


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 18 April 2014 - 18 Nisan 5774
End of Pesach

SPLITTING THE SEA

THE SEVENTH DAY OF PESACH, BEGINNING SUNDAY EVENING (20 APRIL) COMMEMORATES A REMARKABLE event, the climax of the process of leaving Egypt. It was on this day that the Sea split, and the power of “Egypt” as a force against G-d was destroyed.

The Sages tell us that the goal of Creation was that the Torah should be given and that by means of the Torah the Jewish people would transform the entire world into a dwelling for the Divine. However, there were deep levels of impurity in the world, which made it an environment so hostile to holiness that the sacred Torah could not be revealed to humanity.

One stage in the purification of the world was the Flood. In some ways this was like a Mikveh, a purifying pool, bringing an atmosphere of renewal and pristine purity to existence. However, as we read in the Torah, even after the Flood many unhappy events took place. A further stage of purification was necessary before the Torah could be given.

This was achieved by the destruction of the negative power of Egypt. The land of Egypt was not only a political territory and power



In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin
 (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772
 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'

in the ancient world. The Sages describe the Egypt of the Exodus as representing the force of impurity, expressed as the denial of the power of G-d. The Torah quotes Pharaoh's words: "Who is G-d, that I should listen to him... I do not know G-d"¹.

The Jewish people, the nation of G-d, had the task to purify the world so that the Torah could be given. They did not realise this at the time, but it was for this purpose that they first settled in Egypt and eventually became slaves. Then at last came the Exodus, which we celebrated at the Seder nights. But the power of impurity was not yet totally broken. We see this from the fact that Pharaoh regretted letting them go and determined to pursue them.

At this point came the Splitting of the Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian force. Now the Torah could indeed be given. However, this too was a stage in a process. For the goal of Creation can only be fulfilled when all humanity recognises G-d and there is true peace in the world.

In order for this stage to be reached, after our Redemption from Egypt we went into further varieties of Exile, culminating in the fact that today we are scattered all over the globe.

We are therefore still in a kind of "Egypt", awaiting the final Redemption. The Haftorah on the Last Day of Pesach, Tuesday 22 April, therefore concerns the Messiah².

The Messiah will redeem us from this present Exile and through this will transform not only our lives as Jews but also the lives of all humanity. The Sages describe the Splitting of the Sea as tearing through the 'veil' which divides the holy from the profane, the spiritual from the physical. The Giving of the Torah at Sinai was another similar breakthrough, and the coming of the Messiah will complete that process.

Then each person will be able to discover sanctity and spirituality in *every* aspect of life. Our Sages tell us that only then, after our final Redemption, will we and all humanity really begin to live as G-d intended, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of Creation.

1. Exodus 5:2. 2. Isaiah 10:32-12:6.

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*LAST DAYS OF PESACH
– THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA*

SPLITTING THE LAKE

“Stop splashing me” David said.

“I’m not splashing you” Ben said as he plunged the rowing oar deep into the lake, sending a spray of water in his brother’s direction and driving the rowing boat forward.

“MUM” David said in dismay, this time really soaked. “Tell Ben to stop splashing me”.

It was family outing time, very much a cherished opportunity in the Cohen household. That year Shabbat came in the middle of the two halves of the festival, which made long outings more difficult, given many other commitments as well, but the super Cohen mother had managed to pull it all together. Now they were all sitting in rowing boats enjoying the peaceful scenery.

“I wonder what’s under the water?” David said, looking at the large expanse of water around them. “There probably aren’t any sharks because we’re just in a lake, but there could be other stuff under the water’s surface”.

“Imagine if the lake dried up” Ben said. “We might find a whole city covered by water; we would see Coke bottles, maybe some cars, perhaps a sunken boat”.

“The truth is,” said Mrs Cohen, “that is really what the splitting of the Red Sea is all about”.

The boys didn’t understand how seeing how sunken empty Coke bottles connected to the splitting of the Red Sea. They thought the splitting of the Red Sea was simply about saving the Jewish people from the Egyptians who were chasing them.

“Well,” their mother explained, “in normal day to day life we don’t really get a chance to see that G-d is running the world, everything just seems to happen by Nature.

“Just as the water covers everything in the lake and we can’t see what is under the water, so too Nature covers every thing in the world, and we can’t see what is behind it.”

“Hmm” Ben said “so what we need to do is to split the waters of the lake so we can see what is hidden under the water, and how really G-d is just beyond Nature controlling everything”.

“That would be more obvious if the Egyptians were chasing us, and we had to get through the lake, and then the water split and let us through”, said David.

“Yes,” said their mother, “but we can recognise that G-d is running the world even if no-one is chasing us, and even if the waters of the lake do not split.”

“That’s great,” said Ben. He pointed his camera at the wide, sunny expanse of lake. “I’m taking a picture of the water not splitting, and even so, G-d is running the world”.

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