

**“And the earth shall be filled with the knowledge (of the Lord) like the water covers the seas”**

*Isa. 11.9*

*This is the explanation of the verse, for the sea represents sof (the end point)<sup>1</sup> of all the spiritual levels (the lowest point) which is malchut (the lowest divine sefirah of the 10 sefiros)...*

*And this is also the archetypal middah of strict justice (din) as cited in Talmud Gittin 10a “dina demalchuta dina” the law of the land is (also) our law.<sup>2</sup> ...*

*And through using the middah of daas (holy intuition) one can raise the spiritual manifestation of the divine in this world from its lowest level of malchut (= sof = sea) to the level of Bina its source above.*

*This changes the letter yam (malchut) to may (Binah which is mem yud) which then makes the letters meimei (construct of mey) or “waters of” chesed or lovingkindness.*

*All this transformation takes place through daas or holy intuition. so that yam becomes mayim (yud mem becomes mem yud mem) water.*

*Degel Machaneh Efraim Parshas Emor*

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<sup>1</sup> I think he means a pun on *yam suf* the reed sea and the word *suf* can be read as *sof*, the end

<sup>2</sup> This the play on the word law as *din* and *malchuta* not as literally meant meaning local legal authority rather *malchut* the lowest spiritual archetype of the divine.

This wonderful Torah of the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov came to mind as I sailed this cruise ship into the Atlantic with ocean surrounding me for 360 degrees.

His Torah equated the notion of the sea with the doctrine of *din* or the archetype of strict justice, as if the sea has no mercy, for it acts as a force of nature without regard to the object of its "wrath". Sometimes calm sometimes raging it continues to respond to weather, wind and atmospheric pressure ever since creation.

Against this fact of the natural order Rebbe comes to teach us a spiritual lesson. That the word for the sea the Israelites crossed as they left Egypt was *Yam Suf* the Reed Sea, but *suf* also can be read as *sof* or the end, the last one, the lowest point. In spiritual terms everything down here on earth is a poor representation of what is going on up there in the spiritual worlds. *Suf* or *Sof* then represents the lowest of the sefirot the spiritual archetypes called *malchut*.

Using a known pun of *sof* and *suf* with the classical theme in the Zohar equating the lowest rung on the spiritual archetypal ladder of sefirot as *malchut* with *din* or strict justice, he has connected the following themes:

*sea=suf=sof madreigot=malchut=din*

Through the inner work of the zaddik who makes use of the hidden archetype called *daas* or "holy intuition", an experiential state rather than cognitive discursive examination of reality, this lowest rung of spirituality represented by pure blind justice can be elevated to its source above, in the sefirah called *Bina*, represented by the letters mem and yud or "*mi*".<sup>3</sup> *The lowest rung of strict blind justice can be elevated to the ascend to its source or higher rung in the spiritual ladder called bina, which is called "sweetening" by chesed that archetype that allows for love and harmony and peace.* Notice the letters mem yud "*mi*" if inverted become yud mem or yam i.e sea.

*Chesed* is known by the character of water as in "*meimei chesed*" or the waters of compassion. By transforming the *yam* to *mei* the strict justice is tempered by the waters of compassion in this letter mysticism.

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<sup>3</sup> I am reminded of the difference between *mi* meaning who? versus *mah* meaning what? This is the Buberian I-Thou vs I-it model of interpersonal relations. *Ma* represents the discursive examination of reality typified by the Soloveitchik's Adam I who masters the world by dominating it with objective science, industry and power. It is based on the constant question *mah*=what? the very basis of scientific inquiry. His Adam type II represents *mi* or who? meaning the relational-experiential form of knowledge which is subjective rather than objective in observation. This can only be accomplished by the archetype of *daas*, intuition.

The Degel now goes back to that original verse in Isaiah:

**“And the earth shall be filled with the knowledge (of the Lord) like the water covers the seas”**

How will this futuristic transformation of the world occur? The prophet does not inform us. We are not told the details. But Rebbe claims how this will take place. By sweetening strict justice with kindness through that mysterious element of *daas*, holy intuition. I interpret this to mean when the world moves from the objective experience of reality to the subjective intuitive experiential form, then only will the strict justice and merciless “sea” of nature will be transformed into the mercy of a compassionate world.

The verse he rereads now encodes this process as follows:

**“*umallah haaretz deah* (and the earth will be filled with knowledge)  
*kamayim layam mechasim*” (like the water covers the sea)**

***umallah*** is an acronym for Elohim or God as working in the world through His natural providence within nature not beyond it. This Elohim form of the divine represents strict justice....like the laws of nature which appear immutable.

***umallah=elohim=din=strict justice*** that is on the ***haaretz***-the earth until now, will -(through *daas* =) ***deah*** i.e. intimate knowledge meaning holy intuition

***kamayim layam mechasim*:**

from ***yam==sof=suf=malchut=din=strict justice*** be transformed into  
***mayim=chessed=binah=loving kindness***.

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Dad was right...  
on his way to Australia in the hold of the Dunera..  
a British merchant Navy vessel  
a POW ship used to transport 2000 Jews in 1941  
10 minutes a day exercise on deck,  
he too saw the horizon of the Atlantic,  
once a day, for 10 minutes  
running on deck  
with seamen prodding the ragged Jews  
with their bayonets, in the back of the thighs  
to move quicker,  
he too saw  
where heaven meets earth  
360 degrees: nothing but the blue ocean.

And now 70 years later  
on a luxury cruise liner  
I watch the ocean around me  
nothing but blue  
the waves melt into each other  
the surface undulating with dignity  
the cresting surf  
white freshness  
and the pencil sharp horizon for 360 degrees once again.  
heaven meets earth in a visual circle around this boat.

Those waves hypnotically force me to stare  
the undulation and the wind swept surfaces that constantly move  
waves and tides, currents and rivulets, swells and surf, white caps and troughs,  
mountains and valleys of water never ending in motion.  
Even the small effects of wind cause the tiny ripples between the waves catch the eye  
in a wondrous awe.

He told me to watch for the static electrical effects between the surface of the water and  
the edge of the metal ship at dawn and dusk  
he remembered those playful lights: a son et lumiere show as he sailed towards  
uncertainty leaving his loved ones behind at Hitler's mercy.  
As yet I have not seen them play for me.  
I am surely unworthy of this natural display of divine humor.

This is literally the first time I have experienced the globe  
the completely roundness of infinity

the border zone between the roundness of the earth  
the absolute limits of my gaze as a circle

with no interruption of man's building or even sight of land,  
there are no other vessels in my sight  
and I am in awe of mother earth once again in her boldness  
her finite roundness facing the infinite sky  
and the sheer massiveness of the great sea.

Do ships fall off the edge?  
or will science win out the day in my head?  
I tell the steward i still belive in the flat earth  
that he should warn the captain  
so we will not fall off the edge.  
Remember those pictures of medieval sailboats almost tipping off the map  
until one day a heretic taught us otherwise and was burnt at the stake for it.

Remember the biblical water and the *tehom*, the deep  
were already there when the Almighty lent His hand in creating the world,  
so Genesis tells us,  
and I see how primordial this body of water seems even now.  
The light and the sun play off it with differing colors through the day  
now it is pure silver other times grays of every shade.  
Blue then green by the coast  
Mercurial in nature and hiding another world beneath  
it represents the very nature of my soul.

But more than anything it teaches me about the horizon  
for we are told one can never reach the horizon and this ancient mariner  
will not try the beliefs of man and science!  
Yet there is it all around me  
so precise and defined  
so razor edge thin and sharp  
where heaven and earth meet  
360 degrees around me on this ship.

Yet it remains forever unattainable and an image of unreality  
placed within creation  
as an illusion  
but God does not play games with us  
so what is its message?  
This grand visual hallucination?

The infinite is beyond  
and for me must remain transcendent.  
My work is with the finite and real  
but my heart keeps pulling me there  
to that horizon  
and I know that over there

in unreality  
I will find peace of mind  
and resolution and the place we call Eden.

It is as if I must learn to yearn without demanding fulfillment  
I must learn even at this age to unlearn  
and once again delay and defray  
look and gaze without holding and owning  
without grasping and clutching  
to gaze and let go repeatedly  
at this circle of unrealized an unattainable infinity  
that surrounds me  
the ultimate truth.

For the Truth is like that horizon  
out there  
and a mirage  
that will always escape me.  
Truth "out there" has always escaped me  
and in my dis-belief, in my heresy  
I remain sceptical of any truth.  
Truth went up in the flames of Europe  
and in the ongoing genocides since  
no, I long gave up on that doctrine.

Here I am at the center point of this mathematical mirage  
in its center  
of the world  
alone  
for another impending birthday looming large  
chronicles of wasted time and failure appear  
in this ocean of life  
in the silence of the seas  
holding their own secrets beneath.

Yet here I must remain in this center surrounded by this infinity  
and accept my place and my inability to ever taste it  
and somehow accept all that has happened  
the same way my father sailed that fateful ship  
on the same ocean with Nazi U-boats lurking beneath  
never knowing whether he would ever reach shore alive.

And I must somehow transmit this secret to my children and grandchildren  
the secret of this tension  
this paradox of infinity

and its mirage  
for ecstasy remains not within our reach  
and we have no license to experience it  
in our ever further struggling for mastery.

I must tell them  
that I was able to finally surrender for a moment in time  
and accept my mortality  
my point in the center  
unable to move one way or another in that giant circle  
towards the infinite horizon  
but gaze lovingly  
at this marvelous creation of paradox  
and learn to be  
for as long as I am given  
and that is OK  
too.

Today the captain on this small catamaran allows me the helm unexpectedly  
as the engine loses a cable requiring him below  
I take the wheel and suddenly after three days at sea  
I came alive!  
Now responsible for the vacationing people on this 65 foot vessel  
unaware that he has handed me the helm  
I feel the wind in the sails and the blue waves flowing in from the Atlantic around the  
Island of St. John.

I feel the Rebbe's Torah reverberate  
"like the waters covering the sea"  
and here the wind and water  
two of the basic elements in this world  
combined to propel this boat and myself  
flexing its resistant muscle  
in a trio so smooth  
it was heaven  
a moment of excitement  
as I felt my old self once again.

It was a cool thrill  
as I felt in the center of this archetypal triangle of wind water and earth  
and the sun's warmth as chessed  
a divine gift  
the Schechina smiling for a while.

It is at these rare moments that I understand the *yichud*  
*understand the meaning of daas-intuition;*  
*the Hierosgamos, the Holy unification above*  
when in the Garden of the Caribbean Eden  
the warm waters and explosion of tropical life  
where people are at ease  
and the gentle green hills meet the water with grace  
here I feel the Schechina is at peace with Her consort.  
here in place an time there is a sense of eternity.  
Here *daas* informs me and sweetens the mighty waters of the sea and *din*  
the strict cause and effect of my life and my failure  
for a moment of relief.