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The Added Years by Ray Walker

I'm really thankful
For the Added Years:
The Gift of Life
We take so much for Granted.
And modern science

Has prolonged our span
Beyond that normally
Bequeathed to man.

Given the Added Years,
The hours and the Days
And weeks to fill

How do we spend them?
How do we spend them?

Staring out of Windows?
Or looking for a Thrill?

"So what is there to do?"
Asks Everyman.

Give some of it to others,
If you can.

Ray Walker is a Ray Walker is a retired teacher, former Rockies climber, social activist, American olah and published poet.

[Read more about Ray in the article on Creative Seniors, below.](#)

We hope that this e-zine will give you a window onto life for seniors in Israel today. Every month we will send you the latest news, together with profiles of veteran Israelis, reviews, articles and poetry written by or about seniors.

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To submit your article - send to info@ezratavot.org

Dear Readers,

Rosh Hashanah is traditionally a time for families to come together, recall the previous year and wish one another a sweet New Year. In this issue of Israel Senior Life, we feature a geneological look at one Jewish family and hear about the lessons one poet has learnt from life!

Wishing all of our readers and their families a sweet and fulfilling year

Tamar Wisemon
Editor



Honey is well-known as an antibacterial and disease-fighting antioxidant, giving your body not only nourishment for today, but strength for tomorrow. Perhaps honey tastes so sweet because it offers hope for the future.

This Rosh Hashana, Ezrat Avot will distribute 2,500 Holiday Food Packages to Jerusalem's needy elderly and families . [Click here](#) to give a fellow Jew a sweet New Year

Israeli Government and Claims Conference to Increase Holocaust Survivors' Stipend Ezrat Avot Staff and News Agencies

After months of private discussions and public protest, culminating in a "March of the Living" by elderly Holocaust survivors through the streets of Jerusalem, the Israeli government has granted an additional monthly stipend of nearly \$300 to Holocaust survivors. The agreement came as a response to embarrassing revelations that one third of the 240,000 survivors in Israel are living in poverty.

"My aim is to get all the Holocaust survivors above the poverty line and make sure that they live in decency," Israeli Welfare Minister Yitzhak Herzog was quoted as saying.

The government's initial offer of an additional \$20 sparked widespread public outrage, being deemed as an insultingly low figure, and wholly inadequate to improve the standard of living of the very poorest of the survivors. Angry protesters dressed in striped pajamas reminiscent of their concentration camp garb and carried signs saying, "Sorry we survived."

In related news, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which channels funding for specific survivors who receive their stipends and compensation from Germany and other sources, such as the Swiss banks arrangements, has reacted to criticism in recent years that it spent too much money on education and memorials and not enough on the actual survivors.

Starting this year, the Claims Conference will change from a formula that saw 80 percent going to welfare and health purposes, and the remaining 20 percent for education and commemoration, to freeze the education grants and increase the health and welfare allocations.

Hearing opens for Haifa man accused of torturing Holocaust Survivor Ezrat Avot Staff and News Agencies

On August 30th, Haifa District Court opened the hearing for sentencing of 25-year-old Arik Schechter, who admitted to attacking, torturing and robbing 68-year-old Holocaust survivor Ita Fogel in February this year.

Schechter, along with 19-year-old Stephen Borisvitsky and 22-year-old Liran Hubert, is accused of breaking into Fogel's house in Haifa to steal what they believed to be a large sum of money. They allegedly caused a power outage in the building, waited for Fogel to leave her apartment and attacked her in the stairwell, forcing her back into her apartment. When they didn't find any money, the three young men tortured Fogel, gagging her mouth with tape, beating her, pouring bleach on her, dousing her in water and applying electric shocks to her body.

"For my entire life, I worked and I was independent, and if not for the three accused, I would continue to be independent for the rest of my life. I put shutters all over the house but the fear still won't leave me and continues to follow me. I'm afraid of my shadow. I don't go out at night. Who knows who is standing behind you when such thugs exist in Israel," says Fogel.

Prosecutor Maayan Zur said during the hearing that the crime was extraordinary and extreme, and the sentence should be handed down accordingly.

Schechter expressed sorrow for his actions, saying, "I am ashamed and regret that I was a partner in these offenses. I am not a criminal and I have no criminal past." But Fogel, who has been undergoing rehabilitation ever since the attack, rejected his apology, "Forgiveness gives me nothing," she said, "These thugs came in and killed my life. I would shoot them if I saw them. They tortured me for hours."

Some 20 pensioners protested outside the court in protest of a recent spate of attacks on the elderly.

Genealogy: My grand-daughter the Gibeonite **by Leon Moss**

In a burst of misguided energy a few years ago, I decided to update the family tree. It's finally done. About 4 meters wide and one meter high, it'll stretch across the entire wall of the living room. In addition, I made a directory of everyone's whereabouts. Why not give the future generations a start when it comes to looking for free accommodation in far-away countries?

Up until the mid-seventies, the tree had a straightforward and regular look to it. The earlier generations are lost in the mists of Eastern Europe . So I went back only as far as my great-grandparents, those valiant souls who sent their children out of the home knowing that in all probability they would never see them again. A fruitful family, the tree grows sideways, meaning that I'm always taping new sheets onto the sides and I'm forever on the lookout for super-wide photocopy machines.

The variety of names is formidable, but as in most Jewish family trees, first names repeat regularly as the new-born are named after departed ancestors. The tree has other common threads running through it as though it was spun by a single weaver.

The early entries are quite boring: born - Lithuania ; migrations - Lithuania to South Africa ; educated - South Africa; married - so-and-so from Lithuania ; died - South Africa ; buried - such-and-such cemetery, South Africa . Not much in the way of variety and color. It's a nice, comfortable tree that you would never see in the front of a thousand page, prize-winning family saga.

In the fifties changes began to creep into the details. Suddenly the brides and grooms were born in South Africa instead of Lithuania . One cousin even married a woman who came from England ! In the sixties and seventies, someone received a doctorate at an American university; a third cousin emigrated to Australia and another to Israel . Unimportant but interesting family trivia.

By the end of the seventies, the tree began to undergo violent quakes as various brothers, cousins and other assorted relatives began searching the world for new attractions. Migrations flourished. New names began to appear - names that no longer had that old Lithuanian ring to them. A German sounding name here and a name with Polish spelling there spiced up the old tree.

Now in the late nineties, the tree has become twisted, gnarled and tangled - parts of it are quite unrecognizable. Migrations? We can no longer list them as families wander from country to country in search of a new Goldene Medina, a new Paradise to replace the crime-ridden South Africa . Family branches creep all over the world sending exploratory shoots into the most unlikely and exotic places on the planet. If the shoot takes root, it sends back a cry to the old country, "It's good here! Come over!" And another family branch can be seen clutching airline tickets as they rush around frantically attending to emigration procedures.

No branch of the family has been spared the upheavals. Even my own direct family line receives a jolt from time to time.

Take grandchild number four, for example. A five year-old with an all-over, all-year-round sun-tan. Religion – Jewish, both sides; place of residence - Sydney , Australia ; mother - born in Australia ; maternal grandmother - born in Calcutta . A grandmother born in Calcutta , India , listed side by side with one born in South Africa ? On the same line? Unheard of!

Let's look at grandchild number five. Religion - Jewish both sides; maternal grandmother - born in Boston ; place of residence - Gibeon . Gibeon ? My grand-daughter is a Gibeonite?

Gibeon is the English name for Givon, where son number three has built a house. Situated on the north-west outskirts of Jerusalem , it was the capital of a league of cities northwest of Jerusalem in the period of the Israelite conquest. Here Joshua called for a miracle - "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ayalon ." The city flourished in the Israelite period and was destroyed during the Babylonian invasion. Today it is a thriving and growing community.

For all we know, grand-daughter may be turning the family wheel full circle - perhaps we were

Gibeonites to start with and she's simply coming home. Or is it the start of a new branch of the family?

Like Gibeon, the family tree will continue to grow and will contain many strange entries as we Jews thread our way through the world. In the years to come, perhaps one of my adventurous Gibeonite descendants will become mother or father of the Martian branch.

The writer is a "retired-but-working" engineer living with his wife in Kfar Saba. Work consists mostly of writing.

"I Used to Be"

by Sue Tourkin-Komet

I used to be younger
and now I am older.

I used to be chubbier
but now I am slimmer.

I used to be of the age when conceiving children was a month-to-month reality.
but now I'm of the age when most women are grandmothers.

I used to be shy
but for years I've been out-spoken.

I used to be clumsy
and now I am sportsy.

I used to be more American -- and now I'm a hyphenated American-Israeli.

I used to be a poor dresser
but became better at it.

I used to be more of a perfectionist but gave up on that.

I used to get out of breath when running uphill, but I've been lucky
to have trained myself to get more out of every breath.

I used to be so carnivorous—maybe three times a day—
and now, sometimes I'm that way only three times a month.

I used to look upon Creative Writing as a course to take--
and now I look upon it as a way of breathing--a way of life.

I used to perhaps worry about "Writer's Block"---
and now I can worry that I'll never write enough.

Sue Tourkin-Komet, from Washington, D.C., made Aliyah to Jerusalem in 1968. A graduate of Case Western Reserve Univ. of Cleveland and the Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem, her journalism, prose, and poetry has been published in some 30 publications and in 2005 she received a Writer's Grant from Beit HaNassi, the Office of the President of Israel.

Creativity in the Golden Years

by Tamar Wisemon & Heather Shinder

Age is opportunity no less,
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

As Longfellow so eloquently stated, your retirement years can provide you with the opportunity to reveal hidden talents that you never had the time to nurture before. Many seniors use this stage of their life to express themselves through learning new skills or indulge in full-time focus on a beloved hobby.

Ezrat Avot spoke with two Israeli seniors from different backgrounds who have maximized the opportunity they have been given to express their creative side. We hope that they will serve as inspirational role models

to get your own creative juices flowing and perhaps even launch a new career!

Nissim Levy, Sculptor

At the "Galleria Shel Sabah" (Grandpa's Gallery) in Moshav Tsafririm, Nissim Levy exhibits his unique iron sculptures, artistic fusions of iron odds and ends. From a huge "cello" with a snapped string to a "laundry line" of sheet metal clothing, his bold and witty pieces reflects an amusing eye on familiar objects from a new angle.

Nissim was born in Iraq , and immigrated with his family to Israel when he was ten years old. He worked in the farming industry but when he retired, at fifty- eight, he decided to polish up the skills he had learned as an apprentice locksmith in his youth, and create art work from scrap iron.

Says Nissim, "For an artist, fifty eight is late to start, but at least I'm doing what I love"

His "environmentally-friendly" creations are composed of scrap iron, the original shapes of the pieces serving as his source of inspiration for the finished work. His artwork revitalizes these discarded remnants, integrating them into a larger setting in unexpected ways to creating quirky and original sculptures.

As member of the Ella Valley Artists Forum, a Jewish Agency Partnership 2000 project, Nissim's sculptures have been exhibited at a number of local art events and craft fairs. His work is on display, and available for purchase, to visitors passing by his home and workshop at Moshav Tsafririm 5, Emek Haella. Tel: 9911212.

Ray Walker, Poet

Ray Walker is a retired teacher, former Rockies climber, social activist, American olah and published poet. At age 87, she has kept a journal since 1969, amounting to over 140 volumes of eloquent contemplation. "When I sat down and read over some of my journals, I realized that I had written poetry but wasn't even aware of it at the time" Ray explains with glee as she leafs through a deep collection of personal thoughts. "This one's from the early seventies" she casually mentions, browsing through her poetry through the glasses resting on the tip of her nose .

Ray is part of a women's creative writing group ,called Pri Hadash which meets weekly at the OU Israel Center. There every week, religious women meet, share ideas, and inspire each other to create works of art in the form of words.

At age 87, the diminutive yet strong- willed and spiritual, Ray Walker has already published one collection of poems, entitled Mnemonic Devices and a New York publisher has expressed interest in another work, its title though, Ray insists, be kept secret, incase she becomes inspired to change it. "The poems were an outgrowth of the daily experiences that profoundly affected me" she explains.

To begin nurturing *your* inner artist in your golden years, Ezrat Avot recommends looking into the following places:

- **Call your local *matnas* (community center) to find out their schedule of art and pottery classes.**
- **SUNFIRE CERAMICS, the Beit Shemesh studio of Sara Shoshana Shiffman, also offers pottery classes. Tel: 050-991-9472 or 02-9919472.**
- **The OU Israel Center holds a Jewish Women's Writing Group, Pri Hadash, every Sunday. For more info call (02) 566-7787.**
- **The AACI (Association for Americans and Canadians in Israel) offers drawing classes for seniors every Tuesday. For more info call (02) 561-7151.**

The Israel Museum offers weekly painting classes. For more info call (02) 677-1303.

- **Ella Seltzer of Bead-azzled in Ramat Beit Shemesh offers a series of jewellery-making workshops to create wearable art. Tel: 991-4253. www.bead-azzled.us**

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