

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
LAST DAYS OF
PASSOVER**

BY

HESCHEL GREENBERG

**LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – LAST DAYS OF
PASSOVER**

**LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE
ESSAYS ON LAST DAYS OF PASSOVER**

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – LAST DAYS OF PASSOVER

**Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who,
more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us
for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption**

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INTRODUCTION

With praise to the A-mighty, I am presenting a collection of essays on the last days of Passover.

These messages were taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years. Some of them appeared around the Festival of Passover, while others were taken from the weekly messages on the Torah portions that recount the narrative of the Exodus. For the purpose of this occasion, I have reviewed these messages again, edited them slightly and added some insights here and there.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on, or adaptations of specific points in his essays and discourses. Some of the messages were taken from other sources, but, in most cases adapted, amplified and expanded, and/or entirely altered. These essays were intended for an audience that includes those for whom citing sources and

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using Hebrew terms would make their reading of the text more cumbersome. I have therefore not cited the sources for much of the quotes from Biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic and Chassidic literature.

* * *

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash that “The time of your Redemption has arrived.” The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

The last days of Passover are particularly relevant to Moshiach. Indeed, the very last day features a prophetic reading which discusses the qualities of Moshiach and the

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Messianic Age. In addition, the Ba'al Shem Tov instituted eating a meal at the end of the Holiday, which he called Moshiach's meal. The objective is to take the idea of Moshiach from Torah reading and bring into the realities of the physical world.

It is also my heartfelt hope that this effort at disseminating teachings about Moshiach will contribute to the process of changing our *galut*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah. And may this effort, in turn, contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

Heschel Greenberg

Williamsville, New York ח"ו

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ESSAY ONE

SILENT!

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ESSAY ONE

SILENT!

Two Forms of Prayer

As the Jewish people were standing at the sea, pursued by the Egyptian armies they did what Jews are expected to do in such situations. They prayed. Their prayer was more than just a perfunctory response to a bad situation; they actually cried out to G-d. Theirs was a heartfelt prayer of persons who are desperate for G-d's assistance.

There are two mindsets of prayer.

One is where we ask G-d to help us. In our minds, we feel that we are essentially in control of our situation—whether it is good health, sustenance, having children, success in raising them, peace and prosperity—but we want G-d to give our efforts a boost. It's not that we are desperate, but that we recognize that G-d's blessing can be helpful. In a

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medical situation, for example, we may put our trust primarily in the physician and the medication, but still reach out to G-d for His input as well.

The other mindset is when the situation seems hopeless and our only recourse is to turn to G-d for His salvation. This approach is truly what prayer is all about. According to Maimonides, prayer is the means by which we demonstrate that we depend on G-d. In truth, in every situation—now matter how good the prognosis may be for the future, G-d is totally in control. And a person with this understanding will always pray with the feeling that they utterly depend on G-d. However, in most situations our prayers do not seem that urgent and are not as powerful and meaningful as those when we are desperate and feel our total dependence on G-d.

What's Wrong with Prayer?

In light of this analysis one would have thought that when the Jews were standing

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between the pursuing Egyptian armies and the sea, with absolutely no where to go, their prayer was clearly the most urgent, desperate, heartfelt form of prayer, and an expression of their profound faith in and dependency on G-d. Yet, we are told, incredulously, in this week's parsha, that G-d told Moses to tell the Jewish people: "Be silent!" Desist from prayer. Why?

One Kabbalistic answer is based on the paradoxical nature of prayer. On the one hand, for one to pray they must generate the feeling that they are standing before G-d whom they petition for the things that they need. On the other hand, if we were truly aware of G-d's awesome presence we could not open our mouths to say anything. When a person reaches that point of total submission to G-d they are speechless, and there is no need for prayer. Their needs are automatically taken care of.

When G-d told them not to pray, He was not shunning their heartfelt prayers, He was just saying to them, that the experience of the splitting of the sea will be of such a

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magnitude as to preclude the ability and the need to pray.

Help Someone Split Their Sea!

Another dimension of this answer that conveys a practical message to us in our own lives is the realization that there are times when we are preoccupied with lofty matters such as prayer, literally or figuratively. G-d then says to us, “Be silent, stop praying, get up and help another person split their sea.”

The splitting of the sea, besides its literal meaning, also alludes to the things in people’s lives that cover up their inner goodness and spirituality, as the sea covers and conceals all that is in it. Helping someone else “split their sea” can be a far more G-dly experience than the preoccupation with our own spiritual and material needs. Certainly prayer and self-refinement have their place, but it can sometimes be overridden and enhanced by our efforts to help others.

Perpetual Splitting of the Sea

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This message is especially poignant in the present pre-Messianic era, as we stand ready to enter into a world in which the sea will always be split. Nothing will truly conceal the treasures that lie within the world and humanity. As we prepare for that momentous occasion, it would serve us well to reflect on the message of reaching out and helping someone else be prepared for the momentous spiritual reenactment of the splitting of the sea, the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption.

The manner in which we help to prepare ourselves and others for Moshiach is to split our sea by revealing our hidden talents and using them for G-d.

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ESSAY TWO

**THE RESPECTFUL SEA
AND THE NATURE OF
NATURE**

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ESSAY TWO

THE RESPECTFUL SEA AND THE NATURE OF NATURE

Returning to its Strength and Stipulation

The Jewish nation was sandwiched in between the sea and the pursuing Egyptian army. At that point the great miracle occurred. The sea split and the Israelites all crossed safely, while the pursuing Egyptians all drowned.

The event that brought the waters crashing down is described thus:

“Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and in the early morning the sea returned *l’aitano* to its [original] strength.”

Our Sages comment that the word *l’aitano*, when rearranged can spell *lit’na’o*, which means “to its stipulation.”

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This is a reference to the Midrashic teaching that when G-d created the sea He stipulated with it that it would split when the Jewish nation would have to cross it. At this point—when the sea completed the fulfillment of its promise to split—the Torah informs us that the sea did indeed keep its promise.

What Did the Sea See?

This raises an obvious question. Why did G-d have to stipulate with the sea at the time of its creation that it would eventually have to split? How could the sea possibly go against G-d's will? If G-d wants it to split, then it would split!

We find an incredible story in the Talmud that is reminiscent of the story of the splitting of the sea:

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was on his way to redeem some captives. When he approached the *Gina'i* River [that prevented him from crossing], He said to the river: "split your waters for me so that I can cross."

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The river replied: “You are going to do the will of your Maker, and I am doing the will of my Maker. However, in your case it is not certain that you will succeed [in redeeming the captives], but in my case it is definite [and I will not split for you].

He [Rabbi Pinchas] then said to [the river]: “If you do not split, I shall decree upon you that water will never have flowed through you.”

At that point the river split.

Here too, several questions arise:

First, wasn't the river's argument a good one? Why should the river that does the will of its Creator defer to the will of a person who is doubtful as to whether he will fulfill the will of the Creator?

Second, what did Rabbi Pinchas mean when he said: “I shall decree upon you that water will never have passed through you?” How could he decree that water has never passed? He could only decree that the river should dry up and cease to have water flowing from

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that time onward, but how can he decree that water should never have flowed?

Retroactive Delegitimization

Rabbi Dovber—known as the Maggid of Mezeritch and the successor of the Ba'al Shem Tov as the leader of the Chassidic movement—and successive Chassidic masters, answer these questions by referring to the aforementioned Midrashic statement of the splitting of the sea. G-d stipulated with the sea at the time of its creation that it would split for the Jewish nation at the appointed time. Similarly, at the time of their creation, all of existence was charged with the responsibility to conform to the will of those righteous people who are on their way to fulfill G-d's will.

By not splitting at the appointed time, the river demonstrated that it did not abide by the original stipulation made at the time of its creation. Hence, it had no basis to exist. Its existence was not in conformance with G-d's will and therefore it would cease to exist.

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Now, anything that exists temporarily, and whose existence is tentative, is in reality not a true existence even before its existence ceases. Evidence of this fact can be found in the Mishnah, which refers to rivers that dry up every seven years as “false rivers,” because their existence even when they flow is not genuine.

Two Perspective on Miracles

From all of the above a different picture about the sea splitting emerges that sheds light on the nature of many other miracles and provides us with encouragement in the performance of the Mitzvot.

There are two ways of looking at a miracle:

The first approach is that G-d intervenes with nature and alters its course.

The second approach is that when a person devoted to G-d wants to realize his divine mission, the general rule is that nature itself will accommodate that effort. This is so not because nature will change, but rather

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because nature itself was so programmed at the very time of creation. And while there are exceptions to every rule, as well as certain variables such as the degree of righteousness of the individual, the importance of the mission, etc., the general rule is that nature is our ally and not our adversary.

From all of the above a powerful lesson about the nature of nature itself comes to light. As stated, the general rule is that nature is not an impediment to G-d's will, on the contrary. And if it seems that there are natural barriers that do not allow us to realize our G-dly purpose, it is most likely just a test to see whether we are truly intent on carrying out the Divine will, as in the abovementioned story of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair.

When Rabbi Pinchas stated unequivocally that he decrees that the river split, it was his way of saying that I am so committed to doing G-d's will that I will not take no for an answer. It is that attitude that the natural order was “ordered” to respect and accommodate.

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Nature Created for G-d's Glory

In the world we live today, there are many obstructions that confuse us about the true character of nature. As a result, we often view the world around us as being hostile to our spiritual advancement.

In the Messianic Age—that we are poised to enter—the world will see clearly how all of nature was created for G-d's glory, as Ethics of the Fathers" states:

"All that the Holy one, Blessed by He, created in His world, He created solely for His glory, as it is stated: 'All that is called by My name, indeed, it is for My glory that I have created it, formed it, and made it.'"

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ESSAY THREE

SING ALONG

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ESSAY THREE

SING ALONG

The Miracle and the Song

The seventh day of Passover is the day in which several key events occurred. First it was when the Sea of Reeds miraculously split. Second, the Israelites were able to cross the sea on dry land. Third, the pursuing Egyptian army was drowned when the waters of the sea came tumbling down on them. And fourth, the Israelites, led by Moses, sang praise to G-d.

Of all these components of the miracle, it seems that the most pronounced is the song they sang and not the miracle itself.

Indeed, so important is the fourth component of this great miracle that the Shabbat—when the narrative of the splitting of the sea is

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read from the Torah—is designated as Shabbat Shirah—the Sabbath of Song.

One might ask, why do we characterize that Shabbat as the Shabbat of Song? Weren't there three other components to the event? It seems that by designating that Shabbat as the Shabbat of Song it relegates the miracle for which they sang their song of praise to a secondary position?

Wouldn't it have made more sense to have named the Shabbat the Sabbath of “miracles,” or the Sabbath of the “splitting of the sea,” or some other title that highlights the miracle and not the song.

Two Pens

The answer to this lies in a better understanding of the concept of song in Judaism in general and in Chassidic literature in particular.

Rabbi *Schneur Zalman of Liadi* (the founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, known as the *Alter Rebbe*) once remarked: “Speech

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is the pen of the heart, song is the pen of the soul.” This means that while one can express one’s ideas and even feelings by way of speech, one cannot express one’s inner soul with the spoken word. To reveal one’s innermost spiritual sentiments, one must have song.

Furthermore, R. *Schneur Zalman* explained, the only way we can rise to a higher plane of spirituality is by way of melody. Thus, the angels who are in constant pursuit of higher spiritual levels are always singing. Without song, we cannot “get away” from the state we are in and rise to a higher plane.

(To be sure, not all melodies can express one’s inner soul and elevate a person to a higher spiritual plane. The songs that are contained in the Torah, as well as songs that were composed and sung by holy people, are capable of doing that. There are, however, certain songs that can have a deleterious effect on one’s soul and actually stunt the process of spiritual growth.)

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The Song of Transition

Thus, when the Jews left Egypt, making a transition from one state of existence to a much higher one, from the state of servitude to others to the state of servitude to G-d, they needed to sing. Their song ensured that their movement out of Egypt was more than just a geographic change. It was also a major spiritual transformation. Their movement was not just horizontal but vertical.

The Exodus from Egypt was a twofold movement, a physical and geographic transition coupled with a spiritual transformation that necessitated and was thus reflected in their song, similarly,

We can now appreciate the significance of the emphasis on the song. The Israelites sang when they crossed the sea. That song was, in one important way, more significant than the miracle of the splitting of the sea itself, because the song reflected the dynamic of change that was going on within them and was the underlying spiritual catalyst for the entire miracle.

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The ultimate transition and the ultimate song

We therefore also find many references to the fact that the future Redemption will be accompanied by song. Even the song that Moses and the Children of Israel sang when they crossed the sea alludes to the future song that will accompany the future Era of Redemption.

When the Torah introduces the song, it phrases it in the future tense. “Then Moses and the Children of Israel shall sing.” Rashi observes that the future tense employed here is an allusion to the Era of the Resurrection of the Dead, when Moses will return to sing the final song.

This final song will not only express our obvious joy for having been redeemed, but it will also be the **medium** through which we express our innermost divine feelings and the force behind the transition from the state of exile to the state of Redemption.

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ESSAY FOUR

SING AND SHINE

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ESSAY FOUR

SING AND SHINE

“My Handiwork is Drowning, How could you Sing?”

The last days of Passover celebrate the miracle of the Splitting and Crossing of the Red Sea which culminated the Exodus from Egypt, some 3,329 years ago.

When the Jewish people crossed the Red Sea and witnessed the incredible miracle of the splitting of the sea, they spontaneously broke out in song led by Moses. In this song there are two major themes; the greatness of G-d and the drowning of the Egyptians, for their evil desire to harm the Jewish people.

Some of the most exquisite praises of G-d emerged from this song. It was considered so significant a song that it was incorporated by

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our Sages into *Shacharis*, the daily Morning Prayer.

The Talmud (Megillah 10b; Sanhedrin 39b) and Midrash relate that the angels too wanted to sing praise to G-d at that time, but they were prevented by G-d Himself to do so. The Talmud records G-d's rationale for His denial of their singing:

“My handiwork is drowning in the sea and you wish to sing praise?!”

Why Jews and not Angels?

Commentators raise the obvious question:

Why was the singing of the Jewish people acceptable to G-d but the angels' singing praise not? Moreover, the Song of the Sea contains explicit references to the drowning of the Egyptians. Why, we may ask, was it acceptable for the Jews to praise G-d for this miracle (i.e., the drowning of the Egyptians) but it was not acceptable for the angels?

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Another related question has been asked. The Midrash explains the reason we do not recite the whole Hallel on the seventh day of Passover is because on that day the Splitting of the Red Sea occurred and G-d's handiwork were drowning in the sea. How can we say the full Hallel when the miracle involved the destruction of G-d's handiwork?

The question therefore is: if Hallel cannot be said in its entirety because of the drowning of the Egyptians, why were the Jews allowed to sing the jubilant Song of the Sea?

Hallel: Psalms of Praise and Light

One answer (See commentary of Meharsha on Sanhedrin 39b) distinguishes between the Song of the Sea and the Psalms of Hallel.

To explain:

The Song of the sea was acceptable, even when others were suffering, because the Jewish people were expressing their gratitude

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to G-d for having saved them from the hands of the pursuing Egyptian army.

Hallel, however, is a different and unique form of praise. Hallel can only be said when our joy is unadulterated, **complete**.

For this reason, the Talmud states, we do not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. These are days of judgment and our joy in them cannot be a palpable joy; it is covered with feelings of trepidation.

We also do not recite Hallel on Purim, although it is an incredibly joyous Holiday, because our salvation then was not complete. Even after the miracle of Purim the Jews remained subjects of Achashveirosh, the Persian monarch, who did not allow the Jews to resume building the Bais Hamikdash. Instead of reciting the Hallel we read the Megillah which tells the story and arouses our gratitude to G-d.

We can now understand why we do not recite the full Hallel on the last days of Passover, the anniversary of the miracle of

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the splitting of the Red Sea. Because that miracle involved the drowning of G-d's handiwork our joy is incomplete.

Why is Hallel so Special?

The question still remains. What distinguishes Hallel from the Song of the Sea? Both are songs of praise for the miracles G-d has wrought. Why then is one acceptable even at a time when G-d's handiwork is drowning, while the other is not?

To answer this question we have to understand the deeper significance of Hallel. The word Hallel actually has two meanings. The first is "praise" and the second is "light." [It is possible that the English word "halo" is connected to the word Hallel.]

Whenever there are two translations for one word it is understood that they are connected. What idea is conveyed by these two linked translations?

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There are two ways of praising G-d. The lower and inferior level is to recognize G-d's limited involvement in our lives. The superior level is to recognize G-d's dominance over and recognition by the entire world.

When the Jews sang the Song of the Sea, they were giving expression for the miracles that affected them. As important as that recognition was; it was not the same as saying Hallel

Hallel, as psalms of praise and light are intended to illuminate the entire world with G-d's supernatural power; that every nation on earth bask in G-d's light.

Many of the nations of the world, throughout history, recognized the existence of a G-d, but they had a hard time appreciating G-d's relationship with the world and particularly with the Jewish people. Some had a philosophy that G-d was too high and exalted to deal with our lowly physical existence. They therefore came to the erroneous conclusion that G-d had forsaken the Earth and delegated responsibility for the workings

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of nature to the natural forces which they deified.

By placing G-d on a pedestal, saying He was too high for our world, they actually denigrated Him. Our belief is that G-d, while exalted above everything, is intimately involved with our world and has a special and unique relationship with the Jewish people, the chosen people.

Judaism's rejection of this false belief is encapsulated in the first Psalm of the Hallel:

“G-d is exalted above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like G-d our G-d, enthroned on high; looking down low upon heaven and earth.”

While G-d is indeed exalted above all nations and natural forces, He nevertheless lowers Himself to care for the minutest detail of our physical world.

From this we can gain insight into the role of Hallel in shedding light. The purpose of Hallel is to express our belief and feeling that G-d's

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greatness can be felt and appreciated by all the nations of the world, no matter how lowly they may be.

That Hallel was intended to illuminate all nations is further reflected in Psalm 117:

“Praise G-d, all you nations, laud Him,
all you peoples. For mighty is His
kindness over us, and the truth of G-d
is everlasting. Praise G-d.”

When a nation witnesses G-d’s kindness to the Jewish people it is filled with praise to G-d. In effect, G-d’s greatness illuminates the entire world.

Hence, when the Egyptians--G-d’s handiwork--were drowning in the sea, rather than recognizing G-d’s greatness and love for the Jewish people, it suggested that the illuminating light of Hallel was not shining brightly. That kind of a situation does not allow us to give full expression of G-d’s light through the illuminating psalms of Hallel. Therefore, we are compelled to recite only parts of Hallel to signify that our joy is not

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complete because some of the light is missing.

Guardian Angels

Likewise when the angels sought to sing praise they could not do so when G-d's handiwork was being destroyed.

To better understand this we must preface the belief in Judaism that each nation has its own guardian angel. Angels are the spiritual forces that are responsible for the welfare of the nations of the world. When they sing praise to G-d that is their way of channeling their understanding of G-d's greatness to the nations and acknowledging the nations' recognition of G-d.

For them to sing praise of G-d's greatness at the Splitting of the Sea it would have implied that G-d's greatness was appreciated by the nations they represented. But, alas, that was not the case. The Egyptians failed miserably; they failed to recognize G-d's miracles and love for the Jewish people, and G-d was

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therefore “forced” to destroy them. There was no point in singing praises when, as far as the Egyptians were concerned, there was no light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.

The Ultimate Miracle

The message conveyed by this approach is that while we must be grateful for every miracle even if it is not the final miracle, we must know that the ultimate goal is for G-d’s greatness to illuminate all the nations of the world.

While we may be compelled to defend ourselves against those nations and individuals that seek to harm us, our most fervent wish is for all the nations to recognize G-d’s greatness and His abiding and unconditional love for the Jewish people.

This indeed is the ultimate objective of the Messianic Age for all nations to serve G-d and appreciate the unique role of the Jewish people in G-d’s plan for the world. Furthermore, to the extent that the nations

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support the Jewish people in carrying out their mission, they too will bask in the light that G-d will reveal in the Messianic Age.

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ESSAY FIVE

**THREE JEWS, FOUR
OPINIONS**

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ESSAY FIVE

THREE JEWS, FOUR OPINIONS

A Multiple-Choice Test

The Jewish people were standing between the proverbial “hard place and the rock.” They were stuck at the sea, pursued by the Egyptians and at a complete loss as to their course of action.

Our sages in the Midrash relate that the Jewish people were divided into four camps.

One camp wanted to surrender and return to Egypt.

A second group wanted to fight the Egyptians

A third group wanted to commit suicide by jumping into the sea and drowning themselves.

A fourth group wanted to pray to G-d for their salvation.

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Which of these four groups were right? With whom did G-d agree?

None of the Above

The correct answer is none of the above.

Our sages tell us that G-d's response to these four options was: "Why are you crying to me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

While all of the above options have some merit (with the possible exception of suicide), they were completely without merit in this particular situation, because G-d had already told them what their purpose was. They were taken out of Egypt to march towards Sinai, where they would receive the Torah and become a chosen nation. Any thought that turned them in a different direction or that did not push them in the right direction—including the option of prayer—was a deviation from G-d's plan and was therefore wrong in this context, no matter how good it would have been in a different situation.

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Drive Safely. Don't Take Your Eyes off the Road

Since the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews in exile, we were told that this journey, as long and as arduous as it has been, has one goal, one conclusion. Whatever benefit G-d saw in keeping us in exile, He wanted that we should keep our eyes focused in one direction exclusively. We should always be looking towards Moshiach and the Redemption.

In times of crises, we agonize. What are we to do? How should we view things when there seems to be no meaning to the experiences of life around us? When we find ourselves situated between the hard place and the rock what is to be our strategy?

The answer is clear and unequivocal. Whatever we do, must fit into the general direction that leads us inexorably towards the *geulah*, the ultimate Messianic Redemption. Anything that takes our eyes off the road, G-d forbid, no matter how positive sounding the idea may be, is a deviation from the G-d

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given plan and is therefore just as wrong as an inferior plan.

But, marching forward is easier said than done. When the Jews were standing at the sea, marching forward meant entering into the sea.

Make the Plunge First

And there was one Jew, *Nachshon ben Aminadav* who marched forward, because he knew that this was G-d's will. The sea did not deter him. When the waters reached his nostrils, our sages tell us, the waters split, not a second before.

Sometimes G-d wants us to start the process forward and he will respond in kind.

Only those people who are focused on the goal and not simply on the process will be able to act even before it seems feasible. In the end, it will become clear that there was no real obstacle.

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Modern Day “Nachshons”

Throughout history, there have always been “Nachshons” whose ability to see beyond and forge ahead made it possible for us to survive. Whether it was Ezra, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, Rabbi Akiva, Rambam and the B’al Shem Tov, among many other great Jewish leaders, their success was tied in with their ability to make the plunge and forge ahead, even in face of incredible odds that they would not succeed.

In our own day and age we are privileged to have a leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose Nachshon-like approach to Jewish life assumed new proportions.

Following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor who fought the Communist regime and the indifference of America and succeeded, the Rebbe took the post-Holocaust generation and told them in no uncertain terms, we are going to bring the uplifting and vibrant message of Judaism—permeated with Chassidic depth and warmth—to every

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Jew. We will collectively forge ahead until we bring Moshiach and an end to this exile.

Both of their lives were/are living embodiments of this message of marching forward towards the Redemption. Nothing, absolutely nothing deterred them, no matter how apparently insurmountable the obstacle.

May we finally see their dream, and the dream of generations of Jews, be realized imminently with the ultimate Redemption.

Be Part of the Solution

But part of the process of making it happen requires that we too follow our Nachshons and doing everything in our power to bring Moshiach. Rather than remaining passive as the few Nachshons forge ahead, it is imperative that we are all part of the process. Moshiach should come because of our efforts, not in spite of them.

This we do by living our lives Jewishly with life, enthusiasm and joy. We must also “open our eyes” to see how the world is changing

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before our very eyes and respond accordingly. We must prepare ourselves to greet and welcome Moshiach who will usher in the glorious Messianic Age.

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ESSAY SIX

THE TWELVE TUNNELS

No Unnecessary Miracles

When the Jewish people crossed the *Yam Suf*, (usually translated as the Red Sea, but more accurately, the Reed Sea,) our Sages inform us the sea split into twelve different channels; one for each of the twelve tribes.

One is entitled to ask, why? Why did G-d perform this incredible, but apparently unnecessary, miracle? There is a well-known principle that G-d does not perform useless miracles. Every miracle that occurred at the time of the Exodus was necessary to either save the Jewish people or to teach them and the Egyptians valuable lessons. Nature, our Sages teach us, is G-d's handiwork. G-d will not undermine it without justification.

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And what lesson can we derive from the fact that each tribe had its own tunnel that necessitated this miracle?

Furthermore, the Torah always seeks to emphasize the ideal of Jewish unity. The need to express this unity would have been even greater at that time in order to counter the unprecedented unity exhibited by the Egyptians. When the Torah describes their pursuit of the Jewish people by the Egyptian forces, it employs an expression that denotes singularity. It states: “And Egypt *no’say’a*-(the singular form for traveled), after them,” instead of the more fitting plural form: “*nos’im*.”

To counter the single minded hostility for the Israelites should G-d not have removed the barriers between tribes, not cement and institutionalize them?

E Pluribus Unum and E Unum Pluribus

Upon deeper reflection, however, we will realize that the differences between tribes were crucial, particularly at the genesis of the

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Jewish nation. What occurred then set the tone for the future of the Jewish people.

There are three possible formulas for a nation, or for any collective body. The first formula is to focus on the collective nature of the community, ignoring and even denying the role and interests of the individual components of the group. Many ancient and modern societies are based on having all private interests subordinate themselves to the collective.

Diametrically opposite this first approach is to be concerned only with the individual, hardly recognizing the role of the community. And even if the individual must from time to time defer to the community to save society from anarchy, it does so begrudgingly, for it does not recognize any inherent value in community.

Both of these systems are obviously deficient. In the first case, the weakness lies in its failure to recognize that the strength of a community lies in each and every individual. To neglect the individual and his/her unique

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contribution is to undermine the very foundation of the community.

Similarly, the second formula that denies the collective and communal dimension is also flawed. It is axiomatic in Judaism that a community is considerably more than the sum total of its components. There is a special holiness that is introduced into a community that is infinitely greater than any or even the sum of all its parts.

For example, a *minyan*, is much more than just a collection of ten people in one room. It is a completely new entity with its own identity that provides us with the opportunity to recite special prayers such as the *Kadish*.

Prerequisite to Sinai

And this is precisely what G-d wanted to demonstrate to the Jewish people as they were leaving Egypt to form a new nation.

On the one hand, great emphasis was placed on the notion of Jewish nationhood. The Jewish people left Egypt not as a bunch of

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liberated slaves running helter-skelter in all directions, but as a cohesive group that formed a single national identity—the *Bnei Yisrael*. However, simultaneously they were instructed to not abandon their distinctions and the qualities they possessed as individuals, otherwise the entire nation will suffer.

To prevent the loss of their individuality, G-d parted the water into twelve channels or tunnels. This was not an unnecessary miracle, because it served to underscore the importance of preserving individuality even as a single nation was in the process of formation.

But even as they were reveling in their own distinctive identities as each tribe traveled through its own tunnel, it was also crucial that they share their uniqueness with their fellow tribes. This might explain why, the Midrash tells us, the tunnels that separated the twelve tribes were transparent, suggesting that each individual tribe had to be able to see and appreciate the qualities of the other

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tribes and integrate these parochial interests into their own lives.

This dual emphasis on community and individuality as they are fused into one philosophy of life, served as a prerequisite to the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Preparation for the Future Redemption

Never before, have the Jewish people been as fragmented as they are now in the pre-Messianic Era. Most Jewish leaders decry this unfortunate phenomenon of division and at times, senseless hatred.

Didn't our Sages tell us that it was this type of division that caused the exile in the first place? It is obvious that the call for unity is justified, for it is indispensable for the realization of Redemption.

Nevertheless, we must not view all the division as negative and evil. On the contrary, just as the division of the Jewish people into twelve distinct tribes was part of their formation that prepared them for the

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receiving of the Torah at Sinai, so too, in this pre-Messianic time, we must learn to appreciate the legitimate differences—albeit within the framework of Torah—that separate us from one another.

Rather than being viewed as a barrier, the disparate but transparent tunnels were, and should continue to be, the medium through which we preserve the individual qualities of our people, that we use to enhance our Jewishness and respect the qualities of the other tribes and perhaps even integrate those qualities into our own lives. It is the focus on the combination of collectiveness and individuality that we must take in our contemporary “crossing of the sea” on the road to the ultimate redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

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ESSAY SEVEN

**DON'T STAND ON
CEREMONY**

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ESSAY SEVEN

DON'T STAND ON CEREMONY

Who Jumped First?

According to the Talmud and Midrash, the differences amongst our people began to develop at the very beginning of our emergence as a nation and they continue to this day.

Even before we crossed the Sea of Reeds, and were totally out of the grasp of Pharaoh and his pursuing armies, we were already divided about what we should do.

At first the Jewish nation was split four ways as to what they should do when they found themselves squeezed between the sea and the onslaught of the Egyptian army. The first group said they should return to slavery. The second group insisted they should fight the Egyptians, while the third despaired and wanted to drown themselves. The fourth

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group decided to pray to G-d for salvation. In the end G-d decided that they continue their journey towards Sinai.

Even at that point, the Talmud (Sotah 36b) records that a dispute broke out as to who should be the first tribe to jump into the sea.

According to the opinion of Rabbi Meir, “One tribe declared, ‘I will jump into the sea first,’ while the other tribe said, ‘I will jump into the sea first.’ At that point, the tribe of Benjamin jumped into the sea first...”

Rabbi Yehudah, however, disagreed with Rabbi Meir and said to him: “No, this was not what happened! Rather, this one said: ‘I will **not** go into the sea first,’ while the other one said, ‘I will **not** go into the sea first.’ At that point, Nachshon, the son of Aminadav, jumped into the sea first.”

In other words, there was a dispute amongst the Talmudic Sages about the dispute of the Jews! According to the opinion of Rabbi Meir, they were divided as to which tribe will be the first to jump into the raging waters. Each tribe vied for this honor. And it was the

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tribe of Benjamin that did not wait for a formal announcement. They took the initiative and jumped first.

No Protocol in Times of Crisis

The obvious lesson from this approach to the narrative of the Jews going into the sea is that in times of crises there is no time to stand on ceremony. True, in times of peace and calm, it is important that there is a protocol. There must be a system of priority, who goes first and who follows. And each tribe is entitled to vie for the responsibility and honor of being first.

When it comes to times of crises, even Benjamin, the youngest of the tribes can override the system and jump into the sea. For this heroic and pioneering gesture on their part, the Talmud declares, the holiest section of the Temple—the place where the Ark and the Tablets were placed—was situated in the territory of Israel that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

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The Power of the Individual

Rabbi Yehudah, however, disagrees. In his opinion, the heroes are rarely, if ever, tribes as a whole. Communal entities, many will argue, must subscribe to a system, or else chaos will ensue. Furthermore, a tribe, government, or any bureaucracy is like a massive ship that cannot quickly maneuver itself into a new direction. Thus, each tribe insisted that it cannot do anything rash and be the first to jump into the sea without authorization. Committees have to be formed, votes have to be taken and the decision whether to jump or not must be a deliberate and slow process.

In these times of crises, a community depends on a Nachshon the son of Aminadav; a man who overrides the system and acts quickly and unceremoniously. And at that point the sea did split for everyone.

The lesson for our times is clear. While we should always try to work within the community for the well being of its constituents, we will always need individuals

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who cannot rest and cannot wait for the community to take the initiative. In every community there is a Nachshon who jumps into the sea and thereby saves the Jewish people. In modern as well as classical Hebrew, a pioneer is known as a *Nachshon*.

We can now appreciate why it was Nachshon who merited to be the ancestor of King David and all subsequent great Jewish leaders, from King David until the Moshiach.

The Two Nachshons of Our Century

While Judaism believes very strongly in community and collective action, it also believes that in every generation there is a great Jewish leader who does not wait for the community to decide, but takes the initiative and, figuratively, causes the sea to split, enabling the Jewish people to forge ahead towards our national and universal goal of bringing Moshiach and Redemption.

In our generation it was the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Schneerson and his successor Rabbi Menachem M.

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Schneerson, who, followed the model of Nachshon, and served as the impetus for a the explosion of Jewish life throughout the world, paving the way for Redemption.

In addition to their scholarship, piety and love for the Jewish people and humanity, they were/are the Nachshon's of our modern age, fighting Communist oppression on one side of the ocean and American indifference on the other side. They single-handedly jumped into the raging waters that threatened to engulf the Jewish people and succeeded in getting these waters to split, reversing the trend that allowed the Jewish people to direct their energies towards the ultimate Messianic Age.

But the Rebbe was/is not content with serving as a leader who caused others to follow. The Rebbe as one prominent Jewish leader remarked “cultivated leaders not followers.”

The Rebbe's efforts are directed towards revealing the Nachson and Moshiach within all of us, so that we can all collectively—not

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only as individuals—do the unconventional and make the plunge and bring Moshiach.

Indeed, the Rebbe in the year 5751 declared: “I have done all I can do to bring Moshiach, and now I am handing it over to you.” The Rebbe endeavored to reconcile the two opinions if the plunge was a collective effort or an individual initiative. The Rebbe, the Nachshon individual par excellence, revealed and activated the Nachshon within all of us. With this power we will surely bring the Redemption imminently.

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ESSAY EIGHT

**THE HORSE AND ITS
RIDER**

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ESSAY EIGHT

THE HORSE AND ITS RIDER

Was it a Necessary Miracle?

The seventh day of Passover—*Shevi'i shel Pesach*—marks the day the Jewish nation miraculously crossed the *Yam Suf*, the Reed Sea. The Torah reading for this day is the *Shirah*, the Song that Moses and the Israelites sang upon their miraculous deliverance from the onslaught of the pursuing Egyptian army.

Among the varied expressions of praise to G-d, indeed, the very first one to appear is the description of the drowning of the Egyptians:

“The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea.”

Rashi comments that the miracle here was that the rider was attached to his horse as they were cast into the sea.

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At first glance, this miracle appears to be superfluous. What difference would it make if the rider would have been thrown off his horse as he was thrown into the sea? Why did G-d have to bind them together?

A Lame Excuse

One approach to this matter can be to look at the Egyptians not just as a nation of antiquity that enslaved and persecuted the Jewish people. In addition, Egypt as the symbol of those forces that continually try to undermine the integrity of the Jewish people. Their drowning in the Reed Sea was G-d's way of frustrating the threat to the Jewish people. In order to maximize the defeat of these forces of evil, G-d bound the horse with its rider.

How does binding the rider to the horse maximize the defeat of evil?

Panim Yafot, cites the famous Talmudic parable of the king who hired both a blind person and a lame person to guard his orchard. This way, he thought, he would be

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guaranteed that the guards themselves would not steal his luscious fruit. What did they do? The lame person, who saw the fruit and was tempted by it, asked the blind person to carry him on his shoulders. In concert, they managed to reach the orchard and steal its fruit. The Talmud concludes that when the king discovered the theft, he made the blind man carry the lame man, and administered lashes to both of them as they were in that tandem position.

Symbiotic Relationship

This metaphor is used by our Sages to describe the symbiotic relationship between the soul and the body. Without the soul the body cannot function and without the body the soul cannot get what it wants.

The horse and rider also represents the combined efforts of the body and the soul in all of our negative and positive pursuits. One cannot separate the two.

When G-d wants to remove the threat of the pursuing Egyptian army, He made sure to

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eliminate both the body and soul of Egypt symbolized by the horse and his rider. The body of evil represents its mode of behavior, while its soul alludes to its ideology. It does not suffice to destroy an ideology and it also does not suffice to simply desist from evil behavior if one still has the ideology intact.

Alternatively, the soul of evil represents the enthusiasm one invests in the performance of the body of evil. One must destroy both the actions and the enthusiasm that goes along with those actions.

Conversely, and an additional lesson we can derive from the above, is that when G-d wants to fortify the world with positive energy, He directs His energy to the body and soul combined.

In order for us to be the beneficiaries of G-d's energy, we must make both our body and soul receptive to that energy.

By focusing on prayer and Torah study we nurture our soul and make it shine more brightly. The soul can then absorb the spiritual light that G-d always generates.

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When we perform physical Mitzvot; we refine our bodies thereby making them receptive to the G-dly light directed towards our bodies.

Primary and Secondary Forces

In addition to the application of the horse and the rider to the combined efforts of the soul and the body, one can also understand the significance of the “horse and the rider” in yet another way.

In our world of good and evil we will come across the aspects of good and evil that are primary and those that are of secondary and tertiary levels.

It is human nature to focus most if not all of our attention on the primary threats to our existence and neglect the secondary. Likewise in the realm of goodness, we often forget about the small gestures that pale in their comparison to the primary areas of good.

Lest we minimize the threat from the secondary causes to evil, the Torah informs us that G-d had to punish the rider and the

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horse, the primary and secondary threats respectively.

To deal with only the direct causes of evil—“the rider”—and to neglect the accessories to evil—“the horse”—could eventually lead to future problems. Once evil gets a foothold within the individual, its insidious nature enables it to fester until it poses a serious threat to one’s moral and spiritual well-being.

Likewise in the realm of positive efforts, one should never minimize the secondary influences in the performance of a Mitzvah. Not only could it eventually lead the individual down a “slippery slope” to indifference even as it involves primary matters, but moreover, every small gesture of good has inestimable value in G-d’s eyes. Every Mitzvah has the capacity to permanently alter the state of the world for the good and bring about its Redemption.

Handles of Sin

This thought has already been alluded to by our Sages in Ethics of the Fathers: “Reflect on

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three things so that You will not come to the handles of sin.”

What did our Sages mean when they said “**handles** of sin?” Shouldn’t they have written: “Reflect on three things so that You will not come to sin.” What are the “handles” of sin?

A person must strive not only to avoid the actual transgression, but even to avoid the things that can lead to sin.

An example of this is to live in a spiritually healthy environment. One must eliminate not only the “rider,” (the actual threat to our well being), but also the “horse” (the accessories and facilitators of the forces that can cause us harm).

The Song of the Future

The *Shirah* in its use of the future tense, “Then Moses shall sing,” the Midrash states, alludes to the future song of the Jewish nation in the Messianic Age. This implies that the song the Jews sang in the past is not complete.

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One way of understanding the way the song will be complete in the future is in light of the foregoing distinction between the horse and its rider. In the present day and age—from the time the Jews left Egypt through the present—we cannot confidently sing and declare that the “rider” and the “horse” have been eliminated, in the realm of evil. Neither can we say wholeheartedly that even the secondary aspects of our being have been submerged in the sea of G-dly knowledge. In an exile state and mindset we cannot always get a handle on the secondary and tertiary influences.

Likewise, exile conditions make it impossible for us to say that we have fully integrated our soul with our body in the repudiation of evil and the doing of good.

Only in the future Messianic Age, will we have eliminated not only the actual causes of evil, but even the means to the end will be purified and sanctified. There will not be any “handles” of sin, let alone sin. Similarly, there will not be a part of our being—soul or

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body—left out of the spiritual experience of Moshiach and Redemption.

In the Messianic Age, G-d will remove all impurity from the land and even the “handles of sin” will be removed. And furthermore, both the soul and body will enjoy a close relationship, wherein both are harnessed for service to G-d, as the prophet declares that “all **flesh** shall see the word of G-d has spoken.”

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ESSAY NINE

DOUBLE VISION

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ESSAY NINE

DOUBLE VISION

Qualitative Difference

When the Jewish nation crossed the *Yam Suf* (Sea of Reeds) they sang praise to the Almighty for all the miracles that they experienced. One of their praises to G-d was: “This is my G-d and I will exalt Him.”

The Midrash comments that they mentioned “This is my G-d” only once, whereas in the future Redemption we will recite a similar refrain twice, as it is stated: “Behold, this is our G-d, we have hoped for Him that He would save us. This is the G-d that we hoped for; we shall rejoice and be happy in His salvation.”

Let us attempt to understand the point the Midrash has made. At first glance the difference between the past and the future forms of praise are of little import.

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What is the significance of repeating the praise? If the praise was meaningful the first time, what does repeating it add? And if it was not sincere the first time around, why would mere repetition contribute to its sincerity?

Commentators explain that the difference between a solitary praise and the repeated one is not just a quantitative difference; there is also a substantive difference between the two praises. The solitary praise of the past and the repetitive one of the future reflect two modes of awareness of G-d's role in our deliverance from harm.

Implicit Trust

The first individual has no implicit trust that G-d will help. He does not wait and anticipate G-d's salvation, although he might pray and ask for it.

And when the miracle finally materializes and this individual is saved, he will certainly be grateful to G-d and praise Him. However, it is a simple and straightforward praise that

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comes from the recognition that G-d is truly great. This individual did not invest anything before the miracle. There was no sense of closeness to G-d that preceded the miracle.

By contrast, there is another type of individual who recognized G-d's greatness His ability to save him from his misfortune **before** he was saved. This individual's relationship with G-d is one that can be compared to that of a parent and a child or two people who are in love with one another. The child is secure in the knowledge that its father or mother will come to its assistance. The child sincerely hopes for and eagerly **anticipates** the salvation to come.

Since the hope and trust is an overt manifestation of the affinity that exists between G-d and ourselves, this hope in and of itself is a catalyst to bring about G-d's salvation.

Double Joy

Thus, when the miracle finally occurs, this individual will experience a two-fold joy and

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will express his praise and gratitude to G-d in two parts.

Not only will s/he rejoice at having been saved, but, moreover, s/he will express joy and satisfaction for the trust in G-d that proved our worthiness and that G-d truly regards him/her as His child. In the Biblical words cited above: “Behold, this is our G-d, **we have hoped for Him that He would save us.** This is the G-d that we hoped for, we shall rejoice and be happy in His salvation.” The praise is for the salvation as well as for the fact that we hoped for it.

One Dimensional Joy

When the Jewish nation left Egypt, their faith and trust in G-d was compromised. The suffering they endured took its toll on their souls as well as their bodies. It was hard for them to maintain the faith that G-d would make good on His word, particularly after Moses had spoken to Pharaoh and things deteriorated.

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And even when the miracles of the Ten Plagues, did finally come, their cynicism that resulted from centuries of slavery and persecution coupled with past disappointments, made them skeptical about future miracles.

Indeed, when they arrived at the Sea of Reeds and realized that they were pursued by the Egyptians, instead of trusting G-d that He would not abandon them, they complained to Moses: “Is there not sufficient graves in Egypt that you took us into the desert to die in the desert?” Even after the Ten Plagues and their miraculous departure from Egypt, they still harbored doubts.

When the miracle finally arrived and they were saved, they readily praised G-d for it, but they could not say, “This is the G-d that we have hoped for.” Their joy was simple, one dimensional.

The Future Redemption

In the future Redemption, however, after living through thousands of years of exile, we,

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as a people, did not and will not lose our faith and trust that G-d would redeem us and bring Moshiach.

Even in the Death Camps, thousands of Jews went to their deaths singing, yes singing, the melody to the words “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach, and even though he tarries, we shall await his coming every day.”

This hope and trust will pay off. When the ultimate miracle finally arrives, we will offer a twofold and two-dimensional praise to G-d: Firstly thanks for all the faith and trust we had in You that was a powerful catalyst in bringing about the positive events of the future, and thank you again G-d for the actual Redemption.

ESSAY TEN

LEADERS AND HEROES

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ESSAY TEN

LEADERS AND HEROES

Belief in Moses?

The seventh day of Passover is not an independent holiday but the culmination of the Exodus that commenced seven days earlier—the first day of Passover. On the seventh day after their departure from Egypt, the Jewish people miraculously crossed the Sea of Reeds, eluding the pursuing Egyptian army, who drowned in the sea.

Now that Pharaoh and Egypt were no longer a threat to their liberation they were now free to forge ahead towards Mount Sinai and the Promised Land of Israel.

Not only was this the culmination of the physical process of the Exodus, but it also represented the spiritual growth of the Jewish nation. This spiritual sophistication is

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captured by the Torah's statement in cited in the *Haggadah*: "And they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant."

The Midrash comments on this verse: "One who believes in the leader of Israel, it is as if one believes in He who created the universe." Obviously, the Midrash wishes to express the idea that the faith the Jewish people reached at the Sea of Reeds was of a uniquely high level of faith because they also believed not only in G-d—but in Moses as well.

It is interesting to note that the only mention of Moses in the Haggadah, recited at the beginning of Passover, is this one about how the Israelites believed in G-d and in Moses his servant. This reinforces the close relationship between the very concept of the Exodus and the belief in G-d and Moses His servant.

This statement begs for an explanation. Why is belief in Moses so crucial to one's belief in G-d? Furthermore, wouldn't belief in anything else but G-d detract from our belief in one true G-d?

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It's Not what You Are that Counts, it's what You're Not!

The answer to these questions requires a better understanding of who Moses was. Indeed, we must also come to grips with the Judaism's emphasis on *tzadikim*, righteous people and why it places them on a pedestal.

Moses' greatness is not measured by what he was, i.e., his knowledge, piety, leadership capabilities, etc., but by what he was *not*.

Moses was so close to G-d that he was totally self-effacing. He had completely surrendered his ego, not by falsely denying his own qualities, but by recognizing how everything he possessed was from G-d. His every deed, word or thought, every fiber of his being, was devoted to G-d. Every aspect of his life revolved around G-d.

Because he had no ego, Moses, and to a lesser degree other *tzadikim*, were able to successfully serve as an intermediary between G-d and the Jewish people. By connecting to Moses, one was connecting to a person whose

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whole being was characterized by his receptivity and openness to G-d. With this “connection” every Jew felt more receptive and connected to G-d.

Broker or Matchmaker?

There are actually two kinds of intermediaries. The intermediary who acts like a broker, a third party who negotiates on behalf of both, is anathema to Judaism. No entity or person can or ought to pose as a barrier between a Jew and G-d.

The “kosher” and desirable form of an intermediary is the one referred to in the Torah when Moses declares to the Jewish nation: “I stand between you and G-d.” Moses was not a broker, but a *shadchan*, a matchmaker, whose function it is to bridge the gap between the bride and the bridegroom. The objective is not to represent one party to the other, but rather to bring them together.

To be sure, even the egocentric person can also believe in and serve G-d without being

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prepared to surrender his/her whole being to Him. Even a person who has not availed himself of the services of a Moses-intermediary, nevertheless there is always the danger that his ego, personal interests and reticence might interfere with one's relationship with Him.

When the Jews crossed the Sea of Reeds, they developed an attachment to Moses their leader. With this faith in Moses, they graduated from the level of spiritual novice, whose connection to G-d is obscured by their own ego, into the level of "G-d-centricity." Faith in Moses, thus, opened up for them new vistas in their relationship with G-d.

Moshiach: The source of spiritual liberation

The emphasis on faith in righteous people found in Jewish teachings is rooted, not in conventional hero worship, but in the *tzadik's* ability to bring us closer to an awareness of—and, therefore, a connection to—G-d that we could not achieve on our own. Hero worship enhances our own egos; faith in

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tzadikim enhances G-d's presence in our lives.

Our Sages say, "Moses was the first redeemer and Moses will be the final redeemer." This is understood to mean that the Moshiach will be endowed with Moses' soul, inspiration and resources in order to bring about the Redemption.

Our faith and attachment to Moses was the catalyst that enabled the Jews to be spiritually liberated while they were experiencing the physical exodus from Egypt.

Similarly, our faith in Moshiach—who like Moses is described as an utterly humble person—will enable us to realize our spiritual goals in the process of the future Redemption.

ESSAY ELEVEN

THE LAST DAY OF PASSOVER: THE BOTTOM LINE

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ESSAY ELEVEN

THE LAST DAY OF PASSOVER

THE BOTTOM LINE-

Last but Not Least

The significance of the last two days of Passover has been lost on many. What exactly do the last two days commemorate?

The last two days of Passover commemorate the miraculous splitting and crossing of the Red Sea (or, more accurately: the Sea of Reeds). The significance of this event is that it was the culmination of the Exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt. As long as the Egyptian army pursued the Israelites, they were not really free.

Accordingly, it may be argued that the last days of Passover are even more significant than the first days of Passover. Without the

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crossing of the sea, the Jewish people would have been captured by the pursuing Egyptian army and forced to return to slavery in Egypt, or even worse.

Moreover, G-d performed more, and even greater, miracles at the sea than He performed during the Ten Plagues. As we recited in the *Haggadah* at the *Seder*, there were five times as many miraculous plagues at the sea than there were in Egypt itself.

Why No Hallel?

This analysis of the comparison between the miracle of the Exodus and the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea, begs a question:

During the first two days of Passover we are required to recite the *Hallel*, a selection of special Psalms of praise that express our gratitude to G-d for the miracles He performed. These Psalms, in their entirety, are recited during every festive Holiday. The lone exceptions are the last two days of Passover, where only a part of *Hallel* is recited. This would suggest that the last two

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days are not as miraculous as the first two days. Doesn't this imply that the last days of Passover and the miracle they commemorate are of less significance?

No Gloating

Our Sages in the Midrash anticipated this question and explained that despite the greatness of the miracle of the splitting of the sea, our joy is somewhat tempered by virtue of the loss of Egyptian lives. True, the Egyptians were evil people for having mercilessly enslaved the Jews, but they were still

G-d's creatures and the fact that they had to be killed mars our joy at having been saved. Therefore, sections of the *Hallel* Psalms are deleted to indicate that our joy has been mitigated.

But, the question still persists. Why should we not rejoice at the elimination of such evil? What is so wrong if we would express our joy when the most wicked people cease to exist?

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Doesn't King Solomon declare: "When the wicked are destroyed there is joy?"

Moshiach and Evil

The answer lies in understanding another facet of the last two days of Passover, particularly the eighth day—they relate to the future Messianic Age. Whereas the first two days of Passover focus on the past experiences of freedom with but minimal attention placed on the future Redemption during the Seder, the last [two] day[s] of Passover focus[es] primarily on the future Redemption and only secondarily deal with the past. Indeed, the *Haftarah* (prophetic reading from Isaiah 10:32-12:6) of the last day of Passover is devoted exclusively to the characteristics of the Messianic Age.

What distinguishes the future Redemption from all of the preceding periods of freedom?

One of the differences is that in the future Redemption there will no longer be a need to destroy evil, because all evil will either have

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already been eliminated or converted into goodness.

To be sure, this will not be a sudden transformation, but the thousands of years of goodness throughout all of our existence will have generated so much positive energy that the evil will be vanquished.

Kabbalah and Chassidic thought explain further that before the Messianic Age, good and evil are intermingled. But through our efforts at refining the world, the good and evil become separated. When Moshiach will come the evil will have to stand on its own two feet, so to speak, because all the good that it had embedded in it will no longer be there. On its own, evil cannot survive very long.

Unmitigated Joy

We can now appreciate why the joy we experience at the commemoration of the Splitting of the Red Sea is incomplete. The very fact that there was such evil that had to be destroyed tempers our joy. The fact that

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the world has not yet entered into an era where all evil has ceased to exist — thus necessitating the destruction of the Egyptians and our reliving of that experience every year at this time — is a sign that our joy is likewise incomplete.

By omitting sections of the Hallel, we express the fact that no matter how great is our miracle of survival in exile, so long as there is evil in the world we must continue to ask G-d to complete our joy by bringing us Moshiach who will usher in the final Redemption.

We can now better appreciate the custom established by the Ba'al Shem Tov to eat a festive meal at the end of Passover which he referred to as “Moshiach’s Meal.” By participating in this meal we give expression to our sentiment that no matter how great is Passover joy, we eagerly anticipate the future Redemption when our joy will be unmitigated and uncompromised.

ESSAY TWELVE

THE LINK

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ESSAY TWELVE

THE LINK

Two-Part Holiday

Passover is a two-part Holiday. The first two days (only one in Israel) commemorate the Exodus from Egypt and the last two days (only one in Israel) commemorate the Splitting of the Red Sea. Both parts are full-fledged festivals.

The division of Passover into two periods (separated by the intermediate days known as *Chol-Hamo'ed*, the semi-festival days) points to two distinct but related events and messages. The Rebbe pointed out that whereas the first two days concentrate on the past, the last two days focus on the future. Significantly, on the last day of Passover we read the section of Isaiah (Chapter 11) which details the characteristics of Moshiach and

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the events that will occur in the Messianic Age.

Two Approaches to the Link Between the Exodus and the Future Redemption

In truth, both ends of the Holiday refer us to the past and the future. The Haggadah which we read at the Seder contains prayers for the future Redemption and on the seventh day of Passover, the anniversary of the crossing of the Red Sea, we read the section of the Torah which relates that miracle.

Yet, these two segments of the Holiday represent different ways in which we deal with the interplay between the past and the future.

During the first days, our understanding of and approach to the future Redemption is in the context of the past. The past Exodus from Egypt is a harbinger of the future. The message conveyed by the last days, in contrast, is that the future is reflected in the past.

Translated into practical terms, there are two ways we must deal with the future. The first

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is to see ourselves as working towards the inexorable goal of Redemption by making the most of our struggle in exile. Everything we do in the present must be viewed as an important part of our journey towards one magnificent goal. In this context exile is seen as a hidden blessing and a catalyst for the future Redemption. This is the time in which we sow spiritual seeds in anticipation of the growth of a beautiful and G-dly world.

Our current struggle in exile can also be compared to the process of education. The goal of education is to teach the child those skills necessary to become a fully realized adult. Latent within the child are the many talents that will ultimately be manifested come adulthood. But childhood is not an impediment to adulthood to be overcome; it is an indispensable stage, without which adulthood would be missing crucial elements

Similarly, the period of exile, notwithstanding all of its negatives, has enabled us to demonstrate the lengths to which we have remained faithful to G-d and His Torah. Exile has brought out the best in us and made us

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capable of graduating to the next level of maturity, i.e., the Messianic Age.

The Exodus from Egypt has often been compared to the birth and infancy of the Jewish people; thus, the central focus of the Seder is on the child. We do many things at the Seder differently specifically to arouse the natural curiosity of the child. The Seder demonstrates this with the four questions asked by the children and discussion of the four sons. Our focus throughout is on the child within us that is gradually being groomed for the adult state we will finally reach in the time of the Redemption.

To use another analogy, the first days of Passover highlight the journey we have embarked on with the knowledge that our eventual destination is the Messianic Age. The route we have taken on the way to this destination lead us to the giving of the Torah at Sinai and the conquest of the Land of Israel.

While on the road to our final destination, the ultimate goal of the journey, our primary concern, however, is the journey itself.

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Similarly, while the ultimate goal of the Exodus from Egypt is the Messianic Age, nevertheless, our primary focus is on the challenges that confront us now. During the first legs of a long journey the final destination seems merely a glimmer of light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. Our main experience is the departure from Egypt itself and the immediate dangers and exigencies that confront us on the initial steps of the journey.

By contrast, over the last days of Passover we transport the experience of Moshiach and the Final Redemption into our departure from Egypt. Rather than thinking of ourselves as children who aspire to reach a peak level of maturity, we already sense the mature state of life that will characterize the Messianic Era. We see in every aspect of the Redemption from Egypt, and other Redemptions, the taste of the ultimate Redemption.

Applying this flipped perspective to our analogy of the journey, the last days of Passover mark the time when we have

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reached the point in our destination where we can hear the sounds and see the sights of Redemption. Although we have not yet crossed over into the actual Redemption, we can smell the fragrance and savor the taste of it. We are acutely aware of our rapid approach to that time in which wars and suffering cease, the final Bais Hamikdash is built and Moshiach gathers all Jews, past and present, to the Land of Israel.

What's the Connection?

There is another divided perspective embedded within the last two days of Passover. The seventh day of Pesach is, as mentioned above, the anniversary of the miracle of the splitting and crossing of the Red Sea. On the eighth and last day of Passover we read Isaiah's prophecies (Chapter 11) concerning the identity of Moshiach and the way the world will be transformed in the Messianic Age.

Based on the above, a question can be raised concerning the connection of the last two

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days of Passover to the Final Redemption. Why is the splitting of the Red Sea more tightly connected to the final Redemption than the Exodus from Egypt itself?

There is a simple answer to this question. The miracle of the splitting of the Sea was not just a way for the Jewish people to escape the pursuing Egyptian army. It started them down the path to G-d's revelation. Our Sages declare that even a simple maidservant at the Sea's edge had a superior Divine experience than that experienced by the prophet Yechezkal. The divide between the upper and lower realms disappeared in that moment. This was a portent of the parallel removal of the divide at Mount Sinai. However, at both the Sea's shore and at Sinai the removal of the division was a one sided revelation from G-d. The world had yet to exhibit its own recognition that there is no true dichotomy between the celestial and terrestrial. While that realization is still a work in progress, it will ultimately be completed in the Messianic Era.

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If we were to ask where that progress began, the answer would be the splitting of the Red Sea. The seventh day of Passover thus gives us a taste of the glorious future to be had in the Messianic Age.

What's the Difference?

Now the question reverses itself: What is the difference between the seventh and eighth days of Passover if, indeed, both are portents of the future?

The difference lies in the way we identify with the events of the day. On the seventh day we commemorate the splitting of the Red Sea by reading the Torah's narrative of that momentous event. On the last day of Passover we read Isaiah's prophecy of the future events that will come to fruition in the Messianic Age. However, in addition to reading from Isaiah, we connect to Moshiach in an even more concrete way: by eating a special meal at the end of day. This meal, instituted by the Ba'al Shem Tov, is referred to as Moshiach's Meal. It is customary to eat

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matzah and drink four cups of wine at this meal. In this way, we take leave of the Passover Holiday the same way that we ushered it in.

There is a profound difference between reading about Moshiach and eating the meal associated with him. Moshiach's Meal demonstrates that we have the ability to integrate and internalize the message and light of Moshiach, not just passively read about it.

The sounds and glimmering light of Moshiach are revealed to us on the seventh and eighth days of Passover byway of the Torah readings of these two days. We can complete the process of internalizing Moshiach and the passage to our ultimate destination with a literal touch and taste of Moshiach when we sit down to Moshiach's Meal at the end of the Festival. At that point, all of our senses have been activated and we are more ready to greet Moshiach than any other time. This year in Jerusalem!

Passover is first and foremost associated with the Exodus from Egypt. By extension, we

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discuss the future Messianic Redemption as well. However, on the last day of Passover the focus changes from the past Exodus to the future. This is evident from the prophetic reading on the last day of Passover—from the Biblical book of Isaiah Chapter 11—that deals exclusively with the qualities of Moshiach and the way the world will change in the Messianic Age. In more recent times, the custom—begun by the Ba'al Shem Tov—to eat a special meal at the end of the Holiday called “Moshiach’s Feast” highlights this connection and takes it from the realm of an abstract concept into the realm of the concrete.

Nevertheless, even as Isaiah 11 (the prophetic selection we read on the last day of Passover) focuses on the future Redemption a link is made there to the Exodus from Egypt: “as the day when he arose from the Land of Egypt.” The Prophet Micha echoes this connection when he states, “As in the days of your departure from Egypt I shall show you/him wonders.”

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The Zohar states and Chassidic literature expounds on the theme that despite the parallel drawn between these two periods of liberation, the future Redemption will be much more magnificent than the past Exodus from Egypt. According to the Zohar the miracles of the future will be considered as wonders in comparison with the incredible miracles of the Exodus from Egypt.

The Rebbe in one of his discourses raised the question that the Zohar's contention is actually borne out from the Biblical texts themselves. In the aforementioned reading from the Book of Isaiah it is clear that the miracles of the future will overshadow the miracles of the past. It is written that the "wolf will lie with the lamb." This type of miracle is unprecedented. Even Maimonides' allegorical explanation that all the nations will live in peace with each other predicts a world that is utterly different from the world the way it existed at the time of and following the Exodus.

Therefore, the Rebbe asked, what did the Zohar mean when it suggested as a novel

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idea that the miracles of the future will overshadow those of the past? Isn't it quite evident from even a cursory study of the Biblical text? The Rebbe did not answer the question. Instead he challenged us to find the answer. The following lines are intended to meet that challenge.

Upon deeper reflection it may be suggested that the Zohar's novel point is not simply that there will be greater miracles in the future than there were in the past Exodus. The reason that that is not such a powerful reality is that as humans we have a saturation point when it comes to absorbing events that are out of the ordinary, good or bad.

For example, in the darkest periods of exile, there were Jews who suffered the loss of a close relative only to be compounded with the loss of other loved ones. While the pain grew with each successive blow there was a point where one reached the saturation point. The added terrible news led either to their own demise or to a total emotional breakdown.

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The same case can be made in the realm of miracles. The first miracle one experiences can have an incredible impact on the person who witnessed the miracle. But as the miracles grow we either become inured to its effects or it so overwhelms us that we cannot deal with it any longer. The law of diminishing returns is very much relevant to the capacity humans have to experience unusual events.

For the prophet to tell us that the miracles will be greater is not sufficient to get us excited about the future. If we do not have the capacity to absorb and enjoy these new miracles of what use are they? Furthermore, if the reason we are informed about the future miracles is to whet our appetites for the Messianic Age, it can actually have the opposite effect. Just as we cannot deal with too much sorrow and pain so too it is hard for us to experience radical changes in our lives even if they are miraculous and for our good. What good is it if one enters a gourmet restaurant and is given not one steak but 100! The pleasure does not increase no matter

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how much netter each successive steak may happen to be.

Similarly, if we are going to be inundated with miracles, we cannot humanly absorb them and deal with them.

This is, perhaps where the Zohar and Chassidic thought introduce us

ESSAY THIRTEEN

THE INNER SONG

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ESSAY THIRTEEN

THE INNER SONG

The Culmination of the Exodus

The last two days of Passover are commemorations of the final phase of the exodus from Egypt. On the seventh day after their departure from Egypt, the Jewish nation crossed the sea that had miraculously split for them. The Jews crossed on dry land while their Egyptian pursuers drowned.

The seventh (and eighth day in the Diaspora) are thus considered to be holidays because they mark the culmination of the liberation of the Jews. As long as the Egyptians could still pursue the Jews, the Jews were not totally free, for the potential existed for them to be enslaved again.

On the seventh day of Passover we therefore read the section of the Torah that describes this phenomenal event. The highlight of this

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reading is the song Moses and the Jewish people sang when they crossed the sea.

How Could They Sing?

The very fact that they sang this joyous song—and we repeat it—raises a question.

On each of the Jewish Holidays we recite the selection of Psalms known as Hallel. These psalms were composed and are recited to express gratitude for the miracle of the exodus and other miracles that are associated with the Holidays. However, on the last days of Passover—despite the fact that they are full-fledged Holidays that commemorate the great miracle of the crossing of the sea—we only recite half Hallel. The question has been asked: why this holiday is different from all the others?

The Midrash explains that the reason we do not recite the entire Hallel on the last days of Passover is because, notwithstanding the incredible miracle of the splitting of the sea; our song of praise is somewhat tempered and muted because of the loss of Egyptian life. They too are, after all, G-d's creatures.

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A similar sentiment is expressed by the Talmudic Sages who tell us that the angels sought to sing praise at that time. However, G-d silenced them by stating: “My handiwork is drowning in the sea and you seek to sing praise?!”

The question is, if we cannot recite the entire Hallel and the angels were totally silenced, why did the Jews at that time sing the song?

Spontaneous Song

One answer is that there is a difference between spontaneous song and praise and one that is premeditated. With respect to the angels it does not say “they began to sing praise” and were cut short, but rather “they **sought** to sing praise,” suggesting that they were entertaining the possibility of singing praise when they were told not to.

The difference is that when one’s praise emanates from the inner precincts of one’s heart and soul and is sung spontaneously, we know that it is untainted by feelings of revenge or egotistical expressions of triumph.

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Rather, it derives from the soul's exultation and unity with G-d. It is pure and unadulterated.

When we recite the song the Jews sang when they crossed the sea we have the potential to feel the same pure outpouring of faith and ecstasy the Jews felt then.

However, when we sing our own song of praise, we have to acknowledge that in the ideal world, there would be no need for miracles that involve the loss of life. It's not that we pity the wicked, but we feel the loss of life that could have been a positive force in G-d's world.

The Players and the Instruments

The question still remains, why would the angels not sing spontaneously? Why did they just "seek" to sing praise, getting stopped before they could start?

The answer perhaps lies in a better understanding of the difference between humans and angels. Angels are predictable and consistent. They are programmed

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spiritual beings. They have no inner and outer personas. What you see on their surface is what lies in the core of their beings. They do not exhibit fluctuations. They do not have times when they prepare for their missions and when they are spontaneous.

When an angel is exposed to G-dly light, it automatically responds with songs of praise to G-d. It is like a finger on the key of a piano or a gentle wind gliding across the strings of a harp. The music comes naturally. The angels cannot be spontaneous anymore than a piano can be spontaneous. G-d is the Musician and they are the instruments.

Thus, when the angels sought to sing praise to G-d while the Jews were crossing the sea, G-d stopped them. G-d, as the Creator of all humanity, was not expressing overt joy because His creations were being destroyed. Thus the normal celestial music that reverberates throughout the cosmos was silenced. The angels, which are part of the natural order of creation, could not sing because the Divine music was muted.

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Stopping an angel from singing can be defined figuratively as removing the finger from the piano or preventing the wind from blowing on the harp strings. If no one is strumming the guitar there will be no music.

The angels, therefore, cannot be said to be the creators of the music; they are the instruments of G-d's music. And when G-d is not "inspired" to play His instruments, they do not produce music.

By contrast, a human soul is not just an instrument. The human being is charged with creating the music. One can create this divine music when he or she is inspired or one can sing to become inspired. In either case the music must be created by the human being, albeit with outside inspiration.

In Touch with G-d's Inner Rhythm

When human beings break out in spontaneous song it is a sign that they are in tune with G-d's inner "rhythms" that transcend His role as the Creator of the world. And while G-d did not express His joy

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and song overtly with the angelic orchestra playing, we, the Jewish people, felt the hidden music intuitively and began to sing. We were in touch with G-d's inner joy at having saved the Jewish people from drowning and their complete liberation. It is the joy of a parent knowing that his or her child is safe.

G-d manifests Himself in two ways. G-d is the Creator of the natural order and G-d transcends the natural order. At the time of the Exodus, G-d expressed His transcendent nature, which only the Jewish people could feel. And that feeling inspired them to sing the song that expresses G-d's inner joy.

The Tenth Song

Our Sages tell us that the song of the sea is one of the ten songs of the Jewish people; the tenth we will sing in the future Messianic age. This is alluded to in the very first words of the song they sang while crossing the sea: "Then Moses and the Jewish people shall sing." The Torah here employs the future tense to allude to the song of the future.

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It stands to reason that just as the song of the sea was a spontaneous expression of joy that reflected G-d's inner and transcendent joy, so too the song of Moshiach we will all sing will be spontaneous and reflect G-d's essential joy.

May we sing this song this year with Moshiach and Moses and all the Jewish people in the Beis Hamikdash!

ESSAY FOURTEEN

MOSHIACH!

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – LAST DAYS OF PASSOVER

ESSAY FOURTEEN

MOSHIACH!

The Focus of the Last Day of Passover

Passover is divided into two parts. The first two days (only one day in Israel) are devoted primarily to the Exodus from Egypt. On the last two days (particularly the final day) the focus shifts to the future.

On the last day of Passover the Haftarah, the prophetic reading, is taken from the book of Isaiah (Chapter 11) in which the prophet foretells and describes the Messianic Era. That the eighth day focuses on the Messianic Age is further highlighted by the Ba'al Shem Tov's custom to have a special meal at the end of the day, called Moshiach's Feast. At this meal, we eat Matzah and drink four cups of wine, thus underscoring the connection between the Exodus from Egypt and the future Redemption.

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A Staff from Yishai

When we examine the prophetic selection read on this day we discover that, contrary to a popular misconception, the Messianic Age is more than a period of future peace towards which humanity will evolve. The Jewish belief, rooted and explicitly mentioned in the prophetic reading of the last day of Passover, is that this new age will be introduced by Moshiach. Moshiach is a person, a Jewish leader and a descendent of King David.

Indeed, the opening verse of Chapter 11 of Isaiah reads: "A staff will come out of the shoots of Yishai [King David's father]; a branch will sprout from his roots." The prophecy continues over the next four verses with vivid descriptions of Moshiach's qualities and capabilities. Only after describing Moshiach the person does the prophet discuss the changes that will take place in the Messianic Age.

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From the above passage, and many other Biblical verses, it is clear that the Messianic Age will be ushered in by a great Jewish leader, who will be imbued with G-dly inspiration and wisdom.

The Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin Chapter 11) devotes a lengthy discussion to the topic of Moshiach. When one sage asserted that the future Redemption will not need a Moshiach he was sternly rebuked and his opinion was totally discredited.

Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah, clearly emphasizes the role of the Moshiach in ushering in the Messianic Age. In Chapter 11 of his Laws of Kings, Maimonides codifies this belief in no uncertain terms:

"Anyone who does not believe in him or whoever does not look forward to his coming denies not only [the teachings of] the other prophets but [also those] of the Torah and of Moses our teacher, for the Torah attested to him." Maimonides then proceeds to cite verses from the Torah in which the coming of Moshiach, a Jewish leader is

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mentioned. Finally, when Maimonides formulated his Thirteen Fundamental Principles of the Jewish Faith, as derived from the Torah, he included "belief in the arrival of Moshiach and the messianic era."

What's Wrong with a Messianic Age without a Moshiach?

Why is it necessary for there to be a human redeemer? Why can't society simply evolve into a more just, moral and peaceful state of existence? Why does it require a Messianic figure to redeem us?

The short answer is that all major changes in the world, good or bad, have occurred due to the initiatives of individuals. In some examples from our own Jewish history, G-d acted through Moses to redeem the Jews from Egypt; Joshua conquered Cana'an; Kings David and Solomon unified the country and built the Bais Hamikdash.

Indeed, one of the hallmarks of exile and its debilitating state of affairs has been the lack

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of obvious and overt leadership. To be sure, the Jewish people always have had leaders, but their direct influence over the Jewish nation was compromised by exile conditions. The emergence of a great leader in the days of exile who can exercise a powerful beneficial influence over the Jewish people, change their direction and prepare them for Redemption is a sign that he is unique and that we are living in Messianic times, even before he ushers in the complete Redemption.

Great leaders are not dictators. While they may possess tremendous powers of persuasion they do not have the power to enforce their decisions. Instead, they unleash the potential within each and every member of the Jewish nation so that we can change the world together.

Moshiach is not a one man Redemption show. Moshiach helps us activate our soul's infinite potential. The Ba'al Shem Tov took this idea a step further. He asserted that each and every one of us already has a spark of Moshiach in us.

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The micro Moshiachs and the macro Moshiach have a reciprocal relationship. When we ignite the sparks of Moshiach within us they create a huge conflagration, which activates the macro Moshiach and allows him to usher in the Redemption. Conversely, Moshiach inspires us, reaches into our inner sanctum and exposes the Messianic spark within us.

Bankruptcy

It is interesting to note that the source for Moshiach in the book of Isaiah is, as mentioned above, in Chapter 11. Likewise, the source of Moshiach in the Talmud is in the tractate Sanhedrin, Chapter 11. And, the laws concerning the identity and role of Moshiach in Maimonides' work are included in the Laws of Kings, Chapter 11.

Since there are no true coincidences, particularly with respect to Torah, the fact that all of these sources discuss Moshiach in chapter 11, suggests that there is a special connection to that number.

A businessman came to his rabbi and

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bemoaned his financial situation. The Rabbi dutifully told him to rely on G-d and study the Torah. The next week the man returned with a big smile. When the rabbi inquired why he was so happy the man replied, "Rabbi, I followed your instructions and I opened a book of Torah and it said chapter 11, so I declared bankruptcy and all my worries are gone..."

There is a kernel of truth in this joke. Moshiach will reveal the bankruptcy of the world prior to Redemption. If the bankruptcy of the world's institutions is a harbinger of the Messianic Age, then we are there right now. Recent events have shown us that we can no longer rely on government, the military, industry, businesses, insurance companies or any other secular institution. While Galus possesses powerful latent energies, we will not be able to exploit them until Moshiach comes. Meanwhile we are witness to the world going through its own version of Chapter 11.

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Transcendence

However, on a different level, the connection between Moshiach and the number 11 is transcendence. There are a total of ten Divine attributes which constitute the very building blocks of existence. The number 11 thus alludes to the Divine, the One who transcends His own faculties and attributes.

Moshiach's power to change the world lies in his connection to the number 11. He transcends the constraints of the world in which he lives and operates. Moshiach, though he is born and lives within the bounds of exile, has the capacity to rise above it. His connection to the number 11 endows him with the ability to empower us to discover our own transcendence, and fires up our ability to rise above exile and usher in the Age of Redemption.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

**THE LAST DAY OF
PASSOVER:**

THE BOTTOM LINE (II)

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ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE LAST DAY OF PASSOVER: THE BOTTOM LINE (II)

The Eighth Day or the Last Day?

“The bottom line” is an expression that was likely borrowed from Talmudic law. When a contract was written it was necessary to repeat its most salient features in the bottom line, so that one would not be confused by all the legalese in the text of the contract. The bottom line encapsulated all that was important in the contract.

Passover also has a bottom line. The eighth day of Passover is referred to, not as the eighth day of Passover but as “Acharon shel Pesach, the last day of Passover.”

One difference between the two ways of characterizing this day—either as the “eighth day” or the “last day”—is that as the eighth day it is a day distinct from the other seven

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days, possessing its own independent character. The designation of the eighth day as the last day of Passover, by contrast, implies that it is the day that rounds off and serves as the “bottom line” of all the preceding days.

There are spiritual implications to this designation. But first a brief understanding of the spiritual nature of a Holiday is in order.

A Holiday in Jewish mystical tradition is not simply a day that is set aside to commemorate an important historical event. It is a day in which the veil that eclipses G-d's light from the world is removed. During a Holiday, a person is capable of experiencing far more spirituality than during any other time.

Beyond the spiritual energy of the Holiday itself, every Mitzvah associated with the Festival that we perform generates additional G-dly light.

The significance of the “last day of Passover” then is that all the multifaceted spiritual dimensions of the first seven days of Passover

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are reintroduced on the last day of the Holiday. In a certain sense, then, when one properly observes the last day of Passover it is as if one has observed all the preceding seven days.

Lost and Found

The significance of the last day of Passover can also be appreciated by way of an analogy.

When the Jews were in the desert they traveled in formation. There were four camps (each consisting of three tribes), the last of which was the Camp of Dan. Our sages inform us that the Camp of Dan had a special task. They were obligated to retrieve anything that might have been left behind by any of the other tribes who traveled ahead of them.

Dan's "lost and found" responsibilities extended beyond returning lost objects to their rightful owners. The return of lost goods can be understood on two levels. In addition to the simple and literal meaning of returning a lost object to its rightful owner,

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there were spiritual losses that can and must be returned to their owners. By virtue of the Camp of Dan's placement at the end of all the other camps, they were charged with the responsibility of replenishing the spiritual losses of the Jewish People.

The last day of Passover is thus not just a continuation of the Holiday, but it is the day that enables us to retrieve any of Passover's spiritual resources that we may have left untapped. On this day, we have the ability to recover any and all opportunities lost during the first seven days of Passover.

Last Word on Redemption

What is so unique about the last day of Passover? What gives it is special power?

The first seven days of Passover deal with the exodus from Egypt. On the first day we celebrate the Exodus itself, when the Jews actually left Egypt. The Jewish people then traveled through the desert for seven days until Pharaoh's army caught up with them at the Sea of Reeds and G-d saved them by

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splitting the Sea. The seventh day, therefore, celebrates the great miracle of the splitting of the Sea (as is reflected in the Torah reading for that day).

The last day of Passover is dedicated to the future Redemption from the exile in which we are presently situated. This can be seen from the prophetic reading of this day, where a vivid description of the Messianic Age and Moshiach are given.

Furthermore, the Ba'al Shem Tov instituted the eating of a special meal at the end of Passover, known as Moshiach's meal. In recent years it has become customary to drink four cups of wine at this meal as well.

The message of the last day of Passover is simple: We all say to G-d on this day: "It is true; You took us out of Egypt, but is that the last word on Redemption? Are we **truly** free people now? Don't we say at the very beginning of the Haggadah "**this** year we are slaves but **next** year we will be free? Doesn't the Haggadah tell us that, just like Pharaoh, people rise up in every generation to try to destroy us, G-d forbid? It is time for You,

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dear G-d, to complete the long journey of the Exodus, to put an end to all exile and suffering, by ushering in the Messianic Era.”

The last day of Passover is about completing the process of liberation; it is about finality.

Last Day of Passover and the End of Days

We can now appreciate why the last day of Passover has the capacity to makeup for any lost Passover experiences. Inasmuch as the last day of Passover is a reflection of the Messianic Age of perfection, it shares one major characteristic with the Messianic Age.

Conventional thought views the Messianic Age as a time when we will be rewarded for the good we have done.

Chassidic thought, basing itself on the Talmud and other classical Torah sources, understands the Messianic Age as being far more than a reward. In the Messianic Era we will be able to experience all of the spiritual energies that have been generated throughout history.

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Every Mitzvah that every human being has ever performed leaves a permanent mark on the world. Galut/exile conditions, however, prevent us from feeling the intense light that has been introduced into the world. In the Messianic Age, all of these energies will become manifest for all to appreciate. In effect, the Messianic Age will reintroduce all of the G-dly light of the past and thereby validate all that we've done in the past.

We can now appreciate why the Last Day of Passover can reintroduce the holiness of all the preceding days of Passover. Just as the Days of Moshiach, known Biblically as the “End of Days” will bring validation and perfection to the preceding age of exile, similarly, the last day of Passover—in which we get a preview of the Messianic Age—enhances all the preceding seven days and all the spiritual energies they possess.