

Inspiration By the Sea



**Poems from the 2018
Voices Israel Netanya
Workshop**

This chapbook contains poems written by participants in the workshop held in Netanya on Sunday, May 6-7 2018

Three presentations were given as inspiration for poetry exercises:

Marc Radzyner

An exploration of the short poems of American poet A.R. Ammons.

Nicholas Dunne-Lynch

“But song only dropped” - Two Jewish poets of World War 1.

Shlomo Sher

Reconciling the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ in our poetry.

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JUDITH FINEBERG

Revere Beach Initiation

a child not yet of seaworthy size,
too small to self-launch in a
voluminous 1950's automobile inner
tube, my naughty six year old arms
cleaved to its slick, squeaky sides;
headily I bobbed along Atlantic's dicey
waves with the sun cha-chinging
dazzle and diamonds
into the repository of my eyes

the rogue wave seemed to descend
straight down from the sky,
pushing me into a muted underworld,
entangling me in swirls of translucent
green satin, shot through with bubbles
cha-churning...cas-ca-cade-ing...
from my mouth! panic spread outward
from my belly at warp speed, engulfing
my whole being! which way is up?
no end in sight! at the 11th hour
a slit of blue peeked through the wavy-green
winking wider, wider...until my stinging
eyes seized upon the wayward black torus
tap-slap-slapping the restless surface
just a few frantic dog paddles away
my depleted lungs hungrily sucked in
the briny coastal air, then erupted:
I'll never do this again! snort!
another breath plucked up with it my
water-logged, yet inflatable courage:
maybe just one more time!

JUDITH FINEBERG

My Jewish "I, Too" Poem; Thank You, Mr. Hughs

double timing it on sore feet in regulation
shoes, aiming to be inconspicuous as
a salamander slithering over rocks,
I scurried down the long corridor,
desperate to avoid a superior officer,
lest I need salute-
which hand is it again? then my ears
were brought straight to attention by
a clipped "Your Corps, Captain? Nursing?"
"Medical. Corps. Major. Sir!"
"But there are no women
in the Medical Corps!"

don't try to inform, better not argue
what if he knew that I am also a Jew?
what if he can sniff out that my "I" is
on the move, an irritatingly Jewish trait;
that one day I'll be a fact on the ground –
an inconvenient fact for some-
living in "that plucky little country" (as
named once upon a time by a wise princess)
where I shall root, root, root
for the Homeland team
our men, our boys, our family... IDF!!!

IRIS DAN

Jérusalem mon amour

Did we ever talk about that evening when we listened to “Jerusalem of Gold”? Would you remember it if you were alive? You full of impresario pride, having smuggled Jerusalem behind the Iron Curtain, I embarrassed. So different our tastes. 18 years – three quarters of a generation between us, your CV full of things lacking from mine: your mother died, you sold candies in the Transnistria camp at 11, furtively licking every candy before handing it over to the purchaser (oh what rich analytic material), one day to become the eternal hottest bachelor in town. You were ruthless, but sentimentality worked for you.

I would have preferred “Nights in White Satin” (yes I loved you -); I had no time for what I guessed was triumphalist kitsch, although I did not understand the language. Even so I felt the poisonous honey and all it would unleash. The author of the song, seen later: sharp wolf teeth filed to sheep innocuousness, lips readily issuing blessings and absolutions for any and all sins perpetrated for the sake of the greater land, wide skirt under which the Temple Mount and all its devotees could be gathered. You're welcome to her, I thought when I saw her.

Unlike you I came to live here, and here I am still, all these thirty eight years later. In the beginning my heart soared when I lay on the grass at the Hebrew University, when I saw the High Court of Justice, the Shrine of the Book. I was charitable: I never told you the celebrated song was a plagiarism. I told you though how hostile the city was becoming, pushing me off her sidewalks, barring my entrance, throwing black plastic sheets over me, like over a corpse.

IRIS DAN

The High Court of Justice - now under siege; at the University – nudes wiped off from art books to protect pious eyes; in museums - science concealed behind curtains; the united city cut in two by a wall; lives on both sides crushed by frenzy and fear; those who don't dance with flags branded as traitors, beaten up and spat on. And yet, when oh so rarely I'm on my way to Jerusalem, my chest explodes with feeling as it did in my youth when I came to meet you.

IRIS DAN

Entropy

She still can feel the cry of horror
stirring up the molecules inside her.
In front of her the child, the only,
the beautiful, the gifted daughter
making her confession. I'm gay
she says. World disintegrates.
Future derails from its tracks
burning the cultivated land
through which its trajectory runs.

Literary imagery remains at hand:
she thinks of Oedipus descending
into the underworld, King Theseus
throwing a glance inside, his eyes
covered in fright. Like Oedipus
she is dying and like King Theseus
she is afraid to look. She imagines
the child is afraid too. She sees herself
and is ashamed.

She sleeps whenever she can
so as not to see, not to imagine.
She pleads with the child: it's a phase.
Just don't remain stuck in it.
I'm the same person, the child tells her,
and it breaks her heart. She remembers
a Mahjong prophecy that had made them
both laugh: You will attend a party
where strange customs prevail.

IRIS DAN

One day, with friends in Rosh Pina
she weeps beyond her sunglasses
seeing a mare and her foal: the calm,
the coordination of movements.
What will happen to the sweet foal later?
Will it also go away from his mother,
throw his future away? Will the mare
lose her sense of direction? Fortunately
no one sees her tears or hears her thoughts.

Love patches time together again. Future
recomposes itself, not much different
from the future before. I sit with my daughter,
breathing in the air around her.
I tell her of my antipathy for flowcharts.
Why, I happen to love them, she says.
For me nothing is feasible if it cannot be put
in a flowchart. I laugh and remark "this sounds
like a Mahjong maxim", and she laughs with me.

IRIS DAN

Green Grows the Grass

Tall and green grows the grass
at the Jewish cemetery
where nobody remains to be buried.
The white goats seem to enjoy it
I'm here to visit my parents

Not a bad way to spend eternity,
quite idyllic: innocuous herbivores
led by a shepherd-cemetery guard.
My mother would hate it though
She had such a sense of propriety

RUMI MORKIN

Alzheimer's

Stalactite slow
my husband's person fades
along with his artistic talent
golden hands and intellect
in synch with the
stalagmite slow
enhancing of mine
growing, asserting,
happening concurrently
a strange symbiosis
an exchange of roles
visible only from beyond time
as the loss of one
transforms into
the gain of the other.

RUMI MORKIN

Our Little Land

We lead our lives
in our little land
created on the sand
despite enemies threatening
our very existence.
We, with insistence
continue to develop, envelop
ourselves in progress,
moving forward,
while our neighbors protest;
remaining obsessed
with hate they cry out continuously –
it is our land, stolen from us.

RUMI MORKIN

I, too

I, too, am a member
of this settlement
I am the green young bride
who came from London,
told to clean the wooden outhouses
in gumboots with hosepipe and Lysol,
eating austerity meals
in the communal dining room
with wooden benches and trestle tables.

I became a mother of three,
worked, taught handcrafts,
volunteered, set up the archive,
as good years slipped by.
Grandmother, great grandmother,
wiser, older, my life changed
as the settlement changed
and my family grew.

Now, tomorrow
I enjoy the comfortable quiet
of my widow's home;
they all see me as a respected elder
repository of history and experience
the last remaining early pioneer.
I, too, am a member.

ZEV DAVIS

In My Knapsack, On My Back

They carried me along
as I filled by bag with stuff
it sounded religious.
Something that I heard before,
a song I sang in Hebrew

all summer long. There,
Friday night, "The Sabbath Queen
filled the trees with light
and peace and rest," what I knew,
"Oh come my Bride, come my Love,"

It was like that prayer,
that I recited back home,
and, as I recall
the words were not quite the same,
different, were, something else

it was a poem
written by Hayyim Nachman.
He dreamed, new customs,
a new way of saying things
to move on, beyond, elsewhere.

ZEV DAVIS

Static in the Wires

Words sputter. The mike
bursts with sounds from lips. It calls
with a crackling sound,
barely audible, letters
uttered in syllables that speak

and still we can't hear.
This is a hi-tech glitch that flows
irregularly.
Nobody in the room can catch
what anybody's saying.

"Louder," the people
call from their seats, hard to get
the message. Slowly,
then back to the instruments'
fine tuning, maybe inside, check

Something technical,
loose and frayed. I roll it out
put my mouth on the top
of this golden ball . . . bingo
it scratches a reason
for this conundrum. Some tape
to crop around, tight
to coil delightly, safely
in a corner where it fits,

close the box. Testing,
testing, testing, loud and clear.
Electricity
hear and now in this roomful,
where the images appear. my ear. I know
there is

DONNA BECHAR

Onomatopoeia

He lay in his bed
My father, my daddy
The bed in his studio room
In the assisted living facility
Where he's lived for the past
Two and a half years
He lay in his bed
Just home from the hospital
He lay, in what would be
His last night in this bed
Staring at the ceiling and
Then at me, sitting in the
Paisley-patterned armchair
By his side

DONNA BECHAR

Can't Afford to Cry

My hand rests upon a hand that will soon
Cease to move
Some small comfort to an ebbing life?
I can't afford to cry

My hand needs steady
Not whimper
To hold another's waning hand
I cannot afford to cry

My rivers would empty
For all the hands that need holding
And my hand would crumble to dust
So, I cannot afford to cry

MIRIAM DAVIS

Israeli

Do I, as an Israeli
Apologize for existing
As though the worst crimes of history
Were perpetrated by us, rather than on us?

The spotlight sweeps around the neighborhood
Seeking the worst criminal of the Mideast.
Passing over the slaughter of innocents
By their leaders north of us,
Zooms in to focus
On our local fistfights and alley skirmishes
To the south.

Meanwhile next door
A house in flames
Consumes all inhabitants,
No firefighters sent to save them.

MIRIAM DAVIS

Beauty in Destruction

I

The fragility of life
Splinters into shards of glass
A prism splitting light
To illuminate the soul's escape.

II

Leaves decay, rot and slime
Slick and shiny, settle into earth.
The remains
Of once living plants and animals
Suffuse the soil, metamorphosize,
Dissolve, resolve.
New life arises.

MIRIAM DAVIS

Obstacle Course

Heaps of roofing, tiles and pallets
Litter sidewalk space beside the dumpster.
Cars raise wheels the whole width of the sidewalk
Like big bullies daring me to pass.

Weaving between sidewalk and street
Avoiding obstacles from here
And passing cars and trucks from there
I wander left and right.

JUDY KOREN

Apolitical Identity (1)

I really couldn't care about
political identity,
I am a citizen of the world
not limited to he or she,
white politics, or black, or brown
elicit from me but a frown
(or two, or three).
I'm told this merely indicates
I grew up in a state of grace
unlimited by others' hates
a member of a favoured race,
I'm told that if I'd had to face
socio-political upheaval
or found myself denied my place
I'd show less apathy to evil.
But I maintain we must contend
with problems that by far transcend
political identity.
Forget the problems of your birth
and join the fight to save the Earth
sharing one ideology,
for if our planet dies, who'll care
that once, when it was green and fair
you battled **me**?

JUDY KOREN

Apolitical Identity (2)

Say you want to express
your own beliefs through
an imaginary other, writing
“her” meaning you...

Why? Are you afraid of what people will say?
The world is so pitiless to
a naked soul
if no clothing protects it they strip away
the skin, the flesh, the bones, until
they have dismembered the whole.

For instance, suppose
you reject the world's desire
to identify people by
the myriad things that divide:
by politics or color or
gender, or place of birth.
Suppose you want to unite, to say
let's work together to face
the precarious future of the human race
(not to mention everything else on earth).

Would you say it aloud, or wouldn't you prefer
a surrogate scapegoat, because it wouldn't hurt
when the crowd jeered at **her**?

JUDY KOREN

Look who's talking, you reply:
you who just concealed
yourself through four stanzas
saying "you" meaning "I",
hiding behind my shield.
You want unity? Go,
in your own voice invite
this divided world
to adopt your view
and then watch them unite
to dismember **you**.

JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

Identity Politics

*Adam was the first man and he lived all alone
till Eve was manufactured from Adam's funny bone*

Since then we have spawned; Cain and Abel, slaves and masters, promised people, receivers of the law, conquerors, oppressors and oppressed, dividers and divisions, mosques, churches, inquisitions.

And still the story goes on. Do you know how many breeds of dogs there are? All asserting their scents and identities on trees and bushes. Today you can't open your computer or cellphone without being bombarded with politics, religious entreaties requests to donate to this cause or that – women's rights, freedom fighters, save the turtles, join your local democracy group – for the people, by the people, against those other people.

And Adam, fondling Eve under the tree of knowledge, laughs at us. Identity shmidentity, he is saying. Know who you are. Be true to yourself. Look, there's only me and her in Eden. Come have a bite of this delicious apple. Out there it's a tower of Babel!

JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

Bottled Preserves

The glass was so thick
contents obscured from viewing
dark green, snake hue
my head whirled in bifocals

I tried understanding it
from close and far it was
fog, moody, petulant
and the letters were jumbled
like serpents writhing,
rewriting themselves in reciprocals

Cursing, I hated myself
my weakening vision
yet somewhere a small light
glowed

It was a picture of Stephen
in his wheelchair, his face frozen
in teeth, eyes hardly glinting

But that voice! Those syllables
so familiar from way inside him –
the place where ideas are formed
mixed with metallic humor

Wincing, I screwed off the top
of the jar. Inside lay the fruit
sweet and sugary – last year's legacy

JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

I, too

Can I see your passport please.

I don't have one.

Your laissez passé. Your identity card.

No sir. I don't have those either.

Would you please come this way. Sit down.

Where do you come from? How did you get here?

*I come from the grassland, from the mountains
from the desert. I have lived in the crevices of
doorways, in the footprints of despair, disgust
and deceit.*

*Look, these are my hands to hold a plough, my
feet to measure a field.*

*Give me a chance mister. I don't need no
passport. Let me through!*

MARK LEVINSON

Visit

(a social issue presented in first person)

The neighbor showed up at my door with a smile and said, "Sorry. Tonight you'll hear noise for a while. We expect to be partying loudly by ten and the volume won't drop before midnight, if then." I replied, "And the thought that the noise could be curbed, and your party proceed with no neighbors disturbed but with bright conversation and music that's low never entered your mind?" And the neighbor said, "No. And I'm shocked and surprised and object to your stance when I've come to apologize well in advance. That's the nature of parties. There's nothing to do. And it's no fault of mine that I'm downstairs from you." "If you must hold a raucous, disruptive event," I explained, "there are suitable halls you can rent." "Do you think I came up here to ask your advice?" he exploded. "I came being thoughtful and nice."

SUSAN OLSBURGH

Repair and Renewal

From the tight focus of shock
radiate advice and love
like soothing lineament
after the gasp of a burn
like the balm of a bandage
after the sear of a cut
like fresh aloe vera
after the sting of a bee
offer comfort
repair and renewal

SUSAN OLSBURGH

Refuse, Refuse, Refuse

Hey! You BDS* troupe
we too are a group
we have a textbook
come take a look
we do not
we do not isolate
we integrate
from four corners
and we start up
with a buzz
what you need, use
so extend your short fuse
review your current views
and refuse, refuse, refuse
to hold anti-Zionist views

*BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

EDIT GAVRIELI

assuage discomfort

sitting here listening to
interpretations of strange poems
awonder at the ability of so many
to understand what is foreign to me
relieved that I nevertheless
can find words
to address this perusal
of an acclaimed poet

EDIT GAVRIELI

ten lines

winds of war are churning
again, here and now
an abundance of WWI poems
recited at length
depths of horror pronounced
already cognizant of the
consequences of war
I head out to breathe the ocean air
and catch some rays of sunlight
breaking through the clouds

EDIT GAVRIELI

I, too

I, too have walked the walks
talked the talks
of life in this unholy holy land
raised four children
loved and praised
worried and waited
breath abated
till they came home, or phoned
"Mommy, I'm okay"
in spite of all
love of land, my home
here to stay

KAILA SHABAT

Chemical Suppressors

A vision of eternal peace
an inkling of prophecy
diagnosed as a manic episode
is treated with mind-numbing
medication with no expiration date.

After two depressed decades
I resolve to reclaim my heritage:
to experience love and joy
and to become the woman
I was always meant to be.

KAILA SHABAT

Let Me Do Your Will

I seem to be so far from the Intention:
walking stooped over, ever apologetic,
falling on my face again and again.
It seems that the Lord God of Israel
is teaching me humility; granting me
the wisdom to do His Will,
guiding me in the ways of the New Era.

I sense Him in the minutiae of daily life,
guiding my movements, my every word
yet I live in fear He will abandon me,
withdraw from me His Holy Spirit
In my heart, an ever present mantra:
'Let me do Your Will, O Lord,

Let me do Your Will, all my days
and write, not with a view to fame
but what you will have me set down
let my words be for You alone.
I must not shout from the rooftops
But walk with modesty, even to myself.

I entreat You, Lord, to set mankind
on the path of Love and Laughter
and instruct me how to do my part
to ease our passage into the New Era.
Accept Your People's Prayer for Peace.

SIMCHA ANGEL

I, Too, am Israeli

I am the newcomer.
They laugh silently,
uncomfortable with my Hebrew speech
accented with clear sounds of American origins.
but I, too, I.D. Israeli.

I am living here in Israel among them.
strive to observe the commandments,
happily prepare for the holidays,
remember the Shabbat.
I am proud to be an Israeli.

One day tomorrow
my children will be 'them' and
I will be remembered
as the one who came from the 'old country'
Then they will be proud.

SIMCHA ANGEL

The Beauty in a Negative Experience

The low one who tore the flag of Israel into little pieces,
just before Shabbat came in on Friday
littered our gray stone street with colors blue and white,
left some scraps of holy fabric on my doorstep,
warning, that the flag hanging high over the gate
to my Jerusalem home
might be the next upon which he would vent his jealousy

Threatening

I fight the negative fearful energy which descends upon me
as I gaze at the shredded bits of material lying on the street
Ignore this desecration of the symbol of our national identity
The clock ticks quickly as I pray to meet the challenge
And, even stronger, prouder than before,
I enter the Shabbat with peace granted from the One above.

BETSY RAMSAY

That Race Tag

I, too, was Jewish
but nobody knew it.
My father taught us
not to admit it.
So we were cut off
from the company
of our people.
"But it was all right,"
my father said.
"That way we were safer."
"Safer from what?" I thought.
"From being cut off."
"What did it matter?"
My father said.
"It was just an odd chance"
that we bore that race tag.
But it never worked
To cut it off.

BETSY RAMSAY

Your Flower Feast

When you're in the garden
the minutes don't matter.
What is their worth
measured against a rose bud appearing?
or the promise of cherry blossoms,
fuchsia flowers, fruit berries?
Fragile wonders, divinely patterned.
You inhale the enchantment,
the life breath
of your feast of flowers
at day's start.

MARC RADZYNER

tomorrow's day

tomorrow's day
finds itself in rose
of dawn, rose
of sun, rose
of setting sun

AMIEL SCHOTZ

Ummm.....

Yes, I'm a Jew, I chose to live
in Israel. Yet I've so many doubts,
misgivings, more than certainties,
or faith.

I pray—but not to that
great Being I know naught of,
but to the tiny God-like spark
I hope to find within.

I try, however forlorn,
to believe in the two-state solution,
for we're all of Adam born.
But Cain killed Abel,
which proves—if proof were able—
We may be beyond restitution.

AMIEL SCHOTZ

Road Rage

My bitter foes—such useless flesh!
I need them gone, I need their space.
They race like rats or crawl like lice!
I fume, I curse, I burn, I clash.

AMIEL SCHOTZ

Beer Sheva, July

I need a shady bloody spot
to park my bloody car.
The sun's so bloody hot!
So it brings life? So what!

DAVID FELLERMAN

Bereft in Pain

Listening intently to a voice afar
hearing nothing worth noting
beneath the stars speaking gently
and kindly of days gone by
seeing all that is good
in the blink of an eye.
Feeling happy relaxed in the
warmth of the sun as the tide
comes and goes children leap in fun
with buckets and spades build
castles of sand disappear
in the wash to another land.
My heart and my mind are one
and the same, whilst the rest
of my soul is bereft in pain.

DAVID FELLERMAN

The Lowest Point

I reached the lowest point where
light and life become confused
where all that inspires recedes
soul and mind wretched abused.
My head hung low upon my hands
tears of pain and sorrow flowed
crying in despair for help,
where would I go where would I go.
But love supported me, the love
I never knew, it lifted me from that
low point, onwards, onwards,
the road ahead would show.

DAVID FELLERMAN

One New Day

I am me,
you are you,
he is he,
we are few.
Who are they,
there not us,
who really cares,
what's the fuss.
Let's join hands,
Jump for joy,
shout and scream
each girl and boy.
Sad the day
no one cares,
no one speaks,
hide our fears.
It's one world,
one new day,
turn a page,
it's OK.

WENDY BLUMFIELD

The Unanswered Question

He died alone
In the quiet of the night
Did his carers hear him sigh
Did he reach out his hand for me to hold

Those years I lay by his side
Complaining about his restless sleep
His cries of unawareness in the night
And held his hand when he sought comfort

Those years I held his hand as he took uneven steps
Leading him to the ice-cream bar on the beach
Reading him poetry and news of the day
Finding his favourite symphony on Youtube

Until the day, with struggling breath, he went to the care home
It will be easier for you, they said, safer for him
He will not fall or choke on his food
Our carers are gentle and kind

But he died alone
In the quiet of the night
It was peaceful they said
Did he reach out his hand for me to hold?



**Cyclamens and
Swords
Publishing**