

If Only They Would Abandon Me

רַבִּי הוּנָא וְרַבִּי יִרְמְיָה בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי חִיָּיא בַר אֲבָא אָמְרִי: "וְאוֹתֵי עֲזָבוּ וְאֶת-
תּוֹרָתִי לֹא שָׁמְרוּ" (ירמיה טז:יא). הִלְוֵאִי וְאוֹתֵי עֲזָבוּ וְתוֹרָתִי שָׁמְרוּ. מִתּוֹךְ
שֶׁהָיוּ מִתְעַסְקִין בָּהּ הַמְּאוֹר שְׂבֵהָ הָיָה מַחְזִירָן לְמוֹטָב.

Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Jeremiah in the name of Rabbi Hiyya reread the following verse: *Me they have abandoned and my Torah they have not kept* (Jeremiah 16:11). If only they had abandoned *me* but kept my Torah! Because they would have occupied themselves with it, the light that is in it would have returned them to a better way.

Lamentations Rabbah 2:1

On Yom Kippur

בַּיּוֹם כְּפוּר בְּשָׁנַת תְּשַׁכַּח לְבַשְׁתִּי בְּגָדֵי חַג כְּהִים וְהִלַכְתִּי לְעִיר הָעֵתִיקָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם. עָמַדְתִּי זָמַן רַב לִפְנֵי כּוֹךְ חֲנוּתוֹ שֶׁל עֶרְבִי, לֹא רְחוֹק מִשַּׁעַר שְׂכָם, חֲנוּת כְּפִתּוּרִים וְרוֹכְסָנִים וְסִלְיֵי חוּטִים בְּכָל צֶבַע וְלַחְצָנִיּוֹת וְאַבְזָמִים. אוֹר יָקָר וְצָבָעִים רַבִּים, כְּמוֹ אֲרוֹן-קֹדֶשׁ פְּתוּחַ.	On Yom Kippur in the Year-of-Forgetting, 1967, I dressed in dark holiday clothes and walked to the old city of Jerusalem. I stood a long while in front of an Arab's alcove shop, not far from the Damascus gate, a shop of buttons and zippers and spools of thread of every color as well as snaps and buckles. A splendid light and many colors, like an open Holy Ark.
אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ בְּלִבִּי שְׂגַם לְאָבִי הִיְתָה חֲנוּת כְּזֹאת שֶׁל חוּטִים וְכְפִתּוּרִים. הִסְבַּרְתִּי לוֹ עַל כָּל עֲשָׂרוֹת הַשָּׁנִים וְהַגּוֹרְמִים וְהַמְקָרִים, שֶׁאֲנִי עֹכְשִׁיו פֹּה וְחֲנוּת אָבִי שְׂרוּפָה שָׁם וְהוּא קָבוּר פֹּה.	I said to him in my heart that my father too had a shop like this of threads and buttons. I explained to him in my heart about all of the decades and the causes and events, such that I am here and my father's shop was burned there and he is buried here.
כְּשִׁסְּמַתִּי הִיְתָה שְׁעַת נְעִילָה. גַּם הוּא הוֹרִיד אֶת הַתָּרִיס וְנָעַל אֶת הַשַּׁעַר וְאֲנִי חֹזְרִתִּי עִם כָּל הַמְתַּפְּלָלִים הַבְּיָתָה.	When I finished it was time for Ne'ilah/The Locking. He too lowered the shutters and locked the gate and I returned, with all the worshipers, home.

Yehuda Amichai, from: "Jerusalem, 1967"

Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

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