

In the Shelter: A Mother's Whisper...

(November 2023)

For the children, women, men, and elders who were shut down simply for being Jews.

This is the echo of the voices I hear —
voices of those who were massacred by the butchers of Hamas.
Their stories are carved into silence, and I cannot unhear them.

They ripped open my stomach, bleeding raw without anesthesia,
extracted the fetus I'd carried in my womb for eight months,
shot it in the head while I watched —
and then I fainted, unconscious.

They dismembered my babies in front of me,
then murdered my husband
and took my wife to rape her,
leaving her broken and dying on the dirt road.

They lined up the three of us —
classmates in our second year of high school —
not for history class, but for hell.
They waited, one after another,
until we could no longer satisfy their sickness,
and then they shot us in the forehead.

They dragged my two children, my husband, and me into a jeep.
Their hands were not stained with their own blood,
but soaked with the blood of my neighbors.
They were filled with joy.
We were frozen in terror.

Enough.
I can't take it anymore.
I refuse to let the moans of the innocent be muted.
I refuse to ignore the screams of children, of women.
My ears have gone numb from so much crying.

And now, I read that Israel has accepted a ceasefire.
I tear my blouse in mourning.
Some say it is "to get the hostages back."

But I ask you:

Are the Jewish hostages still alive?

Will they ever speak of what was done to them?

One woman, upon release, said, “I lived through hell.”

Then she changed her story — praised her captors —
because her husband is still in their hands.

Of the first mother and daughter released — we heard nothing.

We’re told by a rabbi that “they’re doing well.”

Really?

A person who dismembers babies and tortures children

does not simply stop when he sees a woman,

or a girl just beginning puberty.

Of course they were raped.

Of course they were threatened.

Of course they are silent.

Don’t tell me they were released out of compassion.

These men are not animals.

Animals kill to survive.

These men kill — and torture — for pleasure.

***I wanted to be the voice of the silenced.
Today I watch the murder’s children walk freely —
and think of my children who no longer can.***

— Rifka Epstein

