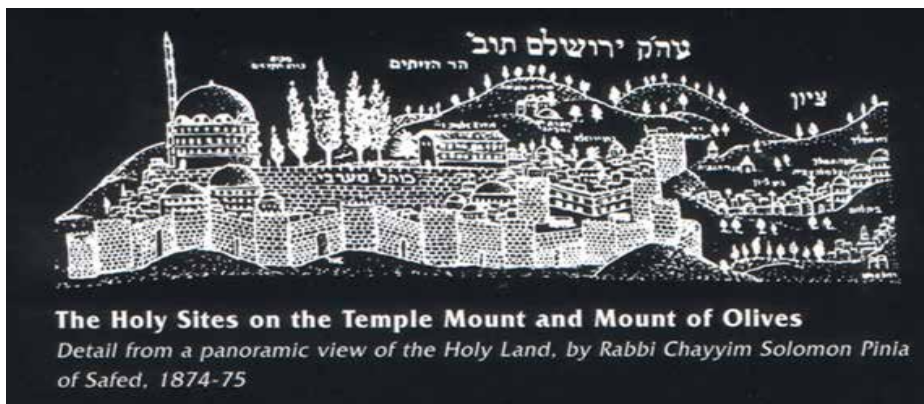


The Book of Life: Uncertainty

I wanted a perfect ending,
 So I sat down to write a book
 with the ending in place before
 there even was an ending.
 Now I've learned the hard way,
 that some poems don't rhyme,
 and some stories don't have
 a clear beginning, middle, and end.
 Like my life, this book has ambiguity.
 Like my life, this book is about
 not knowing, having to change,
 taking the moment and making the
 best of it, without knowing
 what's going to happen next.
 --Gilda Radner



The Five Stages of Grief

A Yizkor Reading for those who have experienced a recent loss.
 By Linda Pastan

The night I lost you someone pointed me towards
 the Five Stages of Grief. Go that way, they said,
 it's easy, like learning to climb stairs after amputation.
 And so I climbed.

Denial was first. I sat down at breakfast carefully setting the table
 for two. I passed you the toast—you sat there. I passed you the
 paper—you hid behind it.

Anger seemed more familiar. I burned the toast, snatched the
 paper and read the headlines myself. But they mentioned your
 departure and so I moved on to Bargaining.

What could I exchange for you? The silence after storms? My
 typing fingers? Before I could decide, Depression came puffing
 up, a poor relation its suitcase tied together with string.

In the suitcase were bandages for the eyes and bottles of sleep.
 I slid all the way down the stairs feeling nothing. And all the time
 Hope flashed on and off in defective neon. Hope was a signpost
 pointing straight in the air.

Hope was my uncle's middle name, he died of it. After a year
 I am still climbing, though my feet slip on your stone face. The
 treeline has long since disappeared; green is a color I have
 forgotten. But now I see what I am climbing towards: Acceptance
 written in capital letters, a special headline: Acceptance. Its name
 is in lights.

I struggle on, waiving and shouting. Below, my whole life
 spreads its surf, all the landscape I've ever known of dreamed of.
 Below a fish jumps: the pulse in your neck. Acceptance. I finally
 reach it. But something is wrong. Grief is a circular staircase. I
 have lost you.