



My Father's Voice

Yehuda Amichai

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 rather with gentleness and love.

And he added caresses and kind words and he added "I beg you," and "please."
And he sang "keep" and "remember" in a single melody and he pleaded
and cried quietly between one utterance and the next,
"Do not take the name of God in vain... do not take it... not in vain," I beg you,
"Do not bear false witness against your neighbor..."
And he hugged me tightly and whispered in my ear
"Do not steal."
"Do not commit adultery."
"Do not 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 on he turned his face to me one last time
Like on the day when he died in my arms and said,
"I want to add Two to the ten commandments:
The eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt not change."
And the twelfth commandment, "Thou must surely change."

So said my father and then he turned from me and walked off disappearing into
his strange distances.