

With Tears Of Wisdom

The sage Ecclesiastes in the bible offered odd counsel:

“Better to go to a house of mourning
than to a house of feasting
For that is the end of every man
and the living should take it to heart
Wise men are drawn to a house of mourning
And fools to a house of merrymaking.”
(*Ecclesiastes 7:2-4*)

Strange advice —
Find wisdom in mourning?
Folly in merriment?
What wisdom in Ecclesiastes?

We venerate smiles
Worship happiness
Is the pursuit of happiness
Not written alongside the pursuit of life and liberty?

So drawn are we to happiness
That even when the shroud
covers the ark carrying the deceased
We would call it not “funeral”
But “celebration of life.”

Tears are too salty
Mourning too long
Sadness too wearying
Better a house of laughter
Than an hour of solemnity
Better a sense of humor than a sense of tragedy
Still, what wisdom did Ecclesiastes find
In the home of the mourning
During the seven days?

The warming of the heart
The healing of compassion
The courage to enter the dark circle of the bereaved
and bring a cup of intoxication in friendship
To lighten up the darkness
To offer support to another
Lift an arm around another’s shoulder
To find balance in one’s own life.

A time to laugh and a time to cry
A time to reap and a time to sow
A happy hour and a sobering moment
A time for Kaddish and a time for Kiddush.

