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Guests at our Seder, Part I, 1953.

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GUESTS AT OUR SEDER

The Great Men and Women of the Passover Drama

March 29, 1953

My dear friends, we are on the eve of that great festival of Passover. Tomorrow night we shall be ushering in this festival with the impressive ritual of the Seder. At the Seder we shall read the Haggadah and recount the story of the exodus from Egypt. We are commanded in the Bible, "And thou shalt tell it unto thy children." The young are encouraged at the Seder service to inquire, to ask questions. "Manish-tana ha-lei-la haze?" "Why is this night different from all other nights?" Certain special ceremonies, symbols, foods, drinks are made part of the Seder service in order to arouse the curiosity of the young, to incite their interest. There is the unleavened bread, there is the bitter herbs, there are the four cups of wine. It is a commandment, incumbent upon us to recount the story of the exodus from Egypt from year to year.

Evidently, there are embodied in the story of Passover some great ideas, some ideas which are worthy of transmission, some ideas which are important to remember for the survival of Israel and for the progress of mankind. Of these ideas we have spoken frequently in the past. They all suggest themselves quite readily when we tell the story of Passover. The central idea, of course, is the idea of liberty, of freedom and of resistance to tyranny. This idea is as valid today as it was in the days of Pethom and Raamses. The right of man to be free, the duty of man to be free, the price which must be paid for freedom, how freedom is endangered, how freedom can be lost, how the moral law alone can make freedom secure; these are ideas which adjust themselves readily as we recount the story of the revolution, the first revolution in history and the exodus of our ancestors from slavery to freedom.

There is another great central idea in this festival, and that is the regard which we must have for other men, for all men, even for strangers. "Do not oppress the stranger," we read in the Bible over and over again, "for we were strangers in the land

of Egypt." Some of the noblest moral laws of the Bible were based upon the consideration, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. From your own experience learn to be kindly, tolerant, considerate always."

But there are not only great ideas associated with this festival of Passover; there are also great personalities associated with it, a host of wonderful and intriguing people, men and women who live and breathe and speak and act in this immortal Passover saga. The drama of Pesach is rich in "dramatis personae", in colorful human beings, who enact each his destined role in this great drama of history. And as you listen to the reading of the Haggadah, these people pass before you - kings and prophets, slaves and princesses, sages and scholars, saints and sinners. They all pass before you out of the distant past and from far-away lands, and yet you'll recognize them for their lives are not altogether strange to you, nor are their ideals and their hopes, their triumphs and their failures, and their motives and their problems.

On Seder night we find ourselves in their company; or rather, they are our guests at our Seder table. They sit with us at our festive board and we listen to their story. We are moved by the impact of their personalities or their deeds. Here, for example, comes a beautiful princess to our festive board, the daughter of Pharaoh, richly apparelled as befits an Egyptian princess, and attended by her maidens. She is a very welcome guest in our home. We know her story. She had come down to bathe in the waters of the Nile, and there, among the reeds by the river's brink, she espied a little basket made of bulrushes, daubed with pitch and bitumen, and she sent one of her maidens to fetch it. "And when she opened it," says the Bible, "she saw the child", the future emancipator, the future lawgiver of mankind, Moses, and "Lo," says the Bible, "the babe was crying and she took pity on him."

And here we are startled into a profound reflection as we read these simple words, "And lo, the babe was crying and she took pity on him." The of subsequent history of Israel, of Judaism - yes, also of Christianity and of the Western world and its civilization was determined by this simple act that a lovely young woman had pity on a helpless, crying child.

Had she not taken pity on this crying child, the whole history of Israel and of the Western world might have been changed. The princess could not know that this child would some day become a great leader of men, a titan among the sons of men. She quickly realized that it was one of the pitiful children of the Hebrew slaves whose death had been decreed by her own father; yet she took pity on him. She drew him out of the water and so, this child lived and came to be known as Moshe - Moses - for he was drawn out of the waters by the pity and the compassion of a woman.

The legend says that Jochebet, the real mother of Moses, upon learning what this princess had done for her child, named the princess Bachya, the daughter of God.

My dear friends, simple acts, very simple acts, often set in motion vast historical processes. A pebble cast into the bosom of a lake will sometimes create ripples, widening and extending until they reach the othermost shores. Vast snow avalanches in the mountains have often been started by not more than a single stone thrown or by the vibrations of one loud sound. Acts have their repercussions, and a simple good deed may set a whole nation free or destroy a whole empire.

And so, we welcome Bachya, we welcome this princess of the Nile to our festive Seder board. She is one of a goodly company who will be with us on Seder eve.

Not much is said in the Passover story about the mother and father of Moses, Joshebed and Amram. They are not even mentioned by name in the 2nd Chapter of Exodus which tells of the birth of Moses. ^{All} that the Bible says is this: "Now a man from the house of Levi went and took to wife a daughter of Levi," as if to suggest that greatness in a man is not always traceable to famous ancestry or to exalted birth. A great man is his own ancestor. The parents of Abraham Lincoln do not explain his greatness, nor the ancestors of Shakespeare or Beethoven or Einstein. Often greatness skyrockets out of total anonymity, out of complete mediocrity.

The sages say that from Rahab, the harlot, who lodged in the walls of Jericho, there descended seven kings and eight prophets, including the prophet Jeremiah.

According to our tradition, it is ~~xxx~~ told that Amram, the father of Moses, was a man of distinction, and Jochebed, his mother, was a woman of piety and wisdom, but Moses' greatness is not attributed to his exalted birth. And they are welcome, the parents of Moses, to our Seder. We know their story, too. We know the pride which was theirs in the birth of Moses who, according to the legend, filled their humble hut with radiant light the moment he was born. And we know, too, the anguish of their hearts when they realized that they must destroy their child for that was the order of the king, of Pharaoh. "And he was a goodly child," says the Bible. "And he was a beautiful child." And they resolved not to put their child to death, as the law required. They resolved rather to endanger their own lives and to keep the child, and so the mother hid him for three months, and when she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of rushes, and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the edge of the Nile. And prayerfully, with anguish in her heart, she waited, as did her daughter, Miriam, to see what would happen to the child, what would be done to him. And in a sense, the whole world waited with bated breath to see what would happen to this future redeemer and emancipator.

Who can fathom the hearts of these parents, the pathos and the sorrow of their lives, the fears which wracked them and their sacrificial love? And who can fathom the deep joy of the mother when through the humanity of the princess of Pharaoh, her babe was rescued from the waters of the Nile and given to her to be nursed and weaned? And again, who can fully appreciate what passed through her soul, the longing and the loneliness, when she had to return her child Moses to the princess, to be adopted as her son, to be raised as an Egyptian, far removed from his people and unaware of his own family and his own parents. The parents of Moses are welcome guests to our homes on Seder eve.

And then there is the lovely Miriam, the sister, she who watched the little improvised craft which carried the high hopes of a people, she who directed the princess to a Hebrew woman, her own mother, to nurse the child; Miriam who stood by Moses in all his

trials and tribulations, who exalted with Moses in his triumphs, and when he finally led the children of Israel across the Red Sea to freedom, "Miriam took a timbrel in her hand and led all the women in song and dancing. Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and the rider hast he cast into the sea." Miriam was rewarded for her loyalty by the gift of prophesy, and for her merit, said the legend, a well of never-failing waters, of fresh water called the Well of Miriam followed the children of Israel in all their wanderings in the wilderness. And when Miriam died, the well vanished. Miriam, too, has a place at our Passover board. We welcome her with joy.

And Aaron, the brother of Moses and of Miriam, so different from Moses and yet, so unselfish, so devoted, so loyal - always he held up the hand of Moses as he did in the battle with the Amelechites. Aaron was the spokesman for Moses for Moses was slow of speech and of a slow tongue. Aaron was not as strong as Moses, as firm in purpose. Aaron was really not a great leader of men. He yielded in a crisis to the clamor and the threat of the people, and he helped them to build the golden calf. But he was kind, friendly, a peace-maker always, settling quarrels between friends and families by telling each that the other was ready for peace; Aaron, of whom the great Hillel centuries later said, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving one's fellow creatures and bringing them near to the Law." Like Moses, Aaron, too, could not enter the Promised Land, and like Moses, the legend says, he died by the Kiss of God and was deeply mourned by the people who came to love him. Surely, there is a welcome place at our Seder board for Aaron, the older brother of Moses, the friend of man.

And there is another famous guest who is especially invited to our Seder - Elijah, Elijah, the prophet. For him a special cup is set aside on the festive board,

and during the reading of the Haggadah, we pause and open the door of our homes symbolically to invite the prophet Elijah to come and enter our home. Elijah is a great historic figure in Jewish history, wrapped in mystery. He is the center of

much rich legend and poetry. There is much in the story of Elijah that is reminiscent of Moses himself, who lived 400 years before Elijah. There is so much in Elijah that is the real embodiment of all that is essential to Judaism, of the unique genius of Hebraic prophesy. Next to Moses, he is the very prototype of all subsequent prophets of Israel. Elijah, like Moses, was a shepherd who lived somewhere in Gilead, East of the Jordan. He appears on the scene of History in the reign of King Ahab in the 9th century before the common era. Ahab was a great king but he had come under the influence of Jezebel's wife, the princess of Tyre who taught him to worship Baal. Next to the ~~xxx~~ palace of the king were the vineyards of Naboth which he had inherited from his father/ and prized greatly. Ahab wanted to purchase the vineyard and Naboth would rather not sell it. He inherited it from his forefathers and he wanted to bequeath it unto his children. And the King was agreed and was content to let it go at that for he was subject to the law and custom of the land. But not so, Jezebel's wife. She could not tolerate resistance to the will of a King, and so she manipulated in such a way that false witnesses appeared to say that Naboth had blasphemed and that was a crime punishable by death. As a result of the false testimony of these hired witnesses, Naboth was tried and sentenced to death and executed. And then Ahab went down to the vineyard of Naboth to take possession of it. At that moment the Prophet Elijah appeared, the conscience of the people who cries out to Ahab; "You have murdered, and now do you really think you will come to inherit the place where dogs are now licking the blood of the man Naboth whom you killed? In that very place will the dogs lick your blood and the blood of Jezebel."

Like the Nathan the Prophet before him, who had dared to face up to a King who had likewise slain a man, he said to him: "Thou art the man! Guilty!" So Elijah, champion of justice, dared to defy a king, and of course, his life was thereafter endangered, and he fled. He fled to the sacred mountain of Horeb where Moses received his revelation and where he learned the nature of the God whom he worshipped.

He prayed for a revelation and a whirlwind came, and he realized that God was not in the whirlwind, and then an earthquake shook the earth and he realized that God was not in the earthquake, and then a fire swept across the mountain and he realized that God was not in the fire, and then came a "still small voice" and in that still small voice he heard the voice of God which sent him back to the land of Israel in spite of the danger which threatened him to preach the word of God, to wage war upon the false prophets of Baal and to call upon his people to choose, "How long will ye halt and act as pagans? If you are for Baal, worship Baal; but if you are for Yahweh, worship Him."

Elijah, the prophet, is famous in our history not alone for his championing of spiritual religion and of social justice both themes the central themes of the great prophesy - but also for his great humanity. In the legend of our people Elijah was known as the friend of the stranger, as the miraculous healer, the comforter of the poor. He would appear at any time and in many forms among the lowly and the humble, in times of great trial and distress, to help men, to save men.

Elijah never died, according to the legend. He ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire, and he will return in the end of days. As Malachi said, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." Elijah is to be the emissary of good tidings, the forerunner of the Messiah, who will usher in the Golden Age for mankind. That is why Elijah, although he did not have any part at all in the story of the exodus and lived centuries after the exodus - that is why Elijah is part of the Seder story, of the Passover story, for Passover is the holiday of freedom, and it is the prelude to the hope of a universal freedom for the whole of mankind from all forms of slavery and oppression. And so most assuredly Eliahu will occupy an honored place at our Seder. We will have him partake of the special cup which is set aside for him and to rest a while in the bosom

of our families from his wanderings to and fro over the face of the earth on his never-ending errands of mercy and lovingkindness.

There is a beautiful story told of Elijah. A famous Rabbi met him once in a market place, and the place was full of people, of eminent people and of powerful people and of rich people and of great scholars. And this Rabbi met Elijah in the market place and said to Elijah: "Who of all this great throng of people will inherit eternal life?" And Elijah pointed to one man shabbily dressed, altogether without any sign of prominence or distinction, and said, "This man will inherit eternal life." "Why?" asked the Rabbi. "Well, this man," said Elijah, "is a turnkey in a prison and he treats his prisoners with compassion and tries to lighten their burdens as much as he can. He can't do much; he's only a turnkey in the prison, but to the extent that he can, he does it joyously and eagerly. That man will inherit eternal life." "And who else?" asked the Rabbi of Elijah. And Elijah pointed to two men, likewise unprepossessing, arrayed in motley garb, evidently two clowns, two jesters, and Elijah said, "These two will inherit eternal life." "But why?" said the Rabbi. "What about all these other men - the scholars, the wise, the rich and the powerful." Well, these two men," said Elijah, "made it their business in life to ease the sorrows of men. Whenever they find men grieving, stricken by sorrow, they go to them and try to cheer them up as best they can."

The world is full of sorrow and those that can bring a little joy into the life of men and who do it willingly, eagerly, out of love for humanity - these are the kind of people that will inherit ~~rich~~ eternal life. Well, this is Elijah and this is the man for whom we will open the doors of our homes tomorrow evening when we celebrate our Seder.

Well, there are others who are coming to our Seder, great and wonderful people, and one unknown guest, but of them we shall speak next Sunday morning.

- 1) ^{He goes} On Eve - To-morrow night we usher in - 230 - 2320 - ①
- ① x 3201 Young are encouraged to ask questions - 2320
- Certain special exercises, symbols, food, drink are made part to incite interest - serious curiosity - 2320 - 2320
 - 2010 - 4 cups, wine
 - 2001 2320
 - Evidently - there are embodied in 1000 - some great ideas - worthy of transmission - useful to proper of mankind - to survival of Israel.

2) Of these ideas we have spoken often - ① Liberty - as valid - ^{as valid to that}
 to-day as in the days of Ptolemy and Ptolemy - the right of man to be free - the duty of man to be free - ^{idea, which will be part - so-called}
 ① how freedom is won - ② Endangered ③ How it can be lost ④ How the moral law alone can make freedom secure.

II. regard for the rights of others - of all men - even of strangers - Do not offend the stranger - for he is all that we have in the land, Egypt ^{the way to the observance of} is based upon robust moral laws, Bible - ~~are~~ ^{is} based upon the consideration - 2320. From our own experience.

3) But there are not only great ideas embodied in 1000 - but great personalities associated with it - A host of great and unifying people men & women ~~have~~ ^{live} and breathe that and set in the

in mortal
Assura Saga - The drama / 1703 is rich in (2)
"dramatic personal" - ~~to colorful human beings -~~ who ~~pass across the stage and enact~~
~~their~~ ^{defined} role in this great ~~historical~~ drama of history.

4/ As you listen to the reading, the ~~338~~ they pass
before you these Kings, prophets, slaves, prisoners, sages
and scholars, saints and sinners out, ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{dearest} ~~part~~ - and
for a away lands - whose lives as known not stranger
to us - as their ideas and hopes and visions, ^{perhaps} ~~and~~ examples
and failures.

In Seder night we find ourselves in their company -
or rather they are our guests at our side - they sit
with us at our festive board - we listen to them. They -
we are moved by the impact of their personality on their deeds.

5/ Here, for example, comes ^{beauty of} a princess to our festive board.
- the daughter of Pharaoh - richly apparelled, as befits an
Eg. princess - and attended by her waiters. She is a
very welcome guest - He knows her story! She had gone down
to bathe on the waters, the Nile - and there, ^{among the reeds at the river,} she discovered a baby
little basket under bulrushes - dangled with pitch and
tar to him - and sent her maid to fetch it - When she
opened it - she saw the child - the future savior of Israel and
law-giver, Moses - and, lo, the babe was

crying, "He took pity on him!"

(3)

And her - we are startled into a profound reflection:
the whole subsequent history, Israel, of Judaism, of
Christianity - the Western world and its civilization ~~was~~
was determined by this fact "that a kindly young woman
had pity on a helpless, crying child?"

(1, 2, 3, 4) - Had she not - the entire course, history would
have been changed

(a) She could not know that this child would some day
become a great leader, a man - a Titan among the sons
men - She realized that it was one, the children, the
Hebrew slaves - whose death had been decreed by her ^{own} father.
But she "took pity on him" - She drew him out, the
water and so named him ^{Ben} -

(b) Legend says - Jacobite - ^{Ben} - ^{Ben} -

(c) Simple acts often set in motion vast historical
processes - (a pebble) - ~~Small~~ ^{Very small} ~~avalanches~~ in the hills.
have often been started by not more than a single
stone, or even a loud sound. Acts have their
repercussions - and a single word deed may
set a whole nation free - or destroy an Empire
of wickedness -

(he welcome) ^{Ben} to our Seder feast!

6/ Not much is said in the 100 story about the Mother and (9)
Father - Moses - Jochebed and Auram - They are not even
mentioned by name in the 2nd Ch. of Exodus which tells the
birth of Moses: all that the Bible says: "Now a man from
the house of Levi went and took to wife a daughter of Levi"

As if to suggest that greatness in a man is not always
traceable to ~~ancestry~~ ^{ancestry} and ~~birth~~ ^{birth} - A great man is his
own ancestor! The ~~same~~ parents of Abraham Ishmael
do not explain his greatness - nor the ancestors of
Shakespeare or Beethoven, or Einstein - Of ten greatness
~~comes~~ ^{comes} shy-credit and total anonymity and
mediocrity.

(a) The story says that from Rahab the harlot
there descended 7 kings and eight prophets - including
the prophet Jeremiah.

(b) According to Jochebed Auram was ^{indeed} a man
of distinction and Jochebed a woman, ^{indeed} a priestess -
but Moses' greatness is not attributed to his ^{ancestry} birth.

7/ They are welcome guests at an 30 - This parent
(Moses we know the story too - the bride in the back
their son - ^{their shame but was held with reluctance} ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~son~~ ^{son} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~argument~~ ^{argument} ~~out~~ ^{out} ~~having~~ ^{having} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~do~~ ^{do} ~~away~~ ^{away} ~~with~~ ^{with}
him - "He was a really child" says the Bible - 1 x 11 K O X 1

21 21 10 - they would not do away with him - a 15

the bar spread - they had death - but they had him 3

months - and after he could find him no longer in

from the him a market week marks - and he found

child in it and placed it among the needs at the day

the N.C. and prepared water - and a del for

daughter. Mission, to as what could be done for them -

as a nurse the what would water will later

death to as what could happen to him -

with can gather the heart, three hours - the patient

and remain, then him, these hours which wrecked them -

and then a fearful loss - when the patient died the

deep joy, the mother - when her gate is marked & he

hundred and weaned - but a girl who can find

approach what passed there in and within

to be accepted in the way, the people, and women

who are young and young

8). And this is how the mission who watched the little

great what caused the life a child - who daughter

the mission - & a little woman - in our with -

never the child - who stood by him in all his
trials - who ~~was~~ walked with him in his dream
- and when - crossed the Red Sea - "Moses took a
tribunal in his hand, and ~~led~~ led all the women in song
and dancing - "Sing to the Lord, for he has overcome
powerfully, the horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea"

He was rewarded - gift / prophecy - and for his
merit, - Joseph a well of ever-fresh water - the Well, which
followed the children, Israel in all their wanderings, giving
the wilderness - and when she drew the well she drawed.
Psalms - too - has a place at our 130

9/ And Aaron - brother of Moses + Miriam - is different
from Moses - but so devoted, so loyal, so selfless - always he held up the hand of Moses, as he did in the
He was the spokesman for Moses - for he was different / special

He was not a strong, as Aaron, in that - He was not a Leader
He yielded to clamor and threat - 135 -

But he was kind, friendly, - a peace-maker always - "settling the
quarrels but friends and families by 'telling each that the
other was ready for peace'"

Aaron, & when Held said - "Be the deeply, Aaron
living peace and pursuing peace - loving his fellow
creatures - and bringing them near to the Law"

Nathan's Vineyard - Elijah crossed - רפ"י אֵלִיָּהוּ (8)
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַב אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ - אֵלֵינוּ
וְאֵלֵינוּ רַב אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ

- Little Nathan - David - לִי הָיָה אֵל - Champion & Justice

- Fled to ^{Samuel} Horeb (Moses) - Whirlwind, earthquake, Fire

וְיִשְׁרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ = because persecute Champion of Jehovah

- Return to his mission - was upon false prophecy for
- and calls upon his people - How long will ye halt -

- Elijah is famous in our history not alone for his championing
of Spiritual Religion and, social justice - but also for his
great humanity - In the legend, as people who came
to be known as the unmercenary healer, the friend
the stranger, the comforter, the poor - He would
appear in many forms and guises - among the lowly
and the humble - and in times of great trial and danger
to men men.

- He never died - He ascended into heaven in a chariot
of fire. He will return in the end of days - As Malachi
said "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before
the great and terrible day of the Lord comes - and he will
turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts
of children to their fathers." He will be the ^{equivalent of God} for us, the
Messiah - who will usher in the Golden Age

That is why Elijah is welcomed to our home on (9)
Passover - which is the holiday of freedom - and which
is the prelude to the universal freedom, manhood
from all power, slavery and oppression.

11/. Most especially ~~the~~ (12) 10/11 - will occupy an honored
place - at our 300 - and as all invite him
to partake, the Special Aisp sit aside for him - and
rest awhile from his ^{many} wanderings to show us the
face of the earth - on his snows, mercy longitudes.
(Tuesday - dawn)

12/. There are other who are coming to our table -
- great & wonderful people - and an entire feast.
But, then we shall eat with West