

## Yehuda Amichai poems for Parsahat Vayishlach

### **A Math Book**

I remember a problem in a math book

about a train that leaves from place A and another train

that leaves from place B. When will they meet?

No one ever asked what happens when they meet

Will they stop, or pass each other, or collide?

None of the problems was about a man who leaves from place A

and a woman who leaves from place B. When will they meet,

will they meet at all, and for how long?

As for that math book: Now I've reached

The final page with the answers.

Back then it was forbidden to look.

Now it is permitted. Now I check

Where I was right and where I was wrong

And know what I did well and what I did not do. Amen.

## **The School Where I Studied**

I passed by the school where I studied as a boy  
and said in my heart: here I learned certain things  
and didn't learn others. All my life I have loved in vain  
the things I didn't learn. I am filled with knowledge,  
I know all about the flowering of the tree of knowledge,  
the shape of its leaves, the function of its root system, its pests and  
parasites.

I'm an expert on the botany of good and evil,  
I'm still studying it, I'll go on studying till the day I die.

I stood near the school building and looked in. This is the room  
where we sat and learned. The windows of a classroom always open  
to the future, but in our innocence, we thought it was only landscape  
we were seeing from the window.

The schoolyard was narrow, paved with large stones.

I remember the brief tumult of the two of us  
near the rickety steps, the tumult  
that was the beginning of a first great love.

Now it outlives us, as if in a museum,  
like everything else in Jerusalem.