

Whatever it is that says “You can’t do that. You have to move.” The thing that says you have to move.

“Teflon Moments”

Schachter-Shalomi had read in the Torah Service the passage in which the Israelites waited through the night for the final word to move out. He recreated in his account and commentary the awesome, magical feeling of that night in which they left Egypt. He drew attention to how everything seemed to go so smoothly: no confusion, no quarreling. He called it a “teflon” occasion; there were no sticking points. It was just happening, unfolding, as if God were orchestrating it and the people were just flowing with it.

This may be characteristic of the moments when divine will, or the divine intention, is moving through reality without hindrance. It may be something that occurs when the people, or the prophet, or when we ourselves, allow this to happen by getting out of the way—or it may be something that at certain times happens despite anything we might do to resist it.

The Burning Bush: *Mysterium Fascinans*

What creates those “teflon” openings? Schachter-Shalomi thinks about the moment in which Moses notices the burning bush.⁴

For some it is fascination.

I have a feeling that if I need a channel for an intellectual process, if I need someone to bring that process down, to bring *mind*-full, to be aware, to bring an awareness down from one level where it is beyond, to another level where it gets specific and nitty gritty, whom would I pick?

A curious person. I would pick somebody who wants to investigate.

4 Exodus 3:2.

When we are protecting ourselves from disruptive openings and changes, we put up barriers that shut out oddities that may threaten our working world-view, our “reality map.” So, faced with the particular divine sign put out for Moses, the burning bush that was not consumed, some people might pass by without noticing that it was not being consumed, perhaps scarcely noticing it at all. Or they might just say, as Schachter-Shalomi imitates:

“*Nu*, a bush is burning, let the bush burn. Doesn’t belong to me!” Do you understand? It’s like “*Yenem’s* bush, a *goyishe* bush, leave it alone.”⁵

This, however, is not Moses’s response, and Schachter-Shalomi wants to explore more about what that was and why it was and what teaching there might be here for us.

But when there’s a fascination! And so here is that *mysterium fascinans*.⁶ Yes, it’s burning, and not consumed. Burning, not consumed. Burning! Not consumed! How come not consumed?

Every scientific discovery comes through a serendipity of somebody asking “how come this anomaly is there?” It is like trying to lift up, as it were, the skirt of Reality to take a peek: what causes this phenomenon to be there?

So if I needed to pick a somebody, I would pick a curious person. I would set up a curiosity there. [Imitates

5 **Yenem.** אַנעם Yiddish: Somebody else, the other person, as in the Yiddish saying *Af yenems tukhes iz gut tsu patshn*, “Someone else’s backside is easy to smack.”

Goyish. גױיש Yiddish: Not Jewish. In this context the meaning is similar to the previous phrase. A *goyishe* bush is a bush that doesn’t have anything to do with us.

6 **Mysterium fascinans.** Latin: The fascinating mystery. Term coined by Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane*. He attributes the idea to Rudolf Otto’s *Das Heilige*, but the term does not appear in Otto’s book.