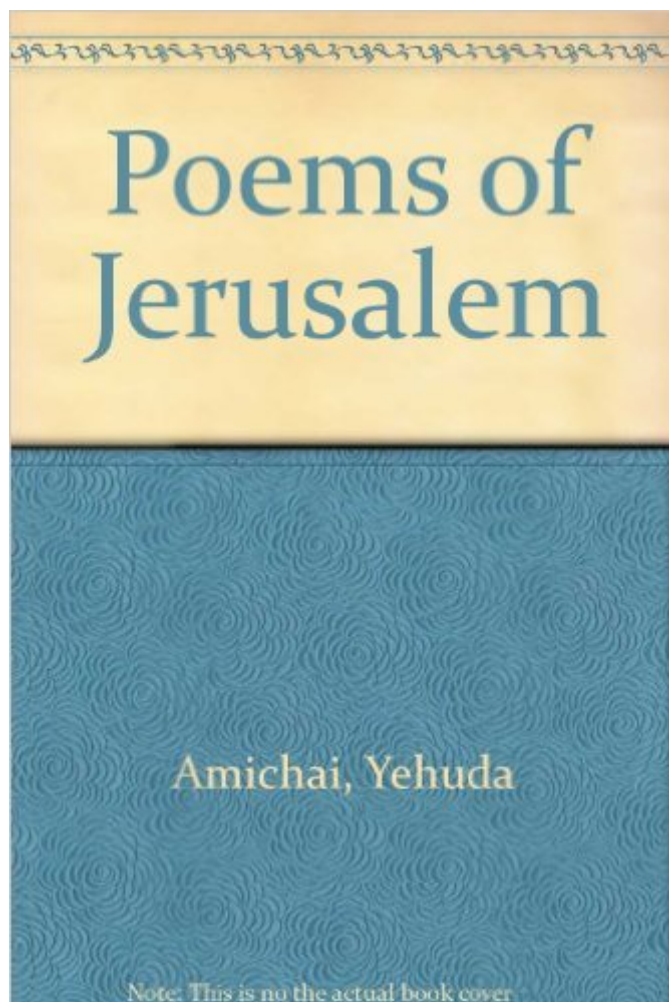


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Poems Of Jerusalem



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Customer Reviews

The poet Ted Hughes, who translated many of Yehuda Amichai's poems (in tandem with the poet) said he admired Amichai's poetry because he could read the Bible like a newspaper. What Hughes meant, of course, was that Amichai did what many Hebrew poets do, but only did it exceptionally well: he often employed the language of the Bible, the elevated literary Hebrew of the Tanakh, and juxtaposed it with gritty, living reality of Israeli Hebrew, with its slang and neologisms, with startling results. And nowhere is this seen more clearly than in this collection of poems about Jerusalem. In "Psalm" Amichai writes: A song on a day / some building contractor / cheated me. A Psalm. And in "The Heaven's are the Lord's Heavens" he writes "And the earth was given to man. But / who finds gold and marble in the house of prayer? / And how many men who kiss the mezuzah / Have been kissed with love by a woman? / And how many women who throw themselves / on a holy tomb / Have ever been taken from behind and fainted from pleasure?" Amichai contrasts the holy with the profane, mixing them up to the point of absurdity, while touching upon his frequent theme of a world abandoned by God. In this bi-lingual edition, the reader can see that there is no real diglossia in Hebrew. The classic Hebrew of the Bible and the Israeli Hebrew of the streets are mutually intelligible, and can even share a line in a poem to the enriching, mutual advantage of both.

Yehuda Amichai is a great poet. His work appeals on many different levels. First of all, he writes about the experiences of love and of war, and of everyday life in a society fighting for its life. Secondly, he uses his knowledge of traditional Jewish sources to create a rich ironic and

contemplative text .Thirdly he is as a writer and as a person, 'decent' and 'fair'. Fourthly, his language has the quiet beauty of Hebrew colloquial .Amichai's poetry captures the mood of the holy city the city in which there is so much beauty and so much conflict and contradiction. And he enhances our sense of reality and life.

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