
Jerusalem Diary

Kathryn Hellerstein

MARCH

*Early last Sunday morning, I was riding the Number Nine bus
To Mount Scopus campus, when, pushing his way into
The aisle crowded by young women with strollers,
By old women with groceries, by men in the old*

*Uniform of Jew—lush beards, sidelocks, hats, black kapotes,
By students in jeans, clutching their notebooks as the bus swerved,
Came a young man. A keffiah wrapped its red and white checks
Around his head like a swaddling of flames.*

*He paid his fare. In the crush, he was wedged backwards, between
An old woman with her groceries and a small boy
Wearing the old uniform of Jew. The young man
Clutched a worn plastic bag to his chest.*

*Two seats behind me, a baby girl began to cry.
Her mother talked softly to her.
The baby screamed. The young man looked at the baby girl.
He looked at the small boy. He turned his head and looked*

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*At the old woman with her groceries. He looked straight
At me, and I became afraid of his eyes, so I stared
At the plastic package he clutched to his chest.
I began to wonder how I would climb out the window.*

*The small boy did not look at the young man.
The old woman with her groceries looked down at the floor.
The students gazed at their notebooks. The bus
Continued on its route, swerving, stopping, swerving.*

MAY

*Khamsin, the Arabic word, is now used less in the papers
Than the Hebrew word, sharav,
But in whatever language, all creatures are
Breathing dust and heat
That never clear
Or let the sun relent
From making all colors so bright
That the world turns ashen.
The winds from the desert
Beyond the museum, beyond the Old City
Beyond all horizons
Pant in a rage.*

