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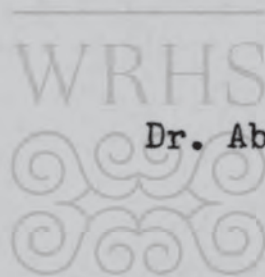
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Life, death and resurrection - for men and nations, 1941.

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LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION -- FOR MEN AND NATIONS

On the Concurrence of Passover and Easter



By Dr. Abba Hillel Silver



At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, April 13, 1941

On Passover everything speaks of life and immortality. Passover is the Universal Festival of Spring, the renewal of life in nature. Easter, too, is such a Spring Festival, the name being derived from Eastre, the Goddess of Spring. The word, Pesach, originally meant what our word Spring means -- springing into life, a thirsting and burgeoning of creative life a skipping and tripping and gamboling of all newly created life.

In the course of time historical events came to be associated both with the Festival of Passover and the Festival of Easter. With Pesach it was associated with the Exodus from Egypt which occurred in the Spring of the year. With Easter, the resurrection of the Christian Messiah which occurred, according to Christian tradition, at the Passover season.

As you will note even these historical events, the Exodus from Egypt and the Resurrection of the Christian Messiah -- even these suggest a Spring motif. The deliverance from the death of slavery to the life of freedom in the case of Pesach, and the resurrection from death in the case of Easter.

On Passover everything speaks of life and immortality. The Exodus saga which is found in the Bible begins with a decree of death. The Egyptian midwives were ordered by the King to see to it that every Jewish boy child born immediately be put to death. But the saga, of course, is not reconciled to death, and so we are told that the midwives feared God and did not as the King of Egypt commanded, but saved the men children alive.

And there follows in that story of the Exodus still another decree of death. Every first born male child was ordered by the king to be thrown into the River Nile and drowned. But again in the story life triumphs over death. Among these children to be cast into the Nile was the future leader of the people. And so, his mother who had hidden him from the eyes of the Egyptianspies, but could no longer hide him, made an ark of bulrushes

placed the baby in it and then placed the ark in the flags by the river brink. The daughter of the King came by and saw this little ark and had compassion upon this little child and she saved him. And so from death a leader was snatched back to life. In fact, the very name Moses means a snatching out of the deep water, a rescuing from death to life.

And there follows in this story of the Exodus still another imminent threat of death. Moses when he was grown goes forth to see his brethren. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and in the impetuosity of youth and in righteous anger he slays the Egyptian. When Pharaoh heard this thing he sought to slay Moses. And again the leader was in danger of death. But the story of the Exodus does not reconcile him to death. And Moses fled from the Land of Egypt to the land of Midian. And death is again cheated of its pray and life triumphantly advances.

And finally, in that self-same story of the Exodus, there is another dynamic struggle between life and death, and life emerges victorious. The children of Israel have now left Egypt. They are encamped by the Red Sea. Suddenly looking behind them they see a host of chariots, and the army of Egypt marching against them and the army carries with it death and the Israelites know it and see themselves trapped. Immediately thoughts of death come to them. And they clamor against their leader, Moses. "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" But again the miracle of life snatched from death occurs. Life cleaves a way through the waters of the sea, and a doomed people marches through the midst of the sea on dry ground. A miracle to be sure, an ancient legend to be understood as such, but a miracle no less incredible than the birth of a child, or

the blossoming of a bud, or a blade of grass break through the frozen clod.

On Passover everything speaks of life and immortality. Egypt is the classic land of the tombs of the dead. The greatest monuments of Egypt are the Pyramids which are vast sepulchres, mansions of the dead. All his life the Egyptian prepared himself for death. His religion was chiefly concerned with death and the Gods of the Netherworld. Its Bible was called The Book of the Dead.

When Moses came to Pharaoh in the name of ^aGod of Life, the eternal creator, the eternal summoner into being, Pharaoh said to him: "Who is this God that I should hearken unto His voice? I know not this God." Of course he did not know it. Pharaoh could not believe in a God who emancipates slaves, who hates taskmasters and oppressors and cruel rulers over men. He could not believe in a God who hearkens to the cry of the oppressed, who loves the stranger, the orphan, the widow, the beaten and broken of life. He could not believe in a God who is both of life and of death and who keeps His faith with those who sleep in the dust. But it is of just such a God that Moses spoke unto Pharaoh, and it is of just such a God that Passover speaks -- a God of life, a God of beauty and things imperishable in life.

On Passover, my good friends, everything speaks of life and immortality. Take this monumental figure of Moses himself. Moses who in his infancy was snatched from death and who in early manhood was saved from death. He becomes a life bringer and a life preserver. He leads from slavery to freedom. He gives them a law of life. He fashions their national immortality by linking up their destiny with those things which are endless and he brings them to the threshold of the Promised Land.

When God wishes to destroy Israel because Israel had sinned a great sin, when God wishes to destroy this wicked people, Moses shielded his people and says unto the Lord: "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy Book: Israel must not die."

And it is interesting to note another fascinating figure which tradition has associated with the Festival of Passover and with the Seder Service -- I refer to Elijah, that semi-historical figure -- that he, too is a figure which is life incarnate, the symbol of the triumph of life over death, of hope over despair, of light over darkness. Elijah like Moses is a redeemer. Elijah, according to tradition, is the man who will announce the coming of the Messiah. In the end of days, so legend tells us, Elijah will slay the angel of evil - Samael -- the angel of darkness and cruelty. He will establish peace and harmony in the world. And on the Seder night the doors of our home are opened to welcome this spirit of Elijah who brings hope and faith and courage into the hearts and minds and spirits of our people.

The idea of resurrection is linked up with Elijah. He himself did not die. He was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.

You will recall the story of the little frightened child who suddenly took sick and died. And the widow came to the Prophet Elijah and shed bitter tears before him. "Save my child!" And Elojah said: Give me thy son. And he took him to the upper chamber of the house and laid him on the bed and he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto the Lord: "O Lord, My God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come back unto him!" And the Lord hearkened unto him and the soul of the child came back and he was revived. And Elojah said to the widow: "See, thy son liveth!" That is it. Life. The undefeated life. "See, thy son liveth!"

Passover, my good friends, everything associated with this Holiday of Redemption and new life speaks of life and of immortality. And that is how it should speak to us today. This day you go forth in the month of Spring. Go forth as nature goes forth at this time, unafraid of the memories of the cold winter that has passed, and unshackled by thoughts of winter that may be coming. This is what Passover should say to our hearts today, to the hearts of all men and women. Take hold life fearlessly! Use it endlessly. Do not be afraid of life's challenges, bafflements, or of uncertainties, or its mysteries. Be reverent of life, but do not be afraid. Do not be deterred by menace of life, its dread or its colossal obstacles -- the Red Sea in front and the dread hosts all about us. "Speak to the children of Israel and let them go forward."

Do not be afraid of life. Do not be afraid of living. Do not be afraid for yourself. Do not be afraid for your children. In these times, only in courage can man find refuge. In daring and defiance and in great spiritual audacity only can man sustain himself and keep himself from utter demoralization.

When you come to think of it, every new born life, in plant, in animal, or in man is born in weakness amidst danger and against overwhelming odds of survival. less, Nevertheless these lurking dangers, the dread uncertainties never discouraged life. Life in the new born babe, in the new born plant, in the new born animal pits its weak and nascent strength, but its unquestionable will to live against all the evils of the past and all the dangers of the future. For life is of God. It is God who breathed the fires of grateful life into the world and these fires are inextinguishable. Therefore man ought not to be afraid of living. They should be afraid of living unworthily, of running away from the memories and the disciplines and the duties and challenges of life, of running away from the battlefield before the battle is over.

Those who work and live heroically, daringly - those people are never afraid of death. "I will not die. I will live as long as I declare the of

the Lord." Because these people know that something of them will remain after death, their name, their memories, the echo of their lives in some loving and proud heart. They know that those values for which they lived, those values which they cherish and for which they fought and which they served with their hearts love and blood -- that these will survive and that other hearts after them ~~will~~ will cherish them and serve them and fight for them. Therefore they know themselves to be the companions of a marvelous band of immortal spirits live in this world. This immortal world, this world of man is fashioned out of the lives, courage and sacrifices and dreams of men who are never afraid of life, who take hold of life, who mold it and fashion and stamp that immortal spirit upon that immortal life.

What is true of men, my good friends, is also true of nations. Nations live, die and may be resurrected. Some nations live unworthily and die ignominiously and are never resurrected. They haunt the ghastly corridors of oblivion. There are other nations, however, that live bravely and fight heroically and sometimes die, but dying only for a time, they are resurrected into greater and more glorious life. You see such death all around you in the world today. Death glorious and death ignoble among nations.

Will little Greece die? It may die tomorrow but it will be resurrected because that spirit which belongs to that little people, which dared to defy the ambassadors of death is indestructible. Will Finland die? Will England die? Nations who wish to live in time and in eternity must be prepared to pay the price. And the price is sometimes momentary defeat, momentary disaster, momentary death. But only momentary. Because anything that the human can destroy, the human hand can renew, -- so long as the spirit remains undefiled clean, strong, unbroken.

Speaking in the bomb-scarred University of Bristol, Churchill of England uttered these words. When you listen to them you understand why there will always be an England:

"I go about the country whenever I can escape from my duty at headquarters and I see damage done by the enemy's attacks. But I also see the spirit of an unconquerable people. I see a spirit bred in freedom, nursed in tradition, which has come down to us through the centuries and will enable us most surely at this moment, this turning point in the history of the world, to bear our part in such a way that none of our race who come after us will have any reason to cast reproach upon their sires."

That is the spirit. "To live in such a way that none of our race who come after us will have any reason to cast reproach upon their sires." That is life. That is immortality. To build the kind of a world with the kind of tools which destiny puts in our hands or to build it with courage and high resolve so that those who come after us will not have the occasion to reproach their sires.

Passover, my good friends, speaks of life and immortality for nations as well for individuals. Israel was in slavery in Egypt . Israel was in slavery in many other parts of the world. A vast section^{of Israel} is in slavery today. Four millions of our people groan under the lash of taskmasters, beaten and broken by the cruelest Pharaoh who ever arose. After four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, Israel was emancipated. Israel was reborn. Why? Because there always remained in Israel the eternal spark in ~~some~~ the heart of some great leader, some Moses, who in the burning bush of fiery experience heard the voice of God summoning him to Deity, to sacrifice, to struggle freedom and emancipation. As long as this spark, this undying fire, this fire which burns through the ages is never consumed, as long as this spark of life hunger, justice hunger remains in our people, in any people of the

world, so long is that people assured of immortality. And we, Israel, are proof of that. We are the living example, proof of how a people which harbors within its spirit the deathless spirit can outlive all the untoward circumstances of life, all the hates, all the persecutions.

Passover, my good friends, speaks to us and to the world today of Life and of Immortality.



1/ On Passover - everything speaks of life + immortality

Passover is the Universal Festival of Spring - The Renewal of Nature. (Easter), too, is originally such a Festival - the name being derived from Eostre - Goddess of light and Spring. 1000 orig. meant was the term "Spring" means - a springing into life - a thrusting and burgeoning of creative life - a skipping and tripping of all newly created life.

In the course of time (historical events) worthy of commemoration came to be associated with these originally nature festivals. With 1000 - the Exodus from E. which occurred in the month of Spring. With Easter - the Resurrection of the Chr. Messiah - which occurred, according to Ch. tradition, at the Passover season.

But even these historical events partake of the (Spring) motif - deliverance from the death of slavery to the life of freedom. in the case of 1000: Resurrection from death - the Jew took - by his dying for the people - in the case, the Risen Christ.

2/ On Passover - everything speaks of life + immortality.

The Exodus saga begins with a decree of death. ^{Midwives - Kill every man-child -} But the saga is not remanded to death. "But the midwives ^{refused} feared God and did not do the thing of E. commanded them but saved the men-children alive."

→ And there follows another decree of death. 1200 6. - ^{Redeemer would die} But life again triumphs. Mother had him - and when she could no longer hold him. ark of bulrushes - in the River by

the river's brink. Daughter of David - Had confession -
Saves him. From death the sinner is snatched back
to life! (3rd) - "Because I drew him out of the water"

→ And there follows in the Saga - Still another incident about
Death. - Slays Eg - "how when David heard this thing
he sought to slay Moses". Moses fled to the land of
Midian. Again death is cheated of its prey and life
triumphantly advances.

→ And yet again Death & life meet in the broil Saga in a
desperate struggle, and life emerges victorious! The children of
Israel now left in. They are encamped by the Red Sea.

Suddenly David and his hosts ^{this merchants} appear. They are marching
against them. There is death in their march. The Is. know
it. They are trapped! Before them the Sea. Around them the wilderness
& the advancing armies of David. "Because there were no
graves in E. had their taken us away to die in the
wilderness"?

But the miracle of life snatched from the jaws of death
occurs again. Life chews a way thru the water, the
Sea, and the drowned people marches thru the midst of the
Sea on dry ground. A miracle to be sure,
an ancient legend; to be understood as such; but no
less incredible than the Birth of a Child, or the Resurrection
of a dead, or a black cross breathing thru the frozen
cloud.

- 3/ On Passover everything speaks of life + immortality.
- E. is the land, the tombs of the Dead. Its greatest monuments are Pyramids - vast Sepulchers - Mausoleums, the Dead.
- All his life the E. prepared himself for death.
 - His Religion concerned chiefly with Death, with the souls & the hereafter.
 - His Bible is called "The Book of the Dead".
 - When Moses came to Egypt - in the name of a God of life - ^{God of life -} ~~God of Justice - Freedom~~ ^{God of Justice - Freedom} who is this God, that
- } אלהים אלהים - Eternal Creator ~~X~~ who is this God, that I should harken unto His voice - I know not this God"
- of course he did not know Him. He could not believe in a God who emancipates slaves - אלהים אלהים - who hates task-masters & oppressors and cruel rulers over men - who harkens to the cry of the oppressed, who loves the stranger, the orphan, the widow, the beaten brother, life - who is the Lord over life and death - and keep this faith with those who sleep in the dust.
- But of such a God Moses spoke, & Passover speaks the God of life and all that is good and beautiful and imperishable in life.

- 4/ On Passover everything speaks of life + immortality.
- The monumental figure of Moses himself is the symbol of life incarnate. Snatched from death in infancy and again in early manhood, he becomes a life-bringer and a life-preserver. He saves his people,

redemms them from bondage - forbids their national
life - gives them a law - which for centuries has
been their pillow - their law & life - and brings
them to the threshold of their promised land.

→ When God wished to destroy Israel - send
his - He shields them with his own life. He offers
his life for theirs - "Blot me, I pray thee, out, Thy
Writ! Israel must not die!"

→ So ^{also} is that other permeating spirit - the semi-historical
& the semi-legendary spirit - Elijah - whom Christian has
so appropriately connected with the Passover service - a
symbol of the triumph of life over death, of hope over
despair, of freedom over slavery. He, too, is Jesus
is a redeemer - the last redeemer - the promised, the
Messiah. He appears in every crisis and in every danger
which threatens Israel. At the end of days - he will
slay Satan - the angel of darkness, of evil of death.
He will establish peace & harmony with the world. And
on Feast rooft, the door is opened, so that his spirit
may enter every Jewish house-hold to breathe hope
of faith & change into new heart and new
spirit.

Resurrection is linked with E - He himself did not

do. He was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.

→ Son, the Widow of Zarephath: "Give me thy son". Upper chamber
 laid him upon his own bed: "And he stretched himself upon the
 child 3 times, & cried unto the Lord: "O Lord, my God, I pray thee,
 let this child's soul come back unto him" And the Lord harkened
 unto the voice of E. & the soul of the child came back unto him
 and he revived - "See, thy son liveth!"

→ "See, thy son liveth"! Life! Undeclared life!

5/ Parents should speak to all, of as, of life - & Immortality!

→ Take hold of life, fearlessly! Use it, eagerly! Do not
be afraid of its challenges, its uncertainties, its bafflements,
its mysteries. Be reverent, but unafraid! Do not
be deterred by menace or dread or collateral obstacles.
The Red Sea in front - the dread hosts all around. 223

→ Do not be afraid of life - living - you men, your
children! In time need or then, only in courage
can a man find refuge - only in daring and defiance
in great spiritual audacity can an escape total
demoralization.

- Every new life in plant, or animal or man is bore in waters, amidst dangers, against overwhelming odds & survival. But the lurking dangers, the dread uncertainties do not deter life. It pits its nascent strength ~~and~~ but firm resolve against all the evils, the past and all the dangers & the future.
- For it is a god! It is god who breathed the breath of life into creation — and they are inextinguishable.
- Be afraid not of life, but of living unworthily, of running away from life, of leaving the battle-field before the battle is over.
- Those who live unworthily, heroically, dauntlessly as men afraid of death. Why not? They know that something of them will remain when they are gone — their name, their memory, the echo of their deeds in some loving friend's heart —
- They know that the value which they cherished and seeded with their hearts' love and blood will survive, and other hearts will cherish them & fight for them.
- They are companions / as immortal band of free, ardent & undefeated spirit who have a firm immortality; for this immortal world, ~~is~~ this home of man is built by them, and their loyalties, courage, sacrifice & dreams.

6) Nations, too, like men, live and die and are resurrected. C
Some live unworthily & die ignominiously & are never resurrected!
They haven't the ghostly candors of oblivion.
Others live bravely - fight heroically against great odds -
die for a time - only to be resurrected into greater & more
glorious life.

There is such death, both glorious & ignominious, before
our very eyes to-day.
Will Greece ever die utterly? or Serbia? or Finland?
or Holland? or England?

→ Nations who wish to live in time and eternity must
be prepared to pay the price of momentary defeat, and
disaster.

All that human hands destroy - human hands can
rebuild. Only the spirit must remain intact -
undefiled, Ours! (Churchill)

7) Paradise speaks of life & immortality for Nations, too.
- Israel was in slavery - 400 yrs. - many
- It was released to freedom & new life.
- Because leaders remained true to ideals. Moses -
Because in heart of burning bush they heard the Voice
calling to Duty, Faith, & Freedom -

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1941.

LIFE, DEATH, AND RESSURECTION -- FOR MEN AND NATIONS

Everything about Passover as well as Easter speaks of life and immortality. Both Passover and Easter are universal festivals of Spring, of the renewed life in nature. The historical events which in the course of time came to be associated with these nature festivals also partake of the Spring motif. In the case of Passover, deliverance from the death of slavery to the life of freedom. In the case of Easter, resurrection from death, the open tomb, life issuing from the grave. The message of Passover and Easter is one of undefeated life, and it is a summons to go forth as nature goes forth in Springtime, unshackled by the memories of a winter that is past, and unafraid of thoughts of the winter that is to come.

Men should take hold of life fearlessly and use it endlessly. Every new life in plant or animal or man is born in weakness, ~~in~~ amidst dangers, and against overwhelming odds of survival. But the lurking dangers of the dread uncertainties never discourage life. Every new life pits its nascent strength against all the evils of the past and all the dangers of the future. Men should not be afraid of life's challenges, bafflements and mysteries. They should be reverent, but unafraid. In times such as these, only in courage can a human find refuge, only through daring defiance and great spiritual audacity can one escape total demoralization.

We should be afraid not of living, but of living unworthily, of running away from life, of leaving the battlefield before the battle is over. Those who live ~~un~~worthily and daringly are never afraid of death. They know that something of good will remain when they are gone -- their name, their memory, the echo of their lives in some proud and loving heart. They know that the values which they cherish and which they served with their heart's love and blood will survive them, and that other hearts will cherish them. They are, thus, the companions of a glorious band of free, ardent and undefeated spirits who share a group

immortality who never leave this immortal world for it is they themselves who built it out of their courage, loyalty, dreams and sacrifice.

Nations, too, like men, live and die and may be resurrected. Some nations live unworthily, die ignominiously and are never resurrected. They haunt the ghostly corridors of oblivion. Other nations live bravely, fight heroically and may die for a time only to be resurrected into greater and more glorious life. We see such national deaths both glorious and ignoble all around us today. Nations who wish to live in time and eternity must be prepared to pay the price in terms of a temporary defeat and disaster. All that human hands destroy human hands can rebuild if only the spirit of the nation remains intact, undefiled and cleaned.

