

VOICES ISRAEL  
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

# NEWSLETTER

## JULY 2025



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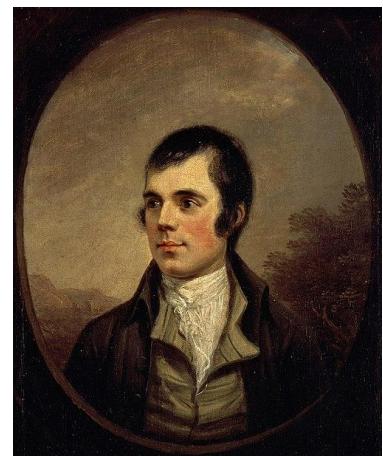
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**Robert Burns**  
 By Alexander Nasmyth  
[Wikipedia]

### Aphorism of the Month

**Life is inexact. Only poets fear not to tread there.**

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



# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

*Answer July—  
Where is the Bee—  
Where is the Blush—  
Where is the Hay?  
Emily Dickinson*

Wow! June was quite a month – twelve days of which, none of us would ever like to go through again. Members in Be'er Sheva, Tel Aviv and Haifa were particularly hard-hit and tragically, twenty-eight of our citizens died in these attacks and many, many more were injured and/or lost their homes. Let's hope and pray that everyone returns to normal life in good health soon.

As a famous Scottish Rabbi once said "*The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men/Gang aft agley*". We had planned to have a workshop in Haifa in June, which of course had to be postponed. But many thanks to Elana Dorfman, our workshop coordinator for arranging a replacement Zoom workshop at such very short notice. And we express our gratitude to Ann Bar-Dov for stepping up to deliver a fascinating analysis of The Book of Jonah and inspiring 25 of us to write poetry just half an hour or so after emerging from protective shelters to avoid Iran's ballistic missiles.

Earlier in the month, we heard with a terrible mixture of sadness and relief that the bodies of our dear member Judih Weinstein z"l and her husband Gadi Haggai z"l, were recovered by the IDF from Gaza. We've known already for many months that they had been brutally murdered on 7<sup>th</sup> October - we hope and pray that their family gains some comfort from having their physical remains now buried in Israeli soil.

On a completely different topic, members who participated in a recent review of the Reuben Rose Competition decided that the format of the competition should remain more or less in line with how it has been over the last few years. You can see full details of the competition on page 8 of this newsletter and on our website <https://voicesisrael.com/reuben-rose/>. The submission period starts on 15<sup>th</sup> July.

We also reviewed the format of the Bar Sagi Competition with Professor Anthony Joseph, the competition's sponsor. We were very disappointed last year that so few young poets had submitted entries but it was agreed that we would try again for one more year, again with the format the same as in previous years.

There was a delay in printing the 2025 Anthology, because of the war with Iran. I'm pleased to tell you that the printing is now under way and we hope that the Anthology will be ready for distribution soon.

Finally, I'm ever so pleased to inform you that well-known American poet Baruch November will be presenting a Zoom reading of some of his recent poems from his new book, 'The Broken Heart is the Master Key'. In addition he will be interviewed about his poems and his life and work by Susan Olsburgh – so please reserve this date/time in your diary – Sunday August 17 at 7:30pm (Israel time) – more details will follow soon.

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,  
President, Voices Israel.

**Late News – The Workshop – Two American Poets – is now scheduled for Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September in Haifa. More details will follow soon.**

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - JULY 2025

SOUTHERN	TEL AVIV	JERUSALEM	UPPER GALILEE
Meeting via Zoom Sunday, July 20 at 5:00 PM	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, July 24 at 7:00 PM	Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, July 29 at 7:30 PM	Wednesday, July 23 at 10:30. at the home of Lisa Aigen
Coordinator: Miriam Green  <a href="mailto:miriamsgreen@gmail.com">miriamsgreen@gmail.com</a>	Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438  <a href="mailto:nosnivel@netvision.net.il">nosnivel@netvision.net.il</a>	Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998  <a href="mailto:aemeallem@gmail.com">aemeallem@gmail.com</a>	Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262  <a href="mailto:poetsprogress@gmail.com">poetsprogress@gmail.com</a>
HAIFA  Tuesday, July 22 at 7:00 PM at Judy Koren's home  Contact Naomi Yalin for details	NETANYA/SHARON  Monday, July 28 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home  2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg	GLOBAL GROUP 1  Meeting via Zoom to be confirmed At 19:30 Israel time	GLOBAL GROUP 2  Meeting via Zoom Sunday, July 13 At 19:00 Israel time
Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738  <a href="mailto:naomiyalin@gmail.com">naomiyalin@gmail.com</a>	Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575  <a href="mailto:olsburgh.susan@gmail.com">olsburgh.susan@gmail.com</a>	Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365  <a href="mailto:y2nosh@gmail.com">y2nosh@gmail.com</a>	Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860  <a href="mailto:koren.judy@gmail.com">koren.judy@gmail.com</a>

**Baruch November – Zoom Poetry reading and interview - Reserve this date in your diary – Sunday August 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm**

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

- **Gwen Owen** of Hampshire, United Kingdom

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

- To - **Isaac Cohen** for his many successes throughout the month.
- To - **Ruth Schreiber**, who has had three poems selected for publication by OfTheBook. You can read Ruth's poems 'Brother', 'Thank You', and 'Hot Little Butterfly' in the Poet's Corner section of the Newsletter.
- To - **Miriam Green** whose poem 'Take Note of Today' mourning Judih Weinstein z"l, has been published in Judith Magazine – you can read the poem [here](#).
- To - **Ruth Schreiber**, whose watercolour was chosen for the cover of the June 2025 issue of Radar Poetry – you can see it [here](#).
- To - **Gail Wasserman**, whose poem 'THEY LAUGHED AND LAUGHED AND LAUGHED AND LAUGHED' has been selected by Moonstone to be published in its new anthology " Betrayal" (about the betrayal of women). You can read Gail's poem in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

## 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](mailto:johnmichaelsimon@gmail.com).

**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: 10:00-13:00; 15:00-18:00. Friday: 10:00-13:00.



## ZOOM WORKSHOP – “THE ROLE OF THINGS”

Twenty-five members participated in our recent Workshop "The Role of things" led by Ann Bar-Dov. **"The Role of things"** was a reflective writing workshop inspired by the **Book of Jonah**. Ann Invited participants to consider how physical things can play significant and sometimes mysterious roles in both literature and life, perhaps even challenging our assumptions about reality. Poems that were started during this workshop will be included in an e-chapbook (pdf). Participants should send their poems to [newsletter.voices@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.voices@gmail.com) by 25<sup>th</sup> July.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## JUDIH WEINSTEIN AND GADI HAGGAI Z" L

You have probably heard the news that the bodies of our dear member Judih Weinstein z"l and her husband Gadi Haggai z"l, were recovered from Gaza by the IDF. Judih and Gadi were brutally murdered by Hamas terrorists on or soon after October 7<sup>th</sup> - we hope and pray that their return to Israel will bring comfort to their family.



### **"Gone in a flash of shrapnel" \***

The irony of your poem, dear Judih!  
Now we know you and Gad  
were amongst the first murdered,  
not hostages  
but your bodies still are.  
When will they be released?

Your hostage photo poster  
hung on our street by the café.  
Often we would 'visit' you,  
see your smile,  
your grey curly hair.  
Those billboard greetings had hope.

We thought you were alive.  
You will always remain in our midst dear Judih,  
and your portrait kissed and blessed  
for you, a fellow poet in Voices Israel,  
are much missed and a continuing symbol  
of the horror of that Simchat Torah massacre.

**Susan Olsburgh** March 2024

\* Title taken from Judih's poem "Gone in a flash of shrapnel"

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## VOICES MEMBERS AT IAWE

Wendy Blumfield hosted an IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English) launch of arc 31 – the IAWE's new anthology. Many members of Voices Israel have poems in Arc 31.

Pictured at the launch were:

(back row – left to right) – Julian Alper, Dina Jehuda, Mike Stone (editor of arc 31) and Pesach Rotem  
(front row – left to right) – Miriam Alper, Wendy Blumfield and Iris Dan



## IAWE (Israel Association of Writers in English) aChord Newszine

IAWE invites you to read or download its quarterly newsletter aChord Newszine No. 19 - click [here](#).

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

### **Voices Israel - Reuben Rose Competition**

**Reuben Rose Competition seeks submissions:**

- **Submission Dates – 15 July to 15 October**
- **Entrance fees- submit 1 poem for \$6, 3 poems for \$14, 6 poems for \$19**
- **Prize Money – 1st Prize \$500, 2nd Prize \$200, 3rd Prize \$100**
- **10 Honourable Mentions**
- **Three Judges – Baruch November, Judith R. Robinson, Fran Levin.**
- **Winning poems and Honourable Mentions will be published in the Reuben Rose Competition section of the 2026 Anthology volume.**

**For more information see:**

<https://voicesisrael.com/reuben-rose/submit-to-the-reuben-rose/>



# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

**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](#).

**Minyan Magazine** (<https://www.minyanmag.com/>) publishes poetry and flash fiction written by Jews and their allies alongside one another. Although we like work with a Jewish theme, we also enjoy work with secular themes. Send us your best, regardless of the theme! Please note that we are a journal of tolerance. It would be a great idea to look at our previous issues to get a sense of what we publish, and all of our issues are free to read! Unsolicited submissions containing three to five previously unpublished poems or up to three flash fiction stories are welcome year-round.

## Poetry Submissions

- Please make sure that your poetry submission contains only one Word document or .pdf with your 3-5 previously unpublished poems.
- Please include your short bio in your cover letter.
- Work should be submitted using our [Submittable](#) link.
- We provide a free option and a \$5 option for expedited submissions. Using the \$5 option guarantees that we will respond within 10 days. This small contribution goes towards keeping the magazine going.

Submissions to **New English Review** (the monthly magazine) should be sent to [kendra@newenglishreview.org](mailto:kendra@newenglishreview.org). There is no word limit, but please keep in mind that your work will be read online. Submissions for the coming month are due by the 20th of the previous month. (Example, submissions for August must be in by the 20th of July.) Timely or news-relevant pieces will be accepted at any time. If you wish to submit, please click [here](#) for guidelines on submitting.

## Best Spiritual Literature Awards - Orison Books

Each year from May 1 – August 1 we accept entries of unpublished poetry for consideration for The Best Spiritual Literature Awards. The winner will receive a \$500 cash prize as well as publication in Best Spiritual Literature, an annual collection of the finest spiritually engaged writing from a broad and inclusive range of perspectives that appeared in periodicals the preceding year. (The unpublished work selected for The Best Spiritual Literature Awards will be featured alongside the reprinted material.)

Submit up to 3 poems (10 pp. max) - Simultaneous submissions are accepted.

Entry Fee: \$12

Submission Period: May 1 – August 1

Judge: Yehoshua November

For more information see [here](#).

**Streetlight Annual Anthology** seeks submissions by 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

We seek to publish all types of well-crafted poems which go beyond description, and resonate with rich language, clear images and a voice. *Streetlight Magazine* welcomes work by both emerging and established poets. Send us 3-5 unpublished poems in a single document. Include with your submission a 2-3 sentence biographical note that will be used if your work is accepted.

All accepted entries will be published in the *Streetlight* annual anthology.

For more information see [here](#).

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

The Deronda Review seeks submissions. Our next reading period will be from May 15 to July 15, 2025. Send to Esther Cameron, [derondareview@gmail.com](mailto:derondareview@gmail.com), or to Mindy Aber Barad, [maber4kids@yahoo.com](mailto:maber4kids@yahoo.com). For the 2025 issue, we will continue the theme of Trust (primarily among fellow-humans), and add that of Will. Poems on other themes, especially nature and the seasons and any of our past themes (see the Archives), will also be considered.

B”H

Dear friends and fellow poets,

Once again the time has come to call for contributions to *The Deronda Review*’s twenty-first issue. A year has passed, another year of war, lit by flares that either blind or show cruelty and betrayal, bravery and endurance, death and the birthpangs of “a terrible beauty,” and faith, indelibly for what they are. (This past week, in the news, another bright angelic face, light from a star extinguished...) We have kept track of this, to some extent, in poems posted [here](#), for which we thank all those who sent them.

For the coming issue, as in our previous issues, we are open to poems on the seasons, on the earth, on any of our previous themes – remember – we’d asked for Trust, Utopia, Building, Soul, Poems Inspired by Poems, Flight.... that last might well appeal to some here at this hour when the ground burns beneath our feet, in more senses than one.

But this time we are focused on WILL.

We think of Rudyard Kipling’s stanza – *“If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew To serve your turn long after they are gone And so hold on when there is nothing in you Except the Will that says to them ‘Hold on’...”* But if you know a bit of Kabbala, there’s more to it. “Will” is the first of ten stages (they’re called Sfirot) by which the Infinite articulates itself into Creation (I’m simplifying drastically, of course). In Kipling, Will’s the last thing left; in Kabbala the start of everything. They say a black hole may flare out another universe, that every seeming end is a beginning.

In any case, to cling to that in us that would envision, trust, and build, or even remember what for now seems lost, requires a strain of Will.

Again in Kabbala, after Will comes Wisdom, which contains all that’s to be, implicit; after that Understanding, which anticipates the forms of things.

Well, we shall now leave off expounding that of which we know but little, but hope these rumors of the hidden things may summon to your minds some old or new words of yours, which you will send to us from now until the middle of July.

A further note: this most unnatural year has also brought, like all years, natural losses: Ruth Fogelman, so long a luminous voice, has gone into the world of light. We’ve gathered her poems we were privileged to share into a retrospect you will find [here](#). To read these poems is to share her life in the Old City of Jerusalem, close to the point where the supernal light breaks forth into this dark and turbulent world. What this past year has borne, is yet unknown; but may the years bring back her inspiration in new-fledged voices of delight and hope.

Listening for your voices, we remain

Esther Cameron  
Mindy Aber Barad  
Editors, The Deronda Review  
[www.derondareview.org](http://www.derondareview.org)

More details at:  
<https://www.derondareview.org/submit.htm>

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**Black Eyes Publishing UK** seeks submissions. An opportunity to be part of this anthology (publication October 2025)  
**Rise of the Badger and the Great Shrubbery**

*What phoenix will arise from the ashes of the human race?*

The idea for this Anthology was born when I heard, yet again, someone talking about 'saving the planet'. It occurred to me that it was humanity that needed to be saved; what they were actually talking about was the demise of the human race. Given time, the chances are, the planet will be fine. The planet will survive the climate crisis and the endless wars; people won't. Even these terms; 'Planet', 'Earth', 'Gaia' etc. are all human titles. No humanity; no names; no Earth. When we cease to be, our language goes as well. I doubt the dinosaurs created a name for the place they inhabited. Are we already too late to prevent it? Probably!

Should we put the proverbial paper bag over our heads, get under a table and just fade away?

No! It's not all doom and gloom. What do we do now? Each of us should strive to do and be the best we can...Live each of our individual lives towards a glorious zenith.

Ten years ago, at the foot of the Cheese-rolling hill on the A46 between Brockworth and Painswick in Gloucestershire, there were two car parks. The first, near a quarry, was closed due to subsidence. Now, a decade later, as you drive past you would never know that once there was a place to park. The whole area is filled with dense shrubbery and trees are taking over, it has become part of the wooded slope of the hill. It may also surprise some people to know that the top land predator in the United Kingdom is the Badger, which like humans are omnivores, therefore adaptable foodwise. Hence the title came to me. **'Rise of the Badger and the Great Shrubbery'.**

This will be a Climate Crisis Anthology with a difference. Here we will assume that the worst has happened; the Human Race has destroyed itself completely, no survivors. What comes next? What kind of phoenix will arise from the ashes of our human world?

Submit, by 31st July 2025, we are inviting submissions of **DRAWINGS** (as a .jpg), **ARTWORK** (as a .jpg), **POETRY** (max 100 lines), **FLASH FICTION** (max 1000 words), **PREDICTIONS** (max 1000 words). Your submissions can be **SERIOUS, FRIVOLOUS, or just PLAIN OFF-THE- WALL**

After reviewing submissions, **we have a final submission call-out till 31st July 2025 to fill any perceived gaps.**

**Publication is anticipated October 2025.** All profits from sales of this anthology will go towards funding a multi-arts festival.

Submit to: Peter Lay - [blackeyespublishinguk@yahoo.com](mailto:blackeyespublishinguk@yahoo.com)

**All Your Poems (Magazine)** – seeks submissions for August edition by 18<sup>th</sup> July.

We accept Poetry Modern and Traditional, if you have accompanying sketches or pictures please attach them as jpg. files. A maximum of 4 poems on any subject should be sent at any one time. All pages need to be numbered and show name and email address. In MS Word not PDF. A short bio (no more than 70 words) and picture must be attached to your submission. *You will not be considered if these are not included.*

If your submission is accepted for publication you will receive a free online copy of the magazine which you can download. Download copies will be available to purchase from [www.allyourstoriesandpoems.com](http://www.allyourstoriesandpoems.com)

eBook and print copies will be available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble as well as other outlets.

This magazine aims to give new and experienced poets an opportunity to be published.

[editor@allyourpoems.com](mailto:editor@allyourpoems.com)

[submissions@allyourpoems.com](mailto:submissions@allyourpoems.com)

For more information see [here](#)

**Free the Verse** is now accepting submissions for its Autumn issue. While the theme and title of this issue is 'Signal' we encourage you to interpret it creatively. More details can be found [here](#).

**Poetry Super Highway**'s Poetry Contest will begin on July 14 – for further information see [here](#).

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## **The Coniston Prize - Submissions for the 2025 Coniston Prize will be open between June 1 and August 1, 2025.**

The Coniston Prize is an annual award that recognizes an exceptional group of poems by a woman writing in English. For more details see [here](#).

## **The Weekly Poems Contest - All Poets Invited**

*Weekly Poems* invites all poets from everywhere on Earth to submit a *weekly poem*. Poems must be 15 lines or shorter, written during the current week and submitted by Saturday, with the winner published on Sunday. Submissions are open eight months of the year, for three weeks per month, opening on the first Monday of the month.

### **Submission & Publication Months**

Submissions are open eight months of the year, with issues of *Weekly Poems* published on the first three Sundays following the first Monday of the month.

– Period 1: February, March, April

– Period 2: June, July, August

– Period 3: October, November

Upcoming Submission and Publication Dates – Submissions open June 30th to July 5th for publication on July 6th

– Submissions open July 7th to 12th for publication on July 13th

– Submissions open July 14th to 19th for publication on July 20th

– Submissions open July 21st to 26th for publication on July 27th

– Submissions open July 28th to August 2nd for publication on August 3rd

More details can be found [here](#).

## ***The Wetherby Festival Comedy Poem Competition* is back for its second edition. We believe that this is the only open-entry funny poem competition in the UK.**

*Have you got a poem that'll tickle our sides?*

*If you have, you can win a prize!*

- Please email your poem to [festivalpoetry@wetherbyfestival.co.uk](mailto:festivalpoetry@wetherbyfestival.co.uk) by 11:59pm (BST) on Sunday 14th September 2025.
- The poem must be in English. We accept entries from any location.
- Winners will be notified by 30th September 2025.

For more details, see [here](#).

## **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest — Poets Wanted! Enter Now!**

We have now entered the third month of the 2025 Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest. The countdown to the July 16, 2025, deadline for submissions is underway. The theme of this year's contest is "Believe In The Power Of Words Brought To Life Through Poetry." The five (5) new contest categories include the following: Wishes Do Come True Open Your Mind To Change Rise To Life's Challenges Do A Good Deed Smile Every Day. Poets may submit a maximum of three poems, no more than one in each of three of the five contest categories.

Everyone is encouraged to enter the contest. Poets do not have to live in Lincoln, California to be eligible. There is no entry fee. Young Poets, 18-years of age or under, are encouraged to submit poems and will compete in a special "Young Poets" category.

The "Rules and Entry Form" can be downloaded from the following blog:

<https://slolowe44.blogspot.com/2025/03/2025-voices-of-lincoln-poetry-contest.html>. If you have questions, please contact Alan Lowe, Contest Coordinator, at [slolowe@icloud.com](mailto:slolowe@icloud.com).

The Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest is presented by the Poets Club of Lincoln. Winners will receive a commemorative chapbook of the winning poems.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## OUR MEMBERS' ART



**“My basket fork-eeping things in”** – made by Miriam Webber:  
cane, yellow macramé string and plastic forks.



**Front cover – Ruth Schreiber’s Watercolor ‘Violinist’**

This watercolour is part of a small series on musicians. I photographed and sketched during a concert at the Jerusalem Theater a few years ago, and added the watercolour paint in my studio at home afterwards.

## MASKS

### By Elana Dorfman

When I was sixteen and very much involved in theatre my mother went on a trip to Greece, and brought back a pair of masks Comedy and Tragedy from the Greek theater. Ever since then I have been fascinated by masks. I currently have a collection of about thirty masks from all over the world: from New Zealand to Switzerland from Mexico to Japan from Kenya to Alaska and many places in between. What particularly captivated my interest in masks is the endless permutations of the human face, the individuality of each mask on the one hand, and the universality of certain features on the other.

For instance, I have a mask from Indonesia of a witch that has a mane of unwieldy hair all around her face. Untethered hair is a universal symbol of something gone wrong. It can



symbolize a character who has lost touch with reality as in the madness of Ophelia when she appears with loose disheveled hair worn down around her shoulders, or a sign of mourning as in the Sophocles play Oedipus where Jocasta appears with her hair in wild disarray in the last scene. It can symbolize death as in the ghosts in Japanese Kabuki plays or being in touch with the supernatural as the long unruly hair of a shaman.

I also have a mask from Thailand that shows a face with its tongue out. This is a universal sign of contempt, it is probably a trickster character. The tongue can also indicate evil as in the Jewish legends about *LoShon Hara* or lasciviousness as well. The same witch from Indonesia also has a long tongue protruding from her face. And there are many more examples of universals facial expressions.

The mask I just recently renovated (shown here), I originally made 40 years ago. It was based on a picture of an African mask that I had come across, and it was in shades of brown. I had made it out of



plaster bandages and after so many years it was faded, and the bandages were showing through in some places where the paint had chipped. As part of the renovation process, I covered it with Polyfilla (a very fine form of plaster) and sanded it to make it smooth. I then painted it with acrylic paint, in shades of green. This time I was inspired by an exhibit I once saw of very colorful central American masks. I think of it as a forest sprite.

## “SURELY IT IS”: PAINT-OVER INTO POEM

By Elana Wolff



In May a fellow writer-friend from the Toronto community messaged me a Submission Call from a new online magazine, suggesting that I submit some poems. I took a look at the guidelines and wrote back saying I had nothing that fit the Call. “Well then write a new piece,” he urged. “You can do that!” I sent him back a straight-mouth emoji 😐 - meaning something like mild deadpan or indecision.

I actually didn’t intend to write for the Call. My attentions were elsewhere—between writing toward deadlines and editing, I was dabbling at a paint-over (otherwise called a *pentimento*). I engage in paint-overs when I no longer want to keep an art-piece as-is, and yet I do wish to retain something of its ‘archaeology’—its origins and backstory. A paint-over process can carry on for weeks as I step away from the piece and return to it with new eyes to see what’s presenting.

I’d been tinkering at this particular paint-over for several weeks when trees in the piece gave rise to some words. I wrote

### Surely It Is

Larched in the earth—this tree  
with the white-blooded cockroach,  
the green-blooded worm.

How did it come to you, Lord,  
to make such ample space  
for time and night

for light. I know a lot  
of fancy words, my go-to word  
is simple, though

I’m mystified  
and have been  
by obedience.

The wind that breezes  
our cheeks, like spirit,  
is one.

on the side of canvas frame: *Larched in the earth*. “Larched” isn’t a word (as such) but that’s what came—a compression of “larch” and “arched”; “arc” embedded.

A paint-over requires a certain intuitiveness, a playfulness, an openness to unfolding. Turning the work to joggle the mind to consider different views and juxtapositions. Layering paint, covering up. Adding bits of this and that—figures, scribbles, found and made-up stuff; text. While leaving traces of the previous art-work showing through.

I didn’t intend to write anything to submit to the new magazine’s Submission Call. Yet as the paint-over evolved, it seeded a poem that I thought might fit the Call. As it turned out, the poem, “Surely It Is,”

was accepted together with two other previously composed poems “Refinement” and “Screwdriver” - as a three-part offering - [see here](#). The editor found the thematic through-line of imaginative freedom and the defiance of constraint compelling, and was “delighted to move forward with publishing the three as a set” - along with three images of the paint-over: full colour, black and white, and a detail in colour. The three takes on the art-piece echo the tercet form of “Surely It Is.”



# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH



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## TRIBUTES TO SUSAN ROSENBERG Z" L

Edited by Wendy Blumfield

### Betsy Rosenberg speaks about her late mother and poet Susan Rosenberg, in conversation with Debbie Golden

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025, Jerusalem



SUSAN

Debbie: Your mother Susan died very recently. I am so sorry for your loss and thank you for taking the time to talk to us about your mother at this time. I was privileged to have met Susan at the Voices Haifa Group and felt immediately drawn to her person and to her work.

Perhaps you could begin by sharing your understanding of the place and importance of poetry in your mother's life.

Betsy: My mother delighted in keeping a journal until the last few years of her life when loss of vision made it difficult for her to write. She loved to read her jottings for the week to my father on Shabbat, and he drank in her accounts of the life they shared with tremendous pleasure, a lovely aspect of their relationship. She often transposed descriptions or surprising insights and dreams from her journals into poetry and shared them with me and other family members and ultimately with the readers of her books.

Living on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor she had an unobstructed view of the sky in Haifa and a sense of communion with the birds and clouds and the sun and particularly with the moon, as you find in many of her poems.

Debbie: Yes, the moon is a very strong motif in her writing.

Betsy: There was a kind of mystery in her though she was very straightforward, and as she was dying, I felt her serene acceptance of life as it is, with all its passion and pain and beauty. A certain piece of music played in my mind as I sat beside her through her last nights to make sure she wouldn't fall trying to get out of bed. The piece was Debussy's Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun which I keep listening to now because I still feel her presence, her essence, in the music.

Debbie: Thank you for playing that piece of music to me. Yes, I understand exactly what you're saying - it's beautiful and as you say, I think 'mysterious' is a good word – I can't improve on that description. Did you play the music for her?

Betsy: I didn't play it for her, I just heard it welling up inside me as I sat with her. In the dim light she opened her eyes and looked at me and said, "I know I'm dying and I'm not afraid and I love you." And the music preserves that astonishing closeness for me. The mystery of it.

Debbie: I think the music is also very delicate as was Susan's writing – moments shared with a very light touch.

Betsy: I wrote a poem about the experience called 'Nymph in Mourning'. I watched the ballet on YouTube later and tried to understand something indefinable about her and about life.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Nymph in Mourning

I was dreaming,  
light flowed through, and up, and down  
the clouds.  
I will crawl deep inside the sacred cave and find  
the flute we made,  
and the wind will carry my call to you—  
Ma, Ma—  
the soft wind  
at sunset, fluttering,  
the prelude of  
heavenly desire that transmuted  
me into  
a child,  
a particle,  
a wave.

Debbie: Thank you.

Betsy: The inscription on her grave will be "The Place from Afar," the title of one of her books, and a reference to Genesis 22:4, "On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar."

Debbie: Why do you think she chose that phrase as the title for the book?

Betsy: Abraham was her favorite biblical character- the embodiment of *chesed* – the quality that most expresses her and what she longed for. She wasn't a saint of course– though she actually wanted to be one .... my father used to teasingly call her Saint Susan ... a joke between them.

Debbie: In many poems she is watching the sky - not only looking at it, but finding a way to reach it, to rise up to it. And regarding what you said about Susan not being a saint, I think there's an interesting mix in her work – it's very earthy, embedded in daily life, in daily activity and in the earthiness of relationships; and there is also the sense of her relationship with God that is very strong in her work.

Betsy: Yes, it's true. And when I would spend Shabbat with her in Jerusalem I would bring a favorite book with me by the poet Louis MacNeice and read poems to her aloud. Some of the poems are many pages long and as I read she would listen with eyes closed, and I would think okay, maybe this is too much, and she would say, "Could you read that again?" She was sharing something that meant a lot to me - such a deep expression of her love and the love and her love for poetry. She would read poetry to me when I was a child and copy down my own spoken poetry before I knew how to write. I know I'm very fortunate – that she encouraged my self-expression and allowed me to share it with her.

Debbie: It's not only a shared world of insights, but also her recognition of your desire and need to find words for those insights.

Betsy: Yes, and if she hadn't listened to me, had she not been receptive, I would have been less receptive to my own inner voice and I feel very grateful for that, a kind of *chesed*. We shared poetry and music, all of us in the family.

Debbie: I'm interested in how poets do their craft. Tell me something about Susan's practice please - how, when, how often did she write?

Betsy: Nothing was fixed. As I said, perceptions, insights, jottings from her journals.

Debbie: So journal writing was a daily practice.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Betsy: Yes, the need to record her experience was there until just a few years ago. I brought a good friend of mine, a bibliotherapist to meet her and encourage her to write some more. They had a lovely conversation but when my friend tried to prompt her my mother said, "I don't want to write anymore. I've said what I want to say." No regrets, no frustration, she accepted herself, she was true to herself. And that was very beautiful. The bibliotherapist was enchanted with her.

Debbie: When did the writing stop? Was it when she moved to Jerusalem?

Betsy: Pretty much. Maybe because she didn't see the moon anymore; because of age, and because of the traumas we lived through.

Debbie: Yes.

Betsy: I always wondered about this. She didn't dwell on my father's absence or my brother's death, or the murder of her granddaughter on October 7th. She lived in the present. But she did write about them; she sometimes dreamed about my father and then realized that he was dead. But the relationship was ongoing though she didn't speak about it often- that was just her nature – to live very much in the present. My sister Carol enabled our mother to move from her home of many years to Jerusalem at the age of 98, in a way that was blessedly easy for my mother. Carol went through all my mother's belongings, and packed for her, and sorted her books and papers and created a charming atmosphere for her in Jerusalem. Carol is a poet and an artist too but also had what seemed like a miraculous ability, not to mention stamina, to see to all the details of such a move. That included finding a new caregiver when Ranjith left. And my mother adjusted beautifully to that as well, though she missed Ranjith a lot I know. He would call her every week after he returned to Sri Lanka and he wept when I told him she had died.

Debbie: It's very clear from her poetry that she lived her life passionately and fully, with so much delight, absorbing everything life brings, including loss, grief, and sorrow. So I think that's why I was so interested in why someone who lives so fully needs to write about it.

Betsy: It's like the need to sing – even while you're washing dishes or whenever, you just sing to express your life.

Debbie: And of course, there's such a close link between music and poetry – they speak to each other, so it's interesting that you grew up in a household where the idea of artistic expression ..

Betsy: It was a need, not an idea, a real need.

Debbie: I felt that very strongly when I went to her flat in Haifa – that the space was a space of self-expression – the life around her in objects and in pictures, in furniture - the view and the light ..

Betsy: Atmosphere

Debbie: I loved it, it was wonderful for me to meet her and get to know her work, and particularly at that point when I was just taking my own first steps.

I would like to ask about the ways in which she influenced your own writing.

Betsy: I sent her every poem I wrote, (and since email I would email my poems or read them to her over the phone) and she would send me her poems – because of that need to share. Sometimes she didn't understand me. She read the Bible as a collection of stories. For instance, she loved Megillat Ruth. Saw it as a terrific story. I once studied Megillat Ruth for a full year but what I feel is the real meaning there still eludes me. And she'd say, "What don't you understand?"

Debbie: Maybe her way of understanding left work for you to do? Obviously not consciously but maybe she was saying "This is what I've done, now you take it further."

Betsy: Yes. Maybe. I'd like to read a poem I wrote for her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday – it's called "Sassa."

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Sassa

Many times I have been saved by the memory of  
nestling with you in the hammock  
eating grapes that were sweet and dusky  
as the blue and green and pink and purple sky,  
that scene we promised never to forget  
though over the years I trampled on it  
and left it to sour in the dark

I am terrible, I know, feigning  
I was somehow created apart  
though it was you  
who introduced me to earth  
to the others of the wide world,,  
my father, sister and brothers

Stay with us  
forty years more  
on earth  
under the sky  
till all your prayers are answered please  
Mommy  
shine

Thank you so much Betsy for such a loving and thoughtful portrait of your mother. You beautifully brought together the way in which her person and her writing were so closely intertwined. Thank you too for sharing your own work written in response to your mother, and for describing for us the intimate and moving experience of accompanying your mother in her last days.  
ה' זכרא ברוך

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SUSAN AND HER HUSBAND DICK LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES  
AT THE VOICES ANTHOLOGY LAUNCH 2011

## Carol Troen (daughter of Susan Rosenberg)

Our mother, Susan Stern Rosenberg, was a poet. As she often remembered, she was thrilled when her first two poems were published by her beloved teacher, Mrs. Lambert, in the literary journal of the Oak Lane Country Day School in Philadelphia when she was only eight. From then on, she wrote poems and a diary regularly through most of her long life.

But more than that, she made poetry -- an expression of complex feelings and perceptions and wondering about meaning -- integral to our lives.

I've shared this memory in conversation and in memorials for our daughter Deborah (Shahar Devorah) and son-in-law Shlomi Mathias, murdered in the mamad of their home at Kibbutz Holit on October 7. Friends commented, in hushed horror, you haven't told your mother! I assured them that we had. She taught us to honor and express feelings.

When I was nine, and Mom was expecting her fifth child, our brother Jon, z"l, to our delight and Mom's utter disbelief, my father brought home a boxer pup that had been found and unclaimed to join us in our two-bedroom apartment in Haifa. We named him Jiggs, after the Comic Strip character. One day, Jiggs escaped. We called and looked everywhere but he was nowhere to be found in the fields and wadi's of Mount Carmel, and we children were devastated.

Instead of assuring us it was for the best, or that we could get another dog, Mom went to the bookshelf and took down the small black leatherbound copy of Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. She showed us her penned dedication from before they were married to our Dad, and turned to the poem On Joy and Sorrow. She read it with us, explaining how the poet saw sorrow and joy interconnected. She helped us understand the connection between our unanticipated joy of having a dog and the deep sorrow we felt when we feared he would never be found (though eventually he was).

1883 – 1931

*Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.*

*And he answered:*

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.*

*And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.*

*And how else can it be?*

*The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.*

*Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?*

*And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?*

*When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.*

*When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.*

*Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."*

*But I say unto you, they are inseparable.*

*Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.*

*Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy.*

*Only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced.*

*When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and his silver, needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall.*

I have quoted both my mother and Gibran often since Deborah and Shlomi's murder. They help explain, to myself and others, that I experience trauma and pain, anger, longing, and sorrow, and stubbornly deny their power to erase memories of past happiness and our ability to be joyful now and in the future. Life and living continue with both joy and sorrow, as does our mother's blessed memory.

Thank you for arranging this collection of tributes and voices in her memory and inviting me to contribute to it.

## Adam M. Rosenberg

Even though I've primarily lived in the US, my Grandma and I had a very close relationship, and one of the ways she influenced my life was through introducing me to poetry. While I'm not nearly as gifted or active in my poetry writing as my Grandma, I've sporadically had my moments of inspiration. I wrote the following poem in memory of my Grandma as I struggled to fall asleep upon returning to the US after her funeral.

### JET LAG

In Memory of my Grandma,  
Susan Rosenberg (1924-2025)  
(4/29/2025)

It's 2:46 AM. Or is it 6:24 or 4:26?  
Flying Tel Aviv to Chicago via Vienna  
was a groggy mélange of time zones  
and the jet lag landed early, late last night.  
Even at this ungodly hour  
the chirping cardinals' conclave  
pontificates outside,  
disregarding the here and now.

I'd love to drift beneath the blankets  
before my new day begins  
enveloped by blank spreadsheets  
within a quiet corporate cubicle,  
but it's too noisy all around.  
Our intermingled songs  
of life, love and loss  
play variations on a theme  
with syncopating circadian rhythms.  
Your harmonies on my melody  
ricochet off shadows  
I reflect in the moonlight,  
the nightstand radio's blazing red glare  
refracting on my internal clock.  
What time is it anyways?  
What is time anyways?  
Where did it go?  
Where will I go?

The last 33 percent of your life  
was the first 100 percent of mine, so far.  
We've voyaged far this week since you left,  
across seas and realms  
and lifetimes past.  
I'm still recovering from the jet lag  
of our joint journey's last leg.  
Your trip is longer still,  
a century retrospective  
with an infinite afterlife ahead.

Please write me a poem along the way

whistling wistfully  
the new songs you sing.  
Please annotate a score  
answering my questions;  
questioning my answers.  
Send them in a lullaby  
to help me lay at rest  
and strengthen my endurance  
as we catch up with each other.  
But before you settle in  
and subtly forget,  
please, tell me quickly:

What is the jet lag like  
up there,  
in Heaven?

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Wendy Blumfield – Tribute to Susan Rosenberg

The Haifa branch of Voices and I personally mourn the passing of our veteran member, Susan Rosenberg. We have been privileged to enjoy her grace, her good humour and her beautiful poetry for many years. We joyfully celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last November after she moved to Jerusalem to be near her family. Susan joined Voices in 1978. She was Voices Secretary from 2001-2011. At that time the monthly newsletter was typed on one side of a foolscap sheet, with poems from members on the other. Susan had the gift of squeezing every item of news on to that page, even handwriting round the margins. She was Voices Haifa Group coordinator for many years, managing the group with tact and efficiency.

Susan was famous for her gracious hospitality in her spacious home in Haifa and many successful workshops were held there. She was also the founding President of the Haifa Chapter of Hadassah Women and she and her late husband Dick were involved in many community projects, founders of the Moriah Masorti Synagogue, founder and actor in the Haifa English Theatre and active in the campaign to free Society Jewry. She always spoke about how much she had enjoyed being a mother of five children and she kept count of all the grandchildren, great-grandchildren and even a great-great. Susan experienced tragedy in her life: her youngest son Jon passed away from cancer; a year later Jon's son was on the way to the memorial and was killed in a car accident. Her beloved husband Dick had been disabled for some time, cared for by her and their devoted carer until he passed away. And on October 7th her granddaughter and husband were murdered in their Gaza kibbutz.

But Susan always showed optimism, had a bright smile and a good word for everybody. Even at Voices meetings, she would give a critique of a member's poem, but always in a positive and constructive way. Susan has been published in most of the annual anthologies and also in her own several collections of poems. We celebrate her long rich and meaningful life but she will be sorely missed.

### Edit Gavriely - Poem

an afternoon with Susan – simply satisfying  
she's a special friend, Susan is - 95 years young,  
having just celebrated this milestone  
with a new collection of poems – "Talking to  
myself at 95"!

a recent afternoon together, during which  
I presented Susan with my latest book of poems,  
to my utmost surprise and delight, dear Susan  
read each of my poems aloud, an honor never before  
bestowed upon me!

the twinkle in her eye, the intonation,  
the phrasing, the understanding – as Susan  
so aptly said - we "speak the same language"

I was tickled pink, deeply touched  
what a gesture, what a gift!  
an afternoon with Susan – simply satisfying!

Haifa, 5 December 2019



SUSAN READING HER ANTHOLOGY POEM 2011 TOGETHER  
WITH EDITOR JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Willa Schneberg

It was a great honor to be friends with Susan Rosenberg. She was a brilliant conversationalist, compassionate human being, and a wonderful poet. I have the pleasure of staying with her twice at her apt. in Haifa. The first time was in 2004, when I judged the Ruben Rose Poetry Contest, and came to Israel to present the Awards and to facilitate some workshops. She and her husband were so hospitable. The second time was in 2014, when I returned in the same capacity, and sadly, her husband had passed. One of the great memories I have of that second visit was attending the Haifa Symphony Orchestra with Susan. It was a joy to share our love of classical music. She and I corresponded for many years and would gift each other our poetry collections.

--

## Helen Bar-Lev

Susan!

You will laugh when you read that my first splendid memory of you is when you jumped off that stage after your presentation at a reading in Haifa, with the agility of a gazelle and a halo of love and positivity, that lovely Susan smile... You were about 80 years old. At that moment I wished to be like you, exactly like you when I reached that age.

And then we became friends, but, then again, everyone was your friend; your beautiful nature attracted people to you. You signed "Love, Susan" on all the messages you sent to Voices members, and I wondered how you could love people you didn't know. But you did, and we all loved you back.

So rest in your peaceful place in Heaven, look down on us from time-to-time, inspire us when we poets are blocked. Bask in your eternal rest...

We'll never forget you...

--

## Linda Suchy, My Friend, Susan Rosenberg

I first met Susan at a Voices Israel workshop held in the Netanya area. A graceful lady relaxing in a lounge chair and writing amazing poems in the blink of an eye.

Workshops are always difficult for me. I can rarely come up with a new poem, so I sit in silence watching everyone writing furiously.

During a break we struck up a conversation when she asked me where I lived in the United States before making Aliyah. I told her I had lived in Portland, Oregon for close to 20 years. She asked me what synagogue I went to in Portland, and I told her Kesser Israel.

At that point, she said oh! My son goes to Kesser Israel. And then the light bulb in my brain turned on. Wait, I said, is Michael Rosenberg your son?

And the rest is history. It's a small world after all. Michael and his wife Rachel and children are regulars at Kesser Israel.

Thus began a distant relationship based on our mutual appreciation for Michael and his family. We met at various workshops. She always remembered me when I would attend workshops in Haifa in her lovely apartment.

May her memory be a blessing. She will be missed.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Michelle Kinsbursky - In memory of a companion writer

“. . . writing poems has been my favorite way of communicating and I know that expressing what is true for me is the very best way to reach others.”

(Susan Rosenberg, Voices, 2008)

I've forgotten how long ago it was  
when she greeted me at the door  
with unexpected warmth, and a life-fully-lived air of confidence  
For an older woman some 30 years my senior,  
I marveled at how she carried herself  
and continued to observe her  
throughout the evening

Would I also have such natural dignity?  
Would I write about life with such  
brief and simple clarity -  
at times devilishly playful,  
at times painfully honest

The years passed  
I rarely saw her, but  
I followed her writings in the Anthology  
not noticing that they were appearing less and less  
when she reached into her late nineties  
I just assumed, she'd always show up on those pages,  
even at one hundred

There are people, we barely know  
who root themselves in our unconscious,  
so she was for me  
Suddenly she'd appear in my mind's eye, I was clueless why or how . . .  
maybe because she was a reminder of that first Voices meeting and the writer in me,  
maybe because there was something so honest and truthful in what  
she wrote  
in her calm, yet hardy manner  
something that  
took hold of my heart  
I was deeply saddened to hear of her passing, of course knowing  
one can't live forever  
but given her strength of spirit and youthful voice  
if she had lived 'til one hundred and twenty and then some, I wouldn't  
have been surprised

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Lilian Cohen

Goodbye Susan  
dear friend  
Remembering you  
with eyes  
always candid  
words  
kind and sincere  
poems  
pared to wisdom

with much love

## Miriam Davis – Poem

### A FRUITFUL LIFE

You have borne many fruits in your life  
The trees you planted have borne fruit also  
Generations beget generations  
Beget generations to come.  
You enjoy the shade of the trees  
And the exquisite taste of the fruit.

You record the events of your life  
Each time a new chapter, a tapestry woven  
Of reflections and feelings, sung as a saga,  
Brought forth in print for the world to share.

## Luiza Carol

Written on Susan's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

So Susan Rosenberg is 100!!! I can barely believe it! She seemed so much younger to me! I've just searched in an old file where I keep a few cherished souvenirs, and found a song by Howard Dietz sung by Fred Astaire, which Susan wrote down for me. She knew it by heart! She wrote it down about 30 years ago in Tel Aviv, when we were waiting in her car for her husband. The song begins "I love Louisa, Louisa loves me". And on the top of the page, she wrote "From Susan, a new friend". That day was the first time we met, at a meeting of the editorial board of Voices Israel Anthology at the Dan Hotel.



## Ada Aharoni

In loving memory of my dear friend, the gifted poet **Susan**, I will always cherish beloved Susan's short, moving, and deeply meaningful poems that touched the soul. Susan was not only a gifted poet, but also a warm friend, and a generous host to our *Voices* meetings, creating a space of inspiration and connection. Her smile, light and kindness will remain with me always. With heartfelt remembrance.

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Birgit Talmon

So, dearest Susan, that's it – you have left us. You held on for so long and saw happy moments alongside deep sorrows. Such is life it seems, but you stood high with your enormous qualities which can neither be bought nor taught. With you they were inborn and we, who knew you, benefitted greatly of these – your wonderful & natural approaches.

I shall remember you until my day arrives.

**Farewell dearest Susan**

## Amiel Schotz

I knew Susan long before we were co-members of Voices. She was the wonderful matriarch of a wonderful family and the warmest of friends. Her poetry powerfully reflected her deep humanism, and she honed her craft over the years always eager to learn, to contribute and to share.

May her memory be for a blessing.

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**WINNERS OF THE REUBEN ROSE COMPETITION 2014**

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Susan Olsburgh



**SUSAN WITH WENDY AND PROF. DAVID CAPLAN**

were gathered at Susan's to welcome American poet Professor David Caplan and I had the honour to chair the meeting.

Another photo is of Susan looking beautiful as always and chatting happily with long-standing Voices poet Johnmichael Simon.

--

Dear Family Rosenberg

I am sorry this is a rather belated condolence note but nevertheless it is a very sincere expression of love and respect for your dear mother, Susan R as I called her. She called me Susan O.

We had over 10 years of lovely friendship through Voices Israel and when I was president and she was Membership Secretary we had very regular contact.

As you will know Susan was a most gracious and generous hostess and everyone used to love coming to her beautiful Haifa apartment for meetings and workshops.

I have included a particular favourite photograph of mine from July 2018 when we



**SUSAN AND JOHNMICHAEL SIMON**

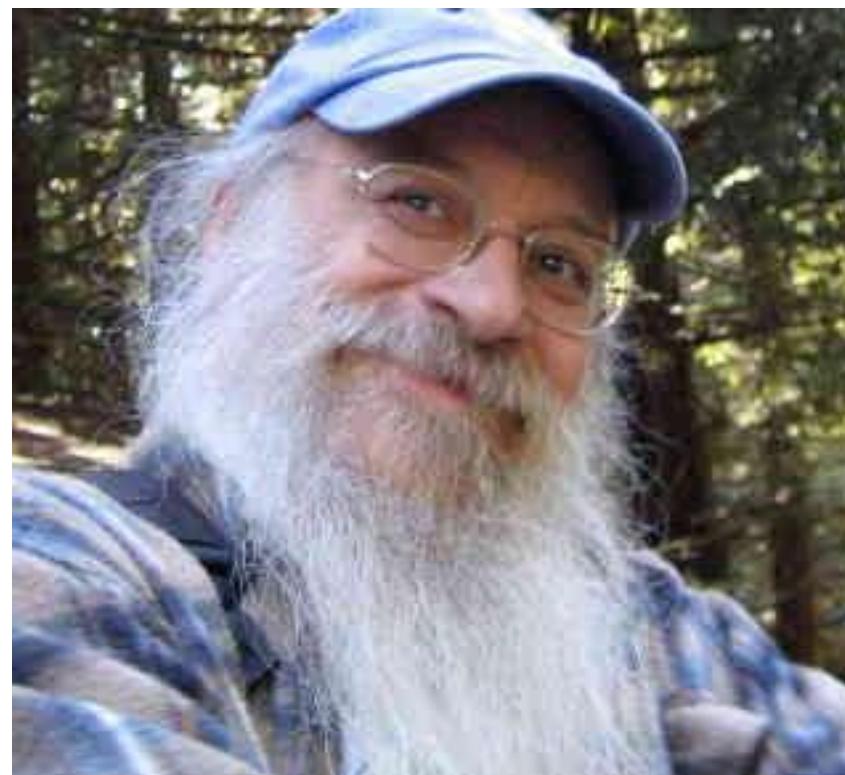


**SUSAN READING HER REUBEN ROSE PRIZE POEM 2014**

## THE QUARRY AT THE END OF THE LINE

By Reuven Goldfarb

My friend Chaim asked me to say something about why I write poetry, and I'll try to answer this tricky question as directly as possible. I write poetry (that is to say, when I do; there can be long stretches of time between poems)



because I can't help myself — and that's a funny phrase right there, isn't it? I can't help myself, so a poem comes along and helps me. That's as good an explanation as any.

What is a poem? I think it comes from my subconscious; it comes welling up, like a complex emotion that needs to be expressed. At first, it's hard to say just what is under there. A line or a phrase or perhaps only a word will surface, and, somehow I know there's more where that came from. It's as if I've been fishing and forgot I left the line in the water. I feel a tug, and I pull on the line. I pull on the line and coil it on the dock. The coils are the shape of the verse. At the end of the line is the nourishment.

What is it? It's the satisfaction of discovering something important about myself in relation to the world. It's articulating and clarifying that original complexity I referred to not only for my own benefit but for others with whom I can

establish contact. I create an artifact that possesses a certain fascination and therefore becomes a conversation piece. I begin by talking to myself or my muse and end by addressing the world.

Of course, the fish cannot usually be eaten raw. It has to be prepared for the table. That's the work of revision — but that's a subject for another essay. (As you can see, I've been hooked by my own metaphor.)

## HOW I STARTED JOURNALING AND FOUND MY VOICE

By Klarina Priborkin

Some of us are very good at social communication while others, don't excel in it very much and that's natural. Some of us are extraverted actors, dancers or public speakers, others prefer more introverted activities such as writing, programming, drawing and knitting. The world needs both the introverts and the extroverts, but it seems that it's a bit more difficult for the introverts to share their unique perspective with others and communicate effectively. My personal journey explores the challenges of finding one's voice as an introvert and the transformative power of self-expression.



As a young adult, I spent much of my life struggling to make my voice heard. I often felt that people weren't truly interested in what I had to say and frequently misunderstood my intentions. I believed my opinions didn't really matter, so I allowed others to make decisions for me. This approach only distanced me further from my own feelings, creating a gap between my true self and the social persona I presented. Despite being a successful young woman with a PhD, a family, and a steady job, I constantly doubted my choices, feeling as though I had been checking off a list of what it meant to be successful, rather than truly owning my life choices.

Seven years ago, when my father passed away, I realized that life is too short to be consumed by self-doubt. I began asking myself difficult questions: What am I truly interested in? What makes me happy? Why do I seek social approval, and what price am I willing to pay for it? How do I want to communicate with my family, colleagues, and friends? These questions made me much more aware of my emotions and sparked a curiosity about the different ways I could express them.

Having played the piano as a teenager, I decided to take lessons again. I quickly realized that while I could learn to play someone else's music, what I truly wanted was to create something of my own. I wasn't ready to put in the effort required to master music theory, the lessons were quite expensive, and I wasn't willing to invest the hours needed for practice. So, I turned to drawing — first with colored pencils and then with watercolor. I gradually improved, but whenever I tried to express my emotions through drawing, the results never quite conveyed what I intended. Once again, I found myself trapped in a cycle of craving to express my emotions but lacking the tools and patience to do it well.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, I began writing a diary to vent my doubts, frustrations, and fears. Over time, these diaries gradually evolved into poems and stories that brought my emotions and memories together, allowing me to discover my authentic voice. I continued writing consistently for two years until I felt I had enough material to publish a book of poems in Hebrew, which reads somewhat like a memoir. The urge to publish stemmed from a need to give form to the journey I had undergone and to complete my mourning for my father, to whom the book is dedicated. The poems I wrote about him helped me redefine who I was after losing him to cancer. They also deepened my understanding of my relationships with my past, my children, my family, and my spouse.

You might be surprised by how beneficial journaling can be for your health. Extensive research has shown that expressive writing significantly reduces symptoms in various conditions such as asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and high blood pressure. James Pennebaker's work clearly demonstrates that journaling about meaningful topics can improve both physical and emotional well-being. To learn more about how journaling can reduce anxiety and enhance your health, check out [this link](#):

I keep writing to uncover deeper layers of my consciousness and explore new ideas. Writing is a unique activity that allows me to delve into my being and uncover what lies beneath everyday experiences. It's somewhat akin to meditation, requiring complete focus and introspection, but with the potential to resonate with others as well. It's the perfect activity for introverts who crave meaningful communication with the outside world. Writing is accessible and requires no special preparation. Even if you never publish your work, you become your own audience — and sometimes, that's all you need to voice your thoughts and feel heard. Try journaling; try writing down your feelings, and you'll discover a world of riches that lies beneath.

## THE KOTEL IS IN OUR HANDS

By Pessy Krausz

Our nascent State had not even reached its first decade when an excited groom, Neville - Yaakov, flew his bride (me!) on a visit – my first, his one of several – to Israel. Hiring a small car we drove to Jerusalem along the winding road from what was then Lod airport. I found difficulty containing my excitement. I was travelling to the city of my prayers and hopes of more than 2000 years.

Dusk was falling as we passed the ubiquitous petrol station on our left. Swerving round the bend to our right I strained my eyes to see the city of my dreams. Would these dusty roads with small houses lead to the glorious huge buildings I'd imagined? Continuing further, my tremulous voice asked,

“When will we reach Jerusalem?”

Proudly

“This is It! Soon we'll find the hotel we've booked and rest before sightseeing in the morning.”



The city was in darkness. Homes already shuttered at 9 pm. We came to a stop in front of the well-established King's Hotel. Small bulbs lit the corridors, no kettle in the room, but at least a bed was a bed! So that's how the Jerusalem of my prayers had been cut down to size – and so had my hopes and dreams.

But what a difference ten years can make when we visited in 1967 – exactly 6 days after the miraculous Six Day War. This time we came with our three small sons, Shimon (nine) Dov (seven) and Daniel (four). We would be making our way to witness for ourselves the retaining wall of our Holy Temple – The *Kotel* – which Rav Shlomo Goren, on finally reaching it with brave Israeli troops, declared in his rousing Hebrew accent – “The *Kotel Ma'arvi* is in our hands” – upon which he blew the *Shofar* and recited the Hebrew blessing *Shehecheyanu* - He who has given us life. Then on reaching the Temple Mount repeated the ceremony. For those who would like to access the historic event Google [הר הבית בידינו](#).

We were also to tour and explore towns which were now accessible. The city of Hebron with the Cave of Machpelah which once again Jews, and indeed people of all faiths, could reach.

And Bethlehem recorded in the Book of Ruth beginning with a famine in the “House of Bread” (meaning Bethlehem), a town that belonged to the tribe of Judah. But it had been under Jordanian control until the Six-Day War, when it was captured by Israel.

However, next day's sightseeing began in Jerusalem itself when we visited our cousin, Shula, who had made Aliya and worked in Jerusalem's Barclays bank. Reaching this imposing building, built in 1930 and situated on Jaffa Road and Allenby Square, we saw its granite facade was pockmarked – a telling remnant of the bullets fired from Jordan – and indeed are still visible to this day 58 years later.

Greeting our pioneer cousin excitedly, she left her desk and led us to the window from which we could see “No-Man's Land.” This strip of land had existed as a buffer zone between the Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem and the Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem from 1948 until 1967.

Continued on next page ...

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

In this picture no-man's land was where we see the street with the car. It contained small tents with goats having place of glory while squatting Arabs found space alongside.

"Aren't you nervous?" we asked her – fresh from the safety of Great Britain's northern town of Sheffield.

"No! Why should I be?"

"Well, you're a stone's throw from those Arabs – potential enemy - aren't you?"

"They're harmless, need all their energy to take care of the chickens sharing their tents. It is a sort of boundary, although thanks to the miracle of the Six Day War we can now circumvent the area and make our way to our Old City."

Saying our goodbyes with a shared drink of cooling water, it was indeed our next port of call. We made our way on foot – past the Cinematheque down the winding Maale Hashalom Street and descending



through the Valley of Hinnom. Heartbreaking little wooden sticks with names of our brave soldiers were placed at intervals on the roadside where they had fallen in courageously ensuring the *Kotel* would be in our hands.

But was it? Arriving under the glorious blue skies, we proceeded towards it with great expectations and our small prayer books. Easing our way through the narrow alleyways, which at that time led to the *Kotel*, our historic encounter was rudely interrupted by Arab lads high up on the walls above us, pelting us with pebbles and shouts. Beating a hasty retreat from "our" *Kotel* which did not appear to be entirely in our hands, we wound our way back, somewhat disheartened, easing our feelings somewhat with a little refreshment we'd brought with us.

Fast forward and eight years later 1975 saw our family make its own personal leap of faith. *Aliya!* And in time for our youngest son's *Barmitzvah* which was celebrated - at the *Kotel*! By then the narrow alleyways had been replaced by a broad plaza. The walls above were protected by our very own soldiers. We were blessed to have four generations present. How my parents wondered at the miracle which their own parents, who had succumbed to the Nazi's dastardly annihilation programme, must surely have been sharing from above.

They would have shared joy as we marked 58 years since the re-unification of Jerusalem – Yom Yerushalyim. No doubt they would also have shared the pain that Israel's age of innocence – if ever there was one – did not last long. Doubtless they too would have joined in our heartfelt prayers to



PESSY WITH SON DANIEL ON HIS BARMITZVAH  
AT THE KOTEL AND HER MOTHER

release our remaining 58 hostages which, at this time of writing, has reached a harrowing 600 days of The Swords of Iron War.

Continued on next page ...

## VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Our resilient Jerusalemites nevertheless celebrated this year's Jerusalem Day on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - 5785 by holding parades with thousands of all ages singing "Am Yisrael Chai – The People of Israel Lives!" Dancing jubilantly, with flags unfurled, despite the heat they marched to the *Kotel*.

Some entering the Old City through the Dung Gate, while others through the Lions' Gate. Google a video with the glorious scenes on

[Jerusalem Day celebrations at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel 2025](#)

We are blessed. The *Kotel* is indeed in our hands. We will evermore sing *Am Yisrael Chai – The people of Israel shall live forever!*"

--

## MATHEMATICAL LIMERICK

$$12 + 144 + 20 + 3 * \sqrt{4}$$

$$+ 5 * 11 = 9^2 + 0$$

7

A dozen, a gross and a score  
Plus three times the square root of four  
Divided by seven  
Plus five times eleven  
Equals nine squared and not a bit more.

[Selected by the editor from the Internet]

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ISAAC COHEN

By Bob Findysz

On a chilly morning, in between seasonal heat waves, under mostly cloudy skies, I left home, nestled in my garden flaunting springtime flowers nurtured as lovingly as my children and writing. Driving down scenic back roads of the Judaean Hills, I entered Highway One crowded with rush hour commuters and assorted others like me en route to the coastal plain below. But I drove only as far as the shuttle leaving from the fast lane parking lot near the airport into the heart of the Big Orange. I debarked near the iconic Azrieli Towers, where I was to meet Isaac Cohen at Café Roladin for our tête-à-tête.



As part of a series of interviews with VOICES Israel members, which I have been doing for recent newsletters, I sat down with Isaac Cohen to become better acquainted with him. The truth be told, while interviewing Yochanan Zaqantov, Yochanan casually mentioned how much he appreciated Isaac's friendliness when he participates in meetings of the Tel Aviv group of writers via zoom. That offhanded remark piqued my curiosity; and so, I decided to ask that

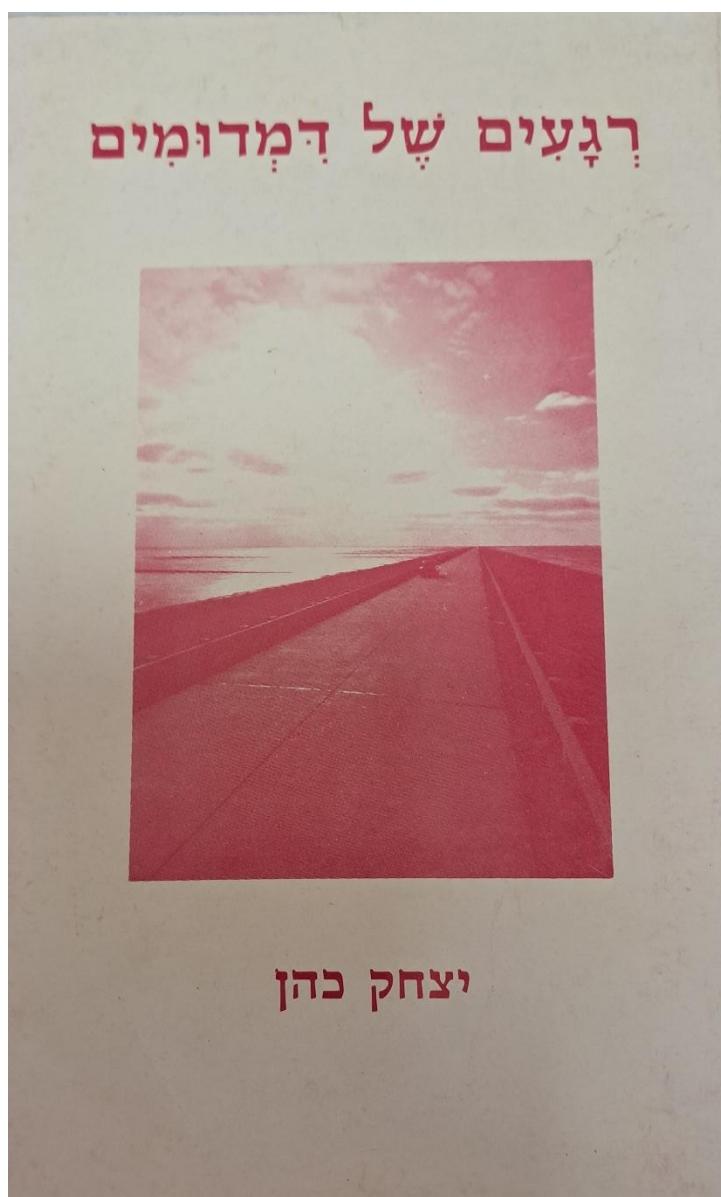
Isaac meet me for an interview. I am very pleased and grateful that he agreed and took time off from his job to do so. Following are the questions which guided our conversation and an approximate but accurate rendering of his answers.



1. *From an informative article on your work and you, which appeared in the Writers Edition online literary magazine in March 2022, I understand that you are a polymath, have had a long and rich career, writing poetry & prose, translating, creating vivid paintings and participating in readings in Israel & abroad, in person and online. Your English poems have been translated into quite a few other languages (including Hebrew) and you also write in Hebrew. You have been widely published, received various awards (internationally as well as locally) for your literary prowess and promoting peace through literature. How would you characterize the poetry you write?*

I write about what others don't, about the weak, poor, anonymous, to call attention to them. To the marginal who need encouragement, to empower them, give on-going support,

through education, not hand-outs. [In the afterword following this interview you can find a poem called "The King of the World" which reflects Isaac's attitude toward these people. BF]



think in their heads, what happened to them beforehand. As a child I was creative but dreamy. She tried to bring me down to earth, to be more practical. However, she was happy to see me writing. And proud when at 40 I got a prize for poetry from Mifal HaPais.

3. *Is there a poet(ess) or more whom you particularly enjoy reading? If so, who? Why do you like their writing?*

Roy Rand was a poet who wrote in English, a member of the VOICES Tel Aviv group. The first time I attended a VOICES meeting in Tel Aviv was at his home 30 years ago, i.e. when I was still living in Beer Sheva. He was a good friend. We read each other's poetry. I liked his. He was a sensitive writer about life, government. He is no longer alive and I miss him.

• *I understand you have studied/ collaborated with other writers: In Hebrew and/or in English? Who? When? Where?*

While doing my MA in Beer Sheva I studied writing in Hebrew with Amos Oz, Yehuda Amichai and Ori Bernstein. [See the afterword for the poem "Peace (I drank)" which Ori translated into Hebrew. BF] Writing in English I studied with Amiel Schots and Norman Sims, who took one of my poems for an anthology he was publishing. After graduating, I took a course with Haim Ezer who encouraged me to read poems out loud and sing songs. I wrote a poem in Hebrew to him. [Isaac gifted me a copy. BF]

- *Do you remember when you started writing poetry? If so, how did you begin? In Hebrew? In English? Do you still write poetry in both?*

I wrote my first poem in Hebrew at 17, at home. I was suddenly inspired. Before that I scribbled about travels, etc. but nothing serious. I shared it with my older sister, Judith, whom I respected. I joined a writing club at a community center, studied with some writers like Gidon Talpaz. While a soldier I wrote poems in Hebrew about peace and love, which I collected and published later, in a book entitled: Moments of Silence (רגעים של דמדומים).

At 30 I decided to translate a poem into English for the first time. When I was 35 I began graduate studies in creative writing at The Ben Gurion University of the Negev; here I learned to write poetry in English as well.

- *Are there times of the day, a special place and/or other conditions which you find are conducive to writing?*

All I need is a scrap of white paper and a pencil or pen, anytime anywhere the muse strikes me. I often use my cellphone or a computer to write drafts. [In the afterword, you can find the poem "BEHOLD A BIRD", an example of Isaac's writing while on the go, walking down the street. BF]

2. *One particular aspect of your writing and personal life has emerged from the reviews which I have read: Your poetry seems to have been influenced by your mother, Mazal Cohen, a gifted storyteller in her own right. Would you like to discuss this here?*

My mother told stories about small, insignificant people and the need to look beyond their exterior, to seek the inner being, what they do with their hands, what they

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

4. When you aren't writing and participating in meetings of the VOICES Tel Aviv group as well as taking part in readings here, there and everywhere in between, how do you spend your time? Painting? Work? Family? Community? Other, personal pursuits?

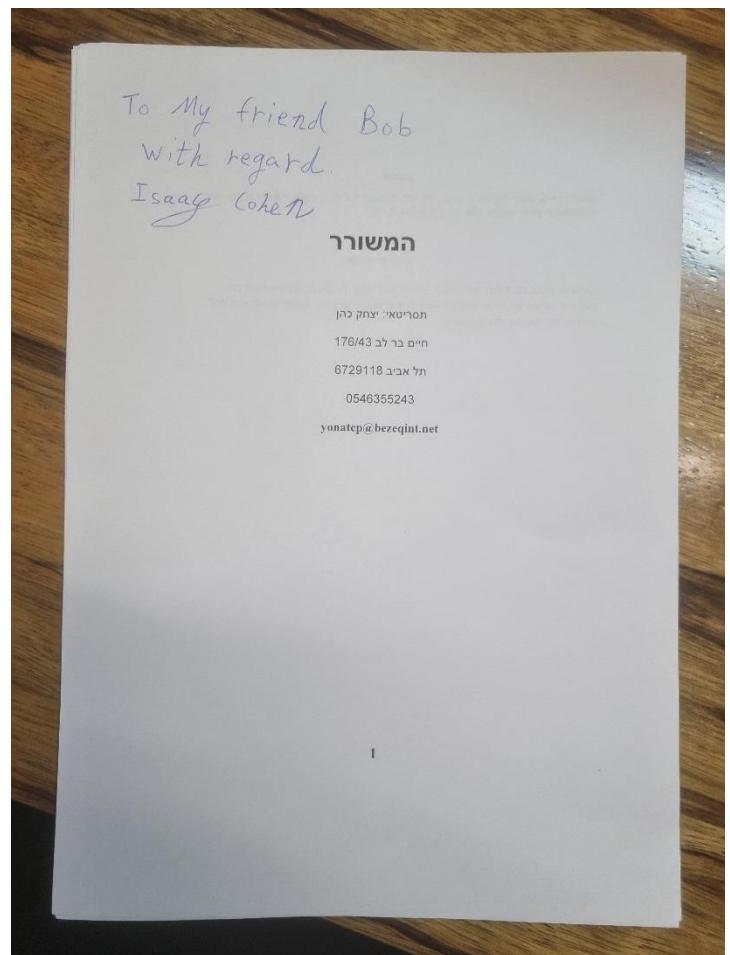
I am still working fulltime for an insurance company in Petah Tikvah, while my wife Yonat, a sculptor, works for a different one in Ramat Gan. We live with our 17½-year-old daughter Noam in southern Tel Aviv, in the South Park neighborhood near the Hatikva Quarter, bordering a public park with two lakes and a petting zoo. I like to paint with watercolors there. Also, in the Ariel Sharon Park on the former Hiriya landfill, which is an easy walk from my home. Very quiet with wonderful panoramas.

Recently I finished a scriptwriting course via zoom. [Isaac generously gifted me an autographed copy of the script for a play entitled "The Poet" ("המשורר") which is pictured here. BF]

I always seem to be studying and learning new things. Besides, I am a singer. I offer my experience to a band, the "Big Band AIG", sponsored by AIG, the company I work for.



distance through another language. [See the afterword for the poems: "The Freedom of Summer", "Home". BF]



We perform Israeli music and songs in English. [In the afterword Isaac has included a poem entitled "The Meeting of Love" which he sings instead of reading aloud. Singing a poem. BF]

Also, I love acting in an amateur theatre troupe. My Blues Brothers clothing is only worn on special occasions. When I perform, for example. I wore it today because this interview is an event for me.

And, I have always been very much into sports. Especially soccer. HaPoel Beer Sheva and Manchester United.

5. Ending on an even more personal note, you were born, raised and educated in Beer Sheva -- a BA with distinction in history as well as an MA in creative writing: How, if at all, has growing up in Beer Sheva affected/ is it reflected in your work in English as well as Hebrew?

Beer Sheva sometimes appears in my poetry, memories from childhood, feelings (good and bad), friendships, situations of pain as well as happiness. It seems writing in English frees me from restraints I have when writing in Hebrew, as if I gain

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

- *Where is your family originally from? When did they get to Beer Sheva and why? When did you move to Tel Aviv? Why?*

My parents left Tunisia en route to Israel in 1956 via Marseilles, where my older sister was born. I was born in Beer Sheva in 1960. They spoke French, Arabic and Hebrew when they landed. So, that's what I heard at home growing up. All three languages. There was no seaside in Beer Sheva so during the summers we went to Nahariya, along with lots of my friends' families. Today, my sister lives with her family on Moshav Nir Israel, near Ashkelon and the sea.

In 1998, I moved to Tel Aviv to expand my horizons, find better employment and more stimulation. The big city, center of the country and everything in it. On the shores of the Mediterranean.

## 6. Anything else you would like to add?

I would like to thank the following editors from all over the world who have helped me and published my work, in alphabetical order:

Prof. Karen Alkalay-Gut, David Bradges, Zlatan Demirovic, Dr. Roopali Sicar Gaur, Rawle Iam James, Alexander Kabishev, Katherine Lugar, Dr. Kkumar Persana, David Leo Sirois, Richard Spisak, Ruth Tennenbaum, Dan Tadmor and Sandy Yannone.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of VOICES Israel people: Mike Scheidemann z"l, a former president of VOICES Israel, from Kibbutz Yizre'el who was very active in organizing writing workshops, etc.; Susan Rotenberg z"l, a former VOICES Israel secretary who helped and encouraged me, invited me to readings, etc.; Mark L. Levinson, the current VOICES Tel Aviv coordinator who has been very supportive; Celia Merlin, a member of the VOICES Tel Aviv group who has always been friendly and helpful, hosting poetry readings in her home; Phella Hirschson, another very supportive member of the VOICES Tel Aviv group; Yochanan Zaqantov, a member of the VOICES Beer Sheva group who joins the Tel Aviv group's meetings via zoom and is a southern soulmate; and, last but certainly not least, Judy Koren, the previous president of VOICES Israel.

## An Afterword

*Following are a number of poems which Isaac requested we include, with his accompanying comments:*

### Peace (I drank)

I drank forty-tumblers of war  
like a drunkard.  
Please, give me  
a bottle of peace  
to cure the disease.

➤ Ori Bernstein translated this poem into Hebrew

### The Freedom of Summer

In the morning we came to the sea.  
We saw neighbors from my childhood.  
We made a pyramid in the sea.  
We laughed at fear.  
We built a Babylon tower  
Which reached the sky.  
I am still there.

➤ summertime in Nahariya

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## Home

The smallish house. The large giving.  
One book and another and...  
My mother used to tell me folk tales.  
My imagination soared beyond the confined space.  
I went to a primary school of Bible reading  
To learn rhythmic reciting of the Torah.  
Our home was a meeting place for scholars.  
My dear mother, I am overjoyed for your having taught me  
To impart from my mind to society. Home is culture.

➤ about my mother and Beer Sheva

--

## The King of the World

The King of the World  
God called to Daniel: "I saw your torn shoes,  
Tomorrow Archangel Michael will give you new shoes.  
Daniel said: "No, no, some people need help before me:  
First, we must take Alexandra  
To the rehab center for alcoholics.  
Yesterday, I heard Alexandra's child crying:  
"Mommie, stop buying Mezcal, my lips are sore from the  
alcohol."  
Second, we must take  
Bonita del Piedro to a boarding school,  
She has got friendly with criminals.  
And then we must help Alegra, the widow  
Who is alone raising five children  
And works all day long doing laundry in rich houses.  
God embraced him and said:  
"You beat me, Daniel,  
You are the King of the World".

➤ one of my favorites

--

## Peace (I drank)

I've had forty jugfuls of war  
Like a drunkard.  
Please, give me  
A bottle of peace  
To cure the disease.

## Behold, bird

Behold, bird,  
My soul touches thee,  
To brave  
The forbidding distance.

Behold,  
The red heart shall cling to the string,  
Drawing the way  
To the stormy heavens.

Behold, bird,  
My tear has frozen,  
And you?

Behold, I am a bird,  
And you  
Are me.

➤ composed while walking down the street

--

## The Meeting of Love

A swarm of butterflies  
Took me to you,  
A beautiful girl  
Near the lake.  
My eyes glittered.  
I asked you for a smell of your hair.  
You gave me the aroma of Paradise.  
Your pleasantness shall stay with me forever.

➤ I sing this poem like a song instead of reciting it

--

## The Pure Souls

Souls, souls, you strive  
To catch minutes of culture.  
Music delivers you  
To freedom.  
The Vandals stop the voice  
Of youth and send you  
To the grave.

➤ Dedicated to the Lost Souls of the Nova NATURE  
Party

# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## A Balloon of Hope

The child saw  
A balloon of hope.  
He caught the balloon  
And flew with it  
To announce  
To all children in the world.  
Can you send me  
Many balloons for adults?

- written in a zoom group with Americans and Canadians called "Cultivating Voices Live Poetry" where I am the only Israeli

## No

On the battlefield there are no flowers.  
No beauty.  
Blood injures the earth.  
Hope shies away, hidden  
By the weapons of mass destruction.  
Perhaps a little child will come  
And tell the leaders:  
Stop!

- my most recent poem



## LA DIGUE

From a poem of **Channah Moshe** to accompany her photo from the island of La Digue in Seychelles.

The skies reflect  
upon the waters below  
in hues of blue  
azure, cyan and  
turquoise drawing  
our eye from shore  
to horizon



# VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

## THE POOR POET

**The Poor Poet** - the best-known and most popular painting by German painter **Carl Spitzweg** - painted in 1839.



### The Choice by W. B. Yeats

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
Perfection of the life, or of the work,  
And if it take the second must refuse  
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.

[Painting and poem, selected by the editor]

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