



## Time for Everything

I'm working on a commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes – Kohelet. It features perhaps the famous, and certainly the most structured piece of poetry in all the Hebrew Bible, "*Eit Laledet, Eit LaMut* - A time to be born, a time to die. A time to weep, a time to laugh. A time to mourn, a time to dance ...'

I've used the passage rabbinically, actually at both funerals and weddings, and found comfort in it without really understanding why – this is the great benefit of forcing oneself to write commentaries, I

get to learn.

On closer inspection, this passage that seems so structured, is a bit of a mess. Some of the pairs go from bad to good (*to kill* then *to heal*), some go from good to bad (*to embrace* then *to stay far from embrace*). Some are opposites (*to tear* and *to sew*) others offer complete micro-narratives (*to be born* and *to die*). And this word '*Eit*'; does the *Eit* of something happen to us against our will or is it an instruction as to how we should exercise our human agency? Does 'a time to mourn and a time to dance' mean sometimes we will experience pain and sometimes joy, or is it an instruction as to how to behave at a funeral or a rave? With a structure that is crystalline in its clarity, Kohelet pulls the rug out from our ability to gain a footing in our life's *Eit*. Everything – every *Eit* – is forever collapsing in on itself and everything is all at once. Kohelet gives and Kohelet takes away.

This reading brings the great poet of Biblical Hebrew into anachronist agreement with the great poet of modern Hebrew, Yehuda Amichai. "Kohelet was wrong" wrote Amichai, to suggest life could be lived in discrete units. "A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment, to laugh and cry with the same eyes [and] to make love in war and war in love." I suspect Amichai knew, really, he was agreeing with Kohelet. Great poets recognise great poets.

So here we are, in the midst of war, in the midst of summer, in the midst of celebration, in the midst of pain. Our thoughts and prayers are with all innocent suffering and in fear in these dark times; whether in Israel, Palestine, Iran, Ukraine ... ah, such a list! And yet we dance. I think the real lesson of Chapter 3 of Kohelet is not that everything is discrete – separate and separable – but rather that the concussive falling together of everything need not and indeed must not halt carving out moments to appreciate and respond to the different moments and opportunities that emerge always.

Shabbat Shalom

## Musical Treats

In anticipation of Shabbat Pride (please book for dinner 4<sup>th</sup> July here

<https://shulcloud.newlondon.org.uk/event/pride-friday-night-dinner.html> - open to the LGBT communities AND allies), David and Yoav have been recording some of the musical highlights from our Pride Kabbalat Shabbat service. It's a project in honour of our beloved former Chazan, Stephen Cotsen. This week, we are sharing David's Yigdal – set to Cage Aux Foles's anthemic, *I Am What I Am*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVD\\_Mafhmv0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVD_Mafhmv0).

And then, this Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm, we are celebrating, our member, Chen Reiss' new album, *Jewish Vienna*, with a celebration of the music of Mahler, Korngold, Zemlinsky and others, presented by Norman Lebrecht. For a taster, click here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuTJzhPukzw&t=302s>. To book click here

<https://shulcloud.newlondon.org.uk/event/jewish-vienna---a-concert-with-chen-reiss.html>.