

A regular iambic pentameter and a somewhat rigid rime scheme (*aaba*) produce an overtone of weariness. The first words *ahén edd* ("truly I know") have a sighing quality.

(5) *And only that the sun has the scent of jasmine*, (6) *And only that the stone has the sound of a throbbing heart*, (7) *And only that the evening has the color of an orange*, (8) *And only that the*

sand has kissing lips. The rime has been abandoned but the meter remains strict. Each

line begins with *verák*, which has the literal force of "and only the fact that," and is followed by the preposition *la* ("to") joined to the second word. In a straightforward word-for-word translation, line 5 would read: "And only to the sun is there the scent of jasmine."

The *la* sounds that begin the second word in lines 5, 6, 7, 8 tie in with the *lo* sounds in 1, 2, 3. Note also that the first three of the words prefixed by *la* (5, 6, 7) have two *e* sounds, the first of which is stressed. This penultimate stress (*lašémeš*, *laéven*, *laérev*) plays against the normal last-syllable stress of most Hebrew words, to produce an emphatic impact. The force is felt especially in line 7, where two such penultimate stresses follow each other (*laérev tséva*).

(9) *How can I remember it [the day]*, anonymous [*and*] *vague*, (10) *How can I guard (preserve) its sudden grace*, (11) *How shall I believe that on one [this] day* (12) *Every flutter and scent was of my very essence [lit. bone of myself, a play on bone of my bone]*.

The third stanza has resumed the rime scheme of the first. And lines 9, 10, and 11

Yehuda Amichai

THE TWO OF US TOGETHER, EACH OF US ALONE

ŠNÉYNU BEYÁHAD VEĤÓL EĤÁD LEĤÚD · שְׁנֵינוּ בְּיַחַד וְכֹל אֶחָד לְחֹד

...שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּיַחַד וְכֹל אֶחָד לְחֹד...
(מתוך חזרה שכירות)

Šneyhém beyáhad veĥól eĥád leĥúd.

- | | |
|---|--|
| יְלִדָה שְׁלִי, עוֹד קִיץ עֶבֶר
וְאָבִי לֹא בָּא לְלוֹנָה-פָּרְק.
הַנְּדָנוֹת מוֹסִיפּוֹת לְנוֹד.
שְׁנֵינוּ בְּיַחַד וְכֹל אֶחָד לְחֹד. | 1 Yaldá šelí, od káyits avár
Veaví lo ba laľúna-park.
3 Hanadneydót mosifót lanúd.
Šnéynu beyáhad veĥól eĥád leĥúd. |
| אֶפֶק הַיָּם מְאֻבָּד סְפִינוֹתַי —
קָשָׁה לְשָׁמֵר עַל מִשְׁהוּ עֶכְשָׁו.
מְאַחֲרֵי הַהַר חֲפוּ הַלְּוַחְמִים.
כַּמָּה זְקוּקִים אָנוּ לְרַחֲמִים.
שְׁנֵינוּ בְּיַחַד וְכֹל אֶחָד לְחֹד. | Ófek hayám meabéd sfinotáv—
Kašé lišmór al mášehu aĥšáv.
7 Meaĥoréy hahár ĥikú haloĥamím.
Kamá zkukím ánu leraĥamím.
Šnéynu beyáhad veĥól eĥád leĥúd. |
| יֵרַח מְנַסֵּר אֶת הָעֵבִים לְשָׁנִים —
בּוֹאֵי וְנֹצֵא לְאַהֲבַת בְּיָנִים.
רַק שְׁנֵינוּ נֹאֲהֵב לְפָנֵי הַמְּחַנּוֹת.
אוֹלֵי אֶפְשָׁר עוֹד הַכֹּל לְשִׁנוֹת.
שְׁנֵינוּ בְּיַחַד וְכֹל אֶחָד לְחֹד. | 10 Yaréaĥ ^{sawing} menasér et heavím lišnýyim—
Bói venetsé leahavát beynáyim.
Rak šnéynu noháv lifnéy hamaĥanót.
13 Uláy eššár od hakól lešanót.
Šnéynu beyáhad veĥól eĥád leĥúd. |
| אֲהַבְתִּי הַפֶּכֶה אוֹתִי בְּנִרְאָה
כִּים מְלוּחַ לְטָפוֹת מְחֻקּוֹת שֶׁל יוֹרָה;
אֲנִי מוֹבָא אֵלַיךָ לְאֵט וְנוֹפֵל.
קַבְּלֵנִי, אֵין לָנוּ מִלְאָךְ גּוֹאֵל.
כִּי שְׁנֵינוּ בְּיַחַד / כֹּל אֶחָד לְחֹד. | Ahavatí hafĥá otí kanir'é
Keyám malúah letipót metukót šel yoré;
17 Aní muvá eyláyih leát venofél.
Kablíni. Eyn lánu mal'áh goél.
Ki šnéynu beyáhad. Kol eĥád leĥúd. |

each begin with *eyĥ* and *eyĥá* (two forms of "how") to recall the *ahén* of line 1. The enjambment of lines 11-12 emphasizes the central idea, coming as it does after the questioning of 9 and 10. The final rime in 12 ties the whole statement together—as Mayakowsky once put it, "rime is the tightening nail."

As the poem draws to its close, it picks up some of the symbols frequently found in the work of Lea Goldberg:

(13) *For every tree was a trembling sail*, (14) *And silence [had] a little girl's eyes*, (15) *And tears [had] the aroma of blooming*, (16) *And the name of the city [was] like the name of my love*. We shall find, for example, images of little girls' eyes and of blooming in the "River Poems" that follow. In "Ĥamsin of Nisán" these and other such images acquire unity in a sudden moment of grace. To the Hebrew reader, the word *eyĥá* has a markedly elegiac tone. Even the city, which in other poems by Lea Goldberg is associated with alienation, here takes on the intimate identity of the speaker's love.

The title "The Two of Us Together, Each of Us Alone" (1955) comes, as the epigraph tells us, "from a lease contract," meaning "Both of them jointly and severally." It is highly characteristic of Amihai to take words or phrases from legal documents, nursery rimes, folk-sayings, popular tunes, as well as from the Bible and the Book of Daily Prayer, and to set them in a new context or alter them slightly. The new context may reaffirm a tradition, deplore it, or mock its absence or perversion. Usually a deflationary device, the slight change is sometimes merely playful; but at other times the playfulness has serious intent.

(1) *My girl [darling], another summer has gone by* (2) *And my father hasn't come to the amusement park [lit. Luna Park].* (3) *The swings continue to swing.* (4) *The two of us together and each of us alone.*

Everything is directed towards freshness and simplicity. The words are such as any child will understand, the rhythm as easy as a 15th-century English ballad. Even the awkwardness of the rimes (*avár-park*, 1-2) adds to the ballad-like effect, charming the reader with the naïve offness. Line 2 echoes a children's song popular when the poem was written: *Abale bo lalúna-park*, "Daddy, come to the amusement park." Amihai's references to his father in his early poetry are frequent almost to the point of obsession. Here the poet regards the amusement park of his childhood as a lost Eden. Though the scene is apparently unchanged (3), everything now is different. For it is no longer a child who enters the park accompanied by his father but a grown man with a girl, the new object of his love. And, as line 4 remarks, the two of them form part of the total human condition of separateness and loneliness.

(5) *The horizon of the sea loses its boats—* (6) *Hard to keep (hold onto) anything now.* (7) *Behind the hill the soldiers waited.* (8) *How much in need of mercy are we.* (9) *The two of us together and each of us alone.*

Though the scene is that of the lost Eden of his childhood, its meaning has been totally altered. The boats disappearing beyond the horizon not only suggest loss and transitoriness but, as line 7 makes clear, they are sailing off to war. And some of the erstwhile children have turned into soldiers, adults who lie in ambush and who kill. To many readers familiar with the smallness of the territory of Israel, the first three lines of this stanza may convey the sense of an entire country transformed (from sea and coastal plains to hills of the border) into a state of war.

(10) *The moon is sawing the clouds in two—* (11) *Come, let's go out to a joust of love.* (12) *Only the two of us will [make] love between (before) the two [armed] camps.* (13) *Perhaps it is still possible to change everything.* (14) *The two of us together and each of us alone.*

Though everything, even the sky, is striving toward divisiveness, perhaps an act of love, publicly performed, may yet redeem the world: "change everything" (*hakól lešanót*).

The phrase *ahavát beynáyim*—"joust of love" is an invention of Amihai's based on *milhémet beynáyim* meaning simply "duel" or "joust." But it has an echo of *is beynáyim* with its two meanings: "champion" and "go-between." Hence, the "joust of love" implies that the two lovers are champions whose individual "war" will obviate the need for a general armed struggle. They are also conciliators, intermediaries, and their love the arbitrating act that may bring about peace. And yet the word *uláy* ("perhaps," 13) dominates the stanza.

Even the affirmation that follows is essentially a cry. The poet asks little more of his love than help to endure. He knows, though he pretends for a moment that it has performed its transforming miracle, that it will not redeem. (15) *My love, it would seem, has changed me* (16) *As the salt sea [is changed] into the sweet drops of the first rains.* (17) *I am brought to you slowly and [I] fall.* (18) *Receive (accept) me. We have no redeeming angel.* (19) *Because the two of us are together. Each of us is alone.*

If the opening affirmation—"My love apparently has changed me"—is clearly qualified by the third word, the transforming miracle as a whole has inherent limitations as well. For in a world without transcendence, how can two people save themselves from all that surrounds and engulfs them, capable as they are of no more than personal, individual action? Line 17 tells us that the speaker has been "brought" to his beloved and that he "falls." The latter verb describes more than the human body in its movement toward an embrace. It tells also of a descent from a world of faith in which angels might have redeemed (18) two lovers and a world in strife.

The change in punctuation of the refrain deepens the impact of the irony, as the two half-sentences—"the two of us together, each of us alone"—divide. The first half declares (it is a complete statement only grammatically) that the lovers are together; but an isolated and chilling counterstatement follows: "Each of us is alone."