

**We will be like dreamers:** Rabbi Yohanan said: This righteous man [Honi HaMa'agel] was troubled throughout the whole of his life about the meaning of the verse from Psalms 126 (which we sing before the Grace after Meals on sabbaths and festivals), "A Song of Ascents, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, **we will be like dreamers.**" He wondered: Is it possible for one man to live long enough to dream continuously for seventy years? [As it is written, "For the Lord said: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take Note of and I will fulfill you to my promise of favor-- to bring you back to this place." (Jeremiah 29:10)] One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a carob tree; he asked him, How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years.

Are you certain that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children. Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him and the rocks enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years.

A song of ascents: When the Lord restores the return to Zion, **we will be like dreamers.** Our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them!" The Lord will do great things for us and we shall rejoice. Restore our return O Lord, like streams in the Negev. They who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Though he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves.

When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, Are you the man who planted the tree? The man replied: I am his grandson. He then exclaimed: It is clear that I have slept for seventy years. He then caught sight of his ass who had since given birth to several generations; and he returned home. He asked, Is the son of Honi HaMa'agel still alive? The people answered him, His son is no more, but his grandson is still living. He said to them: I am Honi HaMa'agel, but no one would believe him.

He then walked to the Beit Ha Midrash and there he overheard the scholars say, The law is as clear to us as in the days of Honi HaMa'agel, for whenever he came to the Beit Ha Midrash, he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that

they had. He called out, I am he; but the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honor due to him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death] and he died. Raba said: That is why the folks say, Either you have companionship or you may as well be dead. (Talmud Ta'anit 23a)

## Psalm 126

אֲשִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה  
 אֶת־שִׁבְתֵּי צִיּוֹן הִיִּינִי כְּחֹלְמִים  
 בְּאֵז וּמִלֵּא שְׁחֹק פִּינִי  
 וּלְטֹוֹנֵי רִנָּה אֵז יֵאמְרוּ  
 בְּגוֹיִם הַדְּגִיל יְהוָה  
 לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֱלֹהִים  
 אֶהְיֶה לְיְהוָה לְעֵשׂוֹת  
 עֲמָנִי הִיִּינִי טְמֵחִים  
 דְּשׁוּבָה יְהוָה  
 אֶת־שְׁבוּתָנוּ [שְׁבִיחָנוּ]  
 כְּאִפְסִים בְּנֶגֶב  
 הַהֲרָעִים בְּדִמְעָה  
 בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ וְהָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ  
 וּבָכָה נִשְׂא מִשָּׂה־הַחֲרִיעַ  
 בָּאֵיבֹנָה בְּרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֶלְמֵתָיו

### Jewish heart:

My **heart** is in the east, and I in the uttermost west— How can I find savour in food? How shall it be sweet to me? How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet Zion lieth beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains? A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain – Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary. (Yehuda Halevi 1141 CE)

## Hatikva

Naftali Hertz Imber

So long as still within our breasts The **Jewish heart** beats true, So long as still towards the East To Zion, looks the Jew, So long our **hopes** are not yet lost— Two thousand years we cherished them— To live in freedom in **the land** Of Zion and **Jerusalem.**

**The land:** Wherever I go, I am going to the Land of Israel. (Rabbi Nachman of Braslav)

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבִּי פְּנִימָה,  
 נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמֶיָה.  
 וּלְפָאֲתַי מְזֻרָח קַדְיָה  
 עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָה.  
 עוֹד לֹא אֶבְדָּה תְּקוּנָתִי,  
 הַתְּקוּהָה בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֶלְפִים,  
 לְהִיזוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ,  
 אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

### Hopes:

*Ein Yahav*  
 A night drive to Ein Yahav in the Arava Desert, a drive in the rain. Yes, in the rain There I met people who grow date palms, there I saw tamarisk trees and risk trees, there I saw **hope** barbed as barbed wire. And I said to myself: That's true, **hope** needs to be like barbed wire to keep out despair, hope must be a mine field. (Yehuda Amichai)



**Jerusalem** In the Snow  
 While velvet covers the town  
 Like a tallit,  
 The canopy of clouds  
 Like a wedding canopy above a bride  
 Dressed in white.  
 The wind ascends

With the sound and melody  
 Of crystal,  
 The fragile heart  
 Like a flake of snow.

Jerusalem  
 Is like this snow,  
 Beautiful at moments,  
 But muddy for hours and days  
 When it melts. (Anat Bental)



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