

Weekly Teaching

April 14, 2017

After the horror of the 10th plague, the death of the 1st born, Pharaoh finally relented to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

Our Spiritual Ancestors hurriedly left Egypt before Pharaoh could change his mind, not even allowing time for their bread to “rise.”

Pharaoh did change his mind, and with his army he chased us down and trapped us at the Sea.

And, God performed another miracle for our People. The Sea was parted and we rushed across, pursued by the Egyptian soldiers.

When the last Jew was safely ashore on the other side of the Sea, the Sea closed and our pursuing enemy was drowned within the Sea.

We then sang a song of joy: “Who is like You O Lord our God...”

And, according to the midrash the angels joined our People in song, but God rebukes the angels and asks: “How can you sing My praises while My creatures are drowning?”

We experienced a great joy at the sea shore, and the Egyptians, our enemy, experienced a great tragedy.

In order to remember how the Egyptians suffered during the Ten Plagues, we created the custom to remove some wine from our second cup at the Passover seder.

And, on the 7th day of Passover we reduce our joy because this is the day that commemorates the parting of the Sea; we thus recite only the short form of the *Hallel* (psalms of thanksgiving).

In this way we remind ourselves that our freedom came with a high cost; human life tragically had to be taken in order for us to be free.

This is not to say that it shouldn't have occurred; if there is no choice a human being has the obligation to use force to protect oneself.

But, this necessity doesn't diminish the sadness that such circumstances are required.

The Kabbalists tell a mystical story on the parting of the Sea and the death of the Egyptians:

There is a moment in which the angel who represented Egypt in the heavenly court stood before God and said, “How can You choose to let one nation of sinners die to save another nation of sinners? How can you pick winners and losers among two people who both have broken faith with You?”

Jewish mysticism posits that letting the Egyptians die was a terribly painful decision for God.

Kabalistic tradition goes on to teach that God forever wants our People to show that we were worthy of the miracle He performed for us: “prove yourself worthy of being saved by performing mitzvot!”

We are required each day to prove ourselves worthy by living up to the Holy standards that God set for us.

Passover is our holiday of redemption and celebration, but we ultimately remember our story by utilizing the Exodus narrative as a Divine prompt by which we try to always do what God requires of us.

Shabbat Shalom & Happy Passover!

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