This edition is sponsored by Shahpor Mahgerefteh in memory of his parents, Bibi and Bar-Yochai.
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Contributors
“Only through the ancient tradition of storytelling can we enter the magical minds of one another.”

— Sivan P. L.
James Crews

Biblia Sacra

I think of those illiterate scribes
copying the Latin of the Bible
onto sheets of vellum the color
of autumn sun or clover honey
or bread just pulled from the oven.
They could not understand
what they wrote, but trusted
that others would cherish the pages,
would pray over their ink-marks
in the small hours of the morning,
a finger tracing the holy words
pressed into skin they blessed
over and over with the tip of a pen.
Jeff Schwartz

Hold on Tight!
Vayishlach

“Let me go for day is breaking.”
“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”
— Genesis 32:26

After college I played chess through the mail
with my father. It was like painfully

slow wrestling. He moved. I moved. Force
against force, muscle against muscle. The son asserting

himself against the father. When Jacob wrestled
the angel, he might as well have been playing chess.

It wasn’t just a physical battle but an eternal
contest of wills, a back & forth struggle

with faith. I tried to grasp the significance
but it hardly mattered. With erratic postal service,

there would be no clear end point, even after twisting my hip. Each
premeditated “Check,” each kissed stamp, each reciprocal touch

brought us closer to revelation. On top of the fridge
humming in my studio apartment, I stacked his postcards

scribbled in code. P-QR3. With so much at stake,
you’d think he’d have more to say.
The Old Man & the Maid

87 years ago when he was 8
he took $2 from his mother to pay

the boy whose glasses he busted
in a fight. His mother accused

the maid of lying, fired her,
& made sure she couldn’t get another

job. Today he asks forgiveness from the maid
whose life, he fears, he may

have ruined. When Joseph’s brothers
lied to their father that a beast had devoured

his favorite son, Jacob mourned inconsolably
never knowing that they had sold

Joseph into slavery, lost track of him
& found, to their shock, he was managing the famine

in Egypt. When he summoned them, Joseph
refrained at first from revealing who

he was. He demanded they bring
Benjamin to him at the risk of breaking

their father’s heart. Concealed behind a door,
Joseph wept. And later when all 11 brothers

returned, he wept openly in their arms.
This is not to say the maid prospered

despite the old man’s crime or that she
would never forgive him. Every year he

wonders what it would be like to embrace
the maid, to feel weightless, erased.

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Joshua Kiernan

The Motion of Prayer

The motion of prayer
words moving across a page
Like tumble weed.
The aroma of books.

The Yeshiva boys
Huddle over the ancient book
Praying and swaying
These metronome Jews
Are what I imagine
my ancestors to be
Cowering in their shtetls.

I am an Israeli soldier
My unit huddles over battle plans.
The aroma of gunpowder
The gun is our bible.
I will pray with it.
Valerie Bacharach

Cello, 1908

for my great-grandfather

He stands in clothes
the color of poverty, sheened
from too much wear.
His cello’s quiet weight pulls
his arm & hand,
strings untuned, bow without rosin.

Czernowitz to Hamburg to New York to Utah.
Weeks in the belly of a ship, body
against body, the reek
of urine & vomit sinking into skin.
Trains across the vast unknown
to his cousin in Salt Lake City.
Home to Mormons & marshland & mudflats.

Everything here is wrong,
this lake as flat as English words.
He misses his wife’s voice,
hers Yiddish kvetching, her mishigos.
His tongue bereft of borscht, of kugel
with its noodles & raisins, its spice
of cinnamon.
His hands ache from the days’ drudgery,
boxes & luggage carted up & down stairs,
in & out of hotel rooms.

He is tired, this man from Czernowitz.
Late night, when constellations map
the heavens, he sits with his cello,
draws bow across strings, songs
of home, psalms of longing,
notes roam free toward unfamiliar skies.
Shabbat Guest

Once, she had chased away the night,
Kept it at bay with the mysterious power of electricity;
Kept her children at home with the spider’s web
Of a mother’s love that cares and ensnares.

The darkness was forbidden to intrude
By the power of god-like incandescence,
But now there are only wintry fireworks
That brightly blossom, then quickly fade,

Until she closes her eyes, and drifts into
Flotsam dreams, brief oblivions,
That ripple like the cold-hearted breeze
Which nags and tears at parchment leaves.

Outside, the rain, so sacred elsewhere
Where it is rare, outstays its first welcome
Strangles the streets, lingers too long, as she did last night,
When she talked of the cataract of twilight, the half-light,

How all is downhill and degraded, time pushing her,
And with her us, bullied by a clock down a steep muddy slope.
She is a pessimist again, clutching at the comfort of sadness,
Now that sixty years have nearly passed.
Robert Findysz

An Ode to an Old Pine Table

It's all battered-up now,
dented, scratched, scarred and stained,
discolored into a dark orange and it wobbles:
witness to a lifetime of family activities -- homework
and school projects, lesson plans, puzzles, board and card games,
countless meals and snacks full of noisy talk, boisterous laughter and joy of life.
The focus of our family's celebration of birthdays, holidays or just another
Shabbat dinner, it came in a box and was meant to be put together
without much bother; but, a neighbor had to be enlisted to help
assemble, stain and then stain it again -- to bring out its
grainy lines and occasional knots, to better
withstand the constant spills and banging
of children's plates and silverware.

We are moving soon,
into a new, just-built home.
But the old pine table is coming with us;
I cannot bear to part with it, yet -- even if its place
at the heart of our home is being taken over by a bigger,
sturdier, carpenter-made piece of solid oak furniture.
This old table will stay with the family, reigning
outside on the wooden deck, continuing to play
a role in the lives of yet another generation:

like a dowager empress or queen mother, it will answer our family's needs.
Rena Lopata

Days of Atonement

My mother wept
each *Day of Atonement,*
a knotted handkerchief
in darkened rooms
bolted against music.

An inheritance of photographs
without sound intrude and bind.

I struggle to shape my prayer
give voice to *Sh’m*’a,
accept that generations of faith
could not stop the slaughter.

Coiled time
inside a ram’s horn.
A ram’s sacrifice holds
unspoken deeds.

Can such violent silence
lie fallow?

Generations of *Kol Nidrei*
in a child’s warm hand.
Last unbroken blast of the *Shofar*
spiralling breath of redemption.
Can it lift me above earth,
can music be my chariot?

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Rena Lopata

In Remembrance

after Rabindranath Tagore

Your spirit sings in my garden.
Your voice fills every nook.
Even the cooling soil beckons to autumn seedlings,
‘Do not fear the winter wind.
I am your mother now.’

I stand among yellowing leaves,
spent flowers slip gently into autumn sleep,
drop into damp soil.
Winter will enfold them.
I fear I have not loved enough.
They were such heady blooms,
radiance taken for granted.

The ancient oak extends his roughened branches,
reaches into my open window
thrusts inside.
He awakens me, I listen.
A chorus of voices;
leaves sing in harmony with twigs and branches,
his roots a bass voice:
‘Weep for your family buried in forest pits.’

I am a pebble on your path
yet your spirit rises in me.
I will say Kaddish for them.
I will remember them.
Gabriel said,
*It will be heavy.*
I can only assume he meant pain.
The feeling of missing someone forever,
and not his frozen image held in
the feminized stone angel holding out her hands
above mother’s grave.
I cannot unfocus on the wings.
The shadowed underside
casting shade on flowers I carefully planted
that need sun. And
I don’t know if she is landing
or leaving to heaven empty-handed.
Steven Sher

**Our Daughter Giving Birth For The First Time**

She tries to press the sharpest twitches
back into her side. One foot attacks the table leg
with measured kicks. The goblet
she's been squeezing hasn’t left her hand
since the meal began. She rips a piece
from the soft *challah*. A strong contraction
follows. She stands and tells her *Shabbes* guests
to sit and eat—she’ll be back shortly.

Once she lays her head upon the pillow,
closing her eyes, she dreams.
A bright-eyed boy is staring back.
Hearing the guests still at the table,
she sings softly along as she has sung
through these nine months and he’s responded
with his repertoire of twists and rolls —
music, the invisible umbilical.

She feels a foot against her rib.
Contractions quicken. Calling out,
*He’s ready*. An hour later, easy labor,
worlds align: this namesake, on the *yahrzeit*
of his great grandfather, born.
When someone welcomes guests
in a time of distress, G-d
extends a greater kindness.
Karen Warinsky

**Breaking the Firmament**

I am not the one who wants to send more junk into outer space,  
a fake moon that would be brighter than the original,  
or set up more 5-G towers to microwave messages  
and who knows what else  
to ourselves,  
or play music on the H-A-A-R-P,  
sending vibrations around the country,  
messing with nature.
I am not the one dropping chemicals from planes  
dripping with the prestige of Harvard Scientists,  
nor an engineer from CERN who wants  
to collide those atoms and mash and smash  
those protons into other protons, trying to outdo Shiva.

I do not want to break the Firmament,  
I only long to lie under it on a warm summer night,  
proximal to a bottle of good wine  
as you, my finally found love,  
tangle your leg with mine.
Karen Warinsky

**Thoreau’s Window**

Henry David knew
beauty could be found
through a dirty window in a prison cell.
He lay all that long July night,
the window open
inside the grate of the whitewashed room
listening
and he sensed his place as never before,
heard the voices of his neighbors and the villagers at the inn,
felt the heartbeat of his town,
put his hands on the thick stone walls
and anticipated the morning.

We must tame our pain first
to get back to our core
when life boomerangs us out
to unintended places
and once we do
it is possible
to see beauty through a dirty window
and greet another morning.
Jacqueline Jules

Building a Tabernacle

“And let them make Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them.”

— Exodus 25:8

Human hands, not divine,
gathered acacia wood
and precious metal.

The Jews were generous,
offering their own linen
and gold, stones and silver.

No one questioned why
the tabernacle did not
appear as a gift like manna.

No one expected the work
to be completed for them.

Something to remember
as I struggle to build
a space inside my heart
where holiness can dwell.
Jacqueline Jules

**Jonah and Noah**

In the last hours of Yom Kippur, 
as I sit with a rumbling stomach, 
reflecting on regrets, I read 
the story of Jonah, that prophet 
who ran away when asked 
to save a city, who refused 
Divine request.

How does he compare? 
To the story Jews read 
a few weeks later 
about Noah, a man who 
never questioned God, who 
simply picked up a hammer 
to do as he was told.

Two men from the Bible 
with rhyming names.

One said, “yes.”
The other, “no.”

Jonah didn’t want to try. 
Noah didn’t see a choice.

Who will I be 
as this stormy year unfolds?

The one who sits in the belly of a whale, 
clutching anger, frustration, and fear?

Or the one who finds wood and builds a ship 
to survive the oncoming flood?
Gloria g. Murray

Grandma

was it because
I had your hazel eyes
and looked more like you
that I loved you the most

was it because
you let me wear
your big, feathery hats
dancing around in
your patent, leather pumps
in front of the mahogany mirror
grandpa carved for you?

was it because
you let me sit by your side
while you kneaded the dough
for the Sabbath bread
rolled matzo balls for the chicken soup

was it because
you put lipstick on my mouth
letting me blot it into one of your
perfumed handkerchiefs
as I smiled through my tinsel bands
or was it because
you were the rebel
who started to smoke at sixty
wear men’s pants in winter
eat pizza when no one
was watching

even when grandpa
would scream in Yiddish—
how could a Jewish wife
commit such a schandah!

while all the ladies
in the senior housing
were always proper
in their pleated dresses
Doris Day hats
and wrinkled opaque stockings?
Gloria g. Murray

The Kosher Chicken Market

my mother’s chapped hand curled tightly over mine as we
watched the large hairy paw of the butcher in his stained apron, smacking the shiny steel across the chicken’s
scrawny neck, then afterwards rubbed in the salt to purify the bony wound

at five, I stood, speechless, under her firm grip, feeling beneath the sudden snap of that blade, my blood mixing with that bird’s on the sawdust floor--still squirming, as if trying to hold fast that last insufferable moment of life
Michael E. Stone

**Fresh Air**

*with apologies*

inside the Ark
how fetid it had been!
no air conditioning
people animals birds
breathing, eating, farting.

there were snakes and other
reptiles I suppose, but no fish,
for fish swam in the Flood
in shoals, a passing panoply,
leviathan’s honour guard.

amphibians and flying foxes,
wombats and widgety grubs,

platypuses, beavers and moles
in the ark, -- where did they burrow?
and the elephants’ skin
already so sensitive,
where did they wallow?

no wonder the dove and the raven,
flew fast from the window,
stretched their wings,
breathed clean air,
and returned to rest at night.

until a new earth appeared.

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And the daughter who was herself beyond two score and ten
saw that the woman’s fingers had begun to twist like branches
of an ageless tree
and she asked this of the woman
and the woman said
yes
and the woman took up
the tool of her ancestors
and set to work,
made
thousands
of perfect stitches
each nestled snugly to the next
like lovers spooned in exquisite fit.
On the virgin white cloth
that the woman cursed for its slipperiness
the stitches multiplied
in mitotic unfolding
as if the silken threads
were spun from the very tips
of her fingers.

The story rose off the cloth,
a sculpted bas relief
that could be read by touch as much as by sight
spun for the younger one
as unique as a fingertip’s whorl
and mythic as the song sung on reedy shores
when being came into being:
begotten and begetter
beloved and lover
seeker on her way from Eden to Canaan
carried on the tides of history, the shoulders of her people
her own feet wet from crossings made.

And the older woman gave the garment
to the younger
a swaddling cloth of pictographs
that wrapped the girl season upon season
in the gift of her own life.
Scherzo

Anna Burstein Bieler, Pianist, 1908-2003

1. Ernst (1926)

When I first came to Leipzig, just eighteen, he shared a house I played at for my weekly meal. He had a sweet violin when we danced easily through Mozart chamber parts.

His scar from service at the Front would glisten as he looked at me.

First love’s a rush where everything contracts to hands and eyes. I’m still amazed I locked my door. In four years I convinced myself that I was over him.

2. The Conservatory (1926-1929)

They came from Russia, Queensland, South America -- the prodigies and floods of acolytes. My master class was something terrible in all respects: to play a new piece every week, with all that competition looking on.

The first three months I overworked my right. The next three months that arm was in a sling. I practiced with my left, so awkwardly. But learned it’s the foundation for the rest.
3. Johanna-Park (1935)

With my first-born we lived on König-Johann-Strasse. Our neighbors had a son that age. Lotte was full of life. Her organ-playing brother left for Paris by this time. We’d push our strollers to the Park and let the kinder romp.

I walked that Park four decades on and still could hear her voice.


She was a wild girl, that one. To her no normal rules applied. They had a marriage open as her creed. I ask no questions or does he, she said. Why cast a stone that hits you in the mouth?

She wrestled me to play those two-piano concerts for the Culture Bund. I didn’t want my name so high on Aryan lists. You’d disrespect Johannes Brahms from fear? she hissed that’s what they want. Reviewers said I stole the show.

Through exiles and returns and all the detours of survival by design and guile and all the losses of the War and post-War years we’re still each other’s witnesses, still friends.
Hadassah Schneider

**Where Are You From?**

I can tell you
of the vineyards in northern France
and the teacher who tended to them.
I can tell you
of the *shul* in Prague and the monster in its attic.
I can tell you
the story of the ninth day of *Pesach*
and the way an old rabbi’s kindness saved an entire town.
I can tell you
of the ancient cemetery in Tzfat where, last summer,
I found the grave of my great-great-great-great-great-great grandmother.
I can tell you
about the only Jewish family in Bogata, Colombia,
and the choice to start a family in a DP camp in Germany in 1945.
I can tell you
how I’ve traced my family tree
and found the names of ancient kings
inscribed on its roots,
discovered the freedom-fighters and scholars
who have watered the seeds.
I can tell you
of all the languages that live on my tongue
and the way my limbs fit together
like poorly made puzzle pieces,
the way my body remembers
all the places my family has fled from.
I can weave tales
of prophets, and unworthy princes,
giants, and dreams of grandeur.
Let me tell you of the magic
that has settled deep in my bones
and the way my back bends
beneath words like destiny and history.
Let me tell you about heritage.
About the oceans that we’ve crossed
and what was lost along the way.
How we light candles on anniversaries
and don’t trust anyone who tells us that we’re safe now.
You might want a simple answer,
but this is not a simple story,
Let me tell you
about the days, and weeks, and months
I’ve spent compiling lists
of names, and birthdays,
and places that no longer exist.
Just so I could answer this question.
A Palm Tree

A palm tree
stands
on its tiptoes
before
St. Peters' church
in Jaffa
because
the stone building
conceals the sunlight
just like the way religion
blocks the beauty
of God.
Jennie Mintz

Anne Frank’s Diary

When the Gestapo stormed in,
they left it lying on the attic floor,
the lined pages blown open,
to the day she confesses

she wants to be an ingenue,
or meet American movie stars.

Her father’s favorite, Margot’s
rival, she drew attention to
herself, but never forgot

her sense of good and evil,
even as she must’ve stood
frozen, rock-like
when the interrogation began,
in a tumbled down building

on the Euterpestraat.

That is the secret within the secret,
the book that wouldn’t go up
in flames. Even now, her voice
breaks free over the massive graves,
and ashes, her winged words
that can still be heard.
Jennie Mintz

The Washroom

On a tour of Auschwitz,
I saw something I did not expect.

On the washroom walls in block 7
the prisoners left paintings.

One depicted two naked children,
the one pouring water from a basin
over the other’s thin skin.

Another, two blue kittens with their
tongues out.

Perhaps the cats reminded a girl
of all she left behind,
while she rubbed her blue smudged hands
under a trickle of rusty water,

before lining up at roll call,
or sent to the showers to rinse
them clean.
Jennie Mintz

**Babi Yar**

—after D.M. Thomas’s *White Hotel*

Perhaps, the name of the tree
that grew wild there
was birch, its white-trunk with
thin feather-veined leaves
growing in Russia and Ukraine.

*Babi Yar* was named for a widow
who sold land to a monastery
that turned it into graves.

As a schoolgirl, I read
that the Nazis planted birch trees
to conceal the site of the killing fields.
Birkenau was named after one.

I can imagine how the rows of people
huddle together,
before the machine guns go off—
children who won’t stop fidgeting.

Even today, years after the war,
the leaves groom themselves
in the wind like a newly married woman
combing her hair.

Her gold ring blinks in the dark.
Janet Ruth Heller

Elegy for Freda (October, 1998)

You died during Succot
when the leaves turned gold
and scarlet and the sun shone
like an etrog.

I miss your beautiful face,
your petite frame,
your recipes for cookies and cakes,
your voice calm as a sage's.

You gave us a china vase
for our wedding sixteen years ago.
A blue bird perches on a vine
full of pink roses.

You never complained
despite the cancer and pain.
I never heard you scold
or speak an angry word.

Where has all your beauty gone?
I see it in the autumn leaves
and the Indian summer sun
and the blue bird on the vase
flying free of earth's constraints.
What Is This Land?

The red veins of earth striating a harsh land,
Burnished by blazing sun and heat,
Stretching across the vast silence of the Judean desert
Transcend the dirt.
They harbor the blood of generations spilled,
The blood of a people coursing to
Rebuild a land out of desolation and ashes.

The loan Acacia trees standing forlorn and defiant,
Amid a wasteland of dry dust are Your People’s soul,
Unbowed and firm against an errant world that rejects it,
Standing, eternally resistant, a nation that dwells apart.

Oases of flowers and date trees that fill once barren steppes
Are signatures of the Prophet’s words
Racing through hill and vale to return your land
And Your People.
Michel Steven Krug

Tzitzit

Slide open and close
The day, the ark, a family
Reinvigorating legacy with contextual
Meaning, the Torah, a weekly
Gathering linking currency
To a creative allegory.
Somewhere unanticipated by these parashah
Are post-modern screens where there’s a
Cache of Hate, metamorphic shells filled

With anti-humane gunpowder sucked
In like cocaine giving blinded courage
To carry sacred guns to shoot tefillin
Clad worshipers reciting ritual prayer
Where community gathers and it’s
Said the synagogue doors are open to
All mothers and fathers and children of faith
Who pray for salvation, returning shells

To beaches, reaching for cultural parallels.
She attended Passover services to say Kaddish
For her mother, never imaging that an
Instinctive lunge would transform her
Daughter, husband and sisters into mourners
Who chant in awe, grief, disbelief, anger, linking
The generations like tzitzit blown in the
Wind by insidious rage and cowardly leaders
As if the bread of affliction must be eaten by all.

2019 Mizmor Anthology
Adina Edelman

Modesty

Summer is a trial
of searing sun settling on dripping skin
of sweating eyes shifting to avoid
the columns of flesh draped
in scraps of carefree cloth.

I walk upon blistering concrete,
hear the flap of my skirt
against stubborn legs
that silently scream out defiance
to their looks of shock and pity.

I wonder:
Is the rough clam shell,
that ocean ornament,
to be more greatly celebrated,
more honored and valued,
than its pure pearl perched within?

To see is to recognize
what is beyond
not
what is right in front of you.
The Situation

Southbound 90
reveals and passes both
types of towns in
the disputed territories,
their turnoffs
differently lettered and
littered.

Knowing we’ll be profiled
through to Isaiah’s
Valley of Vision,
our bare-headed Jewish tour van driver,
who’d savor the same smooth hummus
in Jericho before eyes closed
the tent of welcome, says “you usually see it
ahead of time”
as we’re suddenly enveloped
by finer bits
of Judean sand.

Vision lost,
we can only hard
brake, hope
yellow plates and white plates
follow suit,
accounting for
now-veiled bend,
against the grain.
Brad Jacobson

Shabbat Shalom

Slouched, ash smudged cheeks, patched black pants and coat, he lugs three white sacks uphill. Perfect photo, I imagine, but blurt out, “Can I help?” He pauses, then grins and gazes up at the early morning sky, as if he’s looking at Hashem. He greets me, “Shabbat Shalom,” and keeps walking.
Brad Jacobson

**Yom Kippur**

Before
sunset
I snack
on dates,
almonds,
and potato
bourkas.

A little boy
with paos
scoots
by me
on his tricycle
in the middle
of the road.

near the
synagogue
people,
not cars,
are parked.
No

one puts
shekels
into
parking meters.
On King George Street
people sit
in a circle
singing.
Isaac
  glances
  at the
  rear view
  mirror.
  He prays
  and meditates.

This
  started
  before the
  earth was born.
Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach

Testimony Overheard

There is no time to mourn, she said, if you want to keep on living. And I believe her newborn daughter never left her arms the three days that she lived outside her mother's body.

If you lick my heart, his voice hovered over a bruised face, it will poison you. And I believe his blood is made of ashes. I dare not to get too close.

I'm tired, my husband says, of my body failing me. And I hold him like a warm basket of bread until the muscles slacken, breath rustling skin on skin, listening, trying hard to believe him.
Danielle Resh

**Jerusalem Syndrome**

His touch was
a memory—
sun-hot hand pressed
against my back
on desert days
echoing enigmas
across endless sands

His eyes were the tang
of my great-grandmother’s coconut macaroons
passed between generations
of sticky hands

His curls were
the locks of Samson,
dirt dark with the earth
of man after man,

His skin was the gold
of Jerusalem stone simmering,
shimmering in the *Shabbos* light—
the whisper of lives gone,
present, yet to be

His feet were
prophecy,
every step
weaving disparate histories—

I only prayed
that G-d
carry them
to me.
Danielle Resh

**Bedeken**

Sitting alone
in a haze of white
like waking from a dream,
I seek but do not find.
The silence of doubt,
the freezing of time—

A single breath,
an inhale of fear,
one last one
to be mine.

And then there is
the stomping
of armies, soldiers
of the Almighty,
clad in black,
marching down
to me

And you emerge from
amongst them,
appear
before my eyes,
shining
like the burning bush
Moses chose
to see

You lift up
my veil
to relief:
I’m not Rachel, not Leah
not Sarah not Hannah
not Ruth not Miriam
(though I breathe the air that
they breathed)

I’m me

And what’s more:
I’m not just mine
anymore—

I’m yours.
Danielle Resh

21 Year-Old Pregnant Woman Critically Injured
West Bank, 12.9.18

And her face
is too much
like mine—

eyes of wells
expecting fill
clear and sparkling

locks wound
like a spring
imbibing energy
in preparation
to burst forth

a smile so sweet
the first droplet
of water on your tongue
after a long, long drought

she shines

she bleeds

a severed vine

i try to pray for her;
i can’t—

her face
is too much
like mine.
bleed! burn!
the devil’s deeds
decreed
an Anti-Christ
& hoards of his
man-killing sheep
nonstop
murder millions
sinew & flesh
rot
flesh & bone
burn to ash
indeed
the blind man sees all
blood curdling!
screams! bleats!
indeed
the shepherd hears it all
while
across the sea
farther than
the eye would see
mankind sleeps
a gracious slumber
round the clock
like the good shepherd
& his ardent flock
as sinew & flesh
rot
flesh & bone
burn to ash
nonstop
November 8, 2016

The morning after
there’s my German neighbor Beatrice, 94,
rising each day with blue numbers etched
on her inner arm,
rolling the garbage cans out once a week,
lining them up in a perfect row,
the cleanest garbage cans on the block.

“Beatrice,” I ask, “What do you make of last night?”
“It’s not his fault!” She almost shouts. “I’m so angry
at the stupidity!! What is wrong with us?”
She doesn’t say “them”
but smiles at me.
“Let’s think about one quality that’s good
about him. Just one!”

We laugh and Beatrice turns to her garden,
bends over the plants as if in prayer,
back curved like a wishbone,
so thin I can count the vertebrae–

Weeding, pruning, snipping, watering,
coaxing life to rise from the mud.
Generations of flowers rising, blooming,
shining, fading away–
This morning like every other morning,
yes, her hands say, yes.
Yossi Faybish

Death

floats down, timidly,

like soot deserting the mighty, invincible army
of chimneys
with their tall, thin, thick, brick, tin, square, round encasing
carrying red rags torn from the countless, dead Santas
that ventured down their bellies,

like dust calling off its static allegiance
to surfaces and nooks and cracks and sculptures and figurines
following the gravitational call of its fat, round lover
beckoning to perdition
of another kind,

like snowflakes
lost to the eyes of clouds
to find their way to the eyes of me
where they disintegrate beauty into saltless tears
and follow a predestined trail to my mouth
where a sneaky tip of tongue
snatches them in,

death
befriends me like Delilah of Sorek, like Jael of Heber,
like Judith of Merari,
death
so sweetly innocent.
Yossi Faybish

**Brave New World**

They took away my LP flip-over.  
They took away my mini-skirt and those divine garters ending  
just below the white of flesh,  
they took away my hand drawn Disneys and my transistor radio and my slows.  
My national tomatoes.  
My chatter free travel.  
Chunks of me. My Brave Old World, my basic components.  
Disintegration.

Convenience.  

I flip my LP, rebelliously.  
I watch the Jungle Book and look at yellowing old pictures,  
the shop had thankfully not fixated them enough.  
I close my eyes.  
Looking for an innocence lost,  
never to be found. Except maybe in that final act of my finite life.  
This, at least, they did not take away.
Yossi Faybish

**Babylon**

The tower of Babel.
Pascal’s triangle.

I remember touching the back of your hand with mine
when I marshaled you between the aisles in the supermarket successfully
and you marshalled my thoughts in between your thighs unsuccessfully
and I still wonder if you knew it.

I sat down to write a poem and you made a move
with your head à la Miss Piggy
and I exploded into a million fingers
all dying to crawl inside your hair and massage your scalp
thinking what the hell does poetry mean at all and does it mean
anything at all
with your breast filling my palm and Babel reduced to rubble.

I tried to tell you in one of the many languages I do not know
then tried to tell you in one of the many languages you do not know
then tried math, music, even tried mental acupuncture
and once you finished laughing your head off and mine too
you told me all I wanted to tell you in between those moments
when my flesh was between your teeth and my mind chasing rainbows
in the gutter.
Sheila Ronsen

Lot’s Wife, Edith*

Escap for thy life; look not behind thee, lest thou be consumed.
—Genesis, 19:17

It was late June, my hands deep in the sack
of barley, dinner’s lentils simmered over the fire.
Lot ran in out of breath sweating with two unannounced guests
directed me to set out two more plates. He didn’t tell me their names or
why the rush. That was how he was.
I did as I was told. First though, I swept up the dirt he traipsed in
in his haste. Nothing unusual.

I cooked for these men, made sure they had the best cut of meat.
He was so attuned to their displeasure
and his need to please.
When Lot noticed their eyes searching
the table for the little dish of salt
the briefest nod of his head in my direction
sent me scurrying to fetch another measure.

The knocks on the door were insistent, loud, male.
We were all startled. I put my arms around our girls’
waists, could smell their familiar scent of cinnamon now mixed with fear.
Lot went to the door, trembling, met by a nasty mob of Sodomites
demanding sex with our guests. Lot, forever the gladhander,
the haggler of repute, offered our daughters instead. A heinous gambit
they rejected. I hated him then. Never forgave him, I wished him dead, I did.

It was all so sudden, the whole family fleeing, without explanation.
I avoided the eyes of neighbors and made it look like I knew
where I was going and why. Stripped of my beloved Sodom
as if it was a leper’s rags, ripped from family and friends
I walked behind my husband. Nothing unusual except,
I tarried a bit. Lot became impatient. He yelled to the air in front of him
for me to hurry up. A surprising defiance slowed my steps.

A torrid wind blew from nowhere. The smell of wheat wafted
in the air while within my grief roared. I looked back to see
my home again, so I could summon that image at will.
The wind began to whip, lifted me up and up swirling me
round and round, turning and turning, a blast of white
pelting from all directions, I didn’t recognize as salt.
Now it is my shroud as I stand immobilized, immortalized.

I have a lot of time to reflect inside a pillar.
Although I wasn’t told not to look back
that was my crime. A nostalgia for iniquity.
They said, I refused to listen to my husband, to God.
I suffer now, like a hairy root that writhes
in agony when wrenched from its native soil.
Sometimes I hear a child’s laughter and am brought to tears.

- In many midrashim, Lot’s wife is named “Idit” (Edith) Pirkei R. Eliezer, ch 25
Robin Barratt

**Rav Brachot**

With moon behind clouds  
and drunk on coffee  
I stare at the keyboard  
trying to obliterate white space  
with Times New Roman  
the type-face lingua franca of my life  
I've read there are specific areas  
left blank in the Torah scroll  
for Moses to reflect  
on the meaning before  
and after  
And I think of the painstaking  
formation of ink letters on parchment  
or the sudden eruption  
of a circle from mind  
to hand of a Zen master  
It's all creation  
I can see that even when the moon  
plays tag with the rav brachot  
or many blessings  
I wish to send you  
on a tendril of fine night air
These days it’s a hard country
to breathe in, beyond the bad air
other particles hinder respiration

so the lungs seize, throats clinch
even on rare blue days after rain.
Who made death our only flower,
its scent at each closed window?
The stray eye looks for a hidden
door to another land still pristine.

You remember, the way the thin
legs of camels scurry across far
dunes in “Lawrence of Arabia,”
the small caravan from a Persian
miniature? To their tiny padded
feet white blazing sands are cool

veiled diamonds and always were,
our world a blurred reflection of
a clarity we fell from and forgot.
Jerry Mirskin

The Rebbe

The Rebbe, the teacher
drove an old Rambler and lived in Brooklyn.
A scholar, I pictured him in his apartment studying
late into the night with eyes as weary as candlelight.
He was thin and pale. He looked like all he had to drink
was watered down water. I can appreciate now how young
he was, how committed.

I didn't know what to say.
He was dropping me off at my house after school.
It was late. Maybe 7 pm. October. The houses on my block
looked like they were huddling for warmth.

My family went to the Orthodox temple on the boulevard.
This was not the conservative synagogue down the street
with its handsome furnishings, or the reform
with the guitar playing cantor.
Those scenes compared to Sunday mass at church
where ordered tiers of pews and towering pipe organs
present an aura of program if not pageant.
Not so at the Orthodox. This was chaos,
this was a one-on-one affair, where each person
was in an individual scrimmage with the higher power.
In this precinct you got your mojo on on your own.

It could be an inspiring sight on Saturday mornings,
the men swaying and praying in their beautiful penumbra shawls.
Some whipping around in a storm of their own deliverance.
Each trying with words and song to tune to the eternal.
This was a god hungry congregation.
This is where I went to Hebrew school.
It was nothing like my public day school, where the desks
were squared in rows and students stood by the blackboard
with their hands to their ears so the teacher, walking the ranks, could check the hygiene of fingernails and ears. In comparison, the world at Hebrew school was upside down. The desks askew. The students, who had already been to regular school, and were now tired, slumped over their ancient alphabets. The scene of disorder portrayed a kind of precipitation, as if a minute before it had been raining in class.

I don't know if the chaos bothered me, but I noted it. This teacher seemed a bit tired himself. I didn't think much of it when he asked me to stay after class. I had just gotten an assignment back on which he had given me a "B" and had written across the top, "Very good." I thought he was picking me out for something because I did the well. I looked around the room. He asked me and another kid. "Can you stay after class for a few minutes?" he said, "I can drive you home." I thought for a minute. I was eager to get home because Batman was on TV. It was Tuesday. Batman was on Tuesday and Thursday nights. I thought I could see the show on Thursday. Ok, I said.

When class was over, we went downstairs in the basement where there was a water fountain and I took a drink. I turned to look at the teacher, ready for some explanation. He asked, "Do you know why you’re here?" "Yes," I said. I don't think he expected an answer. "Why?" "Organize," I said, with confidence. I was in sixth grade, an age in which one can put things together. He paused, not understanding the result of my calculations. "What?" "Push the chairs around." Again, nothing.
"What do you mean?" he said.
I clarified, "You want us to help you clean up the room, right?"

If I could go back in time, this would be one of the moments
I would revisit. The hallway in the basement of a synagogue
where we paused by a water fountain.
It took a moment for him to figure out what I was saying,
this man who had singled out a student he thought maybe
had some intuition, whose mind or soul might be quickened
by a question.
A look somewhere between sadness and disappointment
came over his face, and then he said, "I'll take you home."

I don’t know if we exchanged much more than a word or two in the car.
I told him which turns to make.
Not knowing the neighborhood, he drove slowly.
I looked out the window.
The question he had asked sat next to me in the car.
The question peered out through the car window at the little houses
huddling next to one another like charms on a bracelet.
I didn't know what to say.
I realized I must have given the wrong answer. The question,
Do you know why you’re here? was steering the car.
Have you seen those Chagall paintings
where the people are floating sideways through their town?
I was floating sideways through my neighborhood.
Gazing without the familiar tether. I had been asked if I knew why
I was here, and I was looking at the "here."
I never had a question like that put to me.
I hadn’t ever imagined that my presence, or anyone's for that matter,
was endowed with a purpose. That consideration leads to another,
the notion that one's purpose sponsors one's being.
And suddenly one's being seems holy.
I looked out the window. I saw the little streets and streetlamps
and houses with their warm inner glow, and I perceived that what I saw
were not words.
The people in their houses, going about their lives, having dinner, washing dishes, doing homework, resting or watching television, passing from familiar room to room, comfortable within the familiar relations of father, mother, son, daughter--they too were not words.

We floated through the streets. "There," I said, and the Rebbe stopped the car and we looked for a minute at my house. A father and mother were inside. A brother. Did I know why I was here? I had been smuggled into an understanding that was too big for me to say anything. As I looked out the window at my family’s small house I seemed to sense that everything carried with it something like a quality inseparable from its presence--everything I saw seemed charmed.

If I could go back in time and stand again by the water fountain would I be able to say why I was there? Could I find words to replace this man's sadness and disappointment? It was only a few moments before that he had passed me my homework with the words, "Very Good," written across the top, and had asked "Do you know why you're here?" The words of the Hebrew prayers are all about gratitude and praise.

If I could go back in time I might begin with, Thank you, and go on from there.
Seder

I’m eating the bread of affliction
with a little butter that is not really butter
but a substitute.

My mind is in action
though the ideas are fixed
in an order, like the holes on a flute.

Somewhere perpetrators bronze
on a lawn chair in a good neighborhood
while their grandchildren play

and my hands break the bread only once
and it may not be broken for good
but then again it may.

Bring me all the children:
wicked, wise, the ones holding their breath in a cupboard,
the one who may never be freed,

so many still hidden,
on hard chairs, at the groaning board;
the story we already know is over. Read. Again. Read.
The Tree of Death

Just prior to Warsaw’s latest motorways
along a weedy trail,
finally unmarred by the sooty stench of faded industrial exits
and lately untrafficked by beasts
crouches a void of rotted old brambles
where, in a vastly greener epoch,
whose gentle hills were celebrated by the neighborhood’s squirrels,
maned ungulates once grazed upon, passed along, and patiently re-digested
the groats of their own sacred commentaries, antedating

Casimir, who had sheltered the nibbling ruminants from rabid
Crusaders, who had hounded a bleating stampede from the coveted meadows of
Charlemagne, who with apses nearby had reprised the
Eagles of Mars, who had plucked
teachers from priests
Rashi from Aaron
Rent-a-Rebbe from this tourist's modal haplotype.

A few Ivy sheepskins past steerage and fully into the age of holiday package deals,
I lounge safely at a USDA prime distance from the thicketed vacuum,
my postmodern paunch casually draped by plastic shorts,
the cloven bud of my sheath long ago snatched from a mohel’s spittle,
instead pickled and lost in some pathologist's jar, aseptically deconstructed.
I say cheese as my smart phone frames a forward-looking selfie beyond the tip
of my Yizkor book’s yellowed focal plane
but then, hooked by fetid black tendrils from the Tree of Death, I stumble.

The whine of a rebooting atavachron warps my inner drive into reverse, sucking me
toward Schwarzschild’s reeking radius and its vertiginous homologies
grokked from another smoke-drenched time, before
the fertile husbandry of Abraham and his God
seeded their covenant,
populating the Holy of Holies
athwart the merely interrupted
ashes of human sacrifice.

Donald Mender

2019 Mizmor Anthology
Lisa Zimmerman

Joan of Arc, Patron Saint of France and Soldiers

I need a new narrative. No arrows, no bloody lances. No horses drowned along the riverbank. No ash of my bones adrift on the Seine. Let the saints who spoke to me offer anything else— even an easy death for my cruel father, old age and happy grandchildren for the soldiers who would have followed me into carnage. Let my life be small and devoted, prayers woven through my hands into the soft fur of my animals at home. Let me be an emblem of a different form of courage, the bravery of kindness, for example, or true faith even as men gallop forward in panic and rage, even as they insist on killing each other.
Kelly Canaday

Chiaroscuro

The professional grey-scalists and dogmatists alike try to ward off limbo with endless affirmations

Rolling out of the hospital window and into whatever’s next, unable to edit a larger view

Waiting until death to meet themselves and grimly watching TV specials satirize conspiracy theories

The 9am train was a moving flame-a barricade to the open road

The woman playing darts covered herself in lint to hide the rust of her soul

Only the stowaway worm in the dirt-filled pocket of her trench coat made it to heaven
Mike Maggio

Angels

In the beginning
there was love:
coy as a crocus
peeking its way
through winter's whitest snow.

In the beginning
angels came:
first one, then another
swooping softly
under the stars' lustrous light.

In the beginning
ferris wheels whirled
laughter soared
and angels peddled roses
from a secret corner of your heart.

In the beginning
trees cradled you gently:
you sat beneath their shade
painting portraits
of angels pure and faithful
frolicking along the shimmering shore.

In the beginning
there wasn't much to grasp:
a slender hope to drape yourself around
a swollen wish unfolding like a magic carpet
a dream: vivid, almost real
dissolving in the morning sun.
Now you dwell in a room
dark and barren
the hardwood floors
not nearly the trees they used to be.

And you say to yourself
I shall win this spiraling battle
and you say
love is an elixir that will conquer all
and you whisper ever so softly
please, oh God, oh please.

As you polish the stains
your angels have left
to burnish your heavenly dreams.
You Just Never Know

My mother never practiced yoga. She never studied comparative religions or sought to find herself in the silence of rustic mountain retreats.

Her mudra was a cigarette poised between the fingers of her right hand and a coffee cup cradled in her left.

Her mantra was simple. With a slow exhalation, she would bring it forth from the silence--“You just never know…”

I invoke her wisdom when a driver cuts me off in traffic and I want to feel compassion instead of rage—You just never know where he’s going or why he’s racing to get there.

I seek her grace when I feel inclined to roll my eyes at the woman in the supermarket holding up the line while she fumbles with a bundle of coupons—You just never know if her children will have enough to eat tonight.
I think of her when I look at
myself in the mirror
stretching my limbs
in a sun salutation,
and hear her words urging me
to create space for compassion.
Claire Ibarra

On My Bedside Table

Buddha wearing a crystal rosary,
childhood captured in photographs,
“Island Beneath the Sea” by Allende,
a tattered Random House dictionary,

an old, coarse hand mirror made of antler
belonged to an ancestor, homesteading
in Nebraska, along the Oregon Trail.

History and Faith rest on the table,
a lotus flower cups a white candle,
its flame catches and casts dreams,
sleep housed among the treasure of these things.
Where There is Darkness

I have grown too adept
at navigating in the dark,
allowing my eyes
to adjust to the absence of light—
learning how to avoid the sharp edges
that might stub a toe or stab a knee.

It is a skill I honed as a child
pulling the covers up over my head
to escape the gaze
of the unblinking doll on the toy chest
whose menacing stare loomed
like a vulture on the horizon.

In the dark,
shapes emerge from the shadows.
A lumbering hulk in the corner—
A crouching intruder about to pounce?
Or a pile of laundry
dumped on the chair?

It is easy to forget
that darkness is a choice—
to forget that the pile of laundry
needs only to be folded and put away—
to forget there is a light switch
within easy reach.
Vital Conversations

There is no silence. 
God’s voice is everywhere—
In the vital conversation
between heart and lungs.
In the murmuring
of mind and spirit.
In the very air we breathe.

What we call silence
is merely the spaciousness
that allows us to hear.
Drop a stone into a well.
Hear it land a hundred feet below.
Listen to its echo.
Hear the voice of God.

Listen to your neighbor,
your beloved,
your enemy, your friend.
Listen to the refugee,
the prisoner,
the elder, the infant.
Listen—

Not to their words
but their heartbeat,
their breath.
Know that at our core
we all speak the same language.
Come to the well.
Hear the voice of God.
We the Animals

A life force pulses through me
And the 70-year-old Scottish woman with
Hymnals,
Handouts,
And an affinity for tea.
We,
Who were spared the flood
And gifted with furry beasts and pungent petals,
Both dangerous and poisonous,
Comforting and medicinal.
We,
Who have different
Dialects,
Ideas,
Time left on this earth.
We,
Who live miles apart,
Exist with the same vitality in our bones
As the lumbering mammoth that stepped off the ark.
Danny Matos

Maybe, The Addict

Maybe the addict
    is on to something
    Maybe the addict is a mirror
Maybe
    the addict knows
    the self
is not
    all there is
    Maybe the addict knows
one must
    and can
feel the entire world inside of the them
    in one sitting
Maybe the addict
    is a martyr
    and knows abandoning yourself
    is the only way
to truly find yourself
    Maybe the addict knows we’ve made
a religion
    out of a moment
    and is desperately urging us to see
you cannot enjoy a world of having
    if you’re constantly afraid of losing
Maybe the addict is a sign that
    the more you need,
    the more you need
Maybe the addict is the conduit
the adventurer
that life sends into Narnia
to come back and tell us
that there is more to a body
than the throne
of its own reflection
Maybe the addict meets God
and maybe
    Her light
    is so powerful
that all the addict can do when they
finally come back
is lean
    or crouch over
    or bend
    almost as if to symbolize
two opposite ends of the world
    that should lose the fear
    of what it would feel like
to merge.
Pramila Venkateswaran

Steel Fragility

You took yourself out
even before that awful night
because your heart could not take it

You took yourself out
before you were born
or rather wanted to
but god forced you into the world

You protested for years
and tried to buck life by courting danger
and now finally you are an absence
your coin of emptiness scratching out
the shiny film of our memories of us
cycling all the way to the bay and back,
gulmohur flaming the road

Though faint we hear your savage percussion on
upside-down pots uprooted from kitchen shelves
your clamor aiming rude lyrics from your throat,
to the far reaches of Bombay.

We did not see you as you roved the seas,
only imagined you navigating cruel currents,
Syrens rooting for you to crash on evil rocks,
but you knew how to plunge your boat
toward shore before your heart gave out
A Paged Apple

To peel the midnight skin in a sharp myth,
the same dusts dancing in flames,
hanging before the same old mirror;
And to swallow in mines, the bloods glued all over my teething cranes;

one steamy scoop after another,
such was the confessing crunch of hullabaloos,
to be once shared,
and then secretly prayed, us dressed as gurus?

Praying for such selves,
well-carved only on those fertile days,
the much-yellowed chronicles;
now arranged in our old myopic gaze...

until that one bite, Again, clinging through those pages,
coming back to that uncontaminated lapse,
to unlock that same tiring soul,
& to wait for those dated childhood tags,

labelling a seed that so wanted to fit in,
but was held back from its very nature of no return:
soon to be Chopped, Scrambled,
and Sold, in some unknown urn…
Alex Missall

As a Customer on the Covered Bridge

The township
has censored the graffiti
on a railing
running past this bench.

Two barefoot,
orphaned girls
kick water,
killing time
below
my waiting
over the summer creek.

And I find the jalopy
we pushed from
its marked-for-towed fate,
rusting still
in one of the bridge’s
spaces.
  *
He emerges
around the street corner
and into the quiet.

Down the quiet street he skateboards,
these dark glasses dulling the light,
while the two girls
disappear around
a creek-bend.
Grey Held

**In Marrakech**

Robins and rock thrush sleep.
Scent of terraced meadow hay
and orange groves.

Steep stairways
sheep share with my friend, who
slurries sand and clay to fashion
interlocking hexagons he’ll glaze
pale blue.

Here everything earthen
is revered. Everything repaired.
Chickens, roosters—uncooped.

Generation
after generation, dawn arrives
as an egg pecked open.
CONTRIBUTORS
David Allard has successfully stayed hidden under a cloak of anonymity for decades, emerging from time to time to write poems and short stories. Still teaching English language to refugees and asylum seekers, and cooing over grandchildren. Struggling to finish a novel.

Valerie Bacharach’s poetry has appeared in many publications. She is currently pursuing her MFA in poetry at Carlow University and is a member of the Madwomen in the Attic workshops. Her first chapbook, Fireweed, was published in August 2018 by Main Street Rag.

Robin Barratt lives in Austin, Texas with her cat, Hannah. Robin’s first book of poetry, Cat’s Claw Moon, is available on Amazon. Robin hosts poetry workshops in Austin.

Linda Blachman’s book, Another Morning, is available from Seal Press. “Sarah Unbound,” an epic exploration of individual and generational trauma, is forthcoming in 101 Jewish Poems for the Third Millennium. Linda works as a certified life coach and facilitator of Wise Aging groups.

Kelly Canaday enjoys the company of chess players and those who still believe that life is chess. She is currently working for the tiny journal, and her work has been featured in NPR, Into the Void, The Sagebrush Review, The Mangrove Review, and Florida Gulf Coast University’s Digital Archives.


Merridawn Duckler is a writer from Portland, Oregon and the author of Interstate (dancing girl press) and Idiom, winner of the Washburn prize. Her work received first and third place in the 2019 Jewish In Seattle fiction contest. Merridawn is the recipient of fellowships, including SLS in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Adina Edelman is currently pursuing a B.A. in English and creative writing with Southern New Hampshire University. She has published a serial story in the Baltimore Jewish Home, a short story with The Penmen Review, and received a Silver Honorable Mention from L. Ron Hubbard’s Writers of the Future.

Yossi Faybush was born in Romania, raised in Israel, carried his technical skills all over the world while in parallel continuously honing his writing skills. He was quite surprised to learn to know that while high tech may be his call, writing is his passion.
Robert Findysz was born in Chicagoland and soon after finishing his graduate work at the University of Chicago, he relocated to Israel where he married, settling on a kibbutz. He spent a lifetime teaching English to Israeli students. Now retired, Robert is dedicating his time to writing.

Yuval Gilad is an Israeli poet, critic and editor. His poems have been published in Israeli literary periodicals and newspaper. Four volumes of his poems have been published in Hebrew. His poetry is suffused in Israeli landscapes, and deals with loneliness, history and the complicated Israeli existence.


Grey Held is the author of three poetry collections: Two-Star General (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2012), Spilled Milk (Word Press, 2013), and WORK a DAY (Future Cycle Press, 2019). He is a literary activist, who through civic involvement connects contemporary poets with audiences.


Janet Ruth Heller published six books: Exodus, Folk Concert, and Traffic Stop (poetry); Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama (scholarly); The Passover Surprise (story about sibling rivalry); and How the Moon Regained Her Shape (award-winning story about bullying).

Jamie Hudalla is curious about too many things. She studied English, graphic design, and psychology at Bethel University. She graduated in 2019 and now lives in a one-tractor town in Wisconsin, where she teaches art and voraciously researches creative writing MFAs.

Claire Ibarra received her MFA in creative writing from Florida International University. Her poetry has appeared in many literary journals and anthologies. Claire’s poetry chapbook Vortex of Our Affections was published by Finishing Line Press in 2017. She lives and teaches in Colorado.

Brad Jacobson is a volunteer in Israel every year in the SAREL program. He enjoys trekking around the country in places such as Tzfat, Jerusalem, and the desert and scuba dives in the Red Sea. He currently teaches second language learners at the University of Missouri.

Jacqueline Jules is the author of three chapbooks, including Itzhak Perlman’s Broken String, winner of the 2016 Helen Kay Chapbook Prize from Evening Street Press. She is also the author of forty books for young readers. Visit www.jacquelinejules.com
Josh Kiernan is a lawyer by day and amateur poet by night. Born and raised in Manhattan and the Catskills, Josh lives in Israel where he takes inspiration from history, as well as the mountains and streams of his childhood. Josh’s poems have been published in *Voices Israel* and *Poetry Superhighway*.

Michel Steven Krug graduated from the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars and is a practicing attorney. He writes poetry and literary fiction and is an assistant editor for *Poets Reading the News (PRTN)*. His poems have appeared in several literary magazines.

Michael L. Kuskin had a career as Executive Director of a major Jewish charity organization. He published works in more than a dozen educational magazines for religious Day School students, which he wrote and illustrated. He authored two books of poetry, the most recent, *Seraphim’s Touch*, Targum Press in 2017.

Larry Lesser is an award-winning Professor at The University of Texas at El Paso. He has published over fifty-six poems in over fourteen venues, including *DRASH: Northwest Mosaic, BorderSenses Literary Magazine, and CCAR Journal.* He’s now releasing an album of original Jewish singer-songwriter music.

Michael H. Levin is a lawyer, solar energy developer and writer based in Washington, DC. His work has appeared in two chapbooks, several anthologies, and dozens of periodicals, and has received poetry and feature journalism awards. www.michaellevinpoetry.com ; https://twopianosplayingforlife.org

Ibe Liebenberg lives and works in California as a firefighter for Cal Fire and a lecturer at Chico State University. He is a proud citizen of the Chickasaw Nation. His work has been published in *The Journal of Chickasaw History and Culture*, *Blue River Review*, *THAT Literary Review*, and *The ThreePenny Review*.

Sheri Lindner, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist, poet, and essayist, whose works have appeared in print and online collections. She was awarded first prize in the 2013 Nassau County Poet Laureate Society poetry contest. She has been a UJA and Jewish Reconstructionist Federation honoree.

Rena Lopata was born in Melbourne to Jewish parents who migrated to Australia in 1937 from Riga, Latvia. A psychologist, her work and heritage have informed her writing. Rena’s poetry has been published in anthologies and journals, including *Voices Israel*, the *IFLAC* anthologies on Anti-Terror and Peace.

Mike Maggio is a graduate of George Mason University’s MFA program. His novel, *The Wizard and the White House*, was released in 2014 and his novella, *The Appointment*, was released in May 2017. His newest collection of short stories *Letters from Inside*, will be released October 2019.

Danny Matos is a spoken word poet, page poet, and musician based in New York City. He has three projects on all music streaming platforms and is the author of his first self-published book entitled *Scratching The Surface*. Danny is public school educator teaching Health and Physical Education.
Donald Mender started writing poetry at the age of 16. Now at 70, he is digging back in time for inspiration. Most recently he has plumbed modern personal resonances with ancient Jewish experience. The resulting poems try to make contact with tensions between very old and relatively new sensibilities.

Jennie Mintz has a mixed background. Her Jewish father grew up in Queens and her Japanese mother grew up in Hawaii. She was born in Singapore, and has lived in Indonesia, Sudan, Thailand and India. She studied English and History in college, and then began writing poetry. She resides in Virginia.

Jerry Mirskin was born in the Bronx, New York, and has lived in California, Wisconsin and Maine, and has worked as a herdsman on a dairy farm, as a carpenter, and as a New York State Poet-in-the-Schools. He is a Professor at Ithaca College and teaches select classes at Cornell University.

Alex Missal is a part-time poet who resides in Ohio. He studied creative writing at the University of Cincinnati, and there discovered his passion for poetry. His work has appeared in Carcinogenic Anthology II and Alexandria Quarterly.

Gloria g. Murray’s poetry and prose have appeared in The Paterson Review, Poet Lore, Bardic Echoes, Third Wednesday, Flapperhouse, and others. She is the winner of the 2014 first prize Anna Davidson Rosenberg award, Poetica Magazine and third prize recipient in the 2017 Writer’s Digest Poetry contest.

Danielle Resh is an avid writer and creative writing teacher based in Houston, Texas. Her poetry has been published in Hevria Magazine and the Jewish Literary Journal. She is currently seeking publication for her Jewish magical realism novel set in 1800s Poland.

Sheila Ronsen is a psychotherapist/psychoanalyst in New York. She participates annually in the San Miguel Poetry Week. Some of her work will appear in forthcoming editions of Avalon Literary Review, Main Street Rag, Picaroon Poetry and Sin Fronteras.

Ruth Sabath Rosenthal is an internationally published/Pushcart-nominated poet who has authored five books: Facing Home; Facing Home and Beyond; little, but by no means small; Food: Nature vs Nurture; Gone, but not Easily Forgotten; Of My Labor. https://newyorkcitypoet.com

Hadassah Schneider is a writer and spoken word poet from NYC. Her writing focuses on defining Jewish identity in a modern world, as well the intersection between feminism and Judaism. Her work can be found in The Jewish Literary Journal, on the JOFA Blog, and at QCVoices.com.

Jeff Schwartz grew up in Cleveland, attended colleges in Boston and Pittsburgh, and for the last 30 years has lived in Connecticut where he teaches for Greenwich Academy and Global Online Academy. Picture Houses, his book of movie poems, appeared in 2018. He also writes for books and journals on learning.

Michael E. Stone was born in England, grew up in Australia, and has lived in Israel since 1966. He was appointed to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1966 and became Gail Levin de Nur Professor of Religious Studies and Professor of Armenian Studies in 1980. He is now retired. He lives in Jerusalem with his family.

Pramila Venkateswaran is Poet Laureate of Suffolk County and co-director of Matwaala: South Asian Diaspora Poetry Festival. She is the author of six poetry collections, including *Thirtha, Behind Dark Waters, Draw Me Inmost, and Trace*. She teaches English and Women’s Studies at SUNY Nassau.

Karen Warinsky has published poems through the *Montreal International Poetry Contest, Blue Heron,* and *Light: a Journal of Photography and Poetry,* as well as in anthologies including the 2017 release *Nuclear Impact: Broken Atoms in Our Hands.* A memoir about her grandmother is in the book *Dear Nana.*

Solomon Au Yeung is a passionate educator from Hong Kong. He is the author of one poetry collection with works in Chinese published in journals in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and other SouthEast Asian countries.

Lisa Zimmerman’s poetry has appeared in *Florida Review, Poet Lore, Chiron Review, Amethyst Review, Cave Wall,* and other journals. Her first book won the Violet Reed Haas Poetry Award. Other collections include *The Light at the Edge of Everything* (Anhinga Press) and *The Hours I Keep* (Main Street Rag).
Cover Art
Victor Tkachenko
Title: "Good News"

Victor Tkachenko, born in Krivoy Rog, Ukraine is an artist currently living in Toronto, Canada. Victor received professional art training beginning at age ten and was one of few graduates to complete the extensive and rigorous program from the well-renowned Art School in Ukraine. Working primarily with acrylic on canvas, Victor displays a mastery of line and colour through purposeful brushwork and a palette dominated by rich earth tones thickly applied to the ground. The physicality of his work is enhanced with accents of ink and, intermittently, the addition of industrial materials such as varnish and plaster.

Throughout the various stages of his work, Victor’s figurative forms are drafted with elongated lines, exaggerated features and geometric patterns accented with a subtle cubist aesthetic. While early paintings such as “Swing” are recognizable for their use of solid line and bold colour that refer to Byzantine mosaic work or stained glass, his oeuvre is grounded, broadly, in symbolism and expressionism. Dominating his art are planes of soft light which intersect and overlap, objects and figures emerge from a dreamlike atmosphere of harmonious colour while emotion and meaning are conveyed masterfully through bold pattern and vivid line. The embrace of two figures in “Kiss” captures, simultaneously, the intimacy of a single kiss between two lovers and the universal emotion – the tenderness and passion – of love. The feelings of melancholy, of mystery and wonder that persist in Victor’s work recall the style of Odilon Redon and Gustave Moreau and yet are uniquely situated in his hands. Victor’s work can be found at galleries and private collections all over the world.

Contact the artist:
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