TESTIMONY

I exist in order to say

dthis house is not a house,
place of confiscations, parched rock, fear
there by the central square, did I say central square?
Paved wilderness.

I exist in order to say

dthis road is not a road,
clung to by its travelers, ascending on dream’s rust
from the forest, the sand mountain where
I walk, there, who is walking? There where I used to
walk, a child in the sun
do of cessation, with outstretched arms, searching
and searching for my father’s face my mother’s

I exist in order to say

dthese are the crossbeams and chronicles
do of my parents, coal,
ash, wind
do of my sister in my hair blowing
back and back, a night wind

in my day I exist in order to say
to their nighttime voices yes, yes to their weeping, yes
to the lost in their house of abeyance, to the falling from its wall’s shadows
on the fear in my voice saying yes
in the emptiness.
אני סבט גדול ולמר
ביתי זה לא ביתי,
משהו שניים, צוחיח שניים. סמר
שימיiano נון, אופור התעים?
צויי ק므אפת.
אני סבט גדול ולמר
קטה זו לא קטה,
הלילה אוサポートס, גיצל בהלילה חולם
אניⵍך, עיר הסוה
אני הלילה, שמי הלילה? שיחתי
הלילה בשיון, ילות, בטעות
הלילה, בפשפוש ידום, שלום,
הלילה שלום פבר אפר
אני סבט גדול ולמר
קורות אבות, שקם.
אסף, רוח
אוחיות בראש, יתןשיב
אוחיות. רוח הלילה

בראש אנה סבט גדול ולמר
הלילות יולים, פנ פנכים, פנ
לא襦 ובחיתו ארונא, לful ג'סל קורית
על פדבע קולות ילמרpons
בששת בריח.
WONDER

If after everything that has happened
you can still hear the blackbird,
the tufted lark at dawn, the bulbul and the honey-bird —
don’t be surprised that happiness is watching the clouds being wind-carried
away,
is drinking morning coffee, being able to execute all the body’s needs
is walking along the paths without a cane
and seeing the burning colors of sunset.

A human being can bear almost everything
and no one knows when and where
happiness will overcome him.
כל פיה
אַחֲרֵי כָּל מַה שֶּׁהָיָה
אָהֳלֶה הַוּדָּו רֵמִי לְשָׁמֶש גַּחֲרַהְרָה
אָט הַשַּׁחְרוּר הַמְּפָרֶנְי הַשֶּׁפֶם בַּבָּקֶר וְהַבּוּלְבּוּל
לִשְׁמַחְהֶה לְרָאוֹי עֲנָנִים נִשָּׂאִים בָּרוּחַ
לִשְׁתַּתָּא בַּבָּקֶר לְבַצֵּעַ כָּל צָרְכֵי הַגּוּף
לִשְׁלָכָה בַּשְּׁבִילֵי בְּלִי מַקֵּל
לִרְאוֹי הַצְּבָעִים לוֹהֲטִים אַחֲרֵי הַשְּׁקִיעָה.

בֶּן אָדָם מְסֻגָּל לֶשֶךְ כִּמְעַט הַכּל
אֵית אָנָי אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְבַצֵּע מָתַי
וּהלָכָה בַּשְּׁבִילֵי בְּלִי מַקֵּל

Excerpt from In the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Ruebner
translated and introduced by Rachel Tzvia Back
Copyright © 2014, Hebrew Union College Press. All rights reserved.
Available at http://press.huc.edu and http://upress.pitt.edu
Tuvia Ruebner is one of the last major Israeli poets of his generation — the generation that experienced the Holocaust. His poetry offers us an exquisite and indispensable voice of the twentieth century. His little sister, murdered in Auschwitz, and his youngest son, who disappeared in South America, wander unceasingly through his poems. Beyond the personal losses, the devastation of the century informs all of his work. Textual rupture and fragmentation echo historical rupture and fragmentation. The wonder of Tuvia Ruebner is that, after a lifetime of loss and tragedies, he remains open to the possibility of happiness. This openheartedness accommodates the many paradoxes and conflicts of life and infuses his poetry with an enduring and encompassing compassion for the lost and for the living alike.

Rachel Tzvia Back is a poet, translator, and professor of literature at Oranim College. Her graceful translations of select poems representative of Ruebner’s seven-decade poetic trajectory are ever-faithful and beautifully attuned to the Hebrew originals, even as they work to create a new music in their English incarnations.

In the Illuminated Dark is the first-ever bilingual edition of Ruebner’s work, published as he marks his 90th birthday. Readers now have, in both Hebrew and English, access to stunning poetry that insists on shared humanity across all borderlines and divides. In the Illuminated Dark is also among the first volumes published jointly by Hebrew Union College Press and the University of Pittsburgh Press.