

CROSSING THE SEA

Joseph G. Rosenstein

Sometimes I don't know what comes over him. He's so nice to me one minute, and the next minute ... I don't know, it's like he goes crazy. Even the honeymoon didn't last for very long. He had swept me off my feet -- like a teenager showing off all of his tricks -- real macho stuff, you know. At first I wasn't convinced. I wanted to stay with the Egyptian. It was pretty bad there, but, on the other hand, it wasn't all that bad. He forced me to do all sorts of things -- it was very hard living there, but I knew what to expect -- I did what was necessary, looked forward to something better, kept my hopes and dreams, and tried to make it through each day. Here I never know what to expect. I try to please him, but it never seems good enough. And sometimes he really gets weird. What do I mean? Well, here's a good example. The first time I remember was after we escaped. That was exciting. He really showed the Egyptian a thing or ten. I never thought I would get away from that guy, but somehow he managed it. He knew we could never escape -- there were so many guards -- so he had to get the Egyptian to send us out -- real razzle-dazzle stuff he pulled -- it swept me off my feet, and the Egyptian backed off -- "if you want her, she's yours" -- I never believed I would hear the Egyptian say that. After that, I was ready to go anywhere with him, follow him anywhere. He wanted us to take our time going back to his place -- it was strange because I wanted to get as far away from the Egyptian as fast as possible -- but I was in love with him and went along with that crazy idea. But then the Egyptian changed his mind and decided that he wanted me back. He came after us with all of his men -- it really freaked me out -- here we were all alone down by the sea, and there they were, coming after us. I knew he could get us out of this predicament, he did so many amazing things before. But instead he told me to jump into the water. "Hey," I screamed, "it's deep and I can't swim." That was really scary, doctor, why did he have to do that to me? He came through in the end, it was really amazing how he got rid of the Egyptian once and for all, but why did I have to go through that terror? He told me it was for my own good -- he told me that a lot -- and still does -- but I never saw any good come of it. He told me that he would lead me to the promised land -- honestly, doctor, that's exactly what he said, but whenever I reminded him of his promise he would get angry. Once I told him that I was bored with the food, he told me that if I just pretended I could make it taste like anything I wanted. Sometimes he just left me alone without enough food or water at all -- and when I complained he would punish me. Actually, he would go into a rage -- telling me that he had done so much for me, reminding me about how things were with the Egyptian, and claiming that I was ungrateful -- and it always ended with a beating of some sort. Why have I stayed with him, you ask. I guess I've always been afraid of living without him. It's like with the Egyptian. He's weird, but I've gotten used to his weirdness, and I know that if I just wait it out, he'll be his old self again. Sometimes, it takes a long time -- like the time he got jealous. I should have expected it. You know, not long after we escaped, I decided to do a special dance for him -- actually it was a dance to thank him for everything that he had done for me -- but he wasn't pleased. Actually, he got mad, really mad, breaking-things-mad, you know. After that, well ... I learned how to live with him -- for one thing, I don't try any surprises, he doesn't like surprises. Once a week he was really nice to me, he wanted us to be together, but the rest of the week, I learned to lie low. Oh, I started to tell you about the time he got jealous. Actually, as I said before, I should have expected it. When I danced for him, he said I was really doing it for the Egyptian -- can you believe that? I left the Egyptian for him, I gave up everything I had -- not that it was so much, but it was everything that I had -- and here he starting accusing me of dancing for the Egyptian. "What Egyptian are you talking about," I yelled at him, "you took care of him for good, I'm dancing for you." Oh well, you know how that one ended. It got worse later on. For a while every time I turned around he called me a slut and a whore, accused me of chasing other men, all sorts of things like that. But eventually he grew out of that. Now as

he's gotten older, he's been neglecting me. I've had some really hard times, and he's off somewhere, not paying any attention. I don't know what to do about this, doctor. I know he cares about me, but he doesn't show it very much. What happened to that old razzle-dazzle? I know he could have gotten me out of some of those tight spots, but he doesn't seem to be up to it any more. I know that I should think of leaving him, you've suggested that before, but we've spent a long time together. Where would I find another one like him?

Written after a Torah discussion on the 7th day of Pesach, April 2, 1994.

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