

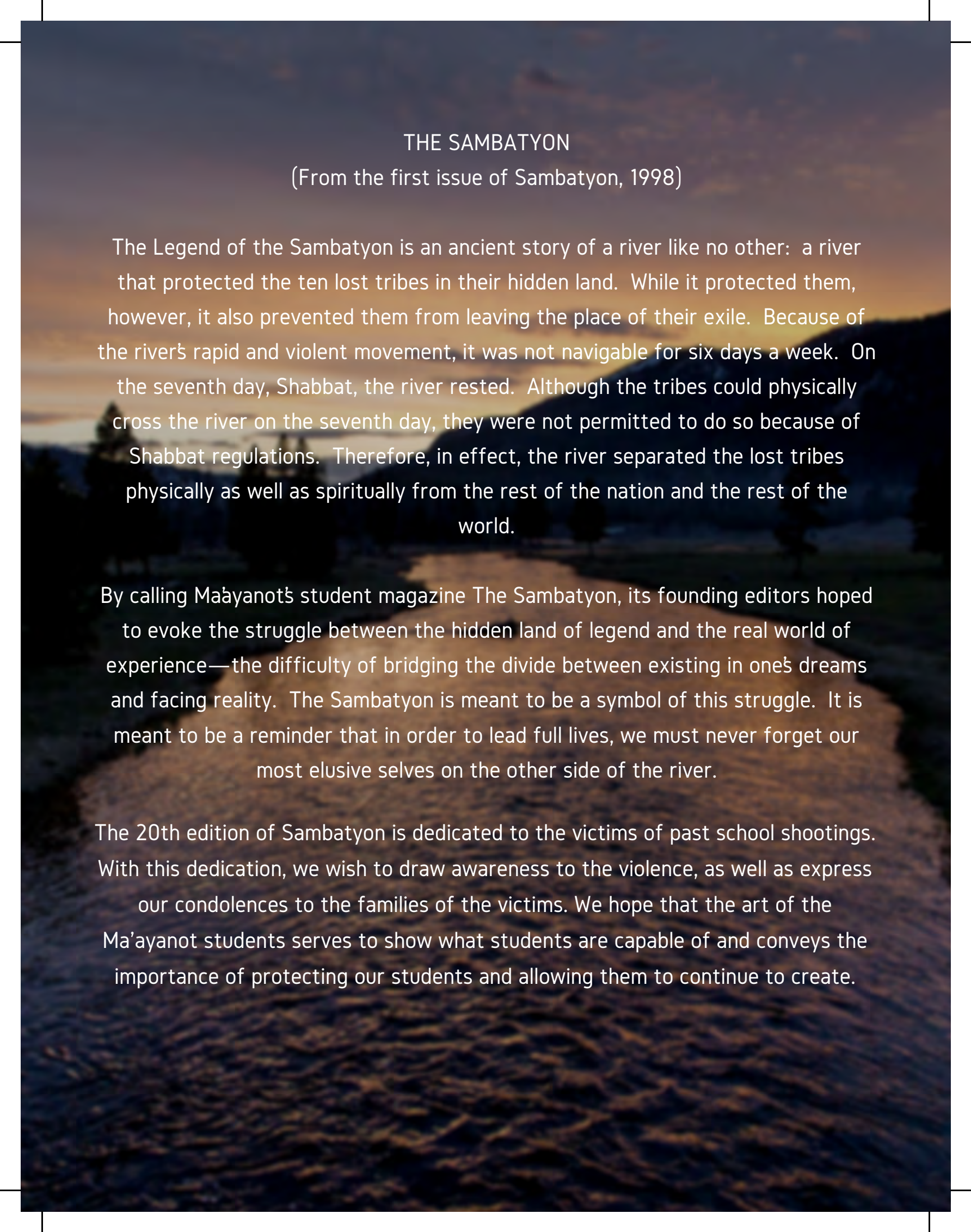


MA'AYANOT YESHIVA  
HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# SAMBATYON

THE 2018 EDITION





## THE SAMBATYON

(From the first issue of Sambatyon, 1998)

The Legend of the Sambatyon is an ancient story of a river like no other: a river that protected the ten lost tribes in their hidden land. While it protected them, however, it also prevented them from leaving the place of their exile. Because of the river's rapid and violent movement, it was not navigable for six days a week. On the seventh day, Shabbat, the river rested. Although the tribes could physically cross the river on the seventh day, they were not permitted to do so because of Shabbat regulations. Therefore, in effect, the river separated the lost tribes physically as well as spiritually from the rest of the nation and the rest of the world.

By calling Ma'ayanot's student magazine The Sambatyon, its founding editors hoped to evoke the struggle between the hidden land of legend and the real world of experience—the difficulty of bridging the divide between existing in one's dreams and facing reality. The Sambatyon is meant to be a symbol of this struggle. It is meant to be a reminder that in order to lead full lives, we must never forget our most elusive selves on the other side of the river.

The 20th edition of Sambatyon is dedicated to the victims of past school shootings. With this dedication, we wish to draw awareness to the violence, as well as express our condolences to the families of the victims. We hope that the art of the Ma'ayanot students serves to show what students are capable of and conveys the importance of protecting our students and allowing them to continue to create.



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# wikiHowTo?=live



Teach me  
how to feel  
for I have forgotten;  
it is something  
I once had long ago  
and now it is lost.  
I cannot undo what I did -  
- I can only hope  
that it will be forgotten  
soon to be an addition to  
the collection of stalactites  
of memories stagnant in my

mind  
collecting dust  
collecting dust  
and bad habits -  
- all I seem to do.  
Teach me how to live  
for I have never truly known  
at all  
When will I learn?  
Will I ever  
truly  
live?





# A Puddle

By Yael Bruk

The puddle swallows my shoe  
In return it creates an image of me

A mimic

If I take my foot away I will be standing over my face

My brown eyes reflect the muddy water

That I have been left to rely on

I was told to dance in the rain

But if I take a step,

I will fall

Fall into a deep slumber

From which I never wish to wake up

A slumber of peace

I will dance

And dance

On my own reflection

Until my body learns to get up

and fend for itself

Until it learns

That, my foot

Will be forever stuck

In a puddle



# **You Needed**

**You need a girl who will remind you that rain is good  
That with every rain shower new life is brought to  
this world**

**That thunderstorms and lightning bolts fix internal  
havoc and the blankets you use to protect yourself  
hold you so tight to keep you from falling apart.**

**You need a girl who will remind you that even the  
stars have distance between them**

**That with every fallen star millions of wishes are  
made**

**That meteor showers and full moons are  
superstitions meant to provide hope and when night  
falls the stars that decorate the sky watch over you  
to keep you safe.**

**You need a girl who will remind you that it's okay to  
be scared**

**That fear can bring out the best in you  
That the breath caught in your throat and the extreme  
beating of your heart is part of being human and  
without it you would lose your sense of self.**

**You need a girl who will change your perspective and  
show you the beauty you've never seen before**

**That windows are meant for gazing into your soul  
That distance and longing bring people together in a  
way nothing else can and the words you hide behind  
reveal more than you mean to show.**

**You needed a girl to be the moon to your stars but you  
settled for a raindrop before it ran down your  
window.**



# Writer's Block

By Yael Bruk

Dear Writer's Block,

door,

You have so much to say they close the words away of a paper filled,  
to a piece of paper, lock them up, with magic so great.  
but I'm standing right here turn the key tight,  
please acknowledge me, I want to open the door Give me the warmth  
and tell me all you know. I want to flee the room. of your words,

and the sun behind your clouds,

Your words are like rain Please, show me the light in your eyes  
I long for it during drought, take this dry paper as you let the words pour onto  
to hear the drumming music, And make me a puddle the paper.  
and wipe it across the sky in a make me a lake

furious blue, make me an ocean Like a fire colored tree,  
a blue that never settles. where our ideas can roam free, rain your leaves

where I can swim in your onto me

Your words, drops of ice thoughts. let red orange yellow  
falling rapidly bathe me in their shade.

from an all-knowing mouth, Give me Prospero's magic

always falling down and his island, I'm waiting here

tripping over themselves, where only you and I can with a jar in my hand,

falling over each other, dance in the rain, a heart-shaped jar

they fall to the floor and watch the sunrise just so that you understand,

and shatter on the ground, painted with the colors of your my heart fills with your words,

by force or by choice leaves, it awaits the next beat of

I will never know. and the sunset, thunder,

to mark the end the clapping hands of lightning,

People curse the day of a new idea drops fill my heart

your drops dare tap them on with words so powerful,

their that many struggle to hear.



# Recovery Simplified: Three Stages

I stand, and I breathe  
the clouds cannot hold  
a candle to my tears  
lit at both ends, would  
extinguish itself  
standing under rain, one  
breath after another  
breathe in and hold it  
hold it right there for  
as long as you can  
stop, stay, still. SILENCE.  
cascading down, down,  
the clouds are not sad  
more than that; they weep  
tears of joy, sorrow  
never, and again  
rain crashes down and  
yet I am not cold:  
there is no wind to  
push me hither and  
scatter me and scrape  
the bits of me together  
again I cannot escape  
this go-round, no merry,  
tremulous drops of  
yes, no, maybe trapped  
a second longer  
than was possible  
fall, melt me into  
nothingness; with my  
kind I converse and  
we talk without words  
and I float above  
away from the storm  
and the rain stops and  
I stand, and I breathe.



# The Wanderer's Last Laugh

By Shoshana Berger

A poem inspired by the painting  
“Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog”

He left it all behind  
His past, his pain  
His mistakes.

He wished they understood  
Understood that he was meant for something better  
Meant to make himself matter to them  
To everyone

Looking down at them now  
He sees the fog that shields their view

He thrusts his cane down on the rock  
Shoulders back, head up  
Because he sees over the fog  
To the place where he will be known as  
The destroyer turned creator  
The wanderer turned founder



# Winter

By Liat Silver

Winter is an example of times that death is thought to be beautiful,  
The leaves have abandoned the trees leaving them dull and bare  
Finally showing us what was underneath the beauty best known by all.

We ourselves are much like the trees

As seasons come and go we change our leaves

Trying to adapt to the colder and earlier nights

Hoping to forget the people that left like the leaves in the wind

Begging to have back the warmth they took with them.

No matter how much I try to say otherwise

There is something beautiful about the branches all splayed out, empty and  
bare

Resting in front of the night sky

Or completing the sunset with nature's favorite silhouette.

A part of life is coming and leaving no matter how painful that may be

See, even the universe knows that the brightest skies or the darkest nights

Need the trees before them

To contrast the light and the darkness

To tell us that even in our shining moments or our moments of despair

There is so much around us

That we help make more beautiful.



# An Old Man's Plea

my dear, you have tired me

I have traveled for hours and for days searching in the setting sun for a quiet place to bring home to you and me

I have journeyed for you;

walked until my feet stung with impertinence and my limbs rustled with an anxious song

all dedicated in your name

perhaps now just for the slightest moment

I will settle down by the river, in the slippery slope of the high grass, in order to summon the energy to proceed

but if I slip

and fall

I may be gone into the water

but I will die happily knowing I

have given you everything

my dear Life;

I have given my heart's desires for you

I have devoted myself to a continual trek

until my skin wrinkled from the sun

and my bones brittle from the strain

would you truly fault me for desiring to rest at an age that I have ceased counting?

I beg of you; relinquish me so that I may yearn for you from afar

(from within the earth, from which I was once created and in which I will now lie.)

never believe that I do not love you, never believe that I do not love

the gifts you have granted me,

but we have not been made to hold desperately to the unlimited

hold desperately to the unlimited and I must rest to appreciate the mission with which you charged me

and I do not wish to resent you for keeping me here

I am old and tired;

I have loved and lost;

and I release you in exhausted friendship

my last request as we part:

do not leave me while I drift-do not abruptly desert me to struggle in the cold-do not abandon me-

lie beside me as I float into the darkness

and when you are certain that I am asleep, only then,

sneak away, quietly.



## **Made of Glass**

**I never know what to do--  
I don't know what is wrong or right  
And yes, I do need you to tell me.  
I am one of the most sensitive, fragile people you will ever meet  
It's as if I am made of glass.**

**I try to keep people away,  
So that the shattered glass doesn't pierce anyone else's skin.  
You are not afraid to come too close to me. I know that.  
But I am afraid of coming too close to you,  
Even though I know you only want to help me put the pieces back  
together.**

**Because when I am broken and you come too close,  
The broken glass takes the form of words  
And I say something wrong that I believe is right  
And we get scratched by the sharp shards as I try to hold them all  
together  
Until the glass flies in all directions and it hurts whoever is too close  
to me  
Even though they all, except for you, don't know what hit them.**

**When I am broken,  
I have a false sense of freedom--  
I feel free, but the tears are like a bird that was caged all his life,  
and didn't know how to fly once the door opened.**



# **My Name**

**By: Maya Wind**

**The letters are short and to the point.**

**I am not. Rather, I am an unraveling string with no end. It means open. Flooding, gushing with feelings and truths, refusing to be held back with a dam of lies.**

**It means staring into more than just space.**

**It's impatient with weather.**

**Tucked and snug in a book.**

**A dull gray. Or maybe a marble gray. A smooth, sturdy, reliable rock.**

**But still dull.**





# **Pale Angel**

**I have been falling  
for God knows how long;**

**while you humans breathe, painted in bright colors,  
I transcend, otherworldly;  
invisible to the passerby in the streets;**

**and I find myself lost in the emptiness,  
wandering the hallways of every building,  
creating echoes, that are overwhelming in the  
reminder**

**that I tread among you who are frozen and vivid.**

**you are sharp chords, played on knives and violins,  
and I am broken,  
a mutation,  
sketched-in inversion,  
the wrong flat played,  
too pale a color used to paint me,  
too dull the note that broke me.**





# regret and kindling

By: Cayla Muschel

your wrists are smoke, your fingers lit coals  
wildfires raging in your bones  
I see you, your charred sinews, your paper flesh  
I know that every spark has crumbled to ash in your  
hands  
forgive my flinch when you wrap your arms around me;  
your grip sears my skin  
but  
I know  
that you don't mean to singe me;  
that you are clouded by smoke forevermore;  
that no one ever let you  
out of the flames.  
still your touch is suffocating  
in my nightmares  
when I see you, the wreckage, remains of burnt tinder,  
smoldering embers  
trying desperately to extinguish the fireballs in your  
palms before you set everything ablaze  
but it's been years since our house burned down  
and they tell me I suffered terribly in the flames  
would you ask me to apologize  
for escaping from a burning building?  
would you ask me to apologize for leaving you behind?





# Rain

By: Maya Wind

The wet, cool drops slithering down my skin. Filling my pores with numb, icy shards. Like crystals falling from the sky. Shattering into oblivion on my shivering clothes. Weighing me down with heavy steps of meaning. Pit pat, pit pat, over the ground around me, where they sought refuge after being released from Heaven's clouds.

subheading



# Varseltongue



I apologized too many times.  
Lack of communication on both sides.  
I know you were right  
when you said I have to speak my mind  
and explain that the things I do are not attacks.  
I do not understand people nearly as well as other people do,  
and that understanding is not easily learned.

And him -  
he does not understand me  
Because I don't explain,  
Because most of the time,  
I do not understand that I did something  
that was translated as anything else,  
and sometimes  
I speak a different language that I  
think is what everyone else speaks,  
but it's like Varseltongue.

Misunderstood.



# ROSES

BY: LEAH MARKOWITZ

ROSES ARE NOT NECESSARILY RED

VIOLETS ARE NOT ALWAYS BLUE,

TAKE A STEP BACK AND RECONSIDER

EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

ROSES CAN BE PINK, YELLOW, AND WHITE

VIOLETS ARE OFTEN YELLOW TOO.

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO EXPRESS

BEAUTY

DON'T LIMIT YOURSELF TO JUST ONE HUE.



# SHATTERED GLASS

TODAY STARTED CRYSTAL  
THE WOMEN SANG AND THE MEN WHISTLED  
TOGETHER WE LIVED IN HARMONY  
ENJOYING OUR NEIGHBOR'S COMPANY  
NOT A PUFF OF BLACK IN SIGHT  
IT WAS A TYPE OF PEACEFUL WHITE  
BUT SHADOWS CAME AND THINGS CHANGED  
PEACE AND WAR WERE EXCHANGED  
DEAD  
DEAD  
BLOOD RED DEAD  
NOTHING MORE TO BE SAID  
BODIES MIXED AND MESHED INTO THE GROUND  
DEATH CAME TO COLLECT ITS VICTIMS WITHOUT A SOUND  
DON'T FIGHT IF THE WIND IS PUSHING YOU AWAY  
IT DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEE DEATH TODAY  
THE FIRE DESTROYS ANYTHING IN ITS WAY  
AND NOW THE ONCE FLOURISHING LAND IS GRAY  
WAR IS ALL OF HUMANITY'S FAULT  
EVERYTHING SWEET TURNED TO SALT  
BURNT UP IN SMOKE WENT THE GRASS  
TODAY ENDED IN SHATTERED GLASS



# **The Blue Fox**

**By: Yaffa Elyakin**

**Once, there was a little fox named Lizzy.  
She was like any other fox in her family,  
except for one thing.**

**Lizzy was the only one that was blue instead of red.  
Her siblings always made fun of her because of the color of  
the fur that she was born with.**

**She felt like an outcast.**

**Lizzy's parents always told her to ignore them, but never  
understood what she really felt.**

**One day, a bird came to Lizzy.**

**"Why are you upset, small fox?" the bird asked.**

**"Nobody likes me, because I don't blend in with my family.  
It is because I was born with all this blue fur."**

**Then the bird told her to look at him, and listen.**

**"You are not supposed to blend in because everyone tells  
you to.**

**You are supposed to stand out, and that is what makes you  
unique, Lizzy, no matter what you look like, or what you are  
born with," said the little bird.**

**From then on,  
she did stand out:  
by being herself and showing  
that she is worthy.**



# **Time**

**They say life goes by too fast,  
that we should constantly press the brakes,  
that we should yell: stop!  
yell: wait for me!  
but time is generous.**

**Time has given the world two thousand years,  
years to become perfect  
for you,  
years to become the world it needs to be,  
for you,  
for your lifetime.**

**Time will go on,  
time will outrun you.  
But who wants to live where time is taken  
prisoner?  
where you can die until you learn to live?  
let time take us prisoner:  
so you can live until you learn to die.**



# **The Plague of Indecision**

**By Kayla Zlotnik**

**Faced with indecision,  
Like a road split by an incision.  
Turning neither left  
Nor right.**

**A path left untaken,  
Before dawn is breaking.  
A street out of sight,  
Was it wrong?  
Was I right?**

**The has been's  
The could be's  
The never will's  
The surely's.  
My head is spinning  
In a world so unforgiving.  
With choices I can neither make  
nor choose.**



# My Land

By: Yael Bruk

Stop sending stomping armies into my home,  
Don't let the muddy boots trudge much longer,  
Let the dust settle, let the pollen roam.  
Please listen, let my children grow stronger

Stop tearing the fragile veins from my heart.  
From my lung, stop carefully plucking the air  
Stop loading your guns, don't throw the harsh dart.  
If you want my land, you must beware.

If you want my land, give me back my brother,  
Give me back my nation from the filled graves.  
You want my land? Heal my broken mother,  
Climb the layers of hell and ash in caves.

We will raise our flags of blue and of white,  
Raise our star that will forever burn bright.





# **The Crash**

**By Liat Silver**

**They always talk about before the crash  
What could've been done differently  
Ways that the hurt could have been prevented.  
This was before my crash  
The crash that changed my family and myself  
forever.**

**It's been two months now since the crash  
There were no alternate routes or potholes to  
swerve around  
There was nothing we could do to stop what was  
coming.**

**After it happened I forgot how to be alive,  
I forgot how to exist.  
I tried to live even if parts of me were broken,  
But the doctors didn't stitch me up well enough to  
remain held together.**

**People always talk about before the crash  
Never during  
Never after  
Maybe it's because some things are too hard to put  
into words.**

**After the crash is always the hardest  
Maybe it's because more was lost than we care to  
admit.**



# Tale of An Onion

By Maya Stiefel

MOTHER COMMANDED ME TO DO SO.  
YOU WILL NEVER GROW AND MATURE  
TO BECOME AN ADULT  
THE PRESSURE IS ON ME IS LIKE THE  
BLOOD PRESSURE MACHINE AT THE  
DOCTOR'S OFFICE.  
SQUEEZING MY ARM UNTIL IT'S LIMP.  
I YEARN FOR IT TO BE OVER  
TO WHEN MY MOTHER WILL SEE ME AS  
GROWN  
TO WHEN THE PRESSURE IS RELEASED  
FROM ME AND I AM FREE TO DO WHAT I  
DESIRE.

I REACH MY HAND DOWN AND MAKE A  
SELECTION.  
I PEEL OFF THE CRINKLY, SHINY  
WRAPPING.  
SHEDDING ITS EXTERIOR  
AS IF I AM SKINNING A VIPER BEFORE  
IT IS READY TO EMERGE FROM ITS  
EXOSKELETON.  
THIS VIPER  
IT WOULD NOT REACT SO PLEASANTLY  
IT'S VENOM WOULD SEEP THROUGH MY  
VEINS  
GIVING ME IMMENSE AMOUNTS OF  
PAIN  
I ANTICIPATE THE IMMENSE AMOUNT  
OF PAIN.  
I KNOW IT'S COMING FOR ME.

THE INSIDE IS RAW.  
IT GLEAMS IN THE LIGHT  
FEELS SMOOTH AND HARD  
LIKE A STONE  
A STONE  
THAT DID NOT WANT TO BE REMOVED  
FROM ITS HOME  
DEEP IN THE EARTH.  
WHERE IT WAS WARM AND SAFE  
AND NOT AT THE ROOT OF MY  
CURRENT DILEMMA

"MOTHER! PLEASE"  
I AM WAILING ON MY KNEES!  
DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS.  
I DON'T WANT TO ENDURE THE  
SENSATION  
THE TINGLE.

THE DISCOMFORT OF MY BUDS.  
TASTES LIKE POISON.  
FROM A VILE KEPT IN A DUNGEON  
IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN A DUNGEON.  
FAR AWAY  
"YOU MUST LEARN."  
MOTHER HAS NO MERCY.  
MOTHER IS RAW.

I TAKE OUT THE KNIFE.  
I MAKE THE SMALLEST, SLIGHTEST,  
MOST MINUSCULE INCISION.  
MY EYES!! I SCREECH  
MY SOCKETS FEEL LIKE TWO  
FLAMING CAULDRONS.  
EACH ONE FILLED WITH LAVA  
EACH ONE THE CORE OF AN  
INDIVIDUAL MAGMA FILLED PLANET,  
ABOUT TO ERUPT.  
ABOUT TO LYSE,  
ABOUT TO --

TEARS SURGE FROM MY EYES  
STREAMING DOWN MY CHEEKS.  
DOUSING MY CHIN AND CONTINUING  
TO CASCADE DOWN TO MY NECK.  
UNBEARABLE.

I ENDURE THE SCENT AS IT  
PERMEATES THROUGH THE ROOM.  
STINGING MY LIPS AND MAKING MY  
FINGERS TWITCH.  
HOWL ESCAPES MY LIPS.  
I AM WOUNDED.  
I AM BROKEN.

I PLACE THE KNIFE DOWN AND FLEE  
FROM THE PREMISES.  
THE ONION FALLS FROM THE  
COUNTER AND ROLLS TO THE  
FLOOR.  
"NEVER AGAIN, NEVER AGAIN."  
I WHISPER TO MYSELF AS I ROCK  
BACK AND FORTH  
TRYING TO COMFORT MYSELF FROM  
WHAT LIES BENEATH THE SHINY  
HARD SHELL OF MY LEAST  
FAVORITE HERB.



# THE LIVING

BY LIAT SILVER

YOU CAN'T MOURN THE LIVING  
THAT'S THE TRUTH I SUPPOSE  
THE LIVING ARE STILL ALIVE  
EVEN IF THEY HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A WALKING GHOST.  
I'VE SEEN YOU SIT THERE WITH EYES WEIGHED DOWN BY AN  
INVISIBLE FORCE  
I'VE SEEN YOU LAY THERE AND TAKE SHORT BREATHS TIMED BY  
AN UNKNOWN CLOCK  
YOU'VE SEEN ME STAND THERE AND PONDER OVER MY WORDS  
WONDERING IF MY VOCABULARY IS STRONGER THAN I AM  
OR IF IT TOO HAS COME TO A STOP.  
I USED TO WRITE ABOUT HEARTBREAK  
ABOUT THE PAIN THAT COMES WITH THE LIVING.  
NOW I FIND MYSELF WRITING WORD AFTER WORD ABOUT YOU  
AND THE PAIN THAT COMES WITH LOSING.  
I MISS THOSE DAYS WHEN MY MOST FREQUENT THOUGHT WAS MY  
HEART AND THE BANDAGES THAT HOLD IT TOGETHER.  
I MISS THOSE DAYS WHEN MY BIGGEST WORRY WAS MY FUTURE  
AND THE MYSTERY THAT ACCOMPANIED IT.  
I MISS THE DAYS WHEN YOU WERE STILL ALIVE AND WELL  
YOU ARE NOT DEAD BUT YOU ARE NO LONGER LIVING AND THAT IS  
NOT LIFE  
CAN'T YOU TELL?  
YOU CAN'T MOURN THE LIVING  
THAT'S THE STORY I'M ALWAYS TOLD  
YOU CAN'T MOURN THE LIVING EVEN IF THEY HAVE BEGUN TO  
MOURN OVER A LIFE PUT ON HOLD.

## My Paradise

Shoshana Berger

My family and I go on a road trip every summer to visit my grandparents in St. Louis. We always stop somewhere on the way for a couple of days to do something fun and interesting. One year it was Niagara Falls, another year it was Chicago, and other years it was any number of other places. This past summer it was Kentucky. Now, you might be wondering, what in the world is in Kentucky? I will tell you: horses. In fact, Kentucky is so proud of its horses that the hotel we stayed in on the first night had paintings of horses, carpets decorated with horses... Lots of horses. We even went to a horse park, which had a horse show and a museum about horses in history. Oh, and a lot of grass. But I don't want to write about horses. I want to write about where we stayed after we went to the horse park. My parents had refused to tell us where we were going. And I am so glad they refused because the element of surprise made it so much better. We stayed in a cabin (granted it was basically a hotel room with three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining table, a couch, and a large back porch) by a beautiful lake. I mean, you looked out from the porch and there was water (and trees) as far as the eye could see.

The next day my parents rented a boat with a water slide, and we took it out on the lake. The weather was perfect; not too hot, not too sunny. The air was fresh and clean, and when I inhaled, it easily coursed through my body, awakening all of my senses.

We anchored the boat by a sandy shore and swam, just swam in the middle of the lake. The water was cool, and it enclosed me in a beautiful, refreshing bubble when I dunked. The water slide was great too. I can only describe it as flying. I went down, my stomach dropping, until I was projected into the air and went splashing into the water.

The best part was that I felt nothing but happiness the whole time. I mean, there were moments when I thought, "It's going to be so sad when this is over," but swimming around in the lake, laughing with my family... It doesn't get better than that.

That evening I sat at a picnic table looking over the lake to watch the sunset. I had always wanted to see a sunset over a body of water, and that night my wish came true. It was... I mean, it was just beautiful. The sun cast a rippling white-gold ribbon on the water as it slowly sank below the horizon. As the sky turned shades of pinks



and purples, so did the water. The sound of chirping crickets only added to the peacefulness, and birds soared towards the setting sun, as though they were chasing after a friend whom they didn't want to leave.

That night I went to sleep the happiest I had ever been. I climbed into bed, snuggled under the covers, and slept, knowing that the next morning I would get up to watch the sunrise. Alone. And I am glad I was alone, because I was able to really focus on everything that surrounded me.

The sun rose over the trees adjacent to the lake, and the air and grass were moist with dew. The crickets still chirped, but everything else was asleep. Once the sun began to rise higher, everything else seemed to wake up. The wind picked up, rustling the grass and trees and creating waves in the lake. Fish began to splash around, seagulls came to look for breakfast. As the sun rose the wind got slightly stronger, creating bigger waves. Everything seemed to awaken with the sun, as though they were all celebrating their homecoming. There was nothing to distract my thoughts, nothing to upset me. It was just me, the lake, the sun, the sounds, scents, and G-d.

After some time, I found a little path that led right down to the lake. I got to do something else I had always wanted to do: I put down my notebook, pen, sweater, and siddur, and walked into the water. I just stood there and looked around at the sun, the lake, the trees. Waves broke around my legs, the force shaking me slightly, but mostly adding to the general euphoria I was experiencing. I then sat on a log to write, allowing the waves to lap at my feet as I continued to soak in the warmth of new sun.

I can't use prettier language to describe this experience because these things are the original sounds, the original scents and images that writers use in their metaphors and imagery. That's how pure everything was. I can only describe it exactly as it happened. And it was the most peaceful experience I had ever had, and I was one hundred percent happy. Nothing could ruin it. My mind was at peace, and that, to me, is paradise.

# The Doorman

By Yael Skydel

When picturing the Manhattan lifestyle, almost all would overlook the role of the doorman. The task of the doorman is seemingly trivial and insignificant, an occupation comprising of the opening and closing of a heavy glass door while ‘strategically’ multitasking an impeccable small smile. If I were to say that a doorman was tremendously influential on my mundane day-to-day life, one would presumably snort. A certain doorman, however, did impact me in such a way. A doorman by the name of Mr. Rodriguez, to be exact.

Ever since I was a young schoolgirl, Mr. Rodriguez worked as the doorman of my building. He, however, played a role beyond his commitment to warmly greet the inhabitants of my building, he was my friend. In terms of appearance, Mr. Rodriguez’s physical attributes were unsurprising. He was a small Hispanic man with smooth wrinkled charcoal-colored skin and an impressive mustache. For as long as I could recall, Mr. Rodriguez wore a dark russet colored suit and large dress-shoes daily.

In times of tomfoolery and silly sunglasses paired off with waxy red lipstick smeared upon my chapped lips, Mr. Rodriguez clapped and encouraged me to explore myself. When I was around the age of twelve, and had broken my arm, Mr. Rodriguez was the first to sign my multicolored cast. During times of vulnerability and ‘running away from home’, subsequent to the daily fought battles with my siblings, Mr. Rodriguez would provide me with two chocolate crinkle cookies for the ‘long journey’ back into the elevator. As I became a serious ballet dancer, Mr. Rodriguez would flatter and recognize me as “his prima ballerina.” The unfortunate day that purple-colored braces were glued onto my crooked teeth, Mr. Rodriguez assured me that the braces gave me charm. Mr. Rodriguez was enchanting. He would relate captivating tales about the secrets of the elevator; he confided in me that the building’s founders were deeply superstitious, hence the missing 13th floor. Mr. Rodriguez would explain each intricate design on the walls of the elevator: the double long gold poles were once used by a European royal family and the marble floor was made out of actual red glass marbles. He generated sunlight upon the gloomy and bitter New York mornings of December, and brought glee to the long tedious schooldays of May. Mr. Rodriguez awarded me with the gift of laughter; he had an incessant supply of corny knock-knock jokes. Mr. Rodriguez literally and metaphorically embodied a door-opener; he had unknowingly opened the door to my self-growth and maturity, and always encouraged open-mindedness. From eras of immaturity and blissful ignorance, to an established state of understanding and knowledge, Mr. Rodriguez had continuously furthered me to open new doors and experience new things. Mr. Rodriguez had opened the door to my transformation into an adolescent.



Morning and evening, Mr. Rodriguez opened the building's door and closed it; he said "good morning" and "good evening" myriads of times each day. At the start of high school, Mr. Rodriguez waved me goodbye each time I boarded the school bus. Mr. Rodriguez was my friend. The tragedy occurred when I was at the climax of my teenage years; I was drowning in schoolwork, drinking too much iced coffee became the norm, and little sleep was unavoidable. To this day, the day that the tragedy occurred seems palpable; it was that scarring. On a late Wednesday evening (school ended later on Wednesday because of after school clubs) when the bus pulled up parallel to my building, an anomaly in the transparent door of the building's front dawned upon me. Mr. Rodriguez was nowhere to be found. Instantaneously, I assured myself that perhaps he had caught the flu that had been going around. The self-assurance, however, was ineffective and I soon became panic-stricken. Mr. Rodriguez never took days off. Unnerved by the eerie silence of the empty lobby, I raced to the elevator and pressed my floor's button about a dozen times, aggressively.

As I thumped my apartment door open, I overheard my mother express to my brother, "what a shame, the doorman Mr. Rodriguez from downstairs who had been suffering with pancreatic cancer passed away."

The room suddenly too bright, began to tilt and my knees felt feeble. Subconsciously, my knees gave way and my entire body slumped down to floor. I felt my eyelids opening and shutting quickly, disbelief consuming my body. In that moment, powerless, only, was the emotion I felt, as I was unable to feel the sensation of a mere teardrop roll down my cheek. Numbness embraced my thoughts, shock swathed my state of mind. Mr. Rodriguez was dead. He was dead.

To all else, Mr. Rodriguez was just a doorman, nice but irrelevant. To me, Mr. Rodriguez was a comrade, a supporter. He watched me grow up. He helped me grow up. And now, he was dead, forever gone. When I began to weep, my brother inquired, "Why are you so upset? You didn't even know him."

I wanted to be livid, enraged. But I could not. Alas, my brother was correct. Mr. Rodriguez knew everything about me. He introduced me to the secrets of the elevator. He knew my favorite type of cookie, the chocolate crinkle kind. The terrible evident truth was that Mr. Rodriguez knew everything about me, but I knew nothing about him. He knew the date of my birthday, my favorite color, and my favorite subjects in school. I, however, did not even know he that was sick, let alone suffering with pancreatic cancer. I did not even know that Mr. Rodriguez was

married, with kids. I did not even know Mr. Rodriguez's first name! He was just a man who had been polite and kind. Mr. Rodriguez was simply a door-opener. Mr. Rodriguez was simply an employee. Mr. Rodriguez was simply a doorman.

The elevator, once a clandestine place of enthralling 'history', suddenly appeared gaudy, lurid, and impersonal. Chocolate crinkle cookies no longer tasted moist and delectable, rather cardboard-like and tasteless.

I gave up ballet.

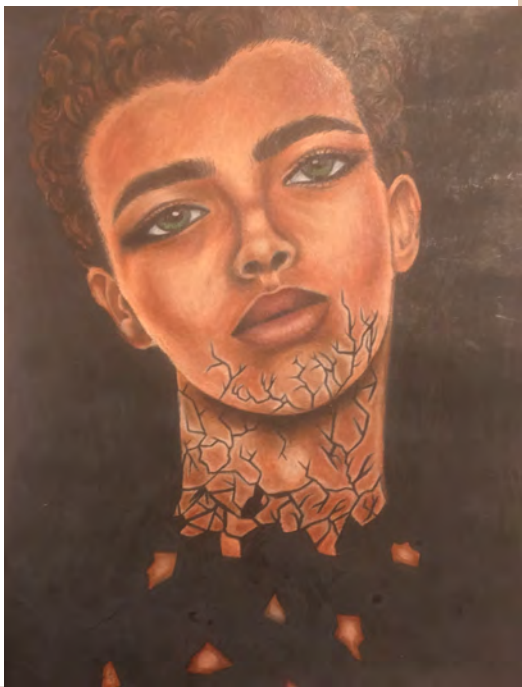
Schooldays became monotonous and time-consuming and the bus rides were unbearable. The glass door of my building suddenly seemed hazardous. Knock-knock jokes became bothersome.

Manhattan seemed boisterous and noisy. Winter became biting and unkind. Summer became dreadful and sweltering.

Mr. Rodriguez was replaced by a different man who did not smile.

I recall the unintentional inferiority I bestowed upon Mr. Rodriguez. I had been unkind to Mr. Rodriguez. I had unknowingly acted blasé with regard to his personal life. Today, as I ride the elevator, I have freed myself from the sorrow and remorse that once filled my soul, and have become fully cognizant of the lack of humanity on this planet. Regardless of race, religion, gender, and occupation, human beings are all sculpted under the same hand. Human beings are fashioned by the same eye. Human beings are designed under the same blueprint. We are not uniform, but are in uniformity. We are different but the same. We are not identical but equivalent. We are alike but diverse. We are dissimilar but comparable. We are human beings. We are all equals.





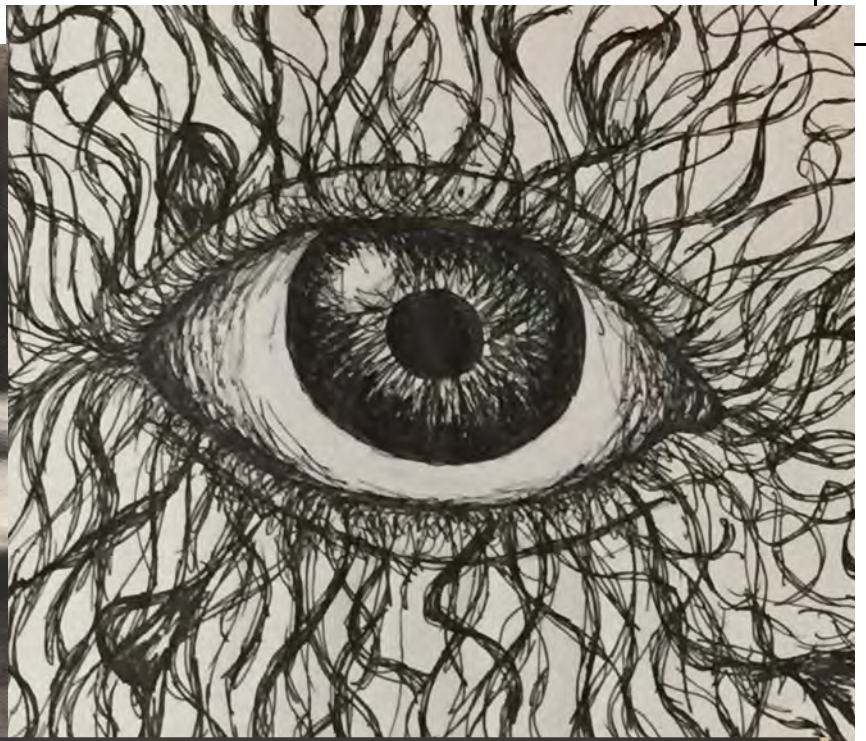








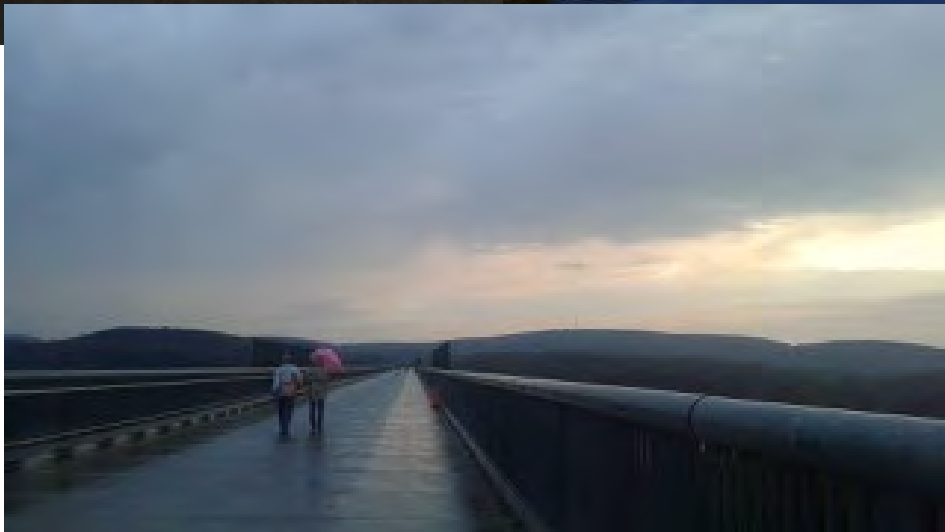
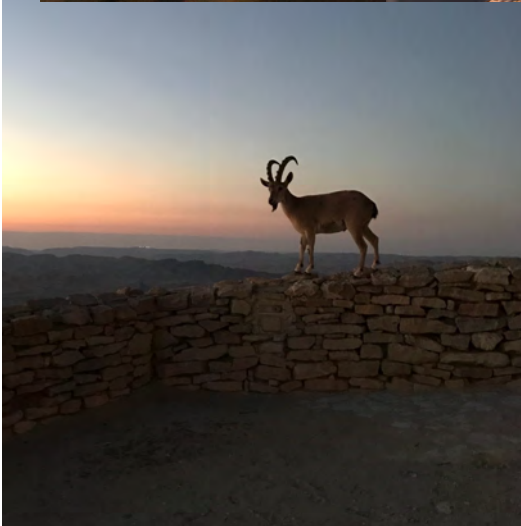
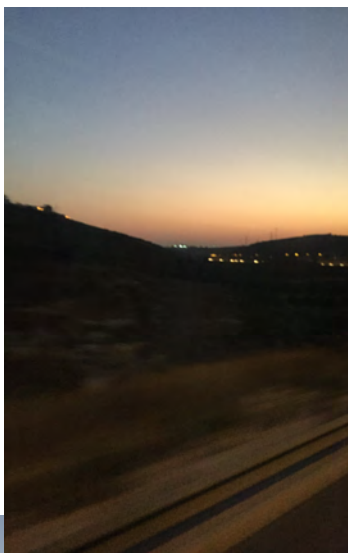








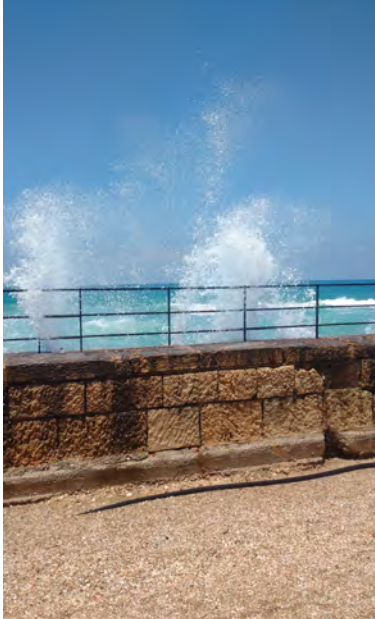




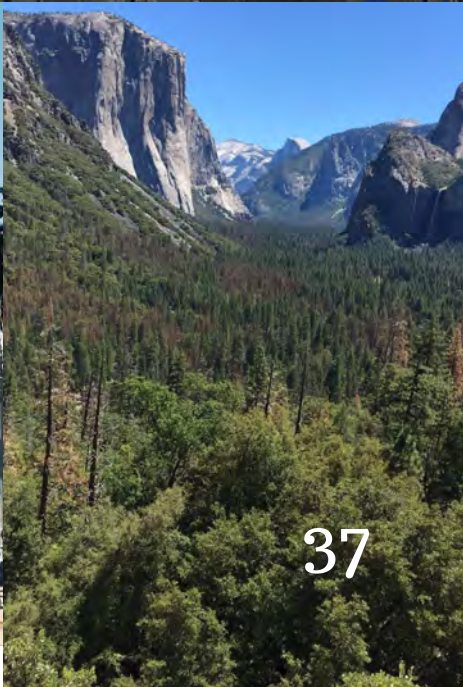
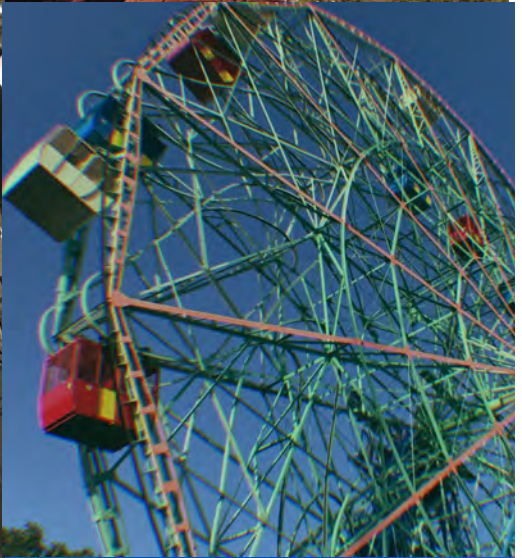
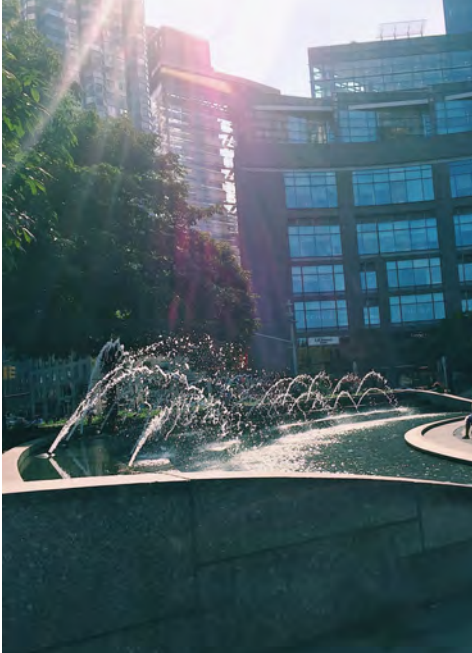
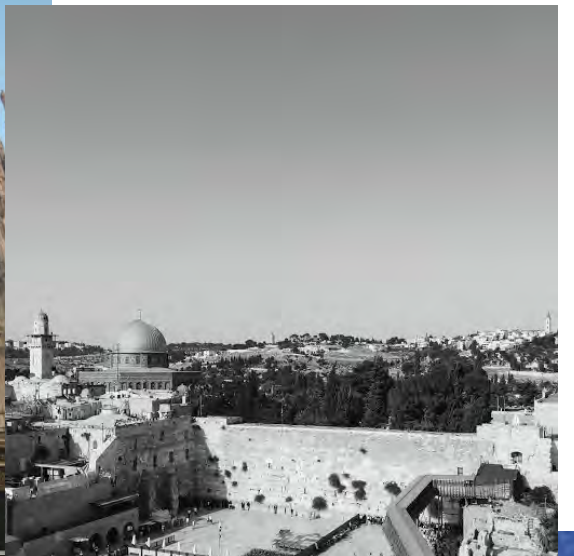




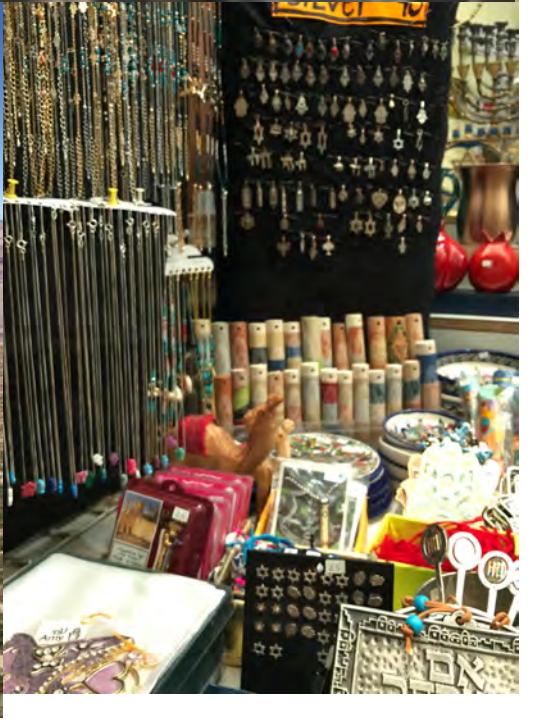
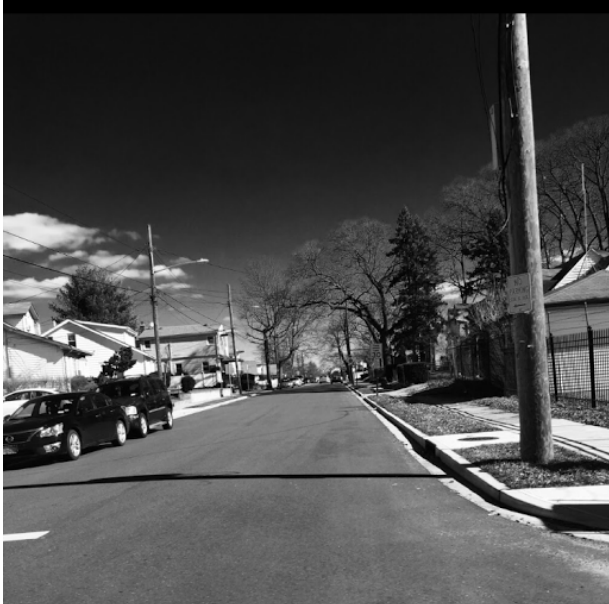














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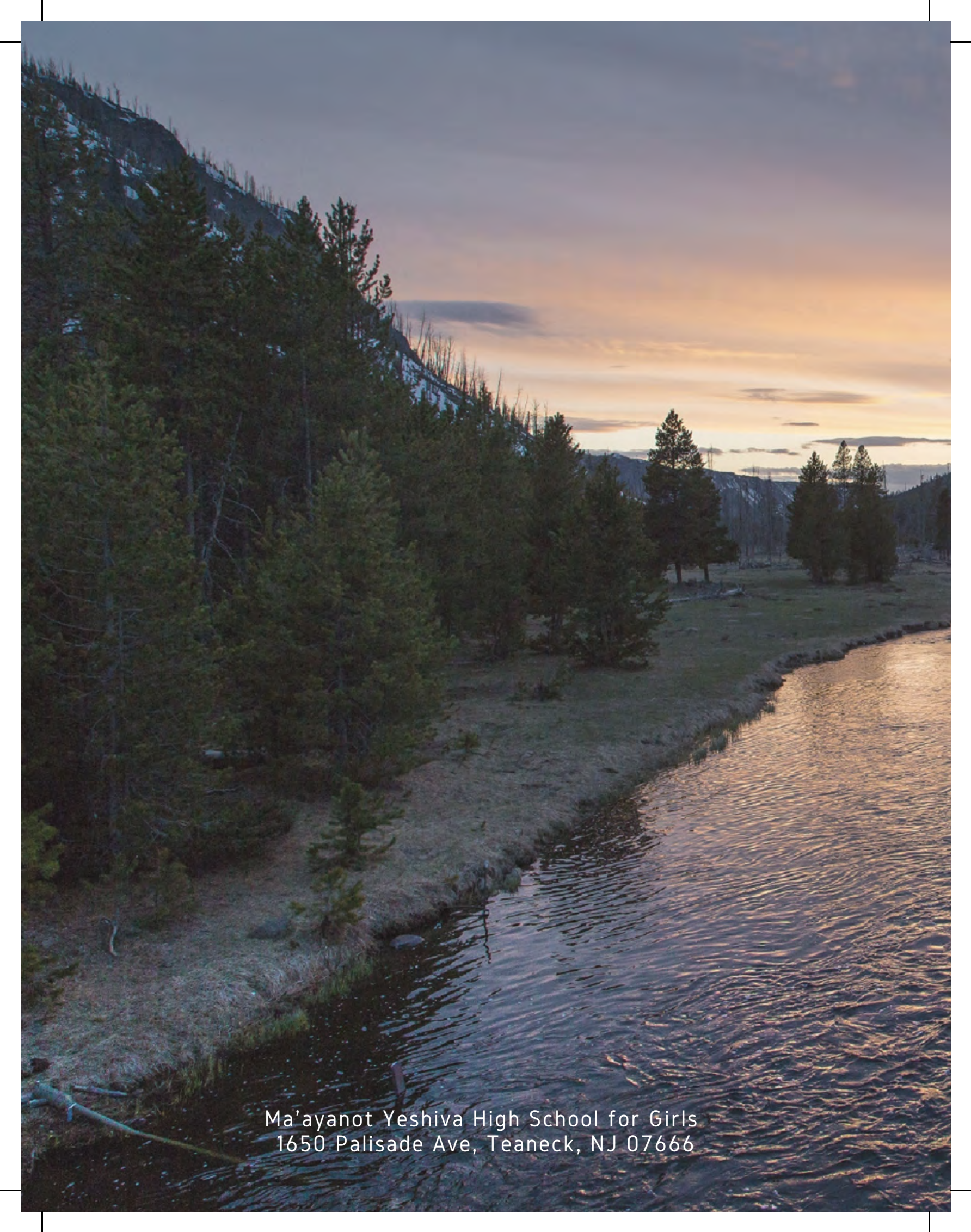
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