

The iCenter

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Introducing “A Bit of Culture” (*K'tzat Tarbut*, קצת תרבות). We'll be offering these insights regularly with the help of colleagues like Vavi Toran, who shared today's bit. Let us know what you think with a comment or reflection below:

### **Revenge of the Stuttering Child**

February is Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. Since 2009, it has been a call to action for organizations and individuals to acknowledge and honor the strength and gifts of each individual.

Last month, both President Joe Biden and Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman addressed the nation on Inauguration Day. But that's not the only thing they shared: they are both testaments that stuttering and speech impediments can be overcome. The fear of stumbling on a sound did not hinder them from braving the microphone and speaking to millions of people in the USA and worldwide. And what a triumph it was!

The Israeli poet, Ronny Someck, was chosen as the National Poet of Israel in 2018. He, too, suffered as a child from stuttering. In his poem “The Revenge of the Stuttering Child,” he describes his painful struggle from the point of view of an adult that is now not only free of this impediment, but is actually a conjurer of words—a poet!

The poem alludes to Moses, another celebrated stutterer, who despite his stuttering made it to Mt. Sinai. Someck's mountain, regrettably, was his love for the girl who sat next to him in class and the words that he could not say to express his feelings for her. It is not a coincidence that Amanda Gorman's poem also uses the metaphor of climbing a hill in order to reach a goal. Whether it is a personal or a national peak we are seeking, we have to face “The Hill We Climb” and take the first step upwards.

People with special needs have to climb hills and mountains daily, sometimes without our awareness. As educators, let us be more mindful of different kinds of learners.

### **Revenge of the Stuttering Child**

I speak today in memory of the words which once stuck in my mouth  
in memory of the toothy gears which crushed syllables  
under my tongue and smelled the gunpowder  
in the gap between the gullet and the arid lips.  
My dream then was to smuggle the words packed like stolen goods  
in the mouth's warehouse,  
to rip the cardboard boxes open and pull out the  
toys of the alphabet.

The teacher would lay a hand on my shoulder and say that Moses, too,  
stuttered but nonetheless made it to Mt. Sinai.

My mountain was a girl who sat  
next to me in class, and I had no fire in the bush of my mouth  
to ignite, before her very eyes,  
the words consumed by my love of her.

Translation: Vivian Eden

נקמת הילד המגמגם  
רוני סומק  
היום אני מדבר לזכר המלים שפעם נתקעו לי בפה  
לזכר גלגלי השנים שפוררו הברות  
מתחת ללשון והריחו את אבק השרפות  
ברוח בין הלע לשפתים החשוכות  
חלמתי אז להבריא את המלים שנארו כסחורות גנובות  
במחסני הפה  
לקרע אריזות הקרטון ולשלף את  
צעצועי האל"ף-בי"ת  
המורה היתה מניחה יד על כתפי ומספרת שגם משה  
גמגם ובכל זאת הגיע להר סיני  
ההר שלי היה ילדה שישבה  
לדי בכיתה, ולא היתה לי אש בסנה הפה  
כדי להבעיר, לנגד עיניה  
את המלים שנשרפו באהבתי אותה

[Watch Ronny Someck reading his poem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAQcRveDCoU>]