

Exodus Poems

# Exodus Poems

By Doug Tanoury



FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING

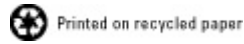


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FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



DETROIT, MICHIGAN USA



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Moses, Henry Holiday window, St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia

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# Exodus Poems

## The Moses Soliloquy

And it began in the wilderness  
With a voice calling out to me in the night  
Calling me by name from a bramble  
For that is all that grows there  
It was as if it was consumed in flame  
For it was lighting the darkness

And I have come to know the voice  
As the Lord I Am who charged me  
And laid this mission on me  
To lead the tribes of his people Israel  
But I was afraid and told him so  
To let him find another but he would not

I am changed somehow by this task  
I no longer am the man I once was  
But somehow I am uplifted  
By the tasks the Lord has asked  
As if I have climbed a lofty mountain  
And have left the normal world

I am transformed by what I do  
And no longer watch the flocks  
In the night and no longer do  
The bidding of Pharaoh and his court and  
For all the wonders the Lord has done  
This change is the most miraculous

For what I Am has asked I have done  
When he said extend your hand  
My hand was extended and  
When he said raise your rod  
It was raised and Pharaoh and his  
Magicians were confounded

As I now am confounded by  
The workings of my God  
Who rains meat for our pots  
And grows bread for our table  
And pours water from the dry  
Stone of the desert at my command.

# Exodus Poems

## August Rain

I remember an August once  
When I could talk to him  
But didn't and each word unspoken  
Rested like a brick on the silence  
That lay thick as a layer of mortar  
And grew into hardness between us

These days I think of him  
Mostly when rain falls in gray sheets  
With a soft hiss as droplets  
Paint the pavement with color  
Of an overcast sky and collects  
On the road in pools in brought to full boil

In summer storms with the  
Sound of thunder on my skin  
I recall in the air's smell and  
The wind cool in my hair  
An August once when rain fell  
In mortar gray hardness on our silence

# Exodus Poems

## **Molten Calf**

This is the god of lawlessness  
A god of wantonness  
And animal appetites  
It a god of body and hunger  
Of longing and wanting

That is my comfort  
In these wild places and my banner  
And standard in the battles  
For I have grown weary and restless  
In the shadow of this mountain

A god of singing and drinking  
Of eating and dancing  
A god of lewdness and wild gestures  
Of revelry and release  
In this desert place

And awaken my heart to the  
Worship of the whim and  
The adoration of the urge  
In a wasteland so barren  
In a world empty of God

# Exodus Poems

## Lazy Geometry

Lying prone in the backyard hammock,  
In the combined shadows of the maple and the ash  
I study the invisible movement of the sun toward zenith  
And the afternoon light that pushes back the shade,  
And when the breeze blows, just so, in the trees  
I occasionally feel the sunlight on my face,  
Fulgurant and fleeting,  
A brightness penetrating just for a moment  
The sleepy darkness of closed eyelids.

I have observed for long hours,  
The serrated edges of each maple leaf,  
And the teardrop foliage of the ash,  
The boughs and branches rising,  
Like arms of the devout uplifted in worship  
They reach to touch the soft circumference  
Of a summer sky,  
Found only in the lazy geometry  
Of a July afternoon.

# Exodus Poems

## **Blue & Purple & Scarlet Stuff**

And I know this for I have seen the fabric  
On the shoulders of kings and their young sons  
Cut and stitched and fit and formed  
Crafted by the fingers of old women  
With poor eyes that must hold the garment  
To their noses to see their work

It is the colors of indigo and lapis  
Topaz and garnet for I have seen the fabric  
In the tunics of Phoenician princes  
And in the capes of the captains of the Hittite hoards  
The blues of royal hue in linen finely woven  
Entwined and twisted

And in the embroidered pomegranates  
That rest ripe on the hems of the garments  
Of Aaron and his priests as they tend the Arc  
Just after sunset under a sky that covers the desert  
Like a cloak made with blue and purple  
And scarlet stuff

# Exodus Poems

## **The Tomb of Queen Amonherkhepsef**

The darkness, I have found,  
Comes in regular cycles  
Like the inundations of the Nile  
That floods the land of Egypt,  
And bring a certain richness in their wake  
That assures abundant harvests.

Yes, every seven years it comes,  
Like the Locust that blacken the sky and  
Devour everything that grows,  
Both the green and the golden,  
The wheat in the fields and the  
Grain in the barns.

So bring me the last scribe who knows  
The picture writing of the past,  
To scribble out my history  
In a stiff script of hieroglyphs,  
A tale of timeless loss and the tedium  
Of endless death and rebirth.

Wrap me tightly in these words,  
Paint my lips, stylize my eyes  
With charcoal lines, and brush brown irises  
On closed eyelids  
So I may remain awake forever  
In the hereafter.

Dress me in fine linens like a bride  
To meet Anubis,  
The dog-faced god of death  
And let the years pass like shifting sands  
I will wait like Isis for Osiris, in a tomb  
Until darkness becomes light.

# Exodus Poems

## Autumn In August

The unthinkable came to me  
One night,  
I felt her gone as a dream vanishes  
Upon rising and gathers up its memory  
In its wake.  
Her touch is summer wind  
In Autumn trees,  
A passing out of season,  
Like leaves in August  
Turning brown and crimson  
And dropping off  
On to still green lawns.  
A thing out of step,  
An order confused,  
A long pattern of seasons  
Broken and gone.

*"She is not dead. . .  
But only sleeping."*

I say out loud ,  
Certain that  
Autumn cannot arrive in August,  
As I make loud radio static  
And breakers on the beach  
By walking alone through dead leaves  
That bury the grass gone dormant  
In days of dark clouds  
That sit on the horizon  
Like cats on a window sill  
In the zenith of twilight.

# Exodus Poems

## **A Slaves Life**

They say go and I go  
They say do this and I do it  
They say gather and I gather  
They say sow and I sow  
For I am but a common slave and  
They a cruel and capricious master

Who cares nothing if I live or die  
For my daughters are like sheep and goats  
And my sons like camels and oxen  
All my children in the fields  
Are bent by this burden  
And bear the rod of the taskmaster

And at night by the fires  
Amid the smoke from the smoldering pots  
I pray to the Lord who is my freedom  
And my deliverance  
Whose reach is greater than the Nile  
And whose bounty flows more freely

# Exodus Poems

## Poem For My Father

My father was the simple man,  
Who wanted things to fit his plan.  
Not highly lettered this I know,  
He never wrote a word although  
He held strong views on many things  
That dealt with cabbages and kings.

You see, my father felt that all good verse  
In rhyme and meter was immersed,  
That poems be written and constructed  
With long tradition unobstructed,  
And built with blocks called foot or feet  
With meter pounding out its beat.

And so he wanted poems to rhyme  
With meter locked in perfect time,  
And all my verse not to his taste  
Was ridiculed right to my face,  
And they were set aside unread  
Like much between us left unsaid.

And so this poem so long in making  
With all the rules it is now breaking,  
The lines have taken years to craft,  
A life long journey toward final draft,  
And all the words now come so free  
And sing in tethered melody.

So Father here's a poem you'd read,  
One penned by your poetic seed.  
It winks, it giggles and it grins.  
It two steps, tangos and it spins,  
And as every word now tows the meter,  
I hope rhyme wiggles past St. Peter.

# Exodus Poems

## **August Again**

After long months of draught  
And endless days of dryness  
In these last days of summer  
The sound of rainfall  
Fills the air like radio static

And I study all the small details of storms  
Their going and their coming  
Their foreshadowing smell  
The telltale blustering of wind  
That blows in strong gusts

And I think it is the crack of lightning  
The flash of thunder and the dull  
Graininess that fills the atmosphere  
And fades the landscape that somehow  
Causes me to recall

An August once when all the elements  
Of storm assailed me and thunder shook me  
Lightning struck me and wind whipped  
And rain beat against my face  
And a long dry season ended

# Exodus Poems

## **Burnt Offering**

And it is with great haste  
I come to her from the altar  
Fresh from the sacrifice of atonement  
Still in priestly robes  
Splattered with ram's blood  
My face smudged with ashes

When my robes fall away  
I wear only the smell of olive oil  
And incense before her and  
She wears only a perfume  
As our scents mingle and our  
Fragrances intertwine

And our clothes left lying  
In heaps on the floor  
Are the skins shed by serpents  
And the discarded shells of insects  
That are cast off when  
They take on new forms

# Exodus Poems

## Ode To Feet

I have seen poetic feet so perfect,  
The very smallest units  
Of patterned stress,  
Soft idioms of Iambic  
And drum beats of Anapestic,  
That march across the carpet  
In measured meter toward full-length mirrors.

I am the bard of bare soles  
And naked ankles,  
Of fallen arches and  
Swollen heels,  
Of toenails  
Pedicured and painted,  
That catch the light  
Like so many cut sapphires,  
All arranged  
In descending order of size.

I have crafted couplets in Trochaic,  
And started the heartbeat of lines in Spondaic,  
For I am the poet of feet,  
Perfect and imperfect,  
Poetic  
And otherwise,  
Of bunions, bumps and bent toes,  
Carried within or laid upon  
A pump, mule, sandal or thong.

# Exodus Poems

## **Cherubim Skillfully Worked**

And it is the artisans and craftsmen that fashion the  
Arc and the altar and all the linens of the tent of meeting  
And the finely woven vestments of Aaron and his priests  
Those that work with precious stones and metals  
Sculpt and shape two Cherubim that looking toward each other  
With faces like the sunrise on the sea and wings spread wide  
And sheltering forming a canopy over the arc of testimony

And it is art that gives glory to God and the craftsman's  
Hand and the artisan eye that honor Him for these  
Are the works and the builders of his dwelling  
Among His people Israel and as priests chant prayers  
And prophets recite the law and the craftsmen shape  
It is the poet's song that rises  
Like a mist on the mountain in the morning  
Their voices raised aloft on the melody of lute and lyre

# Exodus Poems

## **Bad Weather**

Whenever I saw him  
I felt the cold  
A kind of deep chill  
That passed through me  
Numbing my insides  
And the ice that formed  
On the outer edges of my words  
Was skin tingling  
In the same way  
His kisses were snowflakes  
Melting on my cheeks

I would always wish him gone  
Just as I would hope  
For winter's passing  
And long for a trace of color  
In the pencil sketch landscape  
That is February  
And now that he is  
A season past  
There is mildness in the air  
And a stirring in the earth  
Of things ready to grow

# Exodus Poems

## **Precipitation**

In these early days of winter  
When drizzle floats weightless  
And hangs frozen in the air  
The wind in my ears  
Whispering doubt  
And the damp against my face  
Frozen fear  
The smudged grayness of sky  
Deepening suspicion  
That storms recrimination in the loud percussion  
Of hail hitting the awning  
And the downpour of rain against the asphalt  
As I stand unspeaking and exposed  
In a muteness like snowfall that  
Drifts peacefully in quiet of whiteness

Her words frozen rain and falling hail  
And me silent like a snowy night

# Exodus Poems

## **My Father Dying**

In the gulls cry I can remember  
My father's voice and recall his smell  
In the coolness of air drifting off

The lake that lay translucent green  
Like the jade backs of crayfish  
Its surface still and the only motion

A black-hulled lake freighter that  
Travels the horizon like a body being  
Wheeled down a hall on a gurney

The glint of sunlight that stretches  
Across the surface is the silver tails  
Of minnows swimming in schools

And the glassiness of his eyes as he  
Falls into a stillness where unmoving  
He becomes without wind or waves

The lake where mahogany earthworms  
And ebony leeches are bait  
For stained-glass bluegills

# Exodus Poems

## Up on Sinai

And I have answered His call  
Been His prophet and been His slave  
His will has been my will  
And my mouth a holy tabernacle  
For His words

Upon the mountain top  
Beyond the thunder and lightning  
Above the flames and smoke  
God speaks to me in a low whisper  
Carried on the slightest breeze

His voice is soft like the  
Sound of waves on the Nile at night  
And His words hushed like the flutter  
Of dove's wings and as quiet as raindrops  
Striking the surface of the sea

And I am brought high on Sinai  
Upon the mountain top  
To hear the Lord speak  
With the low notes of music  
From a lute and lyre

# Exodus Poems

## **A Quiet Time**

And I would say that in my silence  
I am like the lake that I have often seen  
At sunrise on a summer morning  
A surface smooth and finely polished  
An inlay of lapis and topaz  
Turquoise and jade  
Stretching out under an opal sky

Still as quartz and quiet as crystal  
In the first yellow light  
That floods over the horizon  
Unmoved and undisturbed  
Until my own breath  
Like the wind on the water  
Becomes too faint to hear

# Exodus Poems

## **My Words**

And in days from now  
If this is read  
With the eyes  
Of another age

The form like fashion  
Will be changed and  
I will speak oddly  
Out of style

My words breathless  
And cold until  
They are mouthed  
And lips move

Every syllable  
Becomes my heartbeat  
Every pause my breath  
That rises from

The wheezing bellow  
Of my lungs and whistles  
Up the chimney  
Of my throat

On mouth and tongue  
Through teeth and lips  
To air to ears  
To life once again

# Exodus Poems

## **Favor In My Sight**

They say that Moses found such favor  
That God knew him by name and when they met  
It was face to face and when they talked  
It was like as two friends

He talked often of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob  
As if every word spoken between them were craven in stone  
And He remembered His promises  
As if they were made just today

And I have often wondered  
That if I like Moses met the Lord what I would say  
But I have come to reflect much more now  
On what words He might speak to me

Would He recall His talks with Moses  
And remember the face of Pharaoh or experience them  
As if in present time for tense has no meaning  
For that which stands outside of time

For He Led the twelve tribes of Israel  
Through the wilderness moments ago  
And in the tent of meeting He speaks  
To Moses at this moment

And now too God is parting the curtains  
Of blue and purple and scarlet stuff to watch the sun setting  
Beyond the mountain and both He and Moses  
Marvel at a desert sunset

And I know too that if I met the Lord  
Like Moses I would hang on His every word  
As if they were raindrops in the desert  
And I would whisper only one thing to him

remember me

# Exodus Poems

## A Time Once

There was a time once long ago  
In what seems another life now  
Where I travel back to in time  
To the pillared threshold  
Separating the front room  
From the living room  
An entrance  
To everything that I loved  
And nearly loved

As if the classic columns  
And gothic woodwork  
The precision product of  
A carpenter's craft  
Is not also  
The gateway to my past  
To days already lived  
And nearly lived

Through dim rooms in memory  
Where furniture is tattered and worn  
And each armrest is marked  
By the black spottiness of cigarette burns  
I walk still through a Greek revival  
Entranceway  
To disappointments felt  
And nearly felt

Near half closed Venetian blinds  
That let in slanted blue light  
Of twilight from the west  
That shines on me still  
The basis for color  
And vision  
For all that I see  
And nearly see

# Exodus Poems

## Last Will & Testament

I have often said that  
Old poets  
Never die  
They simply lose their voices  
They get quiet  
Fall into silence  
Forget and are forgotten  
And I know that I am on my way  
Toward the great wordless

I see death and it is  
The stark white page  
The eternal pause  
A period  
And a blankness  
An eternal  
Search that stretches from  
The back of your mind  
To the tip of your tongue  
For a word  
That is never found

I am moving  
In ever so certain steps  
To my quiet time  
Like the hush  
On summer evenings  
As I lay in the backyard hammock  
Still and unmoving  
As a figure carved in the cover  
Of a sarcophagus  
I see the signs  
And read the foreshadowing

Yes old poets never pass away  
They just somehow lose their vision  
My eyes are going bad and  
I can no longer see to write  
I fancy myself  
Like Homer  
A sightless poet

## Exodus Poems

I am blind as Milton  
And one day soon  
The only way I'll scribe  
A line of verse will  
Be to give dictation  
To my children  
Who will grimace  
And make faces  
That I cannot see

As my senses leave me  
And my faculties flee  
And all the muse  
Take flight at once  
Hear this from me now  
That those the gods  
Would destroy  
They first make mute  
Then take their sight  
So I bequeath to you  
All pretty phrases  
To you all sunshine similes  
To you the moonlit metaphors  
I give you  
All lightness and alliteration  
I will you words  
I leave you voice unending

# Exodus Poems

## The Pharaoh of My Past

I was enslaved  
In the Egypt of you  
By one whose heart  
Was hard like a brick  
And whose will was my burden

And how I have come  
To be free is a story of a journey  
Through a desert  
Across a sea  
And up the tallest mountain

I was your slave  
And a victim of a will so harsh  
It would not bend before  
The voice of God  
Until He took your son

So this song celebrates  
And these words now sing  
To Pharaoh's dead son  
Who bought my freedom  
And freed me from the Egypt of you

# Exodus Poems

## **At The Lake**

At the lake,  
These last days in June  
Are like living inside of an opal,  
For there is a golden fire  
In the sunlight,  
A strobe-like flash  
Reflected on each wave,  
A cool lushness in the trees  
Growing slowly toward full foliage,  
And there is a certain point  
Way out the channel, where the freighters steam,  
Where a thin band of milky white atmosphere  
Separates the pale blue of sky  
From the deep blue lake,  
Out where the red beacon on the lighthouse  
Seems to regulate the meeting of air and water  
And marks that misty point where earth ends  
And heaven begins.

# Exodus Poems

## Venus Rising

I have seen a vision of Venus  
Standing statue-like on the escalator  
And rising as if on the waves,  
Wearing a summer garment of many colors,  
A pagan goddess walking amid  
The merchandise in the temple of commerce,  
As a chorus sings and instrument strums  
From invisible speakers, the melodies  
Seeming to emanate from the very air,  
And I am breathless before an image  
Botticelli would paint,  
Of fresco smiles over wet plaster teeth,  
And I understand now the judgment of Paris  
Was a no-win dilemma, an Olympian gottya  
So inescapable and impossible.  
This is the fickled goddess of bargain days,  
The patron of retail sales that I kneel before  
In abject genuflection.  
Awaken you Muse!  
Arise you Greek Poets!  
Rouse yourselves Athenian Playwrights!  
For I have seen Aphrodite walking  
Up the marble temple steps  
Wearing only one leather sandal.

# Exodus Poems

## **The Finger Of God**

And the two tablets  
Scribed with the law and  
Written by the finger of God  
His word captured in the stone  
Were cast down and broken  
At the mountain's base

And I am moved  
By a message from God  
Shattered and in pieces at our feet  
Of covenants unkept and  
Testaments unmet here  
In the shadow of Sinai

And I have not seen God's face  
Only his finger as he wrote  
His presence fire on the mountain  
A flickering and a flame  
That melts an icy heart  
In the company of the Lord

# Exodus Poems

## **The Body Digital**

I bring you the body digital  
Where networks of nerves are fiber optic strands  
Wound round the conduit of bone and  
Through the connectors of heart  
That beats a pulse to push the hexadecimals  
Through veins of micro-circuits  
Into the far reaches of this domain  
Where packets shoot like falling stars  
On the hot and sticky nights of August  
Lost beyond the far horizons  
Where throats are cleared with the bass  
And treble of modems making connection

# Exodus Poems

## Breath

In the dim lit alchemy of morning  
I have come to stand near the counter  
In the quiet of a house asleep  
And listen to the drip coffee maker  
That resembles apothecary apparatus  
As it makes the sounds of labored respiration  
A loud sigh  
A deep inhale  
A long and lingering exhale  
And it called to mind  
My father breathing  
Before he died

The rasping movement of air  
Deep in the throat  
A wheezing in the air passage  
That at times  
Borders on a low whisper  
And sometimes a shrill whistle  
And I see whiteness of the coffee maker  
And the glass that catches the first  
Weak light of sunrise  
All the medical apparatus  
That steams and heats and

Speaks with the last words  
My father uttered  
That was more a bubbling of liquid  
And movement of air  
Than the words of the well  
That are formed by lips  
And shaped by tongue  
This to you now  
Is my lesson in voice  
Which at times becomes  
The same as breath

# Exodus Poems

## Signs In August

As the mornings grow cooler in later August  
I notice flowers grow more vivid  
Each blossom wears a brighter shade  
Each bud promises a more vibrant hue  
And leaves grow a lush green

In these evenings of late summer  
The crickets seem to call louder  
In a meter more pronounced  
And becomes to me as I listen now  
The very heartbeat of night

And in these signs I see  
The season's end foreshadowed  
And I reflect on its last days  
As rain falls in the afternoon and  
Ends in white bursts across the pavement

Making leave and blossom twitch and tremble  
As if animated the flowers awaken  
From dreaming colors of summer mornings  
And trees listen and sway silently to songs  
That fill an August night

And I too am now awake  
And wear a new more full awareness  
Of the signs and signals of a season passing  
And the significance of small and tiny symbols  
Like a raindrop glistening  
On a cricket's charcoal back

# Exodus Poems

## Pathetique

I remember innocence  
In what seems another life  
When I was no one  
And had nothing but music  
That would escape through  
My opened bedroom window without a screen

To be recaptured only now  
In melody slow  
Tunes thoughtful  
The memory notes of a sonata  
Rising now on the heated air  
Of a summer night

It remains a collection of lost lyrics  
A half-forgotten score  
That plays on occasion in the  
Acoustical perfection of  
Of a bedroom painted blue with an opened  
Window that has no screen

# Exodus Poems

## **The Red Sea Between Us**

And something has allowed me  
To get from there to here  
Some miracle of passage  
Some magic that has parted the sea  
Between us and carved a dry path  
From among the waves and formed  
A wall of water on my right  
And on my left

And the power of Pharaoh behind me  
Is washed away and I Am has delivered me  
On this distant shore  
My old life fades from memory  
Like a dream that is only half-remembered  
And seems unreal and somehow  
Unattached from me as if I were born anew  
This very moment

# Exodus Poems

## About Doug Tanoury



Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing <http://www.funkydogpublishing.com> and Athens Avenue <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/dtanoury1/Athens/index.htm>

This and other ebook collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be read and downloaded at: <http://home.comcast.net/~dtanoury1/Tanoury.html>

Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra's English class, *Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c) 1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.