

## The War Memoirs of Rachel Maccabi

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**Ilana Rosen,**

**"The War Memoirs of Rachel Maccabi"**

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**Abstract:** In her article "The War Memoirs of Rachel Maccabi" Ilana Rosen analyzes the memoirs of Rachel Maccabi (1915-2003) about her sacrifices to fulfill the Zionist creed. Raised in a well-off Zionist family, Maccabi moved to Israel/Palestine in the mid-1930s, served in the *Haganah* pre-State military organization, and later became an army officer. Her first husband fell in the 1948 War of Independence and her son in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Between 1964 and 1992 Maccabi published five memoirs. Rosen focuses on Maccabi's last three memoirs, in which she responds to the deaths of her husband and son in Israel's wars with varying degrees of restraint versus disclosure while also criticizing the decline of ideologist, collectivist Zionist values in Israel of the late twentieth century.

## Ilana ROSEN

### The War Memoirs of Rachel Maccabi

Among Israeli writers of documentary prose Rachel Maccabi (1915-2003) is prominent because of the five memoirs she published in the last four decades of her life (on documentary memoirs see, e.g., Rak; Stanton; Toker). Rachel (born Mary Louise) Green was the daughter of an agricultural consultant, a relative of Zionist entrepreneur Baron Felix de Menashe. With her younger sister Jacqueline, Rachel grew up in Alexandria in a well-off Zionist Jewish family. After her move to Israel/Palestine, she changed her name from Mary Louise to Rachel and with her marriage in the mid-1930s her surname became Mutzary-Meni. She first lived in a village in the Sharon area north of Tel Aviv. Later, as a mother of two children, Oded and Alona, she became a wireless instructor in the *Haganah* pre-State military organization and employee of the *Sochnut*, the Jewish Agency for Israel in Jerusalem. Her first partner Maccabi Mutzary-Meni, one of the founders of the *Palmach* pre-State voluntary army, filled various positions in Israel/Palestine and abroad (in using the term "partner" I follow Maccabi's own usage, who avoids calling either of her two spouses "husband," although she was legally married to both of them).

After Mutzary-Meni fell in the 1948 War of Independence as commander of a convoy to the besieged Jerusalem, Rachel changed her last name to Maccabi, that is, she took her deceased husband's first name as her surname and became one of the first woman officers in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), the Israeli army. At the beginning of the 1950s she met her second partner, Lovka (Aryeh) Sternin, joined him in Kibbutz Hatzor and gave birth to two sons, Yoash and Avishai. Although she was able to reorganize her life by re-marrying and having two more children, Maccabi experienced many losses in her life in addition to the death of Mutzary-Meni in war: her father was murdered in 1938 at home by a burglar, her son Oded died of cancer in 1964, her son Yoash fell in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and Lovka passed away in 1990. Despite these tragic losses, as seen in all her memoirs as well as according to her family members, Maccabi never lost her vitality and continued to express her often critical views on both communal and national issues. From the end of the 1960s until the beginning of the 1990s Maccabi published five personal-documentary books on different periods of her life in important Israeli presses affiliated with the kibbutz and army systems, both of which enjoyed a prestigious status in Israel's early decades. In her five memoirs Maccabi reveals the annals of her life as an Egyptian-born Jewish woman, a *halutzah* (pioneering settler woman) in the Sharon, *Haganah* volunteer, Jewish Agency employee, IDF officer, and bereaved wife and mother. Interestingly, she does not devote significant space in any of her memoirs to kibbutz Hatzor where she spent most of her life although she did write and even edit publications at Hatzor, nor does she address her family life after she left Egypt beyond the context of war bereavement. Instead, there are two thematic threads in her memoirs: the variety of people and cultures she met throughout her life and the bereavement she experienced in Israel's wars combined with hope that her sacrifice would not be in vain.

The present study is based on my comprehensive reading of Maccabi's five memoirs in the framework of a research project on the literary and documentary writing of Egyptian Israelis. I trace Maccabi's response in her last three memoirs to the personal war-related losses she suffered and focus on her unique poetics of emotional restraint combined with impersonal pathos, a poetics anchored in the context of her life history, cultural background, and changing ideologies. My study is also based on a personal interview I had in 2011 with Alona Keren-Maccabi and Zvi Keren, Maccabi's daughter from her first marriage and her daughter's husband. The interview dealt with Maccabi's life course, personality, and worldview, as well as with her nuclear and extended family, memoirs, and other writings. The five memoirs written by Rachel Maccabi may be divided into two sections, with the first composed of *Mitzrayim sheli* (1968) (*My Egypt*) and *Hol va'alonim* (1972) (*Sand and Oak Trees*) and the second including her last three memoirs: *Leilot yerushalayim* (1978) (*Jerusalem Nights*), *Behiyukh uvedema: sipurim* (1986) (*With Smiles and Tears: Stories*) and *Avir harim* (1992) (*Mountain Air*). In the first two memoirs Maccabi describes a variety of people whom she met as first a native-born Egyptian and later an *Eretz Israeli halutzah*, whereas in her last three memoirs she focuses on her life in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, first as an underground operative and wife of a *Palmach* commander and later as a war widow and an IDF officer. In addition to their scope, the two groups of memoirs differ considerably in their mode: while the first two are mainly narrative in style, the last three are philosophical or pensive as much as they are narrative. In the latter three memoirs Maccabi undergoes a soul-searching process about her life as a patriotic woman who knew and witnessed many losses and who later joined the Israeli peace camp. These three memoirs show much evidence of the traumatic bereavements Maccabi experienced, as expressed by the tension between her many returns to the traumatic events that befell her and simultaneously her emotional restraint concerning these events (on the dynamics of relating to traumatic events see Herman; LaCapra; McKay). Yet, the overall course of these later three memoirs is of growing disclosure and revelation concerning Maccabi's war-related losses. Maccabi's daughter Alona Keren-Maccabi referred to this tension in her mother's life and writing saying that "throughout the years, Rachel's connection with the dead was very strong. It wasn't as if you [the family] didn't talk about it. There was talk, yes, [but] not about personal pain; and there was no crying" (Keren-Maccabi, Keren, Rosen).

In the texts under discussion and in Maccabi's descriptions of her responses to the deaths in war of her first spouse and of her older son from her second marriage twenty-five years apart from each other, Maccabi exemplifies her distinctly non-poetical narrative style, which may seem even more

laconic and less palatable in English than in the original Hebrew. In these poignant passages, her writing is straightforward and sounds close to live conversation and to the atmosphere of the events and period it depicts. Despite avoiding poetic devices, Maccabi foregrounds the narrator's tumultuous state of mind at the time and under the impression of disaster as transmitted by her recurring sensuous images of falling, sinking, blood, loss or blurring of conscience and death. In both her third and fourth memoirs, *Leilot* and *Be-hiyukh*, Maccabi describes in detail the grievous injury and subsequent death of her first spouse, Maccabi Mutzary-Meni, called Mek in her accounts. In *Leilot*, she delineates Mek's fall in battle towards the end of the memoir, which otherwise deals almost entirely with the pre-State years and the fighting of the *Palmach* in the War of Independence. By contrast, in *Be-hiyukh* Mek's death is the starting point from which Maccabi recounts her years as an IDF officer in the early years of the State of Israel. Her first spouse's death in the later memoir is therefore both a flashpoint and a step toward independence, growing responsibility, and greater influence on the forming Israeli society of the 1950s. In those years, she would also remarry, although she does not address the issue of her second marriage in any of her books except when writing about the loss of her older son from that marriage. The following two long quotations are Maccabi's twofold description of her response to Mek's fatal injury and death:

Along came a spring day carrying the scent of citrus, but lacking everything we tend to connect to the concept of spring: romance, joy, hopes. Mek smiled at me and started the car. I waved good-bye to him, and saw his profile in the car as it was pulling away. I stood on the edge of the pavement, exactly as I had stood countless times on the edge ... and I waved – See you soon. And I didn't know, I didn't know—that this was to be our last farewell, just like that, on a bustling street. The smell of burning asphalt is intermingled with other smells coming from afar, the smell of orchards that were not visible but stretched, then, like a dark green sea in every direction, wrapping the city like a soft green and velvet coat. And now they [the orchards] are no longer ... Days passed and I knew nothing. By chance, I ran into Reuven Shiloah. He asked, "What's with Mek?" "Why?" I was suddenly frightened. Suddenly, everything is at attention and blood flows to my face. Why? Why? "Nothing, nothing," he said ... Who is the cruel one to come and bring the tidings of Job? I walk back and forth in front of the [*Palmach*] headquarters, asking, "What's with the convoy?" A wrinkled note, on it written sloppily in red ink are the names of the dead; on the other side are the names of the wounded. Yeraham pretends to study the list and decipher it. "Mek is wounded, don't worry." That night comes a dispatch, "From the side," from Yedida the wireless girl, with a few lines. "Mek was wounded and underwent surgery. [He] smiles and talks. [He] asks for you to come, but not in a convoy" [According to Alona Keren-Maccabi, *Palmach* Chief Commander Yigal Alon offered to fly Maccabi to her wounded husband, but knowing that her flight would come at the expense of flying in ammunition, she passed up the opportunity] ... Someone rings the doorbell. My friend Shosh, adjutant to the *Palmach* headquarters, enters [Shoshana Spector, widow of Zvi Spector, who fell in battle as commander of the *Yordei Hasira* campaign near Lebanon in 1941]. One blink of an eye revealed everything to me. We go out to the porch, she and I, and watch the sea, and the sun starting to set. I walk, because I am not capable of sitting quietly, and bring a round tin of Players cigarettes. The red sun slides into the sea, a sea that looks blue, deep, and tranquil. Shosh hates the sea in which her partner drowned and she does not go swimming in it, ever. The sea is stretched out in front of us, in all its beauty ... My world came to a sudden halt at that moment. Everything inside me is spinning. Everything standing in front of me looks different; colors, forms, are all entirely different. Everything turned different, starting from that moment of a spring sunset. My voice is no longer my voice. My limbs are heavy and unwieldy and do not obey me. It is strange that my hand still faithfully brings the cigarette to my lips. Opposite me is the blue sunset, mixed with the blood of the sun. I emit cigarette smoke in silence ... I sat through the entire Seder [a Jewish feast that marks the beginning of Passover] in silence and drank. All the participants wondered what happened and what I was trying to drown in a pool of alcohol, four glasses [the holiday custom], several times over ... And I, throughout all those days, as if I was seized by a *dybbuk* [a malicious spirit], one thought alone rules me. I incessantly repeat the simple but proud statement: "But the road is open. Yes, the road to Jerusalem is open. Despite it all, they succeeded in opening the road to Jerusalem" (*Leilot* 213-15; all subsequent translations are by Sandy Bloom [Beit Yatir])

I am here. [It's] A fact. It is probably the Intelligence Department and they gave me some work to do. In later years, they would call this kind of work "busy work." I was supposed to copy ciphered text on an English typewriter. To this very day, I am convinced that no one needed the fruits of my labors. But I may be mistaken. It seems to me that the shutters are drawn. One thing is clear: half-light surrounds us. I am near the machine, dealing with this non-urgent work, maybe work that nobody needs. I am entirely enclosed in half light. My thoughts, my sensations, and my sense of reality have become blurred; reality itself remains in the shadow of light. Only a few days ago, that night, at the Seder, in the twilight hours, my friend Shosh entered the apartment of my sister-in-law Yehudit, and by the look on her face I understood that Mek was dead. You see, we knew there was no room to hope that he would recover from his injuries. Shosh and I found refuge on the porch, our eyes hung on the red sun that was slowly setting into the sea. So it seemed to me. The blue sea is as dark as I had loved it from my childhood, and the sun is suspended, red and sinking into the sea, in a threatening shade. A flagrant contrast to the space in which it would sink in a few moments. It seems to me that even then, in the midst of my dazed, disoriented senses, even then I was observing myself from the sidelines. Both of us did, keeping silent, knowing, chain smoking. I went to bring a whole tin of cigarettes. The surroundings are foreign, the scent of citrus – unlike in Jerusalem – is carried with Passover in the air. In those days, the scent of the orchards that surrounded Tel Aviv still came and took control, sending the senses into oblivion. We sit and keep silent and tomorrow does not exist at all. It cannot exist. How is the life of one person bound up with the life of her companion, to the extent that she cannot imagine life without him? I will be able to ponder this problem all the days of my life, but the evening comes to its end and everything is done so mechanically-routinely without noticing the real sensations, and the fact that to this girl, life is cracked like a thin crystal glass. It cannot be fixed, and until my last day on earth, subconsciously, that moment will stand between a life that was a life of love, a celebration of the senses, and emptiness from then on. I will surely make an attempt to whitewash, to rise, and cope despite everything and play "make believe" after the fall (*Be-hiyukh* 11-12).

In both descriptions, the intensity of the narrative is the result of the combination of the author's restraint in real-time and her detailed, scathing expressiveness in retrospect. The earlier description is anchored in the (pseudo-)natural context of the spring season, the scent of orchards surrounding Tel

Aviv and the closeness of the Mediterranean Sea visible from the balcony of the apartment of Maccabi's sister-in-law Yehudit. The allusion to spring and blossom cannot but remind Hebrew readers of the "sunny weather" in National Poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik's poem "Be'ir haharega" ("In the City of Slaughter"), written soon after the Kishinev Pogrom of April 1903: "For God called up the slaughter and the spring together / The slayer slew, the blossom burst, and it was sunny weather!" (129-30). Despite the fundamental difference between the slaughter of Jews in the Diaspora and the fall of a *Palmach* commander in the hills of Jerusalem, still, from the point of view of the fighter's wife, whose father had been murdered a decade earlier and whose son fell in war a quarter of a century later, the common denominator for all these events is sacrifice and victimization inseparably and against the pulse of nature in all senses (on the change in Israeli notions of readiness for national sacrifice in the transition from the pre-State phase to the State era, see, e.g., Feldman; Zerubavel).

The elegiac tone of the first excerpt is reinforced by the juxtaposition of the orchard scent with the "smell of burning asphalt" of the newly built urban Tel Aviv space, because the narrator notes that at the time of writing, about thirty years after the event, the orchards "are no longer" there. In real time, in addition to the orchards "stretched in every direction like a dark green sea," there is the real sea, which Maccabi watches in silence together with her friend Shosh. The sea and Shosh's presence besides her remind Maccabi of the fate of her friend's partner, which enables her to approach her own loss and grief indirectly and by displacement (on psychological defense mechanisms, see Freud and Sendler). This mechanism supplies Maccabi with a metaphoric *khora*, a receptacle for her harsh feelings (Budick and Iser xv-xvii, see also de Certeau 190-98; Ben Ze'ev, Ginio, Winter). Note also that although in real time the two military widows – the veteran and the novice – may have talked to each other, in retrospect Maccabi describes their shared chain-smoking as speechless and thus pro masculine (as the prototypical "strong and silent" Western heroes).

Maccabi holds her verbal and emotional expression in control when she describes the way she received notice of Mek's injury a few days earlier. She "accidentally" meets Reuven Shiloah (Zaslanski / Zaslani, later the first Head of the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency). Shiloah unintentionally – or so Maccabi prefers to interpret his gesture -- leaks the news of Mek's injury, about which his wife has so far heard nothing, by asking her: "What's with Mek?" Instead of criticizing him or the *Palmach* organization for this strategy, Maccabi rushes to the defense of her spouse's officer with the rhetorical question: "Who is the cruel one to come and bring the tidings of Job?" (for a critical examination of the *Palmach*'s functioning and its later public image see Ben Ze'ev; Millstein; Sivan). Since her answer is that no one can be so "cruel," it remains her own responsibility to ferret out the information: "I walk back and forth in front of the Headquarters, asking, 'What's with the convoy?'" (*Leilot* 214). Now begins a new circle of minimization and concealment of the bad news: "A wrinkled note, written on it sloppily in red ink are the names of the dead; on the other side are the names of the wounded. Yeruham [Cohen, intelligence officer of the *Palmach* Headquarters] pretends to study the list, decipher it [and then inform Maccabi:] 'Mek is wounded, don't worry.'" Ironically, it is likely that Mek was no longer alive when this conversation took place, because each stage was only revealed to his wife after delays. But what cannot be said openly is transmitted indirectly and by code gestures: "One blink of an eye revealed everything to me." The momentary shutting of one eye parallels numerous expressions of silence and muteness as well as roundabout references to death, for example "sunset," "red sun," and "drowning." To the same effect, the two women's cigarettes smoke adds a metaphorical barrier between all these allusions and their meaning or "signified," that is, Maccabi's gradual learning of Mek's death in real time. Interestingly, in the second, later description Maccabi is down-to-earth explicit about her receiving the bad news: "and by the look on her [Shosh's] face I understood that Mek was dead." Maccabi rationalizes the inevitability of Mek's death: "You see, we knew there was no room to hope that he would recover from his injuries" (about the tension between suppression and elaboration of the traumatic experience see Brown; Derrida; Herman; Hartman; Lifton).

In the second description there is no reference to spring, although the Passover holiday just ended is mentioned here as well. Here, the scent of citrus fruit and orchards is described as an obtrusive factor invading the narrator's senses like a sedative drug: "The scent of the orchards ... surround[ing] Tel Aviv and taking control of the senses, sending the senses into oblivion"; this has some similarity with the passage in *Leilot* in which she drowns her sorrow in "four glasses, several times over" (*Be-hiyukh* 214). To strengthen the sense of disaster and devastation, here Maccabi incorporates even more references to "traces of blood," than in the earlier description: "Our eyes hung on the red sun that was setting slowly into the sea," "The blue sea is as dark as I had loved it ... and the sun is suspended, red and sinking into the sea, in a threatening shade," and "the evening comes to its end." In contrast to the earlier account, of the balcony with a view of the Mediterranean sea, now Maccabi finds herself within an office or some kind of closed and darkened space that forces her to lock or alienate herself from her emotions: "the shutters are drawn," "half-light surrounds us," and "I was observing myself from the sidelines." In these days, immediately after Mek's death, Maccabi is employed, to the best of her knowledge, in "busy work" of copying "a ciphered text on an English machine," and she assumes that the work was assigned to her only with the goal of taking her mind off her grief. Thus, in the gap created between intense pain and debilitating numbness, between speaking and silence, she still leaves space for a façade of automatic every-day routine: "everything is done so mechanically-routinely without noticing the real sensations," and "I will surely make an attempt to whitewash, to rise and cope despite everything and play 'make believe' – after the fall" (*Be-hiyukh* 11-12).

In the second recounting Maccabi's numbness is soon replaced by her excessive activity and resistance to mourning. In her agitation and restlessness, she wanders through the streets of Tel Aviv, shifting her attention from her inner world to the public sphere. Then, by extension, she segues to the national sphere and decides that her place, from now on, is in the army: "The army is my home, my

refuge; we grew up among its people" (*Be-hiyukh* 13). Maccabi reaches this decision while sitting on a bench in the Tel Aviv Rothschild Boulevard and scrutinizing pictures of Mek, an act that associatively leads her narrative to the death of her son in war a quarter century after Mek's death. Yoash Sternin, Maccabi's third child, was first declared missing on the Egyptian front in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. His death was verified only after a nerve-wracking six-months waiting period and at that point of certainty Maccabi would scrutinize his picture as a youth "observ[ing the world] with laughing eyes" (*Be-hiyukh* 13). Then, as now, she seizes hold of an emblematic object symbolizing the mate/son who is no longer alive; thus the picture itself becomes a *khora* of her grief over both her felled loved ones.

In the fifty-five years by which she outlived her first spouse, in the thirty years she lived after the death of her third child, and in the three memoirs she would write about her life and about her double bereavement, Maccabi's Zionist decisiveness gradually became moderated, doubtful, or, as she puts it, "cracked like a crystal glass" (*Leilot* 12). This process can be traced throughout all of her last three memoirs. In *Leilot*, Maccabi inserts a dedication to her son: "to my son Yoash and his friends who fought, encircled by the enemy, and halted the progression of a force superior in number and ammunitions, because it was their duty to prevent the destruction of this country, which was established twenty-five years earlier" (10). She then seals this memoir with the following Biblical-Prophetic consolation message: "It is possible that our great desire for even a bit of consolation will be fulfilled, and thanks to the felled [soldiers] Jerusalem's valour and grandeur [will persist]; the city that resides at the head of the mountains and between the hills" (*Leilot* 220). The tension between despair and hope, protest and acceptance, mourning and consolation continues in Maccabi's consecutive memoir, *Be-hiyukh*. The following paragraphs, about the death of her son Yoash in the 1973 war, appear closely after the description of her printing (copying) "busy work" immediately after Mek's death in 1948:

After twenty-five years, after the Yom Kippur War, searches were conducted incessantly for our missing soldiers, some of whom had manned the observation points of the Suez Canal banks. Often, the memory of Nahum Arieli's documents crept into my heart [Arieli was a *Palmach* fighter whose death "on the rocks of the Castel" in 1948 was described earlier 16-17]. Yoash, our Yoash who lay for about half a year covered by the desert sands ["covered" was the term used by his friends] in the place he fell; certainly, as a sign, the armoured corps hat on a rough pole ... No [identity] card was ever brought to us, no identification tags were ever found, the heart-shaped talisman or jewel that hung on his chest (together with his identification tags) was never found ... After twenty-five years when Yoash's death became certain, I felt that there was no need for me to learn a new creed, because the black cloud that descended on my head with the death of my dearest friend still surrounds me. I know, I know, I fully and completely know, I will remember so long as I have breath in my body. One year will replace another and every spring [on the IDF Fallen Remembrance Day], I will light a candle; no, two memorial candles. Nothing. There is nothing beyond this, only this emptiness eating away. The pain flows out in silence, filling all the spaces in the body. It does not matter what I am doing at the time: laughing or making others laugh, playing with children and grandchildren, taking an interest in what is beautiful and attractive. The scenery may be a statue that the hand yearns to caress, or a glaring green and gold picture. But I cannot ignore the drops of blood dripping from it like raindrops, like the cool drops streaming down a rock in a desert oasis. Those who say that there are stages in mourning speak falsehood and foolishness. That which has been lost cannot be returned. There is no solace. Anger, that is an emotion I have not known. Why you, my beloved? That's the way it is. Why not? Every war demands its due, percentages... It is chance, and randomness is an incontestable fact ... And if it happened that I once thought, how good that Mek did not stand with me near the open grave of Oded, after seeing his terrible suffering in the last months of pain with his malignant disease – that was just a hypothetical thought. And if it happened that I thought to myself, How would you feel, my friend, today in our country? These musings are also only thought-exercises ... this is the reality and there is no other [reality]. That world in which I lived for about thirty years is gone. (*Be-hiyukh* 17)

In her last memoir Maccabi returns to issues she raised in the two memoirs preceding it, together with memories from all the periods of her life and alongside verses of poetry she dedicates to Mek and Yoash (*Avir harim* 131-35). The elegiac tone is especially dominant in this book in short passages or sentences in which she expresses her doubts and hopes. For example, the following stream of questions and hopes appears in the chapter entitled "Wild Spring": "Shall I still tell the legends of the Land, its heroism, its hardships and deep sorrow? To tell stories, to yearn and to hope; perhaps it is still possible to avert its betrayal of its past and its dreams?" (*Avir harim* 69). By contrast, a later chapter entitled "Prolonged Autumn" has the following ecclesiastical and anaphoric sentences: "One generation after another grew up on this lovely, coveted land. Generation after generation gives it its love, its sweat, ceaselessly" (125-26). In this last memoir, even more than in the previous two, Maccabi's voice often sounds like a skeptical lamentation, pensive over the meaning of her sacrifice and, by extension, the face and values of Israeli society at the end of the twentieth century.

Reading all of the foregoing quotes from Maccabi's last three memoirs in sequence we see that she experiences the later bereavement of her son Yoash as an extension or sequel of the loss of her first spouse a quarter century earlier: "I don't have to learn any new creed" (*Be-hiyukh* 17). Maccabi touches upon the subject of her suffering only indirectly, because touching it directly is too painful for her, but the circuitous routes she takes lead her to other painful areas and – eventually – back to her double bereavement. For example, her recollection of the waiting period for any news of Yoash, while he was declared missing in action, reminds her of the "smell of death" that clung for a long time to the documents of *Palmach* fighter Nahum Arieli, who had fallen in battle by the Castel Mountain [on the way to Jerusalem] decades earlier. Her thoughts about Yoash's identification tags and documents, that were never found likewise agitate her and bear the "terrible sweetness of death" to quote Shosh Spector's words regarding Arieli (*Be-hiyukh* 17), despite or maybe because of their absence. Maccabi's musings of bereavement are made palpable through their evocation of senses like touch ("a statue that the hand yearns to caress") and sight ("in a glaring green and gold picture, but I cannot ignore the drops of blood dripping from it like raindrops"), in addition to the sense of smell that governs this

entire description. Thus bereavement is depicted in sensuous terms that the author is able to express and transfer, and her readers can at least imagine her state of mind (on the transformation of emotion from sorrow to pride in the writings of War World I widows and bereaved mothers, see Evans).

Interestingly, Maccabi refers only once in all her memoirs to the death of her oldest child Oded, a Stanford University student of psychology, of cancer in 1964 at the age of twenty-seven. Yet even in this short reference she places Oded's death within the framework of her pain over the deaths in wars of her first spouse and younger son, finding consolation in the fact that Mek did not live long enough to see his son's suffering and death, but she does not refer to Oded's death or illness beyond that. Maccabi's daughter Alona – an occupational therapist – referred to this lacuna in her mother's writing thus: "Mek was brave and heroic, this was clear to everyone, but to be heroic in illness is something else altogether" meaning that their mother was unable to relate to death of illness the way she could to death in war, and that she lacked the empathy that would enable her to appreciate her ill son's "combat" (Keren-Maccabi, Keren, Rosen). Maccabi's imagining of Mek's presence at the funeral of his son sixteen years after Mek's death leads her to muse about entirely different, communal, and national realities "today in our state" which she feels her first husband would not have approved of. She is concerned, first, about the constant need for unflagging sacrifice of "generation after generation" and this concern makes her doubly agitated, as she worries that the sacrifice has become unappreciated, un-told, and forgotten along with the legacy of the founder generation, while the very existence of the State of Israel continues to exact new victims, "and there is no solace" (*Be-hiyukh* 17). According to her daughter Alona, Maccabi's bitterness about her sacrifice sprang also from the tension and distance between her and other members of Kibbutz Hatzor, evidently because of Maccabi's scathing, critical nature: "It bothered me a lot that on the Eve of the IDF Fallen Remembrance Day, people did not come [to visit her], did not enter her room [kibbutz apartment]. But they also didn't know how to approach her, how to draw near her ... She always said, No-one takes care of the bereaved families. She did not say, I am alone all the time. And they did not do anything in the way of memorialization for years [and] years. Only after Lovka [Sternin, Maccabi's second spouse] died, did they create a Memorial Hall [for Lovka and his son Yoash]. She resented that a lot" (Keren-Maccabi, Keren, Rosen). Beyond the fact that she felt alone and unappreciated as a doubly bereaved woman, Maccabi had a sense of dead-end and hopelessness on the wider, national sphere, as expressed in all of her later three memoirs. Nevertheless, she avoids ending her last memoir (published over a decade before her death in 2003) with an unequivocal negative statement. Instead, just as she does in the two memoirs preceding it, she leaves behind her a message of both sorrow and pride, or apprehension and resignation, without closure.

Maccabi never had a closeness or affinity to the Hebrew Bible or Jewish religious faith and praxis and she chose her Hebrew first name out of admiration for the Zionist *halutzah* poet Rachel Bluwstein Sela (1890-1931) who lived and died by the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) not long before Maccabi herself emigrated to *Eretz Israel*. Yet in her life and memoirs Maccabi emulates not only the example of the modern, Zionist Kinnertine poet, but also that of the Biblical Mother Rachel of Jews "crying for her children" (Jeremiah 31, 14). Maccabi was limited in motherly warmth, especially toward her two older children, as is evident, for instance, in her daughter's observation that her brother Oded and herself probably chose therapy professions to compensate for this lack in their lives. Therefore, as shown in many of Maccabi's narrative-rhetorical dynamics traced in this article, she often resorts to the communal-national sphere to express her "crying for her children." At the same time, despite all the tragedies and disappointments she experienced throughout her life, Maccabi cherished life: she "laughed or [made] others laugh" through her tears (*Be-hiyukh* 17) as the title of the memoir *Be-hiyukh uvedema: sipurim* (With Smiles and Tears: Stories) denotes. And she never lost hope that there is and will be a "reward for [her] labor" (Jeremiah 31, 15).

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