



From the Songs of Zion the Beautiful

Yehuda Amichai

Jerusalem's a place where everyone remembers
he's forgotten something
but doesn't remember what it is.
And for the sake of remembering
I wear my father's face over mine.
This is the city where my dream-containers fill up
like a diver's oxygen tanks.
Its holiness
sometimes turns into love.
And the questions that are asked in these hills
are the same as they've always been:
"Have you seen my sheep?"
"Have you seen my shepherd?"
And the door of my house stands open like a tomb
where someone was resurrected.

מתוך שירי ארץ ציון וירושלים מאת יהודה עמיחי

כא'

ירושלים, מקום שהכל זוכרים
ששכחו בו משהו
אבל הם אינם זוכרים מה שכחו
ולצורך זכירה זו
אני חובש על פני את פני אבי.
זוהי עירי שבה מתמלאים כלי
חלומותיי
כמו מכלי חמצן של צוללים לצלול
הקדושה בה
הופכת לפעמים לאהבה
והשאלות ששואלים בהרים האלה
נשארו כתמיד:
ראית את הצאן שלי?
ראית את הרועה שלי?
ודלת ביתי פתוחה כמו קבר
שמתוכו קמו לתחייה.



O, My Land

Rachel

O my land, my parent,
Why is your landscape so blighted and gloomy?
The memory of a step-motherland
Imperceptibly creeps into the heart

Upon the hillside – the sprightly fir tree,
On the plain – the ancient oak,
On the slopes, on the shores of the stream,
The birch maidens in their Shabbat garb;

The arm of the sun is too short to cast
Its fiery lance into the heart of the forest,
A whole day in the abode of the pines
Scented darkness and a dream.

O my mother! Surely we yearn for you,
Surely we will claim your abuse from God –
And as in former times, you will again spread
fragrance and shade
Over those stricken by your noontime heat.

הוּי, ארְצִי

רחל

הוּי, ארְצִי, הוֹרְתִי,
מְדוּעַ כֹּה שְׂדוּף נוֹפֵךְ וְעֵצֵב?
זִיכְרוֹנָה שֶׁל אֶרֶץ חוֹרְגַת
בְּלִי מְשִׁים עוֹלָה עַל הַלֵּב:

עַל גְּבֵעָה – פְּרַחְחֵי אֲשׁוּחַ,
בְּמִישׁוֹר – יִשְׁיֵשִׁי אֱלוֹן,
בְּמוֹרָד, עַל חוֹפֵי הַפֶּלֶג,
בְּנוֹת לְבָנָה בְּכִסּוֹת שַׁבָּתוֹן;

יַד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּקְצַר מִתְקוּעַ
בְּלֵב הַיַּעַר רוֹמַח אֲדוּם,
יוֹם תַּמִּים בְּמִשְׁכַּן בְּנֵי אוֹרֶן
אֶפְלָה רִיחֲנִית וְחִלּוּם.

הוּי, אִמִּי! הֵן נַחְלָה עֲלֶיךָ,
הֵן נִתְבַּע עֲלֵבוֹנֶךָ מֵאֵל –
עַל מְכִי צֹהֲרִיךְ כִּקְדָם
עוֹד תִּרְעִיפִי נִיחוּחַ וְצֵל.



Galut (Exile)

Balfour Hakak

My grandfather's priestly garments were transparent
His mother embroidered the hem of his blue robe
With beautiful gold bands.
She took pleasure etching his name
In letters of silver, pure light.
My grandfather, Morad ben Raphael Hakak

Like Abraham from Ur, my grandfather came up
From that same land, in the same manner.
He came to the same homeland.
No longer did he have
His gorgeous robe.
His supremacy was gone
His face shone with grief
The silver was tarnished
And the gold butchered.
My grandfather was a peddler in the markets,
selling his treasures
Tattered clothing, second-rate merchandise
Slow of speech, a forsaken prophet.

My grandfather was a sorrowful king.
He was born to silken garments, rich embroidery and fine raiment.
But when he was exiled to the land
His clothes were spoiled and his splendor ruined.
When he died they draped him in his shroud like a splendid robe
The Tallit he received from his father, his inheritance
Was etched with the blue letters of holiness.

Along the whole length of the Tallit I thought I could see
Beautiful bands of gold. Pure light.
My grandfather. Morad ben Raphael Hakak

גלות

בלפור חקק

סבי היו לו בגדי כהנה שקופים
ורקמה לו אמו בדש הכותונת
התכלה פסי זהב יפים.
וחקקה לו את שמו בעונג
באותיות של כסף, אור מזקק.
סבא שלי, מורד בן רפאל חקק.

ועלה סבי כאברהם מאור
מאותה ארץ על פי אותו דבור.
עלה עלה אל אותה אדמת
מולדת.
ולא הייתה לו עוד
הכותונת הנחמדת.
ואבדה לו שררתו
ואבל נגה פניו
ומשחת הכסף
ומשחט הזהב.
ובשוקים רכל סבי מכר את
אוצרותיו
בגדים בלים, מרכלת אכזב
לשונו כבדה, נביא נעזב.

סבא שלי מלך עצוב.
נולד בבגדי משי ורקמה
בגדי חמודות.
וכאשר גלה אל ארץ
נשחתו בגדיו נשחת הודו.
רק במותו הלבישוהו תכריך
כעטרת טלית שקבל מאביו
טלית ירשה
חקוקה תכלת אותיות של
קדשה.

ולאורך הטלית דמיתי לראות
פסי זהב יפים. אור מזקק.
סבא שלי. מורד בן רפאל חקק.



From: **A TALE OF LOVE AND DARKNESS**

By Amos Oz

I was born and raised in a very small ground floor apartment, low ceilinged, some thirty square meters in size. My parents slept on a pull-out sofa that almost entirely filled their room when they opened it up at night. Early in the morning they firmly thrust the sofa back, piling the bedclothes into the darkness of the underneath drawer, turning over the mattress, closing, fastening securely, spreading a light grey cover over all, scattering several eastern-style embroidered cushions, eradicating every trace of their night's sleep. In this way the room served as bedroom, workroom, library, dining room and guest room.

My little greenish room was opposite. A large-bellied clothes closet took up half of the space. A dark, narrow, low passageway, slightly twisted, similar to a tunnel used by escapees from jail, connected the tiny kitchen and bathroom to these two small rooms. A weak light, imprisoned in an iron cage, spread over the passageway, even during the daylight hours, a cloudy not-quite light. Inside there was only one window in my parents' room and one in my room, both of them protected with metal shutters, both straining to look eastwards but seeing only dusty cypress trees and a fence of unhewn stone. Through a barred window hatch our kitchen and bathroom peered into a small prisoners' yard surrounded by high walls and floored with cement, a yard where, despite a ray of sunlight, a pale geranium planted in a rusty olive can was dying. On the windowsills always stood labeled jars of pickled cucumbers, while a tough cactus dug itself into the earth of a cracked vase that served as a flowerpot.

It was a basement apartment: the ground floor of the building was quarried into the side of a mountain. This mountain was our neighbor across the way – a weighty neighbor, introverted and silent, an elderly, melancholy mountain with all the habits of a confirmed bachelor, always insisting on total silence, a sleepy kind of mountain, wintry, never moving furniture or entertaining guests, neither noisy or disturbing, but through our two adjoining walls penetrated, like a faint but persistent smell of mold, the dark, silent cold and damp of this silent, sorrowful neighbor.

That's why, throughout the summer, we preserved a little of the winter.

Visitors would say: it's so pleasant here during a heat wave, so cool and gentle, almost chilly, but how do you manage in winter? Aren't the walls damp? Isn't it a bit depressing here in winter ?

The two rooms, the tiny hutch of a kitchen, the bathroom, and especially the passage between, were dark. Our entire house was filled with books: My father could read sixteen or seventeen languages and speak eleven (all with a Russian accent). My mother spoke four or five languages and could read seven or eight. They talked to each other in Russian or Polish when they didn't want me to understand. (Most of the time they didn't want me to understand. Mother slipped up once, saying 'stallion' in Hebrew instead of using a foreign language. My father



reprimanded her in glowering Russian: “Shto es taboi? Videsh Maltchik riados es nami!). From cultural considerations most of the books they read were in German and English, although I’m sure that at night they dreamed in Yiddish. But they taught me only Hebrew: perhaps they feared that knowledge of other languages would expose me to the temptations of fabulous, lethal Europe.

in my parents’ system of values, the further west you went, the more cultured you became: Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were dear to their Russian souls, and yet I sensed that they regarded Germany – despite Hitler – as more cultured than Russia and Poland; and France – more so than Germany. In their eyes England even transcended France. As for America – they weren’t quite sure: after all, they shoot Indians over there, they rob mail trains, pan for gold and chase women.

For them Europe was the forbidden promised land, an enchanted place of bell towers and squares paved with old flagstones, tramcars, bridges, church spires, distant villages, healing springs, forests, snows and meadows.

The words “cottage”, “meadow”, “goose girl”, fascinated and moved me throughout my childhood. They were redolent of a real and tranquil world, far from the dusty tin roofs, junk and thorn covered lots and parched slopes of Jerusalem, suffocating in the white-hot yoke of summer. All I had to do was whisper “meadow” – and I could hear the lowing of cows, the tinkle of the tiny bells around their necks, the bubbling streams. With closed eyes I gazed at the beautiful goose girl. She was so sexy she brought tears to my eyes, even though I was not yet fully aware.