

Bat Yiftach--Jephthah's Daughter

"If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter I love passing well."-- Polonius, *Hamlet*

The Book of Judges Chapter 11

[*Sefer Shoftim*, the Book of Judges, spans the time after the death of Joshua in the early 14th century BCE to the crowning of Saul as king of Israel in 1051 BCE.]

וַיִּפְתַּח הַגִּלְעָדִי הָיָה גִבּוֹר חַיִּל וְהוּא בֶן־אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה וַיּוֹלַד גִּלְעָד
אֶת־יִפְתָּח:

Jephthah the Gileadite, an **able warrior**, was **the son of a woman [who was] a prostitute**. Jephthah's father was Gilead;

וַתֵּלֶד אִשְׁת־גִּלְעָד לוֹ בָנִים וַיְגִדְלוּ בְנֵי־הָאִשָּׁה וַיַּגְרִשׁוּ אֶת־יִפְתָּח
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ לֹא־תִנְחַל בְּבַיִת־אָבִינוּ כִּי בֶן־אִשָּׁה אַחֲרַת אָתָּה:

but Gilead also had sons by his wife, and when the wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out. They said to him, "You shall have no share in our father's property, for you are **the son of an outsider**."

וַיִּבְרַח יִפְתָּח מִפְּנֵי אָחָיו וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ טוֹב וַיִּתְּלַקְטוּ אֵלָיו יִפְתָּח אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים וַיֵּצְאוּ עִמּוֹ:

So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in a **good country**. Men of low character gathered about Jephthah and went out raiding with him.

וַיְהִי מִיָּמַיִם וַיִּלְחֲמוּ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Some time later, the Ammonites went to war against Israel.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר־נִלְחֲמוּ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְכוּ זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד לִקְחַת אֶת־יִפְתָּח מֵאֶרֶץ טוֹב:

And when the Ammonites attacked Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah back from the good country.

[The Ammonites lived east of the Jordan and were closely related to the Hebrews. They were known for their violent war practices, and were eventually defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the 7th century BCE. They descended from Ben-Ami, son of Lot with his younger daughter as recorded in *Beresheit* 19:38)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְיִפְתָּח לֵכָה וְהָיִיתָ לָּנוּ לְקַצֵּין וְנִלְחַמָּה בְּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן:

They said to Jephthah, “Come be chief for us, so that we can fight the Ammonites.”

וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח לְזִקְנֵי גִלְעָד הֲלֹא אַתֶּם שְׂנֵאתֶם אוֹתִי וַתִּגְרְשׁוּנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמִדּוֹעַ בָּאתֶם אֵלַי עֲתָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צָר לָכֶם:

Jephthah replied to the elders of Gilead, “You are the very people who **rejected** me and **drove me out** of my father’s house. How can you come to me now when you are in trouble?”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ זְקֵנֵי גִלְעָד אֶל־יִפְתָּח לְכֹן עִתָּה שָׁבְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ עִמָּנוּ וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיִיתָ לָּנוּ לְרֹאשׁ לְכֹל יִשְׁבֵי גִלְעָד:
The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “We have now turned back to you. If you come with us and fight the Ammonites, you shall be our **head** over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח אֶל־זְקֵנֵי גִלְעָד אִם־מְשִׁיבִים אַתֶּם אוֹתִי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְנָתַן יְהוָה אוֹתָם לְפָנַי אֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָּכֶם לְרֹאשׁ:
Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “[Very well,] if you bring me back to **war/fight** against the Ammonites and YuhVavHey delivers them to me, I am to be your commander.”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ זְקֵנֵי־גִלְעָד אֶל־יִפְתָּח יְהוָה יְהִי שֹׁמֵעַ בֵּינֹתֵינוּ אִם־לֹא כַדְבָּרְךָ כֹּן נַעֲשֶׂה:
And the elders of Gilead answered Jephthah, “YuhVavHey shall be **witness** between us if we will do just as you have said.”

וַיֵּלֶךְ יִפְתָּח עִם־זְקֵנֵי גִלְעָד וַיִּשְׁימוּ הָעָם אוֹתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם לְרֹאשׁ וּלְקַצֵּין וַיִּדְבֹּר יִפְתָּח אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרָיו לְפָנֵי יְהוָה בַּמִּצְפָּה:

Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him their commander and chief. And Jephthah repeated all these terms before YudHeyVavHey at **Mizpah**

(literally, Mizpah means “watchtower” but also connotes an emotional bond. *Beresheit* 31:49 identifies Mizpah as the place where Jacob and Laban erected a pile of stones to mark an agreement between them, with God as their witness.).

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִפְתָּח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן לֵאמֹר מִה־לִּי וְלֹךְ כִּי־בָאתָ
אֵלַי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּאַרְצִי:

Jephthah then sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, saying, “What have you against me that you have come to make war on my country?”

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן אֶל־מַלְאָכָיו יִפְתָּח כִּי־לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אַרְצִי
בְּעִלּוֹתָיו מִמִּצְרַיִם מֵאַרְנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֹּק וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעַתָּה הֲשִׁיבָה אֶתְהוֹן
בְּשָׁלוֹם:

The king of the Ammonites replied to Jephthah’s messengers, “When Israel came from Egypt, they seized the land that is mine, from the Arnon to the Jabbok as far as the Jordan. Now, then, restore it peaceably.”

וַיֹּסֶף עוֹד יִפְתָּח וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:
Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites.

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה אָמַר יִפְתָּח לֹא-לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ
בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:

He said to him, “Thus said Jephthah: Israel did not seize the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites.

כִּי בַעֲלוֹתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר עַד-יַם-סוּף וַיָּבֹא קַדְשָׁה:
When they left Egypt, Israel traveled through the wilderness to the Sea of Reeds and went on to Kadesh.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְאָכָיו אֶל-מֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבְרָה-נָא בְּאֶרְצְךָ
וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם וְגַם אֶל-מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב שָׁלַח וְלֹא אָבָה וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּקַדְשׁ:

Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Allow us to cross your country.’ But the king of Edom would not consent. They also sent a mission to the king of Moab, and he refused. So Israel, after staying at Kadesh,

וַיֵּלֶךְ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּסֹּב אֶת-אֶרֶץ אֱדוֹם וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וַיָּבֹא מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ
לְאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן וְלֹא-בָאוּ בְּגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל
מוֹאָב:

traveled on through the wilderness, skirting the land of Edom and the land of Moab. They kept to the east of the land of Moab until they encamped on the other side of the Arnon; and, since Moab ends at the Arnon, they never entered Moabite territory.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְאָכִים אֶל־סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ־הָאֱמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבֹן וַיֹּאמֶר
לוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַעֲבֹרָה־נָא בְּאַרְצְךָ עַד־מְקוֹמִי:

“Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon. Israel said to him, ‘Allow us to cross through your country to our homeland.’

וְלֹא־הָאֱמִיּוֹן סִיחֹן אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבֹר בְּגִבְלוֹ וַיֹּאסֹף סִיחֹן אֶת־כָּל־עַמּוֹ
וַיַּחֲנוּ בִּיהֲצָה וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

But Sihon would not trust Israel to pass through his territory. Sihon mustered all his troops, and they encamped at Jahaz; he engaged Israel in battle.

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־סִיחֹן וְאֶת־כָּל־עַמּוֹ בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּכּוּם
וַיִּירֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־אַרְצוֹ הָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא:

But YudHeyVavHey, the God of Israel, delivered Sihon and all his troops into Israel’s hands, and they defeated them; and Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that land.

וַיִּירְשׁוּ אֶת כָּל־גְּבוּל הָאֱמֹרִי מֵאֲרֹנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֵּק וּמִן־הַמִּדְבָּר
וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן:

Thus they possessed all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan.

וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי מִפְּנֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאֶתָּה תִּירְשָׁנָה:

“Now, YudHeyVavHey, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites before this covenanted people Israel; and should you possess their land?

הֲלֹא אֶת אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִישְׁךָ כְּמוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אוֹתוֹ תִירָשׁ וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ אוֹתוֹ נִירָשׁ:

Do you not hold what **Chemosh your god** gives you to possess? So we will hold on to everything that **YudHeyVavHey our God** has given us to possess.

וְעַתָּה הַטּוֹב טוֹב אֵתָּה מִבְּלָק בֶּן־צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הַרְּוֹב רַב עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־נִלְחָם נִלְחָם בָּם:

“Besides, are you any better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he start a quarrel with Israel or go to war with them?

בְּשֵׁבֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן וּבְבִנְנוֹתֶיהָ וּבְעֶרְעוֹר וּבְבִנְנוֹתֶיהָ וּבְכָל־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־יַדֵּי אַרְנוֹן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּמִדּוֹעַ לֹא־הִצַּלְתֶּם בְּעֵת הַהִיא:

“While Israel has been inhabiting Heshbon and its dependencies, and Aroer and its dependencies, and all the towns along the Arnon for three hundred years, why have you not tried to recover them all this time?

וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא־חָטָאתִי לָךְ וְאֵתָּה עֲשֵׂה אֵתִי רָעָה לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה הַשֹּׁפֵט הַיּוֹם בֵּין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:

I have done you no wrong; yet you are doing me harm and making war on me. May YudHeyVavHey, who judges, decide today between the Israelites and the Ammonites!”

וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן אֶל־דְּבָרֵי יִפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח אֵלָיו:
 But the king of the Ammonites paid no heed to the message
 that Jephthah sent him.

וַתְּהִי עַל־יִפְתָּח רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַגְּלָעָד וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיַּעֲבֹר
 אֶת־מִצְפֵּה גְלָעָד וּמִמִּצְפֵּה גְלָעָד עָבַר בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:
 Then the **spirit of YudHeyVavHey** came upon Jephthah. He
 marched through Gilead and Manasseh, passing Mizpeh of
 Gilead; and from Mizpeh of Gilead he crossed over [to] the
 Ammonites.

וַיִּדָּר יִפְתָּח נֶדָּר לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָתַתּוֹן תִּתֶּנּוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדֵי:
 And Jephthah made the following **vow** to YudHeyVavHey: “If
 You deliver the Ammonites into my hands,

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדְּלֶתִי בֵּיתִי לִקְרָאתִי בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי
 { עַמּוֹן וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהָעֲלִיתִיהוּ עֹלָה:
 then whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet
 me on my safe return from the Ammonites shall be
 YudHeyVavHey’s and shall be offered by me as a **burnt
 offering.**”

וַיַּעֲבֹר יִפְתָּח אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהִלָּחֵם בָּם וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ:
 Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites and attacked them,
 and YudHeyVavHey delivered them into his hands.

וַיִּכְּם מֵעֲרוֹעֵר וְעַד-בְּאֵךְ מִנִּית עֵיר וְעַד אָבֶל כְּרָמִים מְכָה
גְדוּלָה מְאֹד וַיִּכְנְעוּ בְנֵי עַמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

He utterly routed them—from Aroer as far as Minnith, twenty towns—all the way to Abel-cheramim. So the Ammonites submitted to the Israelites.

וַיָּבֹא יִפְתָּח הַמְצַפָּה אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנֵּה בָתּוֹ יֹצֵאת לִקְרֹאתוֹ בְּתָפִים
וּבְמַחְלֹת וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵין-לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אִוֶּבֶת:

When Jephthah arrived at his home in **Mizpah**, there was **his daughter coming out to meet him, with hand-drum and dance!** She was an only child; he had no other son or daughter.



וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָיו אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲהָה בְּתִי הַכָּרַע



הַכָּרַעְתָּנִי וְאֵת הַיֵּית בְּעַכְרִי וְאֶנְכִי פָצִיתִי פִּי אֶל־יְהוָה וְלֹא אוּכַל לָשׁוּב:

On seeing her, he **rent his clothes** and said, “My daughter! **You have brought me low; you have become my troubler!** For I have uttered a vow to YudHeyVavHey and I cannot retract.”

וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אָבִי פָצִיתָה אֶת־פִּיךָ אֶל־יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה לִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּיךָ אַחֲרָי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ יְהוָה נִקְמֹת מֵאִיְבִיךָ מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹנוֹ:

She said to him, “My father: you have uttered a vow to YudHeyVavHey; do to me as you have vowed, seeing that YudHeyVavHey has vindicated you against your enemies, the Ammonites.”



וּתְאֹמַר אֶל־אָבִיהָ יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמְּנֵי שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים
 וְאָלְכָה וַיְרִידְתִּי עַל־הַהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶּה עַל־בְּתוּלִי אָנֹכִי (וּרְעוּתַי):
 She further said to her father, “Let this be done for me: let me
 be for two months, and I will go with my companions and
 lament upon the hills and there bewail my maidenhood.”



וַיֹּאמֶר לְכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח אוֹתָהּ שְׁנַי חֳדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרֵעוֹתֶיהָ וַתִּבְרְךְ
עַל־בְּתוּלֶיהָ עַל־הַהָרִים:

“Go,” he replied. He let her go for two months, and she and her companions went and bewailed her maidenhood upon the hills.

וַיְהִי מִקְצוֹ שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים וַתָּשׁוּב אֶל־אָבִיהָ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֶת־נְדָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר
נָדָר וְהָיָא לֹא־יִדְעָה אִישׁ וַתְּהִי־חֶק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

After two months' time, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. She had never known a man. So it became a **decree** in Israel



מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה תִּלְכְּנָה בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי
 אַרְבַּעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה:

for the **daughters of Israel** to go every year, for **four days** in
 the year to **lament** for the daughter of **Jephthah the
 Gileadite**.



Commentaries:

The annual 4 day grief retreat teaches that grief is understood to be a deep spiritual art that needs to be tended to; it seems that we must learn the art of grieving and do so in community.

Philo, Biblical Antiquities:

Her name was Shela (derived from the Hebrew word שְׁלָה *(še-i-la* “asked for”)

Tanhuma, Behukotai 7:

...if Jephthah had read the laws of vows in the Torah, he would not have lost his daughter

Taanit 4a:

Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Three people entreated [God] in an unreasonable manner. To two of them [God] responded reasonably, and to one God responded unreasonably. And they are: Eliezer, servant of Abraham; Saul, son of Kish; and Jephthah the Gileadite.

Gen. Rabbah 60:3:

The Holy One, blessed be He, is angry with Jephthah and tells him: "If a camel, or an ass, or a dog had come out, would you offer it to Me as a burnt offering?" Jephthah's vow reflects impulsive and ostentatious behavior, without any thought and without taking into account possible consequences. The Holy One, blessed be He, also responded to Jephthah in an "unfitting" manner, and arranged for his only daughter to greet him on his victorious return from battle.

Radak on Judges 11:39:1

"He did to her his vow as he'd vowed." That he made for her a house and put her in it, and she was secluded from humanity and the ways of the world; it was a law in Israel for from year to year the daughters of Israel would go to her.

Rashi on Judges 11:39:1

She became the subject of a law. Legislation was enacted prohibiting any repetition of this, for, had he approached Pinchos, or had Pinchos approached him, he would have released him from his vow. But they refused to humble themselves, and were, thus, both responsible for her ruin. They were punished. The Divine Presence departed from Pinchos, as it is said in Divrei Hayamim, "Adonoy was with him previously." We learn that he was not with him later. And Yiftoch was afflicted with ulcerations and the loss of his limbs, as it is said, "He was buried in the cities of Gilod." Another interpretation: "She became the subject of a law in Yisroel" relates to the following passage.

Addenda to Mahzor Vitry:

Every year since, in the month of Tevet, on the day on which Jephthah fulfilled his vow, water would turn to blood, and the daughters of Israel would weep for four days over Jephthah's daughter.

Mountain by Alicia Jo Robins

When my father came back from the war
I knew he would want to see me first
So I ran out to greet him
But he fell to his knees in the dirt
He told me daughter
I have promised God to offer
the first creature that I saw
Father the vow you have made
is one you cannot escape
but first let me go with my sisters
down to the shores of the lake
I lived two months with them
my sisters in the forest
and then I returned back home
The night he took me to the mountain
neither of us spoke
We reached the peak together
just as sunrise broke

I could have run from him
 I almost thought he wished it
 but I could not run from God
 It was the last day of my life
 the sun had never shone so bright
 My father held the knife
 I kept my eyes open wide
 Then angels came to me
 with faces of my sisters
 and they filled my eyes with tears

Alternate Ending: The Escape of Jephthah's Daughter
 by J. Estanislao Lopez

Seeing my father tear his clothes at the sight of me,
 each seam of cloth unspindling to reveal his bare,

flexing chest as he wailed a heartfelt regret,
 I could no longer take him seriously. God,

I realized, played favorites and favored fools.
 Who did he think would walk through the door

to greet him? The irony!—I could hear the future
 exclaim. And a virgin sacrifice, at that!

But I'm no archetype. I fled to the mountains,
 promising return, but what is a promise if not

an exchange of ideas about ourselves, subject to evolving circumstances? If my nation burns, so be it.

Many will be grateful. And there's no lack of men eager to sing of how they suffered greatly and prevailed.

Jepthath's Daughter

by Sarah Singer

Garlanded,
Clad in gossamer,
Laced with filigree,
I have waited all night
In the still weather,
Come forth to be
The first in Gilead
To greet my father,
With dance and timbrel,
And songs of praise
Upon my lips.

At last, the herald's cry,
The sudden drum,
The clank of shield and spear!
I would make claim...
But look--my father weeps
And rails against the sky
As I drew near,
And priest and warrior
Are dumb.

Rain Falls on the Mountaintop

by Alicia Ostriker , excerpted from **Jephthah's Daughter: A Lament**

Can these bones live?

– Ezekiel 37.6

No one bears witness for the witness.

– Paul Celan

She has no name, has neither face nor eyes

they were drowned in blood

they were burnt

by fire

She is a garden shut, a fountain sealed

She sought her beloved and found him not

no kisses of the mouth no child at breast

no belly of heaped wheat

she is the song of nothing

and never

She loved the man she called father

a great a mighty warrior

a rock an outstretched arm his enemies fled

she ran after his love she praised she danced

hallelujah father but he

was angry

He said she hurt him, she caused him grief

he took her she consented he raised the knife

she lay on stone and showed her throat she said

blessed be he who protects and saves

who comforts the captive and raises up
the dead
Her father will die at a good old age
but where was the angel to stop his hand
where was the sacred messenger
who is this God of stone and knife and fire
why does he hide, what can he see
when a woman prays
will he ever hear
From the forest of our lives
into the clearing
rain falls on the mountaintop
soaking the wordless stone
year after year
like the truth of tears