

A Walk to Caesarea

for Hannah Szenes

She waited six days to come down out of the trees. By then
even the sparrows were quarreling over her hair
and she was having nightmares about falling asleep.
She kept herself awake by worrying
she'd forgotten how to breathe. Sometimes
she davened to remember the twenty-two letters

of prayer. Sometimes the ropes asked her for tawdry favors.
She tied herself up in complicated knots
and rabbited out for practice. She interrogated herself
and answered only in Hebrew. *Ani lo yodea*. Her German
was flawless but she refused to mouth the words
even to her favorite songs. She was so lonely

that she named each of the leaves
that touched her face. One night was very cold
and the last of the leaves fluttered to the ground.
She was hungry to weep openly. Her sweater grew holes
because she ate the fibers like a pantry moth.
Before she dropped from the nest like a speckled egg

she married herself by winding the white cape of parachute
over her shoulders and stepping on the branch below
like a wineglass. *Mazel tov!* Then she found desire
quiet as Braille, pressed two fingers
between her legs and rubbed them slick and glassy
until she came. Afterward she feared

they would be able to hear
the vein in her neck pumping and the lids of her eyes

fluttering. She quieted herself stiff as bark
remembering warrens of bald children
and smokestacks quilled in soft caves near the sky.