

Texts of the Three Winning Poems, Reuben Rose Competition, 2008

First Prize: "From my kitchen window" by Rochelle Mass, Israel

I often think there's a woman on the hill
over there, who looks out her kitchen window
in my direction
as she prepares dinner for her family.
Perhaps that woman has watched our village grow.
Perhaps she's seen it spread over the Gilboa
new homes built for young families
children playing in the yard.

watch Jenin stretch so wide
I have to turn my head
each way
to see the full size of it.
Perhaps that woman is picking olives, as I am
soaking them in large bins then
slicing lemons, adding coarse salt
tossing in bay leaves, peppercorns and
sharp red peppers to get the right flavor.
Perhaps she helps her husband, as I help mine
take their crop to the local press, return
with gallons of oil.

watch evening stagger over Jenin as
I soap my dishes
see lights splash
over the city.

wonder if that woman
is looking my way –
I would ask if she's angry
if she's afraid.

Second Prize: "Names" by Martin Herskovitz, Israel

My mother's father was named Mordechai Kleinbart
but maybe, because he was the eldest son,
his mother called him Tateleh.

And his father probably called him Mordkhe,
like my father calls me.

His sister and brothers called him, perhaps, Mori,
except for the baby sister who called him Momo,
even after she grew up.

His wife's cousins at the winery may have called him Kleiny.
And his children certainly called him Tati,
as did his wife.

Except late at night, alone in the bedroom,
she would call to him with Yiddish familiars
in a soft erotic lilt.

Or maybe not

Because since Auschwitz, Mordechai Kleinbart is the single name I have,
so it alone is engraved in stone and molded in bronze.

All the other names exist only in memories long interred,
or on pages yet unwritten.

Third Prize: "Oasis" by Michael Dickel, Israel

The nights with you are wondrous, the days a joy.
Your sacred presence in my life unfolds me; I grow as a young tree to the sun.
Come dance with me among the trees, naked in the orchard.
Come lay with me under the stars, as one in the desert.
The spring brings forth sweet water, cool from the depths of you.
I drink deeply, refreshed, returning again and again for more.
The roots of the sapling hold to the earth and follow the source of the spring
as the branches reach high into the air and light. Taste my dates, for they are sweet.
My leaves offer shade from the summer heat; your well provides life to us.
Let us raise our tents here, let us hold tight to each other.
Let us live in each other's arms.