GIVING BIRTH TO A SETTLEMENT
Maternal Thinking and Political Action of Jewish Women on the West Bank

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On October 27, 1991, a Jewish woman named Rachel Drouk, a settler in the West Bank, was killed by Palestinian Intifada fighters. Twenty-five women spontaneously gathered at the site of the murder and held a vigil—a vigil that eventually developed into a protest settlement. The women, all of whom were married mothers, presented their initiative in maternal narratives: grounds, motives, and justifications for the act, and targets and anticipations were all related to the practice of care. This article conducts an artificial dialogue between the women's discourse and Ruddick's theory of maternal thinking, enabling deconstruction of the former and a critique of the theory of care.

On October 27, 1991, busloads of Jewish settlers from the West Bank, members of the right-wing political movement Gush Emunim,[1] made their way to a mass demonstration in Tel Aviv to protest the beginning of peace negotiations in Madrid. Their banner read "You don't sell out your mother," and it reflected their fear that the meetings would lead to the withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank. A Palestinian attack on one of the buses left two dead: the driver, a Jew from West Jerusalem, and Rachel Drouk, a settler from Shilo and mother of seven. After Rachel's funeral, 25 women from settlements all over the West Bank made their way to the site of the killing—a barren, rocky hillside in Samaria—set up tents, and stayed the night. The night stretched into a week (the traditional mourning period), then a month, and finally culminated in the founding of a new settlement. The women called it Rachelim[2] in memory of Rachel Drouk, Rachel Weiss, who burned to death with her three children in a Palestinian attack on a bus near Jericho on October 30, 1988, and Rachel, one of the four matriarchs of the Jewish people.

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The act of founding Rachelim was highly exceptional. Right-wing women—most of them orthodox, all married, all mothers—established a protest settlement in the West Bank. Most of these 35- to 45-year-old college-educated women worked, and some held political positions in their community. Orthodox women are accustomed to operating separately from men, because of the traditional seclusion of the sexes. This separation created a vital society of women capable of carrying out spontaneous acts on a community level, as well as organizing in large leagues. Emuna is the largest such league of religious women (Sasson-Levy 1993).

Religious-Jewish fundamentalism as metanarrative contains numerous and varied references to women's roles, status, motherhood, and femininity. Since it constitutes a holistic religious worldview based on mainstream orthodoxy, while tending toward a radical interpretation, these references are in dispute with Western feminist ideologies (Davidman 1991; Heschel 1983; Kaufman 1991; Koltun 1976; Weidman-Schneider 1984).

The expansion of traditional women's performances beyond founding day crèches and girls' schools and beyond performing acts of charity is indicative of essential changes in the status of these women. These changes stem from the open cultural market and the democratic state within which the women live. They bring the women to reinterpret the feminist messages embedded in Jewish culture. The Rachelim event is a prime example of the extension of orthodox women's performance. It was an attempt to operate as women and mothers within the political arena—not as supporters of the men and not as claimants for a fair share, but as initiators of a novel strategy based on novel arguments.

It is tempting to analyze the event according to feminist theories of motherhood, peace, and political action. Evaluating fundamentalist women's actions in terms of Western feminist theory, however, produces unsound results. In Western feminist theory, religious women, especially those who are not part of the West, are seen as a homogeneously powerless group, as victims of their culture (Mohanty 1988). We suggest that it is more appropriate to listen to the narrative presented by the women involved in the Rachelim event. We attribute significance to their experience of motherhood and its political potential in the local cultural context, and we reread the narrative through the theory of maternal thinking (Ruddick 1989). The insights gained from the local event also serve as a critique of Ruddick's essentialist and universalistic theory. Examining the feminist value of the act of founding Rachelim reveals the significance of the event for the women and their society, at the same time unveiling basic social structures underlying the gender category (Strathern 1988).

THE CHAIN OF EVENTS

Immediately following the funeral in the settlement of Shilo, 25 women made their way to the site of the murder. Inside the tent erected at Rachelim, Naomi Sapir recounted the following to one of us (El-Or):[3]

> It could have been me, just the opposite of the sentence we use so often in Israel, "It can't happen to me." I, like each woman there, felt that it could easily have happened to me. Orphaned children were sitting now in some house, and that was what was so acutely distressing. Rachel was the first woman from the settlements who was killed, and for us that was the shock. We understood the price we might have to pay, we grasped the enormity of the risk, the responsibility we have towards our children who travel the roads every day, and mainly the helplessness. We made the decision—we were staying. It was a form of protest, a kind of cry to the world. We are still here, going on with life, still founding settlements. In a place of death, lights will begin to twinkle at night. There will be life. We decided to name the spot Rachelim in honor of Rachel Drouk, Rachel Weiss, who was burned to death with her three babies in a bus attack near Jericho, and, of course, after our Biblical matriarch, Rachel.

The husbands of these women were not partners in their decision or the act. Their role was limited to the technical matters of preparing the equipment needed for staying the night at the bare, hostile location. Both the Israeli military and civil administrations in the area opposed the women's move and raised logistic and legal obstacles to persuade them to go home. Finally, both authorities agreed to allow the women to hold a vigil at the site until the end of the traditional week of mourning. Through parliamentary and extraparliamentary actions and negotiations with the military, the seven-day period was extended to one month, then two months, with the women still in place.

The army erected a large tent for the women and a smaller tent opposite it for house soldiers guarding them. The original 25 Rachelim women took turns sitting in the tent, accompanied by another 200 women, who came in shifts from all settlements in the territories. Girls of all ages from all over the country made pilgrimages to the site, and organized groups of girls arrived from diverse public and religious schools to study in the tent. Rabbis and male and female teachers gave lessons in Judaism. The Rachelim women related their story to visitors—the chronology of events leading up to the founding of the settlement—over and over again. During the first week, the women remained day and night; later, they began going home in the evening, leaving their husbands, sons, and brothers to stand guard.

Three weeks later, the women of Rachelim issued a call to other women in the territories and Israel. It was published in *Nekuda*, the settlers' monthly periodical, distributed in leaflets, and hung on a large poster in the tent. It read:

> We the women of Judea, Samaria and Gaza have established a memorial vigil. We demand we be allowed to found the settlement of Rachelim at this spot, on this hill, where the murderers lay in ambush. There are sufficient government lands for the establishment of a permanent settlement. We remain at this site demanding to found a settlement, for this is the only Zionist response to this criminal murder. We hold vigil at this place, and we will persevere in the hope that the Government of Israel will decide to found a civilian settlement at the spot from which the shots were fired. This will be the way to prove to those who would uproot us that they will never achieve their goal. Not only will we not be uprooted, our roots will only grow deeper. We call upon every woman and mother in the settlements and every woman and mother in Israel to stand up and be counted with us at this memorial vigil. And, of course, men too, husbands and sons, are invited. Let us find comfort in the building of the land. (1991, 13)

The women called it "The Feminist Manifesto." The gender used throughout the document was feminine plural—a powerful statement in Hebrew, which is a gender-sensitive language and in which the generic plural is masculine. The ending explicitly includes men and brings the feminine formalization to a climax.

The choice to unite spontaneously and act on a separatist basis is formalized here. The call is addressed to Jewish residents of the territories and Israel, as well as the government, and is completely by and for women. It concludes with the call to all women and mothers in Israel to express their support for the vigil. The call to men begins with "And, of course . . . ," but the opposite is implied: men are addressed only as an afterthought. There may or may not have been a brief ideological debate at this point, but the upshot was that the ladies of the manor had decided to invite the lords as well.

One could say that the tent guards had been invited to step in. Once the seven-day mourning period was over, the women no longer stayed at the tent during the night. Their men, while not part of the protest settlement, stayed to guard at night—perhaps out of concern or worry. Some came to visit during the day, bringing the children to see their mothers, but they were always visitors. The invitation "to step in" seems more like a plea for consent and support rather than for joining in.

"The Feminist Manifesto" and extensive media coverage brought a massive response throughout the West Bank. Following vigorous public lobbying by the women, the government approved Rachelim as a permanent settlement and study center for women. Within three months of the Rachelim incident, two more Jews from the territories were murdered, and other settlers adopted the women's model and established memorial settlements at the sites. The women of Rachelim had revived an act from Zionist history in which a settlement was founded at a site where Jews were killed and the site was named after them. Unlike Rachelim, the two subsequent memorial settlements did not last. Following the change of government in June 1992 from Right to Labor, all projects in the West Bank, including the development of Rachelim, were frozen.

DOING IT THEIR WAY—THE APPROPRIATION OF THE POLITICAL ACT

The women passed the time at Rachelim debating their case with the military and the civil administration, attempting to regulate and contain the storm they had created. They prayed, kept the dietary laws with respect to food delivered to the tent, and studied. Traditionally a male endeavor in Judaism, religious study has for some time been undergoing female appropriation (El-Or 1993, 1994;

to the tent, and studied. Traditionally a male endeavor in Judaism, religious study has for some time been undergoing female appropriation (El-Or 1993, 1994; Weissman 1976).[4] Local rabbis came to teach the women at Rachelim; it was reminiscent of how women used to come to mostly men's settlements to cook and launder for them.

In the November 1991 issue of *Nekuda*, journalist Emuna Elon wrote about the reaction of nonorthodox Jews to the phenomenon:

> Anyone passing by would probably have been surprised to see a group of tired, eccentric women dressed in long, full skirts and head scarves, sitting around a rabbi and listening to a lesson. The soldiers who came to guard there had never seen such a sight. These poor men had to stand there in the biting cold. But the women went up to them and offered them homemade cakes sent by their families. They invited them to warm themselves by the small heater. (p. 44)

The Rachelim women told guests from outside their political group about soldiers guarding the site who wrote words of admiration in the guest book. Some of these were kibbutz-born men who are identified with the left-most sectors of Israeli society. The women told of officials and senior army officers who expressed admiration for their courage and resolve. The women took every opportunity to thank these people; they referred to them by first names to not disclose their identity and to show their familiarity with them and their gratitude for the personal connections. While visiting the tent, we watched the women receiving reporters and visitors in traditionally feminine ways: they smiled, played the role of gracious hostess, and offered food and drink and warmth by the stove. Numerous children ran underfoot, and the women's arms were full of the babies they had not left at home.

Conversations in the tent were "women's room" ones; the tone and content were set by the women. Visitors, including us, were obliged to acknowledge that the primary actors were mothers and women and that the topics of discussion were children and motherly concerns. One way or another, it led to talking about their men and to listening to criticism and a rereading of masculine politics. The women also wished to speak about their appearance. With a reflexivity typical of women and minorities, they repeatedly and somewhat sarcastically alluded to how the press was not accustomed to their "garb," their long full skirts and dresses, in the bitterly cold, barren landscape. Their head coverings were wrapped in the manner of religious women. They objected to the description of them in the media as "sloppy orthodoxesses" and to the detailed account by a Tel Aviv female reporter of the mud around the tent and the filth in their makeshift toilet.[5] As Geula Tzroia told one of us (El-Or), "It's important to us to look pretty and feminine. We have no need to come across as Amazons on the mount. Our strength is quiet, beautiful, and positive."

At a political rally at the Jerusalem Theater (described below), the women of Rachelim were elaborately dressed, wearing fashionable hats, earrings, and the 1,000 women present that evening, the women of Rachelim stood out for the elegance of their clothing.

The act in question was neither perceived nor depicted by the women in violent heroic terms. No alienation was created between those disobeying the law and those upholding it. The women were tired, the soldiers were cold. The women were not afraid to couch their political action in terms of the interaction between the players. These terms were not abstract; rather, they referred to the people behind the action. They chose to diminish the political struggle and to emphasize instead the possible dialogue between the rival Jewish sides. Thus, the traditional rivalry between those who believe in the Greater Land of Israel and those willing to give it all back for peace became mere appearance and the shared human values were underscored—the hunger and cold, the presence of both parties in the occupied territories—soldiers, government officials, and citizen-residents.

THE SENSIBILITY OF WOMEN'S IRRATIONALITY

Women are often described as acting instinctively and emotionally. Rationality and sensible thought are preserved for masculine action (Harding 1986; Ortner 1974). The women of Rachelim employed this convention for the expressed purpose of deconstructing it. They were proud to describe their action as motivated by a bundle of feminine (motherly) emotions, free of the institutionalized and abstract thought of the dominant male group. They described their action, however, as spontaneous, as the only possible path of rational action, and therefore blurred the accepted distinction between the rational (masculine) and the irrational (feminine).

In the November 1991 issue of *Nekuda*, Emuna Elon's article stressed the spontaneity of the act of founding Rachelim by referring to a tale from the Midrash (a major corpus of Biblical explication) known to every orthodox girl and boy. The tale attributes the Hebrew people's delivery from bondage in Egypt to the initiative of the Hebrew women, who were pious and righteous. Pharaoh, King of Egypt, sentenced all the newborn Hebrew males to death—a decree, the Midrash intimates, that caused celibacy among the men. The Hebrew women, nevertheless, went out to the fields, seduced the men working there, and became pregnant. They hid from the Egyptians, bore their infants alone like the beasts of the field, and hid their babies. God helped the women's initiative with miracles that provided them with the food and shelter necessary to raise their children. These "madwomen" were the progenitors of the next generation that was responsible for Israel's salvation and exodus from Egypt. These "madwomen" combined their powers of seduction and drive for pregnancy and childbearing with the feminine optimism that sees raising children as feasible under any circumstances. The men, on the other hand, were fearful, obeyed authority, and tried to act rationally.

Elon compared the settlers' wives to these Hebrew women in Egypt. Today's men, she claimed, were once radicals under the Labor Government in the mid-seventies but became part of the establishment when the Likud party, which favors annexation of the territories to Israel, came to power in 1977. Today, the men fill official positions and work to further their objectives through accepted conventional channels, while the women do not feel constrained by the establishment and are free to act as "madwomen." This is no time for "rational" conduct, said Elon. "It is an emergency—a time for 'mad' action" (Elon 1991, 44) to continue the previous policy of Jewish settlement of the West Bank despite the political changes and the Intifada. The women realize this and will be the ones to jar the system, carrying both men and women in their wake. A seemingly irrational act, according to Elon, has become a necessary and logical strategy: women can bring off what the dominant but immobilized men cannot permit themselves. The article described the motherly practice itself as madness:

> One hand stirs the soup, the other bandages a scraped knee, the third holds the telephone and the fourth turns up the volume on the radio to catch the news. (Elon 1991, 45)

According to Elon, women with four hands can do anything.

In the past, these women were in no hurry to free themselves from the group's policy. They progressed in step with the men, following their vision and distinguishing themselves at the tasks the men vacated for them (Aran 1991). This active involvement did not prevent Elon from saying, "We've been wasting our time. Giving birth and making homes isn't enough. The feminine voice (in Hebrew, *Hakol Hanashi*) should have been heard in the political system too" (1991, 44). The women's voice had not been silenced previously, but its tones had been in harmony with the men's. For several years, a woman named Daniella Weiss held the position of secretary general of Gush Emunim, and women established Eli—Mothers for Israel—an organization that mobilized support based on concern for the well-being of the children in the West Bank. Now, however, as women reflected on the past, they were intensely critical of their previous efforts.

> We attended parlor meetings after the children were fed and put to bed, after we had hung the laundry and washed the dishes. We held a large assembly at a Jerusalem hall, everyone applauded the beautiful speeches and drove home. But we stayed on the dangerous roads, went on having more babies, carefully monitoring high-risk pregnancies and tending husbands with flu. (Elon 1991, 44)

Politics custom-tailored for men and the masculine fantasy of transcendence were not suited to the women's lives. In the act of founding Rachelim, their point of departure was the practical reality—acts not words, the concrete concern for their children, which men customarily translate into ideology. They were not afraid of the kitsch or sentimentality that is attributed to motherhood in any case. They accomplished a political appropriation with unique features, features that

derive first and foremost from their experience, from the basic commonality that unites orthodox Jewish women—motherhood. Together with the practical concerns, they drew the suitable images of women from the Midrash about the women in Egypt. This configuration, when given historical-cultural legitimization, allowed them to come close to Western feminist experience.

The appropriation of political action by the women of Rachelim comprises two central moves: adoption and feminization.

Adoption. The women chose to lay a claim to a symbolic tract of land. It is accepted strategy in Zionist history to settle sites identified as ancient Jewish settlements and disputed lands that represent a risk to the reemerging Jewish entity. In this sense, Gush Emunim sees itself as following the pioneering Zionist line formerly dominated by the local labor movement. By the mid-seventies, Gush Emunim was appropriating Zionist politics, in both ideological and practical terms (Aran 1991). While Gush Emunim represents itself as the authentic interpreter and implementor of pioneering Zionism, the women now wished to single themselves out as bearers of a flag the men had tired of carrying. The women of Gush Emunim were doing to their men exactly what the movement as a whole had done to the Zionist pioneers before them.

Feminization. Feminist action or research may be defined as having the following characteristics: an organization based only on women; the determination of a feminine-maternal motive as the motive for acting; the description of the aim of action as treating a problem with special ramifications for children and mothers; the aspiration to create widespread identification with women and children outside the acting group; criticism of male politics; and construction of fields of feminine creativity and response (Duffy 1985; Reinharz 1992). The Rachelim event shows such features. It also includes references to Israeli women outside the territories, a certain reflexivity relating to Palestinian women and left-wing Jewish women, a reinterpretation of the history of Gush Emunim, an on-site designing of feminine discourse about women and mothers, feminine media coverage, attempts to change the image of the female settler, and amplification of the feminine (Jewish and orthodox) voice in the local and national political discourse.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE HAVE CHILDREN—THE MATERNAL MOTIVE

Inside the army tent on a cold rainy day, a group of women sat around a makeshift table as a small gas stove struggled to warm the area. Miri Mass, a woman of about 36 years, a textile artist and handicraft teacher, told us the following:

> First of all I have an obligation to my children, as all of us mothers do. I'm a mother of seven children, God be blessed, and I'm responsible for their safety. The children travel to school every day by bus, and to after-school activities every afternoon. They come home and ask, "Why is nothing done? Why aren't they shot? Why doesn't someone finish off those Arabs?" These are natural questions for a child to ask when he is attacked. His bus is escorted by the Israeli army and what does he see? He sees that when stones are thrown at him the soldiers either flee or do nothing. We, of course, raise him to revere the soldiers and our sons enlist in the elite army units, so what can I tell him? How should I raise him? I should also raise him not to hate Arabs, shouldn't I? And not to want to kill them, I should convey that to him too. What can I tell him? So this is my answer! I'm building a settlement. This is how to live in peace. Not by killing and war. By creating.

"Yes, but this settlement is dangerous," one of us offered. "It just increases the risks." Miri replied,

> Childbirth is also dangerous, isn't it? Have you considered that? When a woman becomes pregnant she is taking a risk. So? Do women stop having children? There are still places in the world with a 40 percent risk of infant death during labor. Do women stop having babies there? Giving birth is a huge beginning, with some amount of risk. We are the ones who know how to do that. And I'll have you know that our settlement here has given the children a lot of strength and a lot of meaning. Someone is doing something, not just sitting and waiting for the Arabs to throw stones. I can tell you stories that would set your teeth on edge about what we have gone through here in five years of Intifada. How my husband and myself with nine children (two of them friends' children) happened into a village by mistake and how the women closed in on us. Yes, yes, the women blocked the way and I could already glimpse my approaching death. I radioed the army and got no answer. Finally, there was no choice. My husband got out of the car and fired a few shots in the air. The women moved aside, the army arrived and we were saved. And the children have come home many times through a hail of stones and I've never heard them say, "Mother, I don't want to go, I'm scared." I must think of my children and that's that.

Naomi, also one of the founders of Rachelim, was standing on the side and interrupted Miri at this point:

> And have you ever thought of the Arab children? Of a child who is awakened by soldiers in the middle of the night, in the cold, so they can search his house? Have you thought of him?

Miri replied,

> I think of him at the humane level, of course I do. But his parents are the ones who aren't thinking of him. They should have made sure that there would be no reason to search their house. Just like they take him to demonstrations and then they're surprised when he's wounded.

Naomi went on to express what we the researchers refrained from saying:

> They have no tanks or rifles to bring to demonstrations, so they bring women and children. I really respect the Palestinian woman. Her perseverance. She knows that the one who is stronger will be the one who will stay here. I have a lot of respect and admiration for her—she acts.

"And 'Women in Black'?"[7] one of us asked. Geula answered,

> Those women? They're barren. They do nothing but stand and talk. I respect their persistence but not the practical application or the attitude. They know very well how to count the Palestinian children killed in the territories but not the Jews who are killed. Why didn't they express their sorrow about the murder here? When they went to kiss Hanan Ashrawi [spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks] before she left for Madrid, they could have stopped at Mrs. Rofeh's [the wife of the Jerusalemite driver killed in the incident] and offered condolences, without going out of their way. But no, that didn't occur to them.

Naomi said,

> I have no problem with the Palestinian women. As a mother, I totally understand them. The problem is that their leaders and our leaders aren't doing what has to be done. So they're on the roads and we're here.

Miri responded,

> That's really the point. It's not the problem of feelings that I don't have for those children and those women, it's the political dispute I have with them over who should be the landlord here.

This emotional identification appears to be fed by the steadfastness attributed to women, especially mothers. The Palestinian women are perceived by the women of Rachelim as their counterparts: bearers of life, caregivers, and victims of male politics. The practice of motherhood that they share includes three basic tasks: works of preservative love, nurturing for personal growth, and training for social acceptability (Ruddick 1989). These are expressed overtly by the women of Rachelim.

WORKS OF PRESERVATIVE LOVE

As Ruddick has written, "Preserving the lives of children is the central constitutive invariant aim of maternal practice; the commitment to achieving that aim is the constitutive maternal act" (1989, 19). The primary importance of the physical safety of children was stressed by the women of Rachelim, the Jewish women who came to visit and offer support, and newspaper articles written by women. In a lucid voice, uncamouflaged and unafraid of being accused of melodramatics, they pointed out the direct danger to the children and the indirect danger to them should one of their parents be injured or killed. The women described in detail incident after incident where their own lives and those of their children were nearly lost. After five years of Intifada, there was no lack of such incidents: stones thrown at the windows of the yellow school busses carrying the settlers' children, roadblocks, and, lately, attacks with firearms.

As Hanna Dotan asked during our conversation in the tent,

> What good is the lovely house I built with my own hands if I can't go outside? True, the children aren't scared, but I am very worried. Things can't go on like this.

None of them raised the elementary question, Why are we here in the first place? Their presence in the territories required no explanation, especially in view of Israel's possible full or partial withdrawal from these territories. Holding fast to the demand for a Greater Israel, the women refrained from ideological discussions and focused on the practical matter of the children's safety. By working the maternal issue, they shelved the unbridgeable political debate between themselves and other schools of thought in Israeli society. They felt that on that issue they could garner a broad base of support. Speaking about the safety of children, they urged listeners to accept a fait accompli in which the children were there (with the government's support, of course), and their safety somehow had to be ensured.

When forced to address the ideological issue, the women of Rachelim tried to bring it into line with the questions hurled at the settlers by their opponents, and the doubts and dissent sometimes voiced among the settlers. Their answers were part of their firm belief that Israelis are duty bound to occupy and hold all parts of the historical land of Israel, that living in the territories was a risk to be taken today in the interest of securing complete safety in the future.

At this point, it is tempting to analyze the women's structured discourse with their surroundings as a play between maternal *practice* and maternal *rhetoric*. Direct concern for the children's safety requires immediate departure from the area, while the rhetoric exploits the danger surrounding the children's lives. Did the event emerge as a maternal reaction to the reality? Or was it a counterfeit maternal discourse plucked from an altogether different discourse? A discourse of nationalism and the legitimate ownership of lands, of a messianic dream of the Greater Land of Israel—in short, the macronarrative of Gush Emunim? To discern which interpretation is appropriate to the event, the maternal narrative must be heard before it can be critiqued.

A novel element in the act of founding Rachelim was the women's lack of shame in verbalizing their fears for the safety of their children and the settlers in general. Their action, they claim, had originated in a mortal fear for the lives of their children. They introduced fear into the discourse of the settlers' community, a subject absent from the male ideological discourse and thus denied. The women's admission of fear was a source of empathy and identification. True, they did not seek the legitimization of this fear, as did the "Women in Black." They intended to eradicate it by harnessing its reverberations to the drive for increasing security.

DEVELOPING A FEMINIST STANDPOINT (?)

The fact that the women of Rachelim were not alienated from the value system in which family and maternity are central accounts for their ability to draw strength from the maternal practice. Using their maternal power, they strove to better their position in the social arena, or even control it for a while. In doing so, they somewhat paradoxically reformed (or redefined) maternal practice. The same traditional maternal motif that mobilized them was in partial contradiction to the task they had undertaken. In this sense, they may have been giving precedence to their responsibility to the new baby—the settlement. They had left their homes, gone off and left their children, husbands, jobs, kitchens, and households. It was not a total absence. The distances are short and they could and did travel home from Rachelim in no more than one hour; yet, the act of founding Rachelim, at least in its initial spontaneous stages, separated the women from their homes and routine roles.

Through these transitions between home and the camp, the women were rediscovering their practical status, by no means novel, but partially obscured by their traditional roles. They were discovering the motherhood that lies outside the glorifying discourse of family in Gush Emunim (Aran 1987; Burgansky 1977). They were experiencing the beginnings of acknowledgment of their status as fighting women capable of overcoming the guilt feelings cast at them from every direction. They enjoyed putting aside their sense of duty to husbands and children and carrying on with the task they had set themselves. As Avigail Haim of *Nekuda* reported from one of the women, "The kids are okay, the women next door are helping out, there isn't much in the fridge, but so what; it's no catastrophe" (1991, 12).

The women's settlement increasingly resembled a consciousness-raising workshop for women. With their husbands back home, at work, at the house, or at their studies and teaching, the women of Rachelim remained in the tent and came to reflect on their femininity. Through dialogue—among themselves; between themselves and the rest of the Jewish population of the territories; with the authorities, the army, the government, the media—negotiations on the subjects of their femininity, religiosity, and radical womanhood developed. Reckoning a whole rereading of the history of Gush Emunim was taking place, singling out and underlining the women's role in the success of the settling of the territories, even to the point of reducing the entire saga of the Greater Land of Israel to the women's unswerving, radical belief and devotion. In the interviews granted to journalists during the first few days, women avoided the term "feminism."[8] They replaced it, when offered, with terms including "motherhood" or "daughters of Israel." In time, however, new formulations began to appear. After hours of discussion and thought, and encouraged by the relative success they were gradually able to claim by staying put and becoming a role model for other groups, they dared to change their terminology. The following

are selected quotations from Shelomo Dror's article entitled "Women Settlers on the Frontier Line," in the newspaper *Hadashot* on February 2, 1992:

> [Naomi Sapir:] We didn't come here out of boredom or to rebel against conventions. We were the ones who created them in the first place. It was we who built this society.
>
> The men need to undergo a process to make them understand that we are equal partners. Fifty percent of the settlers are women. How can anyone come and tell me to stay at home. That's absurd. The women can go out and make their own livings and ensure their own security. We came out of the kitchen long ago.
>
> [Miri Mass:] They ask us how our action is viewed by the religious society around us, which wishes to see woman as "a helpmate" [Genesis 2:18]. I answer that for me coming to Rachelim didn't mean going beyond the pale. It wasn't the act of a woman who wanted to show the men that she too can do things like this. That much is clear by now. The distance between me and my grandmother is as vast as the Middle Ages. Once, women used to walk behind the men and even hide themselves. Today it's different.
>
> [Naomi to Miri:] I'm not crazy about all the violent action that's been taken by men recently. It lets a genie out of the bottle and who's to guarantee that extremist elements won't jump on the bandwagon and hurl it downhill? We women don't believe in the use of force but rather in quiet protest and persuasion.

Naomi summed up the feminine thesis that motivated the act of founding Rachelim and served as a kind of ideology:

> By remaining here we express the idea that life for us in Judea and Samaria[9] is not a political demonstration, but a simple and day-to-day wish to live. We state that life goes on and that our answer to death is—life! We organized on a feminine basis because the women provide the emotional and organic justification for the entire idea of settling. As to the political authorities, some of us are of the opinion that we should make do with exerting influence on the decision-makers, while others think that we should actually be in there [in parliament]. Either way, we've wasted a lot of time and there's a lot to do.

In February 1992, the women of Rachelim, with a large number of supporters (one thousand of whom were present at the Founding Conference), founded a women's lobby. They called it the Zionist Women's Lobby, since a nonpartisan women's lobby already existed. They claimed the existing lobby worked exclusively for the advancement of women's personal status and avoided confronting social and political issues. Their lobby did not deal with women's personal status, since they maintained they were satisfied with the status assigned to them within traditional Judaism. The new organization was founded to rejuvenate the nationalist-Zionist ethos as they understood it, on a foundation of women's solidarity.

At this point, the initially spontaneous activity began to take on organized aspects. The original act of the women was being formulated and distributed in pamphlets. The former government had promised the establishment of a permanent settlement at Rachelim, but the women continued their vigil in the tent for

two years. Major political changes in the region prevented the site from becoming a settlement; today fewer and fewer groups of female students go there to study.

Ruddick has defined a standpoint as an "engaged vision of the world opposed and superior to dominant ways of thinking" (1989, 128). The women of Rachelim were attempting to form precisely such a vision. Again, Ruddick's definition of feminist standpoint is "to generalize the potentiality made available to the activity of women, i.e., caring labour—to society as a whole" (1989, 132). This was what the women of Rachelim were speaking about. Still missing is an examination of how these actions and experiences, and the feminist consciousness they created, relate to political conclusions and the pursuit of peace. It remains to be seen just why all the women of Rachelim agree that there is no rightful place for Palestinian children and their mothers on the political level.

GIVING BIRTH TO A SETTLEMENT: FROM A CASE STUDY TO A TEST CASE

The Rachelim event can serve as a test case for two major theoretical concerns in feminist research:

1. The discourse about the practice of care. The essentialistic attributions rendered to this practice such as the pursuit of peace, and the impact of an expressed maternal discourse on alternative ones (Chodorow 1974; Gilligan 1982; Kruse and Sowerwine 1986; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Ruddick 1989; to cite a few).
2. The discourse about feminism and fundamentalism. There appears to be something attractive about the connection between fundamentalist radicalism and women's activism. Much has been written on this topic, especially on Middle Eastern Moslem women (El-Guindi 1981; Kandioti 1991; Macleud 1992; Moghadan 1993a, 1993b; Williams 1979; to cite a few).

The Practice of Care

Gush Emunim, of which the women of Rachelim form an essential part, is doing its utmost to sound a voice that has been growing progressively weaker in Israeli discourse. This voice conceives of the relations between Israel and its neighbors as a state of either war or surrender. Within this voice, the women of Rachelim were attempting to improvise a feminine chord. They sat in the tent and studied the Bible while their husbands were uprooting olive trees in Palestinian olive groves, obstructing highways, and demonstrating outside the homes of Intifada leaders with firearms in hand. The women preferred to describe their political action in a terminology of creating, giving birth, continuity, and education, which supplanted the usual vocabulary of seizing, struggling, constructing, and resisting. They claimed to have chosen a nonviolent way

of remaining in the territories. The fact that they wished to depict their activities in these terms while dissociating themselves from the male choices should not be underestimated. These choices were important, even if the women were not actually changing the objectives toward which the men were striving.

There is no doubt that their variation on the theme bears a close affinity to the model of "maternal thinking" and contains many of the elements identified by Ruddick. From their point of view, the women were responding to the violent acts of the Palestinians. Had they discussed Ruddick's theory, they might have wished to employ her sentence that at times it was necessary to "refuse to judge from a distance the violent response of others to violent assault on them" (1989, 138). The women of Rachelim were contending that until now they had stood behind and beside the men. Now, in this hour of urgency, they could no longer settle for this: the time had come to stand in the place of the men, or in front of them. Disappointment in the men's spirit led them to propose a feminine alternative. Although graceful and pleasant in tone, this alternative, however, was actually a form of feminine radicalism.

The women of Rachelim accepted as given the nationalist religious Zionist interpretation formulated in radical Jewish groups since the early seventies. The roots of this interpretation, which is shared not only by radicals, originate far from maternal practice in totally different layers of Israeli social reality. The essence of motherhood as expressed by the women of Rachelim—of responsibility for their children's well-being, of concern for their nurturing and social training—can only be understood within the context of that interpretation. The practice and experience of care indeed form a unique discipline bearing both emotional and mental power. This is a power immanent to the practice itself, a practice that at the moment is carried out mainly by women. The hermeneutics of this practice do not take place within a domestic void. It exists within a rich and complicated cultural structure.

The full realization of the experience of motherhood would mean evacuation of the territories, or at least an acknowledgment of the contradiction between the wish to ensure the safety of one's children and the national conflict. Other women in Israel face a similar problem. A mother in Tel Aviv can also be said to be undertaking unnecessary risks in the interest of realizing a given social goal—life in an independent Jewish state. If this mother does not believe in a totally national narrative, she may experience the contradiction between her two tasks and acknowledge the fact that her life in Israel poses a continuous threat to herself and her children, as well as a threat to the Palestinians. This is a difficult and demanding but real possibility. The women of Rachelim cannot live this incessant tension, which would endanger the messianic dream of Gush Emunim. Instead of combating the danger, they cultivate a metaphor in which the risk becomes an opportunity; thus, they desired the impossible: to realize the totality of a messianic, religious, radical dream through feminist practice. Since the feminine practice triggering the event in question bears only an artificial tie to

peacemaking, the very nature of this maternal practice is undermined. The sentimental peace of the women of Rachelim—which they represented as a kind of metaphor, a dream that will come true only with the coming of the Messiah—in turn presents motherhood under the same metaphor. By so doing, they are able to dodge their human/maternal responsibility for the safety of their children, or the safety of Palestinian mothers and children, and supplant it with the rival strugglers' duty to endure and win. They described Palestinian mothers and children as respected rivals with motives identical to theirs and their children's. The entire conflict between Jews and Arabs was recast by the women of Rachelim as a struggle between the mothers and children on either side. The grounds for identification become the grounds for the struggle.

The reports they stimulated in Israel's critical press took a skeptical, cynical view of their femininity, their motherhood, and their feminism. The practice itself, which drew all its strength from an authentic feminine and maternal experience, could not be expressed, because it was held captive by a fundamentalist religious worldview in which peace is part of a utopian messianic discourse.

Feminism and Fundamentalism

The combination of feminism and fundamentalism carries major dilemmas. At the beginning of this article, we noted the gap between the metanarrative of Western feminism and the Middle Eastern context. After several years of political-cultural efforts to detach the Jewish Israelis from the Orient, it is time to draw more on local experiences and decode them within their own context. Rather than going into cross-cultural comparisons, we suggest another dialogue: one between the local feminism/fundamentalism experience and the self-awareness of the group being examined. One would study a practice carried out and experienced by women in terms of whether there is a growth of reflexivity, of self-awareness, of observing other groups and thinking, talking about them (sometimes criticizing them). A growing self-awareness, a consciousness, can indicate empowerment. This parameter of self-awareness can serve as a tool for cross-cultural comparisons.

EPILOGUE

Feminist research drawing on the ideas of "maternal thinking" must examine the local context of each group of women. It must examine the cultural richness and diversity, the perceptions of history, and the overt and hidden social levels on which the maternal experience takes place. It is only within this context that the unique local meaning of the universal experience of care may be understood. There is no doubt that in making an effort to design a feminine solution of their own to a problem shared by the entire public, the women of Rachelim were

involved in innovation and in improving their status as women; however, from the standpoint of peacemaking, there is no automatic or even evolutionary connection. This kind of connection will be possible only when women and men together create a society within which the pacifying attributes of the practice of care are freed from their particularistic, nationalistic, and glorifying meanings.

NOTES

1. Gush Emunim is a radical offshoot of religious Zionism associated with the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook the senior (died 1935), as interpreted and taught by his son, Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi Kook (died 1982) (Don-Yehiya 1987). This religious-political movement embodies ultrarightist hawkish politics that focus on the "Greater Land of Israel" view that resists all efforts to dismember present-day Israel. Behind this ultra-Zionist ideology lies an original, mystical, messianic theology. The combination of mystical religion and political activism puts Gush Emunim under the canopy of fundamentalism (Aran 1991).

2. Rachelim is Hebrew for Rachels. Interestingly, Rachelim is the masculine form of the plural. Rachelot is the feminine form.

3. We obtained this quotation and others in this article through interviews conducted between November 1991 and June 1992. El-Or interviewed the women and Aran interviewed some of their husbands.

4. Even today, most of the orthodox women do not study Talmud, the major Jewish corpus that informs and determines the substance of religious Jewish life. They do, however, study the Bible, biblical exegesis, Mishna, and works of Jewish philosophy and moral philosophy.

5. Women's appearances become a major issue when they become visible as political actors. The women of Greenham Common, for example, received fairly extensive coverage in the British press. But Ruth Walesgrove (1984, 21) points out that all the papers related to the women's looks. They mocked their vulgar, sloppy, and dirty appearance, described the mud around their tents and caravans, and doubted their feminine sexuality. Gabriel's (1992) work on "Women in Black" relates to the same issue (see note 7).

6. Both men and women in Gush Emunim show a warm, hospitable attitude toward the soldiers because of their positive attitude toward the army, which they see as "the army of God." It carries a different meaning when done by women in the traditional context of domesticity.

7. "Women in Black" are Israeli women who maintain a peace vigil every Friday afternoon on several major intersections throughout Israel. Initiated as a result of the Intifada in 1988 by former activists in other peace movements, they wear black and carry placards reading "Stop the Occupation." Some of the women base their motivation for peace on their maternity. When passersby mock and curse them and tell them to go home and prepare the Sabbath and take care of their kids, one of them answered, "I am here taking care of my child" (Gabriel 1992, 320). Gabriel points out that these women stand quietly, passively, while the counterdemonstrations and onlookers are noisy. The women of Rachelim hold this against them and claim, "They do nothing, they are barren."

8. Israeli-born women hesitate to refer to themselves as feminists. Because of the Socialist-Zionist ideology that offered equality and because of their reluctance to associate themselves with the Anglo-Saxon aura attached to the feminist movement, they tend (or perhaps tended) to overlook the discrimination against women and deny its political aspects (Izraeli 1991; Swirski and Safir 1991).

9. The settlers insist on calling the West Bank Judea and Samaria to stress its Jewish past and present. Other Israelis use designations like "the bank" (*hagada*) or "the territories" (*hashtachim*). People on the political left refer to it as the "occupied territories."

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FRIENDSHIPS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES From Feminization to a More Heroic Image

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Cultural critics of the "feminization of love" have argued that heterosexual love has been feminized by a stress on emotional expressivity that masks "masculine" love, with its greater emphasis on instrumental behaviors. Using survey data, this article examines the extent to which the feminization-of-love hypothesis can be extended to same-sex friendships. Data analyses revealed that women's friendships were more expressive than men's only when a narrow, positive definition of expressivity was employed; men's friendships were found to be more aggressive, but no more instrumental, than those of women. These and other findings support the conclusion that women's friendships are more similar to the cultural images of heroic friendship and sisterhood than to the narrower image of feminized love.

In "The Feminization of Love" and *Love in America*, Francesca Cancian (1986, 1987) argues that a feminized and incomplete perspective on love predominates in the United States. Within that perspective, love is equated with emotional expression and talking about feelings, aspects of love that women are thought to prefer and in which women are said to be more skilled than men. Cancian further suggests that this tendency to equate love with expressive intimacy blinds us to what she calls the masculine style of love, with its greater emphasis on instrumental behaviors. The best relationships, she claims, are those that combine feminized and masculine styles of love into an androgynous whole.

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