

*Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,  
happy is the one who repays you  
according to what you have done to us.  
Happy is the one who seizes your infants  
and dashes them against the rocks.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Happy is the one**

### ***From my Heart in Lebanon, to the Palestinian People***

It's Saturday. I look out the window and notice the crisp blueness of the sky with a few wandering clouds coating the morning sky. Sun at last! It's not a common occurrence in Cambridge, as winter approaches and the trees on my way to the faculty gradually lose their greenness in inevitable surrender to the future, to life. I walk around and everything is so beautiful. The town truly sparkles on Saturdays. Tourists on the gondolas, bikes everywhere, masses of people walking in all directions, yet serene, almost pristine. It was like something out of a movie: the bookshop, effervescent, the old man sat on the black leather chair roaming through the Theology section, the cashier smiling, people queuing for coffee at Fitzbillies, the pubs filling up, the wine overflowing as the laughs triumph over the loudness of the heart, the world, at last, *happy*.

What am I doing here? And why am I so sad? Why can't I rejoice in the clinking of champagne glasses, why does my laugh never triumph over the loudness of my heart? Am I just different? Made to live through it? What if this overflow of happiness must—by Divine ordinance—be paid for with such paralleled anguish? Is it fair that it is unfairly distributed, that one must pay the heavy dues of another's happiness? But again, the universe is an unfair place.

Why? Why am I here? I obviously don't belong. Somehow, I feel undeserving of this sacred happiness, this heart-throbbing cacophonous nightmare that I would much rather substitute for frenzied love of hopeless striving. Maybe this is my destiny, our destiny. But if it were, why do I feel so compelled to fight against it?

The Delphic oracle was starkly clear when she told Oedipus he *cannot* evade his fate, no matter, to no avail. But I think my—our—situation is not very Oedipal in nature. He didn't know. He didn't know who or what—if anything—conspired against him and participated in his unrelinquishing demise until the very end. But I think I—we—know it all too well. But do we? What if it is Divine Ordinance? What if they truly are God's chosen people? Who are we to say? But if they were, don't you think they would be fated to end up there? Minutes away from the Holiest Sepulchre, they must have a Divine purpose for being here. But what they strived for far outweighs a splitting of the Red Sea and God coming down into the burning bush showing his bewildering but relentless support of this dream of Zion, this greatest of Holiness. But what I see now—in the comfort of English poshness—does not quite honor the two beautiful stone tablets, blessed by the most Divine finger.

I try to cry, but I can't. I try to be sad, but I can't. I try to be happy, but I can't. I'm living the dream juxtaposed to their nightmare. Why? —Not why am I feeling like this? I know exactly why I feel like this, but why does it always have to be us, to be either resting in death or alive in tormented guilt? Are we not allowed to be resting in life? Who even does the allowing?

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 137:8-9

But then again, what if this is Decided? What if your happiness truly relied on the constant torment of your neighbor? What if the Golden Rule was just misheard, what if Christ actually said, “Hate thy neighbor”? Can we truly blame them then? I mean they *proved* to us that before they came, it was but an empty land, unfruitful, on the verge of death, and they merely *cleansed* it. What is wrong with that? I mean God the Son Himself cleansed his Father’s temple, so they must be right.

I think we merely tend to misunderstand them because we have grown hard of hearing—and bearing—at the sound of fighter jets of *peace*. We misunderstand them because of our inability to speak their language of happiness, their happiness built on the ruins of our misery.

*Happy is the one who repays you according to what you have done to us.*

I mean we existed, we lived, we were *there*—and that is simply unacceptable. There? How dare you... how dare you be there, how dare you *be*. Maybe it is after all a Divine ordinance.

*Happy is the one who seizes your infant and dashes them against the rocks.*

Because we started it. We were there. We surreptitiously decided to defy the ticking clocks.

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