

## From Mourning to Meaning:

### Working our way from Yom HaZikaron to Yom HaAtzmaut

Rachel Sharansky Danziger \* 29/4/2025 \* Silence and Song: Prayers and Torah for Israel's National Holidays #1

#### 1: Joy and loss

##### Leviticus 9:22-24

(22) Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. (23) Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of ה' appeared to all the people. (24) Fire came forth from before ה' and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces.

##### Leviticus 10:1-4

(1) Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before ה' alien fire, which had not been enjoined upon them. (2) And fire came forth from ה' and consumed them; thus they died before hashem (3) Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what ה' meant by saying: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, And gain glory before all the people." And Aaron was silent. (4) Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp."

##### ויקרא ט':כ"ב-כ"ד

(כב) וַיִּשָּׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדָיו אֶל־הָעָם וַיְבָרֶכֶם וַיִּרְדּוּ מִעֲשֵׂת הַחַטָּאת וְהָעֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלֵמִים: (כג) וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיָּצֵאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד־ה' אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם: (כד) וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלִיבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּרְגְּזוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם:

##### ויקרא י':א'-ד'

(א) וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֵשׁ מִחֻמָּתָם וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם: (ב) וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה': (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶפְבֹּד וַיָּדַם אֶת־הָרֹץ: (ד) וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־מִישָׁאֵל וְאֶל־עֶלְזָפָן בְּנֵי עֻזִּיאֵל דֹּד אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קִוּוּ שָׂאוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם מִמָּוֶת פְּנֵי־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה:

#### 2: On the edge of independence

Shoshana Lenchner Tennenboim  
Kfar Etzion, February 7th 1948

It is impossible for me to write details about the Lamed-Heh disaster. The fact is that it was a severe blow to Gush Etzion. The number of casualties has already reached 52. May God grant that this will be the end of it, and that the sacrifices the Yishuv has made so far will be enough, and that peace will reign in the land. Despite everything, we are not losing heart. We are strong, and we feel that we are doing our part. May God grant that we hold on and reach a brighter and better tomorrow... There is only one thing that strengthens all members of the Jewish people in our difficult situation, and that is the faith that we will get through this hard time. We should be proud that it is our fate to live in such a fateful time for our people, when the destiny of the Jewish people — to be or not to be — is being decided. Indeed, this is a very difficult period, requiring many sacrifices, but it is known that a nation cannot be built and revived with ideas and romanticism alone. Deeds are required! That is why I feel well, because I am participating, to the best of my ability, in this great endeavor. With God's help, we will get through this difficult time, peace will prevail, and then we can continue our normal lives.

שושנה לנצ'נר-טננבוים  
כפר עציון, 7.2.1948  
לכתוב פרטים על אסון הל"ה אי אפשר לי. עובדה היא כי זו הייתה מכה קשה לגוש עציון. מספר הקורבנות כבר הגיע ל-52. יתן השם ויגמר בזה, ויספיקו הקורבנות שהישוב הקריב עד כו וישרור שלום בארץ. על אף הכל אין אנו נופלים ברוחנו. הננו חזקים ואנו מרגישים כי אנו תורמים את חלקנו. יתן השם ונחזיק מעמד ונגיע למחר מאיר ויותר טוב... יש רק דבר אחד המחזק את כל בני העם היהודי במצבנו הקשה, וזוהי האמונה שנעבור את התקופה הקשה הזו. עלינו להיות גאים שבגורלנו נפל לחיות בתקופה כה גורלית לעמנו, כאשר מוכרע גורלו של העם היהודי להיות או לחדול. אומנם זוהי תקופה קשה עד מאוד, הדורשת קורבנות רבים, אך ידוע שלבנות ולקומם עם אי אפשר רק באידאה, ברומנטיקה בלבד. דרוש מעשה! --- ולכן הנני מרגישה את עצמי בטוב, שכן אני משתתפת כפי יכולתי במפעל הזה. בעזרת האל נעבור את הזמן הקשה, שלום ישרור ואז נוכל להמשיך בחיינו הרגילים.

### 3: Strange fire

#### Emily Dickinson/Complete Poems

Part One: Life  
LXXIX

I YEARS had been from home,  
And now, before the door,  
I dared not open, lest a face  
I never saw before

Stare vacant into mine  
And ask my business there.  
My business,—just a life I left,  
Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve,  
I scanned the windows near;  
The silence like an ocean rolled,  
And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh  
That I could fear a door,  
Who danger and the dead had  
faced,  
But never quaked before.

I fitted to the latch  
My hand, with trembling care,  
Lest back the awful door should  
spring,  
And leave me standing there.

I moved my fingers off  
As cautiously as glass,  
And held my ears, and like a  
thief  
Fled gasping from the house.

### 4: Comfort and silence

#### Vayikra Rabbah 12:2

Rabbi Yitzhak began: "Your words were revealed, and I consumed them; Your words were gladness for me and the joy of my heart because Your name was called upon me, Lord, God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: This statement was said to Moses at Sinai, but its [meaning] was not known to him until he encountered the incident. Moses said to Aaron: 'My brother, it was stated to me at Sinai that I [God] am destined to sanctify this House, and it is with a great man that I will sanctify it. I believed that perhaps it was through [the death of] either you or me that this House would be sanctified. Now, [it is clear that] your two sons are greater than me and you.' When Aaron heard that his sons were God-fearing, he was silent, and he was rewarded for his silence. From where is it derived that he was silent? "Aaron was silent" (Leviticus 10:3). From where is it derived that he was rewarded for his silence? It is because he was privileged and the divine speech was directed to him alone, as it is stated: "The Lord spoke to Aaron."

#### ויקרא רבה י"ב:ב'

רבי יצחק פתח (ירמיה טו, טז): נמצאו דבריה ואכלם ויהי דבריה לי לשון וילשמת לבבי כי נקרא שמך עלי ה' אלהי צבאות, אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמן זה הדבור נאמר למשה בסיני, ולא נודע לו עד שבא מעשה לידו. אמר משה לאהרן, אחי, בסיני נאמר לי שאני עתיד לקדש את הבית הזה, ובאדם גדול אני מקדשו, והייתי סבור שמא או בי או בך הבית הזה מתקדש, ועכשיו שני בניה גדולים ממני ומך. כיון ששמע אהרן שבניו יראי שמים הן, שמת וקבל שכר על שתיקתו, ומנין ששמת, שנאמר (ויקרא י, ג): וידם אהרן, ומנין שקבל שכר על שתיקתו, שנאמר ונתת אליו הדבור, שנאמר: וידבר ה' אל אהרן.

#### מדרש אגדה, בראשית כ"ה:כ"ט:א'

ויזד יעקב נזיד. שאותו יום שמת אברהם היה יעקב מבשל תבשיל של עדשים, כדי להאכיל ליצחק אביו. ולמה מאכילין לאבל עדשים, מיכן שאסור לאבל לדבר, מה עדשים אין להם פה, כך אבל אסור לדבר, שנאמר וידום אהרן (ויקרא י, ג). ד"א מה עדשים מגולגלים הם, אף מיתה גלגל היא שחזור בעולם:

#### Tzvi Hershi Greenberger – "Testament":

"And if I die on the battlefield, in the alleys of a city, or if in the mountains death finds me—  
Do not eulogize me, do not shed a tear from your eyes!  
Silently, unseen, carry me to the Mount of Olives.  
Lay clod upon clod over me,  
And when the deed is done and the stone is sealed,  
Return to your work,  
And be silent—be silent."

#### צבי הרשי גרינברגר,

"צוואה" (24.5.1948)

ובמותי בשדה הקרב, בין סימטאות עיר, או אם בהרים המוות ימצאני, אל תספידוני, דמעה מעיניכם אל תזילו! בחשאי, באין רואה, העבירוני להר הזיתים ורגב אחר רגב על גבי הפילו וכתום המעשה והגולל ייסתם, שובו לעבודתכם והחרישו - החרישו.

## 5: Stability and unity

### **Rabbi Jonathan sacks, “Leviticus: The Democratization of Holiness”, 11:**

The making of the Golden Calf was a mistake, a sin. But the crisis that led to it was real and enduring. What would become of the people in the absence of Moses or someone like him? How could the nation take the risk of depending entirely on God when God was so distant, overpowering, and unpredictable? That is when God gave the answer that led to the forty-chapter digression in the story of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.... “Let them make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst”. This is the start of an entirely new relationship between God and the people...God was about to become not just the force that moves the stars and changes the course of history, but also the one who is close... (11)

### **Rashi on Numbers 20:29**

ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL — all: both men and women, because Aaron used to pursue peace and promoted love between contending parties, and between man and wife (cf. The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan 12).

## 6: Words to bind us

### **David Ben Gurion, Tu Bishvat 1949:**

"We planted a forest and will plant many forests to fulfill the wishes and desires of the fighters who gave their lives for the liberation of their homeland, its prosperity and building, so that all of Israel, from all its places of exile, could return and be reestablished in its country, and live in it lives of freedom and prosperity. But not in the forests that we plant and not in the stone monuments that we build will the memory of the heroes who fell for the salvation of their people and their homeland be enshrined and preserved, but in the heart of the Jewish people, in the heart of all Israel, in our generation and throughout the ages, is where the memory of the heroes who dared and succeeded will be."

## 7. Looking forward

<p><b>Soon in Our Days</b>  <b>Senai Guedalia with</b>  <b>Shira Lankin Sheps</b></p> <p><i>This prayer is לעילוי נשמת</i>  <i>Yosef Malachi Guedalia</i>  <i>Hy”d among all the soldiers</i>  <i>who rose up to the כיסא הכבוד,</i>  <i>the heavenly throne, on</i>  <i>Simchat Torah, the first day</i>  <i>of the Swords of Iron war.</i></p> <p>Dear God,  אבא שבשמים,  (To our Father in Heaven)  Let our pain transform into  purpose  Perhaps we don't know all  the answers.</p>	<p>Please let us be content and  happy  in our surrender to Your  almighty power.</p> <p><i>Hashem,</i> we are in Your  hands.  Thank you, God, for the gift  of life,  for all the good You have  blessed us with  and the souls You have given  us and connected us with.</p> <p>Blessed with the privilege of  being conduits for Your  expression and will  for opening our eyes to see  Your beauty,  opening our lips to speak  Your praises,  and opening our hands to  receive Your שפע  (abundance).</p>	<p>Please, God, continue to  allow us to live in Your  land.  Send Your <i>Shechinah</i> to  settle among us.  Let us live the realization  of Your prophecies,  And bring to life Your  Holy Land.</p> <p>May the crops continue  to grow  May the farmers live in  peace to farm them.  May the markets thrive,  May every house have  what they need.</p> <p>May the brides and  grooms circle each other,  Under Your <i>sukkat</i>  <i>shelomekha</i>,  (Your sukkah of peace).  May the children learn,  With love in their hearts.</p>	<p>Protect our soldiers  and their families  in their endless  dedication to You  and the land You have  given us.</p> <p>May You sit with the  mourners of Zion,  May You heal the  brokenhearted,  May You lift up Your  people,  May we feel Your  presence in our every  moment.</p> <p>Please, God, in complete  faith, let the גאולה שלמה -  - the complete  redemption -- come soon  in our days.</p>
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## **8: A Twilight Prayer (towards Hallel)**

**Yael Sukenik**

Our God, God of our fathers. Of Avraham and Yitzchak and Yaakov  
 God of our fathers who dwelled in Israel and Babylon and Rome, in Egypt and Morocco,  
 in Provence and Poland, who scattered us across all of the lands of the world.  
 Our God and God of our mothers, of Sarah and Rivka, Rachel and Leah  
 God of our mothers who dwelled in slavery and in exile and in salvation, in the golden ages and the  
 holocausts, in our land and across the world.  
 We stand before You in our land and with our land, tonight, among our people,  
 Hear my voice, God who gives heed to the voices that come before You.  
 In this year of 5785, in this place in the cycles of years between exile and redemption and the liminal  
 space Your people sit now,  
 We tore our clothes and sat among our graves.  
 We come before You bereft  
 We tore our clothes and sat among our graves, our graves our everywhere -- a stream in our  
 consciousness and our feeds of the faces of our fallen  
 The rivers of Babylon where we wept are our rivers of tears that follow us haunted by those missing  
 in our cities, the faces of all those we have lost, the tears we stop to shed and the tears behind our eyes.  
 We call out from our depths with our voices and our tears.  
 Every year, we come before You to mourn our dead.  
 This year, we come before You, our hands empty  
 Our Father, our King, we stand for the sake of those we lost  
 our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, our children who fell living as Your people,  
 defending Your people -- who died in Your name.  
 God of the fallen of wars and of cafes and buses and farms, of the fields of war and the fields of dance  
 and the fields of families,  
 of those who fell with guns in their hands and those who fell with babies in their arms.  
 We cry out for them -- that their blood be avenged, that their memory be a blessing.  
 We implore You even as You care for their souls that You guide us in the care of their memories and  
 their families, in the care of their people and the land that they loved.  
 In their names, we ask our salvation, the salvation of the people who remember our covenant with our  
 dead, as we remember our fathers' covenant with You.  
 In their names, we ask You to answer us.

In their names, we ask for the courage to live in this moment You gave us,  
 the moment of joy at everything we have yet to lose.  
 Our God who separates light from darkness and darkness from light,  
 night falls and we move from mourning to the joy we still carry in our broken hearts.  
 Answer us, God of our fathers, of our mothers,  
 Answer us in these moments of twilights.  
 We stand before You tonight in and with our land, among and with our people.  
 God of the land of Israel, of the people Israel,  
 God of time -- who made the seventh day holy and ordered the months with times of joy.  
 Who taught Your people, our sages, our leaders to do the same, according to Your patterns of time and history.  
 Give us the courage to celebrate the land beneath our feet, even as we fight to remain.  
 Give us the joy to celebrate the children in our arms without forgetting the emptiness we still embrace of everything we have lost.  
 Grant us the presence to remember to take nothing for granted.  
 May the people You have commanded to complete Your praise not be forgotten.  
 Halleluya, we sing  
 Halleluya, from the setting of this sun until its rising -- may You who gave us our children remember us and them.  
 May we lift our cups in salvation, for today we are here, and we believe we must, that You forget us not in freedom and not in chains.  
 God whose kindness is forever, the nations surround us as ever. Perhaps we forgot that, but today we do not forget. You answered us, we who read these words are free.  
 We beseech You that we all be free.  
 Let us live, let us proclaim You, Let us proclaim Your righteousness that we seek to emulate.  
 Let us remind the nations blinded by hate and deceit that the nation of Israel is created in the name of our just and righteous God.  
 This is the day You made -- may our clouded joy well up in the miracle of Your presence in our lives and the lives of Your people on Your land.  
 Hoshiyah Na – save us, for we know You are with us.  
 You are forever. And we, Your people, rise up to sing Your praise -- the praise we sing in life.  
 The nation of Israel lives.  
 May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, our cries of joy and of despair, the movements of our dance and our arms in embrace and our tears shed in pain and in joy,  
 May they be acceptable to You, God, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel.

