

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2025





VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

AUGUST 2025 NEWSLETTER

Website Address: <https://voicesisrael.com/>

Amuta No. 58-019-703-6

President

Julian Alper

Mobile: 054-307-3587

president.voices@gmail.com

Secretary

Bob Findysz

Mobile: 054-563-7362

secretary.voices@gmail.com

Treasurer

Chanita Millman

Tel: 02-653-6770

millmanm@inter.net.il

Membership Coordinator

Yochanan Zaqantov

Mobile: 053-708-9140

zaqantov@gmail.com

Workshop Coordinator

Elana Dorfman

Mobile: 054-668-6513

elanado@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Julian Alper

Mobile: 054-307-3587

newsletter.voices@gmail.com

Webmistress

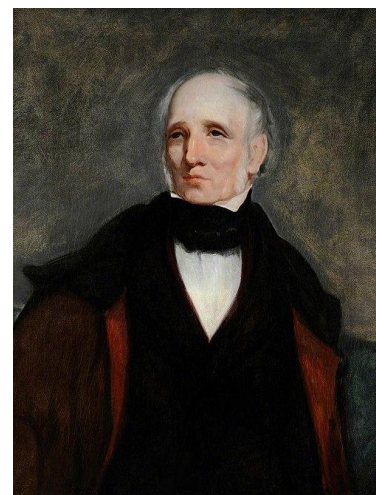
Judy Koren

Mobile: 054-741-7860

koren.judy@gmail.com

CONTENTS

Contents.....	2
President's Letter.....	3
Meeting Dates, Times and Places - August 2025.....	4
Congratulations to our Members.....	5
Announcements/Offers	5
Calls for Submissions.....	6
Baruch November – Poetry Reading/Interview	11
Voices Israel Workshop.....	15
Our Members' Art.....	16
Library Memories	17
Directions - A Play.....	19
The Phoenix of Yodfat	21
Mum's Poems.....	23
Visits to Israel.....	27
Esperanto: Adventures in 'Wonderlanguageland' and 'Lookingglassland'	29
An Interview with Deborah (Debbie) Golden	32
Member's Photo.....	37
The Poet Reclining – Marc Chagall ..	38



William Wordsworth
Anonymous Portrait

[Wikipedia]

Aphorism of the Month

**Classical physics is predictive.
Life is probabilistic. Poetry
disputes both.**

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



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

August creates as she slumbers, replete, and satisfied.
Joseph Wood Krutch

Dear Friends,

My copy of the Anthology arrived last week. It is truly magnificent and we owe a great debt of gratitude to the Anthology Editor-In Chief and Producer, Judy Koren, as well as to the Editorial Board:- Deborah Golden, Avril Meallem and Elana Wolff. Thanks too, go to Malka Kelter for supplying the lovely cover picture: 'Majestic Olive Tree' (acrylic on canvas), and a special thanks to all our wonderful poets who have filled the Anthology with such inspiring and uplifting work. It sometimes takes a while for packages to wend their way through the Israeli postal service, so if you haven't yet received your copy, please be patient – it's well worth waiting for.

Later this month, Sunday August 17th at 7:30pm, we're delighted to welcome Baruch November, a well-known American poet, who will be giving a **Zoom** presentation of some of his poems – and he'll be interviewed by Susan Olsburgh about his life and poetry. I do hope you'll all be able to participate. More details can be found in this Newsletter on page 11.

And early next month, 2nd September in Haifa, our workshop will take place, 'Two American Poets' featuring the poetry of Emma Lazarus and Bob Dylan, led by Wendy Blumfield and Pesach Rotem. This workshop was originally scheduled for June, but had to be rearranged because of the war with Iran. Please note that even if you registered for the workshop that was originally planned for June, you must still register again. More details can be found in this Newsletter on page 15. **Please reserve your place soon – we're almost full.**

Our prestigious Reuben Rose Prize competition is now seeking submissions – please see full details on page 6 of this Newsletter.

Please keep sending your artwork, photos, essays, letters to the editor and poems. Members do enjoy reading and viewing what you produce, and it is wonderful to share our members' many and varied talents.

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

Have you registered yet?
The Workshop – Two American Poets – Tuesday
2nd September in Haifa.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - AUGUST 2025

SOUTHERN Meeting via Zoom Sunday, September 7 at 5:00 PM Coordinator: Miriam Green miriamsgreen@gmail.com	TEL AVIV Meeting via Zoom Thursday, August 28 at 7:00 PM Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438 nosnivel@netvision.net.il	JERUSALEM Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, August 19 at 7:30 PM Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998 aemeallem@gmail.com	UPPER GALILEE Wednesday, August 13 at 10:30. 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, August 26 at 7:00 PM at Wendy Blumfield's home Contact Naomi Yalin for details Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738 naomiyalin@gmail.com	NETANYA/SHARON Tuesday, August 26 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, 14 August At 19:30 Israel time Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365 y2nosh@gmail.com	GLOBAL GROUP 2 Meeting via Zoom Sunday, August 24 At 19:00 Israel time Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860 koren.judy@gmail.com

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

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

- To - **Isaac Cohen** for his many successes throughout the month.
- To - **Gail Wasserman**, who has had three poems selected for publication. 'The Silver Star' and 'I Can Never Wash What I Saw Out of My Eyes' are published in Iron Words for Israel and 'Lay That Gun Down' is being published in Read or Green books American Graveyard Vol 2. (These books are being distributed to US Senators to urge votes for more gun control). You can read Gail's poems in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.
- To - **Ruth Schreiber** whose watercolour 'Old House in Moon Forest' has been chosen by Peter Lay at Black Eyes Poetry, to appear in their next issue, The Rise of the Badger and the Great Shrubbery. You can see Ruth's painting in the 'Our Member's Art' section of this Newsletter.
- To - **Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman**, for receiving the Excellence Award from the Sorbonne University Grand Prix 2025 of Ambassadors.
- To - **Mark Elber** who is featured in a Judith Magazine article - 'Introducing the poetry of Mark Elber'. You can read the article and some of Mark's poems [here](#).
- To - **Julian Alper** who has had two poems selected for publication in All Your Poems Anthology, August 2025. You can read the poems 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.

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.



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

arc 32 - Call for Submissions

The Israel Association of Writers in English (IAWE) has begun collecting submissions of original poetry and prose in English from citizens and residents of Israel for the 32nd issue of *arc*, our annual literary journal.

The theme for *arc 32* is "Humble Beginnings," incorporating whatever is related to things small and new, modest and incipient. Poems, stories, and essays addressing that theme whether closely or indirectly are encouraged. Here are some images to spark your imagination:

- a fresh footprint, a sprouting seed, a single candle
- a little door, a nest, a rising wind
- a new job, friend, project, school

Translations of Israeli literature into English will also be considered if submitted with the copyright-holder's permission. Artwork will not be considered. Please do not send AI-generated text.

Work will be considered from those who are Israeli citizens anywhere or Israeli residents, whether members of the IAWE or not.

Submission guidelines:

- Please submit up to three poems and/or three items of prose **by October 1**, and please refrain from publishing them elsewhere until you've received the editors' decision. Maximum length for each item of prose is 1500 words.
- Submit in docx, doc, or rtf format, and include pdf format as well if your work relies on creative spacing of words or lines.
- Send your submission to arc32editors@gmail.com and please include a third-person biography of 50 to 70 words.

At this time the IAWE cannot pay authors for accepted works, but each contributor will receive a copy of *arc 32*.

Contributors retain copyright and may also republish after *arc 32* appears. We ask only that you acknowledge that the work first appeared in *arc 32*. The IAWE retains the non-exclusive right to republish content from *arc 32* in any form. The editors are under no obligation to accept any particular submission, and their decision is final.

We look forward to receiving your work

Wendy Dickstein & Mark L. Levinson
The *arc 32* editors

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](#).

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

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. 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 September must be in by the 20th of August.) Timely or news-relevant pieces will be accepted at any time. If you wish to submit, please click [here](#) for guidelines on submitting.

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](#).

The Poetry Super Highway Poetry Contest is open to all human beings on planet Earth (except for the judges). Enter as many poems as you like. Poems may be of any style, length, or subject matter. Previously published poems are accepted. There is a \$1 per poem entry fee. The deadline to enter is Saturday, September 27th, 2025. First Prize: 50% of the entry fees collected plus winning poem featured on the PSH website, Second Prize: 30% of the entry fees collected plus winning poem featured on the PSH website, Third Prize: 20% of the entry fees collected plus winning poem featured on the PSH website. Additional Prizes for every single person who enters the contest. Full details [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 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](#).

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

The Weekly Poems Contest - All Poets Invited

Weekly Poems invites all poets from everywhere on Earth to submit a *weeklypoem*. 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

– Open July 28th to August 2nd for publication on August 3rd.

– Open August 4th to August 9th for publication on August 10th.

– Open August 11th to August 16th for publication on August 17th.

– CLOSED WEEK OF AUGUST 18TH TO 23RD.

– Open Monday, August 25th to August 30th for publication on August 31st.

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

The Saturday Evening Post will award \$25 to the author of the winning limerick about this Jack Welch cover illustration from the December 20, 1947, issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Entries must be submitted by August 25. Limericks must contain five lines, and you may enter as many times as you wish. The winning limerick will be published in the November/December issue, and favorite runners-up will be published online. To enter, use this [link](#).



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

The Ilanot Review welcomes submissions from August 1 to September 30, 2025 for the spring 2026 issue

Theme: A Formal Feeling

Only one submission per reading period.

Submissions are free for two weeks or until Submittable's submission caps are reached, whichever comes first. After that, we charge a submission fee of \$3.

Please include a short bio (50-100 words) with your submission.

Poetry: Up to 5 poems, not to exceed 7 pages. Please submit all work + bio in a single Word file, with each poem beginning on a separate page. Please include your name and contact information on each page.

More details - [here](#).

**If any members would like to
help in compiling this page for
future editions of Newsletters,
please email
newsletter.voices@gmail.com**

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

BARUCH NOVEMBER – POETRY READING/INTERVIEW

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

We're delighted to tell you that Baruch November will read poems and be interviewed about his life and poetry, by Susan Olsburgh, in a Voices Israel special Zoom presentation on Sunday August 17th at 7:30pm.

If you would like to participate, please e-mail president.voices@gmail.com for a Zoom link.

About Baruch November and his Books

Baruch November's new book of poems, *The Broken Heart is the Master Key*, features "After Esav," a poem nominated for a Pushcart Prize. In 2019, November's previous book of poems, *Bar Mitzvah Dreams*, was released, and Stephen Dobyns called the book "one of the



best he had recently read." An earlier collection of poems by Baruch, *Dry Nectars of Plenty*, won BigCityLit's chapbook contest. Thomas Lux proclaimed that the poems inside it were by "a poet of talent, urgency, and a large and aching heart."

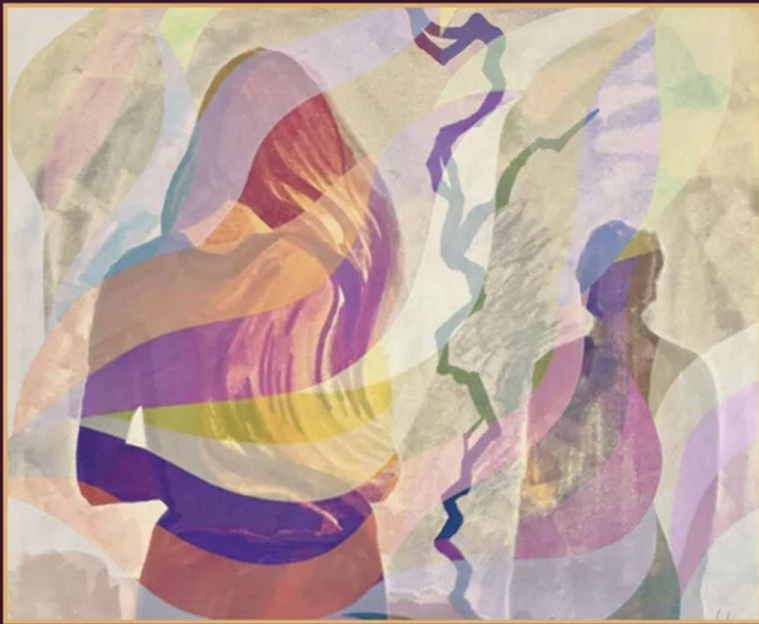
November's works have been featured in *Lumina*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Tiferet Journal*, *NewMyths.com*, and *the Forward*. He serves as a host and organizer of the Jewish Poetry Reading Series. It has featured such poets as Linda Pastan, Grace Schulman, and Alicia

Ostriker. For two decades, Baruch November has taught courses in Shakespeare, Multicultural American Literature, poetry, fiction, and writing at Touro University in Manhattan. He has lived in many cities across the United States but currently resides in Washington Heights, New York.

Continued on next page

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

THE BROKEN HEART IS THE MASTER KEY



Poems by
Baruch November

In his new book of poems, *The Broken Heart is the Master Key*, Baruch November grapples with the pain of unrequited love and resulting regrets, along with interwoven themes that serve as counterbalances. Jewish mysticism, Talmudic insights, biblical figures, and the wisdom of Baal Shem Tov find their way into his work-- often in concert with his explorations of love gone wrong. The reader encounters stories of baseball players, popular icons, November's ancestry, and his childhood, creating a contrast for November's exploration of elusive love. Finally, by the end of the book, it becomes clear why the broken heart is truly the master key.

"*The Broken Heart is the Master Key* is a masterpiece. The poems in Baruch November's new collection have been honed by years of skilled craft, love, and longing for connection — whether with a woman with chestnut hair or with the Divine. November here infuses the dreams of his younger poetic self with the clear, sometimes sharp realism of a man who has known loss yet still embraces the world with open arms. The result is a unique Chassidic dance, a lyrical niggun that lingers in our hearts long after the last page."

Julia Knobloch – Editor of the book

"The plain spoken yet musically resonant poems of Baruch November's collection, *The Broken Heart is the Master Key*, occupy a kind of middle zone between what November calls, "the ways of sorrow, the directions of loss—" and "the beautiful logic of belief." While spiritual aspiration haunts nearly every line of every poem, the sacred promise of it grows more vivid, the more it's complicated, blocked, thwarted or deferred by the body and its profane yet inescapable desires. With a sort of Talmudic passion for clarity and sensitivity to paradox, and a joyous love of low and high brow culture, Baruch brings the whole heterogeneous self to bear on what it means to be an American-Jew at this particular moment of our history."

—Alan Shapiro, author of *Reel to Reel*, finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and *Night of the Republic*, finalist for both the National Book Award and the International Griffin Prize

Continued on next page

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

"Why are you not married?/The rabbis of my early days/demand of me/in my raging dreams.' And so begins Baruch November's searing and introspective new poetry collection that grapples with the weight of romantic misfortunes, family expectations, holy teachings, and a sense of oneness. Can a lonely heart remain righteous and whole, or is it doomed to be buried beneath a "night/of a billion/careless stars"? Whether in the classroom, a synagogue, or a party for Jewish singles, November's wise yet well-rooted poems refuse to pull punches or shy away from life's most difficult questions. I am grateful for this. For while *The Broken Heart is the Master Key* does not claim to have all the answers, it nevertheless unlocks a door that breaks through darkness and draws us nearer to light.

—Jared Harél, author of *Let Our Bodies Change the Subject*, Winner of the Prairie Schooner Raz/Shumaker Book Prize in Poetry

In Baruch November's poems, sudden illuminations rise like proverbs to be remembered. A grandmother "Bracha mastered the parting /of childhood darkness;" an American immigrant to Israel who lost his wife "knew the ways of sorrow,/ the directions of loss—/ a perfect guide/ for the land." And in moments of redemption, we can read the figure of the poet himself who... teaches us that *The Broken Heart is the Master Key*.

— **Rodger Kamenetz**, author of *The Missing Jew: Poems 1976-2022*

To purchase the book – use this [link](#)

Continued on next page

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Baruch's previous book *Bar Mitzvah Dreams*, can be purchased using this link
[Bar Mitzvah Dreams: Baruch November: 9781599487311: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781599487311)

"*Bar Mitzvah Dreams* is a fine first book, one of the best I've recently read. The poems are powerfully made with strong beginnings and surprising conclusions. There is no chaff. The language is direct and rich in metaphor. The free verse is rhythmic and strongly stressed. All are serious, but often with comic aspects. The book also includes two sequences: "A Series of Dreams," with 22 connected poems and "A Beard of Poems" with 18. The first has fantastical elements (Van Gogh makes appearances); in the second, Mr. November uses his beard as metaphor. One section begins: "To wear a beard is also to live in a cage/ made endlessly of oneself." The entire book is a pleasure to read." ~Stephen Dobyns

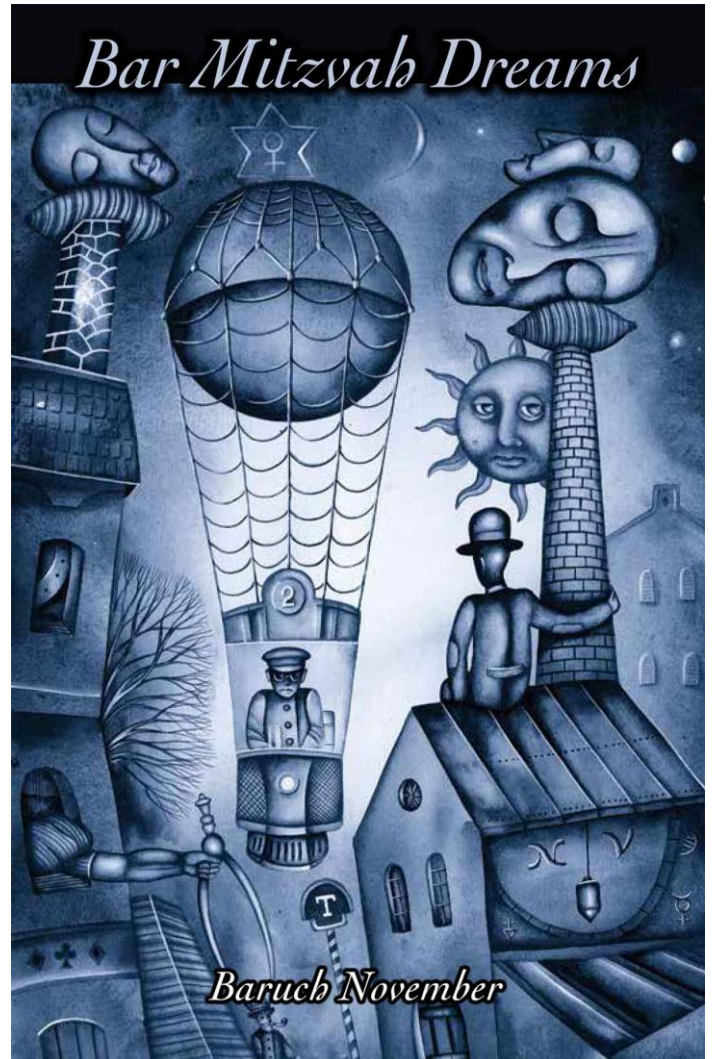
"*Bar Mitzvah Dreams* by Baruch November is an amazing collection of surreal Dream sequences containing references to pop culture figures, artists, thinkers, scholars and rabbis. The poet often speaks directly to these as he tries to come to terms with the meaning of his own life, faith and love. The overriding intelligence of the Poet is present in every poem and comes out of the



questioning of what it means to be alive. The powerful longing for love and touch are strong

elements in this book. I love it and I think you will too. It's quite beautiful." ~Maria Mazziotti Gillan

different situations, as an appeal, a commentary or entertainment. Baruch produces a cocktail of all these components, funny and sad." ~Adam Zagajewski



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

VOICES ISRAEL WORKSHOP

Voices Israel invites you to celebrate the summer's end with a workshop on



TWO AMERICAN POETS

A Late Summer Workshop in Haifa

Tuesday September 2nd, 2025

10:30-15:30

Mercaz Hadarim,
25 Rehov Kiryat Sefer, Ahuza, Haifa

Wendy Blumfield will present the work of the feminist, immigration activist and poet **Emma Lazarus**

Pesach Rotem will present the work of **Bob Dylan**, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and his literary heroes.

Presentations will be followed by writing exercises. Bring your laptops, pens and paper, quills and ink, whatever inspires your muse.



There will be a break for lunch between the two sessions. **Please bring a Vegetarian Kosher dish to share**

The fee for this workshop is 25 NIS

To register press the link below the invitation

[Click here to register](#)

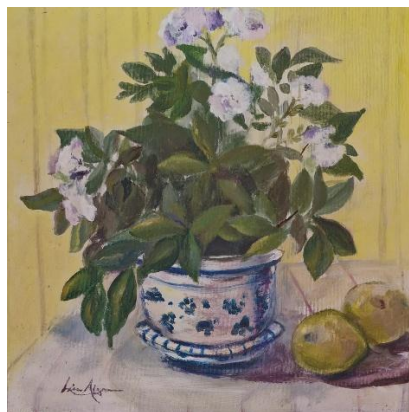
Important Note

If you registered for the workshop that was originally planned for June, you must still register again

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

OUR MEMBERS' ART

Old House in Moon Forest – a watercolour by Ruth Schreiber



Front cover – Lisa Aigen's oil painting
Potted plant with pears

LIBRARY MEMORIES

by Ann Bar-Dov

The woman behind the desk peered down at me through her half-glasses. "You need to be able to write your name to get a library card," she said. "Can you do that?"

"Yes," I said. "I can do it! I've been practicing! Give me a card! Give me a pencil!"

Quivering with expectation, I waited as she rummaged in a drawer, found a blank library card and placed it and a pencil on the counter in front of me. I took up the pencil, moved the card closer to me and slowly printed out: A..N..N. The three letters took up the whole front of the card, but I knew they were correct. That was

my name all right, and I was about to join the ranks of legitimate library patrons, able to take out six whole books at a time for my own reading delight.

I handed the card back to the woman, but she did not nod and smile as I'd hoped she would. She did not say, "Good, welcome to the library." Instead, she said, "No, dear, you need to write your whole name."

"I did!" I said. "That's my name!"

"No," she said. "First and last names both. Can you do that?"

I burst into tears. At four years old, the intricacies of writing first and last names were beyond me. I had no idea at all how to write ANN BAER, and even if I had, wherever was there room for it on that little card?

"You said I could get my own library card if I could write my *name*!" I sobbed to my mother. "You didn't say anything about *last* names!"

This took place more than sixty years ago, in the Linden Boulevard branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. You would think sixty years was more than enough time to soften the outlines of this picture, but I will never forget how humiliated I felt, slinking into the Children's Room behind my mother and knowing that I was still doomed to take out only one or two books under my mother's card. However, looking back on it I am impressed that at four years old I already wanted my own access to the treasure troves of the Brooklyn Public Library.

When I was small, the closest Brooklyn Public Library branch was on Linden Boulevard. It boasted a large Children's Room with big windows and mellow wood furniture. It also had an interesting mezzanine, with a floor of heavy glass bricks that you could more or less see through to the entrance hall and checkout desk below. The library was not close enough for me to get to by myself and it was a constant source of conflict between me and my mother as to when she would take me there. I would have voted for several times a week, never mind anything else she had to do. I could go through six picture books in a few hours; by the time a week had passed, all the juice had been sucked out of them. Once I learned to read (and got my own library card), it took me longer to read through my selections, but somehow I always wound up champing at the bit and having to re-read and re-read until finally we set out for Linden Boulevard.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

As I got older and more mobile, new vistas opened up. Now I could take a bus myself to the Linden Boulevard branch – actually, I'd take the Church Ave bus to Church and Flatbush, get off and walk up Flatbush to Linden Boulevard. I could also take the Flatbush Avenue bus all the way up to the junction of Flatbush Avenue and Eastern Parkway, and the Grand Army Plaza Main Library.

Comparing the Grand Army Plaza library to any other library in Brooklyn was like comparing a neighborhood synagogue with the Temple in Jerusalem. Just as praying got done in both synagogue and Temple, technically all the libraries in Brooklyn were part of the same Carnegie Library system. Books were lent out and returned, and all the branches would order books for you from other branches if you asked for them. The difference was that everything you could possibly ask for was already there in the Grand Army Plaza branch, no waiting necessary.

There was a beautiful Children's Room, with cozy niches under the windows and shelves upon shelves of all kinds of books. There was, in addition, a large Teen Literature Room, with an extensive collection of the latest and coolest. The Main Library also had an audio collection, something fairly new in the late 50's, and you could experience the novelty of hearing a book read through earphones and seeing it as a physical entity at the same time.

No one who has ever visited the Grand Army Plaza library can ever forget its wide front plaza and the many steps leading up to the three huge entrance doors, each festooned with golden figures and flanked by pillars enlivened with more golden images. The main entrance hall was paneled in long, elegant sheets of toast-colored wood. Even the bathrooms were lovely, decked out in white and black marble. To a kid from the slums of Argyle Road (me!), the Grand Army Plaza library was more or less the Holy of Holies, an accessible escape hatch from an often difficult life.

By the time my family moved to Kings Bay in the late 60's I was more interested in adult literature than teen stuff. The obliging librarians in the Sheepshead Bay branch would order whatever I asked for, as would the librarians in the Nostrand Avenue branch. These were storefront establishments, businesslike and competent but not architectural wonders. By then, though, it didn't matter to me what the building looked like. I was – and still am – hooked on books, and for sure I have the Brooklyn Public Library to thank for that.

Ann's essay was the winner of the 2021 Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival Non-Fiction Prize.

The Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival is the first original Brooklyn-focused film and arts festival. The festival presents programs that illuminate the rich, diverse cultural history of Brooklyn. Since the first screening of Brooklyn films in 2007, the Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival has presented Brooklyn-focused film and Brooklyn-literature programs. In 2011 the Brooklyn Non-Fiction Prize, the first of its kind Brooklyn-focused literature project was established by the Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

DIRECTIONS - A PLAY

by Peter Brav

MORNING – Somewhere in the front yard of a suburban home, somewhere you don't live. HAROLD emerges through the front door in gray sweatpants and maroon long-sleeved t-shirt. He is barefoot. He eyes the New York Times at the edge of the street, wondering why they can't throw it as far as he did forty years ago, whether or not he should finally stop delivery so he can get his news on his smartphone in the company bathroom and whether bad news would seem just a little bit better on a 4-inch screen.

He is puzzled why that perfectly fine Italian restaurant on Greene Street has closed so suddenly and asks himself whether his son will ever get a job. Most of all, he is thinking about business ideas never pursued – his chain of branded mohels performing ritual circumcision under the brand name BrisTine; the Ab-Squisher, a remote control toy car designed to ride over the stomach of a person lying on the ground and strengthen abdominal muscles; and Deaf Ears, his soundproof booths placed at strategic Manhattan street corners where harried urbanites could enter and scream for 15 seconds for only a quarter.

He whistles happily but opens the paper to an instant frown, turning pages for updates on the conflicts in Libya, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan, the disasters in Japan, Alabama and Mississippi. He closes the paper abruptly, acutely aware that he will again eschew Sports (Billionaires Lock Out Millionaires), Business (Pay No Attention To That Man Behind the Curtain), Religion and Science (Age of Earth Estimated Between Five Thousand and Five Billion Years), Style (Nothing in Here Looks Good on You or Fits, Fool).

He would like to smell the flowers in May bloom at the edge of his driveway but that smell thing has fallen by the same wayside his appreciation for perfect sushi and perfect lasagna have. It is spring, damn it, is what he is really thinking. After a particularly miserable winter he is supposed to shrug off with ease and a chuckle, he should be rejoicing at the prospect of a joyously warm six months and the recollection that this annual survival renewal is why he never moved to California or Florida. But he doesn't feel like shrugging and doesn't feel like renewing, not even running, as always on the opposite side of the street as that woman with the sleek silver sweatsuit, unless and until he can figure out what he's running from or something to run to.

His company sells a drug for this feeling of his. It is pink and white, a lot like Good and Plenty, which is where those geniuses on the third floor probably got their inspiration. Maybe it actually is Good and Plenty, which would certainly explain a lot (apart from the years pending approval at the FDA). There were always secondary uses being discovered for



PETER WITH 4-YEAR-OLD BORDER COLLIE RUBY WHO COMPETES IN THE SPORT OF DOG AGILITY

His company sells a drug for this feeling of his. It is pink and white, a lot like Good and Plenty, which is where those geniuses on the third floor probably got their inspiration. Maybe it actually is Good and Plenty, which would certainly explain a lot (apart from the years pending approval at the FDA). There were always secondary uses being discovered for

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

relatively venerable drugs, why not secondary uses for aged candies? (Gets your kid through church choir and good for you too!)

He cannot help himself and sings aloud: "Once upon a time there was an engineer, Choo Choo Charlie was his name, we hear. He had an engine and he sure had fun. He used GOOD & PLENTY candy to make his train run. Charlie says 'Love my GOOD & PLENTY!' Charlie says 'Really rings my bell!' Charlie says 'Love my GOOD & PLENTY! Don't know any other candy that I love so well!'"

All this singing exhausts him and he looks around to make sure no one has been listening. Street rumor has long had it that the Durbins' 26-year marriage broke up that Saturday morning Tom Durbin ran up and down the street shouting Yabba Dabba Do for fifteen minutes after opening an envelope from Publishers Clearinghouse that ultimately proved disappointing. And it has never been denied that Clarence McCord killed himself a week after coming to believe that God could not possibly be everywhere and shouting it loudly while flipping burgers in his backyard. As different as Choo Choo Charlie is, Harold wants to take no chances.

Just in time too because there is Helen next door coming out to water her azaleas from her old school pink watering can. Who would believe that she has some terminal illness-contracted in Malaysia or Missouri depending on which gossip neighbor is to be believed? That she has six weeks at most of watering those azaleas?

HELEN: Isn't it just the most glorious of days, Harold?

HAROLD looks at her, then up at the sky, down at the newspaper, and finally back at her.

HAROLD: We're in some trouble here, Helen.

HELEN: I just heard you singing, didn't I?

HAROLD: (momentarily alarmed) You did?

HELEN: What a glorious jingle, Harold! I can hear it even now, taste that wonderful candy too.

HAROLD: You can?

HELEN: Of course. Can't you?

HAROLD: Turns to walk back inside, HELEN still standing and watering her flowers.

CURTAIN COMES DOWN.

PETER BRAV is the author of the novels SNEAKING IN, THE OTHER SIDE OF LOSING, 331 INNINGS, and ZAPPY I'M NOT and the plays SOLD OUT, GOOD TILL CANCELED, PROPRIETY, LATER, SOUTH BEACH, AFRICAN VIOLET, THE RUB, and TRUMP BURGER. His short stories, poems and essays have appeared in numerous publications and his random musings and more can be viewed at www.peterbrav.com. He is a 1977 graduate of Cornell University and 1980 graduate of Harvard Law School and lives with his wife Janet, a retired college professor, and his canine best friends Casey, Max and Ruby.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

THE PHOENIX OF YODFAT

a story by Pesach Rotem



I received an email from the editor of *arc* requesting submissions on the theme of “The Phoenix” and I thought: Oh, no! I am doomed. I don’t know anything about any damned phoenix, I have no interest in any damned phoenix, and I have nothing to say about any damned phoenix. All my friends will submit stories and essays and poems on the theme of the phoenix, and they will be published in *arc* to great applause and acclaim, and I will be the outcast of the IAWF. I am only thankful that my parents are not alive to see my disgrace.

Some people, when they are feeling despondent, go to a bar. Others go to a psychiatrist. Me, I go to the library. That is my place of solace. So that’s what I did, I headed to my local public library, and I felt better immediately. The warm light, the smell of old books, the soft rustle of pages turning — it all helped me calm down and feel at peace.

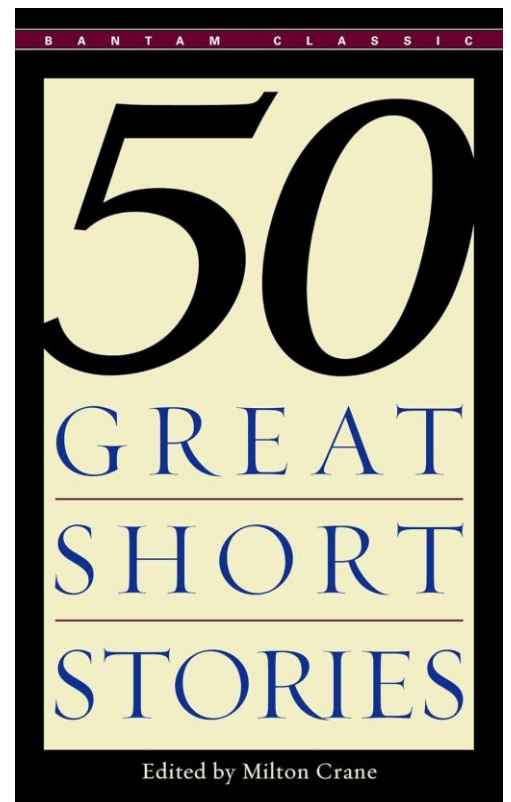
In the front of the library, just inside the door, there was a shelf of books for free give-away. They were mostly in Hebrew but there were a few in English, and *50 Great Short Stories* is

the one that caught my eye. I opened it to the table of contents and there, there in the table of contents, after “The Apostate,” before “That Evening Sun,” there it was: “The Phoenix.”

“Woo hoo!” I cried, shattering the calm of the library and annoying the patrons thereof. “A sign from God! I am saved!”

I took the book and headed home, skipping all the way, feeling a sense of jubilation I had not experienced in decades. At home, I placed my new-found treasure on the table next to my easy chair, poured myself a nice glass of wine, slipped my feet into my most comfortable reading slippers, and sat down with great anticipation.

The cover of my new book said *50 Great Short Stories*, edited by Milton Crane. The fine-print page told me it was a Bantam Book, originally published in August 1952, and the volume in my hand was a Bantam Classic reissue published in September 2005. The Table of Contents told me that “The Phoenix” by Sylvia Townsend Warner — an author I had never heard of but was eager to become acquainted with — was on page 418. I proceeded to page 418 posthaste.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Arriving to page 418, I discovered that the title of the story was not actually “The Phoenix.” It was, to be absolutely precise, “The Phœnix,” with the “o” and the “e” squished together like Siamese twins. Weird. The only time I had seen an “o” and an “e” squished together like that was when I was hanging out with my friend Œdipus, and Œdipus was a weird guy.

How weird was my friend Œdipus? Let me put it this way. Œdipus murdered his father, and that was only the second-weirdest thing Œdipus ever did. I leave the rest to your imagination. Œdipus. A weird dude. And complex.

Anyway, getting back to the task at hand, I started reading “The Phœnix.” The first sentence of the story was “Lord Strawberry, a nobleman, collected birds” and I said, “Oh, boy! This is going to be a good one!” Reading on, it soon developed that Lord Strawberry had the finest aviary in Europe, with many varieties of birds, all well cared for, but he remained unsatisfied because he did not have a phœnix. Finally, after various unsuccessful attempts to obtain one through agents and intermediaries, “Lord Strawberry went himself to Arabia, where, after some months, he found a phœnix, won its confidence, caught it, and brought it home in perfect condition.” So it was clear to the reader that Lord Strawberry — an English nobleman feeling perfectly entitled to go anywhere in the world and take whatever interests or amuses him and bring it home — was supposed to represent Imperialism in this story.

Eventually, of course, the sun set on Lord Strawberry — just as it had set on the British Empire — and he died. After some machinations involving the London Zoo and other interested parties, the phœnix passed into the hands of Mr. Tancred Poldero, owner and proprietor of Poldero’s Wizard Wonderland. And just as Lord Strawberry represented Imperialism in our allegory, Mr. Poldero served as the symbol of Capitalism, characterized by greed, exploitation, and cruelty. His intention was to make money selling tickets to see the phœnix but, unfortunately for him, nobody wanted to see the phœnix. It was not funny like the baboons, nor scary like the crocodile; it was just a nice, quiet, peaceful bird that ate expensive bird-seed on Mr. Poldero’s account.

The sign on the phœnix’s cage said “*Phœnix phœnixissima formossissima arabiana*. When old, sets fire to itself and emerges miraculously reborn.” Needless to say, that is a spectacle people would pay to see, but who wants to stand and around and wait until the phœnix was old? Mr. Poldero’s solution was to use various methods of abuse — methods amounting to torture that I have no intention of recounting here — to induce premature aging in the phœnix. And it worked!

Eventually, the phœnix — aged, dejected, defeated — built itself a pyre from the twigs and straw and shavings that had been shoved into its cage, settled into it, and appeared to fall asleep. And then comes the climactic final paragraph:

At that moment the phœnix and the pyre burst into flames. The flames streamed upwards, leaped out on every side. In a minute or two everything was burned to ashes, and some thousand people, including Mr. Poldero, perished in the blaze.

What a conflagration! Even Sylvia Townsend Warner herself could not have imagined the extent of it. My fears, my inhibitions, my self-doubt — all consumed by the inferno. The fuse of my creativity was lit: an eternal flame, never to be extinguished. I grabbed my pen and my notebook and, without hesitation, I started to write the epic poem that would soon be universally recognized as my masterpiece: “The Phoenix of Yodfat.”

Pesach’s story was first published in arc 31 – the
Anthology of the IAWE (Israel Association of
Writers in English)

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MUM'S POEMS

Poems written by Griet de Jong and compiled by her daughter Channah Moshe

Mum and I were sitting in her kitchen when she mentioned having written poems when she had been a nurse during WWII in England. Upon my request, she read one; her writing captivated me, and without thinking twice, I blurted out:

"One day I'll have your poems published."

She smiled and said, "I have around 50 poems."

After she passed away, her three younger children took memorabilia from her apartment; first, David, Mum's "only son" as she used to refer to him; then Naomi, whom Mum had nicknamed "sunshine" because as a toddler, she had drawn two sunshines in all her pictures; lastly, I took an old dishevelled suitcase, and a few of her books on health topics.

I lugged everything up to the third floor of my apartment, opened the suitcase and discovered mounds of newspaper cuttings covered in dust and



MUM AND I WHEN I GRADUATED WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN FINE ARTS

Mum's poems



Poems by Griet de Jong
(married name: von Springer)

Compiled by her daughter Channah Moshe (née von Springer)

FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION: PHOTO OF MUM AFTER THE BIRTH OF HER ELDEST DAUGHTER RUTHY, OF WHOM SHE WROTE THE POEM "CHILD OF FRUSTRATION."

cobwebs that repelled me. I quickly closed the suitcase, hauled it down three flights and placed it next to the garbage bin. Back in my apartment, I washed my hands, slumped on the sofa and turned the T.V. on, but I wasn't able to watch it. Something nagged at me. Shouldn't I check Mum's last belongings more thoroughly?

Again, I walked downstairs. The dishevelled suitcase was still there. I lugged it up the three flights again, and this time I wore latex gloves to shuffle through the newspaper cuttings, old bills, discovered a copper Dutch Passover plate and a rumpled brown envelope. I retrieved the Passover plate. When I reached for the brown envelope, it disintegrated between my fingers and its contents slipped out – Mum's poems. My promise to her echoed loud in my mind; now I had the opportunity to have her poems published.

I wasn't sure how to set about it, seeing most of my mother's poems were in English but there were quite a few in Dutch and a couple in German. At a workshop of Judy Belsky's, I took the opportunity to consult her about this, and together with Esther Cameron, they both said the Dutch and German poems should be translated into English, seeing the book would be, for the most part, in English. On the spot, Esther offered to translate the German ones. Finding someone to translate the Dutch poems proved more challenging.

I would like to thank the One above who was most important in Mum's life; and for the opportunity to fulfill my promise to her.

Numerous people were indispensable for the fruition of this project. Her son David, who accompanied me on my trials to find someone to translate the Dutch poems. Her daughter Naomi, who was the liaison officer in reconnecting us with our Dutch cousin Nico de Jong. Nico, who

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

diligently translated all of Mum's Dutch poems, noting how touching some were with layers of wealth within them. The renowned poet Esther Cameron, who translated Mum's German poems and commented that "they are messages from a beautiful soul." Thomas Morant who reviewed the German poems. Raphael, my daughter's fiancé, for his astute input. My beloved husband Yair and delightful daughter Ruthy who offered suggestions when yet another quandary cropped up in trying to accomplish this project.

Biography of Mum

Mum's biography is based on her anecdotes, as well as those of Nico.

Mum was born on 11th of February, 1914 [*Tu-Bishvat* – the Jewish Feast of Trees], in Ramsgate, Kent, England, in what were then known as the Montefiore cottages. Her mother, Elizabeth May Feast, was English. Her father, as his family name "de Jong" implies was Dutch.

When Mum was four, the family emigrated to the Netherlands, where they lived in a small village near Leeuwarden in the province of Friesland. She was the eldest of four children, with two brothers – Jan and Nico, and one sister Lies. As the firstborn, she took on major responsibilities. This in light of a frail mother and a father who was the pubkeeper, where she helped out after school, at the young age of 14.

Her secular father's upbringing of his four children, perhaps indicative of those times, was to beat them. When she was 18 and he raised his hand, she decided it was for the last time; she tied her violin and some books to her bicycle and rode off into the next chapter of her life.

This chapter proved challenging too. With only a high-school certificate, in 1932, few opportunities lay open before her. Although becoming a physical exercise educator was her dream, she took up mental nursing as, at that time, this was the only door somewhat ajar for a woman with no credentials. The distorted and suffering patients were, at times, more than her young tender soul could handle.

At the age of 22 (in 1936), she decided to leave the Netherlands and sail to England, where she was later joined by her sister Lies and brother Jan.

She took up general nursing at the age of 25 (in 1939). During WWII she devotedly nursed the wounded, homeless and destitute, working long hours, with food severely rationed. The Blitz of the German bombings brought in burnt and mutilated casualties that strongly impacted her sensitive soul. Despite all this, there were some hysterically funny moments, which, perhaps out of context, might not even be amusing. For example, the wounded who were admitted to the hospital's reception area, were brought up to the ward via an elevator; and the ward nurses would be notified in advance over the phone: "One burn patient on the way up," "One amputee coming up." At mealtimes, the food trolleys would also be conveyed via the same route. So, one phone call was: "Rabbits on the way up." Hearing this, the nurses burst out laughing, somewhat assuaging the tension of six years of strain and painful sights.

Her poems emanate the themes of searching for 'true' love, and seeking the "right" spiritual path in life. Accordingly, she went to meetings of various philosophies, such as anthroposophy. When she came across the Jewish Christian Community (J.C.C.) she felt it was it for her. At the J.C.C. she also met my father, who was the love of her life. Even when, as she sarcastically put it, "It took five others to replace me," she continued to love him until her very last day.

My father came from an aristocratic family. Unbeknown to Mum, this caused quite a stir among the hospital personnel, as is apparent from the following anecdote. The senior nursing staff would, at times, give their subordinates a tough time, which induced them to find solace in venting their frustrations with colleagues behind closed doors. On one such occasion, when Mum complained to a friend about the Head nurse in what she thought was a secluded area of the ward, from behind a patient's partition, the Head Nurse exclaimed "at least I don't have your aristocratic beak!"



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Mum was a kind soul, albeit with strict principles such as seeking to make peace between people experiencing altercations due to idle gossip.

Mum's succinct British humor is manifest in the following. Upon completing the two years of mandatory service in the Israeli Air Force, I called her in London and exclaimed in an English that had obviously not improved during the 2 years of adapting to Israeli culture and military jargon: "I finished the Israeli army!" to which she promptly replied: "Congratulations darling, the Arabs have been trying to do this for years."

Mum was an avid bibliophile, her favorite book being – the Bible. She read it avidly every evening upon retiring to bed. This is why we, her children, had her tombstone sculptured as an open book with Psalm 23, her favorite, inscribed on it. Next to her tombstone I planted a cactus in memory of her grandfather who, in addition to having a greenhouse of cacti, was the beacon of affection and appreciation in her challenging childhood.

Hainault Forest by Griet de Jong

Autumn of 1939, Hainault Forest, 6 a.m. – During the strain of Mental Nursing.

When worldly cares become too many,
And worldly burdens far too heavy,
Oh, leave the mess and fuss!
Leave it all behind,
And step out into peace.
For even in the darkest hour
His grace does shine on us.

Oh, come out in the forest,
On an early autumn-morn,
When the world is yet asleep.
When no ill has yet disturbed it,
And no care the young day burdened.
When the world and you are spotless,
And only from His goodness reap.

Sit awhile among the trees.
Sit in silence and in wonder,
Lost in beauty and in goodness,
Asking nothing, wanting nothing –
The soul at peace with its own self.
Sleepy world, you do not know,
The peace and truth I here confess.

For presently you will awaken,
In your hustle and your bustle.
You will always be the same,
Merciless and hard as concrete,

Always hurrying, doing business.
– Do you ever stop and wonder
Where you're going, whence you came?

In an hour I will be back,
But while I'm here you cannot touch me.
I am right beside you,
Yet I'm far away.
I have seen beyond the drabness,
Beyond the struggle of the world – –
Beyond my own faltering footsteps too.

Golden leaves and browning ferns,
Pure air, rich fertile soil – – –
The breaking of the sky, the birth of a new day.
And the silence of the earth,
Like a sleeping babe.

– – – – –
Not as the world giveth, give I unto you,
Did He not say –?

My soul is longing thirstily
For all that's pure and good.
Something I did always find in a country lane.
My lung expends, my eye is lost,
In the beauty that is spotless.
For a while I linger on,
Then strengthened, I come back again.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

The Prostitute by Griet de Jong

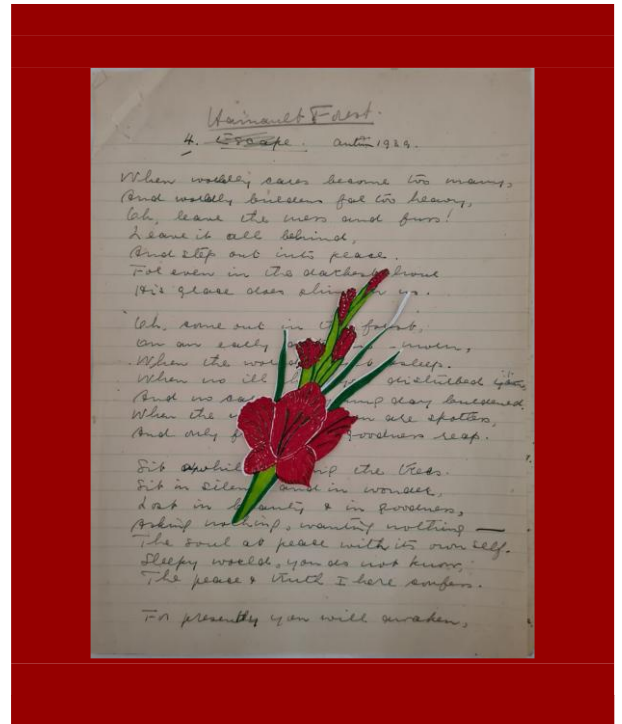
17th Oct. 1944, WWII Blitz, London

On a bitter cold day,	A week went by.
On Waterloo station,	Then you
You approached him.	Waited
A pathetic scrap	For him
Of humanity,	On the steps
In your thin,	Of Waterloo station.
Shabby clothes.	"Returned
And asked him	With thanks,
For a tanner.	Your two and six,
Merciless came	And twenty
His reply:	Players
"Is trade so bad,	For a gentleman."
You cannot	
Earn yourself	You touched
A tanner?"	A chord
Unashamed	In his world-wise
You answered:	Heart.
"No trade	There was something
For a few days	In you
Yet."	Essentially good,
And the bitter cold	Something
Wind	Of Truth
Blew through	Shining
Your clothes.	Through
He dived	Your rags.
In his pocket	A promise,
And gave you	Stronger
Two and six.	Than
"Get yourself	Failure –.
A warm meal."	
And turned	
On his heels,	
Struck by the look	
On your face.	
"Nobody	
Has ever	
Said that	
Before,	
And wanted	
Nothing	
For it,"	
You said.	

Rebirth by Griet de Jong

17.2.1946. Tunnel Gardens, Poplar

Birds are singing,	Smiles upon us –.
Sunshine gay –.	Life, near gone
Children running,	Bursts forth
Chatting, laughing.	In song –
Buds are swelling	And I thank
On the trees.	In silent moment,
Old man nodding,	For the love
Lifts his pipe.	That quietly
God from Heaven	Came –.



BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION: A SECTION OF MUM'S HANDWRITTEN ORIGINAL VERSION OF THE POEM "HAINAULT FOREST" WITH A GLADIOLUS FLOWER WHICH I DREW AS IT WAS ONE OF HER FAVORITE FLOWERS. RED WAS HER FAVORITE COLOUR, HENCE THE GLADIOLUS IS IN RED.

Two of Channah's poems are included in the Poet's Corner Section of this Newsletter

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

VISITS TO ISRAEL

By Gary Corbi

1) Friday Night in Jerusalem

A group of American volunteers from Maale HaHamisha took the bus into Jerusalem on a Friday night. It was a beautiful Judean evening, sunny with little humidity.

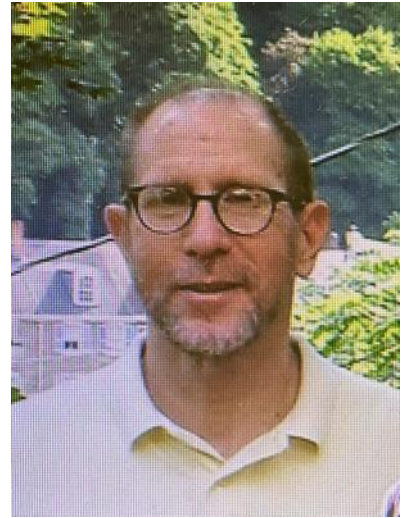
We found a pizza restaurant someone in the group had previously visited for dinner. We then attended a service at Heichal Shlomo, before wandering into the Old City to the Western Wall.

One of the volunteers had arranged a ride home with a kibbutz member who was in Jerusalem to deliver produce. We piled into the back of his pickup truck and enjoyed the ride home through the city under the stars.

The following is about the ride:

Friday night in Jerusalem

Pickup truck slams down the dormant hillside
leaving winding lanes in its smoky wake.
Blank-faced houses stare, voices stone encached
as muted prayers drift in a solemn tide.
Perched in the truck bed, we slide at each brake
our legs crush peach pulp, scent the air with reek.
On hills before us pinpoint white flames flash
tranquil beacons for spent domestic nights.
Matching stars float deep in the sky's black lake
rapt eyes catch their sheen in a moonlight cast.
A savored, first burst; calm, unforeseen peak
of squared, gold hued stone, precisely aligned,
set snug within my world's vast roil, unique,
brief spur to suck life's juice to its tart rind.



2) Beit Hanina

My first weekend in Israel (in late May 1973), I took a bus into the Old City with two English kibbutz volunteers. It was a Saturday morning, so we walked to the nearby village of Biddu to get the bus. We passed an abandoned Jordanian fort as this was the pre-1967 Israel/Jordan border. Instructions were to stay on the road due to the possibility of unexploded mines in the fields.

Once we arrived in the Old City, we went our separate ways. I neglected to ask about bus schedules, being young and foolish. After wandering through the Old City for hours, I went to the bus station near the Damascus Gate and got on the return bus. It was early evening.

I was surprised when we stopped in Beit Hanina and the bus driver informed us that this was the last stop. He would be returning to the Old City. I asked the driver for directions to the kibbutz. He pointed to a road with a sign I could not read, repeatedly saying "kibbutz" while nodding his head.

I alternated walking and running along the road in the gathering darkness. (Thankfully, I ran cross-country so the distance was not a problem.) At one fork in the road, I started down the right fork. A shepherd, out watching his flock, yelled and pointed to the left-hand fork, saying "kibbutz."

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Eventually I found the kibbutz. Hearing singing from one of the volunteer cabins, I entered to find Tony, one of the volunteers, playing his guitar while singing the Simon and Garfunkel song "Homeward Bound." I collapsed on the bed. I submitted a poem, "Beit Hanina" to the June 2024 newsletter about the misadventure.

Beit Hanina

I'm sitting in an old bus station.
Have no ticket for my destination.
My first Old City trip complete
I lean back tired in my seat.
Oozing smoke from every pore
The bus speeds forward with a roar.

Brakes hiss, with a snort, the bus eases to a stop.
Passengers leave in a tired flock.
Until I remain alone.
The bus driver glances back; "Last stop. Everyone off.
We return to the city at sunset."

I unfold my map.
Where are we?
Beit Hanina. Miles from my destination.
And the sun is already low.

I approach the driver.
Point to the kibbutz on the map.
He points to a road on the left and repeats the kibbutz name.
Thanking him I exit.

I walk rapidly along the road.
The sky darkens and I begin to run.
My shirt tail sails like a kite in mid swoop.
Off brand sneakers slap the concrete with each step.
A clown on parade.

I come to a fork in the road.
Unable to see the map, I guess.
Start down the right-hand fork.
I hear a yell from a nearby field.
Moving closer I see a shepherd.
Staff in hand; sheep around him.
He yells "kibbutz" and points to the left-hand turn.

Familiar scenes at last in sight
I walk relieved toward the dim lights.
Hearing music in a house ahead
I walk in and fall down on a bed.
Concerned George and Doile crowd around.
While Tony softly sings Homeward Bound.

ESPERANTO: ADVENTURES IN 'WONDERLANGUAGELAND' AND 'LOOKINGGLASSLAND'

By Luiza Carol

You have just met two 'portmanteau words' in the title above. Imagine a language, in which you are free to create as many such words as you want, providing you understand a very simple system of stitching word roots together — a system that makes any 'portmanteau word' easily understandable. But you are also free to use each word separately, if you choose so.

Imagine a language, in which there are relatively few grammar rules, with no exceptions. For a better understanding, imagine you were teaching English to foreigners, and you had just told your pupils that the verb *to beautify* comes from the noun *beauty*. Immediately, your pupils would be able to create new verbs like *to truthify*, *to accuracify*, *to interestify* and so on, in an imaginary English, where there were no grammar exceptions.

Well, such a 'wonderlanguage' does exist. It is called Esperanto, and it is not an ethnic language, but a constructed one. It was created and initiated in 1887 by L. L. Zamenhof, a genius thinker, a competent physician as well as an eminent poet, essayist, translator, who also used to play cello as a hobby. That brilliant man achieved a splendid language, perfectly fit to express absolutely everything in all fields of human activities. Esperanto is both a harmonious idea and a melodious experience. It is designed for clarity, enriched by musicality. It invites poets and songwriters into a world where rhythm meets reason, and expression flows with astonishing ease. It is spoken all over the world by hundreds of thousands of people (some sources indicate two million or even more, but it is difficult to collect exact data about such a dispersed community, because of the lack of formal tracking, the wide range of fluency levels, and the decentralized nature of the community).

Esperanto is indeed easy and funny, but... would this be enough for so many people in the world to become so enthusiastic about it? Of course, not. But Esperanto is not just a language; it is also a way of thinking and hoping, a special vision of life. It is a social phenomenon, a 'Movado' (movement). Some people decide to learn Esperanto out of curiosity or by mere chance (for instance on the occasion of an international music festival with songs in Esperanto, or accompanying somebody on a trip organized by an international group of Esperantists). Some people read about it and become interested first in the international community that this language has generated, and only afterwards in the language itself. (This is what happened to me, by the way.) Some people limit themselves to acquire a low level of mastering the language, but others do become deeply immerse in the life of this community, especially since it has become easier for a large number of persons to meet not only physically but also virtually, for scientific conferences, artistic programs, discussions about literature, music, medicine, philosophies, religions, visual arts, gardening and many other things. There are more and more opportunities of learning different disciplines of science and technology by means of Esperanto (both by physical and virtual participation) at different universities of many lands.

For 20 years I have been an enthusiastic member of the Esperanto world. This community has a fascinating unique history, and has developed its unique wonderful traditions. An experience in the Esperanto speaking world brings with it a feeling of entering a Lookingglassland. To really enjoy it, you have to be prepared not only to learn a beautiful and rather easy language, but also to enter a realm of modifying mirrors. Scientifically, modifying mirrors are those that can modify reality in terms of *size* and/or *orientation* and/or *field of view* and/or *focus*.

Unlike any ethnic community that has created in time its own language, in this case we witness an opposite phenomenon: it was the language that created the community. In order to enjoy the cultural traditions of the Movado,



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

you have to become a 'samideano'. Here is a typical Esperanto portmanteau word. It is composed of the following elements: 'sama' (similar") + 'ideo' (idea) + 'ano' (member of a group). After you have learned an ethnic language, you become a 'samlingvano' (a member of a group that shares the same *language*), but after you have learned Esperanto, you become a 'samideano' (a member of a group that shares the same *idea*). There is no perfect equivalent in ethnic languages, so it is usually translated as 'comrade', but there is more to it than comradeship. There is a utopian idea behind it. There is a vision of life, according to which all cultural traditions generated by any ethnic language, deserve the same respect and attention from the rest of the world, regardless of the number of native speakers of that language and regardless of the economic and political power of the land(s) where it is spoken. The use of Esperanto as a neutral artificial 'bridge language' is proposed as a solution to what is perceived as a language injustice, that causes also a cultural injustice. Usually, people whose native language is less spread need to learn a more widespread language in order to succeed in their business and to have access to wider information. Practically, nowadays, not knowing English is a real handicap in one's life. Usually, people learn a foreign language because they need it, and English is more often than not the best choice to communicate with any foreigners anywhere, a circumstance that leads to less attention to the values of other cultures. The utopian world proposed in the 19th century by L. L. Zamenhof was a world of bilingual citizens, in which each person could use fluently both his or her ethnic language and Esperanto. In such a world, nobody should feel a foreigner, nobody should feel disabled and nobody's culture should be neglected or despised, but critically filtered through common ethical criteria. Seems too beautiful to become true, doesn't it? All this concept is strongly linked with ideas of universal peace, universal social justice, international solidarity... All those utopian ideas are indeed too beautiful to be achieved in a lifetime, but also too beautiful for us to give up trying to make our life at least closer to each of them. The relatively small but courageous and unique Esperanto community is a social phenomenon that tries to give life to the Esperanto utopia, building relations of friendship and collaboration among its own members from all over the world. This fascinating experiment neither totally succeeds nor totally fails. It keeps evolving and improving itself.

From my own experience, I can say that in this community I could find a lot of friends from all continents. They are people who want to enrich their lives exploring different traditions and ways of living, while rejecting racist prejudices, ethnic stereotypes, calumnies and hateful slogans still haunting the world. The percentage of such people seems to me significantly greater than in any other environments that I happened to know. And this is particularly relevant, considering the diversity of ethnicity and religion inside this community. That is why I came to love the Esperanto phenomenon and why I have lately dedicated most of my time and energy to explore its culture and sometimes to try to contribute to it.

While most people struggle to learn a language that may help them succeeding in their career, the Esperantists have chosen to behave the opposite way: they have elected to learn a language that can succeed only if it receives help from those who love it. While most people hope to gain money by integrating in the fashions and ways of life of a foreign richer country, the Esperantists hope to find international friends and collaborators, in order to build together healthy relations, based on reciprocal trust and respect. And something odd happens: When you feel yourself deeply immersed in a utopia, you are already able to switch your point of view easily. I mean, you may not only look at the Esperanto community from outside it but also from inside it. And then, you may find it... a quite normal world! Meanwhile, from inside it, you can look at the rest of the world... and you begin to see all the ethnic hatred, calumnies, injustices, especially all the abominations of wars at an even larger dimension. You can perceive the rest of the world as an absurd distortion of normality. I am speaking about distortions of *size*, *orientation*, *field of view* and *focus*. I am speaking about normality viewed through modifying mirrors. You can see an absurd Lookingglass world all around us, a terrifying dystopia, while the Esperanto community seems a tiny fragile bubble of normality floating inside it...

Through its history, the Wonderlanguage community had to survive many challenges, especially during the two world wars. During those atrocities, the Esperantists struggled to help each other in spite of false propagandas. Esperanto was secretly taught among prisoners of war and their guardians. In the bleakest concentration camps, Esperanto was spoken,

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

sung and taught as a means of keeping hope alive. Will the ideals of this courageous community resist the challenge of the new horrors of our time? The answer will give the new generations of Esperantists. And by the way: a generation of Esperantists is not a biological generation, but the totality of new people of any age who choose to learn the language in the same year. Esperanto doesn't need a long time of hard learning. Usually after a few months one can already use it at a basic level. I learned it at the age of 58 and I know people who learned it even later in life. It is never too late.

If my comments made you curious to know more about the Esperanto phenomenon and about the fascinating personality of L. L. Zamenhof, you can find details and contacts in Wikipedia and many other sites.

Luiza Carol was born in 1947 in Bucharest, Romania and has lived in Israel since 1980. She writes for children and/or for grown-ups: poetry, prose, plays, songs, essays, translations. She has published in Romanian since 1969, in English since 1981 and in Esperanto since 2006. She has published books, contributed to magazines, anthologies and radio programs, and received literary prizes.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEBORAH (DEBBIE) GOLDEN

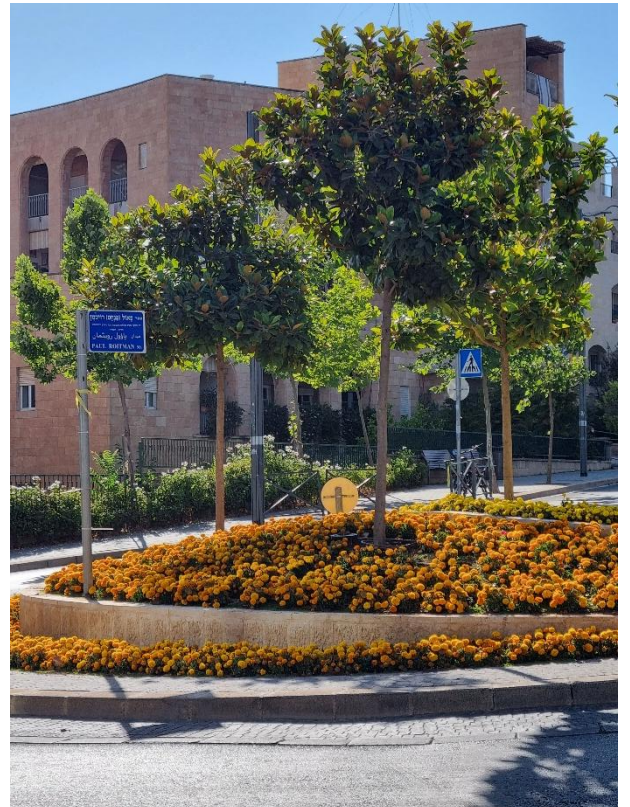
By Bob Findysz

For recent VOICES Israel newsletters, I have interviewed members whom I thought would be interesting for readers/fellow members to get to know better. I started out with people that I had met in the VOICES Jerusalem group, whom I personally wanted to become better acquainted with.

Then I decided to move further afield. And so, I sat with a couple-few VOICES members in Beer Sheva and Tel Aviv. I was very pleased that all the members, to whom Julian and I turned, willingly agreed to being interviewed. In the process, Debbie Golden joined the interviewing project. While discussing how I saw us working together, my interest was piqued by some details of her own background and asked if she would like to be interviewed herself. I am very pleased Debbie agreed to sit with me for a tête-à-tête.



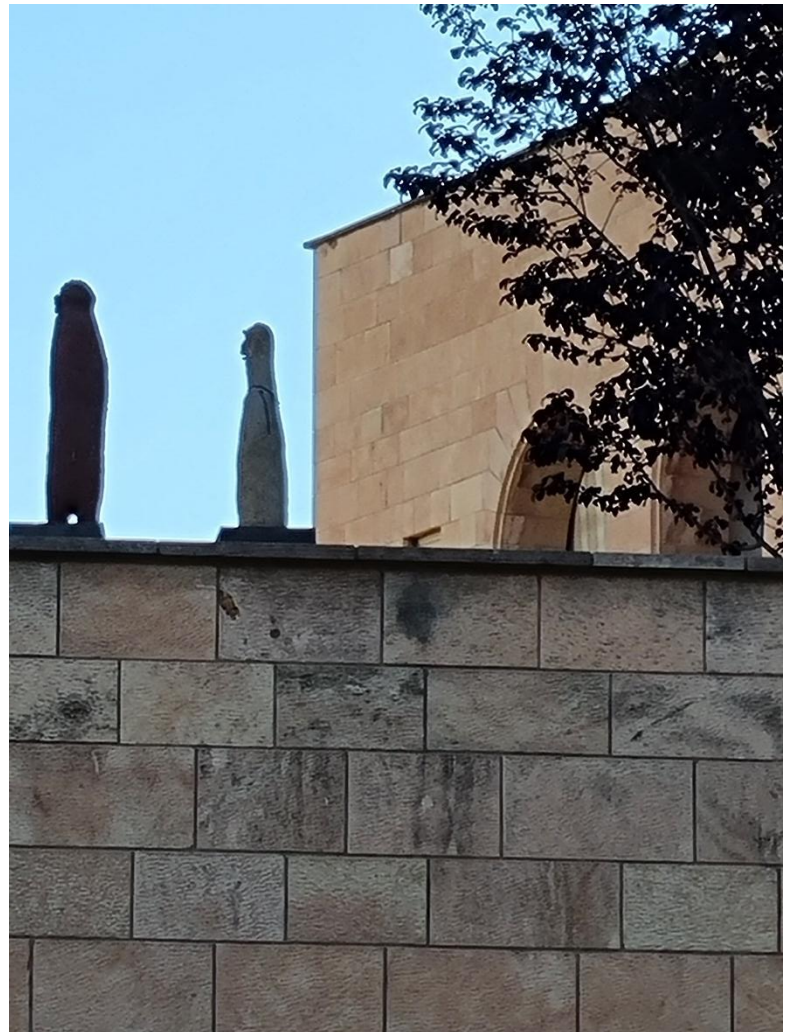
On an unseasonably hot, and in some places sultry, early summer afternoon, I abandoned the cool of my garden and made my way into Jerusalem to meet Debbie at a quintessential capital coffee house with a shady courtyard as well as on-the-street seating more common to the coastal plain.



Taking the more scenic back roads -- as is generally my wont and to avoid the crowded, more hectic highways leading into the city -- I found parking by pango near the Jerusalem Theater, just up the street from Café Malke sitting behind its teal picket fences across from the pink-stoned

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

arches of the Museum of Islamic Art and Yad Mayer, a senior citizen housing complex, from the rooftop of which one can get a good view of the café.



Following are the questions which guided our conversation and an approximate but accurate rendering of Debbie's answers.

1. *Starting on a personal note: from your Haifa University biographical sketch, I know you were born in South Africa but were raised and educated in Britain. When and from where did you immigrate to Israel? Do you still have relatives in either the UK and/or South Africa?*

My parents, two brothers and I came from the UK to Israel in 1970. I was 14 and knew no Hebrew so first went to the *Tabeetha* (Church of Scotland) School in Jaffa. Then I went on to an Israeli public high school in Ramat Aviv. After five years my parents and brothers returned to London but I decided to stay. I am currently writing a family memoir in collaboration with my two first cousins (one in London and the other in Cape Town) So, the bonds remain despite time and distance.

2. *I also see that that you are a social anthropologist by training and an associate professor in Haifa's faculty of Education. You have been extremely productive professionally, publishing a book as well as chapters in other books; articles, online and in hard copy academic publications; and encyclopedia entries. Your research focuses on the quest to belong among newcomers be they immigrants and/or children. Do you write/lecture in Hebrew as well as English?*

Although I mainly teach in Hebrew, in academia we tend to write up our research in English so as to be published more widely. I do think it's important that our work is read by local audiences – particularly in fields such as education, so I publish some of my work in Hebrew.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

- *How/when do you find time to write poetry? Are there times of the day, a special place and/or other conditions which you find are conducive to creative writing, poetry or otherwise?*

I don't manage to find enough time to write poetry, partly because writing poetry needs a special quality of time. I am doing other sorts of writing and each type of writing requires its own particular texture, feelings, associations, possibilities of wandering in the mind. I put aside some time on Saturdays to participate in a Zoom session with close friends from London. We share the common (virtual) space and spend time writing – each doing her own thing. At the end of our writing session, we have a chat.

3. *Do you remember when you first started writing poetry? If so, how did you begin? In what language(s) do you write poetry?*

As a child growing up in London, I remember writing poetry. However, when, as a teenager, I immigrated to Israel with my family, I stopped writing poetry. I don't really know why – perhaps it was the shock of being forcibly removed from my mother tongue. Many years later I began writing again here and there. That intensified after the death of my father (in 2008) and my mother (in 2009). Partly, I suppose, finding words for grief, but also "In memoriam" – my mother loved poetry and had run a highly successful poetry appreciation group at the Highgate Scientific and Literary Institute in London for many years. The final push to write came during the COVID pandemic: I was scheduled to leave on a sabbatical in New York City, where one of my brothers now lives. Instead I was left rudderless in Zichron Yaakov, where I was living, with time on my hands and available space in my head. I took three terms of poetry writing courses at an online poetry writing center run by the late Kathryn Bevis who was an excellent poet and teacher. Through her classes, I met up with other aspiring poets and we continued to meet on Zoom for a number of years, reading and commenting on each other's work. And, fortunately, I discovered VOICES. I only write poetry in English – it has felt like a homecoming in some way.

- *Where have you published your poetry? How would you characterize it? Could you share a few examples of the different sorts of poetry you write and/or pieces that you especially like?*

I have had some poems published; but, I still feel very much a student of poetry rather than an accomplished writer. For me, an essential aspect of studying poetry is actually trying my hand at it – like learning a craft. I try to find all sorts of ways to deepen my knowledge and understanding – masterclasses, poetry appreciation podcasts – I am thoroughly enjoying the learning process but it's a bit eclectic and all over the place.

4. *An aspect of your personal life emerged from our casual conversations: You worked for the Jewish Agency in Dimona of all places. I also lived and worked there for a few years. We seem to have missed meeting each other by a year or so. Would you like to discuss your Dimona experience here?*

After finishing public high school in Ramat Aviv and serving in the I.D.F., I wanted a gap year before going on to study at the university. I was hired by the Youth & HeChalutz Department to serve as the liaison (*Madricha*) for a large group of *Sherut La'am* volunteers in Yerucham and Dimona. The year after, I went on to do my undergraduate work at Tel Aviv University and never looked back.

- *How did you get from that dusty Negev hamlet to an ivory tower on top of the Carmel? Did you leave a paper trail in poetry en route?*

No paper trail in poetry though I did all sorts of jobs while studying, including a few years working in the theatre. I have had a long academic career. I completed a bachelor's degree in Tel Aviv in Philosophy and Sociology/Anthropology. I returned to London for graduate studies and completed my PhD in social anthropology at University College London. I came to Jerusalem to do my fieldwork – my PhD was on the Russian immigration to Israel at the beginning of the 1990s. I began teaching at the Hebrew University and at Ben Gurion University before getting a post in the Faculty of Education at Haifa University.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

5. *Is there a poet(ess) or more whom you particularly enjoy reading? If so, who? Why do you like their writing? How, if at all, have they influenced your own poetry writing?*

I read very widely. Recently, with all the war-related poetry that I have been reading, I find that I am attracted to writers like Ilya Kaminsky and Wisława Szymborska, who focus – with a critical eye -- on the mundane ways through which we become accustomed to war – how war becomes a routine part of our daily lives. I would like to share Kaminsky's "We lived Happily during the War" and Szymborska's "The End and the Beginning". (*Please see the afterword. BF*)

6. *I understand that this past year you moved from Haifa to Jerusalem. Why? As a **Professor Emerita** are you still active on the faculty at Haifa? If so, when you aren't lecturing, researching, writing professionally and creatively, how do you spend your time? Family? Friends? Hobbies? Community? Other, personal pursuits?*

Since retiring and moving to Jerusalem in October 2023, I have remained involved with my academic work. Right now, I am still advising my last PhD student and I continue writing with colleagues. I moved to Jerusalem to be closer to my son Daniel and his wife Abigail -- who live here. Also, although Zichron Ya'akov is a beautiful place, it is quite small. I have always been drawn to the big city. So, I am currently living in Jerusalem and really enjoy exploring the possibilities of a new(ish) life.

- *Besides writing interviews for the VOICES Israel newsletter, have you been involved in the organization?*

I have had the pleasure of interviewing Iris Dan and, in the July newsletter, I presented a conversation with Betsy Rosenberg about her late mother, Susan ל"ט. I am also privileged to be on the editorial team of the forthcoming VOICES



anthology.

I am feeling my way and looking for ways to be engaged.

- *Now that you are living in Jerusalem, do you still participate in the VOICES Haifa group of writers? If not, have you considered joining the Jerusalem group? (We are still meeting via Zoom.)*

I very much miss the VOICES Haifa group and am open to joining another face-to-face group. I hope the Jerusalem VOICES group will soon resume meetings in person.

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

Thank you very much, Bob, for initiating the great idea of publishing interviews with members of VOICES in the monthly newsletter and thanks for inviting me to be an interviewee! (*Julian Alper actually deserves all due credit and thanks for the initial idea. Kudos! BF*)



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

An afterword

Debbie would like to share two poems: **We lived Happily During the War** by Ilya Kaminsky and **The End and the Beginning** by Wisława Szymborska. For copyright reasons, these two pieces cannot appear in the main body of the newsletter but can be found on the last two pages of this Newsletter, after the Poet's Corner section, which is not included in the online copy of the newsletter (BF).



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MEMBER'S PHOTO

**Stay near me - do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!**

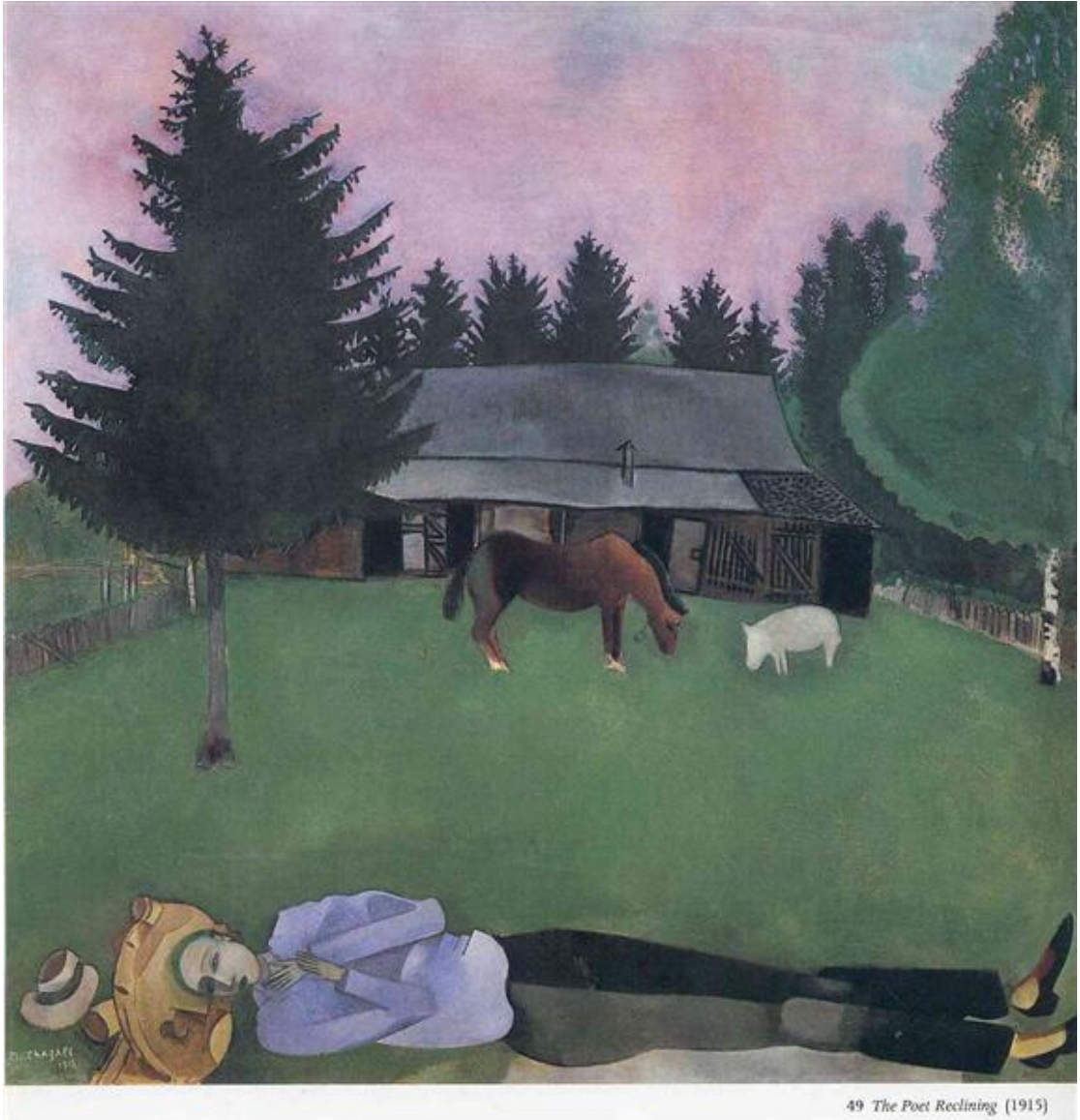
A photographer's prayer - from 'To a Butterfly' by William Wordsworth



Swallowtail butterfly, photographed by Julian Alper on Mount Arbel, near Tiberias

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

THE POET RECLINING – MARC CHAGALL



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/marc-chagall/the-poet-reclining-1915>

**My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk
From Ode to a Nightingale - John Keats**

[Painting and poem, selected by the editor]

--

Contributions published in this Voices Israel newsletter and files linked to it, including in our workshop chapbooks, are the sole copyright of the contributors themselves.

Any of the opinions in the content published in this newsletter are the sole opinions of the individual contributors and do not represent the views or opinions of Voices Israel Group of Poets in English.