

Naming the Darkness

Even in Auschwitz father was able
to teach from the Torah on a secret table,
asking the Lord for His mercy and redress,
praising God in the terrifying darkness,
even in Auschwitz.

Even in Auschwitz, guards gassing children
went home for dinner to families of their own,
and asking after school, and kissing their newborn,
calculated for how long a baby must burn
in the ovens of Auschwitz.

Even in Auschwitz, amongst the living-dead
laughter was trumpeted, and there were jokes that spread
and raged like a fire that was warming;
and singing where no hope would be dawning,
even in Auschwitz.

And even from Auschwitz survivors had to go
back into a world that had let it be so,
and make each new generation remember
all we explain away for an easy future.
Even Auschwitz.

Now Auschwitz is the darkness that's carried within,
that switch too easily thrown in the mind,
deciding each instant to be cruel or be kind;
it's the ego preserved - not me but *him*.
What remains of Auschwitz

are broken thoughts on the polluted altar,
yet are not all that we have to offer,

who can bear gifts too of human kindness.
It's Love we struggle with, peace and forgiveness.
Even Auschwitz.

Even Auschwitz.

James Manlow

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A poem written for Holocaust Memorial Day 2015 'Keep the Memory Alive' - to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz - the largest and most notorious of the Nazi death camps.

"We honour the survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides and challenge ourselves to learn important lessons from their experiences in order to create a safer, better future." - Olivia Marks-Woldman, Chief Executive of Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

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