

Salman Masalha

POEMS

(Arabic)

Translated by

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القصيدة

خُذُوا مِنَ الْبَحْرِ أَشْمَاكَهُ
 أَعِيدُوا الْغِيَوْمَ إِلَى النَّهْرِ،
 أَرْفَعُوا عَنِ لَمَى الطِّفْلِ
 حِمْلَ النِّسَاءِ الْحَوَامِلِ.
 فُرُوعُ الْأَسَى وَارْقَةَ،
 وَالْحَكَايَا سُجُونَ
 مَرَّتْهَا نُهَوْدُ الْأَرَامِلِ.
 إِذَا آزَتْحَلَ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ،
 فَلَا تَحْزَنُوا لِلْفَقِيدَةِ.
 وَلَا، لَا تَقُولُوا
 بِأَنَّ الرَّجَا
 فِي الْقَصِيدَةِ.

THE POEM

Empty the sea of its fish
 bring clouds back to the river
 wipe from the infant's lips
 the weight of pregnant women.
 The branches of grief shade all,
 the legends are sorrows
 milked from widows' breasts.
 When prophets depart,
 don't report the loss
 nor say
 that hope
 hides in the poem.

تأويلات

الْعُيُونُ الَّتِي لَا تَدْرِفُ الدَّمْعَ،
لَا تَرَى الظَّلَامَ.

الْأَيْدِي الَّتِي لَا تُشِيرُ إِلَى الأفقِ،
لَا تَعْرِفُ رَسَمَ البَحْرِ.

الْأَقْدَامُ الَّتِي لَا تَخْطُو فِي الطَّرْقِ،
تَعُورُ فِي التُّرَابِ.

الْعَيْنُ الَّتِي لَا تُغْمِضُ،
لَا تَفْتَحُ البَابَ لِلتَّأْوِيلَاتِ.

الْيَدُ الَّتِي لَا تَمْتَدُّ لِلْعَابِرِينَ
لَا تَفْضَحُهُمْ.

القَدَمُ الَّتِي لَا تَعْتُرُ
لَا تَعْرِفُ دَرْبَ العَوْدَةِ.

الأشجارُ الَّتِي لَا تُثْمِرُ
لَا تُثْمِرُ طَوْعًا.

النَّاسُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَنْسَوْنَ،
لَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ شَيْئًا.

البُيُوتُ الَّتِي لَا تُظْفِي النُّورَ
مَهْجُورَةٌ بالتَّأَكِيدِ.

البَابُ الَّذِي لَا يُغْلَقُ،
لَا يَشُقُّ الطَّرِيقَ لِلسَّفَرِ.

INTERPRETATIONS

Eyes that don't shed a tear
do not see the dark.

Hands that don't point to the horizon
cannot draw the sea.

Feet that don't take a step
sink into the earth.

Eyes that don't shut
open no gate to interpretations.

A hand not extended to passersby
doesn't discover their naked souls.

A foot that does not stumble
doesn't know the way back.

Trees that don't give fruit
do that of their own volition.

People who don't forget
remember nothing at all.

Houses that don't shut the lights
are sure to be abandoned.

A door that doesn't close
Doesn't pave the way to a journey.

البيتُ الَّذِي لا اسمَ لَهُ،
لا يَسْتَقْبِلُ الضُّيُوفَ.

A house that has no name
does not welcome guests.

الإنسانُ الَّذِي لا يَتَكَلَّمُ
لا يَعْرِفُ كَيْفَ يُخْفِي
سِرَّهُ.

A person who does not speak
cannot conceal
his secret.

الوَلَدُ النَّجِيبُ -
طَرِيدٌ فِي حُلْمٍ مَظْرُوحٍ.
الرَّجُلُ الغَرِيبُ -
وَحِيدٌ فِي سِجْنِ الرُّوحِ.

The wise child --
is haunted in a deserted dream.
The stranger --
is alone in the prison of the soul.

البَلَدُ القَرِيبُ -
بَعِيدٌ بَعْدَ الأَلَمِ
عَنْ جُرحٍ مَفْتُوحٍ.

The country that is near --
is as far – as pain is distant
from an open wound.

لاسلكي

على مَبَعْدَةٍ ما مِنْ أَبْخَرَةِ الْقَهْوَةِ
والسجائر المَحْتَرِّقَةِ في انتظار الغيوم.
ترتاح الألوان على أَرْصَفَةِ المَمْشَارِ.
العصافيرُ ترسلُ بَرَقِيَّاتِها بِاللاسلكي.
وأنا أَتَنصَّتُ مُسْتَرْقَا السَّمْعِ
أصطادُ الأسرارِ المَهْاجِرَةِ.

في البَلَدِ الَّذِي لا يَعْرِفُنِي،
أَخْشَى على المَحَبِّينِ افْتِضاحَ الحالِ.
فَهُمْ يَأْتُونَ من رامَ اللهُ وبيتَ لحمِ،
يحتفلون بالسَّرِّيَّةِ في الشَّوارِعِ الغَريبَةِ.

الغيومُ البرِّيَّةُ لا تَأْبَهُ بِناسِ المَدِينَةِ.
هنا لم يستطع المَحَبِّونَ تَدجينها.
ها هي تَمَرُّ بلا اسْتِئْذَانِ.
تَسْلُحُ حُمُولَتِها على رُؤُوسِهِمِ.
وتهربُ لِتختبئَ وَرَاءَ الطَّوابِقِ العُليا.
لُعبَةُ الاخْتِباءِ لا تَنْفَعُ في المَدِينَةِ المَقَدَّسَةِ.
فاللَّهُ يَرى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ.
وأنا أَيضًا.

WIRELESS

Not far from steaming coffee
and cigarettes that turn to ash anticipating clouds
colors rest on the mall's flagstones.
Birds dispatch wireless telegrams.
I strain my ears and eavesdrop,
stalking errant secrets.

In a city that doesn't know me
I fear for lovers lest their secrets are revealed.
They come from Ramallah and Bethlehem,
celebrating the secret in foreign streets.

The wild clouds are indifferent to the city dwellers.
Lovers are unable to tame them.
Now they scud by without permission.
Dropping their load on the lover's heads
and fleeing to hide behind the top floors.
Games of hide and seek are useless in the Holy City.
God after all sees everything.
And so do I.

لو أنني

لو أنني أُعْطِيتُ يَوْمًا مَا نَهَرًا،
لَسَلَّتُ سَيْفِي، وَأَعْلَنْتُ جَهْرًا
عَلَيْهِ الْحَرْبَ.

لو أنني أُعْطِيتُ يَوْمًا مَا حِبْرًا،
لَبَرَيْتُ قَلَمِي الرِّصَاصَ،
وَهَرَقْتُ الْمَدَادَ سُدَى
عَلَى رَمْلِ الطَّرِيقِ.
وَلَيْلَ نَهَارٍ
كُنْتُ كَتَبْتُ بِهِ كُفْرًا.

لو أنني أُعْطِيتُ يَوْمًا مَا صَبْرًا،
لَكُنْتُ صَبْرْتُ عَلَى مَا جَرَى
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ.
كُلَّمَا تَصَرَّعْتُ إِلَيْهِ أَبْتَغِي
الْقَوْرَ، رَأَيْتُهُ يَلْقِي فِي طَرِيقِي
وَصَايَا عَشْرًا.
نُقِشَتْ كُلُّهَا
عَلَى قُشُورِ مَوْزٍ.

IF

If one of these days they were to give me a river
I'd draw my sword and publicly declare
war on it.

If one of these days they were to give me ink,
I'd sharpen my pencil and spill
the ink on the sands of the way,
where I'd write
heretical words,
night and day.

If they were to give me endurance
I'd patiently endure
my history with God.
Every time I pray and
beg for His mercy, I see Him
dump in my way Ten Commandments,
all of them engraved
on banana peels.

سرّاب

غَابَ تَيْنَ الضَّبَابِ
 نَارِفًا كَالْمَطَرِ.
 فِي يَدَيْهِ كِتَابٌ
 مِنْ زَمَانٍ غَبَرَ.
 ظَلَّ لَمَحًا وَغَابَ
 كَالنَّدَى فِي السَّحَرِ.
 رُوحُهُ خَلْفَ بَابٍ
 تَكْتَوِي بِالسَّمَرِ.
 نِصْفُ قَلْبِهِ ذَابَ
 نِصْفُهُ يُغْتَصَرُ.

لَيْسَ إِلَّا الْغِيَابُ
 يَا لَهُ مِنْ خَبْرٍ!
 مَرَّ يَوْمًا وَشَابَ
 وَأَنْتَى وَاسْتَمَرَّ.
 وَاخْتَفَى كَالسَّرَابِ
 فِي هَجِيرِ الْفِكْرِ،
 حَالِمًا بِالْإِيَابِ
 فِي أَعْيَانِ أُحْرٍ.

فِي الْهَوَى،
 فِي الشَّبَابِ،
 فِي التُّرَى
 فِي الْحَجَرِ.

FATA MORGANA

He vanished into the mist
 Bleeding like the rain
 Clutching in his fist
 A book from years of yore
 Appears, then is no more
 Like dew in day's first blush.
 In nighttime Stories told aloud
 His soul is scorched behind a door
 Half his heart melts into cloud
 The other half is crushed

Only vanishing exists
 O, what sort of news is this?
 Gone a day, his hair turned gray
 Though hunched over, he persists
 Like a mirage he fades away
 Into his fevered brain
 For return he longs
 In songs from other days

In love
 In youth
 In dust
 In stone