

Introduction

by Thomas Spindler

Rachel Bluwstein (1890–1931), known as “Rachel the Poet,” is a cultural icon and national poet of Israel. Marian Benjamin Fritsch gives an impressive account of her life story in his foreword.

After the founding of the State of Israel, “Rachel the Poet” became one of the most influential Hebrew poets. Her poems are lyrical and characterized by a special musical tone and a fascinating depth of feeling.

Her grave on the Sea of Galilee has become a place of pilgrimage for Jews, Israelis, and people from all over the world who love her poetry. Since 2017, her portrait, together with an excerpt from her famous poem Kinneret, has been immortalized on Israel's 20-shekel banknote.

Rachel's poetry is part of the compulsory curriculum in Israeli schools. In addition, most of her poems were translated into Arabic in 2019 for the Arab population of Israel.

Many of her poems are short, wistful, sometimes melancholic, and very often reflect feelings of melancholy, longing, and loss. They express in particular her love for Israel and her nostalgia for the Sea of Galilee. Many of her poems have been set to music and are now an integral part of Israeli culture.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Petra Figeac and her team at the „Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin” for their wonderful teamwork. We would also like to thank Marian Benjamin Fritsch, whose translations make Rachel's work accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The two arrangements by our Israeli project partner Danny Donner give an exemplary impression of the almost limitless potential of Rachel's poetry in combination with music.

This special work of Jewish-German history would not have been possible without the significant support of the Berthold Leibinger Foundation and the VHV Foundation. We would therefore like to thank the management of both foundations for giving all project partners involved the opportunity to bring Rachel Bluwstein's work back into our present, into our civil society, into our schools and educational institutions. This reprint is also available as a digital book at www.arche-musica.org.

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