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Learning to Walk

I learned to walk on the
shifting sands of Gaza,
taking baby steps,
stumbling as my knees buckled
in the Israeli sun.

I was smiling then
and I wish that now
the stumbling peacemakers,
fighting for that same bit of land
on which I learned to run,
just once in a while
would also laugh
and notice that the sands are hot and shifting
but not impossible to navigate.

Because eventually
my baby feet, my weak knees
learned to do it.
It took time
but a baby's first steps
never span a desert.

—Nava Etshalom,
Eleventh grade, J. R. Masterman High School,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Merlyn's Pen



When you read and understand a poem, comprehending its rich and
formal meanings, then you master chaos a little.

-Steven Spender

