

The Hidden Search

Odd counsel from the sage Ecclesiastes —

“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 morning,
And fools to a house of merrymaking.”

Folly in merriment? Wisdom in mourning?

We worship happiness
Is not 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 a “celebration of life”
Tears are too salty
Sadness too wearying
Better a hour of laughter than an hour of solemnity.

What afikoman is hidden in the house of mourning
That Ecclesiastes bids us to search out?
Could it be the warming of the heart
The healing of compassion
The simple motion of an arm around another’s shoulders
A tender touch holding back the useless word?

A time to laugh and a time to cry
A time to reap and a time to sow
A time for Kaddish and a time for Kiddush.

