

Bob Dylan's "Not Dark Yet" – an analysis by Kees de Graaf.

Introduction.

Dr A.T. Bradford published a book in 2011 called: *"Out of the Dark Woods – Dylan, Depression and Faith – (The Messages behind the Music of Bob Dylan.)"*. In this book Dr. Bradford stated that in the 1990ties- due to traumatic private circumstances- Dylan suffered from a severe reactive depression which was said to be responsible for the title of his next album of original songs *"Time Out of Mind"*. Hereafter called TOOM). According to Dr. Bradford, *"Time Out Of (my) Mind"* summed up Dylan's mental condition at the time and that **all** songs on the album show symptoms of moderate- severe reactive depression. On the face of it – and certainly for the song **"Not Dark Yet"**- this thought seems a very plausible thesis.

However, we feel that there are some compelling arguments against this thesis from Dr. Bradford. Take e.g. a song like *"Make You Feel My Love"* on the same album. *"Make You Feel My Love"* is a song full of tender love, comfort and compassion and hardly shows any symptoms of depression. And what to think of the album closing track *"Highlands"*? True, there is enough material in this song which may be classified as "depressive". But look how the song ends: *"The sun – "Sun" may also be understood as "Son" in the sense of the "Son(of God)- is beginning to shine on me, but it's not like the sun that used to be"*. The album closing song *"Highlands"* "is not at all pessimistic and dark, on the contrary, in the end the windows get wide open for the Light to shine in!

The idea to classify **“Not Dark Yet”** as a pitch dark and depressive song, is fed by the thought- defended by the vast majority of Dylanologists - that this song is a one layered song dealing with mortality and suffering but **only on a human** level. And more specifically: suffering because of lost (romantic) love while the death bells already toll. This idea is strengthened by the fact that there is an earlier outtake of **“Not Dark Yet”** (released on *“Fragments” – The Bootleg Series volume 17* - which- from the third line of verse 2 - has quite different lyrics. E.g. a line in this first outtake like *“Her lips were so tender, her skin was so soft”* prompts you into the direction of the idea that this song is mainly about lost (romantic)love.

Not only lyrically the song evolved but also musically. Musically the song evolved from an upbeat tempo of the first outtake to into a slow civil war balled – a death march- which ended up on the album. However, as we have seen so often in Dylan’s oeuvre, - *“for all those who have eyes and for all those who have ears”* - his songs are multi-layered. Apparently Dylan was not satisfied with the lyrics of the first outtake and subsequently took suffering and mortality from a personal to a more universal level.

Therefore, apart from the *human* suffering, there is another and deeper layer in the song which expresses *divine* suffering. And as we will see, this divine suffering must be the suffering of Christ. As as we will also find out in the specific lyrics of the song, sometimes human suffering is meant and sometimes divine suffering or both. And of course, the suffering of Christ has both elements of suffering- the human and divine - blended into one. As far as human suffering is concerned, it will appear that the book of Job is of importance. Job’s suffering foreshadows some of the suffering of Christ. We conclude that if we

take all these things into account we are far removed here from Dr. Bradford's idea of a reactive depression.

The poet may have had good reasons to combine human suffering and divine suffering into one song. Romans 8:17 says that if we are to share in the glory of Christ, we must also share in His suffering. In this respect it is not without significance that "**Not Dark Yet**" was used as a sound track for Mel Gibson's movie "*The Passion of Christ*".

It is true, "**Not Dark Yet**" portrays an immense suffering and amidst darkness, it looks as if the poet has come to the end of his trail and there seems to be no hope left. On this album, for the light to appear at the end of the tunnel, we have to wait till the final stanza of the closing song "*Highlands*"- which in itself is a metaphor for "Heaven"- and then the quest to find peace- expressed also later on in the album in the song "*Trying to get to heaven*"- will finally come to rest. But here - in this song -all focus is on mortality and suffering.

One other thing is not without significance. During the TOOM recording sessions, Dylan first wrote and recorded the song "**Marching to the City**". This song was abandoned and later released on "*Tell Tale Signs*" (The Bootleg Series Volume 8). A few lines from "*Marching to the City*" ended up on "**Not Dark Yet**" and on "*Till I fell in love with You*". One could argue that "*Marching to the City*" was a first draft for "**Not Dark Yet**" and for "*Till I fell in Love with You*". Comparing the context of some lines from "*Marching to the City*" with how they ended up on "**Not Dark Yet**" may help us to understand what was on the poet's mind when he first wrote those lines.

Let us see how we can piece all these things together in the specific lyrics of the song.

Analysis.

Verse 1.

Shadows are falling and I've been here all day

It's too hot to sleep, time is running away

Feel like my soul has turned into steel

I've still got the scars that the sun didn't heal

There's not even room enough to be anywhere

It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.

When it says that ***"Shadows are falling"*** our attention is immediately drawn to the garden of Getsemane, the place where Jesus and his disciples stayed during the evening of his arrest. It is also the place where the suffering of Christ is growing in intensity (Matt. 26:36-46, Marc. 14:32-42 and Luke 22:39-46). We see a suffering in the darkness of the garden of Getsemane which will culminate the next day, the day of His crucifixion, during which we get to the point where - as Dylan calls it elsewhere -there was ***"Darkness at the break of noon"*** (with reference to Matt.27:45, Marc.15:33 and Luke 23:44).

"Shadows are falling" is a sign that total darkness is approaching and at the same time that ***"It is not dark yet"***. When it says: ***"I've been here all day"*** the poet may intend to give us a retrospection overlooking the whole life of Christ. His whole life can be characterized as a ***"day"***(c.f. the "Day of the Lord") during which shadows are constantly falling and getting longer and thus a life in which suffering is a constant factor, a suffering which gets worse and worse as we draw near the end. More and more Jesus becomes what Dylan elsewhere calls ***"A Man of constant Sorrow"***.

As ***"Shadows are falling"*** ,for Him, Jesus, ***"it's too hot to sleep"***.

However, ***"it's too hot to sleep"*** must be seen here in contrast with the

sleepy attitude of His disciples. In Luke 22:45 we read: *“When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, **he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow**”*(NIV). Whereas his disciples, overwhelmed by sorrow, found some refuge in sleep, for Jesus there was no escape. He felt the increasing heat of Divine Judgement which made it impossible for Him to find a moment of rest. **“Too hot to sleep”** looks like an understatement because in Luke 22:44 we read: *“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground”*.(NIV). Sweating blood is called “hermatohidrosis” and may occur when individuals are suffering from extreme levels of stress.

“Time is running away” indicates that there is nothing Jesus can do - and wants to do for that matter- to stop time and to stop the sequence of events that now unfolds and which will irreversibly lead to the uttermost suffering on the Cross.

“Feel like my soul has turned into steel” reflects Matt. 26:38 (NLT): *“He (Jesus) told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death”*. His soul, always so full of compassion (Matt.14:14),has now become unfeeling and impenetrable. Grief has made His soul hard as steel and – as the poet calls it elsewhere- *“cold as the clay”*. Jesus is now metaphorically *“twenty miles out of town”* and *“Cold irons bound”*.

When it says: **“I’ve still got the scars that the sun didn’t heal”** for the first time, the focus shifts from (divine) suffering of Jesus to human suffering. At first glance the word **“sun”** in **“I’ve still got the scars that the sun didn’t heal”** makes you think of the **“sun”** as celestial body. However, the word **“sun”** might very well be a homophone here. If you take the word **“sun”** here literally- in the sense of a celestial body -this does not make any sense, because the **“sun”** cannot heal scars, on the contrary, exposure to sunlight makes scars worse and more painful.

Therefore, when the word **“sun”** is used here, we have to understand **“Son”**, in the sense of the **“Son of God”**, Jesus. We see the same phenomenon elsewhere in the album ‘s closing song *“Highlands”* where it says: *“The sun – “Sun“ is then to be understood as “Son”, Jesus- is beginning to shine on me, but it's not like the sun (the celestial body) that used to be”*.

We conclude that ***“I’ve still got the scars that the sun didn’t heal”*** refers to human suffering and might refer to the apostle Paul who mentions these scars in Galatians 6:17 (NLT):*“From now on, don’t let anyone trouble me with these things. For I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus”*. Elsewhere (2 Corinthians 12:7,8) Paul refers to these scars as *“a thorn in the flesh”* which Jesus – the Son - did not heal and did not take away from him, not even after intense prayer.

“There’s not even room enough to be anywhere” looks like some contradiction in terminus because if one exists , there is always (enough) room ***“to be anywhere”***. This phrase is reminiscent of a line in Dylan’s *“Things have changed: “I’ve been trying to get as far away from myself as I can”* because *“to get away from yourself”* is equally impossible.

“There’s not even room enough to be anywhere” is basically the same as what Jesus says of Himself in Matt. 8:20 (NLT):*“But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head”*. It means that when Jesus appeared in the flesh and revealed Himself as the Son of God, he entered a hostile world where He was not welcome at all. He entered the world as a place where there is a resting place for all creatures except for Him *“there is no place to turn, no place at all”*, for Him ***“There’s not even room enough to be anywhere”***.

Each of the four stanzas of the song ends with the refrain: ***“It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there”***. It is as if the poet intends to make it clear that although it is not *entirely* dark yet, we will certainly get to the point where it will be entirely dark.

“It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there” summarises the whole process of ever intensifying suffering from Jesus Christ. It was already dark in the garden of Getsemane . Being in great anguish, His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). In the garden he felt the immense suffering that was coming. But it was ***“not dark yet”*** because dark as it may be in the Garden of Getsemane , yet there was some heavenly aid available . We read of this heavenly aid in Luke 22:43: *“Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him”* (NLT). It would be quite different the next day, the day of His crucifixion. The next day it would be like Leonard Cohen wrote in his song ***“You Want it Darker”***: *“Vilified, crucified, In the human frame, a million candles burning, for the help that never came”*. At noon that day, the darkness would be complete, the utter darkness was finally ***“getting there”***: *“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock”* (Mat. 27:45 NLT). But this time, there is no heavenly aid available because at the pinnacle of darkness we read: *“ At about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”*. (Mat. 27:46 NLT). The utter darkness and pain is reached when man is forsaken by God. It never happened to any creature here on earth, no matter how dark human suffering may be. It only happened to the Son of God of God, in His substitutionary suffering. Only for Him darkness was ***“getting there”*** so that the light could shine again upon humanity.

Verse 2.

***Well, my sense of humanity has gone down the drain
Behind every beautiful thing there's been some kind of pain
She wrote me a letter and she wrote it so kind
She put down in writing what was in her mind
I just don't see why I should even care
It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.***

Verse 2 seems to deal with suffering on a human level. The words ***“Well, my sense of humanity has gone down the drain”*** may be a personal – albeit accurate- statement about the dreadful state of the human condition, usually uttered as a result of negative personal experiences.

“My sense of humanity has gone down the drain” draws our attention to the Biblical book of Job. In chapter 21 of Dylan’s book *“The Philosophy of Modern song”* (2022) we find a passage which shows that Dylan has been quite familiar with the Biblical book of Job. Dylan writes: *“Supposedly, early readers of the Bible were disturbed by the harshness of God’s behaviour against Job, but the prologue with God’s wager with Satan about Job’s piety in the face of continued testing, added later, makes it one of the most exciting and inspirational books of the Old or New Testament”*.

Job lost all of his children and all of his possessions (Job Chapter 1). But not only that. Job was *“infected with terrible boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. And Job took a piece of broken pottery to scrape himself as he sat among the ashes”* (Job 2:7 BSB).

Down and out, his friends came to Job to comfort him. But these friends ended up adding insult to injury. Job complains bitterly. Listen to hear what he has to say, not only to his so-called friends, but also to

humanity: *“One should be kind to a fainting friend, but you accuse me without any fear of the Almighty. My brothers, you have proved as unreliable as a seasonal brook that overflows its banks in the spring”.* (Job 6:14,15 NLT). *“They despise me and won’t come near me, except to spit in my face.”* (30:10) *“They come at me from all directions. They jump on me when I am down”* (30:14).

Job’s sense of humanity had gone down the drain and Job suffered from the same experience as Dylan once described in his song *“Ain’t Talking”*: *“they”-the world- “will jump on your misfortune when you're down”.*

“Behind every beautiful thing there’s been some kind of pain” may be interpreted in various ways. According to the stoic cosmology, of which the philosopher Heraclitus (about 540-480 BC) was the forefather, there is a unity of opposites which suggests that the unity of the world and its various parts is kept through the tension produced by the opposites. In this sense, good and evil, light and darkness, life and death and also **beauty** and **pain** form an inextricable unity; a unity which is inherent in creation and essential for the cosmos to exist.

The Judeo-Christian view however, believes that God’s initial creation was good (Gen. 1:31). In the beginning, there was no evil or pain in paradise. Not until man fell into sin, disintegration could come in. Disintegration like death and decay and **pain** entered the creation.

However, the restoration of fallen mankind in its original status is the most beautiful thing that ever happened in the history of mankind. But there is pain behind that beauty. In order to amend the downfall of mankind, it took a very painful sacrifice. It was Christ who suffered all

the pain. He paid the price, not only for mankind, but for the whole downfallen creation.

Paul Simon – in his song “*I am a Rock*” – may have written that “*a rock feels no pain and an island never cries*” but that does not apply to this Rock (of ages), Christ. On the contrary, for all beautiful things in the world a price was paid by Him and it is the reason why we can say: **“Behind every beautiful thing there’s been some kind of pain”**. Beauty, in its true shape, can only be recognized when we see the price- the pain - that was paid for it to make beauty possible again. Just like Dylan says in his song “*Dark Eyes*”: “*But I feel nothing for their game where beauty goes unrecognized*”.

But the poet is not in a mood to recognize that something beautiful might be underway: **“She wrote me a letter and she wrote it so kind, she put down in writing what was in her mind”**. We do not know if the repetition of the word ‘**down**’ – in ‘*down the drain*’/’*down in writing*’ and the word “**kind**” in “kind of pain” and in “she wrote it **so kind**” is deliberate to make us link these points.

Was his disillusionment with humanity caused and strengthened by the letter he received from her? His disillusionment may have gone so far that he had become unfeeling and suspicious of any kind of gesture of sympathy, prompting his bitter response to her letter: **“I just don’t see why I should even care”**.

It all seems to suggest that you may become so defiled in this world that you are no longer capable to respond to sympathy others bestow on you, you simply do not care anymore. It reminds us of what Dylan once said- paraphrasing Psalm 27:10 - at the Grammy Lifetime Achievement

Award in 1991: *“He (Dylan’s father) said, you know it’s possible to become so defiled in this world that your own father and mother will abandon you, and if that happens, God will always believe in your own ability to mend your own ways”.*

This may be one of those situations when you cry out that **“Every nerve in your body is so vacant and numb”** and say: **“I just don’t see why I should even care”** and you have no choice but to leave things in the hands of God to give you the power to mend your own ways.

In our introduction of this analysis we wrote that the lyrics of *“Marching to the City”* represent a sort of draft from which i.e. **“Not Dark Yet”** eventually evolved. What was going on in the mind of the poet when he wrote: **“I just don’t see why I should even care”**? Well maybe this line from *“Marching to the City”*: *“I been hit too hard, seen too much, nothing can heal me now, but your touch”*. People cannot help him, not even a kind letter from a beloved person, only the touch (of God) may help him to mend his ways.

Verse 3.

***Well, I’ve been to London and I’ve been to gay Paree
I’ve followed the river and I got to the sea
I’ve been down on the bottom of a world full of lies
I ain’t looking for nothing in anyone’s eyes
Sometimes my burden seems more than I can bear
It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there.***

“Well, I’ve been to London and I’ve been to gay Paree, I’ve followed the river and I got to the sea” first of all shows movement. Movement is thematic for the album TOOM. Almost all songs recorded during the TOOM sessions show some kind of movement.

We give you some examples of this movement: From **“Love Sick”**: *“I’m walking through streets that are dead”*, **“Dirt Road Blues”**: *“Gon’ walk down that dirt road”*; **“Standing in the Doorway”**: *“I’m walking through the summer nights”*, **“Trying to get to Heaven”**: *“I’m walking down that lonesome valley, trying to get to Heaven before they close the door”*, up to **“Highlands”**: *“I’m gonna go there when I feel good enough to go”*. And, most importantly, for the song that unfortunately did not make it to the final TOOM cut: **“Marching to the City”**: *“Now I’m marching to the City and the road ain’t long”*.

“Well, I’ve been to London and I’ve been to gay Paree, I’ve followed the river and I got to the sea” must be read against the backdrop of Zechariah 9:10 : *“He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth”*(KJV).

The **“He”** in this prophecy from Zechariah points forward to Christ who would bring the Kingdom of Peace to the ends of the earth. This prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled in Acts 1:8 where Jesus says: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*(BSB).

That *“the ends of the earth”* from Zechariah 9:10 and Acts 1:8 probably was in the back of the poet’s mind during the TOOM sessions is obvious from another TOOM song: *“Make You Feel my Love”* where it says: *“Go to the ends of the Earth for you, to make you feel my love”*

This connection is further worked out in Dylan’s **“Marching to the City”**.

First we have to ask: which City is the poet referring to? Well, if you compare this city with the lyrics of Dylan's 1980 song *"City of Gold"*, it can only be the City of Jerusalem.

It looks as if the poet is part of a pilgrimage (one could call this pilgrimage the Never Ending (Gospel) Tour). A Tour that according to Acts 1:8 starts in Jerusalem and goes – just like Zechariah 9:10 and Acts 1:8 prophesied - to the *"ends of the earth"* and which will in the end return to Jerusalem, to its final destination which is the City of Gold (Rev.21:21). *"The ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8) at the time stood for Europe, so one could say that this included cities like London and Paris.

As said, the poet is on this lonesome pilgrimage, worded in **"Marching to the City"** as *"Go over to London, maybe gay Paree, follow the river, you get to the sea"*. *"Paree"* is the French pronunciation of **"Paris."** According to the Oxford Dictionary Paris was originally called *"Gay Paree"* with *"gay"* meaning *"happy, joyful and lively"*. The sexual connotation of *"gay"* is from a later date.

From the words ***"I've been down on the bottom of a world full of lies"*** it is apparent that this pilgrim is totally disillusioned, he is down and out. While he is marching to the City and is *"hoping he could drink from life's clear streams"* (cf. Rev. 22:1), he is instead confronted with a hostile world where lies rule the earth.

"I've been down on the bottom of a world full of lies" echo in Dylan's *"Things Have changed"*: *"All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie"*. These words show that in the view of the poet something is fundamentally wrong with this world and humanity is unwilling and incapable to repair this.

Dylan once wrote “ *Life is more or less a lie, but then again, that’s exactly the way we want it to be*”(From “*Chronicles*” 2011 p. 57, Simon and Schuster). It all happened when in the beginning man chose to believe the biggest lie ever produced by Satan, namely that man could become independent from God. Ever since that time we have lived in a “ *World Gone Wrong*” situation, to quote the title of one of Dylan’s albums. And now the poet feels the pain and the full impact of what it means “***to be at the bottom***” of such a world, he has gone through all of the pain.

But there is another layer beneath those words; behind this human suffering from the poet we also see divine suffering shining through. During the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30) Jesus sang with his disciples Psalm 116:11 “*I said in my haste, All men are liars*”. They sought false witnesses- liars- against Jesus to put Him to death (Matt. 26:59).

Jesus is the only One who has really felt what it meant “***to be at the bottom of a world full of lies***”. He, in our place, went to the bottom of a world full of lies to set us free from the devastating consequences of Satan’s original lie. He set us free on the Day when Innocence died.

To have a better understanding of the words “***I ain’t looking for nothing in anyone’s eyes***” we have to have a look again at the draft “***Marching***” to the City” where we find similar words in the following context: “*Well I’m sitting in church, in an old wooden chair, I knew nobody would look for me there, sorrow and pity rule the earth and the skies, **looking for nothing in anyone’s eyes***”. In his desperation the poet is looking for answers.

For answers he takes refuge in a church, in an old wooden chair. Nobody would ever have imagined that he would -for all places- go to a church looking for answers. It was and it is not trendy to find answers in church, the place where heaven and earth meet.

It says: You will find **“nothing”** there in **“anyone’s eyes”**. In **“anyone’s eyes”** practically means in *nobody’s* eyes. Everybody around him feels that you cannot find anything in such a place, in church, which may offer you solace.

These words remind us of a line in Dylan’s **“False Prophet”** where the False Prophet- alias Satan- says to the believers: *“Put out your hand - there’s nothing to hold”*. Satan tries to convince people that when you will reach out for help to God, He will leave you empty-handed, you will find nothing. The poet has to deal with the same reproach here: he is **“looking for nothing in anyone’s eyes”**.

Although it is true what Dylan once wrote in his song **“God Knows”**: *“God knows you can rise above the darkest hour of any circumstance”*, it does not make this statement: **“Sometimes my burden seems more than I can bear”** any less poignant.

It seems obvious that the poet is deliberately downgrading the poignancy of this statement by saying that sometimes his burden **“seems”** more than he can bear. This must be because he is aware of what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to*

bear it”(NJKV). But almost invariably it does not feel that way.

When you are in the middle of a crisis in life, you feel there is no escape at all and that your burden is more than you can bear. Just like the poet says in **“My Own Version Of You”**: when *“I get into trouble, then I hit the wall, no place to turn, no place at all”*. It may feel that way, no matter whether you are an infidel or a believer. It may even go further than that. A trauma may be so overwhelming that it pushes a man to the limit, just like what Dylan wrote in his song **“Honest With Me”**: *“Some things are too terrible to be true”*.

But yet again, there is at the same time a deeper spiritual layer under the words **“Sometimes my burden seems more than I can bear”** because, severe as the suffering of e.g. Job once was, nothing compares to the burden Jesus had to bear. On his way to Golgotha, Jesus literally collapsed under the burden of his Cross and therefore they forced a man from Cyrene, named Simon, to carry the Cross for Him (Matt. 27:32).

But excruciating as his somatic suffering on the Cross was, nothing compares to the burden Jesus had to bear when He was forsaken by God the Father (Matt. 27:46). *“Darkness at the break of noon”* (cf. Matt. 27:45) led to the absolute low point, when complete darkness was not **“getting there”** but **had** gotten there. He reached the absolute low point when he was forsaken by God and man, and He knew what it meant for Him: **“my burden is more than I can bear”**.

Verse 4.

***I was born here and I'll die here against my will
I know it looks like I'm moving, but I'm standing still***

***Every nerve in my body is so vacant and numb
I can't even remember what it was I came here to get away from
Don't even hear a murmur of a prayer
It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.***

The words "***I was born here and I'll die here against my will***" are a paraphrase of a Talmudic passage from the Pirkei Avot , Chapter 4, verse 22 which reads: "*Let not your heart convince you that the grave is your escape; for against your will you are formed, against your will you are born, against your will you live, against your will you die, and against your will you are destined to give a judgement and accounting before the king, king of all kings, the Holy One, blessed be He*". (Source: [Ethics of the Fathers: Chapter Four - Chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org/ethics/ethics.asp?cid=10&lang=en)).

However, the context of this passage from the Pirkei Avot deals with divine judgement and the impossibility to escape from it. Therefore, the following passage from the Biblical book of Job also seems appropriate as a backdrop for these words because it deals with the fundamental existential question Job raises to God because of his immense suffering. This passage reads:

"Why then did You bring me from the womb? Oh, that I had died, and no eye had seen me! If only I had never come to be, but had been carried from the womb to the grave. Are my days not few? Withdraw from me, that I may have a little comfort, before I go—never to return—to a land of darkness and gloom, to a land of utter darkness, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness"(Job 10:18-22 BSB).

In a certain way- and at least partly- the words "***I was born here and I'll die here against my will***" may also apply to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. In Gethsemane Jesus fell on his face (cf. "*Crawling down the avenue*" as it says in "**Make You Feel My Love**") and prayed to God

saying: *“My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”* (Mat. 26:39-44) NLT). On the other hand, we should not forget that Jesus gave Himself voluntarily, out of love, as a sacrificial lamb (cf. Hebrews 10:7; Psalm 40:7-9).

They say that the words ***“I know it looks like I’m moving, but I’m standing still”*** have something to do with reincarnation as formulated in the kabbalistic teaching on *“gilgul”* which is the Hebrew word for “cycle” or “wheel”. One of the properties of a wheel is that it can be stationary and at the same time move by revolving round its axle.

The line ***“I know it looks like I’m moving, but I’m standing still”*** also draws our attention to the handout of an interesting lecture on the internet from the Rabbi Yossi Paltiel called [**“The Crime of Standing Still”**](#). The idea behind this kabbalistic thought may be that whereas angels are “standing still” and so to say remain in an unchanged and static position towards God, the human soul however, when it came into this world and was unified with the body, attained the capacity to move forward.

According to Rabbi Yossi Paltiel, the human soul, when it entered the earth changed its position from ***“standing still”*** to action. God created a world of action in which a person can change his heart from one pole to the another, from evil to good, from darkness to Light etc. ***“Standing still”*** and not moving in this world would mean for a person that he or she produces no fruit at all to God.

When it says ***“I know it looks like I’m moving”*** this ‘movement’ may be an allusion to the greatest booster of all movement and action: prayer. Then the picture of a Jew swaying to and fro in prayer or religious study

comes to mind. In this respect we should not forget that when Jews are in prayer they do not kneel down – like (some) Christians and the Muslims do- but they “stand” in prayer.

When we follow this train of thought ***“I know it looks like I’m moving”*** may mean that although it looks as if he is praying- because his body moves to and fro – yet he is not finding any words for his prayer and he is ***“standing still”***, unable to produce anything at all, not even ***“the murmur of a prayer”***.

The poet is ***“Standing still”*** because ***“Every nerve in my body is so vacant and numb”***, which means that he is so traumatized that he has become completely apathetic, no longer capable to respond to any external stimulus. It even goes so further than that when he says: ***“I can’t even remember what it was I came here to get away from”***. Some say that this line hints again at the kabbalistic *gilgul* teachings on reincarnation in which the loss of memory is associated with the transition from pre-existence to re-birth. If this were true the ***“here”*** would mean “this world”.

The words ***“I can’t even remember what it was I came here to get away from”*** echo a Laurel and Hardy film *“Beau Hunks”* (1931) in which Oliver, dumped by his girlfriend, joins the Foreign Legion *“to forget”*. When they get to Fort Arid in the desert, Stan confesses that he has *“forgotten what we came here to forget”*.

Within the context of the song we feel that the words ***“I can’t even remember what it was I came here to get away from”*** can best be interpreted as the subconscious feeling fallen man still has that something is terribly wrong with this world and that somehow he is part

of it. He has gone astray and desperately tries to find a way to get away from it, but he is unable to break free. He has forgotten what the key is to get out of trouble. He needs help from above but is not aware of it.

“Don’t even hear a murmur of a prayer” takes us one more time back to the *“Darkness at the break of Noon”* (cf. Matt. 27:45), to Jesus on the Cross. Jesus was forsaken by God the Father (Matt. 27:46). All lines of communication with God -which were so vital for Jesus- were broken. Prayer to God, even the ***“a murmur of a prayer”*** was made impossible. The door was closed for Him.

Here again, at the end of the poem, when it says ***“Don’t even hear a murmur of a prayer”***, we reach the point where *“Darkness”* was no longer ***“getting there”*** it actually **had** gotten there. It could not have been any darker than this.