

Baruch ha ba
B'shem Adonai;
The Crucifixion

-an excerpt
((not published))

To the soldiers, the crowd was a minor annoyance, but, to Jesus, peering fearfully out at the people from behind outspread fingers, the crowd was a living nightmare. It was like a living organism, a many-headed Hydra, He thought, with one heart, one mind and one body, all bent on tearing me to bits. Back in Nazareth, I was at least a man. I could hold my head up. People knew my name, my place. I had a purpose, a meaning, a life. I am no longer a man among men but a dumping ground for every bad feeling, every sin that has existed in the world since the fall of Adam. Yes, I saw dear Adam's glorious, light-filled face become twisted and contorted with a lustful spirit, looking at Eve as if she were a receptacle rather than a human being, made in my image.

Although the crowd seemed endless to the tormented man, in actuality, it was not as great as the two million pilgrims thronging the streets for the Feast of the Passover. Not all had heard Jesus speak and not all were concerned with Him, whoever He claimed to be, since Jesus was considered by many as part of the fringe element; one of the many self-proclaimed Messiahs who came before and after His birth. However, there were close to one hundred thousand pressing in to catch a glimpse of Him.

As for the form of punishment itself, crucifixions were, after all, a daily event near the holy city, usually of concern only to immediate family and friends. Because of the many small wildfire riots erupting sporadically in Jerusalem, the Romans sought to make examples of the young Zealots to teach their compatriots a lesson. It served, however, only to make martyrs of the young men, inspiring more cocky young men to join up with the hothead zealots. The injustice of a Jew being punished according to Roman law, rather than according to their own laws, which did not permit crucifixions, fed their own spirits of rebellion. Ironically, the Zealot's guerrilla tactics are what brought the might of the Roman Empire down upon the city of Jerusalem, utterly destroying it.

The crowd blurred in Jesus' eyes and seemed to morph into one gaping, leering obscene cavern that went on forever, down into the void of the nether world. Hearing the screams of the damned, some part of His logical mind realized it was not the screams of the damned but the screams of other Jews berating His person, especially His physical body, as if it were a crime to possess one. Hearing cries of unbearable pain and sorrow, He realized again, the cries came, not from hell, but from those who loved Him and from His own mouth.

"Die! You son of a bitch. Son of a whore!" screamed a self-righteous carpet dealer.

Jesus heard the many different catcalls like many different daggers in His heart, striking from all directions, all at once. He clutched His heart, feeling it contract with pain, although the source was emotional rather than physical.

Is this me, He thought, are they speaking to me? What have I done? My people, what have I done, that you should hate me so? No, I'm the only one, He glanced around furtively, it must be me they are yelling at. Do I exist? I thought. I thought I was a person. I thought I was a human being. I guess I was wrong.

I thought I was helping people. I must have been wrong. What have I done? Oh, my people, tell me my sins that I might repent of them and be close to you once again. Was it the blind man? Bartimaeus? Or the leper? The feeding of the five thousand? For which of these do you condemn me now?

"Look at Him now. Save yourself, IF you can." Yelled one of the priest's hired men.

Jesus cringed, overwhelmed with unrealistic guilt, hating Himself, hating His body, taking the accusations deep into His soul, the

quintessential victim for all the past and future victims of abuse from the day the world began. Carrying those emotions which would be thrust upon others from injustice, He essentially freed all victims of the need to carry burdens of false guilt . . . of blaming themselves for their mistreatment.

"Bore Olam, punish this liar for His iniquity." Said a money changer, still smarting in his spirit for losing a day's profits when Jesus had overturned his table.

"King of the crucifix!" shouted a young, apple-cheeked boy, having fun playing a role in the drama, imitating his elders to perfection, his innocent eyes alight with malicious glee.

"King of the Jews." Sneered a wizened Phoenician sailor, sun-burnt and wrinkled from his many years at sea.

Yes, king, thought Jesus ironically, disparaging Himself, I'm a king all right. King of hell, experiencing everything those in hell live through each sunless, endless day. All is panic, and disorder down there in the super heated bowels of the earth. It is just the opposite to the orderly, peaceful heaven I planned for this world. Even the wild birds, the sky and the trees seem frightening to me this day, as if all of creation were turned inside out, mocking its creator. Jesus experienced the

feelings a person has moments before they go completely mad. Jesus carried their panic, confusion and self-hate perfectly, bearing it for them.

I am the vomit of this earth, the Lord thought, echoing the thoughts of souls who would be soaked in despair down through the ages. Yes, I am the dirty, diseased dog whose running sores infect everything it touches. My, my flesh. It ripples in fear, He thought, trying to control it as many a victim of Aids or other terminal diseases feel when the end is near. I smell fear. I taste its bitterness. I am covered in the bile of this world. I can see or imagine or feel nothing good, no, nothing kind. Nothing loving.

All is blackness, He thought, in perfect identification with prisoners locked up in solitary confinement and those imprisoned by their diseases to a point of almost total helplessness. I'm falling into deeper and deeper realms of darkness, He thought, weighed down with every mental illness and irrational thought ever existing.

Death calls to me. It yearns after me. It has become me. I am become degradation itself. Unclean. As a rotting corpse. Soiled. As if I were awash in sewage, He thought, identifying with victims of sexual

abuse. I can't. I can't keep my thoughts straight. They confuse me. I'm bad.

I must be evil to receive this punishment, He thought in a dazed manner, again identifying with victims of perversion, especially children. I'm flawed. Odd. A freak. . . a reject and failure. I can't do anything right. I deserve this. No. No. No, I don't. Father! God, where are you? I can't . . . I can't put all this together.

Sanity has become insanity. Why are they all laughing and smiling at me while my back is on fire with pain. Am I crazy? Are they? Day has become night . . . black clouds roil around like angry bulls, stamping and pawing the ground. No, no, it's the people who are stamping and raising the dust. Why? I can't remember why. Is my body now a filthy disease that must be eradicated? My fault, it must be my fault, His thoughts tumbled one upon the other like wind blown sand. I'm losing it here.

Am I the rabid dog? Or are they? Too many, too many of them. And I, alone. Where is John? Where is my lion, my Peter? Have they killed my friends too? Oh, so lonely. The breath of my body is putrid. I am putrid. Where is the love of God? What is my life without love? Help

me to endure, Father, not to lose my mind, He prayed silently as many a child victim of an adult molester prays.

“King of the worms. Har. Har. He’ll make a sorry feast for His subjects.” Joked a robust, handsome Jew who was studying to be a rabbi.

“That bastard - calling Himself equal to God. Everyone knows His mother slept around before she was married, committing chillul ha-shem against the name of God. Son of a whore!” Old Levi spat out the words, full of righteous indignation, borne of long familiarity with Christ and His family.

Jesus recognized old Levi’s voice, the voice that had so often praised Him as a child for learning the Torah so well. The Lamb of God glanced fearfully over at the old man. A tear slid down the divine countenance at the look of pure hatred the old man shot over to Him. Levi looked tired. He looked like he had been up many nights, praying and fasting and seeking the truth. He leaned on his gnarled olive wood cane and shook a finger warningly at Christ.

Jesus shrank into Himself and turned His face away from the old man. My, my mother, He thought. Why not leave her out of it? Never once did she speak of Levi in other than the kindest of terms.

When the old man was bedfast, she brought him hot food. As long as Levi felt she had properly 'repented', he was willing to tolerate, even, God Bless him, 'forgive' her for her 'great sin' - yeah, right, great sin of conceiving me.

But the day and the hour and the moment she stood up in synagogue and spoke unashamedly of who I really am, after so many years of silence, that was the day his heart was blocked to her, calling her proud and a liar and crazy. It was never easy for her, from the dirty barn to the flea-bitten journey to Egypt.

Thank God Joseph is dead, the Lord thought, else he would have covered my body with his own, dying to defend me as he always lived to protect us. Yes, Jesus mused, His rationality a gift from on high, thank God for Joseph's peaceful death, soon after I entered into my ministry.

Yes, the Lord thought, Joseph died happy, in his own subdued, reticent way. Joseph passed over robust and full of years. He was kept by his righteousness even as Moses, eyesight never dimmed, nor his step faltering. At death, his body shone with the life of God so that it appeared as if the blood was still warm and running through his body. Just about everyone that came to see him tried to 'wake him up.'

"P-tuii. He makes me want to vomit. Just look at Him, the miserable son of a bitch." Yelled another old "friend" from Nazareth.

"Where is your God now? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob stands with us - for we alone are tzaddiks. You son of Satan, spawn of darkness, you imposter, you." A priest exclaimed, smiling broadly, ever thankful to be of the tribe of Levi, from which all the priests came. Yes, he thought proudly, lucky for me, I was marked before birth to serve God just as this man was marked before birth by His mother's sin to defy God.

He pondered briefly, looking back down the corridors of time to the long line of priests from which he had sprung. Not one, not one of my ancestors failed God, he thought smugly. Our hearts are branded with the star of David, as true servants of Israel and Jehovah.

"Oh, no, you are wrong. He's not a demon. He is human enough. Just give me a chance to kick that crummy bloated head in and you'll see some more blood." A temple guard snarled.

Jesus quivered ever so slightly, again one with all victims since time began and beyond, to the end of time; experiencing it with and for them. Jesus imaged the rivers of blood flowing down the alters in the temple; the stench of the dying animals and their peculiar high-pitched wails of pain as their throats were cut.

In His omnipotence, He also saw the future destruction of that same temple, the alter area ankle-deep in human blood, the blood of the priests and innumerable Jews skewered by Roman swords like meat on a barbeque spit.

He saw the abomination of unholiness, the twelve hundred pound sow dragged and forced up to the sacred alter, squealing all the while its throat was sliced by the Romans, forcing the priest's hands to be washed in its blood.

The sow's blood running down the once sacred horns of the alter caused the Orthodox Jews to rip out handfuls of their own beards in utter horror of the blasphemy. The Roman soldiers split their sides laughing, using the brazen bowls set aside for ritual handwashing to scoop up the warm blood and throw it over the cowering Jews, just to watch them jump as if they had been burned.

Yes, my blood, Jesus thought, this day my blood will be as that sow's blood to all the Jews, unclean, repulsive and yet, their eyes desire a spectacle, an entertainment and beyond entertainment, someone to punish for their not being able to keep the law perfectly. Ironically, it is not my blood that is unclean, it is theirs, forever tainted by hidden sins of the heart that no man can divest himself of.