

Nancy Corwin

## PATRIA

Cold, barren, ordinary wasteland  
 She clings to her heritage  
 Hoofbeats at the heart of the city  
 We forget  
 The horses have aged  
 Their heads drop into canvas sacks  
 Bags hung over their lonely faces.  
 Grain spills out the sides  
 Out the bags, out into the street.

They ransomed glory for a dollar a ride those days.

Rain runs down the cracked cobblestones  
 Down the hill smooth as board  
 Streets mellowed by a revolution that  
 Devoured its own heat  
 And spit up sterility.

The breach unrecognizable—like disconnected beads.

The river spins by  
 She brings wheels, chairs, tin cans,  
 She brings the seed that spent itself into the sea  
 Laps it into herself and brings it down, down  
 Down to the center of town  
 Where a man used her to clean the smooth old stones.

Your house has not burned enough  
 Your eyes reflect your eyes to a sanctioning face.

Leo Skir

## If There Is Justice Let It Appear!

I FIRST noticed her in Rimon's where B. and his crowd had taken us. Peter was making many photographs and since the conversation was in rapid fluent Hebrew (not my American Hebrew) I had to be content with a mostly visual scene. And Leah dominated it. If she was the girlfriend of any boy at the table it was impossible to know. It was a political discussion. She was very involved in it.

It was about the Arab question, the question which never was to leave during my entire stay in Israel.

Everyone at the table but Peter and me was connected with the University or writing. On the table was the book *Shalom, Shalom* ("Peace, peace . . . but there is no peace.")

Leah looked at me and asked me what I thought.

I said I hoped eventually for a united socialist middle east.

"You are a socialist?" she said.

"Yes," I said.

"A socialist in America," she said. She shrugged her shoulders. "It's easy to be a socialist in America. It's a rich country."

"I'm not rich," I said,

"But you are an American," she said, "That's enough."

I shrugged my shoulders. An American can do no right. I had learned that by now.

We asked to see her a few days later.

Her house looked like many student houses in Berkeley and San Francisco. The door was painted a violent raspberry lollipop red with a ring of valentine hearts around it, on the porch a motto in Hebrew. The garden was in that hippie-type disorder. Five students shared the house. I asked Leah how much her rent was. (This was THE question everyone in Jerusalem asks you. How much are you paying for your room)?

One hundred and twenty pounds," she said, "a month."

About thirty-three dollars. Which was what Americans pay. But Israelis earn about 1/3 of what Americans earn. It was a lot.

She did not read Heinlein or the Hobbits. They didn't seem to have hit Israel yet. Tolkein wasn't known. But a full half-dozen well-read Henry Miller books were on the shelf.

She had rings around her eyes. She had been studying all night. Like so many American girls I knew. Only prettier and healthier. The endless cigarette smoking. Only instead of endless coffee there was endless tea. And in glasses.

She was as curious about American life as we were about Israel.

About the hippies she asked what their plan for their future was. Did they plan to live permanently in hippie colonies? (She was thinking of something like Israeli kibbutzim).

We explained to her that hippies didn't believe in planning.

"If they are not thinking of the future I cannot take them seriously," she said firmly.

We couldn't explain to her that the hippies didn't want anyone in the straight world to take them seriously. She would not have been able to believe this. If you weren't serious—what was the value of what you were doing? And if you weren't doing something of value, how could you endure the thought of being worthless to society?

It was then that I saw the great distance that separated us from the Israelis: This absolute seriousness which was like something American but long-ago, our Puritan past (which was of course based on the Old Testament values).

And yet—Leah seemed—so much like one of US, her informality, her intensity, even her Henry Miller.

She was unable to understand how the hippies could take drugs. It all seemed to her like alcohol, a retreat from a real world which lay out there waiting to be explored.

"Look at what hashish has done to the Arab world," she said, "I don't want to be like that, asleep. I wish to be awake."

We discussed her social life. She thought her life typical of the life of the Jerusalem students. They came from the other cities. They had their career, their friends and their lovers. It was all very serious and intense.

The social system of dating was almost unknown. One went out with one's friends. One talked with them. One slept and usually lived with one's lover. Then if one found that one's life could go along with the other person one married.

(Leah, of course, belonged to the modern non-religious Jewish population, but her standards were much like those of the religious Jews, except they would not permit intimacy before a formal marriage. But with both, unions of a couple were very serious things and there was nothing like the American use of the date to secure a place in a social group.)

She was going to America—land of capitalism!—for a year. She was not planning on staying longer. She was joining her friend who was a student in a mid-western university. She would study. She would see America. She would return.

She was stopping off in Paris.

Her friend had written her three letters in one day furious at her for spending two weeks in Paris (but how could she miss the Revolution?).

She sighed. "He's furious. He's insisting on marrying me. It's too great a step to take—"

Her dog, a frantic spitz bitch—there seemed an awful lot of them in Israel—was yapping frantically about the room.

She took the dog in her arms. "I found her wandering about the streets," she said, "I had to take her in."

She put the dog down, and said, "I've just bought a dress for 250 pounds. That's really like \$200 in America. Do you want to see it?"

"Yes," I said.

She took it out. It was a nice dress.

"My friends who have been in America told me a good original starts at \$300," she said, "I felt I had to get a good dress before I left. I can only take \$500 with me."

I told her my mother, who comes from a secure middle-class, has never spent even \$100 on a single dress. And that there were many American women like her.

She shook her head in disbelief. She had been so sure she would be shabby in America.

I smiled at her. In this at least she was different from American intellectual girls. They would have felt obliged *not* to have expensive dresses. But we didn't tell her that. She wouldn't have believed us.

We began to leave. She walked us outside past the red painted door surrounded by lollipop hearts.

"What does that mean?" we said, pointing to the Hebrew motto painting in red bold letters on the stone porch.

"IF THERE BE JUSTICE LET IT APPEAR," she read, 'AT ONCE.'

"That's a nice thought," I said, "Take it to America with you and spread it around. What career are you planning for?"

"I'm going to be a criminal lawyer," she said seriously. . . .

#### AN APPEAL

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