

# THE REVENGE OF THE STUTTERING CHILD



February is Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. It is a call to action for organizations and individuals to acknowledge and honor the strength and gifts of each individual. It was established in 2009 by the Jewish Special Education International Consortium.

Last month, both President Biden and Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman addressed the nation on Inauguration Day. But standing on the podium and delivering their poignant and hopeful messages is not the only thing they have in common. 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 “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. The “mountain,” that Someck could not ascend regretfully, was his love for a girl who sat next to him in the classroom, and the words that did not come out in order 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

## נקמת הילד המגמגם

**Poem by:** RONNY SOMECK | רוני סומק

**Translated by:** VIVIAN EDEN

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.

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



Ronny Someck reading his poem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAQcRVeDCoU>