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155

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55

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454

The drama of Passover, 1934.

407

THE DRAMA OF PASSOVER

WRHS

By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple
On



Sunday morning, April 1, 1934.

The story of Passover, my friends, as well as the hero of Passover, Moses, and the symbolic representation of Passover, the Seder, are all full of drama. The word drama means deeds, action, and these three themes connected with the Passover are replete with action.

You take the Seder: the Seder is a dramatic repetition of the story of the Exodus and it is a perfect setting for that story. The table is a careful arrangement of symbolic properties connected with the Exodus and no master of stage craft could have improved upon it. In the Haggadah is a series of scenes and tableaux full of color and action. Here is the festive board around which the entire holiday rests.

At the head of the table the father of the house, enthroned as it were, in dignity and honor, and around him his wife, children, friends and a stranger -- always a stranger at the Seder table -- symbolic of hospitality and brotherliness (remember that we were strangers in the Land of Egypt). The table itself is aglitter with the light of the festival candles, the white linen, shining silver and the rich color of wine -- a spirit of joy, unbounded joy. This is a holiday of a great deliverance, of freedom from slavery and everything that contributes to the cheer and happiness of the holiday is here.

On that same festive board is the "bread of affliction", the matzoth, the thin wafer of want and wandering; the bitter herb which is reminiscent of the embittered life of our ancestors; salt-water which is symbolic of tears. It is a background of tragedy against which our human happiness becomes more zestful and treasured! Then there is the roasted shank bone which is symbolic of sacrifice and the roasted egg which symbolizes the Passover sacrifice in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. There can be no freedom without sacrifice. There cannot be any progress without sacrifice of substance, of happiness, of life itself.

And here, too, is the cup of Elijah, that strange mystic legendary figure, the illusive wanderer upon the face of the earth, the prophet who must come before the Messiah can appear, Elijah who comes often but as often vanishes. The strange legend is significant. There sets his cup, untouched, mysterious, a sort of human libation of oppression and prayers and dreams.

And from the moment that the father holds up the matzo and says "This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the Land of Egypt" -- from that moment through the last words of the Haggadah which close in the mad happy madrigal of "Chad Gadhah" it is full of action, movement and color.

Children young and old love to play. That is why the Seder service is directed primarily to the children. It

is the young child who opens the service with the "Mah Nishtanah." And it is to him that the whole recital of the struggle is directed. It is the children who hunt for the aphikomen, that broken half of the matzo which somehow wanders away and will not return until the eye of some clever lad or lassie ferets it out from its hiding place and triumphantly restores it to its proper place on the Seder table. It is the voices of little children who sing the final songs of the Seder.

Not only do the children contribute to the play-form of the Seder. At some unaccountable signal, four strangers appear and begin to ask questions, the wise man, the wicked man, the innocent man, and a stranger who does not know how to ask questions nor what to ask. The drama is dialogue. Each one of these four mysterious visitors is made to ask a question and each one is answered appropriately. The first one, the wise man, is answered philosophically. The second, the wicked man, is answered indignantly; the third, the innocent man, is answered didactically; and the fourth, the one who knows not what to ask nor how to ask, is answered compassionately. Drama! All through the Haggadah movement and action.

And this is the strange service, the artistic, dramatic creation of a people which has a sense for the dramatic because its own life has been and is so full of drama. You take the story of the Exodus itself. What a marvelously moving revolt that is! The first revolution recorded in History! The first struggle of a people for freedom. There have been many since

and there will be many in the future but this is the classic first revolution. And here are all the factors which go into a popular uprising delineated.

The drama opens on a scene of suffering, of course. Israel is enslaved. For more than four hundred years it has been enslaved. Taskmasters bear down heavily on them. They build cities for Pharoah. They must even provide their own straw for the bricks which go into the building of mighty edifices of these oppressors. Their children are doomed to destruction if they happen to be male. They are cast into the Nile. The scene opens upon the universal anguish of a people battered into servitude for more than four hundred years.

Then the hero appears, the leader. His own life is a drama in itself -- of that we shall speak in a moment -- and his struggle begins to set these slaves free. It is a twofold struggle, against his own people and then against their common foe. For while the people want to be free they are slaves whose souls are corrupted by centuries of slavery, to such a degree that they turn upon their own leader, and Moses betrayed, must flee from Egypt.

He is summoned back and is driven back by a vision which he cannot deny. He sets about again in the work of the deliverance of his people from slavery. He tries to persuade these people, to reawaken in them the memories of ancient freedom. Then his struggle begins anew. Finally destiny inter-

feres. The plagues and misfortunes are visited on the Egyptians. The Egyptians are afraid. Israel takes courage. Finally the signal is given to flee from Egypt. Our great drama in Egypt is over.

The slaves come to the shores of the Red Sea. Before them is the sea and behind them is the enemy. Then the signal is again given for the courageous people to march into the sea. The sea is turned into dry land and the Jews of Egypt march to safety. The drama of the first revolution closes on a high note of glory. Moses and the children of Egypt sang this song: "The Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."

The life of Moses is full of drama. The life of Moses is the drama of heroic leadership just as the Story of the Exodus is the drama of revolt. Moses is the first great personality that appears on the stage of history. Up to this time all religions were anonymous. No great name is identified with any of the ancient religions of mankind. They were the instinctive creations of the hopes of the people. With Moses, a great dynamic personality appears on the scene of religion. Moses becomes a visionary and a creator of religion. Students of religion are impressed with the personality of "Yaveh" in the Bible. "Yaveh" of the Bible is no pale metaphysical abstraction.

He is a most vivid personality. He is power and life. He says "I am that I am." It is undoubtedly true that it was the amazing personality of Moses who first endowed God with this supreme personality. The drama of Moses opened on a high note of God.

Moses is doomed at his very birth. He is to be cast into the Nile. He, who is to be the deliverer of Israel, is himself delivered by the hand of a princess of Egypt, an enemy of Israel. This slave boy grows up in the palace of the king. Note the drama! This slave boy is brought up in the palace of the king. When he grows up he descends into the hovels of his brothers. Between joy and love, between pride and loyalty, Moses chooses loyalty. Day by day he sees the heaving multitudes of slaves and Moses discovers his task in life, his mission.

Then comes the next great dramatic moment. In the passion of uncontrolled youth, he slays an Egyptian. The next day he is betrayed by members of his own people. He is forced to flee from Egypt immediately.

Moses becomes a shepherd in the land of Midian. A long period of spiritual gestation takes place in his life. Then comes a day when the voice of destiny summons him again. God appears to him as a consuming heat, as a blaze, an overwhelming conviction. God appears to Moses in the burning bush and commands him to return to the teeming world of the Nile, to leave

his quiet shepherd life where he had been alone with God for years. He must depart from the free life of the desert. He must leave that world and go into the dark suffering world of Egypt.

Moses hesitates. He knows what the masses do with their leaders, how they wear them down and break their hearts. He recoils from this. "Who am I? Why send me? I am but a Lad!" That call of destiny -- that cannot be denied. No man can deny his own vision. He returns to Egypt. He again begins his work, first to persuade his own people that they want freedom and that they be willing to pay the price of freedom. They are afraid. But Moses persists. He teaches, pleads with his people. After a while the ancient memories reawaken the hunger for freedom. A people rise in revolt. A people break through the confining walls of four centuries of servitude into the open for freedom.

But the drama of Moses does not end here. Moses leads his people to the foot of Mount Siani. He knows that these slaves have been physically emancipated but that spiritually they were still slaves. There can be no freedom without law. At the foot of Mt. Sinai law is given to these people. A new moral code is proclaimed to mankind. A few days later these slaves, tainted with servitude, erect for themselves a gold calf before which they prostrate themselves in abandon. Moses realizes that these

people who can dance round a gold calf are not ready to build a nation in a free land. These must perish in the wilderness. For forty years this law giver, this tried and troubled man leads these freed men though not yet free men through the wilderness, through war, through hunger, frequently denouncing them and frequently his life endangered. He leads them while at the same time teaching the new generation the principles of freedom, the perils of freedom which are to preferred to the security of servitude.

That brings them to the threshold of the land of Canaan. It is the Promised Land toward which his eyes are directed. But he is commanded to ascend Mt. Nebo to look over the land which he will not be permitted to enter. For a leader must die with his own generation. There, on top of Mt. Nebo, Moses must find for himself an unknown tomb. In Egypt, vast pyramids are erected for leaders, of stone and granite. This leader of Israel must be content with an unknown tomb. The angel Gabriel spread out his couch. The angel Michael spread a purple robe upon it. The angel placed a pillow underneath his head. Then God himself descends and with a kiss he takes the soul of Moses to Heaven. Drama, my friends. What superb drama in this life! What a high note of epic grandeur!

And if you ask for drama, look for it also on this Passover in the life of the people of Israel. The drama of survival. See how many themes for drama you will find: The drama of the Exodus followed by the drama in the wilderness followed by the drama of the remarkable struggle in the conquest of Canaan followed by a drama of a long struggle against idolatry followed by the drama of the Babylonian Exile and later the drama of the struggle against Hellenism and the Maccabees followed by the drama of the struggle against the Romans, the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the people followed by the drama of two thousand years in exile followed by the drama of 1934 -- that of the Jewish community in Germany. This is the latest scene in this drama which is Israel's history.

No wonder our people have the sense of the dramatic. But fortunately, though our dramas begin in tragedy, they never end in tragedy. Israel knows how to transform dross into gold, how to transform the bread of affliction into the bread of life.

a question
Crito, the Athenian, asked/ of Socrates just before he drank the hemlock -- Socrates, you will recall, was sentenced to death by the Athenians. Plato in his immortal described the last hours of Socrates with his friends and disciples gathered about him. Crito, one of Socrates' dearest disciples asked of Socrates: "How do you wish to be buried?" Socrates replied:

"In any way you please providing you can lay hold of the soul of me, the spirit of me." This is true, my friends, in Israel. The spirit of the race is imperishable, the seed of eternal life is in us or we could not have lived through this drama.

That song which Moses and the children of Israel sang by the Red Sea at the close of the first drama, that song Israel has sung in every age when every drama turned out to be a miracle play. In 1934, the Jews of Germany, like the Jews of Babylonia, will also sing it. Next year, in ten years, in one hundred years, they will also sing: "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." The enemies of Israel sank like lead into the waters. They were annihilated. History obliterated them. But Israel lives on. The drama of Passover -- ^{is} that/the drama of Israel.

"When thou wilt go through the waters I will be with you and the rivers will not overflow thee. When thou wilt pass through the fire thou wilt not be burned and the flame will not be candle against you, for thou art eternal."

1. The story of the hus, the hus - and the symbolic representation of the idea - all full of drama. The word means "dead - action" - and all 3 are related with dead rather - script - moving, captivating, significant.

(1) Scene is a dramatic representation, the Exodus - a series of perfect stage-setting for a series of visions & tableaux. The Scene table is a careful arrangement of symbolic properties. No writer, stage craft could have expressed upon it the festive grand - and the happy family is holding at the head - at the head, the table - the father - enthroned, as it was, in the splendor of dignity and honor. About him his family - his wife, children, - and a stranger - symbol of hospitality and the house - (for ye were strangers in the land, Egypt) on the festive board is the glitter holy day light - and white linen - and the silver - and wine. Joy - joy unbounded! (This is the festive of a great delineation - of freedom, slavery - of national emancipation. Whatever contributes to any event it cheers and happens is praiseworthy But as that same festive board is the "board, affliction", the thin wafers, want and haste and wandering, and the bitter herbs, remembrance, the bitterness which filled the heart can slam, accents for long, weary centuries, and not forget - how long the shout time, recalling the sacrifice of the perished can't Contrast and conflict! The best ground of tragedy against which our human happiness becomes new zestful and more precious! And here is the roasted shank - bone commemoration, the sacrifice, the perished land on the even, the departure from Egypt. And the roasted egg - symbol, the ancient sacrifice in the ancient Temple in Jer. - No freedom without sacrifice! No progress without sacrifice, substance - life...

And here is the corp of Eliyah - Haaz, my trial, legendary Eliyah -
the cherish wanderer upon the face, the earth - the parent who
must appear before the Mr. can appear - who comes often
but who vanishes as often - the haabys, good hiding
the final redemption, all unmarked from all forces
of slavery & oppression - Here is his corp - untouched -
voluntary - a liberation of hope & prayer & streams!

And from the moment that the father lifts the
mat 30 as high - and proclaims: 111 100 100 - and
writes all who are hungry to come and eat with
the very close of 7375 - which means & climax
in the casual, happy, dizzy madness of 103730
that is drama action movement order in
the Order.

Children, young old, both plays! That is why the Order
is directed principally to the heart and imagination &
childhood. It is the urgent in the family who acts (L.D.S.)
and it is to him - that the reverted, stay is directed -
And it is the children who hunt for that brother half, the
mat 30 that travels wander away and will not return
to perpetrate the resurrection, the renew until the little
hand, some clues should lead a series percept out it
hiding place - and triumphantly rests it to its appointed
place on the Order plate - and it is the voices, children
who glancing round out in their eyes, happy
shows the final map, the Order -

3
I am not only the children contribute to the play-form, the leader.
But ~~even~~ at a given moment of ^{highly} ~~large~~ character appears
somewhere on the page, the ~~225~~ - and they, too, ^{appearing} ~~introduce~~
from a ray of, perhaps visible by its to all corners.
(All drama is in the foreground, dialogue. This is ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~1st~~ and
the 2nd - and the 3rd and that ^{when 3 words are expanded} ~~change~~ ^{that} ~~1st~~ ^{1st} ~~1st~~
He too must act even if he does not know how! The
picture, then of dramatic personae, the story as then appeared
in some old wood-cuts represented with little distinction
in the story, my childhood still huge with me - mysterious -
exotic - in their strange poses - in their ancient apparel -
Spear - foot raised - And each one is expressed apprehending
in the poet - philosophically - the other - indignantly - the poet
didactically - the 1st - compassionately -
This is the Seed - the entire ^{of drama} folk-creation of a
people - that has a scene for the dramatist - because I
own life has been & is still so full, drama! -

II. Exodus itself! A marvellous - moving drama of Revelation!
The first revolution in history! The first struggle
for freedom! There will be many many more in human
history. But this is the first - and here are all
the factors ^{which} ^{is} ^{with} ^a ^{popular} ^{appealing} dramatic - and the conflicts repeated.
The principles, seen that and action as here for
the first time ^{for all time} defined.
The drama opens on a scene of suffering. ~~and~~ a people is enslaved -
for centuries they have been slaves - Task-master rule over them.

Build cities for Pharaoh - must ^{only} provide their own stone for the bricks ⁽⁴⁾
which they baked with the fat from the palace, their greases.
- Their children, if they are male, are cast into the Nile - lost.
- Their hearts are latter - Their lives be lives - They cry unto the
Lord in the anguish, their heart.

(2) Their lives appear - the delusion. This life is a drama in
itself - of that we shall speak in a moment - His struggle
to free his people begins - a long, terrible struggle. First
against his own people - and then against their conscience.
✓ For while the people want to be free - they are still
slaves in mind & soul - You see, slavery had corrupted
their soul - to such a degree - that they at first
turn upon the very man who would redeem them
and threaten to betray him - Moses is compelled
to flee - But he returns, driven from the secular
place, Midian - by the vision which no
great leader can deny - His struggle begins
again - against his own people - (make it heavier)
(Germans) - and against Pharaoh - Pharaoh, rears,
threatens -

(3) Whispering in in in - They are visited upon the land
near the land - the Egyptians are afraid. The Israelites
take courage - the signal is given - They fly
from Egypt -

(4) But the drama is not over - The Enemy persists -
There is the Red Sea - 101/ 12/ 223 -

(5) And the drama ends in a poem of joy - in a uniquely
spring hymn - The song by the Sea - 12/ 223 224

III. Life, Moses - Hero, Passover - the full drama - the drama of heroic leadership - "Athletic tragedies of Statues and most regal argument!"

① first great rel. personality on scene of history
all rel. folk-creations - Anonymous - not creatures of outstared personalities

With Moses - the prophetic personality enters arena of rel. tho
Students of religion interpreted - personality of Jesus of the Bible - pale, metaphysical abstraction -

Intense life & will & power - "I am that I am"

An overwhelming Presence -

Abundant person of Moses first Endowed soul
Caught - unique quality; wonderful personality

② Moses ^{Boys in drama} ~~born~~ ^{born} to death at birth - Sublime -
Man who was destined to be deliverer - himself delivered

③ Slave child grew up as prince
When he grew up - look to 1311
From palace - descended to herds & slaves
But pride & Loyalty
Day by day to be held - bearing multitudes

~~Killed~~ blasted his murderers!

He kills an Egypt - in passion & with

A day later he prayed
Exile - wilderness of 40 years - stretches up

(6)

Shepherd - Learned to become Shepherd; his people
Tasted, too, sharp freedom, desert. Now is so free

Then one day his long period of Sp. gestation -

A voice - inferior & undemanding, calls him to life

God reveals Himself - a He - Consuming & incalculable
flame. an overwhelming & breaking Consciousness

Must learn - Heavenly word, the He - harsh

Hesitates - Knows martyrdom - Recoils -

Who am I? - Cannot be denied -

Returns - Conflict - Conscience -

At first fails - Far from learning - Additional

Spirits must be broken - People puntable -

"put a sword in their hands to slay us"

Moses persists! Bet. resentment - Love

He exhorts - Teaches - Persuades - Challenges

From the ancient hunger - memories -

Fire, rebellion as Knocked - The people

arise! Break them! Out to the

open space -

Sinai - Not enough emancipate. No freedom
without law -

158 - 1815/1816

VI. Our drama by its in tragedy but never ends there
we have the Alchemist's secret, many doors to gold
and the 'bread, affliction' with the bread of life

Crito Socrates - "How beamed with the beam?
just as you please - provided that you can
lay hold of me" - The seed external

28K 10

Tarant Egypt - Golden calf - 7th
generation unfit for freedom -

Must die in wilderness - flesh pots -

security presented - peace / freedom
After 40 yrs. / wandering - 1st yr. - suffering
brings new generation to Chuk-wa
& Promised Land.

His work is done. A leader must die
with his generation - . . .

Unknown touch - Pyramids - hit who!

Angel Gabriel - spread out his robe

" Michael - a purple robe upon it

" Zazazel - placed a woven pillow

+ God, Himself, descended + with a kiss took
Moses me to Heaven -

What superb drama! What high art!
epic grandeur!

IV. And the whole life, Israel - What a drama!
A miracle play. The drama, the Exodus -
The drama of the conquest / Canaan - the drama of the
struggle against Idolatry + Impiety - the drama

1. Story of P- Moses - Seder - all full of drama - "bleed"
2. Seder - dram. repr. of Exodus - Stage setting -
Table = careful arrangement of symbolic properties -
no marks of stagecraft - improved
 - ① The festive bread - and holy - at the head - strange
 - ② Glitter - Joy -
 - ③. But on same bread "bread of affliction" - Contrast
 - ④ And here is roasted shank bone - Egg - sacred
3. And here is Cup of Elijah - strange -
Here is his cup - untouched, solitary - Libation
4. And from moment that father -
5. Children, young + old, love plays - - @ x b j 51
Hunt for that broken half
Voices of children
6. And not only the children contribute - play-form -
at a given signal - 4 baffling characters -
Drama is dialogic - as is
- indignantly -
- 7- This is the Seder - art. dramatic folk creation

① Then long period of sp. gestation

A Voice

God reveals

Hesitates - martyrdom of leadership - Records

Returns

⑤ At first fails. "put a sword in their hands to slay us"

more persons - exhibits

✓ Save the ancient language

For, Rebellion - The people arise

⑥ Incarnate -

⑦ Soldier Calif - Symbol of servitude unfit for freedom

⑧ 40 yrs - Prison Land -

⑨ His work is done - must die - but then Toub

Gabriel

⑩ What superb drama - lyric with epic grandeur

10- What life & death - A heroic Play! The drama

1934 - Outcome -

21st 150

11- Our life-drama begins in tragedy - does not end

at the end

Kuri to - Tricaster

→ 24 X D

8. Exodus itself - Marvellously moving drama & Revolt

① First Revolution in history -

② Drama opens on a scene of suffering -

③ Moses appears - delivers - His life -
His struggle begins -

④ Wrestling with enemies -

⑤ But drama is not over - Pursue - Red Sea

⑥ Drama Ends - with it

9. Life of Moses - "Athe Tragedy of stateliest and most regal air" Drama of heroic leadership

① Personality - anonymous - Galutah - I am -

② Begins in drama - downed -

Slave child -

grows up -

But. pride

Day by day -

Wrestles his mission

③ Kills Egyptian - Betrayed

Flees

Midian - Stren up -

Shepherd - Tastes sharp freedom - Now is