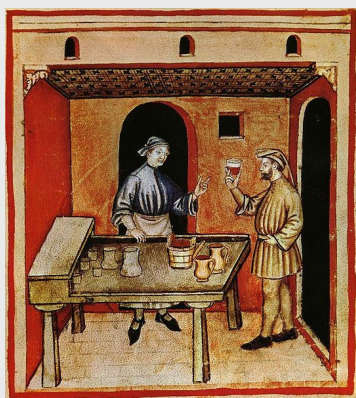


# On Strangers and Wine



Poems from the 2018  
Voices Israel Nahariya workshop



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**THANK YOU!**

**RUMI MORKIN**

**To Susan and Wendy -**

To both of you and others too,  
who were involved in any way  
in organizing Sunday's "do" -  
I thank you for a lovely day!

The stimulating presentations  
offering us "food for thought"  
on immigration adaptations,  
life and love with problems fraught,

and Medieval odes to wine,  
that Spanish Jewish poets wrote,  
propounding homage to the vine  
to "banish sorrow" (quote unquote).

This meeting, deep down underground  
where inspiration filled the air;  
the writing sessions - not a sound  
was heard, as pencils scribbled there.

Like-minded people met together  
nosh and talk, ideas suggested;  
add to this the sunny weather -  
all well worth the time invested.

Rumi Morkin  
5.3.18

## ANNA KRAKOVICH

### Stranger

The change of elements from mother's liquids  
into the stony earth  
with something in between, and I mean life,  
accounts for a basic will for transformation.  
The periods are short,  
though they provide some time  
for turmoil of the wars and subtlety of peace.  
While iffy, more than once into one's life  
a stranger comes and goes,  
and this is I.

## ANNA KRAKOVICH

### Estrangement

Let me go, Mother Russia,  
Let us go!  
I am not Russian for you anyway,  
no matter how hard I try.  
Shalom, my new country, shalom,  
I've shed enough tears,  
I brought you the dearest, my beautiful child.  
What do you say? I'm not Jewish enough?  
And you want me to pay?  
I agree. I have nowhere to go.  
The cost? By the flesh?  
Don't play Shylock, my dear, I love you!  
But my blood and flesh went down the drain  
as I barely survived the terror bombing  
and the hospital became my home for more than a year.  
There I wasn't estranged...  
Our debts are all paid, I said to my smart and honest child  
but she went to the Army during the Intifada.  
Then she said "I'm fed up, Mom, we're living a lie. I am leaving".  
And she did. 15 years ago.  
Now she lives in the UK with a fine British husband.  
She talks Hebrew with her little son  
and Russian with me.

## ANNA KRAKOVICH

### Wine

In vino veritas?  
No, nothing of the kind.  
Reality and truth  
escape the wits  
in the wine vapours.  
Well, if they turn poetic,  
won-der-ful.  
Effectiveness of drugs  
was also proved in canon:  
"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan..."  
the garden-river paradise  
all built of vapours.



## ELI BEN-JOSEPH

### The In-gatherer

I'm foreign on the soil I leave,  
for I'm displaced where I have roamed  
but I'll be well and breathe with ease  
in that bright land where I will go.

Though wind blows cloudy skies about,  
though I must travel ways remote,  
green woods and meadows can be found  
within the land my brethren hold.

I'm going home where rest my mothers.  
I know of this from many a tale.  
My neighbors will uplift each other  
all round the land to which I fare.

I'm going home where sleep my fathers.  
I'll settle down and long no more.  
I'll wade across a storied river,  
then find my feet upon the shore.

## CHAIM BEZALEL

### The Preacher

***“All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.” - Ecclesiastes 3:20***

I

It doesn't matter where we're from  
We're all going to the same place,  
Heaven, Sheol, or Elysium  
Six feet under or outer space

Which makes me wonder as I wander  
Like John Jacob Niles in his song  
To meditate on “over yonder”  
Or just try to tell what's right and wrong.

I'm goin' home to meet my mother  
I'm goin' home to meet my dad  
I'm goin' home to meet my sister  
Or maybe just remember the good times we had.

II

All is vain the preacher is sayin'  
What do you gain from your sweat and strain  
Don't wrack your brain, it's all in vain,  
Too much wisdom will only bring pain.

Once you had your fill of wine, women, and song  
Preach me the difference between right and wrong.

## CHAIM BEZALEL

Think you'll live forever, that's insanity  
We share the same fate with all humanity  
So best to keep silent from inanity  
And also to refrain from profanity.

Pie in the sky or mud in your eye  
No use worryin' 'bout the by and by.

Nothing is new under the sun  
When all is said and done it's all been said and done.  
Enjoy your work, try and have some fun  
And always remember two are better than one

III

I'm goin' home to meet my brother  
'Cept I never had a brother, always wanted one.

## **EDIT GAVRIELY**

### **Days of Yore No More**

those were the days  
perhaps  
they were, past tense

here and now – some of past  
passed on – lessons to be learned,  
perhaps

but focus currently  
on today and looking forward

for better paths to be paved

## EDIT GAVRIELY

### heading home

"home is where the heart is"  
so the saying goes

forty years long my sister  
wanted to know when I was coming home

a few short years ago she  
decided to come on aliyah

home to me

some months ago, aliyah plans abruptly interrupted,  
a different calling came

hospitalized and failing, as a nurse  
named Charlotte, our mother's name,  
cared for her, my sister went home  
to Ma

may they rest in peace

## EDIT GAVRIELY

### **l'chaim**

a simple silver goblet  
engraved with my grandfather's name  
buried in my mother's single suitcase  
carefully guarded on the train  
as she escaped from Germany  
on Kristallnacht

years resting in my childhood home in New York  
eventually brought by me to Haifa  
to grace our Shabbat table each week for Kiddush

## **EZRA BEN-MEIR**

### **A Weekly Wine Poem**

Swirl me round to spin my brain  
and let me fall into its hypnotic thrall again  
For surely I am under its spell  
as though in dance I feel so well.

But you must as my experiences talk  
that never but once did my limbs fail to walk  
so with a thought of how I may fall  
in the dream that my cup when emptied  
makes me seem so tall.

So when I bless the Sabbath bride with wine  
and sit with my family to dine  
the song of the Kiddush blessing rings aloud  
and thoughts of my wife and family make me proud.

## EZRA BEN-MEIR

### A Personal Journey

That's me  
different lands and languages  
after a bomb dropped in WWII blasted my home  
thrust me from Liverpool to Wales  
to be treated to the gravy of the hog.

Warned by my mother -no pig meat please-  
to the midwife of the village  
who took my twin brother and me  
the last from the train platform  
no-one wanting two evacuees of seven years old.

My grandfather  
renown for his smetana and cream cheese  
enabled my reading of Hebrew  
though without the understanding  
of the Bible language  
forever bred within me a contract of love  
the music of its vowels and consonants  
until each morning I read them with a dictionary  
those precious 20 minutes each morning  
at the dawn of day.

It was only some thirty years later I learnt  
that my name Ezra, not my birth name  
was my grandmother' father's name.



## EZRA BEN-MEIR

### A Jewish Story of Survival

I

My grandfather  
in the Russian Army as a private soldier  
walking along a river  
saved an officer from drowning  
who then had him transferred to the local Russian band  
to play the clarinet.

"But I don't know how to play the clarinet"  
my grandfather exclaimed.

"No problem" the officer replied  
"You'll learn".

II

One of my sons and a grandson of a second son  
both in computer HiTech.

III

In the tortuous Middle East of today  
many refugees sought Israel  
as a salvation from their mother country.  
Needing to guard against the swamp of life  
into which we could be emerged  
a tall fence/wall  
just as in many other countries  
stands sentinel of redemption.

## IRIS DAN

### Our Dear Lord in the Attic

Came a time  
when they became refugees  
in their own country  
the Old Church of Amsterdam  
empty and desolate  
the walls stripped of paintings  
the stone idols broken

Jesus and his mother  
fled to an attic  
where the familiar  
comforts of Catholicism  
the icons and the organ  
the perpetual drama  
found a kind of stage

Somewhere on the stairs  
the bed of the priest  
like all Dutch beds of the time  
concealed in a cupboard  
I fingered the straw mattress  
felt the restless tossing  
of the hunted animal

Not far away another attic  
from another era  
where two families hid  
where a girl dared to hope  
not far behind  
the history of the Church  
its smell of burned flesh

and still my pain  
it is my business  
to hurt with those  
forced to pray in secret

## IRIS DAN

### Parenthesis

Can you ever speak  
without censoring your words  
without being speared  
by judgmental glances?  
The hell is the others, Sartre said,  
and loneliness is also the hell.  
From one hell to the other  
you travel wondering where  
they know your language

A parenthesis sometimes opens  
filled with sounds and smells  
and with clear understanding  
a child smiles or a bird chirps  
or your body is the right place  
to be in the world.

Until the parenthesis closes  
you seem on the way home.

## IRIS DAN

### The Culture of Wine

you sit with the other  
your cups clink together  
the wine whirls and splashes  
in the colors of seasons  
the other tells you his stories  
sings you his songs

the golden or ruby-colored  
bubbly or honey-like liquid  
pours in satiny or velvety ribbons  
like a chalice you open  
for the seeds of the stories  
for the seeds of the songs

is there happiness greater  
than feeling the stirring  
of your own nascent stories  
a moment more stellar  
than feeling the bouquet  
of old wine in a new cup

and what is more bitter  
than cups shattered in anger  
wine spilled on the table  
drowning stories and songs  
drowning you and the other  
in rivers of blood

## JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

### Stranger in My Home

Somehow I've always felt  
I don't belong here

Born into an English Christian background  
schoolfellows said that Jews had horns  
and that the Jews had murdered Jesus

So after the war we left for Africa  
where a language sounding like German  
was taught in school  
I mispronounced names of people and places  
the other kids just smirked and laughed

At seventeen I went to Israel  
expecting finally to feel at home  
but after living half a lifetime  
watching how different races treat each other  
how bearded scholars avoid the draft  
how politicians twist all meaning

I'm still a stranger in my home

## JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

### Wayfaring Stranger

I'm just an unbelieving stranger  
wandering through these bible tales  
I've got no views, I'm no game changer  
I drink in bars and sleep in Jails

My father was a loud-mouthed critic  
And so I wandered from his home  
I didn't really feel Semitic  
nor like the good old Church of Rome

But when I traveled over Jordan  
and climbed Gilboa's rugged hills  
I suddenly let go of boredom  
perhaps Israel could cure my ills?

And so I wrote to my dear mother  
leave that old sod and come to me  
we'll settle down in Petach Tikva  
or in Michmoret by the sea

(or in Eilat that's duty free)

## JOHNMICHAEL SIMON

### Embrace the Moment

Come fill the glass, forget the past  
never say never, tonight will last forever  
my love's a dove tap-tapping at your window  
open the sash, let wine bouquet your pillow

Life's far too short, so before sun comes  
brushing away the darkness of the evening  
come fill the glass again, our blood's now rushing  
through our veins, hearts and limbs – now heaving

## KAILA SHABAT

### Kiddush Dreams

At the laden festive Shabbat table,  
from a mottled glass Kiddush cup,  
I drink a few sips of the fruit of the vine.

I enjoy the ritual, blessing the ruby wine  
but shortly after, fall into a dream-filled  
sleep that lasts until sunrise on Shabbat.



## KAILA SHABAT

### Lesson in History

Baffled, we contemplate the conundrum of the Holocaust; the millions of innocent souls tortured beyond imagining.

What was God telling us? If we believe He chose Israel to be a Light unto the Nations, is such suffering a part of His Plan for us?

We witnessed the rise of a 'Master Race' who contrived to render Europe 'Juden Rein,' depriving Jewish citizens of their possessions and the right to exist. Our bodies and souls were exposed to the inherent evil in man – to the apex of his inhumanity.

From the ashes of the Holocaust the State of Israel was reborn, yet only two decades later, in the elation of victory and unfamiliar sense of power following the Six Day War, we forgot its lesson.

We did not accept to live side by side with our neighbour, to love him as it is bid, thus compelling our young soldiers to occupy and subdue another Nation with the ugly manifestations that entails.

It cannot be the Intention that we subdue and enslave another people as Pharaoh did to us. A people is defined by its history, language and borders but history is not static and borders change. To achieve peace in our time, we must respect each other's right to live in the Land, side by side.

This is our ancient homeland. We return to it wiser by over two thousand years of history: not to repeat the brutality we endured during our exile but to show the way to a new reality.

## RUMI MORKIN

### A Glass of Wine...

The glass is different  
but holds this wine just as well.  
Its deep red color reminds me  
of the wine we drank then...  
But now, mixed with it  
in the glass are memories  
surfacing and filling me  
with the sweetness of past joys  
numbing the loss.  
Come, refill my glass  
with more of this magical liquid,  
thus wine and I  
will be drunk  
in unison.

## RUMI MORKIN

### My Family

The spectrum is incredibly long:  
from my great grandparents  
born in the late 1870s  
in a shtetl in Poland  
cholent, tzimmes and Yiddishkeit;  
my grandparents on both sides  
who fled pogroms in 1902  
to settle in London's East End,  
from balagula to grocery shop;  
my parents who came  
to Israel in 1955  
because my sister and I were here;  
built a house in Tivon,  
visited us in the car,  
buried in this country.  
Crossing the now  
from where I look  
both backward and forward  
and wonder what awaits  
my great grandchildren  
growing up in a world  
so unbelievably different.  
I am afraid to speculate.

## RUMI MORKIN

### Strangers

When we came here  
we were strangers,  
to the Arabs around us  
but not to each other.  
We settled,  
we had children,  
our children married  
and we became grandparents.  
The grandchildren grew up  
now they are also married  
and we are great grandparents.  
The original strangers  
are slowly dying off,  
and I have become  
one of the last remaining few,  
clinging to the history of this place.  
The houses changed hands  
young families live around me  
looking only forward,  
strangers to the past,  
the beginning of it all.

## SUSAN BELL

### **Insider-outsider**

I've always been out  
My skin a shade darker  
My accent not the same  
Neither scorned nor accepted  
Feeling alone but  
Imagining I'm in all along

Sometimes trying seldom succeeding  
Playing the game thinking I'm there  
Until I see that my charade is up  
No pretense can be the real thing  
I'm different wherever I think is my home

## SUSAN OLSBURGH

### Andalucian Hebrew Wine Poetry Workshop

I so wanted kosher red wine  
from Andalucia to give to you  
vibes of those years long ago  
when red wine drunk seriously  
placed in a goblet and praised for  
the flavour the colour the perfume  
made the atmosphere sparkle and shimmy.

The Iberian blood-red orange hues  
from those garden wine parties of Spain  
was lauded by HaNagid and Ibn Ezra  
but to our poets drinking in Nahariya  
the reality was an Israeli Merlot.  
It gave joy many centuries on  
and though not Spanish vintage  
it helped us understand those times  
by writing our own wine songs,  
with the grape's power pulsing through  
in a land poets yearned for and dreamt of  
but only a few like Yehuda Halevi knew.

## SUSAN OLSBURGH

### Wandering Wayfarers

Do you feel yourself still to be German?  
The Nazis drove the German out of me  
elderly Father said to the journalist

Yet they were always the Germans:  
the German ladies can make the salads  
the bazaar chairman blithely proclaimed

They left behind the horrors  
but table settings, soup spoon shapes  
divulged origins as much as accents.

Sauerkraut and punctuality remained  
with yearning for Schwazwäiderkirsch torte  
more real than English beer or porter.

Here it is expected that you have roots from elsewhere  
and ironically we are now called the Anglos  
in our own land where British lifestyle traits show.

## SUSAN OLSBURGH

### Crossing the Jordan

I hope when you cross the Jordan  
you'll find what escaped you now  
here on this living lifetime bank you  
used philosophy as a thinker's shroud.

You scoffed and posed as the cynic:  
you didn't need what we espoused  
yet you always looked a little longingly  
at a frameworked contented crowd.

You professed you did not need it  
routine religiosity applied in life  
but I wonder when you cross the Jordan  
will what you have said be allowed.



## WENDY BLUMFIELD

### Unknown History

Walking through the streets of London  
Ghosts from the docklands Blitz  
Grandparents I scarcely knew  
Their house a bomb site, now a car park

Old synagogue excavated from the ruins  
Of a Huguenot home  
An immigrant's suitcase found on an upper floor  
A Victorian market of iron and glass  
All marked for demolition  
To build new towers of brick and steel  
Faceless walls of industry and finance

Living now in green suburbs  
The East End forgotten  
Petticoat Lane before the Sabbath  
When housewives bought the herrings and the fish

Out of the ashes of those blitzed docklands  
Artists and artisans and architects  
Rise up to conserve the stories of the past  
Restore the Victorian market,  
The ancient synagogue, the immigrant's room  
That still exist between the towers of industry and finance

## WENDY BLUMFIELD

### Stranger in Our Land

Walking the slum streets of the big city  
All colours and creeds, language and dialect  
Old men with unseeing eyes  
Youths scoot past a stumbling woman  
Crime in the slum streets of the big city  
There always was a corner for drugs  
A basement for booze.  
But they look at me as if I am to blame,  
My language, my dialect, my colour

I need food for my children  
A school to give them more than I ever had  
But they turn us away  
Not good enough to be part of their lives  
Of the slum streets of the big city  
With its corner for drugs  
And its basement for booze.

## WENDY BLUMFIELD

### The Meaning of Wine

The drop of wine on infant`s tongue  
As he enters into the Covenant  
A drop of wine sipped by bride  
As she enters into matrimony

The sweetness of wine to bless the Sabbath  
Day of rest  
The wine and spices to start the week  
And labour`s toil

The ruby of wine drunk in the tavern  
To ease the working day  
The white of wine as couples court  
In summer fields in May

The song of wine as grapes are crushed  
And lovers drink in the harvest hay

## YONNAH BEN LEVY

### Purim 2018

I am dressed in wine red  
draping over arms and legs  
an older vintage is called to mind  
reflecting from an inner love  
trained in the crushing process  
life calls forth like the grapes  
turned out in the vintner's hand

Loving the deep purple red  
casting its colored reflections  
onto my mind's eye  
it formulates the basis  
of warm fires into  
times and seasons of my  
mid-summer night's dream  
piercing memories, like arrows,  
signal an awareness of times  
past dancing moments of joy  
and sorrow making up  
a wardrobe for a queen chosen  
to guard the Shabbat of wonder  
brought out of perils  
into peace.

## ZEV DAVIS

### Now You See it, Now You Don't

Surprise  
its all there, yes,  
he was a soldier  
and so, perhaps was his father, too—  
who knows . . .

I see  
that long list there—  
children, and their children,  
theirs, "mein elteren" so they say,  
pictures,

albums,  
and moments,  
aunts, uncles. things they said,  
in my brain, the silver dollar  
they gave,

I keep  
The Kennedy half-  
dollar, and the snapshots,  
me with my great great grandmother,  
too small

to know  
these moments, Yeah,  
grandfather's Kiddush cup,  
mine, then my daughter's, she passed it  
along,

a gift,  
a heritage,  
a great grandfather's love,  
us together. I recycle  
my life

## ZEV DAVIS

### To Begin Again

Off in Exile we come to a valley. Renew  
what we lost, plant grapes on Rhenish soil,  
blessed scholars walk through vineyards sue,  
off in Exile. We come to a valley, renew  
the love of a Land lost, what to bless. Imbue  
the secrets of our people's soul, retell,  
off in Exile we come to a valley. Renew  
what we lost, plant grapes in Rhenish soil

and in Andalus the red fruit flowed,  
white, too, scholars prayed and sang, they fixed  
customs and laws, culled senses, good,  
as in Andalus, too. The red fruit flowed,  
words that lead that liquid, seeds sown,  
then sadness, we called to bring more wine we mixed  
as in Andalus, this red fruit flowed,  
white, too. Scholars prayed and sang and fixed . . .

Back , we returned. The Benefactor planted again,  
Jacob's memory begins in Zion from France.  
The love of the Land, a collective past regained,  
back. We returned, the Benefactor planted again  
as barefoot children danced on grapes that ran  
down the sluices into the vats. Entranced,  
back, we returned, the Benefactor planted again,  
Jacob's memory begins in Zion from France,

from Russia, pioneers come to work the Land,  
to learn how to make it productive, thrive,  
women and children, families come to understand,  
from Russia, pioneers come to work the Land,  
to emancipate themselves in this place. They plan  
to build something new, what to show, to live,  
from Russia, pioneers come to work the Land  
to learn how make it productive. Thrive,

## ZEV DAVIS

as onto the fields the vineyard fills the space,  
exported experts from Overseas taught them how  
to start up again, what was there, pick up the pace  
as onto the fields the vineyard fills the space  
and gathered the grapes onto the vats that traced  
as the juice played in the sunlight, a delirious show  
as onto the fields the vineyard fills the space,  
exported experts from Overseas taught them. How

they entice our senses with joy and mirth  
like chevaliers in this ancient place renew  
alive, dry bones reborn as ladies come forth,  
they entice our senses with joy and mirth.  
We take up our cups, with blessings, that truth,  
that mix of love and passion we draw  
to entice our senses with joy and mirth  
like chevaliers in this ancient place renew.

## On the Other Side

I stand alone on a fallow field  
along a stream. I hear it flow,  
there is a way to cross. I'd go.  
Nothing's here. Nothing that yields

along the stream. I hear it flow,  
the other side is green and wild,  
nothing's here, nothing that yields  
where I go. Would I venture? I know

the other side is green and wild,  
looks easy to cross. My footsteps slow  
where I go, would I venture, I know  
it's very narrow, a bridge that's filled,

looks easy to cross, my footsteps slow  
and I understand what is concealed,  
it's very narrow, a bridge that's filled  
as I pass silently. Hardly touch, I grow

as I understand what is concealed,  
and it's clear, there's no fear, and so  
as I pass silently, hardly touch, I grow,  
and step upon this span to reveal . . .

I stand alone on a fallow field,  
there is a way to cross. I'd go,  
and it's clear there's no fear, and so  
I step upon this span to reveal.





