

Memory: The Past Breaks Through Into the Future

a prologue to the High Holidays and its season of Yizkor/Remembering

And Every Person is a Dam

וְכָל אָדָם הוּא סָכָר בֵּין עֶבֶר לְעֵתִיד.
כְּשֶׁהוּא מֵת נִשְׁבֵּר הַסָּכָר וְהָעֶבֶר מִתְפָּרֵץ לְתוֹךְ הָעֵתִיד
וְאִין מִקֵּדָם וְאִין מֵאַחֵר. וְהַזְמַן הוּא אֶחָד
כְּמוֹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, זְמַנְנוּ אֶחָד.
וְזָכַר הַסָּכָר לְבִרְכָה.

And every person is a dam between past and future.

When he dies the dam is broken and the past breaks through into the future

And there is no early or late. Time is one

Like our God, our time is one.

And the memory of the dam is a blessing.

And Who Will Remember

וּמִי יִזְכֹּר? וּבְמָה מְשֻׁמְרִים זְכָרוֹן? בְּמָה מְשֻׁמְרִים בְּכֹלל בְּעוֹלָם,
מְשֻׁמְרִים בְּמַלַּח וּבְסָכָר, בְּחַס גְּבֵה וּבְהַקְפָּאָה עִמְקָה
בְּאַטְיָמָה מְחֻלָּטָה, בְּיָבוּשׁ וּבְחֻנִּיטָה.
אָבֵל שְׁמוֹר הַזְכָּרוֹן הַטוֹב בְּיוֹתֵר הוּא
לְשֻׁמְרוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הַשְׂכָּחָה שְׂאֵף זְכִירָה אַחַת
לֹא תוֹכֵל לְעוֹלָם לְחִדֹּר לְתוֹכָהּ וּלְהַפְרִיעַ אֶת מְנוּחַת הַנְּצַח שֶׁל הַזְכָּרוֹן.

And who will remember? And by what means do we preserve memory? How do we preserve anything in the world?

We preserve with salt and sugar, high heat and deep freeze

With vacuum seal, with drying and embalming.

But the best way of preserving memory is

To protect it within forgetting so that even a single recollection

Will be unable to penetrate and disturb the eternal rest of the memory.

Yehuda Amichai, Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

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