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WOMEN AS A SYMBOL OF ISRAEL IN NATHAN SHAHAM'S "HAND OF FATE" ("YAD HA-GORAL")

Dr. Thaier Kizel

Head of the Department of Hebrew Language and Hebrew Literature

Arab Academic College of Education, Haifa

ABSTRACT: ***Nathan Shaham (נתן שחם) – a biographical sketch***[1]***.****Shaham is an Israeli writer who was born in Tel-Aviv in 1925. He was a member of the youth movements Mahanot Ha-Olim and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir and in 1945 joined the kibbutz of Beit Alpha.In the years 1942-1945 he served with the Palmach and rejoined it in 1947. Subsequently he worked in the Israel Broadcasting Service and wrote for the press. Shaham comes from a family with literary connections. Both his father and his brother were writers, although neither attained his fame. Initially he tried his hand at writing poetry, but his most prominent and important works are in prose, among them the story collections Grain and Lead (Dagan Ve-Oferet), The Gods Are Lazy (Ha-Elim Atzelim) and Veterans' Housing (Shikun Vatikim), the latter containing the story "Hand of Fate" that is the subject of the present study. In addition, Shaham wrote novels and plays, for example the novel Always Us (Tamid Anahnu) and the plays A Field beyond the Border (Sade Me-Ever La-Gvul) and They'll Arrive Tomorrow (Hem Yagi'u Mahar), originally written as a story entitled "Seven of Them" F(Shiv'a Mehem") and later turned into a play.*

KEYWORDS: Women, Symbol, Israel, Nathan Shaman, Hand of Fate, Yad ha-Goral

THE SOURCE OF SHAHAM'S SYMBOLISM

Shaham belongs to what is known in Hebrew literature as the "period of the Palmach" (תקופת הפלמ"ח). This was a time when the pioneering Zionist spirit reigned supreme,[2] with its three main principles:

1. "Hebrew labor" (Jewish workers should replace Arab workers);
2. Control of the land by purchasing as much land as possible and building settlements on it;
3. Making the Hebrew language the vehicle of everyday communication. In fact, in their writings they occasionally used colloquial expressions and imagery, including grammatical errors.[3] For this reason Shaham has been said by critics to have used "street language" and "journalese".[4]

[1] For more information on the writer see *The Hebrew Encyclopedia*, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, 1965, vol. 13, p. 701.

[2] For more on this issue, see Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Maḥmūd Abū Khaḍra, *Tārīkh al-adab al-ʿibrī al-ḥadīth*, Cairo, 2000, pp. 202-210.

[3] For more on this subject see ibid., pp. 211-221.

[4] Yitzhaki, Ydidia, "Sofer Ke-Ish Sifrut Tza'ir", *Iton 77* (108-109), 1989, p. 13.

This was a spirit that was consistent with the zeal that characterized that period and the many problems and challenges it posed, creating an atmosphere that promoted a realism that was inseparably joined to symbolism. And when stories took on an obviously symbolic character they were no longer merely a source of amusement or an expression of reality, but became an actual embodiment of that reality.[5] As a result, Shaham's stories have a distinct symbolic imprint, or as one critic wrote: "The powerful redolence of the times and Shaham's strong mental ties to their spirit enhanced the concept of the symbol in his writings, in which he provides a model of faith and great trust in reality for his generation".[6]

Digest of the story

The story tells of a group of pioneers in a kibbutz who await the return of some of their comrades who had left in a bus on a mission outside the kibbutz. They hear the sound of an explosion, go out to see what had caused it and discover that a mine had exploded near the bus, injuring several of the passengers, among them the story's female protagonist Mina, the wife of the male protagonist Shuka. Mina's injuries are very serious. She is taken to the hospital, where the doctor says that her hand must be amputated if her life is to be saved. He asks her husband Shuka to donate a large amount of blood for her. He donates as much as he can and searches all night for another donor in order to save Mina's life and health. He goes to another doctor in Tel-Aviv, a recognized specialist who works in the same hospital, and brings him to Mina, who eventually awakens. Her situation improves and her hand is saved. On the horizon there is a glimmer of hope for recovery.

The woman as a symbol for Israel in "Hand of Fate"

The woman in this story is the greatest and most pervasive of the many symbols it contains. Mina symbolizes the Land of Israel, which from the Jewish perspective is ill, due to the fact that parts of it are still under Arab control and not their own. The injured hand that awaits the doctor's decision to amputate symbolizes the part that is in Arab hands and all the efforts which Shuka, one of the story's main characters, makes to save it stand for the attempts to realize the beguiling dream of the Jews for what they call "Greater Israel". I claim that all these symbols are an inversion of the historical truth. The author imagines that the entire land is Israeli and belongs to the Jews and thus the injured part is that which the Arabs possess, while the truth of the matter is that the land is Arab and belonged to the Palestinian Arabs before the Zionists implemented their plan to occupy the land and secured their possession of it by calling on Jews to emigrate there and build settlements.

Shaham's perspective is due basically to his background as a member of the Palmach and other pioneer movements that adopted the same principles. In this respect, as some critics have pointed out, he combines his own personal views with those of the movements to which he belonged and whose ideas he expressed faithfully.[7]

[5] Al-Ṭāhir, Aḥmad Makkī, *al-Qiṣṣa al-qaṣīra, dirāsa wa-mukhtārāt*, Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 6th printing, 1992, p. 98.
[6] Lichtenbaum, Joseph, *Sofrei Yisra'el*, Tel-Aviv: Niv, 1959, p. 259.
[7] Yitzhaki, Yedidia, *Sofer Ke-Ish Sifrut Tza'ir*, p. 13.

Aspects of the use of Mina as a symbol

Concern for Mina's safety

The concern shown by everyone for Mina's health is an important aspect of the figure's symbolic meaning. It is not only her husband Shuka who expresses his worry, but all the members of the kibbutz. Her state of health is not a personal matter, but reflects a collective sense of comradeship and love for this woman, whom the author uses as a symbol for the Land of Israel. After the people in the kibbutz hear the explosion outside they fear for the safety of the passengers in the bus that had just left on a mission outside the kibbutz. They knew that Mina was on that bus and they share their concern with her husband Shuka:

They realized that something bad had happened and waited. Such waiting frays the nerves more than fear. They knew something had happened but did not know what, nor to whom, and want to believe … that at least it happened to others … that the catastrophe happened to others and not to those close to them.[8]

This paragraph shows that their concern was quite egoistical, that the people were indifferent to the condition of non-Jews. The kibbutz members hope that something bad happened to others and not to their Jewish friends. The Jews renounced their humanity when it was a matter of others being hurt, but demonstrated it most clearly when the victims were Jews. This is egoism of a very fanatic kind.

The author writes that waiting is worse than fear, because perhaps there is a problem that cannot be solved. This strong sense of worry clearly points to the symbolic meaning of the woman, who stands for the Land of Israel.

In light of the fact that in his stories Shaham uses human and social ties to symbolize actual political ideas, as critics have pointed out, in this case he used the ties of love and marriage that unite Shuka and Mina to symbolize the ties between Jews and Israel, as will be seen below.

Shuka's attachment to Mina and need for her

Several passages in the story highlight the strong attachment felt by Shuka, symbolizing the Jew who struggles for the sake of Israel, and Mina, symbolizing the Land of Israel. Shuka's attachment to Mina can be seen in the following passage, in which his strong hidden love for her and his consternation at her injury can be seen on his face:

The injured woman lies among them … Shuka sat next to her and watched her sleeping countenance to the light of the stars, wanting to do anything in order not to sit in a firm silence that drives death away.[9]

The land is attached more strongly to the Jews the more they are attached to it

The author uses symbols to express the idea that the land is attached to the Jews if they are attached to it. The injured Mina, whom the author uses as a symbol for Israel, forgets her own injuries for a moment and begins to roam through the bus to ask if anyone was hurt. Her concern is expressed in the following sentence:

Mina was the first to recuperate. She asked out loud: "Is anyone injured?"[10]

[88] Barzel, Hillel, *Shiv'a Mesaprim*, Jerusalem: Yachdav, 1973, p. 239.
[9] Ibid., pp. 241, 242.
[10] Ibid., p. 240.

Mina then loses consciousness for a long time. When she awakens and realizes her deplorable state she does not ask how badly she is hurt but repeats the same question as above, showing her concern for the other passengers. She tells Shuka that for her he is the only doctor:
Suddenly she groaned. "Should I get a doctor?". "You are a better doctor than he is. He hurts me and you don't. Were any others injured?"[11]
Here the author uses her as a symbol for the injured homeland concerned for its sons' wellbeing, for it knows that their salvation is its own.

Blood sacrifice
The attachment felt by Jews towards the land as symbolically presented by the author is not only existential and emotional. It requires a willingness to sacrifice, to give. In the following passage we find a strong tie between devastation and love on one hand and the need to give and sacrifice on the other:
Something else is needed, something that only Shuka has, not the doctor. It is the overwhelming need that things turn out well and not badly. Love must also give something of its power. Give what? What is there to give?[12]
Here the author gives expression to an iron will that moves everything around it, and usually produces positive results. For the author love is the motivating power behind this will; it is an affirmative love that drives those who feel it to give and make sacrifices.

The clearest and most effective symbol of sacrifice appears in the following statement by the doctor:
"Wait", said the doctor, "we will need blood".[13]
This sentence has an important symbolic meaning: Mina (= the homeland) can only be saved if one gives everything one can, even one's blood.
The author implies that for Mina to be saved not just one arm is needed but many, and the blood of many Jews. After the doctor says that he needs four units of blood Shuka goes out to look for his comrades but discovers that no one is there, because they were ordered by the doctor to leave. He then bravely and unhesitatingly declares that he is prepared to give as much blood as is needed:
"Take from me. I'll give you blood, as much as you need".
"I can't take more than one or two units, if your blood type is right".
"So take as much from me as you can, but right now".[14]
Clearly the blood type must match in order to fit the symbolic picture. After all, whose blood but that of Shuka the Jew can be allowed to flow in the veins of Mina (=Israel)? It is thus unthinkable that their blood types will not match.

Seeking the help of others to save Mina's life
The story explores the limits of obtaining help. At first Shuka seeks help by searching for a blood donor:

[11] Ibid., p. 250.
[12] Ibid., p. 242.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 244.

He wandered helplessly before hostile and suspicious window shutters, seeking a drop of human blood.[15]

This description symbolically refers to the heartlessness of the others, as a kind of justification for the fact that the Jews wished evil on others, as related at the beginning of the story. He wants to say that the hearts of non-Jews are like stone, that they refuse to help save the life of a fellow human being. That is why he describes their houses as hostile and filled with suspicion; they symbolize the opposition of the non-Jews to the existence of the Jewish state and to the pioneer ethos in which the Jews believe.

The writer proceeds with the idea of seeking help in the form of a blood donation from another. Shuka thinks:

Why shouldn't he knock on one of the shuttered doors and shout: "Give blood! Man, have mercy on a Jewish soul. Have mercy".[16]

"We often see that the thoughts with which Shaham's protagonists are preoccupied are mostly those with which the author himself is concerned in his story".[17] In the present case we see that what concerns Shaham the most is saving Israel, here symbolized by saving a single person, Mina.

The story repeatedly focuses on Shuka's hopeful efforts to find a blood donor. At the same time we are continuously reminded of the heartlessness of the others and their hostility towards the Jews. One young man whom Shuka asks to donate blood refuses to do so, and explains:

A young man with an evil and nervous countenance said that the Jews are not prepared to give a cent to others, yet they have the nerve to ask for a blood donation. Is blood cheaper than money?[18]The author describes the features of this young man, who belongs to the "others", as hostile and criminal. This is not an unusual occurrence in modern Hebrew literature, where "the other" is often depicted negatively, especially if that other does not agree to what the Jews want.

Ultimately the author rejects the possibility of obtaining help from others, who cannot be relied upon to revive the Land of Israel. The blood that is given must be only that of Shuka, whom fate has burdened with this task. This decision is expressed thus:

There is no need for a blood donation from foreigners.[19]In this case it is fate that has decreed this outcome, not the hero, who tried to obtain a donor wherever one could be found. Thus it is fate that controls the heroine's life, which cannot be saved with the blood of foreigners. It also controls the actions of the hero and sends him in a new direction.[20]

The ultimate conclusion from all these efforts is that the help needed in order to save the homeland is the blood of its sons only. Yet many other possibilities exist as well, for example the professional expertise possessed only by Jews. Thus we read of the hope that Mina may be saved by a famous and experienced physician. However, even

[15] Ibid., p. 247.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Yitzhaki, Yedidia, *Shurashim Ve-Nof, Iyunim Bi-Yetzirat Natan Shaham*, p. 84.
[18] Barzel, op.cit., 247-248.
[19] Ibid., p. 248.
[20] Shamir, Zira, "Poetika Ve-Politika Bi-Yetzirat Natan Shaham", *Al Siah* 40, summer 1998, p. 25.

his expertise cannot replace Shuka's will, which so managed everything around it that it succeeded in doing the impossible. The author says of the physician:

A simple and proud generosity is possessed by the great man, but that is not enough, nor is professional knowledge enough.[21]Here one of the "others" is for the first time described in positive terms which, while not exaggerated, do arouse some embarrassment because they are applied only to the doctor, because of his professional expertise, which is placed at the same level as the will of the story's protagonist, who symbolizes the Jews.
This is followed by Shuka's inflated view of himself as the hidden power that moves the doctor, rather than the latter's knowledge and skill:

He moves him by means of his willpower … The knowledge possessed by others imposes his energy on him … After all, no one can acquire every piece of knowledge needed to maintain life, but one can impose one's resolute will wherever necessary. And there is a reward. For here are two people, distant strangers, who have come together for doing something that cannot be accomplished alone. One brought his energy and the other his expertise. With less than this it is impossible to undertake the struggle for a person's life.[22]

Critics have noted that in Shaham's stories personal and professional relations are based on will and fate. In our case the protagonist decided to fight for Mina's health by searching for a blood donor, while fate turned him to a new direction that redefined the nature of his fight. He turned to a skilled physician, with whom his relation was based on practical rather than personal considerations. This relation combined fate and choice: The protagonist freely chose to fight, but fate dictated the form and direction that this fight would take.

Shuka assumes complete responsibility for Mina

At the end of this symbolic scene all the Jewish efforts to save Mina are concentrated in Shuka hands, and all the love that provides the motivation for sacrifice is concentrated in his heart. He now takes full responsibility. Here is how the author describes the crucial moment in which Shuka decided to take responsibility:

At that moment he came to the decision to take matters into his own hands so to speak, like a soldier who realizes that his commander has lost his wits and takes command.[23]
Here the author hints at a broad class of Jewish figures, fighters who bear within themselves the characteristics of the collective which the author wishes to validate, a collective characterized by perseverance, obstinacy and a willingness to take responsibility.[24]

[21] Barzel, op.cit., p. 259.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 244.
[24] For more on this topic see Shaked, Gershon, *Ha-Siporet Ha-Ivrit 1880-1980*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1993, p. 250; Fuʾād Marʿī, *Muqaddima fī ʿilm al-adab*, Beirut: Dār al-ḥadātha lil-ṭibāʿa wal-nashr wal-tawzīʿ, 1981, p. 33.

The responsibility that Shuka decided to take upon himself was in fact imposed upon him by the circumstances as well, and even by Mina herself, who put her complete trust in him. When she awakened from her coma she refused to call the doctor:
She groaned. "Perhaps I should call for the doctor?".
"You are a better doctor than him. He hurts me and you don't".[25]

Artistic devices in support of the symbolism of Mina
The symbolism of the woman in the story is further supported by a variety of elements, as shown below.

Language
The language of "Hand of Fate" is filled with symbolism. It contains numerous references to the state of emergency, the ongoing war, the constant fighting, instability and lack of security. Shaham describes the situation in the colony and insists that the bus ride on a mission outside the kibbutz, a tense night journey, will result in a deeper comradeship among its members:This nocturnal journey is but one of those journeys that deepen the feeling of friendship and gives meaning to their lives in the middle of the wasteland, the poor soil, the dangers.[26]

In this way the author depicts the difficult life they lead and the hardships they are willing to undertake for the purpose of attaining their objectives. He describes the dangers with which they are surrounded, in the face of which the Jews there are united, adding that the tension and worries will prove justified by the eventual good outcome. The author here describes the kibbutz in glowing terms, speaking about the spirit of friendship and kinship that becomes stronger in the face of crises and danger. Shaham in this respect differs from some writers of his generation, who found both positive and negative things to say about the kibbutz; he does not mention a single negative aspect of the kibbutz, so that his writing in this respect is very optimistic, unrealistic, and extreme in the call for settlement and for making the occupation permanent.[27]

Note that although the language used in the story clearly points to the harsh conditions under which the people lived, its purpose is in fact to bolster their morale and fan hopes for a better future in which their aims will be realized. This can be seen quite clearly in such suggestive names as *tikva* ("hope" in Hebrew), the name of the hospital in which Mina lies. Despite her sufferings and the seriousness of her condition, the name of the hospital reveals that there is hope for betterment in her condition:

Inside the city the darkness was thick, before the light of the stars faded. Inside the lit house with the sign "Hope Hospital" on its entrance a young woman lay lifeless, while her husband ran outside, still almost a youth, and fought for a spark of life.[28]The author's affirmation that the woman lying in the hospital is in the prime of life, as is her husband who is searching for a blood donor, is also an affirmation of the spirit of

[25] Barzel, op.cit., 250.
[26] Ibid., 241.
[27] For more on the positive and negative aspects of the kibbutz see Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Maḥmūd Abū Khaḍra, *al-Kībūts bayna al-mithāliyya wal-wāqiʿ fī al-qiṣṣa al-ʿibriyya ʿinda Aharon Meged*. Riyadh: no publisher, 1994.
[28] Barzel, op.cit., p. 247.

optimism and hope, of the ability to resist and make an effort, and to bear suffering. The language of this passage thus brings together optimism and the fight for life.

Critics note that Shaham's language, even when he speaks about struggle, is bereft of verbal aggression, and yet he possesses courage and follows a clear, straight path.[29] I do not accept this view, in light of the examples quoted above in which the other was portrayed quite negatively, using what was obvious verbal aggression. However, even if we were to agree with the afore-mentioned critics that verbal aggression is non-existent, or if we were to ignore it, we cannot ignore his symbolic aggression, so to speak, against the Arabs' rights to the land, aggression against the rights of the other which Hebrew critics call "bravery", "integrity" and "clarity".

Time

The entire story takes up no more than one day. The very short time span in which the story takes place is perhaps a means by which the author wishes to imply that the Jews will attain their goal of taking control of the entire land quickly, albeit through toil and effort. This is an inseparable part of the author's optimistic and hopeful outlook, his assurance that the crisis will pass over soon and all the troubles will be dispelled.

Shuka, who symbolizes the fighting Jew, runs through the night in search of a blood donor after he had donated blood himself in order to save the life of Mina, who symbolizes Israel. When dawn breaks Mina's condition improves and the problem is solved. This would seem to prove that the need was met very quickly and that therefore the time spent in the search was short, when compared to the result. When Shuka begins his race he moves as quickly as possible in the darkness, with no expectations for the morning:

He ran out of the hospital. His steps echoed from the dark, empty streets and the red walls.[30]

Later the author comments on Shuka's successful efforts:

He did what he could. His part is over … He drives him by his willpower … There is a reward.[31]

Critics agree that Shaham's stories are basically concerned with struggle and conflict.[32] This is not something new in modern Hebrew literature. In fact, it is not new in literature period. Struggle and escalating events are a natural consequence of striving to attain a goal in the end. Shaham could have done something new to distinguish himself from other modern Hebrew writers by promoting a just goal, attained by just means: "Literature in its various forms by its very nature espouses struggle. The struggle for freedom, honor and life is the most admirable and the most difficult kind which nations can experience and by which they determine their fate. And literature is the best device for realizing and crystallizing this truth".[33]However, when the struggle is against right, justice and truth, and involves stealing the land, driving out the people and annihilating

[29] Yitzhaki, Yedidia, *Sofer Ke-Ish Sifrut Tza'ir*, p. 13.
[30] Barzel,, op.cit., p. 244.
[31] Ibid., p. 259.
[32] Shake, Gershon & Golan, Yaron, *Haim Al Kav Ha-Ketz, Antologiya Le-Siporet Yisra'elit*, Part I, Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1982, p. 310.
[33] Nabīl Ghārib, *Mawsūʿat al-fikr al-adabī*, Part I, al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma lil-kitāb, 198, p. 79.

their presence, it is a struggle that will fail in the end, even if it achieves temporary success. In fact, it is a struggle without any splendor, one that makes it impossible to enjoy a work of literature about it.

To return now to the time element in the story, the events take place with lightning speed. We find Shuka telling the famous physician he found for his wife that they have no time to lose:
We must leave right away.[34]

Dialogue
When addressing the topic of the dialogue in this story it must first be pointed out that Shaham has a tendency to formulate his stories as plays. This is true of "Hand of Fate" as well. Critics have noted two basic features that Shaham's stories and plays have in common that made the transition between the story form and the play form easier:

A. The stories are filled with a constant struggle, similarly to the dramatic struggle in a play.
B. The dialogue which plays a central role in transmitting ideas in his stories is the foundation of drama.[35] In this respect it is similar to the type known as "dialogue stories" in modern Hebrew literature, in which we usually find favorable descriptions of Jewish immigrants.[36]

The dialogue in this story participates in conveying the strength of the bond between Shuka and Mina. This strengthens the story's symbolism; if Mina is Israel then she is naturally bound to Shuka, symbolizing the Jews, by ties of love and marriage. In the following dialogue between Shuka and Mina after she had awakened from her coma and Shuka was permitted to enter her room, she very clearly expresses how touched she is to find him next to her in her blackest moments, and he just as clearly shows how much he was affected by her injury and weakness:

"Shuka! So good of you to have come".
Tears flowed from his eyes.
"Shuka, what's the matter? You were so brave, boy".
"I was brave for myself but not for you", he said after he wiped his tears.
"Now I'll be brave for you, boy. See, I'm all well".
He kissed her good hand: "You're so brave".
"Be brave, too. By myself I can't. Together, maybe".[37]
"I don't want you to amputate the hand".
"You can take her to another hospital. But I warn you, she must not be moved".
"Maybe I'll call another doctor in the Hope Hospital".
"Only the general manager in Tel-Aviv has the right to postpone an operation, which I believe is vital".
"Please call him".

[34] Barzel, op.cit., p. 258.
[35] Yitzhaki, Yedidia, *Shorashim Ve-Nof, Iyunim Bi-Yetzirat Natan Shaham*, p. 85.
[36] See Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Maḥmūd Abū Khaḍra, *Tārīkh al-adab al-ʿibrī al-ḥadīth*, p. 174.
[37] Barzel, op.cit., pp. 250, 252.

"Listen, young man, I have no doubt. If you aren't sure, you're welcome to do so … My advice to you is not to call. No one will answer. Go to Tel-Aviv. Speak to him. It won't be easy, but you're very stubborn, as I see".[38]

This dialogue makes it very clear that the physician was well aware of Shuka's intense zeal, and confronted him with a test that challenged his will, commitment and ability not to give up until he had what he wanted. As Shaked notes, "Shaham's literary output mostly consists of tests which individuals in society face, tests whose outcome depends on one's efforts".[39] The test mentioned by Shaked is one which the protagonist must face alone. As another critic has written of Shaham's literary figures: "These figures face numerous trials that make them fall. They must struggle in order to survive. The heroes find themselves alone in a confrontation with fate".[40]

The story's opening

The story begins with a presentation of a number of principles:

- **The importance of activity and vigilance**

From the story's very beginning the author affirms the need for constant vigilance and for taking responsibility, in an attempt to make the reader willing to accept the tasks which the protagonist takes upon himself with respect to Mina, symbolizing Israel, tasks that require zeal and vigilance, that leave no time for sleep or sloth. Thus we read at the very start of the story:

Apparently he dozed off. Someone poked his elbow into his ribs … "What does it matter that you slept all the time and did not hear the discussion? … Everyone shares the concern and the responsibility".[41]

Shuka's replies to his kibbutz comrades that he was tired because of his three consecutive weeks of tireless effort, without a single day of rest. His reply reflects his belief that toil is more important than sleep:

"I haven't had a day of rest in three weeks", Shuka apologized while rubbing his eyes with his fists.[42]

For the concerned protagonist and the other members of the kibbutz their responsibility for Israel's safety makes any idea of even momentary respite unthinkable before the objective has been attained and their task accomplished. At the beginning of the story relaxation was something which the members of the kibbutz viewed with disapproval, but at the end, after the protagonist did what he had to do in order to save the heroine, symbolizing the safety and survival of Israel, one was allowed to relax. This can be seen in the following sentence at the story's end. After the nurse comes out and tells Shuka that Mina is well, he allows himself to relax:

She than had him lie down on the bench and presented a glass of cold water to his lips.[43]

"This is a common idea, namely that after much toil and effort a time comes for resting. It is a philosophical and intellectual concept that appears quite clearly in Shaham's

[38] Ibid., p. 253.
[39] Shaked, op.cit., p. 318.
[40] Yitzhaki, Yedidia, *Shorashim Ve-Nof, Iyunim Bi-Yetzirat Shaham*, p. 85.
[41] Barzel, op.cit., p. 237.
[42] Ibid., p. 237.
[43] Ibid., p. 259.

stories".[44]In the previous passage Shuka finally lay down and drank, after having suffered from thirst throughout the story. This is a symbolic thirst, of course, representing the need to save Mina, and ends when the objective has been reached.

- **A call to action**

The author emphasizes the need for action, using as his inspiration the Arab peasant who tills the soil:

"There were orchards because the Arab sought out every little weed and pulled out with his own hands. We, too, will do so".[45]

In this passage Shaham views the Arab in a positive and a negative light at one-and-the-same time. On one hand he is a hard-working man who sows and plants with his own hands, and as such deserves to serve as a model for the Jews. But at the same time he is the enemy, who must be resisted and met with an opposing response until his land is wrested away from him.[46]

The talk about the Arab energized Shuka, and no sooner had he been assigned to work in the armory that he ran there and forgot his fatigue:

Shuka ran secretly through the group into the darkness, to the armory. His tiredness was forgotten. He felt an amazing wakefulness of the senses.[47]

All these indications symbolize the need to strive and toil in order to attain one single objective, the safety of Israel, something that can only be achieved through vigilance and action, by renouncing sloth, sleep and relaxation. This are the zealous principles of pioneers that Shaham promotes, who demonstrates the value of action through the behavior of his protagonists.[48]

Ending and resolution

Endings of stories are of different types. Some convey grief and disappointment. Other endings are happy, with wishes come true. There are also open endings, which allow the reader to interpret the events as he wishes. "Hand of Fate" has a happy ending; after many trials and tribulations that make the reader lose hope the desired result is obtained. It is an ending that obliterates previous troubles and arouses satisfaction and calm. After the doctor arrives at the hospital the author says:

It appears that from now everything must turn out for the best.[49]

Indeed, the ending does confirm that everything was alright. The doctor who examined Mina's hand declares that there is no need to amputate it:

A short time after the doctor entered the hospital the nurse came out to Shuka and told him pleasantly that there was no need to amputate the hand: "Your girl is very lucky".[50]

The story's characters are not lucky because of a caprice of the author. No, their luck holds up because in his view they are honorable people, willing to make sacrifices on

[44] Yitzhaki, op.cit., p. 84.
[45] Barzel, op.cit., p. 237.
[46] For more on the Arab in Shaham's oeuvre, see: Levy, Shimon, "Shevuyim Be-Bidyon, Ha-Aravim Ba-Siporet Ha-Ivrit Ha-Hadasha", *Moznayim* June-July 1983, pp. 70-73.
[47] Barzel, op.cit., p. 238.
[48] Shaked, op.cit., p. 317.
[49] Barzel, op.cit., p. 258.
[50] Ibid., p. 250.

others' behalf, to give up their blood and their very lives. Mina felt that her serious injury was her own fault, because she was the reason why the other bus passengers were hurt. She felt guilty because it was she who had insisted that they return to the kibbutz so late at night. She is not accountable, because after all she was not the one who had placed the mine that exploded under the bus, but the author presents her as a noble woman who takes responsibility and who is endowed with patience and steadfastness. That is why she was saved. The author wants to say that sacrifice on others' behalf always pays. And Shuka paid the price of her salvation with his toil and blood. The author sums up this idea briefly as follows:
"It cannot be that a life for which so much was paid will be lost in vain".[51]

"The heroes in Shaham's stories always come out victorious, after having confronted a hazardous situation".[52] Works of literature have been described as being "a shout in the face of the deaf predestination which engenders the force that we choose to call fate".[53]However, in the story under discussion here the situation is reversed: The will, strength and perseverance shown by Mina and Shuka did not try to change fate, but were instrumental in its realization. Perhaps this is why the story is named "Hand of Fate"; the author possibly wanted to say that the will of the Jews is the will of fate.

From the preceding discussion we can arrive at an extremely significant conclusion concerning the position of women in modern Hebrew literature, namely that the story in question here is one of the few in this literature in which the woman is presented as a positive symbol, of strength, steadfastness and self-sacrifice. She is neither the negative figure of Jewish ritual law nor a weakling controlled by circumstance. Rather, she is the Zionist symbol of conquering the land and making the Israeli presence in Palestine take root. This explains her symbolic use as an injured woman who needs blood to save her life and who awaits the doctor's decision on whether her hand must be amputated in order to prevent the spread of the disease through her body. This is a woman whom the author uses to symbolize the Land of Israel, whose preservation demands sacrifice and blood, as well as Jewish action, to build rather than to destroy, to bring together rather than to amputate.

[51] Ibid.
[52] Yedidia, *Sofer Ke-Ish Sifrut Tza'ir*, p. 13.
[53] Nabīl Rāghib, *Mawsūʿat al-fikr al-adabī*, Part 2, al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma lil-kitāb, 1988, p. 139.