



# EREV SHIRA



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית  
המחלקה לפעילות בתפוצות  
World Zionist Organization  
Department for Diaspora Activities



# EREV SHIRA TACHLES/TARBUT LEADERS GUIDE



Hebrew is an rich and ancient language with poetry and songs that date back to the time of the Bible. The revitalization of Hebrew by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in the late 19th century, along with the modern Zionist movement, sparked a literary revolution with large outpourings of literature and poetry. Women have always been integral contributors to the Israeli art scene, and the field of poetry is no exception. Our main goal in this session is to expose students to important figures in the pre-State and modern Israeli arts community and to help them develop a stronger appreciation for Hebrew poetry. This session focuses this on female poets active in the Zionist movement so it well suited for Women's History Month (March).

Also, keep in mind that this poetry session will be best enjoyed in a creative and artistic atmosphere. Perhaps you can turn your room into a café, hang Israeli art on the walls, dim the lights, etc. A microphone can turn this session into a genuine "poetry reading!"

## PROGRAM BREAKDOWN:

1. 5 minutes – Welcome and Introduction
2. 15 minutes – Rachel the Poet, "To my Country"
3. 20 minutes – Leah Goldberg, "My Homeland" and "Is it True"
4. 15 minutes – Yona Wallach, "A Man Accumulates Memories"
5. 20 minutes – Concluding Discussion



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## PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Learning a language should not be divorced from learning its culture. Poetry is an important creative development in all cultures. While it is often written on a higher linguistic register, exploring poetry allows students to appreciate language as an art form as they recognize rhyming and rhythm sequences, imagery, etc. In this session we introduce participants to selected Hebrew poetry that is linguistically accessible to beginning Hebrew students and that reflects popular past and contemporary Israeli culture.

Participants will explore the lives and poetry of three female poets who lived and wrote in different periods of Zionist and Israeli history. Rachel, the first poet studied, is one of Modern Hebrew poetry's earliest pioneers. Next, chronologically, is Leah Goldberg, who represents the mainstream Israeli poetry. Finally, Yona Wallach, a counter-culture poet, represents a new generation of Modern Hebrew poetry.

Of course focusing on the language of our selected poetry is also a primary goal. After reading each poet's biography, but prior to exploring the poems themselves, participants will review simple vocabulary and grammatical concepts that appear in the poems. Note that the vocabulary we have selected are common words that would be useful in daily conversation, though they also reflect of the main themes of the poems.



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## PART TWO: RACHEL THE POET

Ask one of the participants to read Rachel's biography. Then ask a participant to read the poem in English.

Review the selected vocabulary as a group, making sure all participants say each word.

Now, read the poem in Hebrew as participants follow along. (The individual reading, whether the facilitator or a student, should read be comfortable reading Hebrew so that participants hear the smooth flow of the language.)

Finally, listen to the song on YouTube.



### Discussion and learning:

1. Ask participants to explain the poem's meaning.
2. After reading Rachel's biography, when do you think she wrote the poem?

How is she writing about the land, the country?

Point out the use of nature and landscape as well as the relationship between the poet and the country.)

3. Ask participants to look for feminine words in the song.

This is a good time to explain the important concept of masculine/feminine and singular/plural in Hebrew grammar. Feminine endings include "a" and "it" (singular) and "ot" (plural). Masculine endings include "im" (plural). The masculine/plural form is also used to refer to a mixed group of men and women. The concept of masculine/feminine and singular/plural also affects the use of nouns and adjectives. Give an example using terms they might be familiar with. (Shana Tova is feminine, BUT Shavua Tov is masculine. [Although Shavua sounds feminine—with the "a" at the end—it is actually spelled with a masculine letter at the end of the word ("ayin"), therefore making it masculine.])



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## PART THREE: LEAH GOLDBERG

Ask one of the participants to read Leah Goldberg's biography. Then ask a participant to read the poem in English.

Review the selected vocabulary as a group, making sure all participants say each word.

Now, read the poem in Hebrew as participants follow along. (The individual reading, whether the facilitator or a student, should read be comfortable reading Hebrew so that participants hear the smooth flow of the language.)

Finally, listen to the song on YouTube.



### Discussion and learning:

1. Ask participants to explain the poem's meaning.
2. As noted in her biography, Goldberg was not born in Palestine/Israel. In this poem she writes about a homeland. Ask participants which country they think she is talking about? (Note, there is no right or wrong answer. Researchers are also divided on this question.)
3. There is a strong theme of the number seven in "Mechora Sheli." Why do you think that is and where does it come from?
4. Ask participants to look at the words in bold type. Most of them have a prefix that are not an integral part of the word. This is a good opportunity to teach participants the many prefixes that serve as prepositions:  
V'/U' – and  
Ha – the  
L' – to, for  
M' – from  
B' – in



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Read the second poem in English. Review the vocabulary and read the poem in Hebrew. Finally, listen to the song on YouTube.



## Discussion and learning:

1. Ask participants what this poem is about? Does it differ from the previous poem studied?
2. Tell participants that the poem was written in 1943 when the people of the Yishuv were confronted with the atrocities of the Holocaust in Europe. Ask participants if this information changes their opinion on what the poem is about?

Background (to share with participants after their own discussion): This song was published in one of the Yishuv's most popular newspapers as part of a public debate between Goldberg and other leading poets on whether a poet—or any artist—can create art that does not reflect on the current political situation, (in this case, the Second World War and the Holocaust).

## PART FOUR: YONA WALLACH

Ask one of the participants to read Yona Wallach's biography. Then ask a participant to read the poem in English. Review the selected vocabulary as a group, making sure all participants say each word.

Now, read the poem in Hebrew as participants follow along.

(The individual reading, whether the facilitator or a student, should read be comfortable reading Hebrew so that participants hear the smooth flow of the language.)

Finally, listen to the song on YouTube.



## Discussion and learning:

1. Ask participants to explain the meaning of the poem. Ask if they see any significant difference between Yona's poem and the others they've read so far?
2. Do they think this poem could have been written in English, in North America, and still be relevant? What about the other poems?
2. How does Yona's biography compare to those of Rachel and Leah? Do they think it fundamentally different or the same?



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## PART FIVE: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

1. The vocabulary selected emphasizes a few recurring themes. Ask participants to divide the words according to themes. (Nature, Land/Country, Family, Tradition/Heritage, etc.)
2. How do these themes relate to the poets' lives?
3. This is a good time to present the concept of Hebrew roots for families of words (SHORASHIM):

אדם - דם - דם - אדמה - אדום

זיכרון - מזכרת - לזכור

These are two families that are mentioned in the poems in this session, but you are more than welcome to share more examples:

ספר - ספריה - ספרות - ספרן

לחזור - חזרה - מיחזור - מחזור

חבר - חברותא - חברה - חבורה - חיבור

תוכנית - לתכנת - מתכנת - תכונה

קשר - קישור - תקשורת - להתקשר

After you have read and discussed all the poems, tie it all together. Perhaps ask a few closing questions, such as "what was your favorite poem and why" or "who did you identify with most?" Remind everyone that poetry hasn't stopped with Yona Wallach and encourage them to look into modern works on their own.

## A FEW MORE IDEAS TO ENRICH THE SESSION:

1. You can add more poems, of course.
2. You can teach some of the songs to participants.
3. You can add background information about the singers that perform the songs.





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## Rachel the Poet רחל המשוררת

Rachel was born in Russia in 1890, a descendent of a family of Rabbis. Her family moved to the Ukraine when she was a child, where she attended a Russian-speaking Jewish school and later a secular high school. She began writing poetry at the age of 15. When she was 17, she moved to Kiev and began studying painting.

At the age of 19, Rachel visited Israel with her sister on the route to Italy. They had planned to study art and philosophy in Italy, but decided instead to stay in Israel as Zionist pioneers. They settled in Rehovot and worked in the orchards. Later, Rachel moved to Kvutzat Kinneret on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where she studied and worked in a women's agricultural school. At Kinneret she met Zionist leader A. D. Gordon, who was to be a great influence on her life, and also had a romantic relationship with Zalman Rubshov, who later became known as Zalman Shazar and was the third president of Israel. In 1913 she journeyed to France to study agronomy and drawing. When



World War I broke out, unable to return to Palestine, she returned to Russia where she taught Jewish refugee children. It may have been at this point in her life that she contracted tuberculosis.

After the end of the war she returned to Palestine and for a while joined the small agricultural kibbutz Degania, a settlement neighboring her previous home at Kinneret. Shortly after her arrival she was diagnosed with tuberculosis, which was an incurable disease at the time. No Longer able to work with children, she was expelled from Degania and left to fend for herself. She spent the rest of her life traveling and living in Tel Aviv, then finally settled in a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in Gadera.

Rachel died on April 16, 1931, at the age of 40. She is buried in the Kinneret cemetery in a grave overlooking the Sea of Galilee, following her wishes as expressed in her poem If Fate Decrees.





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## Rachel the Poet - To My Country רחל המשוררת - אל ארצי

I have not sung you, my country  
not brought glory to your name  
with great deeds of a hero  
or the spoils a battle yields.  
But on the shores of the Jordan  
my hands have planted a tree,  
and my feet have made a pathway  
through your fields.

Modest are the gifts I bring you.  
I know this, mother.  
modest, I know, the offerings  
of your daughter;  
Only an outburst of song  
on a day when the light flares up  
only a silent tear  
for your poverty.

לא שָׁרְתִי לָךְ, אֶרְצִי,  
וְלֹא פָאֲרֵתִי שִׁמְךָ  
בַּעֲלִילוֹת גְּבוּרָה,  
בְּשָׁלָל קְרָבוֹת;  
כִּי עַץ - יָדִי נָטְעָה  
חֹפִי יִרְדֵּן שׁוֹקֵטִים.  
כִּי שְׁבִיל - כְּבָשׁוֹ רַגְלִי  
עַל פְּנֵי שְׂדוֹת.

אֲכֵן דָּלָה מְאֹד -  
יִדְעֵתִי זֹאת, הָאֵם,  
אֲכֵן דָּלָה מְאֹד  
מִנְחַת בָּתֶּרֶךְ;  
כִּי קוֹל תְּרוּעַת הַגִּיל  
בְּיוֹם יְגֵה הָאוֹר,  
כִּי בְכִי בְּמִסְתָּרִים  
עָלִי עֲנִיָּה.



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## לאה גולדברג Leah Goldberg

Leah Goldberg was born in 1911 in Germany (now Kaliningrad, Russia). During World War I her family was forced to flee deep into Russian territory. After the war Lithuanian soldiers tortured her father, who was accused of communism, for about ten days. As a result, her father suffered from mental illness.

Goldberg studied philosophy and Semitic languages at universities in Kaunas, Berlin and Bonn and wrote her dissertation on Samaritan dialect in Bonn University. After graduating she taught literature at the Hebrew Gymnasium and was a member of a group of Hebrew writers. She immigrated to Israel and published her first books in Hebrew in 1935.

Her mother immigrated to Israel a year later and the two went on to live together in Tel Aviv. In 1940 she published a second book of poems. During this period she also wrote many well-received children's books and wrote for many Hebrew newspapers.

In 1950 she moved to Jerusalem and began working at Hebrew University.

Later she was made a professor at the University and established a Comparative Literature Department. Goldberg continued to write children's books and also translated classic novels, such as "War and Peace" into Hebrew.

Leah Goldberg died on January 15th, 1970 from lung cancer. She was buried in Jerusalem in the "professors" plot. That same year she won the Israel Prize for literature which her mother accepted in her place.

Goldberg is best known for her poetry. She did not write nationalist poetry nor "recruit" for the Zionist enterprise, but rather dealt with personal and universal issues (though Israeli landscape is one of her main motifs). Goldberg, who was never married, wrote poems that contain themes of great loneliness with desperate attempts to gain love. She also expressed heavy survivors guilt following World War II, leading many to say her songs were a voice of a generation. Following her death her work began to gain in popularity and Israeli musicians began to translate her poems to music. That trend took steam again over the past decade and in 2003 "The Leah Goldberg Project" album was released with contributions from many beloved Israeli women singers, such as Rona Keinan, Levin Hardy, Jasmine Stone, Karni Postel, Sharon Rotter, Efrat Ben-Zur.



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## Leah Goldberg-Mechora Sheli לאה גולדברג- מכורה שלי

my homeland, beautiful poor country  
the queen has no home  
the king has no crown  
and seven days spring in the year  
and mist and rain  
all the rest

but seven days, the flowers bloom  
and seven days, the dew is shining  
and seven days, the windows are open  
and all your beggars  
are standing in the street  
carrying their paleness  
to the light of goodness  
and all your beggars are happy

my homeland  
beautiful poor country  
the queen has no home  
the king has no crown  
only seven days are holidays in the year  
and work and hunger all the rest

and seven days blessed are the candles  
and seven days the tables are set  
and seven days the hearts are open

מכורה שלי, ארץ נוי אביונה  
למלכה אין בית,  
למלך אין כתר.  
ושבעה ימים אביב בשנה  
וסגריר וגשמים  
כל היתר.

אך שבעה ימים הנרדים פורחים,  
ושבעה ימים הטללים זורחים,  
ושבעה ימים חלונות פתוחים,  
וכל קבצניך עומדים ברחוב  
ונושאים חירונם אל האור הטוב,  
וכל קבצניך שמחים.

מכורה שלי, ארץ נוי אביונה,  
למלכה אין בית למלך אין כתר.  
רק שבעה ימים חגים בשנה  
ועמל ורעב כל היתר.

אך שבעה ימים הנרות ברוכים  
ושבעה ימים שלחנות ערוכים,  
ושבעה ימים הלבבות פתוחים,



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and all your beggars stand praying  
and sons and daughters,  
grooms and brides  
and all your beggars are brothers

my humble, poor and bitter  
the king has no home  
the queen has no crown  
only in the world their grace, she said  
and denunciation, the shame,  
all the rest

and therefore I will go to every street  
in every corner  
every market and court  
and alley and garden  
and the ruins of your walls  
every little stone  
I will collect and keep for memory  
and from city to city  
from country to country  
I will wander  
with a song  
and a music box  
to proclaim your  
glamorous poverty

וְכָל קַבְצָנֶיךָ עוֹמְדִים בְּתַפְלָה,  
וּבְנֶיךָ בְּנוֹתֶיךָ חֲתָן כָּלָה,  
וְכָל קַבְצָנֶיךָ אֶחָיוֹם.

עַלֻבָּה שְׁלִי, אֲבִיוֹנָה וּמָרָה,  
לְמֶלֶךְ אֵין בַּיִת, לְמַלְכָּה אֵין כֶּתֶר -  
רַק אַחַת בְּעוֹלָם אֶת שְׂבִיחַךְ אִמָּךְה  
וּגְנוּתְךָ חֲרָפְתְּךָ כָּל הַיָּתֵר.

וְעַל כֵּן אֵלַי לְכָל רְחוֹב וּפְנָה,  
לְכָל שׁוּק וְחֶצֶר וְסִמְטָה וְגִנָּה,  
מְחַרְבֵּן חוֹמוֹתֶיךָ כָּל אֶבֶן קִטְנָה -  
אֶלְקֵט וְאַשְׁמֹר לְמִזְכָּרְתָּ.

וּמַעִיר לַעִיר, מִמְּדִינָה לְמְדִינָה  
אֲנוּדָה עִם שִׁיר וְתִבְתִּי נְגִינָה  
לְתַנּוֹת דְּלוּתְךָ הַזֹּהֶרֶת.



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## Leah Goldberg - Is it True לאה גולדברג - האמנם

Is it true - will there ever be days with forgiveness and mercy?

And you will walk in the field, like a simple wanderer.  
Your feet on the small leaves will be gently caressed,  
Or the stings will be sweet, when you are stung by  
the rye's broken stalks.

Or the downpour will catch you as the raindrops  
pound,

On your shoulder, your breast, your neck, and your  
mind will be clear.

You will walk the wet field, and the silent will fill you -  
Like the light that lines a cloud.

And you breathed in the furrows, a breath calm and  
even,

And you saw the sun in the reflection of the golden  
puddle,

And the things will be simple and alive, and it is  
permitted to touch them,

And permitted, and permitted to love.

You will walk in the field. By yourself. Never scorched  
by the heat

Of the fires on the paths paved with horror and blood,

And in your heart you again will humbly surrender,

Like one blade of grass, like one of humanity.

הָאִמָּנָה עוֹד יָבוֹאוּ יָמִים בְּסִלְיָהָ וּבְחַסְדָּהּ,  
וְתֵלְכִי בַשָּׂדֶה, וְתֵלְכִי בּוֹ כְּהֵלֶךְ הַתָּמָר,  
וּמִחֲשׂוֹף כִּי רִגְלֶךָ יִלְטֹף בְּעֵלֵי הָאֶסְפָּסָת,  
אוֹ שְׁלִפֵּי שִׁבְלִים יִדְקְרוּךְ וְתִמְתַּקְךָ דְּקִירָתָם.

אוֹ מָטָר יִשְׁיֶגֶךְ בַּעֲדָת טְפוֹתָיו הַדּוֹפְקָת  
עַל כְּתִפְיֶךָ חֲזָרָה וְרֵאשֶׁךְ רַעְנָן.  
וְתֵלְכִי בַשָּׂדֶה הָרֹטֵב וְיִרְחֵב בֶּךָ הַשָּׁקֵט  
כְּאוֹר בְּשׂוּלֵי הָעָנָן.

וְנִשְׁמָתְךָ אֶת רִיחוֹ שֶׁל הַתֵּלֶם נִשּׁוּם וְרִגּוּעַ,  
וְרֵאִיתְךָ אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּרֵאִי הַשְּׁלֹוִלִית הַזֶּהָבִי,  
וּפְשׁוּטִים הַדְּבָרִים וְחַיִּים וְמֵתִים בָּם לִנְגֻעַ,  
וְמֵתִים וְמֵתִים לְאֶהָב.

אֶת תֵּלְכִי בַשָּׂדֶה. לְבַדְּךָ. לֹא נִצְרָבֶת בְּלֶהֱט  
הַשִּׁרְפּוֹת בַּדְּרָכִים שֶׁסָּמְרוּ מֵאִמָּה וּמֵדָם.  
וּבִישׁוּר-לֵבָב שׁוֹב תִּהְיִי עֲנֹוָה וְנִכְנָעֶת  
כְּאֶחָד הַדְּשָׁאִים כְּאֶחָד הָאָדָם.



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## יונה וולך Yona Wallach

Yona Wallach was born in Israel in 1944. Her father was killed in the War of Independence (she grew up and died on a street that was named for him). Being an orphan was a defining hallmark in her life and identity. At the age of 21 she voluntarily hospitalized herself in a psychiatric hospital where she was put on an LSD pill treatment, a method that was common in psychiatry in the 60s. She wrote about these experiences in her songs, including the song "If You Go on an LSD Trip."

In the 60s, a time known for its recreational drug use and sexual promiscuity, Wallach was a bold example of connection to the era, which she expressed in her poems with themes such as gender identity and sexual exchange. In her later years she moved back in with her mother, who she mentally and physically nursed almost until her own death.

Wallach is known for her use of eroticism in Modern Hebrew poetry. Her early poems dealt with sexuality, fear, death and madness. The later poems dealt more with conscious, body and soul, multiple identities and death. This brought her widespread fame and recognition from sources other than the everyday readers of poetry.

Many of Wallach's poems were put to music and performed both by her and various artists, including: Gidi Gov, Eran Tzur, Eviatar Banai, Nurit Galron, Dorit Reuveni, Roquefort, Barry Sakharov, Yardena Arazi and Gali Atari. Her work remains extremely popular to this day.





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## Yona Wallach- A Man Accumulates Memories יונה וולך - אדם צובר זיכרונות

A man accumulates memories like ants  
During the summer months.  
During the summer months like a grasshopper  
In the summer season - a man sings.

And in the winter the ants assemble  
They sway from [the weight of] their possessions  
and slowly they perish  
The possessions and the winter perish  
Slowly, slowly  
Na na na na...

A man accumulates memories like ants  
During the summer months.  
During the summer months like a grasshopper  
In the summer season - A man sings.

And in the winter, the grasshopper sings to the  
thresholds  
To taste the season's memories  
The beloved season in its song  
Has slipped away.

A man accumulates memories like ants...

אדם צובר זיכרונות כמו נמלים  
בחדשי הקיץ.  
בחדשי הקיץ כמו חגב  
בעת הקיץ - ויש שאדם שר.

ובחורף הנמלים מתכנסות  
מתנועעות ברכושן ומכלות לאט  
את הרכוש ואת החורף מכלות  
לאט, לאט.

אדם צובר זיכרונות כמו נמלים  
בחדשי הקיץ.  
בחדשי הקיץ כמו חגב  
בעת הקיץ - ויש שאדם שר.

והחגב בחורף שר לפתחים  
לטעום מזיכרונות העונה  
העונה האהובה שבשירו  
ממנו חמקה.

אדם צובר זיכרונות כמו נמלים ...

