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MUDDY WATERS - SPLITTING OF THE SEA

We each inhabit two worlds--worlds that are often as far apart from each other as two worlds can be. One world is the "revealed" portion of our existence: our professional, social and family lives; our conscious thoughts and feelings. Simultaneously, we inhabit a "hidden" world--a world of subconscious drives and desires, of innately known truths and deeply-held convictions that rarely, if ever, see the light of day.

Kabbalistic and Chassidic teachings refer to these two worlds as our "land" reality and our "sea" reality. On land, things are out in the open--so much so, that they often seem disconnected from their environment and source of life (looking at a throng of suited businessmen striding down a busy city sidewalk, it is hardly apparent that they derive their nourishment from the earth). In the sea, on the other hand, everything is submerged and hidden. At most, we might catch a shadowy glimpse of what transpires close to its surface; of what lurks in its depths we see nothing at all. In this world, the creatures are imbedded within their sustaining environment, often to the point of indistinguishability.

What is the case on the individual level is also true of creation as a whole. There are the "revealed worlds," which include the material and physical realities, as well as those spiritual realities that are fathomable and accessible to us. But beyond this "land" lies the mysterious sea, the supra-natural and supra-rational strata of creation.

Much of the pain and frustration in our lives stems from the rift between our "land" and "sea" personalities. If only we could reconcile our revealed life with our subconscious self! If only we could recognize our true will and understand our deepest yearnings; if only the countless choices we make each day in our "terrestrial" existence would reflect who we truly are and what we truly desire! On the cosmic level, too, the strife and discord that grips the "known" universe is the result of its disconnection from its mystic dimension.

This, explain the Chassidic masters, is the spiritual significance of the "Splitting of the Sea" on the seventh day of Passover. The Midrash states that when G-d split the Red Sea for the Children of Israel, He also split "all the waters in the world," from the physical seas on earth, to the individual sea of every soul, to the cosmic sea that suffuses the deepest secrets of creation. In the words of the Psalmist, G-d "transformed the sea into dry land; they traversed the river on foot" (Psalms 66:6). What is ordinarily submerged and inaccessible became manifest and actual, and traversing the depths of one's soul was like walking on firm terrain.

After "the children of Israel passed through the midst of the sea on dry land," the waters reassumed their natural course. Again the sea reality was obscured; again the subconscious became a mystic and secret place. But a precedent had been established, a potential implanted in our souls. Never again was the sea to be impregnable; never again were the revealed and hidden in man to constitute two hermetic worlds. By splitting all seas of creation, G-d empowered us to penetrate our individual seas, to blaze pathways of dry land on the ocean floors of our souls.

How Dry? In the Dayyeinu hymn, sung at the Passover Seder, we enumerate fifteen things that G-d did for us when He liberated us from Egypt and took us to be His chosen people. We thank G-d for each of these things individually, recognizing each as a distinct and unique gift. Thus we say: "If He had taken us out of Egypt, but had not punished [the Egyptians]--it would have sufficed for us.... If He had fed us the manna, but had not given us the Shabbat--it would have sufficed for us...." and so on.

In the stanza that relates to the Splitting of the Sea, we sing: If He had split the sea for us, but did not take us across it on dry land--it would have sufficed for us. Many of the commentaries on the Haggadah are puzzled by the meaning of these lines: what does it mean that it would have sufficed for us if G-d had "split the sea for us" but did not "take us across it on dry land"? Of what use would the splitting of the sea have been to us, had it not enabled us to cross to the other side and escape Pharaoh's pursuing armies? The Avudraham (classic commentary on the Siddur by Rabbi David Avudraham, 14th-century Spain) explains that the emphasis is on the fact that we crossed

the sea on dry land. In order to save us from the Egyptians, it would have been enough that the sea split and we trudged through the mud and silt that naturally covers the sea bottom. To show His love for His people, G-d performed an additional miracle, making our path as dry and firm as land that has never been covered by water.

But the fifteen things enumerated by the author of Dayyeinu are not simply a list of miracles performed by G-d in the course of the Exodus (of which there were many others), but major developments in Jewish history: the Exodus itself, the splitting of the sea, the manna, the giving of the Torah, the entry into the Holy Land, the building of the Holy Temple--events that profoundly impacted our lives as Jews to this very day. What, then, is the lasting significance of the fact that not only did the sea split for us, but that it also revealed to us a wholly dry passage through its depths?

The Intermediate Man: In his Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi describes three spiritual personalities: the rasha (sinner), the tzaddik (perfectly righteous person) and the beinoni (the "intermediate"). The rasha is one whose "revealed" life--his deeds, speech and conscious thoughts--is at odds with his hidden essence. His soul is "literally a part of G-d above," no less than the most perfect of his brethren; but his daily life includes acts that are a transgression of the divine will. His quintessential desire is to be faithful to his Source, but he consciously desires things that impede his relationship with G-d.

In the tzaddik, there is perfect harmony between the hidden and revealed portions of his self. His intrinsic love of G-d spills over into his "revealed" life, so that he desires only that which enhances his bond with the Almighty and is repelled by anything that threatens it. He is one who has transformed his "sea" into "dry land"--whose quintessential self and manifest self are one and the same.

Between the rasha and the tzaddik is the beinoni, the "intermediate." Like the rasha, the beinoni desires evil; but he never allows his negative impulses to find expression in action, speech, or willful thought. In other words, the beinoni is a behavioral tzaddik and a psychological rasha. On the behavioral level, his life is in complete conformity with his inner identity as a spark of the divine torch. Psychologically, the dissonance between his essence and his conscious self remains.

The beinoni is one who has split his sea, but who still struggles along its muddy bottom. He has penetrated his hidden self enough to "get across to the other side." He gets the same "results" as the tzaddik: his daily life is a perfect reflection of his innermost self. But his sea has not been transformed into dry land. Life, for the beinoni, is a constant struggle with the contradiction between sea and land.

A Twofold Split: After describing the inner life of these three spiritual prototypes, the Tanya goes on to declare that every man has the capacity to be a beinoni--to gain complete mastery over his behavior and not allow a single evil impulse to find expression in actual deed. But few can attain the status of the tzaddik, and it is not expected, or even desirable, that all but a select few should achieve this state. For there is something about the beinoni, something about his perpetual battle with evil, that makes his life richer and more G-dly than the perfect existence of the tzaddik. G-d desires both beinonim and tzaddikim in His world, for each realizes a dimension of His purpose in creation that the other cannot fulfill. On a more subtle level, our lives include both states. We each have our beinoni periods of struggle and our tzaddik moments of harmony--both of which are integral to a complete self. On the seventh day following the Exodus, G-d granted us the capacity for both these modes of life: for virtue as well as perfection, for successful struggle as well as harmonious wholeness. He split the sea for us, empowering us to manifest our hidden self in our daily lives. And He transformed the sea into dry land, enabling us to aspire to a complete synthesis of our mystic essence and our terrestrial personality. Based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Passover 1958 (Likkutei Sichot, vol. III, pp. 1016e-1016f); adapted by Yanki Tauber - chabadonline.com

THE PRESENCE OF *MASHIACH* IS REVEALED ON ACHARON SHEL PESACH, AND THIS REVELATION HAS RELEVANCE TO ALL ISRAEL: PESACH IS *MEDALEG*. "SKIPPING OVER" (RATHER THAN ORDERLY PROGRESS), AND *LEIL SHIMURIM*, THE "PROTECTED NIGHT." IN GENERAL THE MOOD OF PESACH IS ONE OF LIBERTY. THEN PESACH ENDS, AND WE FIND OURSELVES TUMBLING HEADLONG INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THIS IS WHERE *MASHIACH'S* REVEALED PRESENCE COMES INTO PLAY - IMBUING US WITH A POWERFUL RESOLUTION THAT ENABLES US TO MAINTAIN OURSELVES IN THE WORLD. (REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, NISSAN - 23)

May it be G-d's will that through waiting and longing for Moshiach, expressed through our celebrating "Moshiach's banquet, " we speedily merit the true and complete redemption. -The Rebbe

REMEMBURING THE FUTURE

In every generation," say our sages, "a person is obligated to see himself as if he himself has come out of Egypt." Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "boundaries" and "constrictions"; yetziat mitzrayim, "going out of Egypt," is the endeavor to rise above all that inhibits the soul of man, be it limitations imposed by an outside force, or the physical, psychological or spiritual limitations imposed by habit and nature.

One of the most constricting elements of the human condition is the phenomenon of time. Time carries off the past and holds off the future, confining our lives to a temporal sliver of "present." But on the first night of

Passover we break the bonds of time, having received a mandate to experience the Exodus "as if he himself has come out of Egypt." We recall the Exodus in our minds, verbalize it in the telling of the Haggadah, digest it in the form of matzah and wine. As we passover the centuries, memory--those faded visages of past that generally constitute our only answer to the tyranny of time--becomes experience, and history is made current and real.

The Third Seder

Passover is an eight-day festival, with two opening and two closing days of heightened observance and commemoration (Yom Tov). While the theme of redemption runs as a current through the entire festival, the first days of Passover focus primarily on our first redemption--our liberation from Egypt thirty-three centuries ago--while the closing days highlight the final redemption--the future era of divine goodness and perfection heralded by Moshiach.

On the first two nights of Passover we conduct the Seder, reliving our redemption from Egypt in the telling of the Haggadah, the eating of the matzah and the bitter herbs, and the drinking of the four cups of wine. On the seventh day of Passover, we read the "Song at the Sea," which contains an important allusion to the Messianic era; on the eighth day, the haftarah (reading from the Prophets) is from Isaiah 10:32-12:6--one of the primary prophecies on the future Redemption. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, instituted the custom of partaking of "Moshiach's Feast"--a mirror seder of sorts that includes matzah and four cups of wine--on the afternoon of the eighth day of Passover.

Thus on the latter days of Passover, our transcendence of time enters a new, heightened phase: it is one thing to vitalize memory to the point of actual re-experience, but quite another to make real an event that lies in the future, especially an event that has no parallel in the history of man. Yet in the closing hours of Passover, we enter into the world of Moshiach. Having vaulted over millennia of past on the seder nights, we now surmount the blank wall of future, to taste the matzah and wine of the ultimate redemption.

Based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe - chabadonline.com