

## Picnics

by [Yehiel E. Poupko](#) in the [February 27, 2019](#) issue

I remember my mother's room  
and the windows overlooking the river  
and the steel mills of my Pittsburgh childhood,  
Bessemer furnaces stoked with coke and coal  
and iron ore, boats and barges floating up  
and down the river.

Yeshiva school children took day trips  
to white hot molten rivers ladled into casts.  
Pittsburgh is big shouldered we were told  
and innocently thought this the original  
while picnicking lunches on benches  
by the river in the glow of iron coke and coal.

And now the mills and furnaces are empty,  
orange rusty and skeletal against the green  
wooded mountains that fall into the river  
on whose banks is the room the nurse enters  
with bottles and bags and needles and tubes  
and pumps filled with molten pouring  
into my mother who lies in the bed in the room  
whose windows look out on the river  
and its skeletons.

Once a month we picnic for lunch,  
*Blessed are You Lord our God*  
*Who in His goodness nourishes the world . . .*  
in the room by the window on the green wooded  
banks of the river our monthly chemo picnic  
on the bank by the river, my mother's bed  
shadowing the mills.