

One-Eyed Moses and the Churning Red Sea

A pirate ship, in the middle of the Red Sea. ONE-EYED MOSES, a pirate captain, is calling out to his imaginary shipmates.

MOSES: Argghhh! Avast, ye kvetching knaves, this is what you call sailing? Aye, 'tis a black day when I see such mishegos pass for mastery of the seas.

(MIRIAM, a pirate wench, rushes in.)

MIRIAM: Captain, the Pharaoh is hard aport!

MOSES: A plague on him! Is Aaron manning the cannons?

MIRIAM: Aye, he is.

MOSES: Then fire upon him, and as I be a Semite, we shall part the very waters with our shots.

MIRIAM: The Captain says fire!

(The cannons roar.)

He's still coming, hard astarboard now.

(More cannon fire. The boat rocks.)

We're hit!

MOSES: Great Abraham's balls, who needs this tsurris? Fire again, Aaron, fire again!

(Another shot)

Miriam, we have sailed the seas together a long time now, you and I, and who knows, this voyage may be our last. But to lose to Pharaoh without a fight, that truly would be a shanda. So we shall fight him with all the strength we have

left, and just pray we don't end up in Davy Birnbaum's locker. Fire again, Aaron, fire again!

(There is another cannon shot, and the Pharaoh fires back. MOSES and MIRIAM rush offstage, looking for cover. RABBI TZIPPORAH FINESTEIN enters. She reads from her sermon.)

TZIPPORAH: Moses parted the Red Sea, right? What does that mean? It says in this parsha, "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong East wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." Some people think that means there was a low tide, that the Jewish people passed through the water unharmed, but by the time the Egyptians followed, the water had risen. But Rashi points out that it does not say the *water* was divided, it says the *waters* were divided. So he says that not only was the water in the sea divided, but also the water in the cisterns and ditches, not only the terrestrial water, but also the supernatural water. What is supernatural water? In the Midrash Rabbah, it says that when Moses stretched his hand over the waters and commanded it to part, it refused. It said, "Why should I part for you? You were created on the sixth day, but I was created on the third." But then God put God's own hand upon Moses' hand, and the *waters* parted. So I ask again, why are the waters supernatural?

(JOSH and RACHEL, two congregants [played by the actors who played MOSES and MIRIAM], walk up to TZIPPORAH. RACHEL is pregnant.)

JOSH: I enjoyed your sermon, Rabbi. I, uh, got a little lost in the middle. But it was good.

TZIPPORAH: Thank you, Josh. And how are you two doing?

RACHEL: The baby's going to pop out any moment. I think this is the last time I'll be at services, for a few weeks. Until the baby comes.

TZIPPORAH: Mazel Tov. You know, I had the oddest dream, last night, while I was writing this sermon. I dreamt that

Moses was a pirate, and he was fighting the Pharaoh on the high seas. But the two of you were in it, too.

RACHEL: Who were we?

TZIPPORAH: I don't remember.

JOSH: May I speak to you privately, Rabbi?

TZIPPORAH: Of course. What about?

JOSH: Well...

RACHEL: There may be a problem with the baby.

TZIPPORAH: A problem. What sort?

JOSH: They're not sure. Some...irregularities.

TZIPPORAH: Oy. I'm so sorry.

RACHEL: Would you say a mishaberach?

TZIPPORAH: For you, of course.

RACHEL: Not for me. For the baby.

TZIPPORAH: By Jewish law, the baby isn't a person till it's born. That's when it gets its soul. But I could say a personal prayer. When my sister was having a baby, I prayed for it right after the Amidah. There's room for it there.

RACHEL: Thank you, Rabbi.

(They exit. TZIPPORAH is reading the sermon, as before.)

TZIPPORAH: But then God put God's own hand upon Moses' hand, and the *waters* parted. So I ask again, why are the waters supernatural? We know that we need water to live. It is said that when we were in the desert, Miriam, who was a prophetess, was able to find the wells, and without her help, they would not have survived. We ourselves are made from mostly water, as some of you who watch *Star Trek* might remember. Any trekkies out there? I believe some alien in the *Star Trek The Next Generation* referred to us as ugly bags of mostly water. I don't know whether I consider us ugly, but you could think of us, in a way, as animated bags of water...

(TZIPPORAH freezes. ONE-EYED MOSES crawls on, followed by MIRIAM. Oddly, she is pregnant still.)

MOSES: Argghhh, I don't think I'm going to make it.