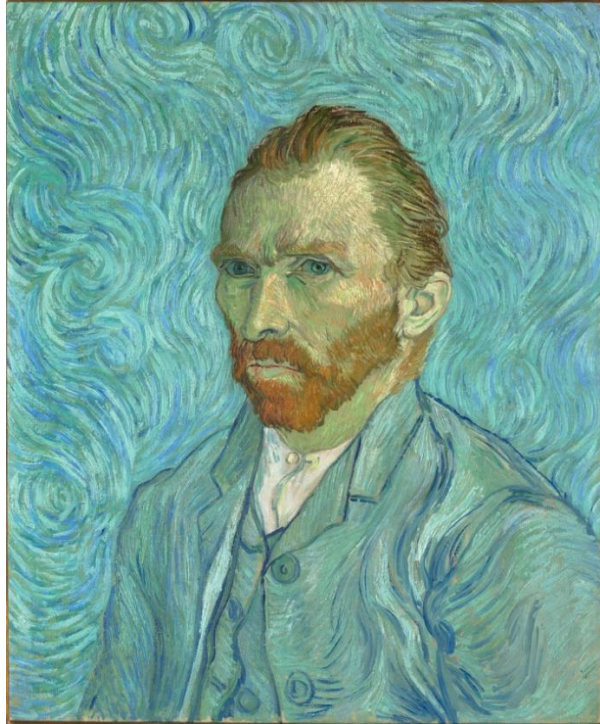


PARSHAT BESHALACH
EXODUS 13:17-17:16
HAFTARAH JUDGES 4:4-5:31
8 SH'VAT 5785/6 FEBRUARY 2025



Self-Portrait

Oil on canvass by Vincent van Gogh (1889)

CROSSING THE DEEP

1. “So God led the people roundabout, by the way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds” (Exodus 13:18).

דַּרְךְ הַמִּדְבָּר יַם־סוּף

סוּף – reeds, rushes

סוּף – end, conclusion, death (סוּף כָּל־הָאָדָם), “the end of every human” Ecclesiastes 7:2)

סוּף – come to an end, cease

2. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song: I will sing out (אֲשִׁירָה) to Adonai. (Exodus 15:1)

Miriam called out to all the women: Sing (שִׁירוּ) out to Adonai. (Exodus 15:21)

3. All the worlds and all creatures may be categorized as masculine and feminine....Anything bounded has both upper and lower extremities. In the future, however, the lines and the circle will be equal, and there will no longer be the categories of masculine and feminine. All will come to realize God's light equally. This is just like a circle dance, where every part of the circumference is equidistant from the center.

Now Moses said, "I will sing until Adonai." This was because Moses spoke while still under the categories of masculine/feminine...But Miriam, through her circle dance (*hakafah*), drew down the supernal light from the place where the categories of masculine/feminine do not exist. (Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Epstein, *Ma'or va-Shemesh*)

4. Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman said, "Having created the world, the Blessed Holy One said, 'I long to have a dwelling below just as I have on high.'" (Midrash Tanchuma Naso 16)

This is the purpose of a human being: that we transform the lower realms into an environment in which the goodness of God is at home and is the dominant reality. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

5. A prisoner cannot release himself from prison. (Talmud, Berachot 5B)

The true meaning of "a dwelling in the lower realms" is that the lowly realms themselves change, from within. (Rabbi Schneur Zalma)

6. Anyone who has ever been compelled to think about it knows that the one face that one can never see is one's own face....I believe that if we understood ourselves better, we would damage ourselves less. But the barrier between oneself and one's knowledge of oneself is high indeed. There are so many things one would rather not know! (James Baldwin, "The Creative Process")
7. They say – and I am willing to believe it – that it is difficult to know yourself – but it isn't easy to paint yourself either. (Vincent van Gogh, letter to his brother Theo dated September 6, 1889)