

SIXTEENTH DEGREE –PRINCE OF JERUSALEM– ESSAY

THE THREE QUESTIONS

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According to the legend of the sixteenth degree Zerubbabel travels to the court of King Darius to ask his support in the rebuilding of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem as originally promised by his forbear, King Cyrus. Darius, recognizing Zerubbabel and his party as Adepts, welcomes them to his court and entertains them. As part of the court customs and festivities the King required answers to his question: “Which is stronger, wine, women, or the King?” This was no idle exercise as the success of the mission in this case, and apparently in most pleadings before the King depended on the thought and intellect that went into the answers, as the King was also an Adept and on his own journey seeking knowledge. Zerubbabel’s companions each chose a different answer to the question exhibiting much wit in defense of their choice. When it came to Zerubbabel’s turn he did not choose one of the proffered answers but instead claimed that Truth was the strongest of all things. This pleased Darius very much and helped his decision in granting Zerubbabel whatever he asked plus making him a favorite of the King and gaining his favor and honors.

The question this essay asks to discuss is how each answer symbolically represents an unproductive life style or value system, and how the searcher for truth, the autonomous, responsible man would do or react in each instance. So let us examine each in turn and in so doing also answer the question, “What is an autonomous responsible man?”

The first answer was wine. According to the ritual the reasons given for wine being the strongest are that it causes all men to err that drink it. It makes the minds of the King, the fatherless child, the bondsman and the freeman, the poor man and the rich man all one and the same. It turns every thought into jollity and mirth so that a man remembers neither sorrow nor debt. It makes every heart rich so that a man remembers neither King nor Governor and makes him speak of all things without thought. And when they are lost in their cups of wine they forget their love of both friends and brethren and a little after draw out their swords. And then they remember nothing of what they have done. Thus what is capable of doing all this must surely be the strongest.

So symbolically what does this represent? First and foremost it is a lifestyle that lacks control. It is one that does not want to face head on the stresses and responsibility of being an autonomous adult. It is one where the individual wishes to dull the senses so as not to feel any anxiety, grief, stress or strong emotions. It in essence places one in a childish or infantile state and not that of a mature adult. The individual just wishes to go with the flow and not face any obstacles. One can picture such a person just floating on a raft down a river without a care in the world, just living for the moment and not concerning himself with any responsibilities or the future. As mentioned above such a lifestyle lacks any control and has given it up to others, circumstance and fate. This is an addictive personality. These individuals frequently become alcoholics or drug users.

Typically this lifestyle leads progressively to destruction. More and more the individual retreats from the responsibilities of daily living. His work will suffer with loss of his job. His relationships will suffer with loss of friends, a spouse and children. He will ultimately lose his home and become homeless. While more and more as his problems arise he will turn from them to drink or drugs to try and make them go away.

The autonomous, responsible adult, the seeker of truth, faces life head on. He does not try and dull the senses, hide from reality or shirk his duties. He takes control of his life by being in equilibrium. Wine has its place when it's time for fun and relaxation but within moderation and under control. He realizes that life has its pleasures and sorrows, its highs and lows, its triumphs and defeats and deals with each in an appropriate manner. Instead of floating down the river, he has a paddle in hand and is steering his way. He has mature relationships with spouse, children and friends; with co-workers, bosses and subordinates. He is a productive member of society. This is what being autonomous means; it means being responsible or in other words it is our old friend, doing our duty.

The second answer was the King. The ritual gives these reasons for the supremacy of the King. Men excel in strength that rule over the sea and land and all things in them. But the King is mightier for he is Lord of all these things and has dominion over them, and what he commands them they do. If he bid them make war against each other they do it; if he sends them out against his enemies, they go; and break down mountains, walls and towers. If he commands them to smite, they smite; to make desolate, they make desolate; to build, they build. If he commands them to cut down, they cut down; to plant, they plant. Therefore how can the King not be mightiest when he is obeyed in such a manner?

So symbolically what does this lifestyle represent? Again it is a lifestyle without control. But in this case instead of giving control over to circumstance or fate or just dulling the senses and tuning out, control is given over to authority figures. The King represents political authority, religious authority, medical authority, educational authority, occupational authority or any superior. It means, following our clergyman's orders without question; obeying our doctor's orders even if we think they're wrong; heeding the rules of our legislators even if we disagree with them and think they're abusive; obeying police orders that may be questionable, doing what our boss tells us to do even if we know it is counterproductive. We are simply blindly following authority without question.

This lifestyle is extremely dangerous as it can lead foremost to governmental tyranny. Albert Pike in many of his lectures and degrees warns of the dangers of this happening. Again it is the result of the lack of autonomy in the individual. In this case it is a developmental problem where the parental authority has been so dominant that the individual remains in essence a child and has psychically never developed into an adult with the autonomy and responsibilities that go along with it. The person basically wants to remain a child and be taken care of by "adults", whether that means being co-dependent on a spouse, being taken care of by big government, always doing what he is told by others and never thinking for himself.

Here again the autonomous adult will take responsibility for his actions. He will think for himself. He will investigate and educate himself on various issues, i.e. seek the truth, so that he can make decisions for himself and not rely on others to make decisions for him. He will engage in bilateral discourse with his superiors, and question actions he does not understand or disagree with rather than taking everything at face value. He will be more self-reliant rather than depending on the dictates of powerful outsiders. The result of this is to make him a responsible citizen, first and foremost as a guardian of our political freedoms and liberties, and secondarily as a productive member of society in all other aspects of our lives.

The third answer was women. This was the answer that Zerubbabel himself gave to King Darius in the ritual. It is not the great King or the multitude of men, neither is it wine that excels. Who is it then that rules over them or has the Lordship over them? Is it not women? Women have borne the King and all the people that bear rule over the land and sea. Even from them they came and they nourished them that planted the vineyards from whence came the wine. They also make garments for men which bring glory to men, and without women, men cannot be. How can it be else that women be strong seeing they do all

this? Therefore are not women strong? **However,** great is the earth, high is the Heaven, and swift is the sun in his course, for He encompasses the heavens round about and fetches His course again to His own place in one day. Is He not great that makes these things? Therefore great is the Truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calls upon the Truth and Heaven blesses it. All works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing. Wine is wicked, the King is wicked, women are wicked, all the children of men are wicked and such are all their wicked works; and there is no Truth in them; in their unrighteousness also they shall perish. As for the Truth, it endures and is always strong. It lives and conquers for evermore. Great is Truth and mighty above all things.

Women symbolically represent a lifestyle, as in the others, where control is given over to our base animal instincts. It is one where control of our life is ruled by impulse and physical desire. Psychologically we can again say it is an infantile, non –adult state, where the individual has failed to mature by not developing a strong super ego and allowing the id to have too much power. One does just what comes naturally, following our physical desires rather than using our minds.

This lifestyle is probably most ubiquitous today in our society. It represents the “Me generation” and all it stands for. We seek instant gratification of all our wants, without taking any responsibility. We are mainly interested in our own gratuitous desires, entertainment, obtaining as many physical possessions as possible, without any consequences and with as little effort as possible. More than the difficulties of tuning out stress with addictive agents, or giving our power to outside forces, this lifestyle represents the biggest threat to our society. All the great civilizations of the past have fallen because of decay from within caused by such behavior and lack of moral focus.

The autonomous, responsible adult lives by a moral code. Work, family and relationships, relaxation, study and fun all have their place but at appropriate times and in an appropriate fashion. Here one puts off ones immediate desires until they can be determined if they are first proper, and then at the proper time. The autonomous adult will not think first of himself, but of his fellow brethren and consider their needs as well as his own. He will be more concerned with the needs of his family, his God, his society, his personal search for growth or truth, than of his amusement. He will realize that God’s desire of him is to make this world a better place and be virtuous and do good, rather than just take up space and have a good time.

