

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

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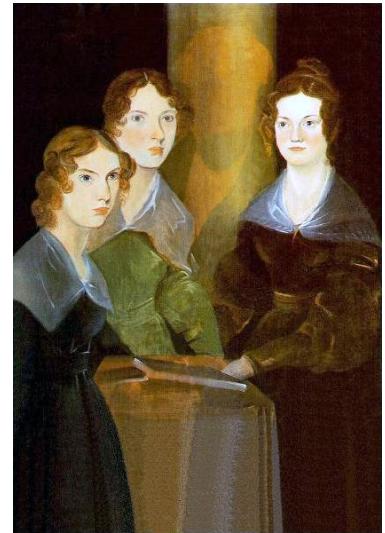
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Brontë Sisters, painted by their brother Branwell Brontë

[Wikipedia]

Congratulations to Reuben Rose prize winners and honourable mentions.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The February sunshine steeps your boughs and tints the buds and swells the leaves within.
William C. Bryant

Dear Friends,

Workshop Chapbook — thanks to Judy Koren who has produced a magnificent chapbook following our fantastic pre-Chanukah workshop on *Light*, presented by Elana Dorfman. The poems are lovely and we had an opportunity to hear the poets read them on January 13 at a very well attended Zoom meeting. More details can be found on our website – see <https://voicesisrael.com/december-2025-a-pre-chanukah-zoom-workshop-on-light/>.

Anthology 2026 — the submission period has begun and will continue until **15 March 2026**. All members are invited to submit up to three previously unpublished poems. Full details appear on page 11 of this Newsletter.

Reuben Rose Prize — Congratulations to Reuben Rose prize winners and those who received honourable mentions – see page 7 of this Newsletter for a list of all the poets.

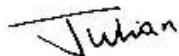
Bar Sagi Prize — we are now accepting submissions for the Bar Sagi competition for young poets in Israel. Please help us publicise the competition to your children, grandchildren, and any teachers you may know. Full details are available on our website: <https://voicesisrael.com/bar-sagi-prize/>. Poems may be submitted until **15 February 2026**.

Membership Fees — All members may take advantage of the 2026 early-bird rates (until **31 March 2026**), which are **NIS 100** for Israeli residents and **\$35** for overseas members. To make your payment, please see details on this page of our website: <https://voicesisrael.com/about-voices-israel/membership/>

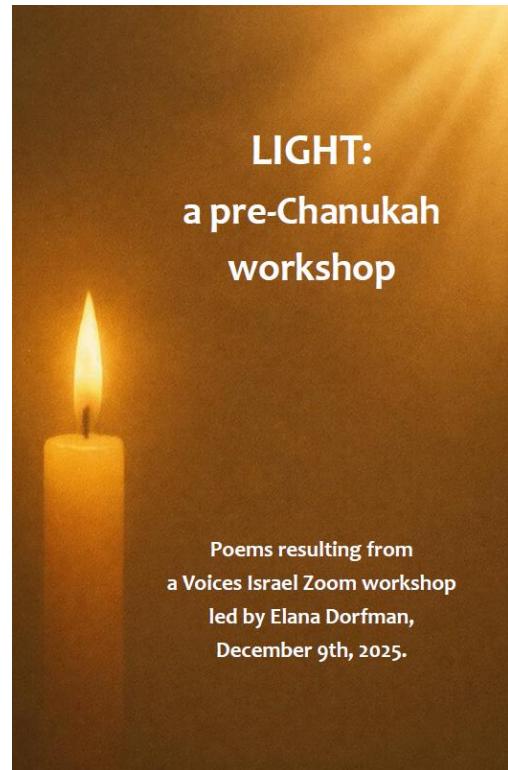
Newsletter — please continue sending your artwork, photos, essays, letters, and, of course, poems to newsletter.voices@gmail.com. Members truly enjoy reading and viewing what you create, and it is wonderful to share the many and varied talents of our community.

Have a great month and write some great poetry!

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - FEBRUARY 2026

SOUTHERN	TEL AVIV	JERUSALEM	UPPER GALILEE
Meeting via Zoom Sunday, February 22 at 5:00 PM	Meeting via Zoom Wednesday, February 25 at 7:30 PM Note the start time of 7:30pm	Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, February 17 at 7:30 PM	Wednesday, February 11 at 10:30. at the home of Reuven and Yehudit. 128 Keren HaYesod Artists Quarter, Tzfat
Coordinator: Miriam Green miriamsgreen@gmail.com	Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438 nosnivel@netvision.net.il	Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998 aemeallem@gmail.com	Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262 poetsprogress@gmail.com
HAIFA Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 PM at Naomi Yalin's home Contact Naomi Yalin for details	NETANYA/SHARON Tuesday, February 24 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home 2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg	GLOBAL GROUP 1 Meeting via Zoom Thursday, February 12 at 19:30 Israel time	GLOBAL GROUP 2 Meeting via Zoom Sunday, February 15 at 19:00 Israel time
Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738 naomiyalin@gmail.com	Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575 olsburgh.susan@gmail.com	Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365 y2nosh@gmail.com	Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860 koren.judy@gmail.com

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

LETTERS

From David Adès

Dear Voices Israel,

Thank you for Susan's letter to Voices Israel Australian members (published in the January 2026) Newsletter. I have felt a great solidarity with so many people, Jew and non-Jew, who have reached out in very heartfelt support after the Bondi attack. There is a lot of good in the world – it's just that the bad grabs the headlines and makes more noise.

I would like to share with you a poem I wrote just four days *before* the Bondi event. It's almost surreal in its prescience but I guess it reflects on a background feeling that most of us carry within us all the time and that informs our sense of place in the world

It was published in *The Australian* a week after Bondi, on 21-22 December 2025:

A Jew's Knowledge

Oh, the bullets of hatred have often enough
whizzed past my burning ears,

and there is no shortage

of those who show what they really think,
whose hostility bristles

because they think I am this or I am that.

But the mob with murder in its eyes,
aggression in its gait, rage in its voice

hasn't come for me yet.

I know myself now.

I know there is no hidden reservoir

of courage, that I would run or hide

and likely sell my soul to survive,
that I wouldn't last a week

in Auschwitz, or the Gulag,

and I know too, that they haven't
come for me yet,

but any day, they might.

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From Avigail Wiseglass – Daughter of Ruth Fogelman

In Memory of Ruth Fogelman - RSVP

A full circle of the seasons has turned since the soul of our mother, Ruth Fogelman, ascended. To mark her first Yahrtzeit, we invite you to join us as we gather once again to honour her light, her words, her art, and the enduring legacy she left in our hearts.

On Monday 9 February (eve of 23 Shevat) we will come together for an evening of remembrance and reflection:

17:30: We will convene at Kehilat Yedidya (12 Nahum Lifshitz Street, Baka, Jerusalem) for an evening dedicated to her memory. The evening will feature a shiur by Rabbi Ari Kahn followed by a poetry reading, celebrating the creative spirit that defined her life.

19:30: We will gather at the graveside for a memorial service (Brosh Gate, Givat Shaul).

Please register using the link below, so that we may prepare a space for all who wish to share in this milestone of memory and comfort.

Here are the details of the Yahrtzeit: <https://forms.gle/3J9ti5Y384kEXDXk8>

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

- **Noam Chitayat** of Seattle, Washington

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

To - **Isaac Cohen** for his many successes throughout the month.

To - **Amiel Schotz**, whose poem writing "Shylock in Venice" was published by ofthebook. You can read it here: <https://ofthebookpress.com/amiel-schotz-shylock-in-venice/>

To - **Eli Ben-Joseph**, whose poem "On rocking-horse wings" has been accepted by the IAWE for publication in *Arc* 32.

To - **Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman** – whose poem "Hushed Moments" is published on YouTube. You can see a video poem with Miriam reading the poem here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DymYUjvzPu0> And to Miriam for publishing her book of poems in Italian – see: <https://www.amazon.it/Aprimi-cielo-Miriam-Jaskierowicz-Arman/dp/B0G4BCPF1F>.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

REUBEN ROSE COMPETITION RESULTS

With apologies for slipping past our target date, we present the winners of the 36th annual Reuben Rose Memorial Poetry Competition. We'll be in touch with each winner individually regarding details of publication etc. Thanks to all who entered, and we refer everyone onward to our other annual project, the *Voices Israel* anthology, which is currently open for submissions from all poets worldwide (<https://voicesisrael.com/anthology/submitting-to-the-anthology/>). The anthology requests no submission fee, and its editorial panel does not overlap the panel that judges the competition.

Following are the judges' favorites from the competition. Congratulations to the poets, and thanks to the judges for their efforts. The text of the poems will be posted before long.

1st prize: "A Young Man's Art," by Mark Elber

2nd prize: "Pomegranate," by Anne Myles

3rd prize: "Fifty-Eight Steps," by Wendy Blumfield

Honorable mentions, in random order:

"Underground," by Suzanne Musin

"The End of Everything," by Alan Hill

"Ancient Ceremony," by Judy Koren

"Woman as an Aramaic Incantation Bowl," by Laurel Benjamin

"Cycling Through New Orleans," by Lisa Aigen

"Run and Return," by Wendy Dickstein

"Motherland," by Michael Lavian

"Resonance," by Ofira Koopmans

"Blue," by Brenda Brett

"In Memory," by Esther B Lipton

Once more, thanks to all who participated.

Mark L. Levinson

for the annual Reuben Rose Poetry Competition

reubenrosepoetrycompetition@gmail.com

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

ANNOUNCEMENTS/OFFERS

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:

Sunday to Thursday 10.00 till 12.00 and 16.00 to 18.00 and Friday 10.00 till 12.00.



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**The Writing Pad invites you to a workshop
with Jane Medved**

Following the Breadcrumbs of the Mind - How to put your dreams and subconscious to work in your writing

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 10:30 – 2:30 at *Pa'amon* in Tel Aviv

For more details see - <https://www.judylev.com/teaching>

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Judy Labensohn - Noted author and writing teacher Judy Labensohn (aka JudyLev) will visit the Tzfat English Library to read from her new book, *Bethlehem Road, Stories of immigration and exile* on Sunday, February 8, at 3 pm, accompanied by her partner, David Kurz, who will read from his just completed novel, *Bruria*.

About her latest book, Judy writes, "*Bethlehem Road: Stories of Immigration and Exile*, came out with She Writes Press in the US in October, 2025. I did a book tour in the States and am now anxious to share the collection of twelve stories with readers in Israel. You can read some reviews on my website www.judylev.com."

David, originally a community worker who worked in Zfat in the late 1970s, recently wrote *Bruria*, a work of historical fiction that takes place in Gamla, Jerusalem and Yavneh during the five years preceding the destruction of the Second Temple. Ben Zakai plays a prominent role in the story.

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Israel Association of Writers in English (IAWE) - A recording of our latest Zoom, titled "In Every Generation..." and featuring new books from Simon Lichman, **Ann Bar-Dov (Voices Israel Member)**, Michael Kagan, and Karen Alkalay-Gut, can be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMg43xdy-uQ>

The books:

- The Punished Wound, by Simon Lichman (<https://www.amazon.com/Punished-Wound...>)
- **Picnic on Vesuvius, by Ann Bar-Dov**
- The Aliens Haggadah & The Aliens Chronicles, by Michael Kagan (check with michael@mlkagan.com for availability)
- Survivors, by Karen Alkalay-Gut

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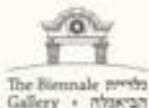


Between Here & Elsewhere



a conversation about Israeli art at the
intersection of local & global influences

with artists Sara Benninga & Meydad Eliyahu
& curators Emily Bilski & Lonnie Monka



The Biennale
Gallery + museum
Jerusalem '79
Biennale 2022

Wed, Feb 4 | 19:00
The Biennale Gallery
161 Yaffo Street, Jerusalem



Jerusalism
Connecting Literally

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WORLDWIDE POETRY (WWP)

- From platform to page: 40 years of poems on the Underground
- Poem of the week: Song by Lady Mary Chudleigh | Poetry | The Guardian
- 'Keep slaying the dragon inside': Simon Armitage pens poem for World Cancer Day | Cancer | The Guardian
- The Blogs: The best day ever | Ariel Galian | The Times of Israel
- Poetry in Israel – Commentary Magazine

MONTY PYTHON – POETS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAobK3fyGDI>



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Voices Israael Anthology 2026

The submission period for the 2026 Anthology starts on Sunday December 14th, 2025 and runs through Sunday **March 15th, 2026, Israeli time.**

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

How to Submit

A button to submit poems appears at the bottom of the page - [Submitting to the Anthology – Voices Israel Group of Poets in English](#). **It functions only during the submissions period. Before clicking on that button please read the following guidelines and instructions.**

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

Poems must be submitted using the Voices Israel Online Submission Manager, powered by Submittable. This is the only way to submit your poems. Email submissions to any of our team will not be considered.

- You **MUST** read the full Guidelines at the top of the submission form on the Submittable page.
- **Important!** Please note that poems must be submitted one by one on Submittable, each poem in a separate submission form.
- **You may submit a maximum of 3 poems** on any subject. We *prefer* poems that fit on one page (up to 40 lines including stanza breaks but not including title), but we will *accept* poems of up to 60 lines. Lines longer than 68 characters, including punctuation and spaces between words, will be counted as two lines.
- Judging is anonymous and the poems are judged “blind” — the editorial team does not see the poet’s name. **Therefore you must not include your name or identifying details anywhere except (if you wish) in your bio, which the judges do not see.** (There is no *need* to include your name anywhere, since the name you registered as the owner of the account is the one the poem is attributed to). **Failure to observe this rule will result in that poem not being considered.**
- **Poems must be previously unpublished.** However poems that have been included in the monthly poetry pages attached to our newsletter, or were written at Voices Israel workshops and appeared in the resulting chapbook of the workshop, are not considered “published” (since they were circulated only to a closed group of members, not available to the general public) and will be considered.

Full details are here - <https://voicesisrael.com/anthology/submitting-to-the-anthology/>



Call for Submissions The Max Schayngesicht Prize for English Poetry

**Department of English,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

The Department of English is pleased to invite submissions for the Max Schayngesicht Prize for English Poetry, established to support and recognize exceptional work by poets living in Israel.

About the Prize

This prize is for outstanding English language poetry. The committee welcomes submissions in any poetic mode, style, or tradition.

Eligibility

Applicants must be living in Israel at the time of submission.

Submitted work must be original poetry in English.

Poets are invited to submit a portfolio of poems.

SENCHY

Submission Guidelines and Materials

Please submit a brief cover letter, a short biographical profile, and a poem or portfolio of poems (format and length at the writer's discretion) to englishdepartmenthuji@gmail.com by 15th February 2026.

All inquiries should be addressed to the Chair of the English Department at ruben.borg@mail.huji.ac.il

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

VAST CHASM, publishes “work that explores the human experience, including flash and short fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and other nonconforming work.” They accept submissions “year-round, on a rolling basis, for their quarterly online issues.” No fee to submit.

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

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

WRITE-HAUS

Write-haus is an Israeli journal that features writers of all genres and artists/interdisciplinary work every week in their Sunday showcase online feature. It's free to submit examples of your work. <https://write-haus.com/sunday-showcase/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

PALETTE POETRY: “Submissions for our Featured Poetry category are open year-round to poets at any stage of their careers. Featured poems are published online only and will spotlight a number of poems from new authors each month. We highly encourage emerging authors to submit.”

Basket Magazine Online Journal seeks submissions. Please submit up to three poems to editor@basketmagazine.co.uk as a .pdf, .doc or .docx file. Feel free to include a brief cover note/bio, though this will not affect our decision-making — it's just nice to know about people. We will only consider previously unpublished poems — this includes work that has previously appeared online in any form (social media, etc). We do not consider simultaneous submissions.

Thimble Literary Magazine is open for submissions **February**, March, May, June, August, September, November, and December. In other words, all months except January, April, July, and October. For more information see <https://www.thimblelitmag.com/submissions/>

Starboard Press

The First Light Spring 2026 Poetry Contest is the second in a series of biannual contests. All entries are eligible to be selected for publication in the Spring issue of First Light Journal due to come out in April 2026. For more details see <https://starboard.press/poetry-contest-2/>

Deadline - March 9, 2026

Entry Fee - There is no entry fee.

DEAR ARTISTS AND POETS - DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 14

Invitation to participate in the **IMMAGINE & POESIA 2026** project in collaboration with AZAHAR and SYNERGIA CRIATIVA (Spain): a PDF is being prepared with artistic works associated with short poems (less than 20 lines). If you like the project and want to send this double contribution with your 3-line biography, please email it to immagine.poesia@gmail.com

At the same time, in Spain, publisher José Zarzuela is asking for artistic works to be sent to his poet friends: he then intends to publish the results in Azahar and/or Synergia Criativa. For sending artistic works only, the email address is this one revista-azahar@hotmail.com

THANKS !

Jewish Book Council is pleased to announce this year's open call for submissions for poetry. The submission period opens on **January 16, 2026** and closes at **midnight ET on February 16, 2026**.

We encourage authors to familiarize themselves with work previously published by JBC before submitting. Submissions will be considered for both *Paper Brigade* Shorts (print) and JBC's digital editorial arm, **PB Daily**. **All authors will be paid for published work.**

Work created with the help of machine-generated text/AI text outputs is not eligible. We do not consider translations of work that have already been published in any language.

We read all submissions carefully, which means it can take six months or sometimes more for us to respond. We understand and accept simultaneous submissions, but please notify us immediately if a piece is accepted for publication elsewhere. There is a reading fee of \$3.00.

Poetry

Paper Brigade considers original, unpublished poetry. Please submit a maximum of two poems. Poems will be considered for both print and JBC's online poetry series, *Berru*.

Submit through Submittable [here](#).

For more details see <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/paper-brigade/submissions>

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Submissions are open for the sixth issue of **The Haiku Shack Magazine. Theme: Water.**
Guidelines: <https://creativeramblings.com/submit-magazine/>

The annual print literary journal of the University of Arkansas Monticello publishes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Click here for submission guidelines: <https://shadowplaylit.blogspot.com/.../submission...>

So, you think you're funny?

NuTH0uSe Magazine seeks submissions of laugh-out-loud fiction, essays and verse. Payment is a contributor's copy. Previously published work acceptable if author retains rights and prior publication is credited.

Manuscript submissions: Nuthouse Magazine, Twin Rivers Press, PO Box 119, Ellenton FL 34222. Include an SASE for a response.

Email submissions: Include text in an email to Nuthousemag@yahoo.com and include your snail mail address should your work be accepted. Attachments will NOT be opened. Emails with attachments will be deleted unread.

Sample NuTH0uSe online: NuthouseMagazine dot com.

Sample NuTH0uSe in print: 4 back issues (publisher's choice) for \$5 payable to Twin Rivers Press. Floridians, add 30 cents sales tax.

Excerpt collections available on Amazon Kindle can be downloaded for free by Kindle Unlimited subscribers.

Want more humor therapy? Try **Nuthouse Magazine's TOTALLY CRACKERS** available in paperback and Kindle editions

New Feathers Anthology is an online literature and art magazine, published three times annually, with a year-end print anthology. We are interested in quality fiction, poetry, nonfiction, visual art, music, and short videos, imposing no restrictions on genre; however, we only accept written work that has not been previously published, whether in print or online.

We are open for submissions from February 1 to March 1 for our spring issue, June 1 to July 1 for our summer issue, and October 1 to November 1 for our winter issue.

All work must be electronically submitted to our editors through Duosoma. Works of literature should be attached as a .doc or .docx file. We suggest that literature submissions be formatted with 12 pt. Times New Roman type, and essays and short stories should be double spaced. **Your files should contain no identifying information**, as all submissions are read blindly by our editors. Submit each piece in a separate file, so that you can easily withdraw pieces, if necessary. Include a cover letter with your first and last name, email address, mailing address, the title of your work(s), and a brief bio (100 words or less). If you have a project to promote or a website, include a few lines promoting your work and a link to your website.

Simultaneous submissions are accepted. If your submission has been accepted by another journal, however, please do us a favor and withdraw the piece. Allow four to six weeks for a decision

Check out Erika Dreifus' Jewish Literary Links

See - <https://www.erikadreifus.com/2026/01/jewish-literary-links-282/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

OUR MEMBERS' ART

Cover Picture

WINTER SUNSET – Fire in the Sky by David Fellerman (Size 70 x 50 cm)

A glorious winter sunset acrylic painting depicting the autumnal evening sunset across the Mediterranean Sea. This painting captures the feeling of wonder I experience every time I view the spectacular end of a clear cool day in all its glory as the sun disappears beyond the horizon, bringing life warmth joy and well-being to all mankind.

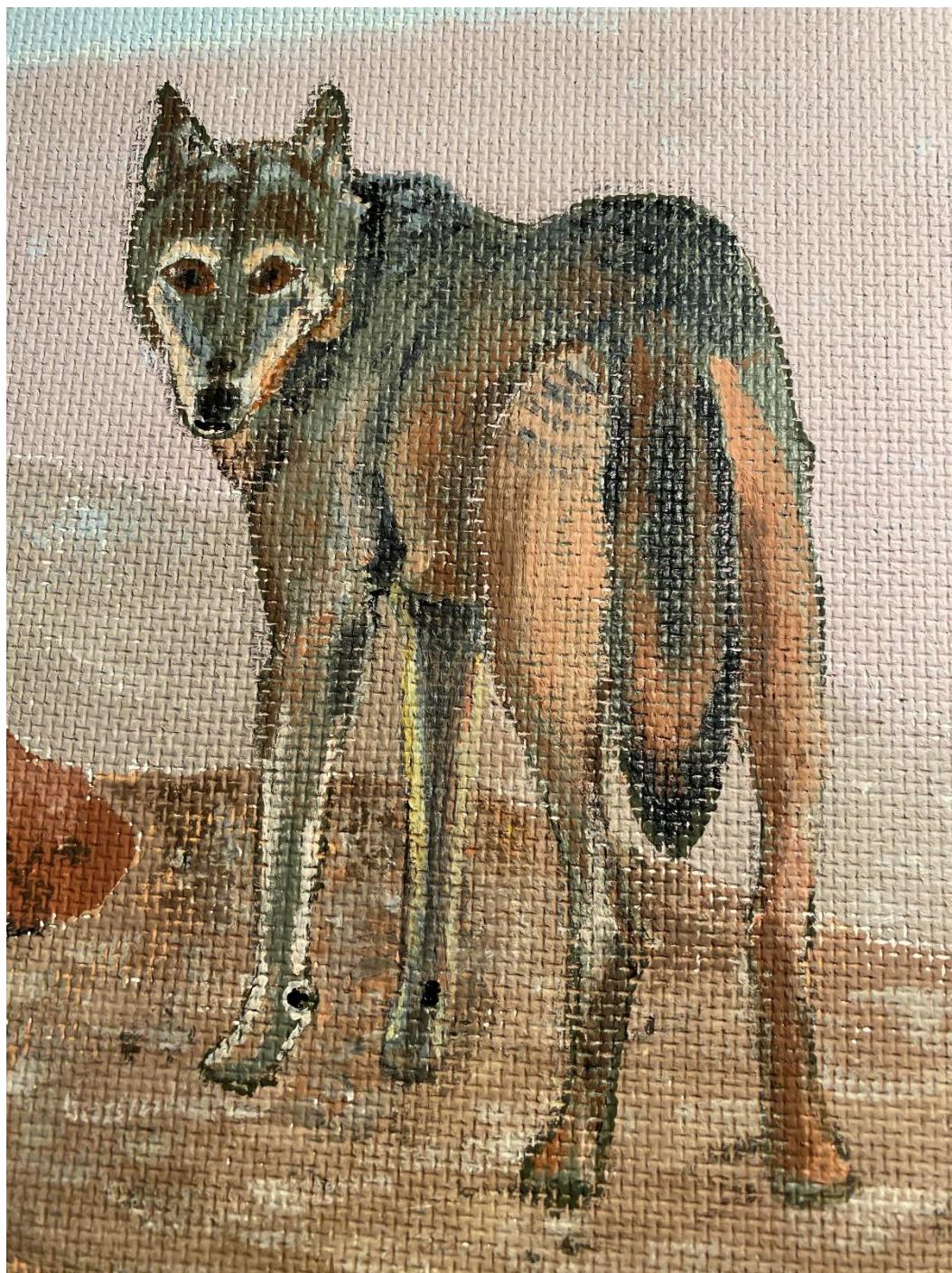


See David's accompanying poem - NATURE'S DANCE in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

More of David's work can be seen here: <https://artandmemorabilia.com/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Negev Wolf – by Eli Ben-Joseph



I am experimenting with painting on the rough side of masonite, which is made by gluing and pressing wood bits onto cloth. I should probably use two coats of zinc white acrylic on the surface before starting a picture because I think the cloth pattern is too strong with only one coat. I glued a frame on the reverse side to keep the masonite from bending.

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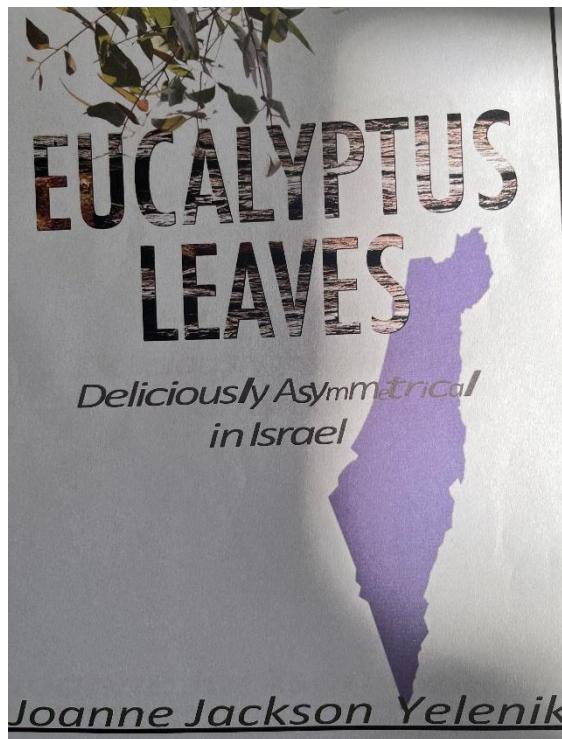
AN INTERVIEW WITH JOANNE JACKSON YELENIK

By Bob Findysz

As part of a series of interviews with VOICES/ Israel members, which I have been doing this year for VOICES newsletters, I met with Joanne (whom I know as *Elka-Hannah bat Tzvi*, but more on that later) to become better acquainted with her. Having reached out to VOICES members in the South and Center of the country, lately I have returned to my own base, i.e. the Jerusalem metropolitan area. Joanne and I have already known each other for over a decade without any connection to VOICES Israel. We originally took a creative writing in English course together at Jerusalem's David Yellin College and afterwards helped establish a small writing workshop (moderated by our David Yellin poetry-writing instructor) in which we still participate once a month at the home of one or another of the workshop's members who have remained almost the same since we began. In any case, it was about time I got to know a bit more about Elka-Hannah *a.k.a.* Joanne. I am very pleased and grateful that she suggested we take some time to do so within the format of an interview.

On a typical late-autumn, golden afternoon we were each in the city on business, so met at a quaint little eatery called the Grand Café on Bethlehem Road in Baqa. Following are the questions which guided our conversation and an approximate but accurate rendering of her answers.

1. *From what I have gathered about you on Google as well as from an ongoing relationship in our monthly writers' workshop, you were born, raised and educated in New York City, including doctoral studies in comparative literature; spent some summers out in the Canadian prairies where your family has deep roots (with even deeper roots in North Dakota, a Ukrainian *shtetl* called Steblev and the Polish town of Wysokie Mazowieckie); served in the Peace Corps in Central America, subsequently teaching in Washington D.C. and Rockville, MD, before immigrating to Israel. Here you live in Beit Shemesh and remain engaged in the education of Jewish youth. You have written essays, short stories and plays as well as poetry and your first novel, called EUCALYPTUS LEAVES: Deliciously Asymmetrical in Israel. (I must admit that your hero's deep but platonic involvement with an older woman while living alone in Israel rang personally familiar and totally plausible for me from my own early life experience here.) Your editor once described your writing as "raw... with a refinement of words, a mixed genre writer of fantasy and autobiography..., poetry and prose." Doesn't any creative writer weave a web composed of their personal experience as well as imagination?*



I spent summers in Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada, my mother's birthplace and where she and her family lived. The family moved there in the early 1900's when my grandparents, Dora and Fischel Goodman, relocated to Winnipeg from Altona, a little Manitoba prairie town where Fischel had a general store. Fischel and the store stayed in Altona, and the family, Dora and the children relocated. Fischel came to Winnipeg

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for *Shabbos* and Sundays. At that time, the Goodmans were very well off, which changed, but the residence arrangement remained. In Winnipeg, I developed, as a child, a new sense of me, and most certainly a new sense of my being Jewish, and of Judaism. Growing up in Brooklyn, which was a *haimish* Jewish microcosm alongside the other minorities found there, summers in Winnipeg were an even more special but clearly different kind of isolated, core existence imbued by personal Jewishness, a passionate Judaism that still exists today. My parents and I often drove to Winnipeg from Brooklyn and on those trips, I developed a sense of the Midwest, of what it meant to live outside of NYC and to be American. In the late fifties and early sixties Canada played "G-D Save the Queen" often and always at movies, theaters, with pictures of the royal family, all of which quite fascinated me. Nationalism itself became a big deal with me as I felt my Eastern European, Canadian, American, British allegiances.

In response to your original question, the web of fantasy and autobiography for me is more like a kind of visitation, combining anecdote, lines, facts, fictions -- probably what you call imagination -- all mixed together.

2. *Are you currently writing poetry and/or prose, in Hebrew as well as in English? Are you working on a second novel? How would you characterize the poetry you write?*

My Hebrew is certainly not on the level for me to do anything more than basic conversation very self-consciously. I would like to do more, learn more, but living in Beit Shemesh, which I love, also runs counter to developing Hebrew language skills. Maybe not much of a topic to probe.

I'm glad to discuss how I characterize my poetry, novel and a memoir hybrid I've recently completed, entitled **PASSING THROUGH : A Haibun Memoir-Chapbook**. I am attaching a working cover. This memoir interfaces poetry written over the years and personal reflections. The narratives are all taken from my life within my mother's life. Her life as an edge to mine. Like interlocking but autonomous Lego pieces. Members of my family speak in their own voices.

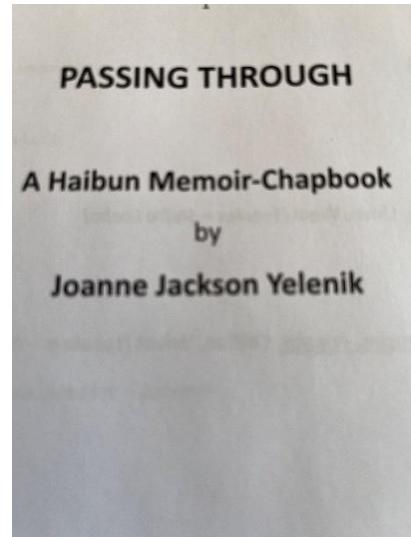
My writing comes from visitations which I now see as memories that I picture. I am enclosing a number of poems that I would like to accompany this interview. (*These poems are all unpublished so will appear as an appendix at the end of this newsletter to safeguard Joanne's ability to submit them for publication elsewhere.* BF) One of these poems, **sabrina**, was written many years after such a visitation. I am a people watcher. Early on, I fancied myself to be a Toulouse-Lautrec or Edgar Degas, whose art emanated from what each observed in places he frequented. My process begins with a voice. Infused in the process of listening to a voice are periods of silence and waiting. Voices come in the form of rhythms as well as words. My tricolor basset hound Winston's breathing became part of the rhythm of the novel I was writing at the time.

➤ *Do you remember when you started writing poetry? If so, how did you begin?*

As soon as I could write, I began writing both poetry and prose. I received immediate, very positive feedback. I am very much a left-handed person: language, words, memory. In addition to being a woman, born in November (on the cusp of seasons) and Jewish, left-handed memory is an important foundation for all of my writing, my poetry. Visual memory in particular.

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

All I need is a pen and a notebook, whenever I get an urgent visitation. My stories come to me in cars, cafés, on beaches, air flights, buses, wherever I am and there is a story. However, my favorite venue is 3 AM at my desk in my study (a.k.a. the computer room) or on a lawn chair in my yard, which my family and I have begun calling *Gan HaGiborim* in honor of all the heroes and heroism over the past two years, both the living and those who died. We are having a bench made to which we will attach a plaque. There is a little mynah bird who often joins me while sitting there. We maintain a respectful distance yet share this space.



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

I tend toward the classic period: Blake, Joseph Conrad, Emily Dickenson, T.S. Elliot and Ezra Pound (despite their antisemitism), Keats, Virginia Woolf. Folded together, they share their visitations; we enter their imaginary world. What is clear is each's authentic voice. A unique essence of breath.

➤ *Besides that adult education writing course we took together and the monthly writing workshop in which we both still participate, have you studied/ collaborated with other writers of poetry and/ or prose in English? If so, who? When? Where?*



I have studied Bibliodrama via zoom. And, I am in ongoing contact with my editor (and teacher), Yael Unterman, who is also an author, lecturer, translator and educator at Shalem College in Jerusalem.

4. *When you aren't writing, how do you spend your time? Work? Family? Community? Other, personal pursuits?*



I have always loved to drive and still do, to anywhere, any distance and at any time. Also cooking, preparing for *Shabbos* with my wonderful family: my husband Ronny, our son Daniel and his wife Sharon, their six children – the oldest two girls are already married while my other four grandchildren are still single. My granddaughters are married to serious *Talmud* scholars and have so far given us five great-grandchildren. One of the poems I am sharing in this interview was written recently to welcome the youngest. At the age of 23, after 5 years of learning in post-high school yeshiva, my eldest grandson, Chaim, lovely man, person, son, grandson, is enlisting in the first all *Haredi* (ultraorthodox) infantry brigade, The *Hasmonaim*.

May G-D keep him safe. Chaim will train for 8 months and then serve for 2 years. For its part, the IDF promises to make accommodations to honor the *Haredi* lifestyle. The *Hasmonaim* is the hope, plan, promise of this mutual endeavor towards greater unity in our land, may it be for the good.

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5. *Ending on an even more personal note, you were born and grew up in the US. Would you like to talk about your Peace Corps work? What you did as a volunteer and where?*

Ronny and I were already married when we decided to enlist in 1966. As a dyed-in-the-wool Kennedy loyalist, I pushed to go. We went first to Puerto Rico for half a year of training in "community development". On-the-spot survival training: upon landing, our first assignment was to find a home which would be willing to host us for the interim. We lived with the Acevedo family: with 6 children in a very small home. We were given the parents' bedroom. Hospitality which could never have been purchased nor paid back. Every home had three pictures on the wall: the pope, JFK and Robert Kennedy. I knew no Spanish, Ronny a bit. We both learned more.

Then it was two years in Costa Rica, in an isolated rainforest, in a village cut off from the world except for an occasional, snail-paced train passing through. From this former banana plantation called Bataan to the capital in San Jose, a distance of 90 kilometers, it took seven hours. We were inspired by Kennedy's vision of the Peace Corps.

The people were a mix of blacks from Jamaica and Latino Nicaraguans. Ronny worked with men: helping squatters get some land of their own. Negotiating red tape. I worked with women: there was a high infant mortality rate, mainly from dysentery, sick babies often dying en route to the hospital in San Jose on that slow train. The Jamaican mothers fed their offspring rice milk as part of their diet. This seemed to save more of their babies. There was terrible poverty at that time. I discovered that scraps of fabric donated by Jewish tradesmen in San Jose could be turned into wonderful clothes by both the black and Latina women. We volunteers left a footprint.

- *When you immigrated to Israel, were you alone or with other family members? If so, who? Directly to Beit Shemesh? How did you get there? Can you elaborate on your family name (i.e. Jackson Yelenik) and/or the decision to use your Hebrew name, i.e. Elka-Hannah, instead of your English moniker?*

When we came in 2006, it was my 93-year-old mother, my son Daniel, his wife Sharon and five of their children. My sixth grandchild was born here. My husband, Ronny Yelenik, remained behind for a few more years -- unsure that this was the move he wanted to make -- before he finally decided he was ready to join us. We came directly to Beit Shemesh because Daniel and Sharon had come earlier on a pilot trip and chose this as the best place to raise their family. My mother and I followed their lead.



My father's family name was Burstein. For business purposes, he decided to change it. His father's name was *Yaakov*. Jacob. Jack... Hence Jackson. We were often asked if it were a Jewish name or someone had converted. I was raised in a traditional Jewish home. Observant but not very religious nor particularly orthodox. In 1983, when Daniel was *bar mitzvah*, we both became more religious. I came to Jerusalem for a teacher training course at Yad Vashem while Daniel was at a summer camp. The experience left its impact on each of us. Later, in yeshiva, he studied with great rabbis and teachers. After my dear mother's death (at 106) in 2018, I found myself becoming more comfortable with and assured about being *Haredi*. During 2018-2020 I gradually took on this mantle. Using my Hebrew name has been part of that process of bringing my different worlds together.

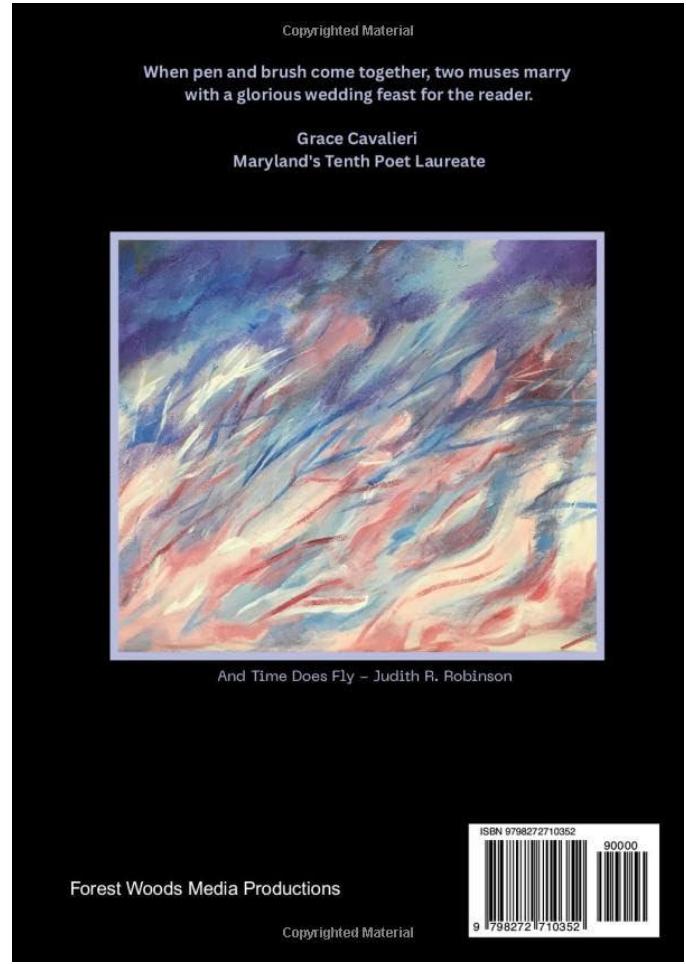
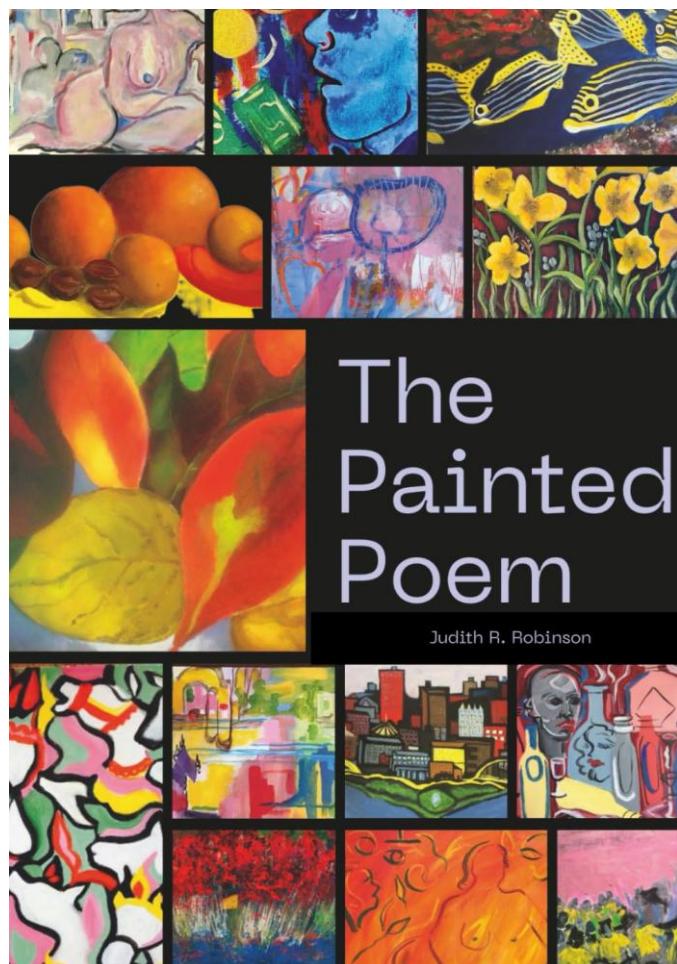
6. Anything else you would like to add?

I am a passionate teacher. I have always preferred the upper grades. Senior High and College-aged. More ready to think. My family says I am the best. I am delighted to be a good teacher. I have never had discipline problems in my classroom. I love my pupils. At the end of each course, I used to give a virtual gift to each one. What I could see in them, their potential, future. With time, they began to give me such gifts. Often revealing their own passions and my treatment of them. Although long ago retired, I still work with young people, mainly tutoring.



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BOOKS



Judith R. Robinson is an award winning poet and visual artist as well as a teacher and editor. A lifelong Pittsburgher, she has written seven books including five poetry collections, one novel and one fiction collection. She has edited or co-edited eleven other collections. Her art has been featured in four solo and two group exhibitions. She has taught poetry for Osher at Carnegie-Mellon University for 20 years.

For more details see here

<https://www.amazon.com/Painted-Poem-Judith-R-Robinson/dp/B0GC6XBVKR>

Two poems from the book are on the following page.

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Two Poems from The Painted Poem

Into the Depths of the Sea

We live the days
Between the days
Of awe and lamentation
Down to the river's edge
The pale rabbi treks, arrives,
Sways, raises a fist
Plump full of crumbs

To cast in the sparkling
Current of hope

Where are the fish?
Where are the fish big enough
To swallow these sins?

To eat our sins
And swim off, swim off, fish!

Take our sins with you
Purify us, save us,

Let us begin again
Souls washed clean again

We pray we pray we pray
One more year one more year one more year.



(painting by Judith Robinson)

A Stream in Late Autumn

From higher ground I see
the river wend its easy way,
its rhythm peaceful as my blood:
my blood is quiet now,
a stream in autumn
mourning rage, pining spring.

All trees are bare.
I watch their bald limbs bend
in rhythm muted as my own:
my bones are spindles now,
autumn branches
grieving fruit, pining leaf.

No leaf to come will mourn for me,
no blossom, bird nor bough.
Nor will rushing waters weep,
nor will locusts call.
The earth will green, the worm renew
and I shall be no longer captive.



(photo by Grant N. Robinson)

POETRY ANALYSIS

By Gary Corbi

Walking to Jerusalem by Philip Terman (find the poem with a Google search)

A poem in which the poem's title is at odds with its text.

The title says that the poet's mother is walking to Jerusalem, with her fellow parishioners. It grounds the idea of the trip in detail; listing the number of miles to Jerusalem and how they use a pedometer to calculate the miles from Linesville, Pennsylvania to Jerusalem.

But the poet's mother is not walking to Jerusalem. Instead, she (and her fellow Church members) go about the everyday tasks of life.

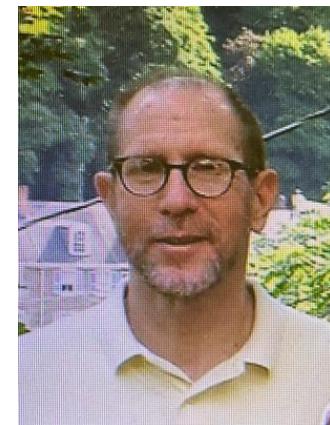
The poet relies extensively on lists of activities in contrasting the physical journey to Jerusalem with the activities the Methodist Church members undertake in their daily lives.

To travel to Jerusalem, they might (or would) need a visa (more realistically a passport), baggage, money for exchange, a guidebook, or a guide. They may also be subject to security checks, rituals (like pausing at the signs of the cross), and may even need, or hope for miracles.

Instead, they walk locally: around their homes, to the post office, to visit a sick neighbor, and to church.

The implication of the poem is that performing their everyday activities brings the poet's mother and her fellow church members spiritually closer to their goal of arriving in Jerusalem.

The final short line, "And keep walking." suggests that Jerusalem itself serves as an entry point to a spiritual destination beyond it. The listing of the mother's advanced age of eighty, and the words "adding up their pedometers together" foreshadows their coming deaths, and a spiritual life after death.



Having Lost My Sons, I Confront the Wreckage of the Moon: Christmas, 1960 by James Arlington Wright (find the poem with a Google search)

Poets have used the moon to represent a variety of moods, emotions, or stages of life through the centuries. Its glow is often portrayed as soft and appealing, and the moon itself as a symbol of romance and a companion for the lonely.

In this poem, there is no softness to the moon. Instead, it is described as hard and merciless; it is out hunting; delivering fire; walking down hallways of a diamond and spilling the inhuman fire of jewels into the poet's hands. This moon symbolizes the poet's failed marriage, his estrangement from his sons and his feelings of loneliness and of being lost in a cold, ruined land.

The poem is mysterious and highly impressionistic. In addition to the already cited descriptions of the moon's activities, the poet asks who lived in the ruins of a white city; "bundled away under wings and dark faces."

The poem is also specific. It is grounded in a particular part of the United States; likely Minnesota or North Dakota; where the Chippewa tribe and Norwegians both settled in large numbers. (Both states share a border with South Dakota.) Charred silos and hunting depict this as a rural area. Frost and "this cold winter" set the season.

If the poet was looking to the moon for guidance or companionship, even that is taken from him when the moon darkens; leaving him lost in a ruined land symbolic of the ruin of his most important relationships.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

by Rumi Morkin

I was annoyed at reading the analysis of a poem that needed no analysis, and decided to write my own - RM

Analysis of the poem “House-wife’s intent”

Rumi Morkin’s poems often have humor in content, punch-line or both, but this inimitable gem radiates an aura of gravity, with tremendous structural force. As one of literature’s shortest poems it is distinctive, containing both meter and rhyme and clarity of straightforward meaning, a certainty of impending movement. It signifies no arbitrary whim, but a firmly expressed wish, a fusion of enthusiasm and resolve, of deliberate completeness.

Excelling in brevity, we sense motivation. Beyond the simple removal of undesired local particles of contaminating material, Morkin stresses the housewife’s ineffable determination to provide for her family an immaculate, well-ordered abode.

No superfluous words deflect from the bold, emphatically stated message carrying exemplary stringency, conveying an indisputably direct approach to what must be done, repudiating the possibility of a recalcitrant inner self.

The first word indicates the housewife’s sense of responsibility, precluding any possible delay when



confronted with a situation demanding immediate attention. The second enhances the prosody by cleverly embodying verb and noun, to express both the action and the object of this action, a ploy of which budding poets would do well to take note.

With a minimum of words to maximum effect, Morkin leaves the reader in no doubt regarding the diligent housewife’s plan. It is unequivocally potent and concise.

House-wife’s Intent

by Rumi Morkin

Must
dust.

CONCERT WITH SPOONS

By Reuven Goldfarb

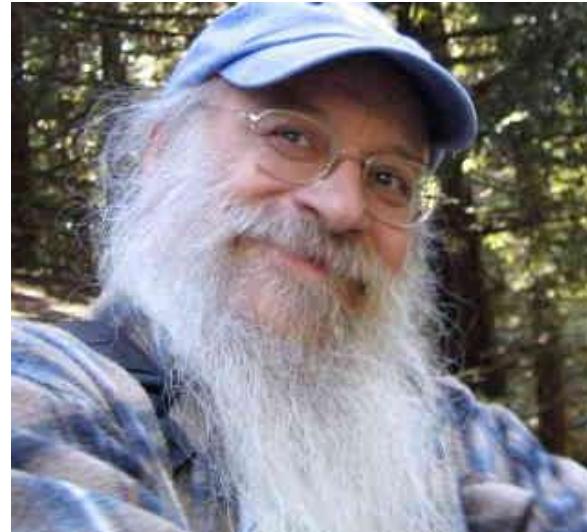
Larry Lichtman was my father's life-long friend. They were chums as young men, and they were in one another's company when they met two young women at Brooklyn's Oriental Beach, one of whom was my future mother, the other her friend Ada, who later married Moe Levine and gave my mother a copy of the *Rubaiyat*. My parents cheerfully described to me how during this first encounter the men played tic-tac-toe with their fingernails on my mother's and Ada's tanned thighs.

Several photos of my just-married parents and Larry survive. In one of them he is perched on the arm of a chair in their first home, entertaining the newlyweds, my father's broad grin a fitting response to his friend's banter. In my parents' circle he was considered a live wire, loquacious and witty, and he seemed to me exceptionally eager and friendly, except on one occasion when he got soused and argued vehemently with one of my uncles about which of them knew less about how to "do it."

Another photo shows Larry being dragged into the surf by a bevy of women — my mother, her sister Helen, and their friend Mildred. Yet another photo shows a brooding Larry; it is a portrait fit for a dust jacket, had his collected stories ever been published in a book.

As they advanced in their careers, Larry worked for Bernie Mann at Inter-Maritime, the company which sent my father, a trucking company magnate, most of his business. Once in a while Bernie and my father took the afternoon off and went to the track, but Larry, a working stiff, didn't have that luxury. Larry's wife Blossom was my mother's good friend, and the two couples enjoyed vacations and occasional social outings and parties together. I have a photo of the four of them in their seventies, wearing hiking shorts and sweatshirts, looking as weathered and worn — and exhausted — as the bare mountain and dry lakebed that is their backdrop.

One summer, Blossom and Larry's daughter Caryn and I both went to Camp Crane Lake, near West Stockbridge in the Berkshires, where I was a sixteen-year-old camper waiter and she a fourteen-year-old senior. One evening we danced and conversed to slow music, our bodies in tentative intermittent contact, each of us seeking an appropriate comfort level, she rather more aggressive



with her pelvis than I had expected, though from our chatter alone you would never have guessed it.

The next summer, I was living at home and working for my father when I met Larry in a triangular park in the financial district. It was lunch hour, and the wedge of cement was lined with green benches, the arms and legs of which were made of iron curlicues that supported heavy wooden slats. The benches were filled by men in suits, all of them office workers from the nearby businesses. They were out for a noon-time break and had either brought bag lunches with them, ordered a take-out meal to finish off in plain sight, or had already eaten in a restaurant or café and now only wanted to sit outdoors and inhale the fresh air while gazing at the foliage and the light that filtered between the trees, on this island within an island, set in a canyon of high rises.

The men were mostly silent, evidently not knowing one another. It might have been supposed that they were meditating, although most likely they were only carving out some private space, finding a balance between nature's tranquility and business office tension. Larry and I were talking about writing. He knew that I was an aspiring writer, and he had apparently entertained some literary ambitions of his own in his youth. He mentioned that he had written several short stories, four of which he thought were pretty good — and which he offered to show me if I was interested — but that the need to earn a living had curtailed his budding career. I would not have minded seeing those stories and told him so, but at that moment two men wearing threadbare clothes and carrying World War One

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helmets appeared in the park. You heard their approach before you saw them.

They were playing the spoons, a skill you perhaps have not seen mastered, but I assure you they were very good. Two soup spoons, held back to back in one hand, with an index finger placed midway along the handles to serve as a sort of hinge, were being played, with the other hand's flickering motion, in rapid rhythm, the bowls clattering against each other like a manual tap dance routine. And while the spoons clickety-clacked in a startling duet, the two men grinned and glanced around the park's perimeter, visually engaging their impromptu audience, pleased as hell to be there.

They played quite a long and brilliant number. Nobody got up to leave, and nobody applauded when they finished, though I felt moved to do so. This impassive response seemed not to faze them at all, especially the more gregarious one, who did all the talking for both of them. Probably they were too used to being ignored to feel perturbed. Both men took off their doughboy's helmets and made the rounds, strolling along the benches and facing each person in sequence while the leader cheerfully kept up a line of patter.

"Whaddya say, folks? Hey! It's only money!" went his persistent refrain. As they circulated, I could see the occasional reluctant hand fish for change and toss it in an upturned helmet. These gestures were encouraged and expanded upon by the two — what would you call them? — mendicants, rummies, musicians? "Thank you, sir!" the talkative one responded to each donation, accompanied by a snappy, well-practiced salute and a half bow.

Whatever you said about them, they looked their age. They were practically toothless, with lined outdoor faces and scuffed, worn-down shoes. They seemed easily old enough to have been World War One combatants, perhaps of the same age as many of the men in business suits, or quite a bit older than some. I was by far the youngest person there.

I laid out some money, for I was touched by their unexpected visit and yearned to hear more. Their music had gotten into my bones. After they had completed one circuit, I got my wish. They stood in the center

again and played a second set, this one just as elaborate but more filled with cheerful and insistent interjections, an attempt to remind us of truer values than the bottom line, accentuated by their garments. Their mute doughboys' helmets were upturned and set before their feet, the steady clatter of the spoons vibrated through the noon air, and the steady patter of the pitchman filled our ears. "Whaddya say, folks? Hey! It's only money! Help us put some beans on the table!"

As one o'clock approached, the men in suits got up and strolled away, their minds intent on work. I also got up to leave, due back at the office but exhilarated by the performance and a little nonplussed by the disinterested demeanor of the involuntary spectators. I commented on this disparity to Larry as we said good-bye: "I thought they were great! How come people were just sitting there?" "Oh," said Larry, with his winsome and wan expression, "people sometimes have troubles of their own."

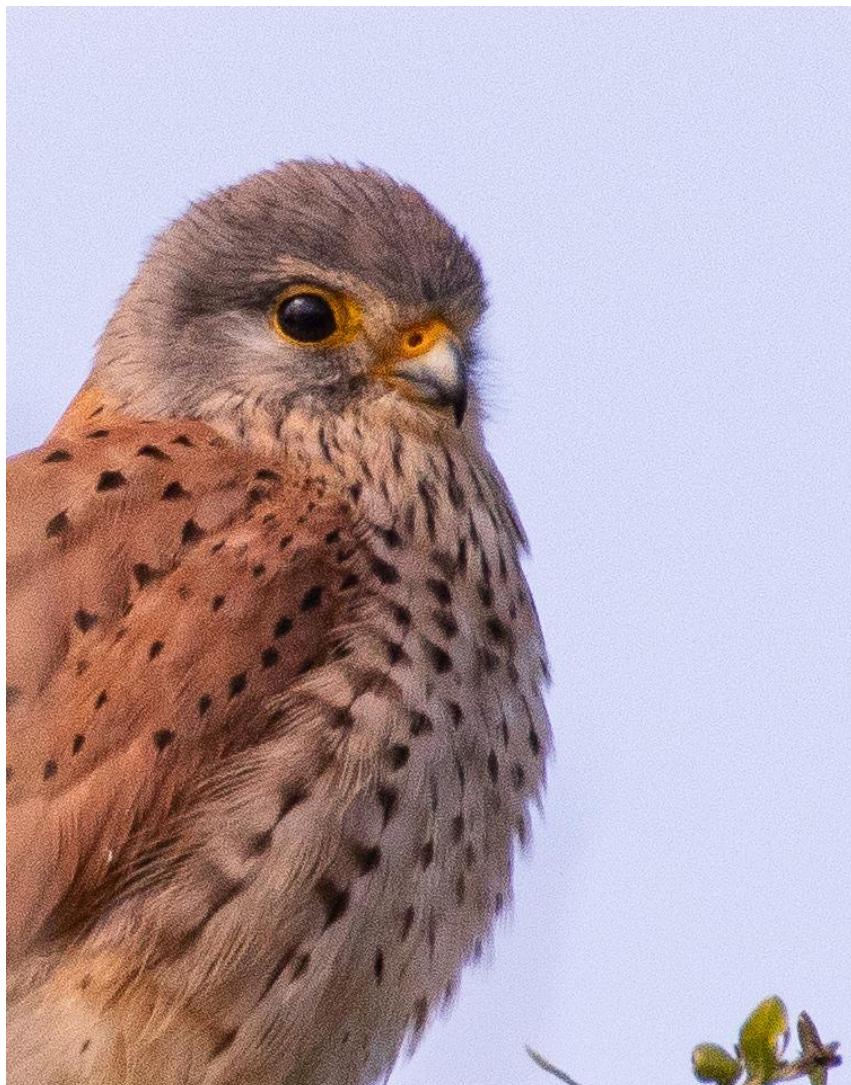
I thought of Larry's stories from time to time and again when my mother told me how he had died. On a cruise ship, Larry, famous for his dancing, was finishing a wild samba when his heart gave out. I told my mother he had danced into eternity. I think she appreciated my perspective, though it's always hard to lose a friend.

Later on, Blossom and her new husband sent me and my wife an excited message via postcard from their honeymoon, to congratulate us on the birth of our first child. I don't know how long their ecstasy lasted, but I could tell it was genuine; it had that edge of giddy madness typical of love affairs. She and he must be gone by now, as is nearly all that generation. Caryn and I are elderly ourselves, and her father's stories, if they still exist, are probably moldering in some cardboard box. I hope that she, or maybe Larry's grandchild, will retrieve them, crack them open, and see what a gentle, wise, and precocious soul he was, when our century was young.

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MEMBER'S PHOTO

Kestrel by Julian Alper



From The Windhover by Gerard Manley Hopkins

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

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POET ON A MOUNTAINTOP

By Shen Zhou



*White clouds sash-like
wrap mountain waists,
the rock terrace flies in space
distant, a narrow path.
Leaning on a bramble staff
far and free I gaze,
To the warble of valley brook
I will reply, whistling*

See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet_on_a_Mountaintop

[Selected by the editor]

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