

VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision

MERCY AND MIRAGE

JALALUDDIN RUMI

This poem by Rumi tells us something of the human story of longing that we experience in journey through the wilderness of space and time. At the beginning of the Qur'an (and used throughout the Islamic tradition) is the short phrase, Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim—In the Name of God, the Merciful, Compassionate One. Like Islam, the other Abrahamic traditions believe that we are swimming in the divine Mercy and Compassion as if in a vast sea. Yet despite the divine waters surrounding us, we are dying of spiritual thirst.

Crazy with busyness and our constant pursuit of the mirages created by our contemporary agendas, we run around looking for something that will quench our thirst. Little or nothing that we hope to be satisfying is, in fact, “living (or eternal) water.” It only temporarily quenches our longings until the next deep yearnings arise.

Will we ever be truly satisfied? The answer is perhaps dependent on ourselves. As long as we attach ourselves to our little schemes and our many pursuits for happiness and comfort, the answer is “never.” But we have as well a chance to drink of another kind of water, an eternal form that can quench our constant longing.

Yeshua was quite clear about this in the Gospel story of his conversation with the Samaritan woman. Yeshua was sitting at Jacob's well while traveling through Samaria when she arrived, coming for water to take back to her village.

They struck up a conversation and he urged her to drink from another, deeper source of refreshment he called “living water.” He told her he would provide this water and the means for drinking it.

Rumi believed that this eternal thirst-quencher was available to everyone in all places and times. But where is it? Is it outside of ourselves? If not, where is this source within? Is it found in time or outside of time? This poem inspires these and other questions meant to push us beyond the mirages of our desert experience and the expectations of our world.

Both Rumi and Yeshua insist that Living Water is available now. The question is will we ever find it and drink it when we do? Read through the poem again. Let it seep into your soul, and as you look at each image, put yourself into those imaginal spaces.

Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) was an extraordinary poet, a wise teacher and guide, and a Master of Islamic spirituality and Universal Wisdom. He played the role of a spiritual midwife in his day. His visionary poetry brought about transformation and spiritual evolution in his students, while he himself was learning and practicing throughout his own life. His spiritual mentor was Shams-e Tabrizi, who awakened him. This ancient poetry is meant to do the same, to awaken us our day.

Reflections on Image and Text:

1. *Where might you start in your quest to find this living water? Why there?*
2. *Where in your life is Mercy flowing all around you? Do you have moments when you realize that you are soaking in the waters of some divine Sea?*
3. *What have been some of the mirage-like experiences of your life? What is your explanation for these experiences as we travel across space and time on this “desert-planet” called earth?*
4. *When have you experienced a sense of deep longing? For what are you most thirsty?*
5. *What would you tell an individual who was seeking for water but cannot seem to find it? How might you guide them to an oasis (or well) of Living Water that this poem describes?*
6. *Rumi makes mention of the “sleeper’s robe.” How is the robe a metaphor connected to the thirsty soul?*
7. *What is it about the “here” and the “now” that is key? How is it that through this means we find the true Self?*
8. *As you gaze at the images provided for this Visio Divina, what do they help you to see?*
9. *How does the last image strike you? What is its meaning for you? What is it teaching you?*

A Place for Notes and for Journaling your Answers:

This reflection, text and its illumination have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means for contemplative prayer and spiritual vision.

LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

*I*nfinite Mercy is flowing continually,
but you're asleep and cannot see it.
Your sleeper's robe goes on drinking river water
while you frantically hunt mirages in dreams
and run around here and there shouting,
"There'll be water further on, I know it, I just know it."
It's this false thinking that blocks you
from the path that leads to your Self.

By always saying, "Further on, further on!"
you become estranged from the "Here" and "Now."
Because of a false fantasy
you are driven from Reality.

—Arranged and edited
for public reading and illumination by
Lynn C. Bauman
from the mystical poetry
of Jalaluddin Rumi

These poems are found in the
Kulliyat-e Shams-e Tabrizi (Volumes I-VII)
or the **Mathnawi** (Volumes I-VI)

Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATIONS





