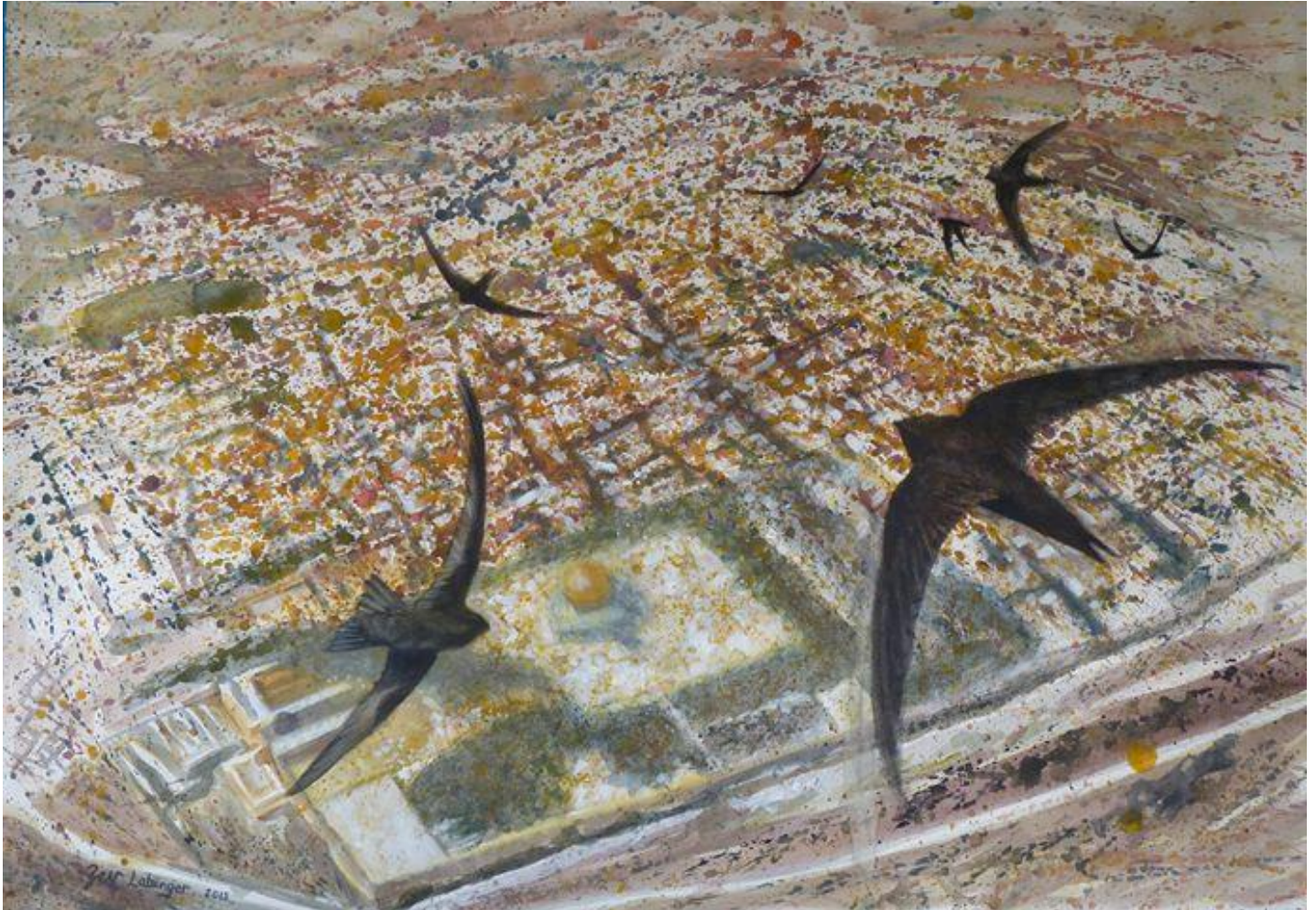


# The Deronda Review

a magazine of poetry and thought

Vol. VIII No. 2, 2020

\$7.00/28 NIS



Zev Labinger, Jerusalem Swifts, acrylic on paper, 70x100 cm

## TABERNACLE-BIRD

Tabernacle-bird, connect earth and sky  
mantle tossed by the wind, your tides moon-raiment

traversing colors we have yet to learn  
creatures locked in lines of firmament.

On autumn nights, pine cones speak to Jerusalem stone  
rendering the tremor of creation to heated rooms  
where men and women lie hidden in their beds.

In the morning, each pine cone  
sculpts your form.

—Shira Twersky-Cassel  
5700-5780/1940-2020

## *In this issue*

- I. To Make the Earth My Home***
- II. Life's Housing***
- III. On Uncertain Ground***
- IV. House Made of Paper***
- V. Quick Time***
- VI. Currents***
- VII. Searching for a Space***

*The Deronda Review* mourns the passing of long-time contributors Shira Twersky-Cassel and Zev Davis. "Retrospect" pages for each of these fine poets are posted on our website, [www.derondareview.org](http://www.derondareview.org).

## CONTRIBUTOR EXCHANGE

Below are titles of books (mainly poetry collections) by contributors, as well as URLs. \* indicates a page in the "Hexagon Forum" of [www.pointandcircumference.com](http://www.pointandcircumference.com). \*\* indicates a page in the "Kippat Binah" section of the same site.

Hayim Abramson, *ShiratHaNeshamah: Shira letzadmekorot (Song of the Soul: Poetry with Sources)*, Beit El, 2016.

Araleh Admanit, *Keshpaga Bi HaOr HaShoel (When The Wondering Light Struck)*, Iton 77, 2018.

\*\*YakovAzriel is the author of *Threads from a Coat of Many Colors: Poems on Genesis* (2005); *In the Shadow of a Burning Bush: Poems on Exodus* (2008), *Beads for the Messiah's Bride: Poems on Leviticus* (2009), *Swimming in Moses' Well* (2011), all with Time Being Books.

Hamutal Bar Yosef's many works are listed on [hamutalbaryosef.co.il](http://hamutalbaryosef.co.il). She has two bilingual poetry collections: *Night, Morning* Syracuse University Press, 2008, and *The Ladder*, Sheep Meadow Press, 2014.

Mindy Aber Barad, *The Land That Fills My Dreams* (Bitzaron 2013).

Judy Belsky, *Thread of Blue* (Targum Press, 2003) (memoir); *Avraham and Sultana*, 2018.

Efrat Bigman, [efratbigman.com](http://efratbigman.com)

\*\*Esther Cameron, *The Consciousness of Earth* (Multicultural Books, 2004); *Fortitude, or The Lost Language of Justice: Poems in Israel's Cause* (Bitsaron Books, August 2009); *Western Art and Jewish Presence in the Work of Paul Celan: Roots and Ramifications of the "Meridian" Speech* (Lexington Books, 2014); *Collected Works* (6 vols.), Of the Essence Press 2016; [www.pointandcircumference.com](http://www.pointandcircumference.com).

Amichai Chasson, <https://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/29459/Amichai-Chasson>; *Medaber im HaBayit (Talking with Home)*, Even Hoshen 2015; *Bli Ma*, Bialik Institute, 2018

Roberta Chester, *Light Years* (Puckerbush Press, 1983).

Wendy Dickstein, <http://woodsingh.wordpress.com/author/woodsingh/>. Books include *The Balloon Lady* (2014), *Alexander Pope in India, and Other Poems* (2019), *Wanderings* (memoir) 2014, and *And a Time to Dance* (memoir), 2018.

Ruth Fogelman, <https://jerusalemilives.weebly.com/>, is the author of *Cradled in God's Arms, Jerusalem Lives*, and *Jerusalem Awakening* (Bitzaron Books), *Leaving the Garden* (2018), and *What Color Are Your Dreams* (2019).

Ruth Gilead, *Pinat Chayim Nisteret (A Hidden Corner of Life)*, Carmel 2005

Philip Kobylarz, *rues, Now Leaving Nowheresville, A Miscellany of Diverse Things, All Roads Lead from Massilia, and Kanji Amerikana*.

Susan Oleferuk, *Circling for Home* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), *Those Who Come to the Garden* (Finishing Lines Press, 2013), *Days of Sun* (forthcoming, Finishing Line Press, 2017).

Natalie Lobé's full length book of poetry, *What Gypsies Don't Know*, was published in October 2018. Chapbooks, *Conversation with Abraham* (2012), *Island Time* (2008) and *Connected Voices* (2006).

Sabina Messég's most recent books are *Yashar min HaShetach (Straight from the Ground)*, HaKibbutz HaMeuchad 2018 and *LaGur Al Kadur (To Live on a Ball)*, Am Oved 2016.

Irene Mitchell, *Fever* (Dos Madres Press, 2019), *Equal Parts Sun and Shade: An Almanac of Precarious Days* (Aldrich Press, 2017), *Minding the Spectrum's Business* (FutureCycle Press, 2015), *A Study of Extremes in Six Suites* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2012), *Sea Wind on the White Pillow* (Axes Mundi Press, 2009).

Rumi Morkin has published two volumes of *The Ogdan Nasherei of Rumi Morkin*. A third volume is in progress.

James B. Nicola's collections are listed on <https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola/poetry>. Most recent: *Quickening: Poems from Before and Beyond* (Cyberwit.net, 2019). Forthcoming: *Natural Tendencies* and *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*.

David Olsen, *Unfolding Origami*, Cinnamon Press, 2015; *Past Imperfect* (Cinnamon Press, 2019); chapbooks include *Exit Wounds* (2017), *Sailing to Atlantis* (2013), *New World Elegies* (2011), and *Greatest Hits* (2001).

Hava Pinhas Cohen, *Bridging the Divide, The Selected Poems of Hava Pinhas-Cohen*, bilingual edition, Syracuse University Press, 2015.

Reizel Polak's books include *Four Entered Pardes* (Greville Press Pamphlets, Warwick, UK, 2016); *And Where Did We Say We Were Going* (Black Jasmine, Sharon, MA, 2015); *Among the Red Golden Hills* (Black Jasmine, Sharon, MA, 2012).

Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory, *Medusa Shkufah Holekhet (Transparent Medusa Goes)*, Even Hosehn 2016; *Matmon shel Shamaniot (A Cache of Geckoes)*, Pardes 2018

Tony Reevy has three books, *Old North, Passage, and Socorro*, all published by Iris Press.

Shefi Rosenzweig, *Lek Tefaneach et HaRachamim (Try to Decipher Compassion)*, Pardes 2017.

Yudit Shahar, *Zo Ani Medaberet (It's Me Speaking)*, Bavel, 2007.

Michael E. Stone, *Selected Poems* (Cyclamens and Swords Press, 2010). *Adamgirk': The Adam Book of Arak'el of Siwnik'* (Oxford UP, 2007).

Henry Summerfield, *That Myriad-minded Man: a biography of George William Russell, 'A.E.' (1867-1935)* (Colin Smythe, 1975)

Wally Swist, *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois UP, 2012); *The Daojing: A New Interpretation*, with David Breeden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar Univ. Literary Press, 2015); *Invocation* (same, 2015), *The View of the River* (Hemet, CA: Kelsay Books, 2017); *The Bees of the Invisible*, Shanti Arts, 2019; *Evanescence: Selected Poems* (Brunswick, ME: Shanti Arts, 2020).

Lois Michal Unger's books include 'Miscarriage in Vermont', 'The Apple of His Eye', 'White Rain in Jerusalem', 'Tomorrow We Play Beersheva', 'Political Poems', 'The Glass Lies Shattered All Around'.

Florence Weinberger, *Carnal Fragrance* (Red Hen Press, 2004), *Sacred Graffiti* (Tebot Bach, 2010), *Breathing Like a Jew* (Chicory Blue Press, 1997), *The Invisible Telling Its Shape* (Fithin Press, 1997).

David K. Weiser, *Ladders: 333 Poems*, <https://www.amazon.com/Ladders-Poems-David-K-Weiser/dp/1709033517>

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Reuven Goldfarb's "Amici" previously appeared in his *Fourteen Sonnets* (1978). Yakov Azriel's "Builders" previously appeared in his book *In the Shadow of a Burning Bush: Poems on Exodus*.

I. *To Make the Earth My Home***BUILDING A FIRE IN WINTER IN MAINE**

I am remembering being cold,  
 those late nights, mesmerized by the flames,  
 then dozing off before the blazing fire,  
 before awakening with a start to the sudden chill  
 and the remaining bright coals  
 dying in the pile of ash on the hearth.

I remember running out in the wee hours  
 the crunch of my footsteps over the hard, packed snow,  
 careful not to trip and fall, or else  
 I would not be found till morning.  
 Beneath the black sky scattered with splinters of ice  
 I saw the wood pile becoming low.  
 I took the twigs of kindling felled by the wind,  
 and the remaining split logs I could carry,  
 listening to winter's profound quiet  
 and the quick retreat of raccoons  
 from the trash.

Inside, the cold was already heavy and quick  
 to triumphantly take over the house.  
 I fed yesterday's news to the remaining sparks,  
 poking them to come alive till they licked the print,  
 devouring momentous events  
 as if they'd never been.  
 And I waited for the kindling to catch  
 and to ignite the white bark of the logs,  
 giving it air and more air  
 until the fire became ravenous and roared,  
 Its mighty breath safely behind the grate,  
 before it would need more and more  
 but meanwhile I could safely close my eyes,  
 having earned that lovely warmth.

We are fragile creatures  
 surviving between several degrees,  
 just a small window between extremes of deadly hot and cold  
 I was surrounded by all the contrivances  
 of modern life, but none of them of any use  
 in keeping the fire alive.

I imagined a woman sitting in her skins in a cave.  
 watching the fire, the shadows dancing on the stone  
 who learned how to survive in the dead of winter,  
 that she had mastered this task alone, keeping her child warm,  
 and passed it on.

—Roberta Chester

**GREEN LAKE, ELLSWORTH, MAINE**

Striated layers of clouds form, dissolve,  
 reshape over the aqueous mirror

that is Green lake. Their reflections  
 ripple, pool around rocks, wash

over stones. We sit in the accumulating  
 darkness infused with sunset,

surrendering ourselves to the subtlety  
 of dusk suffusing the fir woods. Shoals

of dark purple bands, the shade  
 of lupines in bloom, blend into a pink

incarnation of the wildflower  
 gone past above another layer

of cloud, lined with wisps of gold,  
 of rose, that disappears entirely

into smoke across the silver sky,  
 until it all gives way to an accord—

the whole horizon opening up  
 to the rush of stars that fill

the imminent darkness with sparkling  
 light that reflects the lapping waters,

their ceaseless hush, with such  
 breathlessness that compels one's mouth

to form in a circle in which to express  
 the exclamation, *Oh*, as in prayer,

which, when uttered repeatedly,  
 reiterates the monosyllable of gratitude.

—Wally Swist

**PURPLE IRIS***for Gabriel Rummonds*

They bloom above  
the yellow dazzle of cosmos  
and even after the sticky sweetness  
of the vibrant petals of red peonies  
were shattered by wind and rain.

These royal purple iris,  
reigning atop their thin stems,  
announce themselves  
as royalty to the garden,  
their petals veined with magenta

and tipped at their center  
with a dab of yellow,  
holding themselves  
open, as if always flying upward,  
their emanation a similar hue

as that associated with Zadkiel  
and the angels of the purple light ray,  
whose auras are so memorable  
that they appear  
as they appear, etched and emblazoned,

by a divine aesthetician,  
and providing not just contentment,  
which can merely be palpable,  
but also constitutes a healing visage,  
a balm for the eyes –

as if the irises themselves  
are rinsed by their color  
pervading the air, and in their  
uncommon, but simple, decorum,  
avail themselves in cleansing us all.

– Wally Swist

**WHERE DO THE SWALLOWS GO**

Where do the swallows go so fast  
in the slow summer evenings  
when the trees start rippling  
shaking my heart back to fluttering life  
the swallows  
scrolling epiphanies in air  
where do they go so fast  
to a tree they chose as a home for the night

I walk the well-worn steps  
and at my door turn back and ask  
where can I walk so fast

to a chosen tree for the night  
to be a pilgrim under the sky  
send a soft sound  
make a movement of heartbreak  
and make the earth my home.

– Susan Oleferuk

**THAT TIME OF YEAR**

At Kaiser Permanente Hospital,  
in a room on the seventh floor,  
my sister lies on fresh white sheets,  
her spirit withered to the core.  
There scarce is ground upon her  
flesh to inflict another wound.  
She's woozy from medication,  
her head lolls to one side.  
"I don't want to live like this,"  
she whispers. "Would you?"

I have no answer.  
Her heart is failing,  
her spine's a torture chamber.

She motions me to the door.  
I walk a street I've never walked before.

Were the street a leaf-strewn bier  
on which reposed a late-October light,  
its decomposing body dun as the sky  
from which it fell, the fall air  
its chill and formless ghost, the odd  
walker haunted by it, his coat  
drawn close about his throat,

a skull upon the sidewalk chalked  
in a child's awkward hand  
would make me think of  
painted faces, ghoulish costumes,  
and pillowcases fat with candy,

but it's the end of June! Every  
dooryard garden is adrift in bloom!  
Even the air, petal-plumed,  
is a sun-hot blossom goldening open.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

**FALLING ASLEEP**

This is how I used to fall asleep that summer  
 I ran  
 And as I got to the track  
 Close to midnight  
 Ablaze in light  
 There were parents trying to tire out  
 Their kids  
 Just like me  
 They ran  
 They played soccer  
 And I thought  
 If I can run  
 Why can't I kick a ball

Toddlers whining after their parents  
 After the older kids  
 After the ball  
 Sirens whining  
 We stop and drop  
 And I think how nice  
 The fake grass feels  
 On my hot cheeks  
 I check my pulse  
 Hurray! Over one hundred  
 Five minute forced rest  
 All clear and we help each other up  
 And I wave good night  
 It will be  
 And I start for home.

—Mindy Aber Barad Golembo

**AMICI**

And now, about the fields that are laid stubble  
 by Summer's end, I warble my Autumn lay.  
 Stanzaic forms have sometimes meant much trouble,  
 but I don't feel too difficult today.  
 Farewells have all been said, and, like a rhyme,  
 returning, echoing, "Once upon a time,"  
 the friends that once have left rejoice in double,  
 as if departure were returning's seed,  
 as if returning were departure's fruit.  
 and love the flame that new beloveds breed.  
 Yet now I look upon the barren ground,  
 quickened with rain, and then a flute  
 emblazons on the air a simple sound,  
 that makes them seem not very far away.

—Reuven Goldfarb

**FALL**

Of a sudden  
 All the leaves  
 Fly in the air

And all the  
 Birds fly up  
 With the

Flying insects  
 And you stop  
 All amazed.

—Fred Jeremy Seligson

**NOVEMBER IS BROWN**

November is brown  
 a working man's broad back  
 lifting the rocks onto bare hills

November is soft gold  
 the russet of medieval old  
 hurry home early night  
 to fruits in bowls and velvets and wools.

November is a grey curtained  
 dance in the wind  
 a dance of fear, a dance of care  
 a dance on hardened ground  
 for it is the time for all who knew the touch of sun  
 and in the darkening turn around.

—Susan Oleferuk

**CAUGHT**

I was sweeping snow off our porch when caught  
 By something moving up along the wall  
 Beneath our kitchen window — what? a wobbling,  
 Shaken brown spider still alive in all  
 The wet chill from winter's first storm, its sleep,  
 Or death doze, broken by my human action.  
 But no, it was the wind alone that whipped  
 Some last, shredded web and, with it, attached,  
 An egg sac. What design was this? I wanted  
 To know. Inspection showed a backside hole,  
 But also a long insect limb that ran  
 Along the bag, a moth's or mother's, who  
 Could tell? I caught the fragile sac by touch  
 Alone, with plans to magnify, but then —  
 It filled my eyes, wafting me off the porch  
 Like the moon rising above snow and wind —  
 Then gone. Still, there behind the window, vased,  
 A pine branch in water, its own plain grace.

—Rod Kleber

**IN PLACE**

Can you will faith, can you will feeling? If  
 Not, then what – put yourself in place and hope?  
 The ladybug passing the upper left  
 Of the bathroom cabinet mirror stops –  
 At my stare, I think. Maybe at my breath.  
 We're close, my examination, her look:  
 Placid, rounded back, just above a pith  
 Of flat, furious skeleton – head, legs, trunk  
 Still a moment, fearing an enemy?  
 She's not lovely, I'm not friendly, her kind  
 An infestation, my place a wintry  
 Haven for these beetles who can bite, sting,  
 Hurt somehow, I'm told – a mass huddled in  
 The high corner, six shells grouped on the floor  
 Near the wastebasket. Coming to an end,  
 She must not see herself on the glass, or  
 Know anything. Then again, moving as bid,  
 She sprouts wings and flies off, back of my head.

– Rod Kleber

**WINTER ON THE LAKE**

Soon the ice will come  
 to the water we call Wapogasset  
 and over the transparent surface  
 a cataract will form  
 a foreign landscape and  
 our vision of how it was  
 before will be lost.  
 We'll walk the black December  
 nights and point our ears to  
 the telltale groans of ice expanding  
 under an unforgiving wind.  
 By day we'll note the bundled shapes  
 pulling their sleds  
 loaded with bait, lanterns  
 and dreams of what might be.  
 Dogs will prance over  
 the white, and race to nowhere.  
 And always the wind that cuts  
 deep the exposed flesh  
 and a numbing nothingness  
 so bright, it seems to say  
 come look. But in a couple months  
 we'll see things differently  
 and everything we knew  
 and trusted in this space  
 will be abandoned, picked up,  
 moved out,  
 the only remnant the sun  
 and a world we had grown  
 to think of as home.

– Art Greve

**from THE WREN NOTEBOOK**

(entry #77)

Wren is at it.  
 Flying into storm clouds  
 banging into window panes  
 into hard branches and hard sky,  
 crazy and hurt and cold.  
 A wren hopping on one leg  
 as something closes in.  
 Frantic wings pivot in little circles  
 as she tries to lift off  
 from the ground  
 she's never trusted.  
 Limited vision, limited range,  
 delirious.

There's a crust of black bread  
 in the snow.  
 It's almost as if  
 she has a future.  
 If she could just  
 sleep silent through  
 till Spring.

– Rick Smith

**A LITTLE MORE**

Let it be a cold cloudy day  
 so I can brood  
 on the spaces that make soft gray and elude  
 the oppressive lights of the blindness of the world

The trail I follow is a track that loops  
 I can't stop  
 but in every hollow, the bark, the scratches on the rock  
 the proud print of one who walked before  
 I can learn just a little more.

– Susan Oleferuk

**THE CLOUDS OF JERUSALEM**

Her eyes are blue like the sea of the Kinneret.  
 They search the earth from between the lattices of  
 heaven.  
 Her dress is billowing white and dances in slow  
 movements.

Rays shine down on the gates to a city that adorns her in  
 royal attire.  
 Floating on air, she raises herself beyond the mundane.  
 The higher realms are easy to touch within the skies of  
 this abode.

The white stones, holds the tears that ascend with  
thunder and lightning.  
Ancient walkways are sheltered by her doves of glory.  
Healing rains reign down to shower blessings from on  
high.  
Revealing the rungs of her mystical pathway to Gan  
Eden.\*

– Shoshanah Weiss

\*Gan Eden – the Garden of Eden.

## II. *Life's Housing*

### **indestructible**

Pebble. Tiny and round  
but hard. Competing  
with a massive boulder  
I shrugged and piled one  
little stone on top of another.  
An arrogant wind, blowing,  
bragging of its force, upset  
a bit of my building-creation,  
but could not consume it.

– Lois Greene Stone

### **BECAUSE**

Because the hands of the construction workers  
Are still patting the bricks like puppies,  
Because of the scaffold's hug round the shoulders of the  
house,  
Because love's key is always stuck in the door,  
Because even a leaning wall does not forget  
The cement's wet-lipped kiss.

– Ronny Someck

### **EDIFICE**

The temple's lintels, pillars  
and frieze honour capricious gods  
who meddle in affairs of men,  
muddle minds with tales  
of inexplicable fate.

The cathedral's cloister, apse  
and soaring nave ring with chant  
to glorify one of all possible gods  
who rules with dead texts:  
the font of immutable truth.

The palace's crenellated keep  
secures the ruler's authority –  
decreed by divine right –  
while conscripted arms  
sustain imperial might.

The office tower's glass prism  
refracts the money-god's wealth –  
counted in bits and bytes –  
that lies beyond the horizon  
of those enslaved by debt.

– David Olsen

### **BUFFALO BAYOU PARK CISTERN**

A concrete chamber, shaped in beige and grey,  
As vast as ancient catacombs, and filled  
With shallow water, in Houston displays  
A workers' guild of tall, slender columns  
(All two hundred twenty-one made with skill),  
Supporting ceiling, floor, water-column.

This concrete chamber called a "cistern" is,  
In truth, a reservoir dried by disuse,  
Where looking-glass-water shows an abyss  
That doubles the view for each observer.  
Like a taiga-lake with upside-down spruce,  
Here columns float on columns forever.

Seldom, by accidental design, mirrors  
Do reflect stones reflected in mirrors.

– Bryan Damien Nichols

### **STONE WALLS**

Connecticut stonewalls define the landscape,  
Squares, rectangles, irregular shapes.  
Its settlers cleared the land for growing  
by building stonewalls with castaway rock.  
Convex on concave became works of art.

Walking on walls later became  
one of the children's favorite pastimes.  
"I'll never fall," I hear myself crowing.  
The higher the wall the greater the danger  
I, the invincible tightrope walker.

– Natalie Lobe

**OLD ABANDONED BARN**

one never thought  
 exhaustion would claim  
 such strength and tenacity  
 distant and remote  
 the seasons of back breaking labours

custodian of rusting hinges  
 and fallen shingles  
 a fading relic  
 like the boards that slowly  
 unravel without pity

—Joseph Brush

**LIFE'S HOUSING**

The building we should occupy  
 is one that's grounded in the rest  
 of us. Its roof's a lucid eye  
 where pending storms can manifest  
 themselves. And there's a reading room  
 according one fresh food for thought  
 to supplement what we consume  
 inside the kitchen that we brought  
 from home. For still we need to eat  
 in friendly lunchrooms where we work  
 off seething tensions in a suite  
 more constant than the passing perk  
 we get from those outside the job.  
 If Handel's water music can't  
 afford us tuneful means to swab  
 our cellar clean, Elektra's rant  
 from Strauss' opera will suffice.  
 For heating there are books galore  
 whose literary edelweiss  
 will complement the leaves we pore  
 through as we sweetly fall asleep  
 with high rise stories in our keep.

—Frank DeCanio

**THE SANDHOUSE**

"A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. If the Lord does not build a house, its builders have labored in vain..." (Psalms 127:1)

Be careful if you build a house from sand;  
 You mustn't make believe it's made of stone  
 Or bricks or even wood, for sand alone,  
 Without cement or steel, cannot withstand  
     The slightest breeze, but starts to crumble and  
     Collapse before you have the chance to moan  
 Or mourn the home that you erected, blown  
 Away by wind. Yet on the other hand,

God lives and gives you hope, for He collects  
 Your scattered grains of sand, no matter where  
 They fall, and melts them into glass. You stare  
     As God then builds a palace which reflects  
     The burning bush's light, until you swear,  
     "The Lord is my builder, I shall not fear."

—Yakov Azriel

**A HUMAN BEING IS BUILT IN LAYERS LIKE A MOUNTAIN**

A human being is built in layers like a mountain  
 stripes and stripes and stripes  
 layer on layer on layer  
 tears.  
 Pride, cracked from above,  
 wears down with the years  
 anger stone  
 stone anger  
 a heap of stones  
 soft sadness underneath  
 soft sadness and warmth  
 and fear beneath that  
 like coal.  
 Sometimes  
 the earth moves  
 inside outside  
 outside inside  
 and from below are cast up  
 anger sadness pain  
 fear and joy  
 in a mad jumble  
 without rest  
 and our fragile bodies  
 and just then  
 just then  
 pity and mercy  
 are revealed.

—Ruth Shmueli  
 trans. EC

**HE BUILT A WALL (rondeau redoublé)**

He built around himself a wall –  
 it stopped ideas from stealing in;  
 he built it strong, he built it tall,  
 no foreign thoughts could sneak within.

Because free-thinking is a sin  
 and sin's an evil to forestall  
 before it ever can begin  
 he built around himself a wall.

His fortress held him then in thrall:  
 it silenced innovation's din



but its long shadow cast a pall,  
it stopped ideas from stealing in.

He used denial to underpin  
foundations that would never fall  
for *every* fight denial will win;  
he built it strong, he built it tall

but no perceptions came to call –  
it was a fortress, not an inn!  
No insights visited his hall,  
no foreign thoughts could sneak within

And all his life he lived therein:  
secure from controversy's brawl  
he never knew what might have been,  
his sole achievement, all in all:  
he built a wall.

–Judy Koren

### THE MAN OF THE FOREST SPEAKS

(based on the story "The Exchanged Children" by Rabbi  
Nachman of Breslov)

I add from the holy to the secular with loaded  
saltcellars that I brought from a settled place  
I use them to anoint forest trees for heating  
I permit myself to throw  
books into the fiery furnace  
so that we shall warm up and not freeze

They look at me not understanding how  
words become incense in the burning of the letters  
how heat turns into language in which to speak day-  
to-day needs as they sit helpless on the floormats ,  
I break cinnamon sticks into the fire  
to make a pleasant smell for them

Why they come back I don't know.  
I built my house in the air  
so they would stumble on the way here and still  
they knock with mouths full of pleading:  
black souls seeking quiet  
the unicorn seeking sanctuary from the lion  
beautiful girls seeking healing spells  
to relieve the pain that comes after the Sabbath  
Both princes and peasants wander here  
I have seen sons of handmaids pursued by animals

Only the doe my eyes yearn for  
never comes to my house.

– Amichai Chasson  
tr. EC

### THE PLACE THAT GAVE ME ITS NAME

Took from me the house I could have built  
Perhaps a person can build at least one house, between  
birth and death,  
Between the sea and the mountain and the desert, he'll  
find a place for his house  
He'll build a house and know himself

The house I could have built and there were already  
maps of its interior  
And an architect had marked out the doors in the walls  
with straight lines  
And a balcony with a view

The house that I could  
Have made in a suburb of the language  
Between the labyrinths of a great city to which a hidden  
path leads  
And its place is already written in an address  
And there is a window facing north where the light  
comes from

When he held the mezuzah parchment in one hand and  
a hammer in the other  
And a nail between his lips

A hand came down from heaven and confused  
The path of the parchment from the mezuzah  
And the hammer struck the empty hand  
Saw us  
Caught in a translation as in a scaffold  
To understand each other  
The place that gave me its name  
Is going further and further away and someone else is  
giving it

A name

– Hava Pinhas-Cohen  
tr. EC

### PORCH

I made my porch like the inside of a house.  
Outside the windows were checkered curtains  
tied back with ribbons,  
On the entrance door, a colorful picture,  
and a tea set on the waterproofed table  
and a twinkling mobile  
and fresh flowers.  
Like a sock pulled inside out  
the lengthening house put out its interior,  
and I, who am forbidden to leave the house,  
have more room to walk around indoors.

– Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory  
tr. EC

**BLESSING UNREASON**

Reason tells me this house is no more blessed now  
 than it was hours before you, dear friend, nailed the mezuzah,  
 a scroll encoded with perfect holy script tucked inside,  
 at a sacred slant to the right hand side of the door post,  
  
 spoke the sanctifying Hebrew prayer then  
 hedging bets or mixing admonitions, stood in my kitchen and lit  
 a sprig of dry sage, waved it over the stove,  
 the chairs, tables, the TV, carried the smoking bundle  
  
 from room to room, blessed the king-sized bed  
 with its indented side, its empty side, in this dwelling set  
 by the sea which to me, landlocked as a beetle all my life,  
 is blessing enough, while I, following behind,  
  
 inhaled the light that blended with the scent spreading  
 into corners and when you raised and rang a small  
 hand-crafted bell, I also breathed that calling sound  
 and stepped into the limpid air steeped in peace,  
  
 more blessed now that the clothes were hung,  
 the dishes shown evenly stacked through the glass doors  
 like stars through a scrim of polished sky,  
 fresh flowers rising like sentinels from earthen vases,  
  
 the ocean outside gleaming like wet stone.  
  
 We invoke the Kabbalists who knew there is doubt in supplication,  
 and reason gets blown in solitude. Human intention  
 brings reason to God's intention. I plant lobelia to purple my garden.  
 I bless our friendship; it is as particular as the words I've placed here.  
  
 After you leave, a neighbor comes to my door,  
 tells me a woman died in this house; was I aware of a presence?  
 I say no, because I may need to borrow a heel of bread.  
 But there are many presences, each a shimmer, a thumbprint  
  
 left by a friend who came bearing the gift of self,  
 who gazed with me toward the restless sea and the red horizon.  
 Now I live here as truly as the spiders and the whales  
 and the practical floors.

—Florence Weinberger

**TOR HOUSE**

(1)  
  
 The poet pieced  
 this hold together  
 rock by rock  
  
 on land overlooking  
 the Pacific,  
 end of  
 the Carmel loop road.  
  
 A lone outcrop  
 for a lone man,  
 fond of the trees  
 he planted.  
  
 (2)  
  
 Today, I needed  
 two passes by  
 to spot the house,  
 separated by black-top  
 from the sea.  
  
 Close-hemmed, either  
 side, by rico  
 beach houses.  
  
 The coast cypresses,  
 poet's pride, gone,  
 as Jeffers is,  
  
 it didn't take  
 one lifetime.  
  
 The things we love  
 meet their ends  
 at our hands.

—Tony Reeve

**BLUEPRINT**

Who's to say it is not just rock, water, sand, minerals of differing colors, glass which is sand  
 some sunlight, accompaniment  
 of noises not chosen, but given, quietude of worms. Liquid carries a tune: melody of blood.  
 Refrain of bile, string  
 work of mucus. Trees in the park sway and shed few leaves in ablution. Wood, grained  
 and servile waits in stacks  
 of sullenness, raped, used, hammered, sawed, wanting to become. Houses built to be rebuilt.

—Philip Kobylarz

**ecologist**

you built your house  
     from materials  
 that were thoroughly perishable  
 so that after you nothing would remain

No footprint  
 not the slightest  
 none at all

Cypresses that were already dead  
 (that were not killed for you)  
 were sliced into boards  
     for walls

Old Persian rugs  
 on the roof  
 grow  
     the wheat  
 right out of the Japanese book  
 that you  
 translated

so that we may learn too,  
 how to cultivate in the way of the Tao:  
 not to sweat

just to facilitate

—Sabina Messeg  
 translated by the author and EC

**MY HOUSE IS A TREE HOUSE**

My house is a tree house  
 My cypress enfolds the house  
 My cypress stretches out its arms to the other cypress  
 that leans toward it across the balcony  
 And the house says to me  
 You're home  
 The tree says to me  
 Like a bird that sings and builds you no longer craze  
     yourself with alarms  
 You have seen a straight line from behind to far off  
 Now you are turning my branches  
 fingering my acorns  
 anointing them with lacquer  
 hanging them in your ears  
 beautiful woman  
 lovingly rolling the curls of bark I let fall for you  
 And because of this the house also enfolds the tree  
 and the house and I are enfolded by all of the tree  
 These days, I am house-enfolded.

—Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory  
 tr. EC

**WITH MY ACHING HANDS I NEVER BUILT A HOUSE**

With my aching hands, I never built a house  
 or wove a rug, or strummed a guitar.  
 Didn't run on the sand or skip down the street  
 or climb a mountain, on my sore feet.

But I held my babies tight on my lap,  
 ran my fingers through their hair,  
 wove them stories and wrote them poems  
 and sang them to sleep and built them a home.

—Sarita Perel

**STATURE**

My son is building me\*  
 Story upon story  
 Take off the shoes that are pinching you  
 Run barefoot on the sand  
 Feel the earth that feels warmth  
 Don't even be afraid to hover  
 To be in compassion

My son is building me  
 Story upon story  
 Stand up straight, not bent  
 Know every part in the body  
 Every fiber, every chord

My son is building me  
 Story upon story  
 Breathe deep deep to the lungs  
 See deeply with closed eyes  
 Embrace yourself and love  
 Without burden or effort

My son is building me  
 Story upon story  
 Each day, put new splendor on your head  
 Put forth new branches  
 That will reach far  
 That will touch near

—Araleh Admanit  
 tr. EC

\*The word *ben* (son) has two of the letters of the root BNH  
 (build).



**SPACE THAT SEES\***

When I return  
 I will pad our bed made of cardboard  
 With peels of oranges in season  
 Far off in the corners of the room you will light candles  
 The bread baking in the oven will wake the children  
 Drowsy with thoughts they will come into the kitchen.  
 Now all that remains  
 Is to walk all this sky  
 To the house  
 That is waiting for me  
 At the end  
 Of Nothingness.

– Efrat Bigman  
 tr. EC

\*"Space that Sees", installation by James Turrell in the  
 Sculpture Garden of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**ONE WITH THE ELEMENTS**

"The essence of a person is to serve their Creator, as if they  
 were a Temple, as it is written, "You shall build me a  
 Tabernacle, and I will dwell within it" (Pele Yoetz Good  
 Conduct)

The instructions are there, I watch them  
 as my eyes tell my hands to move,  
 where to place my feet. Engrave  
 in my head. Lead out like a stem

grows, immerses, a part of me. Learns  
 new patterns, a catalog, adds  
 items, I take to it. So glad  
 and break out, renew, on a burn,

what was beyond me, ingest.  
 Things mix, match and become  
 what wasn't a part of me. Rest

comfortably inside and impressed  
 as this newness settles. The sum  
 of me evolves, changes. I'm blessed.

– Zev Davis

**THREE POEMS****Stone-cold Proverbs**

One stone is not a wall  
 One wall does not define a city  
 A retaining wall may hold up a prison  
 Or stop the surge of the sea  
 Stones and cement may support a house  
 Or a grave  
 Better a wooden shed with life and love  
 Than a cold marble palace  
 Better to plant one acorn  
 Than to curse a field of stones  
 One stone gate does not delineate the region  
 Where once grew the trees of the Garden of Eden

**The Old Law School Building**

They've painted the dome of the Great Lecture Hall  
 In a hideous shade of green  
 They've hidden West Law books in the basement,  
 Behind an opaque screen  
 The flat LED's cover every wall  
 But no one seems to mind  
 In the Old Law School Building  
 Justice is hard to find

Where once great scholars lectured,  
 A tower blocks the view  
 They've added an elevator  
 But it only reaches "Two"  
 Oh, the students laugh and chatter  
 And smoke and smile and shout,  
 But in the Old Law School Building  
 The lights are going out

**Where the angelic and the concrete meet**

Rafael the angel of healing  
 Lands lightly on the high holy places  
 On the Temple Mount  
 No one sees his folded wings  
 Only the lonely and blind  
 Sense his presence  
 The rain does not cling  
 To his transparent being  
 His two eyes like bright stars  
 Shine from within  
 Under his wings, the melancholy find shelter,  
 The weary can find peace  
 No walls can contain his immortal essence  
 But where on heaven or earth is his dwelling, his home?

Even the sparrow finds its home  
 And the robin builds its nest,  
 But where will the angel Rafael roam  
 To find eternal rest?

– Brenda Appelbaum-Golani

**BUILDING BLOCK**

The deadly metered mile-high toothpick  
 (top floor: a billion dollars, so they say)  
 bores through the skyline and the sky  
 boringly. When the sun reaches  
 the south or so, the boring building blocks  
 the sun, and the boring building's boring shadow  
 bores through the light in southern Central Park  
 and doses the children at play  
 without discrimination, as the night,  
 or the Dark Silent Hooded Angel Wielding  
 Sickle, so delighted to visit daily.

– James B. Nicola

**THE MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE**

From where I stand, six floors beneath the clouds,  
suspended between the monuments of our history, the  
Old City walls  
the King David, our museums, the church and Muslim  
spires  
are all tucked inside our sprawling cityscape.

From its humble beginning, just simple stakes in the  
ground,  
I am watching a giant building grow, blocks of stone,  
clay,  
and slabs of glass, walls and frames, delivered by trucks  
and lowered by our ubiquitous cranes, bit by bit,  
secured and calculated  
to be a perfect fit by Israel's engineers and architects.

Today, I saw a crew, on its plateau, tiny stick figures  
scuttling back and forth creating the infrastructure  
for the mixed media technologies, which together with  
exhibits,  
impressive displays, tours by uniformed docents will  
lure groups  
from afar, revealing our noble intentions and enviable  
mastery.

This bold and monumental enterprise,  
this grand edifice, our city's newest pride and joy,  
will have sufficient walls to proclaim the largesse in fine  
plaques  
of those donors who made all this possible.  
Speeches by dignitaries, from here and abroad, received  
with much applause, will laud the lofty, seldom realized  
dream of tolerance, in this worthy twin for *Yad Vashem*,  
our esteemed,  
much revered museum of intolerance, from which they  
have been shuttled  
back and forth in a fleet of limousines accompanied by  
sirens in the streets.

And yet, barely seventy years past the hatred intended  
to destroy us,  
where the blood-soaked ground of the camps and killing  
fields is forever stained,  
we have heard the news: that beast has in its cradle been  
reborn  
in those same countries sending emissaries to this  
edifice  
who will shower us with compliments, be dined by our  
world class chefs  
and sleep in our best hotels. We are grateful they have  
deigned to visit us,  
saluting tolerance and voicing solemn resolutions, before  
returning to the countries,

that deny and denounce us in international courts and  
assemblies.

From my window, I regret you have taken away a great  
chunk of my sky,  
so I feel justified to suggest the space could have been a  
park, with swings  
and benches, where our Muslim neighbors whose envy  
and resentment, this museum,  
rising on the graves of their cemetery, has increased  
their ire, might sit beside us  
exchanging small acts of kindness, and discovering our  
mutual humanity.

An earthquake can easily reduce this edifice to rubble,  
but sitting on a bench someday I might meet someone  
and exchange a simple conversation and smiles  
and we, who were enemies, might become friends,  
and even have an occasion in some yet inexplicable  
course of events,  
to save each other's lives, an earth shattering event,  
waiting to unravel,  
but not so fragile, and subject to nature's whim,  
as this monument to wishful thinking in concrete.

— Roberta Chester

**FROM ON HIGH**

"This is a building which should not be built,"  
said the Lord, seeing brick after brick shaped  
from the clay of fear, burnished with the glaze  
of arrogance. A tower rising higher  
in an attempt to escape the earth,  
to escape those still earthbound,  
whose words rise but are unheard  
by those gazing down, hurling words  
to those below. "Go, swarm elsewhere."  
"This is a building which should not be built,"  
said the Lord, causing a scattering of bricks,  
the end of the tower. Builders returned  
to the earth. The Lord's words:  
"Resume your journeys. Replenish the earth.  
Do justly. Love goodness. Walk humbly  
with one another. Walk humbly with your G-d."

— Sara deBeer

**DESIGNING A CITY**

First the landscape: bull rushes, cattails and dozens of  
water lilies  
which require water so I'll put in a lake with lagoons, an  
island  
overgrown with scrub, green and yellow tangles  
reaching.

Mist scrimps over lazy schools of minnows in my lake,  
an early morning osprey swoops into breakfast  
ignored by a pair of beavers : chop, cut design, build.

Beyond the lake the land turns into hills, high as blue.  
Oak, popular, maple at the foothills, give way to loblolly  
pine,  
sap grown stiff. Green turns gray peaks white.

Jays, finches, orioles, sprinkle blue, yellow, red accents  
in the sky.  
I hear low toned hoots and howls, a slither of snake  
breaks the silence.  
Bayberry and honeysuckle intoxicate every living thing.

I'm enamored with my city, not a city. No road kill,  
traffic,  
sirens, garbage stench , gasoline fumes; no beer cans,  
smokestacks,  
cracked cement, bulldozers, cigarettes butts stain the  
scene so

I decide to put all that in a another place called inferno  
and leave my little Eden untouched but afraid.

—Natalie Lobe

**THE SONG OF KLEY SHIR\***

To the song of your dwellings I've listened, Kley Shir,  
A place which the not-very-rich can hold dear,

With your shadowy paths, and your patches of green,  
And mysterious passageways through and between,

Here children are sent without worries to school  
And cats find their food on top of a wall.

Is it true the skyscrapers are landing on you,  
That the giants will have it their way? is it true

That the quiet we love will soon have to give way  
To the roar of car engines, the shopping mall's bray?

The harp is in mourning, the lyre in the dust,  
And the shofar is sounding a great warning blast.

Come let us walk down the pedestrian path,  
Forget for a while all the projects of wrath,

In the Keren Park by the swings let us stay  
With the mothers awhile, then go on our way

By the footbridge to where, among streets named for  
streams  
We can lose our way and shake off our bad dreams.

To the songs of your dwellings I've listened, Kley Shir,  
A place which the not very rich can hold dear.

— Esther Cameron

\*Neighborhood in Maale Adumim, Israel. Kley Shir means  
"musical instruments"; the streets of the neighborhood are  
named for Biblical musical instruments.

**VOCATIONS/EVOCATIONS**

Early that morning  
I was told I see in circles,  
not rectangles, "We've different views."  
I don't know why he said that.  
I was photographing Route 1 office expansion.  
A construction foreman 6'1" told me this  
and I'm 5'8"  
I suspect our heights  
had nothing to do with it  
or my clean upper lip,  
his trimmed mustache.  
The photographs were good  
the buildings were plumb  
he was right.

I'll credit buildings  
they hit me as marvels  
out of touch with cosmic globes  
but standing,  
needed,  
conscientious.  
"Problems," his helper said,  
so he went.  
I was awed by that nimble workman's climbs  
on squared structural steel,  
his familiarity with angles  
not mine.

—Harvey Steinberg

### III. *On Uncertain Grounds*

[untitled]

1.  
I dreamt the world was flat  
And all the people equal.  
I spied no hills or valleys.

The sky was paved with glass;  
Fake wind came from a fan,  
But no one even noticed.

Riding conveyor belts  
To school, to work, to death,  
The people all are happy.

2.  
The furniture of faith,  
Austere and angular,  
Will take no rounded shapes.

The table and the lamp,  
The altar and its horns,  
The cherubs' hammered wings –

All point to the jagged path,  
The sharply chiseled edge  
That hidden knowledge brings.

3.  
Towers of arrogance  
Cast extended shadows  
Over the narrow streets.

They darken the nearby harbor  
Where flocks of grazing boats  
Float on murky waters.

At night they send out beams  
Of multi-colored light,  
Illuminating nothing.

4.  
The empty shell remembers  
The life it once contained,  
The animal inside

That moved and carried it,  
That ate and slept and suffered  
The destiny of flesh.

The empty shell reflects  
Rays of the setting sun,  
And shimmers in the water.

5.  
Built of darkened bricks,  
The road desires order  
Although the earth resists

By shifting and subverting,  
With tree roots pressing up  
And sinkholes pushing down.

How shall we pave the way  
To civilization  
On such uncertain grounds?

6.  
The palace is off-limits;  
I labor on its grounds,  
A junior caretaker.

Inside, the candelabra  
Glow with sacred light.  
The chosen guests arrive.

I cannot comprehend  
Such transcendent visions.  
I pluck the weeds outside.

– David K. Weiser

### HOW SUCH AN EDIFICE IS MADE TO STAND

How I wish  
I could have brought you  
to that charming street  
in a far away city  
where there stood  
quaint dwellings with stone  
of myriad pastel  
roses, pale  
gold, blues,  
and windows placed high  
at pleasing angles.  
You would have admired  
the architecture,  
inviting you in,  
now only a vague  
impression of what  
was seen while I slept.  
It brought me little  
apparent meaning  
except for the awe  
how such an edifice  
is made to stand  
and thrill the viewer,  
who sleeps, before  
the substance dissolves  
into something other.

– Reizel Polak



**HE IS PLACE**

It all goes back on itself,  
 The room, the window, the hills of Judea,  
 All girdered in Calder's stable.  
 The hills, the land, layered generations,  
 present and past, gone yet here.

He is Place, in this place and not,

Life is with Him,  
 His image is us,  
 His being our becoming.  
 A camel, they say,  
 Is an animal designed by a committee.  
 Is our world made by a committee of two,  
 Him and us?

—Michael E. Stone

**BUILDING**

Imagining a luminous order of voices  
 While around you the whole shebang is falling to pieces,

Joining word unto word till they make a line  
 While dodging the various projectiles that come flying,

Laying line upon line till they make a poem  
 While the wrecking ball crashes into the wall of your home,

Placing poem beside poem till they seem  
 To mount up and mean, as in that dream

Where rainbow pastel butterflies bore aloft  
 And carried through the air an enormous wooden raft,

Or like those cells that converge and build to fruition,  
 A choirs' choir, polypolyphonic, yet not without  
 resolution:

For building is the only fortress still secure;  
 Building, you move toward an own-made future,

Though on the deck of a boat that is drifting down  
 Toward the drop. Your eyes are to the Should-Have-  
 Been,  
 To the Precedent of Past. To the Midnight Sun.

— Esther Cameron

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM**

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image...its  
 head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver,  
 its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet  
 part of iron, and part of clay. — Daniel 2:31-33

Have we not all some clay in our feet,  
 Some more and some less, as nature decrees?  
 She plays dice with our genes, never deigns to please.  
 Our dream of perfection is but a deceit.

Flawed are our hearts, some more and some less.  
 Too often for us, as for Nebuchadnezzar,  
 Our power, possessions and pride are our treasure,  
 Subjecting our conscience to painful distress.

Our towers of science, our temples of art,  
 The fences of law defending our homes,  
 Our dear-bought democracy's golden domes:  
 Such triumphs seal over flaws in the heart.

But the weakness of some is the weakness of all.  
 Those structures erected through so many ages —  
 Talk of their passing saddens, enrages:  
 They tremble, they totter, but are they to fall?

— Henry Summerfield

**DEMOCRACY**

Democracy: too weak the lamp it hoists  
 Within its vaunted castle's walls to show  
 Our larval vices smear with graft the joists,  
 A process little seen by high or low  
 (Though maggots can metamorphose into flight  
 And rise, like fireworks, into public sight).

The portcullis being raised for an election,  
 The plebeians reach the bailey — not the keep,  
 Where corporate donors buy themselves protection —  
 Bad laws, high profits the reward they reap.  
 Voters succumb to smiles and "no new taxes" —  
 Against their weakness there is no prophylaxis.

Autocracy: its searchlight laser beam  
 Burns where the ruler thinks he sees a foe:  
 One people working to one end his dream;  
 Who next will disappear no one can know.  
 Each year adds stories to the Babel-tower  
 That tempts the fate of overweening power.

The General Secretary, the Caudillo,  
 The President for Life, untrammelled King,  
 The Führer and the Generalissimo —  
 Folk pray to end the terror that they bring.  
 The growing tower sways on its weak foundation  
 Of muzzled speech, chained court, and hard privation.

Human nature will not allow perfection,  
 But man need not abide an earthly hell;  
 Every tyrant may confront defection.  
 A government can serve – sometimes serve well.  
 Camus declared that we must fight a lie  
 To save the quarter-truth that we live by.

– Henry Summerfield

### PLAIN FRUIT

The fruited plains are condos now,  
 And God's grace has been shed.  
 The amber grain waves used to bow  
 To breeze: Today, instead,

Their genes adjusted, no slight breeze  
 Can bend them – they fight back.  
 And purple mountains' majesties  
 Have all turned black.

It seems there is no brotherhood,  
 Nor shining sea, of late,  
 America no longer good,  
 Obsessed with being "great

Again." And as for spacious skies –  
 Who looks up anymore,  
 His twitter feed, a land of lies,  
 And truth, become a bore?

But I remember Beautiful,  
 And Truth worn as a crown,  
 And leadership once dutiful,  
 And brighter hues than brown.

Was that "America" a dream,  
 Bred on the backs of slaves,  
 For all, not fair, but to redeem  
 Before we're in our graves

And feeding worms who'll turn the lands  
 For future waves of grain  
 To sate new souls who'll try their hands  
 At America again?

But such a hymn means hope, and I  
 Will fight to make it true,  
 Then leave it, plus the spacious sky  
 And fruited plain, to you.

– James B. Nicola

### STONE

Lodestone,  
 Deep-founded,  
 Keystone,  
 Cast from bedrock, nourished by it,  
 Matrix-quarry.

Stone, building or shattering,  
 Abyss-grounded,  
 Wind-water-storm-worn,  
 At its side flows the life-giving spring,  
 Waters of Torah in its veins,  
 Source of its strength.

Touchstone, attracting, connecting,  
 Will give no space to the obstacle...  
 Like a mighty cliff it will stand in the breach  
 Stone to stone, hand in hand,  
 A steady and unified wall.

Twelve precious stones  
 With human hearts  
 Story upon story,  
 Milestone, house for the people,  
 I was glad...for we go to the house of the Lord...

– Daniela Barth  
 tr. EC

### THREE POEMS

#### Auschwitz

And there are the numbers of the children of Israel  
 Six on one not-outstretched  
 Arm  
 Let us make bricks  
 And bake them to a black  
 Burning  
 On each one ten handles  
 Engraved in the smoke  
 We'll go up to the red heavens  
 Into silence

#### Memory

On the fourth of the month of Ziv  
 The day of the counting of souls  
 The eve of the holiday of salvation  
 Which G-d granted me  
 I will come with my voice and my blood  
 With my Senir and my Carmel  
 With my Tabor and my Galilee and my Negev  
 To take straight aim  
 To count wandering bullets

To empty out magazines of bitterness  
 And to weep for the light in the faces  
 Of radiant soul-candles  
 That went out before their time

### Independence

Our way  
 Is not that of a bride  
 A pure moon in its fullness  
 Not chaste as the sun  
 Full of scaffolding like a wall  
 Ascents and descents  
 Battles and distances  
 Circles and lines  
 The terrors of armor are dismantled and rebolted  
 Warming and scalding  
 Shining and going out  
 One more ascent and one more ascent  
 A nation I'm dreaming

– Araleh Admanit  
 tr. EC

### [7533] ISRAEL'S FOUNDATION

'Tis easier to destroy,  
 but I'd rather build  
 relationships through words  
 remembering the good of others.

We can join forces,  
 hey you! Can you hear  
 on the other side?  
 to build a house.

Yes! easier is to throw a brick  
 or a stone and to shoot.  
 While it takes guts to gather  
 the burning sparks.

You try to throw us out  
 from the family of nations.  
 Yet we are part and parcel of humanity  
 in spite of your words.

You have put your sentiments  
 to sleep,  
 when you throw rockets  
 but we are alert and awake!

We have built a country  
 that you are bent on destroying.  
 We won't wait your permission  
 to continue building.

You have tried murder with the bear hug  
 and we have proven we can bear war.

Did you forget we offered you peace  
 and even gave you cities, why oppress them and us?

You spread lies with public relation stunts  
 blaming us for all problems of the world.  
 We will yet see countries coming to their senses  
 and realize that it is better to solve actual problems.

Nothing will come from your fake towers in the air,  
 with bombs against civilians or with military campaigns.  
 We have built a fence as a first line of defence  
 and know that our foundation is stronger than yours.

– Hayim Abramson

### UNCLE ZEKE'S SPeACE PLAN

My great-uncle Zeke has returned to Jerusalem  
 after a lengthy sojourn in the Negev where he went to  
 live after retiring a few years ago. We met at a small cafe  
 near Shuk Machane Yehuda. He was there when I  
 arrived, already sipping soda from a tall glass.

"I'm so glad to be back in Jerusalem," he said,  
 smiling. Newspaper in hand, I stared dully at his  
 pleased expression. The news was dismal that day,  
 rockets raining down, an Israeli soldier stabbed. How  
 could he be happy? From the depths of my depression I  
 could only mumble, "When will it stop? What can we  
 do?"

My uncle, always a serious thinking man, took my  
 questions to heart. "Would you like to hear my plan for  
 peace?" he asked.

I leaned back and noticed the metallic threads in his  
 sky-blue kippah sparkling in the sun. He still had a full  
 head of hair, but I hadn't remembered the kippah. He  
 stroked his beard for a moment. Then he explained: "We  
 must start now to build the Third Temple in space."

This announcement, I must say, took me completely  
 by surprise.

"Space?" I asked, somewhat stupefied. "What do  
 you mean—'space'?"

"Outer space," he said brightly. "We must start  
 now to build the Temple in space. We can place it in  
 orbit to pass over Mount Moriah once a day. Much of  
 the technology is already in place and the rest we will  
 develop."

Somewhere in the back of my mind I recalled a  
 section of Talmud devoted specifically to a discussion of  
 air rights. Just how high does a piece of real estate go?  
 Maybe Uncle Zeke was onto something. After all, he had  
 worked as a space agency consultant for years. Before  
 that he had had a short but notable career in what  
 ultimately became the cornerstone of an entirely new  
 focus in quantum theory. His groundbreaking paper  
 posited an idea considered aberrant at first, but finally  
 accepted and recognized with accolades. Uncle Zeke  
 was always light-years ahead of his colleagues and the  
 world at large.

“Our cousins are afraid we want to replace their mosques on the Temple Mount with the Third Temple,” he continued excitedly. “If we went public with an official outer space plan, they could rest easy. The heart of the conflict would fade away.”

Uncle Zeke’s enthusiasm began to melt my grim mood and spark my own imagination, which can also be a bit wild at times. “Yes,” I agreed. “Other nations, too, can contribute to the cost of the project. What about the U.N., or private philanthropists?”

Uncle Zeke carried on: “And all together, lifting our eyes to the heavens, we can put this conflict over small pieces of land on planet earth into perspective!”

He lifted his glass in the air. “Jerusalem is the heavenly city; it extends upwards,” he said. “Now that it’s possible to build the Temple high above the Temple Mount, it is fitting and proper to do so.”

That evening I pondered Uncle Zeke’s Peace Plan as I sat on the balcony with my after-dinner coffee. The night was chilly but clear. The bright lights of our holy city obscured the heavenly lights of the firmament.

I thought of the two traditional approaches to the Third Temple. According to Maimonides we must build it any way and any time we can. Another opinion holds that it will descend from heaven onto its appointed place on Earth. It seemed to me that Uncle Zeke’s plan for peace resonated with them both.

– Batsheva Wiesner

## THE BUILDING COMMITTEE

I build muscles  
Moving bricks  
Hoisting beams

fabricate

My fingers nimble  
Collecting threads  
Precious metals

assemble

My brain  
A warehouse of supplies  
Count the cedars  
Weigh the copper

calculate

My heart  
Cannot measure  
The yearning

create

And I  
Have built up my confidence

produce

I cannot wait  
Will not wake up yet again  
To find it’s not been re-built yet

complete  
(or finished)

– Mindy Aber Barad Golembo

## BUILDING

Blueprint of the house  
the dream  
the placing of electric outlets  
in the southern bedroom.  
Cement, marble, gold,  
tiles, wires, mortgage.  
How long I delayed, how long,  
how many delays, from circumstances beyond my  
control.  
Longing I  
sing  
The exact amounts  
of materials needed  
I long  
and sing.

It took time for us  
to pinpoint the exact location.  
The determination that the time had come  
engendered the seeking,  
the focus.  
There,  
at Nayot in Ramah, (1)  
buds of beauty appeared,  
king and prophet in rare harmony.

The son  
will build,  
will realize the materials,  
will conscript the people  
to build the full height.  
I have indeed built  
a house for Your dwelling,  
a place for Your abode,  
an eternal establishment.(2)  
Will it endure?

The stone of Israel  
assembles at his head.  
bricks upon bricks  
shining like sapphires –  
moon shining toward them.  
From the eddying  
of tongues and souls  
arises  
understanding.\*

– Tziporah Lifshitz  
13 Kislev 5780

translated by the author and EC

\*Understanding – Hebr. *binah*, which is related to the root BNH (build).

**BUILDERS**

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Behold, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, of the tribe of Judah.'" (Exodus 31:1-2)

Bezalel erected a tabernacle of dyed goatskins;  
King Solomon constructed a temple of cedar-wood;  
And Jerusalem arose as a sacred city of polished white  
stone.

But the sages built a sukkah,  
Four cubits high and four cubits wide,  
Of cloth woven from verses.  
Their fingers and minds pulled needles,  
Sewing together a phrase from here,  
An expression from there;

And behold their brocade, which makes the sukkah's  
walls;  
How it shimmers  
With threads of black and golden letters.

Their fabric – thin as paper,  
Yet sturdier than bricks,  
And stronger than tempest-winds.

Bezalel's tabernacle was plundered;  
King Solomon's temple – burnt;  
And Jerusalem – twice razed.

But the sukkah of the sages still wanders with us,  
As we gaze through its roof's lattice  
At the stars.

– Yakov Azriel

**AT A JERUSALEM BUILDING SITE**

On the rubble of a building site  
five crows watch a cat  
who eats yogurt, dipping a paw  
into a plastic cup,  
calmly licking its creamy-coated paw,  
its back to the birds.

Maybe the crows and the cat  
are like the lamb and the lion  
and prophetic days are here.

– Ruth Fogelman

**IV. House Made of Paper****THOUGHTS, NOT STORIES**

Thoughts, not stories  
will get me into Heaven.

I think, therefore I don't know  
where thoughts will lead  
except to more,  
but they will be originals.

I don't mean to imply  
all my thoughts are unique,  
but they seem satisfying  
in a comforting, personal way,  
full of angles and breadth.  
As for width,  
there are many inherent angles  
making the right moves tricky.  
For example, how can I hurry  
a poem along, knowing  
there is an anthem in a word;  
why would I paint a wall  
without primer  
knowing that a crack might appear  
in an adjacent wall.

The instructions advise:  
allow one shade  
to build upon another  
until oils are overrun  
with possibility.  
In the current glare  
some of that paint  
will naturally permeate.

– Irene Mitchell

[untitled]

Sound boxes stand up straighter than ever today  
If you know how to listen lucidly to yourself  
If you know how to dance the movement that your soul  
is already sketching, flexibly, effortlessly,  
If you gaze down from the ceiling on your willing heart  
and your purified will.

Stretch out your hand and touch the invisible thing  
See, you are catching the golden bird that has been  
flying circles around your head for years.

The mirrors will return your love doubled  
Your feet will be lighter  
And if you don't know now  
You'll know later  
And more correctly

– Shefi Rosenzweig  
tr. EC

[untitled]

Noises of a tortuous night  
 Noises of a house pondering  
 How it will be for its dwellers  
 Noises which have no audience most of the day  
 The scenery turns actor  
 As the smell of the meals  
 Begins to dissipate.  
 Soarings into pure poetry are registered  
 As well as the plunge into the valleys of ego.  
 Just as G-d drew the topography  
 The walls of the valley climb and from the peak again  
 fall down. The plain is very devious  
 The poem is very urgent  
 But its buyers are weary of themselves.  
 The eyelids fall  
 The last signs  
 Of a painful and disillusioned consciousness, miracles of  
 exactitude from heaven,  
 Are inscribed  
 Into deep sleep.

—Shefi Rosenzweig  
 tr. EC

#### HOUSE MADE OF PAPER

The window is not the thing  
 But the four photographs you developed and in each  
 one  
 Two doors openings to the living world outside  
  
 When the openings are closed  
 The world inside is a theater for shadows and sounds  
 that get knocked  
  
 When the shutter is dragged up and some kind of  
 window opens  
 There is a place for the presence of mystery that is the  
 thing I wanted to point out  
 A metal frame that the man made in order to say a  
 fragile word  
 About the world outside the picture.  
  
 What did the man feel when he thought about the  
 woman who would sit  
 Facing the wind that would fold for her sake into three  
 equal parts  
 And the light Vermeer captured would fall upon her  
 What did he think when he affixed the yellow metal  
 handle to the wooden door of her room  
 And the key went into the mouth of the lock  
  
 This is music that you allowed me to touch  
 The rising and falling of the closed  
 On the open and the light that penetrates  
 Into what was torn for its sake  
 The play of variation within the boundaries

And my soul goes out to him  
 And you will not see me here

—Hava Pinhas-Cohen  
 tr. EC

#### A GREAT SILENCE

A man rewrites his house  
 Sketching it from within, hurting from without,  
 Bare concrete covers illuminated rooms.

A solitary window looks out on the world:  
 Trees, children, uneven sidewalks,  
 Well-dressed women walking the path.

Never has anyone knocked at his door.  
 Never has he publicized his written house.  
 The pains put the gazers to flight  
 The dogs drove off the few curious ones.

And within the house the furnished quiet,  
 The light spread out smoothly through the rooms.

—Amichai Chasson  
 tr. EC

#### POETRY MACHINE

I write motorized poems  
 I build my motors from the silence  
 silence within the words  
 the body of matters that cannot be said  
 I lift what I could just manage not to say  
 I lift it and only about it I write my poems on  
 The text I say resembles blank sheet of paper  
 I write my motorized poems and only I  
 write my poems on the motors that activate  
 my poems on the motors that roar with rage  
 in my poems on my mighty raging motors

On the motors that activate my poems  
 which do not say any words  
 since the time I have changed  
 my poems have bigger motors than theirs  
 in place of words in my poems  
 I show the poems themselves how  
 my techniques and why for most of my motors I place  
 very far away on the range  
 from faith in prayers and only activate them  
 from there when no one is looking  
 at what is motorized  
 in the poems and my words and workers  
 on giant ladders and wheels  
 in a hurry in rush in whirligigs  
 till my machines have all  
 instantly taken off.

—Admiel Kosman  
 translated by the author

**SCHMATTAS**

When angels get new clothes  
their discards pile up  
at the curbs of city sidewalks

their capes clog sewer pipes  
their togas swoop down to mound in dumpsters  
get tangled in telephone wires.

Shouldn't they be salvaged to cover the homeless  
the chilled and the fevered?  
Shroud the dead?

Flagrant bandannas, canopies for weddings  
recycled for tent cities in Bangladesh,  
antimacassars, adult diapers

fun for kids who like to kick stuff.  
Poets out looking for stuff  
to stitch into heart-shaking metaphors.

— Florence Weinberger

**CUNEIFORM ALPHABET**

Early mid-September Saturday morning cold  
and I am in third grade struggling with making letters  
with a pencil on white three-punch paper with  
blue lines. "What are you doing," my father asks.

And I respond by telling him I am writing —  
for hours. I have found timelessness in  
what I describe today as *listening to guidance*,  
which is not so much hearing my inner voice

as it is *hearing voices* that guide my hand,  
in writing cuneiform characters, some of which  
I have copied from the entry I have found  
regarding them in *The World Book Encyclopedia*.

Exhausted by sometime that afternoon, I look up,  
finally, and squint into the downward slant  
of light spreading into beams among the pattern  
of roses that repeat themselves on the linoleum

that curls up on the corners of the kitchen floor,  
shadows just beginning to appear in the corners,  
my grandmother starting dinner in a skillet  
on the stove behind me where I have written page

after page in a strange alphabet that  
I don't even question, and will not remember.  
Years later, as a young man, the volume  
of the encyclopedia in which I placed these pages

will mysteriously open in my hands, and I will  
feel embarrassment about having written  
such childish scribbling, having already begun  
my journey and apprenticeship as a writer;

whereas, now, as an old man, what  
I remember is making cuniefom characters  
in an alphabet I didn't know,  
and my exercising an ability to listen

vigilantly to what was being sung,  
and my making letters that I strenuously  
formed into words  
in attempting to replicate them in song.

— Wally Swist

**RED**

She loves red is excited  
by red (and by Rosa Luxemburg)  
but wears black a lot because it's slimming  
shoulders her way through demonstrations reads at  
rallies

The suffering a heavy fan spread out on her palm  
does not let go,  
sometimes she laughs because it hurts  
takes joy in order to relieve it  
She'll never weep openly,  
when something hits hard  
she is silent, withdraws  
into herself  
tries to find words,  
She's dying for a political poem  
She can't help writing a political poem  
on the pale mute page

— Yudit Shahar  
tr. EC

*V. Quick Time***MAZEL TOV! A BLESSED LITTLE HAND**

Sleeping,  
a little hand protrudes, resting on a draped fluffy down.  
A hand begs gentle cuddling,  
Clean hand, pure, young, so sweet.

Knuckle lines soon begin to show age.  
Now so young, you will grow up soon  
Hair will rise,  
veins exposed,  
showing their route to your heart,  
wrinkle lines will give your age away,  
like circles on a tree.

My Child,  
your hands will always be, little, blessed.

— Vincent J. Tomeo

**ODE TO MY BREATH**

O breath, you are with me  
even when I sleep—  
you fill me, then empty,  
expand and contract me;  
always and everywhere  
your inflation and deflation  
are my inspiration—

O breath, you were the first  
thing out of my mouth at birth  
and shall be the last at death,  
you have been faithful to me  
longest— you stretch when I am languorous

and contract when I'm afraid;  
you hold the space with me  
when we are in between—  
between thought and action,  
stillness and movement,  
invitation and letting go

O breath you always leave me  
empty, squeeze my contractions  
deeper, so I am ready  
to be filled

O breath of life  
you are in all  
breathing beings, even the trees  
and greens receive what I give,  
offer what I lack—a happy dance  
of oxygen and CO2

O life force, you expand me;  
I will be ash and earth  
when you are gone for good

I want to count our every coupling—  
this/one  
in/out  
hum/sa—  
each inhalation a birthday balloon,  
each exhalation its release rising  
up/up and away

O breath, I have had enough  
scares to know the fear of losing you;  
I have held you too tightly  
in my panics,  
let you go with she-bear sounds  
in my pride

O breath, even though I love you,  
I am not you, nor am I  
my thoughts, even of you,  
or this or that or any other thing—

O breath, only you  
can gather those frightful thoughts  
of our final separation  
back to now/here  
in/out  
rise and fall—  
each/breath the only moment  
that is.

— Kate Marshall Flaherty

**THE FLOWER**

The flower is dangerous.  
Nonetheless, I have picked it.

The biggest, whitest, most  
glaring Shasta daisy.

I can hear my mother yelling: Don't! I do.  
She snaps a picture.

This is where my bravery begins.  
Or so I like to say.  
In truth, I don't remember.

I only look at the photograph  
of me scrutinizing the flower.

The light one finds in baby pictures  
begins to whisper.



It is December 18, 1940.  
Nothing is as it seems:

the sunny winter afternoon,  
the garden with its pretty flowers.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

### TRIPTYCH

#### I

In 1942, when Mom divorced Pop,  
I stopped talking.  
I played by myself in the backyard sandbox;  
wanted to be held, but held back;  
grew pensive and sullen.

Around age eight, I fell in love  
with my mother's Baldwin upright piano.  
Music was mercy,  
my freedom from speech,  
my freedom from being spoken to.

I lingered over Schubert's fragrant,  
overripe chords; pursued the ardent ebb  
and flow of Brahms, Beethoven.

Beauty became a form of redemption.

*Allegro! Andante! Largo! Forte!*  
I obeyed Italian commands of dead Germans.  
Found a new voice with the help of Bartók.

At thirteen, I surrendered to Chopin —  
his wistful wind-swept waltzes,  
his rendering of each phase of the heart.

I wanted to live forever, play the piano until  
I was as old as Moses.

#### II

The charm is broken, the piano put away,  
and I grow old, except in dreams.

I am a girl sitting at a Baldwin  
upright piano. I have been playing  
for hours, a metronome clacking behind  
each melody like a clock. My back  
is tired of straightening, my feet are tired  
of pedaling, and my hands,  
my tiny horses, have galloped miles.

I am playing for my father,  
not my literal father, nor a false

father divorced from the one  
who fathered me, but for an eternal  
father. A version, perhaps, of the first  
Pop, who once held me on his knee  
as light lengthened into summer.

#### III

How did summer slip away  
so casually this year? Without a sigh?  
Without a nod to those who care?  
Or does it still breathe among

the powdery wings that cling to a few  
forgotten flowers? Still shed  
its languid light on stubbled grass,  
shriveled fig and rotting pear?

This is the pensive time of year,  
this time of passing. The shadow  
grows, the sweet light goes, and one  
by one the gentle ghosts move on.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

### AT THE MOVIES

"A moving picture, because it moves, is the one form of  
narrative that cannot convey an idea." —Gore Vidal

Against the white unmovable screen of clouds,  
three eucalyptus stand frame by frame.  
How beautiful each leaf,  
each form of branch and trunk.

Above, in the dark cobalt blue of night,  
the moon is not quite half itself.

Inside, enchiladas and home-made chili sauce  
simmer softly in the oven.  
A lull before the clatter of plates  
and ideas overlapping.

Here, outside, the coolness is an ecstasy.  
Three silhouettes — one of which you have to crane  
your neck to see — each one an idea,  
a single stopped emotion;

each detail incisive as a rare well-chosen word;  
dark and particular as the story  
in an Ozu movie that moves  
slowly out of time as if it were a novel;

moving and unmoving like the long still shots  
in *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalene Bach*,  
where each frame, like the music, is sacred.  
An idea? A generalized emotion? Below, I hear

raccoons picking their way up the slope,  
stopping every few feet to nibble  
on some old tortillas I've just thrown out.  
It is time, I suppose, to sit down to our own dinner;

to stop yearning toward the eucalyptus –  
craning my neck to see the third – surprised,  
yes, still surprised by how beautiful. The clouds  
illuminated like a waiting motion picture.

–Constance Rowell Mastores

### DESERT ON ALL SIDES

After a 12-hour day of  
pouring concrete on the frontage  
road west of the Arizona  
and California border,  
the heat is so delectably hot  
that I feel faint even though the sun  
has disappeared behind the western ridges.  
My feet burn as I stand  
in a bare patch among the chamise,  
black sage, and buckwheat.  
In the twilight,  
I can still see how the wind  
shaped the sand into  
wing-like waves.  
They look as if someone  
has tossed the letters of the alphabet,  
into the air, and they landed  
haphazardly  
across the landscape.  
Then, there's the silence like  
the flight of a burrowing owl,  
or the steps of a slow,  
moving coyote.  
In this heat and silence,  
night arrives with its stars,  
moon, and the long shadows  
of the cottonwoods  
along the arroyo  
beside my truck.  
Near the road, is an abandoned cabin.  
Its rear wall has toppled,  
and the back room  
opens to the wilderness.  
As I slide behind  
the wheel of my truck,  
a deer and two fawns step out of the shack.  
As they pause to look  
at my headlights,  
I realize this is about  
as quixotic  
as my life will get:

a spectacular nightscape  
with Kronos on the radio.

–Joseph D. Milosch

### ONE HOT AUGUST NIGHT IN THE DESERT

I arrived at my mobile lab at 5:30 AM  
and worked until 9:00 PM.  
Closing my work trailer,  
I hitched it to my truck  
for the six-hour drive.  
Slipping behind the wheel,

I thought I'd die for some coffee.  
I felt fortunate to find my cup full  
and knew it was a testament  
to how busy my day had been.  
Stepping outside the cab,  
I leaned against its front fender.

Watching the stars, I became  
aware of how sweet the sand  
and cactus smelled.  
Winding through the deer weed  
and chamise, the breeze seemed  
to whisper, and while I listened

to it, I wished my wife  
was here to hug me.  
I didn't want the hug I received  
in church or outside a restaurant.  
I wanted the hug that made me  
feel I'd live a long time

among the odors of her hair  
while she enclosed me  
with the warmth of her body.  
After I finished drinking,  
weariness settled over me  
like the night sounds become audible,

and the hollow-fluted,  
coyote's howl  
echoed between hilltops.  
As the desert's delicate breeze  
touched me, the coyote continued  
to call for the absent one.

–Joseph D. Milosch

**STAYING IN THE LINES**

Trying to keep  
 awake on the LIE  
 while going 70,  
 I blink, turn up the radio  
 lick my fingers to wet  
 my eyelids, catch  
 myself weaving  
 into other  
 lanes,  
 feel like a kid trying  
 to color  
 in the lines except  
 if I go over these lines,  
 I will get killed.

— Adam Fisher

**STILLNESS**

My work now is astonishment.  
 Here the breeze — an impulsive playful puppy.  
 There a lark — perches on budding maple  
     head thrown back, breast a quiver,  
     sings straight at the sun,

Do I walk at a slower pace?  
 Is my mind unable to process a riddle?  
 I am no longer a young woman,  
     must keep to my work,

which is mostly choosing stillness.  
 To be roomy enough to listen  
     for newness every second  
     to look for miracles —

Budding woods, blooming gardens  
 Trees curtseying in the wind  
 Flock of pigeons glitter like confetti  
 Love falling from lovers eyes, and his eyes.

Which is mostly choosing to invite my longings —  
     the mind chatter, the infectious desires  
 to sit on the porch with me  
 as valley breaks open at sunset like a rose  
 astounded at the silent spaces in between.

— Marianne Lyon

**NEVER GO BACK**

the peeling paint porch off the kitchen's cracked  
 linoleum door that doesn't shut  
 looking out at the barn 90 years old

carl's father built that rich darkness  
 every peg every piece of the loft the holes  
 that let in the light the light spilling over

the smoothed grooves the horses wore 90 years  
 through the sills of their stalls           spring  
 and two hummingbirds come to the Rose

of Sharon      hummingbirds I'm barefoot on the porch  
 you bring me coffee we eat our eggs from the same bowl  
 and the hum and scratch when the one car a day goes  
     down the road

what other sound but the stars spinning?  
 my dress pulled over my knees my hair still long  
 unbraided oh that wood scratching and sweet smelling

the side of the barn   cows coming back   pears  
 in the pear tree peaches                   must be fall  
 now they must be falling on the ground I leave

my muddy shoes outside you carry in the firewood  
 dirt on your arms and I do nothing I have nothing I have  
 to do you are taking care of me feeding me keeping me

warm no thing changed but in two years two trees in the  
     yard  
 dying and one car rusting outside      carl's arm  
     swollen a fall  
 he's 87   lot different from 85      he's a little bit  
     scared

and smaller he wants to tell me about the barn tell me  
     about  
 his horses the little horses he and his brothers rode  
 the house across the way the granary smoke house privy

tools in the shed three tractors in the barn

— Kelley Jean White

**WALKING ALONG THE BEACH**

*in memory of my sister Sharon  
(December 17, 1934-September 19, 2019)*

It will be windy for a while  
until it isn't. The waves will shoal.  
A cormorant will trace its double  
along glassy water.  
The sea will play this motif  
over and over. There will be  
no preparing for separation.

Water will quaver in driftwood,  
gulls will nap on the shore,  
and when the low tide comes lapping  
and clear, the curled fronds  
of seaweed will furl  
and splay, brushing against  
sands marked by the passage of feet.

A gentle rain will fall as we  
continue in the evening light.  
The ocean glitters. Pelicans begin  
their homeward flight. Remember  
how we played on this same  
beach when we were children? What  
was torn from us? What was kept alive?

—Constance Rowell Mastores

**MY SISTER'S TRIPLE-CHAMBERED HEART**

*For Sharon Rowell, creator of the huaca: a clay  
triplechambered vessel flute. Mendocino, California*

The forlorn sigh spreads over her as she lies dreaming  
a potter's dream in shapes of clay - foghorn-sound  
so different from the blasting horns you hear  
off the San Francisco bay. This voice comes just to her  
and makes her want to weep - round, intimate  
and deep - comes just to her. And makes her weep.

She wonders how to answer him, how she will love  
him back. At her potter's bench, she begins to form  
a single-vessel flute. As years pass by, she expands  
her love into a triple-chambered heart. And ocean-  
near she plays to him, and ocean-near his song  
comes back - intimate and deep - and makes her weep.

— Constance Rowell Mastores (ca. 2000)

Note: performances on the huaca by Alan Tower, a student of  
Sharon Rowell, can be found on YouTube.

**GHOSTS**

They're gone,  
But we feel them  
In the smell of their perfume,  
In the chants of our youth.

The bald headed clarinetist at the concert,  
Brings my brother to life again,  
The hot pink silky suit, hugging the soprano's bulging  
hips,  
Reminds me, recreates my mother.

Her urging me to stop, not to run so far.  
Her voice sticks in my brain.  
I fight the command,  
Invisible, but there.

A brother gone, returns with the turn of a hairless head,  
a smile, a pair of jeans  
A mother, invisible, present in my mind,  
Wearing her favorite dress,  
Her voice, loud and controlling.

We live with the ghosts of our youth,  
They are alive in us.

— Yocheved Miriam Zemel

**THESE DAYS**

These days it is enough  
to drive this ribbon  
of asphalt on county road H  
through the black Wisconsin night  
headed toward 46 and Amery,  
with "Hotel California"  
making it easy,  
a hand on the wheel  
the other slapping the arm rest  
with that crescendo toward the end,  
in concert with the rhythm,  
in concert with my life.  
Tonight I'm very much alive,  
working my way through  
the dark country of Polk County,  
wanting to believe this is  
what death is like: driving down a country  
road with music,  
the lights on bright  
showing me the way home.

— Art Greve

## LISTENING

I know a tree  
it stands hidden high on a hill of the Hudson Highlands  
the tree has a bole, a hole  
just my height  
a big round "O" like from a child's crayon

The tree is the only elder I still have living  
so I talk to it  
it listens  
it listens well  
I have spent my grown years listening too  
but never did I leave anyone breathing cool air,  
gazing at the tender river supine below and taking off  
friskily  
down a path

When I pass, I'd like to turn into a leaf  
on the tallest branch of my friend tree  
so I can see so far into the world too  
and counsel wayfarers so wisely.

—Susan Oleferuk

## QUICK TIME

I have a moment  
I took a moment though I don't know who I took it from  
I spent days in coins, dollars  
time, it is said, is money  
yet I lack both  
I once slept years like Sleeping Beauty  
I'm awake now  
I can't say for how long  
Time is on your side  
I am on no one's side  
I hate to see anyone lose  
can't we call it even

This will take a moment to finish  
I'm filling in the moment like a coloring book  
It's an afternoon in June and I'm sitting under a cascade  
of pink roses  
my black dog is at my feet  
the honeysuckle on the breeze is sweet  
my dog ran hard and I fought to stay alive  
and that is our whole life story.

—Susan Oleferuk

## IDIOSYNCRATIC CEMETERIES

New York's headstones stand tall, noble, amplified, but  
in California  
most are mere plaques, sunk so deep into grass, so close  
to their neighbors,  
I step on their edges on the way to visit my parents

who once lived on a continent where Jews were buried  
up steep hills,  
out of sight; where monuments carved with mystical  
signs and sorrow now lie  
toppled, scattered, desecrated, as if scorn for dead Jews  
is dominion over death;

where vandals practice their skills with gouges and  
hammers.

In 1948, when Jordan's troops seized East Jerusalem,  
they laid new roads  
with the grave markers of Jewish scholars, and in  
Hungary,

I watched goats graze among the fallen *matséyves*, taking  
nourishment  
from the dead that fed the grass. In the meadows,  
uneven mounds betrayed the presence of mass graves,  
Jews shot

at the edge of ditches they were made to dig, then  
covered over, the ground heaving for hours from those  
buried alive.

Millions burned, smoke and ashes never sanctified.

I grieve for their eternities, for their souls entombed in  
ghettos of the dead,  
for bones decomposing under Prague's sidewalks  
where the poet and Kabbalist Rabbi Avigdor Kara sleeps  
eight

unsettling centuries under soil layered above his grave  
like glacial striations  
before his tombstone is disinterred.

Its replica in the Maisel synagogue, his  
poetry speaks to the Easter pogroms of 1389.  
Are the dead allowed to tell us the future?

....*they have committed atrocities and acted in malice/devised  
schemes  
to cover up the killing and their dead bodies were like  
refuse.....*

In the ancient city's Old Jewish Cemetery, the  
gravestones still standing rest

against each other like weary crowds of protesters. I  
tried to read  
the faded dates, the chipped names. I felt their presence  
and found we were compatible.

—Florence Weinberger

## RYWKA'S DIARY

*In 1945, on the ground near the crematorium, pages rustle in the wind. The diary of a fourteen-year-old girl from Lodz will travel halfway around the world for seventy years until liberated to the printed page. \**

Rywka adds loose pages to an old student copy book she will omit no line of grief: *Dear God do not let me flinch*

over and over she binds her losses like sheaves for safekeeping  
as she pushes the blunt needle, she pierces her finger  
traces of blood leave a ghost print  
a drop for mother, a drop for father, one for Abramik,  
Tamarcia, Cipka  
and five drops more for the fall of mankind

she becomes their sanctuary  
they live within her like nesting dolls  
she hears them through thin membranes  
people think her a dreamer  
when she misses what they say, she is tending her family

she carries her dead by day; at night she sails alone  
she pulls out her craft hidden in a copse of birch trees  
as she enters the sea, she recites lines from the sacred poem:

*if all the skies were parchment and all the seas were ink...*  
when she rows, she pulls gifts of imagery to her  
in the blessed silence  
released from the constant shouts of condemnation  
she hears the music of her identity  
she hears her holy teachers' lessons  
hung before her lucid as sky writing against a dark screen

she aligns herself with her Lodestars:  
Mother Torah and Father God  
she uses the scaffold of one to climb toward the other  
her first language is prayer  
she sends up her psalms  
twin flares propelled in equal measures of pain and hope  
her book fills out  
as her body loses its claim to gravity  
she will curl into the inscrutable smile  
carved in the white bone of the moon  
when clouds part to reveal a brilliant swathe in the dark water  
she will spread out as a sea lane

the rhythm of her tides pull me back between her lines  
I bow my head and begin again

— Judy Belsky

## DO YOU NOT YET KNOW THAT EGYPT IS LOST?

Mahane Yehuda Market, 5.7.18

Do you not yet know that Egypt is lost?  
Indeed?  
Egypt never ruled my soul.  
Even when my body was enslaved, under the weight of  
soil and stone  
I was free to myself.  
All my work in mud,  
Burning bricks in the flame,  
Was for the sake of heaven,  
To reconcile my soul with the sweat  
Of my body forever holy.  
My spirit knows no despair.  
My light, which was created before man,  
My kingdom of flesh destined to be conquered  
By my soul that hovers  
Over the surface of the waters, the seas, the sages, the  
ages  
There remains only to remove the veil that masks  
As the waters cover the sea  
Revealed is the Face  
That never ceased to see  
His children as they are—  
Children of G-d.

— Imri Perel

translated by Sarita Perel and Esther Cameron

## TO GIVE ONESELF UP

To give oneself up to the journey, to give oneself up to  
wonder, to the quest,  
To the tremor that pushes the heart through the gate to  
another world.  
To give oneself up to the glimpses of light shaking up a  
world that imagines itself as stable,  
To give oneself up to the wind that stomps through the  
deserts, while the body dances to the music,  
To give oneself up to the ancient spirit of the Fathers,  
playing silently between the sounds, and the  
shadows.  
To give oneself up to the holiness revealing itself, loving,  
enfolding, surrounding, indwelling,  
Foaming, erupting, conquering, demanding, collapsing  
in one lucid moment, in the kitchen, the body  
sprawled on the floor that slides out from under,  
To give oneself up to the moment in which the world  
crumbles into shivers of light.  
To give oneself up to the tender smelting that burns the  
heart of flesh in piercing light,  
To the penetrating gaze that reveals all sins.  
To give oneself up to disconnection, to detachment from  
the world, to rupture with all.

To be an angel, a seraph, to give oneself up to higher guidance, to give oneself up to faith, to the journey on foot through the desert,  
 To solitude on the dry journey, to the scorched earth, to the highest heavens that pour down on thirsty roads.  
 To give oneself up to a long and tormenting quest, to the flashes of light that gleam out one minute before it's too late, before it is too collapsed, before it is too detached.  
 To give oneself up to madness, to perdition, to wander without direction in desolation.  
 To give oneself up to the fall, to the attraction of dust, to the crushing, to the endless despair,  
 A great winding of mud shrouds, surrounding the soul to the underworld.  
 To give oneself up to shame, to remorse, to the sorrow of the Shechinah, to the knowledge of Torah, of halacha, to the band of companions  
 To give oneself up to the faith that light still remains in one.  
 That one is not yet abandoned, that the sun will return.  
 To give oneself up to the earth, to the rhythm of its pulse, to the rhythm of life and work, routine,  
 Faith in love, that it has relevance here, in being.  
 To give oneself up to one's wife, to one's children, to earning a living, to give oneself up to creativity, to submission,  
 To the love of one's brothers and sisters till the last drop, to the future city to be built, to one's country ascending by degrees, in flames, crashing into the bottomless pit.  
 To give oneself up to the present moment, to what is true,  
 To the light that shines only today.

—Imri Perel  
 translated by Sarita Perel and Esther Cameron

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## VI. Currents

### WE ARE THE WATCHERS

We are the watchers  
 watching the land disappear  
 feeling the soft throb the heat, the cold  
 the winds and ways of the wily moon and tide  
 and we watch all that came to rise  
 under the sun and air

We watch holding seeds, planting trees  
 seeing the earth dry  
 seeing the water swell, seeing the land unwell  
 alert at a hawk's cry, watching a river die

an atavistic memory brought sweet by the branch of  
 holly  
 scraping the window pane

We keep the trails of soft pine long stepped  
 know where the trees are stripped  
 send goodbyes, hear lullabies  
 harmonize, transcend and send  
 messages from our stations  
 our still seats we have found in this world  
 for the miracle of other eyes  
 to open.

—Susan Oleferuk

### CROWS

On my walk this morning,  
 the wind whispers  
 through the pines  
 its secrets  
 but the crows who gather  
 ahead around the deer carcass  
 ahead of me ignore it. Instead  
 they pick the exposed ribs  
 of the frozen  
 flesh and sinew, making a  
 meal even the eagles  
 won't touch. Crows finish  
 what others begin.  
 And when a crow dies  
 theirs becomes  
 a model community of mourning,  
 a congregation of elders  
 who strut and pace and flutter  
 around the dead feathers,  
 the curled toes and beak  
 frozen in mid-caw.  
 I want to tell them  
 please take my hand  
 and bring me  
 into your community.  
 Teach me to live with less,  
 and be grateful for it.  
 Show me how to love  
 when love is so far away,  
 help me understand your  
 language so that  
 when I return from my walk  
 I might better understand mine.

— Art Greve

**ON THIS EARTH OF SADNESS**

On this earth of sadness we still  
live. Not understanding each other  
nor ourselves. Deceiving others  
and ourselves. Outwitting others  
and ourselves. Stealing. Exploiting. Angering one  
another  
with naive, arrogant, blind self-righteousness.  
Our shoes complacently trample the modest whiteness  
of dandelion seeds.

On this earth of sadness we still  
meet. Anger each other, fight, make truces,  
deceive, cheat, steal, exploit and so forth.  
On this earth of sadness dandelion seeds descend  
in the wind of summer's end, pleading with us to do  
what is possible.

— Hamutal Bar-Yosef  
tr. EC

**FREEDOM**

Something like a quiet screech or howl is heard once  
every five minutes, when the threshing machine  
completes a turn and begins a new one. The taut rope is  
knotted around the neck of a young donkey.  
Determinedly, with a stubbornness born of despair, he  
strides forward, always forward, and arrives once every  
five minutes at the same spot, the same screeching. He  
is alone in the world. He knows that all the same  
something is happening: the old rope is wearing  
through. Slowly, slowly it is wearing through. One day,  
at noon, the rope snaps. The screeching stops. The  
donkey strides forward. He is outside. He breathes sea  
air. With a sudden jerk he begins to gallop forward,  
forward. He crosses fields, forests, hills, mountains. He  
arrives at the top of a black promontory. Far below lies  
the infinite blue sea.  
The donkey stands on the promontory. He is alone in  
the world. He brays bitterly.

— Hamutal Bar-Yosef  
tr. EC

**FIVE HUNDRED YEARS**

It's hard to believe, but five hundred years ago  
people like us had slaves.  
They lived in the house or in the courtyard like horses or  
cows.  
Any slave who betrayed was hanged in the city square  
after being dragged through the streets tied to a horse's  
tail,  
And while he was still alive they opened his belly with a  
knife  
and he saw his bowels gush over his thighs  
for all to see.  
Even in England such things were common  
five hundred years ago, more or less.

That is how they will talk about wars and terrorist  
attacks  
as a way of settling disputes or salvaging pride  
after five hundred more years,  
perhaps even less.

— Hamutal Bar-Yosef  
tr. EC

**MY MOTHER'S VOICE**

And the earth was waste and void  
And my mother's voice  
Was calling my name.

She is distant, and changing —  
Perfect in my eyes.  
Till when.

Till the time comes to burst out,  
Hurl stones, demand justice —  
To sink into the sea, to sink ...

The time to bow one's head —  
emerge dry — against and despite —  
From the sea of troubles.

And the earth was waste and void.  
And my mother's voice  
Was calling my name.

— Eva Rotenberg  
tr. EC

**CURRENTLY, CURRENTS**

For instance, this. Technically, we don't know. A planet may resemble ours: the how and the when  
why and the how, the how  
and its aftermath. Subsiding, tide leaves presents of polished stones it worked so hard to  
accomplish, then throw  
away. Seagulls signal bad weather, but they don't mean to. Voice of the immediate past is  
distant, rocking  
chair when its resting. Clouds another form of ash. We forget the mementos.

— Philip Kobylarz



**THE CAUSE**

Delivered in a forest of truths  
Occasional carvings on the bark  
Trying to decipher the squirrel scamper marks  
And from predecessors who too sought

The way out of the shafts of light  
Arrows with false directions or valid clues  
To insight. To dream is human, to assume

Is folly, the unconscious divulges, like  
A stream in spring, melted obstacles  
Part of the floe, sifting through it,

Joined by the crows whose collective  
Caws provides further evidence that  
All around is intelligence, our gracious

Host

The dynamic formulae that ebb  
And flow. We are students on this  
Earth with a neutral collective destiny

Unless we return to tribal squabbles  
With now nuclear consequences.  
Chagall seemed to know. Fantasy combines

With color, faith, storytelling and vision  
To include all in the dialogue that's  
Necessary to join the crows' insights to  
Those of scholars, the postal workers,

The physicians and the garbage handlers  
Who see that in what we create, what's  
Discarded are the essentials to climbing  
Jacob's precarious rope ladder.

—Michel Krug

**A CONTROVERSY FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN**

How do you create a controversy of love?  
You look at the infinite heavens  
And build a ladder,  
Which begins from the cracked earth and with each  
Step up the rungs of the ladder  
You see the controversy growing bigger and smaller at  
the same time  
Till you arrive there  
In the heavens  
And the controversy turns into one more star  
Lighting the sky  
With a pale light.

—Eka Meishar  
tr. EC

**VII. Searching for a Space****OPEN SEATING**

Thick lines  
of flavored  
steamy air  
adhere  
to the inner  
plate glass  
window of  
the diner  
where images  
move then  
sit at tables  
or the counter  
long like an  
aged formica  
branch  
providing a  
rest for elbows  
and heads  
while listening  
to voices  
as food passes  
between friends  
loners or lovers  
while a hurried  
waitress  
responds to  
the bell  
and hungry hands  
open the door  
searching  
for coffee  
and a  
space.

—Roger Singer

**SONG FOR ALISON**

dearest in your black sweatshirt  
in the latest style  
cocaine musicians  
and managers of bars,  
what songs do they sing you  
more precious than the songs of Jerusalem,  
birds swooping at sunset  
fields of young people  
and soldiers,  
what song do they sing you on Broadway  
that you can so easily forget the Jerusalem songs?

—Lois Michal Unger

**IN DAVID'S RESTAURANT**

"For the Lord has chosen Zion, He has desired her for His habitation. 'This is My resting-place forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired her. I will surely bless her provisions, I will provide abundant bread to her needy.'" (Psalm 132:13-15)

In David's restaurant of firm belief,  
Thick sirloin steaks are broiled, while tender veal  
Is spiced and fried; before the festive meal,  
Mystics' mead is served as an aperitif.  
Solomon's sons and daughters baste choice beef  
By adding psalmists' sauce, so it will heal  
The lepers from disease, the pained who kneel  
Before despair, the mourners from their grief.

But we don't ask for prophets' cake or wine  
Of revelation, pies or apple tart,  
The rich desserts anointed kings are fed.  
The simple bread of simple faith is fine  
And more than satisfies the famished heart;  
When hunger sucks our marrow, bring us bread.

—Yakov Azriel

**WAITING FOR THE TSADDIK**

The tsaddik keeps his own count of time:  
to see him you may have to wait for hours,  
in the murmuring white vestibule,  
sit soundless in the shadow of the cold chrome clock  
measuring moments like drops of frail rain,  
til he appears  
like a muted rainbow scattering sparks  
and you are called.

If you come on the Sabbath  
he'll gather up scraps from his table;  
you hold out your hand  
and wait in line  
learning the gestures of a holy beggar,  
learning humility.

He may bless you  
if you wait long enough,  
light leaping from his eyes.

You gather the fragments and journey homewards  
wondering why you came  
and what you really gained.

It will be revealed  
many hours later  
in the solitude of your thin room  
when you reach out towards the light  
inchoate, joyful cries catch at your throat.

—Wendy Dickstein

**A SONG OF LOVE**

*From the Cave where Hebron's Patriarchs sleep  
from that womb did I emerge into the world  
and there I will return when my voyage ends.*

My beloved land, flesh of my flesh fragmented by cruel  
hands  
together we lie bleeding

out of your dust my innards were formed  
your hills and rivers, the desert and the oasis  
nourished the veins of my heart

Golan winds caressing basalt mountain slopes  
formed my limbs, worn down by tempests raging  
my brow is water-polished stone, carved by the streams  
of Lebanon's melting snows cast into Jordan's tributaries.

Your image is my own, forever I see myself in you  
dark eyes the azure sky over Beit Lechem  
heart a fire-stone of golden Gilboa wheat fields  
at close of day.

Eretz—mother father brother sister,  
each daybreak brings the promise of our Creator  
twilight prayers embrace foundation rock, the  
secret of our fathers.

At the hour of midnight Tikkun prayer, hewn Temple  
stones  
and un-hewn stones of Mount Moriah  
the roots of the Temple Mount [from here God  
raised creation]

weep tears of savage mourning.  
How long this Kina for Zion?

—Shira Twersky-Cassel

Beit Lechem—Bethlehem  
Eretz—The Land  
Kina—verses of mourning for the destruction of the Temple

[untitled]

As Avraham rolled up each side of his tent  
That morning  
They said  
But how could you  
You're so old  
Aren't you in pain  
What if it rains

The poles sink into the mud  
A sand storm  
A wind rips through the fabric

The very fabric of Avraham's personal self  
Sacrificed without a second thought  
Run, he said  
Prepare something for our honored guests  
So he did

So have we  
In honor of our guests  
In honor of one whose guests  
We have been  
And now feel at home  
Within the flaps of his Torah  
His tent of enveloping warmth  
His message of love and acceptance  
Shabbat shalom!

—Mindy Aber Barad Golembo

### MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The low one who tore into little pieces the banner of  
Israel  
just minutes before Sabbath came in late Friday  
afternoon  
littered our gray stone street with colors blue and white

Left some scraps of holy fabric on my doorstep  
warning that the flag hanging high over my home in  
Jerusalem  
might be the next upon which he would vent his jealous  
venom.

Terrorizing

I struggle with the fear-filled energy falling into me  
as I gaze at the shredded bits of material lying on the  
street  
that desecration of the symbol of our national identity.

Stepping into the haven of my apartment I focus--  
salon table is set with a white floral cloth  
white silk covering two loaves of braided *challah*  
lovely white lilies stand tall in shapely blue vase  
seven cups of oil in glass candelabra await lighting.

The clock ticks quickly, I pray to meet the challenge.  
Then, even stronger, even prouder than before,  
I enter *Shabbat*, grateful for the tranquility  
granted me from the One above.

—Simcha Angel

### SEEKING IN JERUSALEM THE GATEWAYS

"Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem." (Psalm 122:2)

**Jaffa Gate:** Saturday. Dusk. From the Throne of God  
*Silently descend threads of a blue veil  
To enwrap, entwine, and tint the pale  
White stone houses of Jerusalem. Three stars wait  
In the darkening sky for us to celebrate  
Havdalah, and shut the Shabbat gate.*

**Zion Gate:** Monday's dawn unlatches the gate  
Of learning. Can you overhear God  
*Whisper, or can you glimpse the veil  
That masked Moses as we read from the pale  
White parchment of the Torah? The Jerusalem winds  
impatiently wait  
Outside the stone study-hall, and in the leaves of olive trees,  
celebrate.*

**Flowers' Gate:** Tuesday morning clouds embrace,  
merge, celebrate,  
And stroke the Jerusalem hills. The gate  
Of beauty never closes; the clouds, in their search for  
God,  
*Transform into stones, trees, temples, and finally a veil.  
Leaves of olive trees (turning from dark to pale  
Green), turning like the pages of a prayer-book, whisper and  
wait.*

**Damascus Gate:** Do you too seek revelation? Why wait  
For the blinding sun-rays of Wednesday noon to  
celebrate  
Jerusalem's splendor, and entrance you; the gate  
Of prophecy needs only a gentle touch; God  
*Has written you a message in the crevices of stone; under the  
veil  
Find inscribed your name: deciphered, decoded and pale.*

**Lions' Gate:** After touching the Kotel's stones, a pale  
Hand opens a prayer-book. The words do not wait  
For a minyan to gather as they reverberate, celebrate,  
And ascend on Thursday afternoon, unlocking the gate  
Of prayer. Beyond words, beyond Jerusalem's skies, God  
*Listens as words of prayer strive to move aside the veil.*

**Dung Gate:** Do the large, silent stones of the Kotel veil  
The Shechinah, blushing beyond the pale?  
The stones, losing color in the Friday twilight, wait  
For us to dance, to herald and celebrate  
The Shabbat's arrival, opening the gate  
Of compassion, the gate closest to God.

### The Gate of Compassion:

*Who cannot celebrate Jerusalem? Who can wait  
Outside the Sanctuary's gate? Pale  
Pilgrims, we lift, hands trembling, the veil of God.*

—Yakov Azriel

## INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS

Hayim Abramson 19  
Araleh Admanit 11, 18  
Simcha Angel 35  
Brenda Appelbaum-Golani 13  
Yakov Azriel 8, 12, 21, 34, 35  
Hamutal Bar-Yosef 32  
Daniela Bart 18  
Judy Belsky 30  
Efrat Bigman 13  
Joseph Brush 8  
Esther Cameron 15, 17  
Amichai Chasson 9, 22  
Roberta Chester 3, 14  
Zev Davis 13, 36  
Sara DeBeer 14  
Frank De Canio 8  
Wendy Dickstein 34  
Adam Fisher 27  
Kate Marshall Flaherty 24  
Ruth Fogelman 21  
Ruth Gilead 12  
Reuven Goldfarb 5  
Mindy Aber Barad Golembo 5, 20, 34  
Art Greve 6, 28, 31  
Rod Kleber 5, 6  
Philip Kobylarz 10, 32  
Judy Koren 8  
Admiel Kosman 22  
Michel Krug 33  
Tziporah Lifshitz 20  
Natalie Lobe 7, 15  
Marianne Lyon 27  
Constance Rowell Mastores 4, 24, 25, 28  
Eka Meishar 33  
Sabina Messeg 11  
Joseph D. Milosch 26  
Irene Mitchell 21  
Rumi Morkin 12  
Cynthia Weber Nankee 12  
Bryan Damien Nichols 7  
James B. Nicola 13, 18  
Susan Oleferuk 4, 5, 6, 12, 29, 31  
David Olsen 7  
Imri Perel 30  
Sarita Perel 11  
Hava Pinhas-Cohen 9, 22  
Reizel Polak 16  
Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory 9, 11  
Tony Reevy 10  
Shefi Rosenzweig 21, 22  
Eva Rotenberg 32  
Fred Jeremy Seligson 5  
Yudit Shahar 23  
Ruth Shmueli 8  
Roger Singer 33  
Rick Smith 6  
Ronny Someck 7  
Harvey Steinberg 15  
Lois Greene Stone 7  
Michael E. Stone 17  
Henry Summerfield 17  
Wally Swist 3, 4, 23  
Vincent J. Tomeo 24  
Shira Twersky-Cassel 1, 34  
Lois Michal Unger 33  
Florence Weinberger 10, 23, 29  
David K. Weiser 16  
Shoshanah Weiss 6  
Kelley Jean White 27  
Batsheva Wiesner 19  
Yocheved Zemel 28



## RECONSTRUCTION

“Small children are exempt from learning (to tear their shirts upon seeing Jerusalem). There is no need to teach them this custom.”  
(Yalkut Yosef, Remembering Jerusalem)

Piles of rocks, large and small, remains  
of something. Small hands clear away  
the broken pieces. Sort them, play  
what's bigger, smaller, each one piles gains  
breadth and wisdom, a space to reveal

carefully compile, they feel  
them, dust the sand, set them up  
from memories of picture books, outcroppings,  
what it was from inside out, steal  
future plans, half hidden, build

what they remember, the sacred space defiled,  
still they sing, and gather stones  
from inside out, they start, all along . . .  
who cares, whose watching. Beguiled,  
more room, count the precious pieces

how the walls encircle, creases  
carefully enclose this sanctuary, rests,  
they stand back, make a wish, behest  
the structure they composed might release  
sparks, fireworks in the air, effuse.

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from memories of picture books: outcroppings,  
what it was from inside out: steal  
future plans: half hidden: build

— Zev Davis (1943-2019)