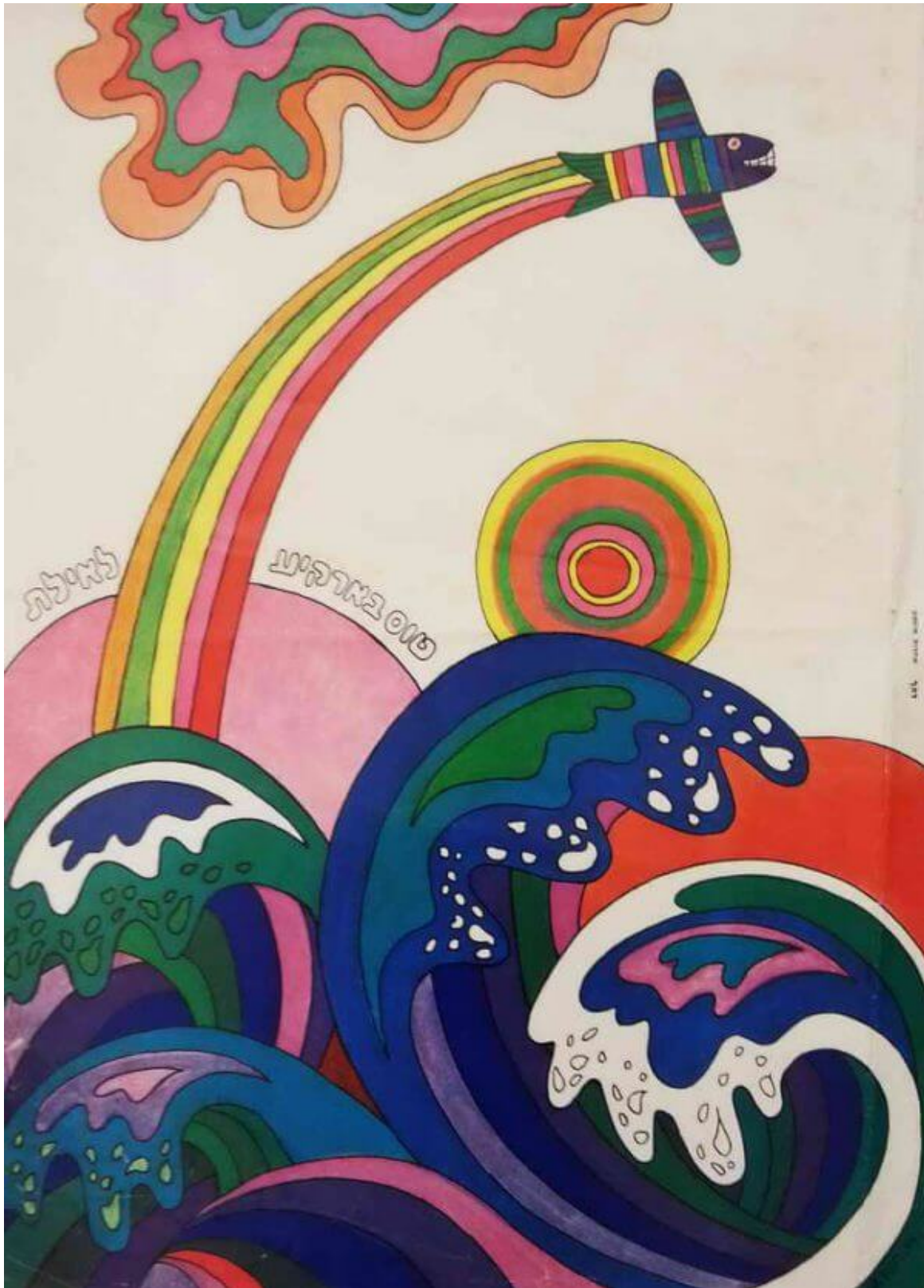


# From Vaisler Brothers to Tel Aviv

by [John RC Potter](#) (March 2024)



Israel Tourism poster, by Paul Kor for Arkia Airlines,  
1960

**One year of** university, then a gap year—no five!  
Went out to work, had to pay the bills.  
A retail clerk at Vaisler's, a clothing emporium  
in east London, when it was still bustling.  
*(London! Oh no, not the jolly olde one;  
but London Ontario Canada.)*  
One side men's clothing, the other women's wear;  
two openings between, like porticos,  
to allow for ease of passage (and gossip).

My bosses were Jewish-Canadian,  
self-made men, pillars of the community.  
I admired their business savvy,  
as well as their wealth and success.  
The woman's manager was Ida,  
a shrewd and intelligent woman,  
always perfectly coiffed and dressed impeccably.  
Ida took me under her wise wing,  
and became a mentor of mine.

*She once said to me with a steely voice and eye:  
"Mr. Hitler took all my relatives from me."*

Little did I know that many years hence,  
my life's journey would take me  
from these Jewish managers and mentors  
to Eretz Israel and the bustle of Tel Aviv.

*From the plane's window, a glimpse of blue sea, silver sand,  
and blond beach.  
A sense of history and time's passage; what lay beyond one's  
reach.*

For a year I lived in Tel Aviv,  
not far from the Ben Gurion House.

Wandering streets that called me home.  
Walking into my past across the millennia,  
mullioned memories of spaces and places:

*The corner of Gordon and Dizengoff,  
where my imagination took lift-off.  
From Ben Yehuda to Arlozorov  
Boker tov! L'hitra'ot! Mazel tov!  
Then making my way back home on two tired feet,  
to my cosy nest on Eduard Bernstein Street.*

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**John RC Potter** is an international educator from Canada, living in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, "Snowbound in the House of God" (*Memoirist*, May 2023). His poems, stories, essays, and reviews have been published in a range of magazines and journals, most recently in *Blank Spaces*, ("In Search of Alice Munro", June 2023), *Literary Yard* ("She Got What She Deserved", June 2023), *Freedom Fiction* ("The Mystery of the Dead-as-a-Doornail Author", July 2023), *The Serulian* ("The Memory Box", September 2023), *The Montreal Review* ("Letter from Istanbul", November 2023) and *Erato Magazine* ("A Day in May 1965", January 2024). His story, "Ruth's World" (Fiction on the Web, March 2023) was nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize. His children's picture book, *The First Adventures of Walli and Magoo* will be published in the autumn of 2024.

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