

A Poem by Julian Ungar

written by Yossi Katz

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You can see when it is about to happen:
the eye gets a little reddish
then a tiny ooze forms in the inner corner
swelling slowly into a teardrop
as the emotions wash over the heart
and the pain creeps up like a soft blanket.

The tear forms, pear shaped
then gravity exerts its voice
drawing it downwards across the cheek's terrain
the sandy golden landscape like the Sahara
leaving a trail of moisture in its wake
until it reached the cliff's edge
and then drops precipitously.

This tear is but a drop
but a drop in the ocean of human tears
that endlessly accumulates.
Mankind does not learn
each inflicts pain on another, weaker
a food chain of suffering
long debated and agreed upon
as to its taboo
nevertheless the deep instinct within to inflict it goes on
unchecked.
But do animals cry?
do tears well up in the cat?
do they inflict pain for the pleasure of it?
do massacres occur in the chimpanzee population?
we think not!

My tears form easily now just like hers
as she recounts her story

the story behind the story
the story behind her history
her chief complaint.

The pear-shaped tear
contains all her pain
the world's suffering
the family anguish
someone must bear this of course
just like someone must laugh it all away.

The drop is discrete and isolated
soon to be wiped away by the controlling mind
the socialized soul
the embarrassment of revealing the heart;
but for that moment, that instant
beyond her control
that salty drop told me everything.

A drop in the ocean of tears
we are each that teardrop
each so discreet
yet part of the sea
and affected by its saltiness, its pollutants
its pH and temperature
pushed and pulled by its currents.

That teardrop coursed its trajectory like the path we each
must follow
from its birth in pain to its pear-shaped formation
then leaving the mother eye
as it descends along the cheek, leaving home and leaving its
salty outlined trace until
it falls off the precipice into the void.

But we are told not one is lost
as the Rebbe of Vurke stood motionless before the ocean of
tears

transfixed
bent over his cane like a shaman
pointing to the ocean of tears
refusing to enter the Garden of Eden
until
until what?
the good Lord would dry up the ocean of tears.
to put an end to all tears everywhere for good.

But what of the past?
can we ignore what happened?
can we forget?
can we imagine it never happened in this frenzied Messianic
dance?

Who will cry for the memory?
who will shed a tear for each martyr?
unjustly tortured or raped
murdered and pillaged?
will the Rebbe just pack his cane and enter the pearly gates?

She wipes her cheek and continues the narrative
focusing on the symptom
and the technical aspects of her illness and the moment has
passed
but in that space
in that instant
all was revealed to me
her past
its impact on her present
and the diagnosis magically appeared.