

Excerpt from I Wasn't One of the Six Million: And What Is My Life Span? Open, Closed, Open

Contributed by [The Horowitzes](#)

Source: Open Closed Open: Poems, by Yehuda Amichai

6.

I wasn't one of the six million who died in the Shoah, I wasn't even among the survivors. And I wasn't one of the six hundred thousand who went out of Egypt. I came to the Promised Land by sea. No, I was not in that number, though I still have the fire and the smoke within me, pillars of fire and pillars of smoke that guide me by night and by day. I still have inside me the mad search for emergency exits, for soft places, for the nakedness of the land, for the escape into weakness and hope, I still have within me the lust to search for living water with quiet talk to the rock or with frenzied blows. Afterwards, silence: no questions, no answers. Jewish history and world history grind me between them like two grindstones, sometimes to a powder. And the solar year and the lunar year get ahead of each other or fall behind, leaping, they set my life in perpetual motion. Sometimes I fall into the gap between them to hide, or to sink all the way down.

7.

I believe with perfect faith that at this very moment millions of human beings are standing at crossroads and intersections, in jungles and deserts, showing each other where to turn, what the right way is, which direction. They explain exactly where to go, what is the quickest way to get there, when to stop and ask again. There, over there. The second turnoff, not the first, and from there left or right near the white house, by the oak tree. They explain with excited voices, with a wave of the hand and a nod of the head: There, over there, not *t hat* there, the *other* there, as in some ancient rite. This too is a new religion. I believe with perfect faith that at this very moment.