

## ESSAY II

---

### FREUD'S DREAM CASTLE BY THE SEA

When Freud spoke of his having been greatly influenced by his early reading of the Bible he can only have meant in an ethical sense, in addition to his historical interest. He grew up devoid of any belief in a God or Immortality, and does not appear to have felt the need of it.

—Ernest Jones, 1953, p.19.

Two months after dreaming the Botanical Monograph, a few days after his 42nd birthday (May 6, 1898), Freud, on the 10th or 11th of May (Anzieu, 1986, p. 314), dreamt Castle by the Sea. To Freud, who has been readying himself for his face-off with *Moses/Moses*, the dream must have been transparent:

A castle by the sea; later it was no longer immediately on the sea, but on a narrow canal. The Governor [*der Gouverneur*] was a Herr P. I was standing with him in a big reception room—with three windows in front of which there rose buttresses with what looked like crenellations [battlements]. I had been attached to the garrison as something in the nature of a volunteer naval officer. We feared the arrival of enemy warships, since we were in a state of war. Herr P. intended to leave, and gave me instructions [*Instruktionen*] as to what was to be done if the event that we feared took place. His invalid wife was with their children in the threatened castle. If the bombardment began, the great hall was to be evacuated. He breathed heavily and turned to go; I held [*halte*] him back and asked him how I was to communicate with him in case of necessity. He added something in reply, but immediately fell down dead. No doubt I had put an unnecessary strain upon him with my questions. After his death, which made no further impression on me [*Nach seinem Tode, der mir weiter keinen Eindruck macht*], I wondered whether his widow would remain in the castle, whether I should report his death to the Higher Command [*dem Oberkommando*] and whether I should take over command of the castle as being next in the order of rank. I was

standing at the window, and observing the . . . merchant vessels rushing past rapidly through the dark water, some of them with several funnels and others with bulging decks . . . . Then my brother was standing beside me and we were looking out of the window at the canal. At the sight of one ship we were frightened and cried out: ‘Here comes the warship!’ But it turned out that it was only the same ships that I already knew returning. There now came a small ship, cut off short, in a comic fashion, in the middle. On its deck some curious cup-shaped or box-shaped objects were visible. We called out with one voice [*rufen wie aus einem Munde*]: ‘That’s the breakfast-ship [*Fruhstucksschiff*]!’ (Freud, 1900b, pp. 463–464; [Freud, 1900a, pp. 466–467]).

According to Freud (1900b),

The localities in the dream were brought together from several trips of mine to the Adriatic. . . . A short but enjoyable Easter trip which I had made to Aquilea with my brother [Alexander] a few weeks before the dream was still fresh in my memory. The dream also contained allusions to the *maritime war* between America and Spain and to anxieties to which it had given rise about the fate of my relatives in America (p. 464).

Ostensibly, Freud here is concerned about the fate of his sister Anna and her family who live in New York, “as there were fears it might be attacked or bombarded from the sea” (Anzieu, 1985, pp. 314–315). On the other hand, the proximity of “Spain and . . . anxieties about the fate of my relatives” to “Easter trip” suggests strongly that Freud’s concern over anti-Semitism informed this dream whose “dream-thoughts dealt with the future of my family [*Zukunft der Meinigen*] after my premature death” (Freud, 1900b, p. 465; [Freud, 1900a, p. 468]). Here it is worth noting: “*die Meinigen*,” in addition to “my family,” means “my people” (*The New Cassell’s German Dictionary*). On March 31, 1492, the Catholic Sovereigns Isabella and Ferdinand signed the Edict of Banishment: Jews had until the 31<sup>st</sup> of July to leave Spain (the alternatives, death or conversion). In the Hebrew Calendar this deadline date was the 7th of Ab, but, according to Jewish tradition, the departure deadline was the 9th of Ab, which was the date, in 586 B.C.E. of the Chaldean or Babylonian destruction of the First Temple. By historical coincidence, the 9th of Ab was also the date that the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E.

(Donin, 1972, p. 263). It is on the Fast of Ab or Tisha b'Av. that Jews lament the destruction of both Temples. (For Freud's familiarity with this the most tragic day in the Hebrew Calendar, see his July 23, 1882, letter to Martha Bernays; in Freud, 1960, p. 16.)

At this point it is worthwhile to revisit the following passage:

I held [*halte*] him back . . . but he immediately fell down dead. No doubt I had put an unnecessary strain upon [the Governor] with my questions. After *his death*, which *made no further impression on me* . . . (emphasis added).

With the above in mind, visualize Freud standing before *Moses/Moses* in the Church of St. Peter in Chains (cf. "a big reception room—with *three* windows") defiantly removing the phylacteries or *tefillin* from his forehead and left arm, as an unseen narrator reads from the Book of Deuteronomy:

Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead . . . Deuteronomy 11:18.  
*The Torah: The Five Books of Moses.*

(The above translation accords with the traditional Hebrew or Masoretic text. In the King James Version, the verse is, "Therefore ye shall lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.")

Now consider this reading: having succeeded in confronting *Moses/Moses* with his plaint or charge against Yahweh regarding the perpetual persecution of his people (cf. "[fatal] strain upon [the Governor] with my questions"), Freud has set himself free from Yahweh's stamp, the Law (cf. "his death . . . made *no further impression [Eindruck]* on me"); accordingly, he proceeds to free others—Jew and Gentile alike—from their religious shackles by destroying the Torah, signified by the death of the screen for the biblical Moses, the Governor. Thus, this haunted Cain's most passionate wish, the wish driving the dream, his wish to redeem himself by delivering his besieged nation—*der Kinder* especially—has been realized: No Torah, no Judaism, no Christianity, no miserable anti-Semitism. It seems, then, that Freud needn't have feared that he would

die prematurely (cf. “. . . my premature death”), that is, before preparing the soil for his Promised Land, a socially just world grounded in reason where the seed of Abraham—Juliuses and Sarahs—at long last, can develop their talents and satisfy their needs.

***“no further impression on me, I wondered whether his  
widow would remain in the castle . . .”***

On the 9th of Ab or Tisha b’Av, the fast day commemorating the destruction of both the First and Second Temples, Jews recite verses from the Book of Lamentations; in the first of its five laments or dirges, fallen Jerusalem is likened to a grieving widow:

1. How doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!
2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks . . .
3. Judah is gone into captivity. . .

Given his familiarity with Tisha b’Av, it is not a stretch to surmise: “I wondered whether his widow would remain in the castle” alludes, ultimately, to Freud’s concern for his besieged nation were it to “remain in their castle” or fortress, the Torah; note: Torah means instruction (cf. “The Governor . . . gave me instructions [*Instruktionen*] . . .”)

***“We [my brother and I] called out with one voice  
[rufen wieauseinem Munde]: ‘That’s the breakfast-ship’”***

“The English word ‘breakfast,’ means,” Freud (1900b) notes, “‘breaking fast’”—as in, he makes clear, breaking a fast (p. 466). According to Maimonides, when the Messiah appears fast days will become a thing of the past. Having (in the dream) destroyed Judaism’s miserable shoot, Christianity—albeit at the terrible double cost of Judaism and Moses—Freud has broken for all time the Fast of the 9th of Av (Tisha b’Av), including all that that most tragic day in the Jewish calendar signifies; accordingly, “breakfast-ship”—“a small ship, cut off short, in a comic fashion, in the middle,” symbolizing the castration or destruction of Christendom—evokes a “memory of the most cheerful *joie de vivre*”:

. . . And while the little mail steamer made its way slowly . . . we, who were the only passengers, ate our breakfast on deck in the highest spirits . . . and we had rarely tasted a better one. This, then, was the 'breakfast-ship'. . . (p. 466).

Accompanied by "excellent" wine, this joyous 'breaking a fast' meal with his brother Alexander occurred on Easter Sunday, April 10th (Freud, 1985, p. 308), or the fourth day of Passover, the season the Messiah is to appear—and five days before the fortieth anniversary of Julius's death. Because Freud's messianic ambition stems from his fratricidal sense of guilt, it is reasonable to assume: in the dream, Alexander is a screen for Julius, that is to say, it is Freud and Julius who "[call] out "with *one voice*": "That's the breakfast-ship!" At the family Seder, Jakob Freud, as per tradition, had set aside a wine glass for the Messiah's herald, Elijah, not suspecting that the long-awaited deliverer of his people was possibly already in his home.

Then again . . .

***"I wondered . . . whether I should report  
his death to the Higher Command"***

*Yahweh, dem Oberkommando*, may actually exist; if so, were Freud to stay on his path, then dismal indeed would be the *Zukunft* or future of his children "unto the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20: 5). Formerly, under the imagined threat of castration, Sigismund abandoned his intention to kill his grey-haired father, Jakob, to possess his young mother, Amalia; under the imagined threat of even more horrific visitations would Sigmund abandon his impious intention to kill each and every Jew's venerable father, Moses, to possess Mother Earth?

#### REFERENCES

- ANZIEU, D. (1986). *Freud's Self-Analysis*. Transl. Peter Graham. London: Hogarth Press.
- The New Cassell's German Dictionary* (1962). New York: Funk and Wagnalls.
- DONIN, RABBI HAYIM HALEVY. (1972). *To Be a Jew*. New York: Basic Books.
- FREUD, S. (1900a). *Die Traumdeutung*. Vienna, G. W. II/III.
- (1900b). The Interpretation of Dreams. In J. Strachey, ed. and trans. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974, 4–5.
- (1960). *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*. Selected and edited by

... FIVE ESSAYS

---

- E. Freud. New York: Basic Books.
- (1985). *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*. Jeffrey M. Masson, ed. & trans. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.
- JONES, E. (1953). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. New York: Basic Books.
- TORAH, THE (1962). *The Five Books of Moses: A new translation of The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.