

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER
(STEPHEN MITCHELL, PARABLES AND PORTRAITS, P. 61)

“A sower went forth to sow. Some of his seeds fell upon stony places. Centuries passed; millennia. And the seeds remained. And the stones crumbled and became good soil, and the seeds brought forth fruit.”

“Wait a minute. You can’t play fast and loose that way with the natural facts. The seeds would die long before the soil could receive them.”

“Why would they die?”

“Because they can’t hold out in stony places, for thousands of years.”

“But, my dear, what kind of seeds do you think we’re talking about?”

YESHU OF NAZARETH
(STEPHEN MITCHELL, PARABLES AND PORTRAITS, PP. 74-75)

1

You came to me when I was nine,
with the sheen that forbidden joys have.
When I asked about you, the rabbi’s
face clamped into a cold smile. Just behind his words
I could sense the fear and repugnance;
something was wrong; I had bungled
into a high-security
area, like sex. No clearance.
You were the noisy skeleton
in our closet, the pile of dust
swept under our soul’s rug, the prodigal
son who had stayed abroad
and grown rich and famous selling
bacon. How could I not tiptoe
out of my fathers’ house
to meet you on every high mountain
and under every green tree?

2

Much later, the [your] message became clear:

“What I have undergone
to reach the kingdom inside us,
you must undergo too,
and it will be no easier
for you, though I have gone first.”

3

Golgotha. Were you unable
to endure one moment longer
the body's agony, the failure,
the impossible desolation
by what you most trusted? And yet
this too had to be lived.
There was no outside heaven
waiting for you. Despair
had to be made your own
since you had, somewhere, willed it,
and yourself had given yourself
that cup
to drink, to the bitter last drop.
You walked into perfect horror
open-eyed, leaving behind
everything. As if you were walking
into the final room
of your own house.