

Who is at my door?

He said, 'Who is at my door?'

I said, 'Your humble servant.'

He said, 'What business do you have?'

I said, 'To greet you, O Lord.'

He said, 'How long will you journey on?'

I said, 'Until you stop me.'

He said, 'How long will you boil in the fire?'

I said, 'Until I am pure.'

'This is my oath of love.

For the sake of love

I gave up wealth and position.'

He said, 'You have pleaded your case
but you have no witness.'

I said, 'My tears are my witness;
the pallor of my face is my proof.'

He said, 'Your witness has no credibility;
your eyes are too wet to see.'

I said, 'By the splendor of your justice
my eyes are clear and faultless.'

He said, 'What do you seek?'

I said, 'To have you as my constant friend.'

He said, 'What do you want from me?'

I said, 'Your abundant grace.'

He said, 'Who was your companion on the journey?'

I said, 'The thought of you, O King.'

He said, 'What called you here?'

I said, 'The fragrance of your wine.'

He said, 'What brings you the most fulfillment?'

I said, 'The company of the Emperor.'

He said, 'What do you find there?'

I said, 'A hundred miracles.'

He said, 'Why is the palace deserted?'

I said, 'They all fear the thief.'

He said, 'Who is the thief?'
I said, 'The one who keeps me from -you.'

He said, 'Where is there safety?'
I said, 'In service and renunciation.'
He said, 'What is there to renounce?'
I said, 'The hope of salvation.'

He said, 'Where is there calamity?'
I said, 'In the presence of your love.'
He said, 'How do you benefit from this life?'
I said, 'By keeping true to myself'

Now it is time for silence.
If I told you about His true essence
You would fly from your self and be gone,
and neither door nor roof could hold you back!

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi

for Jim Burstyn

My constitutional walk amid the the green green fields of Indiana
the late rains have made the green so lush
a magical morning this
air cool, a bit moist, a mist rises as the early morning sun warms the sacred ground
the sky as blue as Techeles and the Throne of Glory
the breeze gently envelops me caressing my face.

Exhilarated by this perfection I think of the time to Daven to pray
this desire to reach out and beyond a perfect morning
beyond accepting it for what it is
just this
my brain forces me to reify and situate and mythologize
to pray to a timeless eternity
as these aching limbs walk off the stiffness in the hips and shoulders
creeping age makes itself felt at the two ends of the day.

For now I revel in the immanence of Mother Earth/Schechinah
of Being ממלא כל עלמין
feeling spirit incarnate in my very bones, in earth, in nature as I age towards earthiness
facing a return to earth.

But y religious-cultural heritage begins to weigh in
heavily on my shoulders
and the faith of the father, La Nom du Pere, the bearded portraits framed on the study
walls looking down sternly, the textual canon I inhabit and inhabits me, its aphorisms, its
quotations, those wisdoms that spring up in consciousness,
force my gaze upwards towards the sky the infinite blueness and the Almighty One.

Until He invaded reality in Genesis 1:1 in our mythic memory, our canonical sacred text,
all was quiet and serene just like this morning in Indiana where only birds chirp away
and all are going about their natural business of survival, until, that is, He crossed over
that infinite chasm we call the *tzimtzum between the infinite and the finite*, to experience
for Himself the glory that is this world of nature and Mother Earth. Until then of course,
there were no questions.

The day He breathed the נשמת חיים
into this anthropoid, there was no self, no consciousness of Other, our canon insists, our
myth tells us, there were no questions, no obligations, no directives, no rules to disobey.
But with the Miltonian assertion of self through the agency of some serpentine wisdom,
the self refused to obey, the self-conscious self became self as other, fulfilled in the very
act of disobedience by eating the fruit of what Mother Earth had produced, a luscious
delight to the eyes. Forbidden by the foreign Sky Deity for no reason, but instilling an
eternal guilt in mankind genetically transmitted forever.

And this Transcendent Deity now imposes His will down here on unconscious Mother Earth's children who will be scarred forever and no more so than His chosen people Israel. But this covenant is complicated as the vassal repeatedly fails and incurs the wrath of the king. Betrayal and rage follow the history of this complexity as the people struggle to relate to a divine Being. How to understand the rage of a Being who allows Mengele to assume divine proportions deciding on life and death with a flick of his arm? The covenant has transformed into something sinister as the Deity wishes to experience such monstrosity at the hands of the human.

It occurs to me as I walk along the crunchy path of pebbles between the cornfields of Indiana, to dissolve the contract (as has been suggested before me by others such as Rubinstein) to return to a pagan earth bound spirit who does not allow genocide for its own sake. Dissolve the Brit, no longer place our trust in this Transcendent Deity, and relinquish His promise to protect, for what good did it do on the ramp? Let each party go its own way, an amicable divorce of sorts. Surely our people might then once more dissolve into non-chosenness, merge back into humanity, not be singled out further by Church, Nazi or Jihad!

Of course the Holy One would have another rage attack, set upon us the German Shepherds loose once more like on the poor innocent whose only sin was to embrace modernity. Left alone what would become of us? to whom would we pray to? We have done it for so many millennia it is second nature! We believe in a Higher Power who we daven to and beg for mercy to and ask for healing from, could we even handle the orphan status?

Yet this morning
despite 6 months of darkness, I feel like praying.
And as I place the black straps on my arm once more I buy into the blackness of Rabbinic tradition. The black notes on white parchment, the black ink on the page of talmud, the black stripes on the *Tallis*, the black yarmulke the black wide-brimmed hats.

And the words flow freely from the lips-
denuded of attention to meaning
just the texture of the sentence, its very materiality, its prosody, its verbal articulation.
No meaning, no intent, no kavannah,
but that is sufficient today
like an actor on stage
playing the part, the role, this feels right
this black ritual from earthy materials, reaching from the spirit below to the male transcendent Deity beyond.

I tap into this feeling-this religious sentiment
and after these 6 months of dehydration-it feels good-
it is sufficient this התעררות דלתתא
in this מוחין דקטנות
and Mother earth/Schechinah gently breezes past my cheek in assent

for She too weeps
over Her disconnection with Him
and it occurs at that moment
that this is what the kabbalists meant by the term יחודים
those unifications they incant prior to performing Mitzvot.
In this new approach, this new myth, the radical theological move
was that is was now up to man himself to re-connect the divine with the divine
the Schechina/Malchut/earth spirit below weeping and wailing for Her suffering children
with the Deity beyond and transcendent.
That what I was feeling was exactly what I was meant to be feeling this moment
by just bringing attention to the infinite gap that separated spirit, mythic, eternal world
reality here and now
on this glorious summer day
amidst the green cornfields of Indiana
from the Historical Deity of our Canon of history and texts
across the צמצום

So I hope and pray -not using the head- with nothing but attention to my earthly time
bound aging presence here on the green carpet of Indiana
and that is sufficient.