

קשוב הלב. האון משקת:  
הקא ו היבוא ו  
בכל זמנה  
יש קצב נבו.

זה מול זה — החוקים השונים  
של גמל אקד.  
צור הקנורה:  
רחוקים לצד.

קולט בשנים. ראה מנגד.  
שמה — אין בא.  
איש וקבו לו  
על ארץ רבה.

חורף. תרין

לשי

אעולל בנקן  
שארית קרש  
ואשלח מנסה לך  
מוקרת לבי —  
כל שיד העצב  
לא עברה משך.  
שקדים מוצם  
לא שרף עוד בי.

ארסד הקנא  
זכרונות בנרת.  
ווד שמי הבקר  
בין צצי הגו.  
ונה העננים  
במרחב רוגע  
ולילך הערב  
של הרי גולן.

זכר ליל הספר  
של חלקת הפנים.  
זו חרופת האשר  
בצלוח ימי.

בבשוי חלצת  
בה אשר הקנא  
ואשלח אליך —  
המקפת לשי

תר"ץ

תג

ניבים וזכרים עלי: ורשיני  
במקנית לקב:  
יום יגיע וקייט  
לשקלי וקב.

וילד רך ובוא שלך  
פרטי דון לבר,  
וטלך ול בקילוסין  
רעבונא לשבר.

ורש, וורש, ורש, ורש,  
במקנית טלב,  
ובוא, ובוא, ור ורש,  
למע קציר קרב.

שבט, תרצ"א