



Second Meeting – Rachel Geshuri (*née* Granek)

From the moment I which I decided to become a mouthpiece for my father who, due to his sudden demise, was not able to tell me about his childhood experiences and his struggles to survive during the Second World War, and from the moment I decided to become a mouthpiece for my mother, who adamantly refused to speak with me and with my brother Natan about her tribulations, I knew that one day I would renew my connection with Rachel.

Rachel was born in Krzepice. Her parents were named Mordche and Gittel Granek. Her father worked as a tailor. In 1933, the family left Krzepice and moved to Danzig, a city on the German-Polish border, on the Baltic coast. The Poles call the city Gdańsk and it has also been referred to as *Freistadt* or the "Free City" - an appellation which requires explanation - when the First World War concluded with the defeat of Germany, and it was decided to establish an independent Polish State, the new state demanded that Gdańsk be included in its territory in order to have access to the sea, although there was a vast majority of Germans in the city. Defeated Germany, however, could not lay down any demands and it was therefore settled in the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed in June 1919, that the city would remain independent, under the auspices of the League of Nations (the contemporary United Nations).

Danzig, or Gdańsk, was renowned throughout history as an important port city situated on the Wisła River and, in the past, it served as a corridor for merchandise to the Baltic Sea. Being a German city in a Slavic region, the city developed and flourished and also served as a large communal centre for Jews, the majority of whom were Zionists.

As time passed, and in view of the events happening in Germany, Rachel's parents realised that Danzig's status was about to change. In 1938, they decided to emigrate to [the Land] of Israel. They lived on Rashi Street in Tel-Aviv. Rachel's father continued working in his trade as a tailor.

The majority of Rachel's relatives left Poland before the outbreak of the War and made *aliyah*, barring one uncle who chose to emigrate to the United States. The others, who survived the Holocaust, joined them. Rachel's grandfather Herszl-Cwi was unable to get away in time and he was murdered by the Germans.

In 1933, when Rachel and her parents left Krzepice, my father Majer was twenty-seven. Rachel told me that he had a hairdressing salon. He was a ladies' coiffeur - the only one in town - and he knew her parents well. Years later, when my father arrived in Israel, he was very happy to meet, once again, with Rachel's parents, Mordche and Gittel, and also to renew contact with Rachel who, in the meantime, had married Amichai. Upon his arrival in Israel, my father chose to relinquish his occupation as a hairdresser and began working as the operator of a steamroller in the Solel Boneh Company. He laboured arduously, as he lacked experience in his occupation and due to the severe weather conditions.

Gittel, Rachel's mother, who was called *Tova* in Israel, was very fond of my father and implored him to pass by their house after the day's work to rest a while and have a glass of tea. My father accepted her invitation. After a brief repose, he would continue on his way, walking home to our house at Salma St. 7 in Jaffo.

Due to his frequent visits, a good relationship was formed between my father and Rachel's brother, whose name was Yaakov. He admired my father, who occasionally took him with him to work and gave him a ride on the immense and intimidating steamroller. This made a huge impression on him.

The links between the families tightened. I remember that, in my youth, we would sometimes visit Rachel and Amichai's house. I remembered Rachel as a smiling woman who radiated kindness. There was a special bond between Rachel and my mother. They would meet frequently. They seemed to love one another as if they were of one family. In my opinion, the links between them tightened thanks to the close relationship which had been formed between my father and Gittel-Tova, Rachel's mother. As I said, my father used to visit their house after a day's work, before returning home.

Besides the special relationship with my parents, Rachel took care to remain in contact with many of the Krzepice *landsleit*. She knew the family connections and the attributes of the families and she was well-versed in the tribulations they had experienced.

It is perhaps due to this that Rachel was extremely pained by the neglect that had spread over the memorial site at the Holon Cemetery. She visited there many times and requested that someone be found, who would take it upon himself, to tend to the site and maintain the chest built into the front of the monument, where was placed the scroll of parchment in which a scribe had written the names of the victims. Maybe thanks to Rachel's actions and her involvement that the memorial site has been tended to and it is properly maintained.



Amichai, Rachel's husband, worked for the Ministry of Communications, in the Engineering Services. Later on, when I began studying at Tel-Aviv University, he agreed to my mother's request and arranged for me a temporary position at one of the public telephone centrals in Tel-Aviv.

At the start of my second year of academic studies, I went to work in the management of the Engineering Services of the Ministry of Communications. I started off in the control centre, I went on to the editorial department as editor of technical publications, then in the manpower division, until I became Assistant Manager of the Engineering Services.

In this context, Amichai and I met frequently. He truly loved his job and was very dedicated to it. I valued his superior professional skills highly, as well as the fact that he invested hours in every task that he took upon himself.



The renewed meeting with Rachel took place in the home for the aged, where she and her husband Amichai were living. Once we began talking, I very soon realised that the conversation would mainly focus on her acquaintance with my parents in Israel.

Rachel noted that our plight had pained her deeply. Three of us had arrived in Israel - my father, my mother and I - an infant about two years of age. She stressed the manner in which we had overcome the hardships of immigration, without grandparents, without uncles and aunts - without any relatives at all. "Your parents", Rachel remarked, "in their own singular manner, formed special connections with the families of the survivors from Krzepice, who filled the void created by the lack of family".

Rachel told me that my father's brother had also been a coiffeur. I have not been able to confirm this information, but I did find, in the list of victims, a man whose surname was Chaskelewicz and his given name "Kalman". I tried to find out whether he was a relative or a brother of my father. No one could give me an answer and the issue has remained a mystery.

Over the course of my conversation with Rachel, I could not help asking a question which troubled me greatly, namely, my father's desertion to Russia. I assumed that Rachel would have answers, due to her tight connections with the *landsleit*. As a preamble, I told her that I had spoken about this with my father's friend, Mr Sandler, who worked as a hairdresser in my father's salon in Munich. Sandler met me often. Once, when we met at the Holon Cemetery, I once again asked him regarding my father's desertion. His response surprised me very much. Sandler said that many viewed my father's escape negatively, as he had left his family behind. I was extremely upset, but I had nothing to respond at the time.

Rachel, too, could not refute Sandler's words. I was eventually given different information and I shall treat this topic at length subsequently.

