

Grandmother

(The Jaboutinsky Cabaret)

A Monodrama

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The Character

Leah Yeshurun - an 80 year old kindergarten teacher from Binyamina, a rural town in Israel.

Synopsis:

At the cemetery in Binyamina, veterans of the Irgun (Etzel) and Lehi gather to bid farewell to their friend Leah Yeshurun, the colony's long-serving kindergarten teacher, who passed away earlier that morning. The "Binyaminim" choir also arrives at the cemetery to honor Leah on her final journey by singing old underground resistance songs written by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Avraham (Yair) Stern, songs that inspired Leah as she educated generations at "Gan Rishonim," the colony's oldest kindergarten.

Leah's last day, as an elderly woman nearing 80, began like any other. She woke up, washed, dressed, drank a cup of tea, and prepared for another mundane, sunny day in the sleepy colony. However, that morning, while listening to the morning news on her old transistor radio, Leah was shocked to hear the Prime Minister—once a child in her kindergarten—announce a general mobilization, seemingly intending to go to war.

Leah decides to break her routine. She boards a bus to Jerusalem to convince Udi to immediately halt his plans for general mobilization and war.

Arriving in Jerusalem, she finds her way to the gates of the Prime Minister's office but is stopped by his guards. She tries to persuade them to let her in to speak with him and convince him to cease the march to

war. The guards, loyal to their duty, refuse to approach him, claiming he is too busy and cannot meet with just anyone.

As she makes her case, Leah's life story unfolds before us—from the Jabotinskyan ideology that shaped her upbringing and was passed on to her kindergarten students, to the creeping rise of real estate bubbles and wealth that overtook her world.

Theatrical Style:

The songs and lyrics of Yair Stern and Ze'ev Jabotinsky are interwoven into the narrative of Leah's life. She watches the ideology she instilled in generations of children crumble before her eyes, its consequences affecting her directly and her desperate attempt to save her grandson from dying in war.

The audience watching the play becomes the mourners at Leah's funeral, to whom she recounts her life story, all the way up to her death—on this very day.

The Play

(On the marble table at the cemetery in Binyamina lies Leah Yeshurun. Around her, her funeral is taking place. She removes the shroud from her face and addresses the audience.)

Leah:

I'm sleeping now. Forever. Lying here on the marble table at the cemetery. Everyone's come to say goodbye to me. My daughter, Nechameleh; that scrawny one over there is her son—my grandson, Idan. The bald idiot sitting there is our council head. He'll soon stand up and babble all sorts of nonsense about me. Even our choir is here—the "Binyaminim." They'll sing the underground songs in my honor. Every time someone from my generation passes, they gather at the cemetery to sing the songs of the Irgun and Lehi. I'm among the last ones left. When the last of us finally goes, it will be the last time these songs are heard. It's going to be emotional.

I never dreamed they'd put on a ceremony like this for me. If I had known, I would've died long ago. Oh well. Let them finish with the Kaddish and speeches already and move on to the songs. I've had a hard day. I just want to rest. And please, make sure my tombstone says: "Fell in the line of duty." I deserve it! At least as much as my Zevik.

Look, now that idiot from the council is starting to talk. I really don't have patience for this. Truly, it's been a long, hard day, and I'm ready to rest. But I'm happy—at least my grandson Idan is here and not... there.

(music starts)

Ah, finally, some music.

(She gets up from the funeral table and, as if preparing for a regular day, ties her hair back, tidies her space, and begins singing along to the music.)

Song *(Leah sings along)*

***We are anonymous soldiers, without uniforms,
Surrounded by terror and the shadow of death.
We have all been conscripted for life:
Only death releases us from our ranks.***

***In red days of riots and bloodshed,
In black nights of despair,
In cities and villages, we will raise our flag,
Upon it: defense and conquest.***

***We were not conscripted as slaves with the whip,
To spill our blood on foreign soil.
Our desire is to live forever as free people,
Our dream is to die for our homeland.***

(Leah enters the stage holding a large basket filled with various items. Sounds of bustling movement as if a war is beginning surround her: planes fly overhead, tanks cross roads, jeeps rush by. The air is full of excitement. She waves her handkerchief at the planes and tanks as they pass and eventually arrives at the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem.)

Leah:

Hello, is this the Prime Minister's office? *(She reacts to the guards, smiling and raising her hands as if surrendering.)* Please... *(She turns in place with her hands raised, clearly enjoying the attention.)*

I have cookies here, and my radio. I usually listen to nonsense on it, and sometimes the news.

(Her cell phone rings from inside her bag. She turns to the guard.)

That must be my daughter, Nechameleh. She calls me every morning to check how I'm doing. I don't answer; that way, she thinks I'm still sleeping.

So, is this the Prime Minister's office? I've come to see Udi. Udi! Ehud... I'm just used to calling him Udi. Sweet little Udi. My name is Leah. Kindergarten Teacher Leah. I was his first teacher at Gan Rishonim, in Nachalat Jabotinsky—Binyamina. Sixty years ago, yes. I'd like to speak with him. Tell him I'm here, all right?

I just heard on the news this morning that he's planning to issue an order for a general mobilization of soldiers. So I want to talk to him, to Udi, give him some good advice. A small tip, just between us. He wouldn't dare refuse to listen to his kindergarten teacher, Leah. Go on, go on—please tell him I'm waiting here outside. I don't want to disturb their important meetings up there... but if he prefers, I'm ready to go in at any moment.

I understand he's a very busy man. He has been ever since he became a Member of Knesset, then a minister, and now the Prime Minister. He must have so much on his plate. Especially today, as he's about to declare a general mobilization.

Can you please go and tell him I'm here? In the meantime, I'll stand here in your place and guard the gate. Don't worry, I won't let anyone through—even if it's the Chief of Staff. When I decide something, it's very hard to stop me. And if I decide no one's getting through, then no one's getting through. You can be sure of that.

In our town, they used to call me "Leah Security." Security is me! I was the one who guarded our farm, even back when our Arab neighbors from Faradis worked in our dairy during the day but would come back at night to steal calves. But when I stood guard, they didn't manage to steal even one.

One night, a little troublemaker from their side sneaked into the barn. I saw his silhouette in the dark, grabbed him by his nose—yes, by his nose—and dragged him to the town square. There was a circle of stones there, right in the middle of the carriage path. And there, I gave him a beating he'd never forget. He was lucky my Zevik saved him from me and sent him back to his village. We never saw him again. He probably ran away with his family.

Zevik knew how to handle them. They worked for us in the dairy, and Zevik enforced strict discipline. They called him "Mr. Zevik!" When he entered the barn, they'd drop everything and stand at attention, waiting for his words. Yes, they respected him, and he gave them respect in return.

On Saturdays, he would teach the children in the town how to shoot a gun. He even taught me. It was the gun he got from Begin in the Irgun. Udi learned too, yes. But he wasn't much of a marksman—usually missed.

So, are you going to approach him yet? No? You know what, forget it. Just tell me which window is his. The one in his office, where he sits with his ministers and decides on wars. Where is it? Can you please just point out which of those windows is his? Well, it must be one of these.

(She stands facing the windows, raises her head, and calls out to the Prime Minister.)

Leah:

Udi! Udi! Udi, it's me—La'eleh! Teacher Leah. Do you remember me? You can't forget me, right? No one forgets their first kindergarten teacher. Isn't that right, Udin'keh? Do you remember me, Udileh?

Udi, can you hear me? I came to talk to you about this thing you announced this morning... the general mobilization. Yes, yes, Udileh...

Udi, this morning, I saw young soldiers getting up, happy... and their fathers putting on their uniforms too, stepping out of their homes, smiling, saying cheerful goodbyes to their wives and children, and marching off happily to the pickup stations and collection points. The whole atmosphere, Udi, was festive—a festive atmosphere.

I asked my daughter, Nechameleh, why everyone was so happy. Do you remember Nechameh? The time you both got lost for eight hours, and your mother and I thought we'd never see you again? Then you came back, smiling like you'd discovered some great secret.

"Udi declared a general mobilization," she told me. She still calls you Udi, just like when you were a couple. Before you left for Tel Aviv. She cried so much when you left. Even now, she watches you on TV every night, and only I know what's going through her head. Ten years she waited for you, and you didn't come back. In the end, she married Paklowitz, our annoying neighbor.

Their son, Idan—my grandson—is also in this general mobilization. He's a soldier now, and I want to talk to you about him. Although he doesn't remember who I am or what I mean to him. How could he, when he's

always got those headphones in his ears, listening to music or talking to his friends on those phones, or typing away at God-knows-what? When I pass him in the town, he doesn't even lift his eyes.

But every day, when he sits at the piano to play, I sit by my window and listen. He plays Mozart's Requiem as if Mozart himself dreamed he'd play it.

So I just want to talk to you about something small, Udileh. Before you give the order. Do you understand, Udin'keh? I'm here waiting for you to come down.

Well, he'll probably come down soon to talk to me.

In my kindergarten, I used to take them on weekly visits to the cemetery in our town—the most beautiful cemetery in the country. Now that Ehud Manor is buried there too, it's even more beautiful than the cemetery in Kinneret. But I took them there so they would understand who they owed their peaceful playtime in the sandbox to.

I clearly remember the first time I took them:

"Gan Rishonim's First Visit to the Cemetery."

I lined them up in a single file, and as we sang, we climbed the hill, passing by the graves of those who fell in the War of Independence.

(The Binyaminim choir begins to sing "On the Barricades.")

**Today, little Sarah,
We'll meet as I head to war,
To establish the state
On both banks of the Jordan.**

***Cut your hair,
Gird your belt,
Hold me close, take the gun,
And join the line with me.***

Each grave had its story—Tanek, which fell on the Altalena ship. And Lipa, and my friend Miriam, who was murdered a week earlier on her way to Kinneret. and my beloved, my Zevik. When Udi realized that the grave he was standing in front of belonged to Zevik, my husband, he came to me, stood beside me, and hugged me. And he'd say to me: "Don't cry, La'eleh, don't cry." That's how sensitive Udi'keh was. But I wouldn't cry... I would sing to them.

**On the barricades we'll meet, we'll meet,
On the barricades freedom will rise in blood and fire.
Gun to gun, barrel to barrel salute,
Bullet to bullet will echo loud.
On the barricades, on the barricades, we'll meet.**

My Zevik... Oh, my Zevik... In the morning, he was a farmer; in the evening, he was in the Irgun. His job was to tell stories, to spread wild rumors that would scare off those calf thieves and make them flee. Oh, the stories he invented... like a thousand and one nights.

He'd make up tales about how the Jews were coming to kill all their men and women and children any day now. But they didn't believe him—why would they? After all, Zevik was a Jew who gave them food and jobs. So, they didn't believe him. But Zevik persisted because that was his order—to keep telling those stories. And an order is an order! But it didn't work.

They laughed at him, saying, "Mr. Zevik, if we're going to die, we'll die here. Why should we die in Amman, Beirut, or Damascus? We'll die here, in Faradis." So, they stayed in Faradis, and to this day, on Passover, they make our Pita bread.

When the war of independence came, Zevik felt he needed to contribute more to the war effort, so he asked to transfer to the operational unit. I was proud of him! But honestly, I didn't want it. He was a farmer, not a fighter! But I stayed silent. How could I object to something so important? After all, a state needed to be built, and they needed fighters. And Zevik, my Zevik, even with a child, a pregnant wife, a farm, a dairy, and calves to care for—he went to fight.

One night during the war, Zevik went out with the Irgun combat unit, some Lehi boys, and a few Haganah fighters (by then, they were cooperating). They set out on a mission in an Arab village near Castel, on the road to Jerusalem—not far from here. Maybe it was that hill or the next; you can't tell anymore because they destroyed the entire village.

When our guys were given orders, they carried them out. Yes... an order is an order. But things got complicated in Deir Yassin.

They told them over loudspeakers to leave their houses... and only then did they blow up the houses. Yes... and in the end, it turned out the houses were full of men, women, and children.

Well, they didn't leave when told to. I always told Zevik their people have a discipline problem. And our guys didn't see or know the houses were full of people—it was dark, after all... yes... so they blew them up. They were ordered to blow them up, so they did. An order is an order, yes... we always had discipline.

A few days earlier, over breakfast after milking, I said to him quietly, "Zevik, maybe you should stay in the story unit. You're good at it. You've got a farm, a family, a baby, Chaim'keh, and I'm pregnant. Maybe now isn't the time for you to go on a mission. This nation needs farmers too, not just fighters."

But then he started preaching to me about what Jabotinsky would say, about the duty of the watchman, and how "Only death releases us from our ranks," and other powerful words. And when I kept arguing, he pulled out his trump card—he started reciting the Betar oath:

1. I dedicate my life to the revival of the Hebrew state.
2. The Hebrew language shall be my tongue.
3. I will prepare my arm to defend my people and conquer my homeland.
4. ...

Maybe you remember number 4?

How could I argue with Jabotinsky? He was a phenomenon, yes... so I sat there and kept quiet.

And soon enough, they brought him back to me in a coffin.

We carried him on a cart pulled by our ox. In the town square stood even our neighbors from Faradis, who worked in our dairy—they came to pay their respects to Mr. Zevik. From there, we ascended the hill, taking him to the town's cemetery—the most beautiful cemetery in the country. We placed him beside Miriam, my friend, who was murdered on the way to Kinneret.

Singing

"And if by hanging,
I give my life to the nation,
Do not cry for me,
For such is my fate.

Wipe your tears,
Press the rifle to your heart,
Choose another of my comrades,
And carry on."

Could I even think of taking another man after my Zevik? When he came to me, he was like a volcano erupting inside me, and I would open up as wide as possible, so that when his volcano erupted, I became the earth for him. Because I wanted to give him some comfort, some solace from there, where he came from...

All my life, I was afraid someone else would come and take me. I was a beautiful woman, and the neighbors wanted me, but I put on Zevik's face, his thoughts, his kind smile, his heart. And so, they didn't dare come near me. I wanted him never to be forgotten. I wanted them to remember he was someone special.

He still hasn't come down yet, has he? He must be very busy today, Udin'keh. Maybe you're hungry? I brought cookies I baked this morning. For him, for Udi and his government friends. These are the cookies he loved since he was in my kindergarten. All the kids loved them—cinnamon and sugar. That's what was available then, during the austerity years. Sometimes, during holidays, I'd add a bit of milk to make them festive. They're still warm. He loves them.

Take some and give them to him. Tell him they're from me, and he'll leave everything and come talk to me. Take them! Here, bring them to their meeting—it'll sweeten their mouths. It can't hurt... Or are you embarrassed? Fine, I'll take them in myself and sit with them for a bit. What's the harm?

In the meantime, take these and share them with the other guards. *(She starts handing out cookies.) ... is it Kosher? It's Kosher-Kosher!*

(The Binyaminim choir continues singing in the background.)

**We rose, we returned, young and strong,
We rose, we returned, bold and headstrong.
To redeem our land in the storm of war,
Claiming our land with a mighty hand.**

All those people up there—they could have been kids in my kindergarten. Generations of children I raised. Generations. They'd sit around in a circle, listening to stories, singing songs:

**"In blood and fire, Judea fell,
In blood and fire, Judea shall rise!"**

Their favorite story was about Judah the Maccabee.

(choir sings in the background.)

**"War for freedom, a fight for our land,
And if freedom falls—revenge shall stand.
If justice fades, the sword will rule,
Though we may fall, our rights remain full."**

Even at Passover, Udi would ask me to tell the story of Judah the Maccabee again. "But it's not Hanukkah now, Udin'keh," I'd tell him, but he insisted, always wanting to hear about Judah's victories.

**"In blood and fire, Judah fell,
In blood and fire, Judah shall rise!"**

I once drew him on a big poster board:

Judah the Maccabee, a new Jew.
Heroic. Tall. Proud. Handsome.
With a Star of David on his shield,
And a massive sword of steel.

He looked out from the board,
With a bronze breastplate on his chest,
Iron greaves on his knees,
An iron helmet on his head,
And his eyes declaring victory.

Udi's eyes would shine when he looked at it. They'd play Maccabees and Greeks, striking with swords and shields. But Udi always lost the fight and would start crying.

"Never mind," I'd tell him. "Everyone is good at something different. If you're not good at battles, you'll be good at making money.

**"In blood and fire, Judah fell,
In blood and fire, Judah shall rise!"**

And look—he's Prime Minister now, and where are the others? "Who will recount the heroism of Israel!" Even on Purim, he dressed up as Judah the Maccabee.

And what about you? What are you dressed as? I see something in your ear, and there's a gun back there. What is this—are you a cowboy?

I know it's not Purim today. It's summer, and it's hot. My grandson Idan is very sensitive to the sun. Ever since he was little, he'd get sunstroke every time he went without a hat, and he never drank enough. It's probably scorching wherever they're sending them. If the order hasn't been given already.

(A squadron of fighter jets roars across the sky.)

What's this? Airplanes?! Are they going to bomb already? Don't you think it's a bit too soon? Maybe they could wait until I talk to him? Do you have contact with them? *(Looks up to the sky)* Wait! Just a moment. Why rush? Why? The enemies aren't going anywhere, believe me. They're always there, waiting for us to come.

My son Chaim'keh was a pilot, too. His father never got to see that. Chaim'keh was still a baby when his father, Zevik, went to Deir Yassin and never came back. But little Chaim'keh loved the father he never had so much. He wanted his father—this man he never got to know—to be proud of him. He was always asking me:

"Mom, what would Dad say about me winning the race?"

"Mom, what would Dad think about me being the class champion?"

One day, Ezer Weizman came to visit the town. That Ezer—so handsome, from Tel Aviv. A real "new Jew." A modern Judah the Maccabee with a mustache. He had served with my Zevik in the Irgun, and now he was commander of the Air Force.

He saw Chaim'keh winning the town's race—he was in his last year of high school then. Ezer gave him the prize and asked, "Have you ever

flown in an airplane?" My Chaim'keh, who until that day had only seen cows in our dairy, suddenly had his imagination lit up by Ezer. The very next day, Ezer took him to see an airplane.

And that was it.

When he finally came home, Chaim'keh asked me:

"Mom, what would Dad say if I became a pilot?"

I answered him:

"Dad would say you need to clean the barn!"

He replied:

"No, Mom! Dad would be so proud of me! Even Ezer says so!"

What could I do? At that moment, I realized he wasn't just mine anymore. The next day, he joined Ezer to become a pilot. And I stayed silent. I wanted him to stay at the farm with me and Nechameleh, but Ezer was more interesting.

The whole town was proud of him. In the surrounding villages and at singalongs, everyone talked about him and what he was doing in the military. So I stayed silent. In the end, I was proud of him too.

When he came home on leave, I brought him to the kindergarten to tell the children about our Air Force and how we bomb. All the girls in town loved him. Every Friday, they'd come asking if Chaim'keh was home for the weekend. They'd all go to a club in Haifa to dance. Oh, how they danced—Cliff Richard and all.

Every Saturday night, I'd pack him a big bag for his return to base. I'd put cookies inside so he'd remember where he came from, so he'd know

that even up there in the skies, down here on earth, I was waiting for him to come down and come back to me.

(choir starts singing in the background)

***“ If my land is diminished and small,
It’s mine from head to end,
Stretching from the sea to the wilderness,
With the Jordan—the Jordan in the middle.***

When he went on bombing missions—like the one to destroy all the enemy airfields—the whole town was proud of him. I listened to the news on the radio, and our neighbor Polak danced all day with joy. He’d run over to me and say, "La’eleh, the Western Wall is in our hands! La’eleh, the Cave of the Patriarchs is ours!" Every evening, the town celebrated with parties and dancing.

Leah Singing:

“Two banks to the Jordan, this one is ours, that one too.

Two banks to the Jordan, this one is ours, that one too.”

(Choir continues in the background):

***"Both my hands I dedicate to you, my homeland,
Both my hands—for the plow and the sword.
But let my right hand forget itself,
If I forget the left bank of the Jordan.
Two banks to the Jordan, this one is ours, that one too."***

We all danced—our whole town, the whole country. It was a celebration like Independence Day, maybe more. We drew a new map of Israel and

hung it in the council office. Another in the kindergarten and school so everyone could see the Israel that my Chaim'keh helped liberate.

Every day was celebrations and dances. But in between the dancing, I'd look up to the sky, waiting for my Chaim'keh to come back from that bombing run. Six days and six nights I waited.

On the seventh day—they came to me.

A young, polite girl in an Air Force uniform stood there with an older officer, who looked very responsible. "Mrs. Yeshurun," they said. I already knew.

The officer began stammering, "Chaim'keh was injured in the bombing..."

But I knew, and I told him:

"Chaim'keh wasn't injured. You don't send a pretty girl in uniform for an injury. My Chaim'keh is gone. Forever."

And there, in that moment, on that day, when they brought him to me, laid him on the marble table in the cemetery, and our rabbi began to recite "*El Maleh Rachamim*," I said:

"Enough! Enough with that prayer. '*God full of mercy*'?! This is a God who takes both fathers and sons. If He had any mercy, He wouldn't take both a father and a son. There is no God, and there is no mercy. None!"

And then they started singing.

Leah singing:

**You are betrothed to me, homeland,
In the tradition of Moses and Israel.**

**A bowed and lost maidservant,
I am your husband and redeemer.**

**Your oppressors shall distance from you
In my life and in my death.
I—shall lay my head in your bosom;
You—shall live through my blood forever.**

And my son was already lying in the ground.

Then my Nechameleh put her hand over my mouth so my screams wouldn't be heard. She whispered in my ear:

“Mom, stop! Please be quiet!”

And Nechameleh, my Nechameleh, was all I had left.

So I stayed silent. Silent through the whole shivah.

Udin'keh came to visit us during the shivah, with Mr. Begin. He hugged Nechameleh and came over to me. And Mr. Begin, too, came and held my hand, but I stayed silent.

He left me a note with his picture, on which was written: *'The Land of Israel is acquired through suffering. May your share of suffering come to an end.'*

Then they all went to the square near the council building to hear what Begin had to say about the liberation of our patriarchs' and matriarchs' graves, and I stayed silent.

I stayed silent until the shivah ended, and until the year of mourning ended, and even after that. For twenty years, I stayed silent.

Until Idan, my grandson, was born. That's when I started talking again.

He was such a beautiful baby. I could see the eyes of Zevik and Chaim'keh in him. Because of him, I came back to life. I started being the kind of grandmother a grandmother should be. I remembered all the foods I used to make for Zevik and Chaim'keh, and I began making them for Idan. And he grew and thrived—and now he's a soldier.

Do you think he's already given the order? Open it for me, open it, please. I must get to him. Open the gate. I won't harm anyone. Just open it for me! I must ask him something. Tell him something. I'm begging you. I can't keep waiting for him to come out.

Go to him. I'm asking you. I'm begging you. Please open the gate. Let me speak with him. If your mother asked this of you, wouldn't you grant her request? Think of me as your mother.

Do you still remember your mother? And your grandmother—do you remember her?

Because my grandson Idan doesn't remember anymore, but I remember. Oh, I remember. I used to bribe him with coins so he could buy candy from Polak. "Every time you come, you'll get twenty-five grush," I'd tell him. And he'd come, like a little lamb, he'd come.

I'm willing to give you something too. Whatever you want, as long as you let me talk to Udi. Whatever you want, I'll give it to you. (*She rummages through her purse but finds nothing.*)

Here—I have this ring Zevik once bought me. I don't need it anymore. Take it! And this device that Nechameleh always puts in my bag so she can call me if I get lost. Take it! I don't need it anymore. Here, take my

radio—it still works perfectly fine. Take it! Take everything! Even my little room in the town—I'll give it to you. Just let me in to talk to Udi.

Do you know how much my little room in Binyamina is worth? Do you know how high property prices have risen in our town? The house Zevik and I built sixty years ago, the one we always thought was a little shack—it's suddenly worth millions. Millions, do you hear?

When I got older, they moved me into the little shed in the yard, and Nechameleh sold the house to some Tel Aviv guy who wanted to feel a bit of the countryside. Do you know how much a small shed like mine costs now in Binyamina? A million! I saw Tubal, the son of our neighbor, Burskayi. He uprooted all the orchards his father planted with his own hands—ten acres of grapefruit orchards—Tubal tore them out with his hands and sold the land to developers who built the new neighborhood there: “Binyamina Vineyards.” Vineyards?! You won't find a single grapevine there. I once took a walk in that dead neighborhood. They've arranged their lives like a TV commercial. Once, when there were orchards and vineyards, we had: Grapevines and grapes, and grapefruits... jackals and foxes, even a herd of gazelles that I used to walk with Idan to see when he was little.

A small room like mine—a small room!—costs a million!

I've given you everything already! Go call Udi now or take me to him. Do you hear me? I must talk to him before he gives the order!

No, I can't stay silent anymore, do you understand? I refuse to stay silent. I lost my Zevik because I stayed silent, and I lost my Chaim'keh because I stayed silent, and I won't stay silent anymore.

To hell with everyone who taught me to stay silent. Even back in Odessa, they told us to stay silent. “Be silent and accept the party’s decisions,” they’d say. And we stayed silent. Until Jabotinsky came and taught us that we could speak. And then they started arresting us, imprisoning us, and sending us to Siberia because we had to speak! So we fled.

And wherever we fled in Europe, they told us to stay silent. So we fled from there too. Do you know why we came here and not to America? Because we were afraid that maybe even in America they’d tell us to stay silent. So we chose to come here—to the wilderness, to the desolation—just so we could speak. Because we wanted a place where we could speak, where we didn’t have to stay silent all the time.

But here—here they taught us again to stay silent. Be silent for the underground, silent for the state, silent for the party, silent for the army, silent for the pain, silent to endure. Silent, always silent.

Enough! Enough with this silence. Enough.

Leah singing:

**We’ve already shouldered the weight of adulthood,
And turned our backs on childhood years.
To the isle of dreams, America, we do not go,
Nor to Mother Russia, let the darkness take her.**

**We no longer believe in heart or mind,
For security, we even hid our eyes.
We’ve stayed silent here, left and right,
Not against, but for, we stayed silent, I swear!**

**But since silence is gold,
Stay silent, friend—
Stay silent!**

**Where are the ones who shouted, where are the ones who ached,
They made some noise but disappeared into silence.
Today, the silent ones have their springtime,
And they've become leaders, beloved by the city.**

**Now that we've become leaders of the workers,
Endless chatter consumes us entirely.
But above all the rhetoric and mountains of words,
Like a stain, silence marches steadily forward.**

**But since silence is golden,
Be silent, my friend—
Be silent!**

**Let others scream from hunger,
From despair, humiliation, and hopelessness.
We know that silence is gold,
And so, my friend, silence pays best.**

**See how easy it is to get rich,
See how easy it is to rise to the top,
See how easy it is to be an executioner...to stay silent!**

**Be silent, my friend—
Be silent!**

I must speak. For my grandson, Idan, who stays silent and doesn't talk. Why doesn't he talk? Why? His friends, his whole generation—they stay silent and don't speak! Why? What happened?

So I need to speak for him. So that he doesn't go there, now that he's a soldier. For Nechameleh, my daughter. For her, I need to speak—so she doesn't lose her...

If you're not bringing him here, and he won't come down himself, then I'm going to him. I'm climbing this fence between you and me, and I'm going to him.

What's this? You're pointing a gun at me? Have you gone mad? Are you an idiot or what?

What do you mean he's not here?! What do you mean he's not here?! Then where is he? Why didn't you tell me he wasn't here from the start? I would have gone wherever he is! What do you mean he's at the Kirya in Tel Aviv? What's he doing at the Kirya in Tel Aviv? He's the Prime Minister—he's supposed to be here, at the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem. What does he have to do in Tel Aviv?

And all this time, you knew he wasn't here and didn't even bother to tell me? Didn't you care? And maybe by now, he's already given the order... Don't you have a heart? Don't you have eyes to see? Ears to hear someone in distress? Who were your teachers? Where did you learn decency?

Didn't they teach you, back in the army where they gave you that gun, that decency comes before the gun? I need to know where he really is. I want to go to him. And how am I supposed to get to the Kirya in Tel

Aviv? And maybe he's not even there anymore. You knew this whole time that he wasn't here.

So tell me now where he is. I need to know right now where he is. Where is he? Where is Udi?!

You're sure he's on his way here?! You just told me he was in Tel Aviv, and now he's already on his way here? What, does his car fly? Next, you'll tell me he has a private helicopter!

What? He really has his own helicopter? Are you lying to me again? What's your name? I need to have a talk with your mother—I think she forgot to teach you some manners. Standing there with a gun, hearing what an elderly woman is asking for, and not offering help? Mocking me with lies about helicopters! Good thing I didn't need you to help me cross the street—you'd have run me over.

(The sound of a helicopter.)

What's this? Is that his helicopter? Is that Udi's helicopter?! Are you sure?

Udi! Udi! It's me, La'eleh, your kindergarten teacher. Udi, can you hear me?

(The helicopter's roar drowns her voice.)

Udi! It's me, Leah, your kindergarten teacher. I came to talk to you about my grandson, about Idan...

(She keeps shouting, but her voice is completely lost. Only her desperate movements and gestures are visible.)

Udi! *(She waves with her cookies, her whole body and soul reaching out. The helicopter lands far away, beyond the fence.)*

There he is—I see him! That’s my Udin’keh! He’s coming out of the helicopter! That’s him!

Udi! It’s me, Leah Yeshurun, your kindergarten teacher. Udi! Call him, tell him I’m here. He doesn’t know I’m here. Call him! Tell him I’m here!

There—he’s looking at me now. He sees me! He sees me!

Udi! Udin’keh, I brought you cookies, the ones you love—sugar and cinnamon. I came to talk to you. Udi! Udi!

(She realizes he doesn’t recognize her.)

Open the gate, please. Open the gate. I want to go to him. I want to talk to him. Open it. Open it! Open the gate for me!

(She pulls an old gun from her bag.)

Udi, here’s Zevik’s gun—the one you used to shoot with when you were little, so you’ll remember you always missed!

(She rushes toward the fence with the old gun in hand.)

(A gunshot is heard. She’s hit and bleeding, crawling back.)

They will get hurt. Our children will get hurt.

(Her cellphone rings.)

That must be my daughter, Nechameleh, looking for me. I won’t answer. This way, she’ll think I’m still sleeping.

(She lays back down on the marble table in the cemetery. The Binyaminim choir concludes the funeral ceremony with the song "Anonymous Soldiers.")

**“In red days of riots and bloodshed,
In black nights of despair,
In cities, in villages, we’ll raise our flag,
Upon it: defense and conquest.****

The End