VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2026



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GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NOVEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Wiiliam Blake – portrait by Thomas Phillips [Wikipedia]

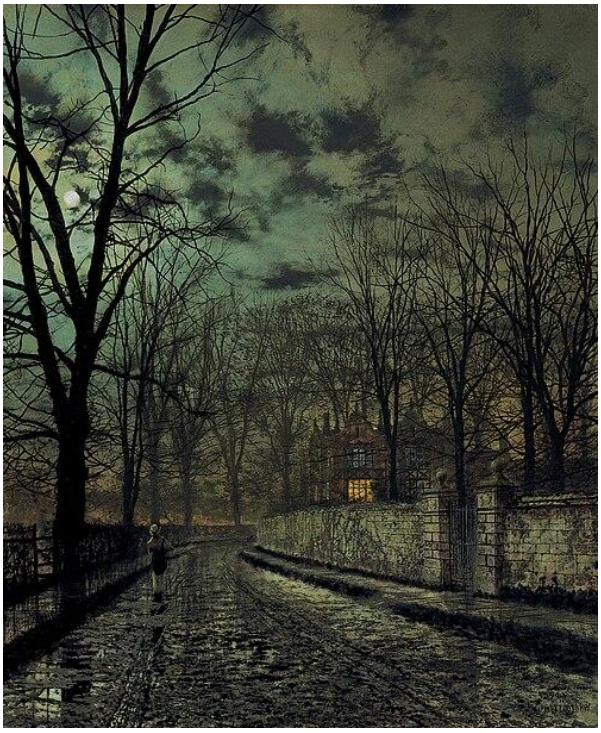
Save this date:

Zoom Workshop The Value of Repetition in Poetry – Nov 23



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Autumn, I love thy parting look to view
In cold November's day, so bleak and bare,
When, thy life's dwindled thread worn nearly thro',
With ling'ring, pott'ring pace, and head bleach'd bare,
Thou, like an old man, bidd'st the world adieu.
From *Written in November*,
by John Clare



NOVEMBER BY JOHN ATKINSON GRIMSHAW [WIKIPEDIA]

Dear Friends,

Last week, we held our Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) and Open Mic Poetry reading. It came on the day after Israe's General Election. Inevitably some of our members will be pleased with the results, and some will be disappointed. But within Voices Israel our members always show full respect to each other, whatever our political views and political differences or other differences. In fact, the EGM proposal was unanimously approved by all members present – there's more about the actual details of the resolution passed on page 7 of this Newsletter.

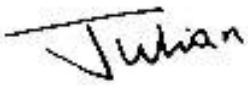
November day's might be bleak and bare (John Clare) but not in Israel, where we are still experiencing pleasant weather and not in Voices Israel where we are looking forward to another Zoom Workshop – "The Value of Repetition in Poetry" led by Susan Olsburgh. This will be on November 23rd, see more details on page 8 of this Newsletter.

Some members still haven't paid their 2026 membership fee. If you haven't already paid, please use this link for details of how to pay: https://voicesisrael.com/about-voices-israel/membership/, or telephone me for assistance 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.

Wishing all members a great month, with good health, happiness and successful writing.

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES

November 2026

SOUTHERN	Meeting via Zoom Sunday, November 22 at 5:00 PM	Coordinator: Miriam Green	miriamsgreen@gmail.com
TEL AVIV	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, November 26 at 7:15 PM	Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Tel: 054-444-8438	nosnivel@netvision.net.il
JERUSALEM	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, December 3 at 7:30 PM	Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998	aemeallem@gmail.com
UPPER GALILEE	Wed, November 25 at 10:30. at the home of Reuven and Yehudit in Tzfat	Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 or: 058-414-0262	poetsprogress@gmail.com
HAIFA	Tuesday, November 17 at 7:00 PM at Iris Dan's home	Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Tel: 054-794-3738	naomiyalin@gmail.com
NETANYA/SHARON	Monday, November 30 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home	Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Tel: 054-919-3575	olsburgh.susan@gmail.com
GLOBAL GROUP 1	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, November 5 at 19:15 Israel time	Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Tel: +972-52-808-9365	y2nosh@gmail.com
GLOBAL GROUP 2	Meeting via Zoom Sunday, November 22 at 19:30 Israel time	Coordinator: Judy Koren Tel: +972-54-741-7860	koren.judy@gmail.com
GLOBAL GROUP 3	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, November 5 at 19:30 Israel time	Coordinator: Julian Alper Tel: +972-54-307-3587	julian.alper@gmail.com
POETRY READING	Meeting via Zoom Sunday, November 1 Time to be confirmed	Coordinator: Debbie Golden	deborahg@edu.haifa.ac.il

NEWS

Happy News - Mazal Tov Mara Lee!

Mara Lee Grayson has just given birth to a baby boy.

We send our very best wishes to Mara Lee, her husband, the new baby and all the family.



Get Well Soon, Yochanan!

We wish **Yochanan Zaqantov** better following his illness. Fo the time being Yochananan will be standing down as an officer of Voices Israel.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

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

To - **Judith Robinson,** who has five poems in the October edition of New English Review – you can see the poems here: **https://www.newenglishreview.org/articles/a-dance/**

And Judith's poem "Eli, Eli" is included in The Jewish Writing Experience and VOX POPULI = see https://jewishwritingproject.com/2026/10/19/eli-eli/ and https://voxpopulisphere.wordpress.com/2026/10/27/judith-r-robinson-eli-eli/

To – **Esther Cameron**, who has had poems and an article published in the New English Review/
- Poem "A Canto for Miss N" https://www.newenglishreview.org/articles/a-canto-for-miss-n/
- Poem "Memo to the Messiah" https://www.newenglishreview.org/articles/memo-to-the-messiah/
- Article "Salvation: Between Christianity and Judaism" https://www.newenglishreview.org/articles/salvation-between-christianity-and-judaism/

To - **Ruth Schreiber**, who has had a photograph accepted for publication in the New Feathers Poetry Anthology.

To - **Pesach Rotem,** whose poem "Escape from the Wrath of Moses" was published in The Ekphrastic Review, along with **Coco Rotem's** photograph "Moses in the Library." The poem and the photograph are here - https://www.ekphrastic.net/the-ekphrastic-review/escape-from-the-wrath-of-moses-by-pesach-rotem and can be found in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

To - **Miriam Webber** has a poem "AI" in the Calul Journal – you can read the poem in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

To - **Stanley Barkan**, whose poem "Crossings" is included in Dashboard Horus: A Bird's Eye View of the Universe – the poem is here: https://dashboardhorus.blogspot.com/2026/10/thursday-october-22-2026-stanley-h.html.

To - **Bruce Black**, whose poem "Kind, Kinder, Kindest" is published by Kind Over Matter – the poem is here: https://kindovermatter.com/kind-kinder-kindest/

To - **Julian Alper**, whose micro poem "Glass of Absinthe" is included in Dear Booze – see https://dearbooze.com/cocktales/f/glass-of-absinthe.

And Julian's article "Kingfisher – The Colour of Words" is published in the New English Review: https://www.newenglishreview.org/articles/kingfisher-the-colour-of-words/

EGM RESOLUTION

18 members attended a Zoom Extraordinary General Member (EGM) on Wednesday 28th October.

Members voted unanimously, in favour of the
Proposal to increase membership fees for the year commencing 1st January 2027.

Regrettably, rising printing and postage costs, together with the strength of the Shekel against the US Dollar, make it necessary to increase our membership fees.
The new fees are shown below:

	Full Membership Fee	Early Bird (for payments received before the end of March)
Israel Residents	NIS 150	NIS 125
Overseas	NIS 180	NIS 150

EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Voices Israel – Zoom Workshop

Monday, November 23rd at 7:30pm (Israel time)

The Value of Repetition in Poetry

Led by Susan Olsburgh

Have you ever considered the value of using repetition in writing your poems?

This workshop will explore traditional repetition patterns examining a range of poems in the English literary canon.

It will give participants the opportunity to experiment in using repetition in ways they may not have tried before.

Registration Details will be sent soon, but meanwhile, save this date in your diary.

NB - there will be a reading of poems produced during and after the workshop, a few weeks after the workshop.

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.

Good Poems in Good Company
Voices Israel Poetry Reading Group

There is so much knowledge and love of poetry among our members that we thought it would be a wonderful idea for Voices Israel to set up a **Poetry Reading Group**!
We plan to meet on Zoom once every two months, on the **first Sunday of every second month**, starting on **Sunday, 1 November**, in the early evening, for an hour. For each meeting we will decide on a poet in advance and will spend our time together reading and discussing their work.
If you're interested in taking part, please contact
Debbie Golden - deborahg@edu.haifa.ac.il

The IAWE Zoom program from last month can now be viewed on YouTube, featuring literary ushpizin presented in absentia — Ziggy Frankel by Karen Alkalay-Gut, Ed Codish by Stephen Horenstein, Avrom Sutzkever by Ricky Rapoport Friesem, Lawrence Ferlinghetti by the program's moderator Ann Bar-Dov, Samuel Yehuda Grussgott by Dina Yehuda, Noam Chomsky by Mike Stone, Charlie Chan by Mark L. Levinson, John Keats by Reuven Goldfarb, and Dr. Seuss by Pesach Rotem.

Link:
https://youtu.be/szaTOGfWKGg

Voices Israel members highlighted in yellow and blue


THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE FOR PEACE, ISRAEL
(IAACP – EUME (EUROPE/MIDDLE EAST)
Presents:
COMING HOME
OUR GUESTS
YOSEF (YOSSI) NAVEH
Mayor, City of Tiberias
'Introduction and Welcome'
Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman
Official Representative & Ambassador for Peace: "The International Association for Arts and Culture for Peace" – (IAACP-EUME (Europe & Middle East)
'Returning HOME after October 7th'
Hod Ben Zvi
Chair of the 'Universal Peace Federation', Israel
"The Logic of Love"
TOM WEGNER
Founder / CEO of "The Abrahamic Movement
"The Abraham Accords - As the key to Israel's future"
Yaffa Batya DaCosta,
President /CEO 'Ezra L'Anousim, Jerusalem
'THE EXILES RETURN! Divine Promise Becomes Reality'
Ha Rav Tzvi Hersh Zalmanov
Chabad of Mordot, Tiberias
'Returning Home – A Jewish and Hasidic Perspective'
Moshe' Baudouin
Olim Coordinator. Municipality of Tiberias, Ministry of Aliah and Integration, Tiberias
'Tiberias Odyssey – 3,500 Years of History'.
November 26. 2026 20.00 PM.
HOTEL DOÑA GRACIA, TIBERIAS, Israel
ENTRNCE IS FREE
The Program is in English
עברית
Hotel & Museum
DONA GRACIA
THE ABRAHAMIC MOVEMENT
Ezra L'Anousim
Tiberias

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

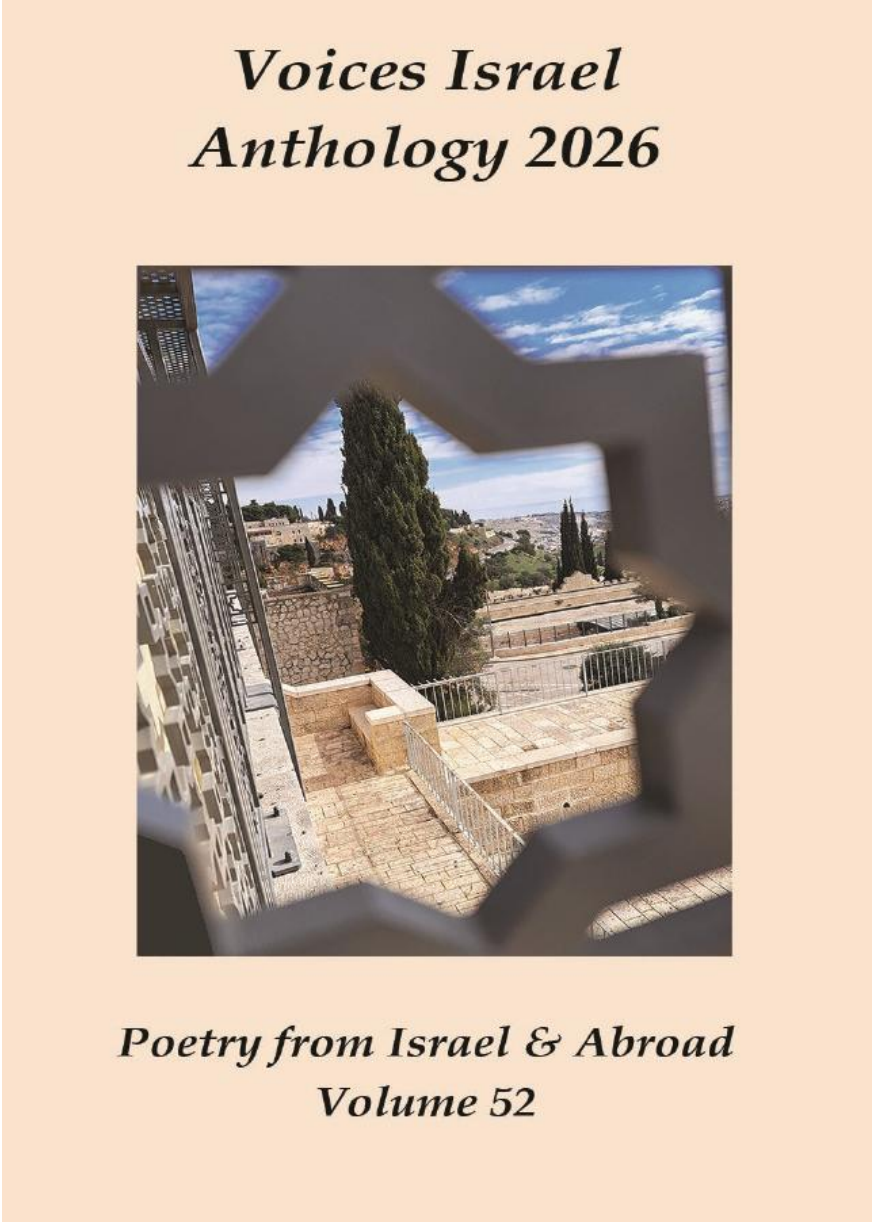
ANTHOLOGY 2026 - LAUNCHED

Our beautiful *Voices Israel Anthology 2026* is now launched.

Congratulations, and heartfelt thanks, to our Editor-in-Chief and Anthology Producer, Judy Koren, and to the Editorial Board—Deborah Golden, Avril Meallem, and Elana Wolff—for their outstanding work in bringing this anthology to life.

You can listen to a recording of members reading their poems on our YouTube Channel:
https://youtu.be/93EW0wrPi5Q

And there are photos on this page:
https://voicesisrael.com/2026-anthology-launch/



THE TWO RONNIES - BIRTHDAY RHYMES



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6l7SFek298

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Bar Sagi Prize Rules and Guidelines

The competition is open to Israelis aged 12 to 18.

The submission period for this year's Bar Sagi Young Poets Prize is from 15th November 2026 to 14th February 2027.

Prizes: 400 NIS first prize, 250 NIS second prize, 100 NIS third prize. Other poems may be awarded an Honorable Mention.
There is no submission fee.

Poems must be in English, and no longer than 40 lines (including stanza breaks). They may be in any style and on any subject.
Poems must be previously unpublished.

To submit, send an email to barsagivoices@gmail.com and include the following:

- **1-3 poems, each poem in a separate file attached to the email.**
- **A completed entry form downloaded and filled in (this is a Word file, it can be filled in without printing). The entry form can be downloaded via this link.**

Prizes will be presented by Bar Sagi's family, and the winning poets and recipients of Honorable Mentions will read their poems, at a prize-giving ceremony held by Voices Israel.
The winning poems, and Honorable Mention poems will be published together with those of the Reuben Rose competition. We retain a non-exclusive right to publish and republish the winning poems and Honorable Mention winners in all media, while the poet retains copyright and can also publish elsewhere after the winners are announced.

Full information about the Bar Sagi Young Poets Prize is on the main Bar Sagi Prize page.

The Jewish Writing Project - https://jewishwritingproject.com/

The Jewish Writing Project was created to give Jews from assorted backgrounds the chance to share their experiences and explore, through their writing, what it means to be Jewish today. It's our hope that through the process of writing and revising, a writer's words can lead the writer (and reader) to a deeper understanding of his or her connection to our Jewish heritage. Here at The Jewish Writing Project, we invite you to tell others about a particular Jewish experience that may have shaped your understanding of what it means to be a Jew. Perhaps you might explore a memory about being Jewish that holds a special place in your heart or you might want to express thoughts about how being Jewish has enriched your life or made your life more difficult. Whatever you decide to write and share with the project–a poem, a story, an essay–please remember to keep the focus on *your* experience of being Jewish. It's our hope that the project can offer both writers and readers new ways of understanding what it means to be Jewish today. Thank you for thinking of The Jewish Writing Project as a home for your work. B'shalom, Bruce Black, Editorial Director *For more information about The Jewish Writing Project, write to Bruce Black at: bruceblack@ymail.com*

Ahavah: Jewish Love is an international anthology exploring love through Jewish life, culture, memory and imagination, inspired by the 2026 European Days of Jewish Culture theme, LOVE. We welcome poetry, short fiction, essays and memoir from writers worldwide. Writers do not need to be Jewish, but submissions should engage meaningfully and respectfully with the anthology's Jewish theme and context.
I serve as Ireland Coordinator for the European Days of Jewish Culture, and the anthology is being developed by Ring of Culture as part of our wider work promoting Jewish culture, literature and dialogue.
Deadline: 15 November 2026
Early-bird submission fee: €8 until 31 October
Publication: Paperback and ebook
Approximately 20 contributors will be selected
Full submission guidelines:
https://www.ringofculture.com/ahavah-submission-guidelines
Submission form:
https://www.ringofculture.com/ahavah-submission-form

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 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/

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://silentriver.submittable.com/submit**

Rawhead is currently accepting Poetry, Visual Art, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, & Hybrid submissions – for more details see **https://rawheadjournal.org/submit-to-rawhead/**

The Penn Review is open for submissions until **November 9**. For more information see here:
https://www.pennreview.org/submit

The Goose Egg is open for submissions for up to 5 poems until November 15 – see
https://thegooseegg.submittable.com/submit

Hoxie Gorge Review is open for submissions until November 15 – see **https://hoxiegorgereview.com/submissions/**

Citron Review is open for submissions of poems up to 30 lines – until 7 December see
https://thecitronreview.submittable.com/submit

Superpresent is a quarterly magazine of the arts. *Superpresent* is available free online and a limited run of print copies for each issue. *Superpresent* publishes poems, short stories, essays, visual art pieces, experimental art, video art, and sound art. We accept submissions from anywhere in the world. **No fees for submission.** The theme for the **Winter 2027** issue is **NOIR.** We are are seeking poetry, short stories, essays, experimental art, video, sound art, all forms of visual art as well as asemic writing and textual arts of all kinds. **Submissions Due** December 10th. See **https://superpresent.org/call/**.

Check out Erika Dreifus' Jewish Literary Links
See - https://www.erikadreifus.com/2026/10/jewish-literary-links-313/

ART BY OUR MEMBERS

Cover Picture - Abstract by Eli Ben-Joseph

Inspired by various modern wall paintings and also by south Nahariya's shore, I painted this watercolor as a semi-abstract depiction of clouds, kites, waves, sand, boulders, sea shells and beach plants.



Mosaic ‘Dinner Plate’ by Miriam Webber

The 2026 Anthology Launch began with a restaurant meal so it seems appropriate to send a piece of work linked to food.

This mosaic is on the wall of my kitchen. If I am ever lacking an idea for my evening meal, or don’t have time to prepare, it’s there, ready to be eaten. Tiles, plate and cutlery need no explanation; the food is made of cloth (meat patties are stuffed with diolen fill), and tiny green felt balls, all glued onto the plate. Is it ART? A good question. Perhaps it is CRAFT? I’m not sure about that either, but I really enjoyed making it and that’s more important than what it’s called.



RAYMOND ISAKOW Z"L

A tribute to our dear member, Raymond, who sadly passed away recently – we will miss him so much.



Ray by his son, David

Warming those wanting
Sustaining those spirited
Nourishing those needing

Raymond Isakow z"l – Rabbi Yossi Chaikin's Eulogy

6 September 2026

Everybody loved Raymond. I would have started my tribute to him that way even without the rather poor play on words from the famous sitcom, because the phrase describes him better than anything else.

Perhaps I should add a small qualifier: everybody loved Raymond, eventually. He did not always excel at first impressions. He could appear gruff, argumentative, even difficult. But very quickly, one discovered the real Raymond — and then one could not help but love him.



That is how Raymond and I began. After one of my sermons, he confronted me and challenged the very core of what I had said. He debated and argued, and I remember thinking: this is not starting well. But he was not aggressive. He was respectful of my point of view. He wanted to learn, not merely to argue.

So I, like so many others before me, fell under his spell. What began as a challenging encounter became a strong friendship that lasted a quarter of a century.

Yesterday's Torah reading speaks of Moshe's last day on earth: **וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה**— Moses went, and he spoke these words. The commentaries explain that Moses departed from this world, but his words were still heard, because he continued to speak through his disciples and followers.

Raymond's voice will not be stilled simply because his body has left this world. His voice will continue to be heard through those he leaves behind. His legacy will carry on through his family, his friends, and all of us who were privileged to know him.

This week's Torah reading, Ha'azinu, is a poem. It is the form Moses chooses for his final message to the Jewish people before his departure from the world.

You may know that Raymond found writing to be a wonderful way of expressing himself. He penned dozens of poems, many of which he published in a book.

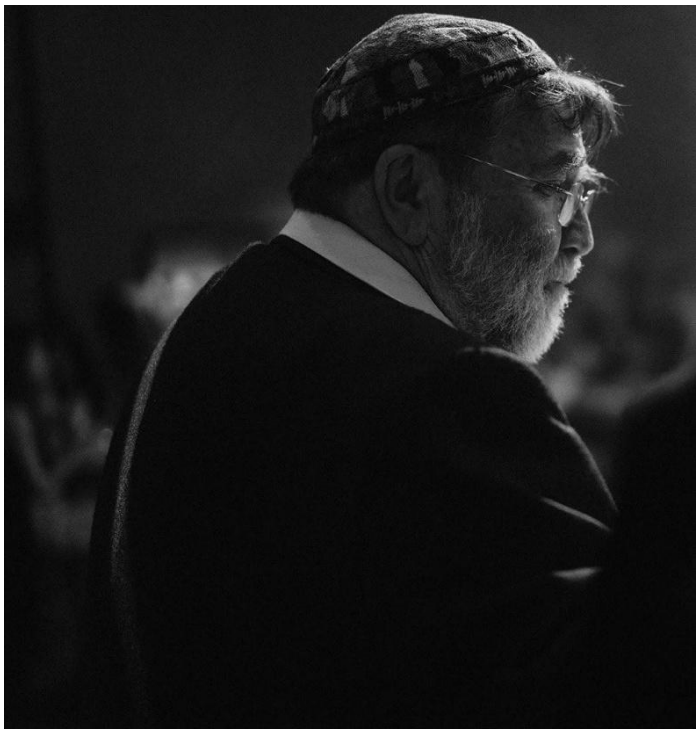
Allow me to share some of his writing, with the permission of his family. These are two unpublished poems, premiering here — so sadly — at his funeral.

On the bone-dry field nothing grows sodden with tears and blood
Buffeted by swirling still dancing souls
Await the rain that will cleanse it and start regrowth
But the promise that comes with rain will never reach these roots
The best it could do is sustain the memories
Of the dancing singing circles of hope
That stopped with the music.

The music of death, percussion and screams
Echoed down the hallways of heaven
Banging and kicking on doors to attract attention
Returning to the field to be planted in its tainted soil
With flags and photos
As leaves and flowers

It sounds almost prophetic.

Here is another poem, so typical of the many philosophical and religious discussions we had over the years.



If we meet in another life

If we meet in another life,
Will you remember this one?
Do memories, like the soul,
Survive our corporeal end?

Will we remember what we were,
When we become what we will be?
Our memories, holiday snaps for our souls,
Still lingering with us?

You cannot choose to remember or forget,
That is decided by our soul.
We need to try to agree with our soul's choice,
Of photos to save in its album.

Before it closes.

Among the many loves I shared with Raymond was a love of words. Again and again, he tried to convince me to venture into the world of poetry. I always felt safer within the confines of lyrical prose. Last night, I sat down at my keyboard and stepped out of my comfort zone for the first time since creative writing class in Grade 4, to write a tribute to my friend Raymond.

Raymond by Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

Huge
Huge brain
To analyse, integrate, understand

Huge mouth
To debate, argue, question
Share kind words

Huge ears
To hear, listen
Take in another perspective

Huge eyes
To look at his fellow with care
With compassion, with concern

Huge heart
To love, to care for
Hilary, his lifelong partner
Jonathan, Bryan, David
Ash, Jess, Omer
Miles, Maggie, Noa Isaac, Trevor and Sean Dare we forget Benji?
And all of Hashem's creatures?

Huge arms
To embrace, hug

Huge hands
To help another in need

Huge soul
Connected with Hashem
Through Torah, through Tefila
Through mitzvot
Connected with his fellow man
All with whom he came into contact

Huge loss… Huge memories… Huge inspiration

A FRIEND by Sharon Kaplan

Poetry is a friend
It shows up with the flick of a pen
Like a butterfly landing

A quiet reverie of words
A kiss from lips unbound
Onto a yielding piece of paper

Lines and squiggles
compose stories
of one's heart's desire
longing to be heard
as with a friend

You shall be missed Raymond
for your poetry of friendship
and for your friendship with poetry



Missing Raymond by Shoshana Kent

For two years
you were part of our poetry group

Never missing a meeting
except the last one

Never without
something thoughtful to offer

Never missing a moment
to share your way of seeing

Never missing a chance
to speak gently

It's hard
to imagine our meetings
without you

I miss you, Raymond

For Our Fellow Poet Raymond z"l Who Died Yvonne Altman O'Connor

All italics are from Raymond's poems

We didn't know that much about you.
You seemed so strong and earthy
On those zoom calls from far away.
Your poems always intense, spread across
The vast African plains strewn with
Jackals, leopards and old men.

We sensed the ashes and *smoke that*
blurred your vision, as all you travelled with
was the history you were wearing.
Your poems are a chink to unravel your being.
We found you were born on a *crowded platform,*
a refugee to creation awaiting your train,
the wind was God's breath on earth,
And carried the dead evidence of your life.

Flying your kite on the cliff edge of doubt,
At times you stood halfway to heaven.
Out in the animal orchestra of the night,
You took off your shoes and felt like Moses.
You reminded us that *God's dark pond,*
Is sown with balls of energy and fire,
Whose light and warmth,
Traverse distances unbounded by knowledge.

That *sun-dried old man in his mud and thatch house*
Hoping for one last storm, hit me the most.
The one constant in his life was the leopard.
When the darkness grew thick each night,
It would appear unafraid in the beam of light,
And sit, patiently staring at the old man.
All our threats, all our fears in one place!
After the rain,
He knew the soil would now be softened.
Enough to start digging his grave
To ensure it was free of rocks
And too deep for the leopard to find.

Raymond, no leopard or lion will find you now,
You have stared them all bravely down.
No memory of *grey flakes or ghost dust* aches.
You are in the unknowable light and
You have left us *the philosophy loaf* of poems
wrapped in tomorrow's newspapers to break.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN ALPER

By Bob Findysz



In the past year and some, I have done my best to carry out a series of monthly interviews, spotlighting a wide variety of VOICES members from around the country's center and south, purposely limiting myself to people whom I could meet in person. Hopefully in due course, fellow VOICES members will rise to the challenge and start interviewing colleagues, especially north of Herzliya. Nevertheless, despite limiting myself geographically, lately I have found it harder and harder to complete interviews on a monthly basis. Life under fire here in Israel has often made it difficult to carry out face-to-face conversations. Hence, I decided to aim at a more realistic, bimonthly or even quarterly schedule, i.e., an interview appearing in the newsletter every other month or three. I want to continue to enjoy the process as well as the realization of these conversations.



After over a year of frustrated plans to tour (parts of) the world and/ or visit (some of) a far-flung family of friends and relatives, my wife, Harriet, and I were able to board a plane that took off (more or less) on time and returned on schedule. We gallivanted around Albania, discovering a pocket-sized country packed with verdant nature, UNESCO heritage sites (always sporting the distinctive Albanian flag bearing a black, double-headed eagle on a bright red field as you can see from the accompanying photo), grand promenades, a fine riviera, plenty of colorful bazaars and well-tended gardens, often in pots -- at the end of this interview, please see a few of the photos of some local flora which I shot along the way. Midweek we had a moment or more of concern during the recent one-day war between the US and Iran. But we landed at Ben-Gurion in due course, flushed with renewed energy to pick up the baton and resume the race (most of) our lives here seem to resemble. My own garden, awaiting summer care, welcomed my return.

Although it took some time to reach the decision and interview Julian, it was actually quite a no-brainer to decide, since he is the person who gave me the idea to carry out these interviews in the first place. Besides, despite working with Julian for a couple of years now in my capacity as Secretary of VOICES Israel, he has remained, for me, quite an elusive personality: he is always ready to communicate with the membership in his capacity as president as well as editor of the newsletter (and now coordinator of the newly created Global Group 3 which he initiated); nevertheless, Julian is not very well-known personally or as a

poet. Hence, on one of the recent Intermediate Days of *Sukkot*, Julian and I met in one of Jerusalem's well-known eateries on Jaffa Road between the Zion Square and Municipality tram stops. Julian and his wife, Miriam, were in town for a gallery talk at the Theater; so, we had a couple-few hours to sit outside beforehand in the spacious and shady *sukkah* set up by the **Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf**. What follows is my attempt to get to know Julian better and share my insights with our fellow VOICES readership. The questions I asked him served as a framework for the interview, with an accurate if not exact account of his answers. It was a pleasure meeting both Miriam and him in person for the first time and I very much appreciate the time he dedicated to our conversation after Miriam took her leave to visit in the city.



1. *From what I have gathered about you mainly on Google, your wife Miriam and you made* aliyah *in 2014 from Manchester where she was a grade schoolteacher and highly talented composer and musician while you were a full-time high-tech consultant who traveled extensively for work. Both your children had grown up and moved to Israel. So, you decided to purchase a vacation apartment in Tiberias (or, as you prefer to say,* Tverya*) to skip the hotel stage and have a* pied-à-terre *for frequent visits. This temporary foothold has become your home. Today Miriam teaches English in a local ulpanit, remains proficient in a number of musical instruments especially piano; and, you have become a part-time nature photographer and part-time poet while continuing to work in your spare time as a high-tech consultant. Your poetry has appeared in various anthologies and on literary websites. Your photographs and nature articles have been published in a number of blogs and journals, e.g.* ***The Times of Israel***, ***The Jerusalem Post*** *and* ***The Jerusalem Report*** *as well as Wikipedia. With so many possible distractions/ demands on your time and focus, are you currently writing poetry? If so, do you have any new poems in the drawer and/ or recently published pieces which you would like to share with us here? How would you characterize the poetry you write?*





I would say my writing is that of an inexperienced poet; some of my pieces are humorous rather than poetic; often they have unexpected endings, leading the reader down a garden path so to speak; often I write about nature, art, history, Judaism/ Israel, and like using word play. I want to share 4-5 poems, including the first poem I ever wrote, which will illustrate what sort of poetry I am writing. However, none of these pieces is new, i.e. just out of the drawer. *(All these poems appear in an addendum which immediately follows the text of this interview. BF)*

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

After moving to Israel, I met a retired American university philosophy professor, living in Tel Aviv after making *aliyah*, with whom I established a good friendship. He was a very clever polymath who wrote poetry, some of which was published in a magazine put out by E.S.R.A. (Israel's English Speaking Residents Association). He encouraged me to try writing a poem. I sent in my first poem (i.e. ***Swallowtail***) to the Reuben Rose competition but, of course, it wasn't a winner. Subsequently it was published in the K.E.L 2023 anthology. My second poem, ***The Dendrcopos***, was accepted by the VOICES 2023 anthology along with another poem I had submitted. All this before I became involved with VOICES at all.



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

I usually write on a laptop PC. Sometimes I get the urge to write after seeing a photo I shot (as I did with ***Swallowtail***) or a piece of art; sometimes an event triggers my writing. Often, I compose while sitting in a café drinking coffee e.g. a poem called ***Americano Man*** which appeared in the VOICES 2024 anthology.

- *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?*

When I read poetry in high school the way it was taught was a big turn-off. So, I just never developed a taste for it. It came as a complete surprise when I began writing poetry. Once I started writing, I also returned to reading it. And, the poets I found In the VOICES anthologies whet my appetite for more. Recently I have read and was inspired by a number of poems, including: Raymond Carver's ***What the Doctor Said***; Philip Larkin's ***The Mower***; Mary Oliver's ***The Journey***; and the novelist Thomas Hardy's poem ***The Man He Killed***. They all have a bit of *musar*, a moral lesson.

2. *Besides in your multiple roles in VOICES Israel, have you studied/ collaborated with other writers of poetry and/ or prose? If so, who? When? Where?*

My wife Miriam is also a poet as well as an accomplished musician and reads much of what I write. I also get feedback from participants in VOICES writing groups I have taken part in and comments from the editors of journals I have submitted work to. Otherwise, I am quite a novice poetry writer.

3. *On a more personal note, until 2014 you lived in the U.K.: Where were you born, raised and educated? Can you tell me a bit about Miriam? Where was she born/ raised/ educated? How/ where did you meet? Can you tell me about your parents? Do you have any siblings? If so, where do they live now? Did you live anywhere else in addition to Manchester before moving to Israel? Anywhere else in Israel besides Tiberias?*

My parents were religious Zionists who unfortunately were never able to realize their dream. My father was a dental surgeon in Bradford, 10 miles from Leeds, where he was born. A leader and servant in the Jewish community, active in the Bnei Akiva movement, the city's *kashrut* committee and one of the major synagogues of Leeds. He met my mother in Bnei Akiva summer camps. She was born and raised in London but was evacuated during WWII to the countryside. And later became an elementary school teacher. My dad died some years ago but my mother has just moved from Leeds, where I was born and grew up, to an old people's home in Manchester. She is doing as well as she can, considering her great age and we visit her as often as is possible. I have two siblings who also remain in the UK.

From Leeds, I moved to Manchester in search of a bigger Jewish community, after completing my university studies. And later I went to London, the big city. Miriam spent her formative years in Liverpool before going away to study at university and ultimately moving to London, where we met and subsequently married before returning to Manchester. Miriam taught at elementary schools, I worked in high-tech and we raised our daughters there. Miriam's parents and brother never came to Israel to live.

- *Were Miriam and you alone or with other family members when you immigrated to Israel? What triggered your decision to leave the U.K.? Were the two of you already retired or still professionally active in the UK?*

Our two daughters were born in Manchester, went to Jewish Zionist schools there before coming to Israel for a gap year at modern orthodox *Midrashot* in Jerusalem followed by university studies at Bar Ilan which quite simply led to their *aliyah.* Hence, Miriam's and my decision to purchase an apartment in *Tverya* as a base for our ever- increasing visits. We were fortunately able to semi-retire early and join our girls here. Today both of them are married and live in Netanya.

- *Can you tell me something about your children? When and where were your daughters/ grandchildren born? What are they doing today? Where?*

Our elder daughter has been married for about 12 years, with two children, ages 7 and 4. They live in Netanya where housing is more affordable and there is a vibrant religious community. Our younger daughter married a year and some ago, relocating to Netanya from Jerusalem. So nowadays all our offspring are together in one place albeit not where Miriam and I reside…

4. *When you aren't involved with family here and abroad; photographing nature all around Israel; writing poetry for yourself; various and sundry VOICES Israel commitments; still working in some aspect(s) of your profession, how do you spend your free time? Community? Other hobbies or personal pursuits?*

On Sundays, Miriam and I tend to pick up our grandchildren from school in Netanya. En route we stop to tour and explore. A chance to pursue my photography and our love of nature. We especially enjoy going to the Rothschild gardens and nature reserve in Zichron Ya'akov. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I work part-time for the same company which has employed me for the past 40 years or more. On Mondays and Wednesdays, Miriam and I have time to spend together. Hence our visit to Jerusalem today to meet with you and then go to the Jerusalem Theater's art gallery.

While living in Manchester, I was very involved in synagogue life, on the organizational side, as well as joining the regular services. Today, due to language and cultural constraints, I am still involved but as a consumer only. Besides daily prayer at my synagogue, I study Talmud and Bible. After reading Maths at university in Leeds, I went on a gap year (and a half) to study Talmud, *Tanach* and Jewish Philosophy at *Ohr Sameach* and *Machon Meir* in Jerusalem before moving on to Manchester. Since then, I have continued my Talmudic studies with a *chavruta* (study partner) by conference call, daily and after *Shabbat*. I also study *Tanach* autodidactically for its moral messages (*musar*).

In addition, Miriam and I are contacts for *Nefesh b'Nefesh* in Tverya (though there aren't many newcomers to our little corner of the country) and active in E.S.R.A., a national organization with 30-40,000 members based in the center of the

country but also operating by phone. We offer Shabbat home hospitality to anglophones who come to town, mostly elderly retirees. I also coordinate and manage (and occasionally teach) a weekly *Torah* class in English.

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

Recently I have developed an interest in art. Especially religious art to complement my poetry and Bible studies. I wrote an article about Chagall, Jewish thought and *Sukkot* that appeared in ***The Lehrhaus***, an online journal "exploring the depth and diversity of Jewish ideas".

I love being involved with Voices Israel. All the poets I meet and speak to are such talented people as well as being ever so nice. It's truly a pleasure and privilege to be part of such a wonderful organization.







Continued on next page ….

Addendum to Julian Alper's Interview

Swallowtail

[My first ever poem -- written in 2022]

I watch and I wait, camera at the ready
scanning the surrounding area
as butterflies nonchalantly flutter by.
The tiniest flutter can be so effective
to change direction and so avoid my prying lens.
Vanessa, the painted lady
flits swiftly, from flower to flower.
The plain tiger swoops past
without distinctive tiger stripes
looking a little moth-eaten
but, butterfly-like it can't settle to anything.
Then I see one, more majestic than the monarch
more admirable than the red admiral
and prouder than the peacock.
The swallowtail, *Papilio machaon*
could such beauty be captured in *papier-mâché*?
Or does it need my shutter press
to encapsulate the moment forever?
With its swallow-like wings it's a master flyer
but it settles for just long enough.
I shot it, captured it, an image of the imago
preserved for evermore in my digital library
eternally alive, forever still.



The Place

2015
It was eighth day Passover there
Shabbat *Isru Chag* here.
He was there
and I was here.
How guilty I felt,
I was inconsolable,
couldn't be comforted,
whenever I needed him
he was there for me,
but when he passed on
I wasn't there for him.
I was far far away,
I was in this place,
albeit a holy place,
and he was in that place,
a less holy place.

When people visited me, they said
"May *HaMakom*, The Place,
comfort you amongst other mourners
for Zion and Jerusalem".

Now, each year on *Isru Chag*
I say *Kaddish* for him
and I recall, that just as they said,
the place was my comfort,
I was in the place that he wished for me,
I was in the place he wished he could be.
I didn't need to feel guilty
I *was* there for him, as he was for me.

* *Isru Chag* – The day after the festival

--- Published in The Deronda Review 2024

The Brit

In many respects
he was dreading it,
he was afraid
anxious and panicky.
He lay awake at night worrying
but he'd been working towards this goal
for many years,
studying hard,
learning the language
and preparing himself for the change.
Cutting off his past
at his age wasn't going to be easy
and once done
there'd be no going back.
It would be painful - very,
new beginnings often are
but there's no gain without pain.
He would change his name
but he'd be rising in spirituality
and coming closer to God,
this was what he'd been striving for,
this was what he was born for,
this was his destiny,
life would be so much more meaningful.
His children weren't entirely supportive,
they felt the distance between them would be too much
but didn't want to stand in his way,
likewise, his siblings had mixed feelings.
Friends and colleagues, though, didn't hold back.
They thought he was plain mad,
absolutely insane.
They just couldn't understand
how a Brit, albeit a Jewish one
and a circumspect one at that
could turn his back
on the comforts of living in the UK
to emigrate to Israel.

--- Published in IAWE's arc 31, 2025

Morning Coffee

Grief is the price we pay for love
Queen Elizabeth II

She sits alone in her chair reminiscing
with a half-empty cup of cappuccino
and a couple of currant cookies.

She looks through the picture window
it's like a large screen television
the image crystal clear.
He is walking towards the mature tree they
planted together as a sapling.
He has a tweed flat cap on his head, an anniversary present
a stripy scarf warming his neck, a birthday present
and a watering can to hand.
He doesn't look a day older
while she's aged ten years or more.
A blackbird, perched on the fence
and a host of sparrows,
are watching him too.
Autumnal rain starts to fall
drops waltz down the screen
washing away the scarf, the cap, the can
and the man
leaving just the birds
chirping like it's the first day of spring.

She sits alone in her chair with
a half-full cup of cappuccino
and a screen full of memories.

--- **Published in All Your Poems, October 2025**

3:30am
After Marc Chagall's The Poet, or Half-Past Three

It's half past three in the morning
long after the time he should have been
in bed recharging his hyperboles.
Sipping sapid forty-five proof caffeine
to remain afloat
the blue and once-white stripes
of his suit-like jim-jams
half-rhyme with his red and
off-white tablecloth.
His half full, half empty
wine bottle at forty-five degrees
is literally begging to be glugged from
onomatopoeically
like Alice's drink-me bottle.
Notebook to hand
he's toiling to find the perfect imagery
as he rummages through his word palette
a veritable thesaurus of colourful metaphors.
His bottle-green head - anaphorically reflecting
his bottle-green cat affectionately licking him -
is spinning in a whirring blur of assonance.

And so it is for all poets -
an inverse head is the norm
in the downside-up world of reality.

Same day, 3:30pm
After Marc Chagall's The Poet Reclining

It's half past three in the afternoon
long after the time he should have been
up and about.
But he was totally drained of rhythm
following a serious night of musing.
Pallid face
yet feeling blue like his blouson,
head on his palette
yet in the clouds -
dreaming through the day.
Not enough oomph in his synonym store
to substitute a simile for a grin
or a smile for a metaphor.
Averse to rising for fear of falling
over the edge of
an enjambment
he preferred to chill horizontally
in the warmth
by the browning evergreen
enjoying the grass
oblivious to the horse put out to pasture
and the pig out of its poke.

He hummed to himself
in a Pythonesque sort of way:
Oh, I'm a poet, and I'm okay
I work all night and I sleep all day.

And he said to himself
in a way that many folk
consider paranormal
or perhaps even meta poetic:
I must tell the poet of this poem
that his ending is a perfect example of
a paraprosdokian.

--- **Published in New English Review, July 2026**

A RETROSPECTIVE: 50 YEARS OF ART AND POETRY

Part 3 - by Ira Director



See:
https://sites.google.com/view/iradirectorexhibition2022/home

Prologue:
If you have read the first two chapters of 'A Retrospective,' in the Voices Israel Newsletter, June and August 2026, you can skip this prologue. It is the same.

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:
The first ventures into soft leather jewelry and decorative objects were described in 2a) soft leather, in the previous Voices Israel Newsletter. Here, chapter 2b) soft leather, describes the dramatic shift from soft leather as craft, to soft leather as art. Watch my change from craftsman to sculptor. See my first sculpture; first exhibition.

During the same period, my poetry was developing. I began collaborating with other poets and accepting invitations to salon readings. Soon the two rivers would merge then cascade over me.

2b) soft leather:
In the early 1980s dinner with a sculptor led to a discussion about exhibiting. He made some suggestions. Smiling and pointing to my belt, which was hand molded leather with an integrated buckle, "I'm a craftsman not an artist."

Pointing to the same belt, "Take it off, curl is around a frame. It's a sculpture."

That night was restless, sleepless. The only thoughts were of sculptures: reliefs; free standing geometric forms. The sculptures would incorporate the same materials and techniques as crafts. However, craft had asked,"How well does this work?" The sculptures would ask, "What does this mean?"

Dozens of shapes, but still no sleep. Getting up, taking my poetry notebook, filling pages with new designs among the poems. Still no sleep.

I got up, went to the studio, and began to work. The first sculpture was the "Hemisphere": molded leather over a cut foam form with abstract sections flowing over the table away from the center. An inlaid polished agate, framed by contrasting colored leather sat near the top.

Continued on next page …

Calm, satisfied, yet no longer needing sleep, I climbed onto the roof, to watch the sunrise before going to the office. I wound down work as a social worker in Texas then devoted full time to art.

The jump from social worker and craftsman to sculptor seemed too abrupt. Something must be missing: perhaps art school, art history. Packing a few sculptures after making an appointment with the Dean of the Art Department at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), We talked. I asked her if I could be accepted to art school.

“Ira, the purpose of art school is to help young artists find their “Voice.” You have already found your “Voice.”

A long pause, “However, I can offer you a solo exhibition in the UTEP Art Gallery.”

That was the juncture: ART/ POETRY: POETRY/ ART. It began when poetry notebooks began filling with sketches for new sculptures. Sketches frantically drawn on poems. It crystallized with preparations for the UTEP art exhibition. Geometric forms were expanded and exhibited. Participation sculptures were developed.

In the next issue of Voices Israel Newsletter, you can Join me at the UTEP Art Gallery. Watch what happens when guests are encouraged, not only to look at, but to participate in the exhibition.

Also Lailah, the Angel of Conception, from the Midrash Tanhuma, lights a candle in the womb to help us understand creativity.

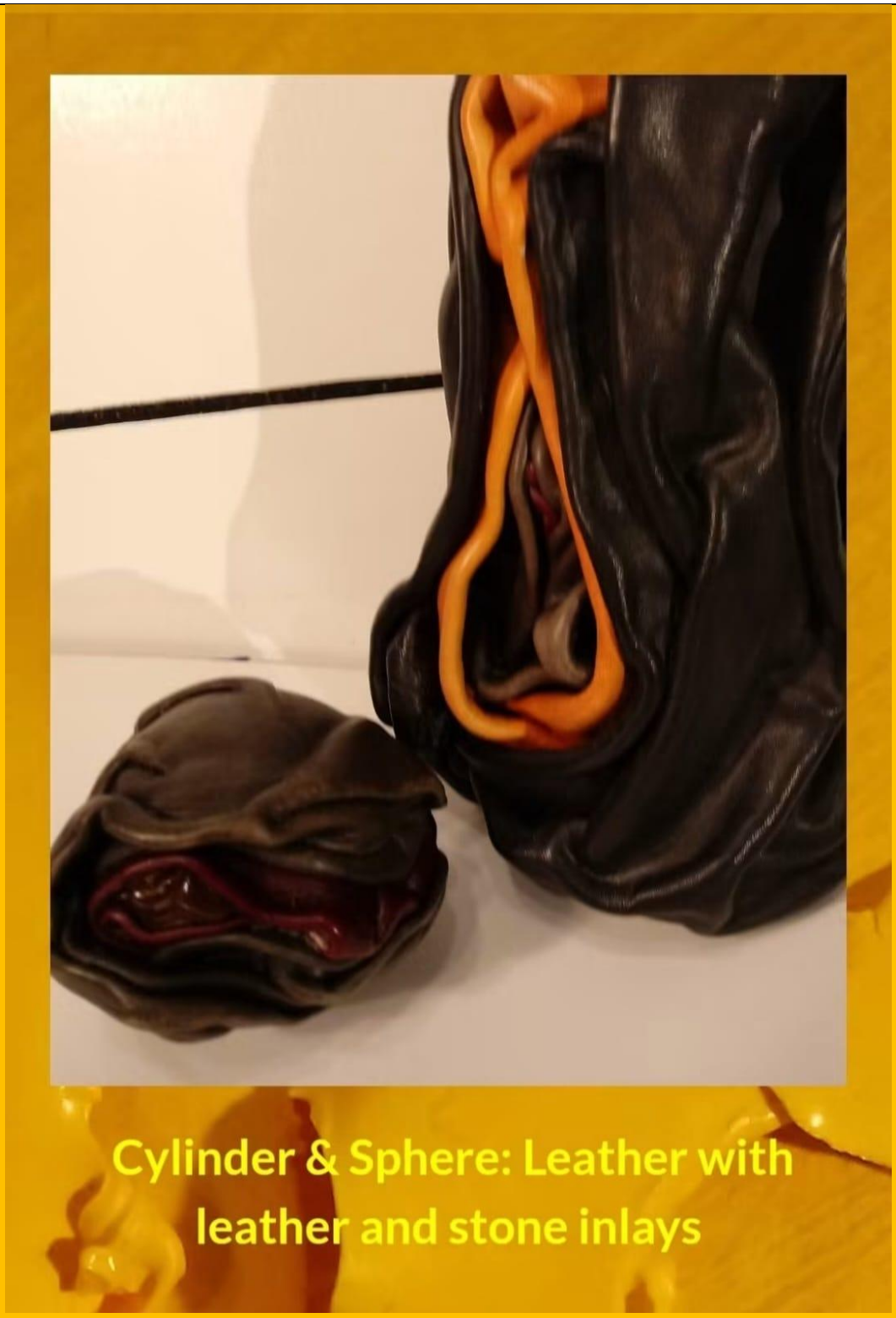
Continued on next page …



Hemisphere: Leather with light leather and stone inlays

Hemisphere: Leather with light leather and stone inlays
The “Hemisphere”, my first sculpture, had been finished in time to watch the sunrise before going to work. Five decades later it still sits on a shelf in the studio. It's regularly softened with hand cream, polished and occasionally receives a gentle squeeze.

Continued on next page …



Cylinder & Sphere: Leather with leather and stone inlays
The first works were soft leather sensually molded over wood and stiff geometric leather forms. Isn't all creation and all art sensual?

WALKING AWAY

By Reuven Goldfarb



My mother bustled about the house, getting us ready for a drive. Visiting relatives was the main outside activity this family engaged in, and another one of those encounters was coming up. I had only a vague idea of what was planned but assumed I had no choice but to go along with the program.

After scraping the breakfast dishes over the waste pail, she stacked them in the sink and vigorously scrubbed them under hot running water. Turning to her family, she quickly identified me, the youngest, as the one who would need the most help to get ready. Picking out a clean jacket, shirt, and pants, she rushed me into them, tied my laces, and sent me out into the street, with instructions to stay close by and be prepared to leave at a moment's notice.

Feeling hampered by my close-fitting clothes — and rather like a new product off the assembly line — I oriented myself by walking across the street and standing next to the mailbox. An acquaintance of mine, a slightly older and bigger boy, but very friendly, who shared my first name, showed up just about then. We greeted each other and chatted for a few moments; then he asked me if I wanted to take a walk. I couldn't think of any reason to say no, and the prospect seemed inviting, so I stepped off with him in an easterly direction, toward Nostrand Avenue.

It turned into a rather long walk. We enjoyed each other's company as we strolled the sunny streets and took Avenue J wherever it would lead us, east and south of Nostrand, even beyond Flatlands Avenue, the farthest boundary to our section of town. We came upon broader vistas than I recognized from home, more open spaces between houses, glimpses of a shining bay, huge vacant lots, building sites, junkyards, and dumping areas.

Probing among piles of litter, we found a necklace with plastic beads strung on colored yarn — the perfect gift, I decided, for my mother. Warmed by the sun and exhilarated by our walk, we regretfully turned toward home, ambling along and talking of everything boys find interesting, sharing our viewpoints and perceptions of the world as we knew it.

The closer we approached to home, the greater was my sense of foreboding. One block short of my destination my eponymous friend said good-bye, leaving me alone as I trudged back to my front door. My mother was angry and abrupt when she saw me and regarded with disdain my gift of beads.

MY OUTSTANDING, EXPERIMENTAL, MULTILINGUAL UPBRINGING

by Ethelea (a.k.a. Leah Reisner Pinhas) Katzenell

A short story from my (incomplete, unpublished) autobiography "Being Ethelea"

I was lucky to be the eldest child born in 1950 to educated, observant Jewish parents, both of whose families had escaped the early-20th century wars, reaching North America before WWI (Weinreb and Edell) and before WWII (Lifshitz and Reisner). My mother, Connie (*Ḥannah Edell*), the fourth of five siblings, was born in Toronto, Canada in 1925 {and is now 101+ years old, though, sadly, in an advanced state of Alzheimers' disease}—a daughter of observant *Galitsianer* (Galician) Polish immigrants, while my father, Rabbi Dr. Nathan H. (*Natan Ḥaim*) Reisner {of blessed memory (1924-2013)} was born in Boston, MA—the eldest child of observant *Litvishe* (Lithuanian, anti-*Hasidic*) *misnagdim* from a small Jewish *shtetl* (שטעטל/village) called *Meretz* (Merkinė).

My mother, after completing her first degree in Religious Education at U. of T., went to New York City in 1945 to get her second degree in Education at the Teacher's Institute of the **J**ewish **T**heological **S**eminary of America. Meanwhile, it was *bashert* (באשערט/fated, in Yiddish) that my father, Nathan Reisner, after having simultaneously completed two Bachelors' degrees—one in Jewish Education at **B**oston **H**ebrew **T**eachers' **C**ollege, as well as graduating from Harvard University *cum laude* ('with excellence')—had already arrived in NYC in 1944 to study for the Conservative Movement's Rabbinate at the J.T.S. They met thanks to the excellent graduate studies in Judaica and the vibrant observant Jewish community there; however, their romantic relationship only began in the summer of 1948 {shortly after the birth of the State of Israel}, when they both served as counsellors at the Zionistic Hebrew-speaking "Camp Yavneh," run by the BHTC in Northwood, NH—which provided high-quality non-sectarian Jewish education to its campers and staff.



MY EDELL GRANDPARENTS



MY REISNER GRANDPARENTS

My maternal grandparents, *Bobbe Malka* (grandma Molly née Weinreb) and *Zeyde Pesaḥ* (grandpa Paul) Edell and my paternal grandparents, *Bobbe Rivka* (Rebecca née Lifshitz) and *Zeyde Zalman* (Solomon) Reisner were all initially wary of Connie and Nathan's engagement—considering their potential union to be a dubious 'mixed marriage' (between different branches of Jewish tradition). Luckily, they were able to communicate well, since they had all spoken some Yiddish (a Judeo-German pidgin language consisting of German, Hebrew and Aramaic) and knew some English, as well. Once these two highly-educated, observant families met in person, they immediately found kindred spirits and unanimously determined that this marriage was most amenable—a rare match made in Heaven. So, Connie and Nathan married in 1949 and were, indeed, happily married for 64+ years and begot me and my three siblings.

Unlike most of my American-born generation, I was

not raised in the traumatic shadow of the horrific Jewish Holocaust but into the optimistic new Zionism that accompanied the establishment of the fledgling Jewish State of Israel. In addition to my father being a pulpit rabbi, both my parents were consummate Jewish



educators and Zionists, who taught Judaism and Hebrew at various schools and summer camps. They, and four other close, like-minded friends with young families, had decided to try an educational experiment—rather than emigrating to the 'Holy Land' of Israel (עליה/*'aliyah* to the biblical "Promised Land")—a still fragile and threatened State with their newborn babies, they would manifest their Zionism by raising us (their children) in 'modern' spoken Hebrew at home. Bear in mind that they, themselves, were not fluent Hebrew speakers—having only mastered ancient biblical Hebrew, the language found in centuries of rabbinic literature (like the Talmud) and Hebrew/Aramaic texts also found in Jewish psalms and prayers. As such, my parents kept an English/Hebrew dictionary, based on Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's 'modern' Hebrew lexicon (the forefather of modern spoken Hebrew, 1858-1922) close at hand.



Thus, I became bilingual by the age of five, thanks to TV programs like "Howdy Doody," contact with kids on my block, and at the local kindergarten.

In fact, when I was five years old, we got a small greyish-blue parakeet (Budgerigar), and since we spoke only Hebrew at home, we taught our clever, young parakeet Hebrew, too. We named him *Ḥabibi* (חביבי, meaning 'my darling' in Arabic and Hebrew slang). Soon enough, he was greeting us in the morning, saying: "*boker tov*" (בוקר טוב/good morning); he'd even repeat "*Shabbat shalom*" (שבת שלום/the traditional Sabbath greeting). Each time we fed him or refilled his feeder, we said: "*okhel*" (אוכל/food) and he came to eat; likewise, regarding his drinking water, "*mayim*" (מים). He was a quick study. We often let him out of his cage to fly around the house a bit, and eventually we taught him to land on our shoulders. Then, if I said: "*Teyn neshikah*" (תן נשיקה/give me a kiss), he'd walk up my shoulder to my mouth and touch it with his little beak. So very cute!



Thanks to my parents' huge investment in our high-quality education, we attended private Jewish schools staffed by top-notch, professional teachers, including certain notable college professors. Throughout my academic education in Philadelphia, I studied two distinct curriculums in tandem, one consisting of all the nationally required secular subjects, the other Jewish studies.



First, I attended the "Solomon Schechter Day School." *Unlike* my fellow classmates, since I was fluent in Hebrew, when they attended remedial Hebrew School on Sundays, I attended the "Wynnefield-Bialik *Folk Schule*." There, for example, *ḥaver* (pronounced in Yiddish with the emphasis on the first syllable; חבר/comrade, friend) Shichman taught us Yiddish

language and songs while he was also Prof. William Shichman, who taught Yiddish Language, Literature, and Jewish Music at the Gratz College of Judaica. I happily joined his Yiddish children's choir, learning classic Yiddish songs like "*Oyfen pripetchik*" ("At the hearth") and "*Tum balalaïka*" ("Strum the balalaika"). *Ḥaver* Shichman took us to old age homes filled with Holocaust survivors {though I was unaware of that fact at the time} to sing for them. They often cried in delight, bringing me to tears, as well. I loved learning Yiddish, the Jewish vernacular of all my former-Soviet grandparents. I came to appreciate Yiddish language and culture, rife with colorful expressions and marvelous gallows-humor.

I adored middle and high school at "Akiba Hebrew Academy," where I took six years of French, in lieu of Hebrew language classes. Next, at U. of P., in preparation for my *'aliyah* {I'm sure you're not surprised}, I majored in Middle Eastern Studies, focusing on Arabic language and Islam.

After settling in Be'er-Sheva in 1972, amid new immigrants from across the globe, I was sometimes surprised, amused and dismayed, all at once by the irony, when native-born Israelis (צברים/sabras), hearing an American accent in my Hebrew, would attempt to 'correct' my modern Ben-Yehuda Hebrew. For example, if I said I'd just eaten a *karikh* (כריך/sandwich)—they'd say, "Wrong! In Hebrew, the correct word is *sanvich*!" A totally British-English word!? Or, if I'd said I was wearing a *tsimriyah* (from the root צמר/wool)—they'd say, "No! In Hebrew, it's called a *sveder* (סוודר/sweater). Yikes!

Nevertheless, in February 1973, while shelving books in BGU's Aranne Library, a good-looking Yemenite student, a bit older than myself, named Sa'adia Pinḥas, asked for my help to find a certain book—which I quickly located



for him, and we got to talking... He had come from Yemen with his family, mostly on foot, shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel. He was studying for a B.A. in Social Sciences and getting a Physical Education Instructor's license at the Wingate Institute. I'd studied Liberal Arts and always been a dancer and a swimmer. We were both modern, observant Jews, hard workers, physically fit, living frugal lives. We hit it off immediately and met to talk more often, becoming ever closer. He, too, was the eldest child in his family, but was still single a decade past the traditionally-practiced age for arranged Yemenite marriages. Luckily for me, having studied Arabic, I was able to understand my soon-to-be mother-in-law's Yemenite blend of Hebrew and Arabic, so we got along just fine.

When we announced our engagement, our parents were wary of potential marital trouble due to our totally different Jewish religiocultural backgrounds {sound familiar?}. My parents came from the States to get acquainted with the future in-laws and to see my new life in Be'er-Sheva and at Aranne Library. My father found David Pinḥas, though not an academician, to be a good man, soft-spoken and well-versed in Jewish matters, much like himself; they had great mutual respect. As for my mother and Hadiyah, even with minimal verbal communication between them, they bonded instantly, quite fond of each other, as you can see in the photos below. Thus, our marriage was welcomed and blessed by both families.

In light of my parents' successful experiment, Sa'adia and I decided that we would also raise our children in a bilingual environment—I would only speak to them in my clear Midwestern dialect (understood by English speakers across the globe), while he would only speak



to the children in his magnificent, unspoiled Yemenite Hebrew that still retained the distinct pronunciations of the letters *aleph* (א, silent, pronounced like its accompanying vowel) versus *'ayin* (ע, a gutteral), and the distinction between *ḥet* (ח, a soft, breathy, pharyngeal sound), as opposed to the *khaf* (כ, a harder,

velar sound produced back at the palate). We agreed that mastery of English would give them a distinct advantage in whatever field they chose to study and wherever they wished to work, in Israel or abroad), while Sa'adia's beautiful Hebrew would assure their perfect spelling and grammar in Hebrew. We also agreed that we'd never speak to them in 'baby talk'—repeating nonsensical sounds back to them, though I did read English stories (like Dr. Seuss, Winnie-the-Pooh, and Alice in Wonderland) and sang them English lullabies while putting them to bed.

I remember a fabulous tragicomic incident that occurred when Tamar was only 13 months old and very verbal in both languages. She'd begun talking early and well, learning words quickly from the age of ten months. Her English vocabulary grew daily; she absorbed and used everything she heard properly. One day, I was home after work and Sa'adia had gone to work. Tamar was sitting on a throw rug in the middle of the living-room playing with stuffed animals, while I was nearby, putting away dry laundry in a big, old wooden 3-drawer dresser. I must have pulled the heavy top drawer out too far, because it suddenly plummeted down landing on my right toenail. The pain was so excruciating that I inadvertently let out an unfortunate cry: "Shit!" while literally seeing stars swimming before my eyes. I was utterly mortified by what I'd done, because both Sa'adia and I **never** used 'dirty language', and I was terrified that Tamar had heard it and would repeat it… I spent the next day, the next week, the next month full of regret and apprehension, lest she use that ugly word and Sa'adia would hear it… but it didn't happen and I gradually relaxed and almost forgot about it.

When Tamar had just turned two, a similar, but contrary, incident occurred. Sa'adia was out coaching a boys' sports team. I'd just nursed my newborn (Rachel), who was napping as I prepared supper in the kitchen while watching Tamar playing in the living-room with her green plastic 4-drawer dresser, where she kept her doll's clothes and trinkets. I watched as she pulled out the top drawer and it fell on her foot—and I swear, she yelled: "Shit!" I was totally dumbfounded. She was so brilliant that she knew that the only right time to use that word was when a drawer falls on your foot… I laughed until I cried and then I laughed again. {I've never heard her curse since then.}

Today, looking at my four successful adult children and six wonderful grandchildren, I'm pleased that my experiment was equally rewarding for them, attested by the fact that they are also raising their children as bilinguals.



PRESSED

By Lisa Aigen



Felicity flew down Broadway, hurling herself between men in gray suits and women in stiletto heels each carrying a James bond attaché. She passed the giant bronze Bull at Bowling Green and waved as she always did to the brave little girl who was standing up to the beast.

The building was right there, marked 160 in golden numerals. Felicity spun into the revolving door.

"It's a small office on the 18th floor", he had said. "No one has ever heard of us on the 17 floors below us, so don't bother to ask. Just get up to our floor and you'll see our sign."

It was very hot and humid. Felicity wiped the tiny beads of sweat off her forehead while she waited for the elevator. She pressed the button again.

Finally, the lift arrived with a hum. It was a beam- you-up moment and she very quickly stood in the lavish hallway of floor 18, clutching the straw basket which held her most precious possession. Five years of work. Thousands of hours chained to her computer. Trips to archives and small towns like the one she wrote about.

She was about to hand it to James Dalton, editor. All she had to do was find the sign.

EUGENE HIRSCH'S "SPEAK, SPEAK"

By Judy Robinson

In 2020, Dr. Eugene Hirsch, Gene, to all who knew him, extended to me the privilege of editing his poetry, an assignment I accepted with pleasure.

This collection, "Speak, Speak," is the culmination of Gene's long career of writing, and reflects the complexity of his mind and experience. As a physician/writer he joins a distinguished list, and in my opinion as a reader/editor, he earns his place among the others, notably Maugham, Chekov, William Carlos Williams.

As for the writing itself, there are several major threads, the first being a poetry that reflects a clear connection with music. As a young child, Gene was considered a musical prodigy. He played and composed for the piano under the tutelage of Stefan Wolpe. His word for the confluence of music and words in his work is inflection. This is not only a matter of similarities, he says. Rather, the music connects with the poetry to produce very specific emotional resonances.



Imagination also plays a significant role in his poetry, as does his interest in mysticism and mythology. In "Maria Sabina," the poem that won the 2019 Westoreland Literary Award, he writes of the woman's death:

When Maria Sabina died,/someone twisted the neck /of a rooster and laid it by her side. On the fourth/day, not the third or the fifth,/its spirit rose up and crowed,/calling her soul to depart,/ to start its journey/ to the Dead Land,/ feeding on squash seeds, /greens and fruit along the way.



Another influence has been his broad education both in medicine and the arts. As a physician there has been the constant preoccupation with life itself, especially the matters of meaning and mortality. The most basic questions are dealt with; the answers are offered with humility. The interpretations of other artists are considered and interpreted as well. As a result of Gene's interest in their work we have answers to big questions from the likes of Byron, Beethoven, Bach, Fellini, Dali, Goya, Handel, Red Grooms and others.

Finally, "Speak, Speak," is a collection of two hundred and eighty two poems that reflects a long life remarkably well-lived. This is a book filled with people, places and world events, interpreted by a keen and curious observer.

Thank you, Gene!

Sadly, Gene passed away soon after his book was published. It was a wonderful experience for me to see his remarkable work published as an entire collection.

Gene's book is available from Amazon at:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/939020240X

This article was first published by Times of Israel and Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle.

ON THE POWER OF POETRY

Ada Limón's *Against Breaking: On the Power of Poetry*

By Bruce Black

Ada Limón, the 24th Poet Laureate of the US, shares her thoughts on writing and the power of poetry in a slim volume, *Against Breaking: On the Power of Poetry* (Scribner).

When she begins writing, Limón notes, she wants to make something true and asks herself questions:

"Do I want to break something, or do I want to mend something? Or simply try to carve out a small place to breathe?"

And if she's lucky, she says, "if I'm quiet enough, lines of poems I love start to move through me. They come to me as if through a necessary beckoning."

Limón suggests that one of the secret powers of poetry is the way a poem connects us to other voices.

"This is the secret power of poetry. Little engines of sound urging us on, telling us we are not alone, because we can't be; we are connected to the readers and writers of poetry."

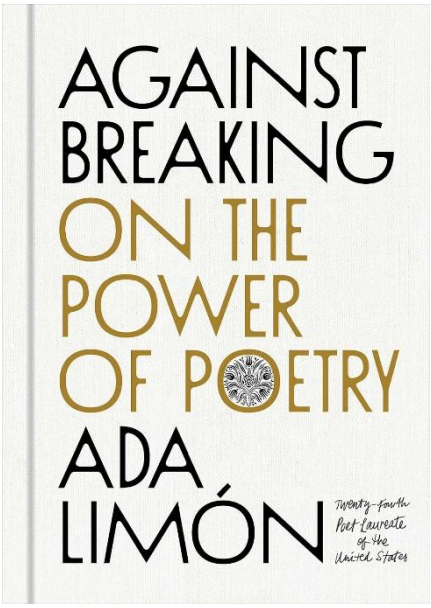
Is any poem ever a failure, she asks, because it goes unpublished or unshared?

"No, because didn't it make you pay attention, the act of writing? Didn't you, even briefly, feel as if you inhabited the world? Didn't it, for a moment, make you feel connected to language? Didn't you find a container for your heart?"

Is there a way to learn how to write a poem?

"While there are ways to teach poetry," Limón says, "mostly we learn by reading and writing, writing and reading, and then going out into the terrifying world and feeling so much that those feelings threaten to collapse us onto the concrete, facedown and forever ruined by human cruelty or even love. And then something happens; there's some moment when you think, a little gravel on your cheek, 'This suffering might make for a good poem.' Or, 'This wonder might make for a good poem.'"

One of the other secret powers of poetry, she writes, is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to make money writing poems, which allows poetry to remain subversive. "Poetry has the benefit of being outside economic systems."



"Is that a fancy way of saying that poetry doesn't make money? Yes. But it's more than that: Poetry is meant to be free, it's meant to be given, it's meant to travel one poem at a time, like pollen from a tree floating through the air to make more trees. Poems travel that same way. And because of that, they remain sacred, unbothered by trappings of the usual oppressive systems."

Another reason why poetry is powerful, according to Limón, is because of its existence in questions without forcing answers.

"It's the opposite of a polemic, or a prescription; instead, it's an interrogation of the world and one's place within it. That said, even though it doesn't hold answers, perhaps it *is* an answer."

Why write or read poetry?

"At this very moment we need to gather strength and resilience and compassion in any way that we can," Limón writes. "Perhaps poetry, for you, is the secret place where you can get to be as free and as safe as you can; perhaps you can make that blank page a place where you can lay down everything you need to lay down. Maybe it's where you go to get stronger; maybe it's where you go to become softer. But know there is a place that you can make on the page that no one controls but you. In that, right there, is a mighty power."

To learn more about Ada Limón and her work, visit:
https://adalimon.com/

Book available from Amazon:
Here => Against Breaking: On the Power of Poetry: Limón, Ada

A POISON TREE

Poem and Painting by William Blake



Poem and painting from Wikipedia (selected by the editor)

Set to music

By Ralph Vaughan Williams

Nicholas Phan, tenor
James Austin Smith, oboe

Click here to listen

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

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