

Messianic Rabbi: For Crying Out Loud

The crossing of the Red Sea is one of the most powerful and miraculous events that we read about in the Bible. Just thinking about the millions of Israelites and the mixed multitude walking up to the sea with the Egyptian army chasing them.

They had just experienced the 10 Plagues, so they knew some of what G-D was capable of, and they also knew that G-D had promised them that He would deliver them from Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land. Now, they find themselves seemingly caught between a sea and an army, and whatever faith they had seems to have run dry.

We read about this moment in time in Exodus 14:10-16:

“When Pharaoh drew near, Bnei-Yisrael lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them! So they were terrified, and Bnei-Yisrael cried out to Adonai. They said to Moses, ‘Have you taken us away to die in the wilderness because there were no graves in Egypt? Why have you dealt this way with us, to bring us out of Egypt? Did we not say to you in Egypt, “Let us alone, so that we may serve the Egyptians?” It was better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!’ But Moses said to the people, ‘Don’t be afraid! Stand still, and see the salvation of Adonai, which He will perform for you today. You have seen the Egyptians today, but you will never see them again, ever! Adonai will fight for you, while you hold your peace.’ Then Adonai said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying to Me? Tell Bnei-Yisrael to go forward. Lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. Then Bnei-Yisrael will go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.’”

Don't you find it amazing that just as we are about to read about one of the most powerful examples of G-D's sovereignty over His creation, at the same time, we are also reading one of the most human experiences? The children of Israel really are between the Egyptians and the sea. They can see both with their eyes and they turn to Moses, their leader, and cry out to him in absolute belief in what they see with their eyes. Then Moses responds to their fear by speaking faith to them. Read his words again: "Don't be afraid! Stand still, and see the salvation of Adonai, which He will perform for you today."

However, to our amazement as readers, G-D doesn't chastise the children of Israel; He chastises Moses. G-D doesn't tell the people that their lack of faith is disturbing; He questions Moses, saying: "Why are you crying to Me?" G-D then instructs Moses to tell the children of Israel to go forward, to step forward trusting in the promises that G-D had given to them. But, that isn't the end of what G-D said. G-D also said to Moses to "Lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. Then Bnei-Yisrael will go into the midst of the sea on dry ground."

Notice that the Bible doesn't say in this text that G-D divided the sea; It says Moses did, and then the people crossed on dry ground.

The people of G-D were caught between an army and a sea, and they, in their humanity, turned to the man that G-D had made their leader and cried out in fear and doubt. But even though they were being attacked by fear and doubt, they still cried out to Moses. Moses replies exactly like most faith leaders would, by saying "be quiet and let's see what G-D will do."

However, that wasn't what G-D was looking for Moses to do. Once again, when the people cried out to G-D, G-D didn't chastise them for doing so. But, when Moses cries out to G-D, G-D responds strongly by saying: "Why are you crying out to Me?" G-D almost seems as if He expects the people to react the

way they do, because G-D knows the people's faith is in the promises they received from Moses. But, G-D has higher expectations for Moses because Moses' faith was not in the words he heard from another man; Moses heard his promises directly from G-D.

We find a similar faith-challenging sea crossing in the book of Mark 4:

"Now on that same day in the evening, He says to them, 'Let's cross over to the other side.' After leaving the crowd, they take Him along in the boat, just as He was. And other boats were with Him. A great windstorm arises, and the waves were rushing into the boat. The boat was beginning to fill up. But Yeshua was in the back of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They wake Him up and say to Him, 'Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?' So He woke up and rebuked the wind. And He said to the sea, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind stopped, and it became totally calm. And He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Even now you have no faith?' They were struck with awe and said to one another, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!'

Notice the similarities: Both involve crossing a sea. Both involve those following reacting in fear and crying out to their leader. Both have the leader speaking the words "be quiet" or "be still." There is a difference, and the difference is significant: that Moses told the people to be still or quiet, while Yeshua told the sea to.

✖ After Yeshua calms the seas, He questions His followers, asking why they were afraid. What He was really asking them was: "Why didn't you speak to the sea?" The same question, it seems, G-D was asking Moses: "Why are you crying out to me?" This is also the same question that G-D is speaking to us today.

Both Moses and the Disciples should have cried out to their

seas instead of to G-D. Too often, we, like the children of Israel, are crying out to G-D when we should be crying out to our sea proclaiming our promises in faith and watching G-D fulfill them.

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