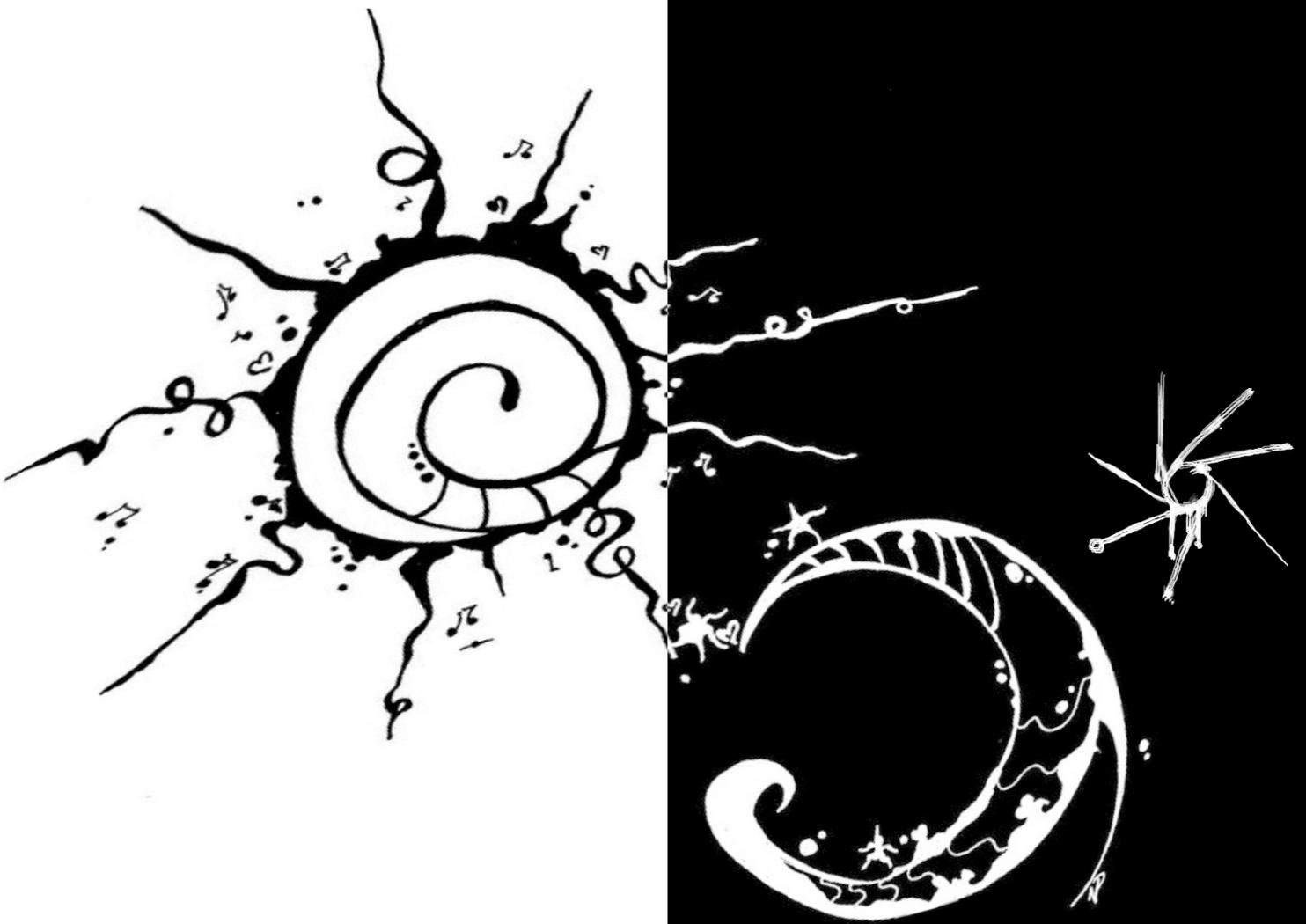


אמונה ואמונת
EMUNAH Y'OMANUT

Light & Dark

A Book of Poems



Compiled by Batnativ Hakarmi

Director of Emunah v'Omanut's Creative Writing Program

Special thanks to Linda Zisquit for her Poetry Workshop

Fragments and Flaws

Mushkie Haskelevich

I am broken down into fragments and flaws
now trembling
once consisting of potent paws,
that knew of no barrier, no boundaries, no laws.

Restrictions that dare rise
frigid coldness that callously lies
within unshaken bones
the blood that collects inside.

I know who knows of no purges
only knowledge
of recycling cathartic urges.
and subsiding empathy that invaded.

Because I breathe boldly and
believe amongst the bitter
beneath the hate that hollows and
above the horror that shivers

But I am yet to retire with
the same authority as the celestial sun
recruiting mankind with his exit, so supremely.
when you resign, we depart with you
when you arise, we follow through.

You are yet to haggle with your own
emotions before you dare touch mine

because now I am frail,
too weak to impose order
and I remain, attest to myself
that I longer can sustain
the youth within me.

I thought this would be difficult to carry
but I restrain this drive
and roam while I hope to find
internally, a hero of some other kind.

Mother

Mushkie Haskelevich

Gray hairs never brown to my knowledge
in photographs before my time
hiding in kerchiefs bound by law
strays we never saw
paths mapped definitively
she dances in the lines musically
born in the mind of prophecy
refusing age to chase
living numberless in her own pace

Shoe

Mushkie Haskelevich

My undetermined travels
keeps up my drive
keeps me pacing
wondering when will I arrive?

I'm just an object of your Odyssey
the vehicle of your destiny
I carry on with the strength
I was taught possessed in me

And though I'm faced down
beneath your feet, on ground
I carry your weight on my sole.

The Reflected Soul

Rachel Usdan

The angelic wedding dress is the disguise
of a heart-broken bride and a distraught groom.
The candle that provides light,
can also destroy you.
In the absence of light, in thick darkness,
it cannot consume you.
White is the pigment of lies
and black in all its glory is truth.
For that which is white is eventually consumed

My Brown Boots

Leah Fleischhacker

Brown

Ripped

Dirty

You have to wonder where I've been

Where the dust on my boots comes from

Brown

Ripped

Holes in the sole

From a wandering soul

Not knowing which way to go

Brown

The color of my hair

The color of my eyes

The color of dirt

The Last Time

Leah Fleischhacker

The last time I saw her
Was in the hospital,
Red hair flaming
Eyes wide
Huge smile on her face.
I didn't say much
Why would I?
How was I supposed to know
It would be the last time?

She made jokes
She laughed
She acted completely normal
How was she supposed to know
It would be the last time?

I barely remember anything
I kept no record in my head
But I can't ask her
Because it was the last time.

Silence

Hannah Vaitisblit

Silence comes in segments;
can segments be measured?
Do we measure “glowing”
or things that are “slight”?
How is ambiguity measured anyway?

If someone bothers you extremely,
can you tell me how much exactly?
Everything seems to seem like something else,
but when things “seem” and “like,”
what are they exactly?

What is silence?
Exactly something or exactly nothing—
is it even exactly exact?

Oppression

Hannah Vaitisblit

What if you could pierce the apple through
with the roughest edge of the key
to feel its most physical transition from hard to soft to hard?
Or make a more gentle movement—
or more cruel, depending how you look at it—
and suffocate its taut breathing skin
with the softness of a blanket tied just as tightly.

Would the apple feel the pressure of the motions,
or are they just like the wind and rain that used to puncture
its delicate skin just yesterday,
when it almost lost the war and fell victim to the bruising ground?
Will the fruit retaliate against your perpetrations,
or will it swing with the oppression, like it did with the wind?

Or maybe you and your key and your blanket are just that wind,
and you too will pass without inflicting permanent trauma.

But then, how can oppression pass without souvenirs?
Perhaps you, your key, your blanket, or your violence
will snatch the tip of the stem,
the essence of solidity,
the origin,
source of growth,
and carry it away with you into the wind.

Or it will be left as a scar
for the apple to remember,
a lingering still-attached fragment,
phantom-limb that is not phantom.

Yizkor

Atara Zwiren

The wire cuts into me
but I don't let go.
I look outside
where the people watch the show.

They can see from afar
the world that I am in
they pretend they can't
they think the Nazis won't win.

I bring myself back
to the camp all around
I walk into the barracks
and light does surround
Candles are burning
for those who do sleep,
but within these candles
their lives we do keep.

Looking Back

Atara Zwiren

Looking down on what was left
Sighing with my last breath,
looking at the people surrounding me
I think of who I wanted to be.
I wrote a hope when I was small
I waited for the right call,
and now it's here so I shall share
my feelings of how I leave the air.
I wanted to change the world,
leave not one leaf unturned
help people in their everyday lives
sons and daughters, husbands and wives.
I wished I helped more people than this,
Could leave the world in true bliss
but that happened to be a miss.
I did try hard, but it isn't simple
making the world smile with only two dimples
I hope it worked and I did all I could
or at least, all I should.

Ode to Judaism

Atara Zwiren

Warmth surrounds us all
in this room so very small.
We sing and dance, enjoy our life,
forgetting about pain and strife.
We celebrate a G-d so true.
our religion is not one so new,
but every day our faith does grow
ever since we left Pharaoh.
No matter how religious you are,
we connect with Jews near and far.
Our religion has passed on "*le'dor va dor*"
throughout times of peace or gore.