

Kisufim Conference 2013

The Jerusalem Conference of Jewish Writers and Poets

MishkenotSha'ananim

Jewish creativity is becoming increasingly prominent in Israel and the world. Precisely during this period, following the Holocaust where the significant absence of European Jewry is clearly felt, the need for a close and direct connection between Israeli and contemporary Jewish literature is apparent.

“The Jerusalem Conference of Jewish Writers and Poets”, in Hebrew, an acronym for “*Kisufim*”, meaning yearning, is not accidental. Jerusalem is at the heart of *Kisufim*, of the Jewish people’s yearning, in Jewish literature throughout many generations. At the 2013 *Kisufim* Conference we created a unique opportunity. For four days and three nights the best Jewish artists in the world today, working in a variety of languages, met to discuss literary creations with a Jewish identity and connection. The meeting was a three-sided encounter including Jewish writers from around the world, Israeli writers who write in Hebrew and Israeli writers who write in foreign languages.

The conference gave a unique opportunity for an international meeting of over 70 participants, 11 of whom came from abroad. Jewish writers, poets and intellectuals joined together for a meeting to examine Jewish-Israeli and multi-lingual, cross-cultural international Jewish Literature. It was an encounter, which offered an opportunity to ask existential questions relevant to the present historical period and to Jewish identity at this time. The conference examined the continuity of the Jewish family during a period, where on one hand there is a Hebrew speaking society and State of Israel, and on the other, a world of Jewish communities that have built new lives following personal and collective destruction.

Throughout the conference poetry and prose readings were held as well as an evening giving tribute to Haim Gouri. In addition, musical evenings, round tables and workshops with poets and writers in different languages took place. Meetings were held between poets and writers who share a common language such as English, French and Hungarian from Israel and internationally.

For the first time the Matanel Award was presented at the *Kisufim* Conference. The award was given to writer Joshua Cohen (USA) and to poet Eli Eliyahu (Israel).

Conference participants included: Nathan Englander (USA), Robert Pinsky (USA), Mario Levi (Turkey), Bernard-Henri Lévy (France), Haim Gouri, Dror Burstein, A.B. Yehoshua, Meir Shalev, Bilha Ben-Eliyahu, Yoel Hoffmann, Haviva Pedaya and Joshua Sobol. Participating artists and musicians included Micha Shitrit, Hanan Yovel and Nathan Slor.

Audiences of over 1,500 people filled to overflowing, the corridors and auditoriums of Mishkenot Sha'ananim and Beit Avi Chai. One could observe a diverse crowd of students and general public from all over the country. Comments both from the audience and participants were enthusiastic and excited. The conference received tremendous exposure and great interest from the various media channels.

The *Kisufim* Conference is a cultural event that concerns the Jewish world and the Jewish identity formulating today in Israel and the world. Our assumption is that today's Jewish literature is the memory-treasure of the entire Jewish cultural world following World War II. We have great interest in concerning ourselves and in being actively engaged with this subject while adding additional layers of knowledge for the benefit of future generations.

Please find the conference program attached.