

Poems for the Shabbat after Thanksgiving and Parashat Vayeshev

November 27, 2021

The Greatest Desire of All by Yehuda Amichai

Instead of singing hallelujah, a curtain waves in an open window
Instead of saying amen, a door closes, a shutter is shut.
Instead of the vision of the end of days,
The voice of banners flapping in an empty street after the holiday.

Reflections slowly take over the house,
Float in the mirror, in the wineglass.

I saw slivers of glass gleaming in the sun
In the Judean Desert, celebrating a wedding

With no groom no bride, pure celebration.

I saw a big and beautiful parade passing in the street,
I saw policemen standing between the spectators and the procession,
Their faces to the viewers
Their backs to all that passed with trumpets and joy and banners.
Perhaps to live like this.

But the greatest desire of all is to be
In the dream of another.
To feel a slight pull, like reins .
To feel a heavy pull, like chains.

A Pace Like That by Yehuda Amichai

I'm looking at the lemon tree I planted.
A year ago. I'd need a different pace, a slower one,
to observe the growth of its branches, its leaves as they open.
I want a pace like that.
Not like reading a newspaper
but the way a child learns to read,
or the way you quietly decipher the inscription
on an ancient tombstone.
And what a Torah scroll takes an entire year to do
as it rolls its way from Genesis to the death of Moses,
I do each day in haste
on in sleepless nights, rolling over from side to side.

The longer you live, the more people there are
who comment on your actions. Like a worker
in a manhole: at the opening above him
people stand around giving free advice
and yelling instructions,
but he's all alone down there in his depths.

Near The Wall Of A House by Yehuda Amichai

Near the wall of a house painted
to look like stone,
I saw visions of God.

A sleepless night that gives others a headache
gave me flowers
opening beautifully inside my brain.

And he who was lost like a dog
will be found like a human being
and brought back home again.

Love is not the last room: there are others
after it, the whole length of the corridor
that has no end.