


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש

Thursday 21 April 2022- 20 Nisan 5782
Final Days of Pesach

LEAVING EGYPT AND LEAVING EXILE

DO PEOPLE SOMETIMES FORGET THE BEAUTY OF THE LAST TWO days of Pesach? The inspiring atmosphere of the Seder nights has passed. The family has eaten Matza for a full week. Then come two more festive days, falling this year from Thursday evening till Saturday night. What is the meaning of these final days of Pesach?

The seventh day of Pesach commemorates the splitting of the sea. This was more than the final destruction of the power of Egypt. It was a tremendous revelation of divine power. The Sages tell us that the simplest servant girl who witnessed the miracle at the sea experienced a greater revelation of G-d than did the prophet Ezekiel in his remarkable visions recorded in the Bible. In certain ways the splitting of the sea was a preparation for an even greater revelation of G-d which was yet to come: the hearing of the Ten Commandments from G-d at Mount Sinai.

Because of the special nature of this occasion, some people have a custom to stay up late this Thursday night, meeting together in the synagogue and studying Torah.

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb ז"ל
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LOOKING AHEAD

Leaving Egypt was a single event, crucial in our history, but final. By contrast, coming closer to G-d is a continuous process. The splitting of the sea brought us closer to G-d. Seven weeks later, the divine revelation at Mount Sinai brought us even closer, granting us the teachings of the Torah which can bring holiness into every detail of our lives.

The culmination of this process will be with the coming of the Messiah. This is the theme of the eighth day of Pesach, which is only celebrated outside Israel.

The Haftara reading (read on Shabbat morning) is the famous passage in Isaiah which speaks of the Messiah as a wise ruler, a descendent of David, son of Yishai (Jesse). He will govern the world with righteousness and faith in G-d, bringing an epoch of peace, in which "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb... there will be no evil or harm on My holy mountain, for the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea." (11: 6,9).

At the beginning of Pesach we remember how G-d liberated us from our first exile, the slavery in Egypt; at the end of Pesach we look forward to the time when we will be liberated from the present exile, through the coming of the Messiah.

CONCLUDING FESTIVITY

Some people have a custom, instituted by the Baal Shem Tov, to have a meal together on the afternoon of the last day of Pesach, eating Matza and drinking four glasses of wine: a kind of repeat of the Seder. But this time one is not looking back to events in the past, but *forwards* towards the ultimate redemption.

Scripture and the Sages compare the coming of the Messiah with the going out of Egypt: "like the days of your going out of Egypt I will show you wonders" (Micah 7:15). The last days of Pesach are an opportunity not just to remember the way we left Egypt, but to enjoy a taste of leaving exile altogether, when we will all experience true closeness to G-d and ultimate liberation.

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END OF PESACH

JUMPING IN

The house felt fresh and clean, with the beautiful smell of Pesach cooking. The candles for the evening of the seventh day of Pesach that had just been lit, emanated a beautiful glow.

Ariella was just opening a book to read on the couch as her older sister Leora walked in with a smile.

They chatted for a few minutes and then Ariella began to talk about school and how soon their holiday would be over.

“Yeah, this break for Pesach was awesome.” Leora agreed.

Ariella moaned. “Ugh, I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to face school, it’s been so easy and comfortable just being at home. School is so much work. I don’t want to make the change back from holiday to school.”

“Hmm, make the change. That reminds me of the idea of jumping in, which sounds kind of like the lesson we learn from the seventh day of Pesach.” Leora said thoughtfully.

“What’s that?” Ariella asked.

“This is what I heard in a podcast. The Jews had made for the desert, led by Moses and Aaron. It seemed rather dangerous to go into a desert without proper provisions. However, Moses said they should do so - and the people had said ‘let’s trust him! Everything he has said so far has come true!’ But now - things seemed to be going WRONG!

“Facing them was the Reed (Red) Sea. It looked so blue and deep! And behind them were the Egyptians! If you climbed up a little way on a sand dune you could see a great cloud of dust in the distance - that was them! It was the dust raised by their chariots! ‘There is nowhere to run!’ the Jews had thought. ‘What can we DO!?’

‘Let's surrender and go back to Egypt’, some were saying. ‘No, let's fight!’ replied others. ‘We brought weapons with us, didn't we?’

“Further on there was another group of people. ‘I'd rather jump in the sea than face the Egyptians again’, a worried voice whispered. A knot of people stood with arms outstretched to G-d. ‘G-d of Abraham! Please save us! We are lost! Save us!’

“Suddenly they heard Moses' voice. Everyone fell absolutely silent. You could hear a pin drop. Moses' clear voice carried through the desert air. ‘Children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Do not be afraid! G-d is going to save you and you will never see the Egyptians again! Do not fear - just GO FORWARD!’

“‘Go forward?’ they all wondered. ‘That means - towards the Sea! How is that possible?’ Suddenly the cloud of dust from the advancing Egyptians seemed ominously close. ‘The end!’ thought the Jews...

“But it wasn't. Something remarkable was happening. ‘The Sea has split! The Sea has split! Dry land!’

“The joyous cry of the people could be heard, and they crossed over.” Leora finished her dramatic recount with a flourish and a bow.

“Wow. I see what you're saying” said Ariella. “Sometimes you just need to take the plunge, go forward, and the rest will follow, like me going back to school.”

Leora grinned at her sister. “Go, and it will be good!”

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