

Poems in Remembrance

Cu drag pentru fiii mei români și fice
(With love for my Romanian sons and daughters)



rabbi morganescu



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The Ache

That Strange Gate

Why is it now, my soul is moved
to taste of your gracious love,
when all before it seemed cold and dead,
though my eye could see so much,
of your glorious grace.

Yes, now my soul drinks deeply,
the river is lively and flowing.
it tastes sweet.
but the gateway is the ache,
 of rejection,
 of appearing foolish,
 of knowing one can't convince

My lips wax not eloquent, but slippery,
my heart knows little of boldness,
it caves in to timidity,
my lips are silent,
but my eyes see you, your hand by mine.

O that you would keep me in such sweet place,
under your wings
to know my broken ways,
this is true joy.

Don't let me go,
pursue me deeper still.
then I shall tell of your gracious love to the saints,
especially those who hold you dear,
those simple ones, whom I love.

O to be swallowed up in Thee!

Brian Morgan
First poem, April 1989

D e a r e s t I o n a t a n

So they hate us,
me, the feigned foreigner
of west's disdain
because of my flagrant freedom
which spills out over my cup
I cannot contain,
and you,
the poet, their Jew
they cannot constrain
to leave thy holy orders
etched in the softest flesh
of poet's visioned heart
whose lofty single touch
sought me to save
from my deep grief alone,
and sinewed my every bone
complete
and enlarged my goyim heart
to find Him,
my shining distant light,
in the East,
a dream of mystery it was
and sweet beyond compare.



Marc Chagall ~ The Martyr, 1940

So they hate us,
me, the tainted foreigner
and you,
the poet, their all embracing Jew.
From my deep grief alone,
I weep because I may speak
freely of our dream-like love
which gave me back my soul,
but you, their Jew,
must sleep slain by slander's
deafening blows.
But while you sleep,
each day, I awake
make vow and holy pledge to stake
my new found poet's soul
to silent serve,
loving you all my days, until He come,
and with those modest smiles that beam
upon your gentle face
transform my life into a dream
my dream to life and grace.
The poet "has the last word,
not to mention the silence after"

Remember

Presence gone
absence abiding
our face falls
and our hands fall limp

Groping for you
we remember that
all embracing touch
when deep called to deep

In vain we gaze ahead
for one fleeting glimpse of Thee
just one ray of light
how long will you hide your face from me

The ache
turns us behind
to carve out "a crevice
in time"

Out of the "nerve of sacred memory"
we reenact Thee
with more color and praise
in full view of all

Past and future meet
kiss, embrace
our souls resonate and play
alive with your abiding presence.

Brian Morgan
April 2, 1996

Children Lost and Saved

Bring Him Home

In appreciation for my son, David Jonathan Morgan

“The beloved gift of God, born by the sea”

October 26, 1975 - November 4, 1975

“God on high, hear my prayer
In my need, you have always been there.
He is young, he is afraid,
Let him rest, heaven blessed
Bring him home, Bring him home.”

“A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping,
Rachel is weeping for her children:
she refuses to be comforted,
because they are no more.”

“Return your voice from weeping
And your eyes from tears;
For your work shall be rewarded,” declares the LORD,
“And your children shall return to their territory.”

But I have spent my strength in vain.
What chaos is this—that your life perfected in secret,
returns to the dust before I could reward you with earthly joys?
“O my son David, my son, my son, would I had died instead of you!”

Grief bore a window into my steel heart,
ache became light’s channel of another place.
Now I long to be where you dwell, knowing
I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.

You made my soul a lyre,
and placed in it new strings,
to play a tune of broader range,
than can ever be sung on earth.

I cannot sing the song yet,
but in my wanderings as a stranger here,
the God of Mt. Moriah has lifted the veil
and for a few moments I have stood there.

What I have seen the eye cannot tell,
but over the horizon my heart has heard,
you singing in harmony with the Son,
not alone, but in a symphony of boys.

God on high, heard my cry—"Bring him home."
He brought him home,
not my home, but his,
not one son, but many.

So I am content to continue my journey here,
not begetting but adopting
the orphans of every race
to join the procession Home.

Let it Rain

In appreciation for our daughter, Jessica Lynne
November 30, 1976 - December 4, 1976

O Jessica, nine months we waited
For your precious hidden frame
To break through the darkness
And turn our souls into day.

Unto us it was given,
Morning came, its dawn so bright,
It loosed our sackcloth,
And girded us with light.

Your form so pure,
Yours the sweetest gaze
A mother's dream,
A father's praise.

Then on the third night
While I slept, you cried
Your mother held you tight,
She knew, but it was hidden from me.

All through the darkness
she cared for you
Then gently laid you upon the altar,
She knelt beside those well-hewn
stones and wept.

Then I heard
the shophar's¹ ringing cry...

Terror struck, "Impossible!" I cried,
"Could it be to walk this way again
Conception to pain, never to regain
When the first born, has already paid?"

I pulled back, withdrew
Traumatized by the pain I already knew
I could not stay and watch
For now I knew.

My eyes could not gaze on your little tent
Which would all too soon,
Be broken down and laid to rest,
In the earth rather than upon a breast.

Waves of grief came crashing down,
Heaven was calling through the rain,
"Pour out your heart like water,"
But I turned and left, numb from pain.

O Jessica, nine months we had waited
For your precious hidden frame
To break through the darkness
And turn our souls into day.

O Jessica, O Jessica, where are you now?
Where did the Sower plant the seed,
I long to know
But it is hidden from me.

¹ "shophar" – a ram's horn used in Israel for a call to worship
Poems in Remembrance

O could I now go back,
And that dark hour relive,
When you lay limp and still,
I would be your papa and give.

I wanted to forget,
it was easy to forget
but I could not forget
You my first precious daughter,
Jessica Lynne.

Sixteen years past,
And in my wanderings here
I came across that valley again,
It was raining.

This time I did not turn away
But obeying heaven's command,
I knelt beside the stones
And stayed until dawn's early light.

O Holy night, angels sang,
The grip of night grew limp,
He appeared
And each soul felt its worth.

He did not turn away
Traumatized by pain
But stretched out His hand
And placed it into the flame.

Beyond His hand I saw
The wrist - impaled by my spear
Pierced so deep with wounds
Yet draws me near.

Beyond the wrist, His gaze,
O that gaze, ablaze
with such love it burst my breast
evoking deepest praise.

O death where is your victory,
O grave where is your sting?

Captured with awe,
I stared and stared
And then I knew,
That when I left,
He had cared for you.

O Jessica,
"Hardly your life clear forth
of heaven was sent,
Ere it broke out
into a smile and went.
So swift thy days,
a gift to us was lent
You, now a daughter
and saint inextricably blent,
Will one day teach your father
in some heavenly tent."²

² Adapted from George MacDonald's, *Diary of an Old Soul*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), 131.
MacDonald also lost a son and a daughter.
Poems in Remembrance

Christmas JOY

In Appreciation to God for our daughter
Rebecca Noelle Morgan
on her graduation from Homestead High School
June 8, 1995

Clothed in darkness
shrouded with pain
my soul poured out like water
drenched by heaven's rain.

Was it not enough to journey to Moriah
to leave our first born, days from his birth
that he might reign above
an angel not destined for earth?

But now death's dark shadow crushed my chest
to steal again the light of day and with it, dreams
and to stand before an empty crib, silence screams
no daughter to place upon a breast.

Would our home never hear an infant's cry,
or see a mother's gaze enfold a child
for whom she feeds,
would I never ever be a dad on earth?

But God,
bent the heavens and came down.
He heard the cry of this poor couple
and considered our low estate.

And did he delay? Not even for a day!
Before Jessica found her place of rest,
he sent a messenger to pray,
"By Christmas LORD, and do not delay!"

With such strange inward stirrings
we knew a baby was on the way.
And while we waited expecting you,
he turned our darkness into day.

He bent the heavens and came down,
he rode upon a cherub and flew,
he sped upon the wings of wind.
Oh, how my anticipation grew.

This is Rebecca Noelle,
heaven's gift, Christmas JOY,
first carried, then caressed,
at last one to be laid upon a breast.

A gift of grace from God alone,
who delights to repair a broken heart,
by breaking in from without
a New Creation to impart.

O Rebecca, will I ever forget that Day,
when I learned what it means to pray,
and see him touch our lives,
turning our darkness into day.

And from that day
the void that grew,
that gaping ache,
he has filled with you.

Your vivacious smile,
your spirit bold,
undaunted,
living life in ways untold,

To shatter walls,
fearing no place and no one,
but gathering all,
priceless.

What you have been to me,
from those dark days,
so long ago yet so near,
words cannot tell, except to say,

*"Tears may come to stay the night,
But a shout of joy comes in the morning."*

You have brought me more joy
laughter,
and song
than ten sons.

How can I ever forget memories
etched upon the heart, playing ball,
being a dad, a coach, a friend,
even a Swiss comedian.

But what I'll miss the most,
is your sweet angelic voice
which lighted among us
unashamed to sing and praise.

And now Rebecca, leave our nest,
take off and fly amidst the clouds
touch the sky, see his face,
but most of all, feel his grace.

But as you leave, glance back and know
that though we shall never be the same,
it will be enough for me, your Dad,
if you take thought from whence you came.

Yes, these were the days
when words of the Ancients came true,
God bent the heavens and came down,
and dried our tears with you.

Does She Know?

Sweeter than any son was she,
did she ever dream to know
a father's pleasure
that she did sow,
at every whispery glance
and touch,
which would steal my heart,
and seize my throat,
with but the fragrance of her air?

Eager to please was she,
but would you know
surrounded with the likes
of friends,
whose cares she knows,
and devotion she gives freely,
sealed upon her lips,
from all to know?

And her surging, sinewed strength,
freely flashed on fields of green,
and fiery smiles,
that brought heaven's
air into to my lungs
to breathe her heart,
and play her part,
I know, more sweet
than any son.

But now she knows
tis time to let her go,
as she sees and longs
for horizon's hues,
beyond our time and place,
and can't imagine why I ache,
as I long to know
her mind and soul,
she keeps inside her beauty so.

But to let her go,
a father's dream,
I must and will,
it is enough for me,
that she but know,
inside that well kept beauty so,
resides
a father's love.

for my daughter,
Jennifer Dawn
on her 18th birthday

יפה כלבנה

“As beautiful as the moon”

Song of Songs 6:10b

'Tis the day we said goodbye, O Jessica,
a memory lost in stone
so could you come today and make yourself known
tell your mother you're all right
tell her your singing and playing and there is no night
tell her the blue sky there never ends
but the trees, see how they bend
is it clapping I hear?
So won't you come tonight
and tell her you can't wait to meet your sisters
and talk and catch up from all the years, even comb each other's hair
where heaven sings like the wind and fills every stare
and you can introduce your brother, just a year older
who stands by your side, his brave headship
one day to be completely rearranged
with a world filled with sisters and little sweetheart nieces
that will make him laugh and giggle until his gut splits in pieces
and tell her how much you loved her
the last night she looked into your eyes
and that you know she longs for you
in earth's dark shadows and heaven's radiant cries
yes tell her all this to awaken her joy
and that one day we will all come, a family reunited to stay
and O by the way, happy birthday.

love,
pappa

Remembering You

for Mary, my first grand-daughter when she had to move far away

August 19, 2000

I remember you
in the announcement of your life
in a faraway land,
my city of dreams, Salzburg.
There I heard of your conception
and a new lens I obtained
and old passions retained
to buy gifts again and again,
a teddy for you, and
dual watches for Emily and me
to remind us of every
moment of your storied time.

I remember you,
Mary,
'twas the night of your birth
midnight dreams rushing upon us
and your parents ran to see what God
had so intricately woven
in the darkness of the womb,
and in the long grueling hours
laboring to make you see the light of day
your mother
nearly lost her life.
I was preaching that day
but my mind was preoccupied
with you and she,
I remember your father crying that day
for more than one life in his arms.

I remember you
Mary Beth
'twas our first outing,
just the two of us
weeks into your life
I carried you into my world,
Stanford,
and a baseball game.
Your sweet silence and glistening eyes
kept me far afield
of what most were there to see,
but not me
I was lost in a field of dreams.

I remember you
Mary Elizabeth
for more than a year
your very entrance across the threshold
would bring a sea of smiles
into our little blue home.
Did you come to play?
Would you like to stay?
Is there anything you need today?
You would walk or even talk,
and waves of laughter would thunder down
making our seeming sorrows weightless
in the very air of you.

"Come back, come back,"
I would say,
for never have I seen all my women
so ridiculous with laughing joy
and stung by sweet, happy song.

'Tis time to go, now
dear grand-daughter,
but not before
your Aunt Katie and I take you
to that place
where stories began for daughters,
"Deer Hollow,"
where I first was captured
by the memory of your mother,
who looked just like you,
and in the memory of that place
I was launched on the path
of remembering.

So venture forth, my Mary Beth,
fly into larger worlds
and faraway lands of desert spaces
and rocky places but remember,
Papa won't ever forget you,
and when you come again
I'll lift you up
through that sea of feminine smiles,
take you by the hand
and feed the ducks with you.

*August 31, 2000
At the Romanian reunion in appreciation to God
for the privilege of hearing my daughter's story and poem*

A Daughter's Voice, A Cousin's Eyes

I am a father,
there are many joys
that have penetrated my life,
but tonight,
just this night,
I got to hear my daughter's voice,
this time in full view of her mother's eyes,
that voice with its own identity apart from me,
telling the story
of a cousin's eyes through her eyes.

I heard her voice tonight,
that blessed voice,
honest about the pain
of an absent family who had to be prodded
and applauded to show a gaze of concern,
and now a heart overwhelmed
by a little town so far away
where everyone is a cousin
and loves to play.

I heard her voice tonight
as she welcomed us in to walk freely
within every chamber of her heart,
that voice I so longed to hear,
a daughter's voice.

This is something not granted to fathers;
angels yes,
but not fathers;
at least until the day is done,
and the night has come
and in that deep oboe sleep
a daughter speaks
of memories of what is gone.

It is then a father hears that voice,
and with it every articulate vowel of memory,
everything for which he's been waking waiting
his whole life,
a daughter's voice,
his daughter's voice
shaping his dreams while he sleeps.

Who am I
that I should hear such sweet things
while I yet live?
Like an intruding angel,
whose wings were caught in the doorway
in a space I did not belong,
but could not remove myself
for fear of being exposed
and caught by her deep blue eyes,
might lose my disguise,
and break the air of her concentration
that granted me this one moment
when I was allowed to hear her voice.

Katie was beautiful tonight
and I was finally able to cry
here like I do there.

Katie,
my daughter,
her voice
I heard tonight,
who am I?

For Emily on Mother's Day

נפלאותיו אשר עשה
The wonders he has done

We will not conceal them
from our children,
But will tell the generation to come
the praises of the Lord,
And His strength and His wondrous works
that He has done.

Psalm 78:4

1917



Chagall, *The Painter to the Moon*,

May 12, 2002

Emily,

What kind of mother are you?
The best that's who!
Who could birth my girls
and one son too
and laugh and cry with me
raising them true?
It's you!
Years have come and years have gone
but as I look back
one thing is true
your love and care
that laid bare
the hearts of my three girls
inside my soul
and now two little faces
smiling far away
rejoice that your sighing heart
is upon them too.
I love you, yes I do!
Happy Mother's Day.

for Steve and Wanda Belton
in memory of their daughter, Missy,
April 29, 1999

עֵינַי עֵינַי

“my eyes...my eyes”
Lamentations 3:49-51

Tears,
precious tears
falling like jewels from your eyes,
what more, what more can we give
for daughters lost
as beautiful as the moon,
a daughter held holy
by your hands when once
lifted from the watery womb
now fills your every memory breath
with each new born
your hands will reach and lift
out of the darkness into the light
until
precious she, wearing daddy’s gloves
reaches for you out of the night
and guides you safely
across the skies into the light
where you’ll resound and quake
with a newborn cry
that will ring Zion’s bell
with an inconsolable stab of joy
as precious He
wipes that final tear from your eye.
עֵינַי עֵינַי
for as the poet sang,
“weeping may come to lodge for the night,
but a shout of joy comes in the morning.”

November 30th, 2011



Dear Mom,

Today is my 35th birthday and I heard that you will be celebrating with dad and my little sister, Jenny, along with my nieces, Mary and Emmy, and my nephew Wesley. So I asked papa to get you some yellow roses to remember me by. Yellow is my favorite color, because it matches my blonde hair,

but most of all, because it reminds me of you. You probably wonder what I look like. It's hard to describe my glorious, new body – but I look a lot like Jenny, but with Katie's curls. Lucky for me I didn't get daddy's nose, but like all your children, my eyes are blue.

As you celebrate my birthday I want you to know what a blessing you are to me. Though I was tragically taken out of your arms to be by my brother's side, my little life was shaped and sheltered solely by a mother's love. For nine months as I bonded with you in the sweet shelter of your womb, my delicate frame was knitted together by God's loving hands. I was wondrously made, and all my days ordained for me, were written in His book, before even one of them came to be. You took such good care of me, even though you could not see my face. I know you and dad worked hard to prepare a special place for my arrival, with new wallpaper, a refurbished crib and a changing table.

When I arrived, you held me with an indescribable love and tenderness. For three wonderful days I had the privilege of gazing into your eyes as I nursed. The feeling of security and wellbeing you provided was so compelling, I quickly learned to trust God in the trouble that lay ahead.

Those were painful days, I know more for you than me. You wanted to see me grow up, to crawl, to walk, to sing, to play soccer, to date, to give me away, and to see my children. But, as daddy wrote, it ended much too quickly:

My eyes could not gaze on your little tent,
which would all too soon
be broken down and laid to rest
in the earth, rather than upon a breast.

As you and daddy were engulfed in sorrow, I lied down to sleep and awoke in a new world where heaven fills the very air you breathe. I began to grow and explore its never-ending beauty with my brother, David. Like him, I never experienced the pains of sin or any of the cruelty that happens on earth. I only knew a mother's love.

But there is more. I got to see another side of things, that perhaps you could not see. When you prayed for me, heaven became silent for about half an hour. Then I heard the deepest groaning and sighs that were beyond compassion, followed by a sudden burst of energy and commotion. Angels were summoned and sent with an urgency I have rarely seen. Out of the death of dreams, seeds of hope were planted in human hearts and corporate prayers were offered in faith. A baby born by Christmas, Who would have thought? The gift of another daughter for my broken hearted mother.

As I peer into your world 35 years later, I can see the fruit of a mother's prayers. Did you ever dream of being entrusted with so many gifts? One son and four daughters, two granddaughters and two grandsons! Not to mention the scores of preschoolers who found shelter under your wings.

In Hebrew your name means "mother." And I, Jessica Lynne Morgan, am forever privileged to be known as your daughter.

Love,

Jessica

An Open Letter to Jessica

November 30, 2016

Jessica,

I was thinking about this, if it was a little unusual, then I thought about the source from which it came and said “perfect.” I even accidentally threw in a chiasm for you. I hope you like it.

Happy 40th Birthday Jessica!

I was a youth of 10 when you were born.
I didn't know you, couldn't have known you
and yet I know you.
You have a legacy you couldn't have known
My youth has passed, I am 50 now and you live on

Did you know you have great grandchildren?
As Abraham had seed that encompassed the globe
so you have a legacy
Your father became your son,
what you taught him through death became the life he taught
bringing life to others souls
taking them through their pain teaching them joy
They, in turn, brought joy to others and your legacy grows

Your father has been taught well by you,
as well as David, and a king named the same
The passion he has grows out of joy,
Joy you have unknowingly given him
he could not have known at the time
the road down which your tiny hand would take him
His mourning was turned into laughter and his pain into joy
It was a hard lesson and many years in the making
—the culmination of pain and the maturation of the soul
One he teaches so we may learn joy,
not as a shortcut to joy through his pain,
but as guidance through our own

Now you are 40

No doubt, both a proud sister, daughter and mother,
yet still being rocked as a child in the bosom of Jesus,
knowing the next step of joy, the joy only he can give

Thank-you for giving us a taste

Tell Jesus thank you, from all of us

Yes, we are all more joyful because of you

God bless you and your father,

Steve Young



February 26, 2016

A day at the beach

Carmel beach was saturated in its sun soaked beauty
when Steve and Katie arrived with their 3 cherubs
There was little about this day
that did not give me cause to rejoice perhaps even worship
—Ty's endless energy quickly lost in mountains of sand
Reese slyly watching, imitating her big brother's every move
Tate snuggled still in Katie's cocoon
Emily, David and Laurie looking on as adoring grandparents—

Standing at the water's edge ankle deep in foam
captivated still by the receding fog bank
would have been sufficient to satisfy a day's longings
but there are castles to explore and track meets
to run with Ty up and down steep mountains of the whitest sand

He conquers them like a proud Philistine warrior,
while my pounding heart begs for a moment to recover
With no time to rest Ty carries his chair up
the mountain of sand utterly oblivious to his sister in tow
and takes his seat like a king peering over his vast domain
—happy children, weary joggers, shy lovers and countless dogs
who, like Ty, unleash their joy with no restraint—
to his right sits Reese, a queen inserted into her brother's world

While Steve and I launch a wiry Frisbee along the shoreline,
Ty gets a Frisbee lesson from grandpa David
Like an Olympic discus thrower he winds his body tight as a spring,
then lets it loose with a shout,
the Frisbee takes flight, no matter its trajectory,
it is airborne buoyed by Ty's incessant laughter

Refusing to rest we take up baseball with sponge balls,
a bat ridiculously too small and a tiny basketball.
Everyone is an instant All-star
When David comes to bat he smashes the ball
into the outfield of unsuspecting spectators

We conscript Elena and her dog Dillon to be our left fielders
and Sarah, who was waste deep digging
a hole with her two friends, in center
Sarah was promoted to offense and after going 4 for 4
we were amazed to discover she's into theatre not sports,
a girl of multi-talents

There is far more JOY to recount than I can remember
but the memory of holding Ty's hand
while carrying Reese on my shoulders
at the waters' edge crowns the day
with childlike pleasure
time has not dampened my ability
to feel as young as Ty, even with these aged bones

As the afternoon fades and we pull up stakes
gathering all the paraphernalia of our Bedouin tent,
my eyes fix on a lone Cyprus at the top of the hill
I have a photo of Emily sitting there in 1976
pregnant with Jessica after David's death
Emily and I would descend even deeper
into the valley of the shadow that year,
but today, nostalgia and love break my heart wide open
as I see the mother of my children
holding Tate, our sixth grandchild.



Fathers and Sons

בן

Son

Son,
I love that name,
conjuring up
all within me.

“A serene splendor,
that takes your breath away.”³

I haven't heard it
in a while,
in fact, I ache to say
I can't remember when?

Did he ever think it,
say it, mean it?
Did son ever conjure up joy
for him beyond my birth?

I thought I was over it,
over forty,
but now perhaps most pained
when reflection is the brightest

I thought I was over it,
until someone dedicates
an opus to his son,
and I forever remain estranged.

And then I remember my son,
who conjured up everything for me
for a few brief moments;
now gone until the Dawn sings.

O sing O soul,
play the notes,
resonate and play,
for this is what you were made for.

“This is my beloved son,
my son, my son!”

³ Elie Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory* (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), 105.
Poems in Remembrance

A Boy and his Papa
for Sid Duzen, my Jewish papa

What does a boy desire?
Affection, touch,
a man to speak with
to hug and to hold
even to weep with,
ah, sweet acceptance.

I was a goy,
you were the jew,
one faired with the rich,
the other the oppressed.

But both were driven
for the deeper things,
mysteries
that lay beyond their reach.

One cast his iron hands
to plough the rocky earth,
perhaps fertility was
in the soil.

The other cast his eyes
towards the skies
seeking the heavenly rains
which no man can command.

In his quest, the goy
found the Jew, who was also a Son
and loved him
because he adopted him.

The jew kept searching in his pain
and gave his life away
to any orphan who needed
what the jew had never received.

Then rejection found them both,
and made them wander
from their earthly roots
until they met on opposite sides.

They gazed at each other
as acquaintances,
until steel cords of death
wound their five bands
round their breasts.

They faced each other
and wept until
they could weep no more,
tears washed their souls
and flowed into one stream.

The jew adopted the goy
and took him into his heart.
They spoke, they touched
they hugged, they wept
in sweet embrace,

What does a boy desire?
Affection, touch
a man to speak with
to hug and to hold,
even to weep with,
ah, a Papa!

To the boy,
there was no joy like Papa,
especially in the simple things.
Could a meal bring eternal delights?
Yes, if Papa was there.

And to the boy's delight,
Papa asked to see all his work.
So the boy showed him all he had done,
Papa looked on with approving eyes.

Then the boy traveled
on behalf of the Jew,
to the land of oppression and death.
It was there that he understood
Papa's pain and fear of death.

I woke one night weeping for you, Papa,
yearning for you to know
the love that filled my breast
of the Jew who died for you
that you should have no fear of death.

For it is not enough
that you have adopted me
in this short life,
I want to be your son forever.

And on that Day,
I will introduce you
to your grandson, David.

You will love him
in the *New Jerusalem*.
For the prophets cannot lie,
that is your city, Papa.

What does a boy desire?
Affection, touch,
a Papa to sing with
to hug and to hold,
even to dance with,
in the New Jerusalem.

I love you, Papa!



My Father Remembered

O Father, you heard the cry of a boy,
who first learned to weep over his father,
when he sat silent in the face of love,
you put his tears in a bottle,
and hid them.

Years later you called him to Mr. Moriah,
but he thought not in vain,
if the sweet scent would
place the Son in the father's heart.

He descended the mount
and clung to his father,
he looked into his face
but saw only silence.

The boy went into the desert to forget.
He sang in the cave of Adullam;
and there he found men,
the discontent and fatherless.

They grew strong together,
and became his mighty men of renown,
he loved them,
they would be his father.

In all their travels,
the son thanked his Father,
for such a wound,
that forged this new family.

But whenever he returned to Ziklag
under the darkness of the night,
he heard his daughters cry "Daddy,"
he knew he could not forget.

Then God remembered the boy,
and visited him with his father,
"Take now your father,
the one whom you love,
and journey to land of Moriah."

They journeyed quietly up the mountain,
the father asked,
"Behold the fire and the wood,
but where is the lamb?"
The son was silent.

Then he raised his eyes,
and heard them singing,
all the men of renown,
with the lamb upon their shoulders.

Those thousand eyes,
broke into the father's heart,
the father wept, took the lamb,
and became a son.

O Father, how great are your wonders!
You heard the cry of a boy,
and kept his tears in a bottle.
I shall never forget.

Becky, Jenny and Katie with dad
celebrating his birthday three
months after his conversion on
January 27, 1991.



In August 2001 my sister called and said dad was dying and almost in a comma. I went to see him in the hospital, and after everyone left the room I was alone with my father. He woke from his comma and stared straight into my eyes.

Into a Father's Eyes

He looked at me
he stared at me
with those hazel eyes
eyes never age
we were so close gazing into each other's eyes
but I could not refrain from turning away
was it fear
fear of finally feeling the affection of a father
or fear of seeing him seized by fear
of that dreaded demon, death
or was it sadness
accumulated sadness
of not knowing if I was ever a son
my father
I was afraid to look into his eyes
this one last time.

I felt like I had missed a key opportunity at that moment, but dad survived a few more months, and God gave me a second chance to connect with him. Just before Christmas I went back to the hospital. I entered the room and noticed the TV was tuned to a football game. Memories of my youth came flooding back, I grabbed his hand and together we watched the game.

Watching Football

Today I went to see my father
and to gaze into his eyes.
Was he dying of pneumonia?
I know he was terrified and tortured in pain,
yet above his head a TV was fixed on football.
I took his hand
and he squeezed mine,
and for a moment
he was no longer my father
but a frail human being
in need of comfort, compassion
and a tender touch of hope.
I took his hand and he took mine
and we watched football -
that's what fathers and sons do.

Once when I was a little boy, during halftime
he made me a pair of frail goal posts out of wood
so I could pretend and play
on my own football field in my backyard,
then he threw the ball to me until the game resumed.
Now I was holding his hand at halftime
and in one minute the game would resume,
and perhaps with it, eternity.

Before I left I looked deep into his hazel eyes,
eyes never age,
"I love you, dad."
Summoning all his strength and vacant beating breath
he said, "I love you, too."
Today we watched football -
that's what fathers and sons do.

Dr. Wendell Andrew Morgan died on Christmas Eve 2001.



A Walk into the Darkness

pentru Sang

We walk together into the darkness,
stillness surrounds us beckoning us onward;
under a lamppost we stop
still,
long enough to listen
to unravel undercurrents of longings
that rise to the tides pulled
by the light of the moon,
but quickly submerge into a vast void
drowned by damning terrors
of childhood memories
when innocence was stripped
and stolen and a son was left naked
and exposed forced to face
the rage and unrelenting rain alone –
there is no family.

For endless years tossed between
the waves of survival and simply searching,
a son aches to know,
“Who am I?”

Now under a lamppost
his face lit by the light of the moon
the son surfaces with enough breath
to ask the terrible question,
“Why?”



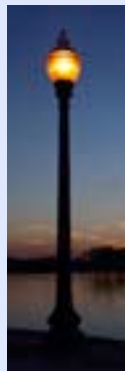
Out of the silent void he hears
his own voice articulate
the reason why he freezes and retreats...
“If I fail, I have no family to fall back on.”

Under a lamppost a father listens,
his heart breaking...
“My son, the ‘why’ is beyond the maze
of mystery, but the ‘who’ is simple –
you are Joseph.”

Under the light of the moon we head homeward
and Joseph sees his future
where his purity and prison pains
make him a rising star in Egypt,
storing enough grain to feed a nation of boys
starving in a famine of love.

Joseph beckons his father to Egypt,
and seeing his new family
a lifetime of emotion is released –
“It is enough.”

As he falls on Benjamin’s neck,
he feels his father’s tears falling from his face
and then he knows, and all of Egypt knows,
the father had walked into the darkness too.
It is raining.



rabbi morganescu
Gmunden, Austria
August 16, 2011

România

Time Beneath His Shadow

Ten years,
it seems like yesterday,
when at night I was cast into his arms,
cheek to cheek,
to hear the soft timbre of his voice,
those pulsating rhythms,
that seized me and tore my heart like water.



Ten years is but a day
beneath the shadow of the poet
to stare deep into the purest eyes
of humble men, frail dust,
sacred sons,
with not a word to give or raise,
but to silent know,
now my soul,
strangely knit to theirs like one.

Ten years, a swift wind,
like the blink of an eye
to frame a window
around those four voiced angels
of Vecernie's beckoning song,
to hold their vibrating notes forever,
and touch their faces long.

Ten years, not one day
did I hasten to stay, but flew away
every night like a bird
to those secret Carpathian heights,
your spine and ridge to lift me,
your valleys to swallow me
in the dew soaked verdant green,
I feel you now in my every breath,
I see you in the splendor of the moon,
and in the nighttime shadows and airy stillness
that bequeaths that rare quiet to my soul.

Ten years I solely seek you
as each day and night abide,
ten years searching for my father's well again,
like a lost forsaken lover seeks his holy bride.

Ten years, one touch, cheek to cheek,
and now I live forever in that timeless space
beneath the shadow of the poet.

*For our Romanian daughters who have no voice
Composed by James Garcia in 1998
Based on Mark 5:43*

Talitha Koum

Tell me your story *Talitha koum*
I will not turn my face from you.
Sing me your pain *Talitha koum*,
I want to hear your tender voice.

Let me touch your tears
for the long lost mother years,
the silent father fears,
and the lonely road where no one hears.

Take up my hand *Talitha koum*,
and look deep into a father's eyes.
Here is my hand *Talitha koum*,
For you I will not despise.

Let me touch your tears
for the long lost mother years,
the silent father fears,
and the lonely road where no one hears.

I am now leaving *Talitha koum*,
I must step down from this holy place.
But I turn and watch you *Talitha koum*,
Lost in your Savior's sweet embrace.

He will touch your tears
for the long lost mother years,
the silent father fears,
and the lonely road where no one hears.

He will be there for you *Talitha koum*,
Talitha koum,
Talitha koum.

*In appreciation to Valer Ille
whose love transcended poverty and pain
and gave us drink from heavenly waters drawn from his well*

Tata's Well

Whenever I hear his blessed voice pounding at my door
I am seized by the throat a world apart
besieged and ravished taken back by a love
that strangely makes its home my heart.

O Tata, let me see your face again,
O won't you wait for me?
Can't I have another drink from your well
before heaven has its way with thee?

Whenever I look into his eyes I am embraced,
by sea of emotion kept as if just for me.
We can't stare too long, or gaze steady strong
for fear, the love that we are caught in
is much, much too dear to be.

Tata, O my blessed Tata
I found my home in you,
I'm named a son, a brother and father too,
I can't believe this gift, it's true!

Was I dazed like dreaming,
or lost in another world asleep?
For now I'm lost awake and ache
for just one word for you to speak.

O Tata, let me see your face again,
O won't you wait for me?
Can't I have another drink from your well
before heaven has its way with thee,
before heaven has its way with thee?





A Field of Corn
when time stood still

Let's have church you say to me
and ascend upon that hill
with lone guitar and Talitha cum
we sing as time stood still.

Yes upon this furrowed ground
of sorrow's crop sown in years of pain
descends our heavenly song
joyous tears, let it rain, let it rain.

And there we stand upon the sod
a small circle lost in time embraced
for there it was in a field of corn
that Noah's heaven flooded our space.

It was heaven, heaven
when time stood sacred still
It was heaven, heaven upon a holy hill
and we were there to feel it's chill
and in the memory of her face I see it still
heaven, heaven, upon that holy hill.

*The paradox of the pain of departure,
being torn from our friends as the train whistle blows
from the same rail station platform in Cluj-Napoca
where 16,700 Jews were deported to Auschwitz*

D e p a r t u r e

Departure
do I hate you
as you grind in upon me
cruel time tyrant relentless
and in a moment you sever
those delicate strands of holy thread
that wound our sweet tapestry
with angel's breath
and colors we so carefully prepared
then cast us into blackness
without a thought for us,
as you left them on a cold bench
father, son and daughter,
never were three so alone
lost in the night
and I, thrust away
waving with no hand to hold
gazing into the darkness
with no eye to behold.

Departure,
I do hate you, and yet,
as you did so ominously hover over us
in that silent screaming cloud
and I so afraid to look up at you,
you did also etch the present holy
and pressurize the past,
pained memories of sweetest joy
with little things
I would never seek to know.

Departure,
you measure seconds like years,
you make moments a lifetime
and weigh them dense with emotion
no poem could even hold;
and my soul, so tightly strung,
is no longer dead but stirred awake
by every weightless breeze
that wafts across the shores
and lifts me with angel's wings,
and my future now forged with the ache
that solely anticipates one more embrace.

Departure,
how I hate you,
but would I truly live...
without you?

East & West

Two lovers,
lost to each other's world
of wind and dreams,
"The *east* holds everything
that is incredibly dear to my heart."⁴
The *west*,
was it just a ruddy memory
now sunk into the blackness of the sea?

Two lovers
gazing across the firmament sky
lost to each other's worlds
severed by time and space
one settling down to sleep awake
the other rising as if to dream.

One yearning for the moon ache
with her immense tides
to ferry her through the night
and wash her up on
that distant shore awake,
the other waking to dream
anticipating just one tender touch
that flames the white heat of the soul
with *lahayim*
more life than water.

⁴ Paul Celan
Poems in Remembrance

How to see her
just one glimpse of those
sea **blue** eyes
and glowing face
held hostage by prolonged chasm barriers
that hide her beauty,
can we climb to the heights or swim through seas,
will the wind take us there,
can broken window panes reflect her light?

O the ache,
the unrelenting ache.

And then on the horizon
everything for which we dream
comes with the sound
of the oboe,
“the sunset of the world
sings with emotion”⁵

“The **eastern** sky at sunset taking
the glow of the **west**
the **west** a clear stillness
The **east** flinging
nets of clouds
to hold the rose light a moment longer,
the **western** hill dark to blackness.”⁶

⁵ Ionatan Ille ~ “*Vecernie*”

⁶ Denise Levertov ~ “*The Coming Fall*”

Two weeks in August
days are long
nights are warm
dreams are burnt to the bone
and Vecernie's moon cannot hide
her full face
even behind the clouds.

We walk on moonbeams
and dance drenched in watery light
the voice of poet is sounded in the **East**,
lightning lights up the **western** sky,
east and west embrace,
kiss.

Wedding vows are renewed,
and over the sky's rim
faintly we hear
our Tata
singing in the window,
"Talitha koum."

Vecernie⁷

Ionatan Ille

Amurgul lumii cântâ-nfrigurat din orga de lumină arzătoare și de vecernii clopotele bat, și-i până sus uleiul în ulcioare.	Chanting the glacial twilight of the world, The great harmonium quivers with light, And burnished bells divulge Eucharistic tones, While oil gathers in clay jars.
Adie zvon de coruri îngeresti, năierii trag la țarmul veșniciei, curând lăsa-vom punțile cerești în primul imn solemn al cunuiei.	Angelic breezes drizzle down from heaven, Seafarers pull their ships to the eternal shores, Too soon we'll cease telluric rims, Attended by the solemn nuptial hymns.
Napoi pe tristul țarm îndepărtat ni s-au topit aducerile-aminte, durere și lacrimi, toate, le-am lăsat, ni-e-ntragă zarea dorului-nainte.	Back on the sad and silent shore, Past memories have melted swift, Mountains of pain and tears we've forgot, Ahead, profound horizons leak.
Spre-Acolo pribegim de-atâta drum, cu doru-ajungerii – aprinsă pară; rămas-a mării ochilor de-acum, în nimbul Crucii, Mirele s-apară.	We've roamed so far and for so long, Inflamed by dreams of getting home Unblemished eyesights, now pierce time, In wait for bridegroom and for bride.

Translated by Marcelus Suciu

⁷ Vecernie – “Vespers” the first service in the Orthodox Church which begins at sunset, for just as in Hebrew thought, the liturgical day begins at sunset.

Vecernie

rabbi morganescu version

The sun sinks softly in the western sky
The east awakes with songs to make us cry
Angels attend reunion of our love
We wait, and lo, descends the pure white dove!

Fond mem'ry shapes our pilgrim journey home
We wander lost, yet never seem alone
A field of corn, a child's tender eyes
And hearts of stone beat gentle and sublime.

A father comes, to seek his daughter's face
The oboe sounds, and heaven we embrace
She comes, she stands with sorrow's gift below,
"I'm here Tata, alive for you to know."

A son has died, the poet sings his song
The moon lifts full its brilliant splendor, strong
David awakes, the window frames the room
In grateful love, we cry, "Talitha koum."

East touches west across the peaceful skies
As hand in hand, he guides us past the lies
Until at last we view Mount Calvary
Our bridegroom King, our wedding feast to be!

Personalized Psalms



My Aleph Psalm – Longing “to meditate”

הגה

“meditates”

Blessed is the man who meditates day and night
in your word, your wondrous word
a tree he shall be
a tree whose roots I long to be
transplanted by streams, never ending streams
of *chayim mayim* (“living water”)
and leaves that do not will not wither

But I am a man, if one could dare say a man,
who cannot set his gaze or fix his face
lest his wandering eyes be still
and his clutching hands cease

Am I afraid of silence
does it bring a deafening chill
what are my fears that forbid you speak
into my beating heart be still

Must I forever fight with raging fists
that steaming engine
whose combustion takes only a spark to ignite
and I am off in flight
to make and shape and form and create
but in the end
so often all I hold is a cistern
a broken cistern
that can hold no water

O Yahweh
make these eyes rock hewn channels
of light and love that penetrates the bone
O Yahweh leave me leave me not alone.

My Psalm 1

אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר

*How commendable / is the individual / who
'ashrei / ha'ish / asher*

How praiseworthy you are, O God to grant
our first word of prayer to be *'ashrei*
not agony, complaint or even petition, but a vision
of one who leads the way, blazing a trail
with steady steps to keep us on track
for a flourishing life beyond the original creation
that you long so for us as humans to fully enjoy

And it's available to any and every individual *'ashrei ha'ish*
who will but choose *'ashrei ha'ish 'asher*
choose resolutely, "not walk"
choose persistently, "not stand"
choose passionately, "not sit"
choices made possible because they made the ultimate
choice to seek you
by renewing their hearts and minds in your word
and to their utter surprise –
they found their affections utterly transformed
and their steps (*'asher*) kept on track

The arboreal image of the well-rooted tree
carefully planted by irrigation channels
"channeling abundant, gladdening, life-giving water
in an otherwise dry place"⁸ moves me deeply,
Undoubtedly I need more pruning,
transform my affections, O Yahweh,
with a persistent, passionate "*not.*"

your grateful servant,
rabbi morganescu

⁸ Bruce K. Waltke and James M Houston with Erica Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship, A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 141.

My Psalm 2
On Earth as it is in Heaven

Act 1: Voices in the News

I find it difficult to grasp the polar extremities
that converge in this poem,
designed by the poet to one end –
to grant us unflinching confidence
to follow the “Son”
despite what we hear in the news
and everything read in our newspapers.

Take a good, long look at politics under the sun
and a clear eye can only conclude
that God’s righteous rule is a lightning rod for riotous rage,
a rage so fierce, it unites implacable enemies
with a fortified resolve to fight to the death.

These vicious voices terrify me.
The poet, however, has a different spirit –
his opening *lammah* (“why”) unleashes
his “exasperation, amazement and indignation”⁹
over the absurd stupidity of the whole affair,
something akin to the tower of Babel.

Act 2: The Voice on the Throne

In the second act of this four act drama
we learn the secret to the poet’s unwavering faith.

Unveil my eyes, O God that, like the poet,
I may perceive your immovable throne, unrivaled sovereignty,
and perhaps even catch a glimpse of the King,
relaxed at the breakfast table, sipping his espresso,
undisturbed by the morning’s news.

May I feel his commanding voice
reverberating deep in my gut as he reconfirms
his covenant choice of person and place,
irrevocable choices,
immovable as his heavenly throne.

And yet I ponder, “How
does your kingdom come on earth
as it is in heaven?”

⁹ Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 163.
Poems in Remembrance

Act 3: The Voice of the Son

As the waters of baptism recede
a voice his heard, “*beni ‘attah*” – (“You are my son”)
birth, adoption, privilege,
and the simple invitation to *sha’al* (“ask”¹⁰)
and with it the promise
that the rebellion *sha’al* be crushed.

I am amazed that just one *choq* (“statute”¹¹)
becomes the driving force and end of human history.
Is this the “one thing” Mary had chosen?

Act 4: The Voice of the Evangel

Peter standing before the Sanhedrin,
Paul testifying before Agrippa,
Luther refusing to bend the knee before the pope,
Bonhoeffer resisting Hitler,
Dorz’s eternal songs recreated in prison,
and our beloved Harmanstein ever speaking,
“Kiss the Son.”

The record shows that whenever the simple,
yet profound message of the gospel
is courageously proclaimed,
the hope is realized
“on earth as it is in heaven.”

Such hope ignited my confidence when I was young
and took my stand before my peers and professors,
both home and abroad,
what JOY I found in your presence in those days;
but now my feet stumble as I consider the cost –
blood flowing everywhere
Palestine, Egypt, Aleppo, Nepal –
which gives *sha’al* a whole new meaning.

Grant me courage, O God, for on most occasions
I fear that I have been ashamed.



¹⁰ שָׁאַל *sha’al* (“to ask”) is a key word in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, especially in the story of Hannah who “asks” for God to give her a son and then names him Samuel. It is also the root of the name Saul, Israel’s first king who was “asked for” by the people, but ironically refuses a life of dependent prayer. *Sha’al* now becomes the pivotal means granted to the Davidic kings to bring heaven to earth.

¹¹ חֻקַּי *hōq* – “statute” comes from the verbal root *hāqaq* “incise, inscribe, engrave” and connotes the idea of permanence. The noun is “often found ‘*olam* (“eternal”), referring to an ‘eternal decree’ to be kept throughout the generations (e.g., Exod 12:14, 17; Lev 3:17; 7:36; Num 10:8).” Peter Enns, “*hōq*,” *NIDOTTE* 2:250-251.

My Psalm 5

The Watchtower

Caught in the crucible of evil, gashed
and bleeding through the terrors of the night,
your *'ebed*¹² ever so carefully arranges
his well honed words on the altar;
lit with soul-fire,
they ascend like an *'olah*¹³ consumed in smoke –
a ringing cry splits the dawn
darkness flees
and our sentinel is seen standing still
eyes fixed upon another place,
waiting for you in the watchtower.
Watching, waiting, gazing, penetrating –
its seems so foreign to my divided
distracted, doing heart,
but what little of it I have tasted,
has sent me longing for more.

The Morgue

Caught in the crucible of evil
our *'ebed* is forced to stand up
and take a good long look at evil in the eye.
It is a dreadful trip to the morgue,
who can endure an autopsy?
But the medical examiner is relentless,
he pulls back the sheet, hands you the knife and says,
“Take him apart piece by piece.
He was a chain smoker, but don't worry,
he's dead, though he is still breathing.”
The gruesome task turns your world around
there are no more greys, or self-seeking lies
only flaming, everlasting truth
and the invitation to dine at Le Meurice
on the rue de Rivoli with Royalty.
Who could refuse?

¹² *'ebed* is Hebrew word for “servant.”

¹³ *'olah* is the Hebrew word for the “whole burnt offering” that was completely consumed in smoke.

If I'm honest...
I must confess I want to dine
in all the wanton extravagance of You,
yet I dread the thought of doing
what my father¹⁴ did in the morgue.
Who will I see when the examiner
pulls back the sterile sheet...
will it be me?

The Party

From the towering heights of the watchtower,
out of reach of ribald rebels and bloodthirsty assailants
our 'ebed peers past history's horizon and sees
an explosion of light that sets things aright.
When the smoke clears
"unblemished eyesights now pierce time,"¹⁵
the future leaps out of its holding tank
to invade the painful present,
infecting everything it touches with *simchah* –
that spontaneous, unrestrained, riotous joy
that overtakes all our sensibilities,
such that even the Pope lifts his robes
to dance unabashedly like David before the ark of God.
It is a crucible of joy that remains and sustains,
it is perhaps the greatest gift poetry can give us,
or as we say among the "Men of Monday Night"
as we pass the cup and look into our brother's eyes,
"It doesn't get any better than this!"

January 17, 2012

¹⁴ My father, Dr. Wendell Morgan, was a surgeon. But the image is dual edged. In one sense, Saul was David's father, and the fear of every son is inheriting their father's sins.

¹⁵ This line is taken from Ionatan Ille's poem "Vecernie," translated by Marcelus Suci.

A Master at Work upon his Masterwork

Psalm 6

A Master at work on his masterwork
servant swooning face down in grief
upon the anvil of God's fiery hot chastening rod,
submitting until there is nothing left to give,
every ounce of strength drained dry,
his brain naught, his body shot,
 silent and powerless to carry out his holy orders...

until the onslaught of terrorizing taunts
attack the foundation stone of the Master's holy love
infuse the servant with fiery fervency
to plead his case for an act of grace
 and reverse the fortunes of the poor and powerful

In a mere 78* words arranged
in 4 perfectly balanced and symmetrical strophes

24 words

15 words

15 words

24 words

and his covenant name "I AM" laced (8 times) throughout
our poet architects a ziggurat for the dying
a Jacob's ladder with solid steps to ascend
out the clutches of the ghoulish grave
 unto solid ground where no request or tear is forgotten

Apparently the poem can be no less beautiful than the poet,
both are masterworks by a master worker,
but I wonder...

 did the poem shape the poet too?

rabbi morganescu

*78 is the numerical value of YHWH 26 x 3, the number of perfection.

