

BECOMING

89 Poems of My Love For Me

Barry Emanuel Zeve

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*I dedicate this book
To my inner parent
Who learned to hold me
Sweet child of the universe
Just the way I always wanted to be held*

*I was a child who'd been orphaned from myself
In order to seek me and then feel found
Who then discovered I'd been cradled, nurtured and
beloved all along*

I thank me with all my heart

It doesn't do *you* much good to read all about how much I love *myself* if you don't have a place to respond directly to thoughts and feelings that come up for you while reading these poems. Therefore I've left some space after each poem for you to respond or react in writing to what I've written, which will leave you with a record of your own process. I hope, over time, you'll reread these poems as well as your previous reactions to them. You might even consider buying this book once a year and create an annual record of your changes to the aspects of self-love presented in these poems. Over time this may give you more insight into your own process of achieving self-love.

It's common to compare ourselves to others instead of comparing ourselves to who we were the day before. I found that as I internalized the process of self-love I became less concerned with others' success and more interested in their process.

By making this book of poems into a workbook for yourself you may reveal thoughts that change and feelings that are transformed that you'll then be able to weigh in your conscience as though on a scale to determine whether you're taking actions on your head and heart with soulful regard. In this way you'll witness that you're transcending yourself.

If you think of your life as a well, then riding in the bucket down to the waterline will bring you to a deeper experience of who you're becoming. And as you look up at that white light where you came from you'll be able to return to the light each time you descend into self-love with new illumination and joy at the world around you that we all must share.

Please consider the possibility that you've never been jealous of anyone else's body or envious of the love in their heart. What if it was always your inaccessibility to

your own container and contents that has eluded you? What if jealousy and envy of others is an emotional reaction to an unconscious experience happening within?

The tenth Commandment (not to covet) is an emotional prohibition against jealousy and envy. When you get past the last of the Ten you're ready to explore Jesus's additional Two. But you can't dismiss any of the others in your exuberance to love GOD and your neighbor as yourself. We live in a remarkable age when the gift of self-love is no longer looked at as weird or crazy. We now realize that we can't give what we don't yet possess.

I wish you great success on your journey, and I hope your intimacy with yourself increases day-by-day.

Good thoughts,

Barry Emanuel Zeve

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1.

Becoming

I lay in bed one night
Tossing and turning
Until I had the courage to face myself
Until I could caress myself with compliments
Whisper within that I love me
Until I could penetrate me with kind words
Until I came
To know myself in the Biblical sense of the word
And then I rolled over
Content
And went to sleep
In peace
And inner harmony

2. I Am That Metaphor

Metaphors are the marriage of two ideas
Metaphors breathe with a lusty breath
They're the union of good feelings that give birth to good thoughts
That then produces moral intentions
That once born
Grow

The shield Perseus used to look upon the face of Medusa
Was a symbol used to evoke the depth of a metaphor
As I gaze into that shield in me I see myself
The horrible
The ugly
The denied
That which would turn my soul to stone if I stared at it directly

A metaphor is an iceberg
A symbol is the tip of a metaphor
With a metaphor and a symbol you can fathom
That which lies in emotional darkness under severe pressure
Beneath the calm surface of an inner sea

Through one metaphor and two symbols I can consume all life
With the fruit of a tree of self-knowledge and a little bread with wine
I can see down into my inner sea
I can get out of myself by diving deeper into me
And then I can surface, cry out with glee
And take my first conscious spiritual breath with GOD in me

Metaphors and symbols are a divine reuse of GOD'S WORD
The power He gave us to plummet ourselves
HE gave the world a living symbol of HIS love
But HE also gave us a way to marry ourselves with His affection
GOD gave us the main metaphor of Moses
I am that metaphor

3. Fear Engulfed My Rocky Mind

Fear engulfed my rocky mind
Saturating it down to the seed in my soul
Until that seed burst open to grip the clay of my mind with roots
Squeezing my GOD within me to ignite me
With the spark of self-awakening
This *is real*

4. **A Year Of Love**

The season of innocence ended
In the late winter of childhood
When the brilliant light of my sexuality rose
Bathing my virginity in feelings of yellows and reds that left me
blue
Primary colors within I'd never before seen or imagined

This sensuous palette was an unexpected dawn
From beyond all horizons seen
A liquid light that promised new hope through physicality
In this, the early springtime of my life

I enjoyed friendships with strangers all morning
But sought a lover to share that afternoon
And found a companion late in the day
Waiting for me with open arms

And with him intimacy through others walked into my life
Kissed me, and I felt like a prince
Falling in love with love as if in a fairy tale
I look back on my youth as a red-hot, summer day
And a summer night in a milky way of endlessly spilling stars

But early in one autumn morn
A diaphanous, pale-yellow light rose within me
From a mysterious inner East
Beyond all visible
Beyond the horizons of anything I'd ever before seen

And without thought of what time, this time, would tell
I watched this new insight rise like a broken heart
Radiating me in a cautious light that asked me to slow down
It bathed all my light-blue experiences

Stroking them with its faint, fair-haired fingers
Melting that frost within that so reminded me of childhood gray

And in that inner, autumn light of my self-love
I found something evergreen
That made it possible to harvest the courage of life's greatest allure
Frightened, shivering and blushing
I disrobed my soul
And looked admiringly into it
And there I saw a man who was sensuous and younger than ever
Who had been waiting patiently with me for me with open arms

5. **Broken Branch**

I had a sudden thought about myself
Which
Like a broken branch
Floated in the pond in my heart
Gnarled, twisted, knotty and bent
It drifted on the surface of my feelings
My thought about me stretched out in a long-fingered pattern
With knotty joints protruding above the surface of my feelings
Like an archipelago of islands when seen from above
Some words reminded me of misshapen atolls
Random wooden rafts of words watered down by feelings
Surrounded by thin air
But this one incomplete thought about me
Was reaching out for meaning
Reaching out for me to see every part of me
That was separated from the rest

This finger-like twig of an idea
Caused diaphanous, distended shadows
Watercolor waves of refraction that shimmered
On the bottom of my emotional oasis
In the inner desert of my youth
And because my inner light was refracted by my feelings
It made it difficult for me to discern the true shape of this thought
In the eerie moving shadow it cast along the bottom
But when I dived down for the truth submerged
Below the surface of habitual self-regard
I looked up at this twig of an idea from below
And followed its contour as far as I could on a single breath
Until I had to burst to the surface
And from there
Climb onto the bank
Outer reality

Gasping for air

Perseverant
I dove in again
Eager to explore that disconnected thought about myself further
This, a prerequisite to an even greater truth
To know that each broken twig of a thought comes from a branch
And each branch connects to a bough
And the boughs to the trunk of a tree of self-knowledge
Which is grounded with roots in the clay out of which I was made

6. **Homeless Here And At Home**

I'm homeless in this world
And yet at home
Tumbleweed and rock
Artist and automobile
A ship safely moored at port with GOD
While at the same time at sail with everyone else on the high seas
I'm black within and white without
Colorless in my head
And a rainbow from the heart
Two faced
Looking up with a mouth that twists and turns
Inconsistent thoughts nailed together into a boat
And afloat on feelings
Sailing thanks to my soul
And providence

I sought to know myself after suffering had become my only guide
Until self-tenderness found me
Took me by the hand and lifted me up
Led me out of the bottom of the boat
And overboard
And gently through the surface tension of the water
Down to the deep
And then onto the land
And then into the tent of inner peace

We're all on different paths
In vehicles on roads that go two ways
Homeless wayfarers
Rootless
And yet given three routes
We wander in the desert of our head, heart and soul
Looking for that palm-ringed oases

Self-love
Where we all hope to quench the same thirst

7. **I Am San Francisco**

I am San Francisco
And the city's streets are the labyrinth I saunter
To encounter my soul
Its neighborhoods reflect my myriad beliefs and religious opinions
Its alleys and avenues are my life's paths
Its bridges are the bridges I span to go to other golden destinations
Its parks are my inner Sabbaths of rest and repose
Its hilltops unfold breathtaking views
Of the quandaries I've climbed

When I come upon an old Victorian lady that still stands proud
I see in her my own flaws and wrinkled brow
And my mother's
As well as my own seasoned warmth for her and regard
Every Victorian lady in this city by a bay
Is a ray of her sunshine

I am San Francisco's cold sea breezes and clouds
That envelope her in fog
She's surrounded on three sides by water
As am I almost completely surrounded by the mystery of love
The city looks like a right index finger pointing northward
To a fixed source

Both of us seem guided by a natural direction
San Francisco is my body of self-knowledge
My outer landscape
And a reflection of the landscape I hold dear within
My crossroads with the world
And my world
Here is where I claim dual citizenship with humanity and myself

8. **The Seed In Me**

There was a seed in me that grew
And before I knew it
I no longer had a seed within
I'd surpassed a sprout
And had become a budding sapling
With roots delving down deep into the ground of my being
A trunk supporting many boughs
Branches waving down kindly on all those beneath me
And leaves on twigs that had learned to see they turned
From green to red to brown
And back
Thank GOD
To green

Season after season I continued to grow up toward the sun
I changed
I blossomed
In my own unique way

An acorn has no idea it will someday become an oak
And the ancient oak can't commit winter well to memory
(Unless you look at the rings it wears within)

The hopeless sapling can't yet talk about itself in these ways
It can't yet hear its own past echoing through its branches
Rustling its own leaves with its own mysterious breeze
The language of self-awareness lies deep within its nature
Like syrup as yet untapped
More rings within must first wed themselves to itself

The essence of friendship lies in self-intimacy with GOD
This will forever lie within you in the innermost ring you wear
Around the core of your being

This is how you grow here within yourself
Whether or not there's any other tree in the forest listening

9. **Acrobat/Artist**

Born on the ground
Yet yearning to fly
I laid out my intentions in life like a rope
With a plan to walk a straight line

Each year I raised the rope higher
Raising my fears
And the potential pain from an embarrassing fall

I did fall
And each fall taught me more about the feeling of falling
And with each increase in height
I readied myself for new views from the tightrope of life
Which took me higher and higher
Into inner space where embarrassment, shame and humiliation
Seemed to drift beneath me like clouds with silver linings

I first started by spanning one sapling like me after another
Peering through the windows of spiritually young men's souls
Then I tottered between the manmade skyscrapers
Of greed and lust for power
Where I felt the adulation and heard the sighs from the crowd below
As I danced with ease above their heads
Free from guilt but still quite far below heavenly love

My head, heart and soul are now engaged with more personal poise
As I balance my self
Holding only an ancient, inner, shepherd's staff horizontally
Like a sheepish grin
I'm an acrobat/artist
Walking a scaffold beneath the ceiling of my inner chapel
I'm a Michelangelo painting a scene of heartfelt adoration
To myself

GOD

And an adoring inner crowd of believers
Who know the reward I'm seeking

10. There's An Outlaw

There's an outlaw in my heart
Who pins me down with threats
Who never has regrets
He's remarkable, inquisitive and demanding
Exposes, reveals and leaves me feeling disgraced
Holds no allegiance to entreaties
He only wants to be triumphant

He can't be bought, seduced or killed
A spiritual pirate
With a hook that impales anything that doesn't feel just right or real
He frightens, shames and terrifies me
Intimidates me when I make excuses
He navigates seamlessly through the choppy waters of guilt
Through the body of fear that's surrounded by distant shores
While he floats above it all
Fearless
He's excruciatingly irascible and real

He moors when dark
No light enters where he leaves his mark
All I can do is disembark glad again to be on solid ground
And make my way blindly forward
Feeling defeated

There's an outlaw in my heart
Onboard a pirate ship
Taking on fresh water in the shallows of safe feelings with his mates
Humiliated and sinking slowly under weight
Of the thought of another such adventure

I should have sealed off the leak
I should not have been so meek

If not for this inner buccaneer of self-mistreatment
I'd have stayed on board this schooner
And cruised the world for self-love sooner

11. Accusation Was In My Hand

Accusation was in my hand
Forefinger cocked
Wagging out from fist at others
Forefinger fixed and ready to figuratively fire
While self-blame
Those three silent fingers pointed back at me
Were ready to shoot should I have struck out at anyone

My unseen thumb
Trusted trigger to inner peace
Covered my middle finger with pity in an effort to offer protection
While I tried to listen half-heartedly to my thumb
The only witness for both the forefinger of the prosecution
And the other three for the defense
Until my forefinger retreated and my thumb distended
And I could put my thumb in my mouth
Without my finger having to go up into my nose
Once my thumb was in my mouth
Where I could recall how it had once been my best and only friend
And I could consider that it may still be
I realized I'm too young to die in another hopeless war within me

12. **Impatience Rose**

Impatience rose from the depths of my heart
 Swelled to the surface of my psyche
 A mound of swirling waves that foamed
 Turned angry-white
 And then let fall with thunderous fears
That crashed against my mind with inner-blame
 Causing a maelstrom of confusion

 Anger with myself churned within me
 Causing turmoil and billowing breakers of guilt
 That swelled unceasingly
As a tide of threatening waves headed for my shore

 Impatience rose again within
 Clawing at my sandy thoughts like fingernails
 Ripping a ragged line when seen from high above
Like a cut my inner ocean inflicted on my inner shore
 Impatience scratched at the ground of my being
 Making me bleed
 Fear and futility

 And then its nails receded
 From the banks of my thoughts
 Without much more than a ripple
A calm and tranquil inner israel kissed and caressed
 Along the mediterranean beach of my self-love
 And I became a gentle man again
 As peace of mind drew me further out to see

13.

Snowflakes

I used to find it frightening to be alone
Terrifying me to the bone
But now I see I'm not frozen any longer
Every snowflake's made of water
The design of each
Unique
We're all different
Until we melt ourselves down with our own self-love
And then we're really all the same
If you pour us all together you can slice us seamlessly in two
Or add us to others
Or empty us into any container you like
Such are the lessons of the heart
This, **God's** holy water that quenches every thirst

14.

Her Country

Her country
Her culture
Her family and friends
They all tumbled before her like dice
And so she learned to play the games of life
A bit more cautiously
In this Monte Carlo casino of GOD's creation
She's less willing to gamble on the goodness inherent in the cards
A little less willing to place a bet on herself
Afraid of taking a chance on anyone she loves
And lose
She didn't realize that her gaming room
Is every man's urban open space
Where men take their best friend, **God**, to play fetch with Him
He who graciously catches little boys' sticks
As if to say I'll play the doG
If that's what you need to learn about My love and loyalty to you

Aware of all this she floats uneasily down the river of time
Turning, tumbling, transforming in the waves
That reshape her like driftwood
Her container changing without awareness
Of what its contents will look like
Fearful it will be hourglass
To jack-in-her-box,
To pear
To old bag
So she shuns her cards
And then quickly holds them close to her vest
As if withholding self-acceptance behind her back with one hand
While experiencing self-rejection from the other

She sees herself as a scale

A balance
A mere measure of her full self
While the arc of her pendulum swings too quickly
Back and forth
Through inner equilibrium
She yearns to stop it all for a brief moment in time
To cash in some of those chips on her shoulder
To hang loose
To find a foothold
A pedestal
A way to average out opposites with a perfect bell curve
To open that inner hand hidden
And reveal the mystery of oneness with herself from within

But her losses have left her imbalanced
Like one foot cautiously poised in mid air before taking the next step
She feels fear relinquishing the known for the unknown
And so with heaving sobs of sadness
Heavy sorrow like big feet she's lifting
She forces her self
Forward
Loss lost to gains through a mysterious process of feeling found
Her disappointments take her blindly
Toward an as yet unseen promise of joy
Heavy
Dark fears unfolding glimpses
Of a white-knuckled hope

And so she celebrates with another cup of decaf-macchiato bliss
That goes to her hips without making her more hip
The gamble gives way to the immaterial grasped
And missed
A weight that comes off as it continues to go on from the inside in
Slowly she moves out of an all-too frank frown
Into a sincere smile built to last upon a strong chin

She's a spiritual pioneer afoot
Trekking across her inner American plain
With plenty of hills and dales to make her journey more interesting
As she inches her way toward her promised land
A place in her imagination that I will never see

15.

Tune Up

When my vehicle was run down
When I was feeling low on gas
Irritable and rumbling inside
Lonely on the road of life
And afraid I was going to break down
I could tell I needed a tune up

So I tried changing tunes
Using the tuner
On my inner dashboard
From there I modulated my volume to make me louder
But every time I felt a bit flat
Like a tire
Or hot under the collar
And wanted to change the temperature within
I sang my song a little sharper
Like a nail
And so they locked me up without the key to B just me
When they should have looked under my hood
And checked out my engine

16. Travels Abroad

My experiences each day were like travels abroad
The people I met
Strange nations
Each person spoke to me in an exotic foreign language all his own
And other cultures appeared to be other continents
Of inner awareness
And I was especially curious
To explore those places the furthest away

In yearning for new vistas from which I could look back to see me
I journeyed outward to become a tourist out in the world
Turning my heart away from my parents' frigid Antarctic winters
I ventured north to civilization as we know it
To the seven seas of more temperate moral waters
Where people like me like to feel that they belong

With only a passport of kind regard and wonder
With which to traverse manmade borders between men
I discovered I was crossing new emotional frontiers
Within me each day
And eventually I became a well-traveled citizen of both worlds
My world within and the world without
Now I can safely say
I'm bi-polar

17. **Drop Out**

I quit the school of life and learning
To gamble on the one-arm bandit of success
And lost
“What good’s an empty cup?” I asked myself
And then I emptied my cup to find out
I failed
Had to enroll in spiritual night school
Unconscious learning at GOD’s academy of failure on earth
Where
Shamefaced
I earned my spiritual G.E.D. degree in me

The curriculum of life had seemed at first so easy
The other students appeared to be so relaxed,
At ease
At home
But as my exams in being myself
Came and went before I even had time to sign my name to paper
I realized I’d have to repeat almost every class in life I’d taken
I’d have to take all my lessons over again with conscious self-regard
And the wisdom of self-love
It wasn’t until I chose to major in me
That I learned how much I liked learning about being myself
It wasn’t until then that helping others
And serving GOD through every one of HIS names
Gave me the freedom to become
The me that I was meant to be

Here is what I learned in the K-12 of life on earth from failure
Before I got my Ph.D. in me at the university of *self*-success
- The earth is our one-room schoolhouse
- We’re all in on it together
- I had to perceive my *self* before I could perceive our Teacher

- I only came to like our Teacher after I learned to like *myself*
 - What I’m going to think or feel tomorrow will depend
On the curriculum I’m given today
- Wisdom dictates that I think deeply before I act on my feelings
- Self-love dictates that I feel deeply before I act on my beliefs
 - I promised my mother I’d graduate with honors

18.

Pain Isn't Rain

Pain isn't the rain that nourishes trees
Cleanses the land
Refreshes the air

Pain doesn't pour down from a thunderous heaven in sharp sheets
Cats and dogs that began as kittens and puppies
That later matured into all those pet sufferings
You simply wish would run away or hide

Pain isn't the rainwater
That quenches your soul as it collects it
That turned your seed to sprout
To stalk
To flower
To fruit

So that you can sow more seeds of love and wisdom

Pain is the lightening that fells trees
That splits a trunk wide open
Pain is the fire before the conflagration
Your preview to a miracle you can only survive
If you come to love that electric light that burns inside you

Pain is a teaching tool
And you are its pupil

19. Sibling Rivalry

Ever take a good look at your penis and not like what you saw?
Your sister might be able to help in that respect
Do something nice for her
And when you take another look at your penis
You might just find that it looks a lot more attractive to you
Just the way it is and always was

Ever ask yourself why it's so difficult to take a look at your anus?
Your brother might be able to help in that respect
Do something nice for your brother
And take another good look at your anus using mirrors
You might just find it doesn't look nearly as dirty
Smelly or disgusting as you may have imagined it did before

There are a lot of dicks and asses out there
Who don't give a damn about their brothers and sisters
When your relationship with yours improves
You'll find you'll be a lot more comfortable in your own skin
Despite how others insist they see you
Anyone who claims to know what's below your Bible Belt
Isn't look under his own

Everyone needs to be
Spiritual toilet trained
Because when you were physically introduced
To your body
Your parents didn't equate those lessons
To matters of the heart and soul
It's time you took a class or two
In the privacy of your own bathroom
Behind that one closed door where no one but GOD sees you
It's your heartfelt relationship with your body that needs review

Take a seat on the throne
And pray from there to the King
And don't be embarrassed
You'll be surprised at all HE's seen before

20. **Flying Fish**

Each time I break the surface of my ocean of emotions
In an attempt to look down within myself
Not critically
But humbly
To see how I feel about myself
I reflect a little more clearly on the face in my reflection
Before I fall back in again
Back down into the emotional depth of being
Where I'm unconscious of what I look like

Deep down within I flail about with pride
Fondled by cold currents of fear of HIS disapproval
Stroked by invisible flows of my own anger of me
As I swim through seemingly endless sorrow
In my murky waters
Until I'm desperate to find a way to feel good about my self again

Then
And only then
I spring off my emotional bottom of self-hatred
Race up past the surface of my feelings
To breathe in the sight of seeing me more as my Father would

There
In thin air where I can strive to remember more clearly
How I saw the emotional child inside me the time before
How my head has cleared since my last breath of fresh air
And how my heart can be further transformed with love
Through spiritual awareness

I wish I could see myself as a man flying overhead
Before I have to plunge back down into my feelings
Like Icarus who flew too close to the Sun
In these

The swimming lessons of self-love
That teach me to breathe while in the waters of my feeling
Without choking
To inhale myself like liquid air
So that the father in me can come to care for that part of me
That's an agile flying fish
Flying in and out of the water
This is the way I hope to grow the wings I'll need to really fly

21. Fashion Tips

1. Wear the adornments of the opposite gender within you to enhance the side in you unseen.
2. Display your respect for GOD by the temple, synagogue, church or mosque you're in, your body. You're a great edifice to the world, a temple of beauty, a cathedral built to honor you with HIS help.
3. All the races must run the human race, so dress for this sport with a nod of acknowledgement and a smile of approval for everyone. You can't win unless everyone else wins as well. The other players have feelings that mirror aspects of your race.
4. Your parents gave you your first article of inner clothing. Whether you once thought it unbecoming or outmoded doesn't matter now. Spiritual fashion changes like the weather from one outer place or inner space to another. You never know when the inner garment your parents gave you may come in handy again, so save it for a rainy day. These garments come directly from those given to Adam and Eve by GOD before they were asked to leave Eden.
5. Your beliefs are a three-piece suit that separate you from the animal out of which you evolved. You're the only animal that makes its own clothes for good reason; and the only one that needs to be reminded that what you wear outwardly must be lined with love for you.
6. Life is a fashion show. Sport your singularity proudly. Befriend others by donning your spiritually naked soul with a heartfelt coat of many colors. Don't be ashamed or conceited at the boldness of your hue.
7. Self-awareness is the greatest garment on earth. Self-awareness should be worn consciously to every occasion. Being *self-conscious* should never make you *self-conscious*.
8. Wisdom is the belt you made with GOD's help to keep *self-awareness* from slipping down to your knees. Don't forget to tie it waist-high tightly.
9. The shoes you wear are meant to protect your feet of clay. Don't be a heel, and don't appear to be too well heeled. Good soles help.
10. Generosity of spirit isn't a handicap. Every time your hand is ready to tip your cap you'll be rewarded.

22. **The Well-Dressed Snowflake**

Each snowflake is unique
Each is made of the same substance
And yet special in its own way

I'm a special snowflake
But no different from any other
My outer wrap may be cold

And my sting may keep you away from my inner beauty and design
But I bring a little beauty from sky to earth
In a flurry I know isn't all my own doing

I'm not the product of a random assortment
Of inner weather patterns

My feelings can't be controlled
But they can be monitored and predicted

I'm not always hail that needs to clamor to be heard
I'm not always rain that pours down with eventual signs of promises
As yet unseen

In the past
When I was draped in the gray
Of my own outer importance

I was an overdressed snowflake
A stone-sized piece of hail
Slowly turning to slush underfoot
Without any clear purpose of my intentions

We're all snowflakes that need a nose or an eyelash to land on
To melt us down humbly into a single tear on a turned cheek

23. The Price For Buying Into Ignorance

Drugs
Sex without soul
Cigarettes
Drinking to quench one thirst but not the other
Talk like a carousel with the same revolving points of view
Dizzy making
Nauseating
The car in neutral
As you rev the gas
The fumes rise
But you go nowhere
While you make a lot of noise doing so
All ways of trying to get out through the fire door exit
At the end of the hall
Instead of taking your seat in your one-room schoolhouse
With our Teacher

Ignorance about the nature of air, land and sea isn't cheap
The less you know about them the more likely you'll get hurt
In the world within
These are GOD's three little clues to the way HE made you
Your head is a mountain of rocks
Your heart is an ocean of water
And your soul is a skyline full of air
And down deep inside all that
There's a flame burning brightly

Lack of self-knowledge isn't priced unfairly
Only the very richest within can find their way out of their hell
Without exploding like a volcano
Without smelling the smoke
And being consumed by the ash they made
Without choking and dying
Just from being themselves

24. **My Wounds Won't Heal**

My wounds won't heal my heart
They'll fester, pus and bleed
Like gaping eyes they'll see to it that I remember
They'll scar and blemish my unforgiving sin
They'll peel back every layer of my skin
'Till I'm raw with tender feelings to the bone
Until I can see my hard heart all alone

In the end it will be I who will expose me
Bruise, cut, lacerate and tear me
Gash, gnash, pierce and lay me bare
Claw at my heart
To find a way to erase the rim around my faithless virgin soul
But my wounds won't heal me
Until myself-love
Is real

25. Self-Disgust Lay Deep

Self-disgust lay at the murky bottom of my ocean of emotion
In that place where all unconscious feelings
Sink into mud
And return to the clay out which I am made

I swam through that inner darkness and pressure
To get to my emotional bottom
To know exactly how far down it lies
There
I instinctually realized
It would be better to get stuck in my own mud
Than in others'

You may find yourself under pressure
You may be in the dark
Deep down within
But if you know
Up from down
Go down with faith
Go down with curiosity
Go down with self-regard
Then you'll know which way after that
To swim in
To arrive in the opposite direction from self-disgust

Things will get brighter after you find the next oyster in the mud
When you get back to the top to take a deep breath
When you appreciate fresh air in whole new way
When you enjoy in spirit
Of wrestling each pearl out of its shell

26. Inner Beauty Is The Ribbon

Inner beauty is the ribbon round the gifts that I'd been given
A ribbon that my parents tied for me with playful bows

Inner beauty slowed me down
From opening my presents 'til I saw my self in THEIR presence
So many of the gifts I received from HIM/**Him**/H I M
First appeared to be mere outer ornamental trinkets I never asked for
I thought They were only meant to appease the eye
I now see that as a lie
Since I've opened THEE like a gift unto me
I've come to appreciate my inner beauty
More than the wrapping that protects it
At last I received the gift of faith
That makes it all worthwhile

27.

Diplomacy

Peace of mind tiptoed through the doorway of inner negotiation
And introduced me to Imagination
Who became my arbiter and best friend
Over time
Diplomacy and Understanding
Made gentle inquiries into my beliefs
And where I hoped to be by the end of my career
And during these discussions
A kind stranger walked into the room
Compassion
And then his best friend
Curiosity waltzed in
Who
With anticipation
Asked me all about
Me, myself and I
He later introduced me to Courage and Conviction
And through all these fascinating contacts I made
I suddenly found myself appointed
Ambassador of Good Will
And I became an emissary of friendship unto all three of me

28. Parenting The Child Within

I was a parent with an hysterical child within
A child who sobbed and screamed incessantly for attention
So I adopted more kids to keep him company

A new car

A house

And insincere smiles

I invited words

Like in-laws

Into my house

Words without feelings directly for me

I enslaved myself to an inner hypocrisy for others' approval
Authored a philosophy of living that wasn't self-forgiving
To keep me in an inner finery I thought was so necessary

But deep inside

When I least wanted to hear that brat of mine

I did

First loudly like a roar

Then softly in a whimper

My inner child would not be consoled

And my inner spouse was powerless to do anything about it

On airplanes I found the answer to my prayers

"Place your own oxygen mask on first"

Which inspired me to become a proud father unto myself

To hold my inner child within

To comfort

Cherish

And envelope him in my loving arms

When all my adopted children cry and scream my name out loud
When the duties of the world beg me for false smiles or frank frowns

I go home to my own inner flesh and blood

I return to my inner child
To support him
To fill his cup
Till it runneth over with the joy and love of self-regard

29. The Child In Me Slowly Learned To Speak

The child in me slowly learned to speak
And finally turned around inside and asked me
“Why didn’t you parent me any better?”

I answered
“My parents didn’t teach me to parent my selves
I’m still learning
So please don’t blame me for not having known how”

My parents taught me to act like a child when I was still an infant
And then like an adolescent when I was but a child
And so when they insisted I act like an adult
I insisted on behaving similar to a juvenile delinquent
And then I stayed that way for a very long time

I achieved others’ love and approval instead of seeking my own
Kicks and highs were inner white lies
Long summer days without thought to autumn’s homework
A time to vacation from life without an inner parent
A time to enjoy tender love and recoil at tough love

Not until I became an expert inner orphan
Not until the infant, child and inner adolescent
Were crying out for an adult to show up at long last
Until someone who could claim to be real flesh and blood
Someone who cared
Someone who’d swear an oath
“He loved me”
Did I know love

Those young parts of me yearned for that older part to come home
Until then
I was every rebel with a secret cause
Criticizing others relentlessly

Doing little or nothing to discover friendship from within
Drunk on disregard and disrespect for me
Crashing my vehicle of life instead of learning to drive it responsibly
Burning down the house in defiance of having to clean it up
Somewhere during emotional puberty
A young adult inside appeared
Who forced all the inner kids temporarily out of the house
Locked them all out of the heart they were taking for granted
In an effort to knock some inner survival skills into my head

Afraid of growing old like all the others
(Alone and in bad company)
I was a toddler cared for by a child
Who was ignored by a juvenile delinquent
But missing adult supervision
I can now speak in one voice and wonder
Now I can speak for the inner “we”
That can breath a sigh of relief for me

What began as a struggle within myself I couldn’t see
Has turned into a struggle with **God**, not against Him
Life started out as whispers from my mother’s womb
Now I’m learning to dance with Death through fire
Across that river of flames from which no one chooses to return
This school of wind, earth, water and fire
Has taught me to regard myself
It’s taught me how to create an inner family
To become a proud father unto myself
I never would have guessed I would ever want to be *for* me
Rather than *against* me

30. **Self-Awareness Is My Ship**

Self-awareness is my ship
Made of mettle
Made of holy wood
Held together with nails
That, when yanked out, hurt like hell

Self-awareness is my ship
Moving
Always moving
If not forward
Rocking slightly
Undulating
Waving
Quivering with anticipation and imagination at where I'm going
Transporting me
Taking me to a new inner presence
And returning me to my past

I'm a trip!

Vessel of my precious cargo
Repository of the bounty of all my travels
Preserver of my experiences
My arc floats on my heart
Holding within it all that I hold dear

Self-awareness is my ship
Constructed with the holy wood of self-knowledge
That floats naturally
Effortlessly
Dividing my ocean of emotion seamlessly with self-regard

At the bottom of my ocean

There's a land submerged
It's the grounding underwater called
Wisdom of the heart
My ship cruises high above this wisdom
Learning to fathom all that exists in the depths below
Uniting me in the process with strange, new shores
Within and around me
While taking me where it wants me to go

31. **In Silent Glee**

Within the ground of my mind a seed burst forth
And unfolded like a grain of truth awakened
It wove its way through me like a psalm
And I heard it whisper
“You love your mom”

My mother’s devotion was graffiti
Etched with a sacred intent upon my trunk
Her dedication cut me with an intention I first rejected
And then condemned
But the blade of her love was a scarification
Engraved upon me with purpose
Like a sacred vow carved into the bark of a tree

As my budding awareness of life unfolded
And I unknowingly scattered the seeds of her wisdom
Everywhere I went
I secretly prayed they’d someday sprout in me
Before her last dying day

She’d inspired me to weed my garden during my summer in the sun
And to save some songs she’d sung from that previous spring
She reminded me to remember
All the loving arms she had to leave that fall
Just to harvest that precious time she could be alone with me
And when I saw the winter sun in her bright wet eyes
We danced together like two leaves in a blustery wind
One still green
One brown
And both curled and clinging
To the same twig

Now alone gazing into a lonely misty night sky

My branches hang forlorn in an orchard of myriad trees around me
Sorrow rains down within
From a cold canopy of benevolent darkness above me
To my roots below
The boughs of my astonished sapling with more room now to grow
Reach up with branches to my mother’s twinkling eye
A single star shining down on me
In silent glee

32. **My Fear Of Creation**

My fear of me having been created in GOD's image
Kept me from exploring more within
I was afraid I'd discover
That I was one of GOD's odds and ends
Frippery
Mediocrity made shoddy and hastily

So I lived in a corner inside me
Thrifty
Rummaged and ravaged
Bordered by examples like Beethoven Shakespeare Rodin
Looking over their shoulders
Yet afraid to look over my own
Afraid I'd find my past too small and insignificant
Afraid I was one of GOD's seconds
Rejected
Heaped upon a large pile of cast-offs
I was afraid of being emotionally lifeless and useless to myself
In need of being cuddled admired selected
Needing to feel chosen as one of those very precious few

There was nothing I could say that would redeem me
When once again I felt like used goods
When I put myself down
Like some thing unworthy of having in my house
"Buy me!" I should have told myself
"Even if I'm a hand-me-down that no other fool would pay for
It costs so little to feel real!
Even if I'm worth nothing to you now
I'm on sale and such a bargain!"
"Pay the pittance!" you cheapskate!

Buy yourself!

By yourself!
Stand tall next to Bach
Beyond the fringes of other people's outer fame
Take the gift GOD made of you
Put pride in the price you've paid in your heart to know yourself
And the time you had to watch
And wait as that price kept coming down
Learn to love yourself until you're good
And then your inner fortune will rise
Far higher over time than you can now imagine

33. Two Sides To Every Coin

There are two sides to every coin tossed

One seen

One not

To everything there's a second

Unseen side

If you're curious to see both sides of every coin

The paradoxical

The Buddha nature

If you want to see you land with your fave side up

Use your imagination to turn your mind upside down

Or inside-out

Or better yet

Turn yourself sideways like a Taoist

To see the mirrors on both sides

And then you'll get to learn all about the other sides inside

That will leave you richer than you think or feel

That will leave you believing in yourself

That you really are

Real

34. **I Am A Tango Solo**

Life is a tango solo
A dance within
You partner yourself
You learn to embrace and intrigue yourself
To step before you step
So that you don't trip over yourself
You learn to step behind you when you're about to fall
To catch yourself
You should always be bending over backwards for yourself
Learning to hold yourself more tenderly with every step you take
You should be slowly seducing you into loving you
Enticing you to learn to love to learn with you
All about you
And the more you dance with you
The more you'll be learning about
Your tango solo

I hear my own music more loudly each day
My rhythm and singular syncopation echo inside
Teaching me to listen
I exercise passionate regard through others
From me
For me
And through them back to me by witnessing my goodwill
I am a tango solo

35. **United Nations**

Imagine a nation where men have horns
And another where they have the bodies of beasts
 But human faces
Imagine a nation of satyrs
 Half goat
 Half sex-starved boys
Another nation of female Minotaurs
With lithe bodies of women with the heads of cows
Another of people with paws for hands and feet with claws
And yet another where they have beaks for a nose
 And pigeon feet for toes
Imagine your neighbors had chicken wings in addition to arms
Imagine your best friend had the ears and tail of a donkey

These are the bodies behind the voices in me
These are the nations neighbors and friends in my inner world
 This is my internal truth
 GOD bless me!
 I'm part nature
 Part human
 Animals within
 In transition
 Growing changing becoming human
 Or not...

 I bring these voices
 To the peace table
 For them to meet one another
For me to see the many 'me's' as 'we' really are
 To regard all of us
 One and all
To ask everyone in my own name to have a little regard
 For my struggle with reality

I politely requested
 That they not strive to be too human
(The virtues of animals are no better or worse than their vices)
 The most effective way to make peace with inner beasts
 Is to bring out the best in each one of them

36. **Spiritual Hunger**

GOD served me ample-sized portions
A daily plate that was always heaped quite full
The problem wasn't that what HE offered wasn't nourishing
It was just that I was such a picky eater
I didn't like what He cooked up for me
And so I had a messy habit of flinging my experiences on the floor
Turning my nose up at my fate
I refused to eat all that was on my plate
I was spiritually anorexic
Couldn't get all life's lessons past my lips
Let alone down my throat
So much food for thought that I discarded
And yet I was always hungry for something more
The more I was served the same-old-same-old
The more I began to suspect my diet wasn't ever going to change
Such were the nursery school lessons of my life
A cafeteria strewn with spiritual food on the floor
Until I grew up enough to choose to eat everything on my plate
First begrudgingly
Then with a finicky appetite
I swallowed what I'd chosen
I forced myself to chew on it using wisdom's teeth
Slowly I learned to eat what was served
Whether I liked it or not
Only then did I perceive my daily bread
Had been given in a timely manner
Whether it was rye, sourdough or corny
It had been baked to perfection just for me to learn to see
Once I stopped flinging my experiences with people
On my inner floor
And gulped down the bad folded in with crumbs of good
I realized that every morsel in this day today
Has been selected just for me to see if I can learn to receive

Slowly I learned to improve my appetite for daily bread
Even if I had to wash it down with a little whine
I even learned to leave a little room
For a piece of forbidden fruit for dessert
It was then that I felt more seen by me
And by THEE
It was then that I felt spiritually a bit more sated
And could expand my diet to see myself as life's most tasty treat
Miraculously then, and only then
Much of my hunger abated

37. **My Silver Spoon**

I was spiritually hungry
On the prowl
Searching
Through the cupboard of life
For its tastiest treats

Born with a silver spiritual spoon in my mouth
Gifted
But famished
I had to learn to take the silver spoon out
To make a way for my daily bread to enter in

Since then life has served me generous portions
I can honestly say I feel quite full
I've learned to use the knife and fork of grace and gratitude
To empty my plate
Which has given me a lot more time to recreate

38. A Gleam In My Inner Eye

I was an iceberg
That judged me by that little peak that rose above the waterline
All my life I thought I was so proud and tall
So high and mighty
Because I could look down on others from that lily-white peak
Onto a flat calm inner sea
Serenely peaceful
An island I assumed that would always be there for me

But when the sea got rough around me
And spat my name out loud
And made me foaming mad
I dove down through that vast blue-liquid mass
To the bottom of that part of me
White frozen and submerged
Where it was surrounded by black feelings
Under enormous pressure
Down to where I could recall in peace
God's Ten Commands
And ride out the storm at the surface
With Christ's other two

39.

The Box

I was a box
Thinking inside myself
I saw I was in a box only when my head came out of it
And I was able to think outside the box
But then I stuck my head back in
In fear
Stuck my left hand out through the hole I'd made
And then the left arm that hand was attached to
And before I knew it
I had my left shoulder up to my heart outside the box
And I found myself feeling outside the box

Then I brought that arm back in
In disgust and disappointment
Because I felt I was the only one who felt anything sincere
And then I forced my head and left arm
Out of the hole in the box in me
Until I was thinking and feeling sincerely for me outside the box

From there it wasn't long
Before I could pull my right arm out as well
And when my head, heart and breastplate were fully out of the box
I could think, feel and believe outside the box

I was acting in an ancient way
That looked like a Greek sculpture come alive
Only the desires below my waist were still stuck therein
Like Jack on a spring
Stuck in that box within

It takes embarrassment of a sphincter
With an unusually large circumference
To decide to leave it behind

Boxed in

It takes a box in a special place that's really real
To take out everything you value because you so much want to feel

Some people breach themselves instead
They come out feet first
But I suggest you come out wisely
By knowing which end you want to get out first
I recommend your right sole is the last part out of the box
Not the first

40. **The Cost Of Tuition**

Tuition

In the School of Self-Love

Is paid for with curiosity

Enlightenment isn't free

This isn't some sort of public institution just anyone can go to

Only those with an inquisitive nature should bother to apply

This school is the very essence of "private"

When I was accepted here and enrolled

All expenses:

Pain, suffering, loss, disappointment, resentment, fear and failure

Were paid for with metaphors, symbols and similes

That taught me about the "mystery" in being me

"My story"

Then I learned to see that the basic expenditures

Of my primary spiritual education had been paid for with pain

My secondary spiritual education had been procured with suffering

College costs were covered with the losses of unrequited love

But the graduate program was practically free from worry

And the doctorate degree in self-love actually paid for itself

With joy and gratitude

To my parents, tutors and Teacher

The university of self-love on earth

Is renown throughout the universe

Those who continue lifelong learning here in "me"

Will find their time in school will be

Well spent now and forever

It's my plan to graduate reality with honors

And I feel assured of an eternally good future thereafter

41. **Methods Of Travel**

My mind is the vehicle I drive
Across this rugged worldly terrain
I don't climb mountains clawing my way up and over myself
I chauffeur me
It's my mind that steers me
Through the landscape of my imagination
Which is my second world
But a world that also *is real*

My heart is the submarine I pilot
Down away from the waves of regret
And all that playful social spray
Through the currents of deeper darker feelings
To a cave at the bottom of an ocean of my emotions
That I'm quite willing to let you in to
But where few admit to having the courage to enter

And yet I most love and yearn to fly
I
Who just came up for air
Who just began to feel harbored
Self-protected and somewhat safe
Now want to imagine taking my soul into flight
To navigate above the airs of religious enlightenment
With a faith in my Abrahamic belief
That will keep me airborne always
On my own broad shoulders
With ever-widening wings

42. **Washing My Laundry In Public**

My thoughts wave to and fro like a clothesline on a windy day

 A long smile held up from ear to ear

 My feelings

 Plaid sheets

 Striped pillowcases

 Undershirts

 Rags and denims

 Flutter on the line

They're clipped to my thoughts with big wooden pins

 My feelings snap

 They flit and fly

 From an unseen breeze

 While my thoughts

 My poor thoughts hold on taut

 Like arms stretched wide

Held back by the weight of my feeling

 Feelings that are clean

 But still dripping wet

43. **The Necklace**

Each Jew is a pearl of wisdom on a necklace around Jerusalem
Each of us is a *knot* that separates one of us from the other
 Notes that the whole world must reckon with
That space and frame each of us from all others

 Focus on any one of us
 And your attention will be drawn
 To the beauty of our mother of pearl
 Stand back and look at us all
 And we shine an aggregate hue
 Hold Israel like a choker
 And watch the whole world gasp for breath
 Try to remove us completely
And your self-adoration will lie before you in bloodied hands
 Like memories of Auschwitz revisited

 May I suggest a New World brooch for Christians
 To give to
 Rome
 Made of that one special pearl of wisdom of the heart
 That came from the Galilee

And Moslems might like to make a lovely charm bracelet around
 Mecca

 Both brooch and bracelet
 Would be fine compliments to our necklace
 Gifts that every peace loving woman
 Would want to wear

44.

Augmented By Me

I am a rock
Come down from a mount
Ground into sand by a shimmering sea
Borne by the swells to an uncertain shore
At rest on a strand
Augmented by me

45.

Song Of Atlas

Joy is the heaviest feeling on earth
A blending of happiness, fear, anger and sorrow
And life is my bench-press
Where I'm gaining strength to bear the weight of joy
To embrace and hold joy high
And then to put it down gently when I get tired
Not let it slip through my fingers
And fall to the ground like dead weight
I like carrying the joy of the world on my shoulders
While singing praises of me
The emotional Atlas that I am
A titan so responsible
That I won't ever drop the ball of joy

46.

The Tree Of Life

The tree within began as a seed
The seed was rooted to the Rock with fear
The seedling pushed through the hard black soil with anger
The sprout looked up at the sky with worry
The sapling looked back down on the dewy ground in sorrow
The mature tree branched out with joy
And after the blossomed buds of many springs seeded the earth
With casual smiles and winks of understanding
These little flowered fists gripped generosity of spirit for others
Until one spring they burst into bloom
Opening with pedals ripe with giving
And ready to fruit the world with deeds of self-love

47.

A Lighthouse

A beacon am I
A mirror and a window
Peering in at myself as well as out at others
Rotating through the silent night

I am an inconstant light when viewed from afar
Blinking periodically for others
And yet eternal, glowing and illuminated from within

Shine a light on your lighthouse
See the illumination you bring to your world
Let that one tiny little light shine up on you
That you may see the illumination of the love you shine for others
Let the illumination of your wisdom
And the warmth of your love
Shine out onto this dark and dangerous world

If you do this
You'll become more than a lighthouse for others
You'll enlighten yourself
And you'll see the Rock on which you were built

48. **I Am Me, A Lemon Tree**

I was once a lemon tree that knew not how to blossom
From a seed that had no idea it had been in a shell
 I had boughs that had no branches
And later branches that hadn't formed a single leaf
I emerged from a trunk wanting of protective bark
That still leads down to roots I've never really seen
 And up from there you can see me flower
 With a fruit that embellishes
 Earth and sky
 A yellow rind with sour flesh inside
 That
 At the core
 Holds the seeds of my own special dreams

 In the orchard of my being with others
I finally smelled the fragrance of my own flowers
 And realized my own spring had sprung
 And so
On the dewy tears of all those dreams as yet unsung
The fruits of my future that lay for so long dormant before me
 Turned into words ready
 Like prisoners held captive without trial
 To escape my tongue and lips

 Nature gave me a season to see the reason
 A season in which I could watch myself unfold
To see that I'd been dropping lemons at others' feet
 From boughs that bowed with stiff regard
While others gathered theirs and made lemonade of them
 And so I sadly saw that all my greatest treasures
 Had been buried in the rotting refuse at my feet

 Now's that next new springtime

 Now's the time to sow these seeds I never reaped
 And, providentially
 I have loads of lemons scattered all around me
 And even a few that have rolled some distance away
From a lifetime of soured circumstances and bitter disappointments
That has long since taken root and come alive themselves

 Although I'm not yet that old a lemon tree
 My yellow fruit is fully tart when ripe
 I'm the color of that strand of the rainbow
 Generally seen as frightening
 A 14-caret dream I never sought
 Then scorned for being sour
 For being yellow

 People still bite into me unknowingly from time to time
 And find it takes a lot to wash me down
 I make them pucker
 And whether they squeeze me
 Grate me
 Or claim to enjoy my zest
 Even though I'm hardly a nutritious meal
 They discover I'm quite a condiment
 Quite a contribution in my own right
 But only if you remember to add plenty of sugar

49. **Victims And Perpetrators**

A victim looks outside himself
Refuses to look at acts of GOD or others
 In his inner mirror
A victim is afraid of what he might see behind him
 That's still following closely

A victim is a Narcissus
Who loves to look at the face in the lake
But who doesn't see how that could lead him to learn to swim

A victim doesn't see this truth
Despite all the ripples in reality and waves in the weather
He drowns himself in others not to have to look at himself
A victim falls into GOD's lake
And claims HE's all wet

A perpetrator pushes others into lakes
With a perverse desire to watch whether or not they'll learn to swim
 Victims thrash about in holy water
 While perpetrators laugh out loud in thin air
 Both gasping for breathe
 Both fully aware of their own reality
While neither understanding its significance to the other's mortality

 "I'm trying to save the both of you"
 I tremble from the ground
 One of you is drowning in self-pity
And the other is choking on haughty airs

50. I Wanted Wonder

The first time I succeeded I wanted others to wonder how I did it
I wanted accolades
I wanted fanfare
Wanted praise
Smiles
And pats on the back
Maybe even an invitation to the White House
With a red carpet and a memorable meal
I would have liked to be decorated and questioned about my success
I would have wanted wows!
I would have wanted them to hear me say
“I defied even me!
Surprised myself!
Left even me speechless!”

The second time
I wanted to wonder in silence
Wanted me to soberly shake my hand in reverential awe
Wanted me to let go of fear of my future
Wanted me to guarantee myself I'd never leave me
Never let me go
No matter how far away I'd again wander
Away from my reason for being here

The third time
I walked by my side in wonder
I stayed closer to Home
Didn't run ahead to tell them all
“He's coming!”
Got a bit more enthusiastic for my own company here and now
Enjoyed my heartfelt admiration and faith in me
The third time I ironically found I had more to give to others
Saw I wasn't some stereotypic emperor arriving naked

With fruits of self-knowledge dangled in plain sight
The third time I wondered why I was a man
Draped in modesty
(But at last at least wearing something)...
The fourth time
I watched me with a curious self-regard mixed with wonder
The fourth time I wondered why I was so 'wonder' full
And I got just what I wanted
“I wonder why?”

51. **I Love My Understanding**

I love my understanding
It's such a sign I care
I don't have to mouth the lyrics to "*compassion*"
Now that I've learned this tune called "*self-passion*"
I no longer feel like a consolation prize
Held in hand with tender lies

Because I better understand me now
I don't tolerate "reasons" and "excuses" for my pain
I purse my lips and reprimand me!
I deal with anger management issues with me with more tears
And fewer jeers

Without the fiddle of self-pity in my left hand
And the bow of victimhood in my right
I play me with gnarled callused hands
But correctly
Perched on a rooftop in an ancient land
Where I see so much
More clearly

Up here
I hear my haunting tune
That
In my inner echoes
Sounds so right
Even if on the outside
I look a little odd
And queer

52.

Inner Art

I was a born painter
Life was my canvas
But over time I realized that my etchings lacked depth
My view was 2-D
Flat
I was a living lie with a few fine points of view
That gave me some perspective
But I was still just pretending to be real
I was overlapping subjects in my foreground
Just to make myself think my self-portrait looked 3-D

And so I graduated to sculpture
Where the object of life was to turn myself slowly
While carving a little more on each and every side
Day by day

And from carving my life like clay
I moved on to chiseling myself in stone
The permanence of ethical regard in principle
And by sculpting myself morally
I developed strong arms and torso
And when I'd chipped away enough of my ego
I saw that my conscience was the real artistic tool at my disposal

And so I tried my hand at inner mettle
Until I could claim to have the Midas touch
Everything I touched within me I accomplished
Everything I set my heart on shaped me into a golden calf
That gave off a brilliant inner light of self-awareness
I became unimaginably rich from the inside out
And although hollow
I worshiped me

I was born a portrait artist who became a sculptor and skilled artisan
Searching for my David to tell me I too was a great Jewish king
I worked in a variety of inner mediums
To find the best way of viewing me
Until I could say my inner world had come to life

And then
When leaves on my inner tree began to tremble
In sync with the invisible Wind
I knew that life would end for me in dance

53. **You May Be Your Christmas Tree**

 You may be your Christmas tree
 Under which you there was once a present
 As an infant you perceived this gift
 In childhood you found a way to remove the ribbon
Then you tore off all the wrapping in your haste in adolescence
 Only to get distracted by the box
 As a young adult

 Many a grown child
 Still doesn't know there's another gift inside him
 Or what to do if he's looked and thinks it isn't there
 This kind of child of GOD goes through life
 Wondering what he'd do with what he doesn't believe in
 And society hasn't got a clue what to tell him or where to go
 His secular education never helped him figure this out either
And his jobs were certainly no place to unravel a mystery like that
 So he explored the feeling of emptiness inside alone
Looking under the sawed off trunk of his Christmas tree for more
 Only to discover it no longer has roots you can see

 But persevere I say
 Be resolute with yourself
 Not too tolerant or accepting
 Work your way through all the packing popcorn in you
 That others are still consuming
There's nothing more to be found if your presence is missing

 Under that Christmas tree that you call "me"
 You're surrounded by discarded bubble wrap, torn ribbons
 And
 By now
 A broken box

 The gift you're still looking for
 You'll find
 It hangs high above your trunk
 Above the boughs
 Above the highest branch it hangs from a single twig
 On the smile of that angel at the top
 There sits the reason for all your empty feelings
On that plastic angel smiling up toward a higher ceiling

 That's the strange and special ornament
 GOD added in your soul
 Whose smile branches out
 Into every part of your heart

 From its light
 All those phony icicles you draped
 Shine just right
You're fooling no one with your empty hands
 And pouting frown
 You're a Christmas tree
 For you and me

54. **Anger Begins Within**

Anger, irritation, exasperation
Resentment and
Of course
Rage
Common feelings I can gage
In others...

But feelings I never noticed
About my relationship with me
Every outward anger
Is a sign of an anger that originates within
An expression of an early morning self-hatred
An exasperation that rises every day with me

A
“How am I going to apply all this to me?”
Frustration
With my hands figuratively on my hips
As I glare at me inside

And from a hidden hollow in my subconscious I hear
“Apply what where?”
I start the day with a bark and blank stare
As I make my bed
A look past my busy hands that tell me in sign language
Where scorn and contempt originate too...

I infuriate me most on Monday mornings
But I do a pretty good job of it the other six days, too
What is it I do to me to be the cause of so much self-made suffering?
What messages am I not passing along to me?
What’s slipping through the fingers of my left hand
Before I can pass it over to my right
And from there
Read it in the morning light?

I know I can’t demand answers from me all day
I’m too proud to stoop to anyone else’s demands
But why don’t I just come out with it
And tell me what’s wrong with me?
Why am I so damn courteous to everyone
Including me?
Why am I always the good little boy
And gentleman my mother always wanted?
Why does it frustrate me being me?
I’m through implying and suggesting
I’m through being diplomatic
By lying to myself
I don’t want to be two-faced and a hypocrite inside
I like straightforward questions with clear answers
I want to know the truth
Even if it meanings
I discover I’m not heartfelt
Or all that smart
If I could only treat me as respectfully as I treated others
I’d prove how kind I could learn to be to me

Although I now know
I’m a tree of self-knowledge
That still has to grow
At least I also know
A self-hating sapling I am not

55. **Angry With The Jews**

I am the Lord
Your GOD
I took you out of Egypt
You didn't take ME along for the ride...

The First Commandment wasn't HIS first commandment
It was HIS emotional introduction to the "jew" in you
Today may be HIS introduction to the "you" in you
But HE's still the big angry
"nothing-you-can-do-about-it"
Before you begin to feel
"Someone"
Or
"Something"
In all that empty inner space inside

A thousand years after GOD gave us HIS Commandments
Without anything we could possibly say or do about the First
He gave us
"Someone"
In the flesh
A man who was pretty damn angry at the richest of us

But today we whittled the Ten down to Nine
Leaving the only crime
Jealousy and envy
Which we pursue with blatant disregard
For His two matters of the heart

Too bad Jesus was so disappointed
With the reception He was given
Yet I'm grateful for the disappointment He brought

By GOD having given us Jesus
I sense that gave HIS
Then juvenile
Chosen People
A clue that HIS anger had waned

And after two thousand years of counting every tear
We Jews have arrived at young adulthood
With nothing much in hand to show for it
But a little wisdom
We somehow know inside
We've made our Maker proud
We've been given back the land
HE had taken away from us
And HE's redeemed us with a few more
Of HIS promises fulfilled
If you think there's nothing to these words
You may be right
But if you feel there's nothing in them
You're quite wrong

56.

Austerity

The struggle of the stupid
(sleeping)
Young
(naïve)
And poor
(unrewarded)

Is something you either identify with
Because you once felt dumb, young and broke
Or you don't

Because you're still sleeping
Naïve to life's real meaning

Or simply because you enjoy being spiritually needy

Either you remember having once been in a stupor in a shell
Locked in the ground and in the dark
Struggling to get out of your husk

Or you're still working on germinating to get you out of yourself

Either you were once a sprout so young and naïve
That you had no idea you were boring through solid rock
To get to a point where you could finally see the light
Or you haven't yet reached inner illumination

Either you know what it was once like to be so poor inside

- A saplings among fully mature trees -

That you couldn't then see your own arrogance

Or you're still looking down on those greater than you

Austerity is caused by a lack of rain

A terrible thirst

A time when cisterns

Wells and other innovative methods of satisfaction

Are needed to keep trees alive

Some cry out that we should water only the mature *breadfruit* trees

Others cry out that we're all trees

That we should share this holy water with everyone

GOD gives us water shortages at HIS will

- He holds back HIS love -

So we can decide for ourselves

If we're ready to embrace HIS metaphor

While living with His symbols

And still come to HIM

Embracing his similes -

So if you're still debating HIS presence within you

Hoping for more indulgence of autonomy

Over the gifts of freedom

Keep growing until you can wrap your roots

Around the Rock more tightly

I don't recommend you take the Bible literally

But personally...

There are many ways to sleep without a man in your bed

And still act abominably

The hard-hearted will always need plagues

To scare them out of their complacency

And "israelites" will always rely on miracles

To get them out of one form of bondage or another

It's always taken a "moses" to get a man

To his promised land

And a J"Joshua" to get him in it

Become a great prophet who can make your dreams come true

Before you profit from the **WORD** from the Son of Man

Then you'll be able to heed the **W O R D** of every man of **G O D**

("Ishmael")

Who heralds in the "prophet mohammed" in you

57. **Where Am I?**

The question I ask myself in the quiet of my heart
And the vastness of my soul
After I ask myself
“Where am I?”
Is
“Where is here?”
When I answer that question within saying
“Here I am!”
I feel seen and heard
I’m not referring to the
“Here”
I say out loud
I’m referring to
“Here”
In my imagination
When I call
Not *out* loud
But *in* loud
“Here I am!”

When GOD called out to Adam in Genesis
He ran
But when GOD called out to Abraham
So many times in Genesis
Each time Abraham answered with
“Here I am, my Lord”
But where exactly was he inside himself?...

You’ll retrace the story of Abraham
In discovering the answer to that question

That I promise you
Here and now

58. I'm Learning To Listen

I'm learned to listen
To fill the ear above my heart like a schooner's sails
To move myself with life's strong westerly wind
Across my ocean of emotion
Across the breezes of the seven seas
Across the storm in my teacup
Across
Me, myself and I
To a heavenly presence
Here and now

Before, I'd been drunk on the wine of worldly distractions
Learning to listen only to others
Not knowing it would teach me how to hear myself
Slowly
I discovered the wheel to my schooner
Which made it possible to control the direction of my feelings
Which in turn made it possible to set a course
Toward a new inner horizon
One where nothing is accidental or incidental
And that then made it possible for me to see
Myself with divine purpose
Someone who didn't have to bet on whether there were stars at night
To know
That GOD doesn't play dice
Day or night
With HIS universe

Self-expression is a choice
You can choose not to express yourself
Or you can choose to do so
And learn about yourself first hand

Helping others is a good way to show GOD
You like to gamble HIS way
It's a good way to load your night sky with milky dice

In yearning to learn how to navigate through my inner left ear
I got to know the One who fills my inner sails
HE who poured me into this, oh so leaky ship
That I have to constantly bail of unwanted gauche feelings
That weigh me down with whispers

It was on this voyage of self-discovery that I discovered
The saucer beneath the storm I was traversing in my teacup
The saucer that catches all that overflowing love
I can never quite contain

It's the elixir in my saucer that I really most love to drink
Although I've been told many times not to do so
Especially in public when I so often find
My cup runneth over

59.

Teacher

A “classmate”

Can direct you from the country to the urban inner sprawl
Can claim to know that part of town within
Where you should stand tall
Can lead you personally down the boulevards
Everyone ought to visit
Can take you through the maze of suburban streets
To the address where you’ll reside
In the city in your head

A classmate can point out the number of the house to choose
To live the good life in your mind
He may even know the neighbor’s kids on one side of you
Or the other
May know those who’ll be in your homeroom at school
Those who share with you your study habits
And who has a similar schedule of classes

A “tutor”

Knows the home in your heart
Can describe your gravel driveway that crackles with insincerity
As you cross it
Knows if the landscaping around your house is sincere
And is willing to walk you past your own white picket fence
And down the primrose lane your parents planted
He can prove to you he knows his way around his own heart, too
A good tutor will walk with you within
From room to room
May suggest which window
You might like to open for fresh air
And when

He’ll show you which hinge will keep it open
Or shut it securely
Will demonstrate how to open your blinds
To let your own light in
And which cord will close them tightly
Leaving you in your own self-darkened dark
There are many classmates and tutors in life
With many gifts that will give you
An orientation to your new school and home

But our “Teacher”

Saw where and when you came from
And sees where you’re about to go from here
And what your classmates and even tutors are planning to do
To help or hinder you
Knew how to get you from then to now
Knows how to get you from now to each and every “then”
Before you arrive at the other end
HE already knows how you’ll probably want to go from
Here-and-now to a future
There-and-then
Based on HIS experience of human nature
HE’s so well traveled in your soul that HE’s seen it *all* before
HE’s like a mirror behind you reflected in the mirror before you
HE can even find someone as intricate as you
In a myriad of reflections
Whether you’re lost between your head and heart
Or stretching like a house cat on a window ledge in your soul

You’re going to need more than classmates and tutors
To get you through this school in three D
You’re going to need a personal relationship with the Teacher
You’re going to need to spend time with HIM

During HIS office hours with you in your soul

There is no substitute for life that any book will bring you
You've got to become the Good Book to yourself
You've got to learn to see yourself in all HIS Letters
Before you'll be able to utter your first WORD

60. **Learning To Teach**

Learning something good about yourself
And then trying to pass that on to others
Without teaching them what you don't know about yourself
While looking for a way for them to hear you
If their ignorance or impatience makes you anxious
 Won't be easy
It may make you feel clumsy conveying your truth
Especially if your intention is to change anyone's mind

Transforming the heart of others
Or helping them transcend their soul
Is only for practice in learning how to learn from "you"
You're just another classmate in a school
Where you should have already learned about learning
 Not solely about teaching

Spend your time more constructively
Teaching yourself while teaching them
Don't consume yourself teaching others
Unless your greater goal is to learn from you from the process

My mother was all consumed with "them"
With what "they" would think or say
Everything she ever taught me was to appease "them"
To think about how "they'd" react or what "they'd" do in return
 And in a funny way she was right
Because in giving so much consideration to others
The Teacher graduated me from "them" to "me"

I'm not stupid, heartless or without a soul
And even if I may not be the tallest tree with the deepest roots
 More like a palm among evergreen
 I still have big nuts

Even if I have shallow roots
And although I have no branches to speak of
I do have huge leaves of modesty to conceal my nuts
 That wave so freely in the wind
I can bend over far further than any fir
And can even withstand conflagrations
So I'm happy being like a palm tree

Coaching others was only for practice
 But it was good practice
 Indeed
It was our Teacher's way of teaching me to pay HIM back
 For HIS grants and scholarships
 "Coaching"
Was the course in HIS curriculum
 I graduated before moving on
To instruct "me" on being "myself"

I was once an English teacher for kids
But now I'm convinced the "student" in "me"
Is mirrored in other people's mysterious reflections of "myself"
 The more I teach them
 The more I learn to be myself

GOD spoke about HIMSELF in the first person plural
In Genesis before Adam and Eve saying
 "They have become as one of *Us*"
And the "*we*" in me, myself and I
 Now understands that personally

And if that isn't mysteriously intriguing enough
HE said something similar in Exodus before Moses
By referring to HIMSELF in the third person singular, saying
 "Thou shall not use the *Lord's* name in vain"
Thereby referring to HIMSELF in the third person

I'm a student of spiritual linguistics applying HIS WORD
Toward teaching me the importance of
Every "he" and "she" I run into

GOD's WORD can be unpacked for mysterious, grammatical lessons
That will reveal how you operate yourself
If you're willing to take His **WORDS** personally
Through the love of one man
GOD's WORD lies in each and every one of our words
And the way you use HIS WORD honestly and intimately
Will have an enormous affect on what you accomplish
In learning about Christ's love of life

Taking the Bible literally is far less mysterious and intriguing
Than taking it personally
Some only want to deduce recipes from HIS WORD
Others seek ingredients for becoming their own self-made man
Or woman
Do you want to be fed fish all your life?
Or do you want to grow up
And learn to leave the watery world of emotion
For the world of spirit?
If you choose the latter
You're going to have to learn to fillet and cook them, too
Something the w O R D S of the Prophet Mohammed
Will teach you how to do
By applying his words
To yourself

61. Who Am I To Judge?

 Who am I to judge me?
Those conclusions I made about me when I was young
 Were so unfair
But I was just a human beginning then
 A work in progress
 Not yet a masterpiece in the making
I wasn't even learning how to consciously grow morally day-by-day
I didn't know my head and heart had a greater task in store for them
 Than making money and getting laid
 I had to slowly evolve into someone
 I'm now so much more proud of
I was a chicken that slowly found the courage
To admit out loud that it didn't come from a humble egg
 I came from another humble chicken

62.

The Holes In Me

I look back at the sniveling child I was
The snot that streamed down my face
The training pants that needed periodic changing
The tears

(That constant cascade of tears)

And all my drool because of my interminable hunger and thirst -
And I have to wring my hands in disbelief now as I think about it

I was a lump of protoplasm oozing
Smelly disgusting liquids and soft gels
Pouring out of orifices I had no conscious control over

My mother taught me to manage my drippings

But she never taught me to love them

She taught me to fight my body's fluids

With tissues, toilets and towels

But I've had an ongoing war with snot and spittle

And I've never really made peace with any of 'em

They still disgust me

I find my body fluids impossible to love

I have to admit

Sometimes I make me sick

If humility could come from just one trip back to childhood

Then acceptance would begin

By embracing all that once came out of all those holes within

Holes that are still located in the same places

Now only further from the ground

Holes doing the same things today they did before

(And more)

But consciously

63.

Soap

There I sit
Wasting away
Each day shrinking down into a bar a little smaller
Each day a layer of me seems to get washed away

I'm soap
Rained down upon by GOD
In HIS shower of mystery
Created to help clean up this greasy world we live in
But I languish at times

I melt
Soften
Ooze and slip out of my own fingers at the slightest provocation
And then I'm too embarrassed by my nakedness
To bend down and pick me up

When will I take myself in hand
And apply myself to something grand?
Like "ME"
And scrub, scrub, scrub
Until those capitals are washed down to the small "me"
I was always meant to be

64. **Self-love Is A Light Bulb**

Self-love is a light bulb
And it takes years to find the switch that turns it on
But it just so happens that self-love is a light on a string
That hangs in your inner closet

I had to find the courage to open that awesome door within
And go back in
And then pull the string
To see
And then I saw
That only I
Need to approve of me

The greater the wattage of self-love in your closet
The brighter the illumination will be
Of all the gifts you've got squirreled away inside you in your heart
Without self-love it's always dark
So don't rely on that little bar of light
That crawls up inside from the outside
At the bottom of your inner door
Don't rely on *that* light to illuminate what's within you
It'll only leave you quixotic and confused
It'll leave you further in dark
With inner shadows forming on your walls
That will never take real shape at all
Which can cause a sudden clap of insincerity or self-doubt
Or a lack of self-interest
To tap what it's really all about
If you can't see that much from inside your closet
Don't expect any lights from the outside in to illuminate anything
Self-respect is the one and only beam
That lights up the world you want to see gleam
Self-respect will radiate out onto all you hold within dear
As well as into all those cupboards and shelves

In that awesome closet of yours
Whose messy contents you may still fear

To open the door of acceptance on others
You first need to turn on the light of self-love
There's no recognition and embracing of others
That doesn't shine through the brilliance
Of *coming out* of you
To the joy of being
Yourself

65. **The Three Stooges**

 History is
 “HIS Story”
 Moe is the Jew in your head
That GOD first gave the world to learn about HIS wisdom

 Larry is the Christian in your heart
 Who gave us
 “His Story”
That **God** next gave the world to learn about His love

 And Curly Joe is the Moslem in your soul
 ALL ahs given us through
 “history”
That G O D then gave the world to learn to believe in him
 Through H I S magnanimity
 In spreading the WORD

 And that sums up today’s lesson in
 “The History of the Western World”

 When you read the newspaper to see
 What the Three Stooges are doing today
 I hope you have something more to say

66. **The Name On My Canvas**

I wanted to contribute to others
So I painted my picture for *them*
But then discovered I'd never get paid!
I expected recognition, appreciation, even fame
But they weren't forthcoming
Which didn't feel richly rewarding
Only numbing

Each time I signed my work of art in someone else's heart
My name seemed to disappear from view
Most of the beauty I created in them couldn't be seen
Some I suspect were even erasing my name from my work
Only to write in their own!

So, of course, adulation and admiration eluded me
And since my name wasn't often lauded with others' clapping hands
I decided I had no choice but to learn to feel good about myself

But there is Someone who sees my contributions
Who watches me as I clasp my brush
As I add more color from my palette
Who watches proudly as I sign my name to my inner canvas
With invisible inky thoughts that only I can see
Someone who gives me credit for all I've done for me
Who gathers my works into HIS greater gallery
And displays my achievements from me before myself
Someone before whom I feel truly witnessed and seen

I know I've done my very best to love myself through adversity
As do others in their way
But from my palate onto my canvas
From these words in thought brushed unto this very page
I swear to GOD
I'll paint my way to artistry
By becoming my own great sage

67.

d

And with gratitude
Lands flat on the ear
Or sharp in the heart

“d”

Eluded me

I spent a lifetime looking for that one little letter
That comes after a, b and c
I needed it for my spiritual vocabulary
To change my “or” to “and”
In my own handwriting on the wall
(“Or” excludes parts of me)
(“And” includes them)

When the conjunctions of my life couldn’t be written down within
Because my emotions ran too high
Like a flood or a tide
That drowned out so many of the good voices in my head
As Noah
(Whose name means “comfort”)
Witnessed
It is said

I decided to search for all the letters missing in my vocabulary
I decided a “d” was a terrible thing to lose or waste

So I spent a lifetime looking for the letter “d” in me
But didn’t realize I always had it near at hand
It was located in my love of music
One day I found my first d
Just above Middle c

It was a half note that had been there all the time!
The importance of the music of words can’t be overstated
Part of the meaning of a word lies in how you pronounce it
The key to the rhythm of your life lies in the melody of your words
A word that doesn’t come out joyously

68. Born An Ugly Duckling

Born an ugly duckling
I became a sassy swan
But now my looks are fading
My beauty's moved from skin through meat
And I can see that ugly goes right to the bone

I have to appreciate me more than ever as I am
Alone with one or two wonderful people by my side
A pretty ugly duckling
Transforming from a somewhat silly swan
Who'd first fallen in love with others
On my way to learning how to fall in love with me

Only when my inner world turned dark and cold
Did I concede to migrate slowly toward self-intimacy to survive
But now when self-love doesn't fly eagerly into my arms
Like a message from GOD on angels' wings
I look for HIM
And curl up in HIS

69. **Petro-Chemical Anger**

Anger is maddening
It bubbles up like oil
Sticky, smelly, messy
A resource
Coveted
A sign of strength
Trapped beneath the surface
Sucked up
And burned for fuel
Anger is explosive
An unclean energy
Needed
But loathsome
Anger pollutes

But there's a new source of inner energy
Better for my inner environment
It's
"Self-love"
And it comes from the Son
Self-love comes from enlightenment
I'm now learning how to tap
Guilt leads to the fear, anger and sorrow with self and others
That will prepare you
For self-love
Which will lead you to GOD-consciousness
Although that often has little or nothing to do
With organized religion

70.

Tipped Glass

I righted the glass I'd tipped over
And saw that I'd spilled out my soul
I felt emptied, galled and not chosen
Because I never felt officially called

And yet I saw bliss beyond botches
Saw a thirst I was able to quench
Saw a prisoner freed from his jailer
Smelled with a nose relieved of my stench

Despite advice from a fool to a failure
From this trip to a man from a boy
I could see that the love I was spreading
Was a cup that was filling me with joy

And I perceived that joy of enjoining
And the delight of becoming a mensch

71.

Spiritual Cleanliness

Science is the soap of life
Religion is GOD's holy water
Let's help humanity take a bath
We stink!

72. **The Minute I Let Myself Be**

My song is composed of musical color
Seven notes to eke out my tune
I'm the half note called "d" above Middle c
I'm the *doe* and the *ray*
And the *me* before *so*
I'm the *la*
I'm the *te*
I'm the dominant seventh
That cries out for more *doe*

I'm a chorus of voices for freedom
I'm every black note that sings out with glee
I'm the white Middle c at the center of me
I'm the seven hues after it rains some
I am the key

A symphony rings in my spirit
Because I'm an ode to joy as a boy
I'm the song I compose on a keyboard called speech
I'm a fiddle, a flute and a bass
That I teach

The song of GOD sings in my psyche
I conduct a hero in me
I'm a composer of love songs to Barry
With lyrics of wisdom and grace

73.

Black on White

Black slave girl on white knight
Shadowed truth on dim light
Broken pane on ode to joy
Divine love on righteous hate

Black on white is not your fate
It's a wooden handle carved from a burning bush
On a carpenter's plane for you to push
A flying carpet for you to board
To grasp
Polish and paint
Your unfinished furniture for the Lord

Your table comes first
And then your throne
Your mettle keys will reach down to the bone

Destiny never shows up late
Like fate
The future comes broken, sick or confused
And then it has to be fixed
To get through it
Like a garden gate

74. **The King's New Clothes**

The emperor entered the throng of life
Naked without
Yet awfully well-concealed within
Outwardly he wore his finest wink-an'-a-nod
Cuz he thought he was the one and only king amongst kings

He'd been born with a silver spoon in his mind
That made others gag on much that he said
But even the blind in the throng
Could perceive that his uniformed words were well aligned
Even if they were all wrong

And so they declared in dread
That the King inside the king was dead
And then even those who could see became afraid
That they too might be dead, naked, blind or simply terribly jaded

They became embarrassed at what they couldn't see in themselves
So they concealed themselves with nervous twitter
Which
Like a fig leaf
Covers just the essentials
Causing giggles
But little more
"Laugh with me or I'll die of embarrassment"
They tweeted
And so everyone chirped in nervous agreement

And then the king suddenly decided to wear something different
Because out of the blue
His wink-an'-a-nod
Made him feel odd, too
Although by then his people no longer did care
Now they were obsessed with what *they* had to wear

75.

Routes

He's a route
In act one
A familiar path
That he follows with little thought to where he is
Or where he's going.
He's a journey without a conscious destination
He's an atheist
Following footsteps he can't even see
Let alone imagine
In act two
He's a script he reads
Of a character he barely knows or notices
Who struts about signifying much
Yet recognizing little about the purpose of his world
Or his place in it
He's an agnostic
With a show-me attitude itching for a show down
He's a song
A tune he hears
But refuses to listen to
He's lyrics he claims to know by heart
But sings off key
But since he isn't listening
What does it matter?
He's a religious fanatic
With an I-know-better-than-you point of view
He's marble
Patterned by nature over centuries
Yet without an inviting texture
A pattern he's proud of
But afraid to touch
He's smooth and hard
But he's blind to his own design

He brings little statues into the world
Figurines like him
Whose noses have to be hacked off
Whose arms have to be hewn
Before they can see their worth in broken stone
He's spiritually apathetic to himself
He expect a reward and recognition *after* he's departed
He's act three
He's baby me
He's who I used to be

76. **How I Got Home**

The path to Truth was not well lit
So I brought along the light of Courage and Conviction
Anger tended to stalk that forested route
But he was known for attacking only others
So I didn't expect to run into him

But I did run into Frustration
And he's his best friend
(They share a lack of wonder)

One day Frustration convinced Anger to attack me for the hell of it
Which forced me to give up my relationship with Fear to fight them
(Fear and I had been friends for years)
He was the one who'd hooked me up with his best friend Depression

Depression had joined Fear and me
When I was no longer willing to ask myself
The really important questions from one decade to the next
I'm actually glad I'm no longer friends with either of them
We still run into one another from time to time
When I don't question or wonder
But our paths rarely cross anymore

The way to Truth is such a dark and unlit path
That I first followed in the footsteps of those I most loved
Whom I'd erroneously presumed
Had been there before
And had seen it all
I have nothing but kind regard for my loved ones now
But really
They had no idea where Truth would take me
Never did

I'm lucky to have crossed paths with that good fellow Understanding

Who resides near the path to Truth in a clearing
Where it leads out of the woods

Understanding explained to me how to take the path of Truth
To get to the Gate of Joy
In town where everyone I ever wanted to meet lived in those days
Once within its gate
It was easy to see the narrow alley on the right called Sincerity
Which
Although a little dirty and smelly
Took me to the Avenue of Honesty
That curves around the circle of Self-Devotion
Where Faith leads off from there down the lane of Dedication

While on it, I saw the crowded highway of Goodness overhead
It's paralleled by the well-worn way of Parental Blame
I took that all the way onto the highway
And exited at Empathy for everyone
Which brought me straight to the Place of Self-Vindication
Located in the neighborhood of Self-Love
The suburb of love I'd always dreamed of living in

Right from the start
Perseverance had been my only means of transportation
Respect, the only toll I ever had to pay
I did pull off the road and rest for a while
In search of peace of mind
(Exhausted)
But from there I proceeded directly home to Self-Love
Where I took a long hot bath with GOD
And vowed never to leave HIS side again

77. **Wasn't Good At Learning**

Wasn't good at learning
 Couldn't listen
 Couldn't hear
Saw no teachers I could follow
So I just swam and swam through tears

My left hand was born so stupid
 It could hardly help my right
 Until a match was lit by Cupid
And my breastplate broke up their fight

Could only watch how I proceeded
 Out of shadows in an inner night
From self-darkness to the morning after
 With the spark of inspiration
 To shine each day upon my light

I struck the flint of my survival
 By igniting "care" by being kind
Until I was burning bright inside all over
 Until my inner ice was broken
Until I saw my heart could melt my mind

78. The Key Of B Sharp

Those two somber half notes in “d”
Called Mom and Dad
Quivered in 4/4
And made you a whole note
And then your life started with a new measure
That began the song you sang in every key

This was GOD’s introduction to you of HIS rhythm method
How do you stand now on HIS staves?
What keeps you hanging on to HIS musical bars?
When did you get black quarter note friends and neighbors
To play with?
When were you introduced to eighth notes acquaintances
Who zoom on by
And those sixteenth note strangers
Who seem to fly right off the page?

When did you learn about musical symbols
Those Sabbath days of rest?

By the time you reached middle age
Having finally found your way to Middle C
At the center of your keyboard on your awesome inner organ
That everyone giggles about when you even mention it
You were ready to give up the pun in your mind
Ready to give up being HIS tool
To become HIS instrument
A voice in HIS chorus
Ready to compose the symphony of your life
As hopeful as an ode to joy

Tell all those fiddlers and base players out there
That I suggest the key of B#

Which is hardly the same as the key of C
The Conductor has already tapped HIS baton
Many times on your head and left shoulder
HE’s poked you in the back of your chest with it
To tell you about the one who’s conspiring against you
HE’s telling you to play it again and again and yet again
Sam
Each time with just a little more feeling

79. **Two Beggars On One Dark Night**

My heart was homeless
So it begged for pity from my head
Emptied of self-love
My heart's hand lay outstretched shamelessly
Without currency with which to pay itself
Respect
"Please give me some thought
I'm starved for attention"
My heart called out to me when I was alone
My soul
Knowing the weakness of my heart
And the poverty of my head
Wisely turned away from my thoughts and passed over my feelings
In favor of that great spiritual free meal
The two of them are both hungry to consume
The bread of self-intimacy
And the wine of self-devotion

80. Message and Messenger

Dick up inside me
Food in my face
Needle in a vein
Eyes glued to the screen
Ears drowning in noise
Nose full of powder
Hands immersed in money
“Yes, M’ Lord!
Bye and bye,
I’m cuming

81. Life Is A One-Room Schoolhouse

Life is a one-room schoolhouse
We're all kids in training
Toddlers yearning to go to kindergarten
Children enrolled in public life from elementary through high
We're all His pupils
Under one sky

Tutors are as numerous as the faces you see
With feelings you can't slice any more accurately than a loaf of
water
And there's only one Baker from the House of Bread
But it's not you or me

Here and now I sit resting
Waiting at my desk within for my next class to begin
While I overhear the bozos at the back of the room
Preparing to devote themselves to learning
All the more about sin

I just came to this school to discover
I just love to learn to know more
Because learning about me is all wonder
Wonder's the key
The says-a-me that opened my door

The tests come repeatedly to me
Yet the questions and answers are such
That half of the problems I deal with each day
Could easily be solved just with touch

A bullet
A bomb
Tax evasion

Even a lie to myself
Is a crime
With a first grade diploma in "Goodness"
You won't get by all of the time

82. **Thanksgiving Prayer**

I am the Artist's brush
An instrument of HIS love
This bountiful presence before me
My inspiration
These words
And my daily deeds
Are dipped in my heart for the hues of hope
Which I share with myself
And then you

May this canvas I'm painting
On time
Become a portrait of loving feelings in rhyme
May all humanity perceive my joy in being me
And be themselves
Framed by this perspective
May I learn to sketch out my days without shades of censure
May I exhibit my self-love sincerely
In the brilliantly lit halls of history
And show others how to picture their world
As a colorful composition
A precious gift given

“To life!”
GOD's greatest work of art

83. **The Beliefs I've Held**

I am a book
A good book

A devoted bible in which I re-right myself daily
With this blessed pen with this holy ink I'm filled with

Every thought in me is GOD's punctuation
Every feeling, an understatement of HIS grace
My beliefs are phrases of inner actions taken
That will further me in writing my story by volumes

I'm a novel in the works
I author me in deeds and words
My hands rest quietly on these keys with good thoughts
At this moment
With good actions at my fingertips that I'm about to realize
And therefore GOD publishes my poetry in motion and emotion
Before HE
(Who's also my Printer)
Distributes my verse

And when I grow old
Out of print
And even outdated
It will be HE who'll suspend all my prose there and then
HE'll place me on a shelf in HIS Library
Where I'll sit patiently as dust
Evidence for others to see and to know
Of the devotion I've learned here to have and to hold

The angels who'll visit HIS Home
Will find and peruse me
For ever greater evidence of HIS artisans' intentions

What will they discover?
How will I then be judged?
From within
By my pages
Or by my cover?

84. **Where I Live**

I splashed through my emotions
Through waves of feelings
That landed on an inner shore
Where my heart matured as the result of me teaching me to swim
I bounced in the breakers
Surfed the waves that swelled toward me
Kicked and thrashed through the everyday awareness
That tried to flood me with profundity until I couldn't breathe
These were the lessons of summer
That took me to life's beach to play every day

But now I'm drawn further and further out to sea
To fathom the deep bottom of the ocean of my emotions
To swim down to a place twice as dark as night
Under incredible pressure
Where there are no seasons, only cold dark thick inner space
A place that defies all reason for being there

Only in my desire to learn about me through others
Do I choose to rise to the surface in search of self
Doing the backstroke toward the shore in anticipation of friendships
Where I meet many novice swimmers by the shore
Who boast the sports of loyalty and endurance
And who teach me not to go down so deep all the time

I invited some of them to my humble abode in my deep blue sea
But they had no idea where I was coming from
They'd never swum so far out to sea or dived down so deep
To discover the home where pearls of wisdom are reaped

Those that surf only the waves at life's beaches
Become easily afraid, uncomfortable, even rude
Afraid they'll burst their lungs for breath when out in the open sea

Afraid of the pressure of being so deeply within themselves
When dragged down under
So I had to wish them well
And watch them swim as fast as they could
Back to the surface where superficial feelings
Make it easier for them to breathe
Where they made their way back to the coast of social intercourse
Where everyday life is all that's talked about
Leaving me at home alone to reflect on what it is I glean from guests
And what a joy I find it being spiritually well toned

85. I've Said Things That Aren't All True

I said things that weren't all true
For affect
To be theatrical
To frame a simple sketch to make it seem important
To paint a yellow house red
So now I'm not yet eager to watching the video called
"Me"

I painted my house over yellow with red
Because I was I so afraid of my fear that I was angry about it
I, who'd whitewashed myself
In a lifetime of unadulterated emptiness
Until I was positively glistening in pure nothing-at-all
I, who'd seen my own blood on my hands
But who could still find nothing good to speak of in them...

I had to find a way to straighten myself out
Like a twisted frame or a limp wrist on a fist
I had to clean myself up my own way
Like an old palette
Or a splintered stage floor

I've said things that aren't at all true
And now that leaves me a bit blue
Promised myself bridges I couldn't cross
I have to look at my rudeness as nudeness
I have to see myself as naked and untrue
Before I can say to myself
"I'll learn to be true to you"

86.

Condiments

Judaism is the salt of the earth
Christianity is our pepper
And here I am with life's bounty on my plate
And still I find life tastes a bit bland
If not dull and unsatisfying
I'd like to spice *me* up a bit
To make me just a little more palatable
Perhaps a Hindu curry made of exotic seasonings
Or a Moslem paprika not just for color
But to give me more zest
That would add some flavor to my life
Maybe I'll add a dash of Zen ginger for a zing
Or slice a Tao pickled onion into my mix

Life is a self-serve banquet
And most poor people are starving to death
Because they just don't like to cook for themselves
They're not worth the effort

88. **I Am A Pane And A Window**

In the springtime of my life
I saw a window to my beliefs above me
And so like any child
I reached up and shattered it
In a vain and foolish attempt to reach for the s κ y
And as the shards of my beliefs lay all around me
I bled unknowingly
From a wound I'd inflicted upon myself
I had to shiver as the wind blew through me for decades
For it was bitter cold within
Without my love

Only later did I set out to repair my red-stained pane
I waited till autumn's shrinking day
Long past the emerald light of May
And the golden rays of summer's Son

Shard by shard I picked up the pieces of my glass ceiling
Reflecting upon myself in its fragments
Wondering what to do with them
Some shards
Mere splinters
With sharp colors that reflected parts of me on the inside
Reminding me of the rainbow of promises I'd made to myself
That simply refused to fade away
What a mess I'd made of it all by not having believed in me
And still somehow I suspected
There was more for and from me yet to come
More than I could see through in all that inner darkness
For I could hear a voice inside my endless inner night
Encouraging me to fit my puzzled belief in me back together again

So I worked through that cold and empty night

Through what seemed an entire winter of disbelief
Feeling like a clumsy apprentice with an unknown Artist
And when my skylight was nearly mended
And I felt I could just barely look up and say
"I liked myself"
Even if I couldn't yet quite say I could believe in me
The view through that heavenly upper pane
Looked curiously different
Now more like a web of broken dreams mended

Since then
A greater spring has sprung
One blossoming with brighter feelings for myself
Now my design hangs above my head
Mysteriously transparent to me
I see down within me
Walls I can now call an inner temple
On which are writ HIS WORD
Which I see despite HIS hallowed inner night

I look up now from within my soul at that webbed s κ y l i g h t
And see through it
And out my eyes
To the shimmering view out on our Artist's other worldly light
That's mirrored in my blue eyes

88. **The Orchard Within**

While we Jews rooted ourselves in this precious New World land
 Deepening our downward thrust into free soil
 Securing for our children a safe place
 A home

It's been the work of our rabbis to yearn for the s κ y
 To raise their resolute faces into the wind and rain
 To bud and bloom somewhat alone within
 Nurtured by their congregations
 But faithful really only to that light they view
 This is their flower blossoming in my soul too

 Out of the winter of our birth in Egypt
 Into the spring of our lives in our ancient Holy Land
 Through the burning summer of Diaspora
 And the harvest of the Holocaust
 We have told our tales
 Wandering through the ages
 Beckoned forth for GOD by our dear sages
 Branching out to seek **God** yearning
 Blossoming forth with sacred learning

 This thought fell from me as from a tree -
 From my mind this one fruit tumbled
 And while striking my earthy heart I heard it mumble
 “Fertilize the Jewish seed within yourself and watch it grow
 Water it with loving tears from your good soul”

And now I know G O D blesses all produced with Israel's pardon
 And so with special thanks to me
 I garden
 Growing all I can in my
 Oh so gay and Jewish soul

89. **The Angry Madonna**

My mother was eighty-nine years old
When her arms became too frail to hold me even figuratively
In her lap any longer
Although her emotional embrace was still at times quite strong
Full of fury in fact
I felt
I was slipping as I lay pitifully prostrate
Dead
I'd even say
To my precious but own unrequited self-love

Once again
I'd given it my all
Once again
I was lying in her arms in my imagination
Waiting for one more resurrection
With what I've always believed were open eyes
Waiting to be reborn with GOD's help
Yet again

But now I have to do it all without her presence
And I wonder if I can
Jewish son of a Jewish mother that I am...
I relied on her so many times before
As though we'd been carved from one block of rock
Here first and foremost for each other
Two mysteries to be unlocked in one

Now I'm a pieta all on my own
The best of her sits deep within me on a good foundation
Secure
My mother with my grown inner child in her arms
Her anger and my sorrow personified

My embrace of my humanity in My holy clay this way

Inside I see this artful pyramid
This mountain of marble
Carved
And like a stamp
Still impressing its spiritual power
Beyond the everydayness of thoughts
Beyond all casual passing feelings
A belief in a life of love for everyman

I am a testament to grace over worldly worries
I am self-carved rock pointing back up at ME
I am
In part
The He in me
Of liberty
I am My promise of vengeance
Rather than revenge
That some gay fool will carve his way into
To be redeemed
With MY self-love

There doesn't seem to be too much to do now for My mum
Except to embrace My elders ever more
For each man holds his mother as firmly as his inner child
A petrified pieta and god waiting to come to life
I am every young dead man awaiting his own resurrection
In the arms of his angry Madonna

*I've written all but this last page
Of my libretto of
Self-love
I heard me from my head
And listened to me from my heart
I've sung my song within
And I've watched me dance
With
Myself-love
And
My self-love*

*I'm almost ready to turn this last page
To close the back cover like a curtain coming down on a stage
On this
My performance from me
For me
To me*

*And for anyone else who cared to share it with himself
But every ending heralds a new beginning
Every moment of silence is the start to another song*

*However foreign, distant, different
However odd or strange the tale
That will accompany my next medley of songs
I know there's hope for me
To fall a little more in love with me
Later today
Tomorrow
And
Day-by-Day*

**Other Books
By
Barry Emanuel Zeve**

1. The Wisdom Of Self-Love:
Life Is A School. I Am My Major
2. The Forbidden Fruits Perspective
3. A Guest At Their Table
My Gay-Jewish Review Of Christ's Feast Of Self-Love