

TALE OF THE FOUR

Music and lyrics by EHUD BANAI



BACKGROUND ON EHUD BANAI

- Banai's first album was released in 1987. It contained several hits, and he continues to be a successful singer-songwriter to this day.
- He comes from a famous show-biz family, with uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces involved in TV or music.

ABOUT THE SONG

- This song comes from Ehud Banai's 2011 album, Fragments of Night.
- In a radio interview about this song, Banai explains he used to live in Givatayim (a neighborhood of Tel Aviv) and had a bad drugs experience with some friends... It's worth using this as a cute set-up before playing the song: It tilts the listening towards surprises.

One Shabbat night
The heavens opened up
A great flash of lightning
Electric Givatayim
Four lads, whose parents were abroad,
Set off for the Orchard
They crossed over the border

A tale of the four
Who entered the Orchard

The first said,
"Me, I've got experience.
Keep your heads so no disaster will happen

*Leyl shabbat echad
Niftechu hashamayim
Barak gadol hivzik
Electric Givatayim
Arba'a ne'arim, kshehahorim b'chul
Yatzu el haPardess
Avru et kav hagvul...*

*Ma'aseh b'arba'a
Shenichnesu laPardess*

*Harishon amar:
Ani yesh li nisayon
Tashgichu al harosh shelo yikreh ason*

ליל שַׁבַּת אֶחָד
נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
בָּרַק גְּדוֹל הַבְּזִיק
אֶלֶקְטְרִיק גִּבְעַתַּיִם
אַרְבָּעָה נְעָרִים, כְּשֶׁהֵחֵרִים בְּחוּ"ל
יָצְאוּ אֶל הַפְּרָדֶס,
עָבְרוּ אֶת קוֹ הַגְּבוּל...

מַעֲשֵׂה בְּאַרְבָּעָה
שֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ לַפְּרָדֶס.

הָרִאשׁוֹן אָמַר:
אֲנִי יֵשׁ לִי נִסְיוֹן
תִּשְׁגִּיחוּ עַל הָרֹאשׁ שְׁלֹא יִקְרֶה אִסּוֹן



After we pass over to the gates of heaven
When we stand before the marble stones
Don't say 'Water, water.'
A tale of the four
Who entered the Orchard.
The second said, "I'm touching and not touching
And I have a feeling that I'm going mad
Things are slippery
There's no clear shape
One moment it's there, next moment it's not
Reality seems to be dissolving."

A tale of the four
Who entered the Orchard.

The third was taken up
Left this world
Shucked off his body like a coat
And disappeared
And they say that now
He is head gardener of the green Paradise
On the outskirts of town.

A tale of the four
Who entered the Orchard.

The fourth returned
But became other
He hardly talks with his friends
He travels silently into the black night
And to the house and to the light
He can never return

*Acharey shena'avor b'sha'arey shamayim
Kshena'amod mul avney hashayish
Al tagidu mayim mayim
Ma'aseh b'arba'a
Shenichnesu laPardess
Hasheni amar: Ani noge'a lo noge'a
V'yesh li hargasha ani holech umishtage'a
Hadvarim chomkim
Eyn tzura mugderet
Rega eyn v'rega yesh
Hametziyut kmo mitpazeret*

*Ma'aseh b'arba'a
Shenichnesu laPardess*

*Hashlishi nagoz
Niftar min ha'olam
Pashat et gufo kmo m'il
V'ne'elam
V'omrim achshav
Hu ganan bachir b'gan ha'eden hayarok
Biktze ha'ir.*

*Ma'aseh b'arba'a
Shenichnesu laPardess*

*Harevi'i chazar
Aval hafach acher
Im hachaverim shelo hu b'koshi m'daber
Nose'a v'shotek el toch halayla hashachor
V'el habayit el ha'or
Hu lo yachol lachzor*

אחרי שנעבר בשערי שמים
כשנעמד מול אבני השיש
אל תגידו מים מים.
מעשה בארבעה
שנכנסו לפרדס.
השני אמר: אני נוגע לא נוגע
ויש לי הרגשה אני הולך ומשתגע
הדברים חומקים
אין צורה מגדרת
רגע אין ורגע יש
המציאות כמו מתפזרת.

מעשה בארבעה
שנכנסו לפרדס.

השלישי נגוז
נפטר מן העולם
פשט את גופו כמו מעיל
ונעלם
ואמרים עכשיו
הוא גנן בכיר בגן העדן הירוק
בקצה העיר.

מעשה בארבעה
שנכנסו לפרדס.

הרביעי חזר
אבל הפך אחר
עם החברים שלו הוא בקושי מדבר
נוסע ושותק אל תוך הלילה השחור
ואל הבית אל האור
הוא לא יכול לחזור.



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 ...

WHAT IS THAT TEXT?

Despite Banai's playful introduction of the song to do with being about a bad trip, it is clear that he is also drawing his inspiration from a famous Talmudic passage from Chagiga 14b. This is an enigmatic tale about four leading Rabbis who go on a mystical quest into the "Orchard -

Pardess". Pardess has at its root the Persian word "Paradise", and is seen to have deep kabbalistic significance. It is worth studying this text a little:

FOUR ENTERED THE ORCHARD

(BABYLONIAN TALMUD CHAGIGA 14B)

Garden of Eden
 HEAVEN?

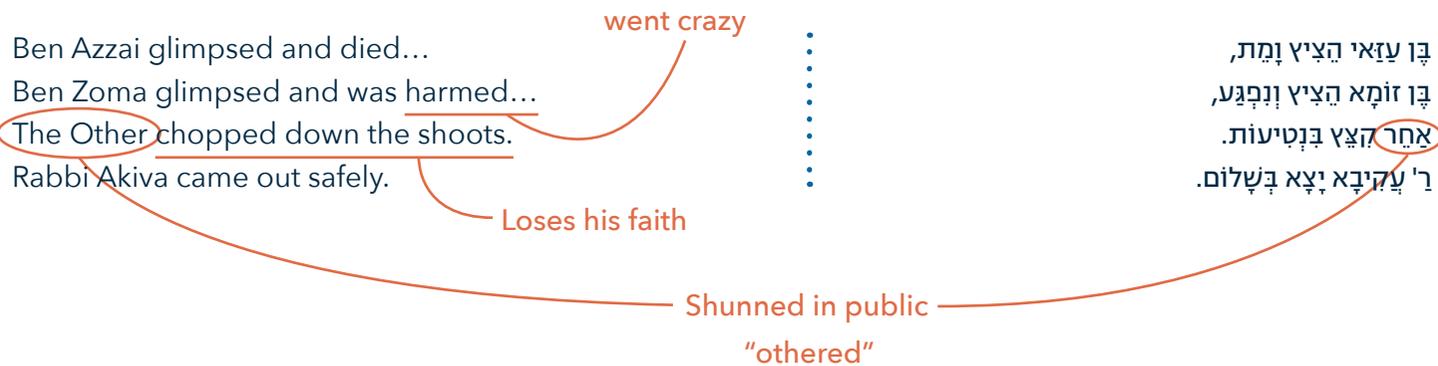
R. Elisha
 Ben Avuya

Four entered the orchard,
 and they are as follows: Ben Azzai; and ben Zoma;
 The Other, and Rabbi Akiva.
 Rabbi Akiva said to them: "When, you reach pure
 marble stones, do not say: Water, water,
 because it is stated: He who speaks falsehood shall
 not be established before My eyes (Psalms 101:7)



אַרְבָּעָה נִכְנְסוּ לַפְּרָדֵס,
 וְאֵלוֹ הֵם: בֶּן עֲזַאִי וּבֶן זֹמָא, אַחֵר וְר' עֲקִיבָא.
 אָמַר לָהֶם ר' עֲקִיבָא: כְּשֶׁאַתֶּם מְגִיעִים אֶצֶל אֲבְנֵי
 שֵׁשׁ טָהוֹר, אַל תִּאמְרוּ: מַיִם, מַיִם!
 מִשּׁוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "דִּבֶּר שִׁקְרִים לֹא יִכּוֹן לְנַגֵּד עֵינָי"
 (תהילים קא, ז)





AND NOW YOU

- In what way does the comparison of the Talmudic "orchard" to an experience with teens' drugs experimentation bring this Talmud story closer to you? In what ways does it distance you?
- What does it tell you about Israeli society that this song (on a best-selling album by a top-selling artist) so confidently mixes the sacred and the profane? Is this a good thing or a bad thing in your eyes?
- Have there ever been events in your life that you might compare to a mythical tale in Jewish tradition?
- Have there ever been events in your life that left you changed forever ?

THEMES

- # Sacred text in public space
- # Leadership
- # Learning
- # Mysticism
- # Life-changing events
- # Talmud
- # Rabbi Akiva
- # Elisha ben Avuya