



## Yom Kippur: A Day of Joy?

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Can we even talk about joy?



## A Man Doesn't Have Time In His Life

*Yehuda Amichai*

A man doesn't have time in his life  
to have time for everything.  
He doesn't have seasons enough to have  
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes  
was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,  
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,  
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather  
them,  
to make love in war and war in love.

And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,  
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest  
what history  
takes years and years to do.

A man doesn't have time.  
When he loses he seeks, when he finds  
he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves  
he begins to forget.

And his soul is seasoned, his soul  
is very professional.  
Only his body remains forever  
an amateur. It tries and it misses,  
gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,  
drunk and blind in its pleasures  
and its pains.

He will die as figs die in autumn,  
Shriveled and full of himself and sweet,  
the leaves growing dry on the ground,  
the bare branches pointing to the place  
where there's time for everything.

## אדם בחייו אין לו זמן יהודה עמיחי

אדם בחייו אין לו זמן שיהיה לו  
זמן לכל.  
ואין לו עת שתהיה לו עת  
לכל חפץ. קהלת לא צדק כשאמר כך.

אדם צריך לשנא ולאהב בבת אחת  
באותן עיניים לבכות ובאותן עיניים  
לצחוק  
באותן ידים לזרוק אבנים  
ובאותן ידים לאסוף אותן,  
לעשות אהבה במלחמה ומלחמה  
באהבה.

ולשנוא ולסלוח ולזכור ולשכוח  
ולסדר ולבלבל ולאכל ולעכל  
את מה שהסטוריה ארכה  
עושה בשנים רבות מאד.

אדם בחייו אין לו זמן.  
כשהוא מאבד הוא מחפש  
כשהוא מוצא הוא שוכח,  
כשהוא שוכח הוא אוהב וכשהוא אוהב  
הוא מתחיל לשכוח.

ונפשו למודה, ונפשו  
מקצועית מאד  
רק גופו נשאר חובב  
תמיד. מנסה וטועה  
לא לומד ומתבלבל  
שכור ועור בתענוגיו  
ובמכאוביו.

מות תאנים ימות בסתו  
מצמק ומלא בעצמו ומתוק,  
העלים מתיבשים על האדמה,  
והענפים הערומים כבר מצביעים  
אל המקום שבו זמן לכל.



## A) Yom Kippur in the Torah

### Leviticus 23:26-32

GOD spoke to Moses, saying: Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to GOD; you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the ETERNAL your God. Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from kin; and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among the people. Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

### ויקרא כג:כו-לב

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: אֶךְ בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֵשָׁה לַיהוָה: וְכָל־מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ בַעֲצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים הוּא לְכַפֹּר עֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כִּי כָל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַעֲנֶה בַעֲצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְנִכְרְתָה מֵעַמּוּיָהּ: וְכָל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה כָל־מְלָאכָה בַעֲצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהֶאֱבַדְתִּי אֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוּיָהּ: כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן הוּא לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּתַשְׁעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בֶּעָרֵב מִעָרֵב עַד־עָרֵב תִּשְׁבְּתוּ שַׁבְּתֶכֶם:



## B) Yom Kippur, a day for matchmaking

### Mishnah Ta'anit 4:8

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel said: There were no days of joy in Israel greater than the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white garments in order not to shame anyone who had none. All these garments required immersion. The daughters of Jerusalem come out and dance in the vineyards. What would they say? Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Do not set your eyes on beauty but set your eyes on the family. As the verse states: *“Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised”* (Proverbs 31:30). And it further says (in the following verse): *“Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her works praise her in the gates.”* Similarly, it says in another verse (Song of Songs 3:11): *“O maidens of Zion, go forth and gaze upon King Solomon wearing the crown that his mother gave him on his wedding day, on the day of the gladness of his heart”* — “On his wedding day”: this refers to Matan Torah (the Giving of the Torah)...

### משנה תענית ד:ח

אמר רבן שמעון בן גמליאל, לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיום הכפורים, שבהן בנות ירושלים יוצאות בכלי לבן שאולין, שלא לבייש את מי שאין לו. כל הכלים טעונין טבילה. ובנות ירושלים יוצאות וחולות בכרמים. ומה היו אומרות, בחור, שא נא עיניך וראה, מה אתה בורר לה. אל תתן עיניך בנוי, תן עיניך במשפחה. שקר החן והבל היפי, אשה יראת ה' היא תתהלל (משלי לא). ואומר, תנו לה מפרי ידיה, ויהללה בשערים מעשיה. וכן הוא אומר, צאינה וראינה בנות ציון במלך שלמה בעטרה שעטרה לו אמו ביום חתנתו וביום שמחת לבו (שיר השירים ג). ביום חתנתו, זה מתן תורה...



## C) Yom Kippur, a day to act like angels

### **Mishneh Torah, Repentance 8:2** (Rambam, 12 c.)

In the world to come, there is no body or physical form, only the souls of the righteous alone, without a body, like the ministering angels. Since there is no physical form, there is neither eating, drinking, nor any of the other bodily functions of this world like sitting, standing, sleeping, death, sadness, laughter, and the like. Thus, the Sages of the previous ages declared: "In the world to come, there is neither eating, drinking, nor sexual relations. Rather, the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence" (Brachot 17a).

From that statement, it is clear that there is no body, for there is no eating or drinking. So, the statement, "the righteous will sit," must be interpreted metaphorically, i.e., the righteous exist there without work or labor. Similarly, the phrase, "their crowns on their heads," is also a metaphor, implying that they will possess the knowledge that they grasped, which allowed them to merit the life of the world to come. This will be their crown. A similar metaphor [from Song of Songs 3:11]: "*The crown with which his mother crowned him,*" which is like Isaiah 51:11: "*Eternal joy will be upon their heads.*" Joy is not a physical entity which can rest on a head. Similarly, the expression "crown" used by the Sages refers to knowledge. So, what is meant by the expression, "delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence"? That they will comprehend the truth of Godliness which they cannot grasp while in a dark and humble body.

### **משנה תורה, תשובה ח:ב**

העולם הבא אין בו גוף וגויה אלא נפשות הצדיקים בלבד בלא גוף כמלאכי השרת. הואיל ואין בו גויות אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה ולא דבר מכל הדברים שגופות בני אדם צריכין להן בעולם הזה. ולא יאירע דבר בו מן הדברים שמארגעין לגופות בעולם הזה. כגון ישיבה ועמידה ושלמה ומיתה ועצב ופחוק וכיוצא בהן. כה אמרו חכמים הראשונים (גמרא ברכות יז א) "העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה" ולא תשמיש (גמרא ברכות יז א) "אלא צדיקים יושבים ועטרותיהם בראשיהן ונהנין מזיו השכינה".

הרי נתברר לה שאין שם גוף לפי שאין שם אכילה ושתיה. וזה שאמרו צדיקים יושבין דרך חידה אמרו. כלומר הצדיקים מצויין שם בלא עמל ובלא יגיעה. וכן זה שאמרו עטרותיהן בראשיהן כלומר דעת שידעו שבגללה זכו לחיי העולם הבא מצויה עמהן והיא העטרה שלהן כענין שאמר שלמה (שיר השירים ג יא) "בעטרה שעטרה לו אמו". והרי הוא אומר (ישעיה לה י) "ושמחת עולם על ראשם" ואין השמחה גוף כדי שתנוח על הראש. כה עטרה שאמרו חכמים כאן היא הידיעה. ומהו זה שאמרו נהנין מזיו השכינה. שיודעים ומשיגין מאמתת הקדוש ברוך הוא מה שאינם יודעים והם בגוף האפל השפל:



## **D) Yom Kippur, a day that promises joy**

**Orot HaTeshuvah, selections** (R. Abraham Isaac Kook, Jerusalem c.1914 – 1924 CE)

**7:1** It is in the nature of penitence (*teshuvah*) to endow a person with peace and with solemnity at the same time. Even the mere thought of penitence is a comfort to him. In one tiny glimmer of its great light there is already to be found the noble happiness of a whole world, but together with this it confronts his spirit constantly with the obligation of completing it. This saves him from pride and invests him with a sweet light, which endows his life with great and abiding value.

**14:7** ... When the light of penitence appears and the desire for good, in its original authenticity, asserts itself, there is opened a channel for delight and joy, and the soul imbibes from the river of delight. When the disposition to act absorbs the substance of these pleasurable feelings, there emerges the pure, higher moral sense that invests life with its splendor.

**17:6** We are delayed on the path toward perfection, and we neglect it, because we feel an excessive anxiety when the thought of penitence occurs to us. We feel anguished and feeble because of the disturbing impact of penitence, and for this very reason we push away from our minds this thought that is the source of every happiness, with the result that we remain straying in the wilderness of life. But this condition cannot last. We must gird ourselves with spiritual strength, with the might of the song of penitence. All its engendered distress must be turned to a vibrant song that revives, strengthens, comforts and heals. Then we will have penitence with all its associated reflections as one sweet, pleasant whole, in which we shall meditate always and according to which we shall order every step in life, for our individual and our collective good, in this world, and in the next, for the redemption of the individual and of society as a whole, for the renewal of the people and its return from captivity, as in ancient days.



## E) Joy in the Musaf Liturgy

### **From the Musaf Amidah, at the conclusion of the Avodah Service –**

The appearance of his (the High Priest's) face was like the brilliance of a sunrise. With great joy, he put on his own clothes. The perfect ones [Yisrael] accompanied its faithful messenger home. They rejoiced in the news that the red thread (attached to the goat) had turned white. The Redeemer had been faithful, and enwrapped Godself in a cloak of righteousness. A great joy burst forth, happiness and rejoicing rang out. The clouds above dripped, and showered forth their dew. The furrowed fields brought forth their produce. Thanks was given by those who harvested their crop in peace. Praise was recited by those who carried the sheaves joyously. The lowliest places of the beautiful land rang out with song. God's goodness was told by all who traveled through byways. He (the High Priest) was the hope of those who sent him, their faith was not misfounded. Their hope to him was like the coolness of snow on a hot harvest day.

From their filth they were washed, from their offensive dirt they were purified. The complete and perfect ones, from a well—had cleansed their hands. To tell all, that their Purifier [God] is a source of living water. The purifying waters of Yisrael had cleansed them with [His] faithful waters. With purity and cleanliness, they will be cleaned and purified. They will be renewed, like the renewal of morning; from their stain, they will be polished clean. The praises of the Almighty will be spoken in their throats, on their tongues will be singing, from their mouths will come a new song. They will rejoice, with trembling and will worship with awe. The Holy One of Yisrael, Who sanctifies God's holy people. To cheer, to sing, to beat the drum, and beat the cymbal; to sing songs, and to play music. Embraced, with the strength of the glorious Right Hand of God. Supported in unity, filled with righteousness, they will be drawn to enter God's gates, with joy. Joy and happiness will be theirs forever. Rejoicing and celebrating in God's Name the entire day, together in joy in God's Presence. The splendor of their light will be like the break of dawn. They will lift their voices and sing of the greatness of God Who is the strength of the world. Fortunate is the people whose lot is thus. Fortunate is the people for whom Adonai is their God. And a celebration was made by the High Priest for all his loved ones, after entering the [Holy of Holies] in peace, and leaving peacefully, unharmed.

