

When You Believe

I did not think that the Red Sea

Could open for humanity.

And so I stood upon its shore

Not one to pray nor to implore

The graces of a deity

To part the waters of the Sea,

So to permit safe entry.

Then came along another man

Who begged me but to take his hand

And lead him through the wall of sea-

And then I saw he could not see,

And then I knew that blind was he.

“Turn back, my friend, you cannot go.”

This, to that blind man, I did say.

But he replied, “The sea might open,

Would we pray.”

So great his wish that he could cross,

*I joined his prayer-for only loss
Could be the sounding of vain words;
For logically, it seemed absurd
That men absorbed in piety
Could open pathway through a sea.*

*And so we prayed-and suddenly
A miracle! God split that sea!
And hand in hand, we both walked through.
And then it was I truly knew
Blind I had been-and 'seeing,' he-
For his hand led me through the sea.¹*

We often say “seeing is believing,” yet there is also the saying from the movie *The Prince of Egypt* that “there will be miracles when you believe.” Sometimes we need to believe in something in order to will it into the world.

There’s a nice story in our *Ani Tefillah* Siddur about the synagogue of Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg where he sang the Song of the Sea with

¹ Lucille Frenkel, “Passover Tale,” in *A Jewish Adventure* (Milwaukee, WI: The Eternity Press, 1983), p. 148.

such power that when the congregation recited with him the verses about the crossing of the Reed Sea, they all lifted up the hems of their clothes to keep them from getting wet, for it actually seemed to them that they had gone down into the Sea which had split before them. Dr. Jay Goldmintz concludes, “Such is the power of imagination during tefila.”² When was the last time in a synagogue service that you felt a sense of creativity? When did you lose your focus and just blend in with the prayers or the music? Such an experience is possible.

Often our sense of apathy or our habituated behaviors do not provide the room for this spontaneous prayer experience. We long for the wonder of childhood yet by living each day with the same regularity we lose the opportunity to have it. On a plane I saw the movie *Christopher Robin* about the adult Christopher Robin who had lost his sense of imagination and belief in the Hundred Acre Woods-that is until Winnie the Pooh came to find him. Through the movie he regained his sense of wonder and fun.

² Ani Tefilla Siddur Pages 100-01

The next time you read the passage of the Song of the Sea, think about ways in which you can bring this into reality. How can you feel like you were an Israelite at the sea seeing the miracle of it splitting? How can you bring the words of the prayers off of the page and into your heart? Challenging for sure yet something I think each of us should aspire to in order to make our prayer עבודה שבלב, the worship of the heart.