

# SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

*Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea. God caused the sea to go back with a powerful east wind all that night, dividing the waters and making the sea dry land. (Shemos 14:21)*

It may be difficult to notice at first, but, because of this verse, an extremely profound question emerges, the answer to which yields an extremely important insight into life. The question: Why did God use a powerful east wind to split the sea? No, not as opposed to a west wind, or a north wind, etc., but, as opposed to any wind at all?

This discussion is actually part of a larger one. As the Leshem points out, it is not a natural thing for the spiritual and physical to work together. For example, it is the natural drive of the soul to return back to the spiritual realm from which it was taken, and the natural drive of the body to go in exactly the opposite direction, back to the dust from which it was taken. Left to their own devices, life would never get started.

If so, then what keeps them together, and for an entire lifetime yet! A miracle. God wills it. And, as long as He wills it, they remain bound together, no matter how much each one tries to go elsewhere. And, try they do, incessantly, which is what makes free-will possible, as each one tries to impose its will on the other in any given situation throughout the course of one's life.

If so, then death should merely be the process of God ceasing to will the union of body and soul. He shouldn't have to do anything special to make a person depart from this world. He should just have to stop willing them to remain in this world, and like a helium balloon finally set free, the soul should simply and automatically race back to its heavenly domain, making the death of the body a de facto reality.

But, that's not the way it happens. Rather, when a person's time is up, God doesn't simply stop willing the soul to remain in the body, as the Talmud seems to imply (Niddah 31a). Rather, God dispatches the Malach Ha-Maves, the infamous Angel of Death, to collect the person's soul, and cause his death. The question is, why?

Likewise, to split the sea, God shouldn't have to send an east wind. All He should have to do is stop willing the water to be there, and it is gone, just like that. Come to think of it, were all the plagues in Egypt even necessary? If it's freedom God wants for the Jewish people, all He had to do was stop willing the slavery, and it would have ended on the spot. Why the big production in the end?

So, the Leshem explains:

All of existence, throughout history until the final rectification, remains on the level of cause and action only. Everything is in the middle of its work. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 59)

Creation, as we know it, is a work in progress. All that exists, and all that occurs, only has meaning inasmuch as it is for the sake of the final product that God had in mind when He first made the world and set history in motion. Therefore, The Holy One, Blessed is He, is not yet pleased, so-to-speak, with His world. For, there is no joy from an action in progress, only after it is complete and has fulfilled its purpose. (Ibid.) As the Leshem explains elsewhere:

It says in Pesikta d'Rav Kahana (Acharei 170): "I said to the roisterers, 'Be not profligate' ..." (Tehillim 75:5); The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to the evil, "The righteous do not take pleasure in My world ... Adam HaRishon did not derive joy ... Avraham did not have joy from My world ..." For, The Holy One, Blessed is He, does not derive pleasure from His world, so-to-speak, etc. It does not say, "God derives pleasure from His creations," but "will derive pleasure" (Tehillim 104:31). (Dayah, Chelek 2, Drush 2, Anaf 2, Os 1)

In other words, the verse says that God does not yet derive any pleasure from His handiwork, but that He will, at some time in the future. And, when will that be? Only after every aspect of Creation will have completed its intended purpose.

Like we have said previously, all of the potential of all existence, in general and in specific, and all aspects of their specific details that come into being each moment of time throughout the 6,000 years; all of them are actions and work for the sake of the future purpose. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 59)

The universe is vast, made up of countless details and aspects, much of which seems merely to exist, with little or no connection to other aspects of existence. However, every last cell and organism has come into being, and exists for one specific purpose: the Divine purpose for Creation, which will be realized at a future time. Therefore, the moment something ceases to contribute to the fulfillment of the Divine purpose for Creation, it will cease to exist.

Therefore, The Holy One, Blessed is He, arranged that the way of all things, even those things that seem to be the result of withdrawal and absence, and can be achieved by the cessation of action ... (Ibid.)

For example, the splitting of a sea takes a positive action, since the natural state of water is to be unified. However, poverty can simply be the result of God ceasing to send money to a person, since the "natural" state of Creation is not to provide a parnassah unless a person does something to earn it. ... nevertheless, The Holy One, Blessed is He, arranged that they too should be achieved only through work and action specifically. (Ibid.) However, explains the Leshem, even the cessation of parnassah is the result of a positive act on behalf of Heaven.

For, if not, then the matter would exist without purpose, God forbid, like a craftsman who has

stopped in the middle of his work. (Ibid.)

In other words, Creation must always be in progress towards its ultimate fulfillment. If a craftsman starts a project, and then leaves it before completion, everything he has brought into reality until that point loses its meaning, until he starts again where he left off. The same is true of everything in existence: whatever exists must be used until it has fulfilled its purpose. For, it is impossible for something to accomplish its purpose the entire time that it is stopped and not working at all. (Ibid.)

This is a world of action. Everything is constantly in motion, or at least active. Even the human brain doesn't stop for a moment, at least while a person is alive, and necessary to Creation. Every moment represents a new opportunity to bring some potential into actuality, and the world, that much closer to completion. It is the way of this world. In the next one, we rest.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, even when God can accomplish something by simply stopping it from continuing its previous existence, He doesn't. Rather, instead, He employs angels and the like to carry out His will, such as the death of a person, or the splitting of a sea, ultimately, to send man a message: make the most out of every moment of life, if you want to play an active role in the fulfillment of the purpose of Creation, and be rewarded for it.

Therefore, even when we feel the need to take a break, which is only human, it has to be so that we can get back into the swing of things later, and accomplish more. We have to realize, and recall all the time, that this is a world of action, and every moment possesses additional opportunities to bring potential into reality, and be credited for having done so. There is no time to be lazy in this world.

Half-way through the period of "Shov'vim,"<sup>2</sup> on the path to redemption and personal fulfillment, it is the most important message of this time. For, as we learn from the Pesach experience, in which direction we are moving, redemption is not a passive activity. Rather, it must involve us, and a true free person is one who approaches life in this way.

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