

Israel

The Intermediate Days

I remember thinking:

These are the intermediate days.

Spring.

One afternoon we took a #22 downtown
and walked along Rechov Yafo, King George, Ben Yehudah.
What a joy, to see all the people out again!

We got frozen yogurt. (It used to be so crowded in there.)

These are the intermediate days.

(At our backs, following along as we
strolled—we didn't want to keep turning around—
the blood of our brethren.)

We wanted spring.

(How can we remember so many names?)

Softest of breezes.

O tender April air,

Comfort us as in other years.

Sharon had entered Ramallah

and for a few weeks, as the Jewish army, God bless it, disarmed Jenin,
we emerged cautiously. Flowers opened.

Forever we are here.

We'd hear an ambulance siren, and I noticed that if you keep walking as if it's nothing,
eyes on the sidewalk, ears pitched keenly elsewhere, it *would* be nothing.

And yes, indeed,

it was, repeatedly, nothing.

Maybe babies were being born.

We even rode the #2 to the Kotel
again. Leaned our foreheads to
the cool stone.

Our eyes closed like petals.

These are the intermediate days.

Oh Jerusalem,

Breathe in this dear light that blooms shimmering
between two darkneses.

Behind us: the names

we were already forgetting.

Before us: somewhere just out of our sight on the road ahead,
something looming,
as yet unnamed.

Then, one Shabbat,

Daniella, aged five, was shot in her bed.

*Let's say she was having such a deep Shabbat morning dream,
she slept right through the whole thing.*

*Let's say she didn't see a thing, that she was already
on her way to the light a thousand times brighter than spring.*

But Shiri,

her mother, saw her die.

And that

was the end of the intermediate days.



Photo: AP/Wide World Photos

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