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When You Gave Light to Israel

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snow has been falling from the lowered sky,
a snow colder than snow.

Translated by the author with John Batki

ANADAD ELDON / ISRAEL

When You Gave Light to Israel

When you gave light to the sun
and sun to the morning,
I went to you, your only child.

The trees screened the flowing water,
on their branches you hung white birds;
and on me, pupils, dark as my shoes.

Bare-footed, the trees are rooted
upright, making God's years green.

Give my legs back those years my father spent by the swamps
that ran here from hillock to hillock—
whistling, hanging his clothes out to dry.

He built a channel for tears; for pain
shelter in my eyes.

When I see white birds, resting
on the tops of trees, it seems
God or his angels are about.

Translated by Bat-Sheva Sheriff and Jon Silkin