I strongly believe that art has to heal and comfort and not just present the cruel reality of our modern life in Israel and the world over.

Yehuda Amichai

A Guide to The Amichai Windows

2017 Turtle Light Press, LLC

Published in the United States by Turtle Light Press, LLC

Limited edition artist book of 18 copies translated, designed, letterpressed, printed and assembled by Rick Black

Turtle Light Press
P.O. Box 50162
Arlington, VA 22205
U.S.A.

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For Yehuda Amichai, who encouraged me to write poetry
and to love in the face of loss

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Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the love and support of my wife, Laura, and daughter, Melanie. It also would not have been possible without the backing of Hana Amichai, who believed in me and stuck by me throughout the years that it took to make this artist book. I would also like to thank my brother, Bruce, who first inspired my love of literature, and in-laws Eileen and Fred Ahearn, whose encouragement often buoyed my spirits.

I am indebted to Professor Robert Alter of the University of California, Berkeley, for his generous introduction. I also am grateful for the assistance of Professors Gary Rendsburg and Azzan Yadin-Israel, both of Rutgers University. They deepened my understanding of various shades of meaning in the original Hebrew and helped to find English equivalents. I also benefitted from working with Debra Band, whose papercuts enhance the book in so many ways and whose feedback was always valuable.

I am grateful to Racheli Edelman, of Schocken Publishing House, Tel Aviv, who granted permission to reprint the original Hebrew poems and patiently waited for the book's completion. I would also like to thank various individuals who graciously allowed me to use images from their collections. In particular, Dr. David Kraemer of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York provided complete access to and usage of the library's vast resources of Hebraic and Judaic materials. In addition, Judith Cohen of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Brad Sabin Hill, of the I. Edward Kiev Judaica Collection at the Gelman Library of George Washington University in Washington, D.C., were particularly helpful in providing resources and guidance. I would also like to thank the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library of Yale University for making accessible the papers of Yehuda Amichai, and Hana Amichai for permission to reproduce original handwritten copies of Yehuda's poems as well as images from the Amichai collection.

I also benefitted from the resources made available by Dr. Ann Brener and the staff of the African and Middle Eastern Division of the Library of Congress. I spent many hours reading books and articles in Hebrew that they gathered for me. In addition, I drew inspiration from numerous window-oriented artist books that Mark Dimunation, head of the Rare Book and Special Collections at the Library of Congress, shared with me. I spent time looking at the artist book collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., as well as original photographs by Alfred Stieglitz and Harry Callahan. The work of Callahan in particular helped me forge the collage style of *The Amichai Windows*.

I was fortunate to work with papermaker Travis Becker and his staff at Twinrocker Handmade Paper in Brookston, Indiana. Their expertise and dedication to fine papermaking are remarkable. While I designed the box for *The Amichai Windows*, I also

want to thank Mirtha Antelo and Sarah Larson, both of Distinctive Bookbinding in Rockville, Maryland, for their fine craftsmanship.

I am very appreciative of the support of Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in Maryland. In particular, I would like to thank José Dominguez, Gretchen Schermerhorn, James Quigley and, of course, my letterpress teacher, Laura Kinneberg. The enthusiasm and support of everyone helped to sustain and encourage me.

I also would like to thank many others, including Lynne Avadenka, Anat Banin, Ze'ev Barkan, Rachel Becker, Alex Ben-Arieh, Bill Bonner, Judith Cohen, Kevin Dinneen, Donna Gustafson, Linda Harasewych, Assaf Harel, Rachel Heimowitz, Barbara Henry, Edward Hirsch, Judith Ivry, David Kalender, Vasiliki Katsarou, Beth Kraemer, Jeffrey Kraus, Sharon Liberman-Mintz, Andrew Lowe, Matthew McLaughlin, Maria Pisano, Ellen Rebarber, Greg Robison, Menahem Rosenberg, Jay Rovner, Cathy Smith, Lynette Spencer, Sarah Stengle, A.J. Strasser, Fentahun Tiruneh, Caroline Waddell, Ulla Warchol, I. Michel Yantz and Oded Yisraeli. These individuals, as well as many others, helped in various ways to make this book possible.

A List of Poems

Introduction

By Robert Alter

Is this exquisite presentation of eighteen Amichai poems, lovingly crafted by Rick Black, which he has enclosed in the similacrum of the double panels of a window, an embellishment or rather an interpretation of the poetry? I would not say that Amichai is an especially visual poet. That is, he does not exhibit any manifest impulse of description, and though his poems abound in striking images, they are not fashioned to evoke fully imagined scenes. The compelling and sometimes haunting visual elements that Black has assembled—photos of the Israeli landscape and the streets of Jerusalem, snapshots of the poet, fragments of his manuscripts in his large, looping Hebrew cursive script, components of well-known paintings, graphic designs—are not exactly interpretations or "readings" of the poems but rather amplifications of their subject and associative ruminations on what they may suggest. The selection, on the other hand, of eighteen poems that feature windows in various ways does constitute an act of interpretation. I don't think Amichai's critics have devoted specific attention to the role of windows in his poetry. Windows are surely not some sort of hidden key to Amichai's whole imaginative enterprise, but they do throw light on how he relates to the world in his poems.

It is hardly surprising that windows should mean different things in different poems. Looking out from a window, which predominates in these poems, is quite different from peering into a window or seeing a face in a window. It is the difference between seeing the wide world outside and seeing a dark or empty space within or someone separated from the observer, perhaps sadly, by a pane of glass. Thus, to a young daughter who looks into her father's eyes, they are like the "windows of a dark house of mourning" ("My Little Girl Looks"). Still more instructively, in poem "Fifty-Six" from the the collection *Time*, "The windows of the old house have remained/merely to be peered into from the outside—the final destiny of windows." Which is to say, the obvious purpose of a window is to serve as a vantage-point of observation. In this poem, the house is now ruined and vacant, and the windows, with no observer to look out through them, have come to the bleak end of all windows, an image of the transience of all things, which is to be blank apertures into emptiness.

But the first poem in this selection, "Eternal Window," is emblematic of the positive valence of windows for Amichai when there is a living, looking person standing by them. Any Hebrew reader, and probably many readers of the poem in translation, will catch the play in the title and in the poem on "eternal light," the lamp that is suspended in synagogues over the ark containing the Torah, which in turn is meant to recall the perpetual light burning in the ancient temple in Jerusalem. The enlistment of the sacred on behalf of the profane is characteristic of Amichai and is nicely caught here in a pointed ambiguity of syntax: "an eternal window is always lit." The Hebrew *tamid* can either function as an adjective (as in *ner tamid*, "eternal light") or serve as an adverb ("always"), and Black preserves this ambiguity by putting both senses in his

translation. The window is always lit, but it is also an eternal window, perpetuating the memory of those who once looked out through it and thus also becoming a kind of memorial candle. In this case, clearly, the window is linked with memory, though, more typically, it is an observation post for seeing the world in its vivid presentness. The act of remembering and the act of seeing share a certain attachment to the realm of the sacred: where once there was a perpetual light that marked the zone of holiness, we now have a window to see with our human eyes all the things, good and evil, that reality presents. Such seeing, ultimately, is the vocation of the poet.

Two poems recall the windows in the synagogue of Amichai's German childhood—the stained glass through which the light of the setting sun was filtered during the closing prayer on the Day of Atonement ("Yom Kippur") and that same window through which the child could see the heavens ("I Am In Great Distress"). But what he usually sees in the present is a landscape of suffering, as in "Among Three Or Four In A Room," where one person is standing at the window—surely a surrogate for the poet—"to see the injustice amid thorns." Amichai, a great love poet who was obliged to fight in three wars and was especially marked emotionally by the bloody battles in the Negev in 1948-49, also was compelled by the circumstances of his life to write repeatedly about the imminence of violent death: "death in war begins / with opening the window to see" ("From Man Thou Art And To Man Thou Shalt Return").

If what the speaker in these poems often sees is anything but those heavens glimpsed in his boyhood, he nevertheless absolutely needs to see. Thus, in "I Am In Great Distress," he enunciates what amounts to an existential cry: "I want windows, only windows." A window may open up on thorns and injustice or even on death in war, but it also can be an opening to more hopeful sights. An arresting evocation of that possibility occurs in the unusual deployment of windows in "To Remember Is A Kind of Hope." That poem sounds one of Amichai's great themes as a love poet, which is actually the end of love, the irrevocable yawning distance that inserts itself between lovers who were once so close. The speaker, having destroyed his home (the Hebrew *bayit* equally means "house"), which may refer to Amichai's first marriage, likens the words the lovers once wanted to say to neat piles of new windows stacked alongside a house under construction. The new windows, standing as a figure for the unspoken words, are all expectation, all possibility, apertures for the lovers to see the vibrant world together once the windows are set in place; but with love ended, the house in ruins, they can be nothing but gaping holes.

Through these various windows, the poet sees many things outside, either actually or in metaphors—an abandoned bicycle rusting in the dew, chalk drawings on a sidewalk, white housing projects, even a grand progress of the 150 psalms. There is also a sense expressed in one poem ("I Know A Man") that a person may be on the wrong track looking out of windows. Here is the whole brief poem:

> I know a man
> who photographed the view that he saw
> from a window of the room in which he loved,
> and not the face of the one he loved there.

In these lines as elsewhere Amichai uses the verb "to love" both in its ordinary Hebrew and English meaning and in the sense of "to make love." Capturing the world outside is an alluring activity, and that in part is what poets do. But the preciousness of intimacy—for Amichai, inevitably fragile and always in danger of being forever lost—is, after all, what makes us cherish life, and for that intimate encounter, no window need intervene.

Through Amichai's Window

By Rick Black

We often pause to gaze out a window. It allows us to center ourselves, to recover our balance, to reconnect with our surroundings. Sometimes we simply need to daydream, to let our minds wander aimlessly. Life passes in front of us—a constantly changing tapestry. Through a transparent pane of glass made of liquefied sand and other compounds, we can escape, if only momentarily, from a world defined by the walls around us.

The view out the window, though, is not always reassuring. Windows can get broken; danger can be seen approaching, too. We are both secure and vulnerable by a window; we can both see and be seen. What did Yehuda Amichai, one of the greatest Hebrew writers of our generation, see from his window? A soldier departing for war, a candle lit forever in memory of loved ones, a ship arriving at a sheltered port?

The Amichai Windows is an odyssey, a visual *midrash*, through Jewish history as filtered through the prism of 18 Amichai poems. The book is a cinematic collage of images that highlight the national and personal aspects of Amichai's life. These photo montages span millennia in terms of geographic and temporal references, including birds and flight, exile, dislocated clock hands, Jewish ritual objects and, of course, curtains and windows.

A Post-Cynical Humanist

A widely acclaimed poet of the 20th century, Yehuda Amichai was a voice of sanity in a world that often belies it. Born in Germany, Amichai immigrated to Palestine in the mid-1930s and spent the rest of his life trying to make sense of the calamitous events that his generation endured. He won numerous awards, both in Israel and abroad. To date, his work has been translated into more than 35 languages.

Down-to-earth, kind and avuncular, Amichai continued to have faith in words and people despite the tumultuous times in which he lived. In fact, he was often the favorite poet and beloved teacher of many secular Israelis who identified with his easy-going, informal demeanor and ironic perspective of the country's nationalist mythology.

"I've often said that I consider myself a 'post-cynical humanist,' Amichai told *The Paris Review* in 1992. "Maybe now after so much horror, so many shattered ideals, we can start anew—now that we're well armored for disappointment."

Born as Ludwig Pfeuffer in 1924, Amichai was raised in Würzburg, a picturesque city in Bavaria. He went to the first Montessori Jewish kindergarten, and then to the Jewish state-owned school where, in first grade, he started to learn both German and Hebrew. "I lived only amongst Jews even before 1933 [when the Nazis rose to

power],” Amichai recounted in an article in English entitled, “Every Writer Uses His Own Life,” which I found in the archives of his papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. “So, to my early childhood, the Jewish world and Jewish culture were there in southern Germany. There was a mountain nearby which for me was Mount Sinai. There was a valley, a place of many school excursions, which was nothing else but the very valley in which little David and giant Goliath had their bout.”

Raised in an Orthodox family, Amichai was taunted by the Hitler youth as a young child. When his father—a traveling salesman and member of the Hevra Kadisha (Jewish burial society)—heard that two Jews had been beaten to death, he decided to leave Germany. The family took a train to Venice and then sailed from Trieste to Palestine in 1935 or 1936 (the dates vary according to accounts). They settled in Petach Tikvah, where Amichai used to play amid the orange groves and go to synagogue with his father.

“While I was standing next to my father in the synagogue in Petach Tikvah in the 1930s—it was still a beautiful, agricultural colony—praying in Hebrew like in Germany, outside of the window the children were shouting in Hebrew at their play,” Amichai wrote in “Every Writer Uses His Own Life.” “So, I found myself standing between the holy language and the street language . . . my body learnt a new language and my mind changed a sacred language into everyday speech.”

After about a year, the family moved to Jerusalem and Amichai was sent to a religious high school at his father’s insistence. In 1942, after high school, he volunteered to join the British Army to help fight against the Nazis in World War II. At first he was stationed on the Atlit coast to protect against a possible German invasion, but he was later transferred to Egypt, where by chance he discovered a Faber anthology of modern British poetry that would ultimately change his life.

“It was my first encounter with modern British poetry—the first time I read Eliot and Auden, for example, who became very important to me,” said Amichai in his interview with *The Paris Review*. “I discovered them in the Egyptian desert in a half-ruined book. This book had an enormous impact on me—I think that was when I began to think seriously about writing poetry.”

Whenever he could do so, Amichai read voraciously at one of the British Army libraries while also smuggling arms and immigrants into Palestine for the Jewish underground. Following the end of World War II, he studied to become a school teacher, took a job at an elementary school in Haifa (which is when he changed his last name from Pfeuffer to Amichai) and eventually joined the Palmach, an elite fighting unit that was part of the Jewish army before the formation of the Israeli army.

Early Wartime Experiences

Two wartime experiences in particular left a deep impression upon Amichai and strengthened his desire to become a poet. In the first instance, which occurred in the fall of 1947, Amichai was assigned to a Negev unit under the command of “Dicky,”

another German immigrant who happened to have immigrated in the same year as Amichai. The two became very close friends; they had both served in the British Army and were a little older than the other recruits. Dicky, who was already married, became a father in December of that year but wasn't able to visit his newborn daughter until the following summer because of all the action. Shortly after he returned to his unit, though, Dicky went on a guerilla skirmish against the Egyptian army and was killed with his men. It was a devastating loss for Amichai, who easily could have gone with him. The second wartime experience with which Amichai struggled to come to terms occurred in the battle for Ashdod. Amichai was carrying a wounded buddy on his shoulders only to find out when he got to the first-aid station that his friend had already died. In later years, Amichai commemorated many of these losses in his wartime poems.

"I started writing poetry, using my words to come to terms with my life's extremes and heal myself and go on living," Amichai wrote in an English holograph, entitled "I Write in Hebrew Because," which I also found in his papers at the Beinecke. "I am very happy that the poems which have helped me to heal myself also help others. I strongly believe that art has to heal and comfort and not just present the cruel reality of our modern life in Israel and the world over."

Amichai's Revolution in Hebrew Verse

Amichai's verse is informal, both in terms of its phrasing and rhyme scheme. At the same time, he draws deeply upon Jewish religious sources from his Orthodox upbringing and blends in snippets of Biblical, Talmudic and liturgical poetry and prose in his work. He has a unique way of converting the everyday into the holy and vice versa, thereby reinventing the poetic tradition to incorporate modern doubts and redefine the Jewish experience.

"Amichai effected a vernacular revolution in Hebrew verse, rejecting the high literary language and the rhetorical thrust of the previous generation of Hebrew poets and finding ways to make poetry out of the plain words of everyday speech," wrote Robert Alter, in an introduction to his comprehensive edited collection in English, *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai.*

Reading an Amichai poem is like having a conversation with him. By using a gentle, wry irony, puns, alliteration, and other linguistic devices, Amichai creates a sense of play in his poetry, even when he is dealing with painful subjects. He was influenced by English and German writers, including W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, and Rainer Maria Rilke.

As Amichai reflected in "Every Writer Uses His Own Life" in his papers at the Beinecke, "As a poet, I have a double loyalty: I'm part of the Jewish-Hebrew tradition but I also belong to the poetry of the mid-century, post-wars generation."

Having abandoned traditional religious faith and the collective ideals that had fallen short, Amichai turned to the most intimate moments between individuals—either embodied in love or familial relationships—and to memory as "a hedge against oblivion,"

as poet Edward Hirsch wrote in a review in *The New York Times*. He found an anchor in the here-and-now, especially in a land weighted down by history. Taking refuge in the present liberated him from both the prevailing ideological straitjackets and the weighty historical past.

Meeting Yehuda and Hana Amichai

In 1995, I met Amichai through my work as the press liaison at the Israeli consulate in Philadelphia. We were hosting a conference of young American Jews and I suggested that Amichai be brought in as the keynote speaker. Before I knew it, everything had been arranged. I was assigned to escort Amichai and his wife, Hana, in Philadelphia. When I greeted them at the 30th Street train station, he was lugging a gigantic, beat-up suitcase. He wouldn't let me help him with it.

"We all have to carry our own bags," he said, reflecting his knack of perceiving the symbolic in everyday situations and transforming it into an ironic metaphor.

Later that night about fifty people showed up at the Gershman Jewish Community Center. He read from a worn, tattered copy of his poems marked with numerous bookmarks. Between poems, he interspersed comments in his deep, hoarse voice about how a particular poem had come to be written. As we headed back to the hotel, he lit his pipe. Its aromatic blend of tobacco filled the chill night air. I apologized for the relatively small turnout at his reading.

"If I wanted more fans, I would have been a soccer player," he joked.

We stayed up for a while in the lobby, talking about life in Israel. I told him that I had been a war reporter there and was searching for a way to come to grips with my experiences. I was trying to use poetry, too. Like a father, he encouraged me to continue writing and not to be afraid to love again.

"Love won't save you from war but it can help you deal with the pain," he said when we were at the hotel. "Poetry can help, too. Words helped me to regain a balance in my life. You have to accept life on its own terms. If you try to fight it, you'll break."

It felt good to be together with him—just the two of us. I reluctantly left him in the lobby of the hotel as he smoked his pipe in the lounge and gazed out the window at the passing traffic. The next morning I picked them up at the hotel, gave them a short tour of the city and then took them back to the 30th Street station.

"Here we are again," he said. "We've come full circle."

"It is probably just another stop for you," I said, "but I hate to see you go."

"Why don't you come visit us in Jerusalem?" he suggested. He scribbled down their home address and phone number. "I'll give you a copy of my newest book and sign it for you."

"I would like that very much."

When I returned to Jerusalem in the winter of 1999, though, I found out that he was in New York City being treated for lymphatic cancer. I had finally come to visit but now he was ill in the States. He died on September 22, 2000.

Conceiving *The Amichai Windows*

In 2007, I wrote to Hana with the idea of making a limited edition artist book. I wanted to do a collection of some of Amichai's personal poems about family. She liked the idea of a limited edition book but not one about his family.

"People will interpret the poems too autobiographically," she said. "No, I won't give you permission to do it."

A bit disheartened, I resolved to try again. I read through most of Amichai's work and one day came across a short, six-line poem entitled "Eternal Window," that I thought might be a good starting point for a book.

Eternal Window

Within a garden I once heard
a song or an old blessing.

And above the dark trees
an eternal window is always lit

in memory of the faces that were in it,
themselves a memory of another lit window.

Yehuda Amichai, "Eternal Window"

The poem captivated me. One memory is endlessly imbedded inside another. It is like each memory recedes in time to a garden—perhaps the Garden of Eden. Amichai converts a *ner tamid*, the eternal lamp of a synagogue, into a *halon tamid*, an eternal window. By doing so, he deftly switches the source of light from a sacred symbol of God's presence to the memory of loved ones. Just as importantly, though, I would be able to play with the idea of windows—a major theme in art and literature—both in terms of the book's structure and its graphic design.

I became mesmerized by the idea of windows in Amichai's poetry: a bus window, a boarded-up window, a shattered window from his childhood synagogue, arched Jerusalem windows. After combing through his poetry, I selected 18 window poems, ranging in theme from the nature of memory to the refuge of poetic flight, from a search for love to the demise of exile, and from a world shattered into pieces to a father's love of his children.

When I visited Hana in Jerusalem with my wife and daughter in 2009, she ushered us into the living room, where there is a beautiful view of the Old City ramparts.

Amichai had moved to this flat when it was located in no-man's land, a poor neighborhood abutting the Jordanian border from which shots were often fired. As my daughter did a jigsaw puzzle, Hana served us tea and chocolate babka. When I told her about my idea for an artist book centered on windows, she liked it very much and gave me permission to go ahead.

Developing the Concept of *The Amichai Windows*

I had a vision early on for the design of the book. I wanted the poems to be read as intimately as possible, to enable a reader to sit by the glow of a lamp, perusing the poem and images, looking out a window, rereading, letting the words and images penetrate. To do so, I planned to make a separate folio for each poem—a folio that would have to be opened as a window. I would create a triptych with the Hebrew version of the poem to the right, the English translation on the left—and graphics filling the entire page, especially the central window panel. By doing this, I wanted the act of opening a "window" to mimic the act of reading, of "opening" a poem. I would use imagery as a visual response to the text but the poems would remain the primary conveyor of meaning.

A few book artist friends suggested that an accordion book would be a better format. With its various see-through panels and openings, I could play with the idea of windows, of what is seen and not seen. I experimented a little with the format but I felt that the poems were getting slighted. The book structure itself was becoming the main focus, not the poems. So, I returned to my idea of separate triptychs and designed the book with my ideal conception of reading poetry in mind. A poem could rest in the reader's lap or on a desk with the side panels opened at about a 45 degree angle so that it could be viewed in one glance.

To do some archival research on Amichai's life and poetry, I took a trip to see Amichai's papers at the Beinecke in New Haven, Connecticut. It was like cupping my hands against a window and peeking inside his life. Most of all, I loved being able to see and handle the original versions of his poems. But there were also photos of him in the British army in Cairo, making funny faces with his kids, and cooking in the kitchen. I found family recipes to make soup for Shabbat and his call-up notice from the Israel Defense Forces. The visit helped give me a sense of his life and provided a lot of images to incorporate into the book.

Replicating Amichai's Poetic Style

In the design of the layouts for each poem, I was trying to mirror Amichai's mosaic style of poetry by creating my own collages. I drew from various periods of Amichai's life as well as from Jewish history. It was not simply a matter of illustrating the poems as in a *livre d'artiste* but of interweaving images and words in a kaleidoscope so that they naturally highlighted each other. For instance, I have overlapped in one layout a photo of the ruins of the Dead Sea sect's writing area, the scriptorium, with an embossed outline of the view of the Old City's walls from Amichai's living room window, a photo of Amichai in the British army, and a Jerusalem clock bearing ancient Hebrew script.

For Amichai, everything is contemporaneous—past and future. He said in his interview with *The Paris Review* that there's a saying in the Talmud that nothing is early or late in the Bible, "which means that everything, all events, are ever present, that the past and the future converge on the present, especially in language . . .This sense of bringing the past and future into the present defines my sense of time—it is very strong within me and my poetry."

In fact, the nature of time is one of the main themes of *The Amichai Windows*. Clocks appear in all guises—with clock hands attached and not attached, in the form of ancient Hebrew letters in place of numerals and otherwise. I also weave in a windmill located next to Amichai's old house in Yemin Moshe with its arms circling, always circling around.

I am a clock hand that has run away
from its dial but cannot forget its circling movements.

When I go straight toward my endless end,
it hurts because I know only round.
Yehuda Amichai, "Twenty-Eight"

To me, it's as if Amichai is waiting by a window for a moment to race out safely so that he can gather up the shattered pieces of his life and put them in a poem for safekeeping. Perhaps he does this simply in terms of memory. He easily leaps in time from his childhood in Würzburg to being a schoolteacher in Haifa, from fighting in the Negev to falling in and out of love, from being a son to raising his own children. Indeed, perhaps memory is his primary window.

Symbolism of *The Amichai Windows*

So much of *The Amichai Windows* is symbolic—from the boxed window enclosure to the choice of papers, from the colors to the logo. I designed the enclosure to open like a window but with two drop-down sides so that the poems would be easily accessible. Inside, a sheer curtain covers the poems, which allows the reader to peek into this special world. It also slows readers down, forcing them to lift the curtain and then remove the individual poems one at a time.

The exterior texture of the box, which is handmade, rough dried abaca /cotton paper, is meant to replicate the look and feel of Jerusalem stone. Mostly, I wanted it to reflect the roughness of life in Israel, which then would be offset by the softness of the curtain. To line the interior of the box, I selected an olive green book cloth to suggest the landscape of Israel—the dusky green of cypress and olive trees. Ultimately, the olive green color was also used to letterpress the poem titles, too.

The logo of the book is taken from a photo of one of the windows of the house of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in Jerusalem. He was the main driving force in helping to revive the Hebrew language in the early 20th century. Everyone who speaks Hebrew today is looking through Ben-Yehuda's window—and all the more so Amichai, who uses and plays with the Hebrew language so well.

Overall, I wanted the textures of the papers themselves to reflect a central paradox of Amichai's poetry. Yes, Amichai experienced the horrors of war, but he is always saying, as it were, don't forget the *softness*. In fact, in an interview with Avirama Golan of Israel Educational Television a few weeks before his death, he was asked about criticism of his work in which it's said that he's *soft*. "The world is not *soft* so I'm the opposite," he replied. "I inject *softness* into daily life. It's the only possibility—even in the army."

So, while the exterior covers, functionally and metaphorically needed to be firm and a little rough, the interior papers on which I would print digital images and letterpress the poems had to be soft. I selected a handmade abaca /cotton mix with a large deckle for the exterior covers and, for the poems themselves, a Japanese paper with the texture of velvet that was specially treated for digital printing and durable enough to letterpress.

Letterpressing The Poems

It took months to letterpress all of the poems for the book. Each day I would drive to Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in Maryland, do my work and then rush home to be there for my daughter upon her return from school. Besides letterpressing the poems themselves, I also embossed numerous images into the paper. Sometimes I printed them in color, other times I blind embossed them.

For example, in the poem, "My Mother Baked The Whole World For Me," Amichai's closing metaphor, ". . . all the rare birds with beautiful plumage flee from me," evokes all of the loved ones who have left him and that he still misses. To capture this metaphor, I blind embossed a bird into the layout—that is, I fashioned the shape of a bird without any ink. The embossment can barely be seen; it can only be touched but not fully grasped like a memory.

I also blind embossed the Hebrew word "chai" (חי in Hebrew) on the design of every poem. While the word itself means "to live" or "to be alive," the Hebrew letters also have numerical equivalents. For instance, the two Hebrew letters in the word "chai" equal 18. Moving from right to left, the "chet" (ח in Hebrew) equals 8 and the "yud" (י in Hebrew) equals 10. Therefore, I have chosen 18 poems for the artist book and produced an edition of 18 copies. But the word, "chai," is also the last part of Amichai's name which, in full, means "my people lives." By putting a "chai" in each layout, I am paying tribute to him. To reflect Amichai's being a child at heart and his love of playing with words, I have hidden the "chai" so that readers can try to find it and be surprised, too.

Amichai's View of Poetry

"A poem is like a lullaby that you sing in order to calm yourself," Amichai said in "Between the Pen and the Paper," a 1965 *Ha'aretz* interview. "There are poems that if I hadn't written them, I would have been completely lost."

Given the harsh realities that Amichai faced, he needed a means to keep his balance, and poetry fulfilled that role. As he said to Esther Fuchs in her book, *Encounters*

With Israeli Authors, poetry is a release because "it helps me locate my pain and transform it into words . . . it is my instinctive way of touching a wound. It also organizes the world for me. It puts some order into the ongoing chaos. It gives me something to hold on to, 'meaning,' if you like."

Standing by the window, Amichai is surrounded by loved ones and the familiarity of home. Poised on the threshold, perhaps he contemplates what lies beyond: his unfulfilled longings, his yearnings for other times and places, for people who have come and gone. We no longer have Amichai, but we have his poetry—and for me, he will always be there, gazing out his Jerusalem window.

As he wrote in this excerpt from a poem in *The Amichai Windows*:

I want windows, only windows.
I want clothes light and loose on my body
like hands waving farewell, without pain.
Yehuda Amichai, "I Am In Great Distress"

A Note on the Translation

"Poetry is what gets lost in translation," Robert Frost is often quoted as saying.

It's true, but it's not true. The original connotations and impact of a poem are lost in translation, that's true. One cannot move from one country to another without a sense of dislocation, of newness, of discovery. But, that's just it. A new language presents the opportunity for the poet to be discovered by a new audience—and for the poem to resonate in new ways. It might not be the same as the original, but it can take on a life of its own.

Translating Amichai's poems into English presents its own challenges. It's true that it's impossible to convey the original's sensibility or meaning in translation. But one can convey a sense of it, a hint of it in the form of a new poem in a new language. The truth is that every translation is a draft that could be endlessly revised.

For me, this sense of a new poem being created must take precedence over slavish faithfulness to narrowly constrained literal meanings. Writes Walter Benjamin: "Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original. For sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it."

And José Ortega y Gasset: "The simple fact is that the translation is not the work but a path toward the work."

At its best, a translation can be a wholly new utterance, a new poem for an audience thirsting to be transported not only to a distant land but to a similar emotional landscape as the original poem. We can try to get as close to the original as possible despite a different cultural context and historical background. And yet languages are like people: they have their own personalities, histories and literary traditions.

This is both a strength and a weakness in terms of translation. For instance, the meaning of a word like "Am" (עם in Hebrew), which is usually translated as "nation" or "people" in English, simply cannot be fully conveyed in English. The connotations of the English word relate to a different past and automatically couch the word in a different context. So, the emotional depth of the word "Am" with its connection to the chosenness of the Jewish people, to the familiar song, "Am Yisrael Chai!" or an ironic use of the term, of the notion of chosenness in Yiddish—all of this is lost in English.

In addition, there are always what I call the "knots of translation" in a poem. By this, I mean the places where there's an ambiguity of meaning that is either very difficult or impossible to translate. This forces a translator to make a choice of two or more

possible meanings—and this is also the part that gets lost in translation.

At the same time, though, there is much that can be gained from the overall meaning and interpretation of a poem so that even if individual words are not transferable or synonymous from one language to another, the overall thought or emotion of the poem can still be successfully conveyed. A "good" translation will form a similar but new poem that hints strongly at the power and emotional meaning of the original.

In my opinion, the original poem must come through essentially in language that itself rings true. If it's successful, a translation will convey the sounds and rhythms, the diction and syntax of the original poem. Ultimately, translating is both a critical and creative act that both betrays and is faithful to the original poem.

Over the course of a year, I met weekly with professors Gary Rendsburg and Azzan Yadin- Israel from the Judaic studies department at Rutgers University. I would bring a rough translation that we would tear apart at a café in Highland Park, N.J. Word by word, we reviewed each poem. On the one hand, Prof. Rendsburg helped to contextualize the linguistic and historical roots of particular words and phrases. On the other hand, Prof. Azzan Yadin-Israel, an Israeli-born native with a keen knowledge of Hebrew slang, adopted a less literal, more free-flowing approach.

After an initial session on each poem, I would retreat to my workshop and puzzle out a translation, taking into consideration their comments as well as previous translations. Ultimately, I wanted to create a new poem in another language. Of course, any shortcomings, mistakes or misinterpretations are my own.

—Rick Black—

Photo Guide & Credits

Eternal Window

1. Estera Ajzen is photographed in the window of her home in Chelm, Poland, where she worked for a photography studio. After the German invasion of Poland, her family fled to the Soviet zone but was deported to a labor camp. In 1944, she married a Soviet Jewish soldier and they survived the war. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Ester (born Estera) Ajzen Lewin and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

2. The Gerechters, a German Jewish refugee family, are looking out the window of their one room home in Albania. Hidden by a Muslim couple, they later avoided German deportation by fleeing from city to city. In 1944, they were freed by Communist partisans and eventually immigrated to the United States. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Johanna Neumann and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

3. Twin Austrian Jewish women pose on a window ledge. They both managed to immigrate to the United States, one just after the Anschluss and the other after the start of World War II. Their parents perished in Auschwitz. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Kenneth Warren and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

4. A panel of the Roman "Arch of Titus" shows the spoils from the sacking of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, including a menorah and trumpets. The panel became a symbol of the Jewish diaspora. The image is reproduced courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Beit Hatfutsot Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel.

5. The original handwritten manuscript of the poem חלון תמיד ("Eternal Window") is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

6. This 18th century eternal light with chased foliage is from Italy. The silver sanctuary lamp is inscribed in Hebrew, "Praise Him all ye stars of night." (Psalms 148.3.) The image is reproduced courtesy of The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

7. A house with a red-tiled roof and garden with orange trees in Jerusalem. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

Twenty-Eight

1. ספר עברונות, a Hebrew calendar book, was produced in Germany in 1627. The

pages contain folk art motifs and were used to explain the rules for fixing the Jewish calendar based on lunar configurations. Some pages have multiple spinning dials that function like circular slide rules, which help to line up the days, months and years. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, ms. 2662.

2. This papercut of a Jerusalem balcony and climbing rose was made by Debra Band and is reproduced with her permission.

3. A dove flits at the Western Wall. The photograph was taken by Mikhail Levit and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

4. The clock hand that appears in this poem is taken from a photograph of a large street clock in Jerusalem by Rick Black.

My Mother Baked The Whole World For Me

1. Flamingoes north of Eilat in the Evrona salt ponds are photographed while looking east towards Jordan. The young flamingoes stay year round; the older ones return at the end of each winter. The photograph was taken by Laura Ahearn and is reproduced with her permission.

2. A great blue heron is captured in flight. The photograph was taken by Meredith Blaché and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

3. These window frames in the YMCA tower overlook the Old City from the western side. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

4. Papyrus reeds in the Hula Valley Nature Reserve sway in the breeze. The photograph was taken by Saar Yaacov and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

Yom Kippur

1. The synagogue, Beit HaKnesset Netzach Yisrael, is located by the Machane Yehuda marketplace in Jerusalem. This photograph of its front entranceway was taken by Rick Black.

2. A page bearing the word, מלך ("king" in English), is from the Esslingen Machzor, a 13th century Ashkenazic prayerbook for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. The artwork and calligraphy were done by Kalonymus ben Judah, a German Jewish artist. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, ms. 9344.

3. The two hands of the kohanim blessing come from סדר דיני שחיטה, an 18th

century Italian Jewish book that spells out the laws of ritual slaughter. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, reference number R1114.

4. A dove at the Western Wall. The photograph was taken by Mikhail Levit and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

Summer Evening By A Window With Psalms

1. A view of Jerusalem's Old City is seen through the windows of the YMCA tower. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

2. Off Jaffa Road in downtown Jerusalem is an artist studio called, "Museum of Psalms." It features Kabbalistic-style paintings of the book of Psalms. This photograph of its sign was taken by Rick Black.

3. An early morning scene of boats afloat on the Dead Sea was taken by the American Colony Photograph Department. Part of the Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

4. A woodcut in the shape of a cloverleaf with Jerusalem in the center of a map of the world was made by Heinrich Buenting in 1581. The image is reproduced courtesy of the Osher Map Library, University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine.

5. Max Schanzer says farewell to his parents through a train window prior to his departure for Palestine. They all had been in the Bergen Belsen displaced persons' camp. The Hebrew inscription reads, "And the children shall return to their homeland." The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Max Netzer and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

6. Refugees are looking through the cabin windows of the Exodus in 1947 before their removal by British troops. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives in Washington, D.C., and the Israel Government Press Office in Jerusalem.

Just As It Was

1. A photograph of the recreated Moses Montefiore windmill in Jerusalem has been artistically altered. Yehuda Amichai used to live near this windmill in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood. The photograph and artistic filtering were done by Rick Black.

2. A woman drives a hay rake at Kibbutz Maabarot in 1940. The photograph was taken by Zoltan Kluger and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

3. Cypress trees tower towards the sky in Yemin Moshe. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

4. A papercut of the Montefiore windmill was made by Debra Band and is reproduced with her permission.

Among Three Or Four In The Room

1. Chaim Nachman Bialik is widely considered the father of modern Hebrew poetry. This is a window of the Bialik House Museum in Tel Aviv. The photograph was taken by Amos ben Gershom and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

2. A view is depicted of the interior of the Bialik House Museum in Tel Aviv. The photograph was taken by Amos ben Gershom and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

3. A photograph of Yehuda Amichai as a young man is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai.

4. An old Palestine coin and modern-day Israeli currency were photographed by Eldad Carin and are reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

5. A copy of a letter without an address sent via the Hebrew postal service, דואר עברי, is reproduced courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh from the website, www.historama.com.

6. A globe thistle was captured by the American Colony Photograph Department. Part of the Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

I Am In Great Distress

1. Yehuda Amichai and his classmates are seated in their first grade classroom in Würzburg, Germany. He is the second boy to the left of the teacher. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

2. A dove is silhouetted in an arched window of the entrance hall of Nebi Samuel, where the prophet Samuel is said to be buried in Jerusalem. The photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

3. Sunlight glints off a lintel with a Star of David in the Nachlaot neighborhood near the Machane Yehuda market in Jerusalem. The photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

4. A beat-up window in Romania is boarded-up with a Magen David in the upper right corner. Entitled "Magen David Romania," the photograph was taken by Oded Yisraeli and is reproduced by his permission.

5. The Jerusalem skyline and clouds are reflected in a window. The photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

6. The Stern house in the Mamilla neighborhood of Jerusalem still shows the numbered stones from when it was deconstructed and rebuilt in its original location. Theodore Herzl stayed in this house during his visit to the city in 1898. Entitled "Stone and Number 1," the photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

7. A tri-arched stone marks the window of this home built in 1908 on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem for a Bucharian merchant, Massiah Borochoff. Entitled "Massiah Building," the photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

8. Two grey, arched metal shutters are fashioned with a Magen David. Entitled "Magen David Window 1," the photograph was taken by Menahem Rosenberg and is reproduced by his permission.

9. A cat is perched by the grate of a window in Jerusalem. Entitled "Narrow Seat," the photograph was taken by Ze'ev Barkan and is reproduced by his permission.

10. Homegrown carrots photographed by Rick Black.

The Jews

1. Entitled "Alter Jude aus Jaffa (Old Jew from Jaffa)," this etching was done by Hermann Struck, a German Jewish artist who taught etching to Marc Chagall, Max Liebermann and others. In 1922, Struck immigrated to Palestine and helped found the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The image is reproduced courtesy of the I. Edward Kiev Judaica Collection at the Gelman Library of The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

2. A Jewish-owned store in Berlin, Germany, is covered with graffiti and rhyming signs of anti-Semitic verse. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Raphael Aronson and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

3. A forest in the Karelia region of Finland in a corner of which is a Nazi bunker. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of James Blevins and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

4. Cave Four at Qumran is one of 11 caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the mid-20th century. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

5. A Hanukkah menorah is alit in the window of a house in the Mea Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem. The photograph was taken by Mark Neyman and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

6. Three Hermann Struck lithographs of a boy, an old woman, and a young woman come from the book, *Das Ostjüdische Antlitz* (*The Face of East European Jewry*) published in 1920. The images are reproduced courtesy of the I. Edward Kiev Judaica Collection at the Gelman Library of The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

7. An advertisement of the Orange telephone company at Ben Gurion International Airport shows colorful birds and a Jew at prayer. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

8. A dove at the Western Wall. The photograph was taken by Mikhail Levit and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

9. A clock hand is reproduced from a photograph of a Jerusalem clockface taken by Rick Black.

My Little Girl Looks

1. An artistically-altered photograph of a shuttered window with a metal grate on Rehov Malki, where Yehuda Amichai lived. The photograph and artistic filtering were done by Rick Black.

2. A feather photographed by Rick Black.

3. A dove at the Western Wall. The photograph was taken by Mikhail Levit and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

4. A photograph of a citation from Genesis (43:11) in which Israel is advising his sons who are about to return to Egypt to obtain more food and provisions. "Take of the best yield of the land in your vessels . . . some balm and some honey, aromatic gum and labdanum, pistachio nuts. . ." The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

My Son Is Drafted

1. A panorama of the Old City of Jerusalem can be seen in this photograph from Yehuda Amichai's terrace. The photograph was taken by Assaf Harel and is reproduced with his permission.

2. A group of refugees at the Atlit Detention Camp volunteered for the Jewish Brigade immediately upon arrival in Palestine. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, Washington, D.C.

3. A dog greets an Egged bus arriving in the Nahal Yam settlement in the northern Sinai in 1968. Taken by Moshe Milner, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

4. A relative hangs onto the outside of a bus carrying released Israeli prisoners of war at Lod airport following the Yom Kippur war. The photograph was taken by Moshe Milner and is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

5. Yehuda Amichai stands by the window of his home in Yemin Moshe, overlooking the Old City. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

6. These Hermann Struck lithographs of a man with a pipe and a young woman writing both come from the book, *Das Ostjüdische Antlitz* (*The Face of East European Jewry*) published in 1920. The images are reproduced courtesy of the I. Edward Kiev Judaica Collection at the Gelman Library of The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

7. A certificate from the IDF was issued to Yehuda Amichai following his completion of a course to defend against chemical warfare. The image is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

8. An IDF call-up notice that Yehuda Amichai received to report for duty. The image is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

9. David "Dedi" Amichai, Hana and Yehuda Amichai's son, stands in uniform by a window. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai.

10. A coat of arms is taken from a testimonial on behalf of a Jewish merchant family who helped provide supplies to the English ambassador to the Vatican in Italy in 1687. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, B (NS) BL2.

11. A mezuzah on a doorpost of the terrace of Yehuda Amichai overlooking the Old City. The photograph was taken by Assaf Harel and is reproduced with his permission.

12. A photo of an IDF soldier's paper identification card was provided by and reproduced courtesy of Assaf Harel.

13. A feather photographed by Rick Black.

14. A dove at the Western Wall. The photograph was taken by Mikhail Levit and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

Fifty-Four

1. The central coastal plain of Israel photographed by Rick Black.

2. A bomb shelter in Jerusalem stands not far from the Machane Yehuda marketplace. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

3. The Dutch painting, "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window," by Johannes Vermeer is reproduced courtesy of www.wikiart.org.

4. An Israeli army boot. The photograph was taken by Eldad Carin and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

From Man Thou Art And Unto Man Thou Shalt Return

1. A curtained window photographed by Rick Black.

2. A stereograph of wildflowers originally produced by the Keystone View Company. The photograph, which has been modified, is reproduced courtesy of the Jeffrey Kraus Collection, www.antiquephotographics.com.

3. A green shuttered window and folding chair. The photograph was taken by Amit Erez and is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

Fifty-Six

1. The Jewish colony of Tell Pioth, which today is the Talpiot neighborhood in Jerusalem, as seen in a 1925 photograph. The image is part of the Holy Land photograph collection and is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

2. The "Mona Lisa of the Galilee" is part of a mosaic found at the Tzipori National Archaeological Park in the central Galilee region. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

3. A papercut of Jerusalem and its hills was made by Debra Band and is reproduced with her permission.

To Remember Is A Kind Of Hope

1. Through the windows, one can see the aftermath of a rocket attack in 2012 from the Gaza Strip on Netivot, a town in southern Israel. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Israel Defense Forces from www.flickr.com.

2. Anemones sprout on a Jerusalem hillside. The photograph was taken by Dror

Feitelson and is reproduced courtesy of www.pikiwiki.org.il.

3. Peeling, wooden window frames photographed by Rick Black.

4. The cover of sheet music, "Two Zionist National Songs," was created and published by Theodore Lohr in 1907 in New York. The image is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

5. A richly colored marriage contract, which has been "torn" to reflect the poem, comes from Herat, Afghanistan, and was made in 1867. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Ket 270.

I Know A Man

1. A sign with barbed wire warns of mines in the Golan Heights. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of www.istockphoto.com.

2. The original handwritten manuscript of the poem, אני מכיר אדם, ("I Know a Man") is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

3. Hannah Senesh, a poet and playwright, parachuted into Nazi-occupied Hungary, her native country, to try to save Jews who were being sent to Auschwitz. She was captured, tortured and executed. This is a picture of her at Kibbutz Sdot Yam in 1939. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of the National Photo Archive of Israel, Jerusalem.

4. An Israeli tank, which is parked amid magenta bougainvillea, overlooks the central coastal plain of Israel. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

5. A screened-in window of a house photographed by Rick Black.

6. An old Kodak film strip was scanned by Rick Black.

7. A photograph of grazing sheep was taken and hand-colored by the American Colony Photograph Department. Part of the Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

8. These wild anemones were photographed by the American Colony Photograph Department. Part of the Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

9. A clump of Bethlehem star flowers was photographed by the American Colony Photograph Department. Part of the Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress, the photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

When I Returned, They Told Me There Is No

1. While serving in the British Army in World War II, Yehuda Amichai stands at ease in the Western Desert in Egypt. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

2. A fragment of an original manuscript found in the Cairo Genizah is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, MS ENA 2558.3r.

3. The Qumran L30 Scriptorium ruins are located near where some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Dr. Robert Raymond Cargill and www.wikipedia.org.

4. An illustrated manuscript bears the name of Würzburg, the city in Germany where Yehuda Amichai was born. The image is reproduced courtesy of Hana Amichai from the Amichai papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

5. A clockface with stylized, ancient Hebrew script can be found by the Mamila neighborhood in Jerusalem. The photograph was taken by Rick Black.

God's Hand In The World

1. The *Libro di Messer Giovam Battista Palatino* is a calligraphic manual written by a 16th century Italian calligrapher. The image is reproduced courtesy of The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, RB 380:1a.

2. A bicycle is parked on a street in Pisa, Italy. The photograph is reproduced by permission from www.flickr.com.

3. A stone arched window in Jerusalem photographed by Rick Black.

4. A chased silver Torah pointer with a ball handle is engraved with blossoms and Hebrew inscriptions from Vienna, 1851. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

5. A *hamsa*, or good luck amulet, is reproduced by permission of Códice Tuna Colectivo de Arte from www.flickr.com.

6. A photograph of this chicken is reproduced courtesy of www.wikimedia.org.

Contributors

Yehuda Amichai

Considered for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Yehuda Amichai was one of the most beloved and celebrated Israeli poets. His colloquial style was easily accessible and helped to forge a new style of Hebrew writing. He was awarded the 1957 Shlonsky Prize, the 1969 Brenner Prize, and the 1982 Israel Prize. He also won several international poetry prizes, including the 1994 Malraux Prize and the 1995 International Book Fair Prize in France. He also wrote novels, short stories and a book for children.

Rick Black

Founder of Turtle Light Press, Rick Black has been a book artist and poet for more than 20 years. His poetry collection, *Star of David*, won *Poetica Magazine*'s 2012 poetry chapbook contest for contemporary Jewish writing. He was selected to be the poet-of-the-month for April 2012 by Cornell University's Mann Library and has garnered several international awards for his poetry. He has also studied with book artist masters at the Center for Book Arts in New York and Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in Maryland. Prior to being a book artist and poet, he worked as a reporter in the Jerusalem bureau of *The New York Times*.

Robert Alter

Known for his stellar translations of Hebrew and biblical texts, Robert Alter is both a scholar and translator. He has published more than 20 books of criticism, translation and commentary, including a recent edited volume, *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*. His book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, won the National Jewish Book Award for Jewish Thought in 1981. He also received *The Los Angeles Times* Robert Kirsch Award for lifetime contribution to American letters in 2009. He is Professor of the Graduate School and Emeritus Professor of Hebrew & Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley.

Debra Band

Debra Band's work in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and papercuts draws upon her love of the manuscript arts, Jewish tradition and learning. She has worked in Hebrew manuscripts since 1987, published several illuminated books of biblical and Jewish liturgical texts and contributed to others. Her latest book is *Kabbalat Shabbat:*

The Grand Unification. Her illuminated manuscripts and papercut *ketubot* are held in private collections, institutions and galleries around the world.

Distinctive Bookbinding

A boutique bookbinding company in Rockville, Maryland, Distinctive Bookbinding has done work for many U.S. presidents and foreign dignitaries. Sarah Larson, the owner, was very patient as the project design developed and helpful in finding the best materials. Mirtha Antelo, who made the double drop-down boxes, paid careful attention to every detail.

Gary Rendsburg

Gary Rendsburg's teaching and research focus on ancient Israel, primarily language and literature, though just as importantly history and archaeology. His academic pursuits also expand into the post-biblical and medieval periods, with particular interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Cairo Geniza documents. The Blanche and Irving Laurie Professor of Jewish History at Rutgers University, he is the author of six books and numerous scholarly articles.

Azzan Yadin-Israel

Azzan Yadin-Israel is professor of Jewish Studies and Classics at Rutgers University. He has written widely on early rabbinic literature, Hebrew language and literature, early Christian writings, and more. He has published two monographs on rabbinic biblical interpretation, a book on the historical connections between English and German, and dozens of articles. His latest book is *The Grace of God and the Grace of Man: The Theologies of Bruce Springsteen*.