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“GOD OF FURY” AND HIS VICTIMS IN HEBREW WOMEN'S POETRY 1930-1970

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This paper explores the metaphor of the binding of Isaac (*Akedah*) in Hebrew women's poetry from the 1930s to the 1970s, namely, the work of Rahel Blubstein, Leah Goldberg, Esther Rabb, and Rachel Chalfi. My reading demonstrates that contrary to the conventional tracing of this metaphor in women's poetry, which derives from the dramatic turning point in the poetic representation of the *Akedah* in the 1970s, female poets in fact worked through the *Akedah* figure much earlier.

The 1970s turning point consisted of a transition from a poetic figuration of the *Akedah* as an inevitable and necessary sacrifice to its representation as an excessive and violent “infanticide,” in which political leaders assumed the role of sacrificing fathers. Throughout this decade writers began to utilize the *Akedah* as a figure and narrative device that expressed a variety of personal experiences, thereby challenging its discursive alliances with the nationalistic, patriotic ideology. In this context, the unprecedented interventions of women in this realm of myth (re)writing marked a significant change in the evolution of the *Akedah* motif.

Though the trend was somewhat uncommon prior to the 1970s, we must not underestimate its importance. Rather, its significance needs to be re-evaluated in view of the radical change in the depiction of the *Akedah* in the Hebraic literary corpus from the 1970s on. I therefore probe early women's poetry for the subversive alternatives it offered to conventional renditions of the *Akedah* typical of popular and literary discourses alike in the Yishuv period and the early years of the state.

The paper contextualizes this challenge to the hegemonic writing of the *Akedah* within the matrix of gender. Accordingly, I underscore the “feminization” of the motif, and explore the poetic trends that empowered women to revise this narrative and enter a discursive scene hitherto associated primarily with male writers and patriarchal ideology.

My argument is that this early feminine metaphorical subversion of the *Akedah* should modify our reading of the critical turning point of the 1970s, which marks the transformation and trans-valuation of the metaphor. I argue that in view of its precursors, this turning point must be understood not as an unprecedented, sudden rupture, but rather as a response to the alternative voices that populated the poetic space of the pre- and early state, which for a long time has been repressed and marginalized by the mainstream of Hebrew writers and readers. By exploring this literary corpus [largely neglected and overlooked by general *Akedah* scholarship], my paper uncovers and identifies the poetic ancestors, the “founding mothers,” to whom the poets of 1970s are clearly indebted.