

Shabbat 07 05 19 Sermon

There's a paradox at the heart of what it is to be human. The paradox is that without resistance to what is, there can be no growth, no progress. At the heart of all progress is a disaffection, a dissatisfaction with what is. Everything that has ever been done from air conditioning to forks was a result of a fundamental looking at reality and saying it isn't quite the way it could be or should be. At the heart of progress, individual, collective, social, global, cosmic, all of evolution proceeds by way of resistance to the status quo.

And we Jews know a thing or two about that. Our clarion call from the time of Egypt on has always been, not yet, there is a promised land. This isn't right, this isn't as it should be, we are not where we belong, something is wrong in Dodge. At the heart of what it is to be a Jew is to say something is remiss, something is wrong, something could be better, something should be better, we will make it better, we will l'takein olam, we will fix the world, it is up to us, aleinu, it is on us. Who else?

This fundamental perspective, this angle, this way of being in the world, beautiful, revolutionary, evolutionary, exhausting, depleting, and at times, more than at times, most of the time, resistance to what is doesn't work. Resisting what is, though at the core of what it is to be progressive, to make change, to shift the dynamic, to change for the better, resisting what is more often than not is not only futile, but it misunderstands what happens when we accept what is, sitting with it long enough for what is to become what could be. It's the longer, shorter way towards progress. Progress by way of what some would say the Zen paradox of change, nothing becomes anything other until it becomes what it is. When it is what it is, it can become what it is not yet.

The great paragon, the archetype, the example par excellence in our Torah of someone in a group of people who wanted to make change, oh, did they want to make change, they resisted, they were resisters, they brought a claim, they made a claim, they undermined the hierarchy. The Korach, the Korachian rebellion, that great moment in the Torah where Moses and Aaron are brought, for those who don't know the story, Moses and Aaron's cousin named Korach comes with a complaint, comes with a lodging, a fundamental resistance to who he was as a leader and said to him, Lama titnasu, who made you? Well, look at you, Moses, we're all kiddushim, all of us are holy, who raised you up? And Moses comes to Korach and to the people and he says to them in verse five of chapter 16, tomorrow morning, book of Numbers 16, five, it says, vayidaber el korach, and Moses spoke to Korach and to all of the people, like in his whole company, saying, Boqer v'yoda, come morning and it will be known whom God has chosen, who is the holy one, who is indeed the ones who belong, you resist what is, but morning will tell us who deserves to be the leader, morning, Boqer v'yoda, this strange locution, Boqer. Moses, out of nowhere, seems to be telling him something about time, meaning like, go to sleep, in the morning, we'll figure it out, Boqer.

Can all say that word, Boqer, one more time, Boqer. The rabbis of the ancient wisdom tradition, the rabbis of the Midrash, they pick up on this word Boqer and some of them say that Boqer is invoked here, tomorrow morning is invoked by Moses as if to say to them, you have all night to rethink your plan. I'll give you all night to regret it, to apologize for it, to do

tshuva, to repent, whenever it was a moment you lost yourselves, Boqer, you have till morning.

Other rabbis say Boqer here is to remind us that we're dealing here in the world of the temporal, and Moses came along and said to them, I'll give you until morning to come up with another plan. Boqer, in their reading, is about extending through time, but this voice is the voice that I want to pick up on and then share with you and then share my thoughts here. Davar achir, the Midrash says, Amar lehimosheh gevulos chalak ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu be'olamo. Boqer, tomorrow morning is invoked by Moses as if to say to them, listen here, you rebels, God made a world with boundaries. When God created the world, there was a right and there was a left, there was an up and there was a down. There were those who were chosen to be leaders and those who were chosen to be followers. There is a world that you are rebelling against. Says the Midrash, Boqer, God is, or Moses says in God's voice, Boqer, tomorrow morning, not I'll give you time, but remember what morning means. Morning means, it's morning and then it's evening and you are the followers and we are the leaders. Gevulot chalak ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu be'olamo, there are boundaries. There's the dry land and there's the ocean and so at first glance reading this, it's the reinforcement of a caste system, right? There are these binaries, the world is full of these sharp divisions. How odd, right? The word Erev, which means evening, also means mixture, strange.

But something else for me when I read this was happening, it was as if Moses, like a good Zen master, a good Hasidic Rebbe was saying, there are things in the world that resistance works for. There are things in the world that we must protest, that we shouldn't go to bed until it's been changed. There are all manner of places in the world where change can only happen by fomenting, by fighting. And then there are things in the world that can't be changed. Oh God, grant me the wisdom to know the difference, to change the things I can and accept the things that I cannot. Boqer. And maybe Moses too was saying to all of us, to me, to you, for whom life will inevitably give us pain and suffering. Some with this amount, some with this amount, some with an unspeakable abyss of sorrow and suffering. Morning will break. Boqer, the Yoda. Accept this and the sun will shine tomorrow morning. You have no choice, but the sun will shine. Boqer. You want morning to be night and night to be morning. You want to be the leaders. You want to change the whole thing. Moses comes along and says, rest in what you can't change. You won't win. But if you accept this, there will come a time with time when the morning sun will rise and you will know again that morning is morning and that night is night. That the order of creation can be trusted.

I think to myself, Ingber, you know, in some very small way how I fight with reality. How often it is that I miss the cue that reality has just sent my way saying, no, this is not where you protest. No, no, no. Take a deep breath. This is where you let go. This is where you say, Boqer. How hard that is to know. And God, honestly, how could you have expected us to know the difference? You want us to fight for so many things and then you want us to say, you want us to say, Boqer, morning. This community, this community witnessed this past week and we are present for and are holding together with Danny and Elise and their whole family as they remember Debra. And we say, you know, really, Boqer, Boqer.

It's impossible to know how we arrive through life's vicissitudes and exigencies and craziness. It's impossible for us as humans to fully understand on any level and the answers that we offer in the face of so many of the events of our lives are nothing. Those answers.

But the Midrash tells those of us to listen for the morning. Listen. ♪ Morning has broken like the first morning ♪ ♪ Blackbird has spoken like the first bird ♪ ♪ Praise for the singing, praise for the morning ♪ ♪ Praise for them springing fresh from the world ♪ Chedashim l'vikarim. Rabba imunatecha. Bless us and all of those who wait for the morning, who renew faith.

Please rise.