Giving Voice to a Matriarch: Leah in Contemporary Israeli Dramatic Monologues

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Abstract

In the book of Genesis, the voice of Leah, the Matriarch, is being heard only twice. Many contemporary poems written on Leah give this almost voiceless character a voice. The article discusses Leah's diverse voices in dramatic monologues written by Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld, Shimshon Meltzer, Yakov Azriel, Rivka Miriam, and Rena Lee.

Introduction

In Genesis, the voice of Leah the Matriarchs is heard only twice: when she names her sons and daughter, explaining each name (Gen. 29:32-35; 30:9-13, 17-21), and during her short conversation with Rachel, her sister, discussing the Mandrakes her son Reuben brought from the fields (Gen. 30:14-15). Apart from these two occasions, Leah's voice is never heard again: not when she wed Jacob as the result of her father's scheme, not when she is labeled “the hated” by the biblical text, and not after bearing Jacob seven children. Nonetheless, many contemporary poems, which were written on Leah, give this almost voiceless character a voice.

In his introduction to Modern Poems on the Bible, David Curzon claims that modern poets treat biblical themes as Midrash:1 “Whether the poets knew it or not, and some of them did, they were writing midrash. Their reaction to biblical texts are both strikingly modern and within an ancient genre.” (3) Curzon writes that as the rabbis interpret repeatedly the information omitted by the biblical text, so do modern poets. M. Perry and M. Sternberg's "Gap Theory”2 explains this phenomenon:

From the viewpoint of what is directly given in the language, the literary work is composed of fragments that must be linked and pieced together during the reading process: it establishes a system of gaps that must be filled in. This gap filling ranges from simple linkages of elements, which the reader performs automatically, to very complex systems of linkages that are constructed consciously, laboriously, hesitantly, and with constant modifications in the light of additional information disclosed in later stages of the reading process. (276)
Sternberg and Perry maintain that the biblical text guides the reader to the possible “closings” of the gaps. Likewise, contemporary poets follow the Midrash in asking questions that arise from gaps in the biblical text. In her article “On Account of the Cushite Woman that Moses Took: Race and Gender in Modern Hebrew Poems About Numbers 12,” Wendy Zierler also deals with the connection between modern Hebrew poems and the Bible. She argues that recent poems have created new Midrash:

Over the past few decades, it has become a commonplace to look at midrash as a form of imaginative literature or poetry and, at the same time, to read Hebrew poetry that reworks or re-imagine episodes from the Bible as a form of modern midrash. While students of rabbinc midrash have taught us to view it in term of literary critical notions of intertextuality and interpretive subjectivity, students of Hebrew poetry have trained us to be alive to the similarity between midrashic and poetic invention. (34)

This article concentrates on five contemporary Israeli poets who wrote about Leah. The poets give Leah a voice in crucial points of her life, thus closing the gaps of her silence in Genesis. Since there are numerous poems on Leah, this study focuses only on poems, which adopt the genre of dramatic monologues and whose speaker is Leah herself.

**The Israeli Biblical Dramatic Monologue**

The genre of dramatic monologue, hardly discussed by critics, is abundant in Modern Hebrew poetry, particularly in poems dealing with biblical characters. The dramatic monologue appeared during the Victorian period as a response to the subjectivity of the "I" poems of the Romantic era. E. Warwick-Slinn notes: “Rather than discovering completed wholes, we find structures that stress movement toward an end but where the attainment of that end is shrouded in incertitude.” (48) Ina Beth Sessions was the first to define the characteristics of the genre: "speaker, audience, occasion, revelation of character, interplay between speaker and audience, dramatic action, and action which takes place in the present.” (508) However, Sessions’ definition only applies to the perfect Victorian dramatic monologue, which had since evolved. In fact, at the end of the nineteenth century, in his essay "The Critic as Artist," Oscar Wilde claims that the dramatic monologue "is simply a method by which we can multiply our personalities." (285) Notwithstanding, in her book,
Dramatic Monologue, Glennis Byron points out the basic differences between the Victorian dramatic monologue and the modern one. While the Victorian monologue plays with the tension between the voices of poet and speaker, Wilde focuses on the connection between writers and their various masks. The movement away from the specificity characteristic of the form and the fragmentation of voice involved in this process are generally considered to lead to the disintegration of the monologue as genre.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, modernists such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot transformed the dramatic monologue. The modernists' appropriation of the genre changed some of its key features, including the naturalistic setting, the voice of the speaker, and the place of the auditor. Some critics argue that the modification of the genre by the modernist movement resulted in its end. Alternatively, Alan Sinfield dubs the change as "occasional use." Yet, when considering contemporary poetry, it seems that the belief in the decline of the genre collapses. The dramatic monologue is in fact flourishing. Glennis Byron suggests turning the attention to non-canonical writers in order to reconsider the position of the dramatic monologue:

…the Modernist monologue can be characterised as a form which continued to be appropriated for the purposes of social critique and which was considered particularly well suited to the exploration of the issues of presentation and communication. Much the same conclusion might be reached if the grouping of dramatic monologues is expanded to include the work of non-canonical poets from the following decades.

Byron indicates that the fact that the dramatic monologue deals with issues like "presentation and communication" makes it suitable for marginal writers. In her book, On the Margins of Modernism, Chana Kronfeld states that modern Hebrew literature could be considered as marginalized literature. Indeed, since the revival of the Hebrew language in the 1880s, Hebrew poets sought after ways to represent the changes they experienced. Kronfeld uses Chaim Nachman Bialik's term "language pangs" in order to explain the process of creating poetic dynamism in a revived language. The fact that Hebrew writers tried to adopt new genres is one of the reasons modern Hebrew poetry is replete with dramatic monologues. This enables contemporary writers to speak through different voices, and give marginalized characters the opportunity to speak out. Consequently, speaking through a different marginalized character in a performative act allows the poet to present his or her
social criticism openly. The editors of The New Poetry\textsuperscript{13} observed that Carol Ann Duffy’s extensive use of the dramatic monologue permits her "to popularize complex ideas about language and its political role and meanings." (17)

Since the renewal of the Hebrew language, biblical language and themes have gained a renewed interest within Hebrew literature. Gershon Shaked believes that interest in the Bible stemmed from a Zionistic point of view:\textsuperscript{14}

The mid-nineteenth century brought a return of Bible study to its former glory. It became the Book of Books for the Haskalah movement, and later served as the cultural foundation of the Zionist movement, providing the ultimate proof of the historic independence of the Jewish people and the compelling rationale for its return to the land of Israel. (43)

From the mid-1960s, contemporary Israeli literature focuses mostly on the individual. The anti-hero protagonist has replaced the central role of the “Hero” as the pioneer, or warrior. In his article "An Introduction to Nano-Poetics: The Importance of Small Things," Gilad Meiri notes: \textsuperscript{15}

The movement from major to minor is generally characterised by preferences for what is concrete, human, mundane, ephemeral, personal, humorous, unusual, ironic and restrained – over what is abstract, divine, sacred, unchanging, collective, serious, familiar, bathetic and ornate…. In 1959, Israeli poet Natan Zach published his famous article in the literary journal Achshav, ‘Thoughts on the poetry of Nathan Alterman the same year that the American physicist Richard Feynman arrived at the basic tenets of his theory of nano-technology. The keys to the future may be found in both these occurrences, poetic and technological. The ‘thin’ and minor-key poetry of Zach and his generation took a giant step away from the collective to the individual, from the high-toned to restraint, from the sacred to the profane.

Accordingly, poems dealing with biblical themes and personalities frequently consider neglected characters like Leah, Hagar, or Avishag. In his article on Carol Ann Duffy, Ismail B. Garba explains the way dramatic monologue structures discourse: \textsuperscript{16}

The mode allows poets (like Duffy) the subversive space within which to challenge and revise the status quo by affording voices to those that are marginalised and deprived of one. A monologue further provides a form of disguise; for a poet can take on the mask of different faces, different bodies and nonetheless different voices. (241-242)
Leah Speaks: the Early Phase in the Israeli Biblical Dramatic Monologue

Two poets, Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld (1902-1881) and Shimshon Meltzer (1909-2000) wrote about biblical figures before the 1960s when biblical themes became more prevalent in Hebrew poetry. Meltzer was probably influenced by the Yiddish poets of the time. As Yohai Oppenheimer notes, Anda Amir Pinkerfeld was most likely drawn to this subject matter by her feminist approach. Her stories on biblical men and women were published in 1942 in a small collection Me'olam-Demuyot Mikedem. Wendy Zierler evaluates the collection:

Particularly noteworthy are Pinkerfeld-Amir’s reworkings of the stories of biblical men and women. Jubal, Esau, Avishag, Eve, Hagar, Jephthah’s Daughter, Lot’s Wife, Delilah, Jael—all of these figures, rarely venerated or accorded attention by traditional (male) writers, are revisioned in Pinkerfeld-Amir’s poetic midrashim…. Pinkerfeld-Amir gives voice to figures silenced and/or marginalized by the collective tradition.

In her dramatic monologue, "Leah", Amir-Pinkerfeld focuses on Leah just before she was traded for her sister Rachel. Leah is the speaker but as in other modern dramatic monologues, the auditor is unknown. Although Leah speaks to Jacob calling to him: "then you came —" using the second person singular masculine "you", it is obvious that she is speaking to herself. Amir-Pinkerfeld adds her own interpretation to the biblical text, bestowing Leah with opinions and feelings that are missing from the original text. Amir-Pinkerfeld uses free verse for Leah's speech. No rhymes and various enjambments reflect Leah's agitated mood: "And in the morning, behold, it was Leah...." (Gen. 29:25).

The poem is divided into eight parts: the first three describe Jacob’s arrival and its affect on the sisters. At the end of part three, Leah understands: it is Rachel whom Jacob loves: "And not to me did you pay attention, Not to me did your heartbeats quicken, not for me." In the fourth part, Leah speaks of her love and envy for Jacob. At the end of this part, Leah's mother, who is not mentioned in the biblical text, asks her to prepare for her wedding: "prepare yourself for your wedding, daughter." The last three parts of the poem depict Leah's feelings during the wedding when she plans to trick Jacob. In Amir-Pinkerfeld's poem, it seems that Leah could have refused to substitute her sister. The poet alters the biblical account where Leah was manipulated by her father into a newly revised story where Leah could choose
whether to enter Jacob’s tent: "shall I truly open the flap of your tent, will my knees not grow feeble beneath me?" The fact that Leah in this poem is more independent than the biblical Leah is due to Amir-Pinkerfeld's point of view as a modern woman. In her article "The Figure of Moses in Modern Hebrew Poetry," Malka Shaked describes the unbreakable bond between the author and his interpretation of the biblical text:

We must accordingly bear in mind that in either case—not only when the poet writes directly about himself or expresses his mood and stance in relation to the world with the help of the Bible, but also when he writes about subjects and figures from the Bible, and even when such figures are presented as speaking in the first person—the poet is dealing with something he regards as central, important, fundamental, and symbolic, the apprehension of which, regardless of whether its expression in the poem is indirect and covert or direct and open, is what sheds fresh, new light on the Bible itself. (158)

Hence, Amir-Pinkerfeld portrays Leah as a self-conscience, opinionated person, who chooses her own way by the end of the poem: "I lift up my hands to the tent canvas," knowing the outcome.

In Shimshon Meltzer’s dramatic monologue, Leah appears after she handed Rachel the mandrakes and is about to spend the night with Jacob. Leah's auditor is unknown, although in two points in the poem it seems to be Jacob: 24 "Oh! Jacob, why do you hate Leah, who conceived and bore sons – your sons?"; "Tonight you will come to me, Jacob, in my arms you will sleep tonight." Nevertheless, it is clear that her intended auditor does not hear her – she is speaking to herself. Leah's described feelings are closer to the biblical text: "And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes too?" (Genesis 30:15). Meltzer extends Leah's pain as the hated wife, though the fertile one, 25 to her brooding over the forthcoming night and its aftermath.

Meltzer uses the Hebrew word for ‘ewe’ as a fundament in the word play of the poem. In biblical Hebrew, an ewe is Rachel or Rachela. Therefore, when Leah compares herself to a fertile ewe, she actually says that she is a Rachel: "Indeed, a fertile ewe (Rachel) was Leah to Jacob." Moreover, as she points out, even then the attention of Jacob to her is similar to the attention a shepherd shows to an ewe that just gave birth: "and I was encompassed by his compassion like any shepherd's mercy
towards an ewe which is giving birth in the herds." Jacob pays her attention only through their mutual children. When she carries his baby-son in her hands, Leah receives tidbits from Jacob’s love to the child: "And time hugging his son tight to his heart, on him rain of love, his favor dropped on my head too, saturating my love-thirsty-soul."26

As the poem progresses, Leah misses Jacob's love. Nevertheless, in the last stanza, Leah forgoes her anticipation for Jacob’s forthcoming night with her. She does not delude herself but hopes she conceives another child. The poem ends with Leah's contemplation on sharing Jacob’s love to his offspring: "And when he will hug his son – my son, to pour upon him abundance of love, his favor will be dropped on my head too, saturating my love-thirsty-soul." The monologue's atmosphere is especially distressing; Leah's emotions, implied in the biblical short dialogue between the two sisters, are being expressed in Meltzer's dramatic monologue rather explicitly.

Leah Speaks: Contemporary Israeli Poets

Considering contemporary Israeli dramatic monologues,27 this study concentrates on three poets, whose approach to Leah and to the dramatic monologue is quite unique.

The present-day poet Yakov Azriel (1950–) treats the biblical mandrakes' dialogue between the sisters as a jumping board to a very different dramatic monologue. Yakov Azriel is an Israeli English poet who emigrated from New York to Israel in 1971. His monologue, "From me, Leah, To You, Rachel, My Sister," was published in Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues (Fall of 2004).28 The poem is not included in Yakov Azriel's first poetry book Threads from a Coat of Many Colors: Poems on Genesis (2005). However, although the poem was not part of the collection, its poetic technique is similar to the techniques used in the book. In an interview with Matt Beynon Rees, Azriel admits:29

My first book focused on the different characters in Genesis, and I especially tried to focus on the gaps in the Biblical narrative (for example, who was Abraham's mother?) or to give a voice to figures who are silent in the Biblical text (such as Dinah, or Joseph's wife Asenat).

In this poem, the speaker is Leah but the auditor is Rachel (Gen. 30:15). Meltzer, as seen earlier, used Leah’s biblical words in a monologue concerning the sisters’
relationship with Jacob. Azriel, on the other hand, addresses the sisters' emotions towards each other.30

In Azriel’s poem, Leah appeals to Rachel, asking her to love her. The entire monologue is based on Leah's assumption that Rachel perceives her as a rock. The first stanza opens with Leah's statement: "You've always seen me as a rock," followed by her explanation:

Solid and stolid, unmoving and unmovable,
Gray and hard,
Grounded in earth like jagged boulder,
Unmalleable like flint.

In stanzas 2-4, in a stream of metaphors, Leah contradicts Rachel’s stand towards her. In each of the stanzas, another aspect of Leah becomes evident. In the second stanza, the rock evaporates at night, becoming “mists spiraling upwards in the dark.” Leah's loveless nights are like a fog, which is the complete antonym for a rock. In the third stanza, Leah's feeling are no longer as cold and solid as a rock; on the contrary, she is liken to lava: "A sizzling rivulet of fire-stone that burns, Devouring everything it touches." In the forth stanza, again as antonym to Rachel's observation that she is grounded to the earth, Leah is equated to rushing water: "Sweeping and swallowing trees and wolves and deer." Leah's fluid emotions are like water and not as firm as a rock. The fifth stanza moves away from nature into the human sphere, comparing the rock to "a knot of quiet words that whisper in dreams as stars slumber." This metaphor explains Rachel's attitude since Leah's sentiments are unspoken or only whispered; she appears to be solid as a rock. In the last stanza, Leah begs Rachel to accept her, hug her, and love her:

If only one day, you, my sister, might stretch out your hands
And embrace me,
To discover that rocks too can dance
Softly
For you.

In fact, Rachel is cold, and closed like a rock. And Leah is the one who yearns for her sister’s love. Azriel’s metaphor gives Leah a distinctive voice. Dan Vogel adds:31

In fact, his free verse can demand attention and engender the feelings he wants in his reader by using the break at the end of the line to emphasize the last of that line and the first word of the next one. (198)
Rivka Miriam was born in Jerusalem in 1952. She started her writing career at the age of fourteen, when her first poetry work was published. Miriam's poetry has an exceptional connection to the Jewish tradition and particularly to the Hebrew Bible. Linda Zisquit, who translated some of Rivka Miriam's poems into English, states:32

In some of her poems, Rivka Miriam speaks through biblical characters as Rachel, Leah, Isaac and Ruth with playful familiarity. She has described her function as one of carrying the ancient and modern figures of Jewish history inside her. (73)

In Rivka Miriam’s poem, "The Song to Jacob Who Moved the Stone from the Mouth of the Well," Leah speaks to Jacob; yet, it might seem that she speaks to herself or to the reader. Significantly, the opening sentence in the beginning of each of the poem’s parts is "He didn't know I was Leah"33 or "And he didn't know I was Leah.” The fact that Jacob did not recognize her is fundamental to the understanding of Leah’s situation. This is stressed again in the repetition in the third and seventh lines when Jacob says to Leah: "Rachel, he said, Rachel.” The repetition of Jacob’s words divides the first part of the poem into two parts. In the opening line of the poem, Leah states a fact— on their wedding night, Jacob did not know who she was. He thought she was Rachel and their sexual act is described in a metaphor taken from the shepherd’s domain: "like a lamb/ the grass becomes part of, stems are part of you." The fifth and sixth lines are Leah's account: "Flocks of sheep hummed beneath our blankets." Rivka Miriam uses the word Rechelim in order to create a double meaning in Leah's description: the movement of flocks of sheep under the blankets is a metaphor for the movements during their lovemaking. However, by not using the Hebrew word "Kivsa" for lamb, which Jacob used two lines earlier, she adds a second meaning to the metaphor: Rachel will always be between them.

In the second part of the poem, the sexual act between Leah and Jacob becomes more feminine, focusing on Leah’s weak eyes:

and my eyes were weak
the bottom of a dark swamp.
the bottom of a dark swamp
to the whites of mine.
Here again, the translation of the Hebrew biblical text into English weakens the double meaning. In the Bible, Leah's eyes are described as "Rakot," — a word that is open to several midrashic explanations. For example, the Midrash explains that Leah's eyes were weak because she cried over the possibility of marrying the evil Esau.\(^{34}\) However, the word "Rakot" could be translated as weak and/or tender. Therefore, Miriam's choice of words alludes to both meanings—weak and tender—that further explain the metaphor of the eyes being at the bottom of a dark swamp. Furthermore, Leah's emotions are implied through a different metaphor:

The cords of his tent held fast to the ground while the wind was blowing from the palms of my hands

Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton write:\(^{35}\)

The poem expresses Leah's sadness and sense of isolation. Everything she has, including her body and her children, has or will be taken from her. Her eyes have grown weak from crying, despondent at what her already befallen her and what she knows lies ahead. (190)

This could also explain the selection of the poem's title: it is not only "The Song to Jacob Who Moved the Stone from the Mouth of the Well," but Jacob is the stone. In this poem Leah's feelings are exposed again through an extensive use of metaphors, and a restrained, short monologue.

Rena Lee's dramatic monologue "Leah" seems to broaden the suggestion hinted at the end of Rivka Miriam's poem that Jacob had Rachel on his mind each time he made love to Leah. Rena Lee was born in Tel-Aviv in 1932 but has been living in New York for the last forty years. During that period, she has become a bilingual poet, but publishes her poetry mainly in Hebrew. "Leah" is one of her English poems. Lee situates Leah at the time between her marriage to Jacob and before his marriage to Rachel. She is still Jacob's only wife (hence "my husband", not our), yet she identifies as the hated wife, the product of her manipulating father. The monologue does not address a specific auditor. Gleniss Byron claims that this is typical of late twentieth-century monologues:

While it is certainly true that many Victorian and modernist monologues do not have auditors, this lack of an auditor combined with a direct address to an unspecified 'you' seems a particularly late twentieth-century development.\(^{36}\)
Leah's voice in Lee's poem comes from a humble position. The monologue contains an inner linear movement: at the beginning, Leah talks about her status as Rachel's sister. Her pain stems not only from being Rachel's sister but also from the fact that "Everybody loves Rachel – especially my husband." In the second stanza, she explains her stance: although her father's trickery took place in order to help her, or so he believed, she feels like "worthless merchandise." In the third stanza, the passionate wedding night is described, using the homonym "taking" in order to create a retort:

- Jacob made love taking me passionately,
- taking me again and again,
- taking me for my sister.

In the fifth stanza the scheme is revealed:

- Come morning, he realized his mistake –
- How can I ever forget his contorted face,
- his agonized scream, "Leah! Oh… it’s you!"

Moreover, the fact that Jacob still makes love to her every night, deluding himself that she is Rachel, makes her more miserable:

- Since then, every night Jacob makes love to me,
- he deludes himself I’m She. And every morning
- he starts loathing me anew.

In the last stanza, Leah, if not for her children, wishes to be dead:

- I know not where to go, what to do.
- If not for the love of God, I’d rather be dead.
- But God knows my heart and sees to my womb –

- Only bearing children renders my life bearable

Rena Lee's Leah is a heartbroken woman, whose only console is her children. Again, the alliterative word play in the last sentence intensifies her position: "Only bearing children renders my life bearable." Lee's Leah, looking at the children as a gift from God, is reminiscent of Meltzer's Leah. Yet, Meltzer's Leah needed the children in order to obtain some of Jacob's love. Lee's Leah does not delude herself about Jacob's feelings. The children are a comfort in her unprivileged situation, regardless of Jacob’s attitude. Leah's voice in Lee's monologue is the voice of a woman who acknowledges her status and reconciles with the state of affairs.
Conclusion

In sum, the genre of the dramatic monologue has facilitated a fresh examination of Leah, one of the anti-hero characters of the book of Genesis.

The contemporary poets who use the dramatic monologue genre to give Leah a unique voice have attempted to fill the gap in the biblical text in order to add their own insights to the biblical characters. While recognizing the lack of emotions in the laconic biblical narrative, the poets convey Leah’s intensive feelings and depict her as the "under-dog" in the Jacob-Rachel-Leah triangle. In reacting to different points in Leah's life, these poets allow her voice to transmit their respective interpretations of the biblical text. Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld is able to re-create Leah as a modern woman who chooses her destiny and affects her future consciously. Shimshon Meltzer enhances the "mandrakes’ episode" and enables Leah to express her agony, which is slightly insinuated in Genesis. Yakov Azriel’s approach is quite similar to Meltzer’s, while expanding the dialogue between the sisters. Rivka Miriam's portrayal of Leah emphasizes her position as Jacob’s hated-wife. In Rena Lees’ monologue, Leah is identified as "worthless merchandise," first by her father and then by Jacob. From the investigation of these poems, it is feasible to assert that Leah’s newly found voices have produced new exegeses or Midrash.

Notes


10 Glennis Byron, *Dramatic Monologue*, 119.


17 The full texts of the poems appear in the appendix of this document.


22 *Midrash HaGadol* (Genesis, 23:1), which is attributed to Rabi David ben Amram Adani, claims that Leah knew she will give birth to Levi whose children are going to be the priests of Israel, because of that and she agreed to marry Jacob. This medieval text (14th century) actually claims that Leah was responsible for the exchange.


24 All quotations from Meltzer's poem were translated by this author.

25 There are many Rabbinic Midrashim that connect the fact that Leah was the "hated wife" with her fertility. For example: *Genesis Raba* 41:1-2; *Pirkey Derabi Eliezer* 35; *Midrash Tanchuma* "Vayetze" 10-11; *Hadar Zkenim* on Genesis Ch. 30.

26 It is interesting to note that Rabi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntshitz in his commentary on the Torah *Kli Yakar* (Genesis, 29:34) explains Leah's naming the first four sons as a way of reclaiming Jacob’s love. When writing on Reuben he uses this metaphor: "How a Cistern can be hated if her water is loved." This water metaphor is echoed in Meltzer's poem when Leah is described as being "saturated" by Jacob’s love to his son.

27 In this study, an Israeli poet is any poet who was born in Israel (as Rivka-Miriam or Rena Lee, who was born in Tel Aviv but lives today in the U.S.A) or lives in Israel (as Yaakov Azriel who lives in Israel since 1971).


30 *Seder Olam Raba* Ch. 2 and *Bereshit Rabati* on "Vayishlach" bot claims Leah and Rachel were twin sisters.
33 The English quotations from Rivka Miriam's poem are taken from Linda Zisquit translation.
34 Genesis Rabbah 70:16; Midrash Tanchuma "Vayetze"12; Rabi Tuviah ben Eliezer's Midrash Lekach Tov "Vayetze" 29:17; Rabi Shim'on Aschkenazi's Yalkut Shim'on "Vayetze" 125.
36 Glennis Byron, Dramatic Monologue, 143-144.
37 As oppose to Rena Lee's Leah, who sees herself as a victim of Laban's fraud but claims that Jacob never forgave her, Rabi Shimshon Refael Hirsch wrote in his commentary on the Torah (Genesis 29:30) that Leah indeed was a victim of Laban's fraud as well as Jacob, but this is the reason Jacob forgave her.
38 The Zohar on "Vayetze" 1 states that Leah is "a joyful mother of children" as opposed to Rachel who is "the barren woman to keep house" (Psalm 113:9).
39 Genesis Raba 71:2 and Rabi Tuviah ben Eliezer’s Midrash Lekach Tov "Vayetze" 29:31 states that if not for her children, Jacob would have divorced Leah.

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לָעָה - אֲנָדָה פִּינִיקְרַפָּל-עָמִיר

יָרוּחַ בְּנֵךְ דְּרַבְּנָה וַיֵּלֶמֶּה...
(בַּעֲשָׂרִים כּוֹ, כֶּלֶל -)

וַיִּלָּמֶּה לָעָה

כֶּכֶלֶת לָעָה נָאִמָּה

שָׁמָּה שַׁשָּׁש חֲשִׁקָּנוּ
ונָמָרְנוּ בֵּצָאֶנָה

שְׁמִי שֶׁחָיָה

כְּשָׁתְיוּ עֵרְוִית
יְיָן תָּרוּחַ
אֵתָהּ רָצוּנִים לָקֲשָׁנָה
לָקֲשָׁנָה שְׁפָנָה
לָקֲשָׁנָה שְׁפָנָה

שָׁרוֹם וּבֵקָרִים וּיוֹן קָמִינָן
קָשֵׁם וּהָיוּ קְשֶׁל

וְנָבֹא אָבֵה

גוֹיָה בְּנֵךְ בֵּית רָצוּנִים מַקְלָת
מַקְשָׁה בֵּהָרָה
שָׁה לָקְבֶּזֶק פָּטָבָה
שָׁה לָקְבֶּזֶק פָּטָבָה
וּלְהָרוּשִׁם לָרָצוּנִים שֵׁם
טְפֵהְרִים גָּזָה.
طفال של הלילה

כל אחד

נagascar שבעה, מקוה ים redirects,盤
zyst תשב מים Está, מקוה ים redirects.
אמר על זכות הדבר.
מצפים בסם רשבית.

יינה כים רשבית.
שקת שחורה בצית ירחם.
אבלות צהרי במקס זאסננו.
נלאירש שברסליו צל בפרשה.
כי בכסם כדנה, Qaeda עם ערובה —
lecק רפה ברקיה ברקה.

￦טוש מהא
לבח אמאשקי כן בקן
EventListener שמת זגאר
—
ראיה ובשרים בצית ש المصرية רבקה.
ועדаем להבשו.

俟ור לעבר אליהם, 닢קحا לביי:
נהנה בכ- תבון.
.Subscribe עם תובון.
מזכנס עלייתי.
רגמה אוס אופר שא לבך קיישה.
בכיבש אתה חרשום.
שך ברךך אליה חורปริים.
ךיך כן כיון —
שלום לא יפרץ בקורותיך?
שך שבך לא צבך שמיים:
שלום. שא אליה חרב.

רגמה אוס אופר שא לביך קיישה.
יכי קיישה.
תלפי כי זוהי שאר צומס —
לא בקושה לבך.
וכללה. בהום יסימני.
לא יבוקב אתה בך. ולא צוף.
שורי בכר מקריב.
עוןך תורה.
שגרר תות עמותם.
כבראת משום.

BackgroundColor: לוחות גראתקה. מת.
שלמה יogne כה שגינה?
ךיך כיון —
שחוריו יבוקב.
שוחים יאם אזעקה עָבָד. 
כבר שונים ורבים.
את דוראים גנבו ליט
לגרות
כבר שונים ורבים.
ויכ מחדש לנדב לברית
לא ירצה כל שלום
—
היות לקללות לעתים.
—but
יבואו טורפים. כלאים וחקנה.
יבואו טורפים. זכרונות וחור罩.
לינו יקללווה.
฿ארה בעלים בחרות.
—
฿ארה טרפה
לינו יקללווה.
לבד מייסדים נגזר מהחרות.
—
מען לשלולם.
כשם אתים שבינו מבודהמהرفع.
랫וע וראו אתים.
בנין אדום. סדרי בניית אדום.
כבר שונות עמליה.
—
גרוב שגרוב אתייה.
לא(Key) הדי. לא בקשתה.
לא קאות אתייה.
כרכוש אציווש בינה זילגוס.
וכלו גרש חשבה לשת.

מעריוויון מאפיים.
מצליחה וסערתני.
שאניי. שאניי. שאבניי.
小時 לילומם ו ConfigureServicesלך —
רמג والح.
ראה. שם ג neuropath.
سبوعות זוגות. ש얍י побשה.
 createTime.
שאניי לא נשכח אליך.
של אוזן גוחול כלציו, التواصل
穟ית וקריעה.

ירד דיב עלולה.
ללא אنهار ביםוני.
薮ה גוסמת הרשת היוול.
שלא חישול לבריך מתכלה.
שם כלאי אטפת מעשה.
שם כלאי אטפת מעשה.
על פעות בירח הפסק הזרית.
על נשוח קעקוזת נשיקותיה.
בשנייה.
שלא קצבה קצבה.
לא יל.

ספראיתpekעטוםורה.
סרアイテלבכרעתאשל.
קזניק

למעל בור הקוה סדרתי.
למען ידע חסנשו חסנה המבונא.
סורים לא חסנוה צור קשרי כל חסנוה.
לחנווה חסנוה גוזלא טני.

סמלנה חסנка צדיקת מבוכמה.
אשה שאינה לכלל הובנה.

שאני קרבנה בייל לירכא חאקול.
Leah – Anda Amir-Pinkerfeld

And in the morning, behold, it was Leah .... (Gen. 29:25)

Every day was like another like twin lambs.

With the sunrise we arose, we went after the flock. two sisters.

We were as tall as two oaks amongst the shepherdesses. We gathered up the shepherds' sighs, we laughed at their stares, we made fun of them.

Our days were bright and the same, like this sun above.

*

then you came – Handsome and erect you walked along amongst the shepherds, confident in your ways. The parents deferred to you, the children deferred to you, and the shepherds made you their leader. Our days grew glum, our nights grew hot – because you came.

We hid our faces, sister from sister, our glances could not be direct, they chased after shadows secreting in them our passion.

And when a word was spoken, your name was hidden tremulously within it. Then one morning we divided our flock, and our paths were parted on the way to the pasture. For indeed we had become isolated one sister from another – So how could we graze together?

*

On that day your flock lay watered and tired made hot by the afternoon sun – and you leapt like a deer amongst the bushes.
You picked mandrakes.

My heart was agitated over you, restless:
Here you are coming.
you are coming to embrace me,
holding out your mandrakes to me.

You examined the package of mandrakes with your glance,
your eyes laughed at it:
then you turned your steps to the path,
fast on the heels of the flock.
And not to me did you pay attention,
Not to me did your heartbeats quicken,
not for me.

*

Every morning your flock was combined
with my sister Rachel's flock.

I would be late in rising,
I would be late going out with my flock,
lest I see you going out together
with joy on your faces.

I roamed over strange paths,
so as not to meet you
near the spring.
But the paths in their malice
led me in your track,
My stubborn feet
led me to the place where you were lying:
and from my hiding place I counted
every caress of your hand upon my sister's breasts,
every kiss upon her mouth.

And even if I say to my hard heart:
there are many shepherds here,
they also appear handsome to me,
their hands strong –
Why should I not relax in their arms?
But my heart does not want to listen:
for you, only for you it longs.

And even if I order my hard heart,
to be silent:
for it is my sister that you love –
my heart will not be silent,
by night by day my heart incites me.

And I follow your tracks, and do not relent.
My eyes are weak from crying
and my face is pale;
I fear to look at their reflection
in the mirror of water.

And my mother asked me:
Why are you grieved, daughter,
why is your face so sad?

– My sister has abandoned me,
my sister has separated herself with her flock
in strange pastures.
The mandrakes too were given to her,
to my sister,
in hidden pastures.

And my mother understood my pain:
It is not done that way in our place
prepare yourself for your wedding, daughter.

* 
Let the players come, let them ready their instruments,
let the poets come, let them rhyme their songs,
for the wedding day.
My sister’s face was radiant,
your face was radiant –
for the wedding day.
Your gaze caressed my sister’s body,
through her dress.
Her face was covered in a flush from shame and joy,
her desire burst forth to you.

And I kept silent, carrying my secret within me
in disgrace and reproach.

I will surely steal your love,
to your tent I will come
not called, not invited,
not the bethrothed of your love.

I surely feel your caressing hands,
although they did not think they were caressing my body.

* 
Drums deafen me,
dances make me dizzy!
My beloved, my beloved, love me;
for my nights cry out to you –
Pity me - please!
See, my body is beautiful too,
as the beauty of her body, whom your soul loves.

But you do not even send me a glance.  
Even if I dance my dance before you,  
with my hips undulating.

*  
The night comes
night of my stolen joy
shall I truly open the flap of your tent
will my knees not grow feeble beneath me?

There in the tent you are waiting
there in the darkness you are waiting.
Upon the palms of your hands longing trembles
upon your lips your kisses are frozen.
   In expectation.

All of you, all of you is waiting,
   not for me.

Wildly I rip open the canvas,
wildly I will fall at your knees, –
take me.

And with morning my shame will be evident,
at the daybreak you will despise me.
I can no longer show my face before any handmaid.
My life will roll down to the depths of shame.

Tonight I will think of your stolen love,
I will drink and be satiated without leaving over anything.

I lift up my hands to the tent canvas - -

Translated by Sue Ann Wasserman
THE SONG TO JACOB WHO MOVED THE STONE FROM THE MOUTH OF THE WELL. - Rivka Miriam

He didn’t know I was Leah
and I -- I was Leah.
Rachel, he said, Rachel, like a lamb
the grass becomes part of, stems are a part of you.
Flocks of sheep hummed beneath our blankets,
tent-flies were pulled to the wind.
Rachel, he said, Rachel --
and my eyes were weak,
the bottom of a dark swamp.
The whites of his eyes melted
to the whites of mine.
The cords of his tent held fast to the ground
while the wind was blowing from the palms of my hands.

And he didn’t know I was Leah
and flocks of sons broke through my womb to his hands.

Trans. By Linda Zisquit
From me. Leah, To You , Rachel, My Sister - Yakov Azriel

*But she [Leah] said to her [Rachel], "Is it such a small thing that you have taken away my husband, that you would take my son's mandrakes as well?" Then Rachel answered, "Then let him [Jacob] lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."* (Genesis 30:15)

You've always seen me as a rock,
Solid and stolid, unmoving and unmovable,
Gray and hard,
Grounded in earth like jagged boulder,
Unmalleable like flint.
Only my eyes are soft, you think.

But you don't know
That after sunset this rock evaporates
As vapors of the night,
Mists spiraling upwards into dark,
Winding in circles in the cool night air;

Or that this rock sometimes melts as lava,
A sizzling rivulet of fire-stone that burns,
Devouring everything it touches;

Or that this rock can stream down a mountainside
Like the rushing waters of torrent overflowing its banks
Sweeping and swallowing trees and wolves and deer.

Or that this rock is a knot of quiet words
That whisper in dreams as stars slumber.

If only one day, you, my sister, might stretch out your hands
And embrace me,
To discover that rocks too can dance
Softly
For you.
Leah - Rena Lee

“Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah… Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful…” Genesis 29; 16,17.

“So Jacob served seven years for Rachel… in the evening he (Laban) took Leah and brought her to Jacob…” Genesis 29; 20,

Wherever I turn, I hear them whisper:
“Look, here goes Rachel’s sister!”
Rachel the beautiful.
Rachel the coveted.
Everybody loves Rachel -
Especially my husband.

I am the one with the weak eyes.
Laban’s eldest homely daughter
canstant cause of his sorrow and worry.
Afraid I’d never get married
on my own merits,
he tricked Jacob on the wedding night,
passing me as Rachel disguised.
Thus I was thrown into the deal,
a piece of worthless merchandise -

On our first night, all through the dark,
Jacob made love taking me passionately,
taking me again and again,
taking me for my sister.

(Can you imagine the power of desire
held in check for solid seven years?)

Come morning, he realized his mistake –
How can I ever forget his contorted face,
his agonized scream, “Leah! Oh… it’s you!”

Since then, every night Jacob makes love to me,
he deludes himself I’m She. And every morning
he starts loathing me anew.

I know not where to go, what to do.
If not for the love of God, I’d rather be dead.
But God knows my heart and sees to my womb –

Only bearing children renders my life bearable.