

## TESTIMONY

I exist in order to say

this 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

this 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  
of cessation, with outstretched arms, searching  
and searching for my father's face my mother's

I exist in order to say

these are the crossbeams and chronicles  
of my parents, coal,  
ash, wind  
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.

## תעודה

אני קים כְּדִי לומר

בית זה לא בית,  
משטח חרמים, צחיח סלע, פחד  
שם ליד הכפר, אמרתי כפר?  
ציה מרצפת.

אני קים כְּדִי לומר

דָּרָה זו לא דָּרָה,  
ילפתו ארחותיה, יעלו בתלדת חלום  
מן היער, הר החול  
אני הולך, שם, מי הולך? שהייתי  
הולך בשעלי ילד, בשמש  
חדלון, בפשט ידים, שואל,  
הולך שואל פני אבי ואמי

אני קים כְּדִי לומר

קורות אבותי, פתם,  
אפר, רוח  
אחותי בשערי הנושב  
אחור, אחור, רוח ילית

ביומי אני קים כְּדִי לומר  
לקולם הלילי כן, כן לבכים, כן  
לאובד בבית אינותם, לנפל מצל קירותיו  
על פחד קולי לומר כן  
בשטח הריק.

## 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.

## תמיהה

אחרי כל מה שהיה  
אם אתה עוד מסגל לשמע את השחרור  
את העפרוני המציץ השכם בבקר והבלבול והצופית  
אל תתמה ששמחה היא לראות עננים נשאים ברוח  
לשאת את קפה הבקר, לדעת לבצע את כל צרכי הגוף  
ללכת בשבילים בלי מקל  
ולראות את הצבעים לוחטים אחרי השקיעה.

בן אדם מסגל לשאת כמעט הכל  
ואיש אינו יכול לדעת מתי והיכן  
תכניע אותו השמחה.

**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 90<sup>th</sup> 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.