

## POEMS OF GRATITUDE

*The poem keeps the world in front of the mind.*

- **Marcia Falk**

Like jumping into a pool, saying *baruch* shocks you into paying attention.  
Like jumping into a pool, saying *baruch* immerses you totally.  
Like jumping into a pool, saying *baruch* forces you to find a way (back) up.  
Like jumping into a pool, saying *baruch* can really wake you up.  
Like drinking from a well, saying *baruch* brings you something from The Source  
Like drinking from a well, saying *baruch* refreshes and renews you.  
Like drinking from a well, saying *baruch* is something you need.  
Like drinking from a well, saying *baruch* is a reward.

- **Joel Lurie Grishaver & students**

I did not make the air I breathe  
Nor the sun that warms me...  
I did not endow the muscles  
Of hand and brain  
With the strength  
To plough and plant and harvest...  
I know  
I am not  
A self-made man.

- **Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser**

Travelers fan out  
Into the wilds.  
And in that jungle  
Of strangers  
Merci  
Rings out  
While the hustling train  
Changes countries,  
Sweeping away borders.  
Then spasibo  
Clinging to pointy  
Volcanoes, to fire and freezing cold,  
Or danke, yes! And gracias, and  
The world turns into a table:  
A single word has wiped it clean,  
Plates and glasses gleam.  
Silverware tinkles,  
And the tablecloth is as broad as a plain.

- **Pablo Neruda**

It doesn't have to be  
The blue iris, it could be  
Weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
Small stones; just  
Pay attention, then patch  
A few words together, and don't try  
To make them elaborate, this isn't a contest but the doorway  
Into thanks, and a silence in which  
Another voice may speak.  
-- **Mary Oliver**

Who walks with Beauty has no need of fear:  
The sun and moon and stars keep pace with him;  
Invisible hands restore the ruined year,  
And time itself grows beautifully dim.

One hill will keep the footprints of the moon  
That came and went a hushed and secret hour;  
One star at dusk will yield the lasting boon:  
Remembered beauty's white, immortal flower.

Who takes of Beauty wine and daily bread,  
Will know no lack when bitter years are lean;  
The brimming cup is by, the feast is spread;  
The sun and moon and stars his eyes have seen,  
Are for his hunger and the thirst he slakes:  
The wine of Beauty and the bread he breaks.  
- **David Morton**

“Sloan-Kettering is a large and growing building  
And all those who come within its walls  
To strip naked,  
Jointly and separately,  
Suddenly find themselves  
In a cage, captive, exposed...  
Sloan-Kettering is a personal encounter  
With a pathless wilderness!  
...How little we need  
To be happy:  
A half-kilo increase in weight,  
Two circuits of the corridors  
At Sloan-Kettering  
In bedroom slippers.  
A morning without aspirin  
Silence gentle as pit,  
A distant  
Sand dune  
Behind the green bridge  
A patch of lawn  
And you beside me beginning  
To knit a new sweater.  
- **Abba Kovner**

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,  
And the tree-toad is the chef-d'oeuvre for the highest  
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels,  
And I could come every afternoon of my life to look  
at the farmer's girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking short cake.  
-**Walt Whitman**

We are here to do

And through doing to learn  
And through learning to know  
And through knowing to experience wonder  
And through wonder to attain wisdom  
And through wisdom to find simplicity  
And through simplicity to give attention  
And through attention

To see what needs to be done....

- **Rabbi M. Shapiro**

(quoted in *I Thank, Therefore I Am* by Rabbi Henry Glazer)

We walk all over the common miracles  
without bothering to wipe our feet.  
Then we wonder why we need more  
and more salt to taste our food.  
My old man, my old lady, my  
ball and chain: listen, even the cat  
you found starving in the alley  
who purrs you to sleep dancing  
with kneading paws in your hair  
will vanish if your heart closes its fist.  
- **Marge Piercy**

At the end  
things pass away  
into a hard won perspective.  
The sepia photographs  
of childhood  
like twilight encounters  
with eternity  
and the youthful  
laughter peeling  
across a mountainside.

Standing close together  
we make our vows  
in front of others  
knowing  
with a backward  
kind of courage  
that everything  
passes  
away no matter  
how precious  
the memory  
and that  
even in this  
we recognize  
the flourish  
and the firm  
signature of love.

Everything we ever  
held in our hands  
is given to another  
or slips like sand  
through the gate  
of our fingers  
into something  
which to begin with  
we cannot recognize.  
Everything we ever  
held in our hands  
is given away  
in marriage to another  
person or another world.

How could we know  
the blessings  
which illuminated our days?  
The joy too strong to feel  
until it was  
no longer there to disturb us.

We find ourselves  
always at last  
ennobled by the encounter  
the wedding vows  
remembered at the end  
and cherished now  
like a live hand  
holding a dead hand  
loving everything it must let go.

**“Letting Go” by David Whyte**