



Lessons in Stone

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The Jewish people have a tradition of placing a stone, however large or small, in places of special meaning or at times when significant things happen in the lives of their people. Stones are placed, with great reverence and recognition, at the graves of those slaughtered because they were Jews. Stones are placed at sites in Israel itself, marking the pilgrimages of world travelers.

This tradition is thought to begun ages ago, when they crossed the Jordan River to claim their homeland after centuries of exile.

"So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites as the Lord had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant had stood. And they are there to this day." (Joshua 4:8-9)

Stones can help us to remember important times of banding together to do what is right, even when we are afraid, or tired, or uncertain. Stones can be a monument to our having been here.

Christians recorded the story of what to do when you have a stone resting in your hand, and someone else's fate resting in your attitudes. Jesus was questioned about whether or not a woman caught in adultery should be stoned to death for violating the law. Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first." (John 8:3) The stones in our hands can remind us that there is no point in proclaiming the importance of spirituality if we are controlling, and competitive, and judgmental. The stone can remind us to be kind, and compassionate, and forgiving.

The stone in the midst of a turbulent stream does not rage at the water for getting it wet. It merely notices and says peacefully to itself, "So this is what the clouds are like, as they fall to earth and tumble down the mountain." The tumbling stream split in two by the rock does not cry out in anger, "Who put this rock in my path?!" It merely notices and says peacefully to itself, "So this is what a rock is like as it sits unmoving on the mountainside." The stone blesses the stream as it flows noisily by, not knowing that one day the water will wash the last bit of stone away. The stream leaves the stone covered with wet kisses as it tumbles down the mountain, wondering what it would be like to be solid and unmoving and at rest. And both, most of all, are what they are, and take comfort from the delightful mystery of the other. (A story from the Tao)

The stone can teach us the Way. In our haste to make things become what we wish they were, let us not forget to notice the wonder of what already is.

The People know that the Stone at their feet is as much a part of the holiness as are the eagle and the wolf, the old trees, and the four directions on the great circle. The People know that only a crazy woman, or a spiritually blind man, would not see that Stone is nature, that Stone is also a brother or a sister, that Stone can teach the human being about what is true.

Some human beings think in their madness that nature is theirs to own and to control and to destroy, trying to make themselves more important and more comfortable. They think that Stone is their property, but not their friend. Even the rocks beneath their feet know a different truth. Trying to change nature does not heal the wound of the heart, or bring comfort to the spirit, or return clear vision to the half-dead mind. The Stone beneath our feet is not crazy, because it knows that it will be here long after the crazy humans are gone. Then the stone will not be silent any more, because it will be heard by those who know that it, too, is alive with the presence of the Spirit. Perhaps the Stone, like our grandfathers and grandmothers, will have much to teach us. And perhaps, if the



madness can be stopped in time, some of the People will still be here to say Hello to the Stone, and to listen with respect. (The voice of GreyHawk)

Consider the Stone from each of these directions on the wheel of spirituality. Hear what it whispers. See what it shows you in the wild places of your own mind. Feel, as you touch it, how Stone touches you back.