

Poems for the Festivals

by Herb Levine

For Sukkot: Blessing in the Sukkah

We have spread a roof of branches over us,
Invited to our Sukkah dear friends,
Spoken of the holiday and its symbols,
Knowing that this tiny, flimsy house
Will comfort us only for a few days
Before the coming of the rains
And the devouring winds.
So, let us praise the shade beneath which we rest
And pray that we merit spending eight such days another year.
 Blessed is our tradition,
 Celebrating a festival of fragile happiness.

For Passover: Diaspora Hymn

From across the sea,
They brought their heavy utensils,
The brass mortar and pestle,
Reminding them of familiar spices,
Cinnamon, cloves, and chopped nuts,
..Expected nothing from these gentiles
Among whom they peddled
To earn their living,
Would never trust them,
Never believe that one day,
Their great-grandchildren would marry them,

Invite them to chop nuts in Bobbe's mortar and pestle,
Light holiday candles with them,
Open their doors to walk with them out of Egypt
In love.

Blessed is our tradition,
Celebrating our redemption in love.

For Shavuot: A New Old Religion

A new old religion

Without a commander and commandments engraved in stone:

At its center, how Ruth followed Naomi out of love,

How Boaz opened his hand and his heart to Naomi and Ruth,

How he gave them six overflowing measures of barley,

How he prevented his young men from harassing the attractive stranger.

How he bought an unneeded field to heal a broken Naomi.

The lion will not lie down with the lamb.

With kindness, the world to come can come now.

Blessed is our tradition,
For speaking the Torah of kindness.

Forthcoming in Herbert J. Levine's *Siddur in a New Key: Blessed Are You Wondrous Universe*