

It comes to me at night
Those thoughts
Your stories
Your suffering.

In the darkness well suited for such machinations
I realize my inadequacy.
For all I can really do is to listen.
Make small indentations here and there
In the utter progressiveness of disease towards its
ultimate desire
To destroy and disintegrate
To annihilate by slow death the flesh of us all.

In these stories of suffering and anguish
My own past rekindles itself
Ignited in kind
My own heart bleeds
For I too have experienced all this
And remain powerless in the face of it.

The past and future combine
The horrors and torture the slow death and fleshy pain

Into a history of story-telling and narrating
To overwhelm the small hours of the night.
My parents and grandparents going back
What were they thinking, my namesake, when being
driven in cattle cars
How did they pray and believe in those last moments, the
gas rising ever so slowly.
Generations after generations until this last bloody century
of genocide.

And inevitability I think of God
That personal being who made promises in the Bible.
And His goodness and this world of pain.
And countless thinkers before me struggling with the
claims
Of His mercy and love.
In the darkness I find no solace.

What do I tell this beautiful new and first grandchild?
As I hold him now and as I will be asked by him, no doubt

That I too failed to make sense of any of it
That I too follow the rite and ritual in the hope of

That in deference to the faith of my ancestors and the
memory of those who died sanctifying His name in
Sobibor and Belzec extermination camps I still maintain
The customs and prayers, the ablutions and Mitzvot

How do I comfort

How do I maintain faith despite

The evidence is overwhelming for the victory for the
demonic forces

Despite modern medicine and comforts

The dark side always seems to emerge from the good.

Where do I turn him towards, for answers that I never
found?

In teachers and clergy that failed me long ago, surely not!

In platitudes and moralistic-pietistic neologisms that I long
ago rejected!

At least let me hand on something genuine!

No it must be in the secrets of Torah

Those codes available only to those who have undergone
the ritual and moral purification demanded

The code of spiritual discipline that teaches the body to
speak

The secret that all is encoded in the body

And precisely there the paradox of life manifests itself.

For in the moment of birth and growth

Is encoded the lifespan and genetic map

Of where and whom and when things will take place within

The diseases and loves, addictions and desires

Right there within, albeit cellular.

Yes I must turn him towards the inner space

Where the paradox of micro and macrocosm remains

Where the divine remains accessible through refining the
ancient arts of listening

To the pulse the breath the flow of body fluids

Even in decline and especially in illness

His presence is felt most.

And maybe, just maybe he or his children will understand
better

Will grasp the true meaning of the paradox of human
suffering and divine pleasure

And all of our worship and effort thought the generations a
long chain

Each link vital in transmitting those secrets

Embedded in the sacred texts and rituals

Will have contributed to their future understanding.