

THE COVENANT

By Dan Rosenberg

Feeling pebble-strong beneath
the unsparing rod and reeling

in our small difference, our
tradition, I position my son's hands.

We add one candle to the row
of thin flames. Our strange

tongue warps my son's tongue,
which weeps spit along the menorah.

He dutifully counts the candles
in English. In English he staggers

past seven, plucks the word *shamash*
from deep in some brain-corner

of pleasing me, and that corner holds
like a sandcastle against the sea

and siren of Christmas. And why
should it? This small difference

we press to each other's forehead
like truth, אמת, as we stalk

our meager borders waiting
for the X to fall and render us

inert again, just dirt piled
in the corner, complaining

through our children and
our children's children that we

were here, we breathed,
we shambled through their world

on our strange clay feet. Our art
is distinction. We bear it like a star.