

David's Desk 197 Audio Companion

October 2023

James: Hi, David.

David: Hello, James.

James: Welcome to another audio companion for David's Desk. This is number 197 A Balrog Moment.

David: Yes, a Balrog Moment.

James: Wow, that sounds so interesting.

David: It sounds so Tolkien-ish.

James: Yeah, I just have a sense of you standing there on the bridge with your staff and saying "Thou shalt not pass!"

David: [*chuckles*] Yeah, well, I'd have to grow a beard and have a hat.

James: Well, in my imagination. You have a beard and a hat in that scene. Where did this come from? David.

David: Periodically, we watch the Lord of the Rings on television—we have the DVDs and sometimes it's just a comfort movie. We love the story so much. Peter Jackson, even though he's not 100% faithful to the book, he really has created a masterpiece, I feel.

So we were watching it and it came to this very dramatic sequence where the Fellowship who are attempting to help Frodo take this ring of power back to Mount Doom where it can be destroyed, they have been forced into the mines of Moria, which was a dwarven city. The dwarves were mining for mithril, which is this amazing mineral that's very light, but it has the strength of dragon scale, so it makes perfect armor.

They were they were digging deep to get this mithril and they awoke this dormant fire demon, called a Balrog, which in Tolkien's cosmology is a fallen angel. The Balrog coupled with Orcs and Goblins basically drove the dwarves away. This is an abandoned underground city that the fellowship is moving through, and they're being pursued now by Goblins and Orcs, Goblins, mainly. And suddenly, the Balrog appears from the depths. It's this huge giant fire demon, it's pursuing the fellowship. They're racing across this narrow

bridge, called Durin's bridge and Gandalf realizes that the Balrog will catch them unless he stops it.

In Tolkien's cosmology, Gandalf is an angel who had been given human form, but he's been put into the body of an old man as a way of masking who he is and also reducing his power so that he's not an overwhelming presence. In that way, he can move amongst the various kingdoms and clans and tribes of men and elves and hobbits and so on and be a guiding counselor without overwhelming them with his presence. But Gandalf has to reveal who he is and what he is to the Balrog because essentially they're the same kind of being—they're both angels—one has fallen, and one has not, one is a servant of the light.

That's when he announces who he is. He says, ""I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor." In Tolkien's cosmology, Anor is the sun, so he's basically saying I'm a solar Angel, I'm a solar being, I wield this light of life, and you can't pass because this light is greater than you are. And he commands the Balrog to return to the shadows to return to the depths. To make sure the Balrog can't follow the fellowship, Gandalf destroys the bridge. It's this very dramatic moment. That's the moment when the Balrog ensnares him with his whip and pulls Gandalf down into the abyss with him. They both fall. And if you want to know what happens to have to read the books or see the movies. [*chuckles*]

James: Yeah, I found that to be a relatively poignant and sad moment, but joyful that the fellowship was able to move through that. So how does that fit within Incarnational Spirituality?

David: I was watching this and that moment always speaks to something very deep within me. Then later, I got this email, and it was somebody writing to me about that scene, about how powerful it was—the wielder of the secret fire, and Gandalf being an angel and everything. And I thought, you know, because we've been working with the idea of light, this actually is what we are—we are all servants of the secret fire, and we all can wield the flame of Anor.

We all have that inner light within us, and we all have the capacity to attune to the light within the world and within the cosmos.

That whole phrase began to resonate with me as a fictional metaphor for who we are. It's exactly the kind of awareness that we're seeking to help people realize in Incarnational Spirituality—to recognize that they are the servants of the of the sacred light and they carry it within them. We all can wield that light and use it for the blessing of the world.

Then I was watching the news the other day, about three or four weeks ago. The news is pretty uniformly terrible in the way it's presented. You realize how not only on the scale of nature with the floods and the fires and storms and so on, but just within the world of humanity, so many old structures are... if they're not actually collapsing, they're proving incompetent and not being able to fulfill their function—like our Congress, currently. I thought, you know, humanity is facing a Balrog moment. In effect, our own shadow, our own demons, are rising out of the depths to confront us. This is the stuff that's come out of our actions in the past and our habits and our way of being. And so it's important for individuals to recognize their light and be able to say, "You shall not pass, you shall not determine our future, you need to be transformed."

In Tolkien's story—spoiler alert—in the battle between Gandalf and the Balrog, Gandalf slays the Balrog and in the process, dies himself. But he's reborn, he becomes Gandalf the White, he becomes the expression of his angelic nature. When he comes back, he's sent back into the world again in this old man's body, but now that body's been transformed into a carrier of the light, it's become light-infused. So he's now Gandalf the White. We could call him Gandalf the Light.

James: Yeah, I found that out, too. When he came back a little bit later, as Gandalf the White. He's being and holding the light. In your David's Desk, he is being a sun, being the light of the sun. But expressing it as that light as well in the story.

I can see moments, as I'm listening to the news and watching what's happening in the world as well, I really do get this sense of a Balrog moment. And sometimes I feel that there's a part of me that the Balrog's whip has caught and will pull me into the abyss if I'm unconscious in that moment, if I'm not making that choice, as you say, to be light, to be joy, to be hope, to love and laughter as Susan Staton Rotman said—you talk about her as well, and her message was the same as your message, basically.

David: Yes. That is so perceptive, James. Indeed, the Balrog's whip can pull us into the abyss and you see that happening in the world. To me, it's such a powerful metaphor, but behind it is the reality that...we're grappling with and designing a new course for Lorian, this two-year cohort course to say we really are called to stand on that bridge and be a presence of light in the world and to act out of that presence, and what does that mean? How do we do that?

That, to me, is the question, so that the idea of light ceases to be an abstraction or kind of a spiritual metaphor or a mental concept. It becomes a lived reality in one's life and work. That's what we're wanting to help people

realize through the courses that we do, and Incarnational Spirituality, and particularly the new one that we're developing.

What Susan wrote—and that's why I wanted to include her message...it was so interesting to me that I got this email from her just around the same time that I had this message from my own subtle colleagues. Although it has come more than once, it's actually fairly consistent. Here came Susan's message, and it even used some of the same words, like be the sun. I love the fact that it was very specific in terms of be joy, be laughter, be optimism be all the qualities that she listed. These are not inaccessible to us. They are within our nature. It may take a little work to draw them out in the moment when we're feeling the Balrogs whip entangling our emotions and our thoughts, pulling us down into anger and fear. But they're there and we can call on them. And when we do that, we are wielding the flame of Anor, we are wielding that inner light and saying, "this is what I will embody, this is what I will express."

James: It's also very noticeable, as human beings, when we walk into a room or we meet a person, if they're joy-filled, if they're optimistic, if they have a sense of peace. We feel that, and we begin to respond to that as well. So we not only hold it for ourselves, we hold it for others, and we can hold it for the world as we walk in this way.

David: This is so true. This gets into the whole art and science of resonance. When you are working with subtle energy, resonance is extremely important. We think, I don't know how I can make a difference, I'm just here in my neighborhood, and I'm nobody particularly important in society or in the world—how can I make a difference? But the power of resonance is always there. If I'm sounding a note, then others pick up on that and they will find themselves sounding that note as well. It becomes easier to sound that note.

I remember when I was in choir, the teacher would start out with his little pitch pipe and he would blow the starting note and we all would sound that. Before that, we were kind of chaotic in our singing, not really coming together. But the moment we had that note to listen to and resonate to, the wholeness of the choir came together and we could all sing our parts in harmony. And that's exactly how the energetic world works. It's an important principle,

James: It's like a little mini Balrog moment. We have those moments throughout our day when we're aware enough that we can actually choose to respond and change our view of what's happening in a way that we can say, well, that's that person's perspective, that's their choice to do that, or to hold those views. And I choose to hold this other view, I choose to hold a view of joy, of peace or whatever it is that in this moment, I find within myself—that of joy, that light of peace, that light of gratitude, even gratitude for the

moment and not being caught up in the stories that are swirling around Congress. We have enough stuff happening in our lives that having moments of looking outside and just seeing a blue sky, just that kind of a moment is enough to begin to change.

David: James, that's so important. I love that you allude to the fact that a Balrog moment doesn't have to be this huge planetary level confrontation. I'm driving down the road and somebody swerves in front of me, cuts me off, drives irresponsibly. For me in that moment, that is my Balrog moment, because the anger, the irritation—I can just think, angry thoughts about this person. Or I can say, I don't know what's happening in that person's life, and what's motivating them to act in that way. But I can still be a point of light, holding harmony and holding a sense of peace. I do not have to fall into the abyss of anger here. Even if it's just a little abyss, it's just that anger in the moment. And if I do fall into that, and I get angry, then I want to remember that might be the thing that could transform me into David the White rather than David the Angry Gray. [*chuckles*]

James: Yeah, I get that from myself as well. Part of our journey at this time is to recognize our own personal Balrog moments and choose wisely. Or notice that we are falling into the abyss, our little personal abyss of this anger, of this fear, of this anxiety, and when we notice that, find a way to come out of that with a little bit of joy, a little bit of hope, fiery hope.

So thank you, David. I feel like you've added another phrase, another image that will be very useful to us going forward. We can even have a section on Balrog moments and how to deal with them in our new upcoming class.

David: There we go. We have to give the thanks to the great master JRR Tolkien.

James: Yeah, definitely. Well, thank you, David. This was a delight.

David: Thank you, my friend. Bye. Bye bye.