



Figure 1 Jerusalem. Sliman Mansour.

The Muse of the Promised Land

Naomi Ruth Lowinsky

A Dream of Jerusalem

Jerusalem sits in mourning. She's sitting shiva.

—Yehuda Amichai *Open Close Open* p. 136.



Figure 2 Isaac Frenkel Frenel

This piece was inspired by a dream:

I am in Jerusalem, standing among others outside an imposing structure—part city hall, part synagogue. But this is not a sanctuary for the living. It reverberates with spirits who

seem trapped within it. They lament and they clamor. They beat their spectral heads and hands against the walls and windows, demanding the Jerusalem we always said we would return to, next year—as part of the Passover ritual. It is as though the building itself is possessed—writhing in an agony of dead Jewish souls. This almost living being is trying to contain the torment, the longing, the sorrow, the rage of generations of ancestors railing at the living, demanding the Jerusalem of their souls. My paternal grandparents, who died in the Shoah, tug at me, as though they want to join those inhabiting “The City of God,” a protest tent city that sprang up after tens of thousands of Israelis hiked in 95 degree heat from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to protest Netanyahu’s Judicial Coup. One sign reads: “Bibi, haven’t the Jews suffered enough?” This cacophony of suffering invoked in me the Muse of the Promised Land—that shining angel of hope in Jewish history—which seems to lurch from catastrophe to miracle and back. But history had other plans.

Catastrophe

Have You not, O God, abandoned us?

—Psalm 60:12 Translated by Robert Alter



Figure 3 *By the Rivers of Babylon* - Gebhard Fugel, c. 1920

On October 7th—a Saturday as well as the holiday, Simchat Torah, which celebrates the end and the beginning of the annual cycle of reading the Torah—the Jewish world was blind-sided by a brutal, entirely unexpected attack on Israel by Hamas, which invaded its southern border with Gaza by land, by sea, and by air. How could this happen to a warrior nation, famous for its masterful military and cunning intelligence capabilities? How could terrorists have crossed the border of Gaza, entered Israel, killing and taking hostage Israelis in their homes, towns, kibbutzim and at a night long music festival held near that border? Three thousand mostly young people danced and sang in the Negev desert until dawn to celebrate Peace, Unity, Love and Sukkot—the Jewish harvest festival. Suddenly, at sunrise, sirens clamored, rockets and missiles fell from

everywhere, hundreds of terrorists shot at the revelers from every direction. The children of Israel were slaughtered, raped, stolen away on motorcycles—hostages to be taken over the border to Gaza. Survivors keep saying: ‘It’s the Shoah, all over again.’ What happened to Israel’s vaunted Defense Forces, its Iron Dome, its Pegasus spyware?

That refrain, ‘It’s the Shoah all over again’ is a trauma response among Jews that sends us whirling downward into a pit of despair and agony—there seems no way out of it. I lived much of my childhood in that pit.

In the Wake of the Shoah

*when my father’s fierce fingers made Bach flow
our dead came in and sat with us a ghostly visitation
and my grandmother sang lieder from long ago
—Naomi Lowinsky Adagio and Lamentation p. 27*



Figure 4 Haunted, unknown artist.

As a child I lived in the dark undertow of the Shoah. The dead were an unspoken presence. I felt them in my father's rages, in my mother's depression, in the sense of dread that emanated from the dark corners of the house; I saw them in my Oma's haunted eyes. We were a family of Jewish refugees from Hitler thrown back and forth between catastrophe and miracle. There was nothing in between. The catastrophe that had befallen the Jews of Europe was just behind us. Daily catastrophes assaulted our household. My brothers chased each around the house, disturbing our father's work on a musical score. He came roaring out of his study, looking and sounding like Hitler, grabbed each little boy by the ear and knocked their heads together. They wailed. My

mother, who had married a distinguished thirty-year-old scholar when she was eighteen, had no authority over him—no gravitas. She wept. And I, terrified of father’s Hitlerian furies, hid out in a corner, said nothing. That was my catastrophe.

Miracle

Justice and law are the base of Your throne.

—*Psalm 89:15* Translated by Robert Alter



Figure 5 Promised Land

But there was redemption. The Muse of the Promised Land visited us often and cast a spell of hope and joy. She was a shapeshifter, answering to different names: Palestine,

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America, Israel. When She arrived, often on Shabbat, I watched my father's face light up, I heard his language become mythopoetic, as he told us miracle stories of how he, our family, our people were saved from Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews by those three Promised Lands which took in Jewish refugees. Father told a magical story of how, in the clutch of history's brutal fist, his path opened before him, and he was shown the way to sanctuary.



Figure 6 *I and the Village* – Marc Chagal

My father was born in Stuttgart to a family of impoverished Jews who fled the brutal pogroms which targeted Jews in the Russian Pale. They found refuge in Germany, in the early years of the 20th century. Father was the only son among six children. He was destined to be the chosen one, the one who would bring the glories of German culture and the patina of knowledge and success to the family. He was well on his way, pursuing a doctorate in Musicology at Heidelberg University in 1932, just before Hitler came to power. I can hear father now, in the spellbinding tradition of Russian Jewish storytellers who leap gracefully from the everyday to the mystical and back:

A Stuttgart policeman—not a Jew—was the first miracle. He warned my family that we were under suspicion because my sister had a communist boyfriend. He told my mother to flush the left-wing pamphlets down the toilet and flee the country immediately. Word got to me in Heidelberg and I—again a miracle—was able to complete my dissertation in six weeks and—another miracle—cross the border to Holland at dusk, while the guards were looking the other way. And wasn't it a miracle that my dissertation was about a Flemish Renaissance composer, Orlando di Lasso, who was of great interest to Princess Juliana of Holland whom I happened to meet on the street one day, which led to my becoming the royal piano teacher, which led to my becoming the piano teacher for the Hoffman family, which led to my marrying the youngest daughter—your mother—just before the Anschluss, when Hitler annexed Austria in 1938. We knew Holland would soon be invaded.

The Promised Land was calling all Jews to get out of Europe. My father-in-law saw it clearly—no place in Europe was safe for the Jews. He was a miracle maker who had the means and the intelligence to figure out how

to get people out. He helped to get three of my sisters passage to British controlled Palestine years before it became Israel. What a miracle that they found refuge and community, that they were able to marry and raise families in the Jewish homeland. Your Opa would not have thought it a miracle that he helped my sisters emigrate, or that he found passage out of Holland for his family and new son-in-law. He was a practical and ethical man who would consider it the only thing to do under the circumstances.

Father never spoke about the difficulties of the family's long passage. The Promised Land of America was calling. But America was in no mood to take in Jewish refugees from Hitler—anti-Semitism was widespread, and the country was recovering from the Great Depression. The Hoffman–Lowinsky family had to wait in Cuba for 20 months before the miracle of entering the Promised Land could happen. How my Opa managed that was never clear to me until well into my midlife, when a relative's death brought letters into my possession that explained what had happened—Opa had purchased Haitian passports. No wonder my family identifies so strongly with people of color. The passports worked to get the family into America but were no help when it came to getting visas, or citizenship. I gather, from the letters, that Opa had to go through a difficult legal struggle. A few months later, shortly after I was born, Opa dropped dead, while playing chess with himself. He'd had a stroke. He had devoted himself to helping many members of our family immigrate to America. I heard the Muse of the Promised Land in the stories my mother's cousins told of how Opa had saved them. Whenever I hear news stories about the difficulties refugees from dangerous situations face when

they try to enter our Promised Land, I feel grieved and furious. But for luck and Opa's skilled perseverance, none of my family would be here.

Catastrophe

I reviewed Arab history

found no dream to borrow...

the tortured homeland infiltrated me

- Siham Da'oud The Poetry of Arab Women p. 92



Figure 7 *Olive Harvest in Palestine* - Maher Naji

My ancestral rememberings are constantly interrupted by news from Israel and from Gaza. I feel suffused with the news. I remember when my husband Dan and I visited Israel in 1987, just before the first Intifada—Arabic for Uprising—every Israeli home we

visited had the television news on constantly. They lived in a state of perpetual vigilance. These days I feel like an Israeli, caught up in my own Shoah trauma vortex. But of course, I'm not living in the horror of today's Israeli reality. I'm not hearing sirens and rockets go off many times a day. I don't have to drop everything I'm doing and run to the bomb shelter. I'm not getting news of dear friends or family who have been slaughtered or taken hostage. I'm not going to funerals. But I am flooded with the agony of the moment. My moral compass keeps spinning. My heart hurts for the Palestinians in Gaza who are being brutally bombarded day after day. They have no bomb shelters. My heart hurts for the mother in Jerusalem whose beautiful 23 year old son was at that music festival. His left arm was blown off by a grenade attack before he was taken hostage. Is he alive? My heart hurts for the mother in Gaza City, where the siege of Israeli bombing has begun. How can she find food and water for her little ones, without risking her life? Israel has stopped the transport of food, water, fuel and electricity. How will she and her little ones survive? My heart hurts for Tony Blinken, our American Secretary of State, who has a Shoah history much like mine. His grandfather fled from Russian pogroms. His stepfather survived Auschwitz and Dachau. He's engaged in indefatigable shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, trying to calm the fevers of war. He too must be in a trauma vortex.

Miracle

Always there is hope

always one is born to pay off

an old debt...

—Anat Zecharia *A Winding Line* p.145



Figure 8 Zvi Adler - Judean Hills

Back in 1950, the Promised Land of Israel, opened its doors to my mother's sister Ilein. She chose to make Aliyah rather than remain in America with her parents and sisters. She married, became a chicken farmer, selling eggs on the outskirts of Haifa. Unable to bear children, she adopted them. My Oma, an accomplished painter of portraits, landscapes, and still lifes, visited her Ilein often and returned with glowing canvases—the beach at Haifa, the azure blue of the Mediterranean Sea. The Muse of the Promised Land spoke to me through those paintings, gave me a vision of Israel as a land of light blessed by its ocean port. Many of these trips happened in the 1950s, before people traveled by air. Oma must have seen the Port of Haifa often, as her ship approached The Promised Land.

The Muse of Israel added trees to this vision. She spoke through my father on Shabbat, who loved telling stories of “The Miracle that turned the Desert into Paradise.” How had this been achieved? By the planting of trees. At Sunday School the Muse took the form of small blue and white metal boxes with slots for coins. We were urged to make offerings to the “Miracle of Trees in the Promised Land.”

The Muse of Israel spoke in the voice of my Tante Ilein, who came to visit every few years, bringing laughter, joy and music to my mother and our family. We had chamber music evenings. She played the cello, Mother played violin and viola, Father played the piano. Tante Ilein told stories of the wonders of this new land. She told us about a Kibbutz near her home. She marveled that these intentional communities revolutionized family and gender roles based on egalitarian and communal values. In the Kibbutz she knew, children lived together, played together, studied together, and worked on the land together. Maybe their parents would visit them on Shabbat. Maybe not. Maybe they’d grow up to continue in the community, work on the land, keep the traditions. Maybe they’d leave, go to a university, learn a profession. The Muse of those times in Israel was not interested in whether you studied Torah, or kept kosher, or observed Shabbat. She was a free thinker, agnostic, progressive. But I never heard Her speak of what happened to the Palestinians whose houses and lands were stolen in the mass displacement of indigenous people that occurred during the 1948 Arab Israeli war—despite the United Nations resolution calling for two states—and continues to this day.

Catastrophe versus Catastrophe

My longing weeps for everything. My longing shoots back at me, to kill or be killed...

I am from here, I am from there, yet am neither here nor there.

—Mahmoud Darwish *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* p. 4



Figure 9 *To Where?* - Ismail Shammout

Many say that the painful history of the Palestinian people is behind the horror of the October 7th attack. Palestinians lost their homes, their land, their way of life when

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Jewish refugees from the Shoah—which means catastrophe—took over what Palestinians believe belongs to them. Israelis, however, see the land as their ancestral homeland. Palestinians call their mass displacement and dispossession during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war The Naqba—which also means catastrophe. The agony in Israel and Palestine has its roots in these competing catastrophes. Israel’s 75-year history is filled with attempts to negotiate a way for both peoples to live together peaceably, interrupted by wars, uprisings and the intrusion of Jewish settlers into Palestinian areas under Israeli Occupation—notably the West Bank.

The recent attack on Israel came from Gaza, a narrow strip of land into which 2 million Palestinians are crushed—commonly referred to as an “outdoor prison—because the Israelis on the northern and eastern side and the Egyptians on the southern and western sides control the borders. Though Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005 many consider it an occupying power due to its continuing blockade of the territory. The Israeli government doesn’t agree. At this point Israel is at war—the fifth Gaza war since 2007. It is also the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, when a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria crossed ceasefire lines and entered the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. Again, my moral compass is spinning. The Hamas terrorists committed horrendous atrocities. Israel needs to fight back. But if the Israelis, and their allies don’t consider the context out of which these catastrophes emerge, they will continue to repeat this catastrophic history. Some say Hamas is also responding to the normalization of relationships between Israel and other Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia which Netanyahu is promoting. They feel squeezed out, forgotten.

Mister, Prime Minister

*you must be very proud of your country
as you observe what's going on with your eyes shut...
Which gives us a reason to stand for years
in the square and sing.*

—Anat Zecharia *A Winding Line* p. 131



Figure 10 *The Spring that Was* - Ismail Shammout

On October 8, the day after the attack, an editorial in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz laid the blame for what happened on Prime Minister, Netanyahu, and his policies concerning Palestine. In Haaretz' view the catastrophe was the result of Netanyahu's "fully-right" coalition of Ultra-Orthodox, racist ministers who took "overt steps...to

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annex the West Bank and to carry out ethnic cleansing” in areas the Oslo Accords had protected, including the Hebron Hills and the Jordan Valley. The editorial holds him and his cronies responsible for the “massive expansion of settlements and bolstering of the Jewish presence on Temple Mount, near the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as boasts of an impending peace deal with the Saudis in which the Palestinians would get nothing.” Haaretz expressed outrage about the “open talk of a ‘second Nakba’ in his governing coalition.” They point out that a Prime Minister who has been indicted in three corruption cases will hardly have time and energy to attend to matters of state.

Before the Israeli– Hamas war broke out, I thought I was writing about a different catastrophe, one that has also been attributed to the Prime Minister—his treacherous Judicial Coup. The autocratic, self–serving and criminal Netanyahu has made common cause with extreme right wingers in a plot to strip the judiciary of its power and independence. This would mean no judicial checks and balances on government power. In response to this there has been a mighty wave of protests. Of course, as soon as Hamas struck the demonstrations stopped. Israelis rallied to the war effort as they must. Army reservists who had threatened not to serve because they were angered by the Prime Minister’s assault on democracy, rushed to protect their country.

This story is fast–moving, changing every hour. As I write a ground war against Gaza seems to be the next step, putting two million civilians at risk. The Israeli government is warning citizens of Gaza City to leave. Where are they supposed to go? They have already been denied food, water, fuel and electricity by the Israeli government.

Hospitals are running out of power, just as thousands of civilians are being bombed. This is punishment of non-combatants, considered a war crime, just as the Hamas brutality against civilians is a war crime. My ancestors, always with me, are lamenting-- "Oy veh is mir".

In what feels like a ray of light in all the chaos and misery of war news, my favorite former American president, Barack Obama, makes a significant statement: "Thoughts on Israel and Gaza." No longer constricted by the politics of his former role, Obama tells a truth that calms the clamoring ancestors in my soul, who have been crazed with worry about the very danger Obama names. After expressing his outrage at the "horrific attack against Israel" Obama goes on to argue that the way Israel is conducting the war is likely to backfire. My ancestors say, "That's right. It is very bad for the Jews"! Obama says:

The Israeli government's decision to cut off food, water and electricity to a captive civilian population (in Gaza) threatens not only to worsen a growing humanitarian crisis, it could further harden Palestinian attitudes for generations, erode global support for Israel, play into the hands of Israel's enemies, and undermine long-term efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region.

Obama, you may remember, made a valiant attempt to achieve such a peace in 2010 and was undermined again and again by Netanyahu's refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories in the West Bank.

Catastrophe American style

My family had a Sabbath ritual

We lit the candles sang Go Down Moses sang Swing Low

Sweet Chariot sang slave music freedom music secret signals

in the night music My father said you never know

when Pharoah will be back

—Naomi Ruth Lowinsky *Death and His Lorca* p. 16



Figure 11 *Moses with the Ten Commandments* - Rembrandt

As the first-born child of refugees I saw the Muse of America as a guardian angel. I heard her in my father's voice, extolling the virtues of the American Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence—"liberty for all." He knew full well that America had not lived up to those ideals, that Black people were discriminated against, as were other minorities including Jews. But because we had been lucky enough to find our way to the Promised Land he was grateful, and believed devoutly that America would fulfill its promise. He was a Martin Luther King liberal. On Shabbat and at Passover we sang "Go Down Moses" because for us Black Moses and Jewish Moses were the same.

The Muse of America as the Promised Land lit a passion for the Jewish ethical tradition in my father as it did in me. I clearly remember my first experience of the Great American Shadow—the Army McCarthy Hearings of 1954. I was 11, recovering from eye surgery, which freed me to stay home from school and listen to the drama on the radio. I can hear McCarthy's noxious voice to this day, shouting: "Point of order, point of order Mr. Chairman." McCarthy was a Republican Senator from Wisconsin, a bully, a demagogue, a virulent anti-communist who saw communist infiltration everywhere—the government, universities and the film industry. He chaired the subcommittee on Government Operations which accused the Army of harboring communists. In the dramatic story I followed day after day the Senate was investigating the conflicting charges made by McCarthy and by the Army. Joseph Welch was chief counsel for the Army. I took pride in reporting the events of the day to my father when he came home. I was filled with righteous indignation until the day the tables turned. McCarthy had

accused a young lawyer on Welch's staff of Communist sympathies. Welsh responded with words I will never forget: "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness... Let us not assassinate this lad further senator. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency?" That phrase—no sense of decency—proved the downfall of McCarthy. The American people in 1954—glued to their TVs—could see what a bad actor McCarthy was. The Muse of the Promised Land won that battle.

Most of a lifetime later, it grieves me greatly to see a similar bully, provocateur, and criminal—currently facing 91 felony counts— who trumpets his anti-democratic and autocratic attitudes as he leads the charge against justice and ethical behavior in our land. He led the attempted coup against his own government on January 6th 2021. I hear "Have you no decency?" as a subtext of the myriad indictments made against our former president who wants to be president again. It disturbs me profoundly that the question of decency, of telling the truth, of not being cruel, of being ethical seems to have little power over a renegade politician these days, at least in America.

But in Israel, before the attack by Hamas, the story was different. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators filled the streets of Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem shouting "Busha!"—the Hebrew word for "Shame!" It comforted me that Jews in the Promised Land were standing up for our ancient ethical tradition. I was moved by an urgent and devastating request for support by Mika Almog, of USA4IsraeliDemocracy.org. She is an Israeli writer, journalist, political activist and the granddaughter of the late Shimon

Perez—former prime minister and former president of Israel. Here is some of what she said:

Israel is facing the greatest threat in its 75 year history...We are literally fighting for our survival, not just as a democracy but as a homeland for the entire Jewish people. The ground is burning beneath our feet...The Judicial Coup is not an internal Israeli matter...This is about shaping the future and the story of the Jewish people. Israel is the glue that kept us together for millennia, our homeland is a safe haven for a people without a home.

Reading this I was in tears, reminded of a story my father never told his children—though he was born in Germany in 1908 he was stateless because, in those days, Germany had no birth-right citizenship. I learned this recently, when my nephew, Hillel, moved to Germany to marry Aurelia, a German woman he met in Israel. He petitioned to become a citizen under German laws that allow for the renaturalization of Jews whose ancestors were victims of Nazi persecution. But he needed to show proof of German citizenship. My mother's family fled a few months before Hitler came to power. And my father, it turns out, was a citizen of nowhere—not Russia, not Germany not Holland. No wonder the Promised Land was so essential to him. It hurts my heart now, generations later, to imagine how frightening it must have been for him and his kin to be stateless and unprotected. Hillel has created a Café in Hamburg, which he calls *Lowinsky's*. His logo is a photo of his grandfather's face. He has brought his Opa, my father, back to a very different Germany than the one from which he fled.



Figure 12 Lowinsky's NY Coffee and Tea in Hamburg

As Almgog said: “No war is as dangerous as a government attacking its own people.” Isn’t that what happened in Germany? Didn’t a version of that happen here in America on January 6, 2021, when the outgoing president provoked an attempted coup? Isn’t avoiding that the whole purpose of the Promised Land?

“Where There is Much Light There is Much Shadow”

Emma Hoffman



Figure 13 *The Ghosts* - Miki de Goodaboom

That is what my Oma used to say to me, when I complained to her about my father and his rages. At night, deep in the pit of my Shoah trauma, I hear her voice saying: “That is true of countries as well as people.” I don’t know if Oma ever read Jung. But she was an artist who worked with shadow and light. She used shadow to delineate the shape of what she drew and painted. As I think about her wise words, heroic stories coming out of the agony of the war come to mind. I marvel at the Muslim medic who stayed to take

care of the wounded after the attack on the music festival. He thought speaking Arabic would protect him. Unfortunately, it didn't. I marvel at the doctors and nurses at the hospital in Gaza City who do their best to care for the sick and wounded despite Israel's blockade of medications, food, water, fuel and electricity to the suffering population. I marvel at the son whose mother, an Israeli peace activist, is believed to be a hostage. He said: "Vengeance is not something to build foundations on. It is not a strategy. How many dead Palestinians will be enough for us to feel safe?" (Quoted in Nicholas Kristof's column, October 27th 2023.)



Figure 14 *The Camel Carrier of Hardships*, Sliman Mansour

Shadow and light, catastrophe and miracle seem to take turns on the stage of Jewish history. Consider the *Psalms*, to which we turn for comfort and support when we feel overwhelmed by suffering and grief. Judaism gives us a deity who can be ruthless and cruel as well as just and loving—which, of course, is true of us all. The *Psalms* move from shadow to light and back. Sometimes it is the Lord who puts us “in the nethermost pit,/in darkness, in the depths” (Psalm 88:7), sometimes it is other humans: “How long

the Wicked, O Lord,/ how long will the wicked exult? (Psalm 94:3). But Psalm 89:1 sings “the Lord’s kindnesses forever.” And Psalm 95:1 invites us to “sing gladly to the Lord.”

Robert Alter—whose translation of the Psalms is the one I quote—points out in *The Art of Biblical Poetry*:

The God of biblical faith...is not a God of the cosmos alone, but also a God of history. A good many psalms...are responses to the most urgent pressures of the historical moment. (p. 121)

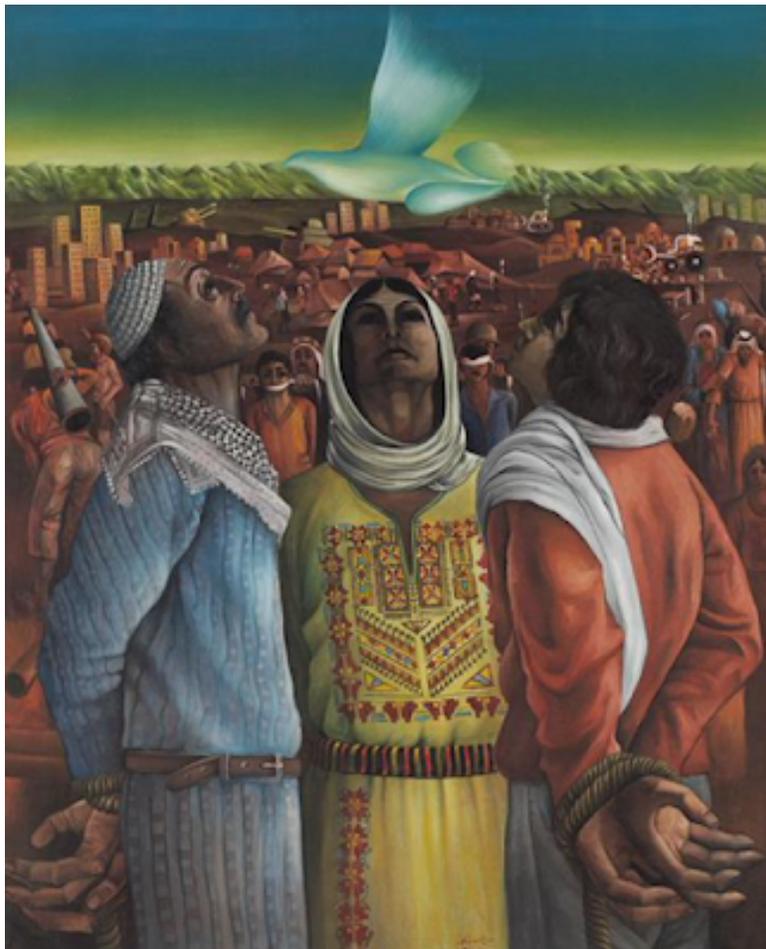


Figure 15 *Perseverance and Hope* - Sliman Mansour

I wanted to sing gladly to that God of history on the morning of October 18th when Dan and I woke to hear the voice of our President, Joe Biden, speaking from Tel Aviv—the only American president who has visited Israel in wartime. I wept, listening to his empathic, strong and ethical response to the atrocities:

Shock, pain, rage—an all-consuming rage. I understand, and many Americans understand

You can't look at what has happened here to your mothers, your fathers, your grandparents, sons, daughters, children—even babies—and not scream out for justice. Justice must be done.

But I caution this: While you feel that rage, don't be consumed by it.

The vast majority of Palestinians are not Hamas. Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people.

And Biden, who is so familiar with sorrow, spoke to the Israeli people about the nature of grief:

To those who are living in limbo waiting desperately to learn the fate of loved ones, especially to families of the hostages: You're not alone ...

To those who are grieving a child, a parent, a spouse, a sibling, a friend, I know you feel like there's that black hole in the middle of your chest. You feel like you're being sucked into it.

The survivor's remorse, the anger, the questions of faith in your soul.

Starting at—staring at that empty chair, sitting shiva. The first Sabbath without them...

For those who have lost loved ones, this is what I know: They'll never be truly gone. There's something that's never fully lost: your love for them and their love for you...

[Read full text: transcript of U.S. President Joe Biden's remarks in Tel Aviv on Oct. 18, 2023.](#)



Figure 16 Jaffa (A Palestinian City before 1948) Juhaina Habibi Kandalaft

Biden also spoke passionately about the humanitarian issues raised by the siege on Gaza and declared it time to return to negotiating a two–state solution! I wonder how that went over with Netanyahu? I say to my inner Oma, ‘isn’t this also a miracle?’ We have a president who, in our angry, unstable, cruel times, has the courage to speak out for justice and compassion. The shadow is, he gets so little credit for his valor, his moral compass, and most of all for his decency. These virtues are not, it seems, in vogue. The shadow is that, as I write, the people of Gaza are still being bombed. The count of Palestinian dead keeps rising and rising. Many who obeyed the Israeli command to evacuate Gaza City and go south have been struck by bombs in what they were told would be safe areas. Most of Gaza City is debris and death—appalling, unbearable.

I began this blog piece thinking I was telling a story about courageous protests by Israelis against their government—which has gone seriously awry. But on October 7th the story shifted into a hell realm—the Jewish-Palestinian trauma vortex. As I come to the end of this piece, with the story still changing every hour, it strikes me that the second story is actually an outcome of the first. The *Haaretz* editorial I quoted earlier makes the connection. As President Obama knows all too well, the catastrophe in Israel has everything to do with the Netanyahu government’s consistent undermining of a two–state solution. They have thrown gasoline on the fires of Israeli and Palestinian conflict by their support of the settlers in the West Bank, who are encouraged to be violent with their Palestinian neighbors. And they eased the way for terrorists to invade Israel, by their lack of a military presence at the Southern border. Netanyahu, I’m told, dislikes the kibbutzim and small towns in what is called the “periphery”—because they

are inhabited by progressive people who don't vote for him. Some say Hamas was surprised and a bit shocked by how little resistance they met. As the protesters have shouted at their government for many months of marching in the streets: "Busha!" "Busha!" "Shame!" I am moved to quote the words of Nir Avishai Cohen, author of *Love Israel, Support Palestine*, and an Israeli reservist in his way to join the war (published in the Opinion Section of the NYTimes, Sunday, October 15th, 2023):

At the end, after all of the dead Israelis and Palestinians are buried, after we have finished washing away the rivers of blood, the people who share a home in this land will have to understand that there is no other choice but to follow the path of peace. That is where true victory lies.

Many years ago, during another time of terrorist attacks in Israel, when the ground was burning beneath Israeli feet, I wrote a Psalm to the God of history that is, sadly relevant again:



Figure 17 Unnamed - Ahlam Al Faqih

Your Face in the Fire

Descend upon me you who are source
 before source fire in the sky gleam
 in the back of my skull Come in the wind
 with wings Come in my breath I cling
 to the luminous stair Sing me your names
 spirit void darkening sea world
 tree When thunder speaks come into my heart
 where terrible stories are told

The woman
 whose womb has cast pieces of flesh all over the streets
 of Jerusalem that son of your prophet whose light
 splintered into thousands of dangerous
 shards

I gather it all for the altar
 the blood the rage the weeping
 Show me your face
 in the fire

(forthcoming in *Your Face in the Fire*)

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Lowinsky is also the author of three prose books, *The Motherline*, *The Sister from Below*, *The Rabbi the Goddess and Jung*, and co-editor, with Patricia Damery, of *Marked by Fire: Stories of the Jungian Way*. Many of her essays have been published in *The Jung Journal* and *Psychological Perspectives*. She is the Poetry Editor for *Psychological Perspectives*, and blogs about poetry and life at www.sisterfrombelow.com.