

YEARS

by Yisroel Shtern

Translated by Miriam Koral (2005)

A

In the green, grey sadness-gloom
of the last tree-lines,
there at the edge of the world – the heavens bend
carefully down to the earth
and listen to the quiet passing
of the years, that swim forth
as a tear does, and like a tear
fall down somewhere.

B

Night after night
black-eyed worlds sing
blackhearted songs,
and the stars fall down
in fear:
“Who is the father?
Who is the mother?
The years are born
abandoned.
Far beyond woods
on a strange wild island
the years lie
tossed away
blind and sickly
and black as the woods
and mute as the island –
and can't weep
and can't weep...
and hanging over them
is a frozen curse.”
Night after night
blackeyed worlds sing
blackhearted songs,
and the stars fall down
in fear.

C

Dinno! --- Dinno! --- Dinno! ---
run the hours
from the city hall tower
down into the world
and announce in advance:
a year is born! –
Down ring the hours
onto the stones
like copper coins into
the tsedaka box (“Charity
Redeems from Death...”)
Dinno! --- Dinno! --- Dinno! ---
a dog arrives
and stands there in the market
with two wet eyes
and can’t remember the way
through the village to its owner –
the young year loses its way
from the city tower
into the night
and falls down onto the stones
spent
and there it breaks...
Dinno! --- Dinno! --- Dinno! ---
Up the blue-black ladder
of the blue-black night
my heart is dreaming hard
up to the tower,
where time’s bell
heaves restlessly
in the night-blind clock...

And the hours keep falling
like leaves in Tishrei¹
down onto the cobblestones;
the stones almost groaning
tell the streets:
“Every year wanders
from star to star

¹ An autumn month in the Hebrew calendar

and finding no redemption
runs with its misfortune
from God and the heavens
and tumbles down
like a sinning angel
seeking in our
cold realm
its eternal rest..."

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