

# A Time To Tear And A Time To Mend



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Annual Day of Learning  
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# A Time To Tear And A Time To Mend

לְכֹל זְמַן וְעֵת לְכֹל חֶפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם

There is a season for everything, a time for every want under heaven

עֵת לְלַדֵּת וְעֵת לָמוּת	a time to give birth and a time to die
עֵת לְטַעַת וְעֵת לְעִקֹּר נְטוּעַ	a time to plant and a time to uproot the planted
עֵת לְהַרוֹג וְעֵת לְרַפּוֹא	a time to kill and a time to heal
עֵת לְפָרוֹץ וְעֵת לְבַנוֹת	a time to demolish and a time to build
עֵת לְבִכּוֹת וְעֵת לְשַׂחֹק	a time to weep and a time to laugh
עֵת סָפוּד וְעֵת רִקּוּד	a time to wail and a time to dance
עֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים וְעֵת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים	a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones
עֵת לְחַבּוֹק וְעֵת לְרַחֵק מִחֶבֶק	a time to embrace and a time to reject embrace
עֵת לְבַקֵּשׁ וְעֵת לְאבֹד	a time to seek and a time to lose
עֵת לְשָׁמֹר וְעֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ	a time to guard and a time to discard
עֵת לְקָרוֹעַ וְעֵת לְתַפּוֹר	a time to tear and a time to mend
עֵת לְחַשׂוֹת וְעֵת לְדַבֵּר	a time to keep silent and a time to speak
עֵת לְאַהֲבָה וְעֵת לְשִׂנְאָה	a time to love and a time to hate
עֵת מִלְחָמָה וְעֵת שָׁלוֹם	a time for war and a time for peace

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

*A time to tear and a time to mend* is one pair of human wants that arcs across necessary poles of our lives. We might ask: Is tearing in grief really a *want*? Let's admit that, in its moment, the tearing that opens grief is precisely what we want; exactly what we need. With tearing we proclaim in language beyond words that—for the moment—all we can do, and all that we want to do, is split the fabric of well woven life with the muscle of anger and sorrow.

The following pages bring classical sources and modern poetry into a brief “album” portraying tearing and mending as Jewish responses to loss. We join these texts in conversations in honor of the Hevra Kaddisha groups, the Burial Societies of the Durham/Chapel Hill/Raleigh Triangle area, those faithful stewards of Jewish traditions of tearing and of mending.

Rabbinic sages were careful to present tearing as a response to death learned from the ancestors; from King David mourning Saul and his son, Jonathan, who was David's dearest friend; from the prophet, Elisha, mourning his master, Elijah; from Aaron, the priest, mourning his sons; and from Aaron's surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, mourning their brothers. Oh! How we value being in the company of our ancestors! Better to be wrapped warmly in the torn cloak of the

ancestors than to be cold and alone with our loss, merely contemporary. Some of the rabbis place Job among the ancestors, declaring him a sage of the land of Israel. Some insist that he was an idolater. In that case, we learn that tearing is a human response, not merely a Jewish one.

Tearing must be a substantial act, a commitment to the moment of loss. Grasp a handful of garment and tear across the stitching; it must be an honest tearing. Stand up when you tear, and tear when the moment is most hot; herein lies the dignity of responding to loss. Wear the tear in front for all to see. Tear in public for parents, for teachers, and for that which is mourned by the community.

Tearing exposes the weave of community. A young child has no legal obligation to tear, but tearing a child's garment fulfills an emotional duty to a healthy, supple community. But for the desperately sick, there is no tearing—or even informing of death—*so that his soul not be ripped*.

Tearing strengthens a community that lives mindfully with its losses. Wearing a garment torn accidentally pretending that it was torn in grief *cheapens the honor of the living and the dead*. Even if we reverse our torn garments in public as Bar Kapparah did at the death of his beloved teacher, Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, tearing opens an emotional hole that will not allow us to put grief behind us; his colleagues recognized the truth.

The community enables and honors tearing: If a traveling cloak is loaned with full knowledge of impending loss at journey's end, then that garment can be torn, repaired, and returned. Tears that must not be repaired must remain torn from one owner to the next. The seller is obliged to tell the purchaser of tears for lost parents or for the ruins of a community. Compassion is sewn into the marketplace when the purchasing community cares and also curates, preserving the jagged scars—a record of grief preserved beyond the grieving.

Tearing honors life that is hanging by a thread. If one tears a garment, having mistaken unconsciousness for death, one need not tear again if that life immediately flickers out. But if life lasts only long enough to say, "He has died," then another tear is necessary. It takes only a few breaths to renew our expectation of life. After only a few seconds of renewed life, loss becomes new, requiring another tear.

As in the story of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch's death, the tearing that marks the end of a life unraveled also signals the beginning of peace and repair. Ecclesiastes implied as much: *a time to tear leads to a time to mend*. One poet reminds us that there are peaceful tears in the world, such as *when the warp and woof are parted for an instant so that their continuing can take place*. Another poet reminds us that skilled, gentle, caring, and strong guardians of the arc from tearing to mending—such as the members of the Hevra Kaddisha—help us towards *forgiveness and repair*.

*Rabbi Steven Sager, Director of Sicha*

## A TIME FOR TEARING AND A TIME FOR MENDING

### עַת לְקָרוֹעַ וְעַת לְתַפּוֹר

(Ecclesiastes 3:7)

עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים כּוֹלֵן קוֹרֵעַ טֶפֶחַ, עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ עַד שְׁיִגְלָה אֶת לְבוֹ. אָמַר רַבִּי אַבְהוּ: מֵאֵי קָרָא- "וַיִּחַזַּק דָּוִד בְּבִגְדָיו וַיִּקְרָעֵם" (שְׁמוּאֵל ב' א: יא) וְאִין אַחֲזִיחָה פְּחוֹת מִטֶּפֶחַ. עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים כּוֹלֵן, אֶפִּילוֹ לְבוּשׁ עֲשָׂרָה חֲלוּקִין- אֵינּוּ קוֹרֵעַ אֶלָּא עֲלִיוֹן. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- קוֹרֵעַ אֶת כּוֹלֵן. וְאֶפְקָרְסוּתוֹ אֵינָה מְעַכְבֶּת, אֶחָד הָאִישׁ וְאֶחָד הָאִשָּׁה. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר: הָאִשָּׁה קוֹרֵעַת אֶת הַתַּחְתּוֹן, וּמְחַזְרָתוֹ לְאַחֲרֵיהָ. וְחוֹזְרָת וְקוֹרֵעַת אֶת הָעֲלִיוֹן. עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים כּוֹלֵן רָצָה- מִבְּדִיל קָמִי שְׁפָה שְׁלוֹ רָצָה- אֵינּוּ מִבְּדִיל. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- מִבְּדִיל. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר: כָּל קָרִיעָה שְׁאֵינּוּ מִבְּדִיל קָמִי שְׁפָה שְׁלוֹ- אֵינּוּ אֶלָּא קָרַע שֶׁל תַּפְלוּת. אָמַר רַבִּי אַבְהוּ: מֵאֵי טַעְמָא דְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה? דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיִּחַזַּק בְּבִגְדָיו וַיִּקְרָעֵם לְשָׁנַיִם קָרָעִים" (מְלָכִים ב' ב: יב). מִמֶּשְׁמַע שְׁנֵאמַר "וַיִּקְרָעֵם" אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהוּן לְשָׁנַיִם? אֶלָּא: שְׁנֵאִין קָרוּעִים כְּשָׁנַיִם. עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים כּוֹלֵן- שׁוֹלֵל לְאַחַר שְׁבַעָה וּמְאַחָה לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- שׁוֹלֵל לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים וְאֵינּוּ מְאַחָה לְעוֹלָם. וְהָאִשָּׁה שׁוֹלְלָתוֹ לְאַחֲרָהּ, מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹדָהּ. כִּי אֶתָּא רַבִּין אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים, רָצָה- קוֹרֵעַ בְּיָד, רָצָה- קוֹרֵעַ בְּכָלִי. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- בְּיָד. וְאָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּיא בַר אַבְבָּא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: עַל כָּל הַמֵּתִים כּוֹלֵן- מִבְּפָנַיִם. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- קוֹרֵעַ מִבְּחוּץ.

For all dead, one tears a hand's breadth, but for one's father and mother, one tears until the heart is exposed. Rabbi Abahu said: What is the supporting verse? *David took hold of his clothes and tore them* (2 Samuel 1:11). And there is no taking hold with less than a hand's breadth. For all dead, even if one is dressed in ten garments, one tears only the upper one. For one's father and mother, one tears all of them. And one's undergarment is not indispensable either for a man or for a woman. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: A woman tears the innermost garment and turns the tear around and then tears the outermost. For all dead, if one desires, one splits the collar stitching; or, if one prefers, one does not split it. For one's father and mother, one splits it. Rabbi Yehudah says: Any tearing that does not split the collar stitching is nothing more than an unsubstantial gesture. Rabbi Abbahu says: What is Rabbi Yehudah's reason? It is written: *[Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "Oh, father, father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!"]* When he could no longer see him, he grasped his garments and tore them in two (2 Kings 2:12). From the fact that it says he tore them, don't I know that he tore them in two? But the verse suggests that it looked like two separate pieces. For all dead, one bastes the tear after seven days and repairs after thirty. For one's father and mother, one bastes after thirty days but never repairs. A woman bastes immediately because of her honor. When Ravin came [from Israel to Babylonia, he brought a teaching of Rabbi Yohanan.] Rabbi Yohanan said: For all dead, if one wants, one tears by hand; or, if one prefers, one tears with an implement. For one's father and mother, by hand. And Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: For all dead, one tears indoors. For one's father and mother, one tears in public. (Mo'ed Katan 22b)

## MOMENTS OF TEARING: FROM MAIMONIDES

אָבֵל חָיֵב לְקַרֵּעַ עַל מֵתוֹ. שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וּבְגָדֵיכֶם לֹא תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתְּנוּ" (ויקרא י:ו). הָא אַחַר חָיֵב לְפָרִים. וְאִין קְרִיעָה אֶלָּא מֵעֵמֶד. שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וַיִּקֶּם הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּקְרַע אֶת בְּגָדָיו" (שמואל ב' יג:לא).

A mourner is obliged to tear on account of his dead. As it is said: [after the death of Nadab and Abihu to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, *Do not bare your heads*] and do not tear your garments [...but your kinsmen, all the house of Israel, shall bewail...] (Leviticus 10:6-7). Thus, others are required to tear. And tearing must be done while standing. As it is said: [after the death of Absalom] *the king rose and tore his garments* (2 Samuel 13:31). (Maimonides, Hilchot Evel 8:1)



כָּל שִׁבְעַת יָמֵי אֲבֵלוּת הַקְּרֵעַ לְפָנִים. וְאִם בָּא לְהַחֲלִיף - מַחֲלִיף. וְאִינוּ קוֹרֵעַ קְרֵעַ אַחֵר; שְׁכָל קְרֵעַ שְׂאִינוּ בְּשַׁעַת חֲמוּם - אִינוּ קְרֵעַ. בְּמַה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים. בְּשָׂאָר הַמֵּתִים חוּץ מֵאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ. אָבֵל עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ קוֹרֵעַ עַד שְׁמִגְלָה אֶת לְבוֹ. וּמִבְּדִיל שְׁפַת הַבֶּגֶד. וְאִינוּ קוֹרֵעַ בְּכָלִי אֶלָּא בְּיָדוֹ. מִבַּחוּץ, בְּפָנֵי כָּל הָעָם.

For the whole seven days of mourning, the tear is in front. If he desires to change his garments, he may do so. He is not required to tear the second garment; for any tear not made at the time of heated emotion is not a tear. Of what do these rules speak? They speak of a death other than a father or mother. In the case of one's father or mother, one rips a rip long enough to expose one's heart. He must rip apart the border of the garment; he may not tear it with a utensil and he must tear it outside, in the presence of community. (Hilchot Evel 8:3)



קוֹרֵעִין לְקַטֹּן מִפְּנֵי עֲגָמַת נַפְשׁוֹ. וְחוּלָה שְׁמֵת לוֹ מֵת - אִין מְקַרְעִין לוֹ וְלֹא מוֹדִיעִין לוֹ שְׁלֹא תִטְרַף עָלָיו דַּעְתּוֹ...

We tear a child's garment in order to create an atmosphere of sorrow. For a sick person who has suffered a death, we do not tear for him, nor do we inform him so that his soul not be ripped up. (Hilchot Evel 8:4)

## THE FABRIC OF COMMUNITY: MAIMONDIEN

מי שאין לו חלוק לקרע ונזדמן לו חלוק בתוך שבועה- קורע. לאחר שבועה- אינו קורע. ועל אביו ועל אמו- אפילו לאחר שבועה כל שלשים יום. וכל היוצא בבגד קרוע לפני מתים, פלומר שהוא קרע עתה עליהן- הרי זה גונב דעת הברות וזלזל בכבוד החיים והמתים.



When a person does not have an outer garment to tear but acquires one during the seven days of mourning, he tears it. If he acquires it after the seven days, he does not tear it. But for his father and his mother, even after the seven days but within thirty days, he tears his garment. Anyone who goes out wearing a torn garment before the dead implying that he tore the garment because of the dead - such a person deceives the community and cheapens the honor of the living and of the dead. (Hilchot Evel 8:6)



האומר לחברו: השאילני חלוקה ואבקר את אבי שהוא חולה, והלך ומצאו שמת- קורע ומאחה, ומחזיר לו את חלוקו, ונותן לו דמי קרעו. ואם לא הודיעו שהוא מבקר לו חולה- הרי זה לא יגע בו.

When one tells a friend: Lend me your cloak so that I can visit my father who is critically ill—if, when he visits, he finds that his father has died, he should tear the cloak, mend it, and return it, reimbursing the owner for the tear. If he does not inform the owner that he is visiting a critically ill person, he should not damage the cloak. (Hilchot Evel 8:7)



מי שהיה לו חולה בתוך ביתו ונתעלף, וסבור שמת וקרע, ואחר כך מת: אם בתוך כדי דבור, אינו חוזר וקורע. ואם לאחר כדי דבור מת- חוזר וקורע קרע אחר.

One has a critically ill person in his home and the ill person faints and the host thinks that he has died; he tears his garment, only to find that the sick person regains consciousness and then dies in as much time as it takes to say he has died. He need not tear his garment again. If the person survives longer than it takes to say it, he must tear his garment again. (Hilchot Evel 8:8)

## A TIME FOR MENDING

כָּל הַקָּרְעִים שְׁקוֹרֵעַ אָדָם עַל שְׂאֵר קְרוֹבָיו- שׁוֹלֵל הַקָּרֵעַ לְאַחַר שִׁבְעָה וּמְאַחָה לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים. עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ- שׁוֹלֵל לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים וְאִינוּ מְאַחָה לְעוֹלָם. וְהָאִשָּׁה קוֹרֵעַת וְשׁוֹלֶלֶת מִיָּד, אֶפִּילוּ עַל אָבִיהָ וְעַל אִמָּהּ, מִפְּנֵי הַצְּנִיעוּת.

Any tear that a person makes over a relative other than parents can be basted after seven days and repaired after thirty days. For one's father and mother, one can baste after thirty days but never repair. A woman who tears bastes immediately, even for her father and her mother, because of modesty. (Hilchot Evel 9:1)



כְּדָרָךְ שְׁקוֹרֵעַ אָדָם עַל אָבִיו וְעַל אִמּוֹ כִּדְ חַיֵּב לְקָרֵעַ עַל רַבּוֹ שֶׁלְמַדּוֹ תוֹרָה, וְעַל הַנְּשִׂיאַ, וְעַל אֵב בֵּית דִּין, וְעַל רֵב הַצְּבוּר שְׁנֵהֲרַג, וְעַל בְּרֶכֶת הַשָּׁם, וְעַל סֵפֶר תוֹרָה שְׁנִשְׂרַף, וְעַל עָרֵי יְהוּדָה, וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, וְעַל הַמְּקֻדָּשׁ.

Just as one must tear for one's father and mother, so one is obliged to tear for one's teacher who taught him Torah, for the patriarch of the community and for the chief of the court; for a large part of the community that has been slain and for the cursing of God's name; for the burning of a Torah scroll and when seeing the cities of Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple in ruins. (Hilchot Evel 9:2)



וּכְשֶׁם שֶׁהַמוֹכֵר אֲסוּר לְאַחֲזוֹתוֹ, כִּדְ הַלוֹקַח. לְפִיכֵךְ, הַמוֹכֵר צָרִיךְ לְהוֹדִיעַ לְלוֹקַח שֶׁקָּרֵעַ זֶה אִינוּ מְתַאַחָה.

Just as the seller may not repair it, so the purchaser may not repair it. Therefore, the seller is obliged to inform the purchaser that this tear may not be repaired. (Hilchot Evel 9:4)



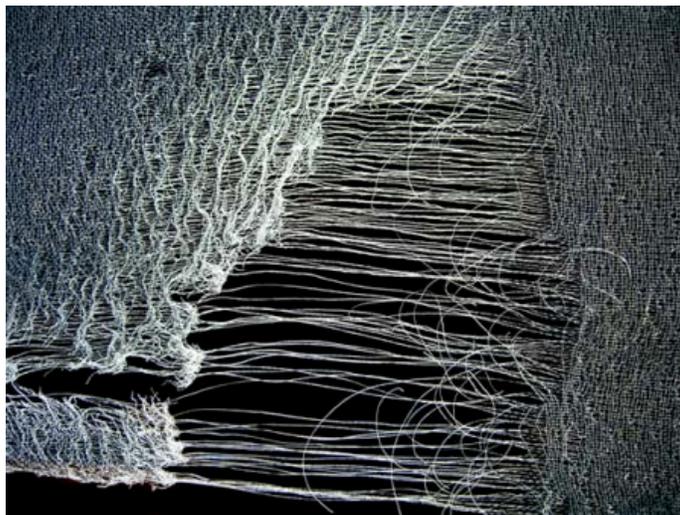
כָּל מִי שֶׁעִמַּד עִם הַמֵּת בְּשַׁעַת יְצִיאַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ, אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂאִינוּ קְרוֹבּוֹ, חַיֵּב לְקָרֵעַ.

Anyone who is present at the moment that someone dies, even if he is not a relative, must tear his garment... (Hilchot Evel 9:11)

## Tearing: A Human Response Or A Jewish Response To Loss?

ריש לקיש אָמר: אַיוב לאַ הָיָה וְלֹא נִהְיָה, מִחֲלָפָה שְׁטַתָּה דְרִישׁ לְקִישׁ, דְּתַמֵּן אָמַר רִישׁ לְקִישׁ בְּשֵׁם בַּר קַפְרָא: בְּיָמֵי אַבְרָהָם הָיָה, וְהָכָא אָמַר: אַיוב לאַ הָיָה וְלֹא נִהְיָה? מַאי לֹא הָיָה וְלֹא נִהְיָה? בְּיַסּוּרִים שְׁנִכְתְּבוּ עָלָיו, אֲלָא שְׂאֵלוּ בָּאוּ עָלָיו הָיָה יָכוֹל לַעֲמֹד בְּהֵן. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: מַעוּלָה הַגּוֹלָה הָיָה וַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִי הָיָה וַיִּמְדַּרְשׁוּ בְּטַבְרָיָה, לְפִיכָךְ הָיוּ לְמִדִּים מִמֶּנּוּ קָרִיעָה וַבְּרַפְתָּ אַבְלִים, הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב: "וַיִּקֶּם אַיּוֹב וַיִּקְרַע אֶת מְעָלוֹ" (איוב א:כ). מִכָּאן שְׁצָרִיךְ אָדָם לְקַרְעַ מַעוּמֵד. רַבִּי חֲנִינָא אָמַר: עוֹבֵד כּוֹכְבִים הָיָה - תַּנִּי רַבִּי חִיָּיא: עוֹבֵד כּוֹכְבִים צָדִיק אַחַד עָמַד לִי בְּאַמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם. וְנִתְתִּי לוֹ שְׁכָרוֹ וּפְטָרְתִּיו, וְאַיִזָּה זֶה זֶה אַיּוֹב.

Resh Lakish said: Job never was and never will be. But this contradicts the known perspective of Resh Lakish who taught in another place in the name of Bar Kapparah that Job lived in the time of Abraham. But here he says that Job never was and never will be?! By never was and never will be he refers to the afflictions written about him. And why were they written about him? It was so that if they ever came upon him he would be able to withstand them. Rabbi Yohanan said: Job was among those who came up from the diaspora and he was an Israelite whose teaching was centered in Tiberias. There they would learn from him about tearing and about the mourners' blessing. As it is written: *Job arose and tore his cloak* (Job 1:20). From here we learn that one must tear while standing. Rabbi Haninah said: Job was an idolator. This from the teaching of Rabbi Hiyya: One righteous idolator stood out to me from among the nations of the world; I gave him his reward and pardon. And who was this? It was Job. (Genesis Rabbah 57:4)



## Tears of Compassion, Tears of Finality

ההוא יומא דנח נפשיה דרבי גזרו רבנו תעניתא, ובעו רחמי, ואמרי: כל מאן דאמר "נח נפשיה דרבי" -- ידקר בחרב. סליקא אמתיה דרבי לאיגרא, ואמרה: עליונים מבקשין את רבי, והתחתונים מבקשין את רבי. יהי רצון שיכופו תחתונים את העליונים. כיון דחזאי כמה זמני דעייל לבית הפסא, וחלץ תפילין, ומנח להו, וקמצטער, אמרה: יהי רצון שיכופו עליונים את התחתונים. ולא הווי שתקי רבנו מלמיבעי רחמי. שקלה כוזא שדייא מאיגרא [לארעא], אשתקו מרחמי, ונח נפשיה דרבי. אמרו ליה רבנו לבר קפרא: זיל עיין. אזל, אשפחיה דנח נפשיה. קרעיה ללבושיה, ואהדריה לקרעיה לאחוריה. פתח ואמר: אראלים ומצוקים אהזו בארון הקדש נצחו אראלים את המצוקים, ונשבה ארון הקדש. אמרו ליה: נח נפשיה? אמר להו: אתון קאמריתו, ואנא לא קאמינא.

בשעת פטירתו של רבי זקף עשר אצבעותיו כלפי מעלה ואמר: רבונו של עולם גלוי וידוע לפניך שיגעתי בעשר אצבעותי בתורה, ולא נהניתי אפילו באצבע קטנה. יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא שלום במנוחתך

On the day that Rabbi [Judah, the Patriarch] died, the Rabbis decreed a fast and they prayed. They said: Let anyone who says, Rabbi has died, be skewered on a sword. His maidservant went up to the roof and said: The heavenly ones desire Rabbi and the earthly ones desire Rabbi. May it be God's will that the earthly ones prevail over the heavenly. When she saw how many times he had to get up to go to the toilet, painfully removing and then rewinding his phylacteries, she said: May it be God's will that the heavenly ones overcome the earthly ones. Now, the Rabbis never ceased their praying. She took a pitcher and threw it from the roof. They ceased praying and Rabbi died.

The Rabbis said to Bar Kapparah: Go and investigate. He went and found that Rabbi had died. He tore his garment and turned the rip towards the back so that no one would see it. He began by saying: Angels and mortals have seized the Holy Ark and the angels have prevailed over the mortals; the Holy Ark has been captured. They said to him: He has died? He said to them: You are the ones who have said it; I have not said it.

At the moment that he was about to die, Rabbi spread out his ten fingers towards the sky and said: Master of the world, it is well known to you that I labored in Torah with all of my ten fingers but didn't make a profit from even the work of my little finger. May it be your will that there be peacefulness in my rest. (Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 104a)



## Tearing

הִיָּתָה זֹו קְרִיעָה מְפִיָּסָת  
כְּקְרִיעָה הַמְפִּיָּסָת שֶׁל בֵּין-הָעֶרְבִים  
כְּשֶׁהִשְׁתִּי וְהָעֶרֶב מְפָרְדִים לְכָדִי רָגַע  
כְּדִי שְׁתֵּתֶקִים מְשִׁיכָתָם  
הִיָּתָה זֹו קְרִיעָה מְפִיָּסָת  
כְּקְרִיעָה שְׁנִקְרָעוֹת שְׁמוֹרוֹת הָעֵינַיִם  
בְּבֹקֶר

כְּשֶׁהִשְׁנָה נִמּוֹגָה וְהֶהָקִיץ טָרַם קָם וְהָיָה לְבְרָאשִׁית.

This was a peaceful tearing  
like the peaceful tearing of twilight  
when the warp and woof are parted for an instant  
so that their continuing can take place  
that was a peaceful tearing  
like the tearing that parts the eyelids  
in the morning  
when sleep dissolves before wakefulness rises to a new beginning.

Rivka Miriam  
Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager



## Invisible Mending

Three women old as angels,  
bent as ancient apple trees,  
who, in a storefront window,  
with magnifying glasses,  
needles fine as hair, and shining  
scissors, parted woof from warp  
and pruned what would in  
human tissue have been sick.

Abrasions, rents and frays,  
slits and chars and acid  
splashes, filaments that gav  
way of their own accord  
from the stress of spanning  
tiny, trifling gaps, but which  
in a wounded psyche  
make a murderous maze.

Their hands as hard as horn,  
their eyes as keen as steel,  
the threads they worked with  
must have seemed as thick  
as ropes on ships, as cables  
on a crane, but still their heads  
would lower, their teeth bare  
to nip away the raveled ends.

Only sometimes would they  
lift their eyes to yours to show  
how much lovelier than these twists  
of silk and serge the garments  
of the mind are, yet how much  
more benign their implements  
than mind's procedures  
of forgiveness and repair.

And in your loneliness you'd notice  
how really very gently they'd take  
the fabric to its last, with what  
solicitude gather up worn edges  
to be bound, with what severe  
but kind detachment wield  
their amputating shears:  
forgiveness, and repair.



Poem by C.K Williams  
Photo by Rabbi Steven Sager