

SEASONS OF THE MOON

THE MONTHS OF NISSAN - IYAR 5761

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THE LIGHT OF THE NIGHT

Imagine a world where when you turned on the light, darkness shone from the lamp. Imagine a world that when you closed the shutters and nothing could penetrate from the outside, the room would be 'pitch' white. Imagine a world where darkness was not the absence of light, but light was the absence of darkness.

PLAY IT AGAIN SAMANTHA

Once there was a child prodigy who, at the age of four, could play Rachmaninoff better than the best.

A concert was arranged for her to play in public. Months before, posters and TV advertisements proclaimed that she would perform for one concert - and one concert only.

In order that this once in a lifetime event would not be forgotten, special mementos of the concert would be sold: A tiny white concert piano on a bracelet, a tiara with a piano on it, a special shawl into which a keyboard had been woven.

The morning after the concert, the newspapers fell over themselves trying to find superlatives to describe the performance.

About a month later, a couple of louts who had missed the show turned up at the child's home and demanded a 'command' performance.

"Yeah, we know everyone says she was great. We read the newspapers 'n' all, but *we* don't believe it. If you bring her down from her bedroom now and get her to perform here in your sitting room on this grand piano, then we'll believe she's as good as everyone says she is; if not we don't believe..."

THE RE-ORCHESTRATION OF NATURE

When the Creator formed the world, there was no doubt that it was He who had brought everything into existence *ex nihilo*, that He knew all that was going on in the world, and that He

was involved in, and cared about, what happens in this world.

From the time of *Enosh*, Adam's grandson, people started to make mistakes about G-d. Some people denied that there was a G-d at all.

Others conceded the existence of a Divine Power, but said that He was so removed and exalted that He only had knowledge of the spiritual realm, but didn't know what was going on down in this world.

Yet a third group admitted that G-d knows what is happening in the lower realms, but He isn't interested in what we do. In other words, He created the Universe, and then, as it were, went off to play golf.

G-d decided once and for all to quash these mistakes. He would bring a series of miraculous events that would show, by altering the course of nature, that He creates nature.

Not only this, but He would take a nation out of the midst of another nation and make them His people. This would show that not only is He aware of what transpires in this world, but He cares and interacts with Mankind.

This was the Exodus from Egypt

G-d would perform these miracles only once, because by doing so, His presence in the world would be so overwhelmingly manifest that it would

temporarily remove man's freedom of choice to believe in Him or not. And the purpose of Creation was that there should exist a being, Man, who had free will to choose whether or not to do the will of the Creator.

PASSING OVER

In order that we should not forget this once-and-once-only re-orchestration of nature, He gave us souvenirs of the 'concert' — a *mezuzah* to put on our doors, *tefillin* to bind on our arms. Someone who has these reminders will go through his life



THE LIGHT OF THE NIGHT *continued*

as though he had a string tied around his pinkie — he will never forget.

Not only that. G-d also made it incumbent on every generation to *pass-over* — to re-create every year on the anniversary of the Exodus, the events of this great ‘concert’ at a *Seder*. At the *Seder* each generation hears from their parents and grand parents what they in turn heard from their parents and grandparents in an unbroken chain back to Egypt - that the Exodus was no old wife’s tale - that it had actually happened.

It’s axiomatic that parents don’t lie knowingly to their children about things of vital importance. And the knowledge of the truth of the Exodus and everything it implies is the bedrock of Jewish belief.

However, once the Creator had performed these miracles, G-d will not again perform for every boor who comes along and claims that he doesn’t believe there was a concert at all. There are still millions of fans out there who still have their tiny white concert pianos carefully handed down from generation to generation to prove the existence of the concert.

A DIVINE MECHANIC?

There’s a problem here. It is self-evident that Exodus proved that G-d cares about what goes on in this world: He took the Jewish People out of Egypt to have a special relationship with them. Similarly, the events of the Exodus show that He knows what’s going on in this world. (For if He cares, He must, by definition, also know.) But how do plagues which show Him overruling the laws of nature, also show that He *created* nature. How do the plagues reveal that G-d created the world out of nothing and not as the Greeks claimed that the world has no beginning. How can the mere *alteration* of nature prove that G-d *created* nature? After all, the fact that I can fix a car doesn’t prove that I can make one.

The answer is that we have to understand the nature of this change in nature that the plagues represent on a deeper level.

When G-d created the world, He did so with Ten Statements, as it says at the beginning of the Torah: “*In the beginning...*” *Let there be light...*” etc. The Ten Plagues were not just the alteration of nature, they were nature in reverse — The Ten Plagues were the negative counterpart to the Ten Statements. In other words, the first statement “*In the Beginning*” corresponds to the tenth plague - the death of the

first born. The second utterance “*Let there be light!*” was the inverse of the ninth plague, the plague of darkness.

A NEGATIVE WORLD

The Torah describes the plague of darkness thus: “*And there was darkness on the land of Egypt and the darkness removed the light.*” When the Torah tells us the “*the darkness removed the light*” it means that darkness is not the absence of light, it means that darkness is a creation just as much as light is a creation. In the normal course of events, G-d allows light to push away the darkness. In the ninth plague, He chose to reverse nature’s polarity and it was the darkness that removed the light.

Now we can understand why these plagues showed that G-d created nature itself. For these changes of nature were not *diversions* of the normal current of nature, but rather the reversal of nature itself. Reversing nature proved that G-d was no mere ‘Divine Mechanic.’ It showed that that He could create a doppelganger world which was the reverse of

creation. If G-d can create the reverse, the negative, it showed that He also created the positive. It also verified the fact of creation itself and showed that the world was not a mere ‘steady state’.

The plagues of Egypt were not just the tinkering of a Divine Mechanic, they were the hallmark of the Maker Himself.

THE PIANO THAT PLAYED ITSELF

The keys to life are moving by themselves

Ivory teeth chewing chopsticks

Black holes a semitone removed

There’s no holy-ghosty hands at work

just holes in paper

secretly digested

In a large mahogany case -

A punched-out program

for a punch-drunk world

written for our command

performance.

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