

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026





VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Marianne Moore
[Wikipedia]

**Nonagenarian
Tribute Evening
(provisionally)
7th or 14th July.
To be confirmed**



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*"June suns, you cannot store them
To warm the winter's cold."*

— A. E. Housman

Dear Friends,

May was a relatively peaceful month here in Israel. However, right at the end of the month, our neighbours to the north made their presence known once again. I do not believe the international news has reported the recent rocket fire, and it has received only limited coverage even in the Israeli media. Nevertheless, Voices members in the far north and throughout the Galilee have had to spend time in shelters in recent days. We hope and pray that lasting peace will soon come to our entire region, allowing our members, together with all Israelis, to enjoy the security and tranquillity they deserve.



JOHN MACWHIRTER (1839-1911) - JUNE IN THE AUSTRIAN TYROL [WIKIPEDIA]

Congratulations to Isaac Cohen, our Tel Aviv member, whose photograph was selected for the cover of the 2026 Anthology. The anthology is now almost ready to go to print, and we hope to distribute copies in early to mid-July.

We have provisionally chosen either 7 July or 14 July to honour our nonagenarian members; the date is still to be confirmed. The nonagenarians we have been in touch with are Ada Aharoni, Amiel Schotz, Miriam Webber, Ricky Rapoport Friesem, and Stanley Barkan. Please let us know if there are any other members who have reached this remarkable milestone.

Many members still haven't paid their 2026 membership fee – if you haven't already paid, now would be a good time. Please use this link for details of how to pay - <https://voicesisrael.com/about-voices-israel/membership/> or telephone me for help on +972 (0) 54-307-3587.

Newsletter contributions are always welcome. Please continue sending your artwork, photographs, essays, letters, and, of course, poems to newsletter.voices@gmail.com. Members greatly enjoy reading and viewing your work, and it is wonderful to celebrate the many and varied talents within our community.

Have a wonderful month, and please stay safe and well.

Kind regards,

Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

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MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - JUNE 2026

<p>SOUTHERN</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Sunday, June 21 at 5:00 PM</p> <p>Coordinator: Miriam Green</p> <p>miriamsgreen@gmail.com</p>	<p>TEL AVIV</p> <p>Meeting via Zoom Thursday, June 18 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 Thursday, June 25 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, June 3 at 10:30 am at the home of Lisa Aigen.</p> <p>Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262</p> <p>poetsprogress@gmail.com</p>
<p>HAIFA</p> <p>Tuesday, June 30 at 7:00 PM at Iris Dan's home</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>Monday, June 29 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home</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, June 25 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, June 7 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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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

- **Walter Gonzalez** of Long Beach, NY
- **Daniel Ginsburg** of Potomac, MD
- **Bruce Black** of Highland Park, IL

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

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

- To - **Miriam Green** whose article about the zoo was published in Hadassah Magazine!
<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/827b17cffd.html#page/27>.

- To - **Walter Gonzalez (W. E. Ticas)** who has opened a blog at The Times of Israel. You can read his first post "Before I Knew the Name" here - <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/before-i-knew-the-name/>. Walter has also had a poem "The Last Visit" selected for the Nassau County Voices in Verse 2026 anthology. You can read the poem in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

- To - **Pesach Rotem**, whose poem "For Beauty Died Our Emily" was published in Ibbetson Street. (www.ibbetsonpress.com). The poem was written at Eli Ben-Joseph's workshop on the poetry of Emily Dickinson and was first published in the chapbook resulting from that workshop. You can read the poem in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

- To - **Channah Moshe**, whose poem "Breakfast in Sun City" was selected for publication in IAWE's arc 32

- To - **Yiskah Rosenfeld**, whose poem "The Lesson of Garlic" was selected by SWWIM for publication – you can read the poem here: <https://swwimmiami.substack.com/p/the-lesson-of-garlic>

- To - **Richard Shavei-Tzion** on the recent release of his movie, "From Vilna with Valor," about the remarkable survival story of Abraham and Zina Gontownik, which was viewed over the Yom Hashaoah week by hundreds of viewers. For details: Whatsapp: 052-8385775

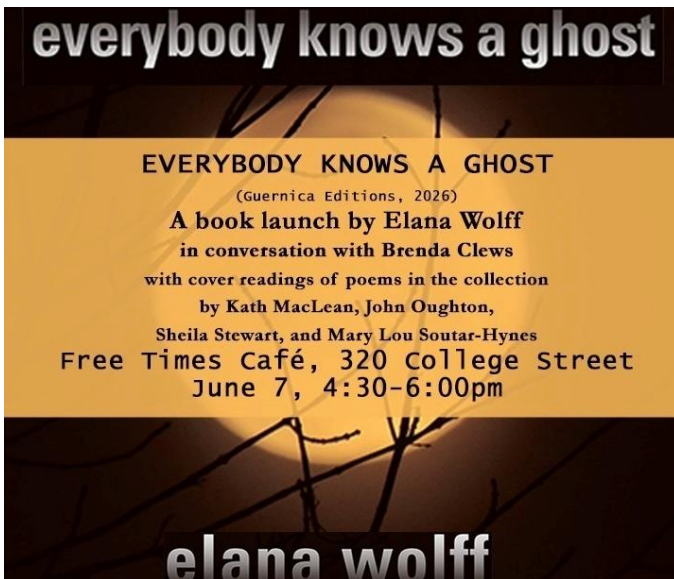
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EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.



QUIRKS OF HUMAN NATURE
Poetry Performed with Improvised Music
Presented by Meg Freer and Deb Schuurmans
June 16, 2026

Elana Wolff, poetry
~ Deb Schuurmans, piano ~
~ Euro Café Duo (Ted Leyton, digital accordion, and Andrea Leyton, voice) ~
Bonus Poets: Bruce Kauffman, Elizabeth Greene, Emily Wright

TUESDAY JUNE 16, 7:30-9:30 pm
TIME OUT BAR & BISTRO 167 Ontario St, Kingston

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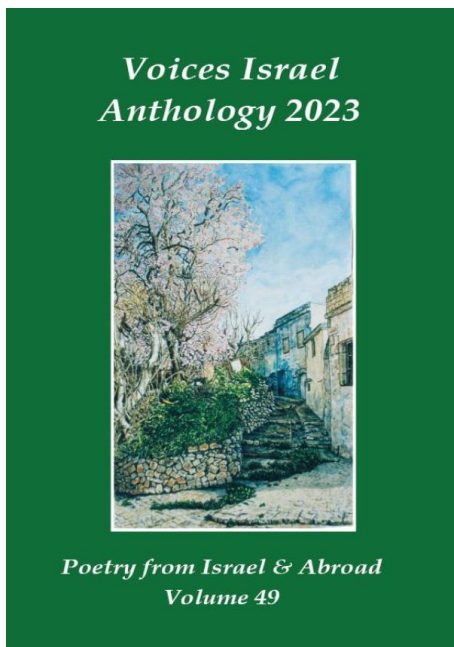
COMPETITION: IMAGE FOR THE 2026 ANTHOLOGY

Following a great set of submissions, we have chosen Isaac Cohen's picture for the front of the 2026 Anthology.

Congratulations, Isaac!!!!

There could be only one winner.

But there are no losers – we hope to be able to include some of the pictures submitted in forthcoming Newsletters.



Painting by Helen Bar-Lev

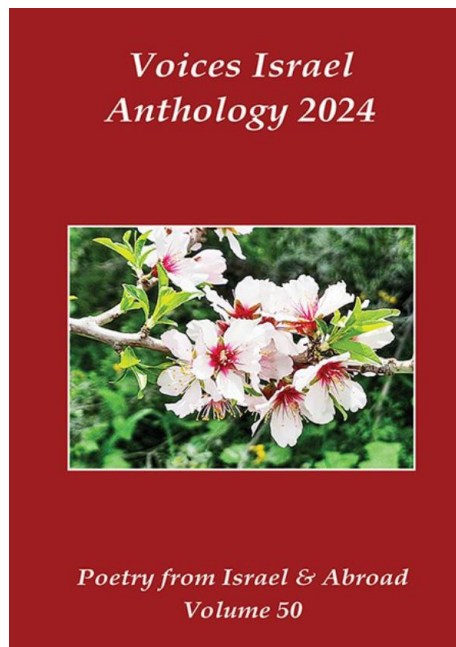
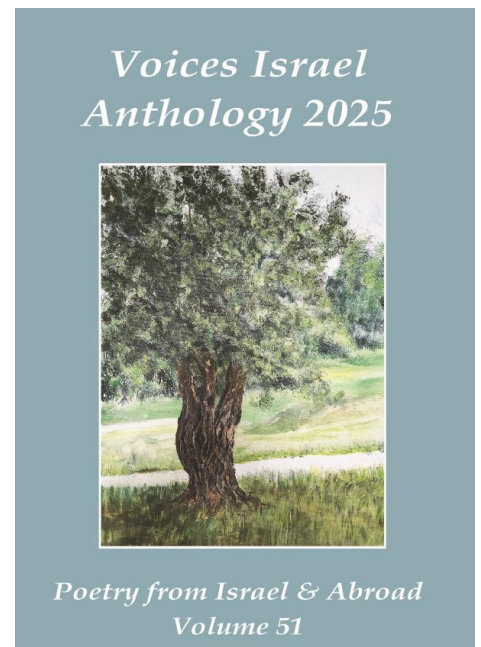


Photo by Julian Alper



Painting by Malka Keleter

The anthology is almost ready to send to the printer and we hope to be able to distribute it in early to mid-July

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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 Naomi Yalin.

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.

Provisional Date – 7th or 14th July

THREE LITTLE PIGS



Three Little Pigs Like You've Never Heard Before. John Branyan

https://youtu.be/l_UegL1R3X8?si=20_yO_6C3M6anctF

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CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Deronda Review seeks submissions of up to five poems, either in ONE Word document or in the body of the email. Reading period is May 15-**June 30**, 2026. Send to Esther Cameron, derondareview at g mail, or to Mindy Aber Barad, maber4kids at yahoo period com.

For the 2026 issue, we will continue the theme of Will (see our most recent call for submissions, below) and add the theme of Birth. Poems on other themes, especially nature and the seasons and any of our past themes (see the Archives), will also be considered.

For more information see

<https://www.derondareview.org/submit.htm>.



Calling for submissions for our inaugural anthology: **Sheltering in Place**

We are looking for poems from those who have experienced Israel during the barrage of rockets from Iran. Whether crouched on the side of a highway, hunkering in an underground garage, secure in a capsuled safe room, or hiding with kids in the concrete tube at a playground, we want your writing! We have special interest in the resilience of the absurd, the "only in Israel" stories.

Seasoned, new, and emerging poets welcome.

Please submit up to three poems to babkaperss@gmail.com

Please put your name and poem titles in the subject line. Attach your poems as a PDF or Word Doc

Deadline June 30th.

For more information please email Haya Pomrenze at babkaperss@gmail.com

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

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

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

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.

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/>

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/>

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Cypress Review seeks submissions – more details can be found here:

<https://duotrope.com/duosuma/submit/cypress-review-d5WzQ>

New York Quarterly seeks submissions:

<https://www.nyq.org/magazine/submissions.php>

Better Than Starbucks Journal is accepting submissions for the Sep 2026 Autumn Issue.

<https://www.betterthanstarbucks.org/submission-guidelines>

Persimmon Tree is accepting submissions from women over sixty.

<https://persimmontree.org/submissions/>

Life and Legends is now accepting submissions on Submittable. We welcome submissions in Poetry, Poetry in Translation, Book Reviews, Interviews, and Essays from writers and translators worldwide. Submit your work at:

<https://silentrivier.submittable.com/submit>

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.**

More details here - <https://www.newfeathersanthology.com/submit.html#/>

Check out Erika Dreifus' Jewish Literary Links

See - <https://www.erikadreifus.com/2026/05/jewish-literary-links-296/>

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ART BY OUR MEMBERS

Cover Picture – Tree Life by Ira Director – see A Retrospective 50 years of Art and Poetry on page 22 of this Newsletter.



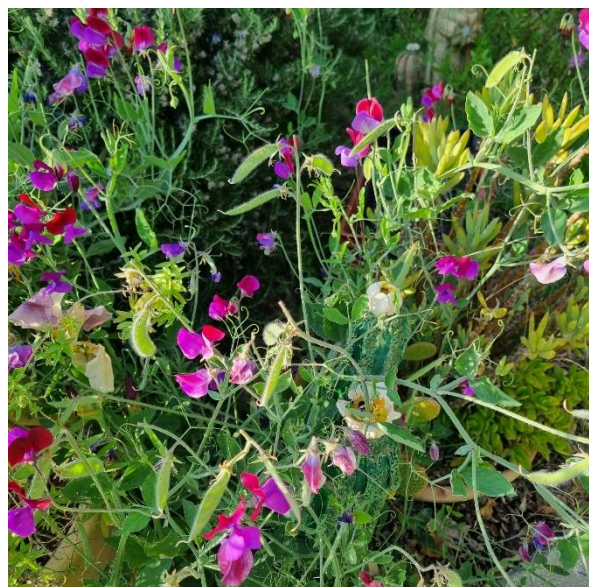
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AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK L. LEVINSON

By Bob Findysz

In the past month and some, conditions were not conducive for traveling very far afield in general and for face-to-face encounters in particular. Hence, I had to decide whether or not to compromise the character of the interviews I have chosen to carry out in person and/or to defer to alternative, high-tech solutions. Being very much technologically threatened, I have a serious handicap vis-à-vis relying on such things as Zoom, video conferences, etc. -- besides, who was really in the mood to sit and chat about poetry? Therefore, Mark and I agreed to postpone our conversation and get together when it seemed safer. Thus, there was no interview in last month's VOICES newsletter.

After weeks of waiting for the skies to stop falling (aka Henny Penny), the current ceasefire has opened up all sorts of possibilities to move around and meet. As much as I enjoy the retreat that is my



personal take on an English cottage garden (where the sweet pea was reigning in all her glory at that moment), I was very happy for an excuse to drive down the Jerusalem hills towards the metropolis on the coast in order to rendezvous with Mark. Spring is in all its glory everywhere. The long, rainy winter has encouraged Nature to give us her best try. And it was a fine day for the trip.

The venue for our conversation was Benedict (as in Eggs...), a popular, breakfast-all-day eatery located on the outside of the market building in Tel Aviv's old Sarna complex. If you've not yet been there, this former Templar village is well worth a guided tour. I have already been on a couple-few. Mark bussed in from his home in Herzliya, I drove to the Fast Lane parking lot near the airport and took a free shuttle to the iconic Azrieli Towers. My preferred means of getting from the countryside into the big city. From there it's a very short walk to Sarna.

Following are the questions I asked Mark with an accurate if not exact account of his answers. I must add that it was a distinct pleasure and honor getting to know this veteran member of VOICES Israel and I appreciate the time he dedicated to our conversation.



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*From what I have gathered about you mainly on Google, you were born, raised and educated in the Boston area; hail from a Reform Jewish family with an established Zionist tradition; completed your undergraduate studies in English at Harvard College before boarding a plane for Tel Aviv; spent a year working and studying Hebrew on a kibbutz in the Haifa area before moving to the city where you taught English to adults; in the army you taught Math as well; after demobilizing you embarked on a career in technical writing, for a series of software companies, during which time you acquired a certificate in computer programming at the Technion and were active in such organizations as the Society for Technical Communication, the Israeli Association of Writers in English (IAWE) and the VOICES Israel Group of Poets in English. And, you married, started a family and moved to Herzliya. In your spare time you have also occasionally contributed prose to the local English-language press (e.g., **The Jerusalem Post, Israel Magazine**), began translating from Hebrew to English, which you continue to do since retiring from fulltime employment, and author a blog called "Translatable but Debatable" analyzing and elucidating Hebrew words and expressions.*

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 and/ or recently published pieces which you would like to share with us here? Do you ever write poetry in Hebrew? How would you characterize the poetry you write?*

In the beginning my writing was more bombastic; but with time I have retreated to a more conservative, more minimalistic, less outlandish style. I have toned down the big generalizations, the alliterations. I don't write in Hebrew, because in Hebrew all I know are the everyday words.

I've chosen to share a poem that I wrote a few years ago for a small booklet put out during the 50th anniversary of my Harvard college graduating class. A stranger received a photocopy of it and didn't even know what book it came from but traced it to me because he wanted to reprint it. Much of the appreciation I receive is from people who know me, so it isn't objective, but I trust a stranger and so I feel most confident about sharing this poem: "When I Forget a Word".

I tend to write 14-line poems, as a helpful discipline. Not true sonnets, not flawlessly iambic, but with a set number of syllables per line. Sometimes, rarely, I let one line borrow a syllable from another. Sometimes I use other structures, such as anapestic tetrameter — which is the Dr. Seuss meter. I publish as Mark L. Levinson because it reduces the number of Mark Levinsons I can be mistaken for.

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

When I Forget a Word

When I forget a word, I like to think it's needed elsewhere. From my home it speeds like an illuminated license plate into an unknowably long darkness. Seldom does it return the way it left, but rather, like the eight of clubs you signed which the magician, after many jokes, finds in the ankle of your girlfriend's boot, it greets me from a newspaper column. "So did you miss me? Were you at a loss? Or were you happy with my synonyms?" It's not that I begrudge the roving word the right to finish its adventure, but I'd rather have remembered by myself.

In elementary school, third grade or maybe earlier, I was already writing verse. Doggerel. Also stories. At first, writing came easy. Then maybe I became more self-critical but for whatever reason I started to write less. I always wrote, though. In college I wrote fiction and poetry, which appeared in a local Cambridge literary magazine as well as Harvard and Brandeis publications.

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

During the day I tend to be preoccupied with other matters. However, ideas may come to me when I'm half asleep. I understand they're called hypnagogic when you're falling asleep and hypnopompic when you're waking up. Sometimes I grab my phone to type the words to myself. Sometimes I forget forever. Then there are the ideas that come during a shower, when the negative ions are swarming in the air. When I sit down to put the ideas in order I may end up compressing the verbiage.

Continued on next page ...

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

I am not very highbrow in my reading. I don't read T.S. Eliot for pleasure. I don't actually read a tenth as much as I used to, whether poetry or otherwise. I have always enjoyed reading James Dickey, a U.S. poet laureate, very popular in the 60s. A poet and novelist. Wrote *Deliverance* on which the film of the same name was based. He is imaginative but accessible.

2. *Besides your translation work from Hebrew (fiction and non-fiction) to English and editing of such poetry journals as the VOICES Israel anthology and the IAWE annual arc publication, have you studied/ collaborated with other writers of poetry and/ or prose? If so, who? When? Where?*

I am a solitary writer, don't like the pressure to perform or produce -- which I feel in a workshop, so I avoid them. As an editor, however, I see the advantage in working with others, co-editors. It takes the onus off me, shares the responsibility.

3. *On a more personal note, until 1970 you lived in the U.S.: Do you have any siblings? If so, where do they live now? Did you live anywhere else in the States before moving to Israel?*

My family is very much a Boston, Harvard-Radcliffe family. My mother graduated from Radcliffe. My grandfather's sons and grandsons, a total of five boys, all went to Harvard. (None of us had sisters.) My grandfather and his brothers were in haberdashery. My father was a doctor but died at 35, when I was six. His mother was active in Hadassah. My mother's side of the family were not businesspeople. They preferred a steady paycheck. My mother's big brother graduated MIT, like his father, but stayed in the army after World War II and retired as a colonel. My only brother still lives in Massachusetts. My mother and brother visited Israel but neither ever moved here.

- *Were you alone or with other family members when you first came to Israel? What triggered your decision to leave the States? Had you visited/ lived in Israel beforehand?*

I studied in college during the Vietnam War years. The anti-war protesters somewhat convinced me, but they weren't my kind of people and the other side wasn't either. As a graduating English major without any obvious job prospects, and feeling inadequate next to the grad students of my acquaintance, I weighed my options. I couldn't see myself relocating to Canada or Sweden to dodge the draft, but Israel presented a more welcoming prospect. I was advised to sign up for a kibbutz *ulpan* to study Hebrew and work for my keep. By the time I departed for Kibbutz Ramat Hashofet (named after an American Zionist judge, Julian William Mack), I had been exempted from the draft on account of my eyesight but I'd already made my mind up. I spent a year studying Hebrew and working on the kibbutz before moving to Haifa, where I taught English several times a week in a night school. Haifa reminded me of Boston, another northern port city that was outgrown and never found a way to regain its importance.

- *Do you have other relatives who moved to/ live in Israel? Can you tell me a bit about your wife and son? Where was she born/ raised? How/ where did you meet?*

I originally met my wife, Leah, when she turned up to study English in my class. I considered her off limits then, but we happened to meet again after she finished the course. She lived in a moshav near Haifa, but after some years of marriage in Haifa we moved to Herzliya where I could find better work. We've been married now for 49 years. I have some distant cousins by way of my mother's brother-in-law who live here but whom I met only once. Otherwise I don't have any relatives in Israel. On the other hand, my wife has plenty of family. Leah was born in Jerusalem but her father



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moved the family to the Haifa area to escape arrest for his pre-state underground activities. Her father's side of the family is Persian. He grew up in Rosh Pina. Leah is a 7th-generation Jerusalemite and her mother's side of the family is North African. Our son, Shakhel, is now in his mid-forties, unmarried and lives in Tel Aviv. My grandfather had three sons. My father had two. I have one. Demographically, we seem to be reaching the end of a line here.

4. *When you aren't translating from Hebrew to English, involved with family, in VOICES Israel or IAWNE, writing poetry and/ or prose for yourself, how do you spend your time? Community? Hobbies? Other, personal pursuits?*

Nowadays, I am busy getting old, forgetting names and words but keeping a growing number of medical appointments. Once a week, on Tuesdays, Leah and I go to senior-discounted films at one of a number of nearby movie theaters. The beach is always there but I never seem to find time for it. Years ago I used to walk the beach northward from Herzliya or Shfayim or Gaash — once hiking even as far as Netanya. An astrologer said I should be walking barefoot somewhere, but the sea itself doesn't attract me. For a Boston suburbanite the beach is cold, windy and far away so I never took to swimming. Leah is also not drawn to the water. Anyway, my idea of the good life is to sleep all morning and work at night when it's quiet and I can concentrate.

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

While I was on the kibbutz *ulpan* at Ramat Hashofet, Leslie Summers arrived from the U.K., already a published poet. I believe Leslie is still living on Ramat Hashofet. In the 1970s he wrote a letter to The Jerusalem Post asking about other poets in the country. Thus started VOICES Israel, originally in Haifa. The AACI there was very active, with a big space and lots of activities, and the Voices Group would meet there. Moshe-Ben-Zvi was among the founders (but returned to the Netherlands), as was Reuben Rose, who liked to say he wrote "verse, not poetry," meaning that he didn't claim his writing was elevated. For years he was the anchor for VOICES Israel meetings in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. He wrote the newsletter, which was one page long, and he handled all the finances and paperwork. He called himself the "convener" rather than president or coordinator.

I started typing the VOICES Israel anthology for Reuben because, as an employee of a hi-tech company, I had access to an electric typewriter. Later I even typed the anthology on an early-model word processor. Reuben never quite understood how, for example, the word processor enabled me to add a page in the middle without exerting myself to type new numbers for all the subsequent pages. Eventually he handed over the job of chief editor to me, as well as the job of chairing the Tel Aviv meetings; his expectation was that, in due course, I would take over the whole operation as a paid, full-time job. Reuben had great ambitions.



Reuben died in 1989, a couple of years short of seventy. His diagnosis of heart trouble caught him by surprise; and, when he entered the hospital for a routine operation, nobody expected that he wouldn't come out alive. After Reuben died we set up an official association (*amutah*) with the help of Marc Lavine, who was both a poet and a lawyer.

The early anthology was still low-tech by today's standards, all communications being on paper, and after some years I resigned as chief editor because I could no longer keep track of which poets had submitted biographies, and, if so, where I'd put them, and so forth.

I believe no one has remained a member of the VOICES Israel group longer than I have, except Ada Aharoni. And maybe Ezra Ben-Meir.



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HISTORY REVISITED

By Lisa Aigen

The Louvre, still palatial in spite of three hundred years without the presence of royalty, loomed above the *Jardin des Tuilleries*. On this spring day crystal spray fountains danced and Dutch tulips of every color exploded with their exuberant hues.

On a bench, under the candelabra of flowering chestnuts, an old woman fed breadcrumbs to the pigeons which swarmed about her feet. She looked at me curiously and adjusted the headscarf that made her appear timeless, perhaps gypsy.

It was Passover so I had a matzo sandwich in my backpack. At least it had been a sandwich, now crumbled and only held together by the butter and cheese. I sat eating this, dropping enough crumbs so that the pigeons also gathered about my feet.

It was Sunday and the museum charged no entry fee



which allowed me, even on my student budget, to indulge in a visit to the Mona Lisa or spend time contemplating my favorite Botticellis. After paying my respects to these old friends, I wandered to the Greek wing admiring the kylixes, used three millennia ago for drinking. In the room was an elaborately carved banquet couch, ergonomically designed for symposiums. The hand-typed sign in French elaborated that the symposiasts used these *klinai* with their built-in headrests to lean so they could comfortably imbibe the fine sweet wines and indulge in tasty appetizers as they discussed finer points of philosophy and politics. This luxury was only for wealthy free men.

These ancient customs had to be explained to most people now, I thought. I knew of them, for we Jews had preserved the ways of the Hellene in our ancient Passover observances. The night we celebrate our freedom.

I wandered to the next room and sped past the mummies stolen from their pyramids to a large display case packed with artifacts. I immediately recognized a copper mirror, though it was no longer polished enough to reflect a face. Israelite women were reported by Jewish tradition to have used such mirrors to preen and beautify themselves to entice their husbands so that even in the dire days of slavery there would be children. Those very mirrors were later hallowed offerings to

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KYLIX PAINTED BY LISA AIGEN

Moses and Aaron when they gathered the spoils of Egypt to build a Tabernacle for the God of Israel.

I felt goosebumps as I peered into the glass case, for it did indeed reflect my face. I moved a hairsbreadth and a pair of ancient earrings aligned with my ears.

I turned and spoke to the mummy behind me.

“You and your people are long gone. Egypt is now myth, even your royals buried deep in your pyramids. But I, daughter of Israel, am here, alive and well, walking about with matzo crumbs in my pocket.”



FROM WIKIPEDIA

[HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:MUMMY_LOUVRE.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mummy_Louvre.JPG)

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WHEN THE SKY STAYED WHOLE

By W. E. Ticas (Walter Gonzalez)

I grew up in a place where the sky could not be trusted.

As a child in El Salvador during the war, I learned to read the air before I learned to read books. Silence was not peace; it was a warning. The sky was not distance; it was a direction from which something might fall. You did not look up in wonder. You looked up to calculate.

Years later, I left. I crossed into a country where the sky behaved differently—where it remained intact, where it did not interrupt lives without warning. People said I was safe. And I understood the word, but not the feeling.

Safety, like any language, has to be learned.

For a long time, my body refused to believe in peace. Loud sounds rearranged my pulse. Helicopters were not neutral objects; they were echoes. Even joy—fireworks, celebration, noise—felt like a rehearsal for something that might go wrong.

I lived like that for years: outwardly adapted, inwardly braced.

Then, in 2006, I returned to El Salvador for the first time.

It was September 15—Independence Day. The stadium was full. Vendors moved through the aisles, children waved flags, the air carried heat, dust, and something familiar I had not realized I missed. It felt like the past, but not entirely. I was no longer the child who had learned to hide there.

Then everything quieted.

Not silence—the kind I knew—but a collective pause. Thousands of people lifted their heads at once.

Helicopters appeared.

They moved across the sky in formation, followed by planes tracing arcs of white and blue. Their shapes were the same as the ones I remembered from childhood—the ones that meant run, hide, disappear. For a moment, my body returned to that earlier time.



Muscles tightened. Breath shortened. The instinct to brace rose without permission.

But no one moved.

No one crouched. No one searched for cover. No one calculated distance or direction. The crowd watched, steady, unafraid.

The machines did not descend.

They did not circle with intent.

They performed.

The sky did not break.

It held.

And something inside me—something that had remained unfinished for years—finally reached a conclusion it had been postponing.

The war was over.

Not on paper.

Not in speeches.

In me.

There is a concept in Jewish thought—*zachor*, to

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remember—not as a passive act, but as a responsibility. Memory is not only about what happened; it is about what continues to live in us long after the moment has passed.

For years, my body had been remembering a war that had already ended.

That day, it learned something new.

It learned that memory can change shape.

That what once meant danger can, in another time, mean nothing at all.

That the sky can remain whole.

Since then, peace has not arrived all at once. It has come slowly, the way light enters a room through a narrow opening—first uncertain, then undeniable.

There are still moments when sound travels too quickly through me, when memory arrives before reason. But there are also moments—quiet ones—when I notice that I am standing still, unafraid, under an open sky.

And I understand something I could not have understood as a child:

The opposite of war is not silence.

It is trust.

Trust that the sky will remain where it is.

Trust that the past will not repeat itself in the same way.

Trust that what once defined you does not have to contain you.

I still remember the sky as it was.

But I also remember the day it stayed whole.

And now, I carry both.

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POETRY BY MARIANNE MOORE

By Reuven Goldfarb



POETRY

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there
is in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful; when they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the
same thing may be said for all of us—that we

do not admire what

we cannot understand. The bat,

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea,
the base-

ball fan, the statistician—case after case

could be cited did

one wish it; nor is it valid

to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not
poetry,

nor till the autocrats among us can be

"literalists of

the imagination"—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and

that which is, on the other hand,

genuine then you are interested in poetry.

Marianne Moore

See - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marianne_Moore

In the winter of '61, I invited my friend Steve Falk (Schmuel Chayyem) to go with me into Manhattan for a reading by Marianne Moore at Cooper Union, a major science and art college that was founded by Peter Cooper in 1859. The institution features a "great hall," a cavernous wooden oval space for lectures, concerts, and performances. That was where Miss Moore was set to declaim her poetry. From our seats in the balcony, she was a diminutive figure, but the excellent acoustics, and the sound system, well adapted to the space, enabled us to hear her very clearly — although her poetry, as you can see yourself, is quite complex and challenging.

I had come across the poem, "Poetry," in Selden Rodman's *New Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1938) and looked forward to hearing her read it. At this distance in time, however, I don't remember if she actually did so. As have many other readers, I have found the most memorable phrase in the poem to be "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Of course, the whole passage with which it concludes, and the whole poem in which it is embedded, are essential to understanding it. To its credit, it resembles a Zen koan, not an impenetrable one, however. **Reuven Goldfarb**

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A RETROSPECTIVE: 50 YEARS OF ART AND POETRY

by Ira Director



See:

<https://sites.google.com/view/iradirectorexhibition2022/home>

Prologue:

Is any of this important? It's important to me and likely to my mother and father. But that's about it. As this writing is for Voices Israel, the audience is filled with poets and artists. Many are better than me. You all have magnificent stories. Just poke a bit at your lives to see what might come out. "That" is important!

Oh yeah, it's also important to my wife Debbie, a bit.

Introduction:

A retrospective is defined as an artist's development and stylistic evolution. This evolution through half a century began with arts & crafts which later transformed into leather sculptures. As the leather was a medium for sculptures, the first paintings, begun in the mid-1980s, were also sculptures. The sculptures emerged from painted wooden forms, the structural qualities of paint and found art.

Poetry, did I almost neglect poetry? Poems and paintings juxtaposed, poems written on paintings, about paintings, peeking out from parts of sculptures.

There's more: photography, international mail art and a homage to James Joyce. An evolution begins somewhere. So let's start with 1) arts & crafts

Continued on next page ...

What's the difference between fine art and craft? Art focuses on personal expression and aesthetic value, while craft prioritizes functionality and utility. Simple? Volumes have been written about that question. Imagine a piece of pottery or a tapestry: craft. Now imagine Raku pottery or Medieval tapestries: Art, craft or a blend? Imagine an ornate teapot: craft. Put large holes in its side and bottom: conceptual art.

Fashioning and teaching arts & crafts have been a hobby and vocation throughout my life. A few of the highlights included teaching candle making to Kibbutz Gezer's children which included sand casting and hand molding multi colored wax, as well as using cardboard boxes to make racecars and three-meter-high dinosaurs.

My personal work enabled familiarity with different materials such as leather, wax, precious and ordinary metals, glass, clay, stone and more. These skills were essential for creating future artworks.



Watermelon: Colored marker on tree segment

"Watermelon" and "Tree Life" (see next page) are examples of nature inspiring art in a similar way, to a Mediterranean sunset inspiring a poem. A wedge of wood, found in a forest stand, cut to fell a tree becomes a slice of watermelon.

Continued on next page ...



Tree Life: Acrylic on tree bark and stone

In "Tree life", stones with abrupt edges along with pointed ends, become a family of hedgehogs. One smooth stone becomes a yellow and black striped bee. They live in a section of heavy dried split bark found on the forest floor which was painted and mounted.

Continued on next page ...



Sunset on My Window: Acrylic on glass

“Sunset on My Window” is simply that. Though any window in the house could have been chosen, or the image painted on a canvas, the window facing the sun was picked. The translucent acrylic image of the sun behind a tree, filters light from the actual sun. A double image: artistic reality plays with nature.

The next step, the evolution from craft to leather sculpture will be in the next issue of the Voices Newsletter.

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MARIANA (MILLAIS)

Mariana, also known as Mariana in the Moated Grange, is an 1851 oil-on-panel painting by **John Everett Millais**. The image depicts the solitary Mariana from William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, as retold in **Tennyson's 1830 poem "Mariana"**.



*She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'*
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Painting from Wikipedia (selected by the editor)

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BAR SAGI PRIZE WINNING POEMS

Congratulations to all the prize winners and those that received honorable mentions!

First Prize

Held by the past - Oshra Abecasis 16

Held by the Past

You miss the memories, not the face,
Not the voice that filled a silent space.
It's not their touch that haunts your mind,
But moments lost, now hard to find.

The laughter echoing through the halls,
The midnight talks, the whispered calls.
The way the world felt soft and new,
When days were gold and skies were blue.

You chase the shadows of a time,
When hearts beat loud and love could rhyme.
But not for them your longing burns
It's for the time that won't return.

A ghost remains, but not of flesh,
Just fragments wrapped in memory's mesh.
And though they're gone, you understand:
You miss the feeling, not the hand.

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Second Prize

The child they called "mature" - Layan Abu Salah 14

The Child They Called "Mature"

They'd say, "She's mature" with a proud little nod.
And I took it as a praise, like a blessing from God.
But growing up early can feel like a shove-
You learn to be steady instead of be loved.
And I wore that sweet label as best as I could,
Not knowing "too grown" never meant "understood"

They'd hand me their worries like books to be stored,
Stacked high on my shoulders I never ignored.
I carried their stories, the bitter and sweet,
Mistaking the weight for a personal feat.
I thought being helpful made everything good,
Not seeing how much of myself I withstood.

I learned to be careful with every reply,
To measure my words so none would sigh.
I polished my manners, my timing, my tone,
A child with the posture of someone full-grown.
And every small triumph felt like it should-
A quiet reminder to stay what I "could."

I'd watch other kids being loud, being free,
A little bit jealous of who I might be.
But I played the role that the elders admired,
I followed the script that they thought childhood would,
Forgetting that joy also needed a foothold.

And somewhere along all the trying to please,
I learned to speak softly, to move with a breeze.
To listen too closely, to bend when they'd lean,
To hide all the parts that felt messy or keen.
I grew in the spaces they thought that I should

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Beneath the olive tree - Sapir Golomb 15

Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
He built himself a swing
She came along, singing a song
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
He sits still on the swing
She asks him why, he says goodbye
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
Empty is the swing
She sits alone, he longs for home
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
She waits beside the swing
He comes no more, her hope is torn
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
There's no one near the swing
She found out why, she cried and cried
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
He has found his peace
No more lies, nothing to hide
Beneath the olive tree

Beneath the olive tree
Years have worn the swing
She sees the way, her heart still waits
Beneath the olive tree

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HM

Where the quiet hearts rise - Lian Ghanem 14

Where the Quiet Hearts Rise Lian

In the quiet of the morning,
when the sky is still holding its breath,
a single ray of trembling light
slips softly through the darkness.

It touches all the silent things
branches, the broken stones
and then the world remembers
how to glow again.

We trudge through days that warp us,
nights that steal our names,
but somewhere in the deepest dark
a spark refuse to die.

It beats like wings inside us,
a tender, fearless flame,
whispering that even sorrow
is simply a door that is turned to gold.

And when the storm has finished
There seems to be
the long and bitter song,
we lift our faces to the dawn
And then we discover that we're not the same.

For every heart that shatters
learns the secret of the light:
that beauty is born in breaking,
and hope in learning how to rise.

So take my hand, wanderer
together we'll cross the shadows,
carrying small, hot flames in us
towards the waiting day.

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HM

I hate you – Sheine Angart 15

I hate you...

I hate you for making
me laugh every time I hear your voice.
I hate you for putting this
smile on my face every time you smile.
I hate that spark in your eyes
every time you talk.

I hate you for making me think:
“Maybe just today.”

I hate you for making me want to live
another day.

I hate you for making me fall in
love with you.

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HM

Do other animals – Itai Shapiro 17

Do other animals

Do the ants ever small talk
About colors, about books
Does the parrot know the boardwalk
As its freedom or deaths' hooks?

Do the elephants stand solemnly
Under the drizzle of the rain?
Do they wonder condescendingly
About the meaning of all pain

Do the cheetahs feel quite deeply
Knowing that they'll never fly?
Do they feel sorrow more discreetly
Or do they have no voice to cry

Do jellyfish survive on purpose
Is death ever present at mind
How come they float beneath the surface
Without much depth inside to find

Do the blackbirds breathe with meaning
Or do their lungs just do the work
Is it they ever crave for feeling
Or is their living just a perk

Do the spiders sleep at night
At ease, content to have eight eyes
Or do they get dysphoria of sight
And wish to see less sunset dyes

Do all the foxes miss their grandmas
And wish that they could hear her voice
Do all tabby cats regret existence
Or is it only the lazy boys

Do all horses wish to be ridden
Or are desires beyond our control
Do all animals keep something hidden
Or are we the only who have a soul

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