

My Father Was God

אָבִי הָיָה אֱלֹהִים וְלֹא יָדַע. הוּא נָתַן לִי
אֶת עֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת לֹא בְרָעַם וְלֹא בְזַעַם, לֹא בְּאֵשׁ וְלֹא בְּעָנָן
אֲלָא בְּרַכּוּת וּבְאַהֲבָה. וְהוֹסִיף לְטוֹפִים וְהוֹסִיף מְלִים טוֹבוֹת,
וְהוֹסִיף "אֲנֵא" וְהוֹסִיף "בְּבִקְשָׁה". וְזָמַר זְכוֹר וְשָׁמֹר
בְּגִיטָּה אֶחָד וְהִתְחַנֵּן וּבְכָה בְּשִׁקֵּט בֵּין דָּבָר לְדָבָר,
לֹא תִשָּׂא שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹא, לֹא תִשָּׂא, לֹא לְשׁוֹא,
אֲנֵא, אֵל תַּעֲנֶה בְּרַעַד עַד שֶׁקָּר. וְחִבֵּק אוֹתִי חֲזָק וְלַחֵשׁ בְּאָזְנִי,
לֹא תִגְנוֹב, לֹא תִנָּאֵף, לֹא תִרְצַח. וְשֵׁם אֶת כַּפּוֹת יָדָיו הִפְתּוּחוֹת
עַל רֹאשִׁי בְּבִרְכַּת יוֹם כְּפוּר. כִּפֵּד, אָהֵב, לְמַעַן יֵאָרִיכוֹן יָמֶיךָ
עַל הָאָדָמָה. וְקוֹל אָבִי לָבָן כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָר רֹאשׁוֹ.
אַחֲרֵי-כֵן הִכְנָה אֶת פָּנָיו אֵלַי בַּפֶּעַם הָאַחֲרוֹנָה
כְּמוֹ בַּיּוֹם שֶׁבּוֹ מֵת בְּזִרְעוֹתַי וְאָמַר: אֲנִי רוֹצֶה לְהוֹסִיף
שְׁנַיִם לַעֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת:
הַדָּבָר הָאֶחָד-עֶשֶׂר, "לֹא תִשָּׁתַּנֶּה"
וְהַדָּבָר הַשְּׁנַיִם-עֶשֶׂר, "הִשָּׁתַּנֶּה תִשָּׁתַּנֶּה"
כֵּן אָמַר אָבִי וּפְנָה מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּךְ
וְנִעְלַם בְּמִרְחָקוֹ הַמוֹזָרִים.

My father was God and didn't know it. He gave me
the ten commandments neither in thunder nor in fury, neither in fire nor in cloud
but in gentleness and in love. He added caresses and added kind words
adding, "I beg you," and "please." He sang *keep* and *remember*
in a single melody and he pleaded and cried quietly between one commandment and the next:
Don't take your God's name in vain; don't take it, not in vain.
I beg you, *don't bear false witness against your neighbor*. He hugged me tightly and whispered
in my ear:
Don't steal. Don't commit adultery. Don't murder. And he put the palms of his open hands
on my head in the Yom Kippur blessing. *Honor, love, in order that your days might be long*
on the earth. And my father's voice was white like the hair on his head.
Later, he turned his face to me one last time
like on the day he died in my arms and said, I want to add
two to the ten commandments:
The eleventh commandment: Don't change.
And the twelfth commandment: You must surely change.
So said my father and then he turned from me and went off
disappearing into his strange distances.

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