



*“Words from the Heart
Enter the Heart”*

PESACH > Seventh Day

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

April 25, 2011

Pesach

To See Beneath the Sea



Meaningful Sermons *“Words from the Heart Enter the Heart”*

Pesach > Seventh Day > To See Beneath The Sea

April 25, 2011

ABSTRACT

Today we honor the parting of the Re(e)d Sea that took place on this day 3,323 years ago, seven days after the Jewish people left Egypt. It may be the most famous miracle in history. But an obvious question that many ignore demands an answer: Why the need for this miracle in the first place?!

Consider that no sea separates Egypt from Israel, so there was no need to part the sea for the Jews to make their way to the Promised Land. God took them on a long detour so that the parting could take place! Why?

The Midrash further complicates the puzzle by stating that not only did the sea split, but *all* the seas and water bodies in the world did likewise at that very moment!

Water and land – two worlds that live side by side. So different, yet so intertwined.

Their relationship teaches us much about our own lives. About actualizing our deepest potential.

This sermon explores the complex symbiosis of land and sea, and how they embody two forms of consciousness which need to be bridged. The sermon then connects the dots to explain the historic importance of the splitting of the sea as a watershed moment that forever changed our destiny.

In the process it also examines the significance of a tsunami – such as the recent Japanese catastrophe – and the lessons it teaches us.

Pesach

Seventh Day

To See Beneath the Sea

**TO SEE BENEATH THE SEA:
ACTUALIZING OUR GREAT POTENTIAL**

1. Opening Joke

Nine year old Joey, was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday school.

“Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved.”

“Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?” his mother asked.

“Well, no, Mom. But if I told it the way the teacher did, you’d never believe it!”

2. The Parting Sea

Today, on the Seventh Day of Passover, we honor the parting of the Re(e)d Sea that took place on this very day 3,323 years ago, just seven days after the Jewish people left Egypt. It may be the most famous miracle in history. [Much ado was made about the special effects needed to recreate the parting sea in Cecil B. Demille's epic film, The Ten Commandments. But now we are celebrating the real thing.]

But an obvious question that many ignore demands an answer: Why the need for this miracle in the first place?!

Consider that no sea separates Egypt from Israel, so there was no need to part the sea for the Jews to make their way to the Promised Land. God took them on a long detour so that the parting could take place! Why?

The Midrash¹ further complicates the puzzle by stating that not only did the Re(e)d Sea split, but *all* the seas and water bodies in the world did likewise at that very moment! What could the Midrash mean by this?

3. The Great Deep

The mystics supply the answer. They explain that something very deep happened here, for the land and the sea represent two forms of consciousness:

- the “revealed world” of dry land represents our conscious experiences
- while the “hidden world” of the sea represents our unconscious experiences

In truth, these two states are one seamless whole. Thus, as the Book of Genesis tells us, in the beginning of time all earth was submerged in water ... just as each of us begins our life submerged in the embryonic fluids of our mothers’ wombs, for each us is a universe in microcosm. Then God created a division, separating the “waters above” from the “waters below.” The primal water-world underwent a dramatic change – a parting took place that divided “land” consciousness from “water” consciousness. That is when the waters below were gathered together, allowing dry land to emerge, thus creating the distinction between heaven, earth and sea.²

This happened for man’s benefit, and in fact, it is only true from our perspective. If we think about it, we realize that our world is still very much a water-world. All land on earth is actually a series of islands jutting out of water. About 75% of the globe is covered with water, leaving only 25% uncovered. The same is true of the microcosm of our body – most of it is made up of water. Our conscious minds are just a “tip of the iceberg” jutting out of our unconscious.

¹ Midrash Mechilta, *Shemot* 14:21.

² Genesis 1:6-9.

However, a separation between land and water, between conscious and unconscious, defines our reality. Still, this separation is not total. At the outset of creation, when God divided the land from the sea, He did so on the condition that the sea would always remember that, one day, it would have to part again and allow man to walk through its depths as if on land.³

So this is the mystics' explanation for this bizarre miracle – the parting of the sea (in which “water was transformed into land” all over the universe) was a demonstration of the naked truth that sea and land are two dimensions of one reality.

The goal in life is to take that which is hidden – the sea – and reveal it, turn it into land! The world of the sea is the world of concealment; the vast waters conceal everything within. The world of land is the world of revelation; minerals, plants and creatures are clearly seen on dry land.

When we have the courage to wade in – to move forward – we split the sea and we reveal the true divine potential lying hidden there.

4. Two Stages of Freedom

And this is why the splitting of the sea was the culmination of the Egyptian Exodus. Before the splitting of the sea, our freedom was not complete.

Freedom comes in two stages: 1) running away from our past, and 2) running towards our future. Leaving Egypt was running away from our past. We left Egypt trusting in God, trusting that there was something better out there. But until we actually discovered something better, our freedom was incomplete – at any moment, we could have lapsed, discouraged and frightened of our new, free reality.

³ *Berishit Rabah* 5:5. *Shemot Rabah* 21:6. Zohar II 198b. Cf. Baal Haturim to Exodus 14:27.

It was at this crucial impasse that the sea parted – opening up for us new unprecedented opportunities of freedom. With our own eyes we saw that the ultimate means of progress is forging ahead – not only escaping the past, but also running toward the future!

For us to truly be free, we cannot only have something to run away from, but we also must have something to run towards!

The lesson to us is very clear. To truly move forward in life, especially when we have a specific goal, we must journey on – we must press fast forward without pause. We must split the sea ... and reveal our hidden potential with all its fascinating and infinite power.

This is also the reason that the people sang praise following the parting of the sea. Song is the language of the sea. Conventional speech (“land language”) consists of staccato-like fragments of disconnected words, separated by spaces and breaths, combining together to express an idea. Melody flows like water in one seamless stream.

The parting of the sea – an integral part of the sea’s nature from its inception – paved the way so that today we have the power to sing, the power to unite what is above and what is below, in one harmonious flow.

5. Crossing the Red Sea (Joke)

In so doing, we become aware of our integral unity ... we begin to perceive that we are all like “fish in the sea,” submerged in and indistinguishable from our divine source.

And speaking of fish in the sea...

As Moses and the Children of Israel were crossing through the parted Red Sea, Moses heard cries and complaints about how thirsty they were after walking so far. Unfortunately, the water was salty and not drinkable.

Miraculously, a fish appeared from the wall of water and told Moses that she and her family heard the pleas of the people. The fish said to Moses that her fellow fishies would filter the salt from the water by passing it through their gills and forcing it out of their mouths. The water would be fresh like a fountain from which the Israelites could drink as they walked by.

Moses accepted this kindly offer. To remember the miracle of the fish who transformed salt water to fresh water, Moses let it be known that hence forth the Seder to honor the Exodus would always include “Gill Filter Fish.”

But seriously ...

6. Water People or Land People

The parting of the sea was a momentous watershed event, which provides us with the power of accessing and actualizing our greatest inner potential, and bridging our own “water” and “land” consciousness.

Each of us humans – mirroring the larger universe – begins life submerged for nine months in a watery womb. During this time our psyches develop a profound internal unity, which prepares us to face the existential loneliness of life on dry “land.” But, upon birth, that “water” experience recedes into the background of our unconscious, and our conscious lives follow the psyche of “land mammals,” each of us self-contained in the here-and-now, living out our fragmented lives (even if we are mostly water).

So the big question is this: Are we “water” people or “land” people?

The answer is that in essence we are “water” people, integrally united with our divine source, but on our conscious level we have a “land” personality, with the purpose being that we discover the “water” within.

But here is the dilemma:

Ever since land and water were separated, their relationship has been one of deep-seated tension. The fragmented conscious universe has so influenced us that we have become consumed with our own immediate survival and self-gratification, forgetting to relate to the integral unity of the “water” mindset.

7. Like the Sea

And yet, it doesn't have to be that way.

Each of us is like the sea. What you see is not what you get. No matter what things may look like on the surface, do not be deceived by externals, do not judge a book by its cover.

Like the sea, all people have dimensions of beauty that are hidden from view, even from their own conscious awareness. The sea conceals an exquisite universe within and beneath.

The Seventh Day of Passover is a time of revelation – when the water parts and the “sea cover” is lifted, revealing the unconscious within each of us and within all of existence ... and allowing us to see the inner beauty of every Jew, regardless of background.

[Look around you with fresh eyes ... the sea has parted, we are in the midst of a miracle. Isn't it glorious? Amen.]

8. Tsunami (Optional Conclusion)

The same is with world events today:

The Seventh Day of Passover opens a door between the worlds of water and land, offering us a glimpse into the complex plan beneath haphazard occurrences ... into the story behind the story.

At other times though the door between the two worlds of water and land can open up in a destructive way and the two worlds collide – like in a tsunami. As we have recently witnessed in the catastrophic earthquake-induced tsunami in Japan.

A tsunami is perhaps the strongest manifestation of the battle between water and land. What's strange is that the force of a tsunami – a water surge that can travel up to 500 miles an hour – is not felt at sea. Ships in the open sea will barely notice the one or two foot waves generated by a tsunami. Its savage impact is experienced only as the tsunami strikes shore.

In other words, water is not affected by water, no matter how powerful its force. Only land is affected ... and ... devastated.

Another fascinating fact is that a tsunami does not originate from water alone. Unlike wind-generated waves – the conventional sort that we are accustomed to – tsunamis are generated from the imbalance between land and sea.

Only a violent disturbance of the seabed – caused by an earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption, explosion, or the impact of a meteorite – can generate a tsunami. When an impulsive disturbance vertically displaces the water column, it pushes a huge bulge of water to the surface, which results in a tsunami racing toward the shore.

Yes, there is an impenetrable barrier that separates water from land – a divine decree declaring “this far you may come and no farther.”⁴ However, the purpose of this boundary is that “land” should learn to reconnect with the “inner water” of our unconscious, in a healthy and balanced way.

As long as they are not, from time to time the rift will explode in an enormous surge of water overwhelming land.

This rift is a necessary step in helping realign a misaligned universe. Both physically and spiritually. But the rift is only a step toward repair (*tikkun*). For we are charged with the mission to integrate matter and spirit, land and water.

⁴ Job 38:11. See Jeremiah 5:22.

9. Disclaimer

Big disclaimer:

This discussion does not minimize nor explain the tragedy of all the lives lost. It simply is an attempt to understand the deeper roots of water attacking land, and its personal lesson for our lives.

Psychologically speaking, the unconscious (“water”) and the conscious (“land”) must make their peace; they need to become aligned in one seamless flow, as they were always meant to be. As long as they do not, the untamed unconscious can occasionally explode in all its wildness ... in a ferocious display of unfettered energy.

10. Water and Land

Water and land – two worlds that live side by side. So different, yet so intertwined.

Two worlds in our eyes. But really one and the same. They were once one – at the beginning of it all. And they will become one once again – at the end of days, when the world will be “filled with divine knowledge as the waters cover the sea.”

From time to time we are reminded of their interdependence and of their imbalance – a reminder that is meant to make us aware of the need to align the water and land consciousness and relieve their tension once and for all. It’s up to us to unite them.

Water reminds us that we are all one, originating and being sustained by one uniting source. Scientists note that after a major earthquake, which sets off a tsunami, the whole world resonates like a bell that has been struck.

May this resonating reminder only come in a blessed way. May all those that have suffered loss be consoled and comforted. May they find the strength to rebuild their lives.

May all of us stand humbled in silence and in support. May we take this tragedy to heart and determine to integrate healthy “water” into our parched land lives.

And may we do our part in filling our lives and this world with divine knowledge as vast as “the waters that cover the sea.” Amen.