Rachel Sharaby

Tripartite Division of Labor by Gender

"Feminine," "Masculine" and "Neutral" in the First Moshavei ʿOvdim

Abstract: Moshav society was based on the family property, and because of this outlook, the family property was planned as a geographic continuum, from the home, through the farmyard branches and the plantation to the fields for crops, a continuum that enlarged the range of options for women. This article claims that the special socio-economic structure of the moshav and the negotiations that women conducted around shifting the borders between the private and public spheres created a feminine identity in the moshav that was more active and stronger than that in the kibbutz. However, because of entrenched traditional outlooks, full equality was not created in the moshav, and the negotiations that women conducted sometimes ended with the reproduction of gender borders.

Introduction

This article discusses the place and gender roles of women in the first *moshavei ʿovdim* that were established in the Jezreel Valley in the 1920s. The present study endeavors to complete the missing link in the rich research literature that has examined the myth of equality of the sexes in the *yishuv* period by investigating the status of women in the framework of the moshav, which has not received scholarly attention.

Until the 1970s, there was a widespread myth in Israel regarding women's liberation and equality of the sexes in the kibbutzim and moshavim, and thus it was perpetuated in the provinces of memory of Zionist historiography. The national narrative presented an image of broad gender equality, according to which the women of the pioneering period were equal in status and roles to men, and they worked side by side with them in agriculture, building, paving roads and guard duty (Bernstein 1989, Sinai 2013).

The decline in the hegemony of the labor party and the strengthening of centrifugal forces in Israeli society that began because of political and social

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changes in the 1970s led to a re-examination of these images and the "secularization" of accepted myths. Today the disagreement continues over the Israeli collective memory, and it is undergoing a process of privatization (Ram 2001). We see a challenging of hegemonic memory and an effort to put in its place a diversity of alternative memories and narratives of groups that had been marginalized.

The new discourse has created a post-modern cultural climate for developing a new social perspective on researching Israeli society "from the ground up." "History from the ground up" is social history of daily life, of lower classes, of economic processes, which does not focus on the political and social thinking of elites, but rather on history from the point of view of groups on the lower rungs of the social ladder, which, according to this viewpoint, are an active, responsive element that influences the actions of the ruling class (Bernstein 1999, 2008).

The awakening of the Israeli feminist revolution since the 1970s, under the influence of the worldwide women's liberation movement (Ben Artzi 2001; Aaronsohn 1992), gave a push to gender research on women at the start of the *yishuv*. This research not only contributes to completing the missing women's narrative and to re-evaluation of the myths of the past, but also creates new insights into the society in general. Gender is perceived as an important factor in political-social-cultural organization and as a central component of the narrative: "from the center to the margins" – in the language of Melman (1997).

Private and public spheres

Gender-based division of labor is a world-wide phenomenon based on well-defined patterns that match the traditional pattern of the female-domestic private domain and the male-political public domain. The division between the two domains of existence, paralleling the division between the sexes, creates different roles for men and women and differing expectations of them, and accordingly assigns stereotypical characteristics to each (Lips 1988; Rosaldo 1974; Sacks 1974; Spencer-Wood and Camp 2013).

Feminist research has already identified gender distinction as a hierarchical and hegemonic way of thinking and acting that constructs power relations and excludes the "Other," the feminine, from domains that are defined as "public" (Atzmon 2001). Women's assignment to the private sphere is explained as being connected with their unique biological function of giving birth (Tiger and Shepher 1975). However, the social derivatives of this uniqueness are much more than what is biologically necessary. This dichotomization, perceived as self-evident, is

in fact an ideological-political separation, which serves as a basic cultural mechanism for excluding women from politics.

The functional distinction between the sexes was institutionalized with the formation of industrialized nations in the nineteenth century. The industrial revolution and the development of market economics brought the production process out of the walls of the home and sharpened the differences between the spheres. The world of the family was considered a place of trust and giving, and a woman's satisfaction was derived from the accomplishments of her male partner and her children and in giving free service in the framework of the home, or in exchange for low wages in the labor market. The world of compensation, in contrast, connected with the man, was considered an effective and rational place meriting prestige and societal esteem (Herzog 1994: 29–31; Fletcher 1999; Pateman 1988).

In the late twentieth century traditional gender norms were called into question due to various factors including: increased levels of education, women going out to work outside the home, the development of the feminist movement and the expansion of ideologies espousing human rights. A new pattern of relationships was created known as "neo-traditional," characterized by flexibility in defining roles of men and women (Shrift 1982). Despite this, from multiple studies it appears that change in the territories of division of labor did not take place: the woman's going out to work may have enlarged her territory, but it was not necessarily accompanied by a converse process of the man's entry into the home sphere.

The prominent feature of the modern nuclear family is still the "second shift" in women's work (Hochschild and Machung 1990: 4; Chafetz and Hagan 1996; Van-Berkel 1997), and the reproduction of traditional gender roles in the household and in the labor market. In recent decades, changes have taken place in women's status in Israel, and the expectation that they will go out to work has become a general societal norm (Elias 2002; Yishai 1997). Despite this it becomes clear that in practice, the change in status is not reflected in patterns of gender division of labor (Herzog 1994; Fogiel-Bijaoui 2005; Aharon 2006).

This article examines the pattern of division of the spheres in the initial period of the first *moshavei ʿovdim* that were established in the Jezreel Valley in the 1920s. The *moshav ʿovdim* operated as an agricultural society, cooperative in the realm of production but not in the realm of consumption, in which the nuclear family was the basic social unit – in contrast to the kibbutz. in which the individual was the basic social unit. Against the background of the egalitarian (separate but equal) perspective of the founders of the moshav and the indispensability of the woman in the actualization of its basic principles, my study will investigate whether a flexible model of division of labor was created in the moshav.

The approach of urban planning, which is characterized by physical distance between the centers of residence and of employment and services, makes it difficult for women to go out into the public sphere and strengthens patterns that circumscribe them to household activities (Davidovitch-Marton 1991; Saegert 1981). In the moshav, by contrast, it may be assumed that the physical planning of the family plot, which created a continuum between the home and the farmyard branches, the plantation and the crop fields (grains and hay), and also the joint activities of the couple, created special interactions between the pattern of woman's work and her physical environment, and increased her range of possible options.

Research method

This study is based on vast archival material, including interviews with women members of the moshavim, mainly recorded and transcribed in the 1980s. Some of these primary oral history sources are found in the archives of the moshavim. Most are found in the archives of the Jezreel Valley regional council.

In archives and libraries I found a treasury of recollections written by women, including autobiographies – a small number of which are published here for the first time – and also writings by by male moshav members (mainly from Nahalal) and anthologies that brought together recollections of women from all the moshavim, letters and records. Stories and recollections of women also appeared in the village newsletters, in notebooks, in family files, in anniversary books and in newspapers from the period: in the weekly *Hapoʿel hatzaʿir* and in the journal *Telamim*.

From the large number of women, most of them anonymous, who put their recollections into writing, one gains the impression that this is the story of the women in the moshavim and not the story of one stratum, from the political elite (mainly from later years) among the women moshav members, like Devorah Dayan and Shoshana Yaffe. Most of the recollections were written in later years, because of the lack of time, hard work and fatigue that were their portion in the initial years of establishing and strengthening the moshavim. It also seems that the problems of formal political equality and socio-economic equality did not trouble them in the way they troubled the women of the kibbutzim.

The research method is based on content analysis of the written testimonies. Using a method that relies greatly on testimonies of women from a later period entails a certain difficulty that is characteristic of research based on life stories in general (Atzmon 2001: 137; Bertoux 1981). At a later age there is a tendency

toward a certain coming to terms with events and conflicts that took place, and toward idealization of the past. This means that the life story does not represent a random sampling of events, but rather discloses the interpretation that the individual gives to his life and the events that he experienced over the course of it (Geertz 1990: 26; Lomsky-Feder 1997: 60). Bearing this in mind, life stories of the women of the moshavim construct "history from the bottom up," and their importance is as a cultural text that combines personal and social meanings.

The women were not satisfied with simply describing their experiences, their difficulties and their burdensome daily schedules, but also described their feelings, their roles and the way in which they perceived these roles. The life stories of women in the moshavim complete the women's side of the story of the pioneering enterprise through their own national narrative, an alternative to the male narrative of its time (see also Berlovitz 2003).

Founding the moshavei ʿovdim

The *moshav ʿovdim* was a specialized form of agricultural-communal settlement that expressed the ideology of Socialist Zionism. Its uniqueness lay in its integration of individual initiative and collectivism (Geva 2006). Eliezer Yaffe, the ideologue of the moshav, was the first to formulate the idea of the *moshav ʿovdim* into a comprehensive theory and operational plan (1919). Yaffe and his colleagues saw it as an instrument for realizing several goals: the national goal – strengthening the connection between the worker and his land; the societal goal – creating a just society, based on equality, justice, brotherhood and freedom of the individual; and the economic goal – creating a place of steady income for the agricultural worker, which would be independent as much as possible of outside sources. In accordance with these goals, the principles of the moshav were formulated: land under national ownership, independent labor, mixed economy, family farm, mutual assistance and cooperation in purchasing, selling and operating cooperative institutions (Yaffe 1919; Dayan 1945: 15–38).

Under the Yaffe's influence, the first practical steps began to establish a *moshav ʿovdim*. The first attempt was carried out in 1919 by members of the Ahdut Haʿavodah party, who founded Moshav Hamra in the Galilee (Assaf 1954: 30–31), which was established over the course of just a few months. That same year, the Hapoʿel Hatzaʿir party decided to begin practical preparations to establish a *moshav ʿovdim*. A committee was elected to prepare a list of candidates experienced in agricultural work and to present a practical plan to the Jewish Agency. At the assembly, which took place at the *moshav poʿalim* Ein Ganim in Petach

Tikva in 1920, the members of the central committee of Hapoʿel Hatzaʿir and the members of the organization of the first *moshav ʿovdim* conducted a discussion on the principles of the plan and formulated the by-laws of the moshav according to Yaffe's model. In 1921, after the Zionist congress approved the budget, a settlement organization led by Yaffe set up and established the first *moshav ʿovdim* – Nahalal, in the Jezreel Valley (Assaf 1954: 35–49; Nevo 1978).

Among the founders of Nahalal there was a large measure of homogeneity: most of them had arrived during the second *ʿaliyah*, from Eastern Europe, mainly from Russia, and most of them were members of the Hapoʿel Hatzaʿir party and had families. A few had studied agriculture in institutions of higher learning in Russia and the United States, but most of them had obtained their agricultural knowledge and experience from independent learning in different cooperative settlement frameworks in Israel. They arrived at Nahalal from the cooperative *kevutzah* Degania; from the cooperative in Merḥavya, which saw cooperative settlement as the synthesis between socialism and individualism; from agricultural training farms: Kinneret, Hulda, Ben Shemen and Mikveh Yisrael; and from *moshavei poʿalim*, in which members were employed as salaried workers in the surrounding towns.

The members combined a socialist perspective with a strong emphasis on individualism, on which account they had not found their place in the *moshavot* of the first *ʿaliyah* and also not in the cooperative *kevutzot* of the second *ʿaliyah* (1900–1914. Most of the immigrants were members of socialist and Zionist movements in eastern Europe, mainly in Russia). They disagreed with full communal living and lacked faith in the ability of the *kevutzot* to maintain a collective way of life over the long term.

A similar social profile characterizes the members of the organization that founded Kfar Yehezkel in 1922 (Idan 1989: 147), but its members belonged to the Ahdut Haʿavodah party, which saw in the kibbutz and the work brigade a preferred way of life. Up to the middle of the 1920s, three additional *moshavei ʿovdim* were founded: Balfouriyya, Tel Adashim and Merḥavya (Idan 1993: 79, 81; Gutman 1991: 58–75).

The principle of the family farm

The family farm is the distinctive feature of the *moshav ʿovdim*. Eliezer Yaffe rejected the life of the *kevutzah*or the kibbutz, because, in his opinion, these were in conflict with family life, which was preferable in his view to collective living. Yaffe saw the family as an expression of the individual, who was repressed by

the kibbutz, and claimed that the life of the collective disturbed the harmony of family life and not the reverse (Yaffe 1919: 13–14).

Young men and women who agreed with this position saw in the moshav a way of life preferable to that of the *kevutzah*, which in their opinion did not make room for the family and for the personal fulfillment of the woman. For example, Shoshana Rechthand (who later married Eliezer Yaffe) wrote in 1920, that the woman, though she was called an "agricultural worker" or a "farmer" in the different settlement frameworks, including the *kevutzot*, spent her time on housework and not in the farm or field. In contrast, "we must not forget the principal trend of the moshav, which is not only to set up organized life and pleasant work, but also to find in general the way of life through independent work."[1]

According to the principles of the *moshav ʿovdim*, the family is the independent foundational unit of the moshav; all family members are partners in creating it and bearing responsibility for it (Assaf 1954: 77). Because, according to the rules of the moshav, the work on the farm must be done by the settler and his family by means of their own labor, without hired workers, the trend was to create a mixed farm (with many branches), an autarchy, that would provide most of the family's consumption and be suited to the family's abilities and needs (Yaffe 1919: 12–30).

Since the nuclear family served as the foundational social and economic unit, and the idea of private initiative was the leading value – a design of the moshav was required that divided the plot of land into a number of independent units according to the number of families within it. The ideal of equality that the moshav espoused required its designers to create uniformity in the quality of the farm units, in their size and in the distance of the residence from the agricultural area and the center of public services. The houses of the residents were concentrated in a circle surrounding a central square, with close accessibility to it, in order to assure the effectiveness of the services and to enable community activities to take place.

In the first model of the moshav (the "circular model"), according to which the first moshavim were built, the agricultural plots were not divided into different sections at a distance from the moshav, as happened in the *moshavei ʿovdim* that were founded at the end of the 1920s, but rather were adjacent to the homes (Hochman 1975). The concentration of the land made it possible for the home to be close to the cultivation area, allowing the mothers and children to participate in the farm work. The plot on which the home of the farmer was built filled a dual function: It was the consumer center for the family – whose basis was the

1 Shoshana Rechthand, "The woman in the moshav ʿovdim," *Hapoʿel hatzaʿir* 13(35): 5 (1920).

residence; and it was also a production center – where farm buildings and courtyard branches (the chicken coop, the dairy barn and the vegetable garden) were located. The plot next to the house lot served as a plantation, and the plot at a greater distance was for cultivating field crops. The integration of the functions of consumption and production reflected the connection and constant mutual interaction between the family and its means of production, which were at the base of the principle of the family farm.

The founders of the moshav wrote that the woman was a member equal in rights and responsibilities and a full partner in the development of the family farm (Yaʿakov 1946: 26–30). The perspective of the men derived from the indispensability of the woman in actualizing the principle of independent labor and the establishment of the farm, but also from liberal outlooks. Eliezer Yaffe protested against the discrimination against women in *yishuv* society and noted that "on the question of our women here in our land...there is a side that is more painful and prominent in the injustice of it...we have been used for generations to envision the woman as the image and shadow of the man...but the woman herself, alone and separate from the man, we do not take into account in any matter...they [the women] will certainly accompany the first ones [the men], whether as cooks and nurses or as wives to husbands, and not more...at the foundation of our young *yishuv*, from its outset until now, the woman has been considered superfluous..." (Yaffe 1919: 20–21).

In Yaffe's opinion, the roles of women should not be limited to caring for children and the kitchen; the society should enable her social and public involvement, for: "she also has a portion in the land and in her independent life, not dependent on any man. And in the future forms of the *moshavei ʿovdim* there must be a place for women as there is for men (Yaffe 1919: 19–21). Yaffe himself had already implemented his egalitarian opinions in 1912–1913, when he settled at Kinneret Farm with the members of the Haʾikar hatzaʿir group (which was founded in the United States in 1908, and whose members went through training before they immigrated). For the first time in the country, women's work on the farm was valued as men's work, and the women workers who worked on the farm, whether in housework or in agriculture, received equal pay to that of their male colleagues – a total innovation in the *yishuv* reality of that time. Because of the difficulties encountered by the woman worker in penetrating workplaces, Yaffe even called upon the men to give prefererence to women workers in every place where this was possible, in order to stand up for the weak (Shiloh 1983: 92).

The arrival

Most of the women of the first *moshavei ʿovdim* arrived in the country during the period of the second *ʿaliyah* with the goal of being part of the social-national project and of fulfilling themselves. But their exclusion from central roles in the socio-political arena and the barriers piled up in their paths as women brought them disappointment and led them to leave various settlement frameworks, mainly collective ones, for the moshav. In the new framework they sought to change their situation from its foundation, to fulfill their aspirations, to create independently and to take full responsibility.[2]

The choice of moshav life also derived from the desire of both marriage partners, having matured and started families, to cease the wearying, itinerant search for workplaces and settle down.[3] Similarly, with the birth of children and the growth in the number of mothers, communal life in the *kevutzah* created difficulties that motivated members to leave for settlements that were suited to family life. The aspiration of the mothers to raise their children on their own and not to place them in the hands of caregivers in children's houses was also a significant motivating factor in their turning to the moshav. Aside from a few isolated cases of women being forced to leave the *kevutzah* and follow their husbands, the decision to join the moshav was generally a joint decision of both members of the couple,[4] who had previously belonged to the settlement organization. There were even cases in which women, having become mothers, pressured their husbands to settle in the moshav (Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 75). Devorah Dayan wrote in her memoirs (1957: 86):

> the aspiration of the mother to be the one who raises her children with her own hands, to be the one who accompanies them, unmediated, was certainly one of the main rationales for a mother going to the *moshav ʿovdim*. The child was the main point of our lives, in the family and in public.

2 Hannah Adler Sadeh-Hen, "My life" [Toledot ḥayay] (transcribed tape), Kfar Yehezkel archive (undated); Tehiya Liberson, "The woman worker in the moshav" [Haʿovedet bamoshav], *Hapoʿel hatzaʿir* 19(3–4): 15 (1926). See also the writings of Yonah Shofman and Haya (Bilinki) Livneh, in *Kfar Yehezkel* (1948): 71–73, 108.

3 Haya Gottlieb from Balfouriyya, tape transcription, tape 5b: 01-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Margalit 1971: 56; Rosen 1984: 66–69.

4 Labor Movement Archives (henceforth: LMA), Lavon Institute, P/41145 (papers of Emek Yizraʿel settlements); Margalit 1962: 24; Tamir and Sharett 1971–1974. vol. 4: 90, 98, 113.

The image of the woman in the moshav is thus not the traditional feminine image of a woman who follows her husband and shapes her life according to his needs. From her perspective, an individual home in the moshav was intended to solve her difficulties as a woman and as a mother, which had not been solved by the collective lifestyle. This analysis, which points to the place of the woman/the family as one of the main factors in the movement of workers of the second *ʿaliyah* to permanent settlement, reinforces the hypothesis that the situation of women is a true generator of historical change (Ben Artzi 2001) and sheds light on gender issues during a significant chapter in Israel's settlement history.

Despite the perspective of the family as the basic unit of the moshav, a single woman – and likewise a single man – could be accepted in the settlement organization and in the moshav as a full member in her own right and receive a farm (Yaffe 1919: 76–78). A few single women did receive farm units, but the moshav was not a good place for a single woman, since traditional perspectives were still deeply rooted. The sufferings of Tehiyah Lieberson, a well-known fighter for women's right to work in agriculture, are a testament to this; she tried to run a farm on her own at Nahalal but was forced to leave the moshav after a long string of pressures, from derision to economic discrimination (Lieberson 1970: 128–138).

The first period of breaking ground ("the period of conquest") was collective. A group of 20 or 30 men went to the settlement site and put up tents. The advance force stayed in place for a few months and began preparing the infrastructure: draining swamps, excavating channels, paving the access road and preparing the land for farming. Because of the difficult conditions, it was decided within the organization that women and children would not go to the site with the male group members, and the women did not complain, despite their exclusion from participation in establishing the settlement. The advance group lived collectively, with two members running the household and the communal kitchen.[5]

After several months, additional members gradually began to arrive, and with them also women and children. Huts were built, in which several families dwelled, and the residents lived communally (Dayan 1926: 18–19, 27; Kushnir 1956: 31, 35). Women members later related that they came to the moshav with a sense of happiness and responsibility (Devorah Dayan 1957: 39), but their expectation of being partners in the creation quickly dissipated, for while the men continued energetically with various public works, they – the women – were left unemployed, since the plots had not yet been allocated, and therefore their mood was quite depressed (Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 174).

5 Miriam Fine from Nahalal, tape transcription, tape 2a: 01-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Dayan 1926: 5–6, 17–18; Rubin, 1969: 26, 44.

A short time after the women and children arrived at Nahalal, the men decided to move them to Nazareth for fear of malaria and warnings of an impending Arab attack on the settlement. The few women members who stayed in place worked in the communal kitchen or joined in the physical labors of the men. The men made weekly visits to Nazareth, to report to the women on the work being done and to consult with them, and the women members visited Nahalal once in a while (Mor 1994: 164).

In retrospect, the women wrote that in Nazareth they experienced great emotional distress and that an inexcusable injustice had been done to them, because they were prevented from actual participation in the first creation of the village – an opportunity that would not return. For example, Sonya Bloch wrote: "The story of Nazareth must serve as a lesson. When you go to build a new point, you need to start together with the members as equal partners in rights, and also in risks" (Nahalal 1947: 114–116).

After about eight months, the women "rebelled" and made an early return to Nahalal, which was under construction. They insisted that not only the men were going to create the village, but also the women, and they wanted to work shoulder to shoulder with the men, in all the life that was emerging there (Nahalal 1947: 114, 217).

About a year after arriving at the site, with the completion of the allocation of plots, the second stage began, in which the family farms were built jointly by the couples. They built the huts and farm buildings together, brought water in barrels, prepared the plots, planted trees and vegetables and started their livestock.[6] The women members reported that after a period of discouragement they felt enthusiastic about working with the men and feeling the connection with the land alongside them.

The Household

The daily occupation with housework was solely the woman's responsibility: tidying and cleaning the house and farmyard, washing the dishes and the floors, and doing laundry in the yard, in a copper tub heated by a fire made using logs and brush that she had gathered. On days when she was sick or late at night, she sewed and patched clothes for the whole family (Life of a pioneer 1965: 45–46). Female solidarity emerged in these years of difficulty and deprivation, and the

6 Sonia Bloch and Bella Horowitz, in *Nahalal* (1947): 229–230; Edna Shulweis from Tel Adashim, tape transcription, tape 36: 04-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Kushnir 1937: 26.

older women guided their younger counterparts in the household tasks (Grinker 1976: 90–99).

In the initial period, the women rotated baking bread in in the large communal oven. Afterwards, each member built an oven in his yard, and the woman heated it with a pile of sticks she had gathered. The daily cooking on the paraffin stove or the primus was also entrusted to the women. In the absence of refrigeration, they prepared cheese, sour cream and butter from leftover milk. They also made tomato juice and wine, crushed olives and prepared grape jam.[7]

The exhausting housework was done without help from the men, except in isolated instances when the woman was pregnant or after giving birth (Nahalal 1971: 111; Kushnir 1956: 61). Thus, the men did not change their role patterns and did not enter the "feminine" world of the home, and therefore no egalitarian paradigm was created in the intra-family domain. The women of the moshav did not conduct a gender struggle and did not initiate change, because they, like the men, operated according to normative expectations. However, this division of roles did empower women of the moshav to a certain extent. In the absence of commercial services such as those in the city and of communal services such as those in the kibbutz, the husband was completely dependent on the household services of his wife.

The only areas of the home in which there was a mixing of roles were selling the agricultural products, buying food in the moshav grocery store and managing the family budget by both members of the couple (Dayan 1961: 136, 335; Life of a pioneer 1965: 69–71). In filling this function, the woman went out into the public sphere and received greater authority than had been given her in the traditional patriarchal Jewish family in the diaspora, or in other settlement frameworks in pre-state Israel (Bernstein 1992).

The woman took care of the children, and, like her partner, she saw motherhood and childcare as her natural roles. She did not try to blur her sexuality or gender identity, but rather emphasized her status as a "woman-mother" who enjoys the experience of motherhood and the commitment to caring for and educating her child in the way of independent work, independence and joy in creativity (Grinker 1976: 240; Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 76; Shefer 1979: 96).

The men and women members saw motherhood as a central factor in socialization in the moshav. In their view, the women were meant to educate the children in the values of the moshav and to raise up a generation that would continue the path of the founders. This maternalistic approach was not essentially

7 Haya Gottlieb from Balfouriyya, tape transcription, tape 65: 06-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Rachel Margolin from Tel Adashim, tape transcription, tape 4a: 01-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive.

different from the ideologies of maternalism and pro-natalism in various nationalist societies, including that created by Zionism, which saw motherhood as a national mission (Elboim-Dror 1992; Melman 1997). However in the moshav the institutions of motherhood took on a special importance and thus merited a high level of prestige, due to the socio-economic structure of the moshav, which had at its center the individual farm, based exclusively on the labor force of the family.

Courtyard farms and field work

The branches of the chicken coop and vegetable garden were located on the plot of the family hut, since both men and women members saw them as "feminine" branches of the farm (Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 174; Nahalal 1941: 13, 31). It is thus possible to see the private sphere in the *moshav ʿovdim* as a wider territory than that of its accepted definition in the research literature.

The woman member raised different kinds of fowl in the farmyard, mostly chickens, and placed the brooding hens in crates in the kitchen or under the bed. The chicks were incubated in crates covered with netting, heated by hot water bottles wrapped in cloths that were changed every few hours. Because of the difficult conditions, the women showed gender solidarity in the communal purchase of chickens and giving guidance for incubating eggs.

After a number of years of raising chickens that wandered around, couples began building small chicken coops in the farmyards. The ongoing work in the chicken coop – which included collecting, washing and sorting the eggs and transporting them to market – was assigned to the woman (Nahalal 1947: 288–289; Tamir and Sharett 1971–1974, vol. 3: 129). The chicken coop was considered a supporting branch and was the fourth in income production after the field crops, the dairy barn and the plantations (Dayan 1931: 58-75; Kfarim Ivriʿim 1947: 32–58; Kushnir 1937: 36-39; 72–76). However, it developed well in the initial years, provided eggs for the home, increased the family income and was considered by the members as an important branch.

From her first day in the moshav, the woman also worked in the vegetable garden that was next to the house. The ongoing work, which required a lot of bending down, was not easy, but the women recounted that they felt happiness and pride that they were growing food for their families with their own hands and in direct contact with the land (Yardenai 1989: 50; Margalit 1962: 148–149). The woman would take the family's extra vegetables to the grocery, which sold them collectively to Tnuva, the central marketing institution, and in exchange she purchased food supplies there (Dayan 1961: 335; Nahalal 1971: 135). The vegetable plot was also considered a supporting branch, and the profit from selling

its produce was fifth on the scale of income sources. It served as an additional source of income for the family, provided their daily vegetable needs and, through exchange, also provided other necessary food items.

Private marketing was contrary to the cooperative principle of the moshav, since, through communal marketing of the agricultural products, the moshav council collected members' fees that funded the operation of its institutions. However, there were women who, together with their husbands, marketed vegetables privately in the market in Afula in order to earn more, and thus increased the family income.[8] A few women with their husbands even initiated and developed cottage industries of making vegetable preserves which were sold outside the moshav at a handsome profit and helped to pay off debts (Grinker 1976: 100; Life of a pioneer 1965: 69–71).

In the vegetable branch, like the chicken coop, the women of the moshav produced and even made economic achievements in areas that were considered in the moshav as part of the private sphere. However, since these branches served as a necessary source of provisions and income for the family, they filled an important role also in the public sphere. For this reason, it seems that the man was willing to enter these "feminine" territories by helping with the marketing and various other aspects of the work, mainly in the winter months, in which he was freer from work in the field crops (Dayan 1961: 131, 135; Margalit 1971: 36–37).

The dairy barn, which was also located on the same plot as the family hut, and the plantation, located on a plot a short distance from it, were the common farm responsibilities of both partners. They saw the work of the dairy barn as a family farm occupation throughout the year and carried out the tasks with a small amount of functional separation (Nahalal 1971: 135; Kushnir 1937: 38). The dairy barn was the central artery of the farm and the second in level of income production after the field crops.

In the initial years, the couples also worked together in developing the plantation for personal provisions and for marketing, and this branch was third in income production. The women did not take part in "masculine" physical labors such as plowing and fertilizing, but they worked with the men in the rest of the tasks (Grinker 1976: 178–179; Life of a pioneer 1965: 54).

The field crops (grains and hay), grown in fields located at a distance, provided the farm's main income and the grains that fed both humans and livestock. These were the man's responsibility and took up most of his time and energy (Gutman 1991: 77–78; Kushnir 1937: 27–33). Sometimes, especially in the busy

8 Rachel Margolin from Tel Adashim, tape transcription, tape 4a: 01-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Kushnir 1937: 42.

seasons, the woman penetrated this "masculine" occupational area and worked in the distant field crops, sowing, harvesting, shucking corn and gathering the harvest. She took her small child with her to the field, and, despite the difficulty, she felt joy and satisfaction from this direct contact with the land.[9]

In the first years, some of the couples still did not have children, and these women were more involved in the field work.[10] In those years, too, because of shortages, there was cooperation in mechanized agriculture and animals were shared among members, and on the days when the man was awaiting his turn, he would work in the "feminine" niches: in the chicken coop, the vegetable garden and the dairy barn (Kushnir 1937: 30; Shefer 1979: 97). In the winter months, too, or when he returned from his work in the fields in the evening, he worked in the farmyard (Kushnir 1956: 112).

Political-cultural activity

The assembly was the highest institution of the moshav, which numbered about 80 families, and reflected its being a democratic organization. In the assembly, decisions were made by majority vote, and each year the moshav council was elected, along with committees that managed various areas of activity. It was in the assemblies that issues in the emerging village were decided. Awareness of their importance led women to participate in the assemblies and even to take part in the discussions, although their presence was smaller than that of the men, because they were caring for young children (Devorah Dayan 1957: 36, 42; Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 88; 96).

Despite the activity of women in the assemblies, only one woman member at a time – usually an unmarried one – was appointed in the initial years to the seven-member council. Like the other members, she volunteered for a turn in the role of council coordinator for a number of months. At Nahalal, a feminist struggle took place over putting a woman representative on the council. Under pressure from the women, the general assembly of 1922 decided that every composition of the council would include one woman, who would be concerned with the women members' issues, which in their opinion were being ignored by the council (Margalit 1962: 388; Nahalal 1947: 112).

9 Rachel Barkin from Kfar Yehezkel, tape transcription, tape 9: 01-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive; Margalit 1962: 57–58, 153, 174; Shefer 1979: 97.

10 LMA, P/41145 (papers of Emek Yizraʿel settlements); Hannah Adler Sadeh-Hen, "My life" [Toledot ḥayay] (transcribed tape), Kfar Yehezkel archive (undated).

The women thus struggled to remove boundaries between the private and public spheres and to change the distinctive gender-based mindset. However, the fact that only one woman member was elected to the councils of the moshavim shows that the women themselves chose men and preferred not to take on the responsibility involved in managing the affairs of the moshav, due to their exhausting struggles with the men and also to the traditional perspectives on gender by which they were also bound.

The normative expectations of men and women created a clear sex distinction in the moshav committees. The women were elected to "feminine" committees: education, culture and mutual assistance,[11] which suited the their motherly image and their "natural" characteristics. Thus, in entering "feminine" niches, they went out into the public sphere without calling into question the gender-based division of labor, or the assumption that politics was a matter for men.

Committees in "secondary" areas, such as education and welfare, were made up primarily of women, while committees whose areas of activity were seen as central were controlled by men.[12] These included the economic and professional committees, the grocery and audit committees and the secondary economic committees, including those that handled the branches for which the woman was responsible or in which she was a partner. Both in normal times and in times of heightened security unrest in the area, the security committee was assigned to the men, while the women and the children stayed in a secure location. The women protested the fact that they did not carry weapons and did not participate in the defense of the settlements (Kfar Yehezkel 1948: 189), but the situation remained in place.

During the initial period of Kfar Yehezkel, no women were elected to any committees, but after a struggle in the 1930s, in which women fought for their right to vote and be elected, they achieved a victory, and at the general assembly it was decided that each committee, social or economic, would include one woman member (Margalit 1971: 38).

The explanation for the absence of women members from positions of political representation, despite their relatively high level of participation in the assemblies that set the composition of the public institutions, was given by the women themselves.[13] From their statements it appears that entrenched

11 See the minutes of the general assemblies at Nahalal from the 1920s, Nahalal archive, 102/g; Grinker 1976: 101–104, 240–247; *Kfar Yehezkel* (1948): 82, 168–169; Margalit 1971: 41; Edna Shulweis from Tel Adashim, tape transcription, tape 4a: 04-447, Emek Yizraʿel archive.

12 See the minutes of the general assemblies at Nahalal, Nahalal archive, 102/g.

13 Sarah Kaplan,"From the opening remarks of the women members' discussion" [Midivrei petiḥah lesiḥat ḥaverot], *Telamim* 94: 24 (Tevet 1934); Margalit 1971: 38; *Nahalal* (1947): 231.

traditional opinions led both men and women moshav members to see political activity as suited to men and not to the abilities and talents of women, but it is clear that the men's opposition to women's involvement also obstructed them in this area.

The women of the moshav thus went out into the political realm but were excluded from positions of power and centers of decision-making in the moshav and were left on the margins. Devorah Dayan's used a metaphor to express her protest against the gender division in the political dimension of the moshav:

> The external construction of Nahalal – center and circumference – can symbolize our lives. In the center, the social life is reflected. There problems are solved, rules are confirmed. There the reality of women is not recognized. The circle [the physical layout of the moshav] is divided into sections, and each section is a separate farm. And here the lives of women are rich and wide-ranging. (Dayan 1957: 42)

Conclusion

The moshav ideology saw the woman as a partner in establishing and developing the family farm. Because of this approach, the family's unit was planned as a physical continuum including the home, the farmyard branches, the plantation and the field crops. From the writings of women, it becomes clear that this continuum, along with the joint functions performed by the couple, created a special pattern of gender-based division of labor in the moshav. This division was based on a tripartite distinction (Rosner and Palgi 1976: 100) of areas of responsibility and tasks performed by the couple: "feminine," "masculine" and "neutral."

The interior-family area was the sole responsibility of the woman, and the man never entered this "feminine" household world. Nevertheless, there was a mixing of roles in managing the family budget, and the woman had authority in making decisions and control over the family's economic resources.

The branches of the chicken coop and the vegetable garden were also defined as "feminine," and due to this the household sphere in the moshav was a wider territory than usual. These branches served as a necessary source of provisions and income for the family and practically speaking filled a function in the public sphere. Therefore, the man entered these territories and took part in them, despite their being "feminine."

The dairy barn, the central economic artery of the farm after the field crops, and the plantation, as the second most important income-producing branches,

were "neutral." The hard physical labor in these branches was the joint responsibility of the couple, and the functional separation in them was minimal.

The distant field crops – the main source of income for the farm – were a "masculine" branch. However, since in the first years some of the couples in the moshav still did not have children, there were women who were in large measure partners in the field work. Likewise, because of the shortage of workers, a number of members shared the use of mechanical equipment and work animals. Because of this, on the days when the man was waiting his turn, as well as in the long winter months, he would devote more time to working in the "feminine" and "neutral" branches.

In the political sphere, the women of the moshav were quite active. They participated in general assemblies and even succeeded in their struggle to elect women representatives to the moshav council and the committees. However, they did not succeed in actualizing their rights to political influence and were excluded from centers of decision-making.

The unique socio-economic structure of the moshav and the social negotiation of shifting gender boundaries thus created a female identity in the moshav that was stronger than in other forms of settlement. This achievement, it must be emphasized, entailed many hours of exhausting toil, and a high physical and emotional cost, mainly to the mothers, and was concomitant with a lack of political power.

Overall, it may be said that women in the moshav achieved responsibility, partnership and authority in many areas and received rewards like admiration, prestige and satisfaction, and the importance of each individual was emphasized. However, partnership does not mean equality. The entrenched traditional outlooks among both the men and the women did not allow for complete equality of the sexes or reversal of gender roles in the moshav.

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