

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026





VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

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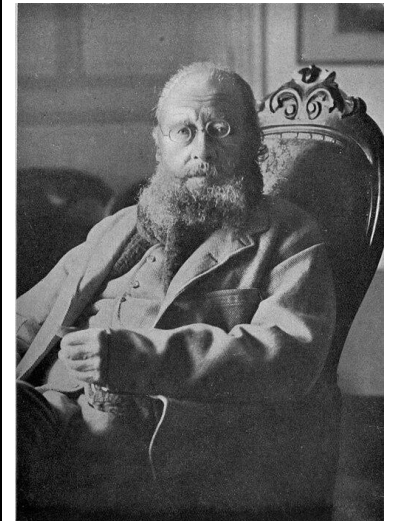
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Edward Lear

[\[Wikipedia\]](#)

**Reuben
Rose/Bar Sagi
Presentation
Evening
30th April 2026
at 7pm
Israel time**



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.*

Philip Larkin

Dear Friends,

We're all having a very challenging time at the moment, and it has been really heartwarming to receive so many messages of love and support for our members in Israel from the Voices family all over the world—thank you so much.

A few days after the war began, we held an impromptu Open Mic session, which was very well attended. And despite the war, our Annual General Meeting proceeded as scheduled—we were lucky that the sirens that evening were just before the meeting started and immediately afterwards, but not during the meeting. We pray for quieter times very soon and a long-lasting peace.

During the first week of the war, Itamar Blumfield got married to Roni—see pages 6 and 7 of this Newsletter for photos. Mazal Tov, Itamar and Roni. And also Mazal Tov to grandma, Wendy.

And Mazal Tov as well to Amiel Schotz, who will be celebrating his 90th birthday this week. We hope that Amiel will continue to write his wonderful poetry in good health until he is at least 120. We plan to honour Amiel and our other nonagenarians in a special presentation evening this summer—see page 8 of this Newsletter.

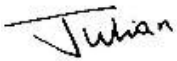
The submission period for the 2026 Anthology has now closed, and we all eagerly await to hear which poems will be chosen by the judges for inclusion in the Anthology.

The Reuben Rose Prize and Bar Sagi Prize presentation evening will be on Zoom on Thursday, 30 April 2026 at 7:00 pm (Israel time). Registration details will be sent out soon, but meanwhile, please reserve this date and time in your diary.

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 wonderful Pesach and stay safe and well!

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

**Save this date - Reuben Rose/Bar Sagi Presentation
Evening - 30th April 2026 at 7pm (Israel time)**

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MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - APRIL 2026

<p>SOUTHERN</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Sunday, April 19 at 5:00 PM</p> <p>Coordinator: Miriam Green</p> <p>miriamsgreen@gmail.com</p>	<p>TEL AVIV</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 PM</p> <p>Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438</p> <p>nosnivel@netvision.net.il</p>	<p>JERUSALEM</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Sunday, April 26 at 7:30 PM</p> <p>Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998</p> <p>aemeallem@gmail.com</p>	<p>UPPER GALILEE</p> <p>Wednesday, April 15 at 10:30. at the home of Reuven and Yehudit.</p> <p>128 Keren HaYesod Artists Quarter, Tzfat</p> <p>Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262</p> <p>poetsprogress@gmail.com</p>
<p>HAIFA</p> <p>Tuesday, April 14 at 7:00 PM location to be confirmed</p> <p>Contact Naomi Yalin for details</p> <p>Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738</p> <p>naomiyalin@gmail.com</p>	<p>NETANYA/SHARON</p> <p>Tuesday, April 28 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home or on Zoom (as appropriate at the time).</p> <p>2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg</p> <p>Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575</p> <p>olsburgh.susan@gmail.com</p>	<p>GLOBAL GROUP 1</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Thursday, April 16 at 19:15 Israel time</p> <p>Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365</p> <p>y2nosh@gmail.com</p>	<p>GLOBAL GROUP 2</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Sunday, April 12 at 19:00 Israel time</p> <p>Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860</p> <p>koren.judy@gmail.com</p>

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

- To - **Isaac Cohen** for his many successes throughout the month.
- To - **Stanley H. Barkan** who has been awarded a Diploma of Excellence by the International Writers Association.
- To - **Larry Lefkowitz**, whose work “Vagabond” has been published at The Deronda Review’s website - you can read it [here](#).
- To - **Esther Cameron**, whose work “Golda, Please” has been published at The Deronda Review’s website - you can read it [here](#).
- To - **Donna Bechar**, whose poem “In the Clouds”, will be published in the upcoming arc32 anthology of IAWE. You can read the poem in the Poet’s Corner section of this Newsletter.
- To - **Miriam Alper** – who has had poems selected for publication in IAWE’s arc32 anthology.
- To - **Ira Director** whose poem “On April 14, 2024” has been published by OF THE BOOK – you can read the poem here - <https://ofthebookpress.com/ira-director-on-apr-14-2024/>
- To - **Elana Dorfman, Ariel Watson and Ann Bar-Dov** who have each had poems published in Writing on the Wall’s web page “Between the Sirens” – You can read the poems here:
[Sirens - by Elana Dorfman - Writing on the Wall](#)
[Dreams - by Ariel Watson - Writing on the Wall](#)
[PSS: Phantom Siren Syndrome - by Ann Bar-Dov - Writing on the Wall](#)
- To - **Klarina Priborkin and Julian Alper** who have each had a mini essay published in Writing on the Wall’s Balagan Underground online magazine – you can see the magazine here - <https://writingonthewall.io/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/BALAGAN-Underground.pdf>
- To - **Yiskah Rosenfeld** who has had two poems about her father published in a new anthology Beyond Words - Literary Magazine.

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MAZAL TOV! ITAMAR AND RONI

Wendy Blumfield writes:

Shabbat 28th March. 8. 15 a.m. I was just adjusting my hat in preparation for going to synagogue for the Shabbat Chatan/Kallah for my grandson Itamar and his bride Roni. Suddenly we heard the wail of the sirens. Must be a false alarm, was my first thought. Shabbat or not, the whatsapps were flying back and forth. Our synagogue has no shelter and has floor-to ceiling windows looking out onto a beautiful garden. So it was quickly decided to cancel the service and close the synagogue. I was devastated. I had been so pleased when the couple agreed to let me organise a Shabbat Chatan because their own parents are secular.

I am a veteran member of Moriah Masorati Synagogue in Haifa and all my requests were dealt with generously: the menu for the after-service lunch; aliyot and the readers I preferred for the Torah and Haftorah, friends who knew our family. We were expecting a big crowd that morning because apart from the family, many of the kehilla are friends of our family for many years. I had ordered a beautiful large cake with the names of the couple and we delivered it to the synagogue on Friday morning. All the food was of course strictly kosher.

The next dilemma was having to postpone the wedding which was scheduled for 4th March in a venue and with a number of guests beyond the rules of the Home Front. However, Itamar and Roni immediately decided not to postpone the ceremony and within a day or two, it was organised in Jonathan and Sigal's garden in Atlit. The Rabbi and the photographer arrived from some distance and the only guests were the immediate family and a few closest friends of the couple. It was the most beautiful wedding I have ever attended. Such joy and love without all the noise and glitz of bigger weddings. And the cake? It was stored in the freezer at the synagogue and I wanted to retrieve it and take it to the ceremony as the wedding cake. I called the synagogue President and asked if anyone was at the premises so that I could pick it up. He insisted that I did not leave home, picked it up himself and delivered it to my apartment from where it was transported to Atlit (see pictures). The messages from all the kehillah and the help with the practical issues filled me with hope that it is the good and beautiful people who will eventually determine our future.



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A special Mazal Tov to our Bar Sagi Competition judge, Itamar Blumfield on his recent wedding to Roni.
And Mazal Tov to happy Grandma, Wendy and all the family.



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HONOURING OUR NONAGENARIANS

We are delighted to announce that we are planning a special Zoom evening this summer to celebrate our nonagenarian poets and their wonderful poetry.

The evening will be hosted by Miriam Green (who, we hasten to add, is certainly not a nonagenarian!).

If you are already ninety or older, will be turning ninety this year, or know of any of our members who are in their nineties, please email president.voices@gmail.com and/or miriamsgreen@gmail.com.

LIVE POETRY REVIEW ON ZOOM

Save this date
15th April 2026 – 7:30 pm on Zoom

Dina Yehuda will be in conversation with **Miriam Botzer** of Tzfat. Together, they will explore Miriam's life and creative journey, focusing on five or six of her poems. Their discussion will address how Miriam turns to poetry as a medium for personal and universal reflection. Being in the period between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron there will be poems that resonate and are in dialogue with these challenging days.

Registration details will be sent soon.



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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WORLDWIDE POETRY (WWP)

- [The Poet's Rabbi | The Lehrhaus](#)
- [‘I want my career, my children and a free supple life’: Sylvia Plath’s radical reinvention | Sylvia Plath | The Guardian](#)
- [Poem of the week – from plastic: A Poem by Matthew Rice | Poetry | The Guardian](#)
- [The Blogs: Under the Unmasked Sky | Samantha Pearlman | The Times of Israel](#)
- [Climate change to identity: The vital lessons in Metamorphoses, Ovid's 2,000-year-old poem](#)
- [New U2 EP features legendary Israeli poet | The Jerusalem Post](#)

MONTY PYTHON – OFF-LICENCE



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKtnehhA7L0>

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CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

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 *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

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/>

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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/>

The 2026 **Switzerland Literary Prize** (VI Edition), organized by Associazione Pegasus, is open for submissions until **April 6, 2026**. This international competition accepts fiction and poetry in published, unpublished, and novel categories, with prizes up to €1000. It focuses on enhancing linguistic cultures globally. See details at www.switzerlandliteraryprize.it. *Note: This is an international competition often accepting Italian language submissions, distinct from the official Swiss Grand Prix for Literature (which awarded Corinne Desarzens for 2026).*

Cypress Review seeks submissions – more details can be found here: <https://duotrope.com/duosuma/submit/cypress-review-d5WzQ>

2026 VOICES OF LINCOLN POETRY CONTEST - Poets wanted. The 22nd Annual Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest begins in April, National Poetry Month. The contest theme is “**Memories: Revisiting The Past Through Poetry.**” Both adult and young poets are encouraged to enter. **Contest "Rules and Entry Form"** can be [downloaded here](#) or requested from Alan Lowe, Contest Coordinator, at slolowe@icloud.com.

Check out Erika Dreifus’ Jewish Literary Links

See - <https://www.erikadreifus.com/2026/03/jewish-literary-links-288/>

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ART BY OUR MEMBERS

Cover Picture - Acacia tree and tent in Sinai by Helen Bar-Lev



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Geranium by Lisa Aigen
(oil on paper)



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Garden Room (photographic collage) by Joanna Stuart



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Mosaic by Miriam Webber

My grandson's wife Roni is studying Japanese culture – at present at work on her doctorate. I made this Geisha for her a few years ago. The size is 32 x 32 cm. and the materials are tiles and broken plates.



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AN INTERVIEW WITH MIRIAM GREEN

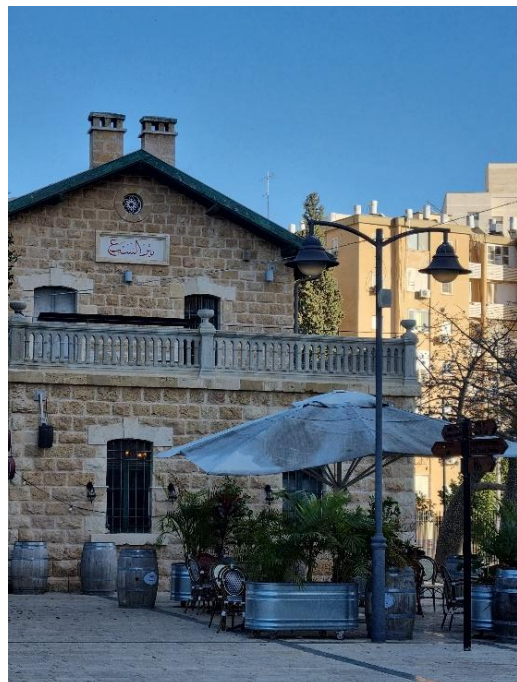
By Bob Findysz



On a fine, early-February afternoon under clear but cool skies I made my way down from my exurban home, past forested foothills and fallow fields carpeted with winter wildflowers creating a multi-hued pallet: pastel cyclamens, creamy daffodils, diminutive purple irises, crown daisies the shade of sunshine and red anemones. Glistening green winter wheat already knee-high swayed in the wind beside avocado and citrus still waiting to be picked. Eastern redbuds and almonds in glorious full bloom punctuated the landscape in cotton-candy white and pink. On a weekly pilgrimage via asphalt highways to visit grandchildren in the South, I detoured to meet Miriam Green at Be'er Sheva's



Ottoman-period, stone train station (reminiscent of bigger versions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv) complete with a small white obelisk -- recalling once-better relations between Turkey and Israel -- and an authentic railroad locomotive on old tracks connecting this outpost with Beirut, Cairo and Damascus, a few passenger & freight cars and refurbished outbuildings. Awnings, garden furniture and a food truck invited passersby to sit and idle away some time. We set a date to meet over a cuppa at a full-service patisserie and café called *BeeZoo* housed in the waiting room of the small but well-built station.



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Following are the questions I asked Miriam with an accurate if not exact account of her answers. I must add that it was truly a pleasure getting to know this extremely talented fellow member of VOICES Israel and I appreciate the time she dedicated to our conversation.

*From what I have gathered about you mainly on Google, you were brought up in the U.S. and worked at the Federal Reserve Board in Washington D.C and **Moment Magazine** before immigrating to Israel in 1991. You did your undergraduate work at Oberlin College in Ohio and a master's in creative writing at Bar Ilan University. You are a freelance writer. Your poetry has appeared in a variety of journals; you have won some poetry prizes, including the 2013 Reuben Rose Poetry competition of VOICES Israel, and were one of the founders of the VOICES Israel's South group of poets. In 2019, you published a book entitled **The Lost Kitchen: Reflections and Recipes from an Alzheimer's Caregiver**, containing anecdotes about your mother and related recipes. You are the mother of three "sabras" and already the grandmother of three. Be'er Sheva has been your home for thirty-five years. For eighteen years you were a counselor for new immigrants at the local branch of AACI (the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel), which I personally remember fondly from my own early years in Israel, when I volunteered at its Jerusalem branch. And, nowadays you are a grant proposal writer for a small strategy and resource development company which permits you to work from home and go into Tel Aviv occasionally for work staff days.*

1. *With so many possible distractions/ demands on your time and focus, are you currently writing poetry? If so, do have any new poems in the drawer which you would like to share with us here? Do you ever write in Hebrew? How would you characterize the poetry you write?*

I write in English though after many years in Israel, my Hebrew is certainly functional. My youngest son is a musician and poet, a graduate of the Rimmon School of Music working on his BA in Music Education. Despite the fact that we both love poetry, we have difficulty understanding each other's writings as we struggle with a Hebrew-English language gap. Thanks to my involvement with VOICES Israel in the South I write poetry regularly. My poetry is shaped by family, memory and place, and by the moral and emotional tensions of Zionism as a lived, daily reality. I write out of the delicate balance of raising a family, caring for aging parents and sustaining intimacy and continuity in a country defined by both belonging and threat. Much of my work explores how private lives unfold within national pressure, how love,



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faith, grief and responsibility persist when home is also a frontier. I'd like to share two previously published poems: the first, entitled "LEMONS", which I wrote before October 7 that appeared in my book; and the second called "THE SVACH", which was published in JBC's *The Paper Brigade* 2026/5786, Vol. 9. (These two pieces will appear in an addendum immediately after the text of this interview. BF) I would also like to share another poem called "SADIR" which has not yet been published anywhere (and so will appear in an appendix at the end of the newsletter to safeguard Miriam's publishing rights BF).

- *Do you remember when you started writing poetry? If so, how/ where/ why did you begin?*

My love of poetry started many years ago and was honed in the years I attended Bar Ilan.

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

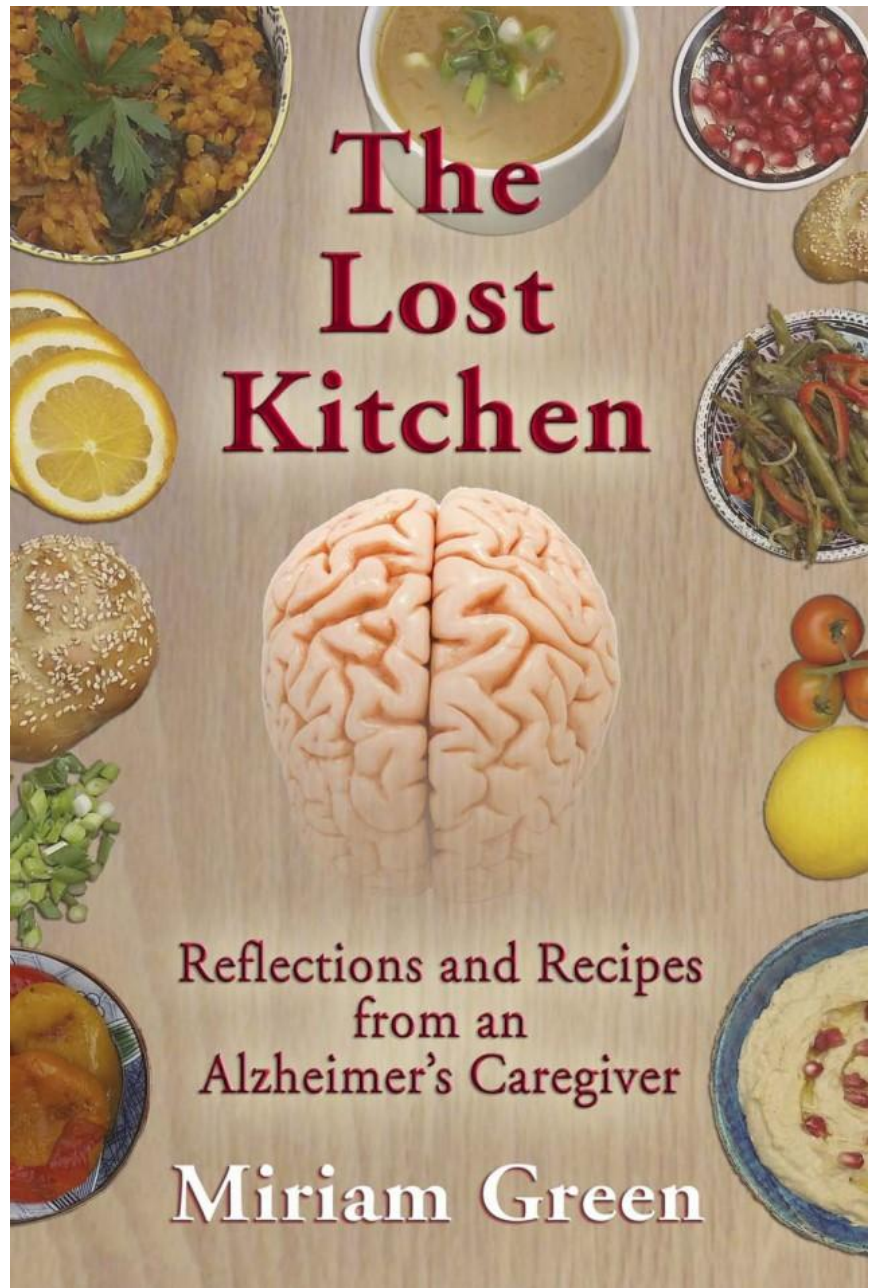
I use a computer for my work writing grant proposals. When I shut it for the day, I begin writing for myself. It is all very random. When I am free from other obligations, I write. Prose. Poetry.

2. *Is there one poet(ess) or more whom you particularly enjoy reading? If so, who? In Hebrew as well as English? Why do you like their writing?*

During college, I first encountered the work of Shirley Kaufman, an American poet who made her life in Israel and chose to write about this place in English. That encounter was formative. She carried two homelands in her language, and her poems hold the tension and the tenderness of that dual belonging. For those of us writing English poetry in Israel, she modeled what it means to remain faithful to the music of one's mother tongue while listening deeply to the cadences of another land. Her work gave me both permission and courage.

My adviser at Bar Ilan, Linda Stern Zisquit, also stands as a guiding presence. An American-Israeli poet with several books to her name, she has devoted herself to shaping English-language poetry within the Israeli landscape. Her poems distill the textures of life here—its light, its fractures, its intimacies—with restraint and clarity. Beyond her literary accomplishments, she embodies a generosity of spirit that has sustained many writers navigating that same in-between space.

And then there was Judih Weinstein-Haggai, a member of VOICES Israel's South group, who was murdered on October 7. Her haiku are small, luminous windows onto the natural world. In just a few lines, she could capture the fragility and



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resilience of this landscape. It was a profound honor to help gather a selection of her poems into a chapbook for Voices, published alongside works by other poets responding to her voice and memory.

3. *What was your BA from Oberlin in? Since completing your MA at Bar Ilan, have you studied/ collaborated with other writers of poetry and/ or prose? If so, who? When? Where?*

Between 1983 and 1987, I completed my bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in creative writing at Oberlin College. About ten years ago, I returned to academic study and pursued graduate work at Bar-Ilan University. I did so over the course of two years while raising three children at home and helping care for my mother in Netanya. It was an intense period, but also a deeply meaningful one.

After helping to establish the southern group of VOICES Israel, I became increasingly engaged with the writers in that circle. What began as a local initiative grew into an ongoing community. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been meeting monthly via Zoom, which has allowed us to stay connected despite distance. On average, seven or eight of us participate regularly. Interestingly, today about half of the group is Canadian, which has added yet another layer of perspective and voice to our conversations.

4. *On a more personal note, you were raised in the U.S.: Where were you born and raised? Do you have any siblings? Did you live anywhere else before moving to the D.C. area?*

Well, I was actually born in London, though I barely remember it. My father is a British-born biochemist who left the UK because of the anti-Semitism he encountered there. When I was two, we moved to the US, settling finally in Bethesda, Maryland, and that's really where I grew up.

I have a brother who ended up in California -- he moved there before I left for Israel -- so we sort of scattered westward in different ways.

I was raised in a Conservative Jewish home, very rooted, very Zionist. Israel was never abstract in our house; it was part of the air we breathed. After Oberlin, something shifted for me religiously. I started attending *Keshet Israel* in Georgetown, and I became more observant. It felt less like a break from my upbringing and more like a deepening of it. Which is also where I met my husband, Jeff.

I'd already spent my gap year in Israel in 1982–83 on *Habonim Workshop*, and that year sealed something for me. So when I eventually made aliyah, it didn't feel dramatic or impulsive. It felt inevitable. It was the realization of a dream I'd been carrying for years.

Later, when I worked as a counselor for AACI, I met so many immigrants who were also living out their Zionist dreams. But I saw how complicated that dream can be. People arrived with passion and idealism, but not always with a full understanding of the realities on the ground, cultural, economic, and bureaucratic. That experience gave me a lot of humility about my own journey. Loving Israel is one thing. Building a life here is something else entirely.



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- *At what point in your life did you move to Israel? Were you alone or with other family members? If so, who? What triggered your decision to leave the States? Had you visited/ lived in Israel beforehand?*

Besides that gap year I spent in Israel between high school and university, I also lived here in 1964 -1966 and again in 1976 -1977 while my father was a researcher at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot. Jeff and I immigrated soon after our wedding. He is a University of Maryland graduate and has a wide circle of friends from there who also immigrated. These friends have become our family here. We have been celebrating Israel's Independence Day together for over 25 years.

- *Did you immigrate directly to Be'er Sheva? If not, where did you start out living here? Do you have other relatives who moved to/ live in Israel? Do you still have family in the U.S.?*

We immigrated directly to Be'er Sheva because Jeff was accepted to an MBA program at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva and subsequently was offered an administrative position. Today he is a financial officer at the university. His sister and her family were already living here and drew us to Be'er Sheva. My parents joined us afterwards and lived in Netanya until my mother became too ill to be at home. Today my father lives near us here in town. I have cousins from my mother's side of the family scattered all over the country but I am not in close touch with anyone.



5. *When you aren't working on grant proposals, raising a family, involved in VOICES Israel or writing for yourself, how do you spend your time? Community? Hobbies? Other, personal pursuits?*

Once a week, I volunteer at the *Midbarium*, the newly reimagined zoo here in Be'er Sheva. It was originally supposed to open in September 2023 after an extensive transformation, redesigned to house only animals from the Syrian-African Rift. That opening was delayed, and then delayed again after October 7. By that time, many staff members had been called up for reserve duty, and volunteers became essential to keeping the zoo running.

A friend of mine, Emily, and I worked in the kitchen preparing food for the birds. It was hands-on, practical work, sometimes messy, but deeply grounding. In the midst of war and uncertainty, there was something steadying about tending to living creatures who depended on us. That experience has found its way into my writing. I am currently working on a prose piece for **Hadassah Magazine** that reflects on that period and what it meant to show up in that way.

I also walk every morning at 6:30, by myself, for about half an hour. I listen to music and let my thoughts drift. It is quiet time, and I find that ideas often surface then.

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The members of my synagogue, *Beit Knesset Rambam* in Be'er Sheva have become part of my extended family and community. We are very involved in the congregation. There is a strong intellectual current alongside a warm sense of connection.

Jeff and I also share a small ritual. We listen together to the podcast "**Poetry Unbound**" narrated by the Irish poet Pádraig Ó Tuama. It is an opportunity to sit with a poem, to reflect, and to share something thoughtful and beautiful in the midst of everything else.

6. *Anything else you would like to add? Would you like to include contact details to invite readers to reach out to you?*

I want to take this opportunity to say how much I value the work that VOICES Israel does in creating safe spaces for writers to share their work. It's not simply about

gathering to read poems; it's about cultivating an environment where thoughtful, rigorous and respectful criticism can take place. That kind of space is rare, and it matters.

When I was working on my book about my mom's Alzheimer's, the most valuable feedback I received was not praise but pointed, constructive criticism from a publisher who rejected the manuscript. At the time, that was not easy to hear, but it was exactly what I needed to rewrite the manuscript. I have come to understand that this kind of feedback is essential to the writing process. Over time, I've learned to create some distance between myself and the critique. It's not a judgment of me; it's an engagement with the text.

I remember that when I was studying at Bar Ilan, a visiting poet once told me quite directly that I was including too much detail. It stung in the moment, but he was right. That comment forced me to pare back and to trust the reader more. My writing became clearer and more accessible as a result. Experiences like that have shaped not only my work, but my understanding of what a true literary community can offer.

My email is miriamsgreen@gmail.com.



Ed - See the addendum on the next page and the appendix at the end of this Newsletter.

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An Addendum:

Following are two poems that Miriam would like to share.

Lemons

after Li-Young Lee

Eight lemons fill the sink
plucked this morning from our tree
which we planted when we first arrived.

I wash them,
roll them on the counter
to make them pliant.
A scented mist erupts from their peel.
From one, I cut a small wedge
to reveal delicate flesh
as we are commanded
because the Land is holy.

We squeeze the lemons,
drink our fill of tart juice,
grate the rind for zest,
suck on the empty halves still laden
with pulp, take what we love,
carry within us this one tree,
not only the fruit but its planting,
not only its growth but its roots.

There are days we live this dream
as if death is nowhere
in the background, the joy
of ripe lemons, fragrant fingers,
a leafy tree with white blossoms,
of having enough.

“Lemons” was published in ***The Lost Kitchen:***
Reflections and Recipes from an Alzheimer’s Caregiver,
Miriam Green, Black Opal Books, 2019.

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THE SVACH

On volunteering at the Beer
Sheva *Midbarium*

As I step into the *svach*,
I wish I were wearing boots.
The mud is relentless,
and the ducks aren't so nice.

A *svach* is a thicket where birds
can find shelter. In this case, the *svach*
is a particular exhibit in the old zoo
reserved for pain-in-the-ass birds
we have nowhere else to keep.

The small pond must be emptied
and refilled. I plunge my hand into
the murky water feeling for the plug.
Cold water rushes into my gloves.
It's winter, and I've saved my sleeve
by hiking it up my arm. Now my hands
are cold. The water refuses to drain.
I use the trick Dalia taught me.
I take the long black stick and thrust
it in and out of the clogged drain.

While the water drains, I rake the dry
part of the enclosure, picking up
strewn vegetables and a few stray leaves.
The chickens edge around me
pecking for their food.

Dalia tells me the ducks will soon
leave the zoo. They've been here since
October 8, evacuees of the Western Negev.
They've harmed not only a diminutive,
white chicken but also a convalescing
Eurasian stone-curlew, a sweet bird
who looks like a tiny roadrunner.

This is my last assignment for the day.
I plug the opening, fill the pond,
retract the hose, step out of the
coop to turn off the water, and
step back in to distribute the food.

I am dreaming of a warm shower
where my feet are dry and I'm
freed from the tedium
of these slight creatures.

I lean into the work, the routine
of caring for these animals,
knowing that to master the mundane
is to live a profound life.

"The *Svach*," was published in *The Paper Brigade* 2026/5786, Vol. 9., and the Jewish Book Council's online site in February 25, 2025
see <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/pb-daily/the-svach>

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THE WRITING ON THE WALL

By Ricky Rapoport FrieSEM



Last June's missile attack left some ugly scars on the beautiful campus of the Weizmann Institute. Bombed out buildings, piles of rubble scarred the carefully tended landscape. The rebuilding began almost immediately, and the green lawns were soon defaced by stark white metal sheets of temporary fencing to hide the construction sites. To mitigate the unwelcome eyesore, the Campus Art Curator, Yivsam Azgad, chose work from a select number of poets and artists ...and that's how my poem, "The Book Collector" ended up on display on the wall only 3 panels away from W.B. Yeats! The closest I'll ever get to such August company.

(The lens of my camera couldn't encompass both poems, so I chose to focus on mine. *Mea culpa.*)

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A DREAM

By Miriam Webber

My husband died over twenty years ago and I continued living in our house, with all the memories of his presence. But I recently moved to live in a cozy little spanking new flat above my grand-daughters new house. I wish he could see my new home – I think he would approve of the way I have arranged everything.

I am retired and can take things easy. I'm a tidy person and enjoy keeping everything clean and neat. I water my few pots, answer emails, read a lot, listen to music and enjoy visits from my great-grandchildren. I cook for myself, bake a cake if I go visiting and always leave my kitchen spic and span.

Last night I dreamed that my husband visited me, looking young and healthy. We hugged warmly and I showed him around my little home, which didn't seem quite the same as it actually is. He was impressed, and pleased that I had hung up a few of his paintings. I offered him coffee and we sat at the table drinking and talking, just like old times. It all seemed so real.

After a while he said he had to leave. I walked him down the path and we had a final hug before he climbed into his car. I watched him start the engine. It



made a strange noise and I was concerned that something might be wrong with the car, but after a second or two it became the buzz of my alarm clock.

I got up and dressed, remembering the vivid dream. In the kitchen I began preparing my breakfast, still with the wonderful feeling of having him with me again. I took the water filter to the sink to fill it, but froze, almost dropping it - in the sink were two coffee cups.

Rumi Morkin

TWENTY YEARS IN PRISON

By Naomi Yalin

I have been asked to write about the 20 years during which I served as a social work coordinator in an Israeli prison. I once wanted to write a book about my experiences there, which would be called "The Onion". Why? Because I continually needed to be able to peel back layer after layer of apparent phenomena to reach the possible and probable truth in any situation.

During those 20 years I built a staff of social workers and a bibliotherapist and coordinated with all the other functions in the prison: the intelligence officer, security officer, medical clinic, psychologist, psychiatrist, workplaces, education officer etc. The warders and managers were of mixed ethnic origin (Jewish, Druze, Christian, Circassian, Bedouin) but generally there were good work relations and real friendships between them. I worked through a prisoner's rebellion, prisoner escapes and suicide attempts, the death of three prisoners due to drug overdose and a war between Jewish and Arab gangs and the general reality of wars and terrorism in Israel.

To describe a little of my work, I'll first remind you of the objectives of penal law:

1. To take revenge in place of the victim
2. To deter the offender and prevent recidivism
3. To deter others from committing crimes – "Let those who see, beware" (general deterrence)
4. To punish the offender
5. To remove the offender from society and reduce their ability to commit offenses (incapacitation)
6. To treat the offender in order to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into society after completing their sentence

As you can see, the aspiration to rehabilitate the offender is only one of these objectives. When I first began my work in 1980, the main job of the social worker was to help the entrance committee decide where to place the new prisoner in the prison,



depending on their specific personal difficulties, the type of crime for which they had been sentenced and the length of their sentence. There was a hierarchy of bosses and servants among the prisoners and social workers did all they could to try to protect the weaker prisoners from being exploited, especially against sexual exploitation by those bosses. This hierarchy became less visible as drugs became more evident throughout the prison system and the "bosses" too became victims of addiction.

Perhaps my greatest achievement was to enlist a young and dynamic staff who helped me to develop the first drug free unit in an Israeli prison. Drugs began to infiltrate Israel especially after the 6 Day War. When a prisoner is under the influence of drugs, rehabilitative treatment is impossible. During the 1980s, there was no way to stop prisoners from bringing in drugs to the prison. The most common method was swallowing the drugs wrapped in several layers of plastic and then excreting them. One prisoner had a pouch specially created in his mouth to smuggle in drugs. The only way to stop this infiltration was together with highly motivated prisoners who would ensure that their own cell (usually up to 12 beds in a cell) remained drug free. After a dramatic incident in which 3 prisoners overdosed on drugs and were found dead in their beds the next morning, we went to study the issue of addictions at Eli Leventhal's drug rehabilitation center in Haifa.

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Then together with a very few prisoners who clearly wanted detox and rehabilitation we managed to clean up room after room in a department of approximately 100 prisoners. Our drug free rooms became a model for more sophisticated projects in other prisons. But in the 1990s a sudden government decision to close some of the security prisons in the West Bank led to the dispersal of all 100 prisoners to other prisons to make way for those security prisoners.

The policies of the Prison Service Commissioners largely determine the extent of influence of the care services within the prisons, and this fluctuates as policies change.

1949-1950 When the prison service was first established it was led by academics and social workers. Ghera Gera, the first commissioner noted that the prison officer was understood to need a "social understanding of the prisoner's situation." On the advice of Henrietta Szold and David Rudi, he established the prisons Maasiyahu for light offenders and Tel Mond for young prisoners. He ensured employment for prisoners.

1952 – Dr. Zvi Harmon, commissioner – a former probation officer – developed a medical approach toward prisoners, focusing on treating pathology. Batons were removed as weapons from the prison guards. A psychiatric treatment department for prisoners was established. However, there were difficulties in recruiting prison guards – the level of education and training was low. The Eyal Prison School was established. The first Rehabilitation Department for inmate treatment services was established. The staffing standard was 1 social worker per 60 prisoners, but it was difficult to recruit social workers. In 1958 a mass rebellion and escape in the Shatta prison changed the attitude of the commissioner. Although there had been no social workers in that prison – the liberal "care and rehabilitation" paradigm was accused of causing the rebellion, and security was given preference over social treatment goals.

In 1968, the women's prison Neve Tirtza was founded. Women are sentenced less to imprisonment. Since this was the only women's prison, it housed mothers with newborn babies until age 3, security prisoners, murderers, drug dealers and prostitutes all under one

roof. Nevertheless, it has been the scene for impressive educational and social work achievements over the years.

Over the years commissioners with different views were appointed. In 1973 the "security" approach was reinforced by Commissioner Haim Levy, who came from a background in the military Border Guard.



Social work was reprioritized in 1982 with the appointment of Dr. Mordechai Wertheimer, PhD in Social Work. Who built rehabilitation facilities in Shatta and Hasharon prisons and some prisoners worked outside the prison during the day. He doubled the number of social workers and established educational centers.

1984 – The Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority was established, and the commissioner decided to involve it providing solutions for prisoners outside the prisons a matter discussed in social workers' reports for the Parole Board. During this period, Herzl Avitan escaped

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and murdered Roni Nitzan, the commander of the detention facility outside the prison.

In 1985 – Rafi Suissa, a previous local authority mayor was appointed as commissioner whose only qualification for the role was that he was father of a prisoner in France. Additional products were introduced into prison canteens. Colorful blankets were provided. Visiting rooms were improved. Prisoners needing fertility treatments were granted leave for this purpose. The commissioner met with prisoners' families and listened to their complaints. The result was pressure on the prisons and social workers to meet the families' expectations. There was a weakening in adherence to procedures and discipline. During this period there were escapes and prisoner unrest: blocking locks, throwing objects from the cells, wardens used tear gas at close range to overcome the rebellions,

1986 – David Maimon, reintroduced more discipline: "We returned to fully enforcing all regulations; our treatment of prisoners is humane". However, escapes continued. Maimon resigned, but the security-oriented approach continued to dominate. In 1994 – Social work and education staff were required to wear uniforms. Social work coordinators were required to stay overnight in the prison and perform duty officer roles.

2001 – Twenty-five security positions were converted into therapeutic positions. However, Commissioner Yaakov Ganot downplayed the importance of social work and emphasized the need for security. He reintroduced batons for prison guards. The secondary rehabilitative goal was reduced to: "Providing corrective tools to all prisoners deemed suitable for this."

Although I left the prison system in 2000, our daughter continues as a social worker there. In 2015 the only female commissioner Ofra Klinger was appointed. The rehabilitation services have improved significantly with the opening of Hermon rehabilitation prison with special departments for prisoners sentenced for drug

and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, causing death by reckless driving, fraud, and sex crimes. The selection system has been improved as has suicide prevention.

Since Ben Gvir became Minister of National Security he has mostly paid attention to security prisoners, ensuring



the limitation of their living conditions, which although it makes control easier for the wardens, breaches all international agreements and Red Cross visits that were formally respected no longer take place. There are new departments, such as a department for Israeli collaborators with Iran in Damoun prison, and more "kosher" departments for Jewish terrorists, who have received various privileges. After a long legal battle, Yigal Amir, the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was granted conjugal visits with his wife, Larissa Trimbobler-Amir, and they have a son together born in 2007.

World prisoner rehabilitation success rates are low, generally estimated at 30% of all prisoners who leave crime after their imprisonment, though most reduce their criminal activity over age 50. I conclude by trying to explain why the rates are so low?

- The length of imprisonment is not determined according to therapeutic and rehabilitative needs. Exposure and treatment of real underlying problems – the "onion peeling" method – takes time. In addition, prisoners move between different prisons for various

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reasons that are not always related to treatment needs.

- The baseline characteristics of most prisoners are severe. A large percentage are illiterate or diagnosed with mental or personality disorders, or learning disabilities. In many cases, they have already gone through all available community treatment frameworks without success.
- Institutionalization, as described by Goffman. Many prisoners adopt the institutional framework of the prison, adapt to it, become dependent on it, and may even fear release.
- Prison conditions are not always ideal for treatment – disconnection from life outside, tensions between inmates, fear.
- Not every prisoner is interested in, suitable for, or ready for therapeutic programs in prison, although some may benefit from treatment aimed only at improving their functioning within prison.
- When there is a high level of tension in prison, it is difficult to motivate inmates toward treatment and rehabilitation, because both the social worker and the inmate focus on survival and coping within prison.
- To succeed in the community, a released prisoner also needs support, guidance, and resources such as employment, housing, and continued treatment.

I will always be grateful to Camil Shahade, the Catholic social worker who built the first hostel for ex-prisoners – at first in his own home and later in the House of Grace in the Catholic Church in Haifa. He taught me to "search for the shadow of divinity in every living person".

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PHOTO AND MICROPOEM – DEAD SEA

By Ruth Schreiber

Jumping for joy
Friendship of four
Dead Sea behind us
Can't ask for more!



RUTH'S PHOTO "DEAD SEA" HAS BEEN SELECTED FOR THE SPRING ISSUE OF NEW FEATHERS ANTHOLOGY.

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THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

BY EDWARD BURNE-JONES



In Burne-Jones' The Wheel of Fortune he depicts a slave at the top of the wheel (with fetter on his leg), a king below (with crown and sceptre) and at the bottom a poet (with laurel wreath) looking at the feet of Fortune.

Of course, after half a turn of the wheel, the poet will be at the top.

Painting from Wikipedia (selected by the editor)

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