

This Place of Grief

There is a place I visit
it turns out, now, almost weekly,
by Mussaf on Shabbes.

The kabbalists go to town about the קדושה
our “sanctus” if you like,
where the word *kesser* כתר implies a crowning of sorts
the King of Kings and we the Schechina embodied,
the *matronisa*, are united
albeit momentarily...
and the men of Bet El yeshivah do their *yichudim*
this sacred hierosgamos, the high point
of our liturgy.
A time for grace and exceeding *kedusha* קדושה.

There is a place I visit
it turns out, now, almost weekly,
by Mussaf on Shabbes.

But for me
it is a time for grief-
I don't know when this began
I just note that each week
it is about this time my heart melts
then breaks open to reveal this deep well of grief.
Watching this repeatedly
I am intrigued by the triggers and the repetitive timing,
its precision and how uniform the evocation remains.

What surfaces?
in this indescribable pain?
It is as if raw grief itself needs no further expression
no other trigger
no cause nor reason
as if I have stumbled upon this subterranean cavern filled with sorrow.

I know this is not about me
I know that from decades of analysis-
those fears resentments and hurts
are all well documented in the dairies and monthly billing statements!
No, this is different!
it is not about my life, my pain, my defects of character
my betrayals, those I have caused pain
those whose hearts I broke,
those lies deceits and betrayals.

This Place of Grief

No, in this place
I feel the pain of others
of Klal Yisroel,
of humanity and history.
A shrieking cry from the beyond
the sum of all the tears shed by all those suffering
rising up like a river to overflow its banks
and the very tragedy that is the hallmark of this creation.

Finally I feel the pain of of the divine
who for millennia has patiently watched His human experiment fail
in the hope that the laboratory specimens will one day
awaken to self-awareness
and stop the violence to our spouses children and others
the genocide the torture the inhumanity.
This pain surfaces in this unique place of grief.

And then something strange happens
for a few brief moments
I am relieved of the burden of existence
of Self, of my being in this world,
of that heaviness we carry
knowing despite our attempts to banish from consciousness
we cannot erase nor anesthetize those CNN images of
Mai Lai, Czhirvenitza, Rwanda,
relieved, and
this heaviness gets lighter
and the ever-present inner KRITIK
is silenced for a few precious moments
as I identify with the Divine בכי

This cosmic grief holds me
in its grip
as the holy words of sanctus sanctus sanctus
קדש קדש קדש
ring out in the screaming silence.
In these moments I am able to access the deepest parts of myself
and in this grief paradoxically everything makes sense
I feel an non ego empowerment
seeing the world from His perspective
as I participate in this subterranean stream of awareness.

This Place of Grief

Ironic that it is not joy or other powerful emotional triggers that allow me access to higher states of consciousness of מוחין, no, it is this deep well of grief that transcends and soaks all existence that moves me.

And in a flash
I remember the overwhelming feeling some 35 years ago
when, as a man in love,
the same grief surfaced at the high point of making love
surprised by the fact
that at the very epicenter of the ecstasy
this familiar grief, not joy
made itself first present in my life.
and triggered my tears.