

יום כיפור, ערב, אבי

אָבי בָּרַךְ אוֹתִי וְיָדְיוֹ רָעְדוּ.
(נחם מבגרים לילדים הוא של רעד.)

בְּעֵינָיו
הִשְׁתַּקְּפוּ כָּל חֲטָאֵי בְּעֵתִיד.

שִׁחְקֵנוּ עֲקֹדַת אֲבֵרָהּם וַיִּצְחָק.

מוֹתוֹ הַמְּקַדֵּם הִיא הַמַּאֲכָלָת
הַמּוֹרֶמֶת מֵעָלִי. מְרַחֶפֶת תָּמִיד.



מָה שֶׁאֲנִי חוֹשֵׁב לְגֵרֵחַ
אוֹ לְאִוִּירוֹן אוֹ לִפְנֵי אֶהוֹבְתִי
אֵינָהּ אֵלָא הַמַּאֲכָלָת
שֶׁל מִשְׁחָק אָבִי וְשָׁלִי.
אֶף אֶחָד לֹא יָדַע
שֶׁזֶה מִשְׁחָק.
(אֶפִּילוֹ אֱלֹהִים לֹא.)

Yom Kippur, Evening, My Father

My father blessed me and his hands trembled.
(Grownups always tremble regarding children.)

In his eyes
were reflected all my future sins.

We played the binding of Abraham and Isaac.

His premature death is the cleaver
raised above me. Always hovering.

What I think is the moon
or an airplane or my beloved's face
is just the cleaver
of my father's and my game.
No one will know it's a game.
(Even God won't.)

Poem: Yehuda Amichai

Translation: Jonathan Paradise 5/25/93

COMMENTS

his hands trembled וְיָדָיו רָעְדוּ Presumably, his father placed his hands on the poet's head as is customary when blessing the children. The practice is based on the account in Genesis 48:20, when Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons.

וַיְבָרֶכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּדָ וּבְרָךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה. . .

binding of Abraham and Isaac שְׁחִקְנוּ עֲקֻדַּת אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק. What is worth noting is that the account of the binding of **Isaac** in Genesis 22—usually referred to as **עֲקֻדַּת יִצְחָק** is here called the *binding of Abraham and Isaac*. Thus both father and son are potential sacrificial victims.

cleaver הַמֵּאֲכִילָת i.e. a butcher's knife. This is the word used in the Genesis account.