
Mima'amakim



Creative Expression on the Jewish Religious Experience

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Creative Expression on the
Jewish Religious Experience

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A song of the steps:

From out of the depths I called to You, God:

*“Master, listen to my voice;
let Your ears be pricked
by the sound of my appeals.*

*“If God conserved sin,
Master, who could stand?*

*“Therefore, forgiveness is Yours,
so that You should be feared.”*

*I yearn for God, My souls yearns,
and upon His word I trust.*

*My soul waits for my Master,
More than night watchmen
await the break of morning.*

*Trust God, Yisrael, because unflinching love is His,
and with Him is much reprieve.*

Thus, He will pardon Yisrael of all his sins.

Tehillim 130



Mima'amakim 2003 is dedicated in memory of

Louis Shapiro, ו'ש"י

and in honor of his beloved wife Pauline Shapiro
for whose good health and long life we pray.

Mima'amakim 2003 expresses its deep gratitude
to Drs. Irving and Roberta Strauchler
for their generous contribution in memory of
Rabbi Gershon Romanoff.

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INTRODUCTION

“Who is a prophet? Someone who is searching – someone who is being sought. Someone who listens – and who is listened to. Someone who sees people as they are, and as they ought to be. Someone who reflects his time, yet lives outside time. A prophet is forever awake. . . A prophet uses the same words as anyone else, and yet, on his lips, they take on a different meaning.”

—Elie Wiesel

“Poetry is a language that has to be penetrated. Poetry involves a precise choice of words that will have implications and suggestions that go past the words themselves. . . poetry consists of letting the word be heard beyond words. . . Then you experience the radiance, the epiphany.”

—Joseph Campbell

“And when you come into the land and plant any tree bearing fruit for food, you shall be restricted regarding the use of its fruit for a period during which it shall be withdrawn from your use. For three years it shall be restricted to you. . . Then, in the fourth year, all its fruit shall become holy for the purpose of praising the work of God.”

— Sefer Vayikra

Three years ago, a small band of devoted Jewish writers, thinkers, dreamers, and poets sought a creative outlet for portraying Jewish life as lived. And thus Mima'amakim began; conceived in the epiphany of paradox and born in the inspiration of religious experience. This fourth issue of Mima'amakim continues in the same innovative tradition. We challenge the limitations of language and experience as we explore the revelation of our many *depths*.

Daniella Ross
Los Angeles, CA
Tammuz 5763
July 2003

ODE TO THE MAHARAL

Michael Berger

I learned about poetry
from the Maharal of Prague,
the same Maharal of Prague
who never made a golem
but who asked his readers to pretend
he never said anything
if they didn't understand him
and who asked G-d to forgive him
for revealing a handsbreadth
while concealing a handsbreadth
because that is the way of secrets.

THE FIRST TIME I CROSS AN OCEAN

Anonymous

I am an onion
My grandmother hides me in the hold of the ship
She combs wayward ends of silk
tucks my tender skin
in velvet folds
She smoothes protective membranes
around the cell
where the code to my identity is stored
She inverts me
roots first
To the rhythm of surf
she sings a lullaby
Somos Judios
Her face is a map
engraved with longitudes of exile
Gravity pulls her back
Wind pushes her forward
She hovers in the air
over two small graves
shaded by willow branch
She leans over me while I sleep
She teaches me the circular dialect of her arms
small sentries
over a citadel
the steps in her dance
move away
move away another way home
She leans over me while I sleep
to enter my dreams
Somos Judios
Through her skin
I smell the aromatic earth
wild roses in her garden
She is happier on land
The ocean erodes memories
with no embankment to settle against
On a road she can leave markers
encode footprints in the earth

When the Jews leave Egypt
there is a road
even where there had been a sea
She scatters breadcrumbs in the air
a gull catches them in his beak
He soars higher on the blessing in her dough
On deck my grandfather
stands beneath the moon
his evening prayers glint like silver seeds
in the dark loam of the ocean
Kavana moves constellations
The captain keeps tacking tacking to compensate
On the final dawn
across a porous horizon
trees begin to name themselves
The customs official asks my grandmother
what is wrapped in embroidered velvet?
This?
Nada
Just paper
I dissolve into paper
For twenty years I am her text
stained with her breath
the secret of her intentions
the leitmotif of her prayer
her sacred architecture
bone white arches
light slips past
memory of the Temple
blue, purple and scarlet silks
fine twined linen
patterns for embroidery
the necessity of beauty
remedies for healing
her bone chant over the dead
how to wash away sin
and leave innocence swathed in white garment
the rhythm of birth
the quickening of anticipation
written over the history of terror
the history of wandering
What to leave
What to take
How to ease yourself from a landscape
boundaries intact

How to ease your thoughts away from one language
And into another
With no loss of *divekut*
How to embed an urgent message
Under your tongue
Somos Judios
Holy texts written in flight
inscribed in parchment
the rise and fall of her cursive
in spaces between births
snatches of psalms
u le Zion yaomer
ish v ish ulad bah
For each one born in Jerusalem
another longs for her
Snatches of psalms
like bits of conversation
between volumes of Talmud
I sleep for twenty years
I awaken as a girl

IN MEMORIAM, ILAN RAMON

Ron Pies

Ilan, on the morning
we lost you
in that bright shattering
of metal,
I had awakened
from a dream
of Boston
in early spring.
The April air
was sweet
and rank
with loosening earth;
the lilac buds
beckoned
like young lovers.
My wife and I strolled
along the Commons
in a bliss
of birdsong
and crocus.
Then we woke
to dead February.

What can we do?
Our prayers
fail us.
We drive out
to the grocery
and buy
the ripest mangoes
we can find.

HA-BUCHARIM¹

Raquel Sanchez

I can hear the silent clip-clops
on this street they call
 Work of Israel
where people modestly make
pavement appear as though
it's still made of dust
cars become wagons here
and children jump past them
with knotted strings
... a running flag
 waving through it all
Pinchus and Simchah
 stand and become
 the corner
they gather Yiddin,
 Yiddishekite
 and Hebrew
to tie
 every soldier
in black leather
... our verbal history of arms

¹ The choices

ZIMMERMAN'S TEFILLIN

Ron Pies

For forty years, Sam Smucker had shmeered God. How do you grease the palm of the Almighty? From Smucker's point of view, it wasn't as tough as it sounds. You make contributions — thousands of them — to United Way, Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, The Red Cross, not to mention the B'nai Brith, The Simon Wiesenthal Center, and even some cockamamie organization called The Brotherhood of Jewish Pigeon Fanciers. All this to atone for what Smucker had done to Zimmerman's tefillin, forty years earlier.

But today, lying in a hospital bed at Mass General—two days before Yom Kippur— more pressing matters sank their teeth into Smucker's chest, or rather, his left "flank," as the doctor had called it. The pain had started as a dull gripping somewhere near his back, then moved down into his groin and left testicle, doubling him over. A pain you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy, Smucker thought. "Most likely, a kidney stone," the doctor had said nonchalantly, "but we need to work it up." Cancer, Smucker concluded instantly, just like his father, who also went into the hospital just before Yom Kippur.

That, too, was almost forty years ago, around the time Sam Smucker and Lou Zimmerman parted ways. It had been a wonderful business arrangement, at first. In Brighton, Massachusetts, in the late 50's, Lou and Sam's Furniture Oasis had thrived. True, Lou Zimmerman was a bit of a *luftkopf* — what the kids nowadays would call an "airhead" — but he had ideas. Zimmerman — a remote descendent of the Baal Shem Tov — was supposed to go to rabbinical school, and had actually applied to the Jewish Theological Seminary. But problems came up: his father, an orthodox Jew, had insisted that his son apply to Yeshiva College, soon to become Yeshiva University. Young Louis was not certain he could handle the rigors of orthodoxy, and in any case, did not want to give his father the satisfaction. Then came his mother's long illness, when Zimmerman was in his early twenties, nearly bankrupting the family; and an invitation from cousin Heschie to join him in the furniture business. It was too lucrative an offer to pass up, and the application to JTS was withdrawn. Zimmerman did not shave and barely spoke for the next month, but seemed to get over it. After Heschie died, Lou became full owner of the store, and took on his old Boston Latin pal, Sam Smucker, as "Chief Financial Officer" of the newly-christened Furniture Oasis. Sam was the numbers man, Lou, the idea man. It was Lou's inspiration, one late night going over the finances, which led to the artificial palm trees and nine-foot high plastic camels in the lobby, even though some of the Jewish customers didn't like the implications. The place caught on, and, in late 1961, Lou and Sam bought out Millman's Cigars, next door, in order to expand.

Then the business with the tefillin began. It wasn't enough that Zimmerman would show up at work each weekday morning, carefully unpack the tefillin case so as not to break its hinges, and conspicuously "lay tefillin" in front of Smucker — an act any truly pious Jew would have been performed at home or in shul. No, Zimmerman had to go through the whole shtick of moaning, mumbling, bowing and rocking, just like the Jews at the Wailing Wall.

The secretary, Mrs. DiNatali, would watch all this every morning through the glass divide that separated Zimmerman from the main part of the office, and quickly make the sign of the cross. Smucker would shake his head and emit a hissing sound through his teeth.

“Lou, you have to do this ceremony out in the open like this?” Smucker asked one day.

“Ceremony? Sam, you of all people, whose grandfather was a rabbi, you have to ask me this?”

“I’m just saying, Lou — it upsets Lucille. You see how she crosses herself. You couldn’t lay tefillin at home, before you get here?” No, Zimmerman would explain, there was no *tikkun* at home, no “repairing of the world.” Here, in the workplace, where the lures of money and power beckon, here was the place to offer up the morning prayer. In the workplace, Zimmerman explained, the *yezer hara* — the “evil impulse” — always tugs at us. It is our obligation to tug the *yezer hara* in the opposite direction, toward the Torah. “Completely *meshugah*,” Smucker would think, but never say. True, in their childhood, both boys had grown up in the orthodox tradition. Smucker’s grandfather, the story went, was a descendent of the great Vilna Gaon, the implacable opponent of *hasidism*. But in Smucker, the faith never took. He preferred the clarity of numbers, the sure syllogisms of geometry. After graduating Boston Latin, Smucker worked for a while in his father’s drug store and took accounting classes at night. He had dreams of doing something spectacular in the field of mathematics — solving Fermat’s last theorem, for starters — but in a few years, Smucker was a CPA doing seasonal work for H & R Block. Then came marriage to Ida, and the birth of a son, Neil, who stuttered and needed “special classes” for a reading problem. With all his obligations, what did Smucker need with the highfalutin, gesticulating mysticism of Zimmerman, who not only had stayed single, but seemed to have no interest in leaving his musty studio apartment in Brighton, except to show up at work.

In the 60’s, things went from bad to worse at the Furniture Oasis. It wasn’t just that the big furniture warehouses were starting up — Moe Brown’s in Cambridge, Leckman’s in Quincy — it was that the air between Smucker and Zimmerman had gone bad. “The whole office smells like stale cigars and sour milk,” Mrs. DiNatali pointed out, just before giving her notice. “And the heat! I can’t breathe in here anymore,” she added, staring through the plate glass at Zimmerman’s manic *davening*. “I know, Lucille,” Smucker replied. “It’s like breathing in an oven.”

Exactly when Smucker began cooking the books wasn’t clear. “Balancing the accounts with a heavy hand” was how he described it to himself. After all, who stayed in the office until ten at night, trying to bring order out of chaos? Who had gone, hat in hand, to the Bank of Boston, explaining why a loan was the only way the Furniture Oasis could survive? Wasn’t he entitled to a little extra? Just putting up with Zimmerman and his *mishugas* was reason enough to justify a few dollars off the top. And over the years, Zimmerman had only gotten worse. The rich, good looks of his youth had grown dark, sharp, and dry, like a crow’s squawk. He had taken to muttering as he skulked around the office, producing dog-like growls that Smucker could barely make out, but which sounded like “the other side,” “*gilgul*,” and “*Sammael*.” Stranger still was the new addition to Zimmerman’s morning ritual. Now, along with the set of two small black boxes and their black leather straps that Zimmerman wrapped seven times

around his left arm, another set of phylacteries had suddenly materialized.

“So, Lou,” Smucker had asked with studied nonchalance, “What’s with the new tefillin this morning?” Zimmerman turned to Smucker with the look a taxidermist might reserve for one of his stuffed ferrets. He replied quietly, “They are the Rabbenu Tam tefillin,” and retired to his glassed-in sanctuary. Smucker knew that further conversation on this matter was out of the question. But he remembered enough of his grandfather’s teachings to know about Rabbenu Tam. “It was a great dispute,” Smucker’s grandfather, the rabbi, had once explained. “You know of Rashi and his commentaries in the Talmud, of course. But, zindle, you may not know that one of Rashi’s grandsons, Rabbenu Tam, disagreed with his revered grandfather on the matter of the tefillin. Rashi had one way of inserting the Torah texts into the tefillin, Rabbenu Tam, another. So great was the respect for Rabbenu Tam that some Jews, to this day, don two pairs of tefillin—first, those of Rashi, and then, those of Rabbenu Tam.”

Smucker knew other things about tefillin. Once, when he was twelve, his grandfather had taken him to a place in Brooklyn where they repaired damaged tefillin and inspected the Biblical passages, the *parshiot*, contained in the small black boxes. “You see, Sammy,” his grandfather had whispered, placing his hand on the boy’s shoulder, “you see with what care they work here? After all, we are told in *Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh*, ‘One who lays tefillin which are unfit, not only does he fail to fulfill the mitzvah, but also is guilty of the sin of saying blessings in vain.’ Look, see how the *batim* — that’s right, the little boxes — see how they are opened? The craftsman drills at the holes of the stitches, so the stitching is released. The knife is placed in the seal, between the folds; no leather must be cut. Then, the *parshiot* are removed, put in a container, and labeled. Then they are given to the *Mageah* for checking—not just a *sofer*, a scribe, Sammy, but a *Mageah*! A certified inspector. And then, the real work starts: putting the *parshiot* back in — covered in hair from a calf’s tail — sealing and stitching the tefillin, repainting the seal...”

No, Smucker was no scholar, but he knew enough about tefillin to see through his partner’s little game: not only was Zimmerman a better Jew than Smucker, he was twice as good as all the one-*tefillin* Jews! Had things gone as expected between Zimmerman and Smucker, had their mutual contempt festered with its usual germs, Smucker would simply have given his notice, cleaned out his desk, and left. But something wholly unexpected happened one morning at work, as Zimmerman was cleaning out an old filing cabinet. He happened upon a pile of tattered — and, he felt sure, stained — copies of Playboy. Leave it to a *luftkopf*, Smucker thought, to find a pile of dirty magazines, and never once find an error in the accounts! What, a married man isn’t entitled to a little fantasy on the side? Smucker had never once strayed from Ida, and a few girlie magazines did not seem like such a sin. “You must remove this filth from my store, or remove yourself,” Zimmerman had hissed, only inches from Smucker’s face. “Your store? Do you think this store could have lasted seven years with you running it, for Crissake? You, who wouldn’t know a balance sheet from a blintze!” “Everything I worked for — to find the Holy Spirit in the marketplace, to struggle against the *yezer hara*...” “What you worked for,” replied Smucker, “was showing me how goddamn holy you are! So I had some dirty magazines laying around! Do I deserve the Nuremberg Trials? Goodbye and good luck, Lou!” By the following morning, Smucker had piled all the junk from his desk into three large cardboard boxes. But what happened that

afternoon surprised even Smucker, who had thought there might be limits to his rage. When Zimmerman was called away to Braintree for the rest of the day to deal with a damaged shipment of recliners, Smucker saw his opening. After hanging out the “CLOSED” sign on the front door, he entered the little glassed-in room, picked up Zimmerman’s tefillin case, and dumped it into a shopping bag. On his way out, Smucker scooped up a couple of Playboys.

There are only four tools required to open tefillin: a drill, a vice, a knife, and a hammer. In his little basement wood-shop, with Ida visiting her sister and Neil at school, Smucker began his work: not with the sanctity of the craftsman in Brooklyn, God only knows, but with a meticulousness Smucker had achieved nowhere else in his life. He even took the time to cut up the glossy pictures of breasts, buttocks, and thighs into pieces small enough to fit inside the *batim*. Of course, a real craftsman would have sealed the *batim* with stitching, not glue, but Smucker could afford to neglect such fine and holy points. His work was good enough that the boxes required no re-painting. In a couple of hours, he was back at the store. For the first time in years, in the fetid atmosphere of the Furniture Oasis, Smucker could breathe. Replacing the tefillin case where Zimmerman had left it, Smucker let out a cackle that housed, like a dark bubble, all the joy left in his life.

Now, from his hospital bed, Smucker struggled to recollect the bleak chronology that overtook Lou Zimmerman in the last thirty years. When was the first admission to Boston State? The first rumors of Zimmerman’s suicide attempts, followed by the series of shock treatments? Of course, a man doesn’t go crazy just because someone guts a pair of his tefillin and fills them with filth. There was no reason to assume Zimmerman ever even realized that the little boxes he wrapped around his arms and bound to his forehead were smutty changelings left by his once-trusted accountant and friend. Nowadays, who knew? The doctors explained madness in terms of brain chemicals gone haywire, or maybe Alzheimer’s. But where did he wind up, Zimmerman? Smucker racked his brain for which cousin — Mortie? Milton? — Zimmerman had gone to live with, no longer dangerous enough for Boston State, but definitely not material for the real world.

What exactly had his grandfather always said in the days before Yom Kippur? “Even God cannot forgive you for the sins you have committed against your fellow man. You must earnestly ask the aggrieved person for forgiveness, and make amends to him.” Smucker twisted over onto his side and felt the stab of some jagged shard deep within his kidney. He grabbed for the phone. Mortie Abrams, he knew, lived somewhere in Brookline.

MA'A'VAR CHA'TZA'YA: STREET CROSSING

Joshua Emden

I clench my older sister's hands

Tight eyes

examine cars.

She stares like hazy asphalt

waits wears black.

She assures me–

turbulence

against heat – any crossing–

is another measure

without dry heat, wry air.

I breathe the chaise of time

with the best of space

and wait for her eyes to change.

ISRAEL: ART AND MATZAV

David Druce

“And as the anthem pierces, I have no other land.” Who’s singing these patriotic Hebrew lines? It’s not a folk singer or synagogue choir, but in fact two Israeli rappers sporting tattoos, the latest American gangsta clothing and iced-out Star of David necklaces. Yes, rap has finally become a popular form of Israeli music, and might be the genre best suited to express the creative challenges of the ongoing ‘matzav’. Until recently, rap was viewed as novelty in Israel; a popular ad for long distance service shows a group of African-Americans sitting around on a stoop in Harlem. Suddenly the phone rings - it’s ‘Dudi Ha Totach’ who starts to rap in Hebrew, and despite the language barrier the group starts dancing to it.

Why would a music style once associated with the ‘hood’ and urban African-American culture have become so popular worldwide? One explanation is that elements within rap-humor, story telling, and virility have always been present in the music of other cultures. Yet rap in the United States has never been very sympathetic to Jews, or, more specifically, to Jewish record executives. Such rappers as Ice Cube and Public Enemy have had lyrics insulting Jewish individuals. Other groups send mixed signals; the Wu Tang Clan of Staten Island has a Jewish rapper, Remedy, who raps about the Holocaust, even while on the road in Germany, while another of their rappers, Method Man, has a song entitled ‘PLO Style’.

Yavne, an Israeli city, is not only known as the home of the Sanhedrin, but as the birthplace of Israeli rap. More specifically, Shabak Samech, party rappers heavily influenced by Beastie Boys who were active in the mid-90’s. Soon, other groups with a more complex message emerged. In particular, Subliminal (Kobi Shimoni) and the Shadow (Yoav Eliasi), quoted above, have emerged as a patriotic rap group. While many of their songs deal with the usual themes of women and street life, others deal with nationalism. In fact, many of the CD’s refrains are taken from classical Israeli folk songs such ‘Banu Choshech L’Garesh’ (We have come to expel the darkness) and ‘HaHagiga Nigmeret’ (The Holiday is Over). And far from being subliminal, their messages are quite clear. The cover of their CD, *The Light and the Shadow*, depicts a Jewish star necklace being snatched from the mud, and the duo says such things as “the nation disappears like a cigarette in Arafat’s mouth.”

Not only is Subliminal’s lyrical style uncommon in Israel, but so are their right-wing political allegiances, views widely expressed on the street, but rarely heard on the national level of the arts. Conservative thinkers, such as Yoram Hazony, author *The Jewish State*, have often questioned the criticism of Zionism that can be found in the work of many Israeli Artists, playwrights, and authors. He can rest assured that at least one of the top 10 of Tower Records meets his patriotic requirements. Two other successful rap groups, Mook E., formerly of Shabak, and the Dag Nahash, are more critical of the status quo.

Mook E.’s first CD, ‘Shma Yisrael’ was one of the most popular in Israel, and one of his songs, the Reggae-influenced ‘Everyone is talking about peace’, was one of the top songs of 2002 according to Army Radio. In the refrain, he says ‘everyone talks about peace, but no one talks about peace. For one it’s heaven, the other is hell, how many fingers are on the trigger?’ Mook

E.'s songs focus less on the details on the current conflict, and allude to a more vague theme of brotherhood. For example, he claims in one song 'all the have same dream...they have divided the world between us and them...the earth is crying.' Somewhere between Mook E. and Subliminal is Dag Nahash who have proclaimed themselves 'producers of Zionist hip-hop.' The Jerusalem-based group, which took its name from Nahag Hadash-Hebrew for 'new driver' and changed it to 'fish-snake', has many complex views. In 'Misparim' [Numbers] the rapper Shan'an Strit, says 'I too, like all the Jews look at numbers...two is the states that will be between the Jordan and the Sea...three is the years I served in Army...nine times I was close to a pigua (terrorist attack)...and the number that gives us the most hope and reminds us of the tragedy, that makes everyone's heart silent- six million.'

There may not be a bicoastal rivalry in Israel, but rappers still criticize each others' points of view, just as they do in the United States. Subliminal blasts Dag Nahash, by saying 'Shalom Saalam Peace (a song of Dag from 2000) there is none in the world', and in regards to Mook E, says 'despite the attacks, simple minded people still believe in the delusion of justice'. Comments like these caused an outcry from several media critics, one who even called Subliminal and the Shadow 'a bunch of fascists'. No doubt the same critics would be even harsher towards Dov Shurin, a musician and radio figure who appeared in this film 'The Settlers'. His last album was entitled 'Nekama', or 'Revenge,' and Shurin has performed songs at Kach events. Many of his songs are based on passages from the Bible such as Moses slaying an Egyptian or Samson tearing down the Temple of the Philistines, and his far-right writings can be found on the Country Yossi website. In my opinion, some of the harshest lyrics found in Jewish or Israeli music can be found in Mordechai Ben David's famous 'Jerusalem is not for sale'. I t goes on to tell the Mormons building a university on Mt. Scopus 'you'd better run to your life back to Utah overnight, before the mountain opens up to swallow you inside.'

Arabic Rap has also become popular in the Israeli Arab community, with the Akko-based group of MWR scoring a hit with the protest song 'Because I'm an Arab'. While Israel is often criticized in local Arabic rap, an audience of millions abroad are singing virulently anti-Israeli songs. In Egypt, a recent national hit was Shabaan Abd Rahim's 'Baqra Al Israil' [I hate Israel], which is a throwback to the Nasser-era when Egyptian music often consisted of national ballads with obvious political overtones. Indeed, it's hard to get more overt than to have lyrics such as 'I hate Israel, I hate Ariel Sharon...I love my leader Hosni Mubarak.' Even more worrying is that the Egyptian national censor chose to change the song's lyrics from 'I don't like' to 'hate'. These feelings extend to London where Noa, an Israeli singer performing at a Mediterranean Festival had her concert interrupted by protestors - despite the fact that she was singing John Lennon's 'Imagine' with Algerian Cheb Khaled!

In short, nothing in the Middle Eastern music world has stayed the same. Many established Israeli pop musicians, such as Sarit Hadad and Yehuda Poliker have songs that allude to violence and its victims. Knesiat HaSechel made a rock version of the famed Mizrahi song 'Tipat Mazal', and Hadad even chose to sing 'Light a Candle', rather than 'Mr. DJ Superman' as Israel's entry in the 2002 Eurovision contest. In past competitions, Israel has wavered between patriotic songs such as Ofra Haza's 'Chai', and the apolitical such as Eden's 'Happy Birthday'. The entertainment world continues to mix with local politics. Shas, the right-wing political party, sampled Ricky Martin's 'Copa La Vida' and transformed it into a religious song

singing of their party's glory. Several political parties make use of entertainers, from Shas' court singer Benny Elbaz, to Ariel Zilber (a member of the National Union), and Chaim Moshe (The National Religious Party). These are some of the trends that show that Israel's change every day, politically, physically, socially, and culturally. As politicians add pages to the history book, it is certain that a musician in the Middle East will bring them to the street.

NEVER MET

Carole Birkan

i'd never
met the woman only
knew
she was ill
fat
and in the final stages
of death
somehow I empathized
imagined protruding
tubes in the rolls of flesh
facts
processed through the words
a doctor fed
my machine with
my computer brain deleting
signs forever
undoing
a grandmother

HIDE AND SEEK

Mindy Aber Barad

In the time of the new moon
Look for the arrows
He says
Have you found them?
Boy seeks arrows
That's me,
Barely taller than the stalks of wheat.
Barley surrounds me
I'll do anything for the prince
Jonathan
Even play this game of arrows
While thistles scratch my legs
And David
I cannot see him
As he hides
In the tall grass.

LA BREA KOSHER, 2003

Mina Friedler

I am a stranger to this place, not God
who delights in all His creatures
as they are, even me
a married Jewish woman
who wears pants
and lets the wind catch her hair
out in the open
where everyone can see
I drive on the Sabbath
a stranger to these narrow aisles
where no one would dare
slaughter a calf, and cook it
in its mother's milk

Yet, married Jewish women, every hair covered,
in long sleeves, who would never drive on the Sabbath
go brazenly without smiling
It is an oxymoron
to smile at those who might kill you
but you must
smile and say 'hello'
to the young gentile with punk hair
waiting patiently, fingering a coca cola
tapping his hands on the counter
While a woman in a *sheitel* haggles
in a language he does not understand
and a child butts him with her carriage
as if he isn't there

I want to scream, shake the mothers, too busy
or too weary reading labels to smile
and teach their children, 'Welcome the stranger'
I want to hold back the Red Sea
I know will not part
this time, waters drowning
all of us

But I am a stranger, too.
My people won't listen.
Until the calf is cooked
in her mother's milk
and the gentile has stopped
tapping his bottle
and broken it

THE MAN WHO RAN INTO THE SEA

Ellen Horrow

He was the man who ran into the sea. Now he sits at the head of his tribe, leading them where he does not want to go. But many years past, when he was young and in the land of Egypt, he was the man who ran into the sea. Today his people do not speak of it any more. Even those in his own family, the tribe of Judah, would rather let the subject wither away. Yet there was a time when everyone revered him and his act of ultimate faith. “Listen you children, listen to Nachshon’s story,” they used to say. Again and again they demanded to hear tale of his bravery; and their own. “Come closer to the fire,” Nachshon beckoned. “Come and warm yourselves in my tent.” The children, those who had been born in the desert and those who were too young to remember their lives in Egypt, used to come and hear his story. “And after the tenth plague the Pharaoh told us we could go; In fact, he ordered us to go. So we packed only what we could carry, because we had no camels then, and started walking. Everyone was frightened. It was nighttime, but the nights were not as cold in Egypt as they are out here. “We walked all throughout that long night. I didn’t even know which direction we were going; all I could see were the feet of the people walking ahead of us. If you turned around you could see the silent trail of people, snaking through the hills. After awhile, we came to the sea. Everyone gathered along the shores, a huge mob of bodies pushing against each other, to see what Moses and the leaders would do. “I stood near the front, so close I could almost touch the water, and watched the leaders arguing. I did not know what they were saying, but I am told many of them wanted to turn back, or try and take another route. All I knew then was that I could never go back. I could not let our people return to slavery and watch you children grow old and die under their whips. “We then got word that Pharaoh had changed his mind and wanted us back. The Egyptian army was almost upon us, so I decided to take my chances and try to swim across. I was a good swimmer, but I knew I would need God’s help to make it to the other side. I didn’t think he would abandon us after taking us this far. So, I walked into the water. The elders ceased their bickering and hushed the crowd. Everyone watched as the water rose higher and higher around me. Just as it covered my head and I prepared to dive down, the water suddenly disappeared.

I released my breath and opened my eyes. There, where the sea had been, was dry land; the same as you are sitting on right now. And I gave thanks to God for saving my life and performing that great miracle.” That was the story they wanted to hear, so that was how Nachshon told it. He could not imagine recounting it any other way. Yet after the children would leave his tent, and Nachshon sat alone with one last cup of spiced wine, he would wonder, “What if I hadn’t wanted to leave? What if I had never run into the sea? Would I have died had God not split the water?” After awhile, though, Nachshon found himself considering these things less and less; not because he found the answer, but simply because the children stopped coming. Their parents no longer sent them to hear the story of the man who ran into the sea. Today no one asks him to tell the story at all. He does not know why, only that the people no longer think of him as they used to.

Yet it was for his courage that they made him a leader and appointed him as head of his tribe. How could he refuse? He was the man who dove into the sea; who believed in God when they

doubted. He has led them for many years now, officiated at countless rites, but their displeasure with him has only grown; he can see it in their eyes during the sacrificial ceremonies. They look to him for glory and pageantry and he gives them neither.

Nachshon thinks that if he were to retell his story now, he would tell it differently. He would not be afraid to tell these children how scared he and the other people were to leave their homes. He would tell them about the violence, how the elders' sons forced the people from their houses that night at sword point and how they burnt the meager huts so no one could return. If he knew, he might even tell the real reason he ran into the sea that night. As he stood at the edge of the water no one dared cross, Nachshon felt afraid. He was afraid he would die here. His people's defiance had ruined any chance of return. The Pharaoh and his army would simply kill them all, right where they stood. So he ran. Nachshon remembers the ice-cold water hitting his chest like a brick and gasping for air before diving beneath it. As he floated, Nachshon knew he should move his arms and kick his legs to swim, but he could not. Instead he opened his eyes, not knowing what he wished to see, but unable to glimpse anything in the complete darkness. None of the people followed him, and Nachshon felt himself sinking to the bottom. Just as he let his limbs go slack and his body fall, the water suddenly disappeared and he landed upright, on the sand. Now though, when Nachshon thinks back to that time of pure silence and night, he wonders if the real reason he ran into the sea was because he wanted to die.

Tugging the forlorn bull behind him, Nachshon makes his way through the throng of people. Feeling their hungry eyes fixed on him, he looks down, concentrating on the path his feet take toward the altar. Once atop the platform, he chances a glimpse into the crowd and then quickly looks away, ashamed he cannot exude the confidence they desire. He already feels his tribe's resentment and cannot bear to compound his inadequacy by acknowledging those critical eyes.

He does not watch the priests as they slaughter the bull, but instead fixes his eyes on the roaring fire before him. The crowd gasps as the animal's body hits the platform with a thud. Nachshon ignores the smells rising from the bull's carcass as the priests flay the steaming flesh, drain the blood and separate the fat. As the priests thrust a hunk of the white flabby tissue into the fire, the flames erupt, roaring far above Nachshon's head. His body urges him to back away but instead he takes a step closer. Despite the hundreds of eyes fixed on him, Nachshon feels alone now, hidden in the heavy, simmering air. "If I walk into this fire," Nachshon wonders, "Will God split the flames just as he opened the sea for me so long ago?" He raises his hands to touch the tips of the fire and sees the flickering light reflected in his fingernails. He does not hear the people scream in fear as he takes another step forward into the fire. The flames sear his parched skin and brittle hair. As his body falls, Nachshon wonders if perhaps this time God will grant him the death denied to him those many years ago when he ran into the sea.

LOT

Chaim Rosenblum

From my slit eyes,
I see you rise to me
like a river washed with rain
to pour more wine in my cup.
Daughter,
your shimmering spirit
showers down
this miserable ache,
the tears that streak my face.
I know of your holy plan
to get me drunk
and arouse my
desire secretly,
so the world can continue.
You are a fertile field
for Adam's seed.
But I'm not the Adam that you seek.
Get up!
Kiss her feet.
Take her back to Abraham,
holy Jew and man of God.
Make her flee from you.
Save her!
Tell her that the world
has not been destroyed.
Save yourself!
God,
help me!
I've prayed and cried to you.
I followed you into a new land.
I've seen angels.
Abraham once loved me.
Give me the strength to stand.
Give me the courage to be a man
and walk past my sin that
crouches at the door.

My daughter,
Chava of a new world,
has come to me.
She thinks that I'm asleep.

WORLD TRADE ANTHOLOGY

POEMS 9/01-10/01

David Kach

In the wake of the
Trade Center terror, a dead
calm stills the Hudson

All around the World
Trade Center site, the posters
say, "Missing. Missing."

Unable yet to mourn,
the woman shows me photos
of her missing son

This Rosh Hashanah
at Unesaneh Tokef
a burly man wept

OVER THERE

Neil Tow

Over there
They cry and stop and look
Over there
They build daily sand castles
That the *chamsin* destroys
And they turn around, with groceries in hand
Too late to see the sudden gale that claimed both the builder
And the dream she was modeling
In the desert-gold powder.
The water-cement oozed slowly from the foundations
Of that constant thought,
That project that took shape with the calloused hand
In a pock-marked land
Over there
She stumbles toward the siren
And then her parents pasted against an antiseptic wall
Stepping forward to stroke her hair she reaches first
To see the fingers burnt by too many suns of disappointment
Blending into the hue of the ubiquitous stone-
While stronger than sand,
Never evolves
Never becomes
And never is unselfish enough to revert back to its elements,
To who it was in a previous mind, another mind that only needed water to grow
Even in the middle of the desert.
Over there
We see her chasing grains of sand
But they hide from her
In the dark corners
Of her wounded soul.

MENACHEM

Zev Berkowitz

In my twentieth year of sprawling life, I went North
to comfort a friend mourning his passed father.
Little can assuage an Avel save for the sight of dear friends
sitting side by side. I stayed silent in the corner;
I was told that the silent calm would best suit his pain.

In torn linen, he sat, weaving *Hilchot Aveilut*,
The legacy of his father, the pain of
not having those things he enjoyed to comfort him:
Music, torah, his own father.
His raging life stood in the din of that filled room.
He mentioned to his mother and his sisters, in a strained voice
that measured both the joys of the past and the sorrows of the present,
“Here is my Rebbe from high school, he would
break down the *sugya* into *drisha* and *chakira*.
Here are the friends with whom I finished *Mesechet Ketubot*,
I argued the world with them,
During days when Descartes’ circularity was my greatest trouble.”

“Yaacov, your father fell so early
And now you shout in a quiet suburban street.
The calm of nature cures all? Here,
the tranquility of the foliage only outlines the pain.”

Along the same street, school children emerged
In bus fuselage, like faceless cargo,
Kept tightly away
From the sounds of death and life;
And in the nearby classrooms
the edification began.

**SPOKEN BY AN OLD WOMAN
IN A NURSING HOME, YOM KIPPUR, 5757**

Jay Michaelson

Why, you ask, do I look forward to the resurrection of the dead?
I have lived too many years already! You are right.
But I look forward to the resurrection because it will not happen today or tomorrow.
That is, I will almost surely die before it comes.
And so then,
when, as prophesied, we are all born anew,
I will be as I was when I was young.
My grandchildren will see me young, alive, beautiful.
And everyone who sees me now,
and cannot imagine me as a young woman—

and everyone who looks at my old photographs and wonders

did she ever really look like that? and will I ever become as old as she? –
they will see me,
and I will smile at them, as if suggesting a lost seduction.

OFAKIM

David Druce

Twilight comes to Ofakim
Covering satellite dishes in its blanket
A water tower, red-eyed Cyclops winks
Standing eternal vigil over Merchavim

A lilt of the accordion, lisp of the flute
The rustle of wind through open windows
Hungry Road rising from the savanna
To apartments placed like children's blocks

At dusk past a crumbling Ottoman fortress
A plane flies home to mother Hazerim
Bedouin sheep nestle in the balding plains
A Haredi boy passes me on a bicycle

Nights are redolent behind the barzelim
perfumed with couscous and matbucha
in apartments gird with slumbering laundry-boards
without walls of gold, or red-tiled roofs

Everyone packed in Bisli box houses
Three doves, freshly painted, at the traffic circle
Given moustaches like Ben-Gurion's bust
Mute like an Easter Island Moa in the gan

An ad for tennis, 'The White Sport'
vacant lots, with embers from Lag B'Omer
Amulets and Bumper Stickers ubiquitous
inevitable excrement, unidentifiable debris

Holy Books, another makolet, broken benches
Children kick a soccer ball under
concrete pillars holding up the apartments
you'll be Yossi Benayoun, I'll play for Beitar

Rechov Herzl: chess players stare down arsim
Cyrillic newspapers wrap bouquets
A car of teens drive through the roundabout
Sharing trip hop and trance with the schunah

The flowers: Vered, Shanit, Heli
who bury themselves like Asarte in Zikim
Dahena Kahenas¹ with orangy Telma hair
their black pitted eyes gaze at Be'er Sheva

Their lithe bodies challenging diaphanous lycra
hair stands at attention, gleaming like disco lights
Soon they will wear dark drab dusty khaki
Milled by their cousins in Yerucham.

Graffiti jostling:
Kahane Lives! Snoop Doggy Dogg Nissim Bohadna was here Vote Yossi Martziano
Avodah for Mayor Deri is innocent Eminem Histadrut Rav Amnon Bruchim Ha Baim
L'Gehinom Prodigy Stas Mirsky Yair Hazan Likud Metallica Yisrael Beteinu

¹ A Moroccan Warrior-Princess

HAIKU

Elyakeem Kinstlinger

Green means go. Red, stop.
The evil inclination
comes at the yellow.

AVAK RAGLECHA

Daniella Ross

I sit at your right
trying to collect as
much dust as possible
(amateur alchemist
that I am) so that when
I lie in my lifeless bed
I can lick dust to gold.

**PURPLE PANTS FOR ANNA KARENINA,
OR
EARLY ORIGINS OF THE NEW WAVE
CHASSIDIM IN CANADA**

Jake Marmer

When the chirping birds elope to the topmost peaks of sedated elms to give wild raspberries a few moments of silence, I stand in the middle of the forest, as if paralyzed, lending both of my ears and at least one nostril to the stammering streams – mysterious waters, wailing daughters of Volga that fondle pensiveness of stones, laid by generations for generations; streams that dissolve scenery into clouds of pointillism, clouds that constantly move - drawing, composing, and dancing like stealthy figures of some elaborate ballet.

Everything was in confusion at Oblonsky’s house. Also over by Levine’s and Tolstoy’s – and Dostoyevsky was complaining of bad digestion. A red-liveried footman was dozing on the steps. Through his half-closed eyelids, he watched a slender young woman leaning on the lamppost, chewing sunflower seeds and gracefully kicking her tiny dog in the rear. Grishka (for such was the footman’s name) was reveling in the luscious uncertainty of whether mademoiselle was real, or just a part of his lingering reverie. Suddenly, a galloping man approached, and she thrust her whole being towards him.

“Oh, Rudolphe!!!”

“No such thing,” yelled back the footman, and started towards them. “What are you, Emma Bovary? Get back to the railroad tracks, Anna!” And he shooed away the rider.

“Indeed,” thought Anna, spitting out the last sunflower seeds and giving the dog a final shove. “I’m not a fictional character. I’m not French. My name doesn’t start with an “E”. Thus she stood there musing on the subject for a good ten minutes, or perhaps it was thirty, or maybe even thirty three, watching Grishka the footman fish the poor mutt out of the puddle.

About the same time, Ruv Glantzenbaum, a wandering shammis from Podol, was gently grazing the strings of his tallis, rocking all 300 pounds of his dedication to the Almighty on the bench outside the local synagogue.

“All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way... in its own vey,” he mentally corrected himself. He had a happy family once – but now, his precious son, his hope and pride, the bubbaleh of the shtibl, Duvid Yankl, was leaving for America. Not even America, like the rest of the normal people, but the desolate land that borders America somewhere on the north.

“Ah Eibishte,” he cried as he thrust his hands towards heaven with the same desperation as Anna who delved towards the mysterious rider only minutes ago. “*Vat* shall I do? Talk to me, for once. I talk to you everyday of my life, in the synagogue, and when my wife makes me peel the potatoes, and at the market place when these *gnuvin* raise prices on cheese...and not a

word out of you! Tell me what to do, for once, *for once*, Eibishte!”

At that moment a large cloud right above Ruv’s head sighed with derision. It began to cough, unwillingly shaking from side to side, much like the infamous esrog jelly of Mrs. Glantzenbaum.

“Everyone in this world can do *tshuva*, except for Elisha Ben Avuya,” a well-modulated tenor announced.

“But that has nothing to do with me!” Exclaimed the Ruv.

“Nothing?” echoed the bas kol. “Uh oh. Listen Glantzbaum we know what’s going on. Write a letter to your cousin in Paris, and ask him to make a really nice suit for your boy. The kid’s gonna put it on every morning and think of you.”

“But I don’t have a cousin in Paris,” screamed Ruv at the disappearing cloud and the fading well modulated tenor, its accent so characteristic of the disciples of New Jersey Day Schools.

The obscurity of life! Tangled coincidences, uncircumcised circumstances, the cross-dressed delusions of the human race! Who is weaving this sticky web of doubts, uncertainties, and guilt? Why, oh why, I ask the floundering spider in the corner of Anna’s room, as well as the Spider Man, crouching in the closet of a Manhattan high-rise. Why can’t you grow wings, learn how to buzz, and pursue the prey of your destiny in the open air, instead of weaving the slimy circles, and begging the cunning forces of the world to send somebody into the darkness of your corner!

“It’s all about clothing. Ah the materialistic *velt!*” chided the long bearded chossid as he shook his finger at the clouds. His scolding became louder as he saw a young lady strolling by the park near a synagogue.

“All about clothing?” She stopped for a minute, repeating his words. “Maybe, I should order a dress from that new Parisian master, Jacques Glantzenbeux? Betsy Twersky will drool, and Wronsky will surely run back to me.”

“Tworksy? Paris? Glantzenb...” Echoed Ruv, eyes narrowing with the sudden insight.

Two months later, a purple cabriolet halted on the corner of Misanthropoff Street. A man in a black suit stepped out, drowning his maroon loafer in a heap of dry roadside weeds.

“Oh les fleurs du mal,” he said as he shook off some pollen from his shoes. “Je suis tres fatigue...merci beacoup. Merde. Je ne sais pas,” he added, thus completely exhausting the feeble two-semesters-of-French-in-college vocabulary of the author.

The visitor knocked, and a long bearded man opened the door. He was clearly in a meditative trance – eyes half-closed, lips noiselessly spelling out a strange mantra, right hand tightly squeezing a huge head of herring.

“This must be yours,” said the stranger as he handed over a hefty package, six-cornered stars and the half-sour pickles drawn all over it.

“Nah” said the chossid, and quickly added “Nah, Nach, Nachman Meuman.”

“No oh no really man really not,” mentally translated the visitor. “Well then perhaps it’s this one,” he said and gave the man another package, thinner, with an exquisite seal shaped in the form of a squished mosquito. He then bowed and rushed back to the carriage. He had one more delivery to make that day.

When Ruv – for dearest reader, you have surely guessed it was he – descended back to his herring-scented reality, he called out “Duvid Yankl! My son, this is for you. Now you can go off to your Canada.” Duvid Yankl gingerly tore off the seal and gazed at the content. Inside, there was a pair of the world’s finest purple pants, designed for an exquisitely thin female waist, so rarely found in the eighteenth century Jewish shtetl.

“What is this?” he squealed.

When the bulging eyes of Glanzenbaum returned to their orbits, the shammis quickly gathered his thoughts and uttered, “These ummm, these eh, these are the pants of the Mashiah. One day, you’ll have a daughter – perhaps a granddaughter – who will not only fit into these pants, but will also lead the Jewish nation through great wars, into the complete *geulah*... Ok, let’s not get carried away. Let’s just say I guarantee she’ll marry a talmid chochom, or at least a son of shoyhet.”

Who amongst us mortals can guess the stirrings within the great immaculate, if we don’t even know how to spell the word “herbarium”? Who can predict the ethereal paths of the angels, or the color of demons’ underpants? And yet, as I watch the stammering streams in the midst of this grand solemn forest, I shall say with utmost certainty, that divine shoulders have shrugged in a fit of soundless giggles as two figures walked out into the fresh darkness, father’s hand tenderly wrapped around the shoulder of the son, fingertips of their imagination stroking the lusciousness of the bright purple future.

A grotesque figure suddenly appeared in their way – an attractive young woman, dressed in a black bekeshes, five sizes too large.

“They did not understand! Ah, how I hate the province, may this province be forever damned!” exclaimed the woman. “Do you know when the next train to Moscow is?” she asked Glanzenbaum.

“Everybody is going away somewhere,” thought our hero. Her, and my son, their children...” Going away somewhere – all climbing ladders of the railroad tracks across clouds of dust, mountains of smoke. They hope that these tracks lead higher and higher to the heaven of success and pleasure, but they never really raise their heads above the inch-and-a-half reality of our two-dimensional world. None of us molecular masochists will ever know if the tracks will one day suddenly turn upwards, none of us will know if kasha varnichkes will be on the menu of the café-car, if there will ever be a Jewish girl, from Canada, Rio de Janeiro, or Avenue N in Brooklyn, who will fit into Anna Karenina’s purple pants, who will bring the joy of *geulah* into our world, or even to one person – or at least will make that one person laugh, amused by the tremolo of her sarcasm, so typical to our obscure black-bearded ethnicity.

ANOTHER PASSOVER SONG

J. Solis Rosenstein

Had we bumped knuckles
in the shadows
of Elijah's Cup
but not agreed to meet again
Dyanu

Had your smile not been
more intoxicating
than four cups of Mogen David,
or my heart more exposed and
fragile than the middle matza
Dyanu

Had we worked at
being better friends
or figured out that night
that we never could be
Dyanu

But you made a comment, which made me mad
Which started a fight, which drove me away
From the relationship we forged for two months

Now you ask me for the reason I left –
Who knows one?!
I know one!
One is the times you answered
“I hate you.”

I walked to the door
Opened it as if for Elijah
And disappeared *B'Chasee Ha'Lyla*

DIGNITY, LONDON-STYLE

Abigail Rozenberg

There is nobility in the suffering of your fellow man.
Or so we're told. And there must be a purpose.
Bereavement? Sickness? Injury? You see those affected, davening.
Such *Kavana*. Pain packaged with a 'This will make you
A better Jew' stamp. Except of course for those who
Abandon Him. But let's not dwell
On them. We understand, we can't all be so strong.
But what of the woman I saw, hunched on the Tube.
She wore cheap tatty clothes, a bottle in her puffy hand,
And kept tugging her short platinum forelock down
Over her squeezed-shut right eye.
A futile attempt to hide its huge, ugly, purple bruise.
We bore witness to her all-enveloping shame. I saw how
All of us in turn, reserved, English commuters wondered
Who could have inflicted this blow?
Was it her drug dealer, a boyfriend, a husband?
Drudgery and Misery was etched on her every expression.
She couldn't even walk down the platform, would only shuffle.
Find a drop of dignity in her pathetic plight,
Or in the fractal glances of shocked sympathy we
Bestowed In our condescension. Roll up for your grain
Of inspiration from a fat, poor, smelly, beaten up old
Drunk. Roll up, add her to your *t'fillah*.
And what of I who has abused this ugly snapshot?
I pasted in some beauty and framed it in a poem.
I had to. I'm religious.

PUNCH-DRUNK

Matthue Roth

Punch-drunk I listen
to *shiurs* and every word
seems true,

pertinent.
I could live off self-help tapes
and torah stories.

One gives you a clear
goal. The other makes you wonder
why anyone would choose this

life: Rules, invocations and
responsibilities to this invisible
dude. *Korach*

got swallowed by the desert
and I never get to watch Saturday
morning cartoons.
But drunk off punch I listen
and every word is gospel,
even honoring my parents

whose house I still can't really eat in.
They cook milk and meat
on the same plates.
But at the rabbi's house
all the shot glasses are kosher
and all the words are on fire too,

slamming into my lifestyle
with the untrimmed force
of Samson the Judge
and punch-drunk, I listen,
waiting for the buzz
to hit.

CHAIM GRADE'S THE YESHIVA

Chaim Strauchler

Orthodox Jewish educators often seek to hide works that demystify pre-war Europe and that create full characters that grapple with questions of faith and desire. Assimilated Jews fail to identify with characters torn between their doubt and the traditional communities in which they breathe. Thus, a work like Chaim Grade's The Yeshiva has fallen from the popular canon of Jewish literature. Sadly, The Yeshiva can now only be found in the bins of used bookstores and the stacks of public libraries in old Jewish neighborhoods.

Modeled after the novels of Tolstoy, The Yeshiva describes a concept through the prism of the people who create, change, and are changed by it. In this case, that concept takes form not in states moving towards war, but in the rise and fall of a small institution of learning. The story begins with the yeshiva's founder, Tsemah Atlas, his recruitment of new students, and the opening of the yeshiva's doors. It ends with the yeshiva's failure and hints towards the paths of those students and teachers who leave it behind. Nevertheless, the novel does not address the yeshiva as an institution per se; in fact, it never gives us the yeshiva's name. It tells the stories of the people whose interactions, dreams, and faults become the life-blood of an institution, the yeshiva.

At the root of this novel lies a debate for the hearts of young students. Tsemah Atlas, a young charismatic ravaged by doubt yet committed to the musar ideal, recruits a band of young teens to join his fledgling musar yeshiva. A musar yeshiva, an academy of Talmud learning with students ranging in age from their pre-teens to mid-twenties, focuses much attention on the ethical development of its students. This story concentrates on the development of Atlas and his students as it charts their movements through an un-romanticized Lithuania. It captures personalities wounded by the unrelenting desire to perfect an imperfect human nature, as the author engages in the debate - "can man truly remove evil from within himself?"

At the center of this dispute stand Atlas and a character named Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover. With vivid and poetic brilliance, Grade sculpts the inner turmoil at the heart of the musarnik. Allow me to delight you with a paragraph.

On Friday night the electric lamps and the lit candles on the lectern flamed with a tremulous gold that was not completely different from the light of midweek; but the heavens did not change, the stars in the sky did not shine any differently in honor of Sabbath. Even Maimonides, Tsemah thought, admits that the infinity of the stars was not created for the benefit of earth or man. But in this world and in our holy place of worship the quiet of praying glowed on everyone's face - on the scholar's and on the rich man's by the eastern wall, as well as on the pauper's and on the common workingman's sitting behind the pulpit. Praying revealed something dormant within everyone. It manifested itself clearly after a secret life deep within, as if the worshipper had shouted down into a deep well and heard his bizarre echo resounding from the depths. If the worshipper was a man of heightened piety, the prayer overwhelmed his body and spirit, his life and soul. All his limbs trembled with ecstatic joy. But even when the

worshiper was a simple sort who prayed for health and livelihood, for his wife and children - such a man derived joy from the prayer itself. After the service he felt purified, like the sky cleared of rain clouds. But he, Tsemah mused, was not like that. He had never really wept at prayers, for he considered weeping a kind of passion - he was disgusted by the man who indulged himself in the tears of self-pity. From his lips came no songs of praise or thanksgiving. He knew only one melody, the melancholy musar melody which cut pieces of flesh from one's body. Instead of feeling joy of soul at prayers, he tormented himself with analysis of soul. He often felt that his soul also yearned and trembled to worship God with joy. But his soul was suffocated as if by prison walls, with his constant admonition of himself and others. While he chastised his pupils, he also envied their daily singing at morning prayers, "With abounding love hast thou loved us, O Lord our God."

Atlas is a tragic hero torn between faith, eros, and reason. His commitment to the perfection of his soul and that of his students rattles his body and mind as he confronts his bestial desires and his demand for unrelenting truth.

Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover challenges the wisdom of engaging in this war with the self. Atlas is an absolutist - his commitment to truth pushes him to hurt both himself and others as his own fire slowly consumes his soul. Kosover proposes a different model for religious development.

"... constant looking for faults in oneself and in others can occasionally bring the faults to the surface. The bad traits lie within us, at times knotted up and dormant. If you touch them, you provoke them, and they stick their heads out and begin biting like angry little beasts. Sometimes you can influence a man to improve by considering him a better man. Then he strives to show that he is indeed a better man. But if a sensual or irascible man notices that you see through him, and especially if you provoke him, he no longer strives to overcome his flaws and makes no effort to appear to be a better person. And frequently a person can persuade himself to improve by seeking virtues, not faults, in himself. Everyman is a village of good and bad Jews, and of many good and bad inclinations. So we first have to weigh when it is proper to start a quarrel with oneself and when not. Sometimes the greatest fault is - looking for faults in yourself."

At the fringes of Atlas' emotional cataclysm sit his students with their youthful dreams and pubescent desires. Central among them is the author's own alter ego Chaykl Vilner. Chaykl's love for beauty pulls him away from his traditional upbringing. Reb Avraham-Shaya, appreciating the danger to this boy's spirit inflicted by the musar yeshiva, attempts to draw him to a more positive vision of religious life - yet even Reb Avraham-Shaya fails to attract Chaykl from a beautiful world of forbidden desires.

Interestingly, Grade models many of his characters after historical figures - some of them central in the development of Jewish life and thought in the Twentieth Century - including the author himself. Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover is a fictionalization of Abraham Yeshaya Korolitz, more commonly known as the Chazon Ish, one of the most critical halachic thinkers and deciders of the twentieth century. *The Yeshiva* and its sympathetic portrayal of Reb Avraham-Shaye shed light on the kind-hearted sage and place in historical context his opposition to the Navardok musar tradition, a significant if not explicit component of his philosophical work, *Emuna U'bitachon*.

While the question of man's religious search for perfection remains pertinent, a "Narvadok" school of musar with its demand for imperfection's purgation from within exists today in books and history alone. Built on multiple extended debates, almost like a page of Talmud, Grade's story presents characters in personal and intellectual confrontation with each other, thereby invigorating the story with ideas and narrative tension. The story presents a critical, though at times beautiful, portrait of life amongst the common men and women of Lithuania, their joys, their disputes, their loves, and their poverty. While Grade doesn't focus on the disappearance of this world, the events of the Holocaust and the destruction of this entire culture make this work a memorial to a way of life that went up in Nazi smoke. What remain timeless are characters torn by love, faith, beauty, and doubt.

Grade takes his time weaving his story - the book is quite long and the plot development shifts from character to character. This movement grants the reader a treasure trove of well-developed sub-characters, yet it does not present one central personality in conflict to give the reader a clear sense of beginning and end. Grade wrote these stories after having abandoned a life of traditional observance. Nevertheless, the primary characters of his novels and stories are immersed in the traditional world of his youth. While he left Jewish traditional practice, he never left behind his love for Jewish traditional life and the beautiful characters who inhabit it.

In his short story "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseynner," Grade explains the importance of Jewish identity to Jewish writers after the Holocaust.

... .. what has changed for me, and for all Jewish writers. Our love for Jews has become deeper and more sensitive. I don't renounce the world, but in all honesty I must tell you we want to incorporate into ourselves the hidden inheritance of our people's strength, so that we can continue to live. I plead with you, do not deny our share in the inheritance. However, loudly we call out to heaven and demand an accounting, our outcry conceals a quiet prayer for the Divine Presence, or for the countenance of those destroyed in the flames, to rest on us alienated Jews.

MASHAL

Dena Weiss

She leans over the text
her shirt collar loosens
and her bra strap slides down her arm
unsuited is she to the shackles
of her womanhood
she *shuckles* and giggles
the men shake their beards
that strip of satin resting
where the leather strap
of her hidden tefillin
would rest
if she were of those who proclaim
shelo asani
instead she fixes herself up and
marvels at how God's will and man's will coincide
in a way that leaves her will
overruled.

ART AND CHASSIDUS: LiVe PRODUCTIONS OF CROWN HEIGHTS

Jake Marmer

Any outbursts of artistic leanings in the traditional community are much revered and talked about on Mima'amakim. While we often decry the lack of such outbursts, it turns out that there's more action out there than we could have imagined. Let me introduce you to *Light in Vessels (LiVe)* - an artistic organization operating in, no less, Crown Heights.

"*Light in the Vessels* is a well-known Arizal-based symbol that stands for bringing the light of spirituality into the shapes of this world," explains Orah Chaya Bitton, founder and director of the project. And so, for the past three years, the "light" has been brought down straight to the Lighthouse Center - located on Albany Street in Brooklyn, blocks away from the illustrious "Seven-Seventy" - in the shapes of multi-media based projects, arts festivals, Rosh Chodesh open mics, and more.

"Seeing the Thunder" has been *LiVe's* most ambitious project to date. Over the summer, six curators and a group of students (aged fifteen to twenty-three) have gathered to workshop and explore such major religious issues as "Divine Knowledge: what does it mean to know G-d," and "Man in the Image of G-d." For seven weeks, participants brainstormed, gathered the sources, and brooded over their personal experiences. Having laid out the concept, they then filmed imagery and symbols that corresponded to their conclusions. As these films were screened, workshops were organized for discussions and further idea exchange.

For "About Time," another of *LiVe's* projects, groups created collages and paintings in the form of clocks to illustrate the theme of the Jewish months. The annual festival of Simchas Bais HaShoeva features a wide showcase of various artists, and, every month, there is a mini-festival in the form of open-mic Rosh Chodesh events.

The idea for this organization occurred to Bitton six years ago, as she was teaching the 7th grade class at Bais Rivkah, a local yeshiva for girls. Bitton worked with her students to build a website exploring the Lubavitcher Rebbe's famous extrapolation on *Shir HaShirim*, "*Basi LeGani*."

Much of the material and ideas used in *LiVe's* workshops are based on *Chassidic* teachings. "*Chassidus* is so artistic it's just hard to resist," says Bitton, referring to the highly metaphoric nature of the teachings. However, *LiVe* is open to anyone with artistic interests and basic knowledge of Torah Judaism. In fact, according to Orah Chaya, much of the core crowd that participates in *LiVe's* projects are people "on the edge." Not surprisingly, it is people who are looking for answers to questions outside of the set qualms of the Beis Midrash or a yeshiva setting that are most likely to be drawn to arts and technology. As the organization expands and more interested participants trickle in, more curators are in demand. *LiVe* is searching for more volunteers to facilitate the workshop sessions - future Jewish educators or simply individuals interested in artistic exploration of the religious concepts.

The staff recently choreographed a dance that elaborates a Purim *maymer* (extrapolation) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in which Mordechai is compared to the Sun and Esther to the Moon. The symbolism expands to cite Haman as the darkness that precedes the light of the sun into the world, just as the final *geula* will result from the both physically and spiritually ominous times. These are the ideas that were expressed in the special Purim dance program showcased at the Lighthouse. One thing is certain, however: I will never get to see it. The events are strictly separated; such are the rules of Crown Heights, both outside and within the artistic sector.

MAR'EH KOHEN

Chaim Kagedan

There he is
Eyes tearing
From the smoke of the *ketoret*
From the emotion
Of atoning for the sins
Of an entire nation.

There he is
Eyes laughing
At the euphoria
Of completing the *avodah*
At the ecstasy
Of standing before
The *Shechinah*

There he is
Eyes loving
His people
As they wait
In pregnant silence
Till the euphonious cries
Of Hallelu-ya surge
When they see him

There he is
There G-d is
Reflected in the
Mar'eh Kohen

THE CITY IS GETTING OLDER

Suzanne Selengut

Climb in the chariot Ahmed.
You roll down the hilly road awhile in your wagon
In your path – a polar dog
a white barking beast
I knew him long ago
He was once an old Jewish pretzel seller

Amidst soapy smelling pilgrims looking lost
Giant White Doughy people
with heavy tongues
wearing unfitting baseball caps
Come loaf with me at the elbow crook of the old city in the shady,
cool spot tween the gate and the wall

There Moussa sits on a rock ledge watching smiling middle-aged Jews
view the distant new city
breath in the air and out the slim satisfaction of well-trimmed forests
and orange-rimmed roofs
A moment of progress in this ominous cobble-stoned place

While prancing through down ramps
goose-stepping
marching to the holy sepulcher of this and that
Byzantine structures

The red-faced men of different husky voiced stare the same hungry way
leer at the girl's dark legs
Shall we give the charming beggar child a shekel?
We have only Deutschmarks left.

Here it is hard to know what is aged and what is holy
My name is Bonnie
We come from such a different culture.
Do you mind if I ask you some questions?
Do you get annoyed when people ask you?
Such a different culture
So we're neighbors over at the Mormon University
Do you mind? Do you mind if I say...

Why do they sway when they pray?

A Jew. Oh you!

What is that again?

Macaroon

Let's try it again.

Bac-la-va

Ma-Ca-Roon

Why don't the women sing in prayer too?

Here's a chair Shani

Be careful

Watch Tatie

Stretch your neck over the Western Wall

Past the goyim - way up there

His arms round the other boys

white strings flying

Round and round and round

But Mommy, he's flying!

Sha Shani Sha.

Saturday evening, the sun of the holy whatever finally dipping

A bride to be, skinny barretted, long skirt blowing in the breeze

On the newly re-done porch of the Dan Pearl Hotel

Staring out at the cool mystery

The plain, regular life tides of an old place

Think with me if you will

of a million years of such brides

of a thousand other perched women

watching a young man in a wagon roll silently down a hill

Listen, if you can to the whispered soundtrack

Climb into the chariot, my bride

Climb in.

ONE EVENING

Dovid Statman

first date

ding

breathe deep

dong

hel-

hi

-lo

It begins

remote locks have killed

chivalry

Joke

Ha

Supping & Conversing

She waits her turn

and sometimes cuts

in line

parting

Thank you, I had a nice time

Yes, the beef marsala was good

Habayta (homeward)

pumped radio

provides release

speed

Debriefing

Was she too fat?

No, she's very pretty

So what's the problem?

FOR MOTHERS' MILK

Dena Weiss

I was raised on Diet Coke;
transparent bubbles
in tight black skirts
simchadancing down my esophagus
Hava Nagilah
and I'm just another sprained ankle
fractured link
in patent leather heels
sitting this one out
and cursing my brittle bones and Nutrasweet
"neither nutritious
nor sweet...
discuss."
ModernOrthodox
AmericanZionist
FeministJew...
discuss.
I awake emaciated, caffeinated
saccharin bittersweet
It causes cancer in us labrats
it cost my Bubby her right breast
though Channah argues that if she's not nursing
they're useless anyway
God was convinced
so I guess my Bubby could afford it
and so can I
if just for the taste of it

THE STRANGELY FUNNY WORLD OF GARY SHTEYNGART'S THE RUSSIAN DEBUTANTE'S HANDBOOK

Suzanne Selengut

I first heard of The Russian Debutante's Handbook (Riverhead Books: 2002) at a reading organized by the Jewish Week in memory of the victims of September 11th. Such seasoned New York Jewish writers as Daphne Merkin and Cynthia Ozick read from their works, and it was the usual chicken soup and Seinfeld Jewish identity crisis. The name and spirit of Woody Allen was invoked, constantly causing me to be both annoyed and bored. But then, 29-year old Gary Shteyngart, Russian American author of the Handbook, took to the podium and began to read from his novel. The mood changed instantly. Here was sharp, funny prose, creating a world of immigrant angst and postmodern Jewish humor that had me literally laughing out loud. I thought of Nabakov with his black humor and Issac Bashevis Singer for his flights of fancy. I said to my roommate, Atara, who was sitting next to me laughing as well, "I have to buy this book."

I did buy it. Hardcover and expensive as it was, it was well worth the money and the trip to Barnes and Noble. The novel follows Vladimir Grishkin, a hero for our times. Grishkin is a 25-year old who immigrated to New York from Soviet Russia at the age of 13. Known to his parents as "the little failure," Grishkin avoids law school, preferring instead to dream unambitiously at his desk at a non-profit organization and sleep with his Jewish dominatrix girlfriend, Challah. His major complaint is his sense of inferiority rooted in his status as an immigrant and a Jew. His mother, the looming presence in his life (of course) reinforces the idea by pushing him "to succeed" and urging him to stop "walking like a Jew."

Grishkin soon meets a gentile, intellectual girlfriend and begins to move in a new social sphere. He dumps Challah and his ethnic, misfit friends and feels for the first time that he can surmount his immigrant persona. While Grishkin is undergoing these changes, the novel takes a surrealistic turn in the form of the Fan Man, a rich, eccentric Russian immigrant that Grishkin meets at his job. The old man wants to become an American citizen and in return for Grishkin's help, he offers to fund Grishkin's trip to the fictional Eastern European country of Prava (Prague, of course), where Grishkin will work for the man's nephew, a top Russian mob boss.

Grishkin's life in Prava is the stuff of comedy routines. He woos the Soviet-style "biznessmen," becomes the right hand man of mob boss, Groundhog, and pursuing his mob mission; infiltrates the expatriate community in Prava and involves them in a series of pyramid schemes. This gives author Shteyngart the perfect platform for deconstructing today's Eastern European art scene, where teams of Western hipsters have descended on places like Prague, the Paris of the East, in order to gain inspiration from the locale. In Prava, Grishkin finds that his sense of gnawing inferiority is lessened. Here he becomes a true part of the art scene - hobnobbing with budding poets while still living a separate life as a top Russian mobster. Although he identifies with the Westerners, even finding a girlfriend in the salt-of-the-earth American, Morgan, Grishkin is actually using his new friends to make money and live a lavish life. Shteyngart seems to be

suggesting that Grishkin too is being used. The Western artists are in some way using the painful experience of Eastern Europeans for their own psychological needs.

Grishkin's life in Prava, which begins to unravel in unpredictable ways, forces him to question not just his Russian and American personas but also his identity as a Jew. Grishkin must deal with the anti-Semitism of modern neo-Nazis. He must also question how truly accepted he has been in the circles where he has succeeded. Sadly, Grishkin's Jewish identity is based solely on his feelings of abuse and victimization. While his selfhood as a Russian and an American is explored, his Judaism is a footnote, discussed only as a name, a surface without meaning.

Reader beware, there is no Oprah-like "aha moment." Shteyngart is far too cynical to wrap Grishkin's life up neatly or to force him into a moral corner. The whole fun of the book is in its inherent freedom and irreverent tone. While sometimes slightly raw or unclear, Shteyngart's prose is full of vigor. It is the work of a young author in all the best senses.

It's difficult to say how the book made me feel. It intrigued me, triggered me, forced me to slow down and concentrate. The prose is thick and full of allusions to movies, books and cultural concepts. It is replete with cynicism. One can imagine Shteyngart writing this while chuckling at all the serious little readers trying to glean a simple moral. He is not so much telling a story as issuing a constant challenge to the reader. Are you smart enough to understand what I really mean, he is asking.

As a reader, I want to say "I understand you." But in a way, I don't. Not completely. Yet in a world of collapsing super-powers and blurry ethnic and religious lines, a lack of clarity makes a lot of sense.

GIZA¹

Neil Tow

The Great Pyramid at Giza
reveals her wonders to fresh eyes.
She has weathered the waves of sand
once marked by the footprints of slaves
going north to freedom,
later ploughed by Rommel's swastika-tanks, the reincarnations of Pharaohs.
She challenges you to climb up the aged walls
with a faith-puzzle written in hieroglyphs of ash-
carried here by the River Styx and deposited in the
eternal stone skin of the great Nile-watcher.
I sit in her shade
that softens the bite of the sandstorm
and I am still faced by the six hundred thousand puzzles marked on each stone.
Now a rustling, bells swinging from a camel's neck,
Bedouins leading them by the bit.
"Curious one, turn toward me again,
and look closer."
I see the Nile sparkling in a daydream of billowing white sails.
"This is beauty," she whispers.
I feel the water overflowing the banks of my soul.
"This is happiness."
She blocks the sun and I rest at her feet
And she speaks on the wind
Gently agitating the palm branches so that they see their reflections anew
each time they look down into the water-mirror.

¹ This poem is dedicated to a centenarian Holocaust survivor named, Giza.

TO BEAR FRUIT

Rachel Fleischer

earth at eye-level in my fleshy hourglass
opens jalapeno hot eyelids
like Lion's Gates:
exposing ancestral virgins to rebel whores.
martyrs and mortar and a mirage make
ladies out of women and women
make water in the desert.
today's tethered sisters boil water
while Windex scrubs lipstick from the ceiling,
gates close like a never-opened book (that houses heresy for truth)
the apostles play god and women play man.
oh the years of sun! changing Bethlehem's sand to pomegranate seeds,
slipping through my body's slim neck:
definitely.

WOMAN IN THE TRUNK

Chaim Rosenblum

I am the woman in the trunk,

G-d comforts me with dreams.

I am not afraid.

I am strong in mind and spirit.

You can test me.

If Eisav can be the mountain, I can be the rain.

Reveal to the world, your perfect secret.

But too late I am released,

and the only thing to do is dance to my freedom.

Did I ask for you to notice me?

Shechem is the sky.

Alas, no place to hide.

He seduces like rain,

removing my cover,

leaving me drenched and gasping.

Please G-d, let this be your will.

POPPY SEEDS

Steven Sher

Scattered on our tablecloth,
they drop from the torn *challah*.
An army surrounds Jericho, that dish
of sour pickles. A second wave routs
Og, an olive from my daughter's plate.
Amalekites, the biggest crumbs,
pick off the poppy strays.
A chocolate stain, first plague,
is blood. Salt spill, Lot's wife.
Guess the Sedrah. I arrange mine
as the multitude departing Egypt;
Moses, a lone sesame, leading the way.
The cloud, my wife's silk scarf,
guards them by day. The fire
(candles) burning at the table's end
protects the camp by night.
Now for God to split the sea,
sink Pharaoh's chariots, a line of peas,
and drown his men, stray caraways—
one dash from my son's glass of soda.

PARANOIA

Nathan Kaufman

“Wait! We can’t stop here! This is bat country!” – Raoul Duke, in Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

We were somewhere west of Nashville, and Adam was worried. We were moving through territory where the natives weren’t known for hospitality toward outsiders, particularly Jews like Zach and me. “Be careful, just be careful,” he kept saying. We wore oversized knitted “srugis” and only stopped to shower once, in Utah, on that whole burn to the west coast. So, with our long hair and beards, we hoped to pass for a couple of dirty hippies instead of Christ-killers going through the Bible Belt. Not that they’d take much kindlier to us as such, but we figured outside New York we’d be better off looking like anything other than Orthodox Jews.

Adam drove into a station to fill up. Through the haze I don’t recall what chain it was; we preferred Texaco, but it was probably some mom and pop type you won’t find another of anywhere. And it didn’t matter. There was nothing but us three and G-d out there, so we took whatever we could find on those long empty stretches of interstate highway. We’d heard as many stories of people stranded, broken down or out of gas, as we had of people in little Hondas getting jackknifed by big-rigs and killed instantly. So what was important was that the place had gas, and, nearly as important, a decent food mart.

Zach got the pump started and followed Adam in for some food. I stayed in the back seat, resting. Didn’t feel like eating. Wasn’t much kosher in any of these places anyway, and what was there, was junk. As Zach walked through the door of the place, somebody came out from behind the building. Baggy jean quarter pants, wife-beater, Aryan Nation tattoos, completely shaven scalp. Skinhead. Guy saw me, leaned against the wall and started staring. I looked away, hoping he’d ignore me. No big deal anyway, I thought. Three of us and one of him. But I kept glancing back occasionally through the corner of my eye, and he was still staring right at me. A couple minutes later Zach came back out with a bag of chips. He threw it into the passenger seat and I said, “Dude’s starin’ at us; it’s creepin’ me out.” “Relax. We’re about to leave anyway,” Zach said. A dark beat-up old car pulled up to the skinhead just then, and he leaned close to talk to the driver, jerking his thumb back toward us. Ignore the neo-nazis, I thought. You’re just a harmless hippy, not a miserly money-lender with aspirations for world domination. They won’t hurt you. Zach walked around our car to the pump. The skinhead walked around the other car to the passenger door. Zach put the nozzle back. No, he did not want a receipt. The other car swung around and stopped right in front of us, blocking our way forward and our exit. My eyebrows raised and I started scanning for other avenues of escape. The skinhead was hanging out the passenger window. He yelled, in a southern drawl, “ey! you wanna bah some acid, mahn?” Zach turned around. “Pardon?” The skinhead repeated, “Do ya wanna bah some acid?” “Uhhh... no,” said Zach. “Wayll, how ‘bout some shrooms?” “Nah.” Zach smiled. “No, thank you.” We’ve already got what we need. We’re done here.

SHALOM GOODBYE

Jake Marmar

When I was eight,
I had a dream about a supermarket.
I must have seen it in the movies,
Or through exulted eyes of my friends
In Israel,
because you know where I come from there weren't any
The shining ice
cream fridges,
Dim glow
of salami stacks –
I didn't even recognize him, first.
Wheeling a cart,
casual day tripper
Long hair
Small round
glasses glasses,
Dressed in the Sgt Pepper suit —
John Lennon!!!
He said, "Shalom."
"Shalom," I echoed. "Ma nishma?"
"Beseder. Ani medaber ivrit." He told me, "Veata?"
No trace of Liverpudlian intonations. He's really from Petah Tikvah, I thought -
that's where my friends have moved to.
"Ani rotze lilmod ivrit beulpan." I said,
and woke up,
I guess because
back then
I didn't know
any other
Hebrew words...

PINEAPPLE

Michael Berger

I eat pale yellow and contemplate
whether Joseph became holy
for refusing to eat the bread
his master ate, and how well
he must have known that men
can't live on bread alone.

FINGER TIPS

Chaim Rosenblum

The watch beeps.
The soul that ascended
to other worlds the night before,
sifts back into the dormant body.
It is a new morning,
dehiscing with an uncollected hue.
Everything is holy,
except for the finger tips,
receptacles to death's residue.
They can be washed.