

Sharing from the Well of Grief—short readings and quotes from apprentices and from the webinars.

Note to apprentices: This document will be updated and posted monthly along with each month's assignments. If you write, read or hear something you want to share with our group, email it to Marv for inclusion.

Migration

I walk out into the bay
until little waves lap my chin,
stand and lose myself in windless water
and cloudless sky. I turn, slow as sand
through an hourglass, look back
to the smudged line of beach.

An undulating ribbon appears;
I stand and wait; the line of butterflies
passes so close that I see the light
glowing through each
orange-and-black wing.

—Marv Klassen-Landis

The Mothers' Prayer

God of Life:

You who heals the brokenhearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.
You did not create us to kill each other
Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other
to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:
For our children crying in the night,
For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.
For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at
these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have
mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one
for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,
May this be your will
And let us say Amen.

–Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Translation by
Amichai Lau-Lavie

Naming

If I name this grief,
Define it
Without guilt
And redemption,
Call it drowning,
Desolation,
Call it
Fire and stone
Then I am bound
To care for it,
Like a stray cat I name
That demands I feed him.
He comes and goes,
Sometimes disappears
For days and then returns,
Insisting that
I remember.

–Lynne Knight
A Collaborative Poem from the Well of Grief

Life is full of Mystery

Grief comes from love

Love never fails

Stone in my pocket, stone on the hill

Digging clay from the ground

Waiting in the darkness

Darkness can be overwhelming, where is the light?

Darkness gives way to solitude

Darkness holds my sadness in secret

Darkness feeling the light

Light emerges, waves on the sea

Sea-change

Grief sits heavy in my body

Grief is an ache

Grief makes me feel broken

Broken wings, broken arrows

Broken is my heart, alive

Alive, alive, we are living

Loss comes in many different forms

Forms I cannot see

Grief is something I do not understand

Understand I try not

Understanding eases the chaos

Chaos begs for rest

Chaos might be a secret to understanding grief

Nectar needed for frenetic, but focused butterfly work

Work can be a relief

Mystery can be embraced and will lead to discovery
Discovery of uncharted paths
Discovery a good friend in the well
The well is deep, so is the love

Note from Marv:

I have used my Last Word First exercise in three ways:

- 1. In chat as we did.*
- 2. By myself as a journaling or poetry warm-up --sometimes to break through writer's block.*
- 3. In person with 2 or more people. Each person has a piece of paper. They write a short line, then fold it back so it is unseen. They copy their last word on the paper and pass it around the group (or back and forth). The next person uses that word as a first word of a new line. Repeat, repeat. This can be great fun for any age—the results are sometimes quite funny since you are always starting with just the one word without context--more often the results are surprisingly coherent and even profound. Synchronicity in action.*

Excerpts from *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* by Francis Weller

"Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning."

"Bringing grief and death out of the shadow is our spiritual responsibility, our sacred duty."

"By restoring grief to soul work, we are freed from our one-dimensional obsession with emotional progress."

"When we fully honor our many losses, our lives become more fully able to embody the wild joy that aches to leap from our hearts into the shimmering world."

"Every one of us must undertake an *apprenticeship with sorrow*."

The First Gate: Everything We Love, We Will Lose

"Grief is akin to praise; it is how the soul recounts the depth to which someone has touched our lives. To love is to accept the rites of grief."

*"Tis a fearful thing to love
What death can touch.
To love, to hope, to dream, and oh, to lose,
A thing for fools, this Love,
But a holy thing to love what death can touch."
-A twelfth century poem*

The Second Gate: The Places That Have Not Known Love

"These are the places within us that have been wrapped in shame and banished to the farthest shores of our lives.... *We cannot grieve for something that we feel is outside the circle of worth.*"

The Third Gate: The Sorrows of the World

"The cumulative grief of the world is overwhelming.... Our ways of living have become corrosive to the earth, to prairie dogs and grizzly bears, to bluefin tuna and monarch butterflies and cultures.... Remembering our bond with the earth helps heal our bodies and our souls."

*"Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
you must wake up with sorrow.
you must speak it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth."
-Naomi Nye*

The Fourth Gate: What We Expected and Did Not Receive

"We are born expecting a rich and sensuous relationship with the earth and communal rituals of celebration, grief, and healing that keep us in connection with the sacred."

“To be empty, to feel empty, is to live in the wasteland near the gates of death. This is intolerable to the soul.”

“Deep in our bones lies an old intuition that we arrive here carrying a bundle of gifts to offer to the community. Hidden within the losses lies our diminished experience of who we truly are.”

“We are left spiritually unemployed, forced to live a diminished experience.”

The Fifth Gate: Ancestral Grief

“This is the grief we carry in our bodies from sorrows experienced by our ancestors.”

“Ancestral grief also speaks to the grief that remains in our collective soul for the abuses of millions of individuals.”

“So many of our ancestors willingly left their original homelands, via migration, often moving far away across oceans (European roots), many forced to leave via slavery, indentured servitude, etc. This departure from their homelands was often disruptive, especially to the psyche. Gone were the patterns that held myth, song, ritual that provided grounding and identity.”

Mist

you are not sinking—
the mist is rising
allow yourself to float—
love will hold you

—Marv Klassen-Landis