

Running Head: THE WEEPING GODDESS

Re-Membering Her: The Weeping Goddess

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It's winter solstice today. I wake up early, sit on my bed and look in the mirror facing me. I am surprised by the image looking back at me, which I don't fully recognize. She appears very sad. A part of me know that 'she' is 'me' but the glass between us seems like an invisible barrier, an unbridgeable void that can't be crossed. I am astounded by my inability to feel her feelings reflected back to me; by her 'otherness'; by her grief. I recognize her familiar yet strange watery eyes. I sense her desire to cry but as if waiting for my approval, she just sits there, on the edge, looking at me. "Why is she so sad?" I wonder as I tenderly witness her. "What is hidden behind her tearful face?" I look for her tears inside me but all I find is a sense of emptiness. And curiosity. As I decide to give voice to this experience I realize that I am entering an alter state of mind. This is how the following images are born. I present them in their original form, in their totality, as they organically 'fell' on the paper.

Emptiness has no color. Yet all the colors lie dormant in her as if in the womb of the world. Where does the creative spark rest? In the heart of the winter, in a cave under the soil, illuminated by a hidden source of light, I imagine a box with chains. It might even be underwater. Deeper than my imagination can go, the creative spark, which infuses the heart with the joy of life, rests. There is so much weight on you, little spark, and you are so tender and young. How will you find your way out to the world? Who will guide you through the labyrinth of time and space? My separation from you is hard on me. Is it hard for you too? Do you long to know me as I do? Do you cry at night whispering my name as I do? Do you find yourself looking in the mirror to witness the grief carved in your face as I do? Is there fire in your midst or has it been kidnapped by Hades? Who am I without you, hearth of my existence? I belong to you. Yet my eyes fill with tears, living waters pouring out of a veiled well, for I don't know you. I am exhausted of carrying myself without you. I am exhausted of moving without being moved. I am exhausted of being guided by others when all I want is to be guided by you. This emptiness, this abyss filled with void, frightens me. Is this a gap, like a secret fault

on the face of the earth, separating us more? Or perhaps this spacious cave into which I feel I felt, is the path that leads to you?

Speak to me so I can find you. Scream, if necessary, so I can hear you. Guide me, oh precious one, to you. There is nothing else in the world that I want but you. Let me reconnect with you. I feel so lonely here without you. I am in exile. Are you in exile too? I am walking in the desert with no water. It has been too long. I am ready to lie here and die, decompose, and disappear. I am sitting by the empty well. Where is the water? What is the purpose of an empty well? What is the purpose of my sitting by it, waiting, as if for a miracle to appear? My heart is shrinking. My skin is drying up. My eyes are closing down. As an act of great courage in commitment to life, I lift myself up with my last drops of will, and looking into the well I whisper, "Where are you? Can you hear me? Please come to meet me. I am dying." Now lifted up, as if by an invisible caring hand, I come to meet the edge of the well. I let go and fall into her, the well, the land, the earth. I roll down, for what seems to be only a few moments, encompassing this world's life time. It is a narrow path, dark and gentle, covered by a living membrane. I feel like the seed penetrating a vagina in the act of love making, of love creating.

I tumble down through a spiral. Like a screw driving me into matter. I penetrate her with curiosity, surrendering to the death and life I am encountering. I land. The land of The Mothers Rock. I am behind form. Silence. Stillness meets me here. The only guide here is the wind. I am inside the navel looking yet deeper into it. I am drawn further into her light and darkness. There is nothing for me to lose. I am risking everything in loving her with an open hand. It is the only path worth moving through. I re-commit as I remember. Now, a crane arrives and picks me up. I see, feel and sense her grace-full, beauty-full and wonder-full ways of being. On this glowing white bird with her magnificent gold-orange beak, I feel a humbling sense of being honored. Apart from her warm glow, I see nothing as we move through darkness. We are in an alien world that feels strangely familiar to me. Her warmth is comforting to me. She is filled with life and I feel such deep love for her as if I have always known her. Her soft white feathers gently move in the wind, which I know to be her invisible partner, guiding her on her path. "where am I going" I wonder silently. "Trust" I hear a gentler reply. Time seems to be insignificant here. Though it appears that we are going somewhere, where that is or when we will get there, seems to be insignificant. I let go further as I lay my whole body on her back, hugging her very big neck. I feel her hugging me back.

We have come to meet The Mother. We are in a huge cave, facing an immense chair, with a grandiose woman sitting on it. She is divine, majestic, present, silent. The crane and I are so little next to The Mother. I can see us from above. The crane leaves and I am left alone by the feet of The Mother. I lie on the floor with my arms open to the sides. The cold earth is rich and alive. I notice that The Mother has a staff with fire on it's top apparently held by her left hand. I can't see her face. The Mother puts down her staff by me and I see that there are stairs inside it. I get up and I start climbing them. I notice

that it is getting very hot inside the staff as I go up. I know I shouldn't forget myself completely as a human being. There is essential importance in that. But I also know that I should continue to walk up. Everything feels golden, as if gold was emanating from inside everything. Matter was alive here. Finally, there is a porch coming out of the stairs. I am very high now. I step out and find myself at the top of the cave, closer to the Mother. I see her eyes. Beautiful and terrifying. "don't be afraid" a voice says in the stillness.

I look in her eye as she looks at me. Her eye is reflecting certain things I cannot understand. A snake appears. It comes out and into things. It curves itself around me. I am a bit concerned it will strangle me but it doesn't. I sense it to be a healing being. I know intuitively and instinctually that much is happening now and on multiple levels. I let myself go. I feel an attraction to the Mothers tongue. She opens her mouth and her red-pink tongue unfolds coming towards me. I realize she wants to eat me. I start to wonder how would it be to become one with her, what lies within her, but I resist. I hold on to the pillars in the porch as a strong wind challenges me, trying to take me into her mouth. I communicate with her through the silence that I don't want to be eaten. I say that if I wont be able to get back, it will not be helpful. I manage to climb up her face to her cheeks and I hug her. I feel her skin next to mine. I embrace her soft rugged face like I would do on the sides of a cliff. I hold on and hug and love with an open hand. I see her eyes filled with tears as mine do too. A big tear drop rolls down her cheek. It is a powerful and significant moment. I recognize her loneliness though I don't know its enormity. I understand that many others are afraid to come to meet her. Yet I remind her that many others are already coming to meet her, ready for the encounter with her. I remind her that many more want to meet her and are preparing for it. I remind her that I am in service to her and for her. I ask her what can I do, how can I be of service. I hear something about water, salt water, and crying. I don't fully understand. I ask for more but she doesn't give me more.

Gradually, the pace of things starts to go up fast. I ask her for fire and I sense her discomfort. Even anger perhaps. I know I want and I need the fire for the sake of the Opus. For her sake too. And for mine. I remember the fairy tale of Vasalisa the wise and when she asks me why should she give me the fire, I respond 'because I am asking for it.' She gives me a flaming rose that carried fire from her staff, which reminded me of the burning bush. Things move very fast now. I hold the flaming rose for a moment and suddenly I start falling down. I wonder what I should do and whether I am going to fall to the ground and die. I realize that I have the flaming rose and it can help me. Perhaps the purpose of my sudden falling down, like a bird being pushed out of its nest, is for me to start immediately using the knowledge embedded in the flaming rose. With this intention I am able to control to some extent the speed of the fall, having the flaming rose serve as a parachute. Then I notice that I am about to fall on a sharp stake. I manage to maneuver my fall a bit and my body misses the sharp stake but the royal robe I am

wearing, of which I wasn't aware before, gets caught on the stake. The robe stays hooked in the stake and I loose it as my naked body unravels from within it and continues to fall. In one instant, the flaming rose slips from my hand, and when we reconnect, it enters my mouth. I eat the flaming rose. For one moment, my face glows with its light. I know it is in me now. I am still falling down. Suddenly, the crane appears again. I fall on its back and in fast speed now, it flies back in the direction from which we came from. It flies all they way up, increasing further its speed, until we reach the top of the well. It abruptly leaves me there. A few of its white feathers are left with me. I notice that their numinous glow is gone.

I am back, sitting by the well. I take an organic deep breath and I open my eyes. I am on my bed. As if he knew that I just came back from a long journey, In that moment Bret looks at me and whispers in silence, 'I love you'. I smile. I breath deep and feel a sense of satisfaction. Something has arrived in-to its place.

When I 'came back' to a standard state of mind, I felt a big sense of release. The woman on the other side of the glass was no longer a stranger. I experienced once again that we were both mirroring the same reality. There was a correspondence again between the inner and the outer. My 'outer' facial expressions in the mirror corresponded with my 'internal' feelings. The previous sense of fragmentation was replaced by a felt sense of integration . This experience did not emerge out of a dream at night or through an intentional ritual yet the feelings of numinosity surrounding it was unmistakable. I felt somehow transformed. The paradoxical "solid transparency" of glass, as Hillman (1976) contends, permitted me, so to speak, to 'see through' psyche. "Glass" he says, "is the metaphor par excellence for psychic reality: it is itself not visible, appearing only to be its contents, and the contents of the psyche, by being placed within or behind glass, have been moved from palpable reality to metaphorical reality, out of life and into image.... Glass is the concrete image for seeing through" (p.

142). My intrigue led me into a journey to further tend these images that like for Alice in wonderland, autonomously appeared from the other side.

I decided to focus on the words I 'heard' from The Mother: 'water, salt water, and crying', not knowing where it will lead me. To my surprise, I found that the image of the tearful numinous Mother, appearing as a Goddess, or as a common women in myths and farytales, is ancient and wide spread around the world. She came to be known as the 'Weeping Goddess' (Kramer, 1982) in various fields as archeology, anthropology, sociology and theology. In his acclaimed book, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, Tom Lutz (1999) mentions various Goddesses associated with weeping and tears. We find Goddesses' tears, for example, revive their dead husbands/ borthers. The Sumerian Goddess Anat brings back to life her husband Ba'al through her tears. Similarly, according to one version of the myth, the Egyptian Goddess Isis, whose name (Ish-Ish) originally meant "she who weeps," revives the dismembered Osiris through her weeping. The life of the Nile River is also said to depend on the flow of her tears.

Other myths recall images of mother's (divine and human) weeping for the loss of their children. Greek mythology brings us the tragic epic of Niobe, queen of Thebes, whose fourteen children were killed by Artemis and Apollo after she arrogantly mocks Leto, the twin's mother. Niobe's husband also kills himself after hearing the terrible news. Niobe was turned into a rock by Zeus, from which her ceaseless tears, that flow

'until this day', form a stream. She became a symbol of eternal mourning. Likewise, Aurora, the Roman goddess of Dawn, flies across the sky weeping for her killed son, Memnon, and consequently, creates the morning dewdrops. Hyria (or Thyria) melted away in her tears grieving the loss of her son, Cycnus, who was transformed into a swan, without her knowing. Another version speak of her tears creating Hyria's lake in which she drowned herself. The christian myth offers ample images of the Pieta (pity in Italian) depicting the madonna grieving and crying for her son at the foot of the cross. Finally, I want to mention the image of La Llorona, the one who weeps tears or blood out of her empty sockets, depicts a mother who loses her children, or who kills her children, and thereafter goes looking for their souls while weeping. This popular image has various versions and it appears primarily in Latin America but also in France, Spain, Ireland, Scotland and Greece (Eckhardt, 2008).

Having grown as a woman in Jerusalem, raised in a Jewish family with implicit patriarchal values, have undoubtedly contributed to the development of a special intellectual and affective bond I experience with the image known in the Jewish tradition as Shechinah, the feminine divine counterpart of a masculine God. The Shechinah, which has been considered to represent the immanent-dwelling-presence aspect of God, is intimately connected with the image of the Weeping Goddess. She is often depicted as a suffering mother, daughter and wife who has been exiled away from her children and out of her home (the Temple in Jerusalem), when the Roman's exiled

the Jews out of Jerusalem. This traumatic event that took place in history about two thousand years ago, is commemorated every year by Jews around the world on Tisha B'Av. Nevertheless, the Hebrew monotheistic and patriarchal tradition has had little tolerance for the image of a Goddess, let alone the Weeping Goddess. Thus, the image of the Weeping Goddess in the Jewish tradition, has been kept hidden from view in small esoteric and mystical circles, the only place she was allowed a form of expression. Yet mystical and esoteric texts written through the different schools of Kabbala make the image of the Shechina abundantly present. These texts emphasize her grief and suffering for her loss of home children as can be seen in stories like 'the lament of the shechinah,' 'the wailing of the shechinah,' 'the suffering of the shechinah,' and 'the exile of the shechinah' (Schwartz, Loebel-Fried, & Ginsburg, 2007).

Nowadays, these stories and texts, which once were considered to be sacrilege, are gradually emerging into collective awareness. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the 19th century founder of the Breslov Chasidic dynasty, whose many fairytales are rapidly gaining publicity, has been a major force in bringing forth the image of the Shechinah to popular view. He wrote many stories about the Shechinah as the Weeping Goddess, portraying her as a wounded Goddess, as the broken heart of the world, weeping for her children (Nicholson, 1989, p. 213). Yet the ambivalent relationship in Judaism to the presence of an autonomous Feminine Divine, let alone a Weeping Goddess, is still wide spread. Rabbi Schaalman (2007) recalls a *midrash*, a Jewish commentary on the Hebrew

scriptures, involving the weeping Shechina. He identifies her image as "a classic picture of divine suffering, of theopathy, the identification of God with the pain and catastrophe of His people that God did not, could not prevent" (p. 67). Schaalman acknowledges the Feminine Divine's presence and uses an old text that relates to her. But ultimately, in his interpretation, she is depicted only as a quality of a male God. As if to say that the male God is not to be seen as the one weeping, the weeping becomes projected onto the feminine 'face'. The female entity is ultimately not acknowledged for her own right and she only comes to represent a face of the male God. A face, perhaps, that the divine masculine is unwilling or unable to see in himself.

While the masculine divinity in the Jewish tradition is very rarely associated with tears and weeping, I would like to note that divine weeping, and divine weeping over Jerusalem in particular, is not an act reserved absolutely for the divine feminine alone. I would like to present two examples of divine male weeping that seem pertinent to our topic. The first one is from the Christian tradition, which in part can be said to have emerged to bring more balance to the image of God. The second one is from a Jewish Mystical text. On Palm Sunday, Christians around the world recall Jesus' triumphant entrance to the city of Jerusalem. The first thing he does, as he strolls down Mount Olives is to weep over the fate of the city and its inhabitants. We read in Luke 19:41, "and when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." The second account is a unique *midrash* to the book of Lamentations, in which we find God himself weeping

over Jerusalem. A dialogue ensues between the Weeping God and his primary angel, Matatron. The *midrash* recalls that after God decided to destroy the Temple, he said, "I no longer have a house on earth. I will take my Shechina away from there and arise to My first dwelling....The Holy One began to weep and said, "Woe to Me! What have I done? For Israel's sake I caused My Shechina to dwell on earth and now that they have sinned I have gone back to My former residence!.... At that point Matatron [his chief angel] came forward, prostrated himself before the Holy One and said, "Master of the Universe, I will be the one to cry, but don't You cry. The Holy One answered, "If you will not leave Me be so I can cry now, I will go to a place where you are not allowed and I will cry there." So writes the prophet [Jeremiah 13:17] 'And if you will not listen [to My weeping], then in hidden places my soul shall weep over [Israel's fallen] greatness." (Rubin and Robinson, 2000, p.174). It is interesting to note that elsewhere in Jeremiah, we find a similar attitude promoting the control of tears. This time it is God speaking to the Shechina saying, "restrain your voice from weeping, hold back your eyes from their tears, for your work has its reward and your children shall return" (Jeremiah 31:14). This time there is no response.

One of the ways in which early Hebrew poets and prophets were able to give expression to the forbidden image of the Weeping Goddess was by personifying her in the city of Jerusalem. Speaking of Jerusalem as the one suffering, or of the daughters of Jerusalem as the ones weeping, became a creative way to overcome theological and

psychological problems. Biblical scholar Dobbs-Allsopp asserts that "the israelite poet would have had to find a viable substitute for this dominant image [Weeping Goddess]. Gwaltney, Westerman, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, and Hillers see in the personified Jerusalem of Lamentations a counterpart to the Weeping Goddess so familiar from the Mesopotamian laments. The similarities in the poetic elaboration of the two motifs are indeed striking" (Dobbs-Allsopp, 1999, p. 77). A clear illustration of this point can be found in Esdras 2. In the story we find the prophet Ezra walking in the field when he meets a mourning woman who lost her child. This woman ends up being Mother Jerusalem and she transforms to his astonishment into a massive city being built (or established) with great foundations (Meyers, Craven, and Kraemer, 2001, p. 543). Many scholar contend that "the image of the Weeping Goddess is a favorite recurrent motif in the sumerian dirges and laments" (Kramer, 1982, p. 133) We find, for example, Ninlil bemoaning the bitter fate of her city Ur, as well as various central divine queens from the bigger cities of Sumer crying for their destroyed temples and shrines. These connections between Weeping Goddesses and place, the acts of weeping not only over the loss of humans but also over the destruction of their homes, cities, temples and shrines, seems a significant motif to note. Yet through my inquiry so far, I have found no parallel to the act of personifying the Goddess in her city and it seems to be unique to the relationship between the Shechina and Jerusalem.

I would like now to say a few words about these images from a depth

psychological perspective. The reoccurring image of the Weeping Goddess through time and place is an archetypal image expressing a primordial force in humanities collective unconsciousness. According to Jung, these archetypal images "can be found everywhere and at all times. They occur in the folklore of primitive races, in Greek, Egyptian, and ancient Mexican myths, as well as in the dreams, visions, and delusions of modern individuals entirely ignorant of all such traditions." (Storr, 1983, p. 65). It is of great importance that we bring these images into consciousness. "These things [archetypal images]" contends Jung "are instrumental symbols with whose help unconscious contents can be canalized into consciousness, interpreted, and integrated" He warns us saying, "failing this, their energy flows off into conscious contents which normally are not much emphasized, and intensifies them to pathological proportions. We then get apparently groundless phobias and obsessions - crazes, idiosyncrasies, hypochondriac ideas, and intellectual perversions suitably camouflaged in social, religious, or political garb" (Edinger, 1996, p. 132). Activated archetypes, charged with numinosity, do not manifest in consciousness in a meaningless mechanistic form but, Jung tells us, psyche has telos. The archetypes are constellated in a meaningful way and they have some kind of purpose, even if this purpose is hidden from our understanding. The telos seems to be the redemption of both human and Gods, the realm of consciousness and archetype. John Dourley, in an essay called Re-rooting in the mother, says, "the thrust of Jung's great work, 'Answer to job', followed his mystic predecessor Jacob Boehme in

describing a psychological cosmology in which God and the human, the archetypal and consciousness, were involved in mutual redemption as the base meaning of personal and collective history.” (2006, p. 173)

Seen from this perspective, we can imagine the experience I had facing the glass mirror, as a personal and collective manifestation of an image that is asking to be revealed, to create bridges into consciousness, to use Edinger’s metaphor. He says, “ In order to have their effects [of the archetypes] transmitted to the ego, [they] need bridges by which to reach consciousness. These bridges are supplied by religion and mythological images and ideas that already exist as an accepted part of consciousness. ..Those images function as bridges that allow the effects of the archetypes entry, so to speak, into consciousness” (Edinger, 1996, p. 132). If we don’t create these bridges, the archetypes will find ways to speak through symptoms and compulsive repetitions. If the Weeping Goddess is an expression of such an archetype, and her emergence is an attempt to create bridges to our personal and collective consciousness, what are the ramifications of us not paying attention to her? Where is the constellated energy flowing if we are not accepting it consciously in the vessels of our being?

An image of the wailing wall comes to mind. Dozens of people standing by the wall, weeping, shedding tears for their loss. For their misfortune. For their pain. Yet, I wonder, how many are turning towards the wall and asking the hidden image of the

Shechina, for her well being? We find an old Jewish text speaking to this when saying that “the Shechinah has no consolation, no one asks for her well being... Weeping is ineffective if we cry [only] for our [own]suffering. We need to acknowledge that Shechinah is suffering” (Rubin and Robinson, 2000, p. 56). What might be transformed, I wonder, if we were to step back for a moment from focusing solely on our personal stories, our personal desires, hopes and sense of suffering, and begin to listen in and feel into the ancient weeping of the Gods and Goddesses? What gates might open up before us if we were to realize that our personal circumstances are entangled for lifetimes with archetypal giants? As we open up to the greater stories surrounding and enveloping us, I wonder, how might we be of service, not only to ourselves and to our loved ones, but somehow, to existence itself?

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