

# OUT FROM THE NARROW PLACE, INTO THE WILDERNESS

In February and March 2021, overlapping the one-year anniversary of Minnesota's first Stay at Home order, J-Pride participants submitted the following gorgeous, thoughtful, and resonant works, drawing on the themes of Passover--liberation, oppression, becoming, death, land -- as well as their lived experiences as LGBTQ+ Jews.

The resulting zine is an offering:

May you be wholly seen and held by its passion, anger, euphoria, and heartbreak.

May it bring us closer to each other.

May you feel these threads of community reaching through time and space.



# Lech Lecha

you go to become your whole self  
take with you all you hold dear  
and all you hope holds you

they'll say you've changed but you  
know you're the same  
you're the same

all we can do is our best  
all we can hold is our hope  
all we can move is forward

you go to be your whole self  
holding on for dear life  
as everything changes 'round you

you go and prove yourself  
as your whole self  
when no-one sees you

and you'll drive us and  
you'll inspire us to  
be our whole selves, too

all we can do is our best  
all we can hold is our hope  
all we can move is forward

all we can do is our best  
all we can hold is our hope  
all we can move is forward



ALL WE

CAN DO

*Jakob Nelson*

## UNTITLED FREEWRITE BY ENSIGN LEPUS

Spock was the first gay Jew I ever

met, long before I understood I was

either. It didn't matter that I

didn't know yet, because neither did

Spock. He was metaphors and cloaked

feelings that could not be realized.

Spock never knew he was a gay Jew,

but he taught me how to discover

that I am one too. And he taught

me to be a gay Jew that never stops

dreaming about the world to come.

I don't care that Star Trek gave us

cellphones and astronauts. It gave

me Spock and it gave others Uhura.

Though we must sometimes dream

the future in metaphors and cloaked

feelings, they cannot stop us from

dreaming. We will find the gay Jews

and in them we will find hope.





because going home means ~~leaving~~ having left

where you are

where you were

because at least wandering means movement

toward  
away ? at all.

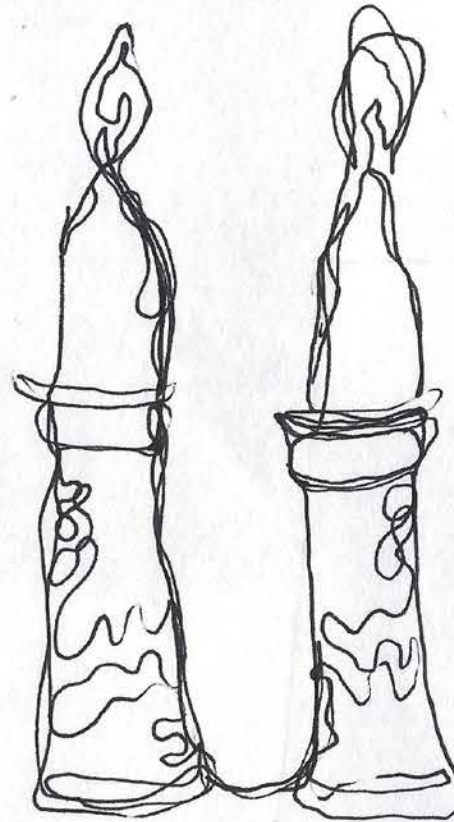
because the pain of breaking

ties

roots

chains

will end



because you can shake the soreness from your muscles

because you can tilt your head to the sky

because you can uncover your eyes and see light

because getting lost is the first step to

finding

being found

because someone is waiting for you to get home

because someone is waiting for you to show them how to get there

I.E. Jennings



# Estradiol Dreams

TZIPPORAH HOROWITZ



Have you ever looked into a mirror  
and not seen yourself?  
In an ocean of confusion, staring  
back is someone else?

Floating along  
deciding who to be  
I knew it felt so wrong  
but I let others make me "me"

I knew what I wanted  
somewhere very deep down  
But to even get started  
made me feel like I would drown

Have you ever looked into a mirror  
and not seen yourself?  
In an ocean of confusion, staring  
back is someone else?

I had all the help I wanted  
hiding what was in my soul,  
but reality confronted me  
with a giant gaping hole

To find myself truly  
I had to get lost  
had to walk into the ocean  
and hope that it would part

And as I took a big step forward  
my foot hit dry land,  
My soul found me wandering,  
and took me by the hand



HAVE YOU  
EVER  
LOOKED  
INTO A  
MIRROR  
AND NOT  
SEEN  
YOURSELF?

And I crossed the whole damn ocean,  
passing watery mirrored glass,  
and when I saw myself in motion,  
I saw myself walk past

Now I never look at mirrors  
where I don't see myself  
and I don't let others tell me  
that I should be someone else

Now my estradiol dreams  
have dissolved into my soul  
my future brightly gleams  
and life I live is whole.



## Passover: Image ID

-David Cahn

A sprawling warm gathering in the gold stage of the sun's setting, smiles abound as many young adults smile and connect before the rustic green rolling Israeli hills, almost turquoise in the majesty of sunlight. Most are seated on the ground around mazes of set tables complete with seder books on each plate. Seated in the front to the left, a bearded man in a white shirt and black kippah smiles on, to the front right a woman in a screen-printed shirt depicting Hindu deities looks on with long hair up in an orange wrap. In the focus facing the viewer, two bearded athletic men sit side by side in collared shirts and formal pants, embracing and smiling, their fingers interconnecting on the front man's chest, the other man's arm draping over the front man's shoulder. The two men smile to one another with profound love.

A bearded man in a white kippah and blue shirt sits beyond them at the next table reading the seder silently as a dreadlocked man in a black kippah and black t-shirt faces a grinning blonde surfer haired man in a yellow t-shirt and backpack, black kippah as he reads the seder. Behind him at the next table sits a woman in a sleeveless t-shirt, her hair pulled back, looking on as a muscular man in a black kippah and pastel yellow t-shirt sits close to a woman in a white dress, shoulder length black hair. Wooden supports hold up an unseen tent canopy behind them, and a white stucco wall peppered with sunlight and shadows of those gathering serves as table for 6 others gathered overlooking them; a woman with long dark hair and blue chandelier earrings sits next to a muscular man in an athletic t-shirt, his arm around her shoulder. A well-built man in a grey shirt and black kippah watches over the gathering peacefully next to two brunette women laughing, one standing and leaning her head close to the others, the other sitting next to a man in a white collared shirt and suspenders, black kippah, hand near mouth about to eat when he finishes laughing. Finally, in the upper right, two muscular men in black kippahs sit side by side elevated above the rest to lead the ceremony, evoking memories of the Egyptian Pharaoh statues sitting side by side—a bold triumph of imagery. One of the men wears a pastel yellow collared shirt and black formal pants, the other a black t-shirt and dress shorts, orange socks and white athletic shoes. Both men cross their nearest arms to lovingly hold the other's closest knee as the rightmost man feeds the other a fork of food, both grinning sublimely.





# The Kiss of Moses

-Max Yeshaye Brumberg-Kraus

**When the pious die a death which is totally painless, such as the death by a kiss of God experienced by Moses [...], this is the most pleasant sensation imaginable.**

**- Hayyim ben Moshe ibn Attar, Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 6:5.**



The earth is cracked  
so it can suck water up to sustain its body;  
my mouth is like the earth, cracked  
but unlike earth, incapable to drink.

I met Him, my love, inside a hollow  
deep inside the concave of a rock, within  
the root of a mountain. He was fire  
growing from branches, touchable flame, and I touched.  
Let his limbs envelop me, tongues of fire  
lick me, unscarring, except upon the mouth,  
where He kissed, the only place it burned:  
my lips.

I was branded, then, to lead His people,  
and I was led by the blister of my tongue  
and the remnant of my mouth, with constant thirst--my manhood is my hungering,  
forever tapping rocks for water, pursuing lands  
to bear me fruit. But no matter how many of my people cried,  
parched and broken in the desert, I was always weakest, stretched farthest,  
about to crumble.

God's fire draws  
from my body fluids to build His own,  
his vaporous pillar,  
that sheath of cloud  
that rises from out  
the desert sand, is me,  
bits of myself ascending,  
my blood and seed and spit--  
humors in miasma.  
God's made of me,  
and takes from me,  
His prophet, a hollow  
and a well. The God  
who drinks--  
I am drunk on him, still set on loving him.

Here and now, I am atop the mountain.  
Having shed my muscle so long to cloud,  
I am too weak, too light, cannot descend to a place which is not dry  
but flowing with milk and honey and also blood  
the seed of men ploughing their spoils of flesh, saliva gathering,  
anticipating their feast on land, on bodies, on gods.

Joshua, my successor, I will breathe my lack in you  
so God can suckle you with His promise,  
and speak through you His majesty,  
and lap from you the last drop of you  
until you are what He needs you to be.  
I pass it with a kiss.

Go into the land. Ravage and cherish.

All prophets, here to come, know, thirst is our inheritancel  
You will be parched like me,  
seek God like a river, search earth for hidden wells,  
but you will never drink, only pour, and it will burn you  
and ration pain to those around you, but also wisdom.


What a curse to be blessed by the God of hollows!  
Standing at the root of your becoming(,) my children,  
it is a curse I welcome, I,  
the residue of Moses, awaiting my lover's lips:  
All knowing flame, set the story on its course,  
then consume me with your kiss.

## CONSUME ME WITH YOUR KISS



# OH, INHABITANTS OF EXQUISITE UNKNOWNNS

FRANKIE MONES



OH, INHABITANTS OF EXQUISITE UNKNOWNNS  
THIS IS A SONG OF SONGS FOR YOU  
FOR YOU WHO YEARN FOR VASTNESS AND WADE THROUGH WILDERNESS  
AND LIVE AND LOVE IN LIMINAL LUMINOSITY  
FOR YOU WHO CARRY HOMELAND IN YOUR HANDS  
THIS IS A SONG OF SONGS FOR YOU

FOR YOU WHO MOVE AND MORPH IN HOLY MOTION  
FOR YOU WHO ARE THE TABERNACLE ITSELF  
FOR YOU WHO ARE A CONSTANT  
DECONSTRUCTION  
AND RECONSTRUCTION  
A SEER AND FREER AND HARBINGER  
OF THE EXPANSE  
OF THE EXODUS  
URGING  
AT THE EDGE  
OF EACH HOUR

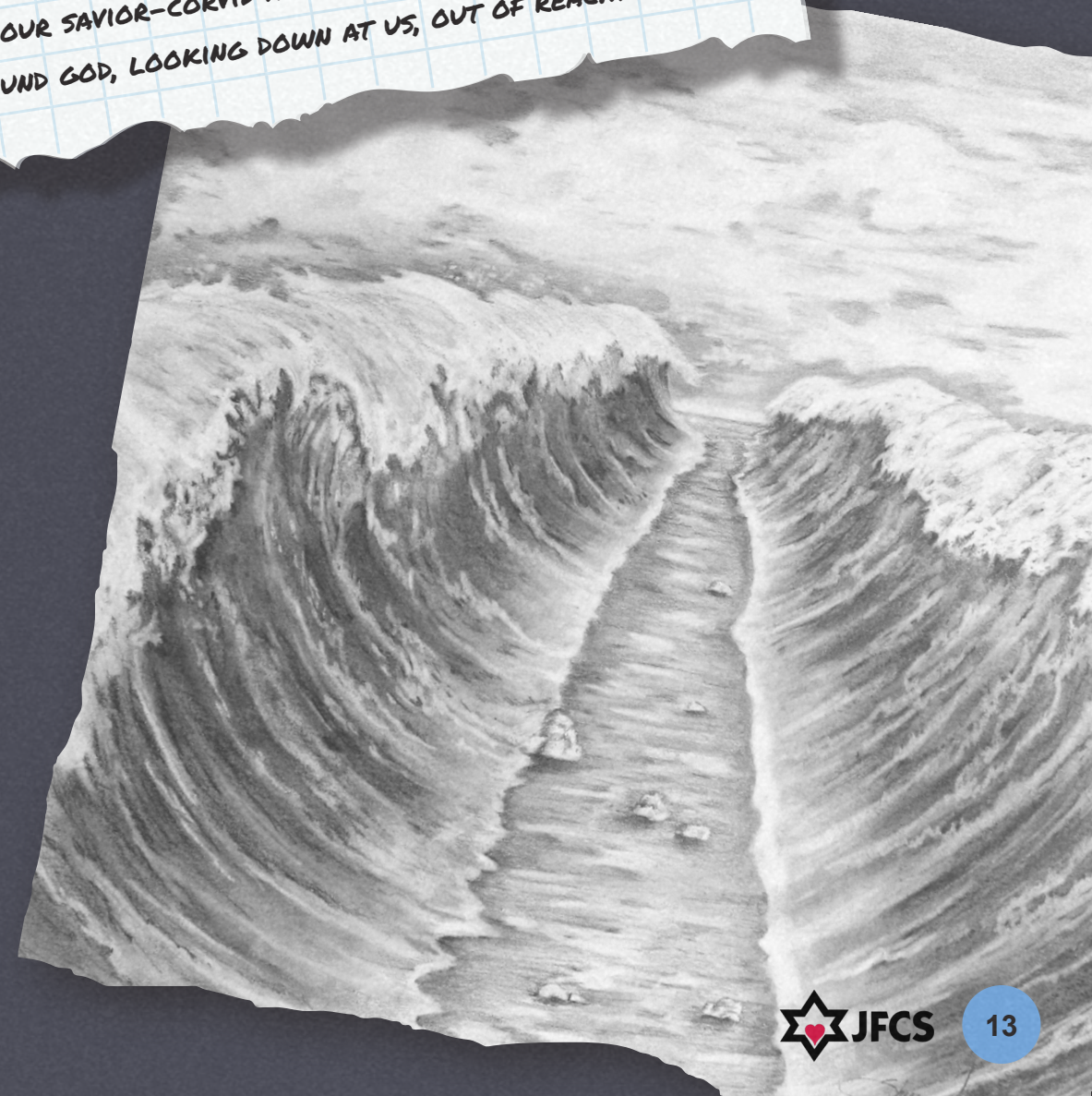
OH, FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM THAT YOU ARE  
MAY YOU KNOW NARROWNESS NO LONGER  
YOUR EYES ARE EVER-SPLITTING SEAS  
YOUR COVENANT IS WILD  
YOU PERPETUAL REVELATION!

WHO IS LIKE YOU?  
LUMINOUS LIMINAL LOVE,  
I CAN THINK ONLY OF THE ETERNAL THEMSELF!

FOR YOU DANCE AND DREAM FAR PAST THIS WORLD  
BRINGING FORTH LIGHT AND LIFE ANEW  
SO LET THERE BE A SONG OF SONGS FOR YOU

CROSSING THE RED SEA  
-MAX YESHAYE BRUMBERG-KRAUS

I FEAR THIS WATER, SPLITTING, CLIMBING SKYWARD  
HOW EASILY THE ELEMENTS FLAUNT PHYSICS,  
SHAPING FLAME, DESICCATING THE SEAFLOOR,  
TRICKS TO MARK A TRANSDEITOUS ECLIPSE.  
I FEAR THIS EXCHANGE OF EARTHLINESS  
FOR AIR, BARTERING WHAT MY BODY KNOWS  
FOR A VOICE WITHOUT FLESH, A WHISP  
ON THE TONGUE OF A PROPHET, A GHOST  
IN PLACE OF LIVING FIELDS, WHERE THE WHEAT GROWS  
AND THE NILE SPILLS DOWN-INTO NOT UP-AWAY.  
HAVING CROSSED THE SEA, I TURN, SPY CROWS  
DESCENDING ON WASHED UP BODIES TO GRAZE.  
IS THIS OUR SAVIOR-CORVID ANGELS SCOURING THE BEACH-  
SKY-BOUND GOD, LOOKING DOWN AT US, OUT OF REACH?





# the death of a toad



THERE IT WAS  
ON A SIDEWALK BLANK AS BLIZZARD  
BEFORE I GOT TO THE CHINESE RESTAURANT  
YET HOMEWARD NOW A TINY TOAD  
RESTING I THOUGHT  
IN THE MIDDLE OF A CONCRETE SQUARE  
LITTLE ISLAND OF ITSELF  
LIMBS AGAINST ITS SIDES  
CALMLY NAPLIKE

BUT BUMBLING PREDATORS WE  
UNKNOWNLY CRUSH SUCH DELICATE LIVES  
I PICKED SHE/HE/THEM UP  
AND MY RIGHT PALM KNEW  
SADLY, INSTANTLY  
THAT THIS SMALL PUFF OF SOFT LIFE  
WAS NEARLY NO LONGER LIVING  
SO I SET IT GENTLY DOWN  
ON SOME BELOVED MUD

SURROUNDED BY MY SADNESS  
THAT ECHOED AGAINST THE TALL TREE  
AND THE BIG ROCK  
AND THE FALLEN CRABAPPLES THERE  
RED AS RUBIES  
LODGED IN THE CRACKED CONCRETE  
LIKE EYES RED FROM CRYING  
AT THE FINAL RESTING PLACE  
OF A LOST LIFE LOVED ONLY IN ITS PASSING

THERE IS NOTHING SO DEAR TO ME AS AN AMPHIBIAN  
THOUGH I KNOW NOT WHY  
AND MY EX-WIFE  
THOUGH I LOVE HER MORE THAN EVEN ME  
YET COULD NOT, LIKE WITH THAT TOAD  
PREVENT THAT LOVE FROM DYING  
IN THE UNKNOWNABLE SILENCE  
OF SUDDENNESS AND MYSTERY  
THAT DEATH IS

## ERETZ YISOREL

birds outsmart daily  
the drone of machines  
with screams of laughter

persistently green grass  
camouflages bomb shelters  
as air vents daven on top

god's tears  
refill the kinneret  
over and over

next year in Jerusalem  
is all of  
our fearful birthright

and life begins  
in a mikvah of blood  
with sacred singing





## An Orange On the Seder Plate

I was taught in Hebrew school  
That we put an orange on the Seder plate  
Because a man once said that

"A woman belongs on the bimah  
Like an orange belongs on a Seder plate."

As it turns out,  
None of that is true.

We gave some imaginary sexist man  
Credit for creating a beautiful custom.

It was started by Susannah Heschel  
To represent the gay people told they didn't belong  
In Judaism.

Tonight it is also for  
The trans people  
The disabled people,  
The people of color,  
The people not born Jewish.

The orange is for them,  
Not for some made up chauvinist.

Tonight let us eat the sweet orange  
And spit out the seeds  
Of hate,  
Intolerance,  
And fear.

Tonight let us eat the sweet orange  
To remember that there are different sections of Jews  
Like there are different sections of an orange  
But they all fit perfectly together.

Tonight let us eat the sweet orange  
And let all those who are hungry  
Share the sweet fruit with us.

*-Sarah Young*



## My body is a mitzrayim.

You don't need to hear about the suffering I felt, just by being alive. You don't need to know the lurid details, the things I thought looking in the mirror. Suffice to say, there was an inexorable wrongness I felt and saw, though others did not.

It wasn't always this way. I have long known my body was my mitzrayim but I didn't know how narrow that place really was, until I was an adult. It is difficult to describe gender dysphoria to someone who has not experienced it. The Mayo Clinic says, "Gender dysphoria is the feeling of discomfort or distress that might occur in people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth or sex-related physical characteristics." But discomfort and distress do not relay the degree of pain I was in, simply by being alive. The bondage of that pain was all I saw.

I started my transition from female to my true self last Tu B'Shevat. As my family honored the new year of the trees, I too honored a new year of my own growth. There is a tradition of planting parsley on Tu B'Shevat, so it's ready to harvest by Pesach and serve as karpas, representing hope and renewal. I, however, was not fully grown by the time Pesach came. It took me a year instead of three months.

Over that year my shoulders spread, my belly expanded, my hips went narrow, my voice fell deeper, and a dozen other smaller changes. This is my wilderness. Like my people, I move forward, heading towards the own promise of a better life. Out of the body G-d gave me and into this new one that we create together. How lucky I am, to have a hand in my own creation. Next year, may I be complete in Jerusalem.

**-MK Zvokel**





> COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
**J-PRIDE**

♥ Here for all. *Always.*<sup>®</sup>

WWW.JFCSMPLS.ORG

952-546-0616