

## Epigrams

1

The General Secretary said: "The nation is the people."  
Dostoevsky said: "Language is the people."  
I pondered: What else is the people?  
I circle back to the starting point—you are the people.

2

Idleness before a soccer final  
is different from idleness in life.  
Are unquenchable love and unquenchable hate  
also different? Both are urgent.

3

Scintillating—the brightness  
of a cotton jacket, greasy around the chest.  
The uniform blackness of our hair.  
Fresh pork darkened by soot.

4

What difference does it make  
taking a short walk before, or after a meal?  
Of course, ships smell different before they leave  
and after they arrive.

5

Someone with a weird name lives only once  
and loses it in his rebirth.  
Those with ordinary names like Yang Wei  
carry on, rebirthing and rebirthing.

6

The hermit lives in the future,  
the worrywart in the past.

How dare you say Yehuda Amichai  
is only an epigrammatic poet?

7

Love wanders around the married and singles.  
What if you' re neither?  
Then love people as an idea until you' re old,  
love your country as an idea until you' re old.

8

The Chinese talk the loudest—big deal!  
This is the most terrifying:  
if nobody speaks on the Earth,  
only the wind...

9

How long does it take to evacuate from a building?  
Are you talking about the P.E. teacher without his thermal pants?  
Anything is possible  
in eight seconds, or a lifetime.

10

Please hear this at Tübingen, my clouds of Changsha:  
“When someone' s watch stops, he swings his arm.  
Who' s throwing us around? Who?”  
Ask Amichai again.

## Tomb Sweeping

Tranquility has an air on its own:  
little tombstones in little files  
crowding into a sea.

Visitors stand upright with their heads down;  
trees stand upright and care about nothing.  
Who else isn' t standing upright, except for the wind?

Listen to the stand-alone early summer wind.  
A man looks lonely with only one hand, one foot;  
another with both hands and feet—why the loneliness?  
For a while, visitors walk up the mound  
to tombstones, and pay tribute to their parents;  
they light up their own incense and sweep their graves.

As tears dry up, the world ends.  
I was born with you,  
I age with you,  
I become sick with you,  
I die with you,  
and in your tomb, I live.

## Serve the People

What dreams can you tell  
after a movie' s over? Mom?  
“You’ re no longer old,  
not that you’ ve left old age to me. ”  
But I won’ t panic about the wrong path.

A pill has a fleeting life  
that I swallow, and its purpose fulfilled.  
Death is a snail mail.  
In the end, we are strangers to each other  
like leaves, in our own birth and decay.

Who said home is where the heart is?  
Whose words are vast  
like open air? Go back to your youth!  
What does poetry take away?  
Of course, it’ s “Serve the People” .