

The Deronda Review

a magazine of poetry and thought

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KINGDOM IN KINGDOM

The air is mild, the sky finally black enough for
glitter.

A hesitant streetlamp comes on just as I step
into its orange jurisdiction out from under a
tree,

a sudden glow then I'm past; the now orange
pavement
textured in living shadows—prehistoric milli-
pedes,

new-hatched, stretch from the pebbly fence-
edge
and ruler-mark the sidewalk into segments
in their image, the extending striated shell.

We are the ancient ones and young.

We are at the beginning of time now, our
constellation
winks at the gazer of a million years beyond:
I am the ancestor of your history.

From the edge through the unlit distance
of dust and gravel hills, drying shrub and thorn

unseeded into air, the eye travels
to the only far structure, wreathed in a string
of bulbs

for the festival—near the top, a pattern
of regular segments lit as 6 and 6
and a star, steady, pointing in six directions.

It only marks a year. It's formed for others.

Such a small number. Such a bright star.

—Courtney Druz

from *The Hannah Senesh Set*



Maale Adumim City Hall

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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.

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

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

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).

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).

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

**E. Kam-Ron (E. Kam-Ron), aka 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).

Sue Tourkin Komet, *Outfront, Jerusalem and Outback, Bethlehem*, forthcoming

James B. Nicola, *Manhattan Plaza* (2014), *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater*, forthcoming:

<https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola/poetry>

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

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).

Michael E. Stone, *Selected Poems* (Cyclamens and Swords Press, 2010). *Adamgirk': The Adam Book of Arak'el of Siwonik'* (Oxford University Press, 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 University Press, 2012); *The Daodejing: A New Interpretation*, with David Breeden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015); and *Invocation* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015).

**Shira Twersky-Cassel, *Shachrur* (Blackbird), 1988; *HaChayyim HaSodiim shel HaTsipporim* (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.

Sarah Brown Weitzman, *Eve and Other Blasphemy, The Forbidden, Never Far from Flesh* (poetry); *Herman and the Ice Witch* (children's novel, Main Street Rag).

Rosa Walling-Wefelmeyer, <https://rosawallingwefelmeyer.wordpress.com/>

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I. *The Heartbeat of the Earth*

INEFFABLE

A water's rhythmic murmur
Laces through our conversation,
Adorning our words,
Assuaging my ears,
Water swaying just beneath my feet—
Ancient world of support,
Grayish blue and green—
A placid dream.

I see it arrest and flow, arrest
And flow, push and play itself
Along its way, as I watch
Through the iron wrought interstices
Of the bridge's floor.

How you and I
Fit so snugly
In this vastness.
The water gently lapping on,
Here and after, beyond and before,
To the far blue mountains borne—
A misty promise in the near horizon—
Under a crystalline white winter sky!

Here, where the Earth
Is not too great
To listen to our voice.

—Catharine Otto

HARMONY

I am startled by the bird's rufous breast,
landing to perch on a branch of the winter maple—

its brown-red color
in contrast to the bark grey and the white on white

against the drifted February fields and the meadows,
beyond.

The bird pivoted on the limb, its
bright black eyes looked into me through the window:

I sat mesmerized by its
presence, that seemed out of place in the frigid cold—

making me think it must have been overwintering; but
before this thought concluded—

the bird flew up, displaying its chalk-
blue feathers, their shade being that of an elegant shawl

covering its wings.
Then the bird dipped, hovering in front of the window,

seeking entry, to come close enough
to the glass that it electrified the sensation of my skin;

since, in its singularly
divine way, it touched me; and became more than just

a mere bluebird,
communicating to me through the harmony of nature,

before flying off in a dazzling rush
of blue, leaving the grace of its visitation in the trace

of its proximity
that I felt had grazed my skin, and brushed my viscera;

affording me with the sight of its fluttering wings that
continue to beat within.

—Wally Swist

IS IT SPRING?

by Mindy Aber Barad, Drora Matlovsky &
Ruth Fogelman

I

M.: Is it spring?
Not by definition, no
But simply by the warmth
Of the stones
Beneath my feet

R.: Simply by the warmth
On my face
Simply by the scented breeze
Plum blossom and almond
I know that spring will soon be here

D.: Simply by the warmth on my face,
In my heart,
I know life is here,
Waiting to burst forth from all sides.

M.: On my face
Scented breeze of blossoms
Gently nudges spring
Ever closer
Although the clouds
Seem to threaten

II

R.: Is it spring?
The sun is out
Light clouds in sky
Overcoats left on hooks
Will the layers of winter remain unworn?

D.: Overcoats left on hooks
Ignore the clouds!
Off to somewhere green,
Somewhere warm
Somewhere happy.

M.: Somewhere green
Is where spring hides
Watching through the filtering clouds
Waiting.

R.: Waiting to burst
Back, again,
Waiting for sun's rays
To warm the Earth,
Warm the roots of the trees,
Warm life into rebirth.

III

D.: Is it winter? Is it spring?
I am cold and the birds sing
Let's put the heater on, my heart sings
I don't know where I am
The clouds, the sun

M.: The birds sing
I've heard them twitter
First soggy
In a drizzle,
Now warmed
By their own symphony

R.: Trees carry a symphony
Though most branches are still bare
So few leaves for the wind to rustle
Only a week ago I saw the golden leaves
Underfoot

D.: Few leaves for wind to rustle
Where does the music come from?
Is there some unseen instrument?
Do the trees sing
The song of spring?

ANGEL SEEDS

The cottonwood tree sets free its angels,
its seeds that swirl like stray thoughts
in the wind's memory, astonish the light,
involve the sun, and bind us to beginnings.

They come in white shrouds over the town.
They seem to sleepwalk through the air.
They come like stars seeking new worlds.
They come to become themselves.

Some blanket the cars, some sway the winds.
Some blow in questions to the moon.
Some land in graveyards which yield and forgive.
They blow wherever the silence leads them.

They burst through the gaping doors of the grocery,
whispering alien voices down the aisles,
tempting the shoppers with their Winter in Spring,
to their land where all hunger ends.

Outside, in the gardens, they seek their
second life, whirling, yearning to cling deep
where stillness and darkness answer their cries,
and heaven, rooted, ripens into earth.

—Sean Lause

LOVER OF SUMMER

I have a summer afternoon off
how do I tell those concerned
that I want to dip into the stillness like a pool
touch the trembling of my Rose of Sharon
and a wayward plump bee under my chin
confused by my bright t-shirt glow

My neighbor's cat naps under the hemlocks
I didn't know
tree tops hustle importantly
sensing a season change
flowers are grown, the goldfinch and sunflower are
one
and I have won a skirmish of love to be alone

I am a child of summer
once a mighty swimmer, never a splasher
but my arms were always open to the sky and sea
now like the cat I dream in dark green
lick the sun like a bee, warm myself in memory
and as a lover of summer, I dive into this afternoon.

—Susan Oleferuk

THE BLOWING SWALE

For a quarter mile the blue and white of lily-of-the-valley
burned the air with a spray of fragrance beyond
sweetness.

Maybe that is what clouded my head, or perhaps it
was just
the blue-sky eternity of the day that seemed to make
me float,

when I saw the sherbet-colored petals of purple-
flowering
raspberry, growing in the waving grasses in the Peter-
sham

woods, on the north shore of Quabbin. I decided to
point
out the flower to my friend; and as I was about to place
one

of my boots into the blowing swale, I stopped short,
and
we saw the length of it moving incrementally in an
opening

of the blades of grass before the tilting flower.
Its scales were designed with bronzed diamonds juxta-
posed

against a dark background, which indicate more
than a single possibility; but in that instant my life tee-
tered,

as I held my foot in the air, withdrawing it as slowly as
the snake slithered through the grass.

My friend and I looked at the thickness of its body, and
then
each other, mouths agape,

the astonishment on our faces replicated by the fear
that raged,
separately, in her solar plexus and mine —

and since we never saw either the snake's head or the
tail,
I could never verify what it was.

Although, what I remember is how the body kept flow-
ing on
before we decided it best to walk quietly away, with
gratitude.

— Wally Swist

REFUGEES

The weeds on the trail were tall and I accidentally
fell into the herd
startled they were lined up big and summer old
staring at me
I knew my place and lowered my eyes and turned

They belonged in the woods, they belonged on the
earth,
they belonged with Egyptian kohl eyes, African necks
meant to reach the free skies
and the warm brown of slim trees
in Northern summer

And I, I was running for my life
so lost
bulldozed
by the sounds and heavy steps of mankind.

— Susan Oleferuk

[fallen leaf]

Shaking off all the dust
You have accumulated over the season

Flapping your wings against twilight
At the border of night

Like a butterfly coming down to
Kiss the land
As if to listen to
The heartbeat of the earth
Only once in a lifetime

— Changming Yuan

IT IS IN THE NATURE OF THINGS

*

It is in the nature of things to want
to fly, as a bird will fly, toward light
on water; to chase, as would a child,
a shadow that escapes you — any wild
elusive shadow; to wonder, in later years,
about the self and how long that self can go
on living, or if it matters at all that it
goes on living...matters at all.

*

In the late afternoon, a wild tom turkey
makes its way through a grove of trees,
as scattered light falls here and there
on iridescent feathers — bronze, teal,

copper – burnished rose – the glorious wings,
archangelic, unfurling as he rises on his toes
to open his body to the cooling breeze.

*

It wasn't dusk yet, but you could feel
dusk coming... (the ancient chambers
thudding inside the heart)... And I remember
how I used to rush from one disaster
to the next without the slightest notion
of what propelled my frenzy.

*

Now, it seems, I am released
into a newly stilled complacency.
My life is seemly, if not a little dull.
I am at home with myself, at home
with the darkness that falls without haste,
filled, as it is, with the inevitable. Yes,
that's it. I am making peace with the inevitable.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

ASIDES AND HESITATIONS

i

I used to think the power of words
was inexhaustible, that how we said the world
was how it was, and how it would be.
I used to imagine that word-sway
and word-thunder would silence the Silence,
that words were the Word, that language
could lead us inexplicably to grace,
as though it were graphical.

ii

Deer start down from the mountains.
A hummingbird and a raven briefly perch
on the same limb of a shaggy pine –
fly off in opposite directions.
The sky speaks of autumn, or of just
before. Not much difference, really, between
what was and what is soon to be – except
in the caesura, the hesitation
between the word and the world.
Time like a swallow's shadow cutting
across the clay, faint, darker, then faint again.

iii

The overheated vocabulary of the sun
sinks to just a few syllables, fewer
than yesterday, fewer still tomorrow.
In wingbeats the disappeared come back
to us. The soul returns to the tree.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

II. *Learn This Universe*

GLIMPSES OF EARLY LIGHT

400,000 years after the Big Bang,
gasses changed. Hydrogen once
simply neutral began to
ionize, leaving protons
nearly naked, electrons
stripped away.

Early stars, bigger and more violent
than anything we know today
are the most likely culprits.

How are we to glimpse traces
of that rending illumination?
Only the faintest whisper
lingers in the cacophony
of cosmic babble.

Pity the astrophysicists
with their low antennae
and supercomputers
seeking, seeking
subtle signals from
this first light.

Poets are their companions
in misery trying to hear
the primal unsaid
s t r e t c h
s t r e t c h

the silence within each

word

– Vera Schwarcz

THE FIRST WEEK OF CREATION

DAY ONE: BEFORE THE ATOMS FORMED

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and
earth." (Genesis 1:1)

Before the atoms formed, God ruled as King,
Before the primal light proclaimed His reign,
Before vast hosts of angels learned to sing.

Before the day could bow, or night could bring
A sable robe to cover His domain,
Before the atoms formed, God ruled as King.

All sovereignty was His, before the wing
Of time first flew as chaos gasped in vain,
Before vast hosts of angels learned to sing.

But now God reigns as well, as when the string
Of space first stretched to limit and constrain;
Before the atoms formed, God ruled as King.

His throne stands firm, His crown and royal ring
Still gleam today, as gleamed His regal chain
Before vast hosts of angels learned to sing.

And after time will end, when everything
Will fade, God's majesty shall never wane.
Before the atoms formed, God ruled as King,
Before vast hosts of angels learned to sing.

DAY TWO: BEYOND THE TIDES

"And God said, 'Let there be a sky in the midst of
the waters, and it shall divide the waters from wa-
ters.'" (Genesis 1:6)

The waters billowed, surging left and right,
Beyond the tides, beyond the furthest boundaries,
Until they parted, split by a sky of light.

Prisms of colors flowed as waves, from white
To sea-weed green and the bluest galaxies;
The waters billowed, surging left and right.

From this world to worlds-to-come, from day to night,
The waters streamed and sang God's melodies,
Until they parted, split by a sky of light.

For then, the upper waters rose with might,
To fill the Torah's oceans, gulfs and seas;
The waters billowed, surging left and right.

The lower waters plunged from heaven's height,
To water Eden's garden, rivers, trees,
Until they parted, split by a sky of light.

But now in deserts, we dream we drink despite
Our drought, while digging wells on hands and knees.
The waters billowed, surging left and right,
Until they parted, split by a sky of light.

DAY THREE: VERDANT GREEN

"And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth vegetation:
seed-bearing plants, and every kind of fruit-tree that
bears fruit with the seed inside, on the earth; and it
was so.'" (Genesis 1:11)

In forests, fields and jungles cloaked with green,
We wade in life's splendor; but all our lives,
We ask ourselves, "What does existence mean?"

Is all this verdant beauty just a screen
That masks our graves? What significance survives
In forests, fields and jungles cloaked with green?

As life blossoms – exquisite, death mocks – obscene;
As death hews down all with axes and knives,
We ask ourselves, "What does existence mean?"

Is the world pollinated by death's queen,
Who stings and makes bitter honey in her hives,
In forests, fields and jungles cloaked with green?

Why must our flowers' velvet fade, the sheen
Of blossoms dim, whenever death arrives?
We ask ourselves, "What does existence mean?"

Where is God's truth, majestic and serene?
Under seas of leaves and grass, it swims and dives.
In forests, fields and jungles cloaked with green,
We ask ourselves, "What does existence mean?"

DAY FOUR: THE MOON OF JERUSALEM

"And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament
of the heavens to distinguish between the day and
the night; and they shall be for signs and appointed
times, for days and years.'" (Genesis 1:14)

In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun
Which quickly sped through days, but lost the race;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

How bright the dawn, when the sun began to run
With confidence, ability and grace;
In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun.

But the sun, which lit up worlds all stars should shun,
Reduced his speed and waned without a trace;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

As hosts of stars declared the race was done,
The moon of Jerusalem reached first place;
In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun.

The stars took threads they earlier had spun
And hid the moon behind a veil of lace;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

“Bring light,” the stars command, “when there is none,
And at the end of days, reveal your face.”
In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

DAY FIVE: BLUE WHALES OF FAITH

“And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and
multiply, and fill the waters of the sea....’
(Genesis 1:22)

Below the ocean’s surface swim blue whales
Of faith that chant God’s glory and His praise,
Undaunted by sea-tempests, storms and gales.

The females sing their psalms all day, the males
All night, as dolphins dance and sea-weed sways;
Below the ocean’s surface swim blue whales —

Undaunted by the whalers’ ship that sails
In search of prey a sharpened harpoon slays;
Undaunted by sea-tempests, storms and gales.

And even when the fickle ocean fails
To bring their krill, even then faith’s music plays;
Below the ocean’s surface swim blue whales.

Rising above the waves, each whale inhales
God’s grace as God commands and he obeys,
Undaunted by sea-tempests, storms and gales.

Their songs and prayers proclaim that faith prevails
In the depths of God’s concealed and hidden ways;

Below the ocean’s surface swim blue whales,
Undaunted by sea-tempests, storms and gales.

DAY SIX: TWO FEET IN TWO WORLDS

“And God created man in His image, in the image of
God He created man; male and female He created
them.” (Genesis 1:27)

In the image of God, Man and Woman shine,
Yet lose this glow in the blackness of the night,
Two feet in two worlds, animal and divine.

Each dawn we pray to sip the angels’ wine
That lets our souls reflect the angels’ light;
In the image of God, Man and Woman shine.

Each dusk we leave our candles in the shrine
To wander in back streets where tomcats fight,
Two feet in two worlds, animal and divine.

But night retreats and shadows realign
As light returns and fills our eyes with white;
In the image of God, Man and Woman shine.

Is human blindness malignant or benign?
Is human fate to see, then lose our sight?
Two feet in two worlds, animal and divine?

Our souls ablaze, we search for God’s design,
For ways to make two separate realms unite;
In the image of God, Man and Woman shine;
Two feet in two worlds, animal and divine.

DAY SEVEN: THE SHABBAT, A SHRINE OF TIME

“And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it;
because on it He rested from all His work that God
in creating had made.” (Genesis 2:3)

With bronze from Jacob’s ladder, which angels climb;
With stone from Abraham’s altars, and his sand;
With Isaac’s wood is built a shrine of time.

With lullabies that Rachel sings in rhyme;
With music Leah’s children understand;
With bronze from Jacob’s ladder, which angels climb.

With curtains Rebecca weaves, still in their prime;
With sacred ephods Sarah sews by hand;
With Isaac’s wood is built a shrine of time.

Seconds, minutes and hours comprise the lime
That binds its bricks, the books that Moses scanned,
With bronze from Jacob’s ladder, which angels climb.

With Joseph’s stars, which prophets teach to shine;
With Joseph’s grain, which grows on scholars’ land;
With Isaac’s wood is built a shrine of time.

With sips and fragrance of the Messiah’s wine;
With bread his wife will bake; with all God planned;
With bronze from Jacob’s ladder, which angels climb;
With Isaac’s wood is built a shrine of time.

— Yakov Azriel

LIFE DIFFERENT FROM THE LIFE WE KNOW

How do peel away the deepest layers
enveloping three billion years
of biological tinkering?

Until recently, life as we know it
dressed itself in three forms:
Archae, Bacteria and Eukaryota.

With new tools for DNA sequencing,
single cells and viruses hidden
in isolated crevices are revealing
secrets modern microbes
have never touched.
From deep within
the earth's crust,
biologists have
excavated a
mimivirus
particle,

neither Bacteria nor Archaea.

Its long extinct lineage
is coming to teach us:
life speaks in more tongues
than we have labeled
or heard before.

— Vera Schwarcz

[fissuring]

Between two high notes
The song gives a crack
Long enough
To allow me to enter
Like a fish jumping back
Into the night water

Both the fish and I leave no
Trace behind us, and the world
Remains undisturbed as we swim
Deeper and deeper in blue silence

Upon my return, I find the music
Still going on, while the fish has
Disappeared into the unknown

— Changming Yuan

BIRD & STONE

Alighting on me
tiny feet upon my brow
no wrinkle
rumple from me
I dare not startle you
pausing here remote
solid slipping
as if a house on sand.

Alas!

Some fancy
stirs your wings to flight
nails scratch a flurry
of new blood to the surface
your fading
becomes a hieroglyph
occult now for millennia
fondness follows
was ever thing so unsurprising?

— Rosa Walling-Wefelmeyer

WILD EYES

1. Rachel

Shaking out the bedclothes,
I turn to meet your stare.
Wild eyes, for love you took me on.

I lift you and you fear the air,
when I hold you close
you turn your face to me.

What are you thinking, long gaze
burning into my own.

2. Ariel

Ariel's love languishes
he casts his head back
into the bend of my shoulder
jade eyes slit,

fur fragrant of cedar and cinnamon
his great tail—silken ebony—
wraps royal about us.

I push my face into his fierce world.

3. Kinneret

a.
Kinneret born, you come to me
from runs along that pebbled shore,
your name speaks of poets and pioneers,

the azure waters of your bright eyes
bring seascape into this walled city.

b.

On laundry days, joyous baths take the place of sea spray,
a run at the washtub – my hand lifts a splash,

shaking off the drops, cat-happy, you search out my eyes
and play ask for more.

c.

Shabbat morning, wait at the door
to welcome each babe and child, each grownup.

The family, they climb the many stairs to enter your
domain,
Resting at our feet you share table chatter.

With all gone home, we close the door
and settle into the peace of Eden

d.

Nights of pain, at my bedside,
long legged cat, lines drawn in silver.

“Look,” I say to David, “he will sit there now for hours.”
In his wisdom my son decides, “He does for you what he can.”

e.

Too soon, life’s end, a failure of the flesh.
Reluctant still to leave my embrace,
– fragile skull pressed into my warm fingers
and caressing palms.

Your essence which would never part from me
is released from my arms and gone.

f.

When they lift your frail body, a soft whimper
so distant, is the sound of a stranger,
no longer that dear voice that was your own.

Soul spark lit to share my life,
you have done well
to heal the many wounds of my days.

4.

The lost animals sent for me to love,
live all in my dreams,
sharing our human lives,
theirs can never be as ours.

Small hearts, small beings,
where is centered your love,
what is the secret source
of that cleaving to myself?

– Shira Twersky-Cassel

DESPOILED DIRT

On a day in rain-soaked Jerusalem,
when the glow of Tu Be’Shvat,
the New Year for trees, renews
ardor for earth and man,

my gaze is guided downward,
past the roots of flowering almonds
to soils geologists have mapped
as rare, endangered, dead.

We who savor grapes, figs, dates, olives,
pomegranate, barley, wheat, who cherish
the Land which nurtures each fruit, and us,
know too little about Cecil,
the yellow-brown loam
once rich in carbon, mica.
Decapitated now.

If we dare lift the green carpet beneath our feet,
we may hear the man-stripped ground
cry out: “My carbons gone! Without
my minerals I cannot filter or cool your air.
Your songs now fly with clipped wings,
tremulous over despoiled dirt.”

– Vera Schwarcz

DECIDE

Where is the tree that stood on the hill
the mossy stone wall, a century strength
a small house below, window boxes and lace
the woman who loved it and left

The metals have been blowing with the anxious ashes
of the dead
memories scattered like refugees
identities picked like pockets
stories opened from a can
there are many truths they say, many friends... none
I stand on my head and east is west

The big dipper feeds the earth
pours in the night and tucks us in
the north star an heirloom for when the streams run
dry
yes it changes, we change, growth, destruction,
raise your tired head to the wind and decide.

– Susan Oleferuk

THE TRADE

In the dream we lay together on the side of the road
 my face against your still warm brown fur, eyes large
 and anguished
 our blood cooling together
 I had been driving on a foggy night
 my arm was across your ribs as I died, we, probably
 the same size, whispered every night
 covered with leaves and mud and snow
 as we lay waiting to be sent where
 we did not know
 in my guilt and growing love
 I traded you my soul
 I would return as the deer

You warned me of the hunger, the hunting, the cull,
 the cold
 but I thought of the days in the air and sun
 the freedom I had felt only here and there
 in turn you heard of all that awaited you
 the bounty, food, warmth, power too
 and when we were called we walked two by two
 we walked off two deer.

—Susan Oleferuk

SONG OF BIRDS

How can I sing of birds while earth's on fire?
 The news is aflame with fiendish desire,
 Yet many with water to douse the blaze
 Stroll blithely along the rustic pathways,
 Finding birds and flowers to admire.

Just as a crescent moon will wax entire,
 Ambitious hate suffuses an empire.
 When the watchful wander within a haze,
 How can I sing of birds?

Chirping birds might echo a holy choir,
 And rustling leaves the strings of Nature's lyre,
 Yet if we are nearing the end of days,
 Should our words be lost in idyllic praise?
 As more kindling is stacked around our pyre,
 How can I sing of birds?

—Ron L. Hodges

THE ARK

Seems the Lord was always whittling away,
 casting out those first two or letting Lot
 bargain a hundred down to ten. By our time,
 nearly everybody had disappointed him again.
 So we had to build a boat to his specifications
 in the middle of the plains far from any sea.

Of course, ridicule turned to begging
 when the rains finally came. By the end
 of the first week we had to club them off.

Afloat, we were headed we knew not where,
 passing people clinging to tree tops
 fighting snakes and birds for space.
 They called out to us but even if we could
 have steered, we wouldn't have stopped.
 We had more than we could handle
 keeping order among predators and
 indiscriminate breeders, the feedings,
 the filth. And the incessant noise—
 clucking, roaring, braying, screeching,
 growling and hissing day and night.

It poured 24/40. The world was one ocean,
 even mountains were submerged. Bodies
 floated by, debris of all sorts. Despair
 took hold, even the creatures became quiet.
 When finally we were perched atop a mountain
 then the wait of months for the waters
 to recede. Weeks to unload everything
 onto the stinking muck. But busy as we were,
 we felt no elation, not even for our survival.
 We were racked by a sadness for something
 we couldn't explain, something forever lost,
 whatever it is we mean when we say home.

—Sarah Brown Weitzman

UNNATURAL DISASTER

I have seen towers shattered, and great waves
 Rise up and fall on beach and field and town
 And bury tens of thousands without graves;
 I have seen sheets of lava rolling down,
 Effacing forests' ancient histories,
 Have seen great ships on icebergs crack and spill
 Their freight of souls to the voracious seas,
 And earth's foundations crack, and the cracks fill
 With humankind's ingenious works o'erthrown.

Yet direst of all grave disastrous sights
 Is that of Mind contorted to condone
 Enormity, and grant wrong equal rights
 With justice. For the fall of reason brings
 (G-d guard!) the fall of all earth's goodly things.

—E. Kam-Ron

CROSS-POLLINIZATION/

They that lack the heart to know, don't fear to ask,
gather at the dust of the feet of the Sages where they
might learn (Pele Yoetz, Reason, 2)

So you don't understand. It's too hard,
a jigsaw puzzle, pieces spread apart . . .
as on a meadow. Butterflies
catch the scents of blossoms. You start

just out, in the air. You rise,
flustered, confused. Relative to your size,
a picture, a panorama. So big
as you count, the flowers wave. Surmise,

enter a tree, branches so thick,
catch the dust, something special. Lick
the sweetness, another, think, drink,
and down to the field, feel the colors drunk,

learn this universe. Discover the link
between where you were, and what you bring.

—Zev Davis

WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

Pattern in nature, pattern in art,
The stay against Chaos or Non-existence:
In ancient mythologies God or the Gods
Against such evil head the resistance.

The electrons' whirl round the nucleus,
The monthly dance of earth and moon,
The bands of trade winds round the globe,
The yearly dry time and monsoon.

The net of veins within the leaf,
The points where seeds lie in the fruit,
The flaunting circle formed by petals,
The hidden branchings of the root.

The wax cells of the honey bee,
The vee of speeding geese in flight,
The bubble net of hunting whales,
The silken threads where spiders bite.

The wheels with cogs engaging cogs,
The painter's landscape viewed through an arch,
The line of bullets in a cartridge belt,
The ranks of soldiers on the march.

Is pattern's source a Mind Divine
Whose creation has cruelly gone awry,
Or does it spill out as it may
From the fall of mindless Chance's die?

—Henry Summerfield

A DREAM

Happy the year five hundred thousand:
The Cherubim seem to lower the sword;
Eden appears again in this world,
Some say under aegis of Eden's Lord.

Still there are atheists and theists
Debating their cases in verse and prose;
Each side ready to learn from the other,
Rivals they are, but never foes.

Like a plant of careful grafting,
The human brain is adjusted and trained;
Equal its service of self and others;
Self-aggrandizement's disdained.

Voters never enthrone a hater,
Cheater, glib talker, or poltroon;
War is a memory faint and abhorred,
The demagogue's rant a forgotten tune.

Happy the year five hundred thousand:
Legend's Golden Age has returned,
Humankind guides its arts and science,
Keeps all good knowledge it has learned,

Such as how, in a distant future,
To move this fertile planet far;
Flee an expanding, devouring sun;
Hitch it to another star.

—Henry Summerfield

JUST A CLICK AWAY ON MY COMPUTER

Poet Emily Dickinson's arrest record
in the state of Massachusetts

Phone number for John the Baptist
Email address of William Shakespeare

Present age of Henry the Eighth.
I can Twitter with the Sphinx

or get a background check
on Matisse's Odalisque. Print out

Bluebeard's present martial status.
Check Methuselah's credit report

or Nefertiti's work record.
Find resumes for the Great Gatsby

and the Wicked Witch of the East.
Noah's Ark has been located

and its complete passenger list.
Ludwig van Beethoven wants to be

my friend on Facebook and
I can get LinkedIn with the Devil

or establish contact with Mars
listed in the Yellow Pages

in the borough of Outer Space
just a click away.

—Sarah Brown Weitzman

III. *Intersecting*

SIGN

are you giving me a sign
whatever a sign may be
loaded as it is with love
with light, with something like salvation
a child's appeal to night

if you are giving me a sign
how shall it be known
something in the floating leaf
the ringing chime, the sprouting bean
a twinkle in Andromeda, a call to come, to come again

if there is a sign to give
why is it not alone
but watercolour
watered flour, stem with flower
a Gorgon's orchid grows from soil not stone

please give me a sign
I will be ready when it comes
even as three nails
blind wounds or empty space
the Helm of Darkness veils a face, reveals the face

you are giving me a sign
I thought it just the sound of hooves
pounding as they are with love
with light, with something like salvation
coming in from distance, always saddled white

this is a sign
I know it now at last
feel it in this bind to rock
the rising sea, the Thing itself—
the sign is wingèd, weighted, me

—Rosa Walling-Wefelmeyer

MASKED - UNMASKED

She's playful,
covers her face
as if at a masked ball,
calls herself
Coincidence,
and sometimes, with a giggle,
Serendipity;
unmask her
and you'll find
Providence.

—Ruth Fogelman

MEETING ON RAILAY BEACH

After the long flight to Bangkok
and another flight to southern Thailand
after the taxi to Diamond Cove
and the long tail boat in the dark
we slept well
woke with birdsong
and blue orchids
we opened the door into February summer
walked past wide brimmed gardeners patiently
scraping scarlet leaves
and there was the beach—

Scandinavian families with blond babies
played in the warm white sand
elaborate tattoos rippled in the green
water, all you need here are flip flops
and a straw to sip coconut milk
I squinted
and saw Tzahi our next door neighbor from home
beautiful in the sun
laughing with a bunch of friends
it seemed perfectly natural to meet him here
halfway across this improbable world
he said this is where
I want to honeymoon
who's the lucky girl I asked
I don't know Tzachi said
but this is the place.

—Dina Jehuda

[I live in a very small community of 150 families on a hillside in Galilee. My next door neighbor is Tzahi S. When my husband and I left for a 10 day vacation to Thailand, Tzahi's mom said, jokingly, "Maybe you'll run into Tzahi." (He was in Thailand for a few months on his after army trip.) Railay Beach is a tiny island, no cars can drive there and there is no harbor, just a beach. It took us 2 planes and a taxi and a boat to get there. We bumped into Tzahi in the water the first morning after we arrived. —D.J.]

IN JERUSALEM

Walking towards my bus stop at Kikar David Remez,
I bump into Larry, whom I've not seen in years.
"The twins will celebrate their bar mitzvah next month;
we want to do it at the Kotel," he says.
"Do you have any idea who can arrange it for us?"
I put him in touch with the perfect person.
After the celebration, our ways again part.

Past midnight, I'm on my way home
from a poetry reading,
through the Jewish Quarter's deserted alleys,
my cart heavy with books.
Please, G-d, send someone to help me
get this cart up the steps to my door.
A young man appears – the answer to my prayers.

I'm uncluttering a corner,
digging through dust-laden boxes
of my husband's pamphlets and papers.
I find a postcard showing a field of red tulips
from Amsterdam, addressed to me, from Miranda,
with whom I've lost contact for twenty years.
I find her on Facebook, contact her.
She's coming to Jerusalem
at the end of the month, with plans for Aliyah.

Providence dances in Jerusalem.

– Ruth Fogelman

ISRAEL, FEARS AND HASHGACHAH PRATIT

When making Aliyah to Israel two years ago, we
thought that that would be it. No more struggles, no
more indecision. And no more fear. But for two long
years it has seemed like we were the outsiders looking
in. What was the secret ticket to emuna that the sabras
seemed to have wrapped securely in their back pockets?

I feared so many things. Yet, ironically, my fears did
not centre on the bigger, more sensational and general
issues. The issues and challenges that bring even sa-
bras to their prickly knees. No, it is rather the daily
challenges and cultural differences that seemed to wear
at my faith and courage. The weather extremes – the
searing heat, intense sun, snowstorms, howling winds,
fierce hailstones, dry, cracked arid earth. So intense, so
strong. And here is little me. The insects – spiders,
crawling ants, mosquitoes (even in the winter!), flies
(even in the winter), scorpions (not just in the deserts!).
And here is big me! The brazenness – chutzpah, open
honesty, persistence, assertiveness. And here is gentle
me.

But one issue that has repeatedly stumped me is the
seemingly straightforward act of buying petrol. At the
Yishuv where I drive our children to and from school

daily, there is an industrial area with a hardware store
and a simple petrol pump. With a very complicated
code procedure. The combination of industrial area,
the Arabs wandering around, the lack of assistance,
and the complicated technical coding system have
meant that for our first two years of Aliyah I have
shied away from buying petrol. In my fear and reluc-
tance, I have asked my husband to "fill her up" every
time. And got away with it. I have managed to ignore
the petrol warning sign on the car's dashboard and
pass the buck every time...

...Until today. This morning a fierce storm was rag-
ing. As I dropped our children off at school, I noticed
the neon petrol sign indicating that the tank was empty.
I am aware that the car indicator flashes a number of
miles before it is truly empty. But I also recalled that it
has already flashed its warning sign the day before and
I had "conveniently" forgotten to attend to it. Who
knew how much more petrol was in the tank? I could
risk driving back without attending to it again, hoping
and praying I would make it home safely. But that
would be risky. It would be avoiding my fear. And it
would prevent me learning a new skill.

I swallowed hard and drove into the petrol station.
With my husband on the phone talking me through the
coding procedure, I managed to fill her up. All by my-
self. Victory! Or so I thought. Until I drove away and
the petrol gauge still showed empty! Calling my (very
patient) husband again, I explained the issue. He tried
to convince me to risk driving back home so he could
resume his old role of saviour and hero. But though
this was "oh so tempting", and I did not relish stand-
ing outside in the rainstorm again, a little voice inside
me advised me to follow through.

I summoned my last vestiges of courage and my
meagre language skills. My senses were screaming for
me to escape. I tried to ignore them. My intellect was
screaming for me to retreat. I tried to distract it. My
spirit was yearning for me to stop and pray. I tried to
coax it. My legs marched to their own surprisingly
stubborn beat. And took me back to the hardware store.

In response to my plea, a shop assistant came out to
the pump with me. He indicated that the pump was
working fine and I should not have a problem. So I
tried again. And again I noticed that the gauge stub-
bornly remained on empty! Finally, I noticed a capable-
looking older man and asked him in my broken He-
brew if anything was wrong with the pump. Three
other women had filled their tanks in the meantime
and they had all driven away satisfied. Maybe it was
my car? Or me? The older man's kind eyes and patient
demeanor reassured me. He walked over to my car,
borrowed my electronic coding device and proceeded
to fill her up properly. I watched him closely. "Why
did it work for you and not me?" I asked in exaspera-
tion. A typical Israeli shrug and a brief "it just does

that sometimes" was his answer. Oh.

I drove away from the petrol station, now armed with the experience of having filled up my car with petrol in a foreign country. A small smile stole over my tightened lips. Like sunshine breaking through the clouds. I had done it! Perhaps this was a glimpse, just a glimpse of the secret emuna ticket hidden in born and bred Israeli pockets. The secret of the sabras. They do not give up. They do not back down. They face their fears head on. And with their courage, they maintain daily victories.

With the word "glimpse" on my lips, I glanced up at the cloud-darkened sky. And then I saw it. My first rainbow since making Aliyah. Faint and ephemeral, it was a sign nonetheless. Like Hashem's message of reassurance to Noah that his challenge had finally abated, I felt that his Heaven-sent, colourful arc had an **uncomplicated** coding system containing a message just for me.

—Chaiya D.

DÉJÀ VU

Moving in both directions,
time loses its footing — takes the mind
to its edge —

In these moments without boundary
mud and chains become illusion,
but the butterfly
remains real.

—Cynthia Weber Nankee

SO MANY NAMES

Name me your face
And I'll match it
To the faces of other names
Spelled the same
Like a friend
Whose name you share
And lives again
Each day I greet you.

Nameless faces too,
Each time I pass by you
On the corner,
You look more like
A name I think I know,
Yet could not.

So many lives repeat with each
Repeating name or face
In my coincidental life.

—Don Segal

TOWARD

I wander in the night
You are by my side
I toss and turn
Hurdle through waves of doubt
You float beside me
Your salt burns and heals

Do you see me
Or through me?
I chose you
Does the metaphor matter?
With or without splinters
As we drip wet on the boardwalk

On rough or smooth surfaces
With or without sands that
Mold the shape of our feet
We mold each other

—Mindy Aber Barad

SINGLE FINGER

I tried reaching for you
in the night thought

a ghost or two would
have pitied such a

gesture and laid their
heads together to

conceive a frame for
holding breath long

enough to flesh a
single finger to reach

and undo—

—Rosa Walling-Wefelmeyer

TIMING

I timed my walking
 With the rising of the eclipsed moon and the
 Setting of the comet
 So I would feel a part of some great
 Celestial event
 As I faced Venus head on, trees stood dark,
 Branches like arms straining to reach her.

I timed my rising
 With your rising, or when I imagined
 Your rising would be,
 Since just the day before
 We laughed at how
 We woke the same time the night before,
 Unable to sleep.

I timed my smiling
 With your smiling, which came so easily
 With brows arched high above
 Like shooting stars
 That hang for a moment in the sky,
 And vanish.

—Don Segal

IT WASN'T IN THE CARDS

"I'm in," I announced and sat down
 to play the cards I'd be dealt.

Flushed with a belief in luck,
 my strong suit, yet I knew

no one holds all the aces. When
 the Jack of Hearts smiled at me,

I went "All In." Then the Queen of Diamonds
 turned up on my left. The others

in this pack consisted of a wild card
 and a dude showing a deuce who insisted

we weren't playing with a full deck.
 Sadly, that Heart Jack and I didn't become

a pair. In fact, he turned out to be a joker.
 I guess that's the luck of the draw.

As I shuffled away I saw
 the decks of cards holding hands.

—Sarah Brown Weitzman

THANK YOU DEAR LORD

How is it possible
 to thank you
 Dear Lord
 for the kindness
 of your ways

You have answered
 my deepest prayers
 You have hearkened
 to the longings
 of my heart

How long have I waited —
 the hours, the days
 the weeks, the months
 the years —
 All seemed endless

Yet always I knew
 I knew that you
 were waiting, too,
 waiting with me

Thank you.

—Simcha Angel

NOTES FOR POEM ON COINCIDENCE

Two lines moving at random across a plane. Two lines
 nearing, intersecting.
 Did the pen decide. Did a mind behind the pen tire of
 so much blank space, so much drift, and force a
 resolution.

What the source of such meetings of line and color in
 canvas after canvas attended by Pollock.
 Was it loose cannon of brush or the time of day or
 some primordial visitation from so far down
 not even the artist knew.

The inner seas of space and time.
 The site of their surfacing.

Cousinage of chance and coincidence or
 only difference.

Think Thomas Hardy:
 "—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain
 And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
 "Hap"

Tight webbing of space-time — what then any claim of a
 moral dimension in whatever joining.

What symbolism possible in idea of syzygy.

The Titanic. Iceberg and ship as near perfect tokens of coincidence.

Oedipus. The famous/infamous meeting of son and father at the crossroads. Mere chance or fate. The play decides.

Two strangers casting glances in the Metro, become lovers for the journey ahead.

Secular space and time. Sacred space and time. How to relate coincidence to one or both.

Perhaps a poem to begin and end in questioning, No telos driving to a certainty.

--Doug Bolling

HEXAGONAL BRICKS

They are tearing up the sidewalks on the Wagon Path in the Nachalim neighborhood, replacing the hexagonal bricks with the ordinary oblong kind. I don't know if anyone else will miss them. But to me they were like the signature of this place, and like something that said to me, "You belong here."

I don't know if you've ever lived in a place where it seemed as if you were specifically meant to live. It had happened to me twice before.

The first time was in Seattle, in late winter 1971, when I was about to have what I thought of as something like a Native American power vision—I had found a copy of *Black Elk Speaks* in a commune house, where I stayed on first coming to the city. But at that point I felt there was something I must go through by myself. So I found a one-room apartment in a beautiful old white frame house across a wide intersection from the commune house. This closeness to and distance from the commune house helped inspire a story called "[The Island Castle](#)" which still shines for me with the radiance of that first breakthrough.

The second time was in 1973. Back in my home city—Madison, Wisconsin—I decided to rent an apartment in the center of town, in the area around the state capitol building, where all the streets except University Avenue and State Street are named for the signers of the Constitution. In the second or third apartment I looked at, the front wall of the main room was bowed out, so that the room had the shape of an irregular hexagon. That shape spoke to me; at that time I went by the name of Bea (one syllable) and the associations of the creature that builds hexagonal cells—a time-honored symbol of poetry and community—had been brought home to me. Also, the

digits of the house number—419—added to 14, the number of lines in the sonnet; also, my maternal and paternal grandmothers were born on February 14th and July 14th respectively. And finally, the house was the last homely house on a commercial block between University Avenue and State Street. This inspired an essay called "Between University and State," announcing the founding of a poetic academy, which, alas, did not eventuate.

In the 1980's, privileged to live in that most symbolic city, Jerusalem, I made another start at the poetic academy. It flopped again, but the idea kept coming back. In 1993, when I was back in the States, it took the form of a longish poem entitled "[The Hexagon](#)," in which where the vision is mapped onto a building of that shape. By that time I'd noticed that the hexagon is also the central portion of the Star of David, and if the six points stand for six weekdays then the hexagon stands for the Sabbath. In 1998 I wrote a [pamphlet](#) in hopes of recruiting the artistic community to actually build the thing. Six months later, some mogul gave a huge grant for an arts center, which was unfortunately wasted on the construction of a glitzy showplace.

Maybe once the Temple is up, Maschiach will order a Hexagon to be built somewhere in the vicinity? Or maybe it was just the fantasy of a poet on her way to becoming Jewish and, once there, unable to give up her personal *jookim*, as sabras say. But then why all the "signs?" "The way a person wants to go is the way one is led," a rabbi warned me in 1979. But perhaps, pending the arrival of great miracles, these things at least show that there is something more to the world than material relations...

After returning to Israel in 2013, I rented for a while in Maale Adumim, across the wadi from Jerusalem. Some friends advised me to go on renting, but NechamaSaraGila Nadborny-Burgeman, of *The Twelve Dimensions of Israel* fame, was very clear about the spiritual importance of owning real estate in the Land of Israel. One day I visited an artist who lives on the Wagon Path in Nachalim. The Nachalim neighborhood is imaginatively laid out, with arches and passageways and pedestrian paths, so that it does seem a little like one big—hive. Though less than 40 years old, the place has acquired a certain patina, i.e. it is a bit dilapidated. But that's what we used to call "funky" in the '60's and '70's, and I guess some of my aesthetic still derives from that period. I thought: "I could live here."

Three weeks after that visit, I suddenly felt that I HAD to buy an apartment, NOW. I went to the realtor down the street who said, "I have a beautiful apartment for you!" It was in the Kley Shir neighborhood, adjacent to Nachalim and architecturally continuous with it. And of course Kley Shir—where the streets are named for Biblical musical instruments—would be an appropriate address for a poet. The number on the door of the apartment was 18 (I was born on the 18th of

Elul), although the apartment across the hall was #3. It had a balcony, and windows both east and west. Something said to me: "You won't find anything better." It turned out that the previous owner of the apartment had a close connection with the person I had visited three weeks earlier. Walking from my new home to the mall by way of the Wagon Path, I noticed the hexagonal bricks.

The other day, seeing them piled up waiting to be carted off, I asked the workers (to their amusement) if I could take one brick home. I put it on the counter in my kitchen. It isn't exactly decorative, but I wanted it as concrete evidence. Of a sign once given, whatever it may have meant.

— E. Kam-Ron

THEY OFFERED ME LOTS OF MOVIES

Sometimes I try to guess the text I've stumbled into
To insinuate my own text
And once — in a rare hour of courage — I tried to write it

Now in the dark theater I just smile to myself
At each collision, even if painful,
between what is done and what is heard.

— Ruth Blumert
tr. E. Kam-Ron

IV. *Each Word Weighs*

RETURNING THE LIGHT TO POETRY

...response to "[Poetry as Question](#)" by J.E. Bennett

I shall not write, unless I say to you
the pain you feel *is* the light.
The sensitivity to deeper hurt
is what holds above the dirt.
is what rises — sipped surprises —
is your wisdom and defeat
is your sinking for a treat
is redemption — *pain itself*.
Isn't it the one without feeling who can kill
— without conscience — without turning —
without empathy restraining will?
All the while, the substance, style
missed in poetry, reflects most notably
its cultureless world.
The pain you feel *is* the light.

— Ruth Hill

THE TASK

What makes me think that I
could cast a spell with this pen?
Should I even try
to give words wings
that they might fly
beyond the strictures
fusing purpose to plurals,
melding clarity to chaos,
infusing the menial with meaning,
yielding straight-arrow insights?
No — the task is too great,
The monolith, too immovable,
The heart, too cryptic.
No — my ink has run dry.
The world needs a stronger voice,
perhaps a few, who will
stitch wounds with stanzas,
mend souls with meter,
unite random factions with rhyme.

— Connie S. Tettenborn

DAVID

As to whether poetry
should mean a thing, or do,
as opposed to merely be,
David was a poet too:

As his stone was wound and hurled
and his psalms were sung
with an aim to save a world,
so can lines of verse be slung.

Talent's like a flaccid sling
pocketed and pliant
till the poet loads the thing
and shoots down a giant.

— James B. Nicola

TERRACES

Age old terraces hug the hills,
bushes thrive thick,
old fruit trees still bloom,
and striving, barely yield,
small fruit of old age.

The moment will come,
to face mind and mortality

When my body stops
and that fruit of mind,
those lessons lived
and learned are gone.

Will a space remain?
A gap? No! I think not.
So self-important I am not.

On the shelf
some books will stand,
orphaned.

– Michael E. Stone
June 2 2014

TRANSPOSINGS

But poetic creation . . . implies the abolition of
time – of the history concentrated in language – and
tends towards the recovery of the paradisiac, the
primordial situation.

Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*

The children enter the magic forest and become
the carriers of magic.
They write no poetry but live within its enchantments
long lost by earnest parents caught in the rubrics
of supply and demand.

They become the forest and the forest embraces
them in all its strangeness, dark shadows that
reel and writhe, that speak in tongues and
offer no alphabet.

Time changes its costume and makes of a stage
something new, something different.
It no longer obeys a straight line from past
to present to future as taught in schools
upright in sunshine.

The clocks fall apart and future and past
intermingle, join hands with whatever a
present is.
The children become travelers then,
moving back and forth as though

no barriers forbid.
They hear the music of stones
and streams, growls and bleatings
behind the shadows.

They taste unknown fruits and berries,
lie down to sleep the sleep of innocents.
They dream of the magic forest
where nothing is real
but is.

And the poet, the poet too ventures
into the strangeness far removed from
ready made texts and rules.
He seeks out the poem wherever it
waits, far ahead or near as the
flame of a candle by which the
shadows grow and offer
their stories.
He listens for the time
before time.
His pen moves when
it moves.

– Doug Bolling

BETWEEN THE LINES

In matters that relate to the material world, a person
might consider the purpose a person of his actions,
that it might deal with the Almighty and take us to
the Divine" (Pele Yoetz, *The Love of God*)

Each word weighs, each word takes
a step in the right direction. Feet
follow, consider thoughts, concrete,
on after the other, each side breaks

a step in the right direction. Feet
follow the next space, a reason, a break
into another dimension. Makes
a difference beyond, where I sit

Fill the next space, a reason, breaks
the mold and looks for the next,
a difference beyond, where I sit
and reveal what's inside, make the tracks,

the mold, and look for to the meet
thoughts, consider, follow them, concrete,
and reveal the inside, make the tracks,
each word weighs, each word takes.

– Zev Davis

THE BLACK WRITER

cold black words
 corrupt the pale
 virginity of paper
 changing innocence
 dark transforms it from
 Eden, with tiny letters
 that mean something,
 with quick hands, you
 peck the nothingness
 because you are inclined to tell
 the world what's on your mind
 ruining the blank chastity of
 empty whiteness

— Allison Whittenberg

OVID IN EXILE

I see him there on a night like this—
 foggy, cool— the moon blowing
 through black streets.

He sups and walks back to his room.
*(O how slowly, how differently
 one tells the time in Tomis!)*

He sits down at the table.
 (People in exile write so many letters.)
 Now Ovid is weeping.
 Each night about this hour he puts on
 sadness like a garment, drinks
 a cup of undiluted wine.

During the day he is teaching himself
 the local language (Getic)
 in order to compose in it

an epic poem no one will ever read.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

Note: Ovid, in A.D. 8, on the order of Augustus Cesar, was banished to Tomis, on the western shore of the Black Sea. He died there at age sixty in A.D. 18.

THE WHITE LABYRINTH

There is one waiting for you
 on every blank sheet of paper.
 So, beware of the monster
 guarding it— invisible as he charges—
 armed as you are with only a pen.
 And watch out for that girl
 who will come to your aid
 with her quick mind and a ball of thread,
 and lead you by the nose
 out of one maze into another.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

BLACKBOARD & CHALK

I used to do drafts of poems on a blackboard.
 I wrote in large loopy letters. I erased a lot. Which
 makes me think
 of John Ashbery. I watch as he writes (brilliantly)
 on a blackboard with his right hand, while his left, a
 line or two behind,
 erases all that's gone before. Reading him can seem like
 that.

Chalk is particular because it falls apart
 as you are creating. With the chalk on your hand, the
 chalk
 on your clothes, the chalk on your nose
 you look like you've been in a mine digging something
 out.

Some of the first brilliant things I ever learned were
 from somebody
 who had their back to me. They were writing
 on a blackboard and chalk was flying everywhere. So
 the image
 is precious to me of the board and the act
 of giving yourself to that board And then turning
 around.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

RIPOSTE TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS

after *A King and No King*

If I took all that there was of me
 and put it in a box of quiddity,
 would my mirror draw a blank
 and dearth of fame suggest I stank?
 You, my liege, have known success
 above what's called eximious.
 Your rank transcends all that I've reigned,
 or ever will— that's preordained.
 Adulations won't serve here;
 from me they would seem petty, insincere.
 Accomplishments like yours cannot be praised;
 they're too advanced, I'm too amazed.
 And would you pity me, who's fallen so far short,
 that I might as well cashier my next effort?
 No doubt you'd be magnanimous,
 for who could not be covetous?
 I read your works, preparing my dismay;
 expecting Shakespeare, or perhaps Dante.
 What I saw looked small, and wanted grace
 which proves that I don't know my place.
 So, sirrah, while I can't impugn
 your résumé, I'd just as soon
 retain what's mine, and who I am,
 than prize all yours, which seems a sham.

— Craig Kurtz

COVER LETTER

Just in case you think I am not astute enough
to intuit why you return my poem/s—
I can see you sequestered behind (preprinted) rejection
slip
like God behind columns of cloud—
here are five good reasons:

1. I love the way God weaves in
and out of our affairs
leads me like a lover
longing for lost unity
to undreamed of boundaries
that break out of bounds
to discover fresh redemptive language
Your instructions to authors denounce religion
Does that include God?

2. I am tired of
a. poems set in minutiae
a subtext growing thinner
the poem as direct access to banal reality
washing a dish
Chicago near the Lake
steamy summer of 1989
your hands in water
staring back at you like someone else's hands
slumped against sink
memories of your mother's
remarks on your posture
when you washed dishes in Hartford, Connecticut 1974
b. advice about writing a poem
write in willingness to discard everything
clean out the attic?
add a quirky element
an ontological room?
No! resist dogma
at all times be free
of the imprisoning self
an attic with revolving door?
you may be self-referential but only if you are mocking
always demonstrate that poetry makes good politics
recycle junk in attic?
stay safe in endless duplication

3. I am a Jew prefer that to Jewess
I practice an ancient religion
don't get me wrong I am American I munched popcorn
during the Ten Commandments
accepted the oddly believable idea that Charleton
Heston's jaw controlled two nations
he controlled my breathing at twelve
I know self-deprecating Jewish fiction sells and sells but I
am not that kind of Jew
WHAT OTHER KIND IS THERE? you ask.

your question consigns me to yet another margin:
with whom do I conduct literary dialogue?
the avant garde progress
but like stodgy pilgrims slowly slowly slowly
through miles of decon-
struc-
tion
their ritual stance:
snooty-slick-over-slouchy-doubtful

4. I find that I can resist transitions
I cannot resist conclusion
endings are unfashionable
like Ecclesiastes
they suggest a map beneath the cosmos
destination and destiny
sins of commission everybody knows
alienation is where it's at

—Judy Belsky

MY BEST FRIENDS ARE BOOKS: A LOVE LETTER
TO LITERATURE

I've known a lot of people
but I like them best as books;
humanity dependable
and honest, scorning rooks.
'Tis curious how 'real people'
can shift and disconcert;
they're indecisive, oft faithless—
suppositions controvert.
No sooner than I place my trust
in human nature, vows or oaths,
consistency and fealty
will 'evolve' and don new clothes.
The people that I thought I knew
so often prove irregular;
when surety gets puts to trust
the denouement will fain demur.
Then is it not astonishing
how characters called 'fictional'
can be relied upon to vaunt
relations more reliable.
Whenever people say one thing
then mean another (howe'er remote),
books will never counterfeit—
their word is bonded by a quote.
And, best of all, books do forbear
tergiversations and miscues;
when all confusions palliate,
they dote on you, and disabuse.
Friends are necessary
to make life more meaningful;
but people are perfidious
while books are sane and stable.
You can have your dramas,

inconsistencies and friends;
I'm content with mine –
the ones who live between bookends.

– Craig Kurtz

MY ROBOT WROTE THIS POEM

My robot had the audacity
to write this poem and then
sign my name to it!
Hey!
Who really wrote this poem anyway?
The person who built the robot?
The robot?
Or me the person who
owns the robot?
Or was it a shared enterprise?

If my robot itself wrote this
(some fried egg and coffee stains on the writing pad
leftover from his breakfast after he was upgraded to
First Class
on the 7am shuttle)
then I state unequivocally that I did not share in it and
it doesn't qualify
as a poem and has no genuine feelings:
A robot's feelings are not genuine because
a robot does not have an own self to generate or to re-
spond with feelings
(maybe a pseudo self but not an actual human self)
Any "feelings" in its poem are
creations of an algorithmic thesaurus of human-like
feelings –
not from real feelings

My robot is not a twenty-first century slave:
I take care to offer him a plentiful, environmentally
friendly diet –
I provide solar cells
and non-GPS manna fresh daily and according to his
flavor preference
He joins my family at all meals;
Upon Jubilee my robot will be
set free from robot status
unless he had his earlobe pierced and has opted to
serve as my robot for his lifetime

Each week's winning poem is displayed for six days
(not on Shabbat)
on the outside skin of the fuselage just forward of
the right fin –
That is one hundred forty four revolutions –
after which another robot/owner's poem gets a chance

O.K. Let's say I don't object to being a
conjoint poet-of-record;
So what did my bloody robot write?
Does it matter?

More fragile than Bach's Brandenburg Concerto which
was etched on the outside of
NASA Voyager
and now consigned to an infinity
of intergalactic wandering,
a winning poem would be erased
by the friction albeit minimal from space dust
and no chance for earth beings to reclaim

Then my robot proceeded to argue that the emotions
he felt were just as real as my human
emotions;
Unlikely.
Unlikely that robot-feelings mature or change over its
lifespan
in the same way that a person's emotions mature or
change
over time.

Now I took control:
"Write a poem about G-d," I challenged
"Repeat command."
"Yes, write a poem about G-d."
"Advise other name."
"G-d has seventy names –
"Which name do you want?"
"Advise other name"
Stubborn sonofa...

"Ad-nai, Kadosh, Akatsh, E-l, Elokaï, Yud Key Vav
Key..."
"Not know how to..."
"Just say it!"
"...pronounce letters"
"Recognize no feeling never feeling where feeling; feel-
ing cold..."
(Circuit overload; pacemaker racing; puffs of smoke;
orange rays flashing
from robot's head)
"No understand."
Silence.

"Silence is the residue of fear"¹
"Fear inspires awe"
"All"

(malfunction in Speech Recognition Directory:)

"Awe not all "

Maybe one day G-d will introduce a minor reorganization

within that which is unchanging –
to permit a better understanding –
until then my robot and I sit together
each pilloried in the stock
of his own consciousness

Please bring us each to his best
clarity
and closer to You

"Join the 'No Understand' Club:

"Nature

"Science

"Only questions...

"No last minute brain soldering

"No seven am space shuttle.

"No beginning without G-d

"No genuine feelings without G-d

"No self without G-d

"No poem without G-d

"No place except G-d

"No love without G-d

"Nothing at all

without G-d."

"Understand."

My robot sinks down stiffly to pray on bended aluminum knees...

"No, your robot brain lies to you –

"You will never be able to 'understand' – to feel G-d's presence,

never really pray to Him

or believe in Him.

"You cannot fake belief

(tho' some try)

"Moreover you will never understand that you will never understand –

"G-d as truth is

the forever enigma

"Twelve, thirteen or more dimensions
of string theory compacted into super symmetry M-theory

or any new theory that comes along
will always conspire to
hide G-d's force

(which is universal and subatomic at the same time)
or else falsely identify it
as science

theory or Nature;

catacombs of exploration –

"The very state of His hiddenness admits the cause and
indeed possibility of

His everywhere power and existence:

"The drive to understand..."

No, neither robot nor emotions

neither poem nor science can understand;

and neither do i.

– Theone and Robot

Jerusalem

¹Clint Smith, Phrase from speech "The danger of silence,"
TED@NYC transcript, July 2014.

[BIRDS OF DISPARATE FEATHERS: A CONFUCIAN
CALL FOR COMMONWEALTH]

Come, come, you peng

From the Zhuangzian northern darkness

You swan from the Horatian meadows

You pheasant from under Li Bo's cold moon

You oriole from Dufu's green willow

You dove from the Dantean inferno

You phoenix from Shakespeare's urn

You swallow from the Goethe oak or

The Nerudan dense blue air, you cuckoo

From the Wordsworthian vale, you albatross

From the Coleridgean fog, you nightingale

From the Keatsian plum tree, you skylark

Form the Shelleyan heaven, you owl

From under the Baudelairean overhanging years

You unnamed creature from the Pushkinian alien lands

You raven from near Poe's chamber door

You parrot from the Tagorean topmost twig

And you crows from among my cawing words

Come, all of you, more than 100 kinds of

Birds from every time spot or spot moment

Come, with your light but strong skeletons

Come, with your hard but toothless beaks

Come, with your colored feathers, and flap your wings

Against Su Dongpo's painting brush strokes

Come, all you free spirits of nature

Let's join one another and flock together

High, higher up towards mabakoola*

– Changming Yuan

*the term 'mabakoola' is a word invented for the earthly paradise i have built for myself and those who would share with me in the world of poetry. (C.Y.)

V. *Dark Wings*

MESSAGES

The tide lifts shoreward,
swift and sure below the
moon's command.

I watch to see if my walls
of sand will hold or fail.
Only the sea knows and it
speaks in tongues not words.
I have been told flux is all
things earthly, perhaps beyond.

In gathered darkness I squat
below the bluffs hearing the
slow drip of rainwater on
ageless stone..

Rain and the passings of a life
mine.
Seconds become minutes
become hours, vanish.
The mystery of it as though
something unknown calling out
to just these moments.

All my life I have reached for
the secret home of time.
How it looms in its invisible
sheath,
How it make no sound.
How it moves among spaces
and objects like a ghost,

Years ago I came here to be
with my beloved.
We built sand towers and moats.

We built a fire to hear the music
of flame in the thickness
of night.

We swam far out to meet the
ocean's call.
Only one returned to this
poor shadow of shore.

When I dare ask how love
and death arrived here at the
same time I find no answer.
I the memorist with only
words to conjure.

—Doug Bolling

PRAYER

Prayer
is the main thing,
with or without words
from the heart.

Monitor bleeps
of life
show in up and down
mountains and valleys

Then one long line begins the infinite trip.

—Hayim Abramson

In remembrance of Tuvia Abramson, z" l,
our grandson. He was about a year and a half old
when he died several years ago at Chanukah time.

DARK WINGS

My mother and father lie next to each other
in white marble beds close to the sunlit sands
of the Mediterranean.

There is grief there always will be
a fresh pool of tears in the ground. Every day
code words in the wind expect to be deciphered

and even though we all turn to dust and ashes,
there surely is an afterlife as I don't have to remind you
how personal is the message in the bird's song over a
grave.

We don't have that many words for the wonder
of her dark wings continuously outspread to catch the
light,
bringing to life the precious love story of the dead we
miss.

—Gretti Izak

in the end

the calligraphy of strain and illness
vanishes like disappearing ink
your skin is lit from within
as if you anticipate a new story
is it hidden in folds of shrouds?

early on, someone names you
named, the tight husks that bind your DNA are re-
leased
you expand, meld with your talent
but confusion strikes

you hide
lost in translation
with no bridge of words
you create and hide
hide and create

now a second naming takes place
you march out of your tired body
bold, you spring forward
out of the shadows
as if there never were secrets

the banal the petty spite and rage fall away
they inter easily among inert stones

in perfect relief
like stars against an incredibly clear night
you appear with no anxiety
you reach up and in one swift motion arrange constel-
lations
everything makes sense now

your facets and tiers crown you
like the twelve stones around Jacob's head

you leave
in the exact instant we get to know you

you get to sleep
safe from wars and tiresome journeys
we almost envy you

– Judy Belsky

SAFTA

Could we really do that?
The clock was
Racing against us, how
Knowing that she
Was ill and likely wanted
us, How could we not do it?

Do it?
Packing up food, clothes and all that,
Was not what I wanted,
Erev yom Kippur was
For pondering and preparing Yet she
Needed us, and how.

I don't know how
We managed it
it was she
Who was meant to come here, that
Fever stopping her was
Not what anyone wanted

We took all that was wanted
Stuffing the car to the gills somehow
Travelling to Yerushalayim, how strange it was
Kol nidrey tonight- who could believe it?
Davenning in a strange shul, who could imagine that?
Yet all we could think was "How is she?"

It was she,
Who we all wanted.
She who taught us all that
You always give no matter to whom or why or how
Giving and loving, that is it,
That is who she was.

And now she is a was
And now we can only remember who was that 'she'
And now we can see it,
That hard but beautiful last day was what she wanted
And now we can see how,
We were drawn by the nose to Yerushalayim to create
that

For it was her family's last caress
She really wanted
Hashem gave her that and hindsight showed us how.

– Batya Jacobs

THE VINEYARD

The corn has turned to thistle, the apples
into mold – and gone the plow,
the seed, the sickle, the ewe to the pail,
press to the grapes; for a man's grief
for the death of his wife has let
a land once fertile fall to waste,
and on this haggled earth he drops
his tears and waters it in vain.

And yet, how strangely beautiful
this spent soil with its brunt of shadow
and spillages of light. The soul
that earns its sustenance in such
a place, toils in a vineyard built
on bones and finds what will suffice.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

and the mariner said... *best be getting on*

Feel it coming to an end;
skin swells; water swells;
but where can old bottles go?
It was heading hard for you;
lichened bark on clear sap; it was
wrapping up for you; autumn
leaves on winter seas; it was
breaking down for you. It's time

for time to pass,
 for you,
 at last.

— Rosa Walling-Wefelmeyer

THE ROSE GARDEN

The rose garden where
my mother walks
has fallen into disarray,
and yet how lovely
she appears, how young!
Her dark hair
shimmers in the sun.

How passionate the imprint
of a dream, how soon
the seeing of it fades—
although inside my heart
droplets of the sweetness
that was born of it remain.

Then, little by little,
all dissolves, melts
like snow in Spring; or,
like the Sibyl's prophecies,
scatter in the wind.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

[Note: Virgil's Cumaean Sibyl wrote her oracles on tree leaves, arranged and kept aside in a certain order. When anyone approached the Sibyl's cave to read them, the leaves were disturbed by winds that lifted them into chaos.]

A FRAGRANCE IN THE AIR

The tail end of sunset
yellow-reds the sky,
the trees silhouette
on the ridge.

In the quiet house
the ceiling fan hums,

and the shutter
bars the bright lamp outside

and I am alone now
as I talk to the Apple,
write, write, write,
the world's without.

It's empty here,
it's void, voided,
and the tail end
of her life

barely lingers
as memory of
a fragrance
in the air.

— Michael E. Stone
28 July 2013

23RD PSALM

"We'll meet again" didn't comfort
me when my father was lowered
into Long Island's red clay soil.
How could it ease me now as
I'm an old woman and he died
a young man? If I believed these
words meant a physical presence
I'd feel despair because he'd
be searching for a college co-ed
barely twenty, and certainly
couldn't 'find' me. Each of my
offspring are older than the calendar
years he'd had! Recently, at the
funeral of a friend, I heard this
expression. Searching faces,
I wondered who truly accepted
that possibility; were any, seated
before the pine box, soothed by the
phrase? Then, as the smooth
wood rolled from this chapel,
I understood 'soul'. Perhaps
there is no concept of age and we
might meet again. For emotional
strength, the spoken word "we'll"
should be substituted with a
meaningful term 'souls'.

— Lois Greene Stone

[untitled]

Her shadow takes you by the hand
though darkness once laid in the wound
soaks through, festers
while the sea comes and goes
looking for more water
carries away the dead
mistaken for waves
for these cars whose lower beams
are honed on the curve coming in
for the kill, row by row
closer and closer, pass after pass
all night circling in pairs

— it's your shadow now
looking in your eyes, is sure
you are too far from morning
can't make it back
though the headlights overheat
chased off by the poisonous froth
from your mouth — it's your shadow
that helps you yell
the way an invisible anchor
is lowered and at twelve each night
splashes across the dry grass
half seaweed half on its side
calling up one mouthful at a time
to hold the sea fast and your hand.

— Simon Perchik

VI. *Not on the News*

NOTHING ADDED

“May my heart fulfill Your laws that I will never be
ashamed” (Ps. 119:80)

It's all there
in the package,
nothing too fancy. A plain,
wrapping, not ostentatious.
The outside

The same as
the inside. Yes,
according to the way
the Manufacturer made it,
and it works

all the time.
Every morning
I open it, lay it down,
arrange the parts as per the rules

and I go

through the day,
know what to do
where I find myself, and
never confused. Everything's clear
before me,

understood,
no problems, and
it's fine. It's fair, it's good.
They explain unexpected things,
yet, even so,

no matter,
it's no bother
to anyone, even me.
At the close of the day
I retire.

— Zev Davis

THE COVERING

The moment at which everything stops
always begins at the end of the search
I hold in my hand the long piece of cloth
the way one grasps a child so he won't get lost
I step into my inner sanctum
stand before a mirror cracked
like a land thirsty for water that drinks its inhabitants.
My image silent like a singer with sealed lips
a moment before the note, a moment before the kind-
ness
and it's as if my body begins to dance
broken movements
all too familiar.
All my curls, shaken free, are laughing
exuding lightness and fragrance
to the point of deceit, to the point where the sun's rays
turn,
dripping gold at my delayed visit
I let them play with me, with my wishes
like two- or four-year-old yelling children
a last glance
like eyes that follow the beloved till he disappears over
the horizon
like a bird looking at summer a moment before the de-
sired journey.
And then I submit
I gather them one by one
like a shepherd guiding his flock
slowly wind a snail shape
now it kisses my head
tight and silent
I choose a few folds to surround my face, to caress my
skin
and flutter with the wind
so that I'll know, just so that I'll know

I take a ribbon, it establishes the humility that I don't
 have
 it covers some of the haughtiness and also some of the
 light
 it's time, the moment when everything stops has ar-
 rived
 my hands with the scarf, the center point
 like the point to which I belong, one and precise
 I spread my hands like a priestly blessing
 place them on my head, set it firmly,
 as if I had wrapped myself in compassion
 covering my innocence with a faded colorfulness
 I've used more than once
 covering my hair
 like a blessing on the fruits of the garden
 and there is a caress from right to left and a caress from
 left to right
 like the crossed hands of Jacob
 I am now marvelously precise
 I carry my head my freedom
 a gentle knot, not tight
 brings time back to its bad habits
 I am a lily.

—Shira Mark-Harif
 tr. E. Kam-Ron

[untitled]

Get up in the morning, go to work
 Write precise lines
 Watching
 Every letter, comma and period;
 In the afternoon—play,
 Draw smiles on a baby's face,
 String big round rhymes
 That roll with laughter into corners
 The children gather them with their little hands
 Astonished by the sounds.
 In the evening curl up
 Between soft words and long spaces
 And then fall asleep
 In front of a heap of blank pages.

—Chani Fruchtman
 tr. E. Kam-Ron

THE SPARK

For now I'm in the tunnel
 No thief crawls toward me
 The moles and the bats have withdrawn into them-
 selves
 And an unsympathetic spider spins in the entrance
 The ants that climb on me
 I remove with care
 They are capable of a sticky friendship
 I wait for a foot that will tear the webs

Distant echoes of hooves
 Things rustle by overhead
 I'm buried alive
 The spark within me is more patient than the ants
 Richer than any firefly
 When I'm not listening to the sounds
 I talk with it
 As with my God
 And it does not answer, but listens.

—Ruth Blumert
 tr.: EC

LOVE STORY

Once a couple kissed,
 both went to work for the day
 but wasn't on the news.

—Hayim Abramson

THE WOODEN TRUCK

Just a wooden truck
 little but the only one.
 It was the toy I had
 and it was gone.

I am old now
 my wife bought cars
 of wood—I lighted up—
 Ah! that little one—let it be mine!

—Hayim Abramson

A PARABLE & A PARABOLA

Parabolic: [1] of or like a parabola, and / or [2] allegorical.

She never flunked out; she was a B-minus, C-plus,
 C-minus student. Her one "F" was in French, and
 wasn't an "F" anyhow the capital letter of "French"?
 He never came close to flunking out--a strictly B-plus,
 B-minus student.

He was *Pareve*—neither *Milchig* nor *Fleishig*.

They intersected in that B-minus territory—he not
 too brilliant and she not too dull. Her father: Head
 Professor of Physics at a Top-Ten University in the
 Mid-West. His father: top physicist for The Govern-
 ment, rumored to have been with The Manhattan At-
 om Bomb Project, previously living in the desolated
 deserted distant Los Alamos—a rumor, for sure.
 There were hush-hush stories how his parents secret-
 ly imported a *Mohel* from far-away Chicago on a very
 circuitous route—for sure non-direct—out to Arizona
 or New Mexico to do a circumcision on a First Born
 Son, as no outsider should know about their deep top
 secret underground warrens of Building-the-Bomb
 activities. The baby boy himself barely had a Bar
 Mitzvah thirteen years later, coming from an almost-

assimilated family ...

She & He – wealthy suburbanite junior-high “temple” non-Kosher Jewish youth group sweethearts, dated each other exclusively and virtuously all through high school, engaged the first year of college, married a year later. She, the college drop-out, not a flunk-out, but hanging in there with her C-pluses and B-minuses, so that at least he’d finish his B.A. They never spoke of math or money as their well-off parents were footing the bill and all expenses paid for the three grandchildren born within five years of the young marriage.

I was making my way, half-way cross-country U.S.A., East Coast to Mid-West, to inwardly silently say good-bye to my Stateside birthplace before immigrating back to my Holy Land Homeland.

Friends of friends of mine set me up for Sabbath hospitality with this off-campus couple, so seemingly phlegmatic, whose passions poured forth into their progeny. Not an easy handful – the eldest kid wasn’t necessarily retarded, but was terribly clumsy and slow. The middle one, bright but hyperactive, seemed neither diagnosed nor drugged. Third one – *nebbach* – a beautiful baby, seemed perfect, but I was shocked to hear afterwards that the baby had Tay-Sachs disease and was edging towards degeneration and a very likely shortened life-span. I sucked in my breath, envisioning the young couple, childhood sweethearts, younger than I, maybe having to sit *Shivah* for their beautiful and beloved child, a few years henceforth. By then I would be terribly busy as a young social worker in Jerusalem in a hospital during the 1973 Israeli *Yom Kippur* War ...

Their old wooden frame house – bought by their parents as a joint wedding present for their “college kids” – had seen better days. It was fixed up but superficially so. I nearly tripped on their thick shaggy wall-to-wall carpet and hugged my shoulders to keep warmer. Their home was warm in a family way, but chilly in a drafty way. The husband / father came home from Sabbath Eve prayers elated and defeated, a B-minus, B-plus, B.A. Student.

His eldest ran in slow motion, the middle one at high speed, and the youngest kicked in cuddly booties with feet that wouldn’t be running in a few years.

The other guest – a younger undergraduate – and I, patiently waited while our hostess set the table, as she wouldn’t accept help from first-time guests, though I offered to do so. The man of the household finally made *Kiddush* after struggling in a monotone to sing *Shalom Aleichem* to the angels and “A Woman of Valor” to his wife whose wig was dangling at a dangerous angle off her tired pretty baby-face with dark circles under her eyes. Jump-starting they were, from non-observant Jewish country-club bagel-and-lox university-educated families to becoming born-again borderline early 1970’s rural state-capital small-town

American *Chassidim*.

We all traipsed back and forth over the shaggy carpet, over the old wooden saggy floorboards for our ritual hand-washings, after *Kiddush* over Kosher wine. Host and hostess were struggling to be grown-ups as their minds wandered back to their meeting as overgrown children at age 14, a decade earlier: then without *Kiddush*, without libations, without *motsei lechem* over the *challah* raisin-breads, without Kosher cuisine, without *Mikveh*, without Hebrew, without Sabbath or Sabbath guests, without a *Kehillah*, without daily prayers, without the monthly New Moon, without benedictions over all foods, without wigs, without wall-to-wall carpets on saggy floors.

Soup time finally came.

Our hostess dutifully and lovingly served her husband, bypassing their mildly fussy baby in the high-chair, another one running berserk, and another one wandering aimlessly in a tipsy way. I offered to serve the other guest and the hostess finally compromised and let me serve myself, which was a struggle over the carpet on a wobbly floor with cluttered toys. She then rushed to serve the guest his clear broth in a broad shallow china bowl, as fast as a tired young woman could rush, and in a tiny split-second while she maneuvered the saggy floor, his whole serving sailed out of the bowl in a perfect parabola through the heated chilly air onto and into the shaggy carpet, unknown to the lady of the house whose eyes were fixed elsewhere. She plodded along rapidly, her wig flopped precariously and she quietly and quickly set the empty bowl in front of the undergrad, while he and I somehow successfully did not gasp out loud. The host was busy with his soup and his soup nuts, unseeing the whole scenario. The hostess, also unseeing, gracefully sat down to have her serving. The guest had an empty but damp bowl set before him.

He and I rapidly flickered our eyes back and forth at each other as he quickly tilted his empty bowl towards his whitened face and pretended to slurp down his serving at high speed to finish his soup before it “cooled down.” I did the same with my real serving.

Our Sabbath dinner continued uneventfully ... Later, the husband and wife stumbled competently to put their kids to sleep while we guests cleared the table.

Shabbat Shalom, ministering angels of peace. Come again and go again, Angels of Peace. Come again, curve again, bend about again; form parabolas round about again-round about last week, this week, next week too; last year, this year, next year too.

Last Life, This Life, Next Life too.

– Sue Tourkin Komet

VI. *Orders to Live*

IN THE FRONT YARD*

on a splintering stool –
she sits
coarse brown wool dress
speckled with the dirt
of just-picked potatoes

takes each one
from the wheelbarrow beside her
wipes with a damp rag
and drops into the dented pot
on the ground
by her bare feet
hidden by ragged hem
her swish-plop movements
a rhythm

wind blows red –
opens the gate with a crack!
“Where are your sons”
two policemen invade
thundering

potato in hand
“I have sent them to study in a far away city,”
she brags,
“you’ll never get them”
she sneers
“foolish old woman,”
they yell,
wipe the dust from their sleeves
and retreat.

rhythm broken,
she continues to wipe off the dirt
deliberately
from each potato
as her two young sons play quietly
beneath her dress
draped in folds around the stool –
the dirt and pebbles around her hem.

A white chicken clucks
And scratches behind them.

–Mindy Aber Barad

* based on true story about a friend’s great-grandmother in
eastern Europe.

OF NARRATORS

A first-person narrator
is telling a story
about the thirty-six righteous men
upon whom the world stands
– the world that can be transformed
when one acquires a holy state of mind
and designs a bridge between worlds.

When Rabbi Steinsaltz gives a lesson,
one can barely hear his voice.
One word is hanging from the ceiling,
one word is perched on a book like
a bright-faced bird but they all connect
and electrify the atmosphere.

Are ideas conduits of electricity?
Always lightening up a room also
the ever predictable revolutions of the clock

like wind power
like the ferocity of the warrior
always comparable to heroic hegemonies –

that throbbing with transformation.

–Gretti Izak

JACOB’S DAUGHTERS

Jacob took his brother’s blessing,
Leah took her sister’s place,
and Jacob blessed Ephraim first.
And I,
I blessed my daughters
and went to kiss their heads,
first Me’ira Ya’akova, the older,
then Yisraela,
who hugged each other so fiercely,
like Jacob and Esau in the womb
or Jacob and the angel,
that my first kiss
landed on the younger one.
And with that kiss,
they became Jacob’s daughters
as surely as Dina.

–Ken Seide

"All Israel has a place in the world to come." –
Tractate Sanhedrin 90a – Pirkei Avot (Sayings of the
Fathers)

All Israel has a place in the world to come
All Israel: the old man with his staff, the nimble, the
young
The one who shrieks in the night, the one cast down
and numb
The one who is eloquent, whose phrases pour from his
tongue
The one dressed in black, the deaf, the dumb
The one whose dark eyes belie her smile
The trekker, the traveler, the constant wanderer, mile
after mile
The one we meet by chance, the one who is late
The one we welcome to our home, the stranger at the
gate
The young man blessed with wealth and serendipity
The woman of valor, of strength and generosity
The secret embezzler, the pious, the fool
The sinner who believes he's the exception to the rule
The ugly, the grey, the wounded in body or soul
The wakeful mother, the childless aunt, the short and
the small
The homeless lost in the city, the farmer lost in despair
The brave soldier back from war, the one who suc-
cumbed to fear
Each one sharing the same doom – to face death, de-
mise and eternity
All Israel has a place in the world to come: so it is writ-
ten, so we say
But, pray, do tell:
Do they all have a place in this world as well?

– Brenda Appelbaum-Golani
24 June 2015

I DIDN'T WANT TO GRAPPLE

I didn't want to grapple
With their ghosts
Who spoke Dutch / Hebrew
Those Israeli / Euro
Immigrant / Sabras
Struck down that sweltering-hot August in the
Melting-pot / smelting-hot
Pizza-shop
S'barro.

Yes – them – the parents and three
Of their numerous children
Yes – he – the father – who an un-injured nearby
Eye-witness heard
The father calmly lead his wife and children in
The "S'hma Yisrael" as they all

Together
Breathlessly
Altogether
Bled to death.

I didn't want to grapple with their ghosts
But yesterday "they" were my hosts – as I was the
Shabbat sleep-over guest in their
Made-over mansion now rented out to
Others.

Every doorknob I touched
All the water I flushed
All the dust I didn't dust
All the rust I ignored
All the locks I locked – and un-locked –
Made me grapple.

Jacob wrestled the Angels at Beit-El – and I –
I wrestled with Neshamot from S'barro's hell.

– Sue Tourkin Komet

ELEGY ON THE WINGS OF A DOVE

Her flight is not the eagle's
high over the hills of Judea.
Too small for heroics,
hear her coo at sunrise
beating short wings,
pictured everywhere
carrying an olive branch.

But is the branch ever picked up?
Every year I find myself
in a labyrinth,
not the Greek of minotaur fame
where one can retrace steps and
sail home on wide white ships

but one where I tread
a clumsy dirt-road coiled
like a viper inside
an astronaut's capsule
where my brief glimpses
of landings shake, shift,
defuse suspense and disappear.

You're jammed inside the labyrinth
the dreams of peace shattered

the wings of doves outside
tap-tapping against the window.

– Gretti Izak

ISRAEL, ISRAEL!

Israel, Israel
Land of my hopes
Land of my dreams
Land of extremes

Israel, Israel
Why won't you wait?
For fears to abate
To part at your seams

Yaakov, Yaakov
Fear that you played to
Fear that then made you
Rebel in distress

Yaakov, Yaakov
A road less travelled
A secret unravelled
Where more is much less

A war of fear
Versus stubborn action
A land of starkness
Resistance and traction

Dodging through puddles
Wiping off mud
Demanding my rights
In cautious soundbites

Despite the mistakes
The frustration and lows
Kindness peeps out
From under dark brows

Braving the storm
Without hesitation
Kindness that's raw
In response to frustration

The outer reality
Of prickly sights
Envelops sabra sweetness
Of rainbows and lights

—Chaiya D.

SHEMESH

In 1955, in Jerusalem, when we wanted
to have a good time we trooped to Shemesh,
the squeezed tight eatery, where we shared
our food and heard the whisper of each "I love you".
Love and humus make good companions, though I never
believed love edible and perishable in those days.

With time Shemesh moved to the sunny side
of the street, became posh and elegant
and like all grand restaurants serves filet mignon
and fancy hors d'oeuvres. When I walk in, Shemesh
greet me warmly and shows me the newest sun paintings
or sculptures that embellish his restaurant, for in Hebrew
Shemesh means sun.

I nod my head in admiration but always ask:
Where is the sun of our youth hiding in these days of terror,
the sun of Joshua who said: Sun, keep shining in Gibeon so
the people can see if an enemy is approaching.

—Gretti Izak

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO MY WORST ENEMY

"Palestinian violence is a justified popular uprising."
(President Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the
Palestinian Authority)

So you think you're Gavrillo Princep that prowls
the streets of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, off and running,
to look for occupiers, to show your cunning,
your mighty auto, your shiny blade, as rout
that Hatfield, has to be neutralized. You, McCoy

forever. This turf is not theirs, It's a ploy,
I came here, I dreamed to take away
What your God Almighty conquered. Whatever I say,
as I wait for a bus, I'm cursed. You destroy
one more cipher in your struggle. I know why.

Your wisemen tell you how I darken the sky
with clouds of infidelity. I blot the land,
the ladies go about shameless, don't understand,
faithless men speak heresies. You cry
the way they hold you for hours at check points, a
crime

that I remain here. Yes, I admit the time
I spend upon this land is an unlawful act,
a valid reason, you feel to make an attack.
If you had an army it would be sublime,
you've seen it in Rome how Titus carried me off

you'd like to shatter my shop window. Still not
 enough,
 do what they did then, what they do to those
 that don't belong, that dispute, that you who chose
 your Almighty God that chose you to snuff out the
 stuff
 of me. It doesn't figure. I always thought

Whoever made me and you is the same. I'm taught.
 I disagree with you, you know. I know, so it is
 far too long, I try to make sense of this,
 yet, for some reason I don't exist. You wrought
 a ghost on a map with a subtitle etched with a knife

and an automobile aimed at me, at my life.
 Guess I'm a zombie, a Syrian fossil that's left,
 a cheeky skeleton, dry bones, not quite bereft
 come flesh and bone, an affront. You strive
 with shouts, and photoshops, and crowds, a mass

opinion that reads how you suffer, a class,
 malcontents oppressed by boll weevils that want a
 home.

As you go out with home-made weapons and roam
 the streets, to take me on, I let your blood—
 I couldn't help it. I guess it's my fault you're dead.

—Zev Davis

PRESSURE

i sd
 there sd be no illegal Jewish settlements in Yehuda &
 Shomron
 b/c
 it sd not be illegal for Jews to settle in Yehuda &
 Shomron

she sd
 a lot of people disagree w/you

i sd
 right
 IS disagrees w/me
 lkws
 Al Qaeda
 Hamas
 Fatah
 Obomber
 BDS
 the EU
 Amnesty International & let's-pretend-to-do-gooders
 of every stripe & description incl
 a few local variants
 the Israeli left

& even some who call themselves
 "center"

from all around the black oily wave
 rolls inward

all together now
 SAY

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO LIVE IN YEHUDA AND
 SHOMRON

oh & btw

G-d is

our

G-d

push back

—E. Kam-Ron

AN OCTOBER DAY IN JERUSALEM

A cacophony of sirens
 rips the air.

My three-year-old thinks it is music
 and while police and medics tend
 the stabbed
 and murdered
 a minute away
 he continues to play
 in the park.

—Ruth Fogelman

TESHUVUH

Adam,
 whose blood is all relation,
 his blood denied,
 came the Muselmann,
 the un-human, unspeaking,
 un-being, head an unlit
 bulb, disconnected, hands
 mere utensils, Mengele's
 dream of perfection in horror.

That artist of suffering,
 the wound whose only cure
 is home, where Eve waits
 with Shekinah in binding light,
 under old, old orders to live.

—Sean Lause

[Note: This issue is posted close to the anniversary of the massacre at the Rav Kook Yeshiva, which claimed the lives of eight outstanding youths who are remembered in the heartbreaking and inspiring book *Princes Among Men* (Feldheim). We publish the following poem as a tribute to these eight unforgotten ones, and to those whose names – 33 as of this writing since October – have been added to the roll of kedoshim who are listed in reverse chronological order at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Terrorism/victims.html>. – The Editors]

IN MEMORY OF THE EIGHT VICTIMS OF MERKAZ HARAV KOOK MASSACRE
 Too Sad! Forever Glad We Had You! Never Letting Go! *By Evelyn Hayes, Author of the Plague Series.*
Thursday, March 6, 2008

Doron Mehereta, 26, of Ashdod
 Ro'i Rote, 18, of Elkanah in Samaria (Shomron)
 Yonadav Haim Hirschfeld, 19, of Kokhav HaShachar (Shomron)
 Yochai Lipshitz, 18, of the Old City of Jerusalem
 Yonatan Yitzchak Eldar, 16, of Shilo (Shomron)
 Neriah Cohen, 15, of Jerusalem
 Segev Pniel Avichayil, 15, of N'vei Daniel in Gush Etzion
 Avraham David Moses, 16, of Efrat, Gush Etzion

Eight Lives splattered into their Holy Books
 Life Blood into Books of Life.
 Eight young Jewish lives,
 loving,
 loved by parents, family, relatives, friends, classmates, school, neighbors, nation, HASHEM.
 Eight young loving lives, focusing, focused, a focus from such a loss.
 Such a loss: lives gaining, from which we gained,
 a corban consumed, absorbed, forever remaining
 amassing in our midst.
 Such a growing gift ripped away, stymied, a well spring, overflowing into our hearts, our souls,
 a maximum maximized by so much wealth, learning, knowledge, wisdom,
 a yearning to walk in the ways of God.
 Such a gift ripening and now ripe for us to preserve and to preserve us,
 So abruptly ripped away by hate,
 Now realigned to stay a prime factor in our everlasting chain of Zion,
 children of Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, an eternal chain:
 Ro'i, Yonadav Haim, Yochai, Yonatan Yitzchak, Neriah, Segev Peniel, Avraham David,
 Students meriting, a heritage from us, for us, forevermore our heritage, a part of us.

Eight lives will live forever on and we will be their children, will carry on their path,
 the pathways of the Torah, our ancient books, truth, dear G-d.
 Each bullet was meant for every Jew, past and to be born
 and now we will be their bullets and beam their light from G-d.

Eight young lives, devoted to the wisdom of our sages, filled with learning from their pages,
 perfected in an imperfect world that cannot accept the destiny manifest for creating
 and relating all that was meant to be,
 undoing the advancement of our world for personal minimizations and meanness that is meaningless.

Eight young meaningful giving lives never growing old,
 holding so much of the best of our Jewish generations
 to generate Hashem's Laws for the Perfection and Sanctification of His World.
 Eight young lives fathered by the Forefathers, never to father children of their own,
 they will father us, bring us whom the bullets targeted to new heights,
 the hilltop of our souls and hearts,
 the grandiose willed by G-d.

Eight young lives mingled into our nation, us,
 a chizuk for our hearts, a candle for our souls,
 a landscape, a Holy Land to enfold
 Just 15, 16, 18, 19, 26,
 Gifts of G-d,
 Fleeting.

Repeating in our beating hearts are their beings, love, learning, meaning
 Creating in our minds, the Jewish ways, better than all the hating, patronizing, destroying.
 Creating in our souls the flames that make the universe, the energy, good life.

Eight lives lost, thousands, millions, multitudes, a people united, bearing pain in unity.

We live, carrying them as they carry us.

Gaining simcha in carrying on, holding in our arms their expanding beings
 that are making us include them into our very selves,
 in truth with trust

that there will be a thrust that makes our nation a miracle from dust,
 a garden from a dessert,
 a manifestation from infestation,

A blessing from a worthiness that is more than less and more and more,

Keeping our losses, embracing all from their cherished charms, choosing each and every reminder as a binder to keep us
 bound to these

eight young lives, our Jewish children, forefathers, us
 Shema Yisrael, Ani, Atar, Echad.

Commemorating your lives, bigger than you,
 each and each, your best into a better we, us, all, Klal Yisrael.

We cry as you were torn. We cry. You were a joy that was born and we will bear the knowledge of your personality, reality,
 actuality, a blessing blessing on.

Doron Mehereta, 26, of Ashdod

Ro'i Rote, 18, of Elkanah in Samaria (Shomron)

Yonadav Haim Hirschfeld, 19, of Kokhav HaShachar (Shomron)

Yochai Lipshitz, 18, of the Old City of Jerusalem

Yonatan Yitzchak Eldar, 16, of Shilo (Shomron)

Neria Cohen, 15, of Jerusalem

Segev Pniel Avichayil, 15, of N'vei Daniel in Gush Etzion

Avraham David Moses, 16, of Efrat, Gush Etzion

MEMORIAL CANDLE

A dear brother was murdered –
 We set up a memorial candle.
 Jewish blood was shed
 And we lit a candle to remember the absence.

On the walls of Jerusalem
 The roads of Samaria
 The streets of Tel Aviv
 The alleys of Hebron,
 The mountains of Judea
 The gardens of Gush Dan
 The fences of Gaza
 The valleys of the Golan
 The spaces of the Negev

The ovens of Poland

The slopes of Carmel

The settlements of Binyamin

In all these places
 Memorial candles
 Stand by the thousands.

The sun has set
 The darkness has come.
 We need no streetlights to light our way
 For the precious light of the memorial candles
 Is already shining.

– Elyakim Hirshfeld
 tr. EC

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ON LENGTH OF DAYS

*Words fall on me
 on length of days
 with the same pulse
 of verse as on my kayak
 rolling on the bluest sea
 on unexpected hours
 or trekking over back roads
 watching cardinals sing
 over Jacob's ladders
 in an open language
 of seasonal herons
 climbing on mountains
 a woman in red high heels
 tells me she has lost
 her tourist visa and passport
 on the last ship at eventide
 holds my matches
 on the sandy coast
 for a neon campfire
 near my hammock
 out in the neighborhood
 under the town's light
 hearing my sax
 in the white deserted sand
 my words wash over you
 with a butterfly net
 at the freshly painted gazebo
 by the lighthouse luminosity
 in wonder of woodwinds
 over blanket quilts of love
 picking you up
 on my peace arm band.*

—B.Z. Niditch



Shvil HaKronit (The Wagon Path), Nachalim, Maale Adumim



Shvil HaKronit (The Wagon Path), Nachalim, Maale Adumim

IT IS TIME TO CONSIDER

*It is time to consider
 how Domenico Scarlatti
 condensed so much music
 into a few bars
 with never a crabbed turn
 or congested cadence,
 never a boast or see-here;
 and stars and lakes
 echo him and the coppice
 drums out his measure,
 snow peaks are lifted up
 in moonlight and twilight.
 The sun rises
 on an acknowledged land.*

—Constance Rowell Mastores