

The following two poems were written by Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) who immigrated to Israel in 1936. He was a winner of the Israel Prize. He was eulogized by Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg as the "secular Israeli Jew closest to God".

A man in his life

A man doesn't have time in his life to have time for everything. He doesn't have seasons enough to have a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment, to laugh and cry with the same eyes, with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them, to make love in war and war in love.

And to hate and forgive and remember and forget, to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest what history takes years and years to do. A man doesn't have time. When he loses he seeks, when he finds he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves he begins to forget.

And his soul is seasoned, his soul is very professional. Only his body remains forever an amateur. It tries and it misses, gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing, drunk and blind in its pleasures and its pains.

He will die as figs die in autumn, shriveled and full of himself and sweet, the leaves growing dry on the ground, the bare branches pointing to the place where there's time for everything.

The waters cannot return in repentance,
The waters cannot return in repentance, to where would they return?
To the faucet, the sources, the ground, the roots, the cloud, the sea,
into my mouth?

The waters cannot return in repentance, every place is their seas/days of old, their waters of old, every place a beginning and end, and a beginning.

