

A HANDFULL OF STARS

By Rabbi Baruch Cohon

It happened nearly 40 years ago and it remains a highlight in my life. The boy was 3 years old, maybe 4. He woke up one morning and said:

“I had a dream last night. I was holding a lot of stars in my hand.”

“You were? What did you do with them?”

“I threw them up to the sky.”

“All of them?”

“Yeah, and G-d put them in place.”

They were partners, he and G-d. שוטרף של מקום says tradition: “We are partners with the Omnipresent One.” The partnership expresses itself in different ways to different individuals.

We might realize that role in the thrill of new parenthood, in the mysterious joy of creating a work of art or craftsmanship, of successfully navigating a dangerous journey or healing a wound.

Or in a child’s dream.

The pilot who brings his damaged plane in “on a wing and a prayer” can feel his Partner’s presence.

The scientist whose discovery sparks new products that change people’s lives has to know Someone was working alongside. In fact, many of today’s leading scientists are more religious than most of us.

The woman whose agony yields new life can feel the wonder of that eternal partnership.

It’s important to sense the Divine help that inspires or goads or guides us. And it is just as important to value our own part in the partnership. Like the farmer who was showing the new preacher around his farm and proudly pointed out the standing golden grain in the south 40. The preacher solemnly told him:

“The Lord surely blessed you, brother. You know, you and the Lord are partners in that field.”

“Yes, Reverend, I reckon you’re right,” replied the farmer. “But you should’a seen them 40 acres when the Lord had ‘em by himself.”

If the pilot overshoots the field and the plane crashes, which partner failed? When an experiment doesn’t work, does that mean G-d took the day off? Agony can turn to anguish if the baby comes into the world with tragic defects, or perhaps isn’t wanted at all, and then where is the partnership?

Every partnership has a built-in challenge, doesn’t it? In a perfect world we wouldn’t need those challenges. Maybe in a perfect world we

wouldn't need partnerships either. Each one of us could succeed perfectly alone. But this is not a perfect world, and I have to believe it is far more interesting this way. Take a risk and don't expect a guarantee; aim for a pinnacle and look out for a pitfall; and try to choose the direction that will find your Partner at your side.

What is faith? Faith can take somewhat different forms in different lives, but we should know what it is not. In "You Can't Lose 'em All" (my booklet/recording) I quote the story of the man caught in a flood. As the waters rose he climbed to the roof of his house. A rowboat came by with some neighbors in it, and they offered to take him with them. "Don't worry about me," he said, "G-d will help me." The water rose still higher. A Coast Guard cutter rode the waves close enough to offer to throw him a life-ring. "Never mind," he called, "G-d will help me." As the water began to submerge the roof, a helicopter flew over and dropped a ladder to him. He waved them off. "G-d will help me." An hour later he drowned. Approaching the Heavenly gates, he was very angry. "Why didn't You help me? I believed, I prayed, I gave charity all my life. Why didn't You help me?" The answer was: "Didn't help you?! I sent you a rowboat, I sent you a cutter, I sent you a helicopter..."

Faith is the consciousness of the part each of us plays, as well as the Divine collaboration we can hope for. It is the confidence of the little fellow who could dream of holding a handful of stars, throwing them sky high, and knowing that G-d would put them in place.

Along with all the wonderful blessings you might wish for, let me wish you a handful of stars.