

B's Peace Dream

At the edge of the world there is a mountain, on this mountain there is a rock and from this rock springs the purest water in the world. And at the opposite edge of the world beats the Great Heart of the World, which gazes all day long at the mountain. The Great Heart, filled with love, yearns for the water, the spring, but it cannot have it. One move and the Great Heart would lose sight of the mountain and in that instant the world would die. But every evening when the sun goes down, the heart sings to the spring. All hearts at the same moment sing to each other.

Now there is a true person of compassion who walks the earth and gathers up all of these threads of songs and weaves them together into time. And it is just enough time to make up another day. The day is given to the Great Heart which then sings again the next evening to the spring. In this way, out of love, out of song, in this way out of beauty, out of poetry, in this way out of an impossible dream, in this way out of yearning, out of waiting, the world continues to exist.

In this way, time is created every day so that every day all hearts can beat, including the Great Heart of the World.

- from Rebbe Nachman's last story, unfinished

I was having extraordinary dreams now, remembering them, recalling with clarity the feeling state that the dream left with me, and it seemed that the more difficult the situation became around me, in the news, the more clarifying and comforting my dreams became. Never in my life had I experienced such an easy entry in and out of dream life and waking, two rooms in the same house.

This is one of two peace dreams I had during a time of highest tension in the heartland, the news was severe, still my dreams were serene and beautiful. The two peace dreams came with one night between them. I wrote both of them into stories, this was the second peace dream.

The day residue of the dream was the news that could hardly have been worse from the heartland, and it became more difficult daily. I was having trouble sleeping at night. I felt a sense of doom and true danger. I walked the house, popped in and watched my children sleeping, walked some more. I felt a legacy of hate that will be their inheritance. I felt that the sentiments erupting in the world were legacies of problems that would be with us for a long time to

come. I was thinking about my own childhood and the passage from then to now.

I began to ask myself the question: how will the world be saved? It wasn't theoretical and it was not a game. I felt the failure of an entire generation, a whole world, a culture, the failure to carry an inheritance and deliver it as a legacy in the same or better condition than it was received.

That night, my two daughters and I had spoken seriously about the events in the world. They asked me a dozen questions, trying to understand the animosity, the danger, the intractability of the hatred. I could tell from their questions that there was much about the current events that they did not understand. I ached with shame and sadness and the inadequacy of the legacy that we, my generation, were leaving to them. There was still something unbelievable, that we could have descended as a civilization to such a low place of hatred and retribution, there was something unbelievable and impenetrable about the durability of animosity, ignorance, fear, exclusivity that divided the world into large, warring camps, unwilling, unable, to move towards each other for the sake of peace.

I was up late that night, the night before the following dream, as in most nights during those days. The rest of the house was sleeping. I looked in on my sleeping children. I felt that I had neither prepared them for this dark inheritance nor had I done enough to deliver to them a safer world. I had never imagined that the legacy that they would inherit would be the world so defiled.

I finally went to sleep. Toward morning, I had the following dream:

In my dream was my teacher, B, in the town where I grew up. He had an uncooperative face on, but I have learned not to interpret his face too much. He was wearing a shirt of mine that has a seam at mid-arm where two pieces of cloth are joined. It's a kind of entertainer's shirt; you can pull the sleeve off to make a sleeveless shirt. You can leave the sleeve intact for a long-sleeve shirt. The shirt is iridescent.

B was wearing my shirt. There was a metaphysics about that shirt, as if it were some sort of holy garment, and whether it was intact or separated was meaningful; also its material was significant, its iridescent luster unlike other shirts, a stage shirt. Somehow I knew that he had come with some songs that I had not heard. I had not seen him in some time, and I asked him if he would perform his special songs.

It was clear to me without him telling me that these songs for peace were what he had come to perform. He was with a student, a more recent student than myself, who was more like a handler. The student told me that B did not want to perform.

"He has the songs," I said, "I am quite sure that he wants to perform them. Go and ask him." His student conferred with him on stage, in the dark, out of the lights I saw them talking, after which B went straight ahead with the performances.

* * *

"It is enough, that I, Rabbi Akiba and your Creator, recognize your power." --R. Akiva, about his student, Bar Yochai, TJ, Sanh. 1:3, 19a.

There was the sense in the performances, like with the blessings I had dreamed two nights before, that something in these songs initiated peace, integrated peace, we weren't singing for peace, but making a necessary connection between music and peace. It was a secret peace music, it was created and performed by my teacher, and there was no doubt in the dream of its effectiveness.

It was the kabbalistic notion of music initiating something, an initiating between worlds, the music performed in the lower worlds which initiates activity in the higher worlds. It was like the sense of prayer that we call Raza de Shabbat, the secret of the Sabbath. Our prayers, our music, our blessings that we lift up on Shabbat initiates integration in the higher worlds, in the loftiest sense: what we do here has implications There. That is the secret of the Sabbath: implications of integration, of wholeness, in the grandest sense. The secret of Shabbat is the secret of prayer and music and blessing that initiates a cosmic integration, integrating something within Godliness itself, as it were.

M, one of my teachers at school, had introduced this idea to us when we were students. On a cold, rainy night, he put up a couple of fliers that said "Raza de Shabbat," the secret of Shabbat. He and I and a few of the secretaries showed up and he had prepared the old liturgy, once expunged from our prayer book, that suggested that when we bless the inner notion, then bless the outer notion, we initiate their union, within and without, she and he, all the terrible twos of existence became integrated and the raza de Shabbat, the secret of Shabbat, is that it is initiated by our prayers. Language. Through nothing loftier than language, we are effecting the holiest integration there is, something within Godliness, as it were, because even within Godliness there is something in exile

from itself, something that is not integrated that requires our best efforts to coalesce.

It was a beautiful night, stormy then quiescent. I helped M into his car when we had finished praying, the ideas that he had planted in me that night took root and grew, years later I returned the sequence to our prayer book and often talked about the secret of Shabbat when we prayed on Friday night.

That was also the sense of the music that B had created in my dream. It initiated something in the grandest way that in the dream was called peace. It was a secret music, as if the secret music of the Psalms or the Greeks, or the music of Abraham, before the alienation of his children, had been preserved, as if the music was known, in some subliminal way, in our bones in our blood, because I cannot recall from the dream actually having heard the music, in an external sense, as if it was music with melody, with rhythm. But it was.

In the dream we were in a performance space, an old theater, a former high school auditorium or an old gym that had been reconditioned, much like many of the theaters where I have worked. B was quiet, as he often is, but determined. He was serious and compliant. It was clear in my dream that he had the wrong student, this handler, someone that B had acquired along the way to tend to the old master. This was B's necessary performance, but his own student did not understand that. The student had tried to interfere. B knew better. He knew it was important, this peace offering.

There was one other detail in the dream that clarified a quality in many of the other dreams I have had: animals. In this dream, when B was through performing, he wandered off through the park where the theater was located. It was the park in the center of the town where I grew up. B was accompanied by one of the dogs that have been my companions throughout my life. It was as clear as anything else in this particular dream. B was walking through the park after performing his secret music for peace with one of my beautiful dogs, who long ago had passed to the next world.

I was calling to them in the dream, B and the dog, from a distance in the park. They were walking together and B did not seem to hear me, but the dog did. The dog brought B to me.

"Your student," I said to B, "he didn't think you were going to perform the peace music."

"He was wrong," B said with his sly I-know-better gloat that he sometimes effected. "He thinks the music is about performance. Performance has nothing to

do with it. It's all about the work. You understand that, don't you?" he asked me, not at all rhetorically.

"I do. I do understand. It's about the work."

"The thirty six righteous ones, what is it about them? They receive the Shekhinah, that's all. They're connected. Purposeful. Like me." He smiled his goofy, toothy smile, looking up at me and into the sun.

That's all I remember.

The feeling residue from the dream was different than the first peace dream. In this dream, there was still the sense of necessary consequence: the efficacy of the music, the music, then the peace. The consequence was necessary, but there was no feeling sense in this dream that it would come to be. There were obstacles outside the music -- the performance, the teacher, the unsympathetic student, the necessary consequence of peace was not assured -- I was not as comforted by this dream as I had been by the dream of several nights before, though the sense of resolution, of necessary consequence of intention and deed, held in both. As if even given the secret songs for peace, there were obstacles.

Who is B? The lone *tzaddik* [righteous person], *tzaddik yesod haolam*, the *tzaddik* who is the foundation of the world, pulling together all the fragments of song, collecting and integrating the partial, pulling these fragments of song of experience of hope of insight, these pieces of dreams these glimpses of visions, pulling them together into time, so the world continues to exist. He is Bar Yochai, all teachers, that's why Bar Yochai is the paradigm, because he understood the principle, because he gave himself over to the right action, because he did it by himself and because that is all that was needed. Maybe B is, just like Bar Yochai, alone, on his idiosyncratic way, picking up a student here a student there, some better than others, knowing as his teacher Akiva knew "it is enough that God and myself know your excellence." Because he came to believe not in the performance but he understood that if he could only do something that right, the right music, it's about the work, spend two Sabbaths properly, pull the fragments of separation together into some integrated whole, the world would be redeemed, knowing that if the world can be redeemed, that's all it takes, one maybe two, and if it's one: it's him.

james stone goodman
united states of america