

# DUNES SOJOURNER

## PROSE ESSAYS

Judah A. Kessler

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## FOREWORD

There are words we utter, read, or write, that are committed to memory for one reason or another, often over the course of our entire life-time. Words that pull at heart-strings, or keep the embers of warm memories glowing, continuing to comfort us in times of joy or sorrow. Sometimes we might not know why a phrase or statement lingers, and suddenly appears, there, right there, in the forefront of the mind, but it does, and like dried, fallen leaves on a chilling Autumn ground, the memory of some-one, some-thing, some-where, stirs and comes back to life as if that moment is happening, and we are there... again.

Maybe some-where, in these words, these phrases and statements, there is an Autumn wind to stir fond memories, bring something back, or start dreams of something to be. These words are stories, moments captured and lingering, stories to tell to you, but maybe they're already your stories as well... or tales of dreams you have... or have had.

Some may read with sadness whilst others with joy, the interpretation belongs solely to the reader. There are lessons to be learnt in each for, as Plato is alleged to have said:

*Be kind to every one you meet  
for each person is fighting a battle  
you know nothing about.*

Thank you for your interest, for your time, and most of all, for your rare gift of compassion.

**GASTON** was an avenue on the Rockaway peninsula of Long Island New York. It was a place where Nature had returned to and re-settled. Today, that Gaston no longer exists out-side the memories of these recorded words. Today, even the name of the place has been removed from the sign on the station platform where the train still stops.

**SETON PARK**, a small respite in the North-West corner of The Bronx, NY, that provided refuge for young and old, with swings and such for the children, tennis courts for the elders and was bordered by a long-disused area where, in Wallenberg Forest, some 50 or more feral cats resided, year-round, almost completely abandoned, but cared-for by a small group of residents in the area.

**DIASPORA VOICES** are the words of a heart, wandering the banks of the Hudson River, through the wooded lands that looked across the tidal waters to the Pallisades of New Jersey to the West. "Diaspora"... the dispersion of people from their home-land, most commonly involuntarily. Deuteronomy 28:25, "thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth" Psalms 146(147).2 "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel".

**DUNES SOJOURNER** wrote of dreams recalled on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, on the dunes and beaches that are the end of the North American continent, with nothing between them and the mighty Antarctic to the South.

**SOJOURN'S END**, the closing of this anthology, recounts daily experiences and thoughts of a solitary traveller along subway lines and shore lines, the words of self-claimed "friends" along the journeys from end-to-end... along the rails of trains and the paths of life itself.

**SOJOURNER**: one who resides temporarily in a place... as each one of us, all who are born, reside here, on this Earth, at this time, in this "life".



I have taken  
of late  
to reading  
old books.

Familiar tomes  
of comfortable phrases  
known.

Perhaps it is  
my older age  
and an intolerance of  
change  
a return to yesterdays  
the solace of  
a past  
familiar.

At first line of chapters  
I know them:  
the words  
events  
and out-come  
but...

I have taken  
of late  
to reading old books  
and gathering  
again  
with old  
friends.

**Chapter I**  
**GASTON 67**  
**SOLACE & SOLITUDE**



I heard Gaston call to me:

Step off the shore and to the sea...

Journal of a man destined for the sea.  
Notes to myself as I sit by and with myself...  
by the sea or beneath the trees.  
It's a journal of the "Why"...

I wake from my sleep  
on a "home-bound" train  
surrounded by people...  
surrounded by strangers.  
They are asleep too.  
We are sure of where we are,  
certain of where we are going.  
We sleep.  
No need to watch the stations pass.  
No cause for concern  
or to be aware.  
We are sure.  
We are certain.  
We sleep  
on a train bound for  
Rockaway.

I travel over water  
to set my spirit free.  
I travel over water  
so your evil can't touch me.  
O'er the Harlem River  
and under NY Harbour  
out across Jamaica Bay –  
out to Farthest Rockaway.  
I stand upon the shore-line  
look off, across the sea  
and finally find I'm breathing!  
You're so far away from me.



Take me out where the open seas rise  
and let me breathe to the rhythm of tides.  
where unfettered, untethered my spirit soars  
as the mighty waves pound and the ocean roars  
and I can rise and fall in peace  
and all my cares and worries cease  
my last tear falls in Jamaica Bay  
and my soul burns bright  
in Rockaway.



Come to greet me, great bird of the sea  
as this old train moves me on...  
over land, over water, over land again  
and at last, over water  
and out to the sand.

Come to guide me, crying bird of the  
sea  
soar beside my window here  
let me see you there, looking in at me  
as I sit here yearning  
for my spirit's home.

Come to watch over me, you bird of  
the sea  
as over the bay, on rails, I ride  
call one and all to join us there  
at the edge of the world  
be by my side.

Take me out on the rolling sea  
Take me out and turn me free  
for moments on sea breezes let me soar  
until my songs in the crashing waves roar  
and I will leave here  
never more.

But for now...

Come to greet me, great bird of the sea  
as I ride the rails  
yearning  
to be free...  
to be free...

The sound of the sea  
beckons from the edge  
of the beach  
of the land  
of the world.

It whispers to me  
on the soft, silent breeze  
to  
come home, come home, come home.

I am exhausted.  
I am spent.

Body, mind and soul are heavy.

I've no energy to battle  
no will to survive.

I am home here  
at the sea.  
I'll go home here  
to the sea.

I came to the beach so not to speak,  
no idle conversation  
no talk, no words.



I came to the sea for no music,  
no melodies  
no memories  
to be as I am...  
alone.

I've nothing to say  
and nothing to sing,  
nothing to celebrate  
and nothing to...

The ocean crashes against the shore.  
The waves beckon  
"Come home. Come home."

The sun is warm  
the breeze is cold.  
I'm alone and

nothing...

nothing.

God led me to Gaston  
and Gaston brought me home.  
67 out to the shore-line  
my soul will no longer roam.

I stood at the edge of the earth-line  
heard Gaston call to me  
as tears of relief welled into my eyes  
I stepped silently out to sea.

God led me to Gaston  
and Gaston brought me home.

I closed my eyes – breathed deeply  
felt the softness envelope me  
my tears and the ocean's waters were one  
I slept and rocked gently with the sea.

God led me to Gaston  
and Gaston brought me home.

No more mem'ries, no more tears  
no more questions, no more fears  
no more suff'ring, no more strife  
not the end – but the beginning of Life!

God led me to Gaston  
and Gaston brought me home  
67 out to the shore-line  
and finally...  
SHALOM!

Peace.

Songs came to me

through me  
on the radio.

In my mind  
I went back –  
went back.

Memories follow  
even to the edge of the sea.

If I go in  
will they follow me  
even there?

Or...

My heart attaches to silly things

finds solace and comfort sometimes inane  
(or, I wonder, are they insane?)  
the trite and trifles of every day  
that are seen by all who ride the A.

But today I saw from the Shuttle rail  
a sight I'd missed for several days  
a little something that caught my gaze  
a little something grey and pale  
a little something "Rockaways".

There they were, just scattered about  
like little gem-stones from the sea  
not so much glistening but grey on black  
dropped there to be noticed, today, by me...  
sea-shells on the school-house roof.

## Brighton

The children came early  
to the beach today  
to build sand-castles high  
form the sands of the shore  
at tide's low.

A castle-fortress  
with village below  
a tower two metres high  
and some  
rose up against the morning sun  
from where to watch  
the receded sea.

Assiduously the children laboured  
wet sand on wet sand  
until the kingdom was done.

And they stepped back  
to admire  
as we looked on  
in awe.

I lingered late  
at the beach today  
long after the children  
abandoned their  
kingdom.

The waters of the oceans  
rose  
crashing in to the shore  
to retrieve the sands  
stolen from it  
to create a kingdom  
of man.

A brat-child-devil-spore  
attacked with hand and foot,  
launched barrage of munitions



formed of wet beach sand  
as his mother-leader-commanding soldier  
looked on.

The little village  
fell.  
He would not relent...  
yet the castle-tower  
with-stood...  
for long moments.

But as the evening sea breeze  
brought the ocean home  
to Brighton's shores  
again  
and I looked on  
helplessly  
impotent against Nature's order of the world...

Castle-fortress crumbled  
its tiny kingdom long destroyed.  
Sands returned  
to the sea from whence they came  
man's labours and creations  
destroyed by man  
obliterated by Nature  
are no match  
no strong-hold  
against what  
must be.

The children came early  
to the beach today.  
I lingered late  
and learned:

What-ever is created  
upon this earth  
will die  
and be returned...  
to nothing.

**G**aston! I whispered, over the sounds of the ocean's roar  
Take me to Haifa, or Tel Aviv  
But take me to the Promised Land.

Gaston whispered back to me  
in the darkness under which we had met:  
Come to me, my arms will cradle you  
and soon  
you will be where it is you wish.

Gaston...

The tides returned  
the great waves crashed to shore.  
Waters rose quickly  
and on the beach  
deposited  
the lifeless remains  
of a man at peace...  
at  
last  
at peace  
at long last  
at peace.

I'm not happy when I'm away  
too long, too far from Jamaica Bay  
It's gotten inside me, how my heart does sway  
for the sweet great comfort  
of Rockaway.



One set of foot-prints  
there  
on the sands of the shore  
existing only for the moment  
waiting for the seas to reclaim  
the space taken.

One set of foot-prints  
there  
disappearing  
proving the end of my sojourn  
proving  
PEACE  
has come.

One set of foot-prints  
there  
created in silence  
under a canopy of deep black-blue  
glistened in the star-light  
as I stepped forward  
to the east.

One set of foot-prints  
there  
lost in the night winds  
as the Atlantic washed away...  
one set of foot-prints  
one sobbing heart  
one destitute soul  
from  
there  
on the sands of the shore  
and  
there  
on the sands of the shore  
peace...



I wrote a note  
on Gaston's shore  
to send it out  
to the open sea  
to my Mother long-gone  
who once loved me  
it was my heart-felt  
tear-filled  
mourning  
plea.

PLEASE  
MAMA,  
COME TAKE ME  
HOME.  
I'M SO VERY TIRED.

I wrote a note  
on Gaston's shore  
on my 52nd birth anniversary,  
to my Mother long-gone

who once loved me  
then stood silently watching  
as it wash out to sea.

PLEASE  
MAMA,  
COME TAKE ME  
HOME.  
I'M SO VERY TIRED.

I wrote a note  
on Gaston's shore  
to my Mother long-gone  
who once loved me,  
heard Gaston's waves  
whisper so softly:  
Step off the shore  
and out to sea  
come home  
come home  
to me.

**I**t has – I fear – been a sojourn too long for me.

I am weary, alone,  
and the hour of departure  
arrived.

I am weary  
lonely  
and have no will  
to fight  
or tarry.

From these shores of Brighton  
from Brighton's shores do I step off  
from here begins my journey  
to walk across these waters  
to the distant shores of the Kinneret  
(Sweet waters clear, the Promised land).

Between the islands shall I venture  
Queens to my left  
Richmond to my right  
out to the open silence of the oceans  
there to – at last – at long, long last  
find restful repose  
a sleep...  
shalom.

For lengths of time of neither night nor day  
I shall be gently rocked  
in the arms of the sea.  
My traverse of silence  
void of time.  
Night will be day as  
day will be night  
and both and all  
will be same.

And one day, one time, one...  
I will arrive  
on the distant shores  
of the Promised Land  
in silence, in rest,  
in Shalom.

From these shores of Brighton  
from Brighton's shores do I step off.  
It has – I fear – been a sojourn  
too long  
I am weary  
I am  
alone.

He walked quietly,  
silently really,  
away  
just  
away  
and left us here  
wondering  
loving  
and hoping  
that he's at Peace  
in his own  
home at the end of the world.





I probably shouldn't say so  
nor feel so  
but  
Rockaway Boulevard kills it,  
murders, brutally  
the silence that is  
the serenity that is  
the peace that should be  
that had been  
me.

We all come in  
from the Rockaways.  
We are the travellers  
from the beach and shore.  
We've come in from the harsh winds  
that blow across the flat lands  
come in from the ocean  
that tried to do us in...  
but failed.

And here  
at Rockaway Boulevard  
come you  
the world  
from Lefferts.  
And you mix your city  
with our sand  
(we, some of us, carry sand

on our shoes)  
your reality  
with my dream  
and I know that from here  
I'll leave there  
behind.

Rockaway Boulevard kills it.  
DeKalb Avenue finishes and buries it.

But dead or done or not...  
I return...  
tonight  
in my heart  
tomorrow  
on the train.





lood-red crimson and orange hang  
on sky of deepening, darkening blue  
and billowed blackening charcoal grey  
floats silently over Jamaica Bay.

The sun is setting. I'm on the rails  
above the waters between there and there  
as sea-gulls soar beside my window  
"You're going home" they're telling me.

The world is gone to Howard Beach  
and tides are rising all around  
as sea breeze blows a mellow chop  
and I gulp peace... my soul's unwound.

Out-side the window of this train  
the night is coming, sure and strong.  
The sea-mist fogs the window pane  
horizon turns to silhouette.

But out there I know with certainty  
is a place and space that waits for me  
that neither time nor tide will take  
that waits  
beyond the final bridge.



**Chapter II**  
**SETON PARK**  
**WALLENBERG FOREST**  
From the Banks of the Hudson River

I still sit in the park  
waiting for you to come by.  
But in my old age  
eye-sight, even in the day-light, is  
failing.

So I wonder:

Could you have been here  
looking for me too  
and I missed you...  
didn't see you...  
didn't recognise you?  
Could it have been?

In my mind  
in my heart  
I see your silhouette against a night sky.  
I knew you  
even in the dark...  
back then.  
I'd know you today too.  
My heart will never forget you.

But these old eyes don't see well now.  
The heart and mind still hold your image  
oh, so vividly clear.

No.  
You haven't been here.  
Not today or yesterday  
and not tomorrow either.

I am many miles away  
sitting in this park alone  
save for  
my memories  
of you  
of  
then.





I found a bag  
on Rosh Hashannah  
with sweet confections there  
inside.  
Twelve in all  
I do believe  
(I didn't count before I ate).

I'd only come to sit and sketch  
upon the slab  
of cold cement,  
and to gaze upon the Hudson,  
the day was new  
the air was clear  
the sky was blue  
the river sparkled.

I'd only come to get away,  
escape the favours  
asked of me.  
You've thrown me out  
and still you bellow  
"Do this..." "Do that..."

as if I am  
your humble  
servant.

And so I left just after sun-rise,  
walked along  
in painful fatigue  
to sit and sketch  
upon the slab  
of cold cement  
the air was crisp.

I sketched a bit and ate my bread  
and found the bag  
all tightly tied,  
into which I'd place the wrappers  
but when I opened it  
looked inside...

I found a bag  
on Rosh Hashannah  
with sweet confections there  
inside  
all still securely wrapped.  
I thought I'd try one.  
What could happen?  
Sick or dead  
I didn't care.

Now five remain  
the day is done  
and I am here to write this down.  
I found the bag  
on Rosh Hashannah  
I ate the sweet confections found.

On Rosh Hashannah  
I found sweets  
deep in the woods  
along the tracks.  
As if a gift of sweetened kindness

but they did not kill me  
I'm sad to say.

How did they get there?  
I shouldn't ask.  
The receipt with-in told purchase date:  
28  
August!  
That was the day on which my Mother  
breathed her last!

Now here on Rosh Hashannah  
in the woods I find the bag  
of holiday sweets  
on a brand new year  
bought on a date  
I can't forget.

I found a bag  
on Rosh Hashannah  
with sweet confections there  
inside.  
Their market name?  
Why  
"Kudos" they were.  
"Kudos" for what?  
I'm still alive.



Early Spring brought  
daffodils  
fresh from the earth  
into your flat  
into your life.  
In little time  
you complained  
they didn't stand tall.  
You discarded them.  
I put them back  
into the earth  
from whence they came  
out of your flat  
out of your sight.



Came early Summer.  
Fresh mulberries  
from the tree.  
I harvested  
from highest branches  
sun-shine drenched  
bursting with ripeness.

Late Summer  
wild raspberries  
brought to you  
from thorny brambles.

Mid-Summer  
I brought flowers  
from meadow close  
you'd never seen.  
Tiger lilies  
little daisies  
and more  
until...



And the seasons  
provided no more  
and neither did I...

We were both  
spent...  
thankless  
and exhausted.

# Chapter III

## DIASPORA VOICES

**T**hrown out into Winter snows

tossed out to Summer rains  
all alone and loveless  
to fend alone  
and defend alone.

Huddled together  
under over-growth  
to protect  
and be protected  
in the wilderness.  
Seated on or under old trees  
felled by years...  
now dead and lifeless.

Wary of a passing stranger  
suspicious of all those unknown.  
Don't come near.  
Don't touch.

Guiltless and condemned  
to solitary days  
and empty night.  
The rains poured down in Summer.  
Now crisp Autumn winds howl  
through empty branches...  
sh-sh-sh-she-sh...  
and the Harvest moon casts sharp shadows.  
Soon the ground will be blanketed  
with bitter white  
reflecting Winter night's  
cold blue,  
and shadows will grow deeper,  
darker,  
blue-black  
in the empty moon-light.

Huddled together  
stranger, friend, family

bound by absence of love and caring.  
Once somebody said they loved you  
but now  
out in the empty, dead forest  
nobody lies anymore.

Thrown out into the Winter snows.  
Tossed out to Summer rains.  
Nobody lies anymore.  
And when we cry against our suffering  
crisp Autumn winds howl  
through empty branches...  
sh-sh-sh-sh-sh.

Wallenberg Forest Cats  
(I am one)



At the end of the seats, beside the doors  
on an uptown number 1 train we sat  
across from one another.  
I glanced at you – Did you glance at me?  
I can only hope. – I’m hoping now.  
You wore black leather  
cap and jacket, and sneakers: yellow and black  
(if memory serves).  
I wore black nylon aviator jacket  
blue jeans and work boots...  
I was reading a book.  
At 66th you left me behind.  
Stepped off the train  
looked left, then right  
then left, then right  
and walked away  
and out of sight.  
I sat in silence  
regretting my silence – and lack of nerve...  
I sighed.  
Can you – will you  
give me a chance?  
(The memory of you won’t let me rest)  
Please let me know and give me peace  
or at least a try and happiness.  
Location: 66th and Broadway  
(Posted but never got noticed... Oh well... time moves on...)

I sit in silence  
across from you  
and I wonder:

Could some-one as good-looking as you  
possibly have any interest in some-one  
who looks like me?

And...

Could some-one as good-looking as you  
ever wonder if some-one who looks like me  
could possibly have any interest in some-one  
who looks like you?



It was an  
inconvenient pregnancy  
turned  
inconvenient birth  
turned  
inconvenient life  
turned  
inconvenient being  
turned  
inconvenient me  
til one day quite  
conveniently  
I stepped out  
into the  
sea.



*L*ove... is not infinite

When we are young,  
we give our emotions openly and so freely  
as if we believe that there will always be more to come,  
that what we give will be replaced,  
that our hearts will forever be full.

As time passes,  
falling in love happens less frequently,  
and with greater difficulty,  
with greater consideration,  
with less freedom.  
We grow cautious,  
less willing to give heart and soul away  
to another.

Some attribute this to wisdom of age,  
others to cynicism and doubt.

It would appear that  
Love is certainly not  
infinite  
and that which had been tossed into the winds if our youth  
leaves us and is gone.  
And in our increased later years,  
instinctively we hold tighter  
to whatever bit of love and bliss  
remains in our heart  
to nourish our soul  
until that moment when,  
loved or not,  
loving or not,  
we depart from this world  
taking with us  
any love that might remain.



Shifting golden sands of Judah  
shadows of deepening, darkening browns  
and hills cast images of silhouettes  
across the ancient land  
sun-set turns amber to black  
in the centre of the universe.

I have looked into your ageing eyes,  
fallen into the abyss of your pupils,  
heard the echoes of time  
in your toothless smile  
and I have been carried back  
back  
on the winds of millennia  
to when sands were new  
hills were mountains,  
when my own, now ancient traditions  
and my heritage  
were only just conceived.

Your eyes are the map,  
your words, my directions.  
I had been lost.  
You have brought me  
“Home”!



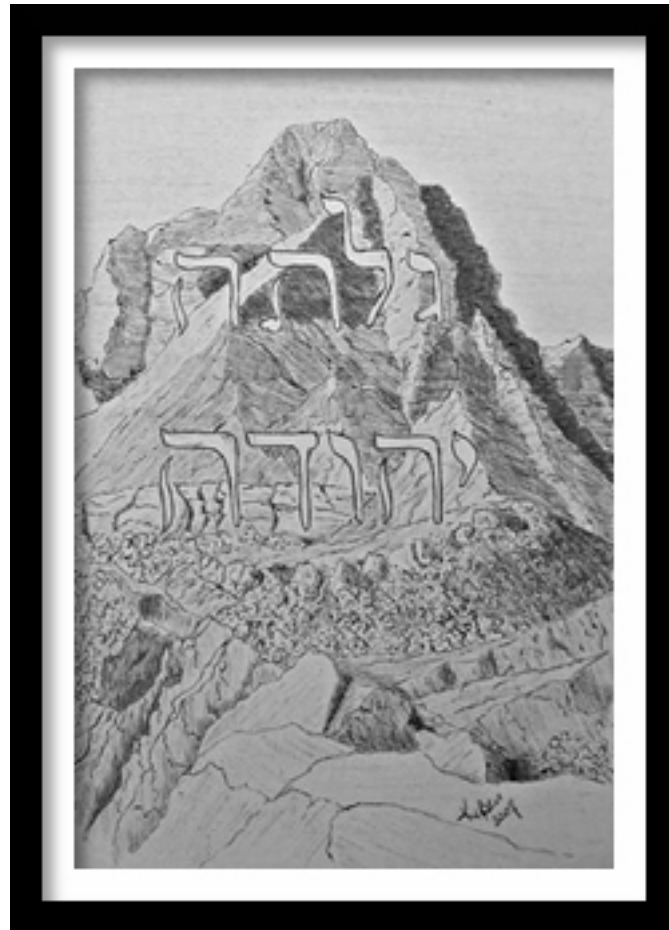
¶nto Sephardic eyes I fell,  
saw kings and queens and nomads there.  
Sands of deserts of ancient times:  
Syria, Alexandria, Israel, Judah.

Language  
ancient, foreign, new, familiar...  
Heritage  
yours  
and mine  
so similar, so same, so different...  
History  
of your People, my People, our People...  
Tradition  
dissimilarly similar...  
Our  
still.

Through your stories I wandered  
ancient sands where Hebrews journeyed.  
I saw your words dance in hot breezes  
bouncing across shifting dunes...  
I heard time-worn chants  
disappear into the distances of time  
time, all but lost  
time, all but forgotten,  
time  
all yours.

Your voice haunts like still Bedouin camps  
silhouetted in the setting sun  
and brings to life such richness  
such riches  
and you bring  
from the past  
all things ancient  
to here  
now  
all new again.

You leave your wondrous gifts for me...  
bring me back to my Home almost forgotten  
to my People.  
you bring me Home  
assure my place  
and now in your voice  
in Sephardic eyes  
I see you're leaving  
disappearing  
back, back, back  
to sand of deserts of ancient time  
Syria, Alexandria, Israel, Judah...  
Solomon.



# Chapter IV

## DUNES SOJOURNER

### DREAMS & PROSE ESSAYS

I dreamt last night  
that all was safe there:  
books and music and water-  
colours.

Through filthy window I  
glanced  
with face pressed hard against  
the pane  
into the darkness of the flat...

All was still, like death,  
covered silently  
in dust...

All was safe there  
rotting slowly  
decaying in the way my soul  
decomposes.  
All returning to the dust of  
earth  
I could smell the rot  
through crumbling frames  
of windows offering no protection.

In my mind I heard the music  
of gentle guitar  
I'll never play.  
A lyric written  
long ago...  
I can't remember it any more.

But all was safe there  
beyond that window:  
books and music and water-colours.  
All was safe there  
in the darkness...  
all was safe there...  
I dreamt last night.





donai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam\*,

to you  
I have called  
aloud  
and  
from my soul.

Yet  
my prayers, pleadings and supplications  
are rebuked  
refused  
denied  
ignored.

To blind eyes  
and deaf ears  
have all my tears  
fallen.

There is no peace.

There is only  
pain.

Upon rising  
each muscle burns.  
When I walk  
I walk  
alone.  
Each breath is laboured,  
taken in resentment.  
My body longs  
and yearns  
to cease.  
There is no rest.

No food  
nor shelter  
is provided  
though I strive  
in good faith  
and justice.



donai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam,

you are my rock  
with which I am slowly  
stoned  
yet  
not to death  
not to the peace  
of death.

My days are shrouded  
in horrid haze.  
I see  
but the mind grows numb.

When at night  
I lay my head down  
to sleep  
I am tortured by dreams  
of hurtful memories.

Even in night's quiet darkness  
there is no peace  
there is only  
pain.

In bitter cold  
have I wandered  
and under scorching sun  
have I journeyed.  
Hour after hour  
day by day  
no rest

no food  
no shelter.



donai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam,

with little exception  
has my existence  
been ruled by your laws  
in reverence.

My life, my actions  
my thoughts and deeds  
have been in accordance  
with your decrees.

When I have faltered  
it was not  
at the expense  
of others  
or the world.

Willingly  
I have been  
according to your words  
your demands  
your guidance.

You reward  
with  
torture.



donai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam,

I am tired  
worn  
at end.  
There is no one  
nothing

but  
you  
and now you  
have turned from me  
have turned against me  
I am alone  
I am nothing  
surrounded by  
nothing.

There is no peace  
there is only  
pain.



donai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam,

to you  
I have called  
aloud  
and  
from my soul...

for nought.

*\*Adonai Elhohainu, Melech haOlam,  
Lord, our God, King of the Universe - Hebrew*



## The Wave (Dream)

The wave crashed to the shore  
behind me.  
I fell to my knees  
rolled into my-self  
its water surrounded me.

As the waters retreated  
I lay prostrate not knowing  
if it had touched me  
or not.

The next wave came crashing  
I tried to escape

clawing my way up the beach  
I could not  
(having no energy  
having no means)  
the ocean surrounded  
my exhausted, spent body  
and the waves took me out  
to the open sea.

They all stood  
watching  
and  
laughing.

*I* need for them to tell me  
why  
they took you away.

*I* need for you to tell me  
why  
you left.



How did it get so lonely  
that you said you had so very few  
friends?

How did life become so vacant  
to throw you into  
him who killed you?

I never hated you.  
I was always open  
to see if you'd come back.

Time pulled us apart  
not Love  
or hate  
or any of that.

I dreamt of you  
some time before you left.

I Loved you  
still  
and wanted you.

And when you found me  
needing you

you took me to you  
laid my head upon your chest  
and drew me to you  
to comfort and console.

I was at peace.

I dreamt of you  
sometime  
before you left.

I Loved you  
still  
and wanted you.

I woke.  
You're gone.  
I came to find you.  
You're gone.

If I can hold you  
in my heart  
it's not to keep you from  
where you should be.  
If I can hold you  
in my heart  
it's so you'll never  
be alone  
be lonely  
again...  
never, never again.

I remember you lying next to me  
(Wet snow and sleet  
slamming against the window glass.)

I remember you gently holding me.  
(Bitter-cold wind howling  
through minute spaces in the door frames.)

I remember bringing you closer to me  
trying to make our bodies  
one.

You were warm  
You were my refuge  
you were my strength.

I remember the glow of the street-light  
breaking through the blind-slats  
reflected on the frozen snow.

I remember the rhythm of your breathing  
and adjusting mine to yours.  
(Dead Winter raged out-side  
all around us.)

I remember the tender rise and fall  
of your chest  
as you drifted away into sleep.

Sleet turned to snow  
wind calmed and went silent –  
you slept in my arms  
lying beside me  
in the night.

I drew you closer into me  
took you into my heart  
drew me closer to you.  
You were so warm  
so safe  
so sound.

I remember happiness.  
I remember  
Contentment.

I wake and remember...  
you're gone.

The scent of you still lingers  
clinging  
there to remind me of a moment's bliss.  
Pungent, fragrances of your body  
where my lips pressed against you  
and tongue devouringly stroked.  
I close my eyes  
raise moustached lip to nose  
and inhale deeply  
for that brief second  
we are one  
again.  
In childish reverie I vow to never wash  
to hold long and fast  
to what remains of you.  
I know the fragrance of your body  
your "secret" places and "hidden" folds,  
where I've gone and lingered  
long moments – quickly passed  
and here, and now  
some part of them are with me  
in the darkness of closed eyes  
in the brilliance of memories.  
Breath escapes in the exhale but  
the scent of you still lingers  
and I silently smile  
alone.

**Chapter V**  
**SOJOURN'S END**  
**LETTERS NEVER SENT**  
**NOR GIVEN**

Where were you yesterday

when I was...

Do you know where I was yesterday

while I was...

Do you know what I was doing yesterday

when I was with...

Do you know who I was with yesterday

when we were talking about...

Do you know what I talked about yesterday

because I was thinking...

Do you know what I was thinking yesterday

because I felt...

Do you know how I felt yesterday

when I woke up at...

Do you know when I woke yesterday

and looked at...

Do you know what I saw yesterday

which turned my day to...

Do you know how my day went yesterday

and why I was so...

and why I am so...

do you know how I was

yesterday

and how I am

today?

And yet you stand here

right beside me

telling me that you understand me

or formulating

opinions of me

claiming that you

really know me

and all the while

know nothing of me

even as recently

as yesterday.

But I know something of you  
now  
as here I stand before you.  
a little something  
most important...  
I can see, quite deep inside you  
and here and now I'm able to say  
you're quite presumptuous  
here, today  
but I don't know about  
yesterday.

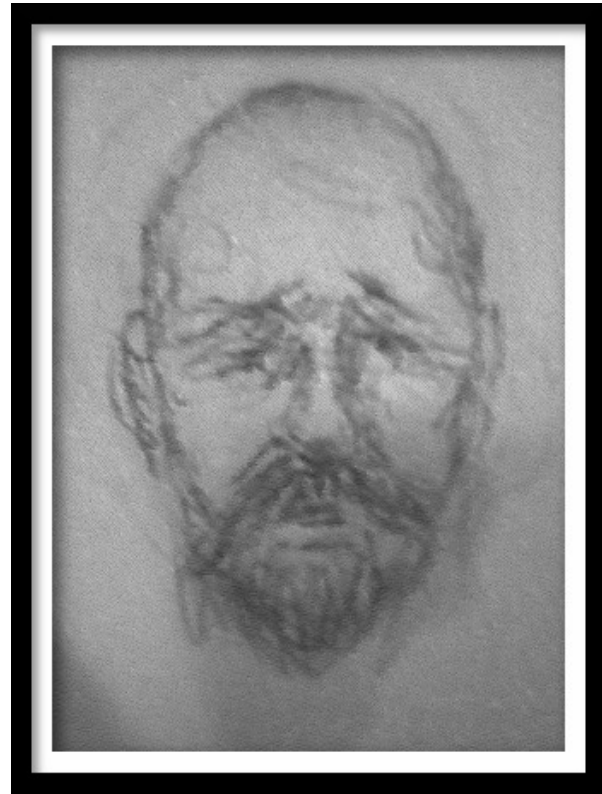


Don't look at me through the eyes  
of a feral beast  
at once  
acknowledging and hating.  
I didn't betray you  
or turn you away  
you never told me of your pain.

When we passed on the street  
cold winds howled 'round both of us  
(the bitterness of Nature never  
discriminates).  
I knew it was you  
and you knew it to be me  
but your eyes were so hollow  
and dark  
from mistrust  
and bitterness  
and hatred  
I say it all  
in a glance.

And when I called your name  
you paused  
only paused  
never stopped  
and looked at me  
not at me so much as in my direction  
and through me as if  
I wasn't there  
and the voice you heard calling out  
was only  
inside your own mind.

What I saw was you  
and the beauty that was and is  
you  
until my eyes caught your eyes  
and stunned me.



There's no warmth, no love, no joy any more.  
Those eyes have gone dark and eerie  
and bitter, and cold, and hateful.  
I know why and understand.  
I do.

But  
please  
don't look at me through those eyes gone wild.  
Don't hate or distrust me  
I didn't know then.  
If ever we meet  
again, anywhere  
take my hand,  
take my heart,  
come home,  
let me in  
let me care.



A “friend” came into my life one day  
Well,  
that’s what she called her-self anyway.

She gave me four walls and a roof over-head  
but she honestly could not offer a bed.

Tempting morsels to eat she spread  
but she took all the best right away instead.

Then sat in her chair day in and day out  
and as I grew meagre, she grew stout.

Flounced on her throne, her orders she’d bark  
from earliest sun-rise till night skies grew dark.

She wanted, she needed, she’d command me to do  
everything, anything all the while through.

When I’d clean the house or wash dishes and such  
“I didn’t ask you too...” it didn’t mean much.

And knowing that I need the money much more  
she paid some-one to work... a young girl from next-door.  
She made me feel like some old, worthless whore.

As all of my life-time when slipping away  
she surely had means to put the “auctions” at bay.

What she offered as “help” was of no good to me  
a “partial” she knew, was offered quite uselessly.

She’d pay some-one else 60 dollars per week  
but let my life go down as more havoc she’d wreak.

She accused me of pawning her father’s old ring  
and of hiding her food and any such thing.

When the tools my employment depended upon  
were ruined by quirk, she found that was quite fun.

Knowing I'm trapped now, she does what she does best:  
Nothing at all except lounge... take a rest.

She knows that I'm trapped, quite stuck with-out work  
so she grows fat in her chair, treats me like a jerk.

She derides and belittles, starts shit where there's none  
and tries all the more, my poor "life" to run.

Food is still offered but complaints soon do follow  
that there isn't much left for her to feed on tomorrow.

When I need the bathroom to use or to shower  
inconvenient it is, no matter what hour.

At sun-rise or sun-set, be-twixt and between  
when I need to use it I'm just being mean.

So I sit on the sofa and wait with mouth shut  
while stabbings and wrenchings rip holes in my gut,  
and she watches TV or talks on the phone  
behaving as if she's home all alone.

About me she talks as if I was old dirt  
and stupidly glances at me knowing the hurt.

But when I speak of it she twists and she turns  
each word that I utter til every one burns  
much deeper into me like Hell's hottest fire  
and she has succeeded in turning me into a liar.

So now here I sit on a bench in a park  
out of the house from run-rise to dark.

No-where to go, no money to get there  
as depression grows darker and turns to despair.

Waiting for death to come soon, rescue me  
and release me to peace, and from my misery.

A "Friend" came into my life one day.  
Well...

that's what she calls her-self...  
anyway.



This morning I sat  
on your sofa  
trembling  
trembling, trembling

The beasts were inside me  
attacking, attacking  
as I sat in silence  
trembling, trembling

Pain so intense, I was  
trembling, trembling  
yet in silence I sat  
trembling, trembling

Spasms surrounding me  
trembling, trembling  
steel bands contracting  
I sat  
trembling, trembling  
I daren't say anything  
trembling, trembling  
you'll twist me words round  
if I dare make a sound  
create war where there's none  
force me out in a haste  
with this pain the I hold  
to the rain – to the cold  
trembling, trembling, trembling.

On the sofa in silence I sit  
with bursting bowels  
I wait.

I hear you in adjacent room  
your flatulence rumbles  
I wait.

My body aches  
my bowels cramp  
but I wait  
sometimes for an hour  
or more.

You whine  
I sit  
silently  
in pain.  
I wait...  
until finally you rise,  
slowly meander to the loo  
to defecate  
and urinate  
I wait.

And when it's my turn  
my time to "go"  
my body has adjusted  
I can't.  
it hurts.  
I can't.  
I've waited.

But you've told others  
that I am the inconvenience.  
But I am suffering  
I am in pain.  
But I am the  
inconvenience  
and the loo  
heavily  
reeks.

The ice from last night's storm  
is melting.  
Droplettes of cold water  
fall from thinnest tree limbs.  
Even the earth  
is crying  
today.

(But I smiled and said  
"Good-morning".)

I am nought but a work-horse  
a pack-mule  
a yoked ox  
created to haul  
and other-wise serve  
until such time  
when I finally break-down  
and crumble in a heap  
to breathe no more.

This is my purpose  
to toil feverishly  
to be here  
and there  
at beck and call  
to lift and reach  
to push and haul  
to fetch and place  
until  
one day  
under weight of world  
I am crushed  
into non-existence.

I am nought but a work-horse  
a pack-mule  
a yoked ox  
serving that purpose  
thankless  
til death brings me  
peace.

*I* tried to read the book

you gave me you gave it me saying  
you thought I would enjoy reading it.  
But you snatched it from me  
like other things you gave  
allegedly  
to me saying  
you thought I would enjoy them.

When I opened up the cover  
of the book you gave  
allegedly  
began to take the printed words from the pages  
you snatched it  
the book  
them  
the words  
it  
the pleasure  
ripping it all  
from me  
from my eyes  
from my  
enjoyment  
with a click the light went out  
the room fell dark  
I could not see  
you snatched it back  
away from me

A captive trapped  
and dying,  
confined to cage  
and world  
diminishing.  
No past.  
No present.  
No future  
not even into  
the next moment.  
Trapped  
and dying...  
almost  
dead.  
All hope shrouded  
in blinding blackness.  
Bound by limitations  
set by others  
uncontrollable,  
uncontrolled,  
set by others  
set by others' whim and whimsy.  
Trapped  
confined  
and dying.  
Off and wandering  
with no destination  
no visibly attainable goal.  
Clothes thread-bare  
shoe-soles thinning  
kilometre after kilometre  
mile after mile  
basting, baking, burning  
under the sun,  
drenching, drowning  
in the rain,  
fumbling, freezing  
in the snow,  
alone...

Trapped  
and dying.

Anger grows like a carbuncle  
depression  
like a puss-filled wound  
festers.

Heart drips purulent  
yellow-green  
thoughts ooze  
blood-tinged.

Body and soul  
rot

decay...

Trapped  
and dying  
each moment filled  
to capacity  
with methods of bringing  
all  
to an end.

Fifty-two years of  
cruel suffering  
of briefest interludes of  
bitter-sweet  
reprieve.

And now, today at this moment  
I linger  
still pondering  
planning  
the end...  
a captive trapped...  
and dying  
and all the while  
you accuse  
or ignore  
me...  
a captive  
trapped  
and dying.

*L*awns were mowed

and flowers planted  
leaks repaired  
and homes made good.

Some food was brought  
and little trinkets  
from stores  
and woodlands...  
but not enough.

Not enough for  
any of you.  
Never enough.

Not enough for  
any of you.  
Never enough.

When I had  
I offered.  
You took.  
When I had not  
you wanted  
and  
discarded me.

“**W**hen you leave here on Sunday...”

Her voice, her tone,  
demanding  
definitive.

Not a suggestion that I might  
“leave here on Sunday”  
nor a recommendation that I should  
“leave here on Sunday”  
rather a statement of dispossession  
“When  
you leave here  
on  
Sunday”.



*S*un-rise comes silently

night becomes day  
another dawn  
a new beginning.

Morning light softly caresses your face  
wakening you to the sweet melodies  
of song-birds perched outside your window.

Your window – I have no window of my own.

As night's slumber leaves you  
still, yet, reclining on the softness of your bed  
your thoughts begin to stir in your waking mind...

Consider: Your bed – I have no bed.

For one moment more  
you turn your head upon the comfort of your pillow  
fluffing its volume beneath your still-heavy head...

Your pillow – mine is gone.

And you draw the sheets and blanket up  
closer, over your shoulders  
tucked tightly beneath your chin  
and you doze...

Your blanket – I have no blanket anymore.

Rising to meet this new day  
a fresh beginning of time renewed  
you ponder and consider your wardrobe  
garments in which to clothe yourself...  
a shirt – my choices are now limited to 3  
jeans or slacks – my trouser number 4  
shoes – 2 pairs I have now:  
one pair cracked and torn  
offering no protection from rain or dust  
one pair which I protect  
and yet too, are showing signs of wear.

Music today  
a tune well-learned  
lyrics remembered  
bringing with them heart-warming  
dear memories  
or the expression of feelings living deep with-in;  
a cherished CD  
a purchase or a gift  
an investment  
a simple pleasure for the here-and-now...  
Ponder, as the melody surrounds you –

ALL of my music is gone... gone.  
Music collected over 20-plus years,  
tunes spanning 50 years and more.  
Music of my child-hood,  
of my Grandparents,

from countries visited  
and lands I've only dreamed of,  
lyrics in languages I've learned,  
languages you have either never heard  
or, at best, seldom heard.  
Music out of print –  
Music bought instead of a meal.  
Music lost  
Music gone – forever now.

Perhaps, today, you'll "putter" round the house,  
that place in which you reside  
where you receive correspondences from friends,  
receive visitors,  
sit at a table with coffee.

Your house – I have none.

Arranging little mementos and decorative items  
on shelves and sills,  
those things that evoke more  
fond, sweet memories  
of events enjoyed  
in the past.  
Every memento of mine is lost  
I've not one memento of any part of my existence.

Or perhaps today  
to sit in your chair  
to view a program on the television  
or read a book of special interest.

Keep in your mind –  
I have neither chair nor sofa any more,  
my little television is gone;  
books too are now scattered about the unknown  
and  
unreachable.  
Books in English, French, German, Russian, Hebrew.  
Books of professional reference: Psychology, Medicine, Language.  
Books autographed by their authors,  
rare books no longer published or published in foreign lands.

Art books, music books, cook books...  
gone books – once my books – gone books.

From where you recline  
or stand in idle reverie  
a water-colour, hand-painted  
the original  
catches a glimmer of sunlight  
and a sparkle catches your attention,  
draws you near –  
it is the house in which you have shelter.  
Shelter from the winds and snows of Winter  
and from the rains and heat of Summer.  
I painted that picture  
and many others,  
invested my time and energy,  
imbued it and them with love  
as with all my paintings  
of history and places that gave me simple pleasures.  
I gave you that painting.  
You kept it  
and sat silently still  
as all the others  
were discarded  
by strangers.

Paintings – as with all else – gone.  
And I think of them  
one and all  
as I walk the streets through Winter snows  
or seek shelter in train stations  
against winds and rain.  
Paintings – in your house  
Paintings. House. – I have neither.

A meal, or a snack  
to calm the pangs of hunger.  
A plate, flatware and glass are set on the table.  
Preparations are made for a light repast.  
As you feed yourself  
I am praying that your mind will fill with thoughts  
as your stomach fills with food...

Table-setting – Table – I now have none.

Alas and at last  
the sun has drawn across the sky  
and has set behind the mountains to the west.  
I once called those mountains “Home”  
and to those mountains I tried to return  
and now, to those mountains, I look for peace...  
final and absolute  
Peace.

But for this evening  
as day’s light dims,  
from the comfort of your chair  
you reach  
up to your lamp to illuminate your room  
and as the switch clicks  
my soul calls out...

A lamp – I had several –  
they’re gone –  
no light in the darkness.

Stars appear in deep indigo skies above  
outside the window  
of your house.  
Your music continues to fill your room,  
your book lay still on the sofa where you left it.  
The lamp casts shadows of mementos on the shelves,  
your dishes are in the kitchen sink.  
All is fine and secure,  
no one will take any of it from you,  
it will remain safely  
where it is  
where you have put it.

Your day draws further  
and to a close  
and darkness fills the world where sunlight reigned.  
The colours of my painting  
there  
on your wall

silently die  
and fade to grey.

Sleepy, you return to your bed,  
(I no longer have my bed)  
lay your head on the softness of your pillow,  
(my pillow too, is gone)  
tug the gentleness of your blanket up over your shoulders,  
(blankets – I have none)  
you close your eyes  
and in the shelter of your home  
(I am hopelessly homeless)  
you drift peacefully  
to  
sleep.

And through this day  
from morning sun-rise  
through to  
night's star-light,  
again, and still again  
you remain oblivious  
of the destruction you have caused  
the anguish and agony you have inflicted  
the pain, sorrow and sadness you've wrought  
the life you have destroyed  
and the death  
for which YOU are responsible.  
And I have borne all  
in  
silence.

Grey.

As if sun or day-light never was,  
one large  
solitary cloud  
of deepest  
almost  
black  
drifts by  
in absolute silence.  
It was all  
Hope  
– now gone.  
It was all  
Life  
– now gone.

**T**hese are hellish, horrid days  
of hateful hating  
loathing and abhorring.  
Homeless days of endless wandering  
no destination  
to stay away.  
These are days of brilliant sunshine  
and eyes that burn and long for sleep.  
These are night of hell-fire dreams  
and silent screams  
for peaceful respite  
deferred – elusive.  
These are times of dire dread  
of knowing well that soul is dead.  
Old eyes can't focus – don't want to see  
and resented breaths continue  
endlessly.  
Atop the hill awaits the gloom  
of space not mine  
where-in you whine  
and hate me as I have learned to hate you.  
These are hellish, horrid days...  
hellish  
horrid  
days.

I'm broken-down in this stair-well tonight  
gritty, tired, burning eyes.  
This old, beaten, abused  
taken-for-granted  
body  
aches and longs for sleep.

My eyes are heavy  
my limbs are weak.  
Runny nose drips clear liquid  
into an old napkin.

I sit  
in this stair-well.  
I hear your television blasting  
even though a fire-wall.  
it's been 16 hours on the go  
on 5 hours' sleep last night.  
And no food of which to speak.

I'm broken  
broken in this stair-well  
passing the moments  
passing the time  
in this stair-well.  
You are ensconced  
situated in your recliner  
seated upon your throne.  
You don't care  
that I am broken.

You picked an argument at sun-rise  
grumbled some sort of farewell  
as I left  
16 hours ago  
and you'll pick another argument  
because that is your wont.

Soon  
but not soon enough  
I will be gone  
and you will be alone, alone, alone  
but not soon enough.  
You will sit alone, alone, alone  
all day and all day long into the night  
no one to talk with  
no one to listen to  
no one who will listen.  
Then  
I won't care  
like  
now  
you don't care.

So let your television blast and blare  
let your lights burn brightly into the night.  
Soon  
but not nearly soon enough  
I will be gone  
quite gone  
very gone  
and you will be alone  
quite alone  
very alone  
but I won't be in this stair-well  
wanting  
and so needing  
sleep...  
passing the moments  
passing the time  
in this stair-well,  
wanting to  
sleep....

**W**hen I am not with-in your sight

you've no consideration of me.  
No thought of where I might be roaming,  
no thought of my shelter  
against heat of day, burning sun or pouring rain.  
In Winter  
am I some-where warm  
protected against snow or sleet or hail?  
How is it I walk for half a day  
with slice of bread  
and bottle of water?

When I am not with-in your sight  
you may ponder and conclude  
that I am out  
in the great, vast world  
enjoying life  
and irresponsibility.

But as you sit there in your castle  
safe and sound and undisturbed,  
watching tele or on the phone,  
eating lunch or sipping tea  
thoughtless of Nature  
and mindless of me...

I have found my night-shade  
and discovered my poke-weed.  
My fare and ticket away from you  
and all that I need  
to leave this misery far behind me,  
departing from mountain-top or sea.  
Though every present moment is torture  
I know my peace is close to me.

So when I'm not with-in your sight  
drown in your bile and vitriol.  
My day is coming and my moment is near  
when I will be  
away  
from here.

Up at sun-rise  
comes the dawn  
a new day has begun  
I'm weary.  
Must begin to bolt and run  
upon the tracks of steel.

Eyes are burning  
head is throbbing  
knees too weak to hold my body.  
I've not slept for most the night  
but now I simply must take flight  
upon the tracks of steel.

Stomach churning  
the world is turning  
for one night's sleep  
my soul is yearning.  
No time to pamper  
the clock is running  
upon the tracks of steel.

Out the door and to the streets  
into the crowds of people there  
up on the bus  
with the rest of us  
who live  
upon the tracks of steel.

Down from the bus  
down from the street  
down underground  
out of the light  
into the dark and crowded train  
upon the tracks of steel.

An hour passes  
then two, then three  
and there is little left of me

beneath the earth in tunnel rock  
upon the tracks of steel.

I take my lunch amongst the crowd  
of strangers packed from side-to-side  
at lightning speed as here I ride  
upon the tracks of steel.

Sideways glances  
a push, a shove  
a beggar's stench of rotting flesh  
in these conditions I try to rest  
upon the tracks of steel.

I close my eyes against it all  
and seek a place of comfort here  
I try to rest  
perchance to sleep.  
I've eaten and read  
made subway my bed  
against the window  
I rest my head  
and hope that I will soon be dead  
upon the tracks of steel.



Standing alone

in a crowd at the bus stop  
a man with a soft voice  
begging change  
for a train  
to get to a  
shelter.

Charity begins at home.  
I knew  
too much  
too well.

Biding time  
on that corner at the end  
of the line  
in the night  
waiting for a bus  
to get to  
place I hated.

Charity begins at home.  
I knew  
too well  
too much.

These days I am living  
on a bus  
to a train  
as my  
shelter.

Charity begins with  
making certain I have  
my passage on a bus  
to a train  
for my  
shelter.

Old man  
I am homeless  
as the word homeless  
is defined.  
At a moment I too  
will be exactly like you.  
I don't have a bed  
just a place for my head.  
In the morning I shower  
at too early an hour.  
The place where I eat  
is an old subway seat.  
My clothing is worn  
and my spirit is torn.

Standing alone  
in a crowd at the bus stop  
biding time on this corner  
at the end of  
the  
line.



*M*y hands are trembling.

My bowels bind.  
My eyes refuse to focus.  
I am alone here  
in this park,  
save for bird and squirrel...  
I am  
alone.

No blue sky above today  
the sun is hidden  
behind dark grey  
in this park,  
sick of spirit,  
ill of heart.

My insides quake  
and both eyes burn  
I don't know how I am awake  
I am alone here  
in this park  
as the heavens above me  
are growing dark.

I'm hungry, tired and very weak  
and in pain I stand to walk  
don't dare to open my mouth to speak  
I am alone here  
in this park  
as biting flies  
devour my flesh.

You think it fine that I can live  
out here alone  
a fugitive.  
I am alone here  
in this park  
I'm on the run  
with-out a home.

My body is tired and needs to sleep.  
From deep with-in  
I silently weep.  
I am alone here  
in this park  
and now with blower and noise they  
come  
to push me on my way.



**H**ave you ever wondered

where I go  
when I am not  
with-in your sight?

Perhaps  
at times.

But did you ever  
ask?

Not ever.

Never.

Have you ever asked of me  
what did I eat,  
how I survive?

No.

Not ever.

Never.

Have you ever given thought  
to creature comforts  
along my way?

No.

Not ever.

Never.

Drink of water  
morsel of food  
a place to sit  
to void or defecate?

No.

Not ever.

Never.

Twelve-plus hours I am away  
on foot  
out there  
no destination.

Alone and wandering

to be away  
from favours, chores and tasks.

A goodly part of every day  
escape  
in solitude.  
I never hear my voice at all  
just the drones  
of city life.

In solitary existence  
mile on mile on  
lonely mile  
I ramble, roam and wander.

Have you ever wondered  
where I go  
when I am not  
with-in your sight?  
Perhaps,  
at times.  
But do you enquire?  
Do you care?  
Are you concerned?  
No.  
Not ever.  
Never.

(Epilogue)

I walk in through  
YOUR  
door  
at night  
long after evening has fallen.

Un-showered  
sweaty  
day's dust a shroud  
to cover  
hair to shoe.

I've travelled 50 kilometres  
and more  
while you have slept  
in easy-chair  
and you have lunched  
and you have snacked  
and you have dined  
and you have rested  
and I have travelled  
50 kilometres  
and more.

And as I enter  
all I hear  
above the roar of television:

"I will ask you..."  
"When you go..."  
"While you're up..."  
and  
"Did you move..."  
"Where did you put..."  
"What did you do with..."  
"I am in pain!"

I brought you flowers.  
You didn't ask.  
I cleaned your house.  
You didn't ask.  
I made your bed.  
You didn't ask.  
I  
washed your dishes  
fetched your mail  
sorted your clothes...  
picked-up fallen objects  
set your table  
retrieved your meds...  
You didn't ask.  
You didn't ask.  
You didn't ask.  
You didn't acknowledge.

You didn't  
thank.

Have you ever wondered  
where I go  
when I am not  
with-in your sight?

Have you ever wondered  
WHY I go?

Perhaps  
not ever...  
Never.



## 29.

On Monday I slept beneath the stars  
under a London Plane.  
On Tuesday I showered, fresh and clean  
in the midst of a Winter rain.

On Wednesday I woke with a grumbling stomach  
I hadn't eaten in days.  
On Thursday my dinner – al fresco but canned,  
swiped from a dumpster in starvation's haze.

By Friday my clothing was soiled and worn  
my skin began sinking and hanging on bone.  
On Saturday kids came – threw bottles at me  
and the policemen kept yelling "Go HOME!".

Came the dawning of Sunday morning  
and all took a turn for the best:  
By Sunday evening  
just shortly past sun-set  
I'd laid down  
closed my eyes  
for my longed-for and yearned for  
Peace...  
in my final rest.



There is a figure

standing silent  
in a lighted window  
in the night.

A woman's silhouette  
staring, staring  
down to streets silent  
empty  
void  
save for empty  
silent  
cars parked down below  
five storeys.

There is no-one  
on the streets  
behind her in her home  
beside her in her life.  
She is  
alone.

Days have passed.  
She's heard no voice  
not others  
nor  
her own.

Weeks have passed.  
She has been single  
silent  
solo  
all alone.

She is looking  
staring  
searching  
the dead-void street below,  
for even one some-one  
(he used to stand just there)  
but there is nothing

and no-one  
and she is alone.

Days have passed  
and have passed  
a life-time gone  
and now...  
it's memories  
and phantasies  
and a figure standing  
standing silent  
in a lighted window  
in the night  
staring  
staring  
empty  
void.



I stand, exhausted, in the cold.

A day of work – hard work – is done.  
There's no looking forward to going "home"  
to a hot meal, drink, a shower, sleep.  
There's no  
"home"  
to go to.

It's half-past 10 in night's late darkness and  
I stand, exhausted, in the cold.  
A day of work – hard work – is done.  
There's no looking forward to going "home"  
to a hot meal, drink, a shower, sleep.  
There's no  
"home"  
to go to.

Like a scavenging beast

I rush to eat  
what remains of remains  
remain  
of left-overs  
bitten from  
chewed on  
spat out,  
from some old napkin  
or garbage pail.

For fresh food  
I lunge  
before pissy fingers probe.  
I devour before  
you gag and spit  
and vomit bits  
un-swallowed.

While you feast beside me  
my empty stomach burns  
filling with acid  
digesting only the aroma  
of your luscious menu.

Sitting on a toilet  
behind closed door,  
bread and coffee are consumed  
as  
bread and coffee are eliminated.  
My breakfast  
in privacy.

Sometimes you offer  
good morsels and meals  
only to take  
and take  
and take  
well before I've begun.  
You take the best

leave me  
the rest.

Like a scavenging beast  
gone wild  
I rush to eat  
what remains of remains  
remain.



I am tired

my eyes are heavy  
my dreams are dark  
my heart is lead.

My body aches  
my thoughts are laden  
my "life" is ended  
my soul is dead.

We take our meals  
as the wheels roll beneath us  
and mile after mile  
of cold steel track passes by.

We are alone  
but in a crowd  
there are many around us  
and  
many more who surround us,  
sit beside us  
across from us...  
strangers, all...  
who stare at us  
but will not speak with us.

We do not eat in comfort.  
No table before us,  
no proper chair beneath us.

We eat...  
quickly  
not looking up.  
We eat  
rapidly  
not tasting.  
We eat  
alone  
surrounded  
by strangers...  
crude strangers  
who do not know us  
and  
who do not care.



Why do you ask “How are you?”  
when, in reality, you really don’t care to know?  
There’s no requisite  
no protocol  
no obligation of conversation.  
There’s no need nor necessity  
to enquire about my being  
well or other-wise.

You don’t care – don’t want to know.  
I understand. I know.  
So  
do not ask,  
making an idiot of your-self  
and trying to make  
a fool  
of me.

You don’t want to know.  
I don’t care to tell.

I used to sing  
and spew my soul.  
I danced  
like a dervish on dope.  
I let my spirit loose  
to roam free through the ether  
then come home to me  
renewed  
alive.

And now  
I sit  
in silence  
as my soul and spirit  
wither  
and die.

There's no more music  
and no more rhythm  
and I rot  
from my inside  
out.

Oft have we played

at hide and seek  
or peek and boo  
as children  
free of malice  
and free to laugh  
in our follies.

And now  
as elders  
adults  
still the games engage  
as our hearts  
our thoughts  
minds and intentions  
are coy-and-shrewdly  
presented  
only in fragment  
to be withdrawn  
in seconds  
with-out notice  
or warning.

Laugh or scowl  
we retreat  
taking our sought  
leaving our boo  
to play again  
another day  
another time  
until it becomes  
too late  
to  
play  
again.

Never forget

Never forgive  
Forever beyond  
as long as I live.

There's no more tomorrow  
you stole that away.  
And yesterday's  
wiped clean  
there's no trace of me left.

You took it  
all  
and walked blithely away  
with no thought  
no concern.  
I'm  
gone.

I have consciousness  
and little mass.  
I stop breezes,  
block sun.

I have shadow.  
I am a shadow.  
I am a remains.  
I have pain.

As clothing becomes thread-bare  
so too does my soul.  
Like leaves turn to soil  
I return to the earth.

There's no more tomorrow.  
You stole that away.  
And yesterday's  
wiped clean  
there's no trace of me left.

Never forget  
Never forgive  
Forever beyond  
as long as I live.

Do you have any idea  
of what it's like  
to out-live all  
of those whom you have loved?

All of those fires  
that burned as brightly,  
blazed as brilliantly  
and as hot  
as a Summer sun-set  
burns into the end of days,  
but now tend more  
as gentle memories  
of light  
little sparks of what once was Hope  
that someday  
maybe  
it could be re-kindled  
even if only for the briefest while,  
even if only to provide  
closure  
so that I could tell just how much I'd loved  
and maybe say  
good-bye.

But I've been denied  
because they've gone  
and left me behind.  
They left, still young  
and I continue to grow old  
and I continue to recall  
and at moments I continue to re-live  
and all the while  
I continue to mourn  
and wail  
silently.

Now  
you too are leaving.

I can't touch you as I did.

I can't even reach you as I've always wanted to.  
There's another sun-set coming  
and your cast shadow is growing longer  
as you begin to disappear into the surrounding darkness  
to join the others...  
and I'll be left  
alone...  
surviving.

You're the last one, you know.  
None will be here after you've gone.  
You're the last.

But as you leave,  
look over your shoulder please?  
And when you arrive  
"there"  
tell them I'm on my way.  
Because  
unless it comes that I leave before you  
I will be following shortly behind  
because  
nobody knows what it's like  
to out-live all those  
you have loved,  
nobody who is left  
anyway.

There is no heart for the tin-man,  
no courage for the lion.  
There is no brain for the scarecrow,  
no home for Dorothy  
and Toto too.

There is no great Wizard  
of awesome powers.  
There is no God of mercy.

The days grow short,  
the nights grow cold  
and there is no peace  
for me.

08.12.February

I am standing on a train platform at Coney Island,  
as the snow falls.

It is evening. I have come out from where I began an hour and a half ago.

The subway is, in fact, my home now.

It is where I am sheltered from the elements,  
where I eat my meals,  
read my books,  
take my sleep.

It is snowing and the Verazanno Bridge rises,  
bringing cars into no-where and  
off the edge of the world into nothing.

Here, there is Coney Island,  
the board-walk and then...  
nothing.

The grey of falling snow becomes deeper, darker.

It is late evening.

I am cold, tired, alone.

The train arrives at my destination.

It is a destination I have contrived.

The snow is falling. The streets are empty.

I disembark out, out onto the platform,  
descend the stairs.

The side-walks are gone,  
disappeared beneath a blanket of soft, white snow.

There is no pavement beneath my feet.

But it is quiet now. I am off the train so I walk.

To the corner and turn to the beach,  
in the cold, in the snow and to the library here,  
where I have spent many hours before.

I enter through the door. It is familiar now, it is warm in here.

There are voices speaking.

It is familiar now,  
they speak Russian.

Some read books. The books are printed...  
in Russian. It is warm here.

It is dry here. It is Russian. It is familiar.

But my ears hiss.

They hiss from the constant noise of the train.

They hiss from the constant noise of a television, set too loud.

I am exhausted.

I am exhausted from the constant moving,  
the constant running,  
the constant yelling,  
the constant fighting,  
especially when there is no reason for the fighting,  
save her incessant stupidity and her need to fight...  
with me.

I am exhausted.

My eyes burn from the fatigue.

It is late evening. It is snowing.

Cold winds blow and the grey of snow-gorged cloud  
grows deeper until finally,

it becomes black

and evening becomes night

and I will be back on a train,

in the noise,

returning to a place

that is not,

cannot be,

home,

to fight again,

for no reason.

And for now, for here,

I am warm, it is familiar,

it is Russian here,

at the end of the land,

at the end of the continent,

at the end of the world.

Here,

in this familiar Russian end of it all,

it is warm and there is no fighting,

there is no meaningless,

unnecessary

fighting.

I am thirsty,

I am painfully exhausted,

but I am some-what...

at peace.

# 34.

I will take my medication  
and find my peace in great salvation  
as the open sea surrounds  
and the might breaker pounds  
the shore-line where I gently doze  
in silent wait for sweet repose  
while gentle Summer breezes  
and brilliant sun-set eases  
the pain that haunts my day and night  
blurs my vision  
dulls my sight  
to where I can no longer cope  
with life so miserably devoid of hope  
and so have taken to my chair  
upon this shore-line free of care  
and woes  
where with the break of dawn  
the mem'ries, pain  
and I'll  
be gone.





Begotten of my parents  
Diaspora\*, my Mother  
Galut\*, my father...  
Children themselves  
of blind Jews  
I am not here for a long time  
but I am here for eternity  
and here in infinity  
I will never be known  
and I will never be forgotten.

\*Diaspora: A dispersion of a people from their original home-land

\*Galut” The dispersion of Jews outside of Israel from the 6th century BCE when they were exiled to Babylonia until the present time.

## IMAGES NOTES

9. I heard Gaston Call  
Jetty and Atlantic Ocean: Gaston,  
Rockaway, NY
10. I travel over water  
Waves, Atlantic ocean: Gaston,  
Rockaway, NY
11. Come to greet me, great bird of the sea  
Pilings, Fort Tilden beach, Rockaway, NY
13. I came to the beach so not to speak  
View of the Atlantic shore, from the top of  
bunker 315, Fort Tilden, Rockaway, NY
16. Brighton - The children came early  
Sand castle reference; Brighton Beach, NY
19. One set of foot-prints  
Jetty, Fort Tilden beach, Rockaway, NY  
Original sketch: coloured pencil
20. I wrote a note  
Winter, dunes, Fort Tilden beach,  
Rockaway, NY
22. He walked quietly  
Crosswalk Nr.3, Fort Tilden beach,  
Rockaway, NY
23. I probably shouldn't say so  
Image: Original station sign, Beach 67th St.  
Gaston Ave., IND "A" Far Rockaway train,  
NYC MTA. Over-layer: Gaston rock jetty.
24. (I probably shouldn't say so)  
View South, from Broad Channel station  
NYC "Rockaway Shuttle" Jamaica Bay
26. Blood-red crimson and orange hang  
Sun-set, Rockaway Beach, NY
28. I still sit in the park  
"The White House" at "The Top" of  
Downing Park, Newburgh, NY.  
Original water-colour.
29. I found a bag  
View of the New Jersey "Palisades" from  
"Riverdale Park", Hudson River shore,  
Riverdale, The Bronx, NYC.  
Original ball-point pen sketch
32. Early Spring brought daffodils  
(1) Day lilies (2) African violet  
(centre) Ms. Margot B.; Flowers were gifts  
given to Ms. B, subject of this piece.
35. Wallenberg Forest Cats  
Wood and soil stair-way, Riverdale Park  
across from Wallenberg Forest park,  
Riverdale, The Bronx, NYC  
Original ball-point pen sketch
39. Shifting golden sands of Judah  
"Galta Yehudah":  
Original ball-point pen sketch
41. Solomon  
"Galta Yehudah 2"  
Original ball-point pen sketch
43. I dreamt last night  
Original photograph of the author
48. The Wave (Dream)  
Composite photo: Gaston, Rockaway, NY
56. Don't look at me through the eyes  
Portrait of the author, pencil sketch by  
Morris Greenberg, of most blessed  
memory; with loving thanks.
69. Sun-rise comes silently  
Original water-colour of the house owned  
by those who inspired the piece. Hudson  
Valley, New York state.
81. beneath the earth in tunnel rock  
Night view of Metro-North rail tracks  
taken from station shelter/over-pass,  
Riverdale Station, Riverdale, The Bronx
85. Have you ever wondered  
Boardwalk, East-ward view, Beach 118th  
St., Rockaway, NY
88. Perhaps not ever... Never.  
Boardwalk, West-ward view, Beach 120th  
St., Rockaway, NY
89. No.29 On Monday I slept beneath the start  
Photo of the tree in Fort Tilden, Rockaway  
where the author "resided" during his  
"Homeless" period. (\*Destroyed by  
Hurricane Sandy)
94. We take our meals  
Elevated tracks, Rockaway Park shuttle,  
NYC MTA, Beach 90th Street-Holland,  
West-ward view toward Rockaway Park
105. For: No.34 I will take my medication  
Original pencil sketch of solitary beach  
chair on Fort Tilden beach, Rockaway;  
Sketch inspired by the piece of prose.
106. Begotten of my parents  
Digitally manipulated portrait of the  
author, pencil sketch by  
Morris Greenberg, of most blessed  
memory; with loving thanks to him and  
to his caring wife, Evelyn.

*Dear Reader,*

*Because of the subject matter and format of this publication, I understand that the material may, at times, read most dark and depressing. However, please remember that these pieces were written at a particular moment in time and may, to some, evoke sadness, whilst to others, hope.*

*I want to personally thank you for purchasing this work. Over the course of my life-time, I'd written MANY pieces of "prose essay" (as they were called by my high-school teacher). For most of my life-time, I held dearly to the many note-books that contained not only the pieces written, but the memories that went with each. These works are captured moments in time, as well as compilations of words. Sadly, all but these pieces collected here were stolen, along with the original art-works that are represented. So you see, this isn't merely an "Anthology" of works, it's my presentation to you and to the rest of the world, of those moments, the memories, the words and the art-works that have meant so much to me, and that I will carry in my heart... forever.*

*Thank you, most sincerely, for your purchase of this "Anthology". And please know that there is a "companion" of sorts, to the latter chapter of this work. "Journal Days" is a "journal-novel" recorded from time actually spent as a resident in a New York City shelter for the Homeless. It is first-hand experience of daily "existence", and may be of equal interest.*

*With sincerest gratitude to you,*

*Judah A. Kessler*



Judah A. Kessler was born in Cornwall, in the Mid-Hudson Valley, in New York State and lived, most of his life, in The Bronx, New York City. He has, as well, resided in the Middle East and Canada. He currently resides in Northern New England, on the Canada border.

Kessler was educated at Dutchess County Community College NY, The New School for Social Research NY in Psychology and at Elizabeth Seton /Iona College NY in Ethics and Nursing.

He was part of the founders of "The New Hudson River School" of art and was an archival water-colourist, producing many works of historical authenticity in conjunction with intensive and extensive research and was amongst the New York City, Zucotti Park "Occupy Wall Street" demonstration. He speaks 9 languages.

Kessler appeared on Anne Barbano's The Next Frontier, 27 October 2011, where he discussed at some length, the concept of "Working Homeless".

In a time of #OccupyWallStreet (Twitter hashtag) Anne found two men who exemplify a condition the nation is experiencing... a working homeless articulate guy from a shelter in NYC... Their stories and voices are compelling... (41 minutes)"

<http://www.annebarbano.com/audioplay.php?idinterview=21>

This "Dunes Sojourner", Kessler's second publication, is a collection of prose essays, written over the course of some years, from the Shawangunk Mountains through the park-lands of The Bronx, to the shores of Rockaway and Fort Tilden in New York where Kessler has resided.

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