

Yom Kippur: Empty Chairs at Empty Tables

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Bavli Bava Kamma 55a	
<p>ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: הוֹאָה הַסֵּפֶד בְּחִלּוּמוֹ – חֲסִיד עָלִיו מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּפְדָאוּהוּ...</p>	<p>And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: If one sees a eulogy [<i>hesped</i>] in his dream, it is an allusion that in Heaven they had pity [<i>hasu</i>] on him and saved him [<i>peda'uhu</i>] from actually being eulogized...</p>

1. Don't Wait for Teshuvah- You May Not Have the Time

Devarim 10:12	
<p>וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁאֵל מֵעַמּוֹ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-דַּרְכָּיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וּלְעַבְדוֹ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ:</p>	<p>And now, O Israel, what does the ETERNAL your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the ETERNAL your God, to walk only in divine paths, to love and to serve the ETERNAL your God with all your heart and soul.</p>

Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 21:6	
<p>וְעַתָּה פֶּן יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ (בראשית ג, כב), אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָא בַר כְּהֵנָא מִלְמַד שְׁפַתְחָ לֹא הִקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא פָתַח שֵׁל תְּשׁוּבָה, וְעַתָּה, אֵין וְעַתָּה אֵלָא תְּשׁוּבָה, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (דברים י, יב): וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְגו'...</p>	<p>And now, he might extend his hand" – Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: This teaches that the Holy One blessed be He opened for him an opportunity for repentance. "And now" – "and now" is nothing other than teshuvah, as it is stated: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God [ask of you?] (Devarim 10:12).</p>

Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen of Radomsk, <i>Tiferet Shlomo</i> , Parashat Vayigash	
<p>"ועתה אל תעצבו וגו' (וגומר)". הנה "ועתה" הוא לשון תשובה. לכן אמר: "אעפ"י (אף על פי) שאתם צריכין לשוב בתשובה על המעשה הזה אשר עשיתם, אך אל תעצבו! לא בעצבות הוא דרכי התשובה. כי התשובה היא מצות עשה מן התורה, וצריך לעשותה בשמחה, כמו שכתוב 'עבדו את ה' בשמחה'" (בתפלת שחרית, תהילים מזמור ק'). ולכן, "ועתה" הוא לשון תשובה. כי הבע"ת (הבעל תשובה) צריך לומר "מעתה הנני שב; הנני חוזר בתשובה, ולא אשוב לכסלה עוד! רק עתה אהיה, ברוך ה', מהיום והלאה."</p>	<p>"Now, do not be sad [or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you]" (Bereishit 45:5). We know that the word "and now (<i>v'atah</i>)" signifies teshuvah (Bereishit Rabbah 21:6). That is why Joseph said to his brothers: "Even though you still have to do teshuvah for what you did to me, do not be sad. Sadness is not the way to teshuvah! Since teshuvah is a positive commandment in the Torah, we are required to perform it with gladness, as it says, 'Serve YHVH with gladness' (Tehilim 100:1)." From this, we learn that "and now" signifies teshuvah, since those who seek to turn their life around in self-transformation must say, "From now I am turning myself around. I am returning in teshuvah, and I will not return to foolishness again. Only from now 'I will be (eheyeh),' thank God, from now on...."</p>

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

2. Messages to the Fallen

General Moshe Dayan, Eulogy- Ro'i Rotberg (1956)	
We will make our reckoning with ourselves today; we are a generation that settles the land, and without the steel helmet and the canon's maw, we will not be able to plant a tree and build a home...This is the fate of our generation. This is our life's choice - to be prepared and armed, strong and determined, lest the sword be stricken from our fist and our lives cut down.	
Sergeant Rose Lubin z"l, Bat Mitzvah Speech	
There will be a time that I will not be existent in this world...So what do I do? I will do something great for the world, I won't wait for the world to do something great for me.... I will make every chapter in the book worth reading.	
Ghadir Hani, Eulogy for Vivian Silver z"l	
Vivian, My Beloved, if you could hear, I would want you to know: Hamas did not murder your vision.... You taught us the most important lesson: to be human, to see the other, the weak, the one whose voice is not heard.	
Rabbi Elchanan Dani on his son Ori Danino z"l	
You people on high have to stop dealing with nonsense and stirring up fights and disagreement. We don't deserve this land without unity. There will be no rebuilding without this land...Shut down your office for 10 minutes a day and think about where your Jewish values are. Shut it down, send everyone out, no phones. Spend time alone with your creator and think, where is God in your picture? Where are your Jewish values?	

3. Death Will Be Destroyed Forever

Bavli Bava Metzia 87a	
<p>כְּתִיב: "וְאָקַחְתָּ פֶת לֶחֶם", וְכִתִּיב: "וְאָל הַבֶּקֶר רֹץ אֲבָרְהָם", אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: מִכָּאן נִשְׁפָּדִיקִים אוֹמְרִים מַעַט יְעוֹשִׂים הַרְבֵּה, רִשְׁעִים אוֹמְרִים הַרְבֵּה, וְאֶפִּילוּ מַעַט אֵינָם עוֹשִׂים.</p>	<p>It is written: "And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and satisfy your heart" (Bereishit 18:5), and it is written: "And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good" (18:7). Rabbi Elazar said: From here we learn that the righteous say little and do much, whereas the wicked say much and do not do even a little.</p>
Isaiah 25:8	
<p>בִּלְע הַמָּוֶת לְנֶצַח וּמָחָה אֲדֹנָי יְהוֹה דִּמְעָה מֵעַל כָּל-פָּנִים וְחִרְפַּת עַמּוֹ יִסֹּר מֵעַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כִּי יְהוֹה דִּבֶּר:</p>	<p>Death will be destroyed forever. My Sovereign GOD will wipe the tears away from all faces. And will put an end to the reproach of God's people over all the earth— For it is GOD who has spoken.</p>
Marius, "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables," <i>Les Miserables</i>	
<p>Phantom faces at the window Phantom shadows on the floor Empty chairs at empty tables Where my friends will meet no more</p>	<p>Oh, my friends, my friends Don't ask me what your sacrifice was for Empty chairs at empty tables Where my friends will sing no more</p>