

# **SHAELOT**

**[Questions]**

**Carol Adler**

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## **REQUEST**

Give me a body  
for simple pleasures  
a mind for recording them  
and eyes to see beyond the  
ordinary

yet even in the  
ordinary let me find  
Your treasures.

Set me a place  
at Your table and  
and teach me Your  
words for grace.

# **SANCTUARY**

## **SANCTUARY**

I don't know how I came to be here  
except that I was brought  
by someone older

or someone who'd been here  
before and  
thinking it important  
to bring me too  
took my hand.

Never telling me  
who He was

I was simply to know  
by the warmth and the grip.

So young I was... so filled  
with fear... and yet

I felt it  
I felt it  
and never let go.

## REACHING

The infant's head  
when it first uncurls  
is overlarge  
as if by nature overindulged  
and so by nature self-  
indulgent;

so it is with the leaf  
in seeking sun  
unfolding to larger  
surfaces;  
each cell  
greedily sucking light  
from light's sustenance  
'til life takes hold...

In God's grove  
the sun is a seedling  
and the Tree of Life  
His special fruit:

Our choice, His lead  
Nurtured by greater  
Surety that

in the opening beyond is  
a higher thrust,  
a greater light.

## **A PEBBLE BURNS**

a pebble burns beneath the multitudes

words

are God's pebbles

worn smooth

## MEZUZAH

The sign says the building is  
condemned but we're already  
inside trapped in the  
elevator speeding past  
numberless floors

never leveling long enough  
to see through the grate or  
bang on the door.

Trapped by birth or choice—  
does anyone know who  
we really are when the  
past is ripped up  
all evidence gone  
and no one to ask  
but the ghost of our loins?

Trapped by a 3-pronged tongue  
fireless flame  
paper remnant dangling  
from our necks on an  
invisible chain.

Piece of skin  
Scrap of pain  
with a voice inside:  
*"Speak My Name!"*

As if speech could mend  
a broken heart  
and pretend  
this ride is  
a childish game.

## **WE ARE THE ECHOES**

we are the echoes  
the refugees of echoes

gingerly we pick among the shards  
pretending to search

but we're fooling no one  
there's no one to fool

even the ghetto is a hideous dream  
and the nation so long we have  
longed for is finally a young heifer  
growing into its own

yet where have we gone  
and what is our promise  
we who sit here praying not for prayers  
but for miracles

we who call to the Unknown  
only to mock It when It comes

or is the mockery only despair  
the shawl we wrap around us  
because we must

take away your echoes  
we say  
talking to you as if you were listening

find another place for them  
another time  
put them back in their boxes  
bury them or  
carry them so high  
we will never hear them  
even when they fall

they fall from us  
still-born  
they rise before us  
standing on the mountains  
like statues

standing on the mountains  
and calling

## THE ECHOES ARE BACK

The echoes are back  
but their skulls have been smashed

they lie on the streets  
deaf to the hordes  
shouting war  
shouting peace

dumb to the tanks  
the trampling feet—

like yesterday's trash washed up  
on the beach  
sticks and stones  
mere figures of speech

## **NOT WHETHER OR NOT BUT HOW**

*[After Abraham Heschel]*

God is not perfect.

Otherwise He would have created us  
undoubting. He would not have trapped  
Moses on that mountain just  
long enough to make us sin

forcing him down again only to  
smash those Laws. Nor would he  
have held up over us merely  
a mountain.

Jeremiah said  
if you fear your people you will  
fail before them

I think that's why God fears no one  
and why man  
fearing Him  
falls short of the mark—  
then of course God driving over  
as if He'd always been there.

There seems to be a deception  
here that we should know about:  
we mortals living just long enough to  
uncover it while He goes on  
unending

giving us nothing but illusions  
like the 7-branched candelabra when  
viewed from the front: infinite attributes  
to be witnessed as one.

Maybe if once a year only  
we considered Him perfect  
He'd surprise us with a miracle:  
something tangible enough that we  
could easily accept.

## SCORES

of generations swarming  
from the Book

hordes of suffering once more  
setting up their soldiers  
only to be shot down...

Is it fair to have traveled all  
these distances only to discover  
we no long know what we're  
supposed to be looking for?

Chosen or choosing—  
once more victimized by our own  
fears and the Prophets of War?

Or is this our fate and this  
Your decree—  
That we who burn to be  
free must be chained to our  
Creator...

Determined to  
create a "Promised Land"  
never to understand the  
hands and heart that  
committed us?



**Carol Adler, MFA's** first ghost-written book listing her name as co-editor, *Why Am I Still Addicted? A Holistic Approach to Recovery*, was endorsed by Deepak Chopra, M.D., and published by McGraw-Hill. Other publications include three novels, four books of poetry, and well over 200 poems in literary journals.

She has ghostwritten over 40 non-fiction and fiction works for a number of professionals in the education, health care and human potential industries.

Between 1960 and 1987, Carol's poetry appeared in most of the major Jewish magazines and newspapers that published poetry.

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Her business experience includes co-ownership of a Palm Beach, FL public relations company and executive management positions in two U.S. rejuvenation and mind/body wellness corporations, for which she founded publishing divisions.

Carol has served as editor of several poetry and literary magazines, including *Jewish Roots*, a Rochester-based trilingual magazine published by the Jewish Community Center. Her career experience includes extensive teaching of college-level creative and business writing, and conducting of writing workshops in prisons, libraries, elementary, junior and high schools, and senior citizen centers.

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