

The Deronda Review

a journal of poetry and thought

Vol. VI No. 1 Spring 2015

5700

SAFE INSIDE YOUR HOUSE

"And I come to Your altar, with joy
and gladness, I praise You with my
harp" (Ps 43:4)

I'm safe
now. The walls
around me, quiet,
a space filled with vision and love
rising

upwards.
The heavens
reign down upon me here.
It feels good to contemplate
the words

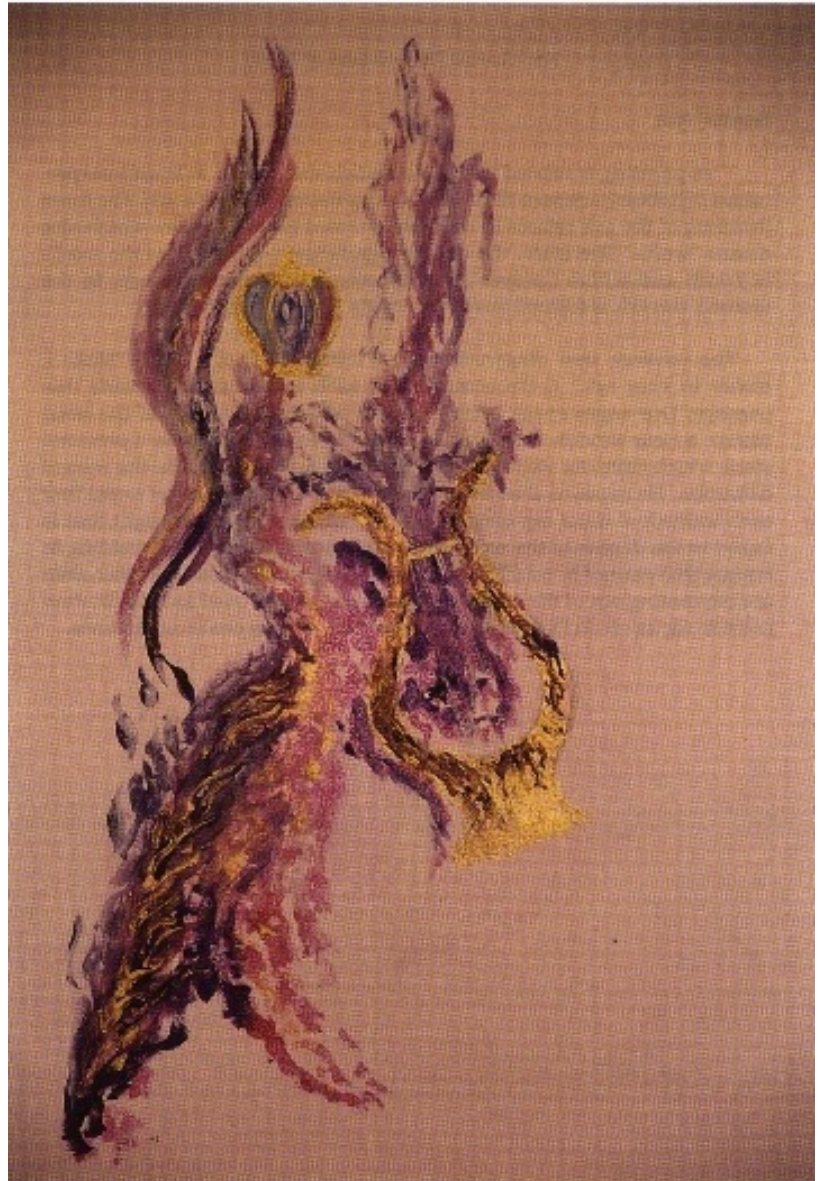
that flow
from inside,
what you placed there when
I arrived here, and I cried out . . .
It's time

to start
and it's hard
at first. Beginnings
nothing that you expected, and
slowly

I learn
the venues,
where my feet take me
stepping carefully, and I know
the way

to find
You, to get
to the gates, enter,
let my voice burst forth, my heart
run free.

—Zev Davis



The Reclamation of Malchut By Finding One's Own Note.
Painting by Nechama Sarah G. Nadborny, from *The Twelve*
Dimensions of Israel.

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CONTRIBUTORS' EXCHANGE

This feature was started to encourage dialogue among poets and readers. Below are titles of poetry collections by contributors, as well as URLs. Due to the fact that the magazine is now mainly web-based we no longer include addresses, but messages can be routed through the editors via the "Contact Us" form. * indicates a page in the "Hexagon Forum" of www.pointandcircumference.com. ** indicates a page in the "Kippat Binah" section of the same site.

Hayim Abramson, *Torah Secrets; Thoughts from the Sources* (in preparation)

**Yakov Azriel 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 multifarious publications are listed on www.hamutalbaryosef.com. She has two books of poetry in English: *Night, Morning*, (Sheep Meadow Press, 2008) and *The Ladder*, (Sheep Meadow Press, 2014).

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

Nechama Sarah G. Nadborny Burgeman is the author of *The Twelve Dimensions of Israel* (Ya'alat Chein, 1995), *Israel and the Seventy Dimensions of the World* (Ya'alat Chein, 2003), and *The Princess of Dan* (Menorah Books, 2014).

**Esther Cameron (E. Kam-Ron), *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).

Eric Chevlen, *Triple Crown* (2010), *Adrift on a Ruby Yacht* (2014).

Robert Glen Deamer, Robert Glen Deamer's books include *Place-Dream and Other Poems* (1991), *The Black Riders and Other Poems* (1992), *Sugarloaf: Poems* (1995), and *Songs for Sugarloaf* (1997), all from The Mellen Press.

Courtney Druz, www.courtneydruz.com, is the author of *Complex Natural Processes* (2010), *The Ritual Word* (2011) and *The Light and the Light* (2012).

Ruth Fogelman, www.geocities.com/jerusalemilives, is the author of *Cradled in God's Arms, Jerusalem Lives, and Jerusalem Awakening* (Bitzaron Books).

Yaffa Ganz is the author of over forty books for children and young adults.

Evelyn Hayes, <http://theracheltear.blogspot.co.il/>, *The Eleventh Plague: Twins, and Their Hearts Were Softened for More, and Other Poetry and Prose* (2002); *The Twelfth Plague: Generations, Because the Lion Wears Stripes* (2003)

Gretti Izak, *Orbits* (1999), *Don't Come Moon* (1999), *Between Panes of Glass* (2006), *Arctic Night* (2010), *Diary of a Journey* (2011), *About Jerusalem* (2012), *Ribs and the Silver Mirror* (2014), *Marking Time* (2014).

Pamela Laskin's most recent poetry books are *The Plagiarist* (Dos Madres Press) and *The Bonsai Curator* (Cervena Barva Press).

Constance Rowell Mastores, *A Deep and Dazzling Darkness*, Blue Light Press (2013).

JB Mulligan, <http://www.hawkwindcreations.com/jb%20mulligan%20page.htm>; a collection of his poems may be read at <http://www.hawkwindcreations.com/POEM-mulligan-collection.htm>

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

David Olsen's works include three chapbooks, *Sailing to Atlantis* (2013), *New World Elegies* (2011), and *Greatest Hits* (2001) and a full-length book, *Unfolding Origami*, winner of the 2013 Cinnamon Press Poetry Collection Award (March 2015).

Ellen Jane Powers, www.ellenjanepowers.com, *Toward the Beloved* (Finishing Line Press, 2013), *Celestial Navigation* (WordTech Poetry, 2013).

Haim Schneider, *Betrachtungen/Reflections: Zweisprachige Gedichte für nachdenkliche Leute/Bilingual Poems for Pensive People* (Gefen, 2010)

Vera Schwarcz, *Ancestral Intelligence* (Antrim House, 2013), *Chisel of Remembrance* (Antrim House, 2009), *A Scoop of Light* (March Street Press, 2000), *Fresh Words for a Jaded World, and Selected Poems* (Blue Feather Press, 2000).

Steven Owen Shields, *Daimonion Sonata* (Birch Brook Press, 2005).

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

Sue Tourkin-Komet, Jersalem, *Outfront, Jerusalem and Outback, Bethelam*, forthcoming

**Shira Twersky-Cassel, *Shachrur* (Blackbird), 1988; *HaChayyim HaSodiim shel HaTshipporim* (The Secret Life of Birds), Sifriat HaPo'alim, 1995; *Yoman Shira BeSulam HaGeulah* (A Poet's Diary), Sifrei Bitsaron, 2005; *Legends of Wandering and Return*, Sifrei Bitzaron 2014.

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Shira Twersky-Cassel's "Autumn" and "The Language of Longing" are from her book *Legends of Wandering and Return*. Courtney Druz's "The Thought Cloud Stair" is from her book *The Light and The Light*. Haim Schneider's "Old Man on His Last Legs" is from his book *Betrachtungen/Reflections: Zweisprachige Gedichte für nachdenkliche Leute/Bilingual Poems for Pensive People*.

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I. The Constancy of Renewal

INSPIRATION FROM THE SNOW-FILLED POPPY FIELD

Return inside
 The time has not yet come
 to Blossom
 The vacant, overlooked caverns
 Await to be mined
 Before the next flower springs forth
 in form
 --Nechama Sarah G. Nadborny-Burgeman

DAYS OF SUN

There will be a day
 when a feather will fall like an arrow
 from an unlikely sky
 a day when the cicadas hum
 and the clouds rise majestic

There will be days, yes there will
 when the frost etches forgotten scars
 and the snowflakes fall heavy, slow and sad

There will be days of the peony, the poppy and rose
 sensuous, insensible and full
 the heartbreak hidden in the seed

And a day of sweet grass, cut and drying in the sun
 the ditch of chicory and flax
 some time to spend on the side of the road
 sitting beside a friend, a dog, a child
 yes, some such days
 --Susan Oleferuk

A NON-DIDACTIC SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

My moonflowers moved to my neighbor's side of the
 fence
 positioning themselves thoughtfully outside his front
 door
 my sunflowers likewise made a massive leap
 and my phlox a dismissive creep
 and I can see them thriving on his side lawn

In turn I now house an errant holly
 a rose of Sharon
 a neighbor's child
 and a driveway that smells of mint jelly
 the lessons, dear reader, are obviously too many

To avoid being didactic let's just say when it comes to
 nature
 the surprises are plenty

-- Susan Oleferuk

SEPTEMBER SONG

The plain of the sky, mountainous with clouds
 above the mountains
 as remnants of the warm breeze slouch
 toward the refreshment of autumn's
 red-and-yellow fountains.

I could walk there, nearer to God
 (maybe farther)
 if at the end of each leg, I had a bird,
 not these aching bone feet. I'd rather
 soar, but I wasn't born to feather.

Still, there are avenues of sky
 along the ground
 for a man to travel, and I
 can hear the songs that rise without a sound
 and hover all around.

--JB Mulligan

AUTUMN

That very day, like golden wings
 the leaves shifted in the wind
 endless chimes rang and parted from the pines
 and from the season of love.

The eucalyptus cast twisting roots into the limbs
 of the hidden stream to slake their thirst
 into the roots of the rock arms of the mountain.

Beneath the shadow of the mountain the valley slept
 deep in contemplation of that sirocco day,
 the sun grew old, dimming into a polished pearl of light
 and not one bird voice could be heard.

Pale gold, the trees were kindled by comets
 of leaf and bud, blinded by the rising flames of autumn.

Day darkened and soon night rested upon his boat in
 the stream
 upon the flow of dark waters.

The halo of his hair, crowned with a garland of stars
 became a corona of keen splendor.

For the soul, memory is an awakening
 a voyage of pain and joy,
 but it is not memories that the weary heart seeks.

Oarsman, he cleaved the gleaming river
 as he would a burnished leaf.

--Shira Twersky-Cassel

THE CRANES

Summer is gone, the time of flying kites
and eating sweet corn on the beach
the time of doing nothing
and not feeling guilty.

Confronted with the pensiveness of autumn
I start thinking how each day may be the last
of my life and I am remiss of so much I meant
to accomplish. Can I console myself with those
who know mysteries that we are given second
chances in future lives to correct our failures?

All this because when I opened the door
and looked at the sky, I saw a flock of cranes,
their white wings touched by the gold of the sun,
making their way to other pastures.

They will be back in spring and like the seasons
of the year that reassure us with the constancy
of renewal, reveal the blessed never ending cycle
of arrivals and departures.

--Gretti Izak

NISHMAS

Through the open door of the shul
Came the song of geese in flight
Leaving behind brown food-famished fields
For rich black streams, rivers and lakes south.

Before I could stop it, my heart,
Peering out from beneath my tallis,
Ran to the door and, leaning against the jamb,
Beat in rhythm to the wings of the lead bird.

It returned only for Nishmas,
Slowly at first, but settling then within my breast,
Dreaming of wings as broad as the heavens
Of water, woods, sun and moon.

-- Gershon ben Avraham

WINTER NIGHTS

Sleep deep in winter night
in the silence of hard cold
drift into the womb of the earth
and espy the stars and moon
where every dog is a wolf
and man large legend
stepping across constellations
like lighted bridges
linking the lost, the gone, the forbidden
we are hunters of brighter seasons
but sleep down deep in winter's night now
and read the signs hidden.

--Susan Oleferuk

OVERNIGHT LOW: 7 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT

In the mix
of tall White Pines,

slow brush of lynx,
and whispers of passing antlers,

a coyote's gypsy song
gives anthem to all that

I--removed--
can never be.

--Cynthia Nankee

WHITE CAT IN THE MIDST OF A SNOWFALL

Grace everywhere –
on the field, in the air,

What is softest
fashions vertical rows of prints

down an evolving canvas,
like delicate Chinese lettering...

or perhaps,
Braille for a world

that's slowly disappearing
from sight.

--Cynthia Weber Nankee

MORNING PRAYER

He left her lying warm beneath blue blankets,
To trudge through snow to morning prayer, as
Reluctantly as Adam leaving Paradise.

Light snow landing in his beard soon warmed, and
Rolled like mourners' tears down his black coat's front.

Wrapped in tallis, his spirit moved through
Fiery places. The windows crusted with snow,
Could not contain his soul.

-- Gershon ben Avraham

TKHINE FOR TU BISHVAT

Woman's Prayer for the New Year of Trees

Will we be like the trees of the fields
whose bounty to come is judged on this day?

Come, let us eat figs and pears with our wine,
and feast on the flesh of plums and almonds!

From the fire of your mouth, *Elokim*,
light the blessings for each tree
that they may bear fruit in the year to come.

We plant key saplings and pray, *Baruch HaShem*,
that no one take note against them.

May their bounty be known unto our children's
children's generation, when our dust
brings forth the wild grape to bloom
and the orchard burns red with apples.

Spring rains will feed the earth, so too may we
be nourished to bring forth honey like the sweet date
palm.

Praise You, Giver-of-All-Things, who calls the soil
from labor and gives us the Tree of Life. *Omayn*.

--Ellen Powers

THE CHRONICLES OF SPRING

When the roots of spring want to speak, when under
the turf a great many old tales and ancient sagas
have amassed; when too many whispers crowd
the dark foundations—then the bark of trees
blackens and disintegrates into thick scales—
and the roots beckon, inviting us to go deeper.

Oh, we wouldn't have believed it had we not seen
this world with our own eyes: the great breeding
grounds of history, factories of plots, hazy smoking
rooms of fables and dark texts written for the drama
of evening clouds; the bottomless infernos,
the hopeless Ossianic spaces, all those lamentable
Nibelungs! Here are labyrinths of depth,
warehouses and silos of things, lachrymatories,
graves that are still warm; the litter and the rot.

Now at last we can understand the great and sad
machinery of spring. Why she must be beautiful
to embody all that has been lost. Why she
must make up for all that heavy knowledge

with lilac blooms and flowering cherry.
New greenery grows overnight and the sap rises
as trees wake up with slender shoots, unburdened
by memories (although their roots are steeped
in ancient chronicles)...Behold your fields,
your own estate--the meadows bright with clover.
Fill yourself with the early morning light
that grows from nearly nothing to an immensity.

--Constance Rowell Mastores

II. Elements of Wonder

elements of wonder

in the beginning
it was all here:

air
earth
fire
water
vegetable
animal
mineral
(even then
plutonium, uranium,
for better or worse)

wool, bone,
skin, stone,
straw for bricks.

plastic, nylon, silicon chips
resident but not evident,

and we, ones who speak,
transform, invent, create
wonders from wonders

--I. Batsheva

footnotes

therein lie the details:
 unspoken secrets,
 whispered asides
 that illumine meaning

light in the vessel
 seed of the reason
 heart of the enigma

and life's footnotes?
 unsaid
 unwritten
 unbelievable

wherein does truth lie?

--I. Batsheva

FOUR SIGHTED

If for real were four dimensions,
 Would we ever know?
 Limited's our comprehension
 To the *status quo*.

Up and down, from side to side,
 We readily perceive.
 Einstein claimed the fourth is time –
 How many so believe?

H.G. Wells conceived a way
 To future and to past.
 Likewise *Star Trek* in its day
 Through anti-matter blast.

Mainstream physics must depend
 On holes, both white and black.
 Constructs based on math pretend
 Abstractions like are fact.

Couched as science, concepts such
 Are sanctioned void of proof.
 But one wonders, do these touch
 On more of faith than truth?

--Ray Gallucci

GEOMETRY

"Teach me Your way, O Lord ..." (Psalm 27:11)

Can triangles imagine or conceive
 A cone? Can circles understand a sphere
 Or contours of a globe? And can a square
 Attempt to comprehend a cube? Lines weave
 Flat worlds of two dimensions to achieve
 Some width and length, but cannot grasp the air
 Of heaven. Lacking means to see or hear
 A third dimension, hexagons believe.

O Lord of depth, do I believe? I fear
 My faith is shallow, God; I sleep inside
 A cave like hibernating bears that sleep
 Throughout the whitest winter, unaware
 Each snowflake is unique. How long and wide
 Your snowfalls are, how fathomless and deep.

-- Ya kov Azriel

SOME LAST QUESTIONS**What is the desert?**

*An expanse stretching from beyond corners;
 a place of freedom for body, for mind.*

What is its silence?

*The breath of God,
 the echoes of a billion years.*

What are the bones?

*Of skeletons whose flesh
 fell away a thousand years ago.*

No--what are the bones?

*Animals that larger animals ate,
 animals that died of starvation or thirst.*

What is the moon?

*A waxing silver plate,
 puller of tides.*

And the child?

*Mother to the woman,
 teacher of her parents,
 her grandparents' crown.*

And God?

I can only tell you what He is not.

--Ruth Fogelman

From *The Hannah Senesh Set*

KINDNESS IN YIELDING

[Pesach Sheni]

At first, it is a second chance,
 a first chance: not a duplication,
 though each second seconds again,
 meiosis not mitosis. You see I'm studying
 how things grow, how days adhere together
 into a path, a membrane for the chick –
 I'm studying poultry – the egg and feather girl! –
 I can; something – what? don't remind me
 of before; this is not the place
 I was. I am new, here. I am always
 starting – each step in the land redeems
 the end, counteracts chance, is first.

–Courtney Druz

III. Tree Rings

YOUR BREAKERS

All that day
 you called to me
 and I groaned abysses

From the abysses you called
 in waves of pain, in waves of hope
 in waves
 of hidden love.

And a song was with me
 all that night
 a song of pain
 a song of the soul's roaring and raging and rushing...
 a song that was your song.

A prayer to G-d, my life.*

--Michal Zacut

*Psalm 42:10.

THREE PETALS FOR INGA

I.
Twin Fires

When the full and effulgent moon
 Sends its silver beams to dive
 Through the tall, dark trees, I soon
 See the twin fires of your eyes –
 That phosphorescence come alive! –
 And I need not wonder why.

II.
Embraced

We're each, in loving arms, embraced, and deep
 Is pleasure, rolled beneath the moon's pale hue.
 And as I drift upon the pond of sleep,
 A piece of me awakens within you.

III.
After a Hard Day

You stood silently in the grey hallway –
 Forever enstamped upon my memory –
 Glowing in cinnamon skin and azure eyes,
 Your face chiseled into honest warmth,
 With your soft hands cupped into a spoon,
 Ready to feed me with undying love
 That pooled from within you and strangely shined
 Like a thousand fireflies come alive.

--Kjell Nykvist

LOVE

If you forget your friends, if you revile them all,
 You grateful ones, revile all the poets,
 Your own, may God forgive you;
 But always honour the soul of lovers.

For, tell me, where else does human life live,
 Since now the slavish one, Care, rules and compels
 all things?
 For that reason too the god has long
 Moved uncaring above our heads.

Yet, however cold and songless the year is
 At the allotted season, still from the white field
 Green blades shoot,
 Often a solitary bird sings,

When gradually the wood stretches, the river stirs,
 And already the milder breeze blows softly from the
 south
 At the elected hour,
 So, a sign of the lovelier age,

In which we believe, uniquely self-sufficient still,
 Uniquely noble and pious, Love, God's daughter,
 Springs up over the brazen and desolate soil,
 From Him alone.

Be blest, O be, heavenly plant, by me
 Tended with song, when the aetherial
 Nectar's powers nourish you,
 And you are ripened by the creative ray.

Grow and become a wood! A more soulful,
 More fully blooming world! Language of lovers
 Be the language of the land!
 Their soul the people's lilt!

--Friedrich Hölderlin
 From the German: Robert Glen Deamer

[5263] CHORDS OF LOVE

Chords of love are the key
 as water bubbles move about
 from the sea depths to the surface
 struggling to reach the light.

On the top, personal prism shines
 from white to his very own colors;
 because even a hard life is a life
 that is right to commemorate.

Outside, the sun touches and raps
 and as any person I can flourish,
 by transforming my unknown north
 to a warm migrating south

Once at the beach I'll cross the bridge
 and seek the villages of the soul.
 Even in humble surroundings
 endeavor to find my hidden treasure.

In the development of my story
 I can uncover its delight to the light.
 If I seek and search out I can find
 how to make it an endless chain reaction.

--Hayim Abramson

SHAPES AND SIZES

I live where
 if I lose a little
 I lose a lot
 when I find a little
 I find a world
 hidden in the hollows of trees
 beyond the bent paths of Indiagrass

I fear the fog
 when the world is walled too small
 and I bump into myself and bruise
 yet in the mists
 I sleep deeply in the blanket of the world
 feeling the slight shifts
 the steps of the seasons

Come sit with me and watch
 the changing sizes of hidden worlds
 but beware the shapeshifters of harmful intent
 and know what I would rouse myself from dreamy
 sleep to protect
 know the ground I stand on
 and what I can't lose.

--Susan Oleferuk

MEDITATION ON SMOKING A CIGAR ON MY PORCH

May, 2014

In the darkness after twilight I sit puffing a cigar.
 I can hear the distant rumble from the highway of the
 cars,
 While overhead in silence, slow traversing from afar,
 I see the dull red glimmer, wan, unreachable, of Mars.

I'll never see it closer; it's a place I'll never stand.
 If Man should ever travel there, by then I'll be long
 dead.
 My little place is puny; God's vast universe, so grand.
 Who can see me sitting here, my stogie glowing red?

--Eric Chevlen

RING OF A TREE

Climbing up the sky to where God lives
 (when He's not at work?, when He needs to get
 away?),
 towns and cities scatter on the earth's
 rich velvet, gems and brooches, strands of pearls,
 toward a lipstick sunset's firm delight
 dissolving at the edges and above
 to dark.

The radar tracks us, point to point;
 we track our homes and jobs; the people there
 track us and other people we don't know...
 the sky grows dense with tracking, thickens, fills,
 brims over and expands. A world is built,
 a rock is a web, a continent a drop
 of rain upon a web on a sodden lawn.
 My life, I've cursed the tiny grit and scratches:
 the stubborn doorknob, coffee's steaming spill--
 without them, this would all collapse and spin
 into a tightening vortex, serpent-world
 swallowing itself into a knot
 imploding into nothingness--then gone.
 Up here, perspective spreads out like a lake,
 "Hey stupid" echoes back to me, a faint
 distinct indictment in the swelling black.
 For once I listen to myself without
 excuse, denial... just a hair on a dog
 barking and racing across the autumn sky.

--JB Mulligan

IMPORT

You sit in a bar in a port by a foggy sea,
 which might be a pond for all you can tell. Beyond
 the clouds of fog, which pile like tumbled boulders,
 gather like hurricane waves, are glittering ports
 you've never seen, that send you gems and casks
 of honeyed wine, bolts of patterned silk
 in pastel slabs, cuckoo clocks and watches,
 ornaments and spoons - a universe
 of objects reflecting light the way the shore
 takes water in and spreads that same wave out
 to every other shore this sea can touch.
 You never get the package that you need.
 Box after box and barrel after barrel,
 time after time - you scatter clumps of straw,
 toss away locks, draw the tarp aside,
 and gaze upon magnificence and riches,
 more than enough to make a person happy...
 somebody somewhere else, perhaps, who waits
 for treasures that you store in cobwebbed rooms,
 write the items up on a storage log
 that yellows in a drawer in an ill-lit office,
 while they, somewhere, lift up your special thing
 and sigh, and shove it high atop some shelf
 in some dank basement where the vermin wait
 to scurry out when darkness fills the room
 while scuffed black boots pound stairs and streets
 toward
 a morning bar, where aging flesh descends
 upon a creaky wooden stool, and minds
 examine mounds of fog upon a sea
 with eyes grown blind by all that same display.
 The gulls cry out, unseen. The wine is thick.
 Its clotted sweetness drowns another moment.

--JB Mulligan

LIES THAT I TOLD MYSELF

Like a television character I declaim:
 You deserve to be happy.
 Don't let happiness pass you buy.
 Leaning on the windowsill I see
 he's there, on another sidewalk,
 elusive, homeless.

Others hurry down the street,
 each to their home
 where their happiness dwells
 and patiently waits.
 Soon it will pour them a cup of tea and ask how it was.

--Ruth Blumert

cold moon quits smiling

O.K. The copies are sorted.
Now what?

After the disasters
my remaining poems are effluent

over-worked, over-edited, over-stylized
barnacle free.

Beside me Hay'im claims
friendship never grows stale:

May this good man live to one hundred and twenty
still believing.

Before me Life beckons with promise
only because I reject the alternatives
try to reject the inevitable
glacial chasm yawning

closing sun
sore sky weeping light
paling to the inbetween
strange colors of ash and voluptuous blue green
purpling peace

the omnipresent unexpected
puckering in dream

triggered by no mirage
an online photo of Sorbibor
an avalanche of memories

Life crumbling
beyond the reaches of words a not silence
pounding
the shuddering inner chill
numbing beyond rage and comprehension

--Judith Issroff

GHOST TOWN

I found myself in a strange city
the streets too wide, too empty, too meaningless
I was confused
that I had to leave my home
unattached I stood, unsteady, no footing
miles of losses behind me like the crumbs that would
never lead me to return

I watched the finch fly through her familiar trees
as I looked far for something to remind me of home
but the past is a sad whisper on deserted streets
ever out of reach
each corner a wrong turn.

--Susan Oleferuk

REFLECTIONS

He sat in the barber's chair,
reflected in the mirror,
and the mirror
opposite that mirror
reflected the reflection,
and that reflection,
the reflection's reflection
until he was lost to sight
in the distant reaches
of looking glass land
that didn't exist
in the space where
he sat in the chair.

Mirrors are covered in mourning.
No mirrors in synagogues.
They either focus you
on yourself, else
perhaps threaten
your here with their
ever receding
looking glass land
of repetition.

--Michael E. Stone

FRESH WATER

I looked down waiting for water to show a ripple. It
didn't. I was to cast my sins into the liquid but, at nine,
I didn't feel sinful. I tried to think of anything that
might have been really-really bad all year, but didn't
think being mean to my older sister was a sin.

"Why are we here, again?" My mother took my small
hand.

"Tashlich," my dad touched my cheek and answered.
"We're casting our sins into the water so we can begin
our new year fresh."

Girls were forbidden to learn Hebrew in the shul we
went to, but Tashlich had a Yiddish sound like when
my mother spoke Yiddish to herself when she was
annoyed. She wasn't angry here; she looked peaceful.
How could she have any sins anyway? Only bad thing
she did was give me a spoonful of castor oil every
morning; I hate castor oil and she knows it!

As I grew, and stood annually by the water, I just
couldn't come up with sins. I didn't envy, steal, cheat,
gossip. My lies were 'white lies' intended so someone
else wouldn't feel humiliated. Was that sinful? I wasn't
greedy.

The High Holidays again, and I was nineteen still
trying to find sins to cast. I wasn't wicked, never
physically harmed anyone, never intentionally hurt
someone's feelings, was not manipulative nor

deceitful. I'd never cheated on an exam, wasn't arrogant or filled with a stuck-up attitude. What would I 'cast'?

Twenty. Now I had anger and resentment. My forty-five year old father died on the living room couch and I couldn't make any sense of that. I had only turned twenty a month before; my younger sister had just become sixteen. My older sister, with her husband and infant daughter, sat on wooden boxes by covered mirrors and could not comprehend death being so quick and so permanent. Was anger and resentment in the 'sin' category or just the emotional upheaval one? Was confusion a sin? Was jealousy for others who had two living parents considered a sin? 'Why' had no answers. "A time to live" and then the time to die was not a comfort either.

Chronologically, my years ahead are few, but learning is ongoing. A friend told me that she and her daughter carry breadcrumbs to the water, for tashlich, and toss in their negative feelings as crumbs drop. Sin doesn't even come up. I imagined my real or perceived emotions that are not positive or constructive: I could 'cast' those away. I could try and 'cast' the hurt by words that do affect me as I pretend words don't wound. I could continue to attempt to accept what cannot be changed and 'cast' away unrealistic hopes. Because my friend shared her way of bending the ritual to make it accessible, my family and I could search for a peaceful year rather than look for something we each might have done that's classified as a sin.

Would the water ripple a smile as it notices our joyousness at a Book of Life?

--Lois Greene Stone

BALLOONS!

Let's shout!
 (not surprise, not happy birthday)
 Thin round membranes of delight
 Bright colors of hot air
 "Celebrate!" they shout
 Floating symbols of years rushing by
 Of achievement

Rainbows of caring
 Tie 'em together
 Punch 'em, kick 'em
 Pop 'em

Here, blow into one
 Blow and blow until your heart
 Is as full as the room
 And your lungs foreshadow the emptiness
 Of the day after.

--Mindy Aber Barad

IN THE NURSING HOME

To Mom

She slouches in the chair
 whose alarm will screech
 when she gets up.

"What is this?"
 she shouts
 indignant
 that this has happened--
 the chair,
 the bad food,
 the hospital bed,
 eighty-nine years of living,
 and now her hands,
 bruised walnuts,
 can't crack open enough
 to hold a spoon.

--Pamela Laskin

JAY

i

Formerly, I was part of someone else,
 but someone else has disappeared.
 Even Death has disappeared.
 Even the photographs that used
 to hang upon the walls...
 Perhaps I am in the wrong house.

ii

After the first death, they brought
 me back absolved of my transparency.
 Once again I cast a shadow, intercepted light.
 A surgeon, his face just out of reach,
 peered down at me and smiled.

iii

And there were evenings robed
 in the colors of the deity, loose,
 flowing, incontrovertible
 in the silence of their streaming blues,
 color of introverts; there I sat,
 hands spread on my knees like a farmer,
 quietly nursing my drink.

iv

My plan was to die in the spring
 when the apple trees begin to bud.
 Or maybe--just maybe--make it
 into June. Ending or beginning,
 who knows. In the hospital, my sons
 attended me. It was the 24th of March.

--Constance Rowell Mastores

IN MEMORIAM: RUTH BLUMERT, JACK LOVEJOY

In December *The Deronda Review* lost two long-time contributors: Ruth Blumert of Jerusalem and Jack Lovejoy of Chicago. Sadly and strangely, both of them departed on December 22, 2014 (the sixth day of Chanukah). Ruth Blumert was born in Haifa. She studied biochemistry and microbiology at Bar Ilan University and Hebrew literature in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. She published a number of books of poetry and fiction and also translated a number of literary works, including *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. She was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize and the Jerusalem Prize for literature.

Jack Lovejoy was a native of Chicago. He served in the US Navy, then returned to Chicago and taught at the Chicago Public Library, where the toughest kids were assigned to him. Later he managed a bookstore, and finally retired to write full time. He published several fantasy novels. When struck down by cancer he was translating Goethe, working on a historical novel and hoping to put together a collected poems.

Below and on p. 9 are the last few poems that Ruth published on www.bananot.co.il. as well as a poem written in her memory by Iris Eliya Cohen. The last poem that Jack Lovejoy sent to us is on page 18. We hope soon to post on www.derondareview.org collections of their poems that we have been privileged to publish. May memory be for a blessing, and may their work continue to inspire us. --EC

LONGING

This evening I will lie down, facing the sky,
I will look up at the stars and the cosmic dust,
I will wait for a star to drop to my side
with a slip of paper
containing a detailed answer.

Till then I shall give myself up to the humming of the
wheels.

*

I WROTE

I wrote a poem about death and destroyed it in the
draft,
but it comes back, tunnelling among cracks and
crevices,
under the threshold,
climbing up the windows.

A troublemaking, incorruptible robot,
mute and focused,
deaf to cries and plots these many ages,
indifferent to flattery and bribes
from those weary of their lives' din.

On his wings
and in his hands and in his knapsack
are prophecies
compared to which hurricanes are a smile.
He gazes round him with his thousand eyes
like a postman from a vanished kingdom,
a kingdom plagued with thirst,
a library of negatives.

*

THEY TOLD ME TO WRITE

about poetry, yet,
and the shock caused the words
to rush around inside me.
I remained by myself
and you--the land's pillars of salt
--are desirous of watching
the internal overthrow
in the gaping, gulping pits
whose existence you never guessed.

And my poem wallows amid its burnt-out brothers
in my internal Moab and Ammon.
Without any Qumran cave
the words climb upward, scroll by scroll,
darker than our eyes.

*

THE CONDEMNED CITY

Said the elders of the condemned city:
Not our hands shed this blood!
In truth, with all our hearts,
We looked into it thoroughly.

What remains to be revealed
is the whereabouts of that red cow
that never bore a yoke
and whose ashes
will purify everything.

--Ruth Blumert
translated by E. Kam-Rom

LOST CREATION

How do we measure what was lost
 Beyond the millions of the Holocaust?
 Or judge the work of unborn men
 From masterpieces that have never been?
 Despite the subsidies and fortunes spent,
 The gaps in culture grow more evident,
 As texture fails and stitching parts
 In every fabric of the arts.
 The era that preceded this decline
 Was lavish in creations truly fine
 For it had disenthralled at last
 The ghetto of the spirit which the past
 Erected so inquisitors might thrive
 On bondsmen mortified and half alive;
 Emancipating an excluded caste,
 Debilitated by envenomed laws;
 A people with a legacy so vast
 Its mere enumeration overawes;
 A nation relegated to be thralls,
 Behind de jure and de facto walls.
 They plied the franchise of their new estate
 To foster learning and create,
 And both their women and their men of parts
 Enriched the arts.

Beyond mere numbers or percents,
 Their contributions were immense;
 Disbursing sustenance and seeds,
 Where genius flourishes and culture breeds
 Like blossoms in the noonday sun,
 Harmonious yet tolerant of weeds.
 Enheartened by iniquities undone,
 By manumissions newly won
 And auspicious prospects of reform,
 The times progressed along a garden path
 Through clement weather and through storm;
 Unmindful of the coming wrath.
 A time of promise which forevermore
 Would temper poverty and banish war,
 Foredoomed instead to ashes and despond
 By one psychotic vagabond,
 Who lured the worst to worsen with a rant
 Of charismatic evil steeped in cant.
 The banners of perdition were unfurled,
 And fiery rivers, raging for his sake,
 Left ruination in their wake
 Upon a passive world.

And though the desolation he begot
 By vogue historians is now forgot,
 And those of stunted probity deny
 How many millions were condemned to die,
 His psychopathic tirades spewing hate
 Incited goose-step hordes to perpetrate,
 Beyond atrocity, the gravest crime

Against humanity through all of time.
 A crime whose echoes still persist
 In scholarship the world will never see,
 In triumphs of the mind our age has missed,
 The science, music, art, philosophy
 Of generations that did not exist:
 A vital heritage lost by default,
 Which never will enlighten or exalt.

-Jack Lovejoy

*

Ruth is done, for the moment.
 She is lying down, Ruth is, and settling in.
 Ruth is getting up, standing up
 Slowly Ruth is walking
 Then hovering,
 Flying, Ruth is, and ascending to
 The gold of the land
 Where there is crystal, rain,
 Onyx stone,
 A baby cloud of Tevet sees
 How Ruth is finished,
 Extinguished, and again
 Kindled in another place

-Iris Elijah Cohen
 Translated by E. Kam-Ron

IF YOU MISS ME

If you miss me, see me standing on the hill
 looking toward the river
 I won't tell you what I'm watching
 I know now
 no woman will
 If you remember, gather the apples for the deer
 you know where and when
 I have a heaven I see in my mind clear
 it is climbing the hill in the fall
 the path damp and gold
 the sky I'll take though of any color
 I was never one to look up
 and I've mismatched much
 so if you miss me search not in the heavenly sky
 look for me instead amongst the trees
 near the river
 on the hill.

--Susan Oleferuk

OLD MAN ON HIS LAST LEGS

Is there no one ready to stay behind,
to keep pace with me,
with my hesitating legs;
no one ready to pay attention,
to listen to my halting speech;
no one ready to think with me,
to lend a hand to grasp and grapple
the balking thoughts.
Truly, there is no with-you,
no for-you.
Each and everyone alone in his cell.

–Haim Schneider

COMPOSITION 7

This is the room where Stephano died.
This is the room. This. This.

The words of a dead man. His words.
Words that whispered like spring
by the river below. Words that walked
in rain and storm. And here.

This is the bed that became an altar.
The candles bloomed from his mouth
as he sang away the shadows,
the past, even death.

This is the desk where Stephano wrote
his life story as though no ending would
ever catch up.
As though the ink began in a secret river
redolent of all things living.

This is the room where we friends gathered
to measure the real against our words,
where we made poems out of air
and blood and counted the wins,
the losses.

This is the small space in the galactic dust
where Stephano told his tales of pain
and joy, how no single room can
contain spirit's will.

This is the room where Mother Judith
laid down and delivered her son
to the light, the distance.
This is the bed where he began.
This. And this.

–Doug Bolling

INVITATION TO MY BROTHER

*

I invite you to come back now as you were in your youth.
Confident, eager, quoting from Chaucer.

Let it be as though a man could go backwards through death,
erasing the years that did not much count.
Or that added up perhaps to no more than a single brilliant
afternoon with Jeannie and the boys.

Sit with me. Let it be as it was in those days
when wine brought our tongues the first foretaste
of oblivion. And what should we speak of but verse?
For who would speak of such things now but among friends?

*

I see you again turn toward the cold and battering sea,
as if it holds an answer to a question.
Your body trembles a little.
What year was that?

*

Correct me if I remember it badly,
but was there not a dream, sweet but also terrible,
in which Eurydice, strangely, preceded you?
And you followed, knowing exactly what to expect,
and of course she did turn.

Come back now and help me with my own last days.
Whisper to me some beautiful secret that you remember from
life.

–Constance Rowell Mastores

from *The Hannah Senesh Set*

ENDURANCE IN KINGDOM

With all his soul Akiva fulfilled the verse
and laughed. But even Akiva was not Akiva,
not as we know him. Laughter was a sign
of a story overlaying its story,
a teacher sitting in the back of his own classroom,
hand in front of his face, laughing at himself.

The self felt needs the self feeling,
the face needs the hand, the muscle skin –
and which was Akiva? The sides of a leaf, water
water falls on--no gap but the eye's
quirk of continuity, its frame
blinking seconds across the smooth stretch.

The particles strike their target while the wave
keeps on going. Breaks and keeps going.

–Courtney Druz

ON HOLDING MY MOTHER'S HAND AS SHE LAY DYING

O frail O crumbling vessel that once bore me to this port,
For now we part. Your part is played, played out,
Your poorer-now old produce,
Once your pride,
Long since poured out.

Your shards--oh how they shimmered!--
Disassemble, gather dust,
Diminish and recede and disappear,
As leeward still I sail these many years.

The night descends. I hear the salty water lap the shore,
And daily dawn discloses distance no man can transcend.
I bend, I bow to fate--
But hark!
But hear!
For even now the workmen, out of sight,
Begin to hew and carve the craft to carry me returned.
The remnants and the shards,
Restored and reunited,
Fit for portage then once more.

--Eric Chevlen

from *The Hannah Senesh Set*
FOUNDATION CENTO

*Son of man, dig now in the wall:
Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,
Who has no house now, will never build one.*

*Dig the grave and let me lie. Glad
As only they can praise, who build their days
As it has usual done — If Birds should build
birds build – but not I build; no, but strain,*

*And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field
to build A city and tower, whose top may reach
loud and long, I would build that dome in air,
of my youth, to build Some tower of song*

*O you dig and I dig, and I dig through to you,
And a small cabin build there, of clay
Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built*

--Courtney Druz

Note: A cento is a poem made of lines from other poems. Represented in this cento are Ezekiel, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Wallace Stevens, Rainer Maria Rilke, Robert Louis Stevenson, Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Paul Celan, William Butler Yeats, John Keats, and Jeremiah

IV. Meant to Heal

DINNER DURING BLOOD SCRUB

"Can you feel it?"
Nothing at all

but for a catheter
in the jugular
aimed at the tip
of vina cava
(puts me in mind
of casa blanca)
in the right
atrium--

no floral respite
this. Instead,

all blood redirected,
guided in "pheresis,"
Greek for taking away,
a machine to wash
and separate.

Not darks from light,
but white cells
burdened with blasts,
a ballast operation,
bailing out viscous
muck slowly, unstick
refuse from lungs,
heart, brain...

while
the vegetable chili
stays warm on ICU tray.

To eat (and live) through
the unthinkable--

we do it
every day.

--Vera Schwarcz

from Kick "It" Cancer Ongoing Poetry Series
Genesis: March 2014
by Sue Tourkin Komet

IT'S NOT LIGHTNING 12 March 2014 PM hours post-
surprise diagnosis

It's not lightning,
It's not thunder,
It's not a tsunami.

Not fire,
Nor ice,
Nor fireworks.

It's only my cancer dancing
Alive,
Kicking up a storm

Dancing wildly
Inside
My

Beautiful
Body.

*

I HAVE "IT" March 13 2014 PM

I have "it"
And
"It" has me.

"It" sneaked in my back door,
Ever so quietly.

But I'll fight "it"
To my death
And I'll live "it"
In my life.

I'll kick "it" as
It kicks me
I'll punch "it" as
It punches me.

I'll hate "it" as
It hates me.

And I'll love "it" as
It
Loves (or: "it" leaves)
Me.

THIS BURNING BUSH IS 30 April 2014 5:00
am to 6:00 am

This Burning Bush is
This dawn-light in me
This day-light in me
The dusk-light in me
This moon-light in me.

This Burning Bush is
This cancer in me
The chemo-t in me
The pain, the strain,
This drain on me.

This Burning Bush is
The nausea
The numbness
The "nothingness"
In me.

This Burning Bush is
This fire in me,
The will-power in me,

This spit-fire in me,
The desire in me,
This life in me.

This Burning Bush is
The quiet agony
The sublime secrecy
The overt ambivalencies
And others' widespread decencies.

The Burning Bush is
Moshe Rabbeinu's
And
Am Yisrael's
Eternities.

The Burning Bush is
My mortality
And
My
Immortality.

The Burning Bush is
All of you
And all of me
For all's
Eternal eternity.

This Burning Bush
Is this poem *in* me
This poem *out* of me
For a brief moment in eternity.

And The Bush
Will
Not
Be consumed.

*

ONE-BY-ONE, MY BEST 7 May 2014 early morning

One-by-one, my best
Girl-friends,
Lady-friends,
Insist

My hair-cut's
Cute.
And I
Resist.

I insist

No, No, No
It's not so
Cute.

It's the
Cancer-cut
It's the
Chemo - hair-cut.

They all mean well
They all mean good
But for me if I could
I would not have had it cut.

I can't get them all
To shut up
They all think
It's so cute, my cut.

For me, it's basically,
The darling sweetsy cutesy lovable beautiful and cute
cancer-cut.

*

THE SIDE-EFFECTS or THE LAST SUPPER? 7 May 2014
late morning

My singular Jerusalemite daughter
Successfully and obsessively
Planned months in advance
For her thirty-fifth
Birthday ... dinner party.

The Master of The Universe
Successfully and obsessively

Planned priorly
And simultaneously

For the onset
And the drama
Of my cancer
Debut.

We had
The successful
And stressful
Dinner party

At a glorious setting.
All Sabra First-Cousins
Of my daughter's generation
Traveled up to Jerusalem

From *Beersheva* and *Tel Aviv*
Modi'in and *Ma'aleh Adumim*
Chashmona'im
And points beyond ... in-between.

While I at The Table
Long and horizontal
Pseudo-secretly battled
The many side-effects of my "chemo,"

Noting retrospectively
That each of my three nephews
All born in The Land of Israel
Bear strong resemblance

To "what's-his-name"
... Not to name him ...

Of the infamous fable
Seated at that historic table

Surrounded by his disciples

At the
Last Supper.

Let's have an "Encore!"
...Not of the cancer...
But of The Dinner,
"Next Year in Jerusalem!" --
Not the
Last Supper.
Not The Last Supper.

--Sue Tourkin-Komet

DREAD OFFERING

We sat watching the entry,
that led to the sanctum,
the chamber of mystery,
where knives are wielded.

You lay on the altar,
fearsome sacrifice, beloved.
priests cut with sharp knives,
their acolytes assisting.

Outside we awaited
saving word, or dread.

The high priest in green,
brought word of solace,
her heart beats well now
We've tipped the balance.

Not death but life
is now in the omens.

--Michael E. Stone
February 14, 2005

FIRST HEALER

The scrapes and bruises that beset a child
Are soothed away with smiles and honey tea;
The little hurts are smoothly reconciled,
And then another playground sets us free,
And soon the passage of our youth forgets
Its broken bicycles and injured pets.

Not that the loss of friendship or a slight
May cut as deep as any pain we know,
And leave our hearts abandoned through a night
Of disenchantment in worlds below
Through earthly joy and happiness and peace
Seem more a vision as our lives increase.

Dreams and ambitions on which rest our lives
Are less consoling with elapsing years,
And little to renew them still survives
Among our days to mollify their tears
Though sufferings are more than we have known,
We find in anguish we are not alone.

Some grievous tracts of body now rebel,
We lose our courage, our philosophy
Which opens wide the very gates of Hell
To voids as blank as hopelessness can be;
And yet I learn true healing is divine,
When I can say, O Lord, that I am thine.

--Jack Lovejoy

CROSSROADS OF THE SOUL

This is Neshama business:
an envelope of water, a mother's womb
lined with grandmothers' tears.

One grandmother brimmed with terror
as iron doors slammed in the gas chambers,
her last *Shema* prayer hurled forward in time.

The other weeps more reticently after the war,
secreting her husband's art, candelabra
sketches shadow a grandchild
he never knew.

Into this capacious capsule of tears
a rock is cast, like Truth in midrash
flung into muddy depths, so a man
brimming with lies may break
into this world in need of
redemption.

From salted water and coarse loam,
a shard of soul gains shape:
The Master Cutter calibrates
each blow carefully,
each high pitched rotation
of the bruited reveals a facet,
one more angle luminosity
to break the carapace,
body's grasping.

The first blow is miniscule,
a hammer falls as they bury
my grandmother and I laugh
and laugh until a kind woman
leans into my shame-filled face:
"It's all right, you loved her well.
There will be time later to learn
The darker songs of mourning."

A couple of decades later,
Nehemiah the sculptor opens the door
of a Colorado barn: half-crafted trunks
of mahogany and teak helped me to mourn
art sketches mildewing
in the attic back home.

Another two decades
until I face the Rebbe--
I stand soul-naked
before the bluest eyes.

The corridor of destiny grows
less obscure, hammers
keep striking, each diamond facet
glistens but does not blind.
How to bend into each blow's blessing?

In darkness one night, I glimpse
a crossroad of Neshamot--
all our gems floating upstream
to the Golden Menorah
facing the Temple Mount.

Only diamonds can cut
diamonds, only earth-worn
souls may ignite the seven flames,
as light spills upward
from down-turned flower cups,
each held by arms toughened
by this longest exile.

Whoever said that fire and water
quench each other had not tasted
the hope that tears seed.

--Vera Schwarcz

CLOSURE

Mourning still--
Why, I ask, the passage of years,
the contentment of the now,
the joys and blessings of a good life,
should have brought closure.

Insensible and defiant as a child's
tantrum, the pain still festers.
In the sound of a woman's voice,
which I don't recognize as my own,
a memory how she dared not weep,
for if she did, there'd be no way to stop.

Inhabiting the gentle terrain of womanhood
stands a wild passionate core, hard-hitting, harsh,
protesting, death-questioning, resisting to be consoled.

Imagining the fragile bones of a child in my arms,
I nurture the wound that does not heal, noting how
the blue angel of consolation denies opening her gates,

my refusal to heal considered ungodly.

--Gretti Izak

THE FAST OF THE SEVENTEENTH OF TAMUZ

The breaking of the Tablets took place on the
seventeenth of Tamuz, the date when the walls of
Jerusalem were breached by the Romans. All these
breaks have to be healed.

Sfat Emet 4:157f

Today the walls are broken
walls of Jerusalem
shattered pieces of gray white rock
soaring toward the Negev desert
toward the green hills of Galilee

Today the Tablets are broken
Commandments in pieces
Thou shalt not on the tower of Babylon
Murder beneath the cedars of Lebanon

Today G-d's heart is broken
Tears from the upper heavens
falling into the abyss at the bottom of the sea

Who will repair the breaches in the walls
sift through white sand
dig through black earth
travel up and down this so worn land
gather Holy debris

Who will find pieces of the Law
Wander the whole earth
searching for slivers of light
gather them ever so gently
prepare for their return
to the Holy Ark

Who will comfort the heart of G-d
cherish the tears
hidden deep in the ocean
rising to the seventh heaven

When will the healing
finally come
to this city
broken
in this world
and the Other

--Gila Landman

ALONG WITH THE GATHERED

I will gather still more to those already gathered.
Isaiah 56:8

A dream
I stand at
the edge of a mountain
let go and
drop, breaking
into smaller and smaller
pieces even before
I reach the ground
But there is no ground
only the falling
and the crumbling

The Tablets too
were let go
from the side
of the mountain
shattered into
tiny fragments
but a gatherer
appeared
picked up each
precious fragment
placed it in a velvet-lined urn
sealed the urn
and brought it
to the Holy Ark

I need
such a gatherer
to wait
with open arms
reach out for my
fragments
in love
place each one
gently
in a vessel
a holy place
so the falling
may be over
and I can come
home

-- Gila Landman

ORDINARY THINGS

I like to do ordinary things
like baking a lemon cake
cooking corn on the cob
hosing down the dusty patio on a hot summer day

I like to do ordinary things
like folding laundry
sweeping the floor with a horse-tail broom
watching an orange sun rise over the Kinneret

I like to do ordinary things
like having a hot cup of Bambu in the morning
eating a bowl of cornflakes in my garden
while watching the fishing boats peacefully glide over
the lake

I like to do ordinary things
like polishing my nails
smoothing lotion on my skin

I like to do ordinary things
especially after the death of a child

--Esther Fein

*

PROOF COIN

I began, not a problem, but a solution
percolating from the molten mantle
into fracture, crack and fault.

I cooled and precipitated into veins
perfusing the Mother Lode. Eroded
from the high country and sluiced

from alluvial dross, I was purified
by the refiner's fire and forged
in a mirror-polished die. Obverse

and reverse and milled edge attest
to my minted worth. Destined
by my satin finish to remain unspent

and uncirculated, I'm encircled by
a bezel and suspended over your heart.
Once legal tender, I'm meant to heal.

--David Olsen

GRACE ON THE METRO

Paris

It's not as noisy as the New York subway
or London tube, but in her agitated state,
the gliding train still seems cacophonous.

She'd managed a seat near the doors,
but latecomers jostle for space and block
the exit, foreclosing any thought of flight.

She smells a harried working crowd,
feels the crush of purposeful urgency.
Every sense seems under assault.

Her view is hindered by other passengers,
but she sees a man who steadies himself
with hand on rail against stops and starts.

He's looking at her, but not as a predator.
Seeming to understand her distress, his gaze
conveys protective watchfulness.

Liquid brown eyes gentle and reassure her.
When she reaches her stop, she's almost calm.
In full control she minds the gap.

--David Olsen

THERE IS NO HEALING

People talk about healing after Charlie Hebdo.
That's an insult to the dead.
There will be no healing.

Murder is an open wound that repeats itself
In a corner of space
Like a permanent invisibility in a missed
Opportunity.

How can you heal the dead or the living
Who are attached to them?

That's a mere trick to satisfy the survivors and
Put gauze on a wound
With the bullet still in it

--David Lawrence

AS WHITE AS SNOW

after an account there were no casualties
reported in the Syrian Civil War in the wake of
the recent snow storm – 2015

Little miracles happen sometimes, flash
before me. Snow falls, rain pours, and it's cold.
Heaven's gone insane, all of the cache,
little miracles happen sometimes. Flash
winds call as combatants hold back, crash,
good soldiers, stand, so stark and so bold.
Little miracles happen sometimes, flash
before me. Snow falls, rain pours, and it's cold

outside. Where almost nobody goes, it's safe.
Hot soup, warm tea, a pillow to rest, serene
dreams of days, of a tranquil, quiet life
outside. Where almost nobody goes, it's safe
to watch the small white flakes as they weave
a pattern. When the storm ends, it stays clean
outside. Where almost nobody goes, it's safe.
Hot soup, warm tea, a pillow to rest, serene,

I can walk about, hold out my hand,
reacquaint myself with someone I know
from across the fence. Explore, expand,
I can walk about, hold out my hand,
his arms, the words he speaks, how grand
the clouds, our breathe creates condense they show .
reacquaint myself with someone I know

see the sheen of the white, reflect the day.
Why must we defile this perfection, look
at the berries that peek at us, they say,
"See the sheen of the white, reflect the day..
that's red enough for me, and sweet. Let's play
as if what divides us was a closed book.
See the sheen of the white reflect the day--
Why must we defile this perfection, look.

--Zev Davis

... even a simple match can make me warm.
... even a single hand can quiet a storm.
Be sure: a tender song can change a world,
And light, you know, was made by a word.

--Miriam Kitrossky

V. Nowhere Else to Build

IN A MIND'S EYE

Safe behind the window glass of a country inn,
I study the bees gathered at red spikes blazing
across the lawn. Spinning clouds carelessly shroud
the neighboring castle, ghostlike. It is early morning
in Konigstein and a pale young man, too young to remember,
confidently offers me foaming *kaffe mit milch*
on a silver tray. The English guest politely
prefers a tisane, cheerfully wishing me a good day.
I picture my family snug upstairs, asleep
under thick white comforters, shuttered against the sun.
It is the unctuous manager, suddenly at my table,
who sounds the alarm in my head. I laugh out loud
to scare away danger upsetting the early morning's
fragile balance. Insects feel spied upon, give up
their red flowers. Clouds drift away. The castle,
now perfectly revealed, is even more mysterious--
like the early hours in a Saxon village, unpredictable,
unknown. My coffee is cold and tasteless. I race upstairs
to awaken the others, to hurry them away. I fear
exposure. There is no time to waste. We must move quickly.

--Virginia Wyler

TORQUEMADA: IN SITU

She breathes in deeply sucking her bruises into her body
each breath curls in the full of the sun not quite whole
not frail a lost puzzle piece mis-placed shrugged off sets gaps
in her puzzled face why eyes trick eyes in noon glare
smudge the landscape speck the lid's corner I rub
at the fringes torn satin dress in twirl great-grandmother's
relics
uncovered laced black *mantilla* pulled wide round the tiny
girl's neck
la chica memoirs unlocked rooted distress so distant
so hoary whispers and echoes *auto-da-fe* ungodly
disciples savage Inquisitors The Grand Inquisition scribed
told and mourned bodily jointly ours the twelve tribes
Conversos Marranos hands tied lips gagged foreplay
inflamed
Isabella The Final Expulsion The Final Solution badges
of yellow omens of terror fire *Der Fuhrer* massacres
mass acres ever forever undying massacres holy
revulsions scapheaps my heirlooms my cup runneth over
I carry my story I carry my shadow barely aware
storm amid sun my universe hovers lodestars to darkness
squalls at the door-jamb brutal *tormenta* I inhale deeply
I must keep small.

--Virginia Wyler

BORN TO THE MELTING POT

When a fire heats a vessel,
a melting down process ensues,
removing most distinguishing features,
creating a uniform substance of sorts.
The vessel's a melting pot
like the Hillside Homes of my childhood--
the first US housing project funded
by federal monies
to melt down Americans.

When a fire blocks all exits,
allowing no escape,
whatever is true metal
is branded bright
in sonnets, odes and free verse
music, rhyme and metaphors
to vanquish the sight, smell, the feel
of terror's katyushas and slit throats.

When a fire ignited from within
burns its way out,
desperate to release a thrust of energy,
scathing in its heat,
the fire soars
from the Sabbath candles
to a lighter place with panoramic vision.

--Leah LJ Gottesman

STORY-TELLER

No tree, no leafy bush,
but endless sand and rock stretch
towards infinity.
No scorpion, snake or desert fox
scurries through the sand or over the rock.

Sometimes in the evening we come
with tambourine or drum
and gather near the center of the camp
and sing songs of yearning,
songs celebrating our new freedom.

And in the center of our circle,
with a colorful wrap around her shoulders,
and her deep eyes dancing from face to face,
Miriam tells stories of our fathers
and of the promise that awaits.

Transfixed, we sit on a woven mat
spread across the sands, our eyes
on the prophetess, our ears
clinging to the intonation of her voice
and to the gems that leave her lips.

--Ruth Fogelman

CIRCLE OF RETURN: ON THE ROAD TO
BETHLEHEM**I. Ruth Reminisces**

What made me marry someone from a strange land?
I struggled when my family cut me off –
he's not one of us,
and when my friends vanished, one by one.

I never felt happy in the palace,
did not relate to gods of wood or stone.
There must be more to life, I thought,
for no idol created the stars, the moon, the sun.

Could be that's why I married Chilion;
somehow he held a key to higher goals.
Or did I marry him to get close to his mother--
a woman of silent strength?

While Chilion taught me the laws of Israel
I struggled with years of childlessness,
maybe next month, he always encouraged me,
but he left me – a widow without child.

Widowhood in Moab means you are no longer a
person.
Naomi alone supported me, sharing my loss,
and continued teaching me the ways of Israel,
reminiscing on life in Bethlehem.

Was it hard for me to pack up, pick up and leave
my country, my birthplace, my fathers' home?
Emotionally, I had long ago left,
little by little, until no roots remained.

A voice within, like the sound of a candle's flame,
whispered, *Arise, go with Naomi.*

II. Naomi Remembers

Heaven knows I didn't want to leave Bethlehem,
despite the harsh famine –
to go to a strange land
with monstrous gods
and profane tongue,
stealing away at midnight
so neighbors would not see or hear.

Oh, the journey through the night,
the steady plod of donkey hoofs,
rumble of wagon wheels on rubble paths
and howl of jackals in the hills.

My Elimelech – when did he ever listen to me?
Oh, the struggle of gagging my tongue
and follow my man.

And the boys? They dared not argue,
especially when he spoke
of taking us to a place with food.
His arguments made sense:
*Why should we stay,
pay such prices for wheat
when there it's cheap?
Should your mother go out,
searching for wild mallow
to cook?*

The boys shook their heads,
looked down at their feet
and at the barren earth
whose wide cracks, like open lips,
screamed for rain,
and the boys did not insist
on staying in Bethlehem
with their friends.

Oh, the struggle of living among strangers--
their eyes shot disdain
when we passed them on the way;
their lips curled in a sneer
as they mocked
the G-d of Israel, the Law of Israel.

And now,
alone
I return
with Ruth.

--Ruth Fogelman

THE UNDERSTUDY

A courtyard without doors is where you never go
unless you lose your way or long to hide
alongside brick-stacked buildings that cast
their dusky shadows before the light recedes.
A Moabite Princess emerged there in the Bronx--
a stage for me alone, a teen declaring vows,
pronouncing Naomi's will her will, Naomi's home her
own,
until Ruth lured me to the lights.

I've moved since then; I've entered center stage
in fields where youthful David grazed his herds,
in fields of a shepherd's flute, the glare, the outreached
vines,
the sound of my name in Hebrew verse through wine-
soaked heat.

But given the script of a redirected heart,
No Ruth can star without the "Goel's" part.

--Leah LJ Gottesman

WHISPER

Whisper under the olive trees
And the birds will sing

Distant tambourine
Carry it everywhere
They will come

From behind spidery silken threads
And thin green blades

And they will delicately peck at the words
And form their own
In a cacophony of Hodu.

--Mindy Aber Barad

OVER THE OCEAN

What I seek
Is not over the ocean
But under an olive tree

My beloved is the expectant sky
Awaiting its first clouds
The bubbly dark ones
Whose job it is just to quench

The answer is just beyond my lips
A taste away from pure immersion
I anticipate the encompassing
The flow around me and within

Not over the ocean
But from the replenished spring
That nourishes the olive tree.

--Mindy Aber Barad

DESERT MOUNTAINS

Mountains, dark, stark
Viewed from above
Rocky facets, sharply cutting the air
Resting on a relentless, wrinkled expanse,
A vast tan desert landscape
Etched by dried streams.
Powerful sculptures by the world's master.

--Don Kristt

LANGUAGE OF LONGING

The great and sequestered light
moves through us in tremors of longing,

yearning, ardor and great stirrings
of languish and we are sick of love.

Raindrops beyond number, each contain a world
ten thousand windows of spectrumed light.

to awaken the flowering fruit of the brave Caper
likened to Israel, it thrives undaunted among sharp rocks,

stamens, petals and fruit berries, strong
scented spider flowers
to intoxicate pollen bearing lives.

When it is time
how shall I part from this parched and beloved land
so sorrowed of longing
from this scented earth that languishes with desire.

After winter rains earth stirrings can be heard.
A kiss of dew brings forth new song.

--Shira Twersky-Cassel

FOR THE SAKE OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

A cry is heard in the heights
Wailing, bitter, bitter weeping
Rachel weeping for her children...
She refuses to be comforted
For her children who are gone.
Jeremiah 31.15

Rachel, continue to weep
In the wide open spaces
In the clefts of the rock
On the heights of lofty mountains
In deep cavities of the earth

Weep for the dead who could have lived
Weep for the living who could have died
For all of us who live holding our satchel of death
Terrified to let it down
To drop the burden and release the mangled bodies
Unclothed, cold, exposed to wind and rain

Weep for the children
Alone and hungry
Crouching, whimpering, in desolate fields
Weep for the mothers, hoarding bread
For the children they see only in dreams
Weep for the kingdom of dreams
Ripped open, ravaged, laid bare

Weep, mother Rachel, weep bitterly
 And comfort us
 By refusing to be comforted
 --Gila Landman

Naftali Fraenkel (16, from [Nof Ayalon](#)), Gilad Shaer (16, from [Talmon](#)), and Eyal Yifrah (19, from [Elad](#))

A CRY

Words are gifts from G-d but sometimes
 there are no words.
 They are consumed in the cauldron of fire
 which burns in the heart.
 Rage, revenge, the desire to destroy -
 these too have their place.
 Amalek must be erased.

But surrounding the burning fire in my heart,
 lies a suffocating blanket
 of sadness and sorrow
 so heavy
 I cannot breathe.

Help us Hashem.
 Give us the wisdom to be wise,
 to do what should be done.

Not forever shall we be sheep.
 Judah is a roaring lion, destined
 to sanctify Your name.

Empower us
 to sanctify, protect and avenge
 Your People and Your Name.
 Embrace and comfort us
 In our time of sorrow.

-Yaffa Ganz

WE PROMISED

for Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, and
 Eyal Yifrah hy" d

So, when we prayed, you were already sleeping.
 We searched for you -- you were already home.
 A joyful innocent smile, magnified
 Above the stage, will remain with us, and also
 The song we sang and will keep on singing.
 We'll keep awake. We'll not let the enemy divide us.
 And with this we'll keep on raising you, our sons.

--E. Kam-Ron

[UNTITLED]

Dove of Israel,
 a torn-off leaf in her mouth,
 wishing that "the sword will not pass through"
 As He is compassionate so you.
 The disciples of the priests desire peace.

Dove of Israel, bathed in blood.
 Pure lamb surrounded by wolves,
 We were born with no choice of birthing-stool.
 Sweet nectar was poured out like water,
 The level of blood rose up to heaven.

We returned to Zion beaten and bruised
 We were almost cut off from our root in G-d
 The leprosy has spread in the land without restraint:
 Cruel robbers seek blood,
 lie in wait for us within and without.

Our land is desolate for them
 They will take no compensation for it
 We are a thorn in their side,
 In their hearts are thoughts of violence and burning
 Our blood will water the capital.

We wrote "peace" on a white flat.
 We gave them our sanctuary,
 sovereignty and territory--
 we became like Achan.
 Dens of vipers they secretly dug.
 They repaid us with a sharpened cleaver.

If they were wise they would understand this:
 The tears of mothers bereaved of sons
 The tears of joy of the mothers of suicide bombers.
 Peace brings war.
 But war brings peace.

Let us begin by separating and end by joining.
 Let us stiffen our neck to a mighty people.
 Let us remove from our necks the yoke of the hairy one.
 He will return vengeance to His enemies
 and the land will atone for His people.

The One who dwells in the burning bush will make your
 light shine.
 Mashiach ben David will redeem Zion.
 G-d will dwell in the tents of Shem.
 We shall put on the diadem, the candelabrum and the
 olive tree.
 I, G-d, in its time will hasten it.

--Elyakim Hirschfeld
 from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron)

SO MUCH CLOSER

After the Har Nof Massacre 5875

"I will be sanctified by those that cling to me" (Lev. 9:3)

They were closer to You, they spoke, how can it be that innocent souls whose lips that called Your Name each day, and nothing else. They fell to a fire of them that spread, profane

thoughts wrapped with gilt edged exteriors, so pure
it seemed, guile deceived as sanctity, ah yes with the ring a sharp sword meant to bless the wounded with words that fall. It was a cure

perhaps, at the perimeter, at the cusp of where they sought to touch, a kiss, to somewhere else the space between the gaps

to Eternity, it was their time to clasp hands, to touch the Endless plane, all of this, all at once fill the gaps, take hold, and grasp.

--Zev Davis

TO AMERICA, ON THE EVE OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

I loved you once, America; and still that love, perhaps, is not quite dead in me, could I but see you as you were until you fell to folly--brave and proud and free.

I dwell with friends to whom you are untrue and, proving so, your deepest vows unsay. Could you still hear a voice that summons you back to yourself, though from so far away?

--E. Kam-Ron

SHIRA B'SHAMAYIM

July 24, 2014

I sing to Hashem because He is in command
I sing as He hurls rockets into the sand
Protecting His people in their holy land.
I sing, He is exalted, Master of War.

I sing to Hashem as He deflects prime-evil.
I sing as He battles for wrong's upheaval
Pressuring terrorists to tremble and cease
I sing; He is author and architect of peace.

We're united in song, Shira B'Shemayim
No longer despair, Yes, emunah, we share.
Accepting His edicts, the good He depicts.
We sing to Hashem, our Father in Heaven. He writes the song.

Shira B'Shemayim , Shira B'Shemayim, Shira B'Shemayim

His right hand is raised to make Amalek fall
His right hand is raised against violence and brawl
Disabling the fighters against mankind.
His right hand is keeping the predators behind.

His right hand is an iron dome
Knocking down evil, protecting each home
Mother Rachel cries for her children
The nation as one prays for shalom

We're united in song, Shira B'Shemayim
No longer despair, Yes, emunah, we share.
Accepting His edicts, the good He depicts.
We sing to Hashem, our Father in Heaven. He writes the song.
Shira B'Shemayim , Shira B'Shemayim, Shira B'Shemayim

Sing because vengeance is His
Sing because blessings are His
Sing with gratitude for His miracles
His salvation is elevation; our manifest destination.

We're united with Hashem and His highest order
Up from slavery, sacrifice, abuse, misuse,
Love, not hate; Trust not fear; Law not disorder
Good not evil, Life not death. Peace not war. Heavenward.

We're united in song, Shira B'Shemayim
No longer despair, Yes, emunah, we share.
Accepting His edicts, the good He depicts.
We sing to Hashem, our Father in Heaven. He writes the song.
Shira B'Shemayim , Shira B'Shemayim, Shira B'Shemayim

--Evelyn Hayes

SUNDOWN FRIDAY

The trees up on the ridge
sharp silhouetted,
sky sundown pink,
translucent evening.

On the flat roofs below
a horde of white cylinders
and solar panels,
and deformed derelict
television antennas.

All at rest. No movement.

In the street's sudden quiet,
the siren marks the start.
The week's burdens shed
in the tranquillity.
Shabbat.

--Michael E. Stone
31.1.14

[5353] EREV YOM KIPPUR

Before sleep I forgave;
and the heart is cleansed
today, this very morning
a new beginning

This errant Jew did decide to settle in
Oh yes! the house in Israel is stronger
My home like and unlike your own
with love to mountain, valley; and city.

The day to day calls its humming song
as I hear Israel's ancient music to settle in.
I am instruments, a humble trumpet
side by side to the big *Shofar* of the *geulah*.

Yes! the heart brims with happiness
for God's bounty
His signs everywhere in sweet fruit
and the dark *galut* far across the ocean.

Surely I say that problems are challenges
Ahoy! I keep the ship's course to its north.
I have taken provisions for the way
and a *siddur*, to expect the unexpected.

-Hayim Abramson

* Inspired by Esther Cameron's poem
"TO AMERICA, ON THE EVE OF THE DAY OF
ATONEMENT." key words: Beginning, valley,
signs, instruments, home, unexpected.

HOW GOOD IT WOULD BE

How good it would be...as you had envisioned,
for just we three - Viv, Iris and Les -
to get together almost 50 years later...
and wiser.

How good to host you within my garden
where fruit can be plucked from trees
whose branches reach closer to the ground
than those in the Bronx that had cracked
the cement beneath apartment windows...
and glimpse a path once taken by our forefathers

or sit beneath the pergola on the Hill of Evil Counsel
where the counterpointed landscape of golden Jerusalem
would tease us to consider our piece in the puzzle
while we sang to our hearts' delight.

How good it would be to share the twilight
descending on the Western Wall and inhale
the scent of prayers and tears with an aftertaste
so sweet, so pure that toddlers scamper from their mothers
to locate the source to which doves duck
in overhead stone shrines while we would withdraw
in reverse, facing what's past.

I wouldn't let you go until we all spend an overnight
on nearby HaMalach Street, emerging into the softness
of its pre-dawn breeze like winds of tranquility
in the Garden of Eden that would sprinkle our reunion
with moonshine and gently quell
the dissidence of our heartbeats.

--Leah LJ Gottesman

from *the Hannah Senesh Set*
FOUNDATION IN KINDNESS

Every stone we carried built a city
and every stone we smashed planted a field.

Every word we spoke built a name,
and every word we refused to speak established it

in kindness. There is nowhere else to build
and no other words to say or to leave out

in this arrangement, built as a week of weeks,
and lost as words to *count our days...How long?*

You thought I said. We are all prophets now
though blind and dumb, nearing the end of the jetty

where the waves are crashing. Listen to their word
and the work of our hands, establish for us;

and the work of our hands, establish it.

-Courtney Druz

VI. *White Spaces***Above and Below the Surface of a Lake**

G-d leads me into wider and wider fields,
 some far from home, wider fields
 of flowers, of pleasant grasses upon which
 to lie, to watch the hovering clouds

with wandering eyes, with careless eyes at peace
 with all I see, I watch the clouds,
 I follow G-d, I follow all the clouds,
 I lie down in the green meadow,

I cast a drowsy eye up to the heavens;
 consider how much a heaven
 is the earth.

*Is the earth
 a heaven? How much? Consider
 the heavens I cast a drowsy eye up to,*

*the green meadow I lie down in,
 all the clouds. I follow G-d, I follow
 the clouds, I watch with all I see
 at peace; with careless eyes, with wandering eyes*

*to watch the clouds hovering, to lie
 upon pleasant grasses, of which flowers of
 wider fields, some far from home,
 in wider and wider fields, lead me to G-d.*

-- Steven Shields

CIRCUMNAVIGATION

Everything is a circle
 No edge
 from which to fall.

A mandala
 A Sufi in the center
 round of white skirt
 Whirling
 Spinning
 Like the
 Moon
 and sun
 Illuminated circumferences
 Circadian rings of light
 Cross over
 And over
 the great round earth.

Like the
 deep round sound of the
 drum, or the
 singing bowl struck awake

its overtone
 Resounding
 Like the echo
 In a canyon

Tell me,
 Where do we
 Start or stop?
 Tell me,
 where is the beginning
 or end
 of the ocean?

-- Anda Peterson

EVENING SERVICE

1. *Creation*

Light contracts onto the horizon
leveling shadows as it goes nowhere
by day or dark. Song created
its departure. Your own voice, unsure
of those first few words.

2. *Revelation*

You extinguish seven bayberry candles
arranged on your coffee table.
Their wax vapor intercedes for the length
of your sleep.

3. *Unification*

Are you sure the fire is nothing
but the sky's atmosphere grazing
in the unlight of our turning?

4. *Adoration*

The yellow jasmine twists around
stones piled at the garden's edge.
You leave its scent in the open window
to untie the words of your dream.

5. *Redemption*

They all fell out of the shifting
smoke-blue stratum. Who is here
to rekindle them as an azalea
reclaims its broken leaves each spring?

6. *Direction*

It must have been the hush of the crickets
that woke you, unsounded stillness, or--
the undertone of the waking wood dove.

7. *Expiration*

When you take down the citron from
its persistent branches, do it in the thorned light
of the crescent moon. There is no need to search
for the mourner's song -- all the names are lifted
into the green crown of evening.

--Ellen Powers

SOMETHING INSIDE ME/ZEV DAVIS

"Light shines in the darkness for the Righteous, that are
kind and merciful, and good" (Ps.122:14)

I step
ever slowly.
My eyes peer through the dense
atmosphere, deep, yet I can sense
something

Can't say
what all it is.
Nothing seems to stop me.
I feel that somewhere there is a light
in spite

of what
is not there, yet,
it is all so clear. Yes,
I must be doing something right,
Perhaps.

Never
sure about that--
I mind my p's and q's,
pause and think before I act, and
watch out

both ways.
Listen, careful
of what I hear, discern
words that I hear and absorb them.
Let them

show me,
and I wonder . . .
this is no miracle,
always there guiding me, a voice
within.

--Zev Davis

THE INTRINSIC IDOL

To be alone with oneself,
though there are people in the environ,
and a lack of necessary challenge, curiosity, or allegiance,
with which to work a matter out
in the community,
or in oneself
and the allure,
of that lickerish allure,
in its purpose:
specifically, the world's wound,
being incarnate in the self, also,
with a modern nominality's
withdrawal of the sacred, thereof
and for meddling with one's religiosity, within.

--Lee Goldstein

BEHIND THE *KOTEL*

"Hear the voice of my supplications when I call out to You, when I lift
my hands towards Your sacred Sanctuary." (Psalm 28:2)

Obstructed from our sight, You wait behind
This wall of stone, my God, and watch me write
These sticks of words which hopefully ignite
A constant flame whose warmth You feel behind
 This massive wall I can't surmount. Behind
 This wall--on our side of the wall--Your light
 Is barely seen, so only from the height
 Of prayer we glimpse the other side behind

The wall, where You are found. But will the wall
Transform, allowing us to reach You there
Behind this wall which has no door or gate?
 Behind this wall, which may become a shawl,
 A drape, a bridal veil, a thin veneer,
 You wait for us; with outstretched arms You wait.

--Yakov Azriel

PSALM 23 REVISITED

1.

"A Psalm of David. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

The Lord, my Shepherd, brings me to a field
Where flocks that He has gathered safely graze
And eat the tender grass His servants raise,
Protected from gray jackals by His shield.
 The Lord, my Shepherd, plays His flute, revealed
 To those who seek the tune of faith and praise,
 For when His flute is played, the heart obeys
 The soul's most sacred yearnings, long concealed.

I shall not want, for God has taken me
To quiet, peaceful streams; and in this hour
Of overwhelming grace, His flute is heard.
 I shall not want, for now my soul can see
 His staff, allowing me to sense the power
 Of the word of God, the fullness of His word.

2.

"He brings me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."
(Psalm 23:2)

How often had I lost my way, and been
A stray among red snakes that lisp'd my name
And fed me dust. Until my Shepherd came
And offered food without the thorns of sin.
 My Shepherd is the Keeper of the inn
 Who searches for His guests among the lame,
 The faint, the stragglers who have walked with shame,
 The mute, the maimed, the famished and the thin.

And every guest is treated like a king;
 Within His inn, the water tastes like wine;
 The fruit is picked from gardens in the east;
 The bread is baked by Levites who can sing
 The Shepherd's songs, and Sabbath candles shine
 As lodgers eat the Shepherd's Sabbath feast.

3.

"He restores my soul; He guides me in straight paths, for the sake of His name."
 (Psalm 23:3)

Before the dawn, before the morning light,
 Before the Shepherd's stars are swept away
 By sun-beamed brooms and all the glare of day,
 A sudden, inner flash of inner sight
 Invades an inner eye with inner white,
 Inscribing cloud-like words unstreaked by gray
 Upon an inner sky. I read, and say
 The words in prayer: *How close is God tonight.*

How close is God, as close as breath, how near
 Is God, like wind upon my hair, like air
 Inside my lungs. The lantern of His name
 Reveals my Shepherd's paths; I have no fear
 Of hungry, stalking wolves, for He is here,
 And more than here, the Light inside the flame.

4.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
 for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

In the valley of the shadow, shrouds are worn,
 For lethal germs of leprosy infest
 The air we breathe, the food that we digest,
 The water that we drink. Yet though we mourn
 Beside our graves, avowing man is born
 To grieve, feel pain and die, our lives are blessed
 By grace: the wife with whom we build a nest,
 Our children's wings, the down that's never shorn.

How great this grace, for we, the deaf, can hear
 The Shepherd's music play while lanterns burn
 To give us light, though we are blind; the trance
 Of faith will seize our limbs and persevere
 Until our crippled, palsied legs shall learn
 To dance the dance of God--to dance--to dance--

...continued

5.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed me with oil; my cup runneth over." (Psalm 23:5)

Master of heaven and earth, for Whom the stars
Of countless galaxies are merely dust
And ice, insignificant specks of rust,
Why do you dress my wounds and heal my scars?
Master of heaven and earth, for Whom the bars
Of space and time are blown away in a gust
Of wind, why do You steer my ship in trust,
Repair its tattered sails and broken spars?

Master of heaven and earth, why this grace,
This overflowing cup of wine? And how
Can I repay You for Your Shepherd's rod,
Your staff, the gentle shining of Your face,
The table You prepare? To You I bow,
To You I raise the cup and drink, my God.

6.

"Surely goodness and grace will follow me all the days of my life; and I shall sit in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6)

The Shepherd's key has opened wide the gate
To gather in the wise with books they wrote;
The righteous come, and prophets who devote
Their lives to God, the noble and the great.
But who am I to enter gates? I wait
Outside the Temple court, and watch a goat
That guards a mended, many-colored coat
While Temple-priests and Levites celebrate.

If only I could be a voice that sings
With those who dwell within the House of God,
Or hold the coat to see if it might fit,
Or stroke the Shepherd's goat that plays with kings;
If only I--but look, the Shepherd's rod
Has cleared a space inside, for me to sit.

--Yakov Azriel

In this world of Hidden Face
What we do is hide our faith,
Tuck it into folds of smile,
Dust with accent of exile.

What our soul seeks is truth
But, too sweet for wisdom tooth,
Truth will have to stay aloof,
And reject all hints of proof.

We will ramble in the wood,
Try to catch a glimpse of Good
While here, behind a tree,
All its glory is mocking me.

--Miriam Kitrossky

LIGHT 27: A PRAYER OF TWO POETS

King David:

El is my light and my salvation
whom shall I fear?

El is the stronghold of my life
of whom shall I be afraid?

Dina:

When did You give me my expansion
When did You tell me "be" and I "was"

When did You offer me your first word "love"
And I became love

When did You allow me to know You were You, and I was I

When did You tell me "you will know" and I "knew"

When did You place me "here" and "everywhere"

King David

One thing I ask from El,
this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of El

all the days of my life,

to gaze on His beauty

and to seek Him in his temple.

Dina

What can I give You back, if all that I am, You are
How can I thank You if not with my tears of adoration

I am here far away, lost in cold sidereal travel

but You are still my central sun

my spirit burns

because it was never hidden, never disguised, never
covered

King David

I will sing and make music for El

My heart says of You, "Seek his face!"

I will see His goodness

in the land of the living.

Dina:

I want to remain in memory as I really am

The essence, the center, the tenderness

The being who utters all the words without words

Who enriches all space with the music of silence

And adores Him who sits in his throne of All-Nothingness

--Dina Grutzendler

WITHIN AND WITHOUT

I look about me, clarity and light,
softness, kindness intertwines with sparks
that fly into this atmosphere. No trite
growth of verbiage. I know it works

in this luscious space, as I delight
where the colors flow, push back the dark.
I look about me, clarity and light
softness, kindness intertwines with sparks

ignite sensations inside me, all the bright
things, bring out the fire, raise a quark,
and yet another, combines, a flame embarks
on an adventure, body and soul in flight,

I look about me, clarity and light
softness, kindness, intertwines with sparks.

--Zev Davis

AN APOLOGY

to F.W.

How the wrongs done to you
have filled your lungs with God.
Your wrongs, my wrongs,
fill our pages.

We cannot
speak the name of *What Is*
without letting our breaths
go out—

Still,
Light continues to attend
the white spaces between
our words.

--Ellen Powers

ARCHITECTURAL PLAN: FIRST DRAFT

A well of cool water murmurs in the center of the garden
 And seventy lecterns surround it,
 All made of solid wood from the Tree of Life
 And on each is an open book, made of recycled paper from the Tree of
 Knowledge.

The whole world is pervaded by a fragrance of citron
 And seventy girl students are hovering,
 The head of each is ringed by a crown of cloud
 Where she keeps her best ideas in crystalline clarity.

And seventy spouts reach from the well to their feet
 As if strewing sundry scents
 and minnows
 and verses
 and the gold which is good.

And above them four sukkot give shade
 Like canopies of date-palm and cedar in the courts of our G-d.

And at evening seventy campfires are lit in a circle:
 Black fire dances with white fire
 And all the matriarchs dangle from the thatch like a feast-day mobile
 To explain what was hidden and stopped to the winds of the time.

--Tamar Biton
 from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron)

ANTICIPATE

We sit on the edge
 Is it time?
 Could we rush to the edge
 Push it?
 When will it be, exactly?
 Are we sitting the right way?
 How do we choose our position
 Our stance
 Some stand while others run
 Those ahead call out
 Pull us with them
 There are so many paths
 And at the end
 We will be asked
 "Did you anticipate this?"
 The correct answer is
 "...and toiled towards it."

--Mindy Aber Barad

from JERUSALEM

Footsteps, birthpangs
 yeast in the soul, whole
 worlds in shreds

Gog v' Magog then
 Eliyahu ha-Navi

ben Yosef ben Dovid

but first empty tefillin
 one more chaos to come

*

Herding her deadstock
 little lost thoughts

shellshard, klippos, whole
 world of shards

what light is lent me

*

A man stands. A man cannot stand
 in the landscape around him. Light
 escapes him

loss is his name & the fullness thereof

ludicrous loss
 undersong of our language

In the end build a name there, home
 perfect in ruin

sounding the Name

*

Conceal me in Your tent's
 concealment

even Your hiddenness hidden

all but Your hiddenness
 hidden from me

*

Tikkun chatzos

midnight north-wind
sings thru the harp

hung over the bed so they rise
for the hour the heart poured out

till nothing left

thrown then & thrown
again & again

endworld to endworld

then again thrown

*

Small psalms fill the mouth
& the one

breath stopped
that would have pushed them out

*

Vaporous certainties
eyes in a box

icons, idols
disciples of screens

the becoming-machine of Edom

no-road to no-throne

*

Two doors to two chambers now
spin them now install seven more

sevenfold interopening

inonunfolding

*

Innerness Even-stone
holds the whole singularity

earth blooms around it

first circle clarity second
dimmer third nearly opaque

-sJakob Stein

CAESURA

How is it words lift and sail,
drown among the silences.

I hear you Gertrude Stein,
your vast shadow echoing
along the rue and through
the texts of soul.

How far to the next beginning.
How far can moon move the sea

even as we stand here making
a grammar from all the
empty spaces.

--Doug Bolling

THE THOUGHT CLOUD STAIR

The moment when you pass through the next curtain belongs to
you.

The second month effects a natural transfer, a de-ritualized
evolution.

The hall you now find yourself in seems mirrored; its contents
are multiplied throughout all the facets of perception.

You don't need to tell me anything; just hold me in your
thoughts.

If you look down the unfolded lengths you will see what I see.

The walls are not mirrors, only burnished gold leaf softly
glowing.

There are no mirrors or sequential dissections; there is really
one of each, each time.

*

It is a mild radiance, I hope it enters you.

One by one the gaps are entered, the wicks lit.
What we each are are parts of the array.

*

I won't silence you here; don't silence me.

Your hem-bell falls and rolls, calling like starlight.
Do you know how many centuries will pass before I dig it up?

Do you even know how faintly far this incense permeates
beyond the veil?

--Courtney Druz

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WRITTEN ON THE PATH IN NACHALIM

Sometimes I get the urge to go into politics,
the last thing I seem to be cut out for,
but it comes to me, like the urge to crochet an afghan
-- you know, a granny afghan, all those patches
each with its own center, its own color scheme,
all of them stitched together in such a way
that there seems to be an overall design.
That is, I think of putting people together
the way you put words together in a poem.
This is a wild idea I have harbored
for upwards of forty years now, though I've yet
to convince anyone it might actually be done.
For one thing, who's going to draw the overall design?
And then, for people to be fitted into it,
they'd first have to consent to be picked up.
I keep thinking someday it will just appear to everyone
in the sky, on some clear morning after rain,
and then gently settle down, until we're all in it
(with the Temple in the middle, of course!).

—E. Kam-Ron

SONG OF THE LADDER

When you climb up the ladder
You see more

When you climb up the ladder
You remember what matters
To everyone.

When you climb up the ladder
You see more and more and more.

And from there you spread a blanket
Over everyone.

—Hamutal Bar-Yosef
tr. E. Kam-Ron

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