

Bar Sagi Young Poet's Prize Winners

First Prize:

Fading Childhood

By Ester Belokurov, from Rehovot, age 18

Remember, we used to sit on the cold tiled floor.
It was always washed with cold soapy water,
And we played whatever it was we played.
If it was winter, we would sit with our hats on
As though it were snowing inside.
Remember, we used to climb in the garden wearing little flipflops.
We would go down the slide repeatedly
Pushing everyone else out the way.
Remember, we used to steal the hot chocolate.
I would keep watch while you would
Climb the chair then the countertop to reach the top shelf.
Remember, how we always laughed and caused chaos.
We would run away from our parents
To the sweetshop owned by the Moroccan lady.
Remember, we would be the last ones to fall asleep.
Your mum never said anything, she just sat and smiled.
Do you remember or do you rely on what you are told,
Like me?

Second prize:

Doors of Life

By Yaara Heller, age 12

In our lives there are many doors,
That we can open and we can close.
When one door closes, a lot more open,
If the doors are locked, I open a window.
If the windows are locked, I break them down,
Because NOTHING can stop me now.

Third Prize:

Guide to the Traveler

By Haya Moukouri 11th grade, Holon, Mikve Israel

Swiftly carrying the whispers of the earth,
Scars lay among the trees, of death, of birth.
Drops of knowledge flow among tears of incertitude,
They have not known pain, but solitude.
Because ignorance is bliss,
And what you don't know, you cannot miss.

So sit down with the lonely bones near the creek,
Stories they tell, about those who made it to the peak.
Run along the whipping tides of grey,
The sand might sing of those who died, so pray.
Wander the depths, the heights, the shore,
And you shall understand and see that your legs are bones and your heart, no more.

Honorable Mention

Finally, at Home

**Liraz Eliszda, age 16, Ramat Hasharon
(currently in Safra Children's Hospital at Sheba Medical Center)**

I knew I wanted that
I wanted to feel at home
But it was beyond me-
Beyond my family-
Beyond reality

My mom told me to keep it a secret
I wanted to share it with my friends
I lied to them
I told them we were going on a vacation
We had to leave everything behind us
Home, properties, friends, family and memories
Good memories, bad memories – everything

The journey wasn't like anything I knew
It wasn't like anything I expected
I was only nine
We were in the desert, on camels
It was hot, it was cold,
It wasn't like anything I knew

I can still feel the last time I hugged my mom
She told me, not to be worried
She told me we were going to a good land
The land of the Jewish people
And I believed her

The journey took two long months
I was curious to see the promised land
And we arrived
And it didn't feel like home
And school didn't feel like home
And the children didn't let me in
And I was alone
And my lioness mom wasn't there
To tell me everything was going to be O.K.

I'm older now. Many years have passed
I can hug my mom now
And she still tells me everything is going to be O.K.
But it's not like anything I have expected.
I have children now. They feel home.
They listen to my story
And they know
That everything is going to be O.K

[From her teacher:]

Hello,

My name is Idit Haimoff and I'm a teacher at Safra Children Hospital, Tel Hashomer.
I'm sending this email on behalf of my pupil, Liraz Eliszda, who wrote a poem **Finally, at Home**, and would like to participate at the competition.
Liraz has written some background about herself and her poem.

Background about me and the poem

*My name is Liraz Eliszda. I'm 16 and I live in Ramat Hasharon.
I have two young brothers. I go to Rotberg High School.
Currently, I am hospitalized at Safra Children's Hospital at Sheba Medical Center.
The poem I wrote is my father's story who came to Israel after escaping from
Iran with his family at the age of 9.
In the beginning of their journey, he got separated from his mom only to meet her
two months later after a dangerous, life threatening journey in the desert.*

*The poem depicts my dad's feelings throughout this shaking long walk; high
expectations from the new place, disappointments, desires, longing, separation from
his land of birth, friends, family and culture.*

When my father arrived in Israel, he had to go through cultural challenges, social rejection at school, and becoming the adult in charge at home due to language barriers his parents faced.

My brothers and I are my dad's optimistic ending and beginning. We are the living proof that the journey wasn't for nothing.

My grandma, the lioness, got united with her family in Israel and today, their story is my story too.

I speak fluent Persian, I eat the traditional cuisines and enjoy listening to stories about my father's childhood in Iran. I listen to the news about Iran nowadays, and the strict, cruel regime, and I hope for better days. A future in which I, Liraz, will be able to visit my father's former land.