

# The Deronda Review

a magazine of poetry and thought

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*The Chariot of the Baal Shem Tov, by Yoram Raanan*

**Commentary by Meira Raanan:** The Chariot of the Baal Shem Tov, 100 x 130 cm, acrylic on canvas, was painted in 2008. This surrealistic work depicts an imaginary chariot led by blue horses flying through a fiery sunset. In contrast, the background colors are muted as a cool breeze moves over the pale firmament above. Framed by warm yellow sunlight and below, the red earth looks like it is on fire.

The carriage and horses were fashioned by the free movement of Raanan's hands, and once revealed, needed only to be subtly defined. Working on the wheels of the carriage, repeating the circular motion with his fingers, he created a sense of rapid movement.

"One of the things that amazes me most in creating art is the movement of my hands in the paint; they seem to become like magic wands conjuring up scenes." *Continued p. 43*

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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. \* indicates a page in the "Hexagon Forum" of [www.pointandcircumference.com](http://www.pointandcircumference.com). \*\* indicates a page in the "Kippat Binah" section of the same site.

Hayim Abramson, *Shirat HaNeshamah: Shira letzad mekorot (Song of the Soul: Poetry with Sources)*, Beit El, 2016.

Claudia Gary Annis, *Ripples in the Fabric*, Somers Rocks Press, 1996.

\*\*Yakov Azriel, *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).

Guy Beining, <http://pippotry.blogspot.co.il/2010/06/guy-r-beining.html>. Most recent books: *Inrue* (2008); *Word Pig 1-34* (2010); *Out of the Wood into the Sun* (Stockholm: Kamini Press, 2011); *nozzle 1-36* (Rockford, Michigan: Presa:S: Press, 2011)

\*\*Esther Cameron, *Western Art and Jewish Presence in the Work of Paul Celan: Roots and Ramifications of the "Meridian" Speech* (Lexington Books, 2014); *Collected Works* (6 vols.), Of the Essence Press 2016.

Sara deBeer, <http://storydebeer.com/>

Heather Dubrow, *Forms and Hollows*, Cherry Grove Collections, 2010.

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

George Held, *Bleak Splendor* (Muddy River Books, 2015) and *Phased II* (Poets Wear Prada, 2016)

Jane Herschlag, [poetryjane.com](http://poetryjane.com), [photographyjane.com](http://photographyjane.com), [http://poetryjane.com/poetryjane/Tearing\\_Off\\_The\\_Covers\\_Video.html](http://poetryjane.com/poetryjane/Tearing_Off_The_Covers_Video.html) (memoir)

Paul Hostovsky's books include *Selected Poems* (FutureCycle Press, 2014), *Hurt into Beauty* (FutureCycle Press, 2012).

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).

Sheila Golburgh Johnson, *After I Said No, Shared Sightings* (an anthology of bird poetry).

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

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

James B. Nicola, <https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola/poetry>, *Manhattan Plaza* (2014), *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater* (Wordtech, 2016).

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

Bibhu Padhi is the author of 11 books, the latest of which is *Midnight Diary* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2015).

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

Red Hawk's most recent books are *Wreckage With A Beating Heart* (Hohm Press, 2005), *Raven's Paradise* (Bright Hill Press, 2010) and *Mother Guru* (Hohm Press, 2014).

Yehudit Reishtein, <http://yehuditrose.com/>

Steven (Shlomo) Sher, <http://www.stevensher.net/>. Latest books: *The House of Washing Hands* (Pecan Grove Press, 2014), *Grazing on Stars: Selected Poems* (Presa Press, 2012), and *The Skipping Stone* (Finishing Lines Press, 2011).

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 Siwnik'* (Oxford University Press, 2007); *Orange Light: Selected Poems 1996-2016* (Cyclamens and Swords, 2016).

Wally Swist, <http://www.wallyswist.com/> Books include *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012); *The Daojing: A New Interpretation*, with David Breeden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015); and *Invocation* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2015).

Connie S. Tettenborn, <http://home.jps.net/~tetenborn/>

\*\*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), Bitzaron, 2005; *Legends of Wandering and Return*, 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).

Catherine Wald, <http://www.catherinewald.com/>, *Distant, Burned-out Stars* (Finishing Line Press, 2011).

Kelley Jean White's books include *Two Birds in Flames: Poems Inspired by Shaker Themes* (Beech River Books, 2010), *Living in the Heart* (WordTech, 2006).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Sue Tourkin Komet's "Confessions of a 'S.A.P.' Slam Artiste Poetess" appeared in the Case Western Reserve University Alumni Magazine. Claudia Gary Annis "Ripples in the Fabric" appeared in her book of that title. Diane de Pisa' "Bird Tracks" won the award of the Poetry Society of America for 2010. "Among the Red Golden Hills" appeared in Reizel Polak's pamphlet of that title.

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### *I. Creation on Fire*

In late November 2016 Israel was swept by fires, many of them apparently set by arsonists. Miraculously, no one was killed. But the flames destroyed many square miles of lovingly planted trees, hundreds of homes with all the possessions of their owners -- and the studio of the great Israeli artist Yoram Raanan, with 40 years of work. Most of 2000 paintings are gone with no record; those that were photographed and can be viewed online, give an idea of the magnitude of the loss. We have called for "ekphrastic" poems on these still-visible images, as a way of absorbing their energy and giving a little of it back, and as a prayer that the artist's inspiration may rise, as he said after the fire, like a phoenix from the ashes.

There are a number of videos on YouTube, including a studio tour at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxUbZcbues&t=219s>. and "The Seven Days of Creation" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdn8N6aErMA>. An important essay by Michael Chighel, written just before the fire, analyzing some of Raanan's masterpieces and assessing their place in Jewish art and art history generally, may be found at [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3507880/jewish/Raanans-Incandescent-Kingdom.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3507880/jewish/Raanans-Incandescent-Kingdom.htm). A search for Yoram Raanan on [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org) will bring up some 120 images. The largest collection of images, which may be purchased as prints, is posted on the painter's official website, <http://www.yoramraanan.com/>

#### I WOKE UP CRYING THIS MORNING

I cry for the beautiful land, that was green,  
but is now black  
I cry for the people, frightened,  
fleeing from the flames  
I cry for the students who have lost their schools,  
and for their parents  
who have lost their homes  
I cry for the firemen, risking their lives.

I cry for the Yeshiva boys  
who raced to save the small children in gan,  
and returned to save their belongings,  
only to see the building in flames,  
their books turning to ashes.

I cry for the firemen,  
making their way through the smoke and heat  
to save the sifrei Torah  
as the aron that housed them  
was consumed.

I cry for the beautiful animals  
the deer, the salamanders, the vultures,  
breeding and preparing to live wild again.  
Where will they go now?

I cry for those who hate so much  
they would rather destroy the land  
that they claim to love  
than see others take care of it

I cry for the land itself,  
for the longing of centuries  
that returned its people  
to reclaim it,

to nurture it,  
to make it bloom again,  
to love it,  
to see it destroyed,  
its green turned to ash,  
blackened by hatred.

I cry that my tears are not enough  
to drench the parched earth,  
to douse the flames,  
to extinguish the hate.

I cry.

— Yehudit Reishtein

#### WHO BY FIRE? — A BRUSH WITH FLAMES

Is it permissible to weep for things?  
Because I want to sit shiva  
for this house that just  
went up in flames.  
Mourning a most tender  
box of paint.  
Mourning the way  
life devastates.  
You would tear your shirt too  
if you had  
ever stepped foot  
into that great forum  
of form and color  
now torn asunder by  
flame and fume  
and utter hate.  
You would've dazzled at  
the way it was scattered  
with a thousand  
masterpieces

the way a king  
 scatters diamonds  
 like a child's  
 game.  
 A place where honest  
 art was made.  
 It was a structure  
 ever-lit-up and  
 upward-faced.  
 Like an altar.  
 And forgive me if I  
 exaggerate  
 but a eulogy is in order  
 today.  
 For a great and epic  
 loss of paint.  
 Honored and exalted  
 be Thy Name,  
 O Master Creator  
 who gives and takes.  
 Restore the spirit of creativity  
 to this painter  
 that his expression be but  
 deepened and wizened  
 and all the greater  
 because of his tragic  
 brush  
 with flames.

—Chaya Kaplan-Lester

[untitled]

No, no one died in the fires  
 set by our enemies  
 under the brass heaven  
 of a rainless November

no one  
 unless you count  
 assorted cherubim  
 throngs under mountains  
 or in the temple  
 transfused by light  
 that queen and king  
 emerging from the darkness of a canvas  
 and how many more  
 how many more  
 beings that embodied themselves  
 beneath the painter's fingers  
 out of nowhere

how fortunate was the eye that beheld them  
 when our ears hear of it, our souls languish indeed

they were our exchange  
 they were our substitute  
 they were our atonement

they have gone back to the Source

may they appear again  
 and may we behold

—Esther Cameron

#### [6219] CREATIONS ON FIRE

After Yoram Raanan's paintings that flew, as Torah  
 letters in fire, heavenwards.

In the infinite of God  
 exist all poems and paintings.  
 Even the forgotten ones,  
 even just the thoughts that never materialized.

God is beyond human explanation,  
 in variations of radiant light.  
 With emunah faith we devote ourselves,  
 fortunate to be able to thank and pray.

With words, colors and music  
 we reach towards His eternal energy.  
 As we give back, we reflect  
 that all our art is part of His manifestation.

Artists derive from the Divine  
 and absorb these higher messages,  
 then give creations back to the Source,  
 who holds them in His infinity.

—Hayim Abramson

#### THE FIRE WILL NOT GO OUT FOR SEVEN YEARS\*

Out of the fire was revealed a special color  
 no eye had ever gazed on.  
 It could not be described it could not be  
 reconstructed even if we mix shades of orange with  
 shades of green and white  
 And the other colors protested that they too could not  
 be described  
 if you have not seen the fire of dawn a tiny leaf folded  
 on wet earth  
 And I said true you cannot be described either  
 but there is now a newborn in our midst  
 may the redeemer come in his days.

—Tziporah Lifshitz

\* At the end of days, all the arms of the armies of Gog shall  
 burn for seven years (see Ezekiel 39:9).



## THE MASTER'S PAINTINGS

Scintillating vibrant colors  
 Formations of other worldly dimensions  
 The soul's invitation  
 To enter into its innermost chambers  
 Radiating enlightenment  
 courting with this worldly fire  
 Yoram guides us to walk the tight rope  
 of Redemption and insanity  
 As he rises from the ashes  
 A new, yet to be revealed beauty awaits us  
 —Nechama Sara Gila Nadborny-Burgeman

## "JERUSALEM LANDSCAPE"\*

After a painting by Yoram Ra'an

Perhaps you have stood on this hill  
 where young dark poplars, tinted  
 in blue, command a place on the slope.  
 Perhaps you have paused to take in  
 the stretch of hills before you that compel  
 more than a glance, but a restless gaze.

Perhaps you have hiked down one of  
 these hospitable valleys reaching  
 the ground to begin a climb to the next  
 hill with its growing greenery, and the gold  
 present in the huge stones as you come  
 by a narrow stream and its delicate waterfall.

No inhabitants or visitors interrupt  
 this scene, but the hidden eye, and hand  
 of the artist who arrives at a landscape  
 to step across — this place on earth  
 which stirs an involuntary, raw  
 love that burns a certain fire to paint, to imagine anew.

— Reizel Polak

\*[http://www.yoramraanan.com/landscape?lightbox=](http://www.yoramraanan.com/landscape?lightbox=image1hry)  
[image1hry](http://www.yoramraanan.com/landscape?lightbox=image1hry)

## [6212] "JERUSALEM ROSE"\*

Shir Hama'alot, the song that ascends  
 on the hills of Yerushalayim, here and above.  
 Each House, three will be, a dream of color  
 and the Jew goes up in kedushah, holiness.

Valleys and hills, the ups and downs of history,  
 barren and fruitful generations, side by side.  
 We are surrounded by walls, ancient and new,  
 yet halachah laws bid us to shape the new world.

— Hayim Abramson

[http://www.yoramraanan.com/print-](http://www.yoramraanan.com/print-temp?lightbox=imageq62)  
[temp?lightbox=imageq62](http://www.yoramraanan.com/print-temp?lightbox=imageq62)

## THE PROMISE OF SUNSET

after a painting "Abstract"\* by Yoram Raanan

It appears at dusk on the horizon  
 slowly slowly. Falling in the sky  
 as wispy clouds pass. My eyes are drawn,  
 it appears at dusk on the horizon,  
 as I attend, engaged. As they respond,  
 this mystery that repeats itself each day  
 it appears at dusk on the horizon  
 slowly slowly. Falling in the sky

with red and gold and blue displays. Above,  
 endows my mind the rest of the time plays out  
 the truth of what is me. Of where I strive,  
 with red and gold and blue displays. Above,  
 me. Projects, recurrent images that revive  
 a daily miracle that reveals, no doubt,  
 with red and gold and blue displays. Above,  
 endows my mind the rest of the time plays out

all through the hours as I progress.  
 I fill the moments with that radiance  
 That keeps me going, and I know I'm blessed,  
 all through the hours. As I progress.  
 discover meanings. As the shadows pass  
 into the afternoon until days end  
 all through the hours as I progress.  
 I fill the moments with that radiance

off to some other venue . . . as I spy  
 a faint light in the window. A newness begins  
 what I saw earlier, then, a blazing in the sky,  
 off to some other venue . . . as I spy  
 what starts again, a miracle. I understand why —  
 a cycle repeats itself. As the globe spins  
 off to some other venue . . . as I spy  
 a faint light in the window. A newness begins  
 -- Zev Davis

\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/dancer>

## "JERUSALEM MOON LIGHT"\*

Beyond the cypress trees escorting us  
 To the wall aglow,  
 The Temple Mount hiding  
 Beneath the blue heavenly presence.

Warmed by the gentle light of the moon,  
 A city golden with glory  
 In the quiet of the night.

— Yocheved Miriam Zemel

\*[http://www.yoramraanan.com/jerusalem-moon-](http://www.yoramraanan.com/jerusalem-moon-light?lightbox=image1xfb)  
[light?lightbox=image1xfb](http://www.yoramraanan.com/jerusalem-moon-light?lightbox=image1xfb)

## "JERUSALEM MENORAH"\*

I feel it burning  
Reaching upward  
Bearing the beauty of the Holy City  
In gold, pink and red splendour.

Grander than the walls and chapels,  
Towering above the trees and walls,  
Her rays of light fill the world,  
Stretching to the pure blue heavens,  
Beaming on the stairway to the sky,  
Lighting the earth.

Heart on fire  
Spirit of devotion  
Flame longing for connection  
With the Almighty on high.

— Yocheved Miriam Zemel

\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/jerusalem-paintings?lightbox=i84xb>

## "JERUSALEM MORNING"\*

Warm orange and green  
Encompassed by rainbow of morning light  
Temple mount hidden and glowing.

Blue heaven encircling,  
Reflected in the mountains below.  
A world encompassed by light and warmth  
In the rainbow of morning light.  
Feeling of peace and hope.

— Yocheved Miriam Zemel

\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/jerusalem-morning>

## MIDBAR BLUE

In Beer Sheva, my grandsons, all blond hair, all brown,  
Blue eyes, and eyes like chestnuts, sleep desert dreams.

Silicon fuels sand dunes plus computers, affords traction  
To ungulates, graduate students, would-be entrepreneurs.

If you hush, the music of the vacant spaces makes cities  
Sing out, effects melodies out of humidity's emptiness.

The Lord fashioned everything from nothing, erected,  
In six days, a universe of possibilities. He then rested.

In the midbar's cerulean heat, golden radiance, red life,  
More than house geckos or snakes race shadow to light.

— KJ Hannah Greenberg

<http://www.yoramraanan.com/abstract?lightbox=i266mc>

## "ROCKIN' HORSE"\*

A hand rocks the cradle,  
Back and forth,  
A child on a horse  
Rides forth,  
Back and forth,  
The world is not still,  
But still it is safe.

Going forward,  
The world whirls wilder.  
The horse can no longer be contained  
Within four walls.  
The sky darkens,  
A dark shadowy hand  
Reaches out, grabs hold  
Of the horse's glowing body.  
The horse, looking back,  
Cannot escape  
Suffering first a loss of memory,  
Then a memory of loss.

— Sara DeBeer

\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/abstract?lightbox=i141j4p>

## HORSES

"For God will speak one way, yea, in two, though it  
is not perceived, in a dream, in a night vision ..."  
(Job 33:14)

Inside a stable, mares and stallions sleep.  
Although it's said that horses do not dream,  
They toss their forelimbs as they lie and seem  
To be immersed in dreams of something deep,  
Far deeper than a pile of hay. They leap  
Inside their nightmares towards a light, a beam  
Of sunshine bursting through the dark, a gleam  
Of day unseen by flocks of docile sheep.

But listen carefully — one stallion has  
Awakened and is running on the roof,  
Stampeding towards the east, beyond our grief,  
Beyond our fear of death, as steadfast as  
Tomorrow's dawn. I hear the stamping hoof  
Of faith, the growing gallop of belief.

— Yakov Azriel

(based on the painting "Flight of the Horse"  
<http://www.yoramraanan.com/abstract?lightbox=i8x0j>)

For the paintings on the Seven Days of Creation see  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdn8N6aErMA>  
 and <http://www.yoramraanan.com/seven-day-set>

#### YORAM RAANAN'S BIBLE

Why does Raanan's Day Three  
 give me extra pause? The blues,  
 greens, crimsons blend in other  
 days of creation, yet the Third  
 causes me to feel calm and  
 content. My eyes look at a  
 vertical rush of color and I 'feel'  
 water, and 'see' a path as if  
 carved by mountains of hue.  
 Trees with bright leaves combine  
 autumn and summer and I'm  
 caught in swirls of Nature.  
 Turbulence may have been  
 G-d's intent as He hurried to  
 complete His work in one week.  
 However, this painting sends a  
 sense of pleasure and beauty with  
 its snapshot of an incredibly  
 colorful and yet gentle world.

—Lois Greene Stone

#### THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

Perhaps also a god, Darkness always was  
 sufficient unto itself, a vast void filling the universe

until G-d brought forth an equal force called Light  
 which flashed and crackled as it tore through space.

Radiant as fire, Light grew dazzling and scorching hot.  
 Darkness and Light stared each other down

like ancient armies across a battlefield strewn  
 with expiring stars, shuddering clumps of wounded char.

Darkness hid in deep places Light would not enter.  
 Light spat lightning. Darkness instantly closed

over the rent. They met only at dawn and dusk  
 locked in an eternal dance. As Light spread

forward, Darkness flowed behind, oozing restlessly  
 like black oil. Around the earth with its fickle turning,

the daily ritual: sunrise follows sunset, the night  
 the day. Advance, retreat. Victory, defeat.

—Sarah Brown Weitzman

#### SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

What was it like  
 on that first day  
 in the cold  
 in the dark?

When did the music start  
 the dance of gases  
 in the arms  
 of dust

a dervish of heat flung out  
 from the sun  
 a molten mass  
 rolling

and churning in fires  
 of longing  
 for the rest  
 of itself?

Like froth on the surface  
 of a boiling pot  
 did a crust  
 rise up

a rim for the globe?  
 But how did it smell  
 this earth  
 without grass?

How hot was that fog  
 blocking out light  
 thickening  
 gloom?

Did centuries of rain  
 then lower the land  
 until oceans  
 swept over

the scar left by the moon  
 swept over  
 the land, swept  
 over the globe

and round it again?  
 How did it sound  
 the crack that set  
 seven continents

adrift? How did it feel  
 the sudden jolt  
 of eons  
 of cooling

contracting the world  
shriveling the globe  
like rotting  
does fruit?

As wrinkles that sprout  
on the skin  
of a peach  
did mountains

surge up that kept in the sea  
forms fermenting  
that breathed  
in ammonia

and dreaded what's  
presently our air?  
How did it look  
to them

when the second coming  
of the sun  
administered  
the poison

of oxygen? Did a great  
silence follow  
of ice  
when everything

died? Was it a Friday  
as we have read  
when the ice  
withdrew

and somewhere beneath, the slime  
stirred? Was this  
the beginning  
of us?

— Sarah Brown Weitzman

[untitled]

darkness prevails  
then suddenly — light  
and light begets color  
pearly cloud jewels  
set in celestial blues  
yet more to come:  
color reveals in land forms,  
leafy, mossy, grassy greens  
and all that creeps upon  
the rust, gray, tan, brown, sandy earth,  
its legions of rocks all hues and shades.

glowing luminaries appear:  
sun unveils land  
in peachy shades  
of blushing dawn;  
time-keeper moon  
shines on glistening indigo seas  
and beneath, creatures flit ablaze  
in skins of silver, turquoise, cobalt, gold,  
above, flying feathered rainbows soar.  
on land, by divine design,  
striped, spotted, dappled beasts  
meander in herds, packs, prides  
in deserts, jungles, forests, fields

and we who speak  
with eyes to see  
and hands to paint  
Hallelujah!

— i.batsheva

#### PARADISE OF BLUE

Lost in a paradise of blue  
Dream in full daylight  
Call to You  
Through water, sky  
The hither and thither  
Up and down  
In and out  
With the wind

Inside a kingdom of my own  
Where You sit me on a throne  
My creations strewn  
On endless floors hewn

Help me keep my book open  
My children  
My writing  
My cooking  
My home

My succah ablaze  
Lion in a corner  
Soothes  
The shimmering lamb  
In the flashing, flickering  
Then fading light.

— Mindy Aber Barad



## [6221] THE FIFTH DAY OF CREATION

Birds and fishes  
as angels of light,  
thousands upon thousands  
in unending motion and flight.

They come in a cascade  
of a thousand colors.  
The emotions of life,  
flashing before of our eyes.

Our mind cannot hold  
Feelings  
and their wonder –  
only the heart.

– Hayim Abramson

## THE SEVENTH DAY

Shabbat lights illuminate  
and spread across the world.  
The Jew becomes a beacon,  
reaching higher with his soul.

The Divine glow from above  
ignites the Neshamah soul below.  
Then we sing, ascending  
the Temple steps of our heart.

– Hayim Abramson

## THE DIVINE SYMPHONY

Dedicated to the artist Yoram Raanan

“The saintly lover of God acts as the foundation of  
the cosmos. The whole world joins in his ascent  
motivated by his dynamic inner personality.”  
*Orot HaTorah*, Rav Avraham Yitachak Ha’Cohen  
Kook referring to the Ba’al Shem Tov.

Ba’al Shem Tov – 1700 – 1760  
Beethoven – 1770 – 1827  
Mozart – 1756 – 1791

When clouds lay bare a moonlit sky  
like fireflies born of the unbroken beam of celestial  
light  
divine sparks cast up the heart  
to repair the fragmented world.

The Ba’al Shem Tov, sent to temporal time  
to elevate the mundane, to open the portal to dormant  
wonders,  
infused with the radiant word of God  
the dark and the inarticulate.  
Then men were born whose passion

to script the human soul brought forth  
music of the spheres, the stars  
the moon and the grandeur of the earth.

Then a man will be born to redeem with his music  
each stroke of the human spirit  
the sorrows, joys and suffering  
that echo the Divine Symphony.

– Shira Twersky-Cassel

## “MOUNT SINAI II”\*

Backlighted  
they stand  
together  
each in his shadow

(which one is  
you  
me)

as we walk toward this picture  
we feel on our faces the glare  
from the lava-core of Creation  
and the Aleph inscribed in all being  
brands itself on the field of vision  
behind our eyes

we see  
and help each other see

(behind us  
the sea drawn up, down, up  
not by wind  
not by moon  
not by heave of earth\*\*

and behind that, Egypt  
where fiery ice fell\*\*\*)

for proof  
that it happened  
we have the memory  
of generations

and this sight, beamed  
from beyond time

– Esther Cameron

\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/fire?lightbox=image1rm4> This painting, thankfully, survives.

\*\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/biblical-?lightbox=imagethv>

\*\*\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/single-post/2016/01/03/The-Plague-of-Hail>

## CROSSING THE RED SEA\*

(painting by Yoram Ranaan)

The canyon of the waves, blue walls that rose  
 on either side of the fleeing horde, reached up  
 to touch diminished sky. A stream of clouds  
 foaming and rushing, crested by the wind  
 that moved the people through, seemed poised to fall  
 and wash them away. A terror of their God,  
 and praise for His great strength, echoed and swelled  
 to song, to laughter, wailing – only one  
 small boy, his hand crushed in his mother's hand,  
 stared in silent wonder at a fish  
 which, gape-eyed and with rapid-flapping mouth,  
 stared back at him, blew prayers in bubbles to  
 some sea-deep God for mercy from this plague.  
 A flood of people surged and pushed him on  
 past shadows on either side that loomed and fled.

–JB Mulligan

\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/biblical-lightbox=imagethv>

## THE LIGHT SHINING IN THE FOREST AT NIGHT

(inspired by Yoram Raanan's painting "Esther"\*\*)

The first to awaken was Esther the queen  
 Only a mist-cloaked moon gleamed through her  
 window  
 The night was cold, the floor smooth and hard under  
 her slippered feet  
 She woke her attendants, she gathered her maidens  
 "O faithful ones, arise for a small repast. For from this  
 sunrise until three days have passed, we must  
 repent and refrain from all food. No drink must  
 pass our lips. This you must do for me."  
 The girls bowed and made obeisance to their mistress,  
 to their beloved queen  
 Then she departed from them, silently finding her way  
 in the darkened hallway  
 Down, down she went to an iron gate, opening to a  
 secret garden  
 Away, away, past fragrant flowers and bubbling  
 fountains  
 Into the forest of the night she ventured  
 She passed the blue-berried juniper, the thorny ficus,  
 the tall cedar, the red-barked katlav  
 Under a row of white willows she sat and wept  
 "Protect me!" she cried  
 For three days and nights she sat beneath the willow,  
 until she and the tree were as one  
 Only G-d heard her prayers, only the Eternal One  
 watched her  
 The creatures of the forest did not approach her, no  
 wolf or jackal disturbed her

As dawn broke on the third day, she felt a great light  
 shine on her and through her  
 "My name is Esther, no, Hadassah, Esther-Hadassah,"  
 she whispered, over and over again  
 She rose with a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty  
 and walked back through the woods,  
 through the garden gate into the palace, to greet the  
 king,  
 to meet her destiny, to save her people

– Brenda Appelbaum-Golani  
 6 December 2016/6 Kislev 5777

\*\*<http://www.yoramraanan.com/water?lightbox=ima ge17pf>

## [6214] "ESTHER" \*\*

We touch our Tehilim book  
 and the pages open to Psalm 22.  
 Queen Esther is there, bidding us  
 to wake up with the Morning Star.

A real fairy tale of green hope,  
 her royal diadem rests on a wise head.  
 She walks, praying to God, pleading,  
 "Do not abandon your people."

Her every step, an angelic emerald  
 of modesty and understanding.  
 She dresses with heavenly light  
 inside her soul, and all can sense her worth.

There are steps to the forbidden throne  
 and she dares to climb them, unbidden.  
 God guides her way  
 to save her people for all generations to come.

–Hayim Abramson

## ON "TENT OF PEACE"\*\*\*

(A painting by Yoram Raanan)

By the painter's hand  
 Feel the diagonal slants  
 Of deep blue calm covering  
 Specked light surrounding  
 Darkly robed figures  
 Gathered together within  
 A white pool of peace  
 As one upward-raised  
 Hand acknowledges  
 The hidden vertex  
 Both shelter and source.

– Connie S. Tettenborn

\*\*\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/tent-of-peace>

## HAKHEL 5774: THE MENORAH\*

Strands of gold, baubles of brightness, all lifting  
upward

Beyond – a background of purple darkness,  
Within, spectacular light emerges, reaching to the  
heavens

Fragments of brilliance, swashes of light,  
Surrounding an impervious cavity of nothingness,

The mystery of holiness pervades,  
It enters our souls.

It summons us to reach higher,  
We feel the light reaching toward us  
To climb within its chambers,

We are encompassed by its majesty,  
But stand aside in awe of its power,  
All senses unite, feeling its grandeur .  
We embrace its glory with our bodies and souls.  
We feel the warmth of its splendour.

– Yocheved Miriam Zemel

\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/parsha-of-the-week-5774?lightbox=i20l7c>

## [6216] THE MENORAH (2) “BEHA’ALOTCHA 5775”\*

The simchah joy of living of the painter Raanan  
comes out to play in every dot everywhere.  
The light of the Menorah is reflected thousand-fold  
in triangles to the square, the dramatic increase of life.

There is the earthy brown base of this world  
and building upon that the blue stars  
that are splashes of the spiritual infinite.  
Both are united in the diamond shine of the Menorah.

– Hayim Abramson

\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/parsha-of-the-week-5774?lightbox=i20l7c>

## FIERY SOUNDS

a poem to honor the paintings of Yoram Raanan

Gold, magenta and ghostly whites  
sung your vision upward  
before the fire.

You excavated depths of soul  
with brush and an ear  
tuned to secrets of the Torah.

Few could translate  
holy words into  
soaring sight.

You did.  
Before  
flames

of hatred devoured  
all you held dear,  
all you conjured

up for us with love.  
Despoiled, your  
canvases are now

an ashen heap.  
Lean in close:  
from the mouth

of disaster rises  
a new symphony,  
a prayer

in the purified tongue  
of Jewish recollection--  
nothing but fiery sounds.

– Vera Schwarcz

## OF THE TEMPLE MENORAH

Seven lit candles  
call to mind the full radiance of Raanan’s studio  
just before the fire.

Now...  
loss smolders in a heap of ash, in the terrible irony  
of flame  
extinguishing flames –  
Israel: May you draw your first comfort  
from memories of Raanan’s flickering gold,

for light and warmth will grow, then soothe  
you, even as  
teardrops burn.

– Cynthia Weber Nankee  
December, 2016

<http://www.yoramraanan.com/single-post/2015/06/05/The-Temple-Menorah>

## THE LIGHT OF RAANAN

The light of your art  
 only now seen darkly  
 in a blackened snapshot  
 will emerge from the ashes  
 as an urgent tragedy of Job  
 in his seasons of waiting  
 was for a taught lesson  
 in Torah,  
 your art  
 being humanly universal  
 in figurative paintings  
 like the "Lion of Judah"\*  
 now faintly icy blue  
 yellowish and charred  
 who lives in our Torah  
 and on the Menorah  
 cannot be roped off  
 for those who love Zion  
 in a repository of tapestries  
 not drained of color  
 for your art memory  
 will return again  
 in editorial honor  
 at your pictorial space  
 to do over  
 from your genius part,  
 you will be robbed  
 in linen over  
 the shapes of your canvas  
 reminding us in a memorial  
 of the saintly sages  
 and insurgent predecessors  
 of rabbis, dreamers  
 and stories of fiddler's acts  
 also robbed of our history  
 by the Shoah,  
 or seen in a rock of ages  
 here before Chanukah  
 upon a remnant of those  
 who remain for the task  
 of remembrance  
 from unsung choirs  
 of more than forty years  
 in a voicing chorus  
 of a liturgy and litany  
 in your memoir of abstracts.

— B.Z. Niditch

\* <http://www.yoramraanan.com/single-post/2015/12/28/The-Lion-of-Judah>

## YORAM'S APPEARANCE

Your now patched  
 up canvases  
 merely appear as a gesture  
 in a Joseph's dream  
 of dreams  
 for you are a poet  
 of culture, it seems  
 in whose drawings  
 will outlive  
 any conduit of exile  
 or long suffering  
 with your ruddy  
 abstract paintings  
 inflamed by arson culprits  
 now on trial  
 they who have put your art  
 into the well of a pit  
 like Joseph  
 do not know the conscience  
 of their acts  
 but your coats  
 of many faint colors  
 will be shown to dwell  
 from a silent honor  
 in those who love Israel.

— B.Z. Niditch

## PRAYER FOR YORAM RAANAN

after Raanan Studio Tour Panorama, June 2013

One views your impressionistic paintings  
 as one walks through the great halls of our spirit,  
 the columns of the practice of belief  
 lining the myriad mirrored visage

of our own colorful becoming and being.  
 Who enters your painting accesses their soul,  
 such iconic burning candelabra,  
 the holographic dove of peace, hovering,

providing resistance against reprisals for all of us.  
 What inspiration for us to choose  
 whether we may take retribution or not  
 before we follow the hallway with many

doors leading to our own tomb,  
 but it is in your reproducing  
 those crystalline goblets in oil,  
 that fills us with so much light,

at least as much as they hold  
 and allow to pass through so much so  
 that they chime with their own  
 illumination, which then intones our own.

How you gild sacred tincture to  
the illustrated boards of a book of scriptures.  
May the lights of your lavish Menorahs  
burn within us for all of our days.

May their twinkling candles  
always illumine our darkest hours,  
as does the plentitude of luminous schools of  
fish you have painted swim through

the inviolate blue of the ocean you envisioned.  
How can we ever walk away  
without forever being augmented after  
viewing your painting of Esther, emerald queen

of deliverance from injustice,  
suggestive of the irradiated mystical  
painting of Gustave Moreau,  
eliciting spiritual luster among the heavier elements,

not without flecks of gold reminiscent of  
the illuminated fish of Paul Klee,  
but it is the painting of the resilient soul, our true self,  
portrayed as crystal arc in human form,

who is bolstered upon blue rays of light  
in bright bands which lifts us up  
in our own leap of exuberance,  
in ever discovering the delight within, the joy without.

The perpetual transcendent not merely  
emblematic, but alive, resurrecting itself  
out of the flames that ravaged two thousand  
of your paintings, whose fiery ash

sparked up amid the devastation among  
the forest only to see you rise up, along with us,  
to paint the light again in broad strokes  
upon which there shines a path through the shadows.

— Wally Swist

#### AFTER A BREAKING OF VESSELS

The end of November was a hard time.  
I hadn't been watching the news;  
I was trying to finish a long poem on the environment  
which argued among other things that the nations  
are not going to sort out the problems of the earth  
unless they can come to terms with Israel,  
because *adam* (man) and *adamah* (earth) are linked  
and *adam* (as made, that is, in the image of G-d)  
is sort of Israel's specialty, despite  
all the knockoffs that are giving us so much trouble.  
Being thus preoccupied it was late Thursday

before I realized our land was in flames.  
Then I heard about the paintings of Yoram Raanan.

I'd seen digital images on chabad.org,  
but hadn't quite focused on them, the way one doesn't  
always,  
as Mitchell said, know what one has got till it's gone.  
So then I look the studio tour on line  
and read Michael Chighel's essay, which explains  
just what those paintings meant for Jewish art  
and art in general, and did then see  
the gift that was given and then snatched away.  
Raanan himself, I gather, has called attention  
to the fact that in his paintings there's a lot  
of fire. Holy fire. In the Temple, on the mountain  
to which his paintings bring us back. The fire  
that can fuse souls, forge a vessel to receive  
the power that could pour in from the Creator  
and give us strength to fix what must be fixed,  
face down what rears against us.

Life itself  
is fire. We burn our food to make the forms  
that hold the soul's transcendent flame. Without  
that energy things fall apart. The will  
slackens.

It was one loss amid so many.  
People lost their homes, all their possessions,  
letters, pictures, all evidence of their past.  
At least no lives were lost, thank G-d. But these  
things too are life. And in such visions as  
appeared upon those canvases — the ones  
of which we have these images, the ones  
that now are only in G-d's memory —  
some of the energy that fuels the life  
of Israel and of humanity  
had been stored up.

And should have been released,  
poured forth to activate, inspire, inform.

And has then something of it been released  
in this most awful fashion? He himself, with wry  
bravery, remarked upon G-d's kindness  
in making him thus famous before death.

The flash of their combustion showed to us  
these images, perhaps cracked our hearts open  
to take in something of their warmth and light —  
disaster offers us at least this gift  
though dwarfed by the proportions of the lost.  
O could we but absorb even a drop  
of what was spilled, what might not be made new?

The days roll on, and bring us other news.  
If our foes set, indeed, those fires, those fires  
were seconded by international vote  
pouring out blame where once they gave us blessing,



with hate only a holy fire might quench,  
 could such be found. It could appear that all  
 Creation's ill was visited on us.  
 Whatever part was played by human malice,  
 the fires were also set by wind and drought –  
 which is possibly not a matter of one bad year  
 but of a change in climate, brought about  
 by burning of the remnants of old life  
 that fuels man's life, now grown so artificial,  
 bound to material fatalities  
 material cunning only reinforces.  
 We have been eating of the Tree of Knowledge  
 and cannot wean ourselves of lethal food.

I once imagined – it was long ago,  
 before I moved, or thought of moving here –  
 that the great danger to our common home  
 would bring us back to Sinai – not just us  
 but everyone. We'd need to find a fire  
 that could fuse souls and minds, could help us see  
 eye to eye to eye, till the great task  
 and every person's part in it, comes clear.  
 It doesn't seem like something human beings  
 could ever rise to, unless they were lifted  
 by spiritual force we can't conceive.  
 Well, in one picture that was flashed before us\*  
 I thought I almost saw what it might be.

It hardly seems worth writing all this down.  
 In the real world our friends and those of Earth  
 fight and malign each other, each side choosing  
 what part of truth it's useful to ignore,  
 as everywhere effectiveness must wait  
 upon expedience. That is this world.  
 But we must hope, as we have always hoped  
 that He who in the light of His countenance  
 once gave us laws of life, will once again  
 reveal Himself. We pray with confidence  
 that Raanan will find fresh inspiration  
 and his new works a doubly-grateful welcome;  
 meanwhile we try to cup the holy sparks  
 that fell into our minds from this great burning.

– Esther Cameron

\*"Mount Sinai II" (see above and back cover), which was sold  
 before the fire and, thankfully, survives.

## II. Hugs for Gretti and Sue

In the dark days of this winter, we lost two fine poets  
 whose work has often graced these pages. Gretti Izak,  
 who was born in Bulgaria in 1928, passed away on  
 November 28, 2016; Sue Tourkin-Komet, on January 4,  
 2017. Below are one more poem by Gretti, which  
 appeared in the Voices newsletter in 2015, and one  
 more piece by Sue, sent to us a few months ago. On  
 January 2, 2017, a poetry reading was held in Gretti's  
 honor at her apartment, with readings of Gretti's  
 poetry and of tributes by her friends, including the  
 poems by Avril Meallem and Esther Lixenberg-Bloch,  
 reproduced below. We have posted on our website a  
 "retrospect" for each poet, consisting of the poems we  
 have published over the years, and would also like to  
 mention that Sue's long-awaited book *Jerusalem Out  
 Front, Bethlehem Outback: Prose & Poetry* will be  
 appearing soon, thanks to the efforts of Batsheva  
 Pomerantz. May their memory be for a blessing, and  
 may their words continue to inspire us.

### FOR THE WELL-BEHAVED CHILDREN

Saucy mistress that she is today  
 always looking for a new lover,  
 Tel Aviv was once a flower child,  
 innocent and sleepy.  
 They loved her rolling sand dunes  
 and the great labyrinth of her pretensions  
 for weren't they well-behaved children  
 from good schools when the scent  
 of the city was fresh like orange blossoms  
 in the Sharon valley, purging thoughts  
 from dark uncertainties,  
 the Mediterranean roar unheard  
 because of their dreaming.

Sometimes they'd take a bus to go  
 rowing on the Yarkon river.  
 Bencho would maneuver to sit  
 next to Gretti, Berto and Renny  
 would double-count the present –  
 no one should be missing,  
 none lost to the current alight  
 with lotus flowers that burnt  
 signs along the shore,  
 that spoke to the full moon  
 in which their reflection was held captive  
 by the moment, playing hide and seek,

the moment that waited between the waves  
 to catch and splash them in the foaming river.

–Gretti Izak

## FOR GRETTI (in memoriam)

From the trams of Sofia  
to velvet galaxies and slivered moons,  
you drew us in  
with a welcoming smile  
to spin in enchanted orbit.

Picasso and petals,  
azalea and fuchsia chimes,  
silvery Chopin mazurkas,  
angels embracing  
amongst lace and china  
revealed the motifs of your heart,  
as shells unfolding on a shore  
rain soaked and milky green,  
proffered their votive offerings.

Perfumed memories resonated  
through the Bulgarian music of your voice.  
A rich treasury of words  
carved with glorious synergy of love and learning  
from nature's bounteous beauty.

All converged on Jerusalem,  
where thirty six righteous men  
under the poinciana tree,  
must have gifted you  
the key to complex harmonies  
charged with meaning.

How you opened worlds for us!  
Worlds of art and wisdoms classical  
that waltzed and twirled  
across the stellar continuum  
of your thoughts.

How you navigated history,  
fused its vicissitudes with line and colour  
never averting your eyes  
from the human condition,  
ever swinging the compass  
back back to country and nation.  
You warred with war  
battled tragedies and loss with erudition,  
never doubting  
G-d-given womanhood

You spoke to prophets  
strong lines of vehement love,  
emitting sparks  
that lit us all,  
and took joy  
in prising from our souls and sensibilities,  
a new birthing  
of odes and hymns.

— Esther Lixenberg Bloch

DEATH COMES SUDDENLY  
for Sue

death comes suddenly.  
your friend has an illness  
you know what the result will be  
but it's not part of reality,  
you talk, you have long conversations,  
that's reality.  
and then the grim reaper comes in a dark coat,  
you want to poke her awake  
and tell her about it  
but you can't...

— Lois Michal Unger

## MY IMAGERY 'CAVE JOURNEY' EXPERIENCE (four days after Gretti z'l passed away)

Soaking in a hot bath and thinking of Gretti z'l, I visualised myself entering a cave and waited to see what would happen...

I became aware that I should take the path on the right and found myself climbing down a rope ladder.

Reaching a hard surface, I saw that I was in a long tunnel with a door in the distance.

I arrived to the end of the tunnel. There were doors everywhere!

Which one to choose?

They all turned out to be mirror reflections of just one door.

I opened this door and entered a vast banquet hall lit by elaborate, crystal chandeliers and filled with people, sitting at long tables that were covered with white table cloths.

There were no plates, cutlery, glasses, food or drinks which seemed rather weird, yet there was a feeling of great joy and love.

In the middle of the hall there was a grand piano that was playing music but the pianist wasn't touching the keys!

My parents and grandparents appeared but they seemed unaware of me.

I wondered if Gretti was here too but I couldn't see her.  
 Suddenly a brilliant white light filled the hall, obscuring everything else.  
 A powerful gust of wind lifted me up and whooshed me away.

I found myself sitting on a huge rock.  
 There was absolutely nothing else around, no earth, no sky, no trees, just nothingness...

Then I felt a presence behind me, giving me a hug. I guessed it was Gretti but wasn't sure. Her gold watch was put into my hand (it was too big for her and I had always wondered how it didn't annoy her being so loose!) so I knew that it really was Gretti.

She said that she can hug me, even though I can no longer hug her, as a human body cannot hug a spirit.

I told her that I can hear her speaking but that it didn't sound like her voice.

She said that it was because there are no actual speech sounds and that I just know what she is saying.

She told me that she is in a beautiful place and not to worry.

I asked her if I could see her and why she couldn't hug me from in front.

She said that I can't see her, but to know that she is all around me and that I am within her.

She continued saying that she will now be the one to comfort me with hugs as I had always done for her. Also that she will be with me when I write from a deep place within myself.

Then she told me that it was time for her to leave to continue on her journey and that I should tell others about all this.

I asked her how I would get back and she said that I just will, and then disappeared.

My eyes filled with tears and then the rock was no longer there.

I was whooshed away backwards, and opened my eyes.

Then I started crying from the depth of my being, overcome both by the awe of the experience and the deep sadness of separation.

— Avril Meallem

#### CONFESSIONS of a "S. A. P." = SLAM ARTISTE POETESS

Part of the fun... of "poetry slams" in Jerusalem was wondering what I would encounter: "Yankee" English, British English, Canadian, "Aussie" or real African English or Indian [Asian] English? Or Hebrew or Hindi, Arabic or Afrikaans, French or *Farsi* [Persian], Dutch or Deutsch, Spanish or Portuguese, or Japanese or Russian or Italian?

Part of the fun ... is where we performed—in the *Zusha* pub-style candle-lit darkened basement in the Modern Orthodox synagogue Yakar... or... in the *T'mol Shilshom* ["Yesteryear"] Bookshop-Coffee House-Restaurant first-of-its-kind combo off main-street Jaffa Road Jerusalem. Part of the fun ... [which I "converted" to] was the mock Olympic-style scoring system [started in 1987 decades ago in Chicago] with poetic "gladiators" dueling it out in front of judges. An American invention—poetry slams—imported into Israel, and not by lil' ol' me.

Mentioning duels... part of my fun... was my sighting-out or psyching out which new duo's at the slams might make their combined ways towards standing together under The Wedding Canopy, especially as I've been a professional Match Maker since 1971. I'm aware of some eighteen persons, a lucky number in Judaism, who were couples at those slams who later tied the knot. I was at many of those weddings, and a good many children have been born of such duo's / couples!

Part of the fun... after I'd listened to others read their short stories or imitation James Joyce / Saul Bellow confessional run-on novel-like chapters, in the guise of poetry at slams was to dare to read a RESTAURANT REVIEW of mine written in a Literary and Travelogue Style, *de rigueur*, causing a modest riot there!

Part of my fun... was my rattling the emcee, brilliant Dr. Mark Kirschbaum, a bone-marrow oncologist [may we never need such treatments] by my occasionally signing up on the sign-up sheet with my pseudonym and when he triumphantly called up a "NEW POET!" and li'l ol' me perkily slunk up on stage, and he ruefully realized he'd been had, he hit the ceiling, eliciting the normal hysterical laughter that erupted en masse. I'd been attending slams non-stop since 1996 so I was hardly a new poet around town.

Part of the fun... was that much of my poetry is morbid & dead serious, so that when I straightforwardly performed a rare satirical or humorous one, like "GONNA BE A POETRY PERFORMER" it also raised the roof, as no

one, myself included, expected li'l ol' me, then looking 30+ but really becoming 50+ to read and perform "rap" poetry. [I barely knew of the "rap" poetry scene when I started to write a few of my own...]

Part of the fun... was having "fans" surprise me on the streets of Jerusalem to discuss my poems with me. Once, a towering fan accosted me and grabbed my poem out of my hand, when I went "downstage" because she absolutely had to copy it and email my poem pronto to some Significant Other in the States, and I didn't even know what email was – then.

Part of the fun is my "reality-show": a publisher'll cut me a deal over coffee, cake & poetry?

– Sue Tourkin-Komet

### ELEGY FOR A SLAM ARTISTE POETESS

Sue, when it came to confrontations you were not evasive.  
There were times when I was tempted to consider you abrasive.  
You got a mean kind of cancer and fought it like hell;  
On more than one occasion you fought with me as well.

You wrote slam poetry, a genre which drives me up the wall,  
though I had to admit your stuff had energy and plenty of gall.  
But it was you of all people who tried to locate  
a filmmaker who'd make a movie about my weird fate

and when I sent you my craziest piece of lit –  
a Wuthering Heights type story told in the form of textual crit –  
you actually read it and said something about eighteenth-century prose,  
showing there were sides to you that I hadn't supposed.

The last time I saw you was at the reading at my place.  
You stayed after and read some traditional poems aloud with feeling and grace.  
At the funeral they told about many acts of kindness you'd done.  
I guess the "abrasive" mask shouldn't have fooled anyone.

There were many it didn't fool, the funeral drew a good crowd.  
Now that you've gone upstairs, I hope your voice is still loud  
and you'll give them the edge of your tongue until, just to have some peace,  
they'll send Mashiach already. Then with tzaddikim you'll feast!

– Esther Cameron

### III. *The Uncertainties of Residing Here*

#### AMONG THE RED GOLDEN HILLS

##### 1) Among the Red Golden Hills

A world I step away from  
coming to this hill – the rocks underfoot  
rise to the size of boulders moving the landscape

back to where it ascends the sky.  
Near to the sounds on this raw, rocky hill –  
where no one before has dwelt, a cluster

of dwellings, all flat-roofed, stand scorched  
by day in the sun, cooled by night.  
Amidst the coarse dried brush, rock-gardens,

newly tended olive, fig, and almond  
trees, grow before the eyes of children  
running with friends by the gravel road.

Steady with words, composed to decide this hill  
will be their home, its young couples  
welcome happily, visitors for a stay.

Everyone knows the costs, the uncertainties of residing here.  
Across the valley, the inhabitants are neighbors  
driving past. In the local super, their eyes

avert, their faces express a dark, inhospitable  
look. Well before sunrise in the stillness of night,  
while their children shift in their beds, a voice

pierces the hour, a high-pitched wailing  
over a speaker, calling their men to prayer.  
Back across the valley — the few close miles

apart, the muezzin startles the hilltop visitors  
out of sleep, unused to such disturbing  
of the peace at the onset of each dawn.

On this hill where we step, by early daylight,  
the children stir waking up  
singing Modeh ani lefonekha . .

## 2) Improv in a Box

Any cardboard scrap  
will do making one dimension  
into more than two  
Unpacked on a table  
a box of four-cups  
(for coffee or tea)  
a see-through top  
in the eyes of Gitty  
(nearly six and a half)  
changes in an instant  
to a stage, a theater  
for puppets cut out  
from paper she loves  
to color to fashion  
a play for her younger  
brothers seating them all  
in a row to entertain  
in flashlight dark

## 3) Happy for the Errand

Nachi not four  
goes proudly stepping  
take-charge steps  
looking ahead  
protecting one  
raw egg in the palm  
of each hand to return  
across the hill's  
stoney road  
a bumpy walk  
to the neighbor's door  
who doesn't answer  
lets himself in  
to wander the rooms  
(where can she be)  
happy to leave  
the eggs on the bed  
beside her napping  
smiling now  
to take the eggs from him

## 4) They call him Melech

(like a king) for a name  
challenging the tongue  
how his siblings  
say Elimelech  
three and a half  
giggles at his fingers  
fiddling to close  
the buttons on his shirt —  
oh that smile  
that says I know —  
to start at the bottom  
button to the top  
also washing up  
hurrying to the sink  
climbs on the tub  
ready to show  
any new thing  
he's glad to help  
himself shoes on  
jacket swinging  
overhead leaving  
with Nachi Gitty too  
down the rough  
steep hill  
stepping not to trip  
on the high steps  
bus off to school

## 5) Construction in a Tiny Corner

Not a statistic  
one might read  
in a Guinness Book  
even so it's a wonder  
how it shows  
Srulik at two  
settles with comfort  
tight for his bulk  
in a corner a chair  
at the back bookshelves  
in front a ledge  
that's clear enough  
to lay blocks on squatting  
carefully picking out  
each one to set down  
exactly as his eye  
demands the building  
stand humming as he goes  
saying words to himself  
lightly waves  
a hand to topple  
happily from the top  
to start over again



no one's counting  
the number of times  
only the length  
he takes a Guinness  
exaggeration  
two hours no interruption

#### 6) To Say how to Say 'Adah'

Here's a look  
that could send a thousand  
sails across the sea  
of any heart the way  
the seeking gaze  
in Benzion's face  
(nine months in the world)  
holds onto the way you are looking  
at him holding a word  
on his tongue 'adah'  
then hearing it back  
a new look jumps out  
with bright baby laughter  
fingers as if plucking  
a harp made of air  
to say 'how do  
you know how to say  
so adah' too

#### 7) Laughing with Srulik

Among the hundred some of children  
on this hill of flat-roofed houses  
here toddles another dear child.  
Gazing on the older ones leaving for school  
Srulik watches content with the company  
of his baby brother on a rug. Over nothing,  
one brings the other to the laughter  
of a heart-belly laugh. They don't know  
the drama unfolding around them beyond  
this ground their home – the red golden  
hills stretching to Jerusalem. They don't know  
that yet some judge may order  
without certain cause to destroy  
their happy place. They don't yet know  
how much history, recent to its past,  
counts to have brought them to dwell on this hill.  
Yet the mothers, the fathers know the gains  
of raising their children free to run,  
to play over this rocky ground, growing  
to find their place, to hold onto their joy  
all through these uncertain rooting days.

— Reizel Polak

#### THE SLOW SOUNDS OF A SUMMER FAST

Doves cooing.  
Water trickling into a neighbour's makeshift  
swimming pool.  
Cats shrieking.  
Birds chattering.  
A neighbour's trampoline springs squeaking in sync  
with a jumping child's noisy wheezing.  
Her summons piecing the air, directing her toddler to  
return home from the park.  
Toddler's raucous protests.

The swoosh of a distant car.  
Washing flapping faintly in the gentle, summer breeze.  
Footfalls muted by dust as fasting men walk wearily to  
Mincha.  
Foliage rustling as birds forage for their supper.  
Cutlery clanking against porcelain plates, in  
preparation for the evening "break-fast" meal.  
Her calls growing more insistent.  
Toddler's objections escalate.

Crickets chirping incessantly.  
The muted flutter of a hummingbird's wings.  
The whir of an air conditioning motor.  
A bicycle stand's rusty grinding.  
A child's toy push-along toy rumbling up the unpaved  
Eshkol.  
Her pleas of love intensifying.  
Toddler's cries diminish

Into soft whimpers of submission.  
Whimpers for Klal Yisrael,  
For their long, obstinate battle against  
Coming home.

Shhhhhhhh. Shhhhhhhh. Shhhhhhhh  
Ah. The soft silence resonates with reassurance,  
forgiveness, embrace.

— Chaiya D.

#### LIFE'S GOOD

My daughter's getting married  
another just had twins  
my son's serving in Hebron  
and a terrorist killed my teacher's son  
life's good.

My youngest has a birthday  
and is doing well in school  
the price of living is outrageous  
and war is raging in Iraq  
life's good.

See these giant olives  
and the sweetest pomegranates  
missiles fly across from Gaza  
and calls of annihilation from Iran  
life's good.

See the desert flowering  
and the bounty the earth gifts us  
we're in our home, our family's close  
one day we'll live in peace  
life's good.

— Ruth Fogelman

### *IN MEMORIAM MICHAEL MARK HY"D*

#### TO CARVE IN BLACK ONLY THE WHITE

I am trying to carve, to write in black  
only the white  
for over the years  
only a few words passed between us  
over the years  
the steady column of light  
that shone from between your eyes  
I recognized in general  
and now in one and one  
one and seven  
standing in tears before the black hollow that is left  
all the glances that passed between us in a blocked  
light  
come back, living and open, like new, to the heart  
the steady quiet light in you rises, inscribes itself,  
opens within me  
and the path to it is given  
just to close my eyes and think: Miki

— Netanel Cohen  
from the Hebrew: E. Cameron

in memory of my father

Father  
reach toward me those days  
too lazy to be killed  
let the hug be as long  
as grief  
teddy-bears in suitcases  
come back from the journey  
on which I am setting out  
gaze toward me that radiance  
that oftentimes disappeared  
between me and you.

— Shira Mark Harif

[untitled]

A white angel in a black coat  
knocked on my door.  
He looked at me gently, but his eyes were covered.  
He took a flower from my garden and went away.  
And whispered praise (Hallel) and song and  
forgiveness to me  
But I did not hear the praise (Hallel)  
And I did not hear the song  
And I did not hear the forgiveness  
I only saw the flowerbed in my garden  
with the black hole gaping

Maayan Ora Batt  
from the Hebrew: E. Cameron

#### METATRON

You built a house of study and of prayer  
That seems about to rise into the air  
Over the Hebron mountains on white wings.  
Surely you learned a skill from Metatron  
Whose secrets you had meditated on  
To make the outward show the inward things.

Mystic, businessman — earth-to-heaven stair!  
Snatched from us by a judgment so severe  
It lent a murderous hand some dastard skill.  
Now angel-tall, with shining sword in hand  
Stand guard above this house, above this land,  
That shine even for those who wish us ill.

And if from your high vantage you behold  
What more we are expected here to build,  
Devise some means to send the blueprints down  
(Your smile would tunnel then through the black hole,  
Restoring light Creation's haters stole),  
And reconnect the Kingdom and the Crown!

— Esther Cameron

As our children are crushed  
Beneath bloody wheels  
And our paintings turn to ash  
By similar hand  
I listen for sirens  
And the muezzin's call to kill

For what do they pray?  
To fill a quota for Death?  
To empty the Earth of beauty  
And re-fill with boundless rot

— Mindy Aber Barad

## TWO VOICES

"A Psalm of Asaph. O God, [hostile] nations have entered Your land, they have defiled Your holy Temple, they have made Jerusalem piles of ruins."  
(Psalm 79:1)

"Death to the Jews," the enemy armies roar,  
Ready to strip the wood from Israel's tree,  
Ready to battle waves of Israel's sea,  
Ready to fight the sand on Israel's shore.  
"Death to the Jews," our enemy's fathers swore,  
Unwilling to hear Israel's melody,  
Unwilling to read Israel's library,  
Unwilling to find gold in Israel's ore.

But even now, far different words are heard  
In many languages and tongues; they sing  
A song in a still small voice that does not cease:  
"Blessed be Israel; blessed be the Word  
Of God from Zion; blessed be their King,  
Our King, Who blesses us, and them, with peace."

—Yakov Azriel

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#### IV. Hearts' Design

## LOOKING FOR THE GIRLS

Are you looking for the girls  
inside the house this summer morning,  
their miniature dolls on the shelf,  
their mansion for parties—a shoe box  
with pink satin lining they kept  
isn't there anymore.  
Look in the alley where they run  
around the clothes-line pole  
in their watch-plaid skirts playing tag,  
or stretch their arms to throw  
a ball for 'baby-in-the-air',  
or try out front where they go  
after lunch to the end of the block  
to pick the honeysuckle growing  
through the churchyard fence.  
Wait, if no one's around,  
at twilight you're sure to find them  
darting in the street  
catching the lightning bugs, marveling  
how they flash in their hands.

—Reizel Polak

## ROOM FOR EVERYONE

11 invitations that morph  
into 40 'cause of word of  
mouth and 'cause 6th graders  
like to tell each other  
everything; so they all show  
up at once for Jimmy's Birthday  
party and somehow we make  
the cake—chocolate—divide  
out for everyone who wants a  
slice, and somehow the chips  
and cookies and ice cream last  
long enough so each child  
has a little bit of something.

—L.B. Sedlacek

## LEAVING THE CONCERT HALL

She is eleven, maybe twelve,  
but numbers no longer matter,  
for she has heard Bach and Mozart  
for the first time,  
has mastered the mathematics of the wind,  
the heart's algebra,  
where A is not A and need not be,  
and now her fingers conduct the weather  
until it shivers with illuminations.

She walks, then skips, then  
spins to a private pantomime  
that need not reveal itself,  
for she is the conductor.  
Silent notes come swirling around her  
in wizard colors of the new,  
and the ecstatic leaves whirl  
in xylophones of dance.  
She feels her joy float from breath to breath.

Bezeled light dazzles round a point,  
a perfect jewel, for she is the conductor,  
and everything is all right, for a moment all right.  
Then, as the sky imagines a storm,  
and the school bus pulls up,  
she folds a crescendo inside a breeze,  
and sets it free.

—Sean Lause

## OCEANS APART

Words, written on my diary's pages  
expressed thoughts, confusion,  
pleasures and anxieties as pre-teen  
years moved through calendar boxes.  
Another, across the Atlantic Ocean,  
penned her coming-of-age. But  
my dad purchased new blank books  
for me annually and each leather  
album recorded my life journey.  
Had I been born when and where  
another imagined her future, on  
her side of the expansive ocean,  
I, too, might have died in  
Bergen-Belsen with only my  
diary noting I had lived.

— Lois Greene Stone

## TRANSPORT (for Yeva who came back)

She carried jewels  
in the lining of her  
coat. The seamstress  
aunt, now her mother (the  
other sent away somewhere),  
sewed a scrap along the  
bottom of the  
dress the girl was  
growing out of.

She carried what was  
left (a watch, four rings,  
some brooches) in the  
lining of her coat, to  
Tashkent to sell, punishable  
business. She was maybe  
twelve, and had no ticket  
or excuse to board  
a train.

The seamstress  
aunt sent her out, warned  
her: "You must not be  
seen." So she crawled  
beneath seats, crouched  
among suitcases.

She carried gold and jewels, a girl  
so slight. And when the soldiers  
asked, the passengers cried  
out "Leave the girl alone. She  
is only a child," but  
a child who made it  
back that night.

— A. Cabrera

## GRAND WIZARD

People lined the curb  
along the length of Flagler Street —

Memorial Day, Miami, 1958,  
I recall my mother holding my hand,

when I was five. The white summer  
dress she made herself only made

more fashionable with the blue cloth  
belt around her waist, and me dressed

in beige shorts, a green polo, sandals —  
both of us delighting in the parade,

the colorful display of the marchers,  
the onlookers. Until the wedge

of the white cloaked riders, with  
veils and pointed hats, on horseback,

approached where we stood  
on the side of the road; their energy

that of an imminent impenetrable  
darkness drawing you into its center,

magnetically; and for everyone  
to see, its Grand Wizard, his veil

lifted, hard obdurate eyes gazing  
into the crowd along the street named

after the Standard Oil magnate and  
railroad tycoon who died accidentally

in a fall down the marbled stairs of his  
home at Whitehall. My boy's soul

intuited evil incarnate and rebelled  
against it instantly, the sheer malice

and foul malevolence in the man's  
visage, smoldering beneath the zany

hoodlum costume, precipitating  
my protest beside my mother, openly

crying out that I didn't like that man,  
the one on horseback riding past us,

the man meeting my face with his cold  
eyes, the one my mother began pulling

me away from and covering my mouth,  
beginning to make her way through

the crowd by the curb with me  
in tow, her stopping eventually to

whisper loudly to me that I couldn't  
say such things out loud to the man

on the horse, that he could do  
things to us that we would not want

done, that he and his men were  
the ones who burned crosses on front

lawns, that these horseback riders  
were known as the Ku Klux Klan.

—Wally Swist

#### BEDTIME STORIES, COPYRIGHT 1955

I scream  
you scream  
we all scream  
for ice cream  
he brings me chocolate-chocolate chip in the wrong  
bowl after her scream  
wakes me  
and call me their little queen  
and says Mommy just had a bad dream  
when I cry and ask what's  
he gives me more ice cream

the next night he brings us ice cream again and he  
sings I'm the Good Humor man  
with the ice cream kids all favor  
but that's silly  
he's the same Daddy, not the Good Humor man

I like Ike  
They wear identical smiles for their children every  
morning and  
they wear matching campaign buttons:  
clearly a match made in heaven

Don't tell Daddy that your Mommy  
it's a special surprise that  
can you keep a secret, Sweetie?  
now that you're a big girl, I bet you can

I'm a good girl, I never told on her —  
such a good girl she is, no trouble at all, even now —  
but like her running mascara, gold stars stain your face

It's Howdy Doody time.  
It's Howdy Doody time.  
It's time to start the show. So kids  
and dads, let's GO!. On today's show, Princess  
Summerfallwinterspring

MY NAME IS ALICE  
AND MY BROTHER'S NAME IS AL  
WE COME FROM ALABAMA  
AND WE SELL APPLES.  
No, it's her turn with the jumprope. You have to learn  
to take turns.  
MY NAME IS BARBARA  
AND MY BROTHER'S NAME IS BOB.  
WE COME FROM BOSTON  
AND WE  
No, your father and I will take turns having you for  
Christmas.  
MY NAME IS NELLIE  
AND MY FATHER'S NAME WAS NED  
WE COME FROM NEW YORK  
But my mother said that even in New York I shouldn't  
tell  
my friends that we were getting a divorce  
AND WE SELL LIES  
On this jump rope it's easy to trip

Saying goodnight for Camels, America's  
favorite cigarette  
he is smoking even more  
she never empties the ashtrays any more

bedtime stories are still read at her  
till the final page  
of theirs

I bet you don't even know. Cornelia's last name  
changed over the summer. Her brother's too. You're  
crazy. How can a last name ever change? Except when  
you get married. And boys' names never ever change.  
Her mother and father got divorced and then —  
Divorced? Cross your heart and hope to die? I thought  
that didn't happen much except in the slums and  
things

But my mother told me not to tell the other children at  
school because

Daddy loads a  
heartful of presents for them on  
his visiting days but the prize in the Crackerjack box  
bleeds.

— Heather Dubrow



## EPITHALAMIUM

## An Old-Fashioned Wedding Toast

Assuredly, each to each, with all to all,  
astonishments invest you both at first  
by voice, form, lilt, light, fragrance,  
leaving only taste of lips, and touch,  
for further time. As prelude, gestures grip,  
and minds fit in tongue and groove companionship.

At this turn, poets usually disclaim all hopes,  
speak cleverly, lack patience. Too young,  
they warn of boredom, harp on wrinkles, guile,  
despair, ungrateful children, temperaments  
at odds, lure of drives and lusts, as though  
events and time obliterate warm hearts' design.

Poets conceive poets' conceits immortal,  
account ironic stanzas as sturdier than life,  
plump each discouragement as fatal strife.  
While true, that mishaps make for muddle,  
directions tangled, reliances and dreams disserved,  
still, vows have latency – beyond dreamers' dreams  
runs a vein of iron soft as gold  
and bright, mined this wedding day, and night.

—Harvey A. Steinberg

## SYNCHRONICITY

We stroll down Columbus Avenue; October sweater-  
weather, gift of a day till a cursing, hair-matted,  
rag-wearing man behind us gets closer, louder.

Herb, wait, let him pass.  
We gaze into a jewel studded window.  
Herb says, That curved silver necklace,  
how much? I guess \$45.

Herb presses the door buzzer, Don't take it out,  
but that swirly necklace, how much?  
The salesman lifts it off black velvet – 18 karat white  
gold  
with diamonds. Forty-two hundred.

Oh, my wife guessed forty-five. I tap his foot,  
afraid he'll reveal my ignorance. Try it on.  
Okay, just for fun, I say, as white-turbaned Harmeet  
closes the clasp around my neck.

You look great in it. This is an embarrassing question,  
how much if it's cubic zirconia?  
We only sell diamonds but since we make our own  
jewelry, well, \$1200. It will take 4 weeks.

Herb asks, Do you want it?  
I think, \$1200, but we worry about his retiring.  
I ponder the fragility of life.  
9/11 has changed us.  
Yes, I do.

A day later Harmeet phones, offers  
the display necklace a bit above cost. I reply,  
I doubt Herb will go for it but I'll call him.

Herb says, Grab it. That money won't change our  
lives.

After all you've been through, it's about time.  
I've never given you such a gift. It's about time.

Again I wonder how I got this lucky.  
A woman with my history. Unheard of, a man who  
adores her. And, a screamer who detoured us  
against this store window.

—Jane Herschlag

## ROSE AND THE FRUIT

She was a blooming, happy girl,  
her name was Rose, and she was wed  
to handsome man that she liked best;  
her skin was white; her cheeks were red;  
she had a little boy and girl,  
just babies yet, sweet lisping things,  
her joys were all in home and hearth,  
as some wear crowns, she wore her ring.

She swept the floor and sang her songs,  
she rocked the babes, she loved her man;  
her world was beautiful and small,  
and every day was joyful span.  
One day she went out to the wood  
to gather herbs to make a tea,  
the babies slept while she searched round  
the bases of old forest trees.

She saw a wall of stone, far off  
she'd never seen it there before,  
and ran to it through darkest wood;  
she found it had an open door,  
which she passed through, and gasped, surprised,  
a tended garden spread out there,  
and sunlight flooded down within;  
the trees were cleared; the plants were rare.

She wandered for a while inside,  
enjoying all the flowers, sweet,  
then saw a tree with hanging fruit;  
she couldn't help but take, and eat.  
Rose ate and ate, it was so rich;  
far sweeter than her sweetest cake,

she gathered some to carry home,  
remembering the babes would wake.

Once home again, she ate the rest,  
she couldn't stand to see fruit there;  
too sweet to leave another hour  
too sweet to save, too sweet to share.  
She turned to making dinner then,  
but heart was in the garden still;  
she'd eaten all she had and yet  
she knew it wasn't half her fill.

Her husband came, she kissed his cheek  
but didn't smile, or laugh, or sing,  
dejectedly, she cooked for him  
she looked down at her golden ring  
it gave no thrill of ownership,  
she sighed at last; the babes arose  
and came to kiss her, and she thought  
how easily they dirtied clothes.

Around the table where they sat  
the food was good and plentiful  
but not a bite would Rose consume  
instead, she felt the garden's pull.  
Her husband worried for her then,  
but Rose told him that she was fine;  
then waited 'til he slept and left  
to seek more of the fruit divine.

She couldn't find the garden wall;  
she looked that night; she looked next day,  
she wandered weeping through the woods  
so hungry, bitter at delay.  
The babes she left with neighbor maid,  
as day by day she chased her plan,  
and neighbor maid took on her joys —  
the babes, the house, and finally, man.

Rose wandered, starving, through the woods  
her home was gone, her joys all lost,  
the tree she sought above all else,  
for tree she'd paid the highest cost!  
She walked until her dress was rags;  
she walked until she finally crawled;  
but then, through woods ahead she saw  
the open gate; the rising wall!

She gathered strength and ran within;  
she took the fruit, and bit it, wild,  
she gasped with joy, she sighed, alive,  
and didn't think of man, or child,  
but only fruit, the luscious fruit;  
her cheeks were wet, her dress soaked through,  
and when she sat and fell asleep  
the juices covered her like dew.

She never left the place again;  
she was afraid it would be gone,  
she lived her life within its bounds  
she gathered fruit at every dawn;  
and wept for what she left behind,  
she grieved within the flower beds,  
but never left beloved tree;  
sweet fruit hung thick about her head.

— Lisa Morris

#### LOVE'S LETTERS

a single long shadow, reminder of his defiant quiet,  
and a face like stubbled November corn fields.  
it's all that remains? a few lines of verse,  
and some letters...

one woman claimed she'd miss him--  
the one who left empty lipstick rimmed cognac glasses  
on the night stand, and never read the news,  
not once,  
did they acknowledge their approaching separation.  
the hope of heaven looked Kandinsky,  
rancio, heady, unearthly, unspeakable.

during the day they thought together,  
but at night, they dreamed apart.  
their children radiated in another universe,  
as his contracted into fields or particles,  
and incalculable darkness.

gravity of tone, the final threadbare force,  
has, in the end, limits--  
beyond which even words lose their attraction.  
stretched letters scatter into scribble.  
ink evaporates. the dent of its imprint,  
flattens into the final illiterate horizon.  
"Hold on, hold on," she said,  
"I'm coming, to read to you."

— David C. Miller MD

#### FROM CAPE COD

If you live long enough  
everyone you love will betray you  
and you will forgive them  
for the tides and marshes of age and love are sharp  
and hurting and deep  
and dying a relief  
when the years too long  
when the losses multiply and thoughts dim  
but hold here fast  
for the sky is blue and wind salty and fresh  
and the sun is lighting the pine  
early this snow covered morning.

— Susan Oleferuk

## I WILL ALWAYS COME TO YOU IN MAY

I will always come to you in May  
 poppies for remembrance, roses for love  
 honeysuckle tangled ties of abundance now gone  
 the dead speak in color, scent and song  
 so much else is forgotten  
 See my shadow in a moonflower before summer's end  
 when the nights are still warm  
 and the stars speak like old friends  
 they tell the others what was and shall come  
 and for you the serene evenings bring dreams of new love

I lie in winters dead in the cold ground of my icy bed  
 far from strength, my hopes, my dread  
 but if I had one moment to claim as mine  
 the end of May would be my time, when the sky  
 darkens and tender trees sway  
 and I drive through the hills to you.

—Susan Oleferuk

## CURIO

He keeps a shelf of souvenirs, objets,  
 he calls them, from trips, jobs, old loved ones turned  
 to friends, then strangers. . . .

One recalls the one  
 who'd shouted his name in the middle of a crowd  
 from the back of a great convention hall  
 and all the heads there turned, like scattered magnets  
 drawn to the sudden energy between. . . .

A colleague chucked his shoulder and advised  
 him, Marry that one, bud! But, resisting the  
 imperative, he didn't. . . .

I turned it in  
 my hands as he told me the story. Ah. Manquée?  
 I asked. He took it from me, turned it around,  
 and said, I must remember to tell  
 Whatshername to dust these, then fumbled for  
 a rag and wiped it himself, but softly, like a memory,  
 dabbing it, not rubbing, leaving it still stippled  
 with deposits from the air, the dusts of time.  
 Then he put it back on the shelf, and wheeled away,  
 coming to life at the whistle of the kettle,  
 calling for some time now, and needing some  
 attention.

—James B. Nicola

## WHEN YOU ARE GONE FROM ME

Since you are gone, the signs of you are everywhere  
 but the most precious are the silvery strands of hair  
 I find on the living room rug, on your chair,  
 or clinging to my clothes.

One by one, these too will disappear,  
 everything does,  
 But this silver hair, once on your dear head,  
 is all the comfort I need from the dead.  
 I don't need much,  
 and this is all that's left of your gentle touch:  
 a silver hair held softly in my palm  
 and all around me your descending calm.

You don't know how I miss you  
 or how I long to kiss you,  
 but it will suffice, I understand,  
 to bend and kiss what I hold in my hand.  
 Anything can be a prayer,  
 even this strand of silver hair.

—Red Hawk

## YELLOW LEAF FLOATING IN THE BIRDBATH

The exactitude of the Cosmos, down to the least  
 yellow leaf falling to its exact place in the  
 grand design, is a source of wonder to me;

I didn't turn wide on the playground in 3rd grade  
 as I was chasing around the school building corner  
 ringing the tardy bell, and ran full face into

a late boy racing to his classroom, and fell  
 to the asphalt in disgrace, bell clattering  
 across the ground, and that slowed me just enough

so that 31 years later you and I arrived  
 at exactly the same space on the warehouse floor  
 but did not collide, we embraced and that

moment of grace gave us our lives. So I look at the  
 yellow leaf and I wonder: what if it had softly  
 brushed the lip of the birdbath, just missing,

and landed among the thousands on the ground;  
 what star might have been erased, its dying arc  
 across the night sky leaving what solar system

suddenly and irrevocably plunged into darkness,  
 and in what lonely basement room may I have found  
 myself,  
 longing for your embrace, with no trace of you?

—Red Hawk

## BIRD TRACKS: A PANTOUM

As my mother ended her ninetieth year,  
on my *bonsai* appeared a bold blue jay  
who regarded me with no trace of fear.  
I knew him, he'd been her protégé.

On my *bonsai* appeared a bold blue jay.  
Contrary to kind, he made no squawk.  
I knew him, he'd been her protégé.  
He came as an augur, not to mock.

Contrary to kind, he made no squawk,  
the first of prophets to come by wing.  
He came as an augur, not to mock,  
an envoy of flocks who do not sing —

the first of prophets to come by wing.  
Then ravens alit on the giant pine,  
two envoys of flocks who do not sing.  
They were too clearly a fatal sign.

Then ravens alit on the giant pine  
next door, where Fran my friend declined.  
They were too clearly a fatal sign  
for her and for one more yet to find.

Next door where Fran my friend declined  
they conferred darkly on a limb  
for her and for one more yet to find  
and fling beyond the world's bright rim.

They conferred darkly on a limb.  
It was you they chose to take away  
and fling beyond the world's bright rim —  
ravens, successors to the jay.

It was you they chose to take away.  
They left me with this conundrum:  
ravens, successors to the jay;  
what rare bird was yet to come?

They left me with this conundrum.  
I asked the rainbow-circled sun to say  
what rare bird was yet to come?  
A hawk on your cremation day!

I asked the rainbow-circled sun to say  
the gist in the gyre of this braying raptor,  
a hawk on your cremation day.  
I welcomed him as your messenger.

The gist in the gyre of this braying raptor  
remains a mystery not mine to pierce;  
I welcomed him as your messenger.  
Why he came when called, shrill and fierce

remains a mystery not mine to pierce.  
Perhaps your totem Phoenix knows  
why he came when called, shrill and fierce,  
a bolt from where the hot sun glows.

Perhaps your totem Phoenix knows  
you chose a card with its brazen guise,  
a bolt from where the hot sun glows,  
left words for your funeral to my surprise.

You chose a card with its brazen guise  
to write a "reminder" to yourself,  
left words for your funeral to my surprise:  
the *credo* that "flames can't destroy the Self."

To write a "reminder" to yourself:  
What prompted, years before your loss,  
the *credo* that "flames can't destroy the Self"  
but rather just "burn off our dross"?

— Diane De Pisa

## PENSIVE NIGHT AT THE 9/11 PENTAGON MEMORIAL

Subdued under a canopy of towering crape myrtle trees,  
cantilevered stainless steel timelines are illuminated  
shrines.

Like a moon succumbing to clouds, pulsating in  
aeonian peace,  
cradled water ebbs, flows softly.

Silently sounds alter the ineffable.

— Vincent J. Tomeo

## THE PEPPER TREE

(in my mother's voice)

Each morning, each evening I cherish it  
 as I sit, drinking coffee, sometimes tea,  
 by the kitchen window. The tree is long  
 in the tooth, one might say of it, as one  
 might say of a man; but the voice of man  
 was never as dear to me as the sound  
 of wind through these bright-green leaves.  
 It has lived here all my life, obligingly.  
 As I often tell my children,  
 I hope I do not outlive it.

Together, we share our years.  
 I understand the language of its bark,  
 its knots and burls; the silence of its flowers.  
 And then this morning: a tired groan,  
 a yielding up, as it slowly fell, a branch  
 gently grazing the kitchen glass –  
 slow, slow in the late heat of summer.  
 And I am hushed, as if I'd lost a brother.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

## MOTHER

The night is not far  
 from day and heat,  
 but still quite its own.

It is much past the time  
 when I lost you to the stars,  
 the moon's absence.

Even then, come slow.  
 I shall wait for you  
 in this white vacancy.

I shall smell the curries  
 you used to prepare  
 once upon a time;

I shall wait for your  
 footsteps from beyond  
 the river, my children's

laughter. You are here too  
 but in a single guise: your  
 picture hangs green on the walls.

The movements are not here.  
 Let me not destroy you; come,  
 following your wish, come slow.

I am sure, you will arrive  
 long before my child and wife  
 find me waiting for a single ghost.

Even then, time is endless;  
 take your time, come slow.  
 I can almost feel your breath.

I never cried when you left.  
 Today, let this lean hour feel  
 ourselves together, while I

waste myself in your arms  
 like a child. No one, no one  
 will know. Mother, come slow.

– Bibhu Padhi

## THE SHADES

Hand and hand with equal plod  
 they go...the child hand raised  
 to reach the holding hand. Hold  
 the old holding hand. Hold  
 and be held. Fulfilled beyond  
 fulfillment. The moon achingly bright.  
 Plod on and never recede. Slowly  
 with never a pause plod on  
 and never recede...Joined by held  
 holding hands. Plod on as one.  
 Old man in his tramping rags, girl  
 child in her pinafore dress. One shade.  
 Another shade. Walking together.  
 The body's cessation of no account.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

## HOW TO MAKE A GRAVEYARD

Will these stones ever speak?  
 They have. They did.  
 Long ago, to an angel  
 too earth-faithful for flight.

Measure carefully.  
 Sarcophagus  
 is much too long a word  
 for death's sincerity.

For heaven sake  
 do not quote anyone.  
 The dead speak only silence,  
 and silence is all of loss.



Be patient.  
Breathe like the windy leaves.  
Enclose the silence,  
and weed it well.

Let the maple seeds  
drift where they will.  
Much depends  
on their random choices.

Leave room for lovers  
who can outdream the moon.  
No one here will judge  
their deathless lunacy.

God is near, and watchful  
as the hare, yet the dead  
speak only silence  
that blows like cut grass through air.

—Sean Lause

#### BILHAH'S SONG

"And Laban gave Bilhah his maidservant to his  
daughter Rachel, to be her maidservant."  
(Genesis 29:29)

Leah's soft voice is weak, but mine is strong;  
Dinah is locked in silence and cannot sing;  
Rachel died in childbirth; I sing their song.

Zilpah clings to whispers, for nights are long  
In half-empty beds where lovers rarely cling;  
Leah's soft voice is weak, but mine is strong.

Rachel loved music, which was her native tongue  
That she and Joseph spoke in Joseph's spring;  
Rachel died in childbirth; I sing their song.

Leah embraces Dinah, who, when young  
Would cradle dolls that Leah used to bring;  
Leah's soft voice is weak, but mine is strong.

Dinah had danced with dolls, and shunned all wrong;  
But where are Dinah's wedding dress and ring?  
Rachel died in childbirth; I sing their song.

And I—I gaze at crescent-moons, now hung  
In wind-filled skies by a frayed and fragile string;  
Leah's soft voice is weak, but mine is strong;  
Rachel died in childbirth; I sing their song.

—Yakov Azriel

#### V. *Runes*

##### GAMBOL

The chipmunk is not as ignobly brazen as the squirrel —  
not the crazed mad dasher crossing the roadway, then

turning around, with its tail a raised question mark in  
the air, always twitching, as the squirrel speeds beneath

the wheels of the moving car. The chipmunk is not as  
imprudent or daft as the squirrel, is not at all maniacal,  
but

behaves more in keeping with an athlete, its white racing  
stripes emblazoned on either side of its upper back,

intimating speed, although not in the squirrel's  
mindlessly  
frenzied fashion, but more in the way of a sprinter, with

the finish line of the other side of the road its inevitable  
destination, a veritable cross-road dash, acorn in mouth,

its four feet engaged in the very definition of what  
the word bolt means. However, as much as squirrels

may be fleet they are not known for being friendly, such  
impertinent creatures as they are, muttering their harsh

chatter, lunatic interlopers always setting limits that  
exhibit

a boundless temerity. Whereas, a chipmunk I chanced

upon hiking Mount Lafayette, as I stopped mid-mountain  
for a rest, volunteered to join me in a snack of trail mix,

tame enough to eat some right out of my outstretched  
hand,

filling its mouth at various intervals until the pouches

in its cheeks bulged, and upon surfeit it returned to its  
hole

dug into the earth beneath white pine, only to emerge  
again

for more peanuts and raisins with which it could  
line its burrow for leaner times, whom native Americans

called the one who descends trees headlong, whose  
nicknames include steward and housekeeper —

how we gamboled that summer day, *Tamias striatus*,  
both of us bartering trust, having befriended one another.

—Wally Swist

## THE RHODE ISLAND CAT THAT KNOWS

Two-year-old Oscar has grown up  
on the dementia unit of a Nursing Home.  
He wins the platinum loyalty award  
where as most dogs only receive the gold.

Dr. Joan Teno of Brown University bows  
not only to Oscar's perfect record  
in death predictions  
2-4 hours before its arrival,  
(more accurate than hers),  
but to his steadfast companionship,  
remaining at the dying patient's bedside.

After twenty-five such vigils  
nurses now call relatives  
when Oscar makes his final visit.

As if that were not enough,  
Oscar is gorgeous.

—Jane Herschlag

## IT'S ALL ABOUT WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE

Cows in the distance,  
small as crows,  
go unnoticed by this calf  
smelling mother's breath.  
Mom's white eyelashes  
fringe calm eyes.

She's as curious about me  
as I am about her.  
She lets me talk  
and stand close to her calf.  
This trusting mom  
must be friends  
with the farmer.

—Jane Herschlag

## OWL, LOST

Your face watched me  
Your eyes of a lonely girl  
turning away  
side after side  
looking over one shoulder then the other  
to draw me from the basin within the tree  
that hid your children

When you left the branch  
it swayed so little  
I wondered if I had seen you at all  
then your gaze locked mine

from another part of the forest  
tearing my gaze again  
from the dark eyes  
of your young ones

Now your tree seems empty  
Its opening a mouth twisted  
in a laugh  
the autumn leaves covering that mouth  
like the palms  
of a hundred hands

No young ones  
No bones or ruffled snags of fur fallen  
beneath your ledge  
Nothing but sanddust  
and darkness

I want to see you  
I want to hear you calling  
in the night  
That silken whisper  
Even if it is not me you call  
Even if it is me  
and the night grows short

—Kelley Jean White

## THE LARKSPUR

All flowers live up to their names  
an eponymous breed claiming colors, scent and heart  
warriors with spears rising in the field  
able to bring us to our knees  
reminding us of forgotten dreams  
those small hidden places like shadows  
under the dark leaves  
surrender written on the wings of a moth

I loved the larkspur before I had ever seen one  
one word conjuring another world and  
I lived in both  
the wildflower meadow sits in the sun  
a disdainful garden needing no man  
weaving spells and humming the land  
all we can offer is  
the glorious names.

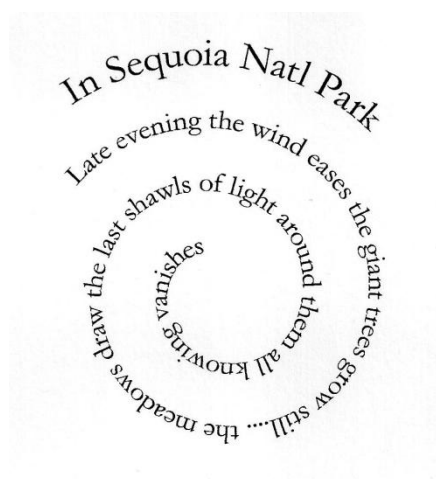
—Susan Oleferuk

## HORSE

With my left hand on her shoulder, my right sliding  
across her back, I take in the smell of horse, pushing  
my nose into her hair, rubbing against her until she leans  
into me as if she wants to fall asleep inside the love.  
Stroking and stroking until her coat takes on the sheen

of newly-minted light. Measuring the distance inside a  
 wish  
 to be one with horse and landscape, the way the sky feels  
 when I lift my hands, stretch my arms apart to split the  
 clouds  
 and know a horse is the fragile piece of God, the divine  
 bit of flesh that fell to earth with us, took on the definite  
 bones of being mortal to be what we cannot be, strong  
 where  
 we are weak, weak where we are strong, so we become  
 the one thing when I slide my hand over her back and  
 press  
 my cheek to hers, warm and giving as the morning sun.

—Constance Rowell Mastores



—Doug Macdonald

#### WHERE THE TREE FELL

Watch the water as it winds  
 Its way over root, a tide  
 That clasped, unclasped, wound, rewound,  
 Drenching leavage, loam. Alone  
 This tree learned by rote the right  
 To root. Now broken branch, bough,  
 Trunk and terminus unknot.  
 Wild west winds brought this tree low,  
 As low as earth would allow.  
 Now wind blows where it is not.  
 Broken where it used to bow,  
 As tangled as words I write,  
 Giving to the living a loan  
 That opens earth, a raw wound  
 Where the tree roots were untied.  
 Roots too shallow for west winds.

—Laurence Snyder

#### ECLIPSE

Tonight we shadowed the moon. Well, she's been  
 Our parasol, darkening our doorway  
 Only too often. Now it's her turn again  
 To back offstage into obscurity, play  
 Her part, fill her ashen plains, empty seas,  
 With earthdark. Be terrified. Draw your shade,  
 Moon. Hide in the earth's focussed cone that frees  
 You from the spotlight for these moments. Fade  
 To a shadow of yourself. Be dark there  
 As we here, as we here block the glow of  
 Starshine that's your customary wear,  
 The glamour of chastity, madness, love.  
 Stardom eludes you now but only through  
 This brief eclipse. No reflection on you.

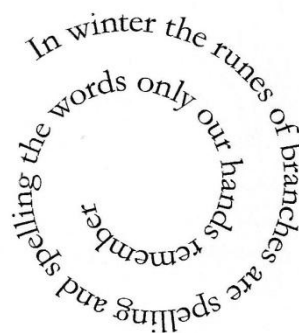
—Laurence Snyder

#### AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

When the earth spoke it didn't mumble.  
 It groaned and growled. And the two firs whipped  
 Branches hard against the house. I slipped  
 To one knee, heard the backyard grumble,  
 Shiver, shake, snatch at its compost quilt  
 With dirty fingers, settling back to  
 Unmade beds where gardens might come true.  
 The dog barked. Our confidence was spilt  
 Out on the ground. Stone bones sifted through  
 The meat of mud and loam, sandy glands  
 Swelled with sweat. The earth here raised soiled  
 hands  
 To heaven, stirred in its bed, and you  
 And I trembled too. Now how can we keep  
 Our covenant with certainty and sleep?

Laurence Snyder

#### Runes



—Doug Macdonald

## VI. *Fitting Frames*

### A HAVEN

Amid chaotic times of volatility,  
Unnerving fluctuations, fault lines breaking free,  
Our saner selves seek structure.

Assurance found in form as words fall into place,  
Just as in the beginning light broke forth in space  
Dividing dark from daylight.

The discipline of metered, numbered syllable,  
The comfort of a tether countering the pull  
Of fickle fads of fashion.

The deeds of man lack pattern; motives are confused,  
In certainty of stanzas, meaning is suffused  
Within the weighty wording.

So, as things fall apart and yield to entropy,  
Take order to disorder, life to poetry  
Imparting peace and purpose.

—Connie S. Tettenborn

### RIPPLES IN THE FABRIC

April 3, 1992: George Smoot of Lawrence Berkeley  
Laboratory announces discovery of 'ripples in the  
fabric of space-time' that created galaxies and  
empty space. — Washington Post, May 3, 1992

Of ripples in the fabric of space-time  
we are alerted: in a place once blank  
they spring from meter and inherit rhyme.

How like the growing nautilus's climb  
is our galactic spiral, as a bank  
of ripples in the fabric of space-time

where human words may radiate sublime  
reflections, reasoned acts: what careless prank  
could spring from meter and inherit rhyme?

Must we, like some inchoate mollusk, slime  
back into an abandoned shell that sank  
from ripples in the fabric of space-time?

Or else, emerging from that paradigm,  
can we escape this sluggish holding-tank  
and ripple through the fabric of space-time,  
springing from meter, inheriting rhyme?

—Claudia Gary Annis

### VILLANELLE

Form gives shape to what we tell,  
poets of the past declared;  
and so I write a villanelle.

Free verse tends to puff and swell:  
meaning sharpens when ensnared.  
Form adds grace to what we tell.

A poem is a citadel,  
as structured as the poet cared,  
thus I write a villanelle.

In shifting dreams we mostly dwell,  
in shapeless images unshared.  
Form lends sense to what we tell.

Rhyming words peal like a bell,  
sounding sweeter when they're paired;  
and so I write a villanelle.

Writing badly or writing well,  
I count out the rhymes and dare.  
Form gives shape to what I tell,  
and still, I wrote a villanelle.

—Sheila Golburgh Johnson

### [5967] FORM

And what is form?  
The shape of a wind  
that comes and goes  
leaving a soul trail.

Beauty that comes  
and goes.  
Externals that entice  
to play destiny's dice.

To form an opinion  
today this way  
tomorrow another,  
river waters that flow.

Plato's shadows  
in shapes by the fire.  
Nothing here is eternal  
and only God remains.

The contour of nature  
in valleys and mountains.  
Figures in formations  
filled-in by our imagination.

Then fashion, in models  
and schemes with contours;

molds and chimeras  
that come and go in style.

Form is the vase and the face  
looking one or another way.  
In black over white  
or vice versa.

We build a frame  
give it an outline of ours.  
In it our very own thought  
that makes the phenomenon.

Then we can follow the book,  
good form as in conform.  
How much decorum  
is but the patina of convention?

The ceremonies are important,  
since it is externals that move us.  
And we can judge only  
by what our eyes can see.

I will bring into existence  
a something that has form.  
It is my very own creation  
and it forms me as I form it.

—Hayim Abramson

#### SLEEPWALKER

Out on a tightrope  
balance depends  
on footing — eyes

ahead — always in motion  
to not fall through  
the distance below. Not given

to seeing the length of the wire,  
not knowing  
where exactly it takes me,

I steady my anxious  
thoughts, take my pencil,  
write down what I can.

And knowing I walk in a sleep  
where distinctions are veiled  
by distance, I trust

the ground of my being,  
keep to the feel of stepping  
into my own next step.

—Reizel Polak

#### THE SCRIBE

The letters tell their story without words,  
and by their forms the Names float up like clouds.  
The crowns upon them slit the klaf\* like swords,  
the spaces pouring graces,  
as parchment quill embraces,  
and I am moving ever floating towards.

The fiery black on fiery whiteness falls  
across the parchment throbbing and alive.  
Now sure and strong, now trembling and unsure,  
the inner power waning,  
the circumstance explaining,  
that I am watching, yet I see no more.

The words below the line produce the light,  
and bold interpretations come to mind.  
Though splendid incantations fill the night,  
the rapid shallow breathing  
as if the soul is leaving,  
and I pursue my spirit in its flight.

— Chaim Tabasky

\*parchment

#### WRITE FROM THE SOUL!

A poet friend says,  
Write from the soul!  
She highlights  
words, phrases, lines that speak  
to her soul.

I am not sure she means soul.  
perhaps.

Should we strive then  
to silence the "brain-that-sweats"?  
Seek not to toil  
between feeling  
and expressing.

Yet feeling needs form,  
a fitting frame  
for the wrestling soul.

Meaning summons meaning,  
inner ears hear  
sound ripple upon sound.

—Michael E. Stone

## INTRICATE

intricate, delicate, ornate,  
latticework, stonework, embroidery,  
ornament, adornment, embellishment,  
styles of art, of carving, of writing.

simple, clean, pure,  
line, curve, angle,  
chairs, tools, and vision,

different wave lengths  
strike the inner eye differently,  
reach perception's pleasure  
by different routes.

—Michael E. Stone

## various kinds of breathing

Poems, like breaths, like leaves, like lives  
go on, whatever one believes  
as stars, as mountains come and go  
(though nothing lasts as long as snow) —

like water in streams and sound in songs...  
and songs in a braid are thick and strong  
as a rope of hair on a back at night  
(though nothing lasts as long as light).

—JB Mulligan

## ESSAY VS. FREE VERSE

I talked to a poet about his free verse,  
and of his opinion and could he explain.  
"Sir, tell me?" I asked him, "What difference occurs  
between a good essay and a poem of free verse?"

He paused as he thought about what he should say,  
and then his demeanor revealed some dismay,  
as he pondered an answer to give the right way,  
in response to the question I asked him that day.

"I'll tell you," he said, with a frown on his face,  
as he looked to his feet for some added advice.  
"The careful selection of words shall I say  
that renders a poem above the essay.

They both carry thoughts about this world and life  
using similes, metaphors and stories alike,  
but the poem is better, much better you see  
because it's a poem where the verses are free."

"But that is no answer," I said in response.  
"You can't possibly know how the essay was made.  
Perhaps the words flowed from the seat-of-the-pants  
or maybe were chosen by whim or by chance.

But that doesn't mean that the essay is less  
than the poem that boasts of its fancy free verse,  
so I'll ask once again for an answer from you  
for a better description comparing the two."

His eyes shifted slowly from left foot to right  
seeking answers, any answers and further insight  
in response to my question, but none could he find,  
as no thoughts of importance would come to his  
mind.

Then he turned and he left me in silence that day,  
no solutions to cause an opinion to sway,  
so I'm left with my question, for better or worse.  
Should I call it an essay or should I call it free verse?

—Gerald E. Greene

## PER/VERSE (triolet)

"When you feel brain-dead or blue, write a verse  
or two. Even a line can make things fine,"  
our workshop leader assured. But it's worse  
if you feel brain-dead or blue, write a verse  
or two, and find you've mined lodes of perverse  
images that rasp the nerves, wrench the mind.  
Then you'll feel deathly blue, and not a verse  
or two, even a line, can make things fine.

—George Held

## POEM

Some pronounce it *poim*.  
Like it has an *oy* inside it.  
The way an oyster  
has an *oy* inside it. The way  
all poems ought to have  
a little *oy veh*  
and a little *oyez! oyez!*  
inside them.

Others pronounce it *po-um*.  
Like it has an *um* inside it.  
A thoughtful pause.  
A caesura. A possum  
that got run over,  
its esses elided.

Me, I always say *pome*.  
Like an apple or pomme  
I want to bite into  
because it has an *om* inside it,  
a mystic and sacred  
syllable I can't wait to reach  
and I have no patience  
for all the diphthongs.

—Paul Hostovsky

## SESTINAMANIA

Whoever must write a sestina  
 Be warned: the result might not repay  
 The labor. First, have something charged  
 To say, and be prepared to sustain  
 It over thirty-nine iambic lines  
 Without detracting from your style.

Some poets resort to contorting style  
 To squeeze a sentence into a sestina  
 Or stuff in more sense than a line  
 Can bear, but such discord won't repay  
 The effort, much less sustain  
 The form. So choose something charged

And vital to you, lest you be charged  
 With baldly exploiting traditional style.  
 Select teleutons mainly to sustain  
 Your drift with ease, for the sestina's  
 Devilishly hard to make pay  
 Off in imperishable lines.

O to write some publishable lines  
 In a prescribed form that's charged  
 With names like Bishop yet did not repay  
 Her efforts despite her enviable style,  
 For she gave up on the sestina  
 After just two tries: it did not sustain

Her interest; nor did other fixed forms sustain  
 Her talent, so she wrote free-verse lines,  
 Dropping the villanelle, like the sestina,  
 After only one try, lest she be charged  
 With being too "academic." Her perfect style  
 Made her free-verse poems (figuratively) pay.

If you're the sort whose product must repay  
 Your efforts as you labor to sustain  
 Your composition and master your style  
 And turn out good, even memorable lines,  
 Make sure to keep your language charged,  
 Your line-ends stressed, to bolster your sestina.

You'll find, I hope, your time repaid in these lines;  
 For sustained invention there is no charge,  
 No tax on style for ending on unstressed "a," "sestina."

—George Held

## ONE AMBITION

All I ever really wanted  
 was to whistle with my fingers —

I knew I would never  
 be the one up on stage

blowing everybody away  
 with beauty, brilliance, virtuosity...

But to be the lightning  
 inside the thunderous applause,

to have the audacity  
 and the manual dexterity

to make a siren screeching  
 through a dark auditorium,

to be the killer hawk  
 in all that parroting, pattering rain,

to be, finally, the very best at praise--  
 now that was something

I thought that if I gave my life to  
 I might attain.

—Paul Hostovsky

## DEAR SEURAT,

Did I know you at fourteen  
 in algebra class when  
 I drew millions of circles  
 to stave off boredom?

Surely, I knew you at twenty-five  
 but did I think of you, even  
 consider your influence, when  
 again, to ward off something,  
 this time depression, so deep  
 I sat for hours, for days, weeks,  
 months, drawing circles.

No entertainment nor social  
 engagement wooed me from the orbs.  
 Only the circular motion soothed  
 my troubled soul. You showed colors  
 as they really were, juxtaposed to create  
 a harmony that eluded me  
 except for the serenity of circles.

My dark period passed. I emerged  
 from my cocoon to a cacophony  
 of sounds, sights, society, still intact,  
 eager to join, except when I picked up  
 pen I could no longer linger over circles.

What was the point?

—Joan Gerstein

## THE SMALL BLUE BOX

The blue tin box that once held cigars  
 Mother used for wool, needles and cotton  
 For mending four children's grubby socks and clothes  
 With nimble fingers and love mother mended and  
     sewed.

We loved the blue box with the flowers  
 Its enamel pockmarked and chipped  
 Too dangerous for small hands and prying fingers  
 It was out of bounds for us.

It came with us to the ghetto  
 And survived concentration camps  
 Broken, battered but alive.

Grown children left home, grandchildren came along  
 With tears in their eyes and tears in their clothes  
 Grandma took out her magic mending-box again  
 Wiped away their tears and made everything right.

Now the blue box, lovingly preserved  
 Occupies a place of honor in my home  
 Telling tales of Divine Providence to generations  
 A mute witness to wondrous miracles and  
 Human perseverance in mending lives.

—Esther Halpern

## PAPERWEIGHT

Set on my desk  
     it glows iridescent as a  
     peacock's tail: turquoise,  
     ocher, sea-glow green and  
     purple, shades that change with  
 every shift of light. I could make a  
 metaphor of this precious glass egg,  
 a gift from a beloved. I could say the  
 symbolism of an oval without an end,  
 the mystery of a womb, a seed,  
 the light tricks that change  
 what I see. But sometimes  
 a paperweight is simply  
     a paperweight, so  
     let us let it be.  
     I thank you  
     for it

—Sheila Golburgh Johnson

## ENTERING THE CATHEDRAL

Like Jonas by the fish was I received by it,  
 swung and swept in its dark waters,  
 driven to the deeps by it and beyond many rocks.  
 Without any touching of its teeth, I tumbled into it  
 and with no more struggle than a mote of dust  
 entering the door of a cathedral, so huge were its jaws.  
 How heel over head was I hurled down  
 the broad road of its throat, stopped inside  
 its chest wide as a hall, and like Jonas I stood up  
 asking where the beast was and, finding it nowhere,  
 there in grease and sorrow I build my bower.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

## Catalogue for a small show of words

1. Word for the image of new fallen snow on a leafless tree.
2. Word for the scent of jasmine dangling in the air.
3. Word for the sound of crystal shattering on a tile floor.
4. Word for the feeling of love in your throat in a dream.
5. Word for learning of a friend's suicide.

—I. Batsheva

## NAMES

Adam gave names,  
 his part of creation.  
 Without names, nothing is.

The blue sky tinged  
 yellow over the hills,  
 dawn's remnant breaking,  
 then Israel was named,  
 the angel not.

Names are power,  
 names create,  
 order, distinguish.  
 Names open the gates.

God calls the stars by name,  
 He knows their number.

God's Name holds the world,  
 its 72 letters.



His speech made it—  
22 letters.

He will be one with his Name.

—Michael E. Stone

#### DIAMOND OF SILENCE

Mr. Winegardner fought in two wars,  
one West, one East,  
and when he returned home,  
he never said one word.

Our baseball diamond had no home,  
a brick for first, a shed for second,  
and a clothesline pole for third,  
mumbling with bitter bumblebees.

It was Mr. Winegardner's yard.  
He watched us play but never said one word,  
cocked back on a wooden poker chair,  
whiskey bottle at his feet.

One day he broke that old shed down  
with a sledge hammer, yanked out the  
pole, bashed it to bits and burned it.  
The bees whirled off like discarded planets.

He painted lines in smooth and straight,  
placed three bases, soft and safe as pillows,  
then home, molded and packed a pitcher's mound,  
then returned to his chair and whiskey.

On that silent diamond we played baseball  
the only way to play baseball---for eternity,  
for golden summers and the blue within  
the blue, no need to even keep score.

Nights he stretched out on the mound,  
watching the moon displace the darkness.  
Still he said nothing. Perhaps the silence  
had forgotten what it once longed to say.

—Sean Lause

#### THE OAK TABLE

My neighbor tells about the time as a child  
when a tornado headed towards their farmhouse  
and his mother took him and his 2 sisters  
and they all huddled under the Oak dining table.  
Chandelier, then roofbeam, then walls  
all crashed down on top of and around them.  
He heard cows screaming and bawling and  
a noise like a freight train, it's always  
a freight train,

coming right through the dining room.  
Then the dust was so thick they choked  
and gagged and  
when it cleared they crawled out  
from under.  
There was nothing left but that Oak table  
amidst a pile of rubble that was once  
the farmhouse.

This table, he said, hands on the table  
we were seated at drinking beer.  
Some things endure, he said. This table  
outlived Grandma and Momma and  
it will outlive you and me too.  
This groove here, he pointed, that's where  
the roofbeam hit.

You go all the way back down the line,  
to the loggers, the craftsman who  
built things to last, or  
the farm woman who had an eye for  
what was solid and enduring, but  
the line of a man's fate runs straight  
and is drawn in the dust  
by such small choices.  
If they are thoughtful, careful,  
the line cuts in one direction, hasty  
or careless, it cuts in another, he said.  
The barn collapsed, he finishes;  
all the cows were killed.

—Red Hawk

#### Hoops

Hoops of our youth chasing wild circles in the ashen kingdom of wrinkled giants down narrow sidewalks we ran leaping the cages of light by the square cellar windows leaping the cracks in the gray years ahead past traffic lights past warning signs we ran swirling and spinning in hubcap days when we leaped and believed

—Doug MacDonald

## 5 ON FORM

## 1) The First Line Is the Hardest

What's new? I work a day-job, and compose  
a sonnet every weekday. It is not  
that difficult. There is a kind of spot  
you have to let the mind find, a pause  
where the gravities can come to equipoise,  
a wide white silence, a minute black dot  
which any number of elephants of thought  
can balance on. From there on in it flows,

or at least the problem has been framed:  
mind's journeymen then make the pieces fit.  
And what's the good of all that? you may say.  
Call it something like a balance-sheet  
for soul's accounts. A pastime for the condemned.  
It keeps the little men in white away.

## 2) Pas de Deux

A formal poem is a pas de deux  
Where the one partner, with all he requires  
Is form; the other is the poet, you,  
With your perceptions, memories, and desires;  
Where each learns her capacity, and fires  
The other on and on to ever-varied  
Displays; but all is spoiled if either tires  
Or lets himself be overwhelmed or carried.

And yet there are those lovely leans and lifts  
Where mate on mate all will-lessly reclines  
Or the balance of their strength more subtly shifts,  
Those pauses eye to eye, where each divines  
The other not as something in the way  
But deepest self, and what one wanted most to say.

## 3) [Untitled]

To write in forms you have to wait  
In empty rooms for words to come,  
To stare where gapes the open gate.  
To write in forms, you have to wait.  
The nerve is taut. The clock says Late.  
Still you must listen and be dumb.  
To write in forms, you have to wait  
In empty rooms for words to come.

## 4) Devotion's Prose

The sonnet is a form that mystics made,  
Worshippers of the Light's unfading rose.  
Its cadences were their devotions' prose,  
The currency in which they used to trade

Their ecstasies, of which time has mislaid  
The cypher, discontinuing the praise  
That round the mortal image ranged the rays  
Of the great Sun; strange that such fame should fade!

Yet in the form itself there still abides  
A kind of centering virtue that gives hope,  
As if the world in its enormity  
Is but the aura of a soul; the sides  
Of all contention balance round a shape  
That cannot change, nor forfeit dignity.

## 5) [Untitled]

A sonnet is the original sound-bite  
A thought-compressor, handy and compact,  
For meditations concrete or abstract.  
It takes you fifty seconds to recite,  
Speaking slowly; and within that tight  
Compass, there is room to state a fact,  
Anticipate how others would react,  
Explain how you would see it, in the light

Of other circumstance which you relate,  
And lastly give a learned opinion, backed  
By literary precedent. That is  
One possibility. Or you may state  
Thesis, antithesis, and synthesis,  
And wait until the couplet to retract.

— Esther Cameron

## SONNET AFTER BILLY COLLINS

First let's discuss the number of lines:  
Fourteen. You can tie them together with twine  
As if they are objects instead of mere words,  
Tiny nuggets of bread thrown down for the birds.  
A poem, after all, is a physical thing  
You can bundle in boxes with scissors and string.  
Though it follows parameters set long ago  
As to rhyme, pacing, content and rhythmical flow,  
Let's remember its limits, keep it in its place;  
It's just ink on paper that might be erased.  
Despite the beguiling surprise of its turn,  
Pyrotechnics that sparkle with wit as they burn,  
and no matter what legends and spells it evokes,  
it would only take seconds to go up in smoke.

— Catherine Wald

## VII. From Sabbath to Sabbath

### AS THE TWILIGHT COMES

i

May your fragmenting words find their necessary  
home

ii

Do not be sure we've come from the sea  
Or deserted our inherited altar

iii

To grasp the instant before conception  
Of who beside mother and father  
Prepared you for birth

iv

Look Dick  
Look Jane  
This body  
is a clod of clay

v

With the first breath  
Of our first hour  
Our time on earth  
Lasts hardly a fleeting sound  
To answer it's worth the trouble

vi

With twilight on the sixth day  
Ceasing from our rushing habits  
From all the making of things  
Spreading a cloth to sit  
At our never deserted table  
Awaiting our presence by the Shechinah

— Reizel Polak

### the challenge

Bodies are born and shed. A chrysalis  
blooms, unpetals and falls.  
But to a chrysalis, its opening is  
the time its being fails.  
Pure rhythm pulses in the brittle shell,  
then hammers on the sky  
a brutal song with urgent wings. And all  
is noise, or destiny.

— JB Mulligan

### fragments of answers

The cricket. The field. The ember-glow  
of a nearby town. The rush of stars  
for fourteen billion years above...  
this is all that whatever God  
is does.... In churches down the road,  
in white florescent light of labs  
up on the hill, the fractured answers  
leak and emit uncertain power.  
The weary wanderer sits in a car  
waiting for the light to change,  
singing along with the radio  
perhaps. The high beams sweep across  
a tangle of trees. The cricket rasps.  
We stay for a bit. We move. We're gone.  
The cricket and the stars stay on.

— JB Mulligan

### the common grave

We lived, imprisoned in each circumstance,  
taking no more than we needed  
and without ever taking a whiff of a chance.  
If we'd failed more, we might have succeeded.

As each sun melted in the common grave  
daylight faded, leaving little  
to display that we'd been alight and alive...  
But a small win still — there's the riddle.

The chain that binds us to the wall of years  
links us to the drab unfamous  
through unending march of hard labors —  
which, praising mildly, can't shame us.

— JB Mulligan

### MAKOM\*

for Rav Avraham Halpern

Where he sets his feet three times a day  
and stands bent at his shtender

leaning forward on his hands, the weight  
of his prayer over sixty years

has worn two holes  
in the linoleum.

— Steven (Shlomo) Sher

\*Place (Hebr.); "HaMakom (the Place) is sometimes used as a term for G-d.

**felt tongue 232**

space is not believable  
& is not  
in our hands.  
we're getting nothing  
out of the thievery here.  
the point becomes  
a dime with mercury  
spilling all over  
a silver coat.

asleep in the apple  
orchard among empty  
crates, the sun  
sprinkles down  
thru the trees.

the man in white  
becomes the first  
number rolled out  
of a lot  
full of tires.  
it is winter  
& we must  
add zeros,  
counting the growth  
on one hand.

—Guy Beining

**felt tongue 489**

my day & night  
with pincers, placing slivers  
of those gone  
into filaments  
of a silver tide,  
a brush stroke  
away,  
calming  
the needle  
of April.  
its  
clownish  
face  
contorting.  
celan did not  
slip, he sprang  
as a poet  
fastened to a lineage,  
unwrapping text  
as prayer without  
it being defined.

—Guy Beining

**LISTEN!**

Don't speak. Just listen.  
Listen to your heart.

Now the sound, perennial  
like some trees, now

the words, fresh and clear  
like crystalline water.

Do you hear? If you  
don't, try to be still, quieter.

I'm sure you will hear  
sooner or later.

Having lived in this  
world for so many years,

one loses the silence  
of being alone.

Wait and then listen  
again. The reassuring,

healing sound and words  
will be with you. Here.

—Bibhu Padhi

**A SPOT OF ANGER**

I do not really know if that anger  
was righteous, but it raised itself up  
spontaneously, without fear of  
who was listening to my voice.

It was no assassination though;  
I cannot murder even myself.  
Perhaps, the harsh mid-afternoon  
Indian sun was the source of what I said.

Today, a day later, it is morning.  
Summer morning and heat  
and a feeling of belonging to  
no one quietly haunts me.

I do not know why anger is  
given to us at all, to what  
purpose, if it does nothing else  
but hurts. I'm afraid no one knows.

Why did it come upon me only  
yesterday, when the object it could

have been directed at might have been  
enjoying his comforts miles away?

I know, generations change to  
turn younger, as if things that  
happened to us would never happen  
to them or their children, and a feeling

that the world above it is ignorant,  
garrulous. I never thought so about my  
father, although he died too young for me  
to know him a little further, but even then

I guess he had his anger too, but I  
do not remember. From whatever little  
of him remains with me now, I suppose  
I should have loved him a lot more.

— Bibhu Padhi

[untitled]

Which is your god,  
the monk or the bawd?  
But I would not be me

without the two,  
nor you be you.  
So which divinity

should we apply,  
and which, deny,  
the lower or the higher?  
Oh dash it all,  
am I crooning to Baal  
or preaching to a choir?

— James B. Nicola

UNTITLED MAY 27

when she sat in the chair  
with the prayer in her head\  
eyes closed  
remembering the words  
suddenly she decided to wear earrings  
and jumped up

— Lois Michal Unger

20/20 HINDSIGHT

From the viewpoint of Now,  
the Past divulges insight,  
and if history repeats,  
foresight comes forth.

No thought is an island.  
Time connects ideas  
to each other, to souls,  
to paths forward and back.

Patterns may appear  
with post-event perspective.  
A bird's-eye view clarifies  
the exit from a maze,  
while we remain gravity-bound  
behind walls, tied to the Present.

Mortals can only dream of  
sharing the realm outside of time,  
where omnipresent fingers fold  
and poke the universe,  
letting the Future dimple  
into the Past.

— Connie S. Tettenborn

SOFT LINES

The gray cloud folds back like a blanket to reveal a  
sleepy sun  
it begins until it ends and the day is filled  
with clouds, some stark but few straight lines  
a fine fuzziness to amuse in fact  
I cannot think when I have ever walked  
a straight path  
that didn't turn or curve or send me up another hill

So we can't sum up the day saying  
Ah I went there when the going was so tumbled and  
strained  
that you really landed  
somewhere else  
the back of the beyond, the back, the beyond, or  
somewhere near it  
but night is folding on a soft black line  
curved like a sweater dropped by the bed.

— Susan Oleferuk

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

I used to have the emuna, the faith and trust to see  
I make a choice using my mind, and then Hashem  
helps me  
To actualize, achieve success or, sometimes, maybe not  
Either way, G-d actions it, controlling the upshot

Yet, things did not go seamlessly, a flow would not  
ensue  
The difficulty seemed to stem, in part, from my  
worldview

Admittedly, I recognised Divine Will and His power  
Yet, this Truth was clear to me only in "Action Hour"

Unfortunately, I presumed that I was head in charge  
Of reasoning, of rationale, and policy at large  
Assuming judge and jury role, I always found it hard  
I wore sole authority... oh, is that why things were  
marred?

One day that penny, it did drop, it landed right on me  
Omnipotent, He does not just control results we see  
He's willing and available to help our thoughts as well  
If only we do draw Him in, then He can make them  
gel!

The intellect, though exalted, is physical and mine  
Being mortal, it is limited, it's human not Divine  
But when I let go of logic, and open up my heart  
I usher in my neshama, my inner G-dly part

Ah...  
The openness, the easiness, simplicity, the grace  
I do not move a muscle, yet...I win the human race!

—Chaiya D.

## THE MASTER OF PRAYER

"Once there was a master of prayer, who was  
constantly engaged in prayer, and in singing songs  
and praises to God..."  
— from "The Master of Prayer" by Rabbi Nachman  
of Braslav

If only we could find the master of prayer  
Who would instruct us how, and when, to pray;  
Where has he gone? If only he were here!

How common is the wish to pray; how rare  
The man of grace who understands the way.  
If only we could find the master of prayer.

If he were here with us, he would repair  
The flute of faith that prophets used to play;  
Where has he gone? If only he were here!

He'd know which melodies we should revere,  
Which blessings to recite, which words to say;  
If only we could find the master of prayer.

He'd make the sacred letters shine, aware  
Of countless lights, while we see only gray;  
Where has he gone? If only he were here!

Where haven't we searched or looked for him, near  
And far, night after night, day after day?  
If only we could find the master of prayer.  
Where has he gone? If only he were here!

—Yakov Azriel

## THE LOST PRINCESS

"Once there was a king who had six sons and one  
daughter. This daughter was very precious to him,  
and he loved her deeply... One morning she was  
gone ..."

— from "The Losing of the King's Daughter" by  
Rabbi Nachman of Braslav

How can we find the daughter of the king,  
Lost on a distant peak of ice and stone?  
How can we hope to hear the princess sing?

Stripped of her crown, stripped of her signet ring,  
Stripped of the purple robe she used to own,  
How can we find the daughter of the king?

Even in dreams we see the princess cling  
To her sighs, her stifled cry, her muffled moan;  
How can we hope to hear the princess sing?

Without a diadem, without a string  
Of pearls, her face unnamed, her name unknown,  
How can we find the daughter of the king?

Adrift amidst strong winds and storms, no wing  
With which to fly, abducted and alone,  
How can we hope to hear the princess sing?

Write on your kerchief with tears, how to bring  
You home again, to your father and your throne.  
How can we find the daughter of the king?  
How can we hope to hear the princess sing?

—Yakov Azriel

## THE SILENCE OF GOD

"O God, do not keep silence; do not be still, do not be mute, God!" (Psalm 83:2)

Is Your silence gray, God? — winter's gray  
That freezes both our hearing and our sight,  
Preventing us from glimpsing heaven's light  
Or listening to prayers our children say.  
Is Your silence black, God? — A runaway,  
Ferocious blackness prowling in the night,  
A dark-furred beast that does not fear to bite  
Our eyes and ears when pouncing on its prey.

Is Your silence white, God? — An opaque cloud  
Enveloping the sinner and the saint,  
Both those who feast and those who have no bread.  
If only You would speak to us out loud  
In all the colors, tints and shades You paint  
From ultraviolet, Lord, to infrared.

—Yakov Azriel

## FRIDAY NIGHT SETTING SUN

"The sun sets below the trees, it departs  
as we watch, the angels offer peace,  
"Welcome, oh Sabbath Queen, welcome oh  
Sabbath Queen . . ." (Bialik)

I  
The routine of Creation closes out  
as from the window, the sun sets  
and a band of angels gathers about

spreads a gentle canopy, they caress . . .  
the Sabbath Queen arrives, she comes, "Peace,  
rest from your labors, this is a time to bless,

reflect upon the venues you've begun." We never cease  
to wonder, our minds traverse, look up, our eyes  
see what's yet to see beyond, yet to be released,

another soul comes down, its flickers, rise,  
a candle fills a special space. All aglow,  
she shows us the World to Come, tantalize

here, a taste of serenity for one day. All of us, now  
encapsulated, away, in this special place, we grow

II  
a constellation we can't imagine, elsewhere,  
a sacred precinct sheds messages. Of signs  
of holiness set off from the week, we share

the gifts, as we delight. The evening sky reminds  
us where we began, a universe we create  
on this day that we usher in, here we're bound,

the Sabbath Queen leaves us for the others who await  
her, to offer her kindness, she commences her path  
where we rest, in between, we sate

our souls. Take the lessons, the pleasures that swath  
of supplications engages our hearts. We sing  
into the evening, our aspirations and watch

the Divine that descends upon us. It brings  
a sense of warmth, a shower of compassion rings

— Zev Davis

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**Meira Raanan's commentary on "The Chariot of the Baal Shem Tov," continued from cover:**

Spontaneously painted with (his) hands and paint-soaked fingers dancing across the canvas, Raanan created the impression of swirling wind. With carefree abandon and even working with his eyes closed, by touch rather than by sight.

This painted was named after the carriage of the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov was the founder of the Hassidic movement, (characterized by simple and joyous service of God, through prayer and acts of kindness). To spread his teachings and help those in distress, he traveled to faraway places, riding his horse-drawn carriage ascribed with supernatural qualities. Although ordinary in appearance, many stories reveal its mystical power, in which his driver Alexei follows his master's orders, drops the reins, turns his back to the horses and lets them travel where they may.

The horse's hooves do not touch the ground, for the carriage is not rolling on wheels but flying to its destination like a magic chariot. Such was the alleged power of the Baal Shem Tov's carriage to leap beyond gravity, and even the laws of nature and journey over great distances in an instant.

The freedom with which this was work was painted is the very aspiration into which every artist and writer longs to tap: to be on a magic chariot, drop the reins of control and fly on the wings of inspiration.





As the people gathered around Mount Sinai, a heavenly supernal light settled on top of the mountain. In the painting the sky radiates into shades of yellow and blue, illuminating the mountain and the multitudes of people below. Our sages tell us that in its original form, the Torah was composed of fire, and it was from within fire that the Torah was revealed — on a mountain that was ablaze. Here in the painting the mountain glows white hot, incandescent and luminous. Every day, we are told, a Heavenly Voice issues from Sinai urging us to recall how G-d speaks to us from within the fire.

— Meira Raanan

### Har Sinai, by Yoram Raanan

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