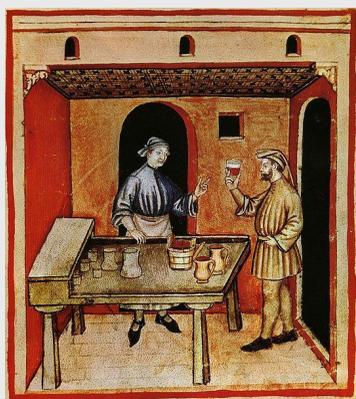


On Strangers and Wine



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.

