

## EREZ BITTON: AN OFFERING FROM THE MAGHREB

Erez Bitton, who was the recipient of the 2015 Israel Prize in Literature (the first Mizrahi poet to receive it), was born in 1942 in Oran, Algeria. His parents, originally from Morocco, decided to migrate to Israel in 1948. They settled in Lod, where Erez was blinded by a hand grenade he found near his house. He received his basic education at the Jerusalem's School for the Blind. He got a B.A. in social work from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and worked as a social worker. It was in that capacity that he had the opportunity to meet Zohra El Fassia, in Ashkelon. With the publication of his first books, Bitton was recognized as the founding father of Mizrahi poetry in Israel. His collections of poetry include: *A Moroccan Offering* (1976), *The Book of Na'na* (1979), *Intercontinental Bird* (1990), *Timbisert, a Moroccan Bird* (2009), *Blindfolded Landscapes* (2013), and *The House of Pianos* (2015). His poetry has been widely recognized. Besides the Israeli Prize, he has received the Prime Minister Award (1988), the Yehuda Amichai Award (2014), the Bialik Lifetime Achievement Award (2014), and the American Sephardi Federation Lifetime Achievement Award (2015), among others. Erez Bitton lives in Tel Aviv with his wife Rachel Calahorra Bitton, and is the father of a daughter and a son.