

My Father Was God

אָבִי הָיָה אֱלֹהִים וְלֹא יָדַע. הוּא נָתַן לִי
אֶת עֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת לֹא בְרַעַם וְלֹא בְזַעַם, לֹא בְאֵשׁ וְלֹא בְעָנָן,
אֶלָּא בְרִכּוּת וּבְאַהֲבָה. וְהוֹסִיף לְטוֹפִים וְהוֹסִיף מְלִים טוֹבוֹת,
וְהוֹסִיף "אֲנֵא" וְהוֹסִיף "בְּבִקְשָׁה." וְזָמַר זְכוֹר וְשָׁמֹר
בְּנִגּוּן אֶחָד וְהִתְחַנֵּן וּבְכָה בְשִׁקֵּט בֵּין דְּבַר לְדְבַר,
לֹא תִשָּׂא שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא, לֹא תִשָּׂא, לֹא לְשׁוּא,
אֲנֵא, אֵל תַּעֲנֶה בְרַעַף עַד שִׁקֵּר. וְחִבַּק אוֹתִי חֲזָק וְלַחֵשׁ בְּאָזְנִי,
לֹא תִגְנוֹב, לֹא תִנְאַף, לֹא תִרְצַח. וְשָׂם אֶת כַּפּוֹת יָדָיו הַפְּתוּחוֹת
עַל רֹאשִׁי בְּבִרְכַּת יוֹם כְּפוּר. כִּבֵּד, אָהֵב, לְמַעַן יֵאָרִיכוֹן יָמֶיךָ
עַל הָאָדָמָה. וְקוֹל אָבִי לָבָן כְּמוֹ שֶׁעַר רֹאשׁוֹ.
אַחַר-כֵּן הִפְנֶה אֶת פְּנֵיו אֵלַי בַּפֶּעַם הָאַחֲרוֹנָה
כְּמוֹ בַּיּוֹם שֶׁבּוֹ מֵת בְּזוֹרְעוֹתַי וְאָמַר: אֲנִי רוֹצֶה לְהוֹסִיף
שְׁנַיִם לְעֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת:
הַדְּבַר הָאֶחָד-עֶשֶׂר, "לֹא תִשְׁתַּנֶּה"
וְהַדְּבַר הַשְּׁנַיִם-עֶשֶׂר, "הִשְׁתַּנֶּה תִשְׁתַּנֶּה"
כֵּן אָמַר אָבִי וּפְנֶה מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּךְ
וְנִעְלַם בְּמַרְחָקָיו הַמּוֹזָרִים.

My father was God and did not 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 with 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.
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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