

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2025





VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

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Dates for your Diary

**Voices Israel AGM on Sunday
March 23rd at 7pm on Zoom**

**Reuben Rose and Bar Sagi
Awards on Sunday April 27th
– on Zoom**

Haiku – SPRING BARLEY

**wild spring barley fields
green sea with yellow flowers
dancing in the breeze**

Yochanan Zaqantov

Aphorism of the Month

**The truths that poets can
uncover cannot be found by
any other artist.**

**from Simon Constam, author
of *Daily Ferocity*, on
Instagram**



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

During this last month we have all had a terrific uplift. Despite the huge price we have paid as a country, we are so happy to welcome home the first hostages since the implementation of the recent ceasefire in Gaza. We may not know the returned hostages personally or even their families, but in Israel we're all family. And we all share the happiness of the families who have been reunited with their loved ones. Their safe return is also a reminder of those who were brutally murdered and couldn't return. For us in Voices Israel, of course, we remember our member Judi Weinstein Haggai and her husband Gad Haggai, who died at the hands of barbaric terrorists.

Just a few days ago, we recalled the pain of our *annus horribilis* that every one of us experienced. The Zoom event in which our Dina Yehuda interviewed Rachel Korazim one of the co-editors of a new book **Shiva: Poems of October 7** brought back to us the horrific losses we have suffered in the last year or so. It was wonderful to see so many people participating and let's hope this helps with our healing process and allow us all to move onwards.

Poetry and art and general creativity are great therapies and it's wonderful to share what we produce with others. Indeed, just a few days ago one of our members, who is going through a challenging time, wrote to me – "Painting has helped me channel my angst these past weeks, as has poetry". Hopefully we can use our poetry to give us and others comfort following a year of tragedies and inspire us to greater happiness in the coming years.

I'm delighted to see that this Newsletter includes an article that focuses on the relationship between poetry and art. Ira Director's correspondence was inspired by a book that I too have been reading recently - *Letters to a Young Poet* written between Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Xaver Kappus. So, please keep sending your artwork, as well as your poems, book reviews and essays, and letters to the editor for forthcoming Newsletters.

Voices Israel has such talented and interesting members and I'm sure everyone would like to know more about what other members do. So, I'm very pleased to see that Bob Findysz, our esteemed Secretary, has interviewed our member Michael Stone for this Newsletter. I hope you'll enjoy getting to know Michael.

The submission period for the Bar Sagi poetry prize for youngsters aged 12-18 has begun. The number of poems submitted so far has been a little disappointing, so we have extended the submission period until 28th February 2025. We ask you to do everything you can to spread the word among English teachers you may know, schools you are familiar with and any friends and acquaintances who have contact with teens who might like to submit their poems. Details for submission to this year's competition can be found on our website [here](#).

Please God, we should continue to hear good news and be able to welcome all the remaining hostages very soon.

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

P.S. See page 23 regarding paying your 2025 membership fee.

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MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - FEBRUARY 2025

SOUTHERN Meeting via Zoom Sunday, February 23 at 5:00 PM Coordinator: Miriam Green miriamsgreen@gmail.com	TEL AVIV Meeting via Zoom Thursday, February 27 at 7:00 PM Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438 nosnivel@netvision.net.il	JERUSALEM Meeting via Zoom Thursday, February 20 At 7:30 PM Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998 aemeallem@gmail.com	UPPER GALILEE Wednesday, February 19 at 10:30 AM at the home of Reuven and Yehudit. 128 Keren HaYesod Artists Quarter, Tzfat Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262 poetsprogress@gmail.com
HAIFA Tuesday, February 18 at 7:00 PM at Naomi Yalin's home Contact Naomi Yalin for details Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738 naomiyalin@gmail.com	NETANYA/SHARON Monday, February 24 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home 2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575 olsburgh.susan@gmail.com	GLOBAL GROUP 1 Meeting via Zoom Thursday, February 20 At 19:30 Israel time Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365 y2nosh@gmail.com	GLOBAL GROUP 2 Meeting via Zoom Sunday, February 9 At 19:00 Israel time Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860 koren.judy@gmail.com

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Voices Israel is pleased to extend a warm welcome to our new member(s):

- **Nicholas Dunne-Lynch** of Tel Aviv
- **Phyllis Klughaupt Becker** of Raanana

REFUAH SHELEIMAH

We wish *refuah sheleimah*, best wishes for a full and speedy recovery, to Ruth Fogelman. Please keep Ruth (Rut bat Chana) in your thoughts and prayers. **Ruth will be pleased to hear from you** – e-mail her at ruthfogelman@yahoo.com or send a WhatsApp message to +972 (0)55-272-4492.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Newsletter – January 2025

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to congratulate you and the team for an extraordinary newsletter—more like a literary magazine or journal. 29 pages of interest, information and inspiration. What a production!

Mazal Tov,

Amiel Schotz

IN THE NEWS



Pittsburgh Poet/Artist Wins International Poetry Competition – see full article [here](#). From **Judith R. Robinson**, a Pittsburgh poet and artist who was recently awarded 1st prize for her poem “A Stream in Late Autumn” by the judges for 35th Annual **Reuben Rose Poetry Competition** (hosted by Voices Israel):

I am thrilled to have received the 35th Reuben Rose Award.

There are many people writing about the ongoing Mid-East conflict. ‘A Stream in Late Autumn’ is not a political poem, nor is it an anti-war poem. It is a lyrical poem about the knowledge all humans possess, that our lives are finite, that if we’re fortunate we grow old, that we are mortal. Death, as Wallace Stevens wisely noted, is the mother of beauty. If life was unending we would not cherish it as we do, nor would we feel so compelled to create, celebrate, and leave proof of our existence. It is a great compliment to me, and to the poem, that the judges chose to forego a war-related poem this difficult year.

IN NEXT MONTH’S NEWSLETTER

Look out in next month’s newsletter for:

- **A Comb Over’s Tale** by Birgit Talmon
- **Kingfisher – The Colour of Words** by Julian Alper

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ESRA BOOK SHOP HAIFA

ESRA (English Speaking Residents Association) has opened a SECOND-HAND ENGLISH BOOKSHOP in HAIFA. All are welcome to visit and explore the wonderful collection of books of all genres. Voices poets may like to donate one copy of their collections to expand our poetry shelf. It would draw attention to your great work. Members who have access to Haifa are welcome to donate or just visit. 5 Rehov Kiryat Sefer - adjacent to Kiryat Sefer Circle on Moriah, Ahuza.

Opening hours: Sun-Thurs: 10-1; 15-18 oclock. Friday: 10-13 oclock.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

- To - **Judy Koren** whose poem "Valley of the Caves" has been published in the January issue (no. 10) of Pulsebeat and is online at <https://pulsebeatpoetry.com/pulsebeat-10/judy-koren/>.
- To - **Wendy Dickstein** who has had three poems published in **OfTheBook Literary Journal**. You can read the poems here - <https://ofthebookpress.com/wendy-dickstein-three-poems/>.
- To - **Channah Moshe** whose poem "Phoenix" has been selected for publication in the arc 31 journal of the IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English).
- To - **Denyse Kirsch** whose poem "Dearest Friend" has been selected for publication in the arc 31 journal of the IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English).
- To - **Pessy Krausz** whose article "Sheila Patz: The Secret of Long Life" was published recently in the Jerusalem Report – you can read it [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS/OFFERS

Johnmichael Simon is offering his **chapbook design services** to Voices Israel members and friends.

If you would like to possess a beautifully presented and published collection of your own favorite poems, please contact Johnmichael for details of this special offer at johnmichaelsimon@gmail.com.

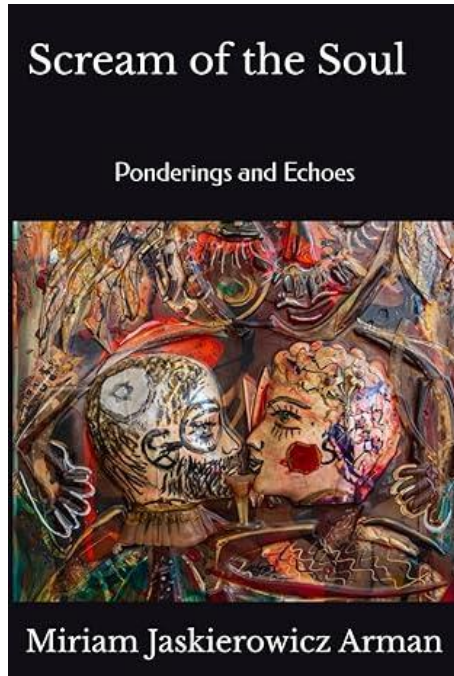
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The IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English) is pleased and proud to release the winter edition of *aChord*, no. 17 – it is available [here](#).

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BOOKS

Scream of the Soul: Ponderings and Echoes by Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman



What a delightful and special moment in my life. I can let my soul speak and I don't have to keep it locked inside the cage of a mundane life. I can go into back rooms and forgotten boxes in dusty old closets and extract the treasures of tears shed and loves felt, sufferings past and present, I can travel oceans and stand right here in my beautiful space, expressing every emotion and be totally clear with and about myself. What a joy, what an honor!

Come with me explore and experience the recesses of my mind, the insatiable thirst for beauty and understanding, faith, peace and hope. Share with me and be part of the most intimate expressions of my soul and know me.

The voice is life, everything that is expression, communication, emotions, and the essence of a human being, is contained in words.

I grew up with soul scream, with pain and lack, with tragedies and moments of forgetfulness, I listened and suffered the horrendous past of my parents, who survived in

the concentration camps; I absorbed their pains via the placenta. I tried, creating my own life; I lost, I won, I fought – tireless desire for the truth!

I write with the pen of my heart, and I can scream when my voice fails me...moments of profound lucidity offer the possibility of total honesty - tones of words that allow powerful emotions to be expressed - the past, the present and what I conceive of the future.

Idealist, perhaps - warrior for faith, hope, yes...without limits or borders...that's who I am! The world is my terrain... everything is part of my mind's playground – light and dark meet in the 'whole' which I paint: interpretations and representations of my life. The mirror of the verses reverberates in my sensibilities and try to express themselves. I am a wanderer on this earth, caught between sky and sea, traveling emotions, encountering lives which I needed to touch, love, and raise - mundane existence - finding a place where I recognize myself and flourish.

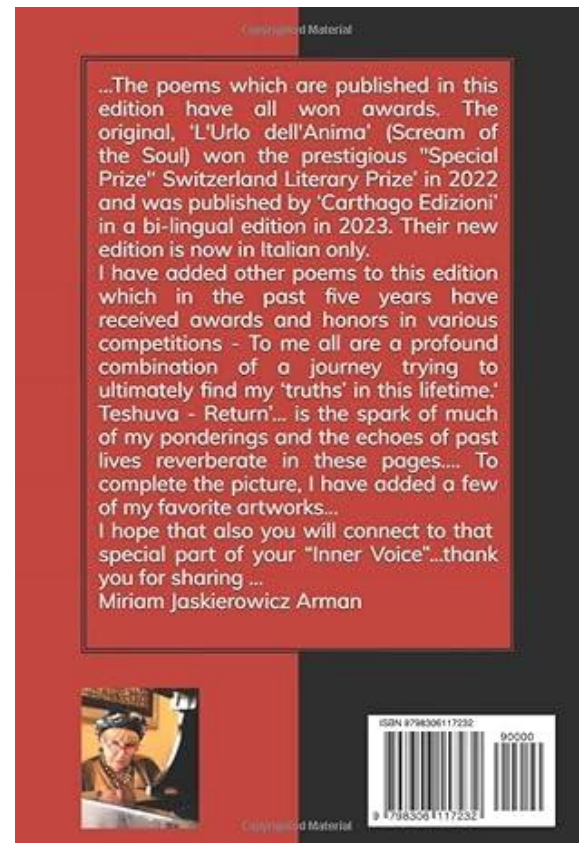
Prayer brings peace; hope enfolds like formidable, powerful arms, reinforcing the great desire to make the world 'sing'. Art is the fiber of existence; let the traveler rest his head on the luxuriant moss, and respite; vigorously refreshing the soul, living all over again.

This is not the first time I've made this trip... This time instead I'm sharing the journey without closing the doors – this time you are guests partaking of the experience.

There is G-D who guides my steps, and it is He who inspires me, it is He who wipes my tears, lights the fires that drives the battle toward good –

I will win, I WILL WIN!

Purchase from Amazon here => [Scream of the Soul: Ponderings and Echoes: Arman, Miriam Jaskierowicz](#)



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CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Voices Israel - Anthology 2025 - The submission period has opened and will remain open through March 15th, 2025.

Guidelines:

Submissions for the Anthology are accepted until March 15th, Israeli time. *International submitters: please don't leave it to the last day to submit, you might find you've missed the submission period if you haven't calculated the time difference correctly!*

Poems must be previously unpublished. However, poems that have been included in the monthly poetry pages attached to our newsletter or were written at Voices Israel workshops and appeared in the resulting chapbook of the workshop, are not considered "published" (since they were circulated only to a closed group of members, not available to the general public) and will be considered.

The editorial board then reviews all submissions, makes its decisions, and sends notices out to contributors. We aim to produce and print the volume by July or August. It is then distributed to paid-up Voices Israel members and others who have ordered and paid for copies. Copyright for individual poems is retained by the author of each poem. Copyright for the anthology belongs to Voices Israel Group of Poets in English.

How to Submit:

There is no fee for submitting poems for publication in our Anthology.

Poems **must be submitted using the Voices Israel Online Submission Manager, powered by Submittable**. This is the only way to submit your poems. Email submissions to any of our team will not be considered. Use this link to submit to the anthology - [submit](#).



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Judith Magazine, a new online **Journal Of Jewish Letters, Arts & Empowerment** seeks submissions – more information can be found [here](#).

The Jewish Literary Journal (a monthly online journal) seeks submissions of up to 5 poems - further details can be found [here](#).

OfTheBook Literary Journal publishes fiction, non-fiction, and poetry from new and established voices welcomes submissions of up to 10 pages of poetry, with one poem per page. Further details can be found [here](#).

WRITE-HAUS online journal welcomes submissions of prose and poetry for a **SUNDAY SHOWCASE**. More details are [here](#).

THE DERONDA REVIEW (www.derondareview.org), continues to accept poems for its page “Poems for Israel, October 2023,” which now contains the work of more than 40 poets. The page is being updated as new poems come in, so scroll down to find the latest! Poems for posting on this page may be sent to derondareview@gmail.com.

Green Golem is a new online Zionist literary magazine that is now open for submissions. Visit the Golem at <https://greengolemmag.com/>.

Jewish Book Council - Paper Brigade seeks unpublished poetry. Please submit a maximum of two poems, along with a \$3 reading fee. Poems will be considered for both *Paper Brigade* and JBC's online poetry series, Berru. The submission period closes on **February 15, 2024**. There is more information [here](#).

Free the Verse is now accepting submissions for its Spring issue. While the theme and title of this issue is ‘Here again’ you are encouraged to interpret it creatively. The deadline for this issue is **February 25th, 2025**. More information about how to submit can be found [here](#).

Saturday Evening Post Limerick Contest – seeks limericks describe James Williamson’s cover illustration from an old issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Submissions until 25th February 2025 – for more details of how to submit see [here](#).

The 2025 VOLE Spring Anthology Competition – Seeks submissions of up to 3 poems for a £10.50 fee.
Prizes: 1st Prize: £50.00; 2nd Prize: £30.00; 3rd Prize: £25.00

Closing Date for Submissions: 28th February 2025

Up to 50 short-listed poems will be published in the Competition Anthology, CAN SPRING BE FAR BEHIND?
Further details can be found [here](#).

24th Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest will award prizes of \$2,000, \$500, \$250, and ten Honorable Mentions of \$100 each. The winner will also enjoy a two-year gift certificate from our co-sponsor, Duotrope (a \$100 value). The top 13 poems are published on our website. There's no fee to enter. Entries close on April 1. Whether your poem is published or unpublished, or even if it has won a prize in a different contest, you may submit it to our contest. Jendi Reiter will judge, assisted by Lauren Singer. One poem only, please. [Submit online here](#).

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OUR MEMBERS' ART

Malka Kelter's Acrylic Painting - "Olive Tree"



I like the strong, upright branches, and the knarled trunk of the olive tree, standing proudly erect, inspiring growth and self-confidence. Malka Kelter

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Elana Wolff's Painting - "Where's My Hat?"

Mixed media on canvas, 24" x 30"



Front cover – Brenda Brett's Oil Painting - "Wistful"

Thoughts on the brink of a fledgling career.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL STONE

by Bob Findysz

On a bright, clear and crisp Sunday morning, over a cuppa and some freshly baked pastry from my daughter's bakery on Kibbutz Palmach-Tzova, I sat with Michael Stone in his booklined Jerusalem home. Following are the questions which guided our conversation and a summary of Michael's responses recorded on my telephone and freely transcribed. The first interview I have ever conducted for VOICES or otherwise:

1. *From your impressive CV, I see you have developed a long and intensive interest in things Armenian. How did you first find yourself delving into such an unusual area?*

When I completed high school in Australia I had learned Latin, Greek and French as well as Hebrew from home and the *cheder*. At university it was a fairly natural progression to biblical studies. And, with Greek and Hebrew, to concentrate on the Second Temple



period. After finishing my undergraduate work in Australia, I received a year fellowship to study in Jerusalem before going on to Harvard for my doctorate in biblical and ancient near eastern studies. Given my background, my advisor there suggested I focus on languages, particularly Old Persian and Armenian. I fell in love with Armenian, which has become one of my two great loves, a mistress of sorts second only to my academic wife, viz. the Second Temple Period.

- *Can you briefly summarize your lifetime interest in this field?*

I have combined my field of Jewish Studies and the Second Temple with Armenian biblical traditions and their place in Armenian society and culture. Some ancient Armenian biblical writings predate the surviving Greek texts of those works. I am also fascinated by the parallels between Jewish and Armenian Christian experiences. Judaism and Armenian Christianity are, in fact, "national" religions, the Armenians being in agreement only with the Copts, Ethiopians and Jacobite Syrian Christians. Besides, I very much like the Armenian people and their culture. In the end, in recent years, as an academic bigamist, I have focused on my Armenian mistress and do less in Jewish studies.

- *What aspects of Armenia and the language interest you most?*



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Two things: The first is the retelling of biblical stories and their function within Armenian society; and, the biblical roots of Armenian – such as texts containing Mt. Ararat and the Noah story. The second is Medieval Armenian poetry, which I have translated extensively over the years, mostly published in academic journals rather than collections of poetry. As a sideline, I have also developed an interest in Armenian pilgrims and inscriptions in the Holy Land and Sinai.

- *Why has this field given you such long-term fulfillment?*

It's about exploring unknown territory, taking advantage of so much available but unstudied material within the context of the history of religions, including the Jewish apocalyptic (visionary, revelatory) Second Temple period literature usually ignored by mainstream Judaism. In addition, I am interested in Armenian philology (texts and manuscripts), including Armenian poetry. Another rich source of unresearched materials.

2. *How did you first become interested in writing poetry?*

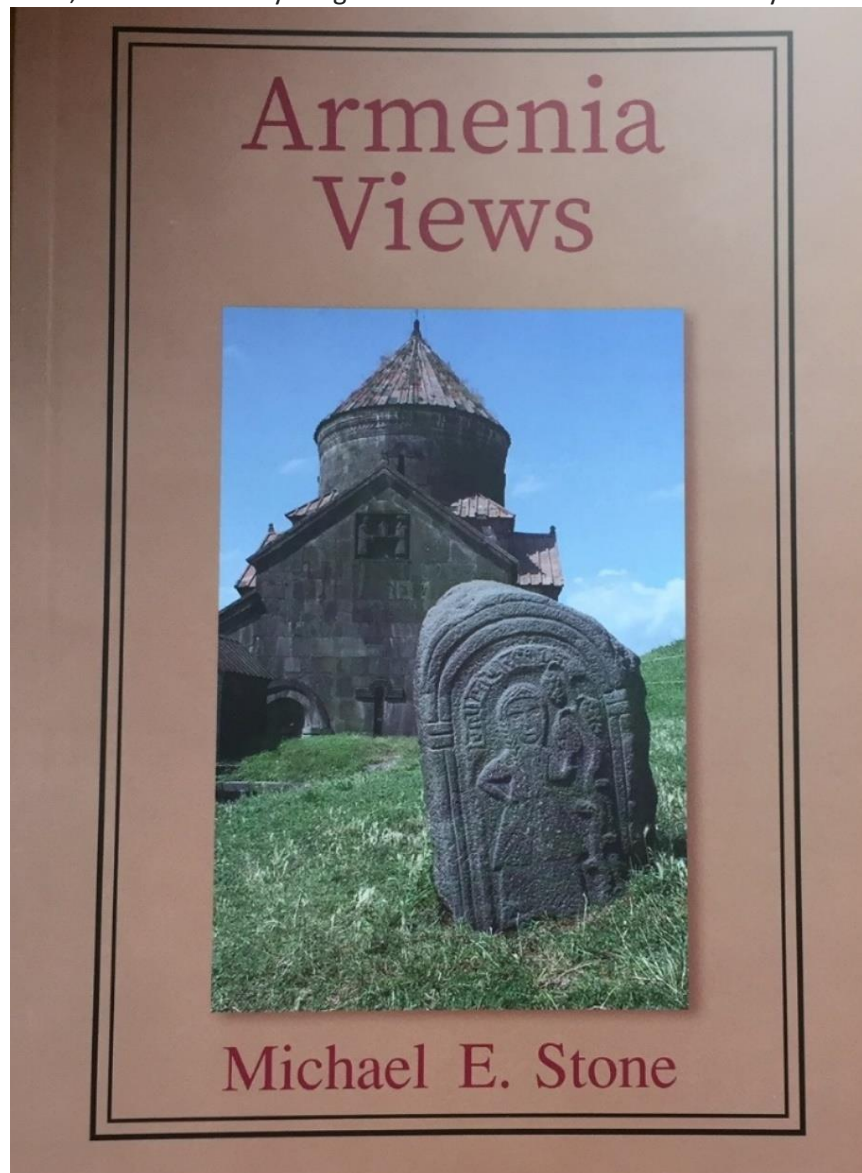
I have always enjoyed reading poetry. In high school, at university and afterwards. I don't know/ remember why I started writing poetry, only in the past 25-30 years. Beforehand, I didn't write anything creative. I was a scholar. I had always played with the idea of writing poetry but never did. I loved reading it. It was after the fall of the Soviet Union, when I was in Armenia. In the early 90s I would return from a day out in the field and write up a description of where I had been. Previously a foreign visitor was not allowed much if any freedom of movement anywhere in the Soviet Union including in Armenia. When I looked at these reports I noted that they were actually poetry full of descriptions of places I had finally been able to experience. All I needed was to break up the lines, mix them around a bit and it became poetic. Ultimately an Armenian literary magazine called *Ararat* published some of them. That started me writing poetry. (At the end of our conversation, Michael presented me with a signed copy of his Armenia poems.)

3. *From your quite extensive list of publications, i.e. academic books as well as professional journal articles, I wonder: How have you found the time to write poetry as well?*

I usually write in bed, on an iPad. Since *Corona* the muse has evaded me. And, now, there is the war. However, whenever I have to write, I find the time for it. I write what I feel strongly about. Lately, it has been mostly political and I write for the drawer. But, I haven't been writing all the time like I used to when I wrote because I had to, had something to say.

4. *Do you have a (number of) favorite poet(s)/ poetess(es)? If so, who are they and why do you enjoy their writing? Have they influenced your own poetry writing? If so, how?*

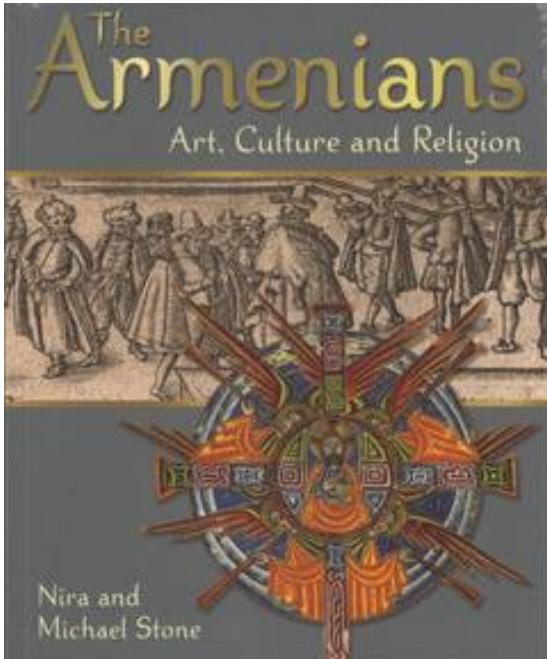
Gerald Manley Hopkins, an Anglican British poet who converted to Catholicism and became a Jesuit in Ireland where he also wrote poetry: his work is full of amazing alliteration and innovative "sprung" rhythm. Besides, I also like the writing of a woman called Jeredith Merrin, whose work I once discovered in a used bookshop in Cambridge. We have been in



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correspondence for many years now. Her poems are real, reflect reality, something I can recognize. My own writing is not full of color or images. Just words, words, words about what I see and feel.

5. *Do you have any advice for your fellow poets in VOICES/ Israel about how to balance writing for professional purposes and pleasure?*



I am a scholar of the past. I write poetry because I have to. With no ambition to become a famous poet. Before I started, I wasn't really thinking about writing poetry. Armenian poetry opened up a wellspring of poetry within me. A writer of poetry ought to do what their spirit tells them to. Yet, one needs to work at it. It doesn't just pour out in iambic pentameter. I have filled hundreds of pages of personal journals with all sorts of writings. Not literary pieces. Diaries of creative writing, of life, what I needed to record.

6. *Ending on a more personal note, are you married? Do you have (grand)children? Ages? Where are they living today?*

My wife of 52 years died 13 years ago. Nira was a medieval art historian, involved in Armenian art. I am left with our two adult children, 6 grandchildren and 6 greatgrandchildren between 8 years and 4 months old. My son and his family live in North Carolina; he holds a masters from Harvard Business School, got involved in the computer world, now retired he is still a business consultant. My daughter is a biologist, has an essential oils cosmetics company based near Rishon

where special needs employees work alongside pupils from an agricultural high school. She lives above me in this building; some of my grandchildren live on the floor beneath me. All of us have separate entrances and we live together quite harmoniously in this house my wife and I built in the late 60s.

7. *Anything else you would like to add?*

When I lived in Australia I never experienced antisemitism yet never regret moving here. Today Australia is a very different place. A synagogue was burnt down recently. Very sad.



p.s.: This interview could well be the first in a series which I would like to do with members of VOICES/ Israel. If you know of someone in the organization whom you feel ought to be approached, or would like me to turn to you, please feel free to contact me c/o of my VOICES Secretary email address secretary.voices@gmail.com or at my personal address, viz.: bfindysz@gmail.com

Bob Findysz

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CORRESPONDENCE ON POETRY AND ART

Julia Bartels and Ira Director

Correspondence is taken from actual emails between Julia Bartels and Ira Director. The inspiration for this format came from *Letters to a Young Poet* written between Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Xaver Kappus.

May 19, 2023

Dear Mr. Director,

My name is Julia Bartels and we met, without exchanging names, at Kibbutz Gezer's Yom Ha'Atzmaut party. We spoke about art and poetry, and you gave me a link to your work. Looking through it after returning home to Europe for my university studies, has raised some questions. If you have some time, I would love to hear anything you might share.

Should art be useful? In the conclusion of your retrospective, Ex. 2022, Retrospective: 50 years of art and poetry, <https://sites.google.com/view/iradirectorexhibition2022/home>

you wrote that you started creating simple and useful items. Is that something you plan or keep in mind as you work, to give art a practical purpose? Might that distract from the purpose of art, of aesthetics, expression, or provocation? Does the purpose of your work sometimes come after its creation or publication?

Thank you for our conversation in the kibbutz. It was genuinely interesting and thought-provoking. If you have the chance, I would very much appreciate hearing more about your art and your story.

All the best and Shabbat Shalom,

Julia

May 22, 2023

Dear Julia,

It was a pleasure to hear from you, and to have the opportunity to continue our talk. These answers are my personal perspective. Many thoughtful people have different ideas.

Though painting and poetry are different, here they are used in the broadest sense, "The Arts."

The creative process is the same.

Art is not useful in the practical sense. It can't be used to hammer a nail into a wall (usually).

It is extremely useful in stimulating an artist's and a viewer's imagination, reflection, self-awareness and understanding of the world.

As a child, I began creating useful/ decorative items: Searching the fields for four leafed clovers, a symbol of good luck, laminating them and making pendants; also making abstract copper enameled jewelry. The creation of craft pieces continues today. Nature still provides interesting bits of herself which I refashion. But craft and art are often different. A beautiful ceramic tea kettle is craft; putting a hole in its side might turn it into art. It's a different discussion with abundant literature if you are interested.

While working, the practical applications of art are never a consideration. It doesn't have any. It does rip my intestines out, hangs me upside down then slowly lets me heal as the piece reaches completion.

At times, I only realize the purpose or meaning of a single artwork, after the piece is finished. If it's a series or variations on a theme, it might leave me hanging upside down for years. Other times there is a general idea of what needs to be accomplished or even a clear plan and goal. Some artworks are still perplexing.

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Even though I have a list of publications and exhibitions, not being famous allows the creative process to be unaffected by the public's reception of my poetry, paintings, photography and AI images. Still there is pride in these creations, pleasure when others see the works, and hope they find value there for themselves.

I hope this answers some of your questions. Please let me know. If you find it useful or interesting, I'll continue writing to you. Your questions have also helped stimulate and organize my thoughts.

Thank you,

Ira Director, Curator , Gezer Gallery, [קִיבוּץ גֶזֶר, גלריית גזר-Gezer Gallery, Kibbutz Gezer](#) | [Facebook](#)

P.S. It seems my dog finds value in my leather sculptures. She recently ate one.

May 24, 2023

Dear Ira,

Thank you so much for your email! It's very interesting to hear your ideas and I'm so glad to provoke some thoughts. Please continue as I'm looking forward to reading more.

As for the use of art, I wonder what not having a practical purpose does to you (besides rip your intestines out). Is it ever discouraging that you cannot present your creations and prove their worth through application? That you can't see a direct tangible impact? Or is the opposite the case – does the self-awareness or understanding witnessed in viewers outweigh many possible practical purposes? I suppose this relates to both my question of why you create art and the question of to what extent art can change the world. Does it? Perhaps more than we can tell? And *should* it?

I realize I'm flooding you with more questions. Please feel free to answer or ignore any as suits you. But know that you are inspiring thought and even understanding.

Shavua tov!

Julia

May 26, 2023

Dear Julia,

My apology for not being clearer. There is no relationship between “practical purpose” and art. “Ripping my intestines out” is a metaphor for opening up to the creative process. There is no public; no need to prove anything; no tangible impact; no viewer.

When I pick up a pen/ paint brush/ camera or load an AI image generator, the rest of the world fades away into nothingness. Absolute nothingness.

Then I drift back, “[it] slowly lets me heal as the piece reaches completion.” This is, as you asked, the “practical purpose, tangible impact, proof of worth.” It has nothing to do with anyone but me and my relation to creativity.

Certainly positive reactions from people are enjoyable, but that doesn't have any relation to why artists create. There are different ways for artists to relate to the public.

Francis Bacon and Franz Kafka are among artists who don't want either all or part of their work to be seen. Quote, “Franz Kafka left his work...with explicit instructions that it should be destroyed on [his] death” [Artists who burned or destroyed their own works](#) | [WikiLists](#)

Many other artists, like Vincent van Gough and Emily Dickinson, continued their work without receiving recognition. Their importance was recognized after their death.

[16 Famous People Whose Talents Were Only Recognized After Their Deaths - ScoopWhoop](#)

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Professional artists are different as they need to relate to their public: critics, galleries, collectors. If they develop too quickly they lose their audience and livelihood. If they develop too slowly their public gets bored.

No value judgements. Just a description.

Why create art? Because I have to. No, not really. I could choose not to, but it would be a sadder life and a lot less sane. It teaches me about myself and my place in the world. Everything we do changes the world, but it changes ourselves first.

Rabbi Israel Salanter, a 19th century Lithuanian rabbi, taught, "When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. But I found it difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my country. When I found I couldn't change my country, I began to focus on my community. However, I discovered that I couldn't change the community, and so as I grew older, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself..."

Should art change the world? Everything we do, including art, should be an influence for good. That's the definition of leading a moral life. It's surprisingly simple. Start with a simple smile and good morning. I'm not claiming to have always followed these ideals. But at least I know the goals. Not everyone does.

Years back at the Israeli Tax Authority (home of trolls and ogres) while struggling to open a private tax account for teaching English, I mentioned in passing, the frustration and the temptation to move back to the USA. The short chubby religious man behind the desk stopped his work. I assumed he had no interest in another secular kibbutznik staying in Israel. Instead he said not to give up hope, encouraged me to stay in Israel, and expedited the tax account authorization. Thirty years later I think of him and remember how a small kindness can have a large impact on a person's life.

Best,

Ira

P.S. This one quote explains one of the practical applications of art better than I do.

"Art is to console those who are broken by life." Van Gogh

[11 Vincent van Gogh Quotes that will Inspire your Artistic Journey](#)

May 29, 2023

Dear Ira,

How did you learn to appreciate abstract art? I sometimes find it difficult to relate to and think many people write it off for this reason. I'm sure you'd argue they're missing out. Though, I wonder whether one can "learn to love" different art forms or if that feeling should come from inside without trying.

I'm also very interested in poetry. When we met, we talked about translation, and I believe you said almost anything can be translated. I'm not yet convinced. Doesn't the shape of your poems matter? The sound, the pacing, the connotations of the words you used?

And how did you start writing poetry? And why? I sometimes wonder if artists do what they do because of political or social aspirations, because of talent, or because they just *need* to (whatever that might mean). Do your poems fit into those categories?

All the best,

Julia

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

May 30, 2023

Dear Julia,

Another story: even as a child, my mother often took me to the Art Institute of Chicago. Even their website is breathtaking. [The Art Institute of Chicago](#) Continuing to visit as an adult, I would walk quickly past contemporary art to see the "real art".

Junk, a joke, a con. A brightly painted two meter tall red rectangular prism, cuboid, received particular disdain. One day, while passing, I stopped, turned around and looked. I got it; finally

understood. Even today I play the clip, in my mind, with perfect clarity: the look of the room and sculpture; my steps; the change from disdain to understanding.

It happened without trying; without wanting it to happen. More than that, I had already decided it had nothing to tell me. Like many things in art and in life, repeated exposure can sometimes lead to understanding.

Study would have likely made it happen quicker. Degrees didn't prepare me: Orthodox Jewish highschool - Bible and Talmud; Methodist junior college - comparative religion and philosophy; university - BA. philosophy; MA - poetry.

Study material is available on Google search. One example of many. Quote, "Abstract art is art that does not represent an accurate depiction of visual reality, communicating instead through lines, shapes, colors, forms and gestural marks".

[What is Abstract Art? The Complete Guide - Rise Art](#)

If you have more than a passing interest in modern and contemporary art, the Dada movement, conceptual art, performance art, mail art and AI image generators are significant. Keep in mind that every new movement in poetry and art has been met with derision. Robert Frost wrote that writing free verse poetry was like "playing tennis without a net." Critics initially dismissed Impressionism as unfinished and too sketchy.

If I said, "most anything is translatable", I was wrong.

Some poetry is easily translatable. Mine has simple words, short sentences and clear ideas. It's evocative because of that. It lends itself to translation for the same reasons.

Complex poems generate problems. Rilke has been translated into English by accomplished professors. Each translation reads differently. One book of his poems has the English and German on facing pages. The translation appears correct, but understanding the cultural context is beyond my reach.

Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé didn't allow translations of their work. This was not uncommon of French Symbolist poets. Others claim that a translation is actually a new poem. Is that bad?

Two final thoughts on translation:

Robert Frost, "Poetry is what gets lost in translation."

[The Difficult Art of Translation Poet Laureate Closes Literary Season.](#)

Willis Barnstone, "Although it is impossible to reproduce the same sound and meaning in... translation, I think what is the most interesting to translate... is... the untranslatable"

[Difficulties in Poetry Translation](#)

I'll answer more of your questions about poetry in the next email.

Best,

Ira

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S - A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

by Nicholas Dunne-Lynch

When his name comes up, most of us will associate Robert Louis Stevenson with *Treasure Island*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Kidnapped*, but there are many who had their first taste of poetry in childhood with *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

Published in 1887, five years after the iconic *Treasure Island*, it is hard to believe these two were the work of the same person. Indeed, *Jekyll and Hyde* sits uncomfortably beside both. *A Child's Garden* was an instant bestseller and remains in print in today's hi-tec age when children's poetry seems irrelevant amongst social media and smartphones.



In our farmhouse garden at Loughanure, County Kildare, Ireland, we had a swing attached to a branch of a sturdy tree so 'How do you like to go up in a swing, up in the air so blue,' spoke to us, instantly resonating in our lives. and soon in our esteem ousting our ration of comics, *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, among whose pages Dan Dare and Desperate Dan starred in their weekly extraterrestrial or otherwise outrageous adventures. Neither really spoke to us; neither was here, today and now, the way swinging was 'the pleasantest thing ever a child could do,' because around us were rivers, a well, brooks, many tall fir trees, and 'cattle and all, over the countryside.'

THE SWING

*How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!*

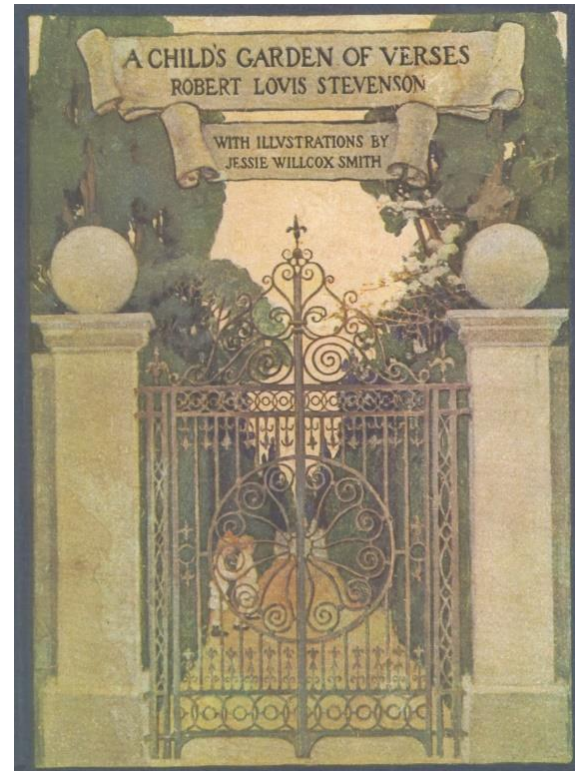
*Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside —*

*Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown —
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!*

From the moment our mother returned from Dublin with a copy of *A Child's Garden*, within it her childhood favorites too, we lost no time in memorizing many verses, poetry that lingers long after the banal utterances of the two Dans have faded.

See *A Child's Garden of Verses* at

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25609/25609-h/25609-h.htm>



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CANCELLED!

By Pesach Rotem

The Poem

In December 2023, a couple of months after the horrific events of October 7, I wrote a poem called “A Time for War and A Time for Peace.” The title, of course, comes from the Book of Ecclesiastes (Kohelet). The poem is an optimistic poem, predicting – in a tone of absolute certainty – that Israel and Palestine will someday live in peace. The catch, however, is that that blessed “someday” might not arrive for another century or two. And so, after painting a rosy picture of Israel and Palestine living in a state of such harmony that war is not even imaginable, the poem concludes:

And yet, today, in the meantime,
in the harsh reality of the here and now,
in the bloody shadow of Simchat Torah,
in the vow, once again, of Never Again,
there is no alternative to victory.

Peace will have to wait.

Whether it is a good poem or a bad poem is not for me to say. What I can say is that the poem accurately reflected reality as I saw it.

Published, Then Cancelled

*Topical Poetry*¹ was an online journal that billed itself as “a global platform to share poems on current events.” It had already published four of my poems² and I felt like I had a good relationship with the editors there. I submitted “A Time for War and A Time for Peace” and I was pleased to receive their response:

Dear Pesach,
Thank you so much for sharing your work with us. We are thrilled to publish your poem in our next issue (Dec 17, 2023).
Congratulations once again!
Sincerely,
Topical Poetry

Sure enough, they published my poem on December 17 and there it was, on the Internet, for the whole world to see. For me, it was a thrill. The thrill lasted one week. On December 24, I received this:

Hi Pesach,
We have received multiple emails from our readers about being hurt by this poem. In light of the ongoing situation, we have decided to retract the poem from the publication. We hope that you will understand.
Regards,
Topical Poetry

Naturally, I replied right away. “No, I do not understand. Please explain what is hurtful in my poem.”

No response. I never heard from Topical Poetry again. I had been cancelled.

“Poets Respond” Responds

I am a member of a Facebook group devoted to current-events-related poetry called Rattle’s Poets Respond³. On December 27, I posted⁴ the story of the publication and cancellation of “A Time for War and A Time for Peace” to the group, along with a copy of the poem. I assumed that I would receive a sympathetic hearing. After all, this was not a



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

random group of strangers. These were my colleagues. My partners in current-events poetry. How could they not be on my side?

I was, it turned out, mistaken. The comments to my post were not friendly. The first one read: “Thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza—women, children, and elders—are being killed and wounded and are slowly starving. And you wonder why this poem is hurtful? This is beyond tone deaf.”

And they kept coming:

“A grievous mistake you made by publishing horrifying, nauseating genocide propaganda.”

“He falsely tries to claim victimhood for writing what is, essentially, a racist poem.”

“This is, in fact, a propaganda piece masquerading as a poem.”

“I think any publication has a right to not share this type of hate speech.”

“I agree with removing the poem. This poem was not only in poor taste but also seems to support the ongoing slaughter of thousands of people.”

“What a hideous, war mongering poem this is.”

One commenter warned that “Hatespeech like this can’t be published without harsh legal consequences” and advised me that “you better stop going to countries that prosecute anyone for encouraging genocide.”

Most hurtful of all were the comments of Timothy Green. Timothy is the editor of *Rattle* magazine as well as the administrator of the Facebook group, and he declared, “Well, it’s not really a poem, it’s propaganda, which is the opposite of poetry” and he concluded that “it’s just a partisan call for violence.” Ouch!

There were a few supportive comments, which I appreciated, but they were a small minority. I also posted my own comment in an attempt to defend and explain myself:

The intent of the poem was to explore the inner turmoil of the poet as he grapples with conflicting ideas and conflicting emotions. The poet believes in peace, he yearns for peace, but in the end he must acknowledge, sadly and reluctantly, that, in the present circumstances, peace is not possible. Whether it is a good poem or a bad poem, or whether it is even a poem at all, I leave to others to argue over. I do my best.

Republication and Conclusion

Eventually, “A Time for War and A Time for Peace” was republished in *The Deronda Review*⁵, in *aChord*⁶, and in *Green Golem*⁷. I am grateful to the editors of those publications for getting my work out to the world.

In the end, nothing terrible happened to me as a result of being cancelled. Nobody punched me in the face, nobody prosecuted me for inciting genocide, but it was nevertheless an unsettling experience. I know that other Israeli writers have had similar experiences and I think it is important to share them.

Notes

1. <https://topicalpoetry.com/>
2. <https://topicalpoetry.com/?s=Pesach>
3. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/poetsrespond>
4. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/poetsrespond/posts/7206424702743783/>
5. <https://www.derondareview.org/backingIsrael.htm>
6. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FKV05d8UJfAWq2ToGoIT0EKo0jbvJiRR/view>
7. <https://greengolemmag.com/2024/02/13/a-time-for-war-and-a-time-for-peace/>

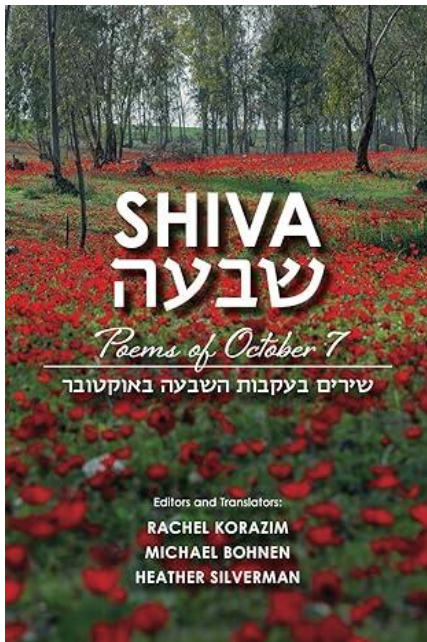
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VOICES ISRAEL – INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL KORAZIM

Zoom Interview of January 28th - Report by Wendy Blumfield

It was significant that this Voices Israel event, an interview by Dina Yehuda with renowned poetry educator Dr Rachel Korazim, was the day after the Memorial of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945.

Introduced by Elana Dorfman, Rachel Korazim talked about the anthology, *Shiva*, a number significant in the date 7th October, edited by herself, Michael Bohnen and Heather Silverman. She explained that it was divided into several chapters and she introduced the poet who had written the poem, Mothers, Osnat Eldar, as well as several other poems.



Osnat, a native Israeli poet with excellent command of English, expressed what so many Voices poets experienced in the aftermath of that day, the most horrendous attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. “No words.” She could not feel, or sleep, or write or speak. Nobody could write about it. We were all silent in our shock and horror.

Nevertheless, Osnat gradually emerged from the silence, “made her way back to G-d” as she put it, felt that He had given shelter - and started to write. By writing about the mothers of the victims and the fallen soldiers, she intended this to be interpreted also as the suffering of their fathers, children, parents and the entire People of Israel.

The final poem that Rachel presented written by Michael Zatz, was Illusion. However deep the grief, the dog has to be walked.

This probably explains the unbelievable voluntary efforts of the citizens of Israel, doing whatever they could to provide services and provisions, physical and emotional support.

Rachel who was in Budapest on the day of the atrocity, could not get home for some time and meanwhile was in contact on-line with communities in the USA, Jews who were sharing the shock and expressing solidarity.

“I did not plan an anthology, just started to collect poems”, she said. When it developed into a full anthology the editors decided that it must be ready by the following September for congregations to share at *slichot*.



The anthology, in English and Hebrew side by side, is now being translated into Hungarian and French.

Shiva: Poems of October 7 can be purchased from Amazon [here](#).

Members in Israel can obtain a copy by e-mailing

Judy Koren koren.judy@gmail.com.

Cost 40NIS if collecting from Judy, or 60NIS to include postage.

Net proceeds of all sales will be donated to the Israel Trauma Coalition for their work with victims of October 7th and its aftermath.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

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<https://voicesisrael.com/about-voices-israel/membership/>.

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Chanita Millman, 15, Shachar St., Beit Hakerem, 9626323 Jerusalem, ISRAEL.

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