

The Deronda Review

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Nechama Sarah Burgeman, Yearning for Higher Worlds, acrylic on canvas

20 Tammuz 5784

I gazed for a long moment at the deep blue of the face of the petals
And I knew that we shall yet be again
And the vague notes of the flute will yet intertwine with the psalms and prayers
And the shepherds will yet return from the pasture at sunset
Carrying in their hearts the quiet of earth and sky
And the bleating of the sheep
In no danger
And all of being cradled in your arms, O Place of the world
And I knew that man will yet seek to look into the eyes of his neighbor and will find there
Attention, innocence, strength, compassion
Love

Tziporah Faiga Lifshitz

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CONTRIBUTOR EXCHANGE

Below are titles of poetry collections in English by contributors, as well as URLs. ** means the poet has a page in the Hexagon Forum section of www.pointandcircumference.com. For a completer listing, including books in Hebrew, see derondareview.org/contribex.htm.

L. Ward Abel, *The Width of Here* (Silver Bow, 2021), *American Bruise* (Parallel Press, 2012), *Green Shoulders: New and Selected Poems 2003–2023* (Silver Bow, 2023)

Hayim Abramson, *Sefer Shirat HaNeshamah* (Book of Songs of the Soul), www.hayimabramson.com

Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman, *L'Urla dell'anima – The Scream of the Soul* (bilingual), Carthago, 2024, www.miriamjaskierowiczarmanfineart.com/

**Yakov Azriel is the author of *Threads from a Coat of Many Colors: Poems on Genesis* (2005); *In the Shadow of a Burning Bush: Poems on Exodus* (2008), *Beads for the Messiah's Bride: Poems on Leviticus* (2009), *Swimming in Moses' Well* (2011), all with Time Being Books. Many of his poems can be found on the 929 Tanakh site, at <https://www.929.org.il/lang/en/author/36669>.

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

Gary Beck has published 32 poetry collections (see online Contributor's Exchange). www.garybeck.com

Jane Blanchard's latest collection is *Metes and Bounds* (Kelsay Books, 2023).

Esther Cameron's Complete Works (6 vols.) are available on Amazon. Also see www.pointandcircumference.com

Amichai Chasson, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amichai_Chasson

Roberta Chester, *Light Years* (Puckerbush Press, 1983); *A New Song: Poems Inspired by the Weekly Torah Portion* (Mazo, 2023).

Eric Chevlen, *Triple Crown* (2010), *Adrift on a Ruby Yacht* (2014), *Born to Blush Unseen: Collected and Rejected Poems* (Borrorean Books, 2023). www.triplecrownpoetry.com.

Ed Coletti curates the blog "No Money in Poetry," <https://edwardcolettispoetryblog.blogspot.com/>

John Delaney, *Waypoints* (2017), *Twenty Questions* (2019), *Delicate Arch* (2022), *Galápagos* (2023), *Nile* (2024), <https://www.johnmdelaney.com/>

Bart Edelman, *Crossing the Hackensack* (Prometheus Press), *Under Damaris' Dress* (Lightning Publications), *The Alphabet of Love* (Red Hen Press), *The Gentle Man* (Red Hen Press), *The Last Mojito* (Red Hen Press), *The Geographer's Wife* (Red Hen Press), *Whistling to Trick the Wind* (Meadowlark Press), and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023* (Meadowlark Press).

Esther Fein has three books of poems: *Journeys, A Fine Line, and Carved from Jerusalem Stone*.

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

Mel Goldberg has published three books of haiku: *The Weight of Snowflakes, A Few Berries, and Seasons of Life*, all in 2018.

Paula Goldman, *The Great Canopy* (Gival Press, 2005), *Late Love* (Kelsay Press, 2020).

Paul Hostovsky's newest book of poems is *Pitching for the Apostates* (forthcoming, Kelsay Books)

Len Krisak, *Say What You Will*, Able Muse, 2020; *Afterimage*, Measure Press, 2014; *If Anything*, WordTech Editions, 2004; *Even as We Speak*, University of Evansville Press, 2000 (The Richard Wilbur Prize for 2000); *Midland*, Somers Rocks Press, 2000; *Fugitive Child*, Aralia Press, 1999

Michel Krug, *Jazz at the International Festival of Despair*, Broadstone Books, 2024, <http://www.michelkrug.com/>

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

Rumi Morkin (Miriam Webber), Four volumes of *The Ogdan Nasherei of Rumi Morkin*, privately published.

James B. Nicola's latest three (of eight) poetry collections are *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense* (Shanti Arts, 2021), *Turns & Twists* (Cyberwit.net, 2022), and *Natural Tendencies* (Cervena Barva Press, 2023).

Susan Oleferuk, *Circling for Home* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), *Those Who Come to the Garden* (Finishing Lines Press, 2013), *Days of Sun* (Finishing Line Press, 2017), and *When There Is Little Light Left in Late Afternoon*, (Kelsay Books, 2022).

David Olsen, *Unfolding Origami*, winner of the Cinnamon Press Poetry Collection Award, 2015; *Past Imperfect* (Cinnamon Press, 2019); *After Hopper & Lange*, Oversteps Books (2021), *Nocturnes* (Dempsey & Window (2021), *The Lost Language of Shadows*, Dempsey & Windle, 2022

chapbooks include *Exit Wounds* (2017), *Sailing to Atlantis* (2013), *New World Elegies* (2011), and *Greatest Hits* (2001).

Andrew Oram, <https://www.praxagora.com/>

Imri Perel, www.atgalya.com

Tirtsá Posklinsky-Shehory, *Medusa Shkufah Holekhet* (*Transparent Medusa Goes*), Even Hoshen 2016; *Matmon shel Shamaniot* (*A Cache of*

Geckoes), Pardes 2018; *Pere Kelev Hi Haytah* (*Wild Dog*), Levin Press, 2021

Michael Salcman's books include *Stones in Our Pockets*, Parallel Press (2007), chapbook; *The Enemy of Good Is Better*, Orchises Press, Washington, D.C. (2011); *Poetry in Medicine, An Anthology of Poems About Doctors, Patients, Illness and Healing*, ed. with intro. by Michael Salcman, Persea Books

(2015); *A Prague Spring, Before & After*, Evening Street Press (2016), *Shades & Graces*, Spuyten Duyvil Press, (2020), *Necessary Speech: New & Selected Poems*, Spuyten Duyvil Press (2022) and *Crossing the Tape*, Spuyten Duyvil Press (2024).

Rikki Santer, *Resurrection Letter; Shepherd's Hour*, Lily Poetry Review Books (forthcoming). May be contacted through <https://rikkisanter.com>.

Yaacov David Shulman, *Little Psalms* (Wings of the Morning Press, 1987), *Airport Lights* (Createspace, 2017), other collections listed on dotletterword.com.

Jane R. Snyder, janersnyder.com

Harvey Steinberg, *Agitations and Allelujas* (Ragged Sky Press, 2022).

Iona Tor, *In Search of Astonishment*, Niv, 2020; *Weaving Symbols*, Emdah, 2024 (both in Hebrew)

Henry Summerfield, *That Myriad-minded Man: a biography of George William Russell, 'A.E.' (1867-1935)* (Colin Smythe, 1975); *Every Religion Has Two Faces* (Friesen Press, 2024).

Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah, *Blame the Gods*, Kingsman Quarterly, 2023

Florence Weinberger, *These Days of Simple Mooring*, *Ghost Tattoo* (Tebot Bach, 2018), *Sacred Graffiti* (Tebot Bach, 2010), *Carnal Fragrance* (Red Hen Press, 2004), *Breathing Like a Jew* (Chicory Blue Press, 1997), *The Invisible Telling Its Shape* (Fithin Press, 1997).

David K. Weiser, *Ladders: 333 Poems* (2020), *Ladders II: 336 poems* (2024), both on Amazon.

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) and *Toxic Environment* (Boston Poet Press).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Iona Tor's "What I Know" is from her book *In Search of Astonishment*; "Thirst" is from her book *Weaving Symbols*.

I. *The World We Tumble On*

trust

if you don't trust anything
trust light
trust water
the slow steady pace
of an ant.

trust earth
as it moves into night
and then,
i m p e r c e p t i b l y
negates the night
with dawn.

- Batsheva Wiesner

SIC TRANSIT, APRIL 8, 2024

One moon, no more, obliterates the sun;
One sun, no less, erased from human sight.
Predicted and surprising, all in one,
This sinking of the day into the night.
His ways are just, for just so was the moon
Effaced by the bright brilliance of the day,
And none could see it coming (coming soon),
Nor, having struck, it stealthy slip away.
Teach us to count our days, and fill the years
We tarry, as we tally each ellipse,
Nor let us sink in shadow to our fears,
Nor tremble every man at his eclipse.
The heavens speak Your glory! Now I see
The heavens speak that glory too to me.

- Eric Chevlen

AT LLANDUDNO

Out on the Irish Sea,
The black bull-heads begin to form,
Mustering their forces for
What seems to be
Some sort of final storm,
After which there'll be no more.

For when the wind is done
With cliff and rock and soil and sand,
And puts away the moon and sun,
And blots the half-resisting land,
There'll be no need to storm again,
Until the morrow. Then

- Len Krisak

LAKESIDE AFTERNOON, RANGELEY, MAINE

Calm. Quiet. Peaceful. Tranquil. Like you,
sleeping.

Who knows when
the kazatske will begin? The silent band
strikes up below the surface of the lake.
Waves kicking, whitecaps dancing,
wind panting. The ducks are riding high,
bouncing in their own bathtub. Most
of the canoes retreat to shore, envious of
the sailboats rejoicing in the chaos of
a summer squall.

Just as suddenly the manic beat subsides.
Kazatska > polka > lindy > tango > fox-
trot > waltz. *Goodnight Irene, goodnight Irene...*
The lake is filled with lovers swaying in place,
boats rocking at the tie-ups, rafts sloshing
over, buoys bobbing their empty water-
jugs.

Our world bouncing gently. Work forgotten.

Space and time

waiting for us summer dancers,
waiting for the music to start up again

- Marian Shapiro

THE FOREST

No sorrows here. What could go wrong?
A dry stream bed? A fallen tree?
A sudden flooding thunderstorm?
Yet all continues life in song.
A Summer's warmth, a Winter's cold
inside this woodland without worry.
Such melodies while birds soar free,
renewal patient, slow to hurry.
Our tented firmament stands bold.
Of past and present, leaves may flurry
where in the halls of time, winds gust.
Yet nothing blooms with anxious eyes.
I have my faith. I have my trust.

- Lucia Haase

THE WATERLILY

Living in water
stilled,
the waterlily rests
until a breeze

ripples the surface
gently moving
the petals,
and there's a lift

of fragrance
stirred
by ink of the pond
to the world.

The bloom
in lily language
writes it's own
legacy

it's own story
of grace and praise
peacefully stemming
from ground beneath,

and gazing
heavenward faithfully,
isn't that what
He asks?

- Lucia Haase

COVENANT WITH THE SUN

Tell you what - You
continue to be faithful to your schedule, and I
promise to count on you.
No matter storm, no matter night
I won't doubt you. I'll never say *Seeing is believing*. Nor
will I cite astronomers to prove what I already know:
that you love me, and
that I love you back. Freely and forevermore.

- Marian Shapiro

PRAYER FOR WRITING GREEN

Noted poets reading before us are green, keepers of trees,
the fish in divergent streams. One lives candle-lit, another
wears gauze made of hemp, canvas shoes, cotton ribbons.
My poems seem profligate, choked with clauses, the sea's
metaphors squandered, coldly alliterative: wasted whales,
dying ducks, pervasive plastic. Too late for purge or sage,
I pray my pages give me poems worth the leveling of hard-
wood trees, whole pine forests felled for thick anthologies,
cedars, softwood trees for bargain staples. May my stanzas
rub against each other flaunting energy, my pauses mulch
the underbrush, upper cases cleanse the forests of detritus,
erasures generate, iambic sentences engender lush deserts.

- Florence Weinberger

INVISIBLE ISLAND

I take the trail where the sign leads, head into pain then
medicate, take it as far as it goes, zigzag past birches to
low lying manzanita, into wild garlic, where I find a
darkling thrush, eyes sparkling. I wake. It's dawn. I'm
still sitting in the living room chair. I don't possess
Elizabeth Barret Browning's laudanum, have to contact
the plumber, have the furnace serviced, research
window cranks, don't live in Casa Guidi so can't make
the rounds of churches in search of frescoes, can't find a
wine bar with pinot grigio, a soft cheese accompanied by
fig jam. I'm not asking the Buddha to reawaken this day,
not asking for spiritual cultivation, but could use advice
on enlightenment.

where this trail diverts
oh invisible island
oh trembling lilies

- Laurel Benjamin

CONTRAILS

Because I thrive in Spring and Summer
 I suspect I will die when the sun is down
 during a winter of my discontent
 when the now-kissed trees go gray
 untouched after sparkle ceases
 and rain begins its soddening work
 toward resurrection and another day
 of grandeur for my progeny, but
 for now, I only watch an airplane
 soaring beyond its fading contrails
 whispering to me of loss
 within this, my momentary whiling.

- Edward Coletti

A UBIQUITY OF BLUE

Lapis lazuli on my tongue
 prayer
 for bright, clear skies
 however blue a blue may be—
 David's blue star
 billowing.

From deep recesses
 opalescent blue hands
 bejeweled with purity
 to repel the servitude
 of evil eyes.

Kitchen window
 cerulean with moonbeams
 Yahrzeit candle
 flickering all night
 whispering
 your name.

Think blue—a value
 of darkness or
 under your feet
 a reverie
 of brickwork
 sapphire sacred.
 Weary of an ancient world
 frayed blue threads
 of Papa's prayer shawl
 tucked inside
 memory's drawer.

Rods and cones dazzled—
 breezy fields

of spring bluebells
 turquoise stomps
 of blue-footed boobies
 my husband's gaze
 of wordless trust
 that renders
 sky and sea.

- Rikki Santer

SUNDAY MORNING

A great woman stands at the door of her house
 Selling the effects of the man of God:
 A bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp/
 A garage sale on the front lawn
 In a small American town, in the Catskills.

Neighbors gather, examine axes,
 Hunting rifles, rusty saws,
 Try on bearskins in front of the mirror,
 Lie down on the bed with muddy boots.
 Pay in cash.

I buy the cloak, drape it over my clothes,
 Cross the Hudson, immerse
 Seven times in the river.
 On the opposite bank children are running toward me
 Stumbling, naked they fall
 From the bank, roll into the water.

I pass by them.
 In the thicket of reeds I spot a skinny boy,
 An eagle scar is etched on his bald head,
 A shadow of mustache on his upper lip.
 I recognize him—
 He is my son. I am not his father

I place my mouth on his mouth
 My eyes on his eyes
 My hands on his head

He wakes up.
 Shakes himself. Stands up
 And immediately continues on his way.

Small boys gather round me
 In their hands are figurines of bulls, they run
 Between the trees of the wood, they sing
 Here comes Elisha here comes Elisha
 That's the prophet the man of God.

- Amichai Chasson
 translated by Esther Cameron

ELUL

From the ends of my fingers grains of sand trickle
They return to the beach, are swept away by a strong
current
Collect in the cracks of the asphalt, thin fissures
Leading them in an incised channel.

Grains of sand melt among the swimmers,
Unite with their brothers on the shore
Of the sea, are swallowed up like the sun
In the water now

Pale stripes are exposed
On the suntanned skin of my children
Signs of sandal straps
Scratches from the rocks, a thread
From a worn-out towel is caught
On the edge of the broken nail
Of a little toe.

The sun disappears
The day is done.
Soon we will return
And pray: please
Forgive please.

- Amichai Chasson
translated by Esther Cameron

POEM

-- In memoriam, David Citino, 1947-2005

Beyond the ash of autumn -
This thread of milkweed
Blossoming in the bee's dream.

The Coral

The angels closed their eyes and wished.
Their snow-like memories of starlight were given to us;
they let themselves into our houses,
our coral bodies that feed in the blue morning;
our feathery polyps fanning in the tides.
The bodies of our fathers and mothers accumulated.
Our bodies grew into a full-veined blossom color of
blood.
How our bodies shine in the water where sun strikes.

And the enamored creatures gathered into the warm
seas,
vassals of the dynasties of coral over ages.
Their loves curve finger-like over the reef.
blessed coral fish of reefs, star-like angel fish,
barracuda, hermit crab of lost souls,

the eel in waiting, the goat, and the butterfly fish:
They have spent their lives in rooms of bones, our cities:

*

Lifetimes spent accumulating
mean nothing to us now. Coral spirit,
the starfish and the sea feather,
the wide-eyed blenny and the glassy sweeper,
Christmas tree worm and the moon jelly fish;
the dead sea creatures are released like Angels
into the starlit synagogues of air above the sea.

And just as cranes in flight will chant their songs
and stretch in legions across the sky;
so, too, when we die we give our bodies
to the reef. Our spirits rise bead-like
one after another, ghost-like from the sea. We drift
like feathery clouds on the trade winds,
an army hungry and tired and coming home.
We find the places where water ends,
Following the journeys of horizons lacing the world,
we have learned land is similar to the sea.
this is the rich black dirt, the brown sand called earth.
There mountains, like the coral bodies of ancestors,
bear in their arms these streams, their nourishment.
These trees wave in the winds like seaweed, strong
brothers.

*

Lumbering snowflakes that we are,
we kiss the grass as we kiss the sea.
we fall discarded by the sides of roads,
over the villages of humankind, the small mountain
towns.

We become black with soot. Still we fall;
and it is a wonder to me, how in the bare trees
the birds flare their wings and circle home.
And it is a wonder to me,
how the bodies of the wolf and the cougar

are lit by the moon on the snow at night.
This is the world we tumble upon, into the streams
of the white-tipped mountains.

We flow to a city, sift through gravel, through taps.
We fill your glass, your eyes wide in thirst late at night,
The winter night spreads across the silhouette of moonlit
hills,
and moonlight filters through the slat curtains of your
apartment.
It falls over the hanging, copper basket
where the apple and the lemons sleep. Moonlight
falls over your hair and your half-bared shoulders.
Spirits of the ocean, on moonlight
we flow into the warm seas of your body;
we come to know your loves.

- Stuart Lishan

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

The late day when the mountains unfold their shadows
 like cloaks of solitary men
 who give hesitant embrace
 in this uneasiness when night is beckoned with smells
 the resurgence of sweet grass, damp clover and moss
 when the trees grow closer to whisper the birds to rest
 here in the darkening spaces left under the mountains'
 shadows
 memory arises.

- Susan Oleferuk

THE GARDEN

Breaking waves
 Remember
 Tangled archway
 Enter
 Pink beach roses
 Inhale
 Sea birds calling
 Listen
 Vibrant, yet so peaceful
 The way that it should be

- Dawn McCormack

II. Kingdoms

HEROISM

Sing, muse, the rage in which my brother seethes,
 that sends him with his cane to walk the streets,
 a witness pouring out his wrath on creeps.
 The worms, the villains, stupid, sickening!
 --A war cry aimed at those who let their dogs
 excrete on sidewalks, ambushing his feet.
 You evil saints who hand him masks to wear!
 You dullards booming forth your nonsense noise!
 Disorder, dirt, new rules, new words, new gods--
 Who did this, wrecked us? Who could call it right?

Since he was born bad-centuried, misplaced,
 already latecome for the hollow ships,
 he missed his chance to cross a wine-dark sea,
 and counsel chieftains how to scale Troy's wall.
 He can't high-hearted lead men in the fray
 or pierce a giant serpent with his sword.
 Instead, unslaughtering, he lifts his weights,
 grows out his beard, a prophet in New York,
 and yells, "control your killer dog, you b---h,"
 when barking yon behemoth draws too near.

Arthritic-hipped he walks in pain from park
 to citadel, apartment of his own,
 and reads books written ere it all went wrong
 (unmetered "verse" by vegetarians
 is trash though frauds dare call it poetry).
 An artist outside school or scene or show,
 he works in wire which bending to his will
 forms monstrous creatures by the kitchen sink.
 Strange wonders in their fishnet ranks, they wait
 in friendship with him for the final flood.

Opposing medicine, this Noah still
 goes with me to the doctor when I ask.
 Arriving breathless 'fore the doors slide closed,
 we board the elevator, almost full,
 and turn to see the one who came too late,
 a woman left in tired-eyed defeat.
 We won! Huzzah! She cannot slow us down
 as we quest upward: cardiac, floor six.
 But then my brother pushes "open door,"
 small mercy disk the rest lack heart to hit,
 and though we sigh in longing to be gone,
 he says to her, "There's room. You can get on."

- Miriam Fried

THIS CRYING THING

We had just stepped onto the elevator
 when I noticed the damp
 glisten in his eyes,
 and I asked him if he was all right.
 "Sorry," he said, "it just
 comes over me sometimes, washes
 over me like a wave
 gently lapping, cleansing,
 waking me up to the exquisite
 sadness. Or is it happiness?
 I can't quite say," he said,
 pressing the button for the ground floor.
 "I'm old," he said, "and the older
 I get the more I cry like a baby –
 no, like a mother. No, a father –
 or maybe a squirrel
 in the lower branches
 keening for its mate. But also
 the thin cry of the hawk
 that will kill the squirrel
 and eat it. But the thing is,
 it feels good, this crying thing
 that isn't crying exactly,
 more like a breaker that doesn't
 break, doesn't burst into tears,
 but just keeps swelling,
 curving deliciously, the crest
 thrusting forward, the trough
 forming the delicate concave place
 in which I could live forever,
 just catching my breath in the almost
 but not quite spilling over."
 I didn't know what to say to that
 so I didn't say anything,
 and we stood alone together
 in the silence. Then the elevator doors opened
 and we walked out into the light of day.

- Paul Hostovsky

LITTLE THEATER

At last, the intermission lights come up
 And she can fill my plastic tiny cup
 With jug wine sherry at the tip jar table.

It's only when she smiles that I am able
 To recognize the gray eyes and the Titian
 Tresses: *Linda?* Working *intermission?*
 This woman's brilliance once kept *Doubt* alive
 And helped a fading *Beauty Queen* survive.
 A green-fuse force through Chekhov, Shakespeare, Shaw,
 She'd had the power to leave a house in awe.

Recovering, I ask her what's up next,
 And from her jeans she pulls a dog-eared text:
Saint Joan, with five weeks to the first audition.
 Till then, her diffidence lies in remission.

That play! At fifty, never really pretty,
 Long odds. I fight to hide some hint of pity.
 For now, a costumed summer docent gig
 For tourists. Norma-like, *she* is still big;
 It's *opportunity* that's gotten small –
 The dwindling chance for one great curtain call.
 The shameless tip jar takes my ten-spot in,
 The lights blink, and the last act can begin.

- Len Krisak

VOCATIONS/EVOCATIONS

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

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

- Harvey Steinberg

Jane R. Snyder
THREE POEMS

BLUE VELVET BAG

how I loved the
silky feel of running
my fingers through
the fringe on my
father's *tallis* and
watching as he
gently folded it into
the blue velvet bag
in those moments
when the world
simply seemed
to stand still

BIG MACHERS

Grandpa David
once dined with
Moshe Dayan
they were both
big machers one
in Israel and the other
in The Free Sons of
one wore an eyepatch
and my grandfather
just his pride

TALL BEARDED JEW

Great Grandpa Yankel
tailored clothes for
rich Gentile ladies
who sent their fancy
carriages into the
ghetto to fetch the
tall bearded Jew
with golden hands
whose eyes were as
steely as his needles

IN NEW MEXICO

Juan Montoya hides
behind solidity of doors
and shuns transparency of windows.
Somehow ill at ease,
he creeps home on Friday
an egg bread under his arm
while his grandmother lights candles.
He trusts the craftiness of foxes,
as he tries to reconcile the past
with the present that
grows smaller every day.
Yet he plants trees,
and hears the secrets
whispered by the wind
in a language he does not know.

– Mel Goldberg

Note: in New Mexico there are descendants of "forced" Jews,
who accepted Catholicism outwardly while retaining Jewish
practices in secret.

FOCUSING

Sometimes I feel like a pawn in a cruel chess
game...when I look down and see the speck of my body in
this vast world of chaos-groping for my *tikkun* (soul
rectification)
Sometimes I feel totally *shalem* (whole)...knowing why I
am here in the Divine army
Victory
Of light over darkness
Sometimes I am in holy *katnut*..(small mindedness)
piloting my kitchen as I peel, chop, soak, bake
etc. All of the *malachot* (acts of working that
manipulate reality)
Soon forbidden as I prepare to tune into a cosmic
peaceful silence of surrender
L'cvod Shabat Kodesh (in honor of the holy Shabat)
Sometimes I am the voice of the *imaot* (our foremothers)
Comforting conversations with those so stressed
We have the best Defense system
Ha Kodesh Baruch Hu (The Holy Blessed ONE)
Yes, that is all that is left
I cannot man or woman the iron domes
A gun will do me no good
Nowhere to go
I find comfort in my *nahala* (my Divinely given land
inheritance) doing what *mitzvot* I can
As I write my books and teach as I try to really walk my talk
I hope the gate of prayer through painting will be
opened as
I discipline my time
The precious amount allotted in my gift of life
I pray to focus on what I can do

– Nechama Sarah Burgeman

PRAYERS FOR THE WOMAN UNDER THE BRIDGE

Italicized lines are from Yom Kippur morning service prayers.

Today no sign of her pushing a loaded cart,
squawking about a bum leg as I pass the bridge.
No sign of flowing gown and tossed hair. The train
rattles overhead yet the path is smooth, lined
by trees, and I think of one student, on probation,
his admission, at ten years old living under a
bridge

he crept into a video store, started selling
to the underbelly. I walk as if I could keep
the growing things awake and clasp their power
into my life. Monkey puzzle trees line the path,
not native like oaks with their own gnarls
patterning light. I can't help the woman who
churls

her fist at fast walkers in zipped-up sweatsuits,
anyone who comes close or a slow moving bike
with a boom-box-basket. Her eyes pour fine contrary
dust, not tears, and leaves twine in a dryad-mix-
tape.

I pray you should be the one receiving the word.
On my walk back she's there, feet dangling

over the creek near a young stand of redwoods.
Do I hear a prayer or am I examining my
conscience?

Your song comes from no song.

What can I vow that will stop birds flying
into glass or snails called invasive from breaking
the code of a lake wrought long ago – all the vows

will not stop the narrative. This is not a prayer
for a woman who lost everything –
she sewed tight that decree before Moses.

A book now sealed. A book yet to be written.

In my garden, I refill the bird bath.
It's already autumn in my mouth.

– Laurel Benjamin

EMERGENCY ROOM

I watch the ill, the frightened,
the diseased, the demented,
huddling in the waiting room,
devastated beyond hope.
Only sad resignation
keeps them from collapse,
dissolving into disfunction.
Only vestiges remain
to define a human being,
at least remnants of one.

– Gary Beck

MY GRANDFATHER'S CANE

At first, Solomon ruled over the upper worlds and the
lower worlds and whispered
to the winds as one man to another and magnified his
deeds and his wives till Ashmodai arrived,
looking like him, and sat on his throne and
Solomon
wandered around like a crazy man under the sun
saying:
I am Solomon son of Bathsheba, I was a king

The Gemara relates that in the end King Solomon ruled
over nothing but his cane
And the Izhbitzer Rebbe writes: Know that in that cane
all the world was contained

I am looking at my grandfather who hardly rules over
his cane, not over his bodily functions not over
his wife not over his family
He holds on to me and to his wooden cane to go into a
small room
in the house that was once his kingdom
lets himself be placed without resistance in front of the
television
a Tripolitan Tony Soprano with no strength left. He
mutters: I am Ami-Shaddai son of Hiriya, I was
a king
And I looked into his cane to see if it contained the
world
but I found nothing

– Amichai Chasson

III. *The Life That's Shared*

A SNIPPET

I pull a blade of grass
and don't think of my friends.

I think of grass.

There's much to mind in the narrow strand
I call on in this province.

A curled stem can be a friend,
it bends with the wind and stretches
with my smoothing it.

I should not have plucked it,
now I think on it.

– Harvey Steinberg

James B. Nicola
THREE POEMS

helping friends

I have a friend who needs help
and another friend who can help
They are friendly with each other, too

The first friend does not want help
The second just asked my help
in figuring out what they are to do

I'm not too sure I could help
Nor am I sure I should help
Yet we're all works-in-progress, I maintain

So I am asking for help
from you, and hope that your help
may calm the coil of empty, pointless pain

THE ART OF LEARNING

The best arguments in the world won't change a
person's mind.

– Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

You've learned to lose when counsel does not work.
The childhood friend who cheated on a spouse,
abused or spoiled a child, or sold their house
too soon: When asked, you offered, like a jerk,
and lost them all to deafness. And when they
lose almost everything in the divorce,

or find their child dead from an overdose,
you think: Could you but find a winning way
for them to hear, would it help at all? No,
you think again, there's no hope when we do
nothing. *Right*, though, is a reckless virtue.
And thankless. *Wrong* relieves and soothes, some. So
the phone rings. It's a friend who's learned you care.
And you've learned to anticipate despair.

THE PLACEMENT OF SOULS

When books are placed upstanding on a shelf
next to each other, we below can read
their spines. Within, an author's soul, or self,
might be identified. One may mislead
unknowingly or knowingly and wear
a jacket not quite accurate to who
or what the volume is. So few souls dare
to take one down and open it. Will you?

When I take down a long-time favorite book
I read it slowly, savoring the prose,
the poetry, the pictures, the insight,
the life that's shared. This second or third look
now, decades later, makes it, I suppose,
an old friend I at long last know, or might.

ABOUT MY FRIEND DANNY ASHKENAZI O.B.M.

August 8, 1922

Last night I received a gift for free
You came to me in a dream.
You sat down smiling opposite me,
My friend! Could I believe what seemed?

I was stunned and overwhelmed with surprise.
But you gazed at me tranquilly
Is that you? Can I believe my eyes?
Yes, my dear friend, it's me!

You said that it was all a mistake
You never really died
And you certainly did manage to make
Your presence felt. Your smile was wide.

So now we can pick up our fight from the start
Till our shouts at each other reach heaven
Tell each other get lost, while the love in our hearts
Is seven times seven!

– Haggai Kamrat
translated by Esther Cameron

HE SAID TO ME COME

He said to me come
 and we'll sing the Song of Songs
 He said to me come
 and we'll complete all the beginnings
 since the days of our youth.
 He said to me come
 till the end of days.
 We'll fly over the bumps in the road
 over the deadly viruses
 we'll close our eyes and row in the clouds
 we'll hum old songs
 we'll forget the masks
 we'll sweeten the endings,
 we'll crumple all longings
 into the time that remains.
 He said to me come.

- Rachel Saidoff
 translated. by Esther Cameron

LOVE LETTER

Like the obstreperous old Greek gods
 I have to again self-transform.
 This time to sensible, practical, and mannerly
 To be able to disarm and overcome
 Your resistance, and why not,
 To my impatience, illogic, and inconsideration
 Almost as indomitable as Crete's
 Long wall of sharp-edged peaks.
 Justly, I am most amazed to see
 This new animal standing in the old space
 I had once occupied. But even if true
 I can hardly stand the tedious boredom
 Of this new worthy presentable me
 Appealing to you in this letter.
 Please, consider well and do not accept it.

-

Paul Raboff

MY SISTER'S MARRIAGE

I feel free at last to grant your request,
 to stay up late and become a modern wife,
 to a traveller from a distant land,
 a man who arrived with a faded past,
 a truckload of nuclear character, a peanut of virtue,
 whose mood slices the lightning arching towards you,
 with his tongue lashing out at your frequent moons.
 His heart appears to be a temple of temper,
 where traces of tantrums drop into a skillet
 like boulders from a volcanic mountain
 and his smiles disintegrate like a fly
 dropping its dry wings on a rugged floor.
 There must be something about his bearings,
 where nothing besides mundane remains
 except for the excessive ruins or dissipation
 of what would have been a saving grace.
 I tried to cancel my negativity towards him,
 hoping that something good comes from this blather,
 yet I see your future sprawled before me
 like a squeezed rag in a muddy lake,
 where the shimmer of dirt is the only attraction I see,
 and nothing pushes you towards the edge
 than my resistance to your faith in a phantom.
 So often do lichens glitter in the cold sun,
 but collapse is the fate of such lovely downwind
 with its shiny radiation mistaken for a glowing change.
 I wash my hands of your robotic love and pride
 in anarchy masquerading as simple charm,
 where deception wears the hues of pageantry,
 and concealed violence parades as self-control.
 When this hot wind blasts our delicate shores,
 and burns up the little vestiges of love and joy we share,
 I will not float with a hint of gloating,
 but stretch my arms to catch your falling body,
 my sister, my family, forever mine.

- Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah

IF CHAGALL'S FLYING GOATS COULD COMFORT MOURNERS

Every word I speak now is a prayer,
that you lie undreaming in sweet comfort,
that you do not judge my intermittent cheerfulness,
my lack of tears when I turn to you to share
my soliloquies and you're not here.
Nor do I speak out loud, as if you are. Instead,
I think back to times I made you laugh,
turning certain fraught events into private punch lines.
Some siblings part forever over scraps.
Half a syllable's misspoken, they lose the jokes,
the recipes, the wry allusions.
Sister, no one shares my sudden memories,
but here's mercy, your jacket's in my closet, you're
floating
over my roof, my left shoulder.

- Florence Weinberger

MY FATHER

Though born with Elizabeth Bishop he died
long after, he loved my poems
because they were mine,
father remained as innocent as a child's laughter:
and in seven languages knew no rhyme.

- Michael Salcman

THE ARMCHAIR

In the old house, when we moved away,
there remained a small armchair made of straw,
a bit faded, a bit tattered.
Little fibers already exceeded
their authority and stuck out between the slats.
But that was my father's armchair, may he rest in peace,
which he'd bought from an Arab peddler in the village,
on which he sat for many of the years of his life
over the old well in the courtyard of our house
sometimes with a cobbler's last between his knees for
repairing shoes
sometimes with an awl in his hand for punching a belt
sometimes with a hammer for fixing at table or a chair
sometimes with the handle of a pot or the handle of a lid.
Toward the end of his life he plaited flowers
from nylon or silk
roses and lilies in different colors
for the family, the grandchildren...
Now the armchair is orphaned
The house has been sold to strangers.
Only longing
remains from those days.

- Rachel Saidoff
translated by Esther Cameron

home is

where I grow up their house bellybutton of my
being secure cove to go back to when I
leave for other lands till they retire snowbirds
winging south still my compass seeks them out
trying to relocate home then my children are born
affirming my life leave to unfurl their wings and
come back again bringing their own children
home is where my offspring grow up my house
bellybutton of their being

- Bob Findysz

THE PLACE

2015

It was eighth day Passover there
Shabbat *Isru Chag* here.
He was there
and I was here.
How guilty I felt,
I was inconsolable,
couldn't be comforted,
whenever I needed him
he was there for me,
but when he passed on
I wasn't there for him.
I was far far away,
I was in this place,
albeit a holy place,
and he was in that place,
a less holy place.

When people visited me, they said
"May *HaMakom*, The Place,
comfort you amongst other mourners
for Zion and Jerusalem".

Now, each year on *Isru Chag*
I say *Kaddish* for him
and I recall, that just as they said,
the place was my comfort,
I was in the place that he wished for me,
I was in the place he wished he could be.
I didn't need to feel guilty
I *was* there for him, as he was for me.

- Julian Alper

* *Isru Chag* - the day after the festival

IN MY MEMORY

In the gray before dawn
 I dream of the dead and lost
 they come to me calm
 and give words
 the words are awry
 I don't know how I understand and
 why I don't take these moments
 before the lighting of dawn
 to speak what I have held so long

Where are you?
 Attendez-moi.
 I so regret....
 Where do the violets go in snow?

Would my own words be misspoken
 misunderstood
 Did anyone, in fact, understand or need to?
 I miss their words
 In my memory
 words are what I keep.

- Susan Oleferuk

PRAYER FOR MY NEIGHBORS

I saw them. I saw them suddenly go
 from sidewalk to street, from street to gutter
 as police cars circled and spun in the dark.
 I saw them, children really, guns drawn,
 heard the first shots, heard the last, heard
 the voices of cops in the night, smelled fear
 and gasoline, tasted metal night and horror,
 shut my eyes – I did not want to see my hands
 trembling, did not want anything I'd have
 to remember. But I do remember. Do see
 what shut eyes failed to stay blind to: lost
 innocence, the face of a schoolboy turned to
 prey.

- Kelley Jean White

IV. *Existential Questions*

EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS

"Whosoever saves one life ...saves an entire world"

Who am I? I am
 Somebody. But who?
 Billy the Kid, William,
 Outlaw, laying low
 hiding out in New Mexico,
 Maud Martha, or just
 Calamity Jane
 Drinking herself to oblivion
 on the Midnight Train
 not left, not right,
 not orthodox, nor anti-faith,
 The Spirit is strong with this one,
 One, whose soul is greater
 Than the sum of her limbs
 Beyond bones, above flesh an blood
 Who am I? Eternal
 Beyond the bounds of galaxies,
 Eternity is already in me

- Brenda Appelbaum-Golani

TESTAMENT

I was unkind
 to my sister
 failed to praise
 when she desired
 assurance.
 I have been disinclined
 to march in step.
 I tend to leave early.
 I always thank.
 I don't require compensation.
 I quit smoking in 1978.
 I vote.
 I have a composting bin in
 my kitchen, compostable bags that slip right in.
 I recycle, I tip,
 I light candles,
 send checks.
 help zealots
 be more effective.
 I would consider
 picking up
 someone waiting
 at a bus stop
 but I wouldn't do it.
 I'm not perfect
 but I try my best
 to be ready
 for my audition with God.

- Florence Weinberger

APPETITE

Sometimes a hunger comes
 For bitter, not for sweet –
 A first full course
 Of rue, regret, remorse,
 And all the crow that you can eat –
 A plate of seder crumbs
 Of *maror* bitterer
 Than what was left by her;
 Than every hope's defeat.

Sometimes you long
 For bitterroot to burn
 To ashes on a tongue
 That tastes their acrid turn
 From dirt-tart tang the flavor
 Of an acid herb
 To the acerb,
 Scorched bits you crave to savor –
 That caustic fare for which you yearn.

– Len Krisak

BREAKING POINTS

To love a tree that you planted,
 watching it grow above you,
 spreading its shade with clusters of leaves,
 is not nothing to take for granted;
 it will last a long time, ringed with hope,
 longer than your heart grieves
 its passing seasons too.

But to love something that doesn't live long –
 the little boy in your son,
 who played with his truck toy
 alone in his room, so grown and gone;
 or Tug, the cat that, gently with a paw,
 would touch your face in bed and then 'meow' –
 those moments break you now.

– John Delaney

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 Hope that inspires. A good that transcends.

– John Delaney

walking the hypotenuse

you think you're so smart
 walking the hypotenuse,
 saving steps as you go

don't you know
 a simple ant
 knows that,
 was born knowing?

and you, with a brain
 as large as a grapefruit!

– Batsheva Wiesner

OFF-KILTER

As I've been now,
 For some time.
 Weight of the world
 Stretched across my back,
 And each point north –
 This weary, unsteady head,
 Always a wobble away.
 Often, I take stock,
 Set myself level,
 Engage in what day remains,
 Before the night falls,
 One shadow after another.

It's just how it is...
 The more you advance,
 The likelihood you'll be
 A beat and a half off –
 Six steps south of Sunday –
 Wherever you're destined.
 Normally, I'm okay with it.
 My break and sudden shake,
 Remaking all I knew.
 Yet I could find solace,
 If there was a straight line
 Between here and tomorrow.

– Bart Edelman

[untitled]

(Not being [I am] being not
 [{In-between}] contradicted
 Or [seeming] contradicted – me,
 Laws, God, blown out, restricted.

(So it goes. “Woof!” I
 Insist. Or “Moo.” [Chewing on
 My barley. {Will no one feed me wheat!?!}]
 Let me sing an antiphon:

“I do! I think! My mind, it melts
 Into my heart [and then I start
 To worry...?!]! Let me stand on my island.
 Let me trust! I’m taken apart.

([Have some oatmeal?] [No, wheat
 Berries!] The bird is singing in
 Our land a mind-expanding vista,
 A galaxy, a hadron spin!)

– Yaacov David Shulman

A WOMAN’S SONG

On Yom Kippur I stand
 on the balcony above the holy scrolls
 surrounded by a host of women
 joined by remembered souls.
 Our dresses white like shrouds
 we rise up on our toes, soar in the air.
 I sing out like the seraphim
 I offer my own humble song and prayer.

In my mother’s womb You formed me
 in my mother’s arms I first felt your love.
 Mother left me, You still held me
 showed me mercy from above.
 When my own child stirred within me
 when I held her in my own arms
 how I wondered at the glory
 all creation reaffirms.

Through eons of time you hold dominion
 galaxies spin at your command.
 Though I’m now old and weary
 You still hold me by the hand
 gently lead me from despair
 comfort me in warm embrace.
 I offer up this simple prayer
 it lingers in this sacred space.

How can I sing of the Almighty
 whose existence transcends time?
 I’m a tiny speck in all creation
 what can I know of the sublime?

Yet my prayer swirls like incense
 with ancient whispered prayers it blends
 like the scented cloves that still my hunger
 it revives my soul as it ascends.

Rochelle Kochin

Refrain for my life:

a sound like gunshots
 a sound like a child falling from a height
 an angry voice
 wind on a cold night
 and a fast car carrying
 it all away

– Kelley Jean White

WORD SONNET

upon radiation treatments

Blessings,
 like
 angels,
 radiate
 sheaves
 of
 light,
 linger
 on
 eyelids,
 kiss
 my
 blue
 eyes.

– Ruth Fogelman

THOU

I don’t know how to pray. I don’t know how
 to turn to You, or if I turn at all.
 But other things I know – to fail; to fall;
 to lie; to hide. Am I supposed to bow
 before You? I'm not sure I can; for now
 let's talk, all right? Although I'm very small
 and You are very great, most people call
 You merciful, so may I call You "Thou"?

I'm sure Thou knowest I have a basement, right?
 Thou knowest my basement has a sea no boat
 or raft can ever cross – and this is where
 I have been living / swimming / drowning, night
 by night, year by year. Please – keep me afloat;
 I turn to Thee, the Thou who knoweth prayer.

– Yakov Azriel

wf heineman -two poems

the aging mystic confirmed his bones were not sagging.
 they are separating and the space of awareness
 is widening.

not sagging.
 2022

*

out of the blue it showed up.
 my out of body experience returned home.
 he was extremely upset.
 ranting.
 cursing.
 i had rearranged the furniture.
 i had sold his favorite old chair.
 i had converted his bedroom into a study.
 the bathroom had been repainted with unmanly pastels.
 the big game hunting posters had been removed.

nothing but anger and frustration.
 that is his part of it.
 for my part of it
 he did not bring back a single present or memento
 from the souvenir shop in the great beyond.
 not a single photo.
 not even a simple revelation.

he expected me to pay the bills without answering a single question.
 what was he doing in places like that.
 who was he doing it with.
 how can you call those purchases accessories.
 he had smuggled his suitcase through customs and hid it from me.
 i refuse to become paranoid
 but the next time he goes on a cruise
 i am going to buy a new house
 and not leave a forwarding address.

rethinking paranormal obligations.
 wf.h.
 2022

ONE MAN WHO SUCCEEDED IN FALLING

There is one man who succeeded -
 A thousand generations failed.
 And if not for that man,
 Creation would be a failure.
 One man succeeded in falling,
 Falling like a feather.
 When there is no resistance a feather falls to earth
 like an iron ball.

And iron will kiss the earth like a feather.
 Only cancel out the resistance
 And the ball of iron in your heart will turn into a feather.

- Imri Perel
 translated by Esther Cameron

284.
 Because I do not struggle
 But gratefully accept
 Whatever my fate provides,

 I cannot feel the pang
 Of sacrifice and pain,
 Nor great success and pride.

 I cherish simple comfort,
 And if I have succeeded
 It's because I never tried

- David Weiser

POOR GOD

Poor God
 He's looking
 He's begging
 For people
 In His image
 After all
 To believe in Him
 Even just a little
 Even less
 He can't find them
 He has to settle
 For someone
 Like me
 And because
 Of that
 Just a little.
 Poor God.
 I'm sorry
 You can't
 Do better than me
 But here I am
 Filling this space
 The only space
 Available for me.

- Paul Raboff

BEYOND A MIRROR'S LIGHT

"And He said, 'Hear now My words; if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known to him through a mirror, in a dream I will speak with him. Not so My servant Moses; he is trusted in all My household.'" (Numbers 12:6-7)

Some prophets see the mirrors of the night,
 While others glimpse the mirrors of the day,
 But Moses gazed beyond a mirror's light.

The prophet's soul, a lens enhancing sight,
 May catch a flash reflected on the gray;
 Some prophets see the mirrors of the night.

Words glow on day's mirrors, black fire on white,
 White fire on black, and blaze the prophet's way;
 But Moses gazed beyond a mirror's light.

What visions show, and prophets' pens must write,
 Reveals a mirror's sheen, where angels pray;
 Some prophets see the mirrors of the night.

Above the Throne, above the Chariot's height,
 All mirrors swirl as Torah verses sway;
 But Moses gazed beyond a mirror's light.

Instead of myriad mirrors, dull or bright,
 He heard one Voice that told him what to say;
 Some prophets see the mirrors of the night,
 But Moses gazed beyond a mirror's light.

- Yakov Azriel

LIKE AN EYE BEGINNING

So faith is what it's about

-- A friend's young daughter instructs me
 at the International Exhibit Competition at
 the Carnegie

I

This painting is
 a dark tingling about the impasse
 of blackness; it's

something that startles us to
 stare at a blank, al-
 most, impossibility.

Nervously the voice
 of light pinches, peaks
 in its stippled pricks.

The wind-waved,
 laved-lacquered, sting-
 steepled canvas

can do this, even as
 paint's veiled, velvety texture
 urges, *Ur's* us if you will,

beckons us up close to
 the painting's points, where
 its waved-tipped black
 snarls push

us away, then don't,
like a seashore; it's light

arises out of a black surf
of surfaces. It
pulls one in, like the

first tide when the black
moon rose over the still
unsunned, unstrung-by-lyre light

Earth. In the beginning,
all was darkness, a black painting, this.
Then light shone forth, as if

from within.

So faith. . .

II

This one's a parlor-patch
of ottoman-sized, toad-
stool-like shapes;

resin-shiny as soft rain-
fall; grape skin
thin; with many colors scent-

lessly repre-
sented; diaphanous,
like an eye beginning
to cataract.

Despite their syn-
thetic materiality,

they seem like wonder-
ful, gummi bear flavored, fun-
gusy, galvanized-with-

life-lived-in-
organic creatures
biblically umbili-

calling themselves
to the earth
of a planet, like ours.

. . . is what . . .

III

This rusty patch of steel, crossed by cable
is a piece about forbidden spaces,
the way a museum is about

forbidden spaces, just as are
these coffins for all shapes,
all things, for

bidden spaces.

. . . it's about

IV

And this big table and chairs
make us feel like Jacks and Jills in a gi-
ant's dining room.
It's the idea of child
they mean to regain in us,
of a world gone ga-ga

in bigness. Every detail, even the but-
tucks grooves in the giant chairs, is
faithful. I'd love to sit up there,

So faith. . .

just to let my feet dangle,
like a cigarette
from a giant's lips.

. . . is. . .

V

And the Brazilian woman in love with color;

and the Russian man with his film pastiche on waiting,
of lines, and the people in them, lines

snaking, skirting, squirting in-
to alcoved streets, jettisoned by lines
of cars, and us, in line, watching;

. . . what. . .

and the orchids of the dying Japanese woman
contrapuntally arrayed with i-
mages of her life -- her wedding photo

and the shy, purple blush of orchid above;
the lime tree-sashed-with-yellow
orchid, and her below,

sitting on her tombstone;
and the hush of a white orchid, and
she's gone from the picture;

. . . it's about.

and the Israeli film out of kilter,
so that night closes in, but doesn't,
over a sotto voce voice over of prayer,

the night of Jerusalem bubbling in,
out of focus, uncut, beaded
by streetlamps; now an upward flurry

of camera and night
appears, black, starless,
but touched.

So faith is. . .

– Stuart Lishan

THE SILENCE

It is a fact
 You know it for truth
 Death comes early here
 Through the dark nights
 It wraps you in its embrace
 Even in the sun's caress
 Its wind is icy to the touch.

But tomorrow you and I could
 stand up
 and embrace life
 trust the smell of salt tears
 mixed with daffodils and the iris,
 the inevitable living.

We could, if we desire,
 wrap ourselves in our grandfather's tallit,
 remind ourselves of love
 and in the prayers of the heart
 silence would sing
 love songs.

– Estelle Gershgoren Novak

PRAYER

Where is the Source of God?
 The Beneficent One
 In Whom the soul could rest,
 Its searchings done.

I turn my eyes away
 From life's dark thickets dense
 To all the good you've given,
 Which in my veins I sense.

God whom no bounds define
 Teach me to be like You
 That I may see Your creatures
 With unobstructed view.

Lift me above my will's fences
 That leave me caught in strife
 To the heights of Your will, from whence I may spread
 Your mercy over all life.

– Eva Rotenberg
 translated by Esther Cameron

V. *The Candle Burns*

MY COUNTRY

Dove of muteness, pearl of the world
 You were the pillow of my growth
 Yours only yours is all that is in me
 For from you I drew my strength

I withheld no step from your earth
 I went to and fro
 And in all that I touched your hand touched me
 My country, I will forever love your land.

– Haggai Kamrat
 translated by Esther Cameron

ABROAD IN WARTIME

I am impressed; they do not need RSS¹
 They do not need to hide in their own place!

They do not have to invent locks that lock better,
 They do not need a shelter!

They do not need an Emergency squad
 They do not have to wake up from a nightmare...to the
 daymare of the real world

They do not need armed Guards and ammunition
 They do not need to prepare an escape plan in case of
 intrusion

They do not need an "Iron Dome," nor suspect every
 noise is a shell
 They do not need to refrain from admitting they are
 from Israel!

Trauma counseling, also, they do not need!
 They do not need to see blood, donate blood, bleed!

They do not need to patch their faith in man and curb
 their rage
 They do not need to stand the test of courage

They do not need to develop Resilience and Bury and Bury.
 They do not need to take into their everyday vocabulary:
 Gaza, Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, tunnels, kidnappings,
 missiles
 And all the other dirty words

They do not need all these -- they are "abroad!"
 – Sabina Messeg
 translated by the author

¹ Residential Secure Space

All the flowers died this summer; what remained in the garden was green foliage in different textures. Unlike my usual practice, I continue to water them, I accept them without color or joy. Together with them, I content myself with survival, trusting that the remaining green will hold out till the rain comes

– Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehori
translated by Esther Cameron

The mulberry tree increases its wide-spreading shadow; the street cleaners have already taken all the abundance of fruit that it shed on the ground

What remains are the flies circling over smells of rotting
What remains are the residents of the street laying their heads on their collections concealed in plastic bags
What remains is the smell of the joint smoked by some young people who have cleared out of here
We remain

with the pigeons who always find rotten crumbs to pick up between the cracks
still believe they'll always find
And for some unknown reason this makes them happy

– Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehori
translated by Esther Cameron

waiting for the right lament

How good it is gray today. The day is gray, everything is gray.

The beautiful garden is gray
There is a drizzle... but not a "rain of blessing"
Everything is wrapped in its soul, reality is wrapped

so good it's only dripping
I wouldn't stand a good thirst-quenching rain
may the drops continue to fall,
to weep, to mourn... without stopping

this is the time to cry! to wail and wait
for the retaliation, for the fighting back.

I know I said something inappropriate, I'm taking my words back
I run along narrow paths... I run away I run from you

putting down my bare feet
and raising them... in invocation

This time not expecting a poem, but a lament

I'm waiting For the right lament

What is the correct lamentation needed at this moment?
What about the fury we have to suppress

The wish for revenge we are forbidden to express !
Oh let drops continue to drop to plummet
The sky continue to shed
tears

Just not the generous rain
that came to wash away, to fertilize, to bless!

– Sabina Messeg
translated by Esther Cameron

THE FLIGHT

The airport is sad gray and sad
The planes hang their heads in blue and white stripes
Beginning of June gray skies
How shall we lift the cup of bitterness
Let us fly
Bombs in the north the forests are burning
Lone soldiers drown in the quicksands of the south
Beautiful barefoot lads
Put on army boots
Put on their helmets like a diadem
Tell me
Where is Gate E2
I hold you in my hands
Your guitar your bed
The soft blanket you grew up with
In another hand I lead the troll my soldier I am flying to
the great world

The plane is a breathing panting beast it ascends
The skies are wide the radiance is hollow
They ascend
Soldiers march in lines to the village
Their backs upright
They sit down in D32
A plane takes off without applause
What do you wish to drink
We have already drunk the cup of staggering
What else have you on your cart
I wrap myself in the blanket of childhood I do not close
my eyes
A sad airplane takes off without applause
Outside is the radiance of the color of amber the living
creatures and the likeness of a man
You leave behind you a contrail of blood

– Chana Kremer
translated by Esther Cameron

FIVE HAIKU

loaded pomegranate another red Rosh Hashanah

red bedspread
in the shape of a child
October 7

roaming red nova eye of the raven

baby bones
the second front
still sizzling

fringes on the front –
camouflaged
prayer

– Sara Tropper

DISGUISE YOURSELF

Disguise yourself as if you are joyful as if you are
happy
Wear borrowed white clothes
Disguise yourself so as not to shame God
in His greatness
He wants you to be joyful believe me
Act as if you are not afraid dance
as if you were dancing
there will yet come good days

– Chana Kremer

TRIO

Euripides 400 B.C

When Death comes to take him
King Admetus tricks him and does not go;
but Death demands another in his place.
His wife, Queen Alcestis offers herself
causing great mourning and sorrow,
until brave Heracles volunteers to go
down into Hades and bring her back;
he succeeds.

T.S. Eliot 1922

On the eve of a cocktail party
Edward's wife Lavinia vanishes.
The guests are puzzled, concerned -
where is she? Is she dead?
An unidentified guest offers to find her
and bring her back. With clever tactics
he succeeds.

Israel 2023

At a crowded open-air music festival,
an unexpected, horrific attack by
 Hamas terrorists, killing, abusing,
burning, destroying, dragging off
hundreds of hostages into the Hades
of Gaza tunnels and cells
causing a whole country to mourn.
Brave soldiers go down into that hell
fighting the evil, to bring them back.

The last line has yet to be written.

– Rumi Morkin

A SHATTERED TRUST

My people,
my beloved children,
we stand alone,
in the howling wind,
in a world of abandoned morality.
Alone on this tall mountain of truth,
we view the horizon,
our humanity,
It ought to be
enshrined as holiness,
now,
prostituted to a world in turmoil,
a spiral of decay,
flowers wilt,
trees wither
before the hailstorms
of falsehood,
of broken trusts,
the bonds of trust
binding men together
the adhesion of society,
shattered beyond recognition.

Alone we are,
but not alone are we.
We have blossomed,
our land has flourished
our children, threefold.
And we,

as brothers,
 have come together for a common purpose.
 To create a truth so powerful,
 So enduring
 That it is impenetrable.
 We will endure.
 For the sake of humanity,
 We must endure.

- Don Kristt 5.2024

FRIDAY AFTERNOON PIYUT

It was his habit to indulge himself in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellowing light, when thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly, and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision. – George Eliot

Those expanding hours
 the pause Friday afternoon
 portfolios laced shut
 new ventures not to be offered or taken up
 while waiting for Shabbat evening yet to fall

my breathing reaches ahead

Now – who are those gathered there?
 materialized from dust and shadow
 figures greet each other
 thronging sketched wayfarers
 adjusting their shawls or long skirts
 stroking beards or trimmed moustaches

One fellow with news from the front,
 another retelling family tales
 one interpreting a text
 perhaps musing on
 what Spinoza demanded of government
 or reconciling Freud and Reich

assembling smiles and charitable coins
 comrades conducting spirited arguments
 in tents or low-slung meeting houses
 poised on their lips
 a pipe, hookah, or schnapps glass

My eyes tear at recognizing them
 I gather their epochs eagerly,
 wander among them to inquire
 where they hailed from

how they kept clear hearts, sharp
 thoughts, keen knowledge
 throughout those mists of time

Our words and embraces
 bring us one week closer
 to the joy of the after days

- Andy Oram

MEZUZOT

When we few now alive
 have all died, remember:
 We were men who groveled in the cold
 wearing only striped pajamas,
 our lives threatened for a crust of bread.
 We were hollow-eyed women
 with wombs shriveled as ancient parchment.
 So we trust you to tell our story.
 Teach it to your children,
 Write it on your hearts.
 Think of us when you are in your warm house
 or are walking safely on your way.
 When you lie down in peace
 to sleep in a comfortable bed.
 If you fail, the world will forget us.
 Your children will turn away from you
 and you will disappear from the earth.

- Mel Goldberg

ERGO SUM

The relatives who died in the war
 have faded in and out of our lives.
 Not alive,
 But then not dead,
 Gone or lost in the war,
 Maybe once or twice mentioned as dead or killed,
 but this is stated
 With such dispassion
 That it seems not true.
 So I am going to Auschwitz
 To give them life,
 To find them within the ledgers and the Lagers
 Within the piles of shoes,
 Within the ashes.
 For you cannot be destroyed unless you were once alive
 So amongst the destruction I will prove their existence,
 Like a latter-day Descartes, You were killed
 therefore you were
 And I will grieve.

- Martin Herskovitz

Amos Neufeld
FIVE POEMS

WE FILLED THE EARTH

*("Be Fertile ... and fill the earth." Genesis 9:1)
for Paul Celan*

Did you knead us with such love from this hard earth
just to break us? Beloveds, conjured in your image
thrust back naked into earth's dark void, night's breath-
choked chaos. Souls of flesh burnt to ash, flowering

dust, broken-stemmed blooming black over a bed of
 thorns
clinging to each breath — our life-blood crying out to
 you ...

Fashioned to tend the living garden, sow
and fill the earth, teach our children your ways,

blow sweetly in their nostrils the fresh breath of life,
crown your works with ours, fulfill our mission.
If not angels stewards who strove on your behalf.
Did we betray you — the earth you'd envisioned?

We shards of battered bones, gasping for breath,
our flesh of ash flowering blood-red, grief-torn, filled the
 earth.

*

TWO SISTERS SHARING A SCRAP OF BREAD

(for my mother Charlotte and her sister Irene)

Two sisters who kept each other alive,
caught between fleeting hope and deepening despair.
Their lives stripped from them — all they'd hoped for,
loved dearly. Did their love help them survive?

Ordered to pack home in a few rucksacks,
their parents bereft, fearing what was to come —
told cruelly they would never return home.
Wondering if you'd see them again ... on train tracks
bound for hell's fires.

 Bombed, huddled in a bunker,
making entries in a journal, recording
boundless brutality, grasping notes of hope,
sharing loved songs, poems from lost realms. Hearts
 riven.

Two sisters sharing scraps of bread, loved poems,
visions of a promised land where they would build
 home.

WHO?

Isaiah 56: "who gathereth the dispersed of Israel"

Who will gather our dispersed ashes
from forgotten forests and fields,
from blood-soaked corners of the broken earth
where beasts once devoured us?
Who will dare blow breath back
into our burnt bones
licked clean by a pack of hounds?
Who will bear and deliver our ashes
from the burning pyres of this furnace-planet,
clothe us in flesh and bone
and give us a patch of earth to call home?

Who will ever again raise us from dust,
from the earth's inferno,
the chaotic depths of the abyss,
knit our bones and mend our broken bodies,
and send us forth to a promised land
so that we may rise at dawn and soar
into its augmenting light
to fly to a magic mountain?

Who will hear our blood cry out
from the ground of killing fields,
from dungeons buried in the earth,
black holes from which not even light
could escape. Summon us
from fugitive clouds of smoke,
the ashen wings of the whirlwind,
from graves adrift in the teeming sky,
from unmarked mounds,
ditches we dug for ourselves,
overflowing gashes
in flesh-flooded ravines,
open wounds in hushed green fields
where we were laid waste
to fill the earth?

Who in the distant heavens
will hear and answer our cry
from out of the darkest of nights,
say: *here I am*
to stand by you,
give you strength,
deliver you on eagle's wings
from death-darkened days into the light?

Who will ever again call our names
and walk by our side,
free us from a barb-wired wilderness of abandonment,
rescue our burnt bodies from a wasteland
of breathlessness — last gasps
in sealed chambers of clawed walls and screaming flesh,
from the utter loneliness of our orphaned prayers —
so that we may go forth to reach a promised land?

Who, after countless roll calls — unfathomable fear —
will dare to call us by our names
from which we were stripped and banished
after our naked world was consumed
in the gaping maw of that terrifying night,
and dispatched in columns of smoke curling into the sky —
an offering to blue-eyed gods?

Who will remember us (as we once were)
lovingly created in our creator's image
after we were branded like cattle for slaughter,
our shorn skulls and skeletal frames bludgeoned,
charred corpses stacked like firewood,
shattered vessels so beaten and battered,
that no one would recognize us?

Who will ever again press us to her heart,
hold us close — like a beloved —
and walk with us through the fires of the inferno —
not alone?

Who will ever again dare to gather us
from a wilderness of loss,
knead our ashes into flesh and bone,
blow breath back into our broken bodies,
and give us a name and a home
that will not perish?

*

BEARING WITNESS

for Jan Kariski

*"If the Prophets broke in/through the doors of night/and
sought an ear like a homeland —/
Ear of mankind/overgrown with nettles,/would you hear?"
Nelly Sachs, If the prophets broke in)*

You tried to wake the conscience of the world,
rouse leaders who refused to understand
that there would be no more Jews. They were being
murdered.
Methodically. That shame would mark mankind.

You asked them to halt the greatest of crimes —
rescue the remnant of Europe's Jews still alive.
You'd seen Jews starved, death-bound, dying — *there*
was no time
to waste! Did the world not want to know? — to believe?

even hear of such cruelty? One said: *I know humanity —
impossible ... though you are not lying.*
Death's fierce landscapes had pierced you — wrought
soul-shaking empathy.
You'd seen a people perishing, naked hells of dying;

did your utmost — haunted that you had failed —
described hell's deathscapes precisely but couldn't right
the world unkeeled.

WHO WILL HEAR OUR SCREAMS?

*for Emanuel Ringelblum and the other members of Oneg
Shabbat: The Warsaw Ghetto Chroniclers*

Even our death-screams can't capture the horror
we've suffered: random shootings, roundups, lives-
riven, death-
shrouded — at the mercy of murderers.
We've chronicled the truth — cries etched in the earth,

in our eyes, not wanting to give murderers
the last word — drown out the truth of our screams.
Recorded our lives ravaged in the ghetto
though the world outside remains deaf to our pleas —

has turned its back as our loved ones are taken.
An infinite grief from which no one's recovered.
Yet we continue to write and bury our archive
so you will know the dying hells we've suffered —

brutal truths that may live beyond our time,
beyond this world that refused to hear our screams.

JUDEOPHOBIA*

squall of thorns \ flood of rotting teeth \ cabinet of lost
lungs \
shuttle-cock bloodied \ womb imploded \ serpents in
the
waters \ tattoo drenched with saliva \ bird wing
wrenched
from its socket \ salt-caked flesh \ ulcer in fault line \
punchline
trapdoors \ assembly line for iron muzzles \ wishbone
jagged \
glass splinters in the stew \ headlines impotent \
footnotes
spider-webbed with sorrow \ lemon-sick scent of
bleach \
hard mathematics \ terrorist snake burrows \ dance
party
death trap \ gleeful snuff footage \ fossilized cures
lodged
in riverbeds \ exile exiled \ two-headed,
victim | persecutor \
petition petition the ghosts

– Rikki Santer

*Dr. Leon Pinsker, who coined the word in 1882 in his
argument for a Zionist state, explained the term this way: *As a
psychic aberration, it is hereditary, and as disease transmitted for two
thousand years, it is incurable.*

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

I'd hold tight to Mama's hand
when Zayde blew the shofar.
The sound would grow with every breath
like the flames that grew in our fireplace
when Zayde blew on smoldering coals.

The shofar curved like Zayde's back
its wide mouth protruding from his prayer shawl.
When it quavered I'd listen for the bleating
of the white ram trapped in brambles
sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son.

When Zayde blew the last long blast
I'd let go of Mama's hand
to fly away to Solomon's Temple.
Where white-robed priests standing
on stone steps before golden temple doors
blew trumpets and a long curved horn
whose blast would last
long after the trumpet blasts had died away
until only a still small voice could be heard.

What if I'd held on?
Now when I listen
to the sound of the shofar
reverberate off the walls
echoing through ages past
I remember a shofar left
in the ashes of a synagogue.

When the horn quavers like a child's cry
I mourn mother and grandfather
burnt like offerings in a crematoria oven.
No snared ram to take their place.

But when the shofar blasts steady
I see Zayde wrapped in his prayer shawl.
I again hold Mama's hand.
I bind Mama and Zayde tight in my memories
and hear the still small voice of peace.

- Rochelle Kochin

THE CANDLE BURNS

BURN MY HEAD, MY MIND MY SOUL
BURN MY HAIR, MY BODY, MY LIMBS
TAKE AWAY MY DIGNITY, REFUTE TRUTH,
NEGATE HISTORY,
BRING HATE, ANIMOSITY AND REVOLUTION
BURN MY HOUSE, TORTURE MY EXISTENCE
BUT KNOW, YOU WILL NEVER TAKE MY FAITH!

DESTROY WHAT IS MATERIAL
DESTROY WITH LIES AND WORDS THE FIBER OF
THE WORLD
DESTROY YOUR OWN PEOPLE
DESTROY YOUR OWN CHILDREN
DESTROY YOUR OWN ESSENCE
BUT YOU WILL NEVER DESTROY MINE!!!

I WILL SING TO MY G-D
AND PRAISE HIS NAME
WILL CRY TO MY G-D AND BEG FOR HIS MERCY
I WILL LAUD HIS NAME AND HIS JUSTICE
AND HE WILL HEAR ME AND PROTECT HIS
CHILDREN
I WILL CRY AND MY TEARS WILL HE SAVE
AND HE WILL POUR OUT HIS WRATH AGAINST
HIS ENEMIES
REMEMBERING MY SOUL TO HIM DEDICATED...

SIMCHAT TORAH...THE JOY OF THE TORAH
WILL PREVAIL AGAINST ALL OUR FOES
AND HIS MIRACLES WILL FOREVER ATTEST:
AIN OD MILVADO - THERE IS NO OTHER BUT
HIM!!

MIRIAM JASKIEROWICZ ARMAN

REGGIO CALABRIA, ITALY
YOM HASHOAH-ZIKARON 5784 - 2024

ODE FOR WALKING WOMEN

On a day when I am walking with two women
in my neighborhood, over past the bakery
where they sell fruit pies,
cream pies, quiche, and pizza,

and the European woman tells us she's taking
antibiotics for Lyme's disease,
asks questions about my ear pain,
when the subject changes to the news

and how do we find our sources. I don't
 mention ten Jewish newspapers
 in my inbox every morning, don't
 mention as we cross Ashbury Ave

and start climbing uphill,
 the Nova exhibit in New York
 extended another two weeks maybe to
 spite protestors with Hamas t-shirts

and how a woman found her shoes
 in a pile of shoes on a platform where the shoes
 belonged to the three hundred sixty
 dead that day, each one with a barcode,

and she found her shoes because she survived,
 so she picked up her shoes and
 walked out of the exhibit, heaving
 outside the doors. I'm not climbing uphill

anymore, have led the two women
 to a park where we find a deer
 with two spotted babies,
 then wild turkeys, and hear chestnut-

backed chickadees' chatter. I answer a question,
 saying the protestors called for the end
 of Israel and death to Jews. And then
 we're walking on pavement

when the British woman asks about
 the New York Times and I point out
 they shy away from real numbers,
 and she says you mean they're afraid.

I wait a couple minutes to hear both women.
 Sigh because this is the first time
 since a massacre in another country
 I've never visited never wanted to

up until recently never felt part of,
 the first time since I confined myself
 to a tiny space where at night cargo trains
 lean on the horn, pushing through to the next
 town,

the first time that someone has ascended,
 said they're not Jewish but understands,
 and I imagine in vespers the women repeat
 a prayer resembling the native garden

we've stopped to admire, how even
 a single cactus blends in, not indifferent
 nor hostile to manzanita which will outlast us,
 and flannelbush with its buttery petals,

all five of them. And because as we
 make our way downhill
 with sweeping views of the Golden Gate
 and we stop to take it in, the women

talk about who controls terror in
 the Middle East and they grunt over
 college protests, and then we resume
 our pace and descend back into

the indifferent streets, where the burning
 inside me has vanished

- Laurel Benjamin

GUARANTEE
 (Habakkuk 3:2)

May you employ this gun
 With stern righteousness
 Kindness and efficiency
 Determined to the end,
 "Wrath remembering mercy"

In complete intelligence,
 Our enemy's doctrine
 Does not allow for peace
 As subject to attain
 Even phantom pretense.

I offer this gun to be
 A dedicated weapon
 Cleaned, oiled, free
 Of obstructions in steel
 Spiraled minutely.

- Paul Raboff

Donald Mender
TWO POEMS

BULRUSHES

Daddy,

I've been so very bored with
your cornball
palace,
your kiss up
courtiers,
your dragster
chariots,
your zip gun
generals,
your stone cold
temples,
your droning
priests,
your bricked in
crypts,
your pointless
mummies,
and the rest of
Cecil B. DeMille's
recycled
kitsch.

But today,

while the help
was cutting me
a few bongos full
of wild weed,
sprouting here and there
along the Nile's
freakier banks,
I spied a spindly little kid,
still drizzled
with some crone's
broken water,
floating by
in a raggedy
hemp basket,
left, I suppose,
as a kosher snack
for prowling crocs.

Now *that*

wasn't so boring,
and I put aside
my smoke.

Though the half starved slave boy's
hollowed out monkey face
was mostly shadows,
his eyes,
sparkling like
a fired up brain

on acid,
grabbed my nodding skull
and yanked me
from my habit.

I just couldn't resist
bundling the kid home
to be dried, wrapped,
and richly suckled
at the buttery teat
of my favorite
wet nurse.

Slave or not, I thought,
that weird little bag of bones
with LEDs for orbits
may fill out awesomely,
and grow to become
my very own rainbow star,
casting a royal peacock's glow
across skies throughout
Greater Memphis.

Yet, deep down,

my gut worried
that he's dangerous
like an alien time bomb,
which might tick away
for years among us
and finally go nova,
repaying my favors
with bloody fallout -
vermin,
pus,
dead cows,
and worse,
dooming
my toked up perks,
your dynasty,
our Delta,
the Milky Way,
Amun-Ra himself.

Even so,

this thrill-seeking chick,
inhaling once again,
simply couldn't say no
to those burning eyes.

*

STREET SCENE

August, 2024:
Neo-Nazis
swagger through
Downtown, U. S. A.
They bellow at
the startled faces

of passersby,
"Are you a Jew?"

I can't help
wondering how
Professor
Einstein,
slowly sucking
on his
pipestem,
might reply.
Not every metric
is relative.

What about
King Christian
the Tenth?
"Ya, sure;
we are all
Danes, too."
Nice arm band.
Nice fella.

Let's not forget
Slapsie Maxie
Rosenbloom
and Bugsy Siegel.
Israel's got nukes.
Full stop.

VI. In G-d We Trust

TRUST

Trust is the silver filament
sustaining the universe
and the family of Man,
powerful as spinning galaxies,
fragile as a spider's web
broken like the severed spine
paralyzing all,
but for a miracle to reconnect
as trusting souls.

□

- Elhanan ben Avraham

A NEW CONTRACT

I agree with my blood to sign a new contract.
With the blood of my brothers the previous one was
cancelled,
with the shrieks of women it was torn.
Even the lease that was signed at the beginning of my
creation, in the blood of my navel,
Was burnt like paper along with everything else.
Its empty words are scattered on nameless roads -
"Trust" is crushed and smeared on the asphalt.
"Man is good" is scattered on the grass,
The sprinklers of the kibbutz are still watering it
industriously, perhaps it will compost faster.
"Morality" was violently abducted on pickup trucks full
of gloatings of bloodlust and predation.
Beaten on all sides, unrecognizable from blood and
fractures.
But I agree with my blood to sign a new contract.
I will no longer close my eyes, never. Even when I sleep
on a loaded gun,
My eyes will remain open.
And you, my grim reality, on your part...

- Imri Perel

translated by Esther Cameron

LANDING AT BEN GURION AIRPORT

What an effort have I made
To get from a sheltered spot on the Spanish
Mediterranean coast

To my targeted house 12 kilometers from Lebanon
And I have no bomb shelter!

But I have an olive grove
And we will pick the olives and carry them to the press

And surely the daffodils have already opened
And maybe the anemones as well.

I will pace the goat path, I will count the flowers
One by one, even in danger of raid,

until their number exceeds the number of missiles
aimed at me ... that someone intercepted.

Thanks, "someone" dear,
Whether God or a little soldier;

Under an iron dome
The lacy flowers bloom

I'll walk the velvety valley paths, I shall not fear.

- Sabina Messeg

translated by Esther Cameron

TRUST

October 23, 2023

Indeed the refusal of trust
in the echelons of intelligence
in the organizational echelons
in the echelons of the leaders
in the echelons of the ministries
between the public and the ministers
between these and those
between those and these!

Indeed the refusal of trust
in the echelons between the strategic and the tactical
the ceremonial and the operative
the right and the left
between ministers and rebels
traitors and loyalists
between these and those
between those and these!

And the open-eyed people, the eternal people
trust, absolutely, in their trustworthy army
in the host of fighters, young men and fathers
children and mothers giving them strength
as they lay their lives on the line for Israel
with their help she will arise and be redeemed.

- Haggai Kamrat
translated by Esther Cameron

A SONG OF BRETAGNE

Savage coasts of forbidding cliffs and gargantuan
boulders plunging into the ocean beside neon lime algae
covering beach pebbles left stranded between tides.
Secure harbors fattened by sugar and slave trade,
favorite haunts of shifty mariners more likely than not
corsairs of a king. Menfolk drawn away to 'sailing',
fishing, soldiering and trading, their women left behind
to keep the hearth burning. Victorian mansions at
seaside resorts frequented by Brits trying to get back at
least a temporary toe-hold of what they lost ages ago.
The landscape is owned by feudal towns and tidy
villages with sturdy stone cottages whitewashed or left
untouched, revealing irregular Breton granite blocks in
tones of charcoal, old rose and burnt butter, crowned by
black slate roofs with a rectangular chimney on each
shoulder like muslim graves. Lonely farmsteads are
scattered across washboard rises and dips, stapled into
emerald chess boards defined by gently waving stalks of
maize, summer wheat already being cut and baled,

meadows where livestock graze and stands of wood
beech, oak, chestnut and pine.

A homeland of fierce religiosity and pride in patrimony
as ancient as the *menhirs* * scattered about or lined up in
rows, inhabiting whole fields like Chinese terracotta
warriors, left by Celts whose language still rolls off the
tongues of wizened grandmothers and school children.
In sometimes unexpected corners, medieval walls
embrace half-timbered houses and flamboyant gothic
temples to a catholic god, fairytale chateaux with
manicured gardens Alice might have played in,
formidable fortifications built to discourage an
assortment of uninvited guests.

On so inhospitable a chunk of rock, strangers are not
easily brooked and there is little patience for rule of law
foreign or domestic. Jews were grudgingly allowed
entry then expelled when convenient for those with
power, readmitted and hounded out time and again, the
Nazi round up just a final betrayal. No wonder such
outlanders have rarely set down stubborn roots. Torn
between so much wild beauty and such a stony heart, I
sing this song to you, Bretagne. My quest has run its
course -- I know you for the siren you are.

- Bob Findysz

* A tall standing stone erected throughout western Europe during
prehistoric times. Stonehenge is the best-known example.

9670 Trust

I trusted them, the European elite
surely enlightened, 'twas hard to swallow
seeing thousands of broken windows
I put my hopes in America, the land
of the free and the brave, surely it was
to be different, yet the image is tarnished
seeing thousands shouting out slogans
I trusted, but no more

- Hayim Abramson

THE BRIDGE

I.

Driving on the 35W Bridge
The limestone guardrails sturdy – with creamy intaglio
the Mississippi beneath, downtown Minneapolis
by the reliable locks,

recalling that afternoon
when my dad phoned that his broken back
had an explanation: cancer had robbed
his bones of integrity.

This bridge, I knew, was the state
of the art replacement for that collapse
that caused drivers to plummet
into the Mississippi or onto its riverbanks.

Civil engineers, inspectors,
all believed in material science.
But taxpayers and lawyers were left
to do the rebuild and shift the loss.

II.

Was it then, or after the banks failed,
was it all these cross allegations,
the infidelities; was it the jobs with benefits,
that abruptly ended like a relationship

too dependent on transaction.
Was it Assange endangering lives
or like Daniel Ellsberg, spotlighting war,
while faith jumping the guardrails

Many banked on unimpeded prosperity
that ended like a picnic in the soaking rain,
or when the raging salvos streamed through tunnels
until belief has been suspended

like a Ferris wheel stuck at its zenith
because the mere assertion of faith
is ridiculed as some exclusive ticket
from Paradiso.

– Michel Krug

Mindy Aber Barad
FIVE POEMS

1) Clouds

Years ago
I called them “Clouds of Glory”
Protected my son
Our sons
From The sun

Ominous clouds have followed
And followed
And protected
I hope they never tire
Of their job

But I do
Trust
That they will
Bow and retreat
Gracefully
Before the
Great Day.

2) Trees

Grow so thick
Together
No way around
What?
No path
Impossible.

Trust
That on either side
We have not veered
From the path
It’s simply the
Long-short way
Around
Obstacles
That were

Never
Really
There
To begin with.

3) Blush

As the almond blossoms deepen
From innocence to blush
I wonder
Can I still trust them
And the birds that call to me
And call the trees home.

Will they protect it
Or will they abandon their nests
When the blush turns blood red

4) Explorations of Planet Denial

"If you need to be there," she said, it's a good
place."
Trust me - it's a great place.
Planet Denial
I have prolonged the "day before" indefinitely.
for a long while
a 'good place'-
no I do not
remember
the details
of the day before,
but everything must have been fine.

Give me a day that is all Sabbath
it is That day
the day before,
that place,
when all is calm,
all is possible,
positive.
Health, strength, faith -
a day of wholeness, one-ness.
A place of Trust.

5) Broken Magic

broken trust
my voice
a broken glass
mirror shards
with muted frames
brittle
firey
broken magic

ON TRUST

Leaving Goshen quickly at night,
past the blood, still fresh, on the door post,
that spared her life,
the breath of the Angel of Death
lingering in the air, loud with the wailing
of each Egyptian mother
for her lifeless first born,

Miriam might have taken anything on her way out -
a comb, a shawl, an ankle bracelet
Some momento of Yocheved, her mother
working together fearlessly
at the birth stool delivering the boy babies
from Pharoah's harsh decree
that would have erased us entirely...

But she chose instead a timbrel, knowing
they were going to the land that was promised them
but not knowing how and when they would get there.
But she was sure she would strum the strings,
that the women would dance and sing
because she was, of course, a prophetess,
believing she would lead the throng
in a great song of victory
when visibly behind them,
the Pharoah's chariots and horses
and all his calvary were swallowed by the sea.

II

And now, in a dark time when it is hard not to despair
when our beautiful boys are falling day after day,
or returning to us to be put back together again.
It is hard not to despair
when the enemy has surfaced everywhere,
oblivious to our history, defending our massacre,
in such a perverse distortion of humanity,

and when the deafening silence of our friends
painfully reminds us we are a nation
destined to stand alone
to bear witness to God's intervening
presence in history.

And now in a dark time,
we are still forbidden to despair,
though we deserve our sorrow,
our mournful cries, each tear-stained pillow,
But as it is written, in the "Song of the Sea,"
this tribute to Miriam's trust we repeat every day
to affirm that God has not and cannot abandon us.

When that appointed time comes we will sing and
dance again,

with a multitude of horns and strings and tambourines,
 a great song of victory, echoing from the hills,
 our enemy on its knees conceding defeat.
 All our dearly beloved whom we laid to rest
 will rise again and dance with us.
 And the world will be in awe
 of God's mighty hand and outstretched arm,
 as it was then, and as it will be,

and we will see signs and wonders
 beyond our capacity to imagine,
 when that Divine promise will be kept,
 If not today, then surely tomorrow.

- Roberta Chester

FROM THE DAWN OF MY CHILDHOOD

From the dawn of my childhood she dwells
 In my heart, in my soul,
 My faith.
 Strengthens me
 And lights my path.
 Believes in the King
 Of Kings of Kings.
 In the bands of angels.
 With time I learned to believe in myself.
 My faith is my candle
 The crown of my songs
 I choose faith
 Without conditions
 I choose
 Life.

- Aviva Golan

[untitled]

I trust that which I see.
 Even though I wait patiently
 For the righteous to stand up and proclaim
 Their trust in Gd is strong again.

The flame that grows
 inside of us.
 The passionate cries
 that have called out to the world
 Must be like
 a sacrifice to Gd above.
 The one we trust
 The one we love.

We can only count on Him

To free
 The captives
 And calm
 this chaotic sea
 Of hatred and antisemitism.

To fix the deeply root chism of hate and angst
 Not against us the Jews
 But against Him.

I trust that Gd
 Is the answer
 To our cries
 To our fears.

He wants us to lean in
 on him, you see.
 Because He is
 the one and only
 who holds the only key
 To Moshiach and Eternity.

The truth, I trust, will set us free.
 May it be speedily in our days.
 I trust that which I see.

I see the goodness.
 And miracles.
 That Gd has given to me
 Every day
 Gd loves me.

- Annie Orenstein

THE TENTH OF TEVET

I trust (although it seems most men who dwell
 in hell believe there is no heaven), still
 I trust. I pray (though many of us will
 assert there is no heaven, only hell),
 I pray here, nonetheless. For who can tell
 us not to pray and not to trust until
 there's proof that Providence exists? We'd kill
 ourselves by our own hands, we'd kill too well.

For surely there is trust and surely there
 is prayer. How strange it is — although we're told
 that hell is fire, I find it's ice. How odd
 it is — that in the blizzard of despair,
 amidst the freezing winds and numbing cold
 of doubt, that I should meet You now, my God.

- Yakov Azriel

SHOULDERS

"... but as for me, I shall put my trust in You." (Psalm 55:24)

Tired from playing, my grandson rests his head
Upon my shoulders, as I hug the child
And pat his back; his disposition mild,
My grandson says nothing, but sleeps instead.
Amidst his sleep, he laughs; as if this bed
Of shoulders had transformed, or reconciled,
His ragged nightmares, ill-cut, torn and wild,
To well-sewn dreams that gleam with golden thread.

O Lord, do You agree to let me rest
My head upon Your steadfast shoulders, too?
Do You agree to hold me and embrace
Me as You stroke my hair and face, to nest
Me in the cradle of Your arms? O You
In whom all children trust, grant me this grace.

- Yakov Azriel

ROCK AND REDEEMER

In the shepherd's dream of the world, a pasture
of blushing sand that froths in ebb and flow.
Suspended megaliths like sentinels
ship their shadows across landscape in majesty
of infinite progression. Praise sky
that holds clouds like soft flour. Praise melody
of silence and sunlight. Praise faith
that defies gravity, our most ancient language.

- Rikki Santer

JOB'S WIFE

"While this one [this messenger] was yet speaking,
there came yet another one who said,...." (Job 1:16)

*"Our herds of oxen, donkeys, camels – gone,
While swords of fire have fallen from the sky
To slay our ewes and rams."* She paled, withdrawn
Within her soul's frail shell, but didn't cry.

For she and Job were taught to trust in God,
Who gives the righteous water from His well,
Who leads His flock with a shepherd's guiding rod,
Who shows the pious heaven, never hell.

But then she heard the words that couldn't be true:
Not one, not two, not three, not four, but all
Her children killed, all dead, the baby, too,
Who only now had learned, poor thing, to crawl.

And when she lost her faith in God, she cried
Bitter and long, as when her children died.

- Yakov Azriel

David Weiser
FOUR POEMS

92.
Time is. And I have reached
Old age with little wisdom
And less intelligence.

Time was. And I have mouthed
Too many empty phrases
And words devoid of sense.

But time will be, I trust,
When my fallen soul regains
Its innate innocence.

187.
The apples of ignorance
Blush pink at being picked
And claim they aren't ripe.

But grapes of knowledge bask
In the fading twilight
And flash a purple smile.

They thank the sun and earth
For sweetening their taste
That lingers on as wine.

264.
The figs are ripening,
And soon the fruit will fall
When the stem grows weak and thin.

A woman's pangs cry out,
And the time approaches
When new life will begin.

Though now we only notice
Omens of evil strife,
We trust that good will win.

267.
I wait for the messenger
Although I know the message;
It says we must believe.

And I have sworn to do so
Although my soul may shrivel
And drift like a falling leaf.

Yet I will contemplate
The source of eternal life
As long as I can breathe.

ODE TO FAITH

To the synagogue I attended in Delray Beach, Florida,
before making aliyah

You *Anshei Emunah*
People of Faith
Keeper of faith
Guardians of the Tablets
With tears
Fluid
Flowing
Flying
Gliding
Squinting
Whatever it takes
Not just to preserve
But to transfer to each offspring
To each bud
A gift of faith
As inheritance
A pleasure
A privilege
A joy
A celebration

- Esther M. Fein

LUCKY

Most of my friends
took as gospel how G-d

made 7 lucky, not just
in dividing the 7 Seas

from the 7 Continents,
forming 7 Natural Wonders

and resting on the 7th Day,
but also the 7 Luminaries,

plus the 7 Archangels
to combat the 7 Deadly Sins,

so imagine the joy for Jews,
especially my little sister,

raised to reverence
Passover and Hannukah,

when the Beatles twisted
and shouted, long hair

shaking in that craze
before race riots and 'Nam

tested our lifelong faith,
how they harmonized

vows to hold her hand,
and how she could trust

that all their loving
covered 8 days a week.

- Richard Krohn

CURRENCY

IN YOUTH WE LUST
IN TIME, ADJUST

IN BREAD WE CRUST,
IN CRUMBS, DISGUST

IN RACE WE BUSSED
IN RAGE, COMBUST

IN RAIN WE RUST
IN DROUGHT WE'RE DUST

IN SOD WE'RE THRUST
IN G-D WE TRUST

- Richard Krohn

BETRAYAL

"Circumcise the foreskin of your heart ..."
(Deuteronomy 10:16)

Did you betray your children's trust in you
And seal your heart with glue? Did you betray
Your wife, who cherishes the words you say,
And tell her lies that you insist are true?
Did you betray your father's garden, too,
Uprooting trees he grew? Did you dismay
Your mother when you laughed and threw away
Her love, betraying everyone you knew?

Did you defraud the crescent moon, deceive
The ocean's waters and deprive the air
Of countless clouds through crafty, cunning art?
Then turn to prayer, and as you pray, believe
That God, who circumcises hearts, can tear
Your foreskin's faithless treacheries apart.

- Yakov Azriel

SOME SPRING COME AUTUMN

*"No more can salt water yield fresh."
– James 3:12b (RSV)*

Enough of falling in, then falling out
With others ever ready to deceive.
So much for any benefit of doubt
For ones who offer little to believe.

I simply lack the zest, the zeal to try
To get along with those I cannot trust.
I wish them well, and that is not a lie.
From day to day I pray for them. I must.
– Jane Blanchard

BROKEN BOND

I accepted your word,
Your plea for forgiveness, for I
So wanted to trust you, even
Though you once betrayed me
Spreading your vicious lies and
Wounding all that I hold dear
Yet, I chose to honor the sacred
Bond that we once shared

But today I see that you have
Struck again, raging and
Destroying our peaceful ways,
Leaving our lives in tatters, as
Broken as the limbs of Mother Oak,
Tossed about during a violent storm

And now I have come to the painful
Realization, that while there may
Someday be forgiveness, this time
There will be no forgetting, no hoping
For this bond has been broken forever,
Smashed into pieces and scattered
To the ends of the weeping earth
And we can never go back

– Dawn McCormack

[untitled]

Not wide the chasm was
Though none could leap it,
Richly the harvest grew
With none to reap it,
Not false the promise was,
Though you did not keep it.

– Esther Cameron

TRUST/BETRAYAL

If you keep looking back when you walk
you may trip, fall in a ditch
or completely miss the land you longed for

If you run forward and don't look back
you may lose all hope of peace
for like many, you have been betrayed

You bear the initials carved in you like bark on a tree
but those you have betrayed, you do not see
for you are too far in a distant wood.
– Susan Oleferuk

MY POLAR STAR

i.m. Cathy Young (1953-2022)

Ursa Major
Great Bear
Big Dipper
The Plough

By any name,
the constellation's pointer stars
allowed voyagers to find Polaris
and steer any course,
certain of true north.

While the spinning Earth
caused other stars to appear
to wheel round a fixed point,
the North Star
was trustworthy, constant.

My sister:
reliable, constant,
a trusted guide
and unique light
through darkness.

– David Olsen

SAFE-KEEPING

Secrets, mostly whispered,
I shared believing she'd
guard them as important words.
As soon as we had a falling-out
my private feelings were aired
and gave her power. At thirteen,
respect for my friend was shattered.
With attempts to embarrass, influence,
she challenged: 'don't you trust me'?
My parents guided

me through this confusion.
 A certain characteristic
 was important, now, for one
 who'd become special.
 I was friendly but guarded.
 At twenty-two, beneath a chupah,
 my husband and I silently vowed
 that our union was going to
 permit us to feel safe when
 our quiet emotions heightened,
 also, personal whispers would not
 become conversation for others.
 Trust.

- Lois Geene Stone

WHO KNEW

that love
 could fill a well, so deep
 and fortified? What draws
 the heart to another so vividly
 and warmly? The years take
 their toll on a highway
 to a destined end where
 we are beginning again.
 The shock of white hairs
 on your once dark curly head,
 shatters memories of our youth.
 Pale, unwrinkled, you strengthen
 my heart with your inner calm.
 Your narrowing blue eyes
 look into mine all too clearly
 after all these years. Our comings
 and goings strengthen the arc
 of a rainbow which spread over us
 in the widespan of life.
 To see you lights me up,
 like the yellow roses you brought
 this morning. Decades of sharing, husband,
 with your once youthful bride
 blossoming to a wife
 fully in stride; our lives embark
 on that great divide, sparing
 no couple.

- Paula Goldman

AMULET

This will protect you
 though all betray you:
 the word keeps faith
 though it be broken.
 Though friends fall silent
 the unseen tokens
 will lead you home
 to the House of Song.

Esther Cameron

TRUST

Give me your trust, my love, and nothing more
 to calm twilight incontinence, and still
 the unremitting pulse that's named not love
 but bears a guileful self-effacing name.

Entrust yourself to me and I to you.
 Our whispered promises of shared devotion—
 whatever else they be—are steadfast stones,
 on which we edify ourselves and build our love.

O Sweet, my Sweet, let nothing them remove.
 Let no force claim our battlements improve
 besides those old time-honored stones of yore:
 give me your trust, my love, and nothing more.

- Ashby Neterer

WHAT I KNOW

To love is to know
 that your masks
 become a cage

And in there
 is a little bird
 all soft fluffy down
 in all shades of color
 and all its standing
 is on the branch
 of the wings of the spirit.

It flutters with longing
 to pick up seeds of love
 from the palm of my hand.

Even if your song scorches
 and your beak stabs me
 and even if I am hurt
 and pay you back in kind -
 we must remember
 that you have a birdling inside you

and so do I.

- Iona Tor
 translated by Esther Cameron

IS THERE A CHANCE FOR LOVE?

A Jew once wrote to me asking if I would write a
 book on the subject of the love of G-d, with stories from
 past times and from the present day. Indeed there is
 nothing more important and lofty than the
 commandment written in the "Shm'a": "And you shall

love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." And yet it is not easy for a human being to love G-d, blessed be He, with a perfect love, because of the sufferings one undergoes along with the good one receives. It seemed to me that the love of G-d was the province of completely righteous people, so at that moment I didn't know how to answer him.

The next day, as I was waiting at the light rail station near the Mahane Yehudah market, I heard a woman say, "Thank you so much for the money you brought me today! I really appreciate it."

I saw that the speaker was a simple woman, about fifty years old, who looked like one of those who observe the traditions without being strictly Orthodox. The wires of the earphones dangling from her head told me that she was talking on the phone with someone. "I love you so much, without you I wouldn't have a life."

Clearly she was talking to her husband. It was pleasant to hear that there are couples who love each other so much – like a breath from the garden of Eden in these turbulent days. Here, in this noisy, obtuse, alienated, crazy generation, was love, like a rose among thorns.

I walked away a little distance from the place, not wanting to eavesdrop on a conversation between lovers.

The simple woman came closer to me, as if it was the will of Heaven that I should continue to listen to her. "Never leave me!"

This was going up a degree; I became curious as to the secret of her domestic peace, how in this world of separation, so full of temptations, was it possible to preserve such an innocent love between man and wife?

While I was still thinking, I saw that the woman was being approached by a man her own age, an aging Jew, somewhat untidily dressed as befits an old Jerusalemite. She greeted him with a slight nod. I couldn't understand where the passionate love had gone. They looked like a husband and wife who were very much accustomed to each other, and nothing more.

Then to whom had she spoken those lofty words?! I wondered.

Then I reproached myself for letting myself think about the happiness of other people. Unless this leads to a short short story, I'll be left with only a sin and a transgression.

I moved off, but was surprised to see that they were following me, as if the heavens were forcing me to hear some story.

The husband stepped up to the orange kiosk of the state lottery, and his wife waited for him at a distance of twenty paces, close to where I was standing.

"I have no patience with him!" said the woman. "He throws away our money on lottery tickets!"

I was startled. Here I had hoped to find love in the world, and it turns out that she suffered because of him and was attached to someone else...

"Sovereign of the world, Father dear, could you perhaps let my husband win the lottery just once?"

Suddenly I realized that her beloved was the most abstract of all beings, Whose infinite greatness passes understanding, and Whose presence in the tiniest details of our world is impossible to grasp.

That is the true domestic peace, my heart exulted, to be constantly connected to the supreme partner of all couples, to love Him and to be connected to Him. Then there is a chance for love between man and woman, and all for all the other loves that scurry around on the paths of broken hearts.

As I searched on my cellphone for the number of the man who had asked me to write the book, I saw the Jerusalemite husband leaving the orange lottery kiosk with a light step, walking toward his wife who waited for him like a bride for her groom, under the magnificent canopy of heaven.

– Oded Mizrahi
translated by Esther Cameron

A PRAYER FOR SUSTAINING CONSTANCY

Grant us a holy grammar for the gullible,
tender warrants for the displaced, and for those who
only watch,
edification.

Give us talent to extract from the babble gladness,
give the protesters water and the anti-protesters, water.
Bless our impatience with the antics of senators.

Give us adepts who make truth out of misdirection,
endeavor
out of burnt forests, seeds out of sin.

Give us the pluck of ants and peacemakers.

– Florence Weinberger

LITTLE BLACK GIRL

for Jean Toomer and Martin Buber

She came from the wind
like a mirage
on a cold, blustery morn,

well-worn sandals
flopping gaily.

"I like your dog,"
she said.

"I like yours, too,"
taken by her smile,
her mien.

I'd rarely seen Black folk
in the hood,
our hood,
of Czechs, Poles,
Hungarians, and the like,
but there we were,
two souls
communing.

I don't recall the details,
just the grace
of someone braver than me
taking a risk,

thinking
it might be kids
who save the world.

- T. J. Masluk

THE GIFT OF TRUST

for the returned hostages

I am going to
The synagogue of the sea
where salt and water
will wash me
and cure me of self-loathing.

But afterward

I go home to you my friends
Where I find the gift of trust
You, whose pain is still here,
whose voice had almost been lost
in memory's silence,
give me the gift of trust,
a gift best bestowed
by those who suffer
and come home to be loved
by those who leave lies behind them
who are not deceived by the world
even as it despises them
laughs loudly at their troubles
or says nothing happened.

I am lifted upward
by your gift of trust
even as you raise yourself up
out of the dark nightmare of your sorrow.

- Estelle Gershoren Novak

TRUST

let us be true / To one another
Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

We do not have much trust in one another
So must rely on those whose calculations
We can predict, as we predict the weather,
The course of falling rocks, or the rotations
Of stars and planets. So with them we make
A world where we can find a den or perch
Secure and firm, save when, by some mistake,
Foundations shift and leave us in the lurch.
Yet times have been (we think we can recall)
When on the scattered shone a sacred vision
And pledging "All for one and one for all"
They rose to act, holding beyond division
To what was truest in both self and friend,
Trusting in *that*, whatever fate might send.

(saying it again, with thanks to Elhanan ben Avraham)

We tend to trust what seems most built to last:
That tower rising steadily, tier on tier,
Until even heaven's blue ceiling seems quite near,
Nay, is breached! The bonds of steel hold fast,
Likewise the calculations of the strong,
The systems that they build, the institutes,
The long, long arms that gather labor's fruits -
They have a niche for all who'll go along.

Whereas the troth of friends - alas, how frail!
A spiderweb in winds that shake the hills!
So friendship seems but one of life's small frills
Till Earth stirs in its sleep, and girders fail,
Till on some mountain shines a sudden light
And Comradeship is born, in Might's despite.

- Esther Cameron

VI. *Past and Future*

[untitled]

Things have been worse, and things will be better.
Things have been better, and yet will be worse.
Such is the arc, no, the sine wave of history.
Such is its blessing; such is its curse.

- Eric Chevlen

PAST AND FUTURE

As the statue's in the marble, the poem in the phrase,
Hidden in the present is a world that all could praise,
But hard it is to spy it, and harder still to know
If it will come to birth unscathed, its blessings to
bestow –

As the sculptor must not carve awry, the poet limp or
falter,
The fashioners of the future must not bow at the wrong
altar.

Our ancestors half missed the signs of the age they were
preparing.

In scorn of others and in self-praise our fathers were not
sparing.

They built strong fences all around their prim and proud
society;

The objects of their worship were degree and strict
propriety.

Our age's moral policies they couldn't have conceived;
Our much misused technology they wouldn't have
believed.

The objects of *our* worship may be licence more than
liberty,

And speed and power to such excess they threaten all
humanity,

But how the future will unfold is more than we can
know –

Just here a glimpse and there a glimpse our speculations
show.

Against our fears no prophecy provides a sovereign
shield:

The future is to our weak eyes only an unsown field.

– Henry Summerfield

THE COMING WAR

She says, "There's a brimming
in this world tonight. It speaks
from a thousand places – though
joining into
one fever."

Then she pushes a book aside
and opens draperies fronting
the east-windows
to see Shiloh coming
in the clouds.

The weather stares us down
never blinks, like we are tumblers
filled with smoke

in that gaze of a different god
than we've known.

Only present tense survives
all the other severed tenses
and it bristles in the remaking
always arriving
nowhere.

I ask, "What are we waiting for
both here at the not-quite
and there at the never point
of always returning forever
slowing to a moving stop
leaving in a hurry?"

Big flashes portend a loss of order
as we view just a patch of sky
in a much larger window
made of deep fields
and stars
all at the ready.

As we both brace for white-heat
to push us back on our heels
she holds my hand without touching
and says, "A sideways glance and
we're gone. I told you
this would happen."

– L. Ward Abel

LIVING SHIVA

To honor rites of mourning yet still survive,
because *if it isn't one thing, it's another,*

what takes aim at one house but spares
its neighbor, the endless cycles of Pharaoh,

and so this last pandemic for those
who chose to gather, mirrors as always

facing walls so none could dwell
on self, windows flung open to exhaust

the shared bad air, but no men shoulder-
to-shoulder in a cushion-less couch,

and now, even as we return to common plates
of raisins nested in noodle and cottage cheese,

to golden skin of whitefish peeled back
to boast its lode, this uptick in attacks

on temples, in viral desecrations and hate,
driving us to shut windows, draw curtains,

assign a time when all must arrive
so that we can lift the couch off the floor,

slide it across the door, wedge its spine
tight beneath the brassy knob.

– Richard Krohn

MANKIND AND THE DESTRUCTION OF REALITY

Our daily actions, in the vast majority of the cases and for the most part of us, seem to be purposeless, having no real target, no grounded meaning.

As in this inexorable motion, an always larger part of the human race tends to live in sweltering megalopolis all around the world. The life of any randomly chosen simple individual in one of those looks like it is less and less connected with the objective reality of Life, that is to say its Essence, and more and more to a virtual one.

But what is exactly this objective reality, this Essence, what does it stand for?

If you take for instance any animal, the objective reality for it is connected with its five senses, these have a sole purpose, its own survival, which includes of course procreation. Sometimes, it can be observed in wildlife completely gratuitous acts, like an elephant trying to save a rhinoceros stuck in a pond from a group of starving lions, or a monkey trying to get a small bird out of some water where it had unfortunately fallen. We will never really know, I guess, the real motivations of those clever mammals whenever they try to help a specimen of another kind than themselves, and thus acting in a gesture of total generosity regardless of their own welfare. And maybe it's better not to understand all of it in order to keep the sheer beauty of these actions intact.

But ourselves, we are for the majority condemned to stay trapped in small apartments made of concrete and glass within huge cities. Almost all the spectrum of our behavior, most of our actions, tend just to give us the comfortable notion of a well organized routine.

What impact does this superficiality might have on us? This a few generations after we all have stopped cultivating the earth for food or simply go to fetch water every morning in order to survive on a daily basis.

Many would argue that this is actually the very goal of civilization, to free all human beings from the original bonds of mere survival, and enable them to enjoy this new freedom throughout their lives. Then, as years go by, to enable them to gather more knowledge to better understand the world, or to play various games, and by the same occasion gather all sorts of new goods.

But I sometimes get the feeling that all this freedom is turning more and more into a labyrinth for many of us here.

Our actions tend to just mimic the ones of our surrounding environment according to the country where we live. We go on vacations when everyone else does, mostly in the summer, some amateurly paint during their weekends, thinking that they will maybe be famous, like Van Gogh, but only after their deaths. Ignorant that these are actually paintings that nobody will ever see out of their limited family circle. In the same way, some play tennis in their free time, keeping in mind the performance of the great champions whom all can admire on cable television, or on various other screens.

We each day recreate over and over an egoistic world, made out of our icons, of illusionary models, while eating junk food made by robots in factories, or buying disposable clothes that children or adult slaves have woven, in order just not to starve to death, on the other side of the planet.

A Russian poetess told me, not such a long time ago, while walking in the center of Moscow and watching the crowd this: "If these people could only see themselves as they really are for one minute they would totally fall apart."

And why could it be? Because the sole purpose of all our empty tasks, our superfluous leisures, have in common one single goal, and that is to put the maximum possible distance between us and this hole in the ground, already waiting for us in some not so far away graveyard. The human race, after extracting itself out of Nature, is lying more bare and vulnerable than at any given time in its past history. Being utterly lost, the destruction of the planet is actually the logical consequence of this simple fact, this awful masquerade. That is why logically it can and will not be avoided, however hard we try to prevent it. This, not because we are getting weaker or more ignorant than before, but because it is the only way left for humanity to continue its erratic motion inside the Universe, now that only symbols are left around it like walls, themselves cut off from any grounded reality.

– Ivan de Monbrison

A RESPONSE

Dear Ivan de Monbrison,

I've got
Some column-space to fill here, so I thought
(Mindy suggested it) that I'd reply
From a Jewish point of view. Although not sure
That I'm that one to do this, I will try.
First off: the aim of life, by us, is not
Simply postponement of the well-known hole
Nor survival of one's genes (though that's important),
Rather building, creating, what may last
Beyond the individual life, borne on
By one's successors in an agelong relay,

Till the world reaches some perfected state
 In which war and oppression have been conquered
 And people live in happiness and peace,
 Rejoicing in the beauty of creation
 And thankful to the Maker in Whose image
 Our kind was made as makers in our turn.
 Whoever has that aim and end in view
 Does not live only in some present city
 But in this project's long continuation,
 However, in the present, may appear
 The chance of its eventual fulfillment.

Doubtless our making has become unbalanced
 With the proliferation of devices
 And the neglect of "the humanities" –
 I.e. the understanding of that being
 Which all that making was supposed to serve –
 Though in our Torah world there still persists
 Insistence on the study of the Word.

Another thing you mentioned was "routine."
 Though not a word of approbation, still
 There's something to be said for it, as long
 As the routine can be infused with meaning –
 As with the Sabbath and the festivals
 Which come back at predicted intervals
 Like rhyme.

I guess you mourn the bond with nature –
 So (speaking as a poet now) do I.
 So much of us was bound up with those kindred
 Shapes of living things, or of our makings
 Which between generations hardly changed;
 From them we drew our imagery of feeling.
 And now the stars are hidden by our glare,
 Some inner compass, maybe, is disabled
 Which may be part of why things have gone crazy.
 The poet's toolbox of ancestral names
 Is antiquated now, and gets less purchase
 On a reality where things and names
 Shift and dissolve like flashes on a screen.
 But as the Talmud says, "you are not required
 To complete the work, but neither are you free
 To give it up." If today the poet's job
 Is harder, this should summon us to think
 More deeply on the nature of our calling
 In hope of finding out some strategy
 By which we could again fulfill our mission
 Of drawing things back to the human center.²
 Oh yes, and let me not forget to mention
 That Judaism lays great stress upon
 Connections between humans. If we must
 Live packed in cities, there could be immense
 Joy in that if we could learn to see
 And value every human soul.

² My epic poem *The Consciousness of Earth*
 Discusses this at length; it's on our homepage...

We say
 That all is done for good – that is, for the good
 Which we can make of it, despite, or at
 The prompting of, the pain. With all best wishes,
 Yours faithfully and hopefully,

Esther Cameron

IF PAST WERE PROLOGUE

In the ancient Temple in Jerusalem,
 if, prior to praise, petitions, and prayer, dark spirits
 had first to be dealt with, a special incense was burned.

Cinnamon bark, cassia, saffron and salt, musk, and
 frankincense were blended with other spices, making
 eleven,

then galbanum was added, a rank resin
 catalyst, but the mix could banish the fetid smell

of burning meat, ashes left on the sacrificial altar,
 scent of iniquity that sometimes seeped in on the night air.

If, in the tempest of present time, we were to gather
 eleven nations intending to live out their lives in
 tranquility

if, out of the fog of animosity, we contrived an elixir
 mixing Sanskrit's 267 words of love, or even the
 Eskimo's 32,

with a sliver or more of galbanum, which can be found
 growing
 profusely on the northern slopes of mountains in Iran,

reduced the mixture until we could dissolve it
 in a premium wine or well-chilled vodka, producing a
 solution

not too bitter to swallow...

– Florence Weinberger

THIRST

Rain and dew
 have trickled down to the depths
 Spring and well are ready

A thirsty world awaits and asks
 Where is
 the bucket
 to draw the water up?

– Iona Tor
 translated by Esther Cameron

IN MEMORIAM: JUDIH WEINSTEIN

Judih Weinstein, poet and entrepreneur, lived with her husband Gad Haggai on Kibbutz Nir Oz, on the Gaza perimeter. The couple were dual citizens of Israel and the US. They had four children and seven grandchildren. According to the Times of Israel, "she was an English teacher who worked with children with special needs, and also used meditation and mindfulness techniques to treat children suffering from anxiety caused by years of rocket fire that have plagued residents of the Gaza border area." According to the kibbutz' statement about her, Judih "loved to create and was dedicated to working for peace and friendship."

On October 7, 2023, Judih and Gad were on their morning walk when the attack began. Judih made a 40-second video clip of missiles streaking across the sky, and shared it in a group chat that morning. Nothing more was heard from Judih or her husband. Both were murdered that day when Hamas invaded Nir Oz, and their bodies were taken to Gaza.

With permission of the family, we reproduce here a few of her poems. May her memory, and the memory of the others murdered on October 7, be blessed. And may the vitality that bursts from her poems prevail over the messengers of death.

DO YOU LOVE

do you love
do
you give love in ample plentitude?
do you love to love
the word
the enchantment
the magus magic montage of magnamitude attitude
love
do you love out loud when you look at life
is love a flying Oh zone that auras over all?

do you love
this love
of glorious boisterous lilt etude?

Stream poem mind - judih September 2020

once upon a time
i belonged
i clicked in
my friends were poets
we spoke poetry
we jammed we thrived
one fed the other
my friends were painters
we spoke images
we painted our minds
collective creation
my friends were funny
we giggled at absurdities
in the middle of life
vibrations of laughter
once upon a time
real life friends
sitting side by side
strolling shade-strewn paths
we offered secrets
and bonded over pledges
this nostalgic sigh
as screens populate my day
video chatting as if
a leap through the distance
from mind to mind
is perfectly fine

FLAMING SANDSTORM

a flaming sandstorm
screams maelstroms in my mind
fire-eyed phoenix walls
rebirthing through infinity's scales

a wild-eyed artist
overturns paint cans from mountaintops
a sunset with no conception of time

Begone the beige of blandness
Forge pigments where no color's found
Turn it on! Blast it wider! Sing the sky olive!

Laila Sara Mazer, *Untitled*, Watercolor, 2012

NOW, MY SOUL

they tightened the rope around our neck
 they turned our faces black like the rim of a pot
 They changed our joy into grief

They brought a flood of blood on the earth!
 They made us loathe the image of man

But now, after the flood
 Come, my soul, let us take care of you
 Put one part of you on guard
 Be a soldier in the bitter battle

But with the other parts take up your harp
 Be David -- not Saul (the king of suffering)

Don't give everything to mourning.

Sabina Messeg
 translated by Esther Cameron

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