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Guests at our Seder, Part II, 1953.

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GUESTS AT OUR SEDER

The Great Men and Women of the Passover Drama

April 6, 1953

My dear friends, a goodly company was already assembled at our festive board of the Seder when we had to interrupt last week our introductions and our welcome to these gracious visitors to our homes. You recall that we welcomed the princess of Pharoah, the parents of Moses, Miriam, Aaron, and the wandering prophet, Elijah. But others were still to come, to join our happy family circle.

Here comes, like a breath of spring, a dark and comely maiden, graceful as a palm tree, the fairest among women, whose voice is sweet and whose eyes are like doves - Shulamit, Shulamit and her beloved, all radiant, whose appearance is like Lebanon, stately as a cedar. They step right out of the Song of Songs and step right into our homes, bringing with them the fragrance, the music of spring.

For Passover is the festival of spring. Passover speaks of the rebirth of nature and of the renewal and deathlessness of life. That is why the most beautiful of all nature and love songs in all the world's literature, shir ha-shirim, the Song of Songs, is chanted in our synagogues on the Sabbath during the feast of Passover. For the theme of that song is, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of singing is come." And beautiful Shulamit and her shepherd swain, over whom love streams like a radiant banner - they dance and they sing this song of life and hope and spring in the gardens, in the vineyards and upon the mountains of spices, right into our hearts on Passover eve.

For Pesach, my friends, is the very victory of life over death. The story of Pesach begins with a decree of death. Every male child born shall be thrown into the Nile - that was the decree of the Pharoah. Thus, death was pronounced over a people

but, reads the story in the Book of Exodus, the midwives feared God and did not do as the King commanded, but saved the children, and life triumphed over death.

And the story of Pesach continues with yet another ominous threat of death. Moses was to die, to die as an infant. He was to be thrown into the Nile, and death was to triumph, not only ~~an~~ his own personal death, but the death of a people in perpetual slavery and bondage. But the mother of Moses loved him dearly and would not obey the King's command, so she hid him. When she could not hide him any further, she placed him in a little basket among the reeds of the Nile. And then the daughter of Pharaoh came, the beautiful princess, and seeing the basket and seeing the child in it, took pity on the child and saved him. So Moses was snatched, as it were, from the jaws of death and life, his life, and the life of a people triumphed over death.

There followed still another threat of death and a struggle between death and life. When Moses is grown, he leaves the palace and goes down to the slave pens of the Hebrews to see their affliction and their torment and see their Egyptian taskmasters lashing the Hebrew slaves. In his uncontrolled anger, Moses slays the Egyptian and when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. Death again hovers, and life again seems to be defeated. But Moses fled to Midian and escaped, and again death is cheated of its prey, and life resumes in triumph.

There is still another threat of death connected with the story of Passover, and the ultimate vanquishment of death. The children of Israel have been redeemed. They have left Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses they have come to the Red Sea. Suddenly the hosts of Pharaoh and his chariots appear on the horizon. They are marching against them and there is death in their march. The children of Israel are trapped with the sea before them, and all around them the wilderness and the onrushing hosts of Pharaoh. But again, the miracle of life triumphant over death occurs, and life cleaves a way through the waters of the sea, and the doomed march through the midst of the sea on dry ground, and are saved for a great heroic destiny, a miracle, to be sure - a legend, no doubt, this crossing of the sea as if it were dry ground, but when you stop

to think of it, no less incredible than the birth of a child, the blossoming of a bud, or a blade of grass breaking through a frozen clot of ground in the springtime.

The victory of life over death, that is Passover. All Egypt was filled with the pyramids of death, the tombs of the dead. The religion of the Egyptians was concerned chiefly with death and the hereafter, with the netherworld. Their Bible is called "The Book of the Dead" and contains formulas of how people should conduct themselves in the netherworld.

When Moses appeared before Pharoah, Pharoah said to him, "In whose name do you ask for the release of these slaves to go and worship their God in the wilderness? Who is your God?" Moses replied, "My God is the Creator of all life, of all existence. He is the source of life. The God of Israel is the King Who desires life. The Law of Israel is the Torah, a law of life." And it is this God of life who triumphed over the Egyptian God of death and the netherworld.

And so, thrice welcome to our Seder are the beautiful, radiant young man and maiden who are aglow with life and aflame with hope, and whose ardent live is the very testament of victorious and undefeated life. Shulamit and her shepherd man are welcome in our homes in the spring holiday.

Well, there are also some very staid Rabbis and sages coming to visit our homes on Seder night, sages who are deep in ancient lore and rich in wisdom; they come to honor our Seder. Their names are mentioned in the Haggadah - Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarioth, Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Tarfou. These Rabbis lived long ago in the turbulent generation following the destruction of the Temple. Each one of them was a great Rabbi; each one of them is a story all by itself. Akiba, for example, perhaps one of the two of the greatest of the Rabbis - Akiba who did not know the Aleph Bes until he was 24 years old, who by dint of hard labor and study, helped by his wonderful wife and helpmate, studied for 24 long years and then became the greatest of the Rabbis of his day, not only a Rabbi but a great fighter for freedom. It was he who was the spiritual leader of the Bar Kochba rebellion against the Romans in the

middle of the second century of the common era, and he died as a martyr for his faith and his people's freedom. And the legend has it that his flesh was torn with combs in his body. Great men - these Rabbis of our people in the olden days. These men in the Haggadah lived at the beginning of a new exile, a long and dark exile for their people, longer and darker by far than the exile in Egypt, an exile which was to last for more than 1800 years. And these Rabbis on Seder eve loved to dwell long and longingly upon the story of the redemption from Egypt, of the exodus, so much so that the whole night of the Seder was not long enough for them to dwell on the story. Their disciples, we are told, had to come to them and tell them, "Masters, the time has come to recite the morning Sh'ma Yisroel."

Well, we make room for these venerable sages at our festive board. We would like to listen to their discourse and their learned conversation and to the distilled wisdom of their learning and of their years.

Among these Rabbis is also the gentle Hillel. Hillel is among them. Hillel comes to remind us on Seder night to add some bitter herbs to our unleavened bread and eat them together in order to fulfill that which is written in the Bible. But when you come to think of it, much greater things does Hillel remind us when he comes into our homes - Hillel, that gentle, saintly guide and teacher and leader of his people, whom the Rabbis compared with Ezra and Moses himself; Hillel also terribly poor who struggled hard to achieve learning, mild in his judgments. "Do not judge your neighbor until you put yourself in his place." Hillel reminds us of the very heart and core and essence of Judaism. It was he, you will recall, who was approached by the heathen and said, "I am prepared to become a Jew, to become a proselyte, provided you can teach me your whole law, the whole law of Judaism while I stand on one foot. Quickly! Tell me what it is, this thing you call Judaism. Sum it up for me - in a word, in a sentence." Hillel, a patient, kindly man, was not outraged at all by this request. He was not insulted by his seeming insolence. He said, "Yes, I can teach you

the whole law while you stand on one foot. The whole law of Judaism is compressed in one sentence of the Bible - in three words, in fact. 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' That is all. The rest is only commentary."

Most assuredly we are privileged to welcome Hillel to our table on Seder eve. And of course, the most welcome of all guests, the very hero of Pesach, is Moses. How could we celebrate Pesach without him? And what glory and dignity and majesty come into our home when Moses enters - Moses, the man of the hour, whose face, the Bible says, radiated light when he descended from Mt. Sinai carrying the two tablets of the Law, and whose face and personality have radiated light into all the habitations of Israel, and for that matter, to humanity athwart all these many centuries. So great indeed did our people regard Moses they were inclined to say, "Moses is equal to the whole of Israel." He fashioned a nation which has survived for more than 3,000 years - ~~not~~ while other ~~and~~ ~~many~~ nations, ~~and~~ ~~great~~ empires, greater and more powerful by far, have perished from the earth. That was the handiwork of Moses, a nation builder. He gave a Law to Israel and to mankind, the Law of Moses, which has survived for more than 3,000 years and which is today revered by more than half of mankind, which has become the basis of all civilized law of mankind.

Moses, the first revolutionist in history, who taught mankind that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, and mankind never forgot it. Moses was a leader - a leader, not a duce, not a fuhrer, not a commissar - a true leader of men who never thought of himself, never thought of his career, never thought of his fame - only of his people whom he led. His people was not always good to him. Frequently they abused him and accused him of ignorance and impatience with their suffering. A people always does that to its leader. Frequently they rebel against their leadership. Frequently the people of Israel sought to kill Moses, but Moses never stopped loving them. And when they sinned grievously against God and God wished to destroy them, and God said, "I will destroy these people and out of you, Moses, I will build a new people." Moses

replied, "Verily the people have sinned grievously, a terrible sin, but now, O Lord, Thou must forgive their sins. Wipe me out of Thy book! Rather I perish than this people." Moses was never jealous of his gifts, of his prerogatives. Someone told him that there were other people in the camp prophesying, seemingly trespassing upon Moses' prerogatives. Moses replied, "Would that the whole people of God would become prophets. God might place His spirit upon all men."

And with all his greatness, Moses was the most humble of men. When the Bible comes to summarize his life and to pay him a last memorial tribute, "This man Moses is very humble, more humble than any man on the face of the earth." And the great statue of Michelangelo which he carved and in which he caught the dignity and the majesty and the greatness of Moses - somehow this quality is lacking, missing - this quality of humility, humbleness - the man who recognizes that his work, his course, is far greater than he himself, that he is only an instrument, a tool in the hands of God and that God frequently breaks the tool.

Moses died with his aged and tired eyes straining to see the Promised Land toward which he had been marching and leading the people for 40 long and terrible years through the wilderness. He couldn't enter the Promised Land. No great man ever fulfills his program. Moses must die alone, outside of the Promised land, at the top of Mt. Nebo where no man will know his burial place. No man must know his burial place for fear that men, in the days to come, might want to worship the greatness of Moses, and in Judaism no man can be worshipped - no man on top of Mt. Nebo and no man on top of Mt. Calvert; only God alone can be worshipped. Moses died on top of Mt. Nebo, the Rabbis say, with the Kiss of God.

How blessed is a people that has such a hero to stand at the headwaters of its history and to lead it through the centuries! What inspiration, what confidence, what challenge! How blessed are we to have him come into our homes on Passover eve as our most honored guest, he who commanded the first celebration of Passover on the eve of the departure of our forefathers.

And finally, dear friends, there is another guest who comes to our home on Seder night, an unknown guest; in fact, not an individual at all, but the spirit of a whole people. Israel is the unknown guest in our home - Israel, a people. Israel's festival. It's not the festival of Moses or Aaron or Miriam. It is the festival of Israel. Without Israel there'd be no festival, there'd be no Moses, there'd be no Torah, there'd be no Judaism.

The Rabbis asked, "Who created for whom?" Was Israel created for the Torah, or was the Torah created for Israel? Who comes first. And the answer is given: "The Torah was created later. Israel comes first. It isn't merely the individual poet who sings; through poetry the people sing. It's the people that creates the poet and poetry. It was the people of Israel that was redeemed from Egypt. From its loins sprang these great personalities who are associated with the Passover story. Theirs is the genius for freedom, for faith, for ethical aspiration and for survival. The greatness of Israel is due to Israel itself. Here is a people always small in number - always small in number - but always great in spirit and in creative power. Here is a people that always believed in itself and in its destiny and refused to succumb to the most powerful empires on earth and to the most harrowing and persistent persecutions ever experienced by people. Here is a people that has risen from an immemorial crucifixion, a people that refused to become just another Levantine nationality, but violently dissented from the whole pagan, idolatrous world and pursued its own way, its own tortured way to spiritual freedom and independence; and a people who gave to mankind its idea of God and its moral code - to Christianity and Islam; the people who gave to mankind the vision of the distant days to come when poverty and persecution and oppression and war will be abandoned and men will learn to live in brotherhood and peace and justice; a people that set this vision for the whole of mankind, and a people that gave its sons and its daughters to die for it.

Here is a people that ate matzoh, unleavened bread, and morer, bitter herbs, not merely on Seder night, but throughout the long and dreadful centuries, and yet remained

steadfast to its faith, to its God - "through fire and through water, but nevertheless we did not forget Thy ways".

It wasn't merely an individual who was great - we had great Jews, many of them - but a whole people has enacted one of the greatest and most impressive dramas of human history; a people that lost in their own lifetime 6,000,000 of its sons and daughters through persecution and gas chambers; a people seemingly broken and totally defeated, scattered; and yet a people that found itself with enough faith and enough courage, enough energy, enough spiritual and physical vigor to rebuild after 1800 years its national life. What courage, what strength, what greatness reside in this people.

Pesach, dear friends, is Israel's most characteristic holiday. It is a complete paraphrase of its experience and its destiny. It is the very image and portrait of its soul. Israel, the spirit of Israel, the unknown spiritual soldier of mankind, comes into our home and we sit down on the festive board of Pesach night, together with the living, together with those whose memory is living among us, we "sing the new song of our redemption and for the redemption of our souls"; a beautiful holiday which we celebrate in the midst of a beautiful company. Amen.

1) A goodly company was already assembled at an festive board (1)
when we had to interrupt our introductions. - We welcomed the
priests, Pharaoh, the priests, Wise Men, Messengers, Baron - and the
wandering prophet Elijah - But other were still to come: - to
join our happy family circle.

Here comes, like a swath, Spring, a dark and comely
maiden, graceful as a palm tree, faint among women, whose
voice is sweet and whose eyes are like doves - Shulamith
and her beloved, all radiant, whose looks are navy and
black as a raven, whose appearance is like Lebanon, standing
as a Cedar. They step right out, the song & song, and
come ^{right} into our house, bringing with them the fragrance
and music of Spring.

For Passover (is) the festival of Spring. 2nd m. It speaks
of the birth of nation - and the renewal of life. That is why
the most beautiful of all nations and here sung in all literatures -
the psalm which is recited in our synagogues on the Sabbath
during the Passover week: Its theme is:

"For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,
the fountains appear on the earth, the time of singing is come."
Shulamith and her shepherd swain ^{or where, love, streams like a fountain} dance and sing ^{this}
Song of life and love and Spring in the gardens and vineyards
and upon the mountains of spices -

2) Poa is the victory of life over death.

Story of Poa begins with a decree, Death - 2nd L. - "But
the widow feared God and did not do as the King commanded,
but saved the children."

Story continues with the rescued Hebrew, Death - 3rd L. - But Mother
- daughter of Pharaoh - 2nd L. is married from Death

Then follows another threat (Death) Moses says Ef - 'And When 2712
heard this thing he sought to slay Moses. Moses pleads to Hashem
and again Death is checked, its prey - and life is triumphant

Chiding of Israel at Red Sea - Suddenly the hosts, 2712 and
his chariots appear. They are marching against them. There is Death
in their march. In a moment before them the Sea, around them the water-
ness and the menacing hosts, 2712 -

But again - life cleaves a way thru the waters, the Sea - and the
downed march thru the midst of the sea on dry ground.
- a miracle to be sure - a beyond us doubt - but no less
incredible than the birth of a child, the blossoming of a bud,
or a blade of grass breaking thru the frozen ground.

All of Egypt was filled with the pyramids and the tomb
the dead. Their religion concerned chiefly with Death and
the Afterworld - 'The Book, the Dead'.

Moses - 2712 (2712) - I am the Eternal Creator
of life - God of Israel (2712) - and then I will
life I overcame over the Ef. I will, Death

3). And so things were to me 2730 are the beautiful, radiant
gay man and woman - who are at ease with life - and at ease
with life - and whose radiant love is the triumph of victory
and undefeated life.

4). Saintages and Rabbin - deep in ancient lore and (with) can
be seen, come to know me 2730 are. Rabbi Eliezer,
Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiba and
Rabbi Tarfon. They lived long ago - in the turbulent
generation following the destruction, the Second Temple.
Each a great Rabbi - an epic story in himself - Akiba
2730 (Fighting for Freedom - never lost faith - back from with iron count -

They were at the beg. of a new exile & long dark exile for them (3)
people - larger & darker than the Egi - no wheel was to fasten it
centuries - They lived to dwell in long and longish upon
the story, the departure from Egi - that the mighty presence was
not long away by and their disciples had to come to them and tell
them. 'Masters, the time has come to reach the morning & d.

We make room for their venerable presence at our future bond.
We would listen to their ^{conversations and for} distilled wisdom of their learning
and their joys.

5/ The gentle Hillel is among them - He comes to remind
us to add some bitter herbs to our unbittered bread
and eat them together to fulfil that which is written in
the Bible.

But, much greater things does Hillel remind us - that
gentle, simple guide and teacher ^{& leader} his people ^{believed}
to Ezra and Moses ^(poor) ^{wisely in faith} ^{heard} ^{of} ^{Essenes}
of Judaism - (Near them - ^{read it})

Most assuredly we are privileged to welcome him -

6/ And, of course, the most welcome, all just as the here, good
Moses - how could we celebrate good without him -
And what glory and dignity and ^{majesty} ^{presence} come with an
honor when Moses enters - (Moses ^{as the} ^{light}
- whose face radiated light when he descended from the Sinai.
- giving the Law with him - And whose face and presence
have radiated light in to the dwelling place, ^{and}
and, humanity at least these many centuries.

14
 So great - indeed - 1100, to 3200 B.C.E.
 He fashioned a nation - survived > 3000 yrs - what unnumbered
 other perished
 He gave a Law - 3200 B.C.E. - which has survived > 3000 yrs - revised
 by 1/2, maintained - and the basis ^{manages} of Law to this day.
 He - ~~was~~ the first Parliament - taught mankind that "Respect to
 Tyrant is obedience to God - and mankind never forgets it
 He was a Leader who never thought of himself, only the people
 whom he led - He was abused by them - Rebelled against his leadership -
 Sought to kill him - But he always loved them -
 When they sinned - God - destroyed - He prayed for them.
 He was never jealous of his gifts or prerogatives -
 He was the most humble, meek -
 He died - with his aged, tired eyes staring to see ^{God} ~~himself~~ ^{40 yrs}
 - alone on top, but he was - with that ^{God} ~~King~~ ^{God}
 How blessed is a people that has such a hero to lead
 it through the centuries - What inspiration, What
 confidence, What challenge!
 How blessed are we to have him among our guests - he who
 commanded the albatross, the first Passover on ~~the~~ as the
 eve of the departure from Egypt
 7. The Unknown Guest - not an idol - but a people - 1100 B.C.E.
 Rahel in 1102 (102) B.C.E. - # "Das Volk dichtet" - "the people is the
 poet"

GUESTS AT OUR SEDER

The Great Men and Women of the Passover Drama

April 6, 1953

My dear friends, a goodly company was already assembled at our festive board of the Seder when we had to interrupt last week our introductions and our welcome to these gracious visitors to our homes. You recall that we welcomed the princess of Pharaoh, the parents of Moses, Miriam, Aaron, and the wandering prophet, Elijah. But others were still to come, to join our happy family circle.

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There followed still another threat of death and a struggle between death and life. When Moses is grown, he leaves the palace and goes down to the slave pens of the Hebrews to see their affliction and their torment and see their Egyptian taskmasters lashing the Hebrew slaves. In his uncontrolled anger, Moses slays the Egyptian and when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. Death again hovers, and life again seems to be defeated. But Moses fled to Midian and escaped, and again death is cheated of its prey, and life resumes in triumph.

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the whole law while you stand on one foot. The whole law of Judaism is compressed in one sentence of the Bible - in three words, in fact. 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' That is all. The rest is only commentary."

Most assuredly we are privileged to welcome Hillel to our table on Seder eve. And of course, the most welcome of all guests, the very hero of Pesach, is Moses. How could we celebrate Pesach without him? And what glory and dignity and majesty come into our home when Moses enters - Moses, the man of the hour, whose face, the Bible says, radiated light when he descended from Mt. Sinai carrying the two tablets of the Law, and whose face and personality have radiated light into all the habitations of Israel, and for that matter, to humanity athwart all these many centuries. So great indeed did our people regard Moses they were inclined to say, "Moses is equal to the whole of Israel." He fashioned a nation which has survived for more than 3,000 years - ~~and~~ while other ~~and~~ ~~subjugated~~ nations, ~~empires~~, greater and more powerful by far, have perished from the earth. That was the handiwork of Moses, a nation builder. He gave a Law to Israel and to mankind, the Law of Moses, which has survived for more than 3,000 years and which is today revered by more than half of mankind, which has become the basis of all civilized law of mankind.

Moses, the first revolutionist in history, who taught mankind that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, and mankind never forgot it. Moses was a leader - a leader, not a duce, not a fuhrer, not a commissar - a true leader of men who never thought of himself, never thought of his career, never thought of his fame - only of his people whom he led. His people was not always good to him. Frequently they abused him and accused him of ignorance and impatience with their suffering. A people always does that to its leader. Frequently they rebel against their leadership. Frequently the people of Israel sought to kill Moses, but Moses never stopped loving them. And when they sinned grievously against God and God wished to destroy them, and God said, "I will destroy these people and out of you, Moses, I will build a new people." Moses

replied, "Verily the people have sinned grievously, a terrible sin, but now, O Lord, Thou must forgive their sins. Wipe me out of Thy book! Rather I perish than this people." Moses was never jealous of his gifts, of his prerogatives. Someone told him that there were other people in the camp prophesying, seemingly trespassing upon Moses' prerogatives. Moses replied, "Would that the whole people of God would become prophets. God might place His spirit upon all men."

And with all his greatness, Moses was the most humble of men. When the Bible comes to summarize his life and to pay him a last memorial tribute, "This man Moses is very humble, more humble than any man on the face of the earth." And the great statue of Michelangelo which he carved and in which he caught the dignity and the majesty and the greatness of Moses - somehow this quality is lacking, missing - this quality of humility, humbleness - the man who recognizes that his work, his course, is far greater than he himself, that he is only an instrument, a tool in the hands of God and that God frequently breaks the tool.

Moses died with his aged and tired eyes straining to see the Promised Land toward which he had been marching and leading the people for 40 long and terrible years through the wilderness. He couldn't enter the Promised Land. No great man ever fulfills his program. Moses must die alone, outside of the Promised land, at the top of Mt. Nebo where no man will know his burial place. No man must know his burial place for fear that men, in the days to come, might want to worship the greatness of Moses, and in Judaism no man can be worshipped - no man on top of Mt. Nebo and no man on top of Mt. Calvert; only God alone can be worshipped. Moses died on top of Mt. Nebo, the Rabbis say, with the Kiss of God.

How blessed is a people that has such a hero to stand at the headwaters of its history and to lead it through the centuries! What inspiration, what confidence, what challenge! How blessed are we to have him come into our homes on Passover eve as our most honored guest, he who commanded the first celebration of Passover on the eve of the departure of our forefathers.

And finally, dear friends, there is another guest who comes to our home on Seder night, an unknown guest; in fact, not an individual at all, but the spirit of a whole people. Israel is the unknown guest in our home - Israel, a people. Israel's festival. It's not the festival of Moses or Aaron or Miriam. It is the festival of Israel. Without Israel there'd be no festival, there'd be no Moses, there'd be no Torah, there'd be no Judaism.

The Rabbis asked, "Who created for whom?" Was Israel created for the Torah, or was the Torah created for Israel? Who comes first. And the answer is given: "The Torah was created later. Israel comes first. It isn't merely the individual poet who sings; through poetry the people sing. It's the people that creates the poet and poetry. It was the people of Israel that was redeemed from Egypt. From its loins sprang these great personalities who are associated with the Passover story. Theirs is the genius for freedom, for faith, for ethical aspiration and for survival. The greatness of Israel is due to Israel itself. Here is a people always small in number - always small in number - but always great in spirit and in creative power. Here is a people that always believed in itself and in its destiny and refused to succumb to the most powerful empires on earth and to the most harrowing and persistent persecutions ever experienced by people. Here is a people that has risen from an immemorial crucifixion, a people that refused to become just another Levantine nationality, but violently dissented from the whole pagan, idolatrous world and pursued its own way, its own tortured way to spiritual freedom and independence; and a people who gave to mankind its idea of God and its moral code - to Christianity and Islam; the people who gave to mankind the vision of the distant days to come when poverty and persecution and oppression and war will be abandoned and men will learn to live in brotherhood and peace and justice; a people that set this vision for the whole of mankind, and a people that gave its sons and its daughters to die for it.

Here is a people that ate matzoh, unleavened bread, and morer, bitter herbs, not merely on Seder night, but throughout the long and dreadful centuries, and yet remained

steadfast to its faith, to its God - "through fire and through water, but nevertheless we did not forget Thy ways".

It wasn't merely an individual who was great - we had great Jews, many of them - but a whole people has enacted one of the greatest and most impressive dramas of human history; a people that lost in their own lifetime 6,000,000 of its sons and daughters through persecution and gas chambers; a people seemingly broken and totally defeated, scattered; and yet a people that found itself with enough faith and enough courage, enough energy, enough spiritual and physical vigor to rebuild after 1800 years its national life. What courage, what strength, what greatness reside in this people.

Pesach, dear friends, is Israel's most characteristic holiday. It is a complete paraphrase of its experience and its destiny. It is the very image and portrait of its soul. Israel, the spirit of Israel, the unknown spiritual soldier of mankind, comes into our home and we sit down on the festive board of Pesach night, together with the living, together with those whose memory is living among us, we "sing the new song of our redemption and for the redemption of our souls"; a beautiful holiday which we celebrate in the midst of a beautiful company. Amen.

Passover
1953

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~~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 - ^{"drawn out"} Moses - for he was drawn out of the waters by the pity and the compassion of a woman.

^{Yocheved}
~~The~~ legend says that ~~Jochebed~~, the real mother of Moses, upon learning what this princess had done for her child, named the princess ^{Batya} ~~Batya~~ 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, ^{which} ~~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 ^{single} ~~simple~~ good deed may set a whole nation free or destroy ^{an empire} ~~a whole empire~~.

^{Batya}
~~And~~ So, we welcome ~~Batya~~, 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.~~

^{Yocheved}
Not much is said in the Passover story about the mother and father of Moses, ~~Jochebed~~ 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 ^d ~~so~~ 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 ^{and} ~~total~~ anonymity, ~~and 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.

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So, we welcome Batya, this princess of the Nile, to our Seder board.

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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 ~~now~~ told that Amram, the father of Moses, was a man of distinction, and ^{Yocheved} ~~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.~~ ^{check?} And they resolved not to put their child to death, as the law required. They ^{chose} ~~resolved~~ rather to endanger their own lives and to keep the child, ~~and~~ as 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~~ put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the edge of the Nile. ^P ~~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 ^{These} ~~their~~ ^{Who} ~~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, ^{which} 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~~ ~~and~~ 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

According to our tradition, it is told that Amram, the father of Moses, was a man of distinction and Yocheved his mother, was a woman of piety and wisdom, but Moses' greatness is not attributed to his exalted birth. 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. 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. They resolved not to put their child to death, as the law required. They chose rather to endanger their own lives and to keep the child. The mother hid him for three months, and when she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of rushes, put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the edge of the Nile. Prayerfully, with anguish in her heart, she waited, as did her daughter, Miriam, to see what would happen to the child. In a sense, the whole world waited with bated breath to see what would happen to this future redeemer and emancipator.

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trials and tribulations, who exalted with Moses in his triumphs, ^{Moses} 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 has he cast into the sea." Miriam was rewarded for her loyalty by the gift of prophecy^C, 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, ^{Aaron} so loyal, ~~always~~ held up the hand of Moses as he did in the battle with the Amalekites. Aaron was the spokesman for Moses, ^{who} ~~and~~ 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~~ ^{OF AARON} 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.

~~There~~ 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~~, ^{him to} ↑

~~During~~ During the reading of the Haggadah, we pause and open the door of our homes symbolically to invite ~~the prophet Elijah to~~ ^{him to} enter our home. Elijah is ^{AN} ~~a great~~ historic figure in Jewish history, wrapped in mystery. He is the center of

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Elijah

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 ^{SS} 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 ^{Elijah} ~~he~~ heard the voice of God ^{→ a call which} ~~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 of them~~ the central themes of the great prophecy - 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 it is written~~ "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 ~~Elijah~~ ^{Elijah} will occupy an honored place at our Seder. We ^{would} ~~will~~ have him partake of the special cup which is set aside for him and to rest a while in the bosom

Elijah prayed for a revelation and a whirlwind came. He realized that God was not in the whirlwind. Then an earthquake shook the earth and he realized that God was not in the earthquake. 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 Elijah heard the voice of God--a call 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."

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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 ^u a beautiful story told of Elijah. A famous Rabbi met him once in a market place, ~~and~~ the place was full of ~~people~~, or eminent people ~~and~~ powerful people ~~and~~ of rich people and ^{and} ~~of~~ ^{RENOVED} great scholars. ^{The} ~~And this~~ ^{who} Rabbi met Elijah ~~in the~~ ^{asked him} 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 ^{is} 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 slaves~~, 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 ^{OTHERS} ~~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 ~~in~~ ^{such} eternal life. ~~Well, this is Elijah and this is the man~~ ^{whom we bid welcome to} ~~for whom we shall 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.~~

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A beautiful story is told of Elijah. A famous Rabbi met him once in a market place. The place was full of eminent people, powerful and rich people and renowned scholars. The Rabbi who met Elijah asked him "Who of all this throng of people will inherit eternal life?" Elijah pointed to one man shabbily dressed, altogether without any sign of prominence or distinction, "This man will inherit eternal life." "Why?" "Well, this man," said Elijah, "is a turnkey in a prison. He treats his prisoners with compassion and tries to lighten their burdens as much as he can. He cannot do much; he is only a turnkey, 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. Elijah pointed to two men, likewise unprepossessing, arrayed in motley garb, evidently two jesters, "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." "These two men," said Elijah, "made it their business in life to ease the sorrows of others. 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 eternal life. Such is Elijah whom we bid welcome to our Seder.